

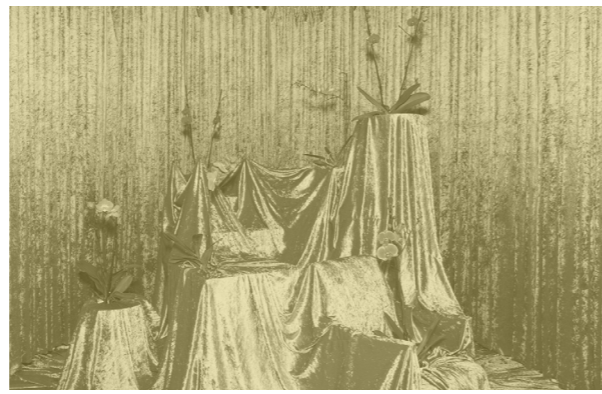
Four years ago, the idea for *The Architectural Exhibition Review* was born out of a yearning. Yearning to visit all the places and see all the shows we never manage to catch before they disappear. To indulge in this desire each week one of our writers adds a new color to the vivid pastiche of contemporary curatorial and scenographic practice. The fourth issue collects today's mesmerizing global practice of curating architecture through the lens of contemporary storytelling, some local, some global, always with shifting focal points: flowers, air, nature, and trees; models and fragments of historic buildings; (Cold war) politics, revolutions, and protests; globally recognized big names like Frederik Kiesler and IM Pei, and perhaps lesser known practitioners like Slovak architect Vladimír Dedeček; artist-created environments, bygone utopias and a shrine to the moon landing; biennales and expos, computer-generated geometries and visual investigations; housing policies, human rights issues, and real estate economies as well as tales from the diaspora.

Our recurring feature "Shows I Wish I Had Seen" puts the history of architecture exhibitions under a microscope to question established narratives. In the past year our writers have unearthed almost forgotten European avantgarde practices such as the origins of the term "new building," the West German exhibition "Berlin Plans" that was later outdone by another pivotal reconstruction era show, "America Builds," and the daring feat of the Prague-based Museum of Decorative Arts to show modern architecture during the city's Nazi occupation.

*aer* continues to expand to broaden our formats. Together with architecture and scenography students at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology we published a special edition "Shows We Wish We Had Seen" that unpacked iconic exhibitions that have shaped

As the first biennial dedicated to design disciplines and one of the longest-running biennials in the world since 1964, BIO (Biennial of (formerly, Industrial) Design) has consistently maintained an evolving character and a sui generis ecosystem. During the Yugoslavian period, BIO functioned as a buffer zone, and a bridge between the design cultures of East and West Europe, arranging (inter)national selections of cutting-edge design products in each edition. With its shift to a curated format in 2012, BIO has transformed into a laboratory and testing ground for contemporary political and social issues on a global scale.

The latest edition, BIO28, curated by Alexandra Midal and Emma Pflieger under the theme "Double Agent: Do You Speak Flower?," aligns with the biennial's legacy of contextual and performative dualities—revealing criticism and practices of resistance through encrypted messages and the metaphorical floral language. Ljubljana's Museum of Architecture and Design (MAO), the main exhibition venue and organizer since 1972, is serving as a suburban seedbed for the biennial's curated selections and collaborative research-based outputs (installations or posters from the BIO28: Production Platforms). Additionally, a satellite venue, ISIS Gallery, was introduced to extend the biennial's reach into the urban fabric—a strategy that created a sense of dichotomy rather than an integrated experience. Studio Sadar designed the exhibition with horizontal flower fields-like stages and vertical foldable planes to display floriography-based artworks. Encountering speculative and provocative works through nature-inspired, exuberant, and seemingly untamed installations—whether loosely arranged across planes, suspended, or woven into reed-like compositions—offered a more organic and compelling aesthetic than conventional, florist-like presentations against pristine white backgrounds. *eb.*



#### WHAT IS THIS? AN EXHIBITION FOR ANTS?!

What is this?! A center for ants?!" "The center has to be at least THREE times this size!"

In 2001, Ben Stiller delivered probably the most iconic lines ever said about an architectural model in the hit-comedy "Zoolander." This joke lands superbly, because how can Zoolander not realize that the model of "The Centre for Children Who Can't Read Good" is just a model? And yet, as I walk around "Marco: Micro" at Sydney University's Chau Chak Wing Museum, I realize that I know less about models than I thought. Who makes them? What's the purpose of big, small or even 1:1 versions of things? What use are physical models in an age of computer generation? Perhaps Zoolander wasn't so silly after all...

I hadn't considered that botanists used large-scale models to study the anatomy of tiny things and was tickled by a giant garden pea in a pod; nor that engineers study the geometry of motion through small models called 'kinematics'; nor that in the 19th century, 1:1 educational models of mushrooms were made to help identify poisonous fungi.

As the caption playfully reminds us, there was "Not mush-room for error."

Throughout the show, models are displayed from science, medicine, engineering, art and architecture—fields that often feel academic or exclusionary. Their display breaks down these barriers, inviting engagement through tactile, intriguing and often fun exhibits. It's nice to see an exhibition not taking itself too seriously while being informative. The exhibition's design, perhaps, could have benefited from leaning into this sense of fun, using tricks of scale or different text sizes more dramatically, for instance. However, the reuse of the previous exhibition's build makes sense in an age of environmental crisis. We shouldn't be designing new sets for every show. In this case, the models more than held their own, not needing a design to assist with the heavy lifting of engagement.

"How can you expect to teach children to learn how to read, if they can't even fit inside the building?!", Zoolander asks. How can the public understand the value models if we rarely get to see them? This exhibition delightfully remedies this oversight. *lc.*



*Double Agent: Do You Speak Flower?*, 28th Biennial of Design (BIO28) | Museum of Architecture and Design (MAO) and ISIS Gallery, Ljubljana, Slovenia | 11/21/2024-06/04/2025

*Micro: Macro* | The Chau Chak Wing Museum, Sydney, Australia | 07/19/2024-06/29/2025

*Louis Sullivan and Architectural Ornament* | St. Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, MO, USA | permanent exhibition

*Fragments of Chicago's Architectural History* | Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA | permanent exhibition

*Stories from Around the Non-Aligned* | BHROX bauhaus reuse, Berlin, Germany | 11/19-12/15/2024

*Frederick Kiesler: Vision Machines* | Graham Foundation, Chicago, IL, USA | 10/23/2024-03/15/2025

*The Architect Vladimír Dedeček* | Slovak National Gallery, Bratislava, Slovakia | 10/05/2024-02/02/2025

*Building Worlds. Archiv der Avantgarden – Egidio Marzona, SKD, Dresden, Germany* | 11/16/2024-03/09/2025

*The Air We Share* | Deutsches Hygiene-Museum, Dresden, Germany | 11/09/2024-10/26/2025

*Eva-Maria Lopez. Phyto-Travelers* | Zentrum für Kunst und Medien, Karlsruhe, Germany | 07/26-10/26/2025

*Trees, Time, Architecture! Design in Constant Transformation* | Architekturmuseum der TUM, Munich, Germany | 03/12-09/14/2025

*Schöner Wohnen. Architectural Visions from 1900 to Today* | Kunsthalle Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany | 06/08-10/19/2025

*Designing the Future Society for Our Lives* | Expo Osaka, Kansai, Japan | 04/13-10/13/2025

*Wa! Germany* | Expo Osaka, Kansai, Japan | 04/13-10/13/2025  
Armstrong Air & Space Museum | Wapakoneta, OH, USA | permanent exhibition since 1972

*Electric Op* | Buffalo AKG Art Museum, Buffalo, NY, USA | 09/27/2024-01/27/2025

*Profitopolis or the Condition of the City* | Werkbund Archiv. Museum der Dinge, Berlin, Germany | 05/23/2024-02/28/2025

Unit 1 | Detroit, MI, USA | since 2019

*Thus We Advance, Harvesting our Caravans* | MAS Context Reading Room, Chicago, IL, USA | 05/15-06/14/2025

*Visual Investigations* | Architekturmuseum der TUM, Munich, Germany | 10/10/2024-02/09/2025

*Performative Home: Architecture for Alternative Living* | MMCA Gwacheon, Seoul, South Korea | 07/19/2024-02/02/2025

*Chiharu Shiota: Between Worlds* | Istanbul Modern, Istanbul, Turkey | 09/06/2024-04/20/2025

*O Que Faz Falta* | Casa da Arquitectura, Porto, Portugal | 10/26, 2024-09/07/2025

*A Quiet and Protected Water ...* | Astrup Fearnley Museum, Oslo, Norway | 09/05-11/17/2024

*I.M. Pei: Life is Architecture* | M+, Hong Kong, China | 06/29/2024-01/05/2025

*Programmierte Hoffnung* | HFG-Archiv, Ulm, Germany | 02/15-10/26/2025

*Intelligens* | Venice Architecture Biennale, Venice Italy | 05/10-11/23/2025

*More than Housing: How Will We Live in 2074?* | Museo do Design, Lisbon, Portugal | 09/28/2024-01/26/2025

*Forest Parts* | Arc en Rêve, Bordeaux, France | 11/28/2024-05/25/2025

# issue no. 4 WE GO, SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO



september 2025

the architectural exhibition review

## FOOTPRINTS IN OHIO

Imagine you just touched down on the dust covered, barren surface of the moon. You don your spacesuit and open the hatch of your lunar lander. As you walk up the ramp you pass the blue taxi lights on the tarmac before reaching a deep opening that leads you into an artificial mound. There, you will be protected from space radiation and itinerant meteorites. You step inside the round pressure dome of the base. Finally you can breathe. You're home. As you gaze back out beyond the craggy ridges your eyes get lost in the black abyss of infinity.

