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The Serpentine Gallery opens the 2012 Pavilion in London's Hyde Park, created by Herzog & de Meuron and Ai Weiwei. It is the twelfth commission in the Gallery's annual series, the world's first and most ambitious architectural programme of its kind. The design team responsible for the celebrated Beijing National Stadium, which was built for the 2008 Olympic Games, comes together again in London in 2012 for the Serpentine's acclaimed annual commission, being presented as part of the <u>London 2012 Festival</u>, the culmination of the Cultural Olympiad. The Pavilion is Herzog & de Meuron and Ai Weiwei's first collaborative built structure in the UK. This year's Pavilion takes visitors beneath the Serpentine's lawn to explore the hidden history of its <u>previous Pavilions</u>. Eleven columns characterising each past Pavilion and a twelfth column representing the current structure will support a floating platform roof 1.4 metres above ground. The Pavilion's interior will be clad in cork, a sustainable building material chosen for its unique qualities and to echo the excavated earth. Taking an archaeological approach, the architects have created a design that will inspire visitors to look beneath the surface of the park as well as back in time across the ghosts of the earlier structures. Julia Peyton-Jones, Director, and Hans Ulrich Obrist, Co-Director, Serpentine Gallery, said: "It is a great honour to be working with Herzog & de Meuron and Ai Weiwei, the design team behind Beijing's superb Bird's Nest Stadium. In this exciting year for London we are proud to be creating a connection between the Beijing 2008 and the London 2012 Games. We are enormously grateful for the help of everyone involved, especially Usha and Lakshmi N. Mittal, whose incredible support has made this project possible." Image: Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2012 by Herzog & de Meuron and Ai Weiwei. Image © Iwan Baan

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