

Introduction

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The theme for this year's Young Architects competition probed the effect of time on architecture's assertion of style, methods of assembly, and relationship to program. It was conceived by members of the League Prize committee, inspired by their observations that "increasingly architecture may be described as having variable temporal dimensions," and that both the stone temple and the party tent fit under the label "architecture." Along with factors ranging from untested materials to durability compromised by fast-track construction, the committee challenged entrants to consider whether permanence has come to play a less significant role in the definition of architecture. The theme encouraged entrants to examine the implications and relevance of designing permanent structures in an unstable environment, as well as to speculate about the type or types of new architecture that "will continue to define space and people's lives for generations to come."

The six winning firms addressed traditional and transitory sites, demonstrated new methodological and formal approaches to the design of temporary and lasting structures alike, and challenged the very meaning of permanence. The annual League Prize exhibition, held in the Sheila C. Johnson Design Center at Parsons The New School for Design galleries, provided each firm with an opportunity to design a site-specific installation. For some, this meant fusing a collection of individual projects into an interrelated display field; others focused on documenting a small number of past projects, often from multiple perspectives and in different modes of representation.

The Open Workshop's group of design explorations, which has been termed *Malleable Monuments*, tested how architecture can be empowered within the evolving, fluctuating, and indeterminate conditions of the city, its public sphere, and its ecological context. For the exhibition, Principal Neeraj Bhatia suspended four layered "geologic" models within a tensile portico structure, referencing a monumental archetype and at the same time destabilizing its reading through the lightness and malleability of its materiality. Detailed taxonomic drawings classified his projects into four categories—frameworks, living archives, articulated surfaces, and rewiring

states—within the portico. For Bhatia, the projects share a goal of choreographing and reconciling how human and environmental subjects and their ephemeral and often contradictory characteristics have the capacity to continuously recompose a permanent work.

Invariations, an ongoing series of studies by Pelletier de Fontenay, documents an ongoing exploration of architectural concepts generated by means of simple geometric and spatial operations. *Invariants*, as defined by Yves de Fontenay and Hubert Pelletier, are “essential components that preexist project-specific elements.” A stable underlying concept—that “all architecture plays with the constant and fundamental notions of form, structure, movement, proportion, and light”—is placed “in opposition to ever-changing conditions such as site, program, budget, client, regulations, and so forth.” For the exhibition, the team set out, on a gray limestone tabletop, a series of pamphlets that outlined the generative system for each element. Accompanying models gave form to a spatial system in which the invariants interact to create a coherent structure of matter and space.

Ultramoderne displayed four recent projects, including a pavilion for the Chicago Architecture Biennial, constructed in 2015, and a proposal for the MoMA PS1 Young Architects Program competition. Each design was represented in three modes: models, drawings, and photographs. All were purposely abstract “in the hope that any one fixed image of a project [would] be instantly complicated by its neighbors, echoing the simultaneity that buildings necessarily take on.” Principals Aaron Forrest and Yasmin Vobis’s approach was instigated in response to an assessment of the constraints of architectural exhibitions: an exhibition, “whether of an idea or [of] the final built thing,” is a “second-order phenomenon.” The duo perceive these constraints as a liberating force, one that can provide multiple readings of any given built work, and describe the material effect as “hovering somewhere on the spectrum between solid, analytical fact, abstract concept, and material quality, each suggesting its own parallel mode of inhabitation.”

Inside Out, designed by G3 Arquitectos, addresses the interior of the house as one of its fundamental aspects. Juan Alfonso Garduño Jardón’s analysis, derived from the ideas of Juhani Pallasmaa, posits the interior as “the space through which individuals and families relate to the world, accommodate themselves in space and time, and gather and compose themselves.” Jardón created two sculptural pieces to explore how light and matter can be employed abstractly in the construction of

an interiorized experience. He cast the first piece in bronze, embedded it into a tapered concrete column, and set the column into a wooden bench. After completing the composition, Jardón decided to cast a second, freestanding piece to "reflect the external aspect of the interior study."

Neck of the Moon is the culminating work in the *Geostories* series of projects by DESIGN EARTH. In an epoch Rania Ghosn and El Hadi Jazairy define by its climatic risks and planetary-scale uncertainties, the project provides a manifesto on the environmental imagination. For the partners, the prefix *geo-* "engages Earth as a grand question of design, [rendering] visible the unaccounted-for spaces of environmental externalities." The root *-stories* "channels these matters into geographic fictions on technological systems." In a sequence of nine visionary drawings, a video, and an accompanying publication, *Two Cosmograms*, the *Neck of the Moon* proposal invited viewers to imagine a world in which compacted space trash grows into Laika, Earth's cyborg second moon.

NEMESTUDIO composed a grid of nine drawings that inserted the office's most recent projects into a single, continuous imaginary territory. According to Mete Sonmez and Neyran Turan, each project gained "a new and a slightly different specificity and resolution in the fictional territory of the drawing," including new details, design features, programs, and modified scales; the projects also developed novel relationships because of their spatial adjacency. Seven volumetric models below the drawings exemplified the "elemental language" and typological variations of the office's ongoing study *Six Objects with Thirty-Six Plans*. Both the drawings and the models reveal the studio's interest in the idea of the slightly "(un)familiar," that is, a subtle aesthetic tension between reality and abstraction in the distorted space of architectural representation.

Although each firm's installation challenged traditional narratives of place, tangibly expressing the tension between solidity and temporality, the overall impression of the exhibition was surprisingly cohesive. This accord may be attributed, in part, to certain shared qualities threading the work, notably an emphasis on the basic elements of architecture from materials to volumetric form. These shared features address how and where the work is composed and deployed—whether set in firmly grounded sites, sites of transition, or sites of the imagination—and bridge the relationship between architecture and time.



