

**A** AGAINST  
ALL  
ODDS  
PROJECT

**A**  
**O**

ETHICS / AESTHETICS

**ARCHITECTURE, DESIGN & ART ACT NOW!**

"We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them"  
(A. Einstein)

## Press Release

May 2011

Following on the first international Conference of the AAO project: Ethics / Aesthetics, held at the Athens School of Fine Arts, the six Academic Workshops currently under way and Athens Here and Now with interactive works in downtown Athens, **the AAO project organizes a second international Conference, a main exhibition and two parallel events at the Pireos St Annex of the Benaki Museum.**

The first conference explored ethics and aesthetics as a broader platform in terms of its theoretical foundation and the spatial translations of this relationship in the new spatial and curatorial practices, in artworks and in architectural, urban and topological applications.

The **second Conference**, to be held on **June 6 and 7, 2011 at the amphitheater of the Benaki Museum, Pireos St Annex**, will present the projects of the participants in the main exhibition, the inventive strategies they adopted and their works' media and objectives in an attempt to assess today's pressing social and ecological needs and the ways they are addressed.

The participants are:

Cameron Sinclair/Architecture for Humanity, John Peterson/Public Architecture, Santiago Cirugeda/Recetas Urbanas, and Anny Platanioti/Alexandros Tombazis Architects.

Mauricio Corbalan & Teddy Cruz, Ross Evans/Worldbike, Matt Passmore & Teresa Aguilera/Rebar, Corinne Matesich/Futurefarmers, Eelko Moorer, and Joan Heemskerk & Dirk Paesmans/Jodi.

The **main exhibition** of the AAO project: Ethics / Aesthetics will be held at the **Benaki Museum, Pireos St Annex from June 6 to July 31, 2011**. The exhibition is structured to explore the impact of the new participatory processes on the field of spatial practices and the points of convergence and differentiation between aesthetic form and ideological background with regard to self-reference and identity.

Especially since the attacks on the Twin Towers, architects, designers and artists have attempted to re-establish their social and political role. An inevitable stress and confusion ensued regarding the evaluation criteria, since the familiar principles about form and functionality were either combined or rejected in favor of the design profession's service to society and the underserved—although some people say this is a vague notion. Individual resistance gave way to collective action. The main exhibition classifies the projects according to their aesthetic and ethical dimension, hence it presents works which deal with these issues equitably, or they emphasize one side against the other. Can Architecture effectively challenge and/or change social organization?

In the first thematic unit, **Activism. Groups with vision**, the projects activate strategies that go beyond the disciplinary confines to achieve deep and enduring change. They rise above innovations in form, materials or technology, and even above the final outcome of the design (space or object), to include complex and sophisticated tactics to address the complexity of contemporary social, political, and environmental challenges.

Participants:

- TEDDY CRUZ, USA, architects
- ARCHITECTURE FOR HUMANITY, USA, architects
- DARRYL SMITH/LAURIE LAZER, USA, artists
- REBAR, USA, designers/ artists
- NOMADIC ARCHITECTURE NETWORK, Greece, architects

In the section **Society & Aesthetics** the works espouse innovative strategies to tackle urban, social and environmental issues while placing emphasis on the final aesthetic outcome as well; the latter reflects the philosophy behind the process but retains also an autonomous aesthetic value. The languages adopted for communication range from a 'makeshift' modernist idiom, with an implicit sanitizing effect on its users, to an 'unfamiliar' dialect.

Participants:

- PUBLIC ARCHITECTURE, USA, architects
- RECETAS URBANAS, Spain, architects
- FUTUREFARMERS, USA, artist
- WORLDBIKE, USA, designer
- PPT\_TLab, Greece, architect

In the works exhibited as part of the section **Identity. Professional Ethics**, aesthetics symbolizes the ethical aspect. Architects adopted a cohesive and consistent philosophy of ecological design and secured international acclaim by putting together a consistent professional identity. Designers, on the other hand, approached this as an intellectual exercise and went for

simplicity, sensitivity and low cost, producing objects that are durable, reusable and with a modesty that makes them emblematic of political correctness in design.

Participants:

- DROOG, Netherlands, designer
- SARAH WIGGLESWORTH, UK, architect
- ALEXANDROS TOMBAZIS, Greece, architect
- EMECO-THE COCA-COLA COMPANY, USA, designers

The works in the **Action–Reaction** section eschew political correctness altogether and adopt an attitude of reaction to (consumerist) society, rejection of the expected and a sense of provocation in the Dadaist tradition. The ultimate question is, can Architecture be effectively provocative?

