The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

59 177

To: Assignment Editors June 2, 1971

From: Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information. Phone: 956-7501.

On Thursday, June 3, at 11:30 am, a 2300 square foot "floating" tent will be unfurled from a 50-foot mast above the Upper Terrace of The Museum of Modern Art's Sculpture Garden. Entrance for press and others guests is at 8 West 54th Street.

"The Frei Otto Tent" will cover an exhibition of photographs of other work by this well-known German architect who is now designing the tents for the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich. His tent structure for the German exhibition at Canada's Expo attracted worldwide attention. The tent will be open to the public June 10, following a preview benefit dance on June 9.

Larry Medlin, Otto's associate who designed this suspended structure for the exhibition, is in New York from St. Louis where he is a Professor at Washington University. The exhibition, directed by Ludwig Glaeser, Curator of Architecture and Design at The Museum of Modern Art, will open on July 7.

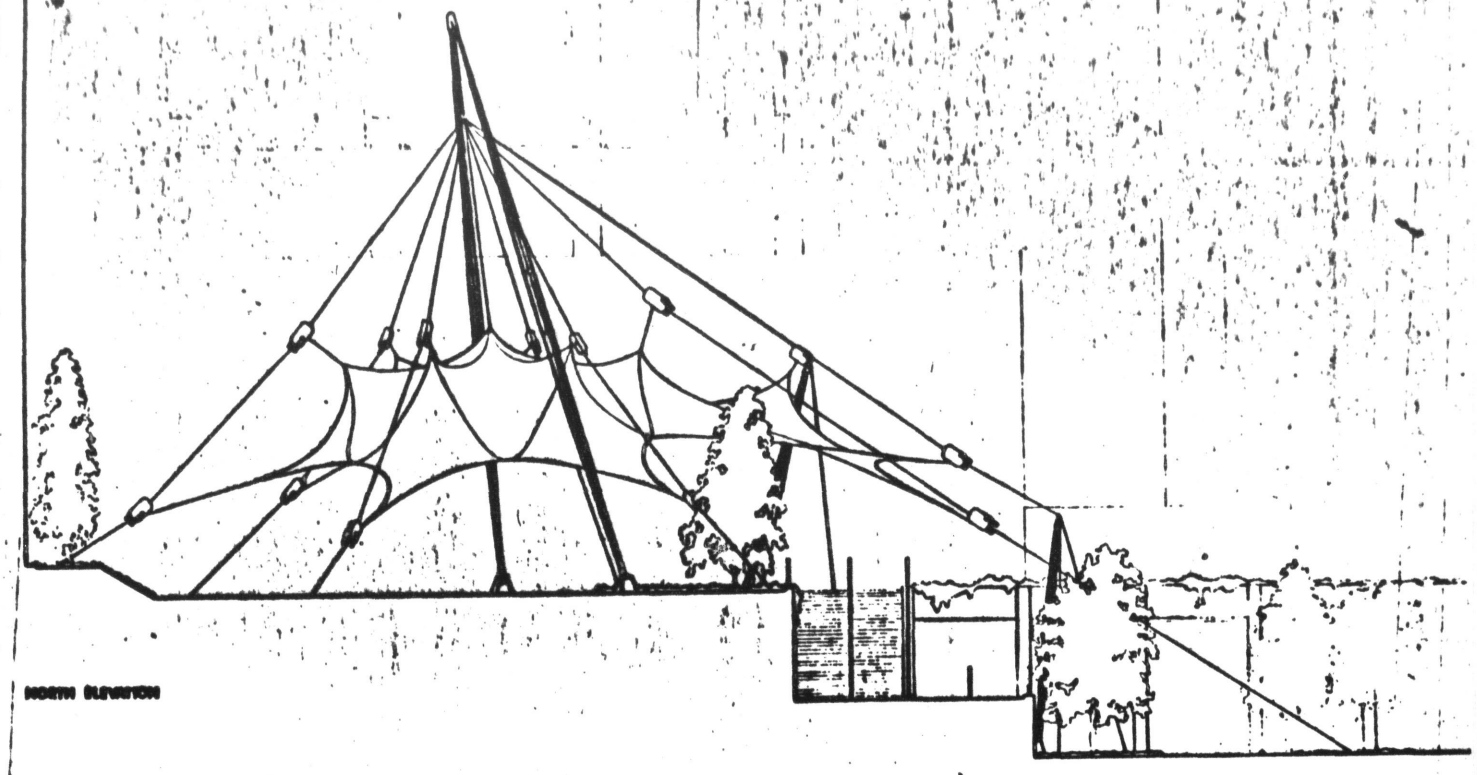
A German engineer flew to New York last weekend to work with the Museum's crew. Footings for the cables and the masts that support the bird-like structure were installed in May. The tent, made of Trevira(R) High Tenacity polyester fiber will be hoisted by winches.