As much as the exterior of the Neil Armstrong Museum in Wapakoneta, Ohio, dwells on the romance of manned space travel, the interior brings everyone back down to earth quickly. Its slender concrete ramps and landing bridges feel much too tight for today's visitors. And the daunting brief of having to balance a shrine to the first man on the moon with the legacy of the entirety of space travel since the Apollo missions appears impossible.

I'll admit the reason I went was not only to see the building but a deep seated love for hard sci-fi and the aesthetics of early space travel. New yellow-and-grey museum education panels crammed in next to original experience-focused displays of life size mockups, relics and high tech debris from the space race age were simply not what I had hoped for.

The only leftover that hasn't been touched since the museum opened in 1972—mere three years after the moon landing—is the Infinity Room, a simple optical illusion using mirrors and Christmas lights, that beckons with the endlessness of the nebulae of galaxies far away. You need a lot of imagination and love for retro tech to make it work. But it is precisely here that it feels possible to understand just how outrageous the afternoon of July 20, 1969, really was to those watching. It wasn't just about figures and dates in history books. It was about pushing a final

frontier further into the unknown and sharing that experience with millions who were unable to see for themselves. In taking a page out of the playbook of 19th century period rooms, the Armstrong Museum's building embodies this human desire to envision the impossible until today. *tf.*



## THEN AS NOW

The Electric Op exhibit at the Buffalo AKG Art Museum is not an Op art show exactly. It is a show of some Op art alongside art created outside and after the movement, over the last six decades. The pieces are united by a "technological" quality that has more to do with the imagery itself than the ways in which the images were produced. Rendered by hand or by machine, each piece is a supreme example of that sort of image the world seldom saw before the invention of computers and can't stop seeing now that computers are everywhere.

Given the focus on technological imagery over time, I feared that the curator would try to trap me in a historical narrative. (I'm not the easiest to trap because I'm too restless to read the wall text.) But I don't think a trap was set. No arrows ordered me around. The galleries were not numbered. One path through the show was as good as the next. The grouping of the work betrayed only the slightest conceptual order.

In this way, the curator, Tina Rivers Ryan, allowed the work to stand all together, all at once. This was generous because it freed me to see, as I wandered around undirected and uninformed, how perfectly continuous the work is, how little

the distances of time and technological advancement separate the older and newer work.

Thus, Electric Op reveals that the Op art movement was an early manifestation of a visual culture still flourishing today. The exhibit's indefinite historical narrative is a recognition that this moment begun by Op art is not over yet. More than recalling the past, Electric Op is the site of something happening now, something I was given to see by the show's straightforward curation. *mh.*



## THE STATE OF THINGS

Satisfyingly self-evident and sufficiently surprising: a museum that was recently forced to relocate organizes an exhibition on displacement and land speculation. "Profitopolis or the Condition of the City" at Berlin's Werkbundarchiv is designed as a stroll. On a tour between Kottbusser Tor (old museum location) and Spittelmarkt (current interim site), urban policy issues such as environmental protection, new traffic policies, affordable housing and citizen participation are negotiated.

The end points are marked by artist Tracey Snelling's sculptures—colorful, flickering architectural models with small videos and sound. Along the way, visitors pass



the self-organized "Open Garden Moritzplatz," the Otto Suhr housing estate sold to the "Deutsche Wohnen" group, the luxury "Fellini Residences," the Ahornblatt restaurant demolished 25 years ago, and the long-planned Spree river pool. In addition to photos, videos and brochures, there are everyday and art objects: a submersible pump to test the Spree's water quality, the board game "Anti-Monopoly," an original carpenter's hammer from 1980s squatters, the "Puddle Archive" by artist Mirja Busch—each topic has its exhibit, in line with the spirit of a "museum of things."

The rich mix of activist works and explanatory texts, historical events and current initiatives sits on a modernist landscape of stacked storage shelves, reminiscent of the apartment blocks outside. Through the large shop windows of the Kreuzberg prefab, the demands for a socio-ecological city radiate out into the public space. On the way to the special exhibition, one passes the partly empty shelves of the open storage, moving boxes are piled up between designer chairs—the archive's displacement following the lease cancellation by a Luxembourg real estate fund is omnipresent.

The activist walk is flanked by two wall exhibitions on the history of the Werkbund as well as the original 1970s Profitopolis exhibitions. The juxtaposition of these topics raises the question of the role institutions such as the Werkbund can play in political urban discourses. The exhibition understands to draw attention to this and motivates visitors to take a closer look. *amm.*



## DOING THE DETROIT THING

The first time I signed a waiver before entering an exhibition was on the eastside of Detroit. On 3283 Dubois Street you stand in front of one of only two houses on the block. Up and down the road it doesn't get any better. At most there might be two or three remaining structures on any of the surrounding city blocks. This is McDougall Hunt, a neighborhood so close to Eastern Market, Wayne State, museums and downtown its brutal state of utter abandonment would be unfathomable—if this were any other place than Detroit.

The house on the corner of Dubois and Mack is an older two-story brick apartment building with window frames, cornices and a boarded up basement, all painted baby-blue. The entrance is deeply recessed behind a locked iron gate. Even with an appointment the place looks unwelcoming. Inside visitors step into the monochromatic world of ceramicist Anders Ruhwald. Once your eyes adjust to the darkness the textures of the walls and floors start to pattern your experience. Charred wood panels and blackened boards swallow the light of a few meager light sources, a candle in one room, a lone lightbulb in another. One empty room is tiled bottom to top with black ceramic squares. Even in parts of the former apartment that overlook the sunny urban decay outside the incoming light seems only to intensify the cavernous stillness inside.

Ruhwald's objects are carefully placed. They occupy a corner or a closet. They fill an entire room. They hang silently above your head.

It is an abstract narrative that doesn't fail to rope you in. As you open doors and wander about the unease of the deserted neighborhood creeps inside behind you. Like a careful arsonist's masterpiece the contours of the apartment are covered with the soot and ash of a conflagration of massive proportions. Visitors turned urban archaeologists discover beauty and inner life in the shards of a once thriving part of the city. *tf.*

## DIASPORIC HISTORIES

I know from growing up that our histories are not the dominant narrative. The dispersion of people means decentralizing the keepers of history and losing stories for future generations. But decentralized history-writing also means that the story is ripe for the taking, reclaiming narratives often shaped by the powerful.

"Thus We Advance, Harvesting Our Caravans" not only documents the architecture of the Mexican diaspora between Chicago and Mexico but also reclaims narrative. It posits architectural expression not as happenstance but as a means of transnational self-determination.

Entering the MAS Context Reading Room in Chicago, there's a sense that things are indeed, as the title suggests, on the move. Off-the-shelf clips and brackets mounting the work visibly await their disassembly, migration, and reconstruction. The freestanding chain-link

fence bisects the space diagonally—a barrier visitors must move along and around to view the work. The co-curators brought together the work of Leticia Pardo and Inés Vachez Palomar, each of whom has captured one end of the ongoing transnational architectural exchange through photographs, drawings, models, and writing.

Pardo's work renders how the Mexican immigrant community in Chicago wraps new skins around existing buildings by layering photographic fragments of the new atop elevation drawings of the old. Each piece travels with an unfolding plywood cart, in and of itself an exhibition on wheels. On alternating walls in conversation with Pardo's work, Palomar's photographs and writing capturing Vista Hermosa reveal the changing built environment as the influence flows in reverse from the United States to Mexico.

Two things struck me. One, that diaspora doesn't flow in one direction (outward). Distant places and people are in constant dialogue. And two, that architecture is not static or tied to a geographical location. A place lives in the physical world and in our minds and memories. The exhibition provides a glimpse into the life and architecture of the Mexican diaspora, and is undoubtedly critical to filling in the gaps of diasporic narrative. *pq.*



► architecture's relationship to styles and fashions, technological advances, the relationship of humans to nature, nationality, culture and globalization, the individual's place in society, and our relationship to history. And with a collective of twenty-one writers, curators, architects, and academics *aer* participated in the exhibition "The Architecture Exhibition of Tomorrow" at Architektur Galerie Berlin to ponder how architecture exhibitions may continue to be a key medium of architectural thought and production.

As a collective effort *aer* is nothing without its writers around the globe who report on what they see. And yet, we still don't manage to cover it all. That is why we want you.

If you'd like to contribute to *aer* and you're based in one of the locations listed below we'd love to hear from you:

Abu Dhabi  
Accra  
Amsterdam  
Athens  
Atlanta  
Buenos Aires  
Brussels  
Cape Town  
Copenhagen  
Delhi  
Dublin  
Hong Kong  
Jakarta  
Lagos  
Lima  
London  
Los Angeles  
Melbourne  
Mexico City  
Milan  
Montreal  
Moscow  
New York  
Paris  
Rome  
San Francisco  
Santiago  
Sao Paulo  
Sharjah  
Stockholm  
Tokyo  
Vienna

Or shoot us a message to let us know which other place we're missing: hello (at) architecturalalexhibition.com *tf.*

## TRACING THE NON-ALIGNED

Remember the Non-Aligned Movement? After the end of the Cold War, this forum of countries independent of any major power blocs faded in the background, but in its glory days, it held the promise of a “third way” beyond the canonical East and West. “Stories from Around the Non-Aligned” at Berlin’s BHROX by Slovak artist Olja Triaška Stefanović spotlights the NAM’s iconography, layering political, architectural and personal artifacts.

