

BETTS PROJECT

Press Release

Re-Imagining the Avant-Garde

Ant Farm, Pablo Bronstein, Matthew Butcher, Peter Eisenman, Sam Jacob, Damjan Jovanovic, Office Kersten Geers David Van Severen, Office Kovacs, Perry Kulper, Jimenez Lai/Bureau Spectacular, Nemestudio, Luke Caspar Pearson, Aldo Rossi, Traumnovelle, Neil Spiller, UrbanLab, WAI Thinktank, Warehouse of Architecture and Research (WAR)

**Opening reception & book launch:
Thursday 21 November, 6 – 8 PM**

**Exhibition:
22 November – 21 December 2019**

Betts Project presents 'Re-Imagining the Avant-Garde', a group exhibition that explores the ongoing importance of the work of Architects associated with the Avant-Garde of the 1960s and 1970s for today's designers and artists. The exhibition has been developed as a companion to the recently published special issue of *Architectural Design (AD)* edited by Matthew Butcher and Luke Pearson entitled *Re-imagining the Avant-Garde: Revisiting the Architecture of the 1960s and 1970s*.

The avant-garde of the 1960s and 70s has been likened to an 'architectural Big Bang', such was the intensity of energy and ambition with which it exploded into the post-war world. It produced architectural projects that redefined the discipline and remain highly influential today. In contemporary design, references to the likes of Archizoom, Peter Eisenman, John Hejduk and Superstudio continue to define the approaches of a new wave of practitioners. This avant-garde was highly diverse, and not tied to a single methodology or tendency in its political, formal and cultural preoccupations. It was also geographically divergent – reaching from Europe to North America and Japan. The avant-garde was, however, unified as a critical and experimental force, critiquing contemporary society against the backdrop of extreme social and political upheaval. Those turbulent times mirror today.

The intention of the exhibition 'Re-Imagining the Avant-Garde' is not to create a new history in the typical sense but to highlight the continuing power and relevance of 'avant-garde projects for contemporary art and architectural practice. It will show a range of artists and designers whose work has developed a clear relationship, formally, spatially and conceptually, with this earlier period.

The diverse works shown in the exhibition all resonate with certain attributes that defined the designs of the 1960s and 1970s. These attributes include an interest in distortions of cartographic representations, an interest in exploiting new media in the representation of architecture, the design of worlds that satirically comment on current political, environmental and social discourse and a desire to readapt historical forms and figures to question contemporary cultural attitudes to taste.

This exhibition is also accompanied by a series of talks that are taking place throughout November and December at the Sir John Soane's Museum and at Betts Project.

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For press enquiries please contact Tony Tremlett: tony@bettsproject.com
For sales enquiries please contact Marie Coulon: marie@bettsproject.com tel: +44 (0)7 9090 70 611

Address

Betts Project
100 Central Street
London EC1V 8AJ
www.bettsproject.com

Opening Hours

Wednesday — Friday, 12 — 6 pm
Saturday, 12 — 5 pm
or by appointment

About Betts Project

Betts Project is a London-based contemporary art gallery specialising in architecture, founded in 2013 by Marie Coulon.

The concept behind Betts Project is to introduce both a specialist audience and wider public to new ways of discovering and thinking about architecture, through the exhibition and promotion of materials integral to architecture – largely drawings, but also models and other forms of representation. It aims to support and promote work by established and emerging international architects, as well as lesser known or overlooked practices still very much relevant to the contemporary discourse.

The gallery is also driven by the desire to introduce architectural objects as works of art. To do so, it organises high calibre exhibitions for new and established audiences and participate to art fairs, and thereby brings unique collectable works to the market at an affordable price.

