architectural models, mostly from the Guerrero region in southwest Mexico. These objects, generally made of stone and occasionally precious greenstone, were created around 500 BCE. Their minimalist forms showed the basic shapes of houses and sometimes associated figures in seated or reclining positions. The well-carved, polished Mezcala greenstone house models were probably valued by the Aztec, who used them as offerings at the Templo Mayor in Tenochtitlan, the capital city of the Aztec culture between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries.

A Chimú architectural model that was included in the exhibition portrayed a ritual performance in the palace courtyards at Chan Chan, the capital city of the Chimú culture that flourished between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. Inside the courtyard, the ceremony was narrated by the aligned positions of the human figures, each of whom carried a specific musical instrument, a *chicha* (a fermented maize beer) container, and body paraphernalia of hats, shirts, and loincloths decorated with small inlaid *Spondylus* (thorny oyster) shells and mother-of-pearl. These figures, located on the lowest plaza in this maquette, were described as servers who presented offerings to mummies, which were located in the higher position. This organization communicated a ritual hierarchy, including two carefully wrapped mummies located on the highest pedestals on either side of the model. The clear provenance of this object from the archaeological excavations in the Huaca de la Luna site also helped to explain its possible significance.

*Design for Eternity* succeeded in its aim of introducing the daily life, religious activities, and social systems of ancient American cultures through miniature architectural models. Carefully orchestrated through the selection of the objects, their organization in the gallery space, and the inclusion of thoughtful didactic resources, the exhibition communicated its message to all levels of audience. The object labels, in particular, were noteworthy for not just naming the objects but also describing their imagery. For example, the label for a “Bottle, Throne with Figures” from the Chimú culture identified the object’s function as a vessel while highlighting the importance of the fact that it was shaped into the form of a throne. An other important resource included by the curator was a video addressing the special function of Lambayeque ceramic vessels as whistling musical instruments. In the video, an animated sequence clearly revealed how the vessels, created between 800 and 1300 CE, made whistling sounds with the movement of air. Several additional artifacts also complemented the architectural miniatures, including two photographs of the site of Chan Chan (taken by Edward Ranney in 1942) and two Chimú shirts made out of camelid fiber and cotton. Displayed in connection with two Chimú architectural models, these items helped viewers understand the decorative motifs on the surfaces of the models and contextualize them within the material culture of full-size architecture and clothing.

The exhibition gave general audiences a rich education in pre-Columbian culture, life, funerary practices, and religious rituals, all reflected through the singular theme of small-scale architectural models. The exhibition catalogue is also a valuable resource, presenting advanced scholarship on these unique and important objects.

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**Related Publication**


**Architectural Master Drawings from the Albertina**

Tchoban Foundation Museum for Architectural Drawing, Berlin  
12 March–10 July 2016

It began, quite rightly, in Rome. Consisting of thirty-eight meticulously selected works from the architectural drawings collection of the Albertina in Vienna, the exhibition filled both of the Tchoban Foundation’s exhibition rooms. The bringing together of exquisite, and in some cases paradigmatic, individual works amounted to an exhibition that was itself an artistic achievement. It began with a delicate study of a Gothic tower on parchment from Pisanello’s workshop. Although this work originated in Rome as part of a sketchbook, as an ideal study and as the product of an international court culture, it was not bound to any particular place. Next was a drawing by Maarten van Heemskerck completed about a hundred years later, immediately after the Sack of Rome, the greatest crisis of the Roman High Renaissance. With his view of Saint Peter’s Square, Heemskerck, using a sharp perspective, plunges down into the very soil of the Eternal City, offering a thoroughly down-to-earth angle on two epoch-making—and unfinished—architectural projects: Pius II’s Benediction Loggia and the loggias commissioned by Julius II (Figure 1).

The opposite wall displayed an anonymous pan of the Pantheon stemming from Sangallo’s circle and an impressionistic perspective view of the south side of the Colosseum by Giannaria Pomedello. This pairing showed not only the buildings that had the greatest impact on early modern Europe but also the broad formal possibilities of architectural drawing in the Renaissance, ranging from informal plan sketches with simple annotations and measurements to strikingly composed vedute.

Further drawings offered highly distinctive angles on the reception of Roman High Renaissance culture. A 1534 design by Giulio Romano for the Porta del Te in Mantua represented the immediate transmission within Italy of the ideas of the first generation of Renaissance architects, while the nearly contemporaneous drawing of illusionistic façade murals for the Nuremberg house of the patrician Stark vom Röckenhof family represented the unorthodox hybrids emerging from the Renaissance culture of northern Europe. Two drawings by Francesco Borromini of the church of Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza—a plan with a synoptic projection of the dome, and an elevation of the lantern—are among the most important fruits of the renewed seventeenth-century appreciation of the formal vocabulary of the antique. Close to seven hundred Borromini drawings form one of the core collections of the Albertina, and these two works, displaying multiple layers of the design process, alone justified a visit to the exhibition.