Stefanović assembles an array of found objects, interspersed by large-scale photographs and videos, enveloping visitors in the NAM’s hopeful and ambitious atmosphere. The objects include covers of the Zagreb student newspaper *Solidarnost*, a Non-Aligned world map overlaid with a photo of the artist as a child, postcards, family photos, stamps, and a large collage of cropped flower bouquets from official events. Two videos depict the clipping of those articles set to a recording of John F. Kennedy talking about the NAM and quiet mirrored shots of the Atlantic and Pacific coastlines.

The NAM can only be understood within the circumstances of the Cold War. Geopolitics are omnipresent, with the two major powers hovering in the background. One is represented with a photograph of the Queens Unisphere, and the other by an enormous print of an interior from the Stasi headquarters, placed across crops of remnants of the Berlin Wall. Despite its initiation by Josip Tito, newspaper

clippings and official maps of member states such as Bangladesh or Madagascar underscore that the NAM was rooted in the Global South. Stefanović’s personal photos and artifacts are crucial in complementing this top-down perspective with a personal history.

The key to appreciating the show is that it is as much an art installation, as it is about geopolitics. Missing translations and labels can be frustrating, often requiring visitors to resort to Googling and reverse image searching. Much remains impenetrable to visitors unable to read Serbo-Croatian, yet the pieces collectively evoke a vivid sense of place and time. The show is not a history lesson. It works brilliantly on a personal and an atmospheric level, successfully reviving and tracing the NAM’s legacy. *tf.*

## TOUCH THE PROTOTYPE

I invited my father to the Graham Foundation on a whim to attend a talk in the top-level ballroom. As an institution that nurtured my budding as an architect over a decade earlier, I was familiar with its odd visitation choreography: enter the mansion, climb three flights with other guests, snag a seat, and wave at your friends across the room before the event starts. This time was no different, except that I was texting my father (a first-timer) a disorienting set of directions on how to get upstairs well into the beginning statements.

Curator Mark Wasiuta delivered a presentation on Frederick Kiesler’s work—a “paper” architect whose life’s sketches, processes, speculations, and other brilliant documented shenanigans were displayed on the two floors below us. One of the grandest relics on display was the first fully realized prototype of the Mobile Home Library: a modular, ergonomic solution to streamlining media-intake in one’s domestic sphere. Mark spoke of the endless speculation behind the machine since its inception between 1937–41 by Kiesler and his students—only for it to amount to dozens of diagrams, drawings, and partial study models by the end of his life.

So, the machine was built for us to witness in 2024. It centered an entire salon in solitude, lending a way for you to surround it and for it to surround you. The resulting piece gave life to its numerous studies, and it even demonstrated its mobility with an automatic motorized rotation mechanism. Most impressively, visitors were restricted from touching it.

It seemed that the pristine product was a tool for spectatorship, rather than a tool for testing theories of correalism in architecture. The Mobile Home Library’s conception, built on numerous media, was, in the end, not built for any media other than as itself. Its empty shelves and creaking motor left me desiring an evening alone with it to test its potentials. So, my father and I touched it (... accidentally). *ah.*

## HISTORY REPEATING?

“You are our future, if you maintain common sense!” The quote by Vladimír Dedeček, architect of the iconic “bridge gallery” at the Slovak National Gallery (SNG) in Bratislava, has today become a conspicuous self-fulfilling prophecy. Two exhibitions recently celebrated the reopening of Dedeček’s building, “Vladimír Dedeček: Past and Present” and “Vladimír Dedeček and SNG: A Story from the Future,” with a surprising outcome.

The former was a classic retrospective. Dedeček, one of the most prominent Slovak architects, designed spectacular late modern and brutalist venues. His early work was the bold university campus and auditorium in Nitra (1956–66) with thin convex and concave shells spanning 36 meters, alluding to Oscar Niemeyer. The Slovak State Archive in Bratislava (1971–83) presents his design method of stacking and intersecting volumes. The exhibition approached the audience on three levels: via a biographical timeline, large 1:10 models, and film insights. The space’s conceptual whiteness suggested the main focus was Dedeček’s composite design method, an art of joinery in the era of concrete and steel elements.

“Vladimír Dedeček and SNG: A Story from the Future” disentangled the complex political and personal history behind the competition and extension of the SNG. Dedeček designed the bridge gallery as a load-bearing truss superstructure spanning the front façade of 73,5 meters, creating a cascade of three gallery floors, lit by dispersed daylight, in 1967. However, after the end of Czechoslovakia’s revolutionary period in 1968, the SNG’s founding director was fired. The gallery opened in 1977 under the conservative state establishment’s new leadership. The bridge gallery served its purpose until it was closed in 2001 for emergency reasons. After 21 years of vacancy it was a major accomplishment of director and curator Alexandra Kusá, to convince authorities to reconstruct the unique

bridge gallery wing that reopened in 2023. However, instead of being celebrated, Kusá was dismantled by today’s new conservative government. So, is it just history repeating, or can we maintain some common sense, and possibly, a future? *hhd.*



## COUNTER CONDITIONING

The river Elbe defines almost everything about the valley of Dresden. Certainly where and how to build. Its extensive floodplains shape the historic city center on a scale that, even today, makes it the country’s fourth largest city. Water—its current whereabouts and its future seasonal encroachment on civilization—is the foundation the city’s ever-blackening sandstone monuments rest on.

The historic downtown museums are particularly prone to feeling the stresses of water. Whereas my classmates merrily paddled down the gushing suburban streets during the 2002 “flood,” curators weren’t amused. Since then collections have moved upstairs, into newly built storage tubs that hover in midair as in Staab Architects’ reconstruction of the Albertinum.

The new Archive of the Avant-Gardes on the eastern bank of the river follows the same model of storing valuables in the attic. Below the suspended concrete box in the former 18th century customs building is a sizable if somewhat cavernous gallery that unboxes collector Egidio Marzona’s enormous flotsam of a century’s worth of art, objects and architectural ephemera. They all have in common a focus on the history of the future. For the second exhibition since its opening curator Hubertus

Adam excavated architectural manifestos, zines, construction site photos and experimental designs of mostly predigital world modeling efforts. Aluminum tinted space age technophilia sits next to the esoteric escapism of magic mountains. The late 60s herald the age of architectural super groups, of DIY zines and globular carbuncles and the post apocalypse. On walls the color of tree frogs and open formwork concrete this assemblage creates a world in stark contrast to the ever-present languid nostalgia of a city famous for dreaming of its past.

You don’t necessarily need to come here to see the works on view. They are all widely published and are surely part of some TASCHEN book version of art history 101. But I doubt you will ever see them anywhere else in such a rejuvenating setting where they feel both utterly out of place and with renewed potency. If you are overwhelmed by the past, maybe a dose of future’s past can act as a corrective. *tf.*



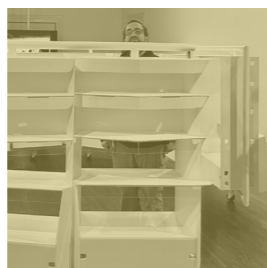
## PARTICULAR DISPLAYS

How do you display something you can’t see? By showing its effects on the world around it: on creatures, on inanimate objects, by its environmental traces that can be heard and felt but not seen. “The Air We Share” at the German Hygiene Museum in Dresden achieves a delightful balance capturing the evanescent mixture of oxygen and nitrous gas we rarely think of but cannot live without. It serves up a smorgasbord of thematic areas that deal with air as a medium through which we pass and a carrier of microscopic particles that,



in turn, passes through us. It considers how we can bisect its varied composition and how it ever so slightly clouds our vision with the effects it has on our surroundings. It tackles our attempts at channeling the flow of molecules, whether in a temporary inflatable shelter or as cities designed for better circulation. Finally, air gives us the slip in its political aggregate and through its unruly disregard for nationalization.

Technology plays a big role in our relationship with air. AI-powered designs to resolve the multiple dimensions of seasonal, local and global aspects of positioning ourselves within the Earth’s troposphere are but the newest attempt at applying tools to the singularity of our situation. Earth has no plural. If there is anything that should make us aware of this global existence it is the first ever image of the Blue Marble, taken from the air, by Apollo 17. The exhibition employs a number of sleights of hand to make us care for that which we normally cannot comprehend by bending it to our ocular predisposition. A curtain softly undulates in a doorway. Empty mason jars bear descriptive labels of their invisible contents. Perfumes of olfactory memories carry the signature of a place. Lightweight airducts are a backdrop for airborne diseases and the promise of a cleaner life in the comfort zone alike. But the most convincing contributor to this show is another invisible wave-particle, light. It masterfully enhances the subtle color gradient rising from floor to ceiling, like the rise of a charcoal sun that blurs our perception of where the atmosphere meets the solid ground on which we stand. *tf.*

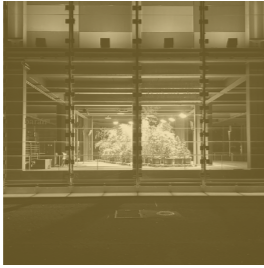


## THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

After layers of space, metal, glass, and, most importantly, reflections, a sample of ornamental plants brought to Europe from the “New World” hides from the distracted gaze. The installation authored by Eva-Maria Lopez, “Phyto-Travellers,” seems to be floating in the middle of Kubus Subraum, a structure that connects to the main building of the Zentrum für Kunst und Medien in Karlsruhe. From outside, only the original names of the species are clearly visible. The reflection that surrounds the glass box overtakes the exhibition. The lush evergreen vegetation indoors seems to blend with the reflection of early fall foliage outside. While the daylight lasts, the eye has to step through the glass to be able to see what hides behind it: eerily familiar symbols of another world that nowadays are seen as local in the European context. The exhibition is conceived to be visited mainly by looking in from the outside and is only accessible on selected dates. The two worlds, inside and outside, remain separated, meeting only by the eye piercing the in-between space. The separated plant life evokes the complex encounter of cultures and individuals: Often, what lies behind us gets mixed in with bits and pieces of what we can observe. Only when I look close enough can I discern what is before my eyes. As a migrant in a foreign land, I also stand on one side of the glass. It is only when I see through that I discover wonders, bits of color that remind me of home, and the different processes of trans-continental exchange.

