The pavilion we aspired to for Expo 2015 had to satisfy two requirements: to represent faithfully an immense country like Russia and to reflect appropriately the theme of the event ‘Feeding the Planet. Energy for Life’.

My colleagues and I, the architects of this project, Alexei Ilyin and Marina Kuznetskaya of the SPEECH Architectural Office, wanted to honour the tradition of our past pavilions which since the London Expo of 1851 have been specifically designed for each occasion by the most important Russian architects of each period. All those Russian pavilions of the past have found a place in the history of architecture as unique masterpieces—united by their dynamism, simplicity and impressive structural features at the main entrances.

A clear example of this is the Soviet pavilion designed by Konstantin Melnikov at the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et industriels modernes hosted in Paris in 1925. Its distinctive features included high glass panels, an external tower and the interaction between the floors with a diagonal open staircase that crossed the whole pavilion forming two equal triangles. Also, the architect Ilya Golosov placed himself right alongside Melnikov, proposing a highly innovative pavilion, giving the impression of symmetry in motion. For another Paris edition of Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne, 12 years later, Boris Iofan designed a pavilion on a pedestal, its dynamic construction stretched in an upwards movement crowned, at its highest point, by a statue of Vera Muchina titled “L’operaio e la kolchoziana”. For the New York World’s Fair of 1939, instead, Boris
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Iofan designed a pavilion shaped like a horse shoe, in which its colossal and imposing structure created a sense of motion concentrated around the main entrance. Following these creations, the Russian pavilions at the 1962 Expo by Melnikov held, again, in New York, at the 1967 edition in Montreal and, three years later, in Osaka designed by Mikhail Posokhin, all gained recognition.

From these few examples one can understand how the philosophy of each of these architects was guided by minimalist ideas and by the determination to follow forms and particular volumes that were almost ahead of their time.

...la filosofia dei diversi architetti è stata guidata sempre da una concezione minimalista, dalla volontà di seguire forme e volumi particolari, proiettati in avanti.
My colleagues and I, from the 21st century, wanted to adhere to the same rules but at the same time remain consistent with the trends of contemporary architecture. Our aim was to create an unforgettable combination between innovative and technological structures.

The uneven surface, the ‘L’ shaped plot and the surrounding self-built pavilions of other countries limited our plan but at the same time inspired us to concentrate on the main façade. Another significant restraint was the height set by the Expo organisers, which did not allow constructions higher than 12 metres, with the exception of one protracted point 17 metres high.

Therefore in order to avail of the whole 3260 m² assigned to our pavilion we tried to study a parallel-piped form that surges skywards, with a long flat roof that gently rises covering the pedestrian area and the main entrance. This roof is almost 30 metres long, of convex shape, and it can easily be distinguished by its silhouette within the Expo 2015 grounds. Completely covered in stainless steel, during the day it will shade visitors from the sun, while at night it will reflect the illumination.

nations from the surrounding lighting. It provides a huge interactive attraction as visitors can take photos of themselves as if they are looking at a reflection in a mirror.

Wood is the main identifying element of the pavilion, being both ecological and traditional. The upper floor of the building is completely covered in wood while the walls of the ground level are in glass, a friendly boundary between the inside and outside of the structure.
The pavilion is straightforward to erect, as all the wood, glass and metal components are ready and can be easily assembled on a frame. Wood is the dominant element inside the structure: it is present in the reception area, in the furniture and in the finishing features.

For us the pavilion should be not just an authentic representation of our country but also an engaging space that facilitates socializing and that is capable of captivating the attention of visitors. For this reason the roof is also a terrace from where visitors can enjoy a view of the whole exhibition.

The rear side of the structure blends harmoniously with the rest of the exhibition, its silhouette evokes the boundless landscapes of Russia, scattered with hills, valleys and steep slopes.

The pavilion’s theme is food security, a serious topic that is directly connected to the problem of sustainability and availability of resources. We therefore tried to create a minimalist pavilion that would be elegant and stunning but also cost-effective to build. Having said this, and despite the fact that the structure appears very simple, the roof terrace creates an innovative and interesting solution and the state-of-the-art plastic principles that facilitated the use of wood, all are built on centuries of tradition in Russian architecture.

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