

PRESS RELEASE

Speculative Chicago: A Compendium of Architectural Innovation

Gallery 400

Chicago, IL

February 25–March 29, 2003

Opening Reception: Wednesday, February 26, 2003, 4-7 pm

Panel Discussion: Thursday, March 27, 2003, 6 pm

Including works and projects by over 50 architects, designers, theorists, and other "speculators" working in Chicago or building projects in Chicago, the exhibition argues that innovation concerning the built environment continues to thrive in the "city that works."

Exhibitors:

Borum, Daubmann, Hyde and Roddier

Tom Brock

Jospeh Bums, Thornton·Thomasetti

Engineers

Kristin Randall Burrello, Rita Grendze, Odile

Campagnan

McLain Clutter

Davis Brody Bond Architects + Planners

Dirk Denison Architects

Digital-DOA

EHDD Architecture

Ammar Eloueini, Digit-All Studio

Julia Fish

Julie Flohr and Jason Sachs

Meton Gadehla

Studio Gang

Garofalo Architects

Gensler with UrbanLab and Christine

Tarkowski

Ellen Grimes

Sharon Haar with Cecilia Benites

Kevin Harrington

Doug Ischar

K2 Architects

Krueck & Sexton Architects

Landon Bone Baker Architects

Clare Lyster

Mhairi McVicar

Cart Ray Miller

Jonathan Miller
Keith Mitnik, Mireille Roddier
Museum of Contemporary Phenomena,
Helen Slade, curator
Anders Nereim
Ben Nicholson
Office for Metropolitan Architecture
Douglas Pancoast
Pappageorge Haymes, Ltd.
Frederick Phillips and Assoc.
PPKS Architects, Ltd.
PS Studio
Robertson + McAnulty Architects
John Ronan Architect
SLO, Swift.Lee Office
Joshua Roberts
Schneider + Schumacher
Simparch
Christine Tarkowski
37500
UrbanLab
Joe Valerio of Valerio DeWalt Train
Xavier Vendrell Studio
Brian Vitale + Robert Benson for von Weise
Associates
Charles Waldheim and Marili Santos-Munne
Wilkinson Blender Architecture
Tim Wilkin

As New York and Los Angeles wrangle over the number "ONE," for the Second City, the number seven has always had a magical aura: Al Capone served only seven years, Mayor Daley (the First) died two years shy of his seventh term. *Speculative Chicago* brings together 49 (7 x 7) designers working on speculative projects in and around Chicago. The exhibition comes 35 (5 x 7) years after the Chicago Seven took on the Chicago Police Department and 28 years (4 x 7) after the anti-Mies polemic *Chicago Architecture*. Last but not least, it follows the birth of the ubiquitous Chicago Seven (all male) architects whose first forays into self-promotion appeared in 1977.

But enough about the past: for years we've heard nothing about Chicago architecture outside of the history of its histories, the paucity of its polemics, the legacy of its landmarks. *Speculative Chicago* sets out to change all that. Whatever ghosts lie hidden within the closets of Chicago architecture's storied past, this exhibition enthusiastically directs our attention to the future. It seeks nothing less than a wholesale transformation of public awareness (both local and national) of Chicago's architectural scene by drawing attention to on-going projects. By revealing and asserting the collective inventiveness of Chicago's architects and architectural speculators, the show is pointedly intended to catalyze much-needed discussion of the spirit of innovation buried within Chicago's (often under-recognized) emerging practices. These speculations appear at a variety of scales, types,

and degrees of complexity. Included in the exhibition are models, drawings, demonstrations, publications, films, videos, and samples from 49 (7 x 7) designers working in Chicago or creating works for the City.

These multifarious works set out to interrogate contemporary cultural contexts, technological developments, and methods of production through a variety of media. For all their differences, each of the projects shares a vested interest in "speculation." Speculating appears in multiple guises:

- Assuming risk in hope of gain
- Meditating on or pondering a subject
- Suggesting, testing, and examining
- Curiosity and questioning
- Theorizing vs. demonstrating

Speculation is also understood as research and other theoretical work that mines (and undermines) pre-existing thinking for new strategies, tactics, and techniques; fabrications, or constructed works at various scales that pursue innovation through an appropriation of contemporary technical and production intelligence; projects, or architectural works that demonstrate contemporary insight and/or significant contribution to ongoing debate concerning the built environment; and networks, or urban works that demonstrate contemporary insight and/or significant contribution to the ongoing debate concerning public space. In all cases, the work is specific to Chicago and the vicinity or is the work of Chicago and the vicinity's individuals or firms.

Chicago has a great tradition of speculation. For much of its history the city enjoyed an international reputation for innovation and experimentation, mostly recently in the form of "Modern" architecture. It was in Chicago that the skyscraper was born, where Sullivan and Wright thrived, to which Mies emigrated. Chicago's phenomenal growth in the 19th century was fuelled by the fire of 1871, leading to innovation in material, fabrication, and environmental technologies.

To concentrate the very latest speculative work in and around Chicago, the process for assembling *Speculative Chicago* has rested on the knowledge of a group of co-curators working collaboratively with Gallery 400 Director Lorelei Stewart. Sixteen Chicagoans (architects, designers, teachers, writers) selected the work in the exhibition from over one hundred proposals submitted in response to an open call for submissions. The sixteen curator/exhibitors are: Joseph Burns, Sarah Dunn, Deborah Fausch, Martin Felsen, Jeanne Gang, Douglas Garofalo, Ellen Grimes, Sharon Haar, Kevin Harrington, Robert McAnulty, Anders Nereim, Ben Nicholson, Donna Robertson, John Ronan, Mark Schendel, and Xavier Vendrell.

Speculative Chicago: A Compendium of Architectural Innovation and its accompanying catalogue contest the idea that the city has lost its architectural edge by exhibiting current ideas and works that once again employ the city as a laboratory for experimentation, and in so doing, attempt to challenge the status quo. *Speculative Chicago* brings together architects, designers, theorists and other "speculators" who demonstrate that innovation continues to thrive in the "city that works."

An accompanying 176 page two-color catalogue designed by Field Study will be available in August 2003.

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