The visitor’s perception in this exhibition is in constant transformation; as daylight fades and the shadows of the outside capture the reflections on the glass, the indoor garden is revealed to the eye, and the installation gains prominence. The light emanating from the inside breaks through and draws attention to the foreign specimen. Elements that were noticeable during the day disappear. The darkness

draws out the green of the leaves and connects both sides of the looking glass. *ca.*



## ROOTED TECHNOLOGIES

Trees are an emotional matter. To this day, I still feel a twinge of sadness when I think back to the moment my grandparents cut down the massive cherry tree in their garden, the one we used to play in. My friend, the tree, was gone—just as Alexandra had sung in her famous Schlager in 1968. Undeniably, trees are deeply connected to the relationships between humans and their habitats: as material resources, as natural shelters, and in the urgent context of climate change.

“Trees, Time, Architecture” thus attempts to present both a historical and contemporary survey of the use of trees—as living entities, not merely dead wood—in the built environment. Its design unfolds didactically, moving from problems to solutions. The first hall addresses the well-known exploitative treatment of forests, featuring a large block of coal placed illustratively at its center. The second room holds a vast collection of architectural case studies, from the canonical Nordic Pavilion in Venice and Frei Otto’s Ökohäuser to more recent approaches, such as AI-engineered structures made from residual cut branches. Displaying an array of delicate wire models, the final chapter highlights the work of the co-curating Office for Living Architecture and its professorship at TUM, culminating in what is arguably its key reference:

the living root bridges of several Indian communities, true examples of engineered yet organic structures.

Referencing Siegfried Giedion’s “Space, Time, and Architecture,” the exhibition updates his claims about understanding architecture in a “new” space-time continuum, weaving together science, technology, and art. By pointing to selected Indigenous techniques as model solutions, practical approaches to building that once seemed utopian come into view. Nonetheless, one is left with the same unease that once unsettled the modernist Giedion: Can we produce humane technologies? And if so, will they truly save us from what we fear? *sba.*



## BYGONES

There are certain exhibition topics that always seem to be a sure hit. Polka-dot-based artwork, for instance, or starry night skies. Much other artistic production, regardless of quality, isn’t as easy a sell for a general audience. In architecture, the closest curators tend get to a full house, aside from instantly recognizable big-ticket names, is when they turn toward utopia: Olalekan Jeyifous won the Silver Lion at the last Venice biennale not least for the refreshingly cheerful futurism of his Pan-African spaceport.

This year alone I’ve seen several shows celebrating similar retro-aesthetics of 60s and 70s pop art, inflatables, zines, fetishes, adult ball pits. The Kunsthalle

Tübingen currently also mines the seemingly inexhaustible vein of past artistic forays into pop culture with a show entitled “Schöner Wohnen. Architectural Visions from 1900 to Today” (Living beautifully). It assembles some of the greatest hits of architectural drawing, collage, modeling, and interior design of the 20th century. The original works on paper are beautifully staged in Abbe Schmid’s airy galleries (themselves a product of a bygone utopian era, the late 60s). Blow-up photos of buildings and full-scale interior mockups anchor delicate watercolors and garishly fun cut-out magazine graphics. From Archigram to Frederik Kiesler to the psychedelic visions by Itzehoe-based Wenzel Hablik, there is a smorgasbord of iconic-canonic imagery.

For a show that sets out to examine the beauty of representational novelties in architecture and their power to elevate our imaginary of future living, it ends rather bleakly. As you walk up the gentle promenade architecturale toward the back room contemporary artists take over. They seem to insinuate that the ink for architecture’s outstanding utopian thinking dried up ca. 1990—a statement that is incomprehensible considering the rich utopian (and dystopian) production of the boom and bust years of the early 2000s alone. You’re left wondering whether computers have killed the visionary in this retelling of the story of utopia. Or, whether the visionary itself has become reactionary by equating beauty with the well-known gesture of a hand on paper and not a screen? *tf.*



## ARCHITECTURE IS THE MESSAGE

While the European architecture community recently turned its eyes to the Venice Biennale, the Asian hemisphere focused on Japan—specifically the 2025 World Expo in Kansai, Osaka. With minimal international publicity, the event seems to vanish in today’s global noise. Adding to the challenge, registration and entry lotteries bordered on the absurd. The irony seems lost on the organizers: An event meant to celebrate accessibility and global exchange feels like an airport lounge for the lucky few. It’s tempting to turn away, but that would do a great disservice to the stunning architecture on display.

Because unlike Venice where pavilions are inherited or adapted, the Expo structures are newly built: bold, experimental, and often breathtaking. Encircling the main attractions is a monumental wooden ring—possibly the largest timber structure in the world—which binds the grounds in rare architectural harmony, uniting diverse national styles into a cohesive whole.

The same could be said for the content, however, with less satisfying results: Many pavilions that tried to reflect the Expo’s overarching theme “Designing Future Society for Our Lives” did so with a disappointing sense of sameness. After the third immersive film about oceans, marine life, and our shared planetary responsibility, even the most eager visitors zone out.

At some point, you stop listening and start looking. You notice the ingenuity of the spatial staging in the Dutch or German pavilions.

You marvel at experimental forms. And some truly stand out: The Portuguese pavilion, with its sculptural façade of thick gray ropes, echoes the rhythm of ocean waves. The Spanish pavilion draws the eye with its generous staircase—an architectural gesture toward sea and sun. And perhaps most quietly striking is the Swiss pavilion: Light-footed, future-oriented, and built with a minimal ecological footprint it wraps four ground-level spheres in a delicate membrane.

While I can barely recall the Milan Expo of 2015, this year’s Expo in Osaka will stay with me—overflowing with impressions carried above all by the power of architecture. In the end, it’s not the message, but the medium that defines this memorable Expo. *cf.*

## CIRCULAR NARRATIVES

Have you ever taken a photo of your audio guide? I never had—until now. The German Pavilion at Expo 2025 in Osaka, “Wa! Germany,” may not have been an architectural showstopper, but it delivered something arguably more valuable: genuine fun.

What made the experience special was “Circular,” a tiny mascot inspired by Japan’s kawaii culture. This cheerful guide lights up when held to marked spots and starts talking—bringing the exhibition to life room by room. I found myself genuinely enjoying the interaction, something I can’t say for most museum audio guides. Circular

isn’t just cute; it’s effective. The character leads visitors through a thematically clear and immersive exhibition on circular economy—complete with circular building design, recycled materials, and a narrative that’s as playful as it is instructive.

In “Circular Me,” one of the rooms, visitors are encouraged to reflect on their own role in the circular economy. The exhibition is cleverly staged, emotionally accessible, and thoughtfully designed. Unlike many Expo displays that lean heavily on technical jargon or generic messaging, this one is surprisingly engaging.

The German Pavilion follows a successful concept—smart, playful, and visually compelling. “Wa” by the way, stands for more than just a name. It nods to the Japanese word for harmony, and in this case, reflects the pavilion’s core message: that circular economy isn’t just a technical solution, but a cultural shift—toward cooperation, balance, and sustainability.

As much as I appreciated the clarity and creativity, I found myself asking: Is it all a bit too much? There’s a pavilion song. A café. A fan shop. A virtual expo. A stage program. And this is just the German Pavilion, one of around 80. Do we need all this? Or does the overload risk distracting from the core message? When does the immersive become excessive? *cf.*



@architecturalexhibitionreview  
www.architecturalexhibition.com

stay tuned!

## LIFTING THE VEIL

It may be challenging to translate image-based research to fit expectations associated with art institutions. “Visual Investigations” at the Munich Architecture Museum reveals how design, advocacy, architecture, and law are intertwined. By making their connections visible the exhibition shows how aesthetic perceptions and visual storytelling constitute forms of resistance against complex social and political conflicts.

Upon entering, visitors encounter a translucent veil, hinting at moving images behind it. The exhibition design offers choices. Cases investigated by research organizations, communities, and NGOs turn the three galleries into a world of local struggles and investigative methodologies. It is up to the visitor’s curiosity to delve into the lengthy evidentiary process and technologies involved. Alternatively, one can follow a historical timeline that traces the evolution of communication technology from the first aerial analog photo to the first YouTube video, the first smartphone to the advent of AI. It showcases how these tools influence human rights advocacy as well as indexes a vocabulary of visual investigation: Open Source Intelligence (OSINT), 3D modeling, remote sensing. A common thread runs through all: they are civil verification tools, created collectively, interdisciplinary, and with activism at their core. They are open to contestation and verification, and embody research and new technologies for civil responses to violence by the state or corporations.

In the midst of this data density, moments of rest and reflection are provided. Open spaces with windows overlook the garden connecting the surrounding museum complex. With benches and books they offer a necessary pause. So, is this art, architecture, or evidence? Crossing such thresholds allows the complexity of events to unfold, interpreting data, images, and information within legal, political, cultural, and social spheres. “Visual investigations” allow

the cases to reach farther, engage visitors and attune to the social dimensions of conflict. Today’s crimes are increasingly visual and spatial. Making room for these discussions is both a challenge and an essential act. *pm.*



## HOMES WITH A THOUSAND MEMORIES

“Driving home for Christmas with a thousand memories”—this is a line from Chris Rea’s eponymous song, a song I often listen to while driving home. The homes we are heading to are probably not just a physical place, but somewhere filled with family or memories. What does “home” mean in South Korea, particularly in Seoul, which is often referred to as the “Republic of Apartments”?

