

Graham Foundation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Every Building in Baghdad: The Rifat Chadirji Archives at the Arab Image Foundation on view at the Graham Foundation September 15 – December 31, 2016

Opening Reception: *Thursday, September 15, 6-8:30PM*

Talk by curator Mark Wasiuta, *6PM*

*Chicago, IL (August 25, 2016) — The Graham Foundation is pleased to present **Every Building in Baghdad**, an exhibition examining the work of Iraqi architect **Rifat Chadirji** through the collection of his original photographs and building documents held at the **Arab Image Foundation** in Beirut. With the work of his architectural office, **Iraq Consult**, and in his other professional and intellectual roles, Chadirji became a pivotal cultural figure in Baghdad during the period of its postwar modernization from the 1950s through the 1970s. As an architect, planning consultant, and Director of Buildings for various government agencies, Chadirji was central to the organization of Baghdad and to the consolidation of its postwar image. With nearly one hundred buildings Chadirji helped foster the emergence of the factories, colleges, monopoly headquarters, communication structures, and other new building types that appear in Baghdad following Iraq's 1958 revolution.*

Despite the long historical continuity evoked by his regionally inflected modernism, Chadirji was all too aware of the transformative effects of Iraq's growing oil economy. His work as a photographer was informed by his exposure to Iraq's political and cultural precariousness, while it foresaw greater disruption ahead. Over a span of more than twenty years, Chadirji recorded the street life, social practices, and spaces that he believed were threatened by the development driving Iraq's postwar evolution. Over the same period, he meticulously photographed his own architectural work in an attempt to produce documents that could survive the damage, alteration, and potential destruction of his buildings.

The threat that lurks within the Chadirji archives reverberates with the current instability in Iraq and Syria and the continuing specter of building destruction and cultural violence. The texture of precarity within Chadirji's photographs also underscores the institutional project of the Arab Image Foundation and its attempt to assemble, secure, and preserve the photographic history of the Arab World. In this sense, Chadirji's photographs and building documents exhibit at least three identities: they are an informational system describing every building within his architectural oeuvre; they are a device to preserve the image of Iraq's experience of modernization; and they are the charged signifiers of collateral damage and the historical and cultural vulnerability that marks the archives of the Arab Image Foundation.

Every Building in Baghdad: The Rifat Chadirji Archives at the Arab Image Foundation curator Mark Wasiuta notes, "Chadirji's work is fascinating and not especially well known in the United States. Through it we are able to see architecture contending with the complex

forces of modernity and post-colonial life in the Middle East. Even as he was helping form the independent state, Chadirji sensed the fragility of Iraqi culture and envisioned the destruction of his buildings. Taking a cue from his grim clairvoyance, the exhibition enters a discussion about suppressed histories and about the fate of cities, architecture, and culture in conflict zones.”

Displayed in custom armatures throughout the Graham Foundation’s turn-of-the-century Madlener House, the exhibition includes 60 photographic paste-ups documenting Chadirji’s own building projects, as well as hundreds of his photographs shot in the streets of Baghdad from the 1960s to the early 1980s. In the first floor galleries, Chadirji’s documents are surrounded by a folio of etchings he produced in 1984. On the second floor, Chadirji’s photographs are accompanied by those of Iraqi photographer **Latif Al Ani**. A contemporary of Chadirji, Al Ani chronicled newly emerging urban conditions under the shifting political regimes of the 1950s to the 1970s.

