

Pavilion for Vodka Ceremonies
Alexander Brodsky, 2003

Photographs
Yuri Palmin, 2004

1/8 Replica
Anton Gorlenko and Anton Gribanov, 2019

Construction documentation
Anton Gribanov and Anton Gorlenko, 2017—2018

Film
Andrei Silvestrov and Pavel Labazov, 2003

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Alexander Brodsky designed the Pavilion for Vodka Ceremonies in 2003 for the open-air art festival Art Klyasma held in Pirogovo estate near Moscow. Raised on four supporting pilotis, the simple timber-framed structure was clad with 83 old windows salvaged from a 19th century factory in the centre of Moscow. The structure and windows were painted over in basic white in order to blind the windows off, yet to create a specific quality of translucency. The resulting interior space was intended to shelter the contemplative ritual: two friends drink vodka, drawing it with metal cups from the large bowl on the table. The conversation that followed was to touch on ontological questions of architecture, art and poetry. Being unconditionally recognised and internationally published, the pavilion survived for 10 years and was disassembled in 2014 after irreparable damages caused by a summer storm.



Alexander Brodsky's Pavilion for Vodka Ceremonies. Yuri Palmin. 2004

Brodsky: Well, here we go.
Djikia: In one gulp.
B: Here's to us!
D: Look, it's oxidizing.
B: Oxidizing?
D: These dripping black stains...
B: Not bad?
D: The mug doesn't fit my height, by the way.
B: I see the mug is leaking.
D: That's because when it's not your first time drinking...
B: It's working already.
D: See, your mug gets higher than mine.
B: Yes, despite me being shorter. That's justice.
D: Here's to you!
B: To you, my darling!
D: It went down well!
B: A bit more.
D: A tiny one.
<...>
D: What was that other definition of architecture?
B: The art of ordering space.
D: The art of ordering space.
B: Took him three words.
D: He defined it well. What's your definition?
B: My definition... I made it up before I knew of Bruno Zevi's definition. I got ahead of him...
D: Zevi's definition is technical.
B: ... took me two words: The poetry of partitions.
D: This one is a poetic definition, poetic definitions are the most accurate ones.

B: I believe he was speaking of Poetry when using the term Art.
D: But one makes a mistake simply using the word Art. Poetry is a lesser mistake than Art, because the word Art in Russian is more vague than Poetry. Poetry is a pure word, Art is impure. At the same time poetry of partitions is a poetic definition since partitions are the object of architecture.
B: Poetry rules, the rest follows. We need to drink to that. Here's to Poetry!
<...>
D: (Pointing at the bowl) And this is a well.
B: The inexhaustible well. Temporarily.
D: Any well is temporarily inexhaustible. It depends on your ability to exhaust it.
B: Whether you've got the time and strength for this.
D: Here's to inexhaustibility!
B: To inexhaustibility of our wells! We need to exhale through the window.
D: It's actually better to inhale through it.
B: First exhale than inhale through the other one. You can't inhale through the same window.
D: You can. The breath is carried away fast.
B: The vodka ceremony opens some... It's not yet polished enough. I just realized that fortochkas (small ventilation windows) are needed to exhale through after drinking.
D: One for the road? Are the mugs here?
B: One for the road. Three cheers!
D: Well, off we go.



1:8 Replica of Alexander Brodsky's Pavilion for Vodka Ceremonies. Interiour view. Anton Gorlenko. 2019