The exhibition highlights small houses that have been built in urban areas since 2000, focusing not on the form or structure of the houses, but on the lives of those living in them. The curator uses the active verb “connecting” instead of the passive “connected” to convey the message that the audience should actively connect their own lives with those of others. The exhibition shows how houses designed by architects have impacted the lives of their residents. Through architects’ notebooks, models, and photographs, the exhibition emphasizes that houses are not merely spaces, but also carry the stories of the people who inhabit them.

In particular, the first section “The Home as Architectural Manifesto” emphasizes an active way of viewing space, encouraging visitors to think about the traces they want to leave in the spaces they live in. Through this ex-

hibition, people are invited to reflect on the values they prioritize in their daily lives and how they form relationships with their families and neighbors

The exhibition, made up of five chapters featuring various homes and stories of life, concludes with a space where visitors can imagine and decorate their own spaces. Additionally, a video series—documentaries, animations, and fictional stories—is shown to continue deepening the exploration of the concept of home. Ultimately, the exhibition poses the question of the kind of home we want to live in, and how we can realize a life that reflects our true selves in that home. As many are heading home this December it is a time to rethink its meaning. *hk.*



## READ THREADS

A red web-surface seeping into the white wall guides us to a red room woven with delicate threads that challenge our perception of depth. This space is Chiharu Shiota’s 1:1 scale installation titled “Between Worlds” at Istanbul Modern. The installation consists of a spatial web crafted from red threads. The surfaces, formed through the repetitive weaving of units, are



layered on top of one another to create multidimensional depth. The systematic weaving transforms into controlled chaos through this layering. Visitors experience this web-space by following a fixed route set by the artist, where they become “performers.” Walking turns into a performance.

Within the chaos of this web, there are glitches—gaps that offer an experience similar to time travel. When one “performer” observes another from a different point along the route, time seems to fast-forward or rewind, creating encounters with other moments or fragments of the experience. Similar glitches appear in front of the museum’s security cameras, where the camera’s gaze monitors the performers’ actions. Consequently, the sense of touch is excluded from this interaction that is solely based on visual stimuli.

In these glitch-filled red spaces, suspended “in between,” abandoned suitcases emerge. Some, bearing name tags, are biographical objects hidden within the webs. As a symbol of travel, “the suitcase” takes on an identity by borrowing from the carrier’s. Through the emotions and memories they carry, these transformed memory boxes redefine concepts like home, belonging, and identity.

In the exhibition, however, the suitcases do not flow with the rhythm of the red web; instead, they remain still, suspended in time. They occupy the space, “somewhere in between.” This shared stillness becomes an attempt to create a new collective memory “within absence.” *iz.*

## CARNATION DREAMS

Can architecture sustain democracy? On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Carnation Revolution in April of 1974 that ended the fascist dictatorship, the Casa da Arquitectura opened its collection to Ana Neiva and Jorge Figueira, inviting them to reflect on Portuguese architectural production since then. Taking its title from a famous revolutionary song, “O Que Faz Falta” aims to reflect on how architects responded to “what was needed” and gave form to democratic values.

The result is a panoramic reading of 49 works and 1 unbuilt project—an attempt at curatorial democracy—with a total of 86 authors from different generations and backgrounds, covering a wide range of programs, from welfare infrastructures to capitalist ventures. Through a diversity of commissions, approaches, and working conditions, the show reveals how the cycles of democracy affected the profession.

In chronological order “O Que Faz Falta” presents two parallel rows of white tables, repurposed from previous exhibitions. Visitors walk around a central corridor and two smaller ones on either side. The surrounding walls are blank. Five large boxes suspended from the ceiling present a montage of references to events, trivia, and famous personalities. The boxes act as a temporal vortex, linking the works below to the cultural context of 5 historical periods: Revolution (1974-83), Europe (1984-93), Fin de Siècle (1994-2003), Troika (2004-13) and Wi-Fi (2014-23).

Each work is illustrated with archival sources, from original models to technical drawings, sketches and photographs, which usually delight architects but make it difficult for the general public to understand the projects. To go beyond the planning dimension and see how the buildings perform would have been useful, in order to truly witness how they served democracy and withstood use and the passage of time. Nevertheless,

it is an impressive effort to bring together archival material from different institutions and private collections, some of which will be added to the ever-growing archive of the Casa de Arquitectura. The construction and enrichment of this archive is arguably “O Que Faz Falta”’s greatest contribution to democracy. *aa.*



## RECOMBINATIONS

Burls and ropes and sticks and stones. Wire, tarpaulin, pipes, and poles. Silje Figenschou Thoresen’s commissioned installation brings texture and palpable scale to the Astrup Fearnley Museum, a privately owned institution for contemporary art.

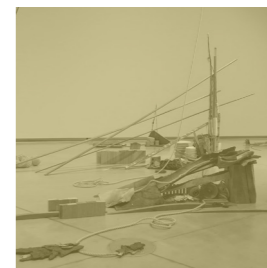
Thoresen explains her practice as grounded in indigenous Sámi traditions—not through literal crafts but as an improvisational mentality. Objects from a vast repository are stacked or bound into precarious configurations of varying sizes, exploring material properties through juxtapositions and multiple combinations.

The present configuration is just one moment in the ongoing lives of these fragments. Nothing is pristine; each surface shows use and weathering. Nothing is permanent; every composition can come undone by loosening a nylon knot, shifting a steel clamp, or even by the accidental brush of a passing coat. The artist’s refusal of irreversible change in favor of perpetual recombination begs the question: is this pragmatism or romanticism? Hard to tell without her undisclosed criteria for selection and sorting.

While labeled site-specific, both site and specificity

are ambiguous. The gallery faces some of Oslo’s most expensive balconies along the peaceful but polluted fjord. The installation was assembled elsewhere before reassembly in Renzo Piano’s sterile concrete expanses. Its fragments (and histories) are sourced from Kirkenes, Northern Norway, and can be associated with coastal industries, demolition sites, and Arctic nature. I miss a sense of place, signs of exchange.

Everything has its own history of being. During my visit, a spider claimed a piece as its own, stretching a fine web between a plank and a rough-hewn pillar. Its unscripted intervention speaks to how we are but temporary custodians, cyclically reusing and reinventing. Thoresen invites us to recognize the latent potential of the present. How we treat things along the way determines whether they exceed the sum of their parts or fall into obsolescence. *idr.*



## BREAK THE MOLD!

“Cities today are incredibly dull. Part of the reason is because the city is filled with faceless buildings.” Ieoh Ming Pei presents this controversial view, wearing a well-tailored suit and his perfectly round glasses, in the video series “Essays/I. M. Pei: An Architect for Today” (1970). Pei, as a media and image savvy architect drew attention through unorthodox, controversial public designs. His transformation of the Grand Louvre—the proposed entrance pyramid and additional shopping amenities in the subterranean level were mocked as L’hyper Louvre, as a commercialization and Disneyfication of French

heritage. Pei throughout his career enhanced the world’s metropolises with iconic landmarks like the Bank of China Tower in Hong Kong, the National Gallery East Building in Washington D.C., or the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, often referring to triangular and crystalline geometrical forms in the spirit of an elegant late modernism.

The exhibition “I. M. Pei: Life is Architecture” at the recently opened M+, a museum by Herzog & de Meuron in Hong Kong, portrays Pei essentially as a star architect. It is a carefully curated show that starts with Pei’s early university projects, proceeds to large scale global commissions managed by a corporate firm of six partners and 275 employees. The exhibition showcases a typological comparison of extremely intelligent and multi-faceted housing, administrative and cultural (museum) designs, brings together a broad range of drawings, plans and correspondences from global institutions and archives, interweaves media coverage, and a chapter on construction within the exhibition plan. Still, when constructing such a monographic exhibition, can we productively reframe the biographical method of storytelling? The exhibition captions attribute all drawings and plans to its respective authors and office collaborators. Consequently, would it not be interesting to learn more about Eileen Loo, Pei’s wife, a student of landscape architecture with Marcel Breuer, or the setting and work structure of the Pei Cobb Freed & Partners office? *hhd.*



## RETROSPECTIVE "RUNDGANG"

The exhibition "Programmed for Hope" at HfG-Archiv / Museum Ulm focuses on the architectural experiments at the renowned design school HfG Ulm, which existed from 1953 to 1968. Visitors can experience a kind of retrospective "Rundgang" (literally "round course")—a term used by art schools in Germany for open studios at the end of the semester. The "Rundgang" can be seen as a metaphorical key to both the structure of this exhibition and the main methods of HfG and its Building Department.

The exhibition is organized as a "fictional curriculum" of an already non-existent school. In the center of the main exhibition room, visitors will find a podium with architectural and design models. They can move around the "tapestry of knowledge" on the walls, which features visual material from the 1st to 4th year of study.

This circularity and self-referentiality reflect the core principles and specifics of HfG, particularly the principle of feedback loops, which was central to the school's innovative cybernetic and systemic holistic methods. Circulation graphs were a key element in the "Visual Methodology" course and the basis for algorithmic approaches in architecture, such as the ring-cell construction methods. Additionally, the school was known for its aspirations to be autonomous and self-sustainable.

Ultimately, this methodological self-referentiality or "methodolatry" contributed to the school's closure. Many of the circulation graphs on display at the exhibition codified the movements of students inside the school's building into patterns, formalizing the communication system within HfG. During the exhibition opening or "Rundgang," this process worked in reverse—as if the movements of visitors decoded the circulation diagrams. At this moment it seemed that the feedback loop comes to us from a time when people believed

that the best future could be systematically programmed. For a second, a retrospective "Rundgang" turned proactive.



