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# Species Niches

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### PAVILION

Species Niches, is a 1,300 square foot network structure built during the summer of 2014 by Harrison Atelier at Architecture OMI, OMI International Art Center, Ghent, NY. The pavilion, completed in 2014, represents the first phase of a three year residency at Architecture OMI; subsequent phases include the expansion of the pavilion to house a theater and a reception area.

The title *Species Niches* refers to the process by which different species cohabit and form worldly enclosures alongside, against and within one another's niches. Yet humans in the Anthropocene era are both a niche-occupier and, through technology, the environment in which other species niche. This dual role points to an interdependency among species, including humans, that informed both the pavilion structure and performances taking place therein.

### STRUCTURE

The pavilion is an undulating canopy draped over a dome and proscenium arch, the design of which draws inspiration from the structural logic of the "reciprocal frame:" no single hierarchy governs the network of locally-sourced oak structural members; rather, the geometries of the design are interdependent and interwoven. The structure was developed with Allan Olson from ARUP.

Conceived as two layers of reciprocal frame "mesh" that thicken with truss-work, the pavilion enclosure flickers in and out of the field of perception, at times registering as a dense weave of oak members, at other moments opening up to frame the landscape. The corners of each oak member are routed and each edge sanded down, producing a structural element that is hospitable to the touch.

The roof plan of the pavilion provides both a sense of containment and dispersion, as contained clusters of interior space compete with the profile of the building, which presents a bristling set of extensions that diffuse into the rolling landscape.

### PERFORMANCE

The reciprocal frame structure is a flexible network, capable of transmitting the shifts in body weight from one dancer to another, a relational quality that makes for a physical or performative dialogue between human (dancer) and thing (pavilion).

The spatial idea became the subject of movement sequences by Dance OMI residents who, in climbing up and exploring the interstitial spaces of the pavilion, claimed (or performed) niches within the construction. A workshop performance by residents of Dance OMI occurred in August 2014.

The pavilion opened with a June 13, 2014 performance choreographed by Silas Riener and performed by Riener, Rashaun Mitchell and Cori Kresge. The music was composed by Loren Dempster, who performed on the cello and on the pavilion itself, using the wooden structure as a percussive instrument.



