



Ensō.
Concrete pavilion as a cultural compass in the city park of Hasselt.

Our design process started with establishing objectives and parameters. The aspects our pavilion should fulfill. For this, we looked at an interesting reference project from California called Thimess Pavilion. It intrigued us how with one same element, a symmetrical and architecturally worthy gem could be created. To obtain our concrete element, we were inspired by "Behaagt" in Maasmechelen. This requires residents of the garden district to exchange their concrete fence for a green hedge, by 2025. Where should all these concrete slabs go then? That is how we created this one element, the concrete slab, and we capitalized on it. We came up with 5 aspects important to us. The pavilion would be demountable, achievable by half of our group, flexible in shape, fully circular and have an open structure.

In making initial designs for the pavilion, we stumbled upon a text by Denise Scott Brown. In this text, she distinguishes 'Curiosity' and 'Reflection'. The way a form elicits a certain response from a person. A form without corners, a circle, will reflect this curiosity towards its center. Denise Scott Brown's research fascinated us immensely and led us to the use of the circle for our pavilion.

After Denise Scott Brown, the research continued in the beautiful traditions of Japanese and Buddhist architecture. In these cultures, the circle is rarely or never used. The circle symbolizes perfection, something non-existent in Japan. Instead of the circle, Japanese architects use the Ensō-symbol, or the 'unfinished circle'. Ensō symbolizes imperfection, or rather perfect-imperfection. This principle is often used to explain imperfections in concrete. Because what is concrete if not a perfect imperfection?

To achieve the most interesting final design possible, we tested a total of about 37 designs. All using one simple form: the concrete slab. After all our experiments, we are pleased to present two designs: double circle and spike. Double circle uses the slab in its horizontal position. The floor plan is a translation of the Ensō principle, with the opening pointing north, like a compass. Ensō is complemented by its smaller brother in the middle. They both descend in increments of 2 plates, inversely to each other.

Spike uses the slab in its vertical position. Although Double Circle shows a rather soft and cautious approach to the plates, Spike is bolder in its appearance. In addition, Spike offers shelter, something Double Circle does not. This second design is composed of trios, specifically 2 standing plates, 1 inclined plate, and 2 slot poles. The inclined plate was attached with bolts and the half-underground groove threaded rod provides stability. Spike is also a translation of the Ensō-principle and like Double Circle, has a filigree character.

Double circle and Spike can be used in combination with each other, or separately to tell their concrete story.