This section presents the work of pioneering architects, designers and artists whose environmentally friendly creations retain their expressly ecological nature while at the same time subverting the conventions of everyday life through alienating gestures.

Participants:

1. DO-HO SUH, Korea, artist
2. FRANK HAVERMANS, Netherlands, artist
3. JASON MILLER, USA, designer
4. EELKO MOORER, UK/Netherlands, designer
5. JODI, Netherlands/Belgium, artists

Opposition to the prevailing sociopolitical order is a common denominator among many works. However, in a certain way it is precisely the global macro-structures of the capitalist way of production that provoke micro-structural resistances.

In the exhibition, a number of activists have chosen to employ a corporate hierarchy in their group and others a communication language that borrows its beat from the mass media. Other teams have chosen the existing art system, including gallery spaces, to disseminate their works. Some creators have opted for a market-oriented yet socially and environmentally responsible method to promote their profile. Finally, some works stay at the margins of market-driven production and remain in small commissions, in snatches or in early phases of their designers' paths.

## **Parallel Exhibitions**

### **Slow Down Rooms**

Curated by Iris Kritikou, this parallel exhibition presents emerging Greek artists who adopt handmade approaches and experiment with various materials as they focus on the idea of recycling and create installations inspired by the specific exhibition sites. *"The idea of an artistic project on 'artists' rooms' explores the unexpected aspects—the prevailing stereotypes but also the fluid components—of a three-dimensional space which can be approached and reconstituted using alternative or makeshift means. ..."* Iris Kritikou

Participants:

Marios Angelos Voutsinas  
Penny Gheka & Apostolos Papageorgiou  
Georgia Gremouti  
Vangelis Theodoridis  
Eleni Karayanni  
Panos Kombis  
Elena Papadimitriou  
Christos Simatos  
Dimitris Skouroyannis  
Amalia Stavroulaki

**Athens Here and Now**

This second parallel exhibition presents in six installations the process and the outcomes of the six academic workshops of the AAO project, that dealt with the current pressing urban and social issues in the city of Athens. Through the academic workshops, ethics acquires the form of strategies and actions from the field of visual arts and design to be implemented in downtown Athens – a place with challenging, pressing needs as well as an intense symbolism. The various proposals constitute small contributory gestures to society by means of collective actions which involve and motivate the entire social spectrum. The installations will be designed and curated by the instructors and participants of each workshop.

Participants:

Parsons The New School for Design, New York  
Université de Paris 8, CITU Research of Paragraph Laboratory  
National Technical University of Athens, School of Architecture  
University of Thessaly, Department of Architecture  
The Athens School of Fine Arts, Postgraduate Program on Digital Art Media

All actions are based on a model of expanded collaboration within a network of professionals, public and private bodies, educational institutions and museums.

The AAO project provides no certainties. On the contrary, its principles call upon us to a collective engagement so as to contribute to the resolution of our crucial, challenging problems and urge us to go from idle contemplation to thinking through synergy.

The AAO: Ethics / Aesthetics project is organized under the auspices of the **Hellenic Ministry for the Environment, Energy & Climate Change**, the **Hellenic Ministry for Culture & Tourism**, the **United Nations' Development Program (UNDP)**, the **US Embassy in Athens**, the **City of Athens Tourism and Economic Development Company (ATEDCo)**, the **Technical Chamber of Greece**, the **Society of Graduate Architects-Panhellenic Architects' Association (SADAS-PEA)** and the **Hellenic Institute of Architecture (EIA)**.

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## **6 June – 31 July 2011**

Main exhibition – Parallel exhibitions  
Ground floor, Benaki Museum, Pireos St Annex, Athens  
Official opening: 6 June 2011, 20:30

## **Monday 6 & Tuesday 7 June 2011, 17:00**

2<sup>nd</sup> Conference  
Amphitheater, Benaki Museum, Pireos St Annex, Athens

## **Benaki Museum**

Pireos St Annex

Pireos 138 & Andronikou St

Opening hours:

Wednesday, Thursday, Sunday 10:00 – 18:00

Friday & Saturday 10:00 – 22:00

Monday & Tuesday closed

tel. no. 210 3453111

AAO project

Concept – Curator-at-large:

**Lina Stergiou**

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The AAO project is organized by

