

French Pavilion Biennale di Venezia

Location : International Architecture Exhibition – Biennale di Venezia 2025

Architect : Jakob+MacFarlane, EDL architectes, Martin Duplantier

Client : Institut Français

Package : Structure

Scope : Structural design and engineering of the framework and tensioned canopies

Date : 2024-2025

The French Pavilion, which usually hosts France's exhibitions at the Venice Architecture and Art Biennales, is currently undergoing restoration until 2026 and will therefore be inaccessible for the 19th edition of the Biennale.
Rather than moving away from the site, the curatorial team chose to invest in the adjacent spaces by installing a temporary pavilion in the heart of the construction site.

The winning team therefore envisioned an extension that wraps around the pavilion under renovation, stretching into the gardens and over the canal. It expands the construction scaffolding into a public reception space. This approach fits perfectly within the theme of this year's exhibition, "Living with…", offering an ingenious solution in harmony with the context, constraints, and site.

This temporary structure was conceived from the outset using a modular scaffolding system that extends the site's existing perimeter scaffolding. Its implementation required in-depth studies, well beyond those of a typical construction project, due to several specific challenges: innovative use of scaffolding systems, unprecedented volumetry, a highly constrained site, and a complex interface with the existing structure — all while meeting high architectural standards and accommodating public access.

The construction system chosen ensures both strong architectural coherence and optimal ecological performance: the elements are standardized, already manufactured, rented, dismantled, and reused elsewhere after the exhibition. This approach also enables high modularity, rapid assembly, and full reversibility on-site. Though modular, the system was pushed beyond its traditional uses to meet the demands of an exhibition pavilion: large spans, impressive heights, and architectural lightness.

In this unique context, T/E/S/S carried out the studies for the design and structural sizing of the modular system. Beyond ensuring stability, grid layout, and integration with the existing scaffolding, T/E/S/S developed specific solutions to accommodate non-standard, custom-made components — such as metal grating floor panels (off-catalog and intended for reuse), ramps and staircases adapted to the wooded, sloping topography descending toward the canal. T/E/S/S also designed the conception and detailing of the stretched fabric coverings.

The main design challenge was to elevate a typically basic modular system into an elegant, slender structure capable of meeting demanding exhibition requirements. Another major challenge was adapting to multiple constraints: compatibility with the geometry and grids of the existing building and scaffolding, preservation of the site's mature trees, and coexistence of an active construction site with a public-facing exhibition space.

This project was made possible through the sponsorship of T/E/S/S, an engineering design firm

