6. The Scarpa exhibition was supported by the Veneto region in collaboration with the city of Venice, the province of Venice, and the General Management for the Quality and Protection of the Landscape, Architecture and Contemporary Art of the Ministry for the Heritage and Cultural Activities. It was designed by the Andrea Palladio International Center for Architecture Studies (CISA Andrea Palladio). Curators were Guido Beltramini and Alessandro Scandurra.

7. The Commissioner for the Fehn exhibition was Eva Madshus, assisted by Martin Dietrichson, Ulf Grønvold, Anne Marit Lunde, and Gennaro Postiglione.

8. The building had earlier been called the Palazzo Gussoni-Cavalli. It was largely reconstructed in the early twentieth century by Camillo Boito, the Director of the Accademia di Brera in Milan. It is now the home of the Istituto Veneto di Scienze Lettere ed Arti.

**Between Earth and Heaven: The Architecture of John Lautner**

Hammer Museum, Los Angeles
13 July–12 October 2008

The Lighthouse, Centre for Architecture, Design and the City, Glasgow
19 March–26 July 2009

Wolfsonian—Florida International University, Miami Beach
15 October 2009–17 January 2010

Palm Springs Art Museum
20 February–23 May 2010

Organized by Nicholas Olsberg and Frank Escher in conjunction with the recently formed Department of Architecture and Design at the Getty Research Institute and the John Lautner Foundation, Between Earth and Heaven: The Architecture of John Lautner has been largely drawn from the John Lautner Archives, which were donated to the Getty Research Institute by the John Lautner Foundation in 2007. This generous gift has made many of Lautner’s writings, papers, and drawings accessible for the first time to scholars and the public, allowing the curators to undertake the first major critical assessment of this important architect’s work. A handsome catalog draws upon more of this rich archival material, allowing Olsberg and Escher in their essays to evaluate in more depth what they see as Lautner’s achievement.

John Lautner, Jr. (1911–1994) was born in Marquette, Michigan, where he was nurtured by parents steeped in German philosophy, American Transcendental thought, and Nordic and Indian mythology, and who also shared a deep interest in art and architecture. Lautner joined the Taliesin Fellowship in Wisconsin in 1933, where he absorbed many of Frank Lloyd Wright’s ideas about architecture and society. Following employment with Wright, and later in defense-related construction during the war and collaborations with Los Angeles architects Whitney Smith and Douglas Honnold, he struck out on his own in 1947.

Thus began the first stage of his career, which is amply documented through drawings, photographs, and models in the first gallery of the exhibition, which covers the years 1947 through 1960. During this postwar era Lautner, like many young Los Angeles architects, focused heavily on the problem of the small single-family residence. This exploration includes the Gantvoort, Carling, Jacobsen, and Polin houses, all designed in 1947, and all of which share the architect’s early fascination with innovative roof structures of either steel or wood, employed to shelter free and flexible plans that often open dramatically to the Southern California landscape. Lautner deployed similar structural and planning strategies in his designs for half a dozen drive-in restaurants and automobile showrooms that he produced during this same period. A series of shadow and light studies for the Lincoln Zephyr Showroom in Glendale (ca. 1948) reveal the dual objectives of these expansive structural systems for his commercial work: to open vistas of the interiors and their merchandise to the passing automobile while simultaneously sheltering the contents from the harsh Southern California sun.

In his elegant design for the Desert Hot Springs Motel (1947), Lautner translated the wood and canvas vocabulary of Wright’s Ocotillo Desert Camp (1929), and the later Taliesin West drafting room (1937 on), into thin Gunite and glass walls combined with steel I-beams, whose 45- and 60-degree angles echo the desert terrain in which this only partially-realized complex is set. Small exterior gardens and walls separate the units, which are exca-
crete roof-shells, an approach that would experiment with curved and folded con-

and the sheltering structural system that are hallmarks of his work.