PARTICIPANT BIOS

Born in Baghdad in 1926, the Iraqi architect **Rifat Chadirji** is the son of Kamil Chadirji, an important figure in Iraqi postwar culture and politics and leader of the erstwhile Iraq National Democratic party. After studying architecture in London at the Hammersmith School of Arts and Crafts, Rifat returned to Iraq in 1952. In Baghdad, he formed his design office, Iraq Consult, where he worked as an architect and planner. At the same time, Chadirji held a number of intermittent government posts, including Director of Buildings for Baghdad’s Waqaf Organization. As his architectural practice developed, he became focused on an approach to design combining western technical advances and local vernacular forms. This quest governed his later work, during the 1960s and 1970s, and became the basis of much of his subsequent writing as an architectural theorist. He was a prolific designer, responsible for more than one hundred buildings in Iraq and in neighboring states. Many of his buildings, such as the 1966 administration offices for the Federation of Industries, the 1966 offices and stores for the Tobacco Monopoly Administration, or the 1975 offices for the Central Post, Telegraph and Telephone Administration, were seen as consequential for Iraq and the region. While practicing as an architect, Chadirji, like his father, devoted a portion of his time to photography, documenting his own buildings and the disappearing customs and urban texture of Baghdad and its surrounding cities. Jailed in 1978 by Ahmed Hassan Al-Bakr, Chadirji was released by Saddam Hussein in 1980 to help plan modifications to Baghdad in anticipation of the *Conference of Nonaligned Countries*. Chadirji fled Baghdad in 1983 for Harvard University, where he remained for the 1980s, first as a Loeb Fellow and then as a visiting scholar. In 1986 he received the Agha Khan Chairman’s Award for lifetime achievement in architecture. *Taha Street and Hammersmith*, Chadirji’s first book, appeared in Arabic in 1985. *Concepts and Influences: Towards A Regionalized International Architecture, 1952–1978*, his first book in English, was printed in 1986. He has since published more than ten others. Following the recent war in Iraq, Chadirji received renewed attention as an important architect whose buildings have suffered war damage and as a voice espousing a form of secular modernity during Iraq’s earlier period of growth. He now lives in London with his wife, Balkis Shararah.

The Arab Image Foundation is a nonprofit organization established in Beirut in 1997. Its mission is to collect, preserve, and study photographs from the Middle East, North Africa, and the Arab diaspora. The AIF's expanding collection is generated through artist and scholar-led projects. The Foundation makes its collection accessible to the public through a wide spectrum of activities, including exhibitions, publications, videos, a website, and an online image database.

Mark Wasiuta is a curator, writer, and architect who teaches at GSAPP, Columbia University where he is Co-Director of the MS degree program Critical, Curatorial and Conceptual Practices in Architecture (CCCP Arch). Over the last decade, as Director of Exhibitions at GSAPP, he has developed a body of research and archival exhibitions that focus on experimental practices of the postwar period. Recent exhibitions, produced with various collaborators, include, *Control Syntax Rio* at Het Nieuwe Instituut, *Environmental Communications: Contact High* at the Chicago Architecture Biennial, *La Fine Del Mondo* at the 14th International Architectural Exhibition at the Venice Biennale, as well as *Information Fall-Out: Buckminster Fuller's World Game* and *Les Levine: Bio-Tech Rehearsals, 1965–1975* at the Arthur Ross Architecture Gallery. He is co-editor and co-author of *Dan Graham's New Jersey*. Forthcoming projects include the exhibition *Detox USA*, at the 3rd Istanbul Design Biennial and the publications *Documentary Remains*, *Environmental Communications: Contact High*, and *Collecting Architecture Territories*. He is partner in the design and research office the International House of Architecture.

Adam Bandler is a curator and designer. He is the Assistant Director of Exhibitions and an Adjunct Assistant Professor at GSAPP, Columbia University, where he has co-curated and co-designed numerous exhibitions including *Every Building in Baghdad: The Rifat Chadirji Archives at the Arab Image Foundation*, *Information Fall-Out: Buckminster Fuller's World Game*, and *Environmental Communications: Contact High*, also featured at the inaugural Chicago Architecture Biennial. He is partner of Rivera & Bandler, a New York based design office, which recently completed design for *Tony Oursler: Imponderable* at the Museum of Modern Art and *Tony Oursler: The Imponderable Archive* at the CCS Bard Galleries. He has collaborated extensively with The International House of Architecture on such projects as *Air Manifest: Los Angeles 1955, 1965* at Studio X Istanbul, *House Arrest*, and *Instructions for the Reconstitution of Historical Smog*. He received his BArch from the Southern California Institute of Architecture and his MS in the CCCP Arch program at Columbia University's GSAPP.

Florencia Alvarez Pacheco is an architect and holds a master's degree in CCCP Arch from GSAPP, Columbia University. She has taught at the University of Buenos Aires, School of Architecture, Design and Urbanism. She was founding co-editor of *UR architecture*, an annual magazine of art, architecture, and urbanism. She worked at Arthur Ross Architecture Gallery for *Environmental Communications: Contact High*, *Information Fall-Out: Buckminster Fuller's World Game*, and *Les Levine: Bio-Tech Rehearsals, 1965–1975* among other exhibitions. Her research focuses on the implications and challenges of diverse techno-pedagogical experiences from the postwar period such as *Pigeon Audio Visual*.