## THE SHORTEST BIENNALE REVIEW

**B**est missed pavilions (presumably):  
Togo, Bulgaria

Best one-line joke pavilions:  
Poland (funniest of all),  
Estonia (insulation shocks tourists)

Best self-care pavilions:  
Denmark (dig and tell),  
Finland (endless repairs),  
South Korea

Best bombastic pavilions:  
Germany (Wagnerian), USA  
(cut a forest for your porch)

Best wartime pavilions:  
Latvia, Ukraine (roofs for resistance),  
Lebanon (seeds for peace)

Best tasteful pavilion:  
Spain

Greenest over-achiever pavilions:  
Belgium, México

Biggest pillow pavilions:  
Argentina, Bahrain

Most puzzling pavilions:  
Japan (the building speaks, but ...)

Best ever parametric pavilion:  
Serbia (knitting beats computing)

Best extra dry pavilion:  
Switzerland (discover a woman without showing her work)

Best scaffolding:  
Holy See, France, Hong Kong

Best bad art show:  
Australia, UK, Nordic  
Countries Pavilion (maybe someone can explain?)

Best bad idea:  
Netherlands (draining a sports bar)

Best no Biennale shows:  
Architecture of the Barricade  
Arsenale Institute for the Politics of Representation,  
Diagrams Fondazione Prada

Best models:  
North Macedonia (Heavy Metal Brutalism)

Best party:  
Austria (a Piranesian fortress on Sant'Andrea island)

Best bags:  
Uzbekistan (sun reflector),  
CCA (variatio delectat)

Best lion statement:  
Solidarity with Serbian protesters (Vladan Joler) *oe.*



## CARNATION DREAMS II

**"M**ore than Housing" is more than an exhibition. It is the coming together of all the schools of architecture in Portugal to celebrate the 50th anniversary of democracy around a common challenge: How will we live in April 2074? It is the disruptive spirit of the Carnation Revolution revived in the institution par excellence for the production and transmission of critical knowledge, the university. It is the culmination of a two year-long process of intense academic activity in which students, teachers, and guests from other fields have created a collaborative space

for shared questioning, discussion, and experimentation. Ultimately, it is the voices and ideas of 1751 students of architecture, urbanism, landscape architecture and fine arts, reflected in more than sixty speculative proposals and exploratory projects, all united in their diversity and exhibited on a modular platform made of reusable raw bricks and acid green plasterboard.

The brick is the symbolic and literal foundation of "More than Housing." It was the primary building material of architecture's response to the urgent housing crisis of the post-revolutionary period, as illustrated at the beginning of the exhibition by three paradigmatic neighborhoods of public initiative, developed in the late 1970s within the principles of resident participation and the right to the city originally established by SAAL (Serviço de Apoio Ambulatório Local, 1974-76). The brick is also the elementary unit of the exhibition design. Its dimensions, 40 x 20 x 19 cm, determine the individual module assigned to each proposal, all of which have the same designated display surface defined as 3 bricks long, 6 bricks wide and 10 bricks high. The brick ensures an overall unity of presentation in the exhibition, conveying a sense of equality among all participating schools, while also allowing for a wide variety of arrangements within each module, so that each student's proposal can be expressed in all its freedom and singularity.

"More than Housing" is architecture in action, an exhibition in the form of a collective manifesto, a glimpse into the built environment of 2074 through the visions of the future architects of tomorrow.



## BETWEEN NATURE AND HUMAN IMAGINATION

The landscape of the Landes de Gascogne is characterized by its maritime pine forest, which, unlike other forests, sees its growth and extension through the hand of man. Europe's largest artificial forest is transformed into tools and materials that testify to this symbiosis between nature and construction at Arc en Rêve's White Gallery. After the installation of the Children's Forest Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2024, which focused on questioning man's interaction with nature and exhibition spaces, Arc en Rêve becomes a playground.

Like the children's huts, the central space transforms into a black room bordered by a wooden skin. Supported by a delicate wood mesh, it captures the projected shadows from the herbarium of Léon Dufour, the botanist of the Landes, as well as samples collected from the forest. Each visitor becomes the creator of their own living painting for which the backdrop is a canvas for a multitude of stories. This sensitive exploration turns the space into a meeting place and weaves a link between the wild reality of nature and the dreams of humanity.

The continuous play turns the space into a theater. Each visitor can create their own forms and assemble the fragments of nature at will. A device, established from a repetitive system of perforations on a plate, allows the meticulous assembly of wood samples. Each piece of wood, each fragment of matter becomes a tangible trace of the forest: a memory, a vestige, a footprint of life. Far from being static, this scene changes every day, recomposed by the gestures and ideas of those who cross it.

Thus, the gallery becomes a landscape: an exploratory territory where visitors are invited to navigate between the real and the imaginary. The experience is sensory, each of the gestures and objects on display mediating between the individual and the immensity of the forest

of the Landes. The exhibition is no longer simply a place to exhibit collected material, it is an invitation to rediscover the links that unite humans with nature; it is a place to tell a story, to tell the story of the forest and to question its future.

*mpm.*



## PARTS TO A WHOLE

While roadtripping in the US this summer I seemingly saw the same exhibition twice: first as "Louis Sullivan and Architectural Ornament" at the St. Louis Art Museum and then as "Fragments of Chicago's Architectural History" at the Chicago Art Institute.

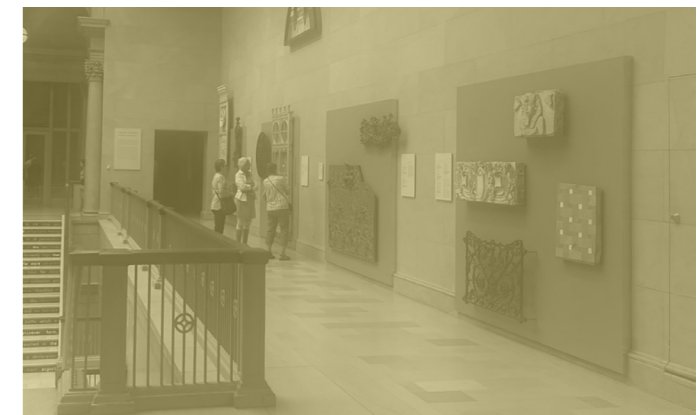
Both presentations are casually located in a staircase and a hallway. In Chipperfield's modern St. Louis building the historical ornaments are shown as an intervention in a series of niches; some objects sit on plinths like instant art works. Little labels provide details on each object and a current image of the building to which it belongs. The disappearance of the ornaments from niche to niche seems like a quiz: to which building by Louis H. Sullivan, his partners or protégés can the next one be attributed? Some are noteworthy originals such as the Chicago stock exchange elevator grilles that museum visitors might recognize from other collections at MoMA or the V&A. Balustrades attributed to Frank Lloyd Wright can also be found in the Met in New York and the Philadelphia, Denver and Chazen Museums of Art!

In the Art Institute's grand historical staircase, on the other hand, the exhibition becomes a history lesson of built Chicago. Objects are attached to gray wood panels.

Window fragments are hung separately and illuminated from the back. Many of the buildings whose parts are on show here have been demolished. Some have been renovated, some had parts removed. None still exist the way they were designed. And not every object was designed by a superstar architect or is a part of the canon. A church window stems from the principal work by early female architect Marion Mahony Griffin. Four objects from Bronzeville represent one of the most important African American neighborhoods of the early 20th century: the city's first black owned and financed building, a building designed by Walter T. Bailey, Illinois' first black architect, and a floor tile from the Mecca apartment building, a symbol of the displacement of black residents in Chicago.

While modernism moved on from ornaments, these fragments still form parts of multitudinous stories told across the country that inform how we understand architecture today.

*la.*



The architecture exhibition of the future should focus less on displaying objects and more on revealing systems. It must emphasize urgent social and political issues—such as displacement, labor, and extractivism—not merely as problems to be solved through design, but as conditions in which we are complicit. We should aim to create spaces that foster solidarity, dialogue, and collective thinking.

— *Tinatin Gurgeni**dze (architect, researcher and curator, co-founder of Tbilisi Architecture Biennial/Georgia)*

Architecture exhibitions are both a media (the technology of presence—the representation of architecture, a literalization of spaces through descriptions of interesting fidelity) and a medium (the discipline of practices—in the case of architecture exhibitions, the magician’s trick of making something appear that isn’t there, specifically, architecture, at least in its built form). At the overlap of two historical trajectories lies the future of architectural exhibitions. **From the modernist future perspective, shifting to a more recent focus on the “real and now” will continue to back in time, not to history, but to imagining counterfactual pasts,** described not through modeling but through recreations made only of code. — *John McMorrough (theorist and Professor of Architecture at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor/USA)*

Architecture exhibitions have always bridged between poles: built and speculative, material and abstract, local and global. **Another set of opposites is at hand: objective and subjective, with contemporary exhibition making leaning towards the latter. The urgencies of our time cannot be fully served by calculated objectivity.** In keeping with feminist and intersectional practices, expressing subjectivity—authorship, context, and identity of designer, artist, writer, or curator—allows for more inclusive narratives within architecture’s history and suggests future visions rich in empathy and complexity. — *Mimi Zeiger (Mimi Zeiger, critic and curator, Los Angeles/USA)*

Architecture is the slowest artform. Its temporality in comparison to contemporary art or fashion spans years or even decades. Its discourses only slowly catch up with the art world. Still, it is most strongly connected

to the human and more-than-human life-forms. **The task for future architecture exhibitions will be to catch a glimpse of the upcoming life- and artforms and disclose these in the contemporary and historical architectural settings.** — *Helena Huber–Doudová (curator of the architecture collection, National Gallery Prague/Czechia)*

**Tomorrow’s architecture exhibition must be an act of care—rooted in its place, always unfinished, continuously remade by the many, not the few.** We should move away from star architects and glossy objects and toward the urgencies that shape our lives: community, climate, public space, health and well-being, mobility and democracy, biodiversity, universal access, social justice. The curator’s task is no longer to dictate a single story, but to listen, to weave together a chorus of voices, to dismantle the inherited power structures and outdated rules that stifle innovation. Less authority, more multiplicity. More empathy, more time to linger, to listen, to speak, to stay—and to dare. Tomorrow’s architecture exhibition will not be a showcase of masterpieces; it is a living manifesto for an architecture that cares.

