**PRESS RELEASE**

Curated by Jesús Fuenmayor and Julieta González
Demonstration Room: Ideal House

Gallery 400
Chicago, IL
January 15–February 23, 2002

Opening Reception: Wednesday, January 16, 2002, 4-7 pm
Artist's Lecture: Mauricio Lupini, Tuesday, January 15, 2002, 5 pm
Curators ’ Discussion: Wednesday, January 16, 2002, 4-5 pm

In a space designed to mimic an architect's office, *Demonstration Room: Ideal House* presents proposals, architectural models, and other forms of artwork investigating the idea of house as domestic utopia. Curated by two South American curators, Jesús Fuenmayor and Julieta González, the exhibition includes work commissioned by some of today ’s most interesting artists including:

Francis Alÿs, Dan Graham, Carlos Julio Molina, Carla Arocha, Jeanne Van Heeswijk, Ernesto Neto, Anna Best, José Antonio Hernández-Diez, Claudio Perna, Stefan Bruggeman, Proyecto Incidental, Paul Ramírez-Jonas, Mariana Bunimov, Gabriel Kuri, Juan Carlos Rodríguez, Minerva Cuevas, Atelier Van Lieshout, Karin Schneider, José Gabriel Fernández, Diana López, Teresa Serrano, Carlos Garaicoa, Mauricio Lupini, Javier Téllez, Alexander Gerdel, Rita McBride, Sergio Vega, and Liam Gillick

The exhibition layout, inspired by El Lissitzky's 1920s *Demonstration Room*, supplants the romantic notion of a pure, epiphanic art experience with a historically situated and critically informed understanding of art. By using the architect's office as a model for display, *Demonstration Room: Ideal House* blurs the boundary between artworks and exhibition space, demonstrating how context is critical to our experience of art.

The works in the exhibition are framed by four overlapping themes:

1. Urban nomadism as facilitated by mobile living units.
2. The house as gesamtkunstwerk: a holistic, total work of art.
3. Collective housing and experiments in communal living.
4. Shanty towns as they illuminate and critique utopian ideals.

One artwork on the theme of collective housing is Anna Best's *Anti-Lonely House*. *Anti-Lonely House* is a communal living model which addresses the needs of senior citizens and immigrant workers through the design of the panopticon. On the subject of the shanty, Sergio Vega's *Vertical Displacement Within the Same Class* is a series of photographs which juxtapose a contemporary Latin American shanty town with the Garden of Eden, alleged to have been located on the very same site as the shanty town.

Although the artists in *Demonstration Room: Ideal House* employ diverse strategies in addressing these subjects, they share a common critical understanding of the relation between art project and art object. In this exhibit, conceptual proposals, ephemeral interventions, scale models, and fully materialized works occupy positions of equal importance. One of the more conceptual/ephemeral works in this exhibition, by José Antonio Hernández-Diez, whose untitled piece consists of classified ads in local Chicago newspapers, solicits and/or offers houses proposed by artists for the show. His ads project into the public sphere his own and others' desires for an "ideal house," at the same time framing the "ideals" of other artists in the limits of the real world. On the more experiential/physical end of the spectrum is Javier Tellez ’s *LC/4 R-Machine*, a person-size plywood crate containing a Le Corbusier chaise lounge and a video monitor. The viewer reclines on the lounge inside the crate, and watches a video of a catatonic schizophrenic patient, while Bach ’s *Goldberg Variations* plays in the background. *LC/4 R-Machin*e reflects on mental illness as a by-product of modernism, describing how architecture affects our understanding of borderline states.

*Demonstration Room: Ideal House* is the premier exhibition in Gallery 400's new architectural exhibition program. The exhibition originated in Caracas, Venezuela at Museo Alejandro Otero and has traveled to New York (Apex Art, February–March 2001) and Antwerp, Belgium (New International Cultural Center, September–November 2001).