

**The Museum of Modern Art**For Immediate Release  
June 1988DECONSTRUCTIVIST ARCHITECTURE

June 23 - August 30, 1988

A radical architecture exemplified by the recent work of seven architects is the subject of an exhibition opening at The Museum of Modern Art on June 23, 1988. DECONSTRUCTIVIST ARCHITECTURE features ten international projects designed over the past decade, as well as a selection of Russian Constructivist paintings and sculptures from the Museum's collection. On view through August 30, the exhibition has been organized by Philip Johnson, architect and founding director of the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design, and Mark Wigley, architect and lecturer at Princeton University, with the assistance of Frederieke Taylor.

This is the third of five exhibitions in the GERALD D. HINES INTERESTS ARCHITECTURE PROGRAM at The Museum of Modern Art. Conceived to examine current developments in architecture, the program includes the publication of catalogues to accompany the exhibitions, as well as lectures and symposia.

The exhibition includes drawings and models by Peter Eisenman, Frank O. Gehry, Zaha M. Hadid, Rem Koolhaas, Daniel Libeskind, Bernard Tschumi, and the firm of Coop Himmelblau (list of projects attached). Though working independently, the architects share striking formal similarities. Using twisted volumes, warped planes, and clashed lines, they intentionally violate the cubes and right angles of modernism. By challenging traditional ideals of order and rationality, their projects undermine basic assumptions about building.

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The exhibition is part of the  
Gerald D. Hines Interests Architecture Program  
at The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

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In the catalogue essay accompanying the exhibition, Mark Wigley writes, "Architecture has always been a central cultural institution valued above all for its provision of stability and order. These qualities are seen to arise from the geometric purity of its formal composition. . . . The projects in this exhibition mark a different sensibility, one in which the dream of pure form has been disturbed. Form has become contaminated. The dream has become a kind of nightmare."

A selection from the Museum's holdings of Russian avant-garde art from 1913 to 1933 introduces the architectural projects in the exhibition. Included are paintings, sculptures, photographs, and books by El Lissitzky, Kasimir Malevich, Liubov Popova, Alexander Rodchenko, Vladimir Tatlin, and others. The term "deconstructivist" applies to a contemporary artistic phenomenon that derives its forms from Constructivism and yet deviates from it. Deconstructivist architecture explores the relationship between the instability of the Russian avant-garde and the stability of high modernism. While the precarious, experimental designs of the Russian artists were never conceived as a structural possibility, all of the projects in this exhibition were designed to be built.

Philip Johnson writes in the catalogue preface, "The changes that shock the eye of an old modernist like myself are the contrasts between the 'warped' images of deconstructivist architecture and the 'pure' images of the old International Style." Daniel Libeskind's competition-winning entry for West Berlin's City Edge (1987), for example, employs an obvious Constructivist motif repeated by each of the architects: the diagonal overlapping of rectangular bars. This office/apartment complex is composed of a colossal bar that angles up from the ground and looks over the Berlin Wall, subverting the logic of that

wall. The bar itself is an outwardly smooth, "pure" surface actually composed of internal chaos: a jumble of folded planes, counter-reliefs, and twisted forms that relate to the disorder of the city below.

The hallmark of deconstructivist architecture is its apparent instability. Though structurally sound, the projects seem to be in states of explosion or collapse. "Towers are turned over on their sides; bridges are tilted up to become towers; underground elements erupt from the earth and float above the surface; commonplace materials become suddenly exotic," writes Mr. Wigley. Deconstructivist architecture, however, is not an architecture of decay or demolition. On the contrary, it gains all of its force by challenging the very values of harmony, unity, and stability, proposing instead that flaws are intrinsic to the structure.

Despite their radical appearance, the projects in this exhibition are essentially traditional forms that have been subverted or displaced. The power of deconstructivist architecture to shock and disorient is exemplified by Frank Gehry's Santa Monica beach house (1978-88), an ordinary bungalow bursting with warped and twisted shapes. The unconventional use of such benign building materials as wooden planks, sheet metal, and chain link heighten this effect. The original house thus becomes a strange artifact, trapped and distorted by forms that have emerged from within it.

Mr. Johnson writes, "In art as well as architecture. . . there are many--and contradictory--trends in our quick-change generation. In architecture, strict-classicism, strict-modernism, and all sorts of shades in between, are equally valid. No generally persuasive "-ism" has appeared. It may be none will arise unless there is a worldwide, new religion or set of beliefs out of which an aesthetic could be formed. Meanwhile pluralism reigns,

perhaps a soil in which poetic, original artists. . . can develop." He concludes, "The confluence [of these seven architects] may indeed be temporary; but its reality, its vitality, its originality can hardly be denied."

In conjunction with the exhibition, a symposium moderated by Mark Wigley will be held on Thursday, June 30, at 8:30 p.m. in the Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 1. Panelists include Kurt Forster, director, The Getty Center of Arts and Humanities; Michael Hays, lecturer, Princeton University; Jeffrey Kipnis, assistant professor, Ohio State University; Rosalind Krauss, professor, Hunter College; and Anthony Vidler, professor, Princeton University. Tickets are \$8 for the public, \$7 for Museum members, and \$5 for students and are available at the information desk in the lobby of the Museum.

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\*PUBLICATION Deconstructivist Architecture by Philip Johnson and Mark Wigley. 104 pages. 153 black-and-white illustrations. Published by The Museum of Modern Art. Paperbound, \$17.95.

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For further information or photographic material, contact the Department of Public Information, 212/708-9750.

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DECONSTRUCTIVIST ARCHITECTURE

List of Architects and Projects in the Exhibition

Coop Himmelblau, Vienna  
Wolf D. Prix (b. 1942, Vienna)  
Helmut Swiczinsky (b. 1944, Poznan, Poland)

Rooftop Remodeling, Vienna, 1985

Apartment Building, Vienna, 1986

Skyline, Hamburg, 1985

Peter Eisenman (b. 1932, Newark, New Jersey; resides New York)

Biocenter for the University of Frankfurt, Frankfurt am Main, 1987

Frank O. Gehry (b. 1929, Toronto, Canada; resides Venice, California)

Gehry House, Santa Monica, 1978-88

Familian House, Santa Monica, 1978

Zaha M. Hadid (b. 1950, Baghdad, Iraq; resides London)

The Peak, Hong Kong, 1982

Rem Koolhaas (b. 1944, Rotterdam, The Netherlands)

Building and Tower, Rotterdam, 1982

Daniel Libeskind (b. 1946, Lodz, Poland; resides Milan)

City Edge, Berlin, 1987

Bernard Tschumi (b. 1944, Lausanne, Switzerland; resides New York)

Parc de La Villette, Paris, 1982-85