— *Ana Neiva (architect, curator, and professor of architecture at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Porto/Portugal)*

Exhibitions could embrace refusal—not as absence, but as architectural intention. **Rather than showcasing new or alternative building methods, they might foreground the decision not to build—an act of care, reuse, and resistance.** This shifts architectural value from production to preservation, making non-building both an ecological responsibility and a radical curatorial gesture. In turn, exhibitions open space for slower, more responsible forms of architectural imagination. — *Esra Kahveci (architectural historian, curator, and faculty member at Istanbul Technical University/Turkey)*

„Die Architekturausstellung der Zukunft ist offen, interaktiv, digital-physisch hybrid, diskursorientiert und politisch. Sie bewegt sich weg vom reinen Objektfetischismus hin zu einer Plattform für Austausch.“ Ob ChatGPT diesmal recht behält? Oder passiert das genaue Gegenteil? – **Eine eindeutige Positionierung der Kurator\*innen anstelle von Mitmachaufforderungen und**

**Gesprächsangeboten.** Eine Rückbesinnung auf Räume, Dinge und das tägliche Leben abseits der komplexen Fragestellungen. Eine Handvoll beeindruckender Exponate, was zum Anfassen. Wäre das so schlimm? — *Anna-Maria Mayerhofer (exhibition maker and research associate at TU Munich/Germany)*

The future of architecture exhibitions will shift from celebrating individual human genius to amplifying more-than-human and community-driven design. **Curators will prioritize collaborative processes over polished products, embracing participatory practices, ecological thinking, and inclusive narratives.** Future exhibitions need to leverage collective creativity and diverse perspectives, positioning architecture as a shared, evolving, and socially embedded endeavor. — *Clemens Finkelstein (critical spatial platform builder and fellow at the Panel on Planetary Thinking, Hamburg/Germany)*

Architecture exhibitions of the future should explore and experiment more with spectatorial engagement with what is on display. **Thinking around how the spectator can be involved more experientially can offer opportunities for a deeper ethical and/or political reflection.** Using “phenomenology of spectatorship” in the architecture exhibition of the future can help to go beyond critiquing what is already there, moving towards a better involvement with the built environment. — *Vanessa Vanden Berghe (History and Theory Coordinator of Interior Design at Chelsea College of Art, University of the Arts London/UK)*

**The future of the architecture exhibition should not be for architects. It should be for everyone.** It should be playful and engaging, not academic. It should be rigorous but joyful. It should burst open the doors to the built world and bring down the barricades that exclude so many. It should be fun. It should not impact the environment in being put on. It should be thoughtful and caring towards its large audience. It should take architecture off its pedestal. — *Lara Chapman (design and architecture writer, Sydney/Gadi Country/Australia)*

I am somewhere between a student, a writer, and a curator-to-be. From this uncertain edge, what I find missing in architecture

## TALKING BACK OR LISTENING FORWARD?

The future of the architecture exhibition cannot be the vision of one individual.

Architecture is more than the buildings designed by professionals. Architecture is the setting in which most of our human experiences happen, from the day we are born to the day we die. The spaces we inhabit, whether planned or not, define the ways in which we relate to ourselves, to others, and to society.

Architecture exhibitions are a part of this experience.

The future of the architecture exhibition has to capture our widely diverging experiences and find ways to make them productive for all. Rather than focusing on themes and topics there will be a marked shift toward practices and processes.

Making exhibitions means choosing with good reason. Here are a five good reasons many whose quotes are included here, hope to see as the driving forces behind future architecture exhibitions, from Los Angeles to Sydney, and from Seoul to Berlin.

**I** The architecture exhibition of the future will be a collective process of reckoning with institutional histories and collecting practices. How will we preserve our current architectural culture differently? What kind of repositories do we need to hold our knowledge? What spaces or carriers of information will our memories endure in? How can we change systems that are no longer serving us?

**2** The architecture exhibition of the future will be a shared process to reimagine how we see and represent ourselves and others through displays. How will we ensure that we hear the voices of multitudes not just the one? What are the media that can draw our attention toward that which we do

not yet understand? Whose reality do we join and how does history connect us to our future? How do we listen and dismantle practices that hold no value to our futures?

**3** The architecture exhibition of the future will be a joint search for stories brimming with relevance. How can we speculate and find an imaginary of things to come? How can we return to utopian thinking and create something that outlasts the ephemeral nature of the exhibition? How do we ensure reciprocity through the processes we employ? How can our audiences create stories relevant to their lives?

**4** The architecture exhibition of the future will demand accountability. How do we amplify voices through new technologies? What role does solidarity play in open dialogue? Do we still have a connection to place? Can care and repair be a form of resistance? Are our current institutional practices enough?

**5** The architecture exhibition of the future will foreground human experience. Is it possible to have less authority and more authorship? Can we admit subjectivity and be more present? Will we still have to be there in person, and if so, how do we share our experiences? Can we have empathy on a large scale? Is joy part of our experience of architecture? *tf.*

Exhibition contribution: *The Architecture Exhibition of Tomorrow*| Architektur Galerie Berlin, Berlin, Germany|07/11-08/23/2025

exhibitions is a lingering effect: something that stays, shapes thought, or shifts perception, helping to build a slightly better reality that this field can offer. Not the name of the format or the role, but the resonance. **Future exhibitions may dissolve categories, but they must insist on real relevance. Beyond intellectual play, toward something that truly remains.** — *Hyunah Lee (doctoral candidate at TU Munich, Seoul/South Korea)*

**Architecture exhibitions must confront the widening gap between dense, theory-driven formats and the behaviors of today’s experiencers.** While shows still demand patient reading, audiences shaped by information overflow and decreased focus often opt to document for later rather than engage in real time. The future exhibition must embrace layered immediacy—formats that reward both fragmented attention and moments of deep presence. — *Erenalp Büyüktopcu (PhD candidate and research assistant at Istanbul Technical University/Turkey)*

In a society run by speed and overproduction, architectural exhibitions provide a space to slow down and pose critical questions about the world we live in. They allow us to address ways in which spatial production is linked with other aspects of our lives, to map and analyze these connections, to question them, to foster discourse, and to imagine our possible collective futures. **In a way, it is one of the few places left where utopia as a critical concept remains a methodological possibility.** — *Jana Čulek (architect, founder and lead of Studio Fabula, and post-doctoral researcher at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb/Croatia)*

There is a rarely criticized, yet ubiquitous marketing format used by the US construction industry called the Lunch & Learn: a presentation with free meal in exchange for an hour of your attention—a trade-oriented didactic approach I often observe in architectural exhibition design and curation (but, without the catering). Informative, yet somehow unapplicable. **Let the exhibition format give way to experimentation and translation, rather than a PowerPoint of itself.** — *Andrea Hunt (architect, Chicago/USA)*

**Indem Museen ein echtes Lerninteresse mitbringen entsteht Glaubwürdigkeit. Museen sollten nicht nur Dinge aus der Welt**

**herausnehmen, sondern wieder etwas in die Welt zurückgeben.** Hierarchien gilt es umzudrehen: Normalerweise vermitteln Museen ihre Botschaften in einer Art Frontalunterricht. Wir bilden uns ein mehr zu wissen als das Publikum. Bereits das Ausstellungsthema an sich sollte ein Beteiligungsangebot beinhalten, also im Sinne von: „Das ist was, das mit mir und meinem Leben zu tun hat!“ — *Oliver Elser (curator at DAM – Deutsches Architekturmuseum, Frankfurt am Main/Germany)*

In the future, architecture exhibitions will be waterproof. The exhibits will be sealed in vitrines or produced using waterproof material: works on paper will be laminated and models will be made from plastic (no more cardboard, it would be reduced to mush). **Visitors to the architecture exhibition of the future will be equipped with scuba gear. Such shows could be housed in significant examples of architecture from the old, submerged world, so people could see how we built before the flood.** — *Tom Wilkinson (research associate at KIT, Karlsruhe/Germany)*

Architecture exhibitions are no longer a mode of representation of the built environment but a practice, with its codes, institutions, and forms of professionalization. This transformation occurred, slowly, since the mid 1970s. As we shall build less and less in the years to come, and as some stronger economic crises are lurking over our future, **“exhibiting architecture” will become one of the main forms of expression of the architect, especially through forms of care and repair on display.** — *Léa-Catherine Szacka (curator and Senior Lecturer (Associate Professor) in Architectural Studies, University of Manchester/UK)*

**The exhibition of the future will be more high-tech and low-tech at the same time.** For me right now most gadgets and gizmos are just a hassle to use and I dislike most of them when I visit exhibitions. But spatial technologies will get there soon and it will be immersive and it will be great. Curators will need to think hard about what to say yes to and more importantly what to say no to. At the same time, architecture exhibitions have to become even more physical, haptic and multisensory experiences. This is nothing new but is the essence of the kinds of things you

cannot get at home. — *Felix Torkar (architectural historian and acquisitions editor at JOVIS publishers, Berlin/Germany)*

I have one quote pinned to my wall that sets the tone for my work. Translated freely, it says: “Just because a Socialist collects stamps, this does not make for Marxist philately.” So, while we’ve seen curators ask question about the “how” of architecture in recent years, diving into themes like extraction, climate impact, communities, and land politics, I see an urgency to scrutinize our own practices and ask: **“How” do we actually need to practice the change in politics we always point to?** — *Sina Brückner-Amin (postdoctoral researcher at KIT and saai Archive, Karlsruhe/Germany)*

Architecture exhibitions will speculate and hope to provide answers to the issues that continuously plague the world and feel particularly heightened right now. The right to shelter, to belong in a space, to access freely—these are all crucial dilemmas that many of us want to resolve. **At the same time, while the privilege to live in a beautiful space seems frivolous, architecture exhibitions should show us that it’s essential, and that architecture should respond to cultural traditions that organically emerge throughout time, migration, and connection.** Despite that, we should be wary that exhibitions will unfortunately be used for propaganda that goes against human rights. In both cases—whether for the people or against them—they will be looking at the past to seek answers about the future.