After this brilliant prelude, the rest of the first room served as a demonstration both of the gravitational pull of the Roman epicenter and of the wide spectrum of objects represented in architectural drawings. Sketches by Gian Lorenzo
Bernini for the Saint Peter’s Baldacchino, fantasy compositions of vases by Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach, designs for perspectival wall and ceiling decorations by Andrea Pozzo and Johann Anton Gumpp, interior views of Saint Peter’s by Giovanni Nicolò Servandoni and of Saint Paul’s in London by Robert Trevitt, a stage design by Antonio Galli Bibiena, and finally the design for the renovation of the Royal Palace in Innsbruck showed the unrestrained creative force deriving from antique vocabulary through the seventeenth and into the middle of the eighteenth century. However, at the end of this period, works like the depiction of the Florence Cathedral campanile by Ferdinando Ruggieri and the sketch for the façade of the Milan Cathedral by Luigi Vanvitelli demonstrated an awareness of historical stylistic diversity and the autonomous value of Gothic architecture. This historical relativism would soon spell the end of classical architecture. Concluding the first room of the exhibition was a masterfully colored presentation drawing by Giacomo Quarenghi for the new St. Petersburg Stock Exchange of 1783; this work, while depicting a contemporary architectural project, also evoked a monument from a past age.

The fractured relationship with history continued in the second room. An entrancing drawing by Jacob Wilhelm Mechau, which transplanted Johann Gottfried Klinsky’s design for a Schiller monument into an arcadian landscape, and the design by Johann Ferdinand Hetzendorf von Hohenberg for a replica of the original Habsburg Castle in the Laxenburg Park already seemed to offer a nostalgic look back to a distant past, especially as displayed alongside modern temples of the nineteenth century: the 1853 interior perspective of a projected glass exhibition hall for Vienna and Otto Wagner’s 1891 competition entry for the Berlin Cathedral. Wagner’s drawing, the inclusion of which was in honor of the location of the exhibition in Berlin, represented the crisis of traditional building types in a time when sacred architectural elements like the pediment and the dome had long been adopted by exhibition halls and railway stations. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the scale drawing, increasingly overloaded with rich detail and ornament, seemed to have reached its limits, and the gestural hand-drawn sketch developed. The architect returned to drawing. At the same time, painters discovered the modern rhythm and pattern of architecture, as shown by the juxtaposition of Egon Schiele’s tiny, beautifully drawn Umfriedete Häuser with Adolf Loos’s axonometric of a villa.

The two ends of the spectrum of twentieth-century representational styles were clearly laid out in what followed. Frank Lloyd Wright’s prickly, angular 1923 elevation of a house for Dorothy Martin Foster, meticulously rendered on graph paper, was followed by a 1930 drawing of an organic curved megastructure for a utopian New Marseilles, by Lois Welzenbacher, dashed off on a torn sheet of paper. What could be shown as the exhibition moved further into the twentieth century was, of course, more fragmentary, reflecting new practices and processes. While ever larger numbers of unexhibitable sets of plans were being produced because of the increasing use of automated technologies, the small “idea” sketch from the hand of the architect became a significant artistic format. Often such sketches no longer related to particular places—for example, Frederick Kiesler’s ballpoint pen study Endless House or Hans Hollein’s Bauanlage in colored pencils. It was not possible for the organizers to foresee that the last object in the exhibition, Zaha Hadid’s presentation drawing for her buildings on the Danube canal at Spittelau in Vienna—rendered on a black background, simultaneously dynamically deconstructivist and monumental—would become an homage to the architect, who died during the run of the exhibition.
The Albertina has one of the most significant holdings of architectural drawings in the world, and the drawings are seldom exhibited outside Vienna. There were a few years during which, under the influence of postmodernism, public interest in history and heritage grew, and a series of large exhibitions devoted to the history of architectural representation took place—examples in the German-speaking world include Architektur aus der Albertina (Munich, 1987), Bernini to Piranesi: Roman Architectural Drawings of the Baroque (Stuttgart, 1993), and Architectural Models of the Renaissance: The Harmony of Building from Alberti to Michelangelo (Venice, 1993; Berlin, 1994). But architectural drawings are now most often seen in small one- or two-room exhibitions.