Over the past years the exhibition programme has featured solo shows by established international figures such as Nigel Coates, Shin Egashira, Günter Günschel, Denise Scott Brown, De Vylder Vinck Taillieu architects, Florian Beigel + Philip Christou, Caruso St John, Alexander Brodsky, Lars Lerup, Tony Fretton, Fred Scott, Studio Mumbai, Richard Goodwin, Peter Märkli alongside artist Hans Josephsohn, Pier Vittorio Aureli, and OFFICE kgdvs with photographer Bas Princen.

To find out more visit: www.bettsproject.com and sign-up to the Betts Project e-newsletters.

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SELECTED WORKS



New Cadavre Exquis speculates on architecture's materiality in the context of digital accumulation. The project consists of four architectural assemblies, which are created via a sampling process of digital readymades ranging from everyday objects, building elements, primitive forms and natural features from the 3D Warehouse—an online open-source digital library of more than 2 million 3D models.

Nemestudio / Neyran Turan

Reassembly-as-Cooper as an apartment building
(*New Cadavre Exquis*), 2017

Digital print on canvas

50 x 50 cm

Courtesy the artist and Betts Project

Neyran Turan is an architect and partner at NEMESTUDIO. She is currently an assistant professor at the Department of Architecture at the University of California-Berkeley. Her work focuses on alternative forms of environmental imagination within architecture and their capacity for new aesthetic and political trajectories. Turan has recently been selected to curate the Turkish Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2020.



Filter Island is a proposed public space that provides water infrastructure by combining landscape, architecture and infrastructure. With Filter Island UrbanLab seeks to reposition the contemporary debate of what a city should be by exploring how city-scaled mega-forms can become an updated architecture-based urbanism—a conjecture of what a comprehensible city could be to combat (predicted) crises—through analysis and experimentation. Through the filter of productive contemporary crises, the urban-scaled architecture project can engage and exploit existing infrastructural conditions as a catalyst for urban invention.

UrbanLab / Sarah Dunn and Martin Felsen

Filter Island, 2015

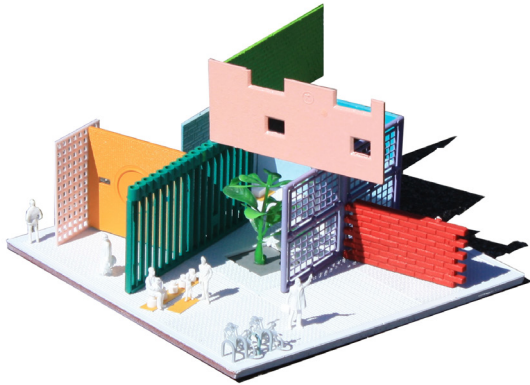
Ink on paper

29.7 x 42 cm

Courtesy the artist and Betts Project

UrbanLab is an architecture and urban design firm founded in 2000 by Martin Felsen and Sarah Dunn. UrbanLab's projects span scales, from large, urban designs to small, residential projects and exhibitions. Their primary interest is in forward-looking projects that speculate on a more resilient and resourceful tomorrow. UrbanLab has exhibited at the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2010 and 2012, and in the Chicago Architecture Biennial in 2015 and 2017. UrbanLab's work is in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago.

SELECTED WORKS



Miniature maze is a model made for a competition proposal in Toronto. The scheme proposes a miniature maze to play hide-n-seek along the Toronto Waterfront. In the spirit of many of the speculative models Office Kovacs produces, this model uses altered readymade parts.

Office Kovacs

Miniature Maze, Toronto Waterfront, Toronto, Canada, 2017

Altered readymades, paint, paper, fish tank plants, HO scale figures

15 cm x 15 cm x 8 cm

Courtesy the artist and Betts Project

Andrew Kovacs is an assistant adjunct professor at the University of California (UCLA) Architecture and Urban Design Department. His design studio Office Kovacs, works on projects at all scales from books to urban design and recently designed Colossal Cacti (2019) for the Coachella Music and arts festival. He is curator of Archive of Affinities, a widely viewed website devoted to the collection and display of architectural b-sides.



