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### Present at the creation

By Patrick T. Reardon on Tue., 06/16/2009 –6:55 pm.

No one at the Burnham Plan Centennial is happy that the opening of the Zaha Hadid pavilion will be delayed. But there's a silver lining for art lovers.

Visitors to Millennium Park will have the rare opportunity for the next several weeks to watch a work of art come into being, step by step.



This past weekend, workers at a Lincolnwood warehouse dismantled the pavilion's 7,000 intricately curved and delicately positioned aluminum frame and moved all the pieces to the Chase Promenade.

There, in its spot just south of the nearly completed Ben van Berkel pavilion, Hadid's complex structure --- which will use tightly fitted fabric to encase the metal skeleton and feature rooftop slits echoing the diagonal streets slicing through Chicago's grid --- will take shape.

The two pavilions are the centerpiece of this year's celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Plan of

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### ABOUT THIS BLOG

This blog is about history, planning and the future. It's rooted in the recognition that we live in a world that is created by plans – and by the failure to make plans. [\[MORE\]](#)

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

[Patrick T. Reardon](#) is a Chicagoan, born and bred. He has been writing about the city, its region and planning issues, mainly in the Chicago Tribune, for nearly 40 years. [\[MORE\]](#)

Chicago, also called the Burnham Plan after its main author, Daniel Burnham.

The London-based Hadid, the first woman to win the Pritzker Architecture Prize, and van Berkel, an Amsterdam architect and co-founder of UNStudio, were commissioned to come up with innovative designs that would inspire this region's citizens to dream boldly and creatively about the future.

Their pavilions had been scheduled to open on Friday, June 19, the same day that Michael Torke's commissioned oratorio "Plans," based on Burnham's stirring "Make no little plans" quote, will have its world premiere at the Grant Park Music Festival.

In recent weeks, however, it became clear that the complexity of Hadid's design was going to keep her pavilion from completion at least until mid-July. As reported in the Chicago Tribune on Sunday, only van Berkel's will be ready on Friday.

#### **Present at the creation**



At present, the best place to watch the creation of Hadid's pavilion is the strip of well-shaded lawn just west of Chase Promenade and just north of Monroe Street. There's even a short cement wall, running the entire length of the lawn, where you can sit in relative comfort away from the sun.

For the next few days, the work will be going on in the open air. As of Monday, June 22, though, a construction tent will be put up over the site, cutting off this side view. But the plans are for visitors to continue to watch the pavilion take shape through a clear panel on the north side of the tent.

This week, workers have been in the process of piecing the gleaming aluminum framework back together.

For this child of the 1950s, the scene brought back childhood memories of Christmas mornings when, for the umpteenth time, I'd gotten a Tinkertoy construction set, and was fitting long thin colored wood rods into circular joints of unpainted wood. Nothing much ever came of

these efforts, but I could relate to the tediousness of making sure things fit in some sort of order.

It also brought to mind other Christmases when, as a parent, it was my task to follow the intricate directions for putting together a plastic gas station or a cardboard stove.



The aluminum framing is large but not overwhelming. It could easily fit inside the base paths at Wrigley Field. The upper level of the frame looks a bit like the tiara for a giantess, and a large oval emptiness on the west side could be the eye of a cartoon whale.

This initial fitting together of the aluminum tubing seems to be the easy part --- or, at least, the easier part. The work to stretch the fabric over the frame so it fits just right and looks and works the way the designer wants it to will certainly be more difficult, dicier.

### **Making an idea reality**

Watching the progress at Hadid's pavilion won't be exactly like sitting in da Vinci's studio while the master painted the "Mona Lisa" or looking over Mozart's shoulder as he sketched out "The Marriage of Figaro."

The act of imagining this work has already been done by Hadid. What remains is something less creative --- the making of that idea reality.

Yet, chances to watch artistic ideas become physical are rare. About the only time that happens is in architecture. When a building goes up, you can see the progress of the work day in and day out, and see the architect's idea take shape. But it's at such a distance -- - physically and emotionally.

Hadid's pavilion is of human scale. And its innards --- the way tubes twist, turn and connect --- will determine its outer shape. And, although delayed, it won't take months to complete.

Anyone who studies the construction work now and over the next few weeks will be able to look at the finished product and know something of what's going on under its skin.

That's a bit like looking over the artist's shoulder.