Scattered on the outer edges of the galleries are six new large-scale models of key projects that have been cut away to reveal interior spaces and also to impart some sense of the views that would be seen from inside. The views themselves are represented as abstract gray panoramas on the gallery walls, which are also washed in pale pastel light so as to dissolve the perimeter of the galleries. Projected above the models are a series of short color films (produced by Murray Grigo) that move the viewer into, through, and around the buildings, panning in and soaring over the structures in an almost dizzying and disorienting, yet profoundly poetic manner. The overall intent of the installation is to produce ambiguous spatial experiences akin to the physical experience of much of Lautner’s own work.

While there had been earlier exhibitions devoted to the work of John Lautner, including one at the Schindler House and Studio in West Hollywood (1985) and another that circulated to venues in Vienna, Chicago, Vancouver, New York, and Cambridge, Massachusetts (1991–92), Between Earth and Heaven is the first critical presentation of a significant and carefully selected sample of his sketches, drawings, and models. As an initial attempt to understand this architect’s intentions, it has been tightly focused on the spatial experience of the spaces he cre-
Living under the Crescent Moon: Domestic Culture in the Arab World

Vitra Design Museum, Berlin
21 July 2003–18 January 2004

IVAM, Valencia
17 June–22 August 2004

Kunsthall Rotterdam
23 September 2004–9 January 2005

MART, Rovereto
11 June–18 September 2005

Arquerias de Nuevos Ministerios, Madrid
2 December 2005–22 January 2006

TCDC Thailand Creative and Design Centre, Bangkok
23 November 2006–4 February 2007

National Museum of Singapore
23 March–27 May 2007

Ex Cathédrale du Sacré Coeur, Casablanca
16 November–8 December 2007

Vitra Design Museum, Weil am Rhein
23 February–31 August 2008

Fewer than eighteen hours before I arrived at the entrance to the Vitra Design Museum in the German town of Weil am Rhein, just north of Basel, I had been to an IKEA in the heart of the country’s northwestern rustbelt. Some of the immigrant and working-class customers were there precisely because their accents, clothing, or skin color made them suspect that they might not be treated graciously at the kinds of shops that stock Vitra furniture (the Vitra company is a major sponsor of the Vitra Foundation, which runs the Design Museum, but the Foundation is legally distinct from the company). Despite its association with social progress, modern design is often used in contemporary Germany to define social and intellectual status, to separate “cultured” Germans from those whom they view as not like themselves. At the ticket counter I found a German couple literally screaming that they had traveled two hours to the Frank Gehry–designed temple of avant-garde design to see chairs, not the exhibit Living under the Crescent Moon: Domestic Culture in the Arab World. The woman’s cropped gray hair, elegant black tunic, and beautifully crafted silver brooch almost certainly identified them as architects. They got their money back but not their dignity.

Should they choose to return in 2010, they will be able to view the Vitra company’s entire product line in a new showroom by Herzog and de Meuron, currently under construction only a few hundred feet from the Design Museum. Astonishingly, neither the company nor the foundation has turned before to local talent. Instead they were both Gehry and Tadao Ando’s first European clients. The campus, one of the world’s great showcases of contemporary design, also includes factories by Gehry, Nicholas Grimshaw, and Alvaro Siza, and pavilions by Buckminster Fuller and Jean Prouvé. Had the angry architects been able to endure a ninety-minute wait in the café, below models of vernacular Arab dwellings as well as Gehry’s convoluted ceiling profiles, they would have had the pleasure of one of the best architectural tours I have ever taken.

Although it is almost impossible to walk down the street of any German-speaking city and not see people whose families come from Africa and Asia, it is rare to have their presence addressed within the walls of major art institutions. As one of the most important European organizers of traveling design exhibitions, the Vitra Design Museum is to be commended for being such a noteworthy exception, in this case in collaboration with the Institute Valencià d’Art Modern and the Kunsthall Rotterdam.

The beautifully installed and visually entrancing exhibit had but one major limitation. By focusing in turn on nomads, village dwellers, the inhabitants of precolonial cities, and finally on the modern city, it made contemporary Arab life more exotic than it probably usually is. For the curators, the tent, although occupied today by only a small minority, remains the paradigmatic Arab dwelling. Here, because each object within the dwelling as