

Design, Bitches, *Masters of Architecture*, 2012

COURTESY OF DESIGN, BITCHES

ALMOST ANYTHING GOES IN SANTA BARBARA

Almost Anything Goes: Architecture and Inclusivity
Museum of Contemporary Arts Santa Barbara
653 Paso Nuevo, Santa Barbara, CA
Through April 13

It is impossible to underestimate the role that museum and gallery exhibitions have played in the history of modern architecture. Figures like Giuseppe Terragni, Lilly Reich, Bernard Rudofsky and, today, Neil Denari and Diller + Scofidio have all designed for and in the space of the gallery. They often designed exhibitions before they could get a building commission, or during slow economic times, but for all of these figures the gallery was a site where they could theorize or construct models that were still spinning in their heads but not yet possible to realize. Some of the most exciting ideas in 20th century Avant-garde architecture were first thought out in galleries, such as Frederick Kiesler's *Endless City*, and his "L and T" method of installation design. In recent times, Diller + Scofidio's *Tourisms: suitcase Studies* (1991) can surely be said to have led to their design for The Brasserie, Boston's ICA, and the just unveiled Gray Box gallery/theater at MoMA. Though the historic links from gallery to building are clear, critics often assert that architects in galleries do not produce architecture but art or, worse, architecture posing as art.

This argument is often, but not always, a canard for architects who long for physical spaces where they can experiment, communicate with the public, and succeed or fail. The gallery space provides an opportunity for architects to experiment in real time, and space has never been more important than today when digital design can imagine the most hyperbolic forms, use of new materials, and geometries that may or may not be buildable. Benjamin Ball of Ball-Nogues Studio, a practice that has flourished in the design of installations, makes exactly this point about their work for galleries. Their goal, Ball admits, is to be in dialogue with the 75 years of artistic practice, but even more they want to do research about craft and the process of production.

These issues of design intent, production, and even reception are all played out in the exhibition *Almost Anything Goes: Architecture and Inclusivity* at the Museum of Contemporary Arts Santa Barbara. Conceived and co-curated by Brigitte Kouo, a designer with an interest in architecture, and the museum's director and chief curator Miki Garcia, **continued on page 24**

THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER JANUARY 29, 2014



COURTESY MCAAS

ALMOST ANYTHING GOES IN SANTA

BARBARA continued from page 23 it smartly selects a group of young Southern California designers all working in different areas of architectural research and production. Ball-Nogues Studio was a natural inclusion in this survey. They are joined by Amorphis, Atelier Manferdini, Design Bitches, dO/Su Studio Architecture, Digital Physical, and Variate Labs.

The entrance to the exhibit foregrounds an eight-foot-tall sculptural object *exo*, 2013, created by DO/SU Studio Architecture and its principle Doris Sung. It is a creative study for a multiple layered building facade if it were made of thermo-bimetals, in this case aluminum, a "smart... material that inherently responds to temperature, curling when heated and flattening when cooled." It aims to challenge our perception of a facade as only a protective coating when it could be, as Sung said, "a responsive and active skin."

Scattered around the gallery are luscious candy colored tabletops created by Atelier Manferdini that foreground architecture's "communicative value" and look good enough to eat. The architects in this exhibit are young so one wants to encourage all sorts of experimentation strategies, but also to warn

them to be aware of the possible clichés of art world production. All of the works in the exhibition do focus on architecture. The sculptural well pieces by Amorphis could benefit from an updated reading on the critiques of minimalism, but still they suggest a relationship between the viewer and the work of art mediated by personal conditions—a major concern of architects. Another installation that straddles the strategies of art but still makes a convincing case for what architects can bring to the debate are the photographs by Design Bitches that use personal images of the architects standing in for the male heroes of yore. They are quite convincing and hilarious. Design Bitches also has a beautifully crafted series of concrete bags arched across the gallery ceiling like clouds dripping rain that playing with notions of "heaviness and somber lightness."

The old installation pros Ball-Nogues produced the most convincing object and creative design strategy with their Mickey Mouse ear-like paper lamp. It was created by shooting paper pulp through a pressured sprayer into molds of flexible inflatable fabric. These paper lamps are one-off prototypes in the gallery, but suggest a way of creating objects of mass production. Ball-Nogues Studio is now working on its first building in San Antonio, Texas.

Santa Barbara is a seductive landscape of historic mission architecture. One does not expect to find adventurous design here. So the curators are to be congratulated for making this exhibit happen in their enticing shopping mall gallery. It displays again the amazing depth and creativity of young architects in the Southern California region.

WILLIAM MENKING IS A+D'S EDITOR-IN-CHIEF.

A+D Architecture and Design Museum > Los Angeles
Williamson Gallery at Art Center College of Design
Eames Foundation

RAY EAMES IN THE SPOTLIGHT

FEBRUARY 25 - MAY 4

ON VIEW AT THE WILLIAMSON GALLERY AT ART CENTER COLLEGE OF DESIGN
1700 Lida Street, Pasadena CA 91103

OPENING CEREMONY | 28 FEB | 7-10PM

Presented in conjunction with the Williamson Gallery at Art Center College of Design & the Eames Office. This exhibition celebrates Ray's centennial, featuring rarely seen-before-drawings and sketches from the years before and throughout her collaboration with Charles. From her exquisite fashion designs to her training with legendary painter Hans Holbein, the show traces the ways in which Ray's earliest interests and skills connect to the work she passionately explored throughout her life. Highlighting the design icon's substantive role in a partnership often viewed through a lens trained on Charles, *In the Spotlight* honors Ray's remarkable gifts—not as something added to her husband's work, but as a contribution fully integrated into the process of their endeavors.

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