— *Dalina A. Perdomo Álvarez (assistant curator, Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at MSU, East Lansing/USA)*

A future where architectural research and exhibitions are truly grounded and localized—where work is produced to deeply engage with histories, memories, technologies and desires—a dialogue of flesh and code. **A future not of exclusionary galas, or champagne in white cubes, but of sweat, spit, and soil. A future where the models rot before opening night and where the only remaining blueprints are the scars of the land.** A bottom-up bloom of millions of architectural minds: gothic, erotic, neurotic. — *Alberto Ortega Trejo (architect and artist, between Chicago/USA and Pachuca/Mexico)*

# SHOWS I WISH I HAD SEEN

85 YEARS LATE

The year 1940 may seem like inopportune timing for an exhibition promoting modern architecture in Bohemia. However, as it would appear later, it was the last chance for decades. “Towards a New Architecture” at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague borrowed its title from Le Corbusier’s iconic 1923 book. The show represented Czech functionalism in a broader historical context. At the same time it symbolized its architects’ optimistic visions for the future.

This ambitious exhibition project had been planned since the mid-1930s in conjunction with an extensive catalog. As a first complex assessment of the evolution of Czech modern architecture since the beginning of 20th century this book had the highest priority. Editors and curators know how hard it is to meet deadlines, particularly with many contributors writing on a range of topics. Therefore, the organization around *Architektura* magazine postponed the show to allow the book to grow. With content almost completed, the exhibition opened to the public in May 1940, over a year after the

Nazi occupation.

Under these political conditions, the hundreds of photos of modern architecture were nothing short of an act of bravery. A brand new garden—the only full-scale exhibit—offered space for dance performances and open-air lectures. For educational purposes, there was a library with a reading room. The book that everyone was waiting for, however, was not there—not even in September when the show came to an end.

By 1941 publishing the catalog had become impossible with passages struck due to censorship. And after the war, with social realism on the rise, there was no chance to print a book on modern architecture, either. Today, the catalog remains preserved as a typescript, a few copies with editorial notes, which have stayed unpublished and forgotten.

Exhibitions are temporary events and catalogs are among the tangible evidence of a curator’s efforts. So, how can you tell when it’s time to give up? Is it a month, a year, a decade or longer after an exhibition closes its doors? What about 80 years later? *md.*



## HISTORICAL TURNING POINT

Architectural exhibitions are usually ephemeral events. They are dependent on media representation so that people can form an image of them later. Ideally, what remains of them are books, catalogs, reports and photographic views. For many, this is not the case. They are in danger of being forgotten all the more quickly. And even building exhibitions such as the famous Werkbund exhibition in Cologne in 1914 can disappear without a trace.

Exhibitions therefore require documentation in order to be passed on to posterity, and it is a stroke of luck when one comes across photos in archives, journals or libraries that are of particular importance for historical reconstruction.

One such stroke of luck is the 1989 publication “The Berlin Tenement 1945-1989” (*Das Berliner Mietshaus*) by Johann Friedrich Geist and Klaus Kürvers, which is freely accessible online. Here, as part of a larger research project, the meticulously reconstructed and contextualized cosmos of the exhibition “Berlin Plans” (Berlin plant) unfolds, which took place in Berlin almost 80 years ago in the summer of 1946, one year after the end of the Second World War.

The book offers access to a world at a historical turning point that has itself been overtaken by history. We see pictures of war-ravaged Berlin, until recently the capital of the “Third Reich,” of which now 40 percent are reduced to rubble and ashes. We see views of the exhibition rooms in the ruined Berlin Palace, which was blown up four years later,

then built over by the Palace of the German Democratic Republic and finally replaced by the Humboldt Forum. The Berlin public can be seen looking at the plans and models of the exhibited “collective plan,” which, in accordance with the Athens Charter, envisages the rebuilding of the—not yet divided—Berlin as a loosened-up, functionally structured “urban landscape.”

The suspended fabric ceiling indicates that the room was provisionally refurbished especially for the show, while the modern, airy and curvy exhibition design anticipates the Swinging Fifties. The contrast could hardly be greater.

The exhibition and its reconstruction are both time capsules into a past future that never became reality. *fh.*

## THE ORIGINS OF A TERM

In the history of modern architecture, there were certain exhibitions that had a huge impact on the architectural development of their time as well as later generations, either themselves or through their reception in the media, such as the Werkbund exhibition in Stuttgart in 1927 or “Modern Architecture” in New York in 1932.

This series of canon-shaping exhibitions also needs to include an exhibition that is almost completely forgotten today and

was held at the Kunsthalle Mannheim in the spring of 1914, shortly before the First World War. Its title was “New Building” (*Neues Bauen*).

This title was meant programmatically. The aim of the exhibition was to search for new forms for the new architectural style. It was in fact the first architecture show in Germany to abandon the then common concept of an encyclopedic overview of contemporary architecture as a historical-genetic retrospective in favor of a highly explosive current focus, industrial building, in order to derive aesthetic principles for a contemporary design approach that could be transferred to all areas of architecture. The curators explicitly wanted to reach a lay audience with this heuristic approach. They saw it as a didactic method to reawaken a general interest in architecture, which had become deeply alienated from people through the inflationary use of historical forms, as contemporary critics such as Hermann Muthesius noted with regret.

The term “New Building,” which would become a label and umbrella term for the “Modern Movement” (Pevsner 1936) in architecture during in the 1920s, therefore does not derive from the expressionist-revolutionary utopias after 1918, as has been repeatedly claimed, but from the reform context of the Wilhelmine Empire.

A catalog was published for the exhibition and it was reported on extensively in the periodicals. However, not a single photographic view is known to date. Unfortunately, we do not know what it looked like. This is probably one of the main reasons why this canonical show has remained an almost ephemeral event. *fh.*



## SHOWS I WISH I HAD SEEN

Za novou architekturu (Towards a New Architecture) | Museum of Decorative Arts, Prague, Czech Republic | 05/-09/1940

Berlin Plant | Berliner Stadtschloss, Berlin, Germany | 08/22-10/15/1946

Neues Bauen | Kunsthalle Mannheim, Mannheim, Germany | 02/-03/1914

## EXHIBITION CONTRIBUTORS

Alberto Ortega Trejo | Chicago  
Ana Neiva | Porto  
Andrea Hunt | Chicago  
Anna-Maria Mayerhofer | Munich  
Clemens Finkelstein | Hamburg  
Dalina A. Perdomo Álvarez | Lansing  
Erenalp Büyüktopcu | Istanbul  
Esra Kahveci | Istanbul  
Felix Torkar | Berlin  
Helena Huber-Doudová | Prague  
Hyunah Lee | Seoul  
Jana Čulek | Zagreb  
Lara Chapman | Sydney  
Léa-Catherine Szacka | Manchester  
John McMorrough | Ann Arbor  
Mimi Zeiger | Los Angeles  
Oliver Elser | Frankfurt  
Sina Brückner-Amin | Munich  
Tinatin Gugenidze | Berlin  
Tom Wilkinson | London  
Vanessa Vanden Berghe | London

## CONTRIBUTORS IN THIS ISSUE

Alexandra Areia *aa.*  
Andrea Hunt *ah.*  
Anna-Maria Mayerhofer *amm.*  
Carolina Alvarez *ca.*  
Clara Frey *cf.*  
Erenalp Büyüktopcu *eb.*  
Felix Torkar *ft.*  
Florian Henrich *fh.*  
Heejung Kim *hk.* (CAC)  
Helena Huber-Doudová *hhd.*  
Ingrid Dobloug Roede *idr.*  
İlke Zeyfeoglu *iz.*  
Laura Altmann *la.*  
Lara Chapman *lc.*  
Magdalena Dědičová *md.*  
Max Hallinan *mh.*  
Maria Paula Mora *mpm.*  
Nikolay Smirnov *ns.*  
Oliver Elser *oe.*  
Paula Marujo *pm.*  
Philana Quan *pq.*  
Sina Brückner-Amin *sba.*  
Teresa Fankhänel *tf.*

aer.

Issue no. 4, Fall 2025.

The Architectural Exhibition Review is published by Clara Frey and Teresa Fankhänel.

Karlsruhe 76227  
Germany

@architecturalexhibitionreview  
www.architecturalexhibition.com

Send letters, inquiries and orders to  
hello@architecturalexhibition.com

ISSN 2833-3683  
\$ 5,99 in North America  
€ 4,99 in Europe

Printed in Germany.

Nothing may be reprinted in whole or in part without the written permission from the publisher.

© 2025, all rights reserved.