The Dramun, disguised as a comic strip, is an unexpected result of an architectural project, a residential complex located in between Pesaro and Urbino, in central Italy. This drawing emphasizes the outskirts - suspended between the suburbs and the countryside - the very pop atmosphere and village-setting perceived at the first site visit. In order to face the rapid and sometimes superficial web searching, WAR staged a simple and corny story that captures the attention of an unfocused viewer but, at the same time, shows all the details of the project.

Warehouse for Architecture and Research (WAR)

Il Dramun (Drama by Moonlight), 2018

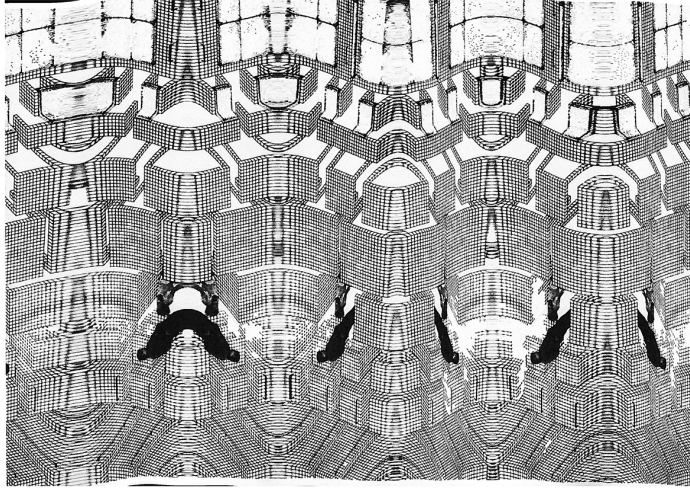
Giclée ink on paper

54 x 54 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Betts Project

WAR was founded in Rome in 2013. Its essence lies between the concept of a mannerist architecture studio and an independent space for research in the contemporary practice. Their works have been exhibited in Rome, Venice, Milan, New York, at the Royal Institute of British Architects in London, and published in international magazines such as *Artribune*, *Corriere della Sera*, *Domus*, *Summa+*, *The Architect's Newspaper* among others.

SELECTED WORKS



To create the image a reproduction of Superstudio's drawing was dragged across the surface of an image scanner while it was in the process of being scanned. The result subsequent work *Dragged Drawing (Superstudio Grid)* is a direct mapping of this action and the scanning process –a physical imprint of the drawing as it moves through time and space. Out of this new materialisation of the original Superstudio image, a series of forms were identified, tracing various contours, then spliced out. These splices were then used to create other design works including the project *Superstudio Memorial*, 2019.

Matthew Butcher

Dragged Drawing (Superstudio Grid), 2017

Giclée ink on Hahnemuhle paper

Dimensions: 29.7 x 42 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Betts Project

Matthew Butcher is a designer and academic. He is the editor and founder of the architectural newspaper P.E.A.R.: Paper for Emerging Architectural Research and Associate Professor of Architecture at the Bartlett School of Architecture (UCL). His work has been exhibited at the V&A Museum, London; Storefront for Art and Architecture, New York; The Architecture Foundation, London and the Prague Quadrennial, Prague.



DWG Hunter is a digital videogame that uses a procedural generation system for distributing symbolic architectural objects. The game explores architecture as a playable, responsive system for spatial production. Inspired by the isotropic grids of Archizoom, a computational algorithm interprets player interactions to produce an infinite number of possible architectural compositions in a virtual environment.

Luke Caspar Pearson

DWG Hunter, 2019

Digital video game

Courtesy of the artist and Betts Project

Luke Pearson is a designer and lecturer at the Bartlett School of Architecture (UCL), where he is Director of the Undergraduate Architecture Programme. He is a founding partner of You+Pea, a design research practice working at the intersection of architecture and videogames. Luke is also the founder of the Drawing Futures conference and has written for publications such as *eflux Architecture*, *Frame*, *Thresholds* and *The Journal of Architectural Education*.