

# 'DOES THE ANGLE BETWEEN TWO WALLS HAVE A HAPPY ENDING?'

curated by Ishmael Randall-Weeks

DIANA AL-HADID, ALEXANDER APOSTOL, SALVATORE ARANCIO, ALEXANDRE ARRECHEA, ARMANDO ANDRADE TUDELA, TIM HYDE, ANDRE KOMATSU, NICOLA LOPEZ, ISHMAEL RANDALL-WEEKS, ANDREA SALA.

"All of us have our dreams to reassure us. Architecture is a stage set where we need to be at ease in order to perform. Fearing ourselves, we need our illusions to protect us, even if the protection takes the form of finials and cartouches, Corinthian columns and acanthus leaves. Modernism lacked mystery and emotion, was a little too frank about the limits of human nature and never prepared us for our eventual end. [...]

So, there is one place where modernism triumphs. As in the cases of the pyramids and the Taj Mahal, the Siegfried line and the Atlantic wall, death always calls on the very best architects."

*A Handful of Dust*, JG Ballard, *The Guardian Weekly*, Monday 20th March 2006

'Does the angle between two walls have a happy ending?' brings together twelve artists from varied discourses and backgrounds, whose work critically and conceptually reposition and re-contextualize formal histories of art, architecture and design in order to highlight intersections between the political, the poetic and the aesthetic. The title is taken from an advert placed by JG Ballard in *Ambit*, the legendary magazine he helped to edit in the 1960's, which blazed its own unique and often subversive trail through art, poetry and social commentary. The project is intended as a reflection on the urban landscape, its architecture and typography - within the legacy of modernism and its imprint on post-industrial production - as a contention and/or attraction that delineates actions and positions of inclusion and exclusion. To look at architecture - as social fabric or catalyst - is to look at a discipline within our society that has had a major role on the political, social and ideological changes that have marked the course of our lifetimes. While some of the artists in this project explore the potential of utopian ideas, others look towards a passing idealism of modernism (embodied in "a future that could have been" within a current view of modernism's crisis and demise). There are several crossovers and intersections among the artists' works: first the relationships of architecture and form to nature; second, the investigation of time and space within the history and processes of modernity; third, challenges of the nature of perception in the history of architecture, design and painting; and fourth, an exploration into public and domestic spaces through architecture and urban design with a specific relationship to social issues.

In the conceptually based approach of *Tim Hyde*, *Alexander Apostol* and *Armando Andrade* is an investigation into the relationship between physical space, time and perception, particularly within the history and processes of modernity. Within the work of *Apostol* a care is taken to look towards the city as a place to view the side effects of modernity (particularly Latin America as a case study that is symptomatic of its potential for malfunction or dysfunction) and to explore the darker sides of progress where utopias have gone awry. Similarly, *Andrade Tudela* chooses to question the conceptual and formal presuppositions of modernity by creating heterogeneous spaces and environments that are defined by an architectural, geographical and even social viewpoint. Meanwhile, *Tim Hyde* uses modernist architecture as a backdrop in order to render visible the relation between space and the physical interactions they enable so as to challenge interpretation and question the nature of representation.

The tension between order and disorder in the works of *Nicola Lopez*, *Salvatore Arancio* and *Diana Al-Hadid* are both beautifully evocative and deeply disquieting. Where their works intertwine is in the observation of historical representation as well as architecture as metaphor (often times altering and turning it upside-down or inside-out) to reflect on current fragilities and chaos in the world. Where *Al-Hadid* makes seemingly impossible constructions that evoke feelings of instability and unrest within concepts of architecture as labyrinth, *Arancio* chooses rather to deal with the suspension of the real and the fictional through an emphasis on construction and staging to suggest, in a sense, a human inefficiency against nature. *Lopez*, on the other hand, uses architecture and structure to create images of landscapes that struggle against themselves often spinning beyond control or comprehension.

*Andrea Sala* challenges the nature of perception, within an interest in the history of architecture, design and painting. *Sala's* fascination with the world of design and architecture pays a sort of tribute to the mysterious and daily forms that slowly deposit themselves into our visual memory. He seeks out a different potentiality inside an object, and in a sense, captures a new functionality in those objects.

*Alexandre Arrechea*, *Andre Komatsu* and *Ishmael Randall-Weeks* have all a physical and conceptual approach to drawing and construction that mix a profound interest in both public and domestic spaces with reference to specific architectural models and social contexts. Where *Komatsu* is fascinated by construction and destruction procedures that are visible in his collecting of trash and rubble from the streets and then attributing a new functionality to those materials, *Randall Weeks* rather prefers to transform them into functional building blocks that serve to question societies advancements through design, architecture and the sciences. Similarly, *Arrechea's* work is rooted in the scrutiny of power structures that visually are manifested in constructions of displays of surreal architecture, as he creates a theater of the absurd, where the intellectual heritage of socialism and its consequent contradictions are at play.