On an area of private parkland in the historic town of Versailles, this stunning new chapel has been built to replace a simple canvas marquee. The large tent formerly provided a modest place of worship for the religious community of the Deaconesses of Reuilly, before a gale in 1999 caused its near destruction. The severe damage, both to the tent and the park, led the Deaconesses to decide on the construction of a permanent, durable chapel.

The Deaconesses asked Marc Rolinet to design their new chapel. Their wish was that this would be, in a symbolic echo of the tent – a discreet, but warm and welcoming refuge. The challenge for the architect was to create a structure in harmony with its natural surroundings, yet with lasting character and strength.

An architecture of contrasts
In a metaphor for unity of the spiritual and corporeal, the building’s two tiers are designed to aesthetically counterbalance each other. The geometric, triangular form

Часовня диаконис Рейли/
The Chapel of the Deaconesses of Reuilly

Эта часовня была построена на месте простого парусинового шатра на частной парковой территории в историческом городе Версаль. Раньше религиозное сообщество диаконис Рейли использовало шатер в качестве молитвенного дома, который в 1999 был практически разрушен штормовым ветром. Из-за сильных повреждений шатра и парка диаконисы приняли решение о строительстве более прочной часовни.

Проектирование новой часовни было поручено Марку Ролине. Диаконисы попросили его, чтобы новая часовня символически была похожа на скромное, но теплое и гостеприимное укрытие. Перед архитектором стояла задача создать конструкцию, гармонично сочетающуюся с естественной средой и, кроме того, прочную и долговечную.

Архитектура контрастов
Здание состоит из двух уровней, которые эстетически уравновешивают друг друга, воплощая метафору единства духовного и телесного. Треугольная наружная конструкция из прозрачного стекла обрамляет внутренний каркас органической формы, состоящий из перекрещивающихся гибких деревянных реек.

Образуя структурный переход, пространство между двумя лежащими друг на друге слоями представляет собой естественный коридор для медитативных прогу-
of a transparent glass casing envelops a sculptural, organic-form interior 'shell', constructed from interlaced, supple wooden slats.

While creating a structural transition, the space between the two superimposed 'layers' opens up a natural corridor area for meditative strolling. The curve of the building's wooden core is echoed in the seamlessness and continuity of this walkway, which, encircling the chapel, rises at a gentle angle towards the farthest end of the building, then descends again discreetly towards the chapel entrance, following the natural rise and fall of the terrain.

The use of natural materials reinforces the chapel's integration into its woodland environment, but also gives it durability in time, establishing it as both contemporary and lasting.

Conceived for minimal use of tri-dimensional steel supports, the clear glass 'skin' creates a volume substantial enough to balance with the solidity of the interior wooden core, while retaining the essential lightness and transparency with which this whole project is infused.

**An architecture of light**
The chapel benefits from almost 360° exposure to daylight, filtered only here and there through tall trees. Vast glass façades allow the interior spaces to be washed in natural light which is in turn reflected in myriad directions. The tapering angle of the transparent 'canopy' gives a rising impression to the chapel's silhouette, and this, along with the dramatic interplay of light, gives an animated feel to the building that is in counterpoint with the pureness of its structurallines.

**Balancing and intermingling volume and space**
The aperture-like entrance to the chapel invites discovery of a unique interior – intimate, with more filtered, subdued light, yet still richly illuminated by the sun's rays that seep through the latticed shell. While the outer glass screen...
catches and reflects light, the second, inner ‘screen’ of trellised wood refracts and diffuses it. The curved form of this interior resonates with inferences – to music: the bowed, hollow shape recalling a medieval instrument; to a cave, the primal shelter; and again, to the tent the building has replaced, with the light softly permeating the wood as it once shone through the woven canvas.

**Glass, wood and bioclimatic architecture: a natural synergy**
Sustainable principles underpin the chapel’s design which optimises natural, durable materials and environmentally sound function. Additional spaces beyond the cloister are designed for flexible use, while the benefits of a natural lighting strategy are complemented by maximised use of natural ventilation. The bioclimatic function of glass and wood, which balances with the materials’ aesthetic value, is a key issue for the architect.

The building is designed for passive energy efficiency which adapts to the local climate. Heat passes through the wood skin, to the benefit of the intermediary spaces when the central heating is in use. There are then periods when the sunlight, shining through the glass panels, produces significant heat, and the porous system works in reverse.

**Biomimicry and evolving design**
Rich in references to nature and ecology – the membrane, the cocoon, an eternal interaction with the elements and the climate – this structure is a multi-dimensional expression of both contemporary and enduring principles. At a time when the future of the natural environment and a constructive relationship with new technologies are at the forefront of social consciousness, Marc Rolinet’s vision has resulted in an inspiring work, intelligently and elegantly synthesising the fundamental elements of architecture: space, materials and light.