Thus it is all the more to be welcomed that Sergei Tchoban has, with the Tchoban Foundation, created a space specifically for changing exhibitions with a focused format. The small but spectacular exhibition building offers, with its discreet lighting and human-scale spaces, an intimate atmosphere fostering direct dialogue with the drawings on display. While digital formats are becoming indispensable to architectural historical research and dissemination, it is only through such exhibitions that we are introduced to the hand of the artist. These exhibitions are rare pearls, and they must remain so for reasons of conservation and finance. The opportunities they offer for direct encounters with the drawings are precious gifts.

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Related Publication

Yona Friedman: Architecture mobile = Architecture vivante
Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, Paris
11 May–6 November 2016

The French Hungarian architect Yona Friedman has suffered an odd historiographical fate. He is known, to quote Archigram’s Peter Cook, as a “Daddy of the megastructure” and a leader of an international network of experimental urbanists in the 1960s and 1970s. He is acknowledged as a pioneer in the theorization of key design concepts such as mobility, adaptability, and improvisation, and he is lauded as an influential progenitor of participatory design. But these plaudits appear mostly in footnotes, interviews, blog posts, and passing asides. Friedman remains an “architect’s architect,” receiving scant attention from historians. The recent retrospective Yona Friedman: Architecture mobile = Architecture vivante, held at the Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine in Paris, attempted to rectify this state of affairs and introduce Friedman to a broader audience.

Curated by Caroline Cros, the show glossed Friedman’s biography and his major projects. Filling one large gallery, it was arranged roughly thematically, with walls dedicated, respectively, to architectural works on paper, models, and artwork made by Friedman in the 1960s to decorate his home and studio. The final wall displayed a series of philosophical comic strips that Friedman created in the 1990s. The exhibition was augmented by interviews with Friedman and documentation of his career accessible through television monitors equipped with stools and headphones. Books by Friedman were available to visitors, and his Instagram account was live streamed, creating a casual environment that encouraged sustained engagement.

A central aim of the exhibition was to argue for a wider acknowledgment of Friedman’s place in the canon. The first vitrine encountered upon entering displayed ephemera tying Friedman to well-known figures such as Le Corbusier and Moshe Safdie. Implicitly challenging the Anglo-American narrative constructed by Reyner Banham, the show’s wall texts quoted praise by stalwarts of the Parisian avant-garde, such as Pierre Restany, who featured Friedman alongside the likes of Duchamp and Warhol in his famed “red book” of criticism (on display), and Michel Ragon, who declared Friedman’s highly influential manifesto Architecture mobile (1958), from which the exhibition took its name, to be as consequential as CIAM’s Athens Charter.

In his manifesto, Friedman advocates letting the people who use spaces design them. He calls on architects to cede aesthetic authority, redefining urbanists as technical facilitators of self-planning. Friedman, who has built little, explores this egalitarian reversal of roles between users and designers in more than six decades’ worth of publications, drawings, and models, a sampling of which was on display at the Cité de l’Architecture. This commitment was most clearly apparent in the wall of models, which was the highlight of the exhibition. More than forty rarely seen models, drawn from the holdings of the French National Foundation for Contemporary Art, allowed viewers to trace the development of Friedman’s thinking. They showed a continuous search for ways to facilitate improvisation and for ever-simpler building techniques, reducing the need for expertise. Their quick and loose quality conveyed Friedman’s open-ended participatory process. The diversity of the chosen models effectively demonstrated that mobile architecture is not a monolithic project and not—as is often presumed—synonymous with Friedman’s best-known project, Ville Spatial (Spatial City). Rather, for Friedman, Spatial City is just one among many possible ways to democratize planning.

That said, Spatial City is by far the most influential of Friedman’s projects, something the show acknowledged by opening with an array of striking collages, photocollages, and drawings visualizing spatial cities, which are essentially massive space frames hovering above cities or bodies of water. They are meant to be utilitarian frameworks that contain and support self-planned environments, freeing people from the structural concerns that keep them dependent on professionals. Whether taken literally as design proposals or viewed as evocative illustrations of Friedman’s philosophy, these images marked the postwar architectural imagination and galvanized the birth of megastructure.

An interesting aspect of Friedman’s work is his early call for preserving traditional built environments, as could be seen in the exhibition in a presentation drawing for the 1971 Pompidou Center competition proposing a space frame above Les Halles, sparing the historic market whose subsequent demolition was so controversial. By turning urban sprawl vertical, Friedman aimed to shield cities from modernism’s appetite for tabula rasa, a point he