

# The Museum of Modern Art

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## THE POETRY OF CONSTRUCTION EXPLORED IN AN ARCHITECTURE EXHIBITION ON VIEW CONCURRENTLY AT THREE ART MUSEUMS

### *Fabrications*

**The Museum of Modern Art, New York**  
**January 29 – April 28, 1998**  
**Media Preview: January 28, 1998**

**San Francisco Museum of Modern Art**  
**February 6 – April 28, 1998**  
**Media Preview: February 5, 1998**

**Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus**  
**January 31 – April 12, 1998**  
**Media Preview: January 30, 1998**

*Fabrications*, an innovative exhibition developed jointly by The Museum of Modern Art, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the Wexner Center for the Arts, The Ohio State University, will be presented simultaneously at the three institutions, opening at MoMA on January 29, 1998; at SFMOMA on February 6; and at the Wexner Center on January 31. The exhibition features twelve full-scale architectural inventions, four at each venue, produced by twelve architects or teams exploring broad tectonic issues. The architectural precepts are grounded in architectonics, the poetry of construction and the process of making. The relationship between use, meaning, and fabrication is evident not in representations, models, plans, or drawings, but in the reality of the built structures themselves.

Recalling the full-scale, three-dimensional fragments used to educate students a century ago, these inventions will be revelatory, addressing the processes, materials, and

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technology of the constructed world. Additionally, each built work responds to the specific qualities of the three sites as well as to the theoretical issues developed between the curators and architects. The various social, historic, economic, and climactic influences contributing to a project's generation are also manifest.

*Fabrications* is organized by Terence Riley, Chief Curator, Department of Architecture and Design, The Museum of Modern Art; Aaron Betsky, Curator of Architecture and Design, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and Mark Robbins, Curator, Architecture, Wexner Center for the Arts, The Ohio State University.

Video monitors at each institution will provide a record of the twelve projects that make up the exhibition, thus linking the geographically dispersed installations electronically.

**The Museum of Modern Art, New York**  
***Fabrications: The Tectonic Garden***

Alfred Munkenbeck, Munkenbeck + Marshall Architects  
Enrique Norten, TEN Arquitectos  
Monica Ponce de Leon and Nader Tehrani, Office dA  
Henry Smith-Miller and Laurie Hawkinson, Smith-Miller + Hawkinson Architects

Following discussions and analyses of the site, the individual architects conceived MoMA's four projects that will be on view in the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden. According to Mr. Riley's essay in the catalogue accompanying the exhibition, "As a group, the four installations not only reveal certain aspects of their materials and construction but also various aspects of the site and its specific context."

The installation by Henry Smith-Miller and Laurie Hawkinson was designed as an appendage to and a critique of the façade of Philip Johnson's East Wing (1964). Mr. Riley explains, "The new construction challenges the rationalist idea of unchanging and

objective vision: the viewer and the thing that is viewed are not part of a seamless universe but engaged in a subjective connection. The installation examines the relationships between structure, perspectives, reflection, and transparency.”

Alfred Munkenbeck proposes a temporal shelter of a reflective canopy and two walls made of blocks of ice rising from adjoining edges of one of the Garden’s reflecting pools. The structure’s inevitable dissolution, as the seasons change and the ice blocks melt, eloquently allegorize the transformation and impermanence of building materials.

Enrique Norten’s glass and steel bulkhead is reminiscent of an archeological dig. Several of the Garden’s marble slabs will be removed to reveal the rubble of the townhouses formerly occupying the site. Standing atop the rubble and beside the bulkhead, the viewer’s physical and historical points-of-view are shifted.

Monica Ponce de Leon and Nader Tehrani’s installation, made from sheet aluminum that has been folded and perforated, resembles a geometric staircase and also serves as a canopy. Installed diagonally to the ground along the north wall in the Sculpture Garden, the piece was completely fabricated off-site.

Astrid Perl binder and Cristian Sabellarosa are curatorial consultants on the MoMA installations.

**San Francisco Museum of Modern Art**  
***Fabrications: Bodybuildings***

Craig Hodgetts and Ming Fung, Hodgetts + Fung Design Associates  
Sheila Kennedy and J. Frano Violich, Kennedy & Violich Architecture  
Rob Wellington Quigley, FAIA  
Byron Kuth and Elizabeth Ranieri, Kuth/Ranieri

At the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, four architectural teams collaboratively designed constructions that represent or engage the human body in four different states. These states, *Body in Action*, *Body in Repose*, *Somatic Body*, and *Body in Equipoise*, are explored with regard to built work in general and museums in particular.

