

Metalocus

'Spaces without drama or surface is an illusion, but so is depth' at the Graham Foundation

By Olga Svischeva

January 7, 2017



Emilio Ambasz, "Residence au Lac," Lugano, Switzerland, 1983. Image © courtesy of Estudio Ambasz

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From February 16th to July 1st the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts of Chicago presents an exhibition "Spaces without drama or surface is an illusion, but so is depth" that features the works of both architects and artists, using Aldo Rossi as a touchstone.

Spaces without drama or surface is an illusion, but so is depth is a result of a collaboration between the Graham Foundation and LIGA, an experimental exhibition-oriented platform in Mexico City dedicated to the promotion of the contemporary architecture. The exhibition is created around the idea of theatricality of the spatial experiences, tracing the connection between the architectural representations and the scenography and theatrical set design.



Monadnock, "Marketsquare," Nieuw Bergen, 2015. Photo: Stijn Bollaert

Description of the project by The Graham Foundation

The Graham Foundation is pleased to present *Spaces without drama or surface is an illusion, but so is depth*, an exhibition that examines the recent proliferation of collage in architectural representation in relationship to scenography and theatrical set design. Based on historical references such as nineteenth-century toy theaters, as well as twentieth-century models such as Aldo Rossi's *Little Scientific Theater*, and David Hockney's stage design for the *Magic Flute*, this project invites contemporary practitioners to rethink the ways in which architecture is created in relationship to theatricality and how it oscillates between reality and scenography to answer questions about space, depth, context, facade, and representation.

Featuring the work of architects Emilio Ambasz, baukuh, Gerardo Caballero, fala atelier, Marcelo Ferraz, Sam Jacob Studio, Johnston Marklee, Monadnock, MOS Architects, Norman Kelley, OFFICE Kersten Geers David Van Severen, Cecilia Puga, Aldo Rossi, Taller de Arquitectura Mauricio Rocha + Gabriela Carrillo, Pezo Von Ellrichshausen; artists Pablo Bronstein, William Leavitt, Silke Otto-Knapp, Gabriel Sierra, Batia Suter; and dramaturg Jorge Palinhos; *Spaces without drama* investigates the similarities between theatrical stage sets and architectural scale models, highlighting the ways that each constructed landscape anticipates narratives and prompts the personal drama of speculation and the creation of fictions. In both cases, the resulting spatial experience is controlled and precisely framed with a fixed relation between observer and object—an architectural imaginary that is more graphic composition than spatial

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creation, more image than space. By superimposing fragments, forms and elements within a given stage set, the model of the theater allows the participants to rehearse the laws of artistic creation itself. As Aldo Rossi states about the theater in *A Scientific Autobiography*: “*Inside it, nothing can be accidental, yet nothing can be permanently resolved either.*”

LIGA, Space for Architecture is an experimental exhibition-oriented platform in Mexico City that has focused its efforts on displaying emerging and influential Latin-American-based practices since its founding in 2011 by Carlos Bedoya, Ruth Estévez, Wonne Ickx, Victor Jaime, and Abel Perles. Following on the Graham Foundation’s multi-year grant support of LIGA’s program, *Spaces without drama* is the result of an invitation by the Graham to LIGA to develop an exhibition for the Foundation in Chicago. For this collaboration, LIGA founding directors Wonne Ickx and Ruth Estévez have developed a curated investigation into contemporary issues of spatial representation and performance and have taken the opportunity to expand their focus beyond



Pezo von Ellrichshausen, “Casa Meri,” Florida, Chile, 2014. Photo courtesy Pezo von Ellrichshausen

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Latin America to include practices from Europe and the United States.

“Exhibitions are a vital site for the development of ideas and discourse in architecture, and LIGA is one of handful of experimental independent spaces in the world committed to making exhibitions that provide opportunities for architects to develop new work,” notes Graham Foundation director Sarah Herda. *“This exhibition brings together an amazing group of contemporary practitioners, and by using Aldo Rossi as a touchstone, also connects to significant ideas supported by the Graham over the course of its history.”* Aldo Rossi lectured at the Graham Foundation in 1979, just after developing the *Little Scientific Theater*, and in 1981, the Foundation gave a major grant to the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies for the *Oppositions Books* series published by MIT press, that brought Aldo Rossi’s *The Architecture of the City* and *A Scientific Autobiography* to English language readers for the first time.

Spaces without drama uses the Graham Foundation’s historic Madlener House galleries as a double stage—a staging of mise-en-scènes to present contemporary and historic photographs, models, and drawings, as well as newly commissioned projects including movies, installations, and performance. Significant pieces include rarely exhibited work by Aldo Rossi, from the collection of Frank Godlewski, as well as many new works by artists like Pablo Bronstein, Silke Otto-Knapp, William Leavitt, and Batia Suter and contributions by more than ten contemporary architecture offices from Europe, Latin America, and the United States. The exhibition will be accompanied by a pamphlet with contributions by the curators.

Contributors

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Curators

LIGA: Ruth Estévez, Wonne Ickx

Location

Madlener House, 4 West Burton Place, Chicago, Illinois 60610

Dates

February 16 - July 1, 2017

Visiting hours

Wednesday through Saturday, 11AM-6PM

Price

Free Admission

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