Tents, usually associated with wandering tribes, armies or circuses, have, however, always been a concern of builders and architects because of their inherent unique possibilities of increasing the area covered. Today, with high strength steel for masts and synthetic fibers for membranes, tents can provide remarkable spans with reasonable life expectance. "Its collapsibility makes the tent the mobile building par excellence," Mr. Glaeser comments. "Thus the current revival of the tent seems appropriate for an age of programmed obsolescence and promising for a future of ever larger surfaces roofed on this and other planets."

Frei Otto, who constructed glider planes as a boy, has been developing tensile structures since 1947, when he was 22 years old.

L. Stromayer & Co., manufacturers of the tent, have contributed to the exhibition. Sponsors include the Federal Republic of West Germany and Farbwerke Hoechst.

59 d



NORTH ELEVATION

Exhibition structure: The prestressed tensile membrane is exemplary of Frei Otto's work, especially the retractable roof systems he has developed in recent years. In terms of his theory of a "minimal structure," the tent covers a considerable surface (2,300 square feet) with a limited amount of material and labor. The thin, almost translucent, membrane made of vinyl-coated polyester, is suspended at one point from two connected steel masts. Straddling the roof, these masts also support the steel cables which provide the necessary tension and stability for the membrane and the masts as well. The mast footings and cable anchors are bolted to the concrete beams of the terrace structure, securing the tent against any up-lift wind forces. The shape of the membrane is composed of a dome-like center and a sail-shaped extension above the stairs leading to the terrace. Shifted slightly out of the courtyard axis the exhibition structure is sensitively adapted to the site. It will hover like a sail above the sculpture garden, as much a structural demonstration as a sculptural configuration in its own right.

Display: The exhibition is a survey of Frei Otto's work presenting his principal theoretical studies as well as his major executed buildings. It includes a total of 58 projects organized into six groups: cable and mast supported membranes, large scale projects, the German Pavilion at EXPO '67 in Montreal, retractable roofs, air-supported pneumatic membranes and experimental studies outside the field of tension structures.

The projects are shown in photographic enlargements (99 with an average size of 37 x 45 inches), each accompanied by smaller pictures and diagrammatic drawings, as well as identification labels and explanatory texts.

The enlargements are embedded in standardized panels (7 x 4 feet) of white fiberglass, protecting the display from weather and damage. It is the first time this technique, developed for outdoor signs, will be employed for an exhibition. Another innovation is the system of clamps which will connect the display panels. Both elements will facilitate the installation and dismantling, and, therefore, the circulation of the exhibition.

The exhibition is accompanied by a substantial catalogue. Designed for a format of $9^1/8$ by $10^1/4$ inches, it will include 102 plates illustrating each of the selected projects by at least one full-page reproduction. Additional illustrations as well as explanatory texts supplement the checklist making it a valuable reference source. An extensive introduction explores the significance of Frei Otto's contribution to modern architecture and structural theory.