The four teams committed to a joint set of guidelines and a collaborative process; each construction—assigned at random but initially designed by one of the four—will reflect and respond to the physical properties of the site. The teams rotated each design and related material among them to add to or subtract from (but not erase) the work that had been completed. Each team worked on each of the four states of the body at least once and documented the developing projects. The resulting architecture—strange hybrids between bodies and buildings—reveals hidden truths about itself, about the building in which it is located, and about our own bodies that so often go unexamined.

According to Mr. Betsky, “Upon entering the fifth floor galleries, the viewer is confronted with a quartet of installations. The entrance itself is a maze of building materials—laths, plywood, screws, and connecting devices—representing the Somatic Body. In the main space a giant lung-like object ‘breathes’ to the rhythm of the museum’s air conditioning, representing the Body in Motion. At the end of the space, a seesaw bridge brings the visitor’s body into Equipoise. Layers of felt, placed along the side of the space and edging into alcoves, express and support the Body in Repose.

Together, the pieces present a monumental version of the body that both enlarges it to a grand scale and makes the built institution seem more human.”

**Wexner Center for the Arts, The Ohio State University**  
***Fabrications: Full Scale***

Sam Mockbee and Coleman Coker, Mockbee/Coker Architects  
Eric Owen Moss, Eric Owen Moss Architects  
John Patkau and Patricia Patkau, Patkau Architects  
Stanley Saitowitz, Stanley Saitowitz Office

At the Wexner Center each architect developed individual concepts of function in response to perceived needs within or beyond the exhibition space. The architects worked within the more than 4,000 square feet of gallery space without being assigned a particular space. In his catalogue essay Mr. Robbins writes, “Their projects function as objects, as spatial envelopes, each yielding space and shaping spaces between pieces. Although locations were agreed upon and each architect was informed of the project designs of the others, unexpected spatial and material relationships developed.”

Sam Mockbee and Coleman Coker’s installation is essentially a ramp made of rough wood constructed as a kit by students in Memphis, where Mr. Coker teaches. Inspiration for the projects comes from the linear layout of an old school bus inhabited by a local man. After the exhibition, pieces of the installation will be transported to Mississippi to become components in an addition to the man’s home.

Eric Owen Moss’s installation, a series of steel bleacher fragments, explores gravity and space as a sculptural, three-dimensional entity. The seats, which could also function as steps to viewing perches high above the gallery floor, suggest different vantage points from which to view the gallery space and the other projects within it.

John Patkau and Patricia Patkau designed their installation, a small, self-contained cottage made of wood, to be transported to virtually any outdoor site after the exhibition closes. The unit includes a loft-bed, kitchen, and a bathroom with a composting toilet. When re-located, electricity will be self-generated with a bank of photovoltaic cells, and rainwater collected and distributed throughout the unit.

Stanley Saitowitz's project uses one-half-inch thick plate glass to demarcate space in an area of the Wexner Center that functions both as a reading room and a passageway to a performance space. In addition, the gallery walls are laminated with glass, placing them, and the museum, on view. A floor of glass, lit at the edges and etched, extends over an existing stairwell, recalling glass floors in nineteenth-century library stacks. The location will continue to function as a reading room, a place for reflection, and, in lieu of images, display materials and the people who use them.

### **Adjunct Exhibition**

In conjunction with *Fabrications*, the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona will present *Fabricaciones* early next year in Plaça dels Angels, a public square facing the museum. Organized by Xavier Costa, Director, Department of Architecture, *Fabricaciones* addresses the representation and display of architecture with site-specific construction from four European firms: Abalos & Herreros (Madrid); MVRDV Mass, Van Rijs, De Vries (Rotterdam); Riegler & Riewe (Graz); and Vicente Guallart (Barcelona).

### **Sponsors**

The Wexner Center component of *Fabrications* is presented with the support of the Ohio Arts Council and the Wexner Center Foundation. The accompanying publication is presented with the support of the Graham Foundation for the Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts. Promotional support for the Wexner Center component is provided by WBNS-TV.

### **Catalogue**

*Fabrications*, with essays by Terence Riley, Aaron Betsky, Mark Robbins, and Pat Morton, architect and historian, accompanies the exhibition. It contains 115 illustrations, 50 in full color, documenting previous work by the twelve architectural teams as well as

drawings and plans of the *Fabrications* constructions. The book will be available at The MoMA Bookstore, SFMOMA MuseumStore, and the Wexner Center Bookshop.

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