CREDITS

Every Building in Baghdad: The Rifat Chadirji Archives at the Arab Image Foundation originated at the Arthur Ross Architecture Gallery at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation and was curated by Mark Wasiuta, Adam Bandler, and Florencia Alvarez.

The Arthur Ross Architecture Gallery at GSAPP is a platform for original curatorial projects and for experiments with the distribution and organization of research material. Through its exhibitions the gallery exposes important and unexamined projects and archives from the postwar period.

RELATED EVENTS

Thursday, September 15, 6-8:30PM

Opening Reception

6PM: Talk by curator **Mark Wasiuta**

Thursday, November 10, 6PM

“Historic(Ist) Encounters: Transforming Post-WWII Architecture in Baghdad”

Amin Alsaden, PhD Candidate, Harvard University

Thursday, November 17, 6PM

“Erasures”

Nora Akawi, Curator of Studio-X Amman and Adjunct Assistant Professor at the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, Columbia University

Thursday, December 15, 6PM

“The Arab City: Architecture and Representation”

Amale Andraos, Dean, Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation Columbia University

Additional events will be announced throughout the run of the show. For more information about upcoming events, visit: www.grahamfoundation.org/public_events

ABOUT THE GRAHAM FOUNDATION

Founded in 1956, the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts makes project-based grants to individuals and organizations, and produces programming designed to foster the development and exchange of diverse and challenging ideas about architecture and its role in the arts, culture, and society.

The Graham Foundation was created by a bequest from Ernest R. Graham (1866–1936), a prominent Chicago architect and protégé of Daniel Burnham.

THE MADLENER HOUSE

Since 1963, the Graham Foundation has been located in the Madlener House, a turn-of-the-century Prairie-style mansion, designed by Richard E. Schmidt and Hugh M. G. Garden (1901–02) and renovated by prominent modern architect Daniel Brenner. The 9,000 square-foot historic home now houses galleries, a bookshop, an outdoor collection of architectural fragments, an extensive non-lending library of grantee publications, and a ballroom where the foundation hosts public programs.

BOOKSHOP

The Graham Foundation's bookshop, designed by Ania Jaworska, offers a selection of new, historically significant, and hard-to-find publications on architecture, art, and design, many of which have been supported by grants from the Graham Foundation.

GALLERY HOURS AND VISITOR INFORMATION

Admission to the galleries and public programs is free and open to the public. Gallery and bookshop hours are Wednesday through Saturday, 11 AM–6 PM. Group tours are available by request.

ACCESSIBILITY

The second-floor galleries and third-floor ballroom where events are held are only accessible by stairs. The first-floor galleries and bookshop are accessible via outdoor lift. Please call ahead to make arrangements.

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MEDIA CONTACTS:

Ellen Alderman
Graham Foundation
ealderman@grahamfoundation.org
+1 312-787-4071

Andrew Huff
SUTTON
andrew@SUTTONpr.com
+1 212 202 3402

High-resolution digital images are available on the press section of our website; email Ellen Alderman for the press login or additional information. Press tours welcome



(Top) Rifat Chadirji, IRQ/314/154: Offices and stores, Tobacco Monopoly Administration, Baghdad, 1966. Photographic paste-ups, 8.27" x 11.69". Courtesy of the Arab Image Foundation.

(Bottom left) Rifat Chadirji, IRQ/331/026: E. Abboud Building, Baghdad, 1955. Photographic paste-ups, 8.27" x 11.69". Courtesy of the Arab Image Foundation.

(Bottom right) Rifat Chadirji, IRQ/315/186: Offices, Central Post, Telegraph and Telephone Administration, Baghdad, 1975. Photographic paste-ups, 8.27" x 11.69". Courtesy of the Arab Image Foundation.



(Top) Rifat Chadirji, 741 Signs and Advertisements, 10-78-143-8: Decoration for Tammuz month (July) celebrating the revolution and the birth of the Baath party, 1978. Courtesy of the Arab Image Foundation.

(Center) Rifat Chadirji, 763 Architecture, 13-81-121-31: Mixed architecture, demolition, 1981. Courtesy of the Arab Image Foundation.

(Bottom) Rifat Chadirji, 760 Architecture, 15-82-39-24A: Mixed architecture, commercial building, 1982. Courtesy of the Arab Image Foundation.