It took only five days to build the original pavilion. It took one year to make the 1:8 replica. There was no architectural documentation for the original project – no one even recorded the main dimensions of the structure. All the measurements were approximated from Yuri Palmin's photographs and Brodsky's fragmented recollections. Assuming that builders must have used only standard timber sections from the lumber yard, the corresponding linden strips were ordered. All 83 windows were made by hand and fixed onto the frame with microscopic headless copper nails. Window frames were painted in three coats with Tamiya gloss enamel, to match the warm glossiness of the old eggshell paint. The structure and glass were painted in matt white acrylic paint. The brush was selected to scale with Brodsky, and a specific stroke technique was devised to match the effect of the original. Everything needed to be painted 8 times slower (only partly achieved) so that the character of the strokes appears natural at 1:8. Ironmongery was made in steel and copper and painted white. The table base, whose measurements were taken from the film about the pavilion, was welded from a brass rod, tinned and painted black. The bowl, cups and lampshade were cast in silver. The socket and switch were 3D printed. Wiring connects a LED cell to a 9v battery. After a series of discussions, the authors made an agreement not to model vodka.

Ise Grand Shrine is rebuilt every twenty years as a part of the Shinto belief of death and renewal. Also, it is the moment when the older generation of Japanese craftsmen hand over their joinery skills to the next generation. Although Alexander Brodsky's work could be seen as the ground zero of the Russian architectural discipline of the last two decades, there seems to be no way to communicate Brodsky's distinctive originality to new generations without falling into boring epigonism. Most interpretations approach Brodsky through the prism of extensive cultural associations and become easily trapped by reflections on nostalgia and the poetics of decay, which are secondary to the work itself.

Given: 1. The building is not seen as a definite point in the past, provoking merely nostalgic interpretations, but as a new start. 2. It revives itself for a second life not as a real object, but as a scaled museum piece (now safe from weathering) and a laboratory specimen, in which the process of making itself becomes the method of approach «the most secret and most profound poetry of work»?*

The twenty-year renewal process in Shinto is called the Sengu. The twentieth anniversary of the Brodsky pavilion comes in 2023. The replica is the clear material evidence of research, yet the search will go on, for the word replica stands not only for the exact copy of something, but also for reply. The 83 windows of the pavilion project multiple views onto wider aspects of architectural ontology. Authorship, originality, exemplar, scale, structure, transparency, gaze, detail, frontality, facadeness, three-dimensionality, and definition of architecture *per se*.

*Linde, U. and Birnbaum, D. (2013). *De ou par Marcel Duchamp*. Berlin: Sternberg Press. Swedish art historian Ulf Linde, who dedicated life to close studies of the art of Marcel Duchamp through meticulous replications of his works, formed the main inspiration for the project. The work of Ulf Linde, in turn, was introduced to the authors by Buster Rönngren.

1. The scale of 1:8 was chosen experimentally as an intermediate solution between 1:5 and 1:10.
2. Division by eights is an approximate basis of most proportional systems.
3. In classical art, the head of a figure is taken as 1:8 of a body.
4. Proportionally, the plan of the pavilion forms two-squares, which presents us with a diagram similar to another «8».
5. In order to convey the spirit of the original intervention, with Brodsky's inherent understatement, a seeming relation between the viewer, the object and the landscape must be kept in a triad of a viewer, a replica and a room. Any possible room.

In the original pavilion, Brodsky used old windows. Their dilapidated appearance informed the image of the structure. There are no salvaged windows in 1:8. And an attempt to imitate the cracks seems inappropriate. Hypothesis. What is the precise scale for an object made by hand at the extremes of feasible accuracy, when the resulting untidiness is equal to the wear time gives to matter over 100 years? What is the ratio between approximation and entropy?

All the windows are installed inside out. It is an obvious observation, yet rarely mentioned. When approaching the pavilion before the ceremony, what we see is not the facade, but the interior wall. Fact. When we step in, we find ourselves *outside*. Two hold a ceremony in the *external* foyer anticipating the landscape. While drinking vodka they look out of the pavilion, ie. *inside* the landscape, the entirety of which the pavilion frames. After the ceremony the two leave the pavilion and enter *inside* the landscape, which is perceived now in a different light. The protruding gables are the visible seams of the building's underside. This inversion explains Brodsky's intuitive, yet consistent decision to paint the windows from the inside, for this is the main facade of the building.