

MAK

FOR ART + ARCHITECTURE, L.A.

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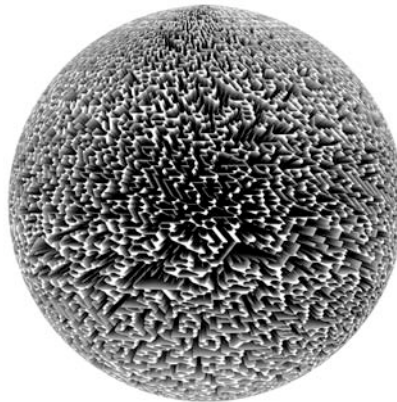
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Karl S. Chu, *Planetary Automata, Zyx Series*  
From a series of black and white digital prints, 31 7/8" x 31 7/8"  
Courtesy of the Karl S. Chu

**MAK Center for Art & Architecture presents**

**THE GEN(H)OME PROJECT**  
**October 29, 2006 – February 18, 2007**

**Modernist Landmark Transformed into Genetics Lab**  
**by Artists, Architects**

**\* Free MAK Day Opening includes Talks, Tours and More \***

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(West Hollywood, September 26, 2006) As part of its ongoing mission to facilitate and advance cultural innovation, the MAK Center for Art Architecture presents *The Gen(H)ome Project*, an exhibition exploring the integration of recent developments in information technologies and the natural sciences — especially genetics — into cutting-edge architecture. Interacting with one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's most renowned architectural experiments, the Schindler House, exhibition projects offer "genetic modifications" of the home's structure, interiors and grounds. Among the many scientific methodologies referenced are nanotechnology, climatology, cell physiology, astronomy, robotics and algorithms.

*Gen(H)ome* will open with a free day of public tours, lectures and presentations, the annual MAK Day, Sunday, October 29, and remain on view through February 18, 2007. The exhibition is guest curated by Eran Neuman, Aaron Sprecher and Chandler Ahrens of Open Source Architecture, with MAK Center Director Kimberli Meyer. Participants include **Greg Lynn FORM, Karl S. Chu, servo, Marcos Novak, ocean D, Weathers - Sean Lally, Phillippe Rahm, Christa Sommerer and Laurent Mignonneau**, and **Open Source Architecture**. The exhibition will be accompanied by a podcast and catalogue detailing the projects, along with essays by Martin Bressani and Robert Jan van Pelt, Marie-Ange Brayer, Helen Furjàn and Peter Lloyd, Christopher Hight, Aaron Sprecher and Eran Neuman.

## Background

There is a long history of the arts incorporating developments in the life sciences. The last century saw Modernist applications of natural symbolism, such as in Victor Horta's architecture; Buckminster Fuller's appropriation of structural skeletons; and the Postmodernist replication of life imagery. Today, architectural and artistic objects no longer merely imitate and simulate natural structures and forms; the distinctions between object and subject, organic and inorganic, artificial and virtual are increasingly blurred.

A precedent for this process may be seen in R.M. Schindler's Kings Road House. Both a social and architectural experiment, the house integrated the 19<sup>th</sup> century Romantic desire to live immersed in nature with the 20<sup>th</sup> century need for an engineered, controlled environment. Designed as a communal house for two couples, it proposed a new kind of domestic space. Organized around an open floor plan with gardens shaped as additional rooms, the house presaged California modern, indoor/outdoor living. As the architect stated, "Our rooms will descend close to the ground and the garden will become an integral part of the house. The distinction between indoors and outdoors will disappear."

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Advanced mathematics, genetic science and the introduction of Information Technologies (IT) have engendered new architectural design techniques. Procedures such as streaming, scripting, automation and interaction have shifted the architectural element from a fixed into a responsive component, allowing architects to emulate biological processes. Design now incorporates evolutionary design, mutation and genetic modification.

While new structures and materials are being generated and explored, genetic procedures have rarely been addressed in the context of architectural type. *The Gen(H)ome Project* examines the new architectural paradigm in its implications for domesticity. Advances in nanotechnology and bioengineering make interactivity between habitat and inhabitant possible. "Smart" spaces will soon react to our needs and preferences. *Gen(H)ome* realizes these ideas in projects that are provocative, playful and intellectually engaging.

### The Projects

**Karl S. Chu** is known for originating the term "genetic space" and establishing the theoretical underpinnings of genetic architecture. In *Gen(H)ome*, he exhibits *ZyZx*, a part of the *Planetary Automata* series. Using algorithms, Chu generates spherical mathematical entities — planets — representing variable potentialities. As he describes, "Each planet is generated by a rule in one-dimensional cellular automata. There are a total of 256 possible rules, and, correspondingly, a total of 256 planets, which together constitute a monad: the sum total of possible worlds contained with the universe of one-dimensional cellular automata."

Genetic research has yielded not only insights into physical traits, but mental and psychological conditions as well, viewing people not only as conscious beings but also as organisms that can be unconsciously affected by external conditions. With *Spoorg*, a name derived from "spore," **servo** refers to this notion and applies a method of organic cellular adaptability, installing an ivy-like network of "spoorgs" to the interior and exterior of the Schindler House nursery glass window-wall. Mechanical, yet "alive," the network responds to light and motion. It functions as a shading and speaker system, filtering sunlight and creating an ambient sonic environment.

The architecture office of **Greg Lynn FORM** creates exotic forms utilizing techniques derived from the aeronautic, automobile and film industries. Because he studied both philosophy and architecture, Lynn combines the realities of design and construction with speculative, theoretical and experimental modes. He has introduced the notion of "smoothness," positing a continuum between architecture and nature. His theory is infused with genetic procedures that address intricacy as a connective system that is neither top-down nor bottom-up but instead comes into view simultaneously at all

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scales. This approach is seen in *Blob Wall*, a modular construction of variable, idiosyncratic forms.

With backgrounds in biology, video art and performance, **Christa Sommerer and Laurent Mignonneau** work from an understanding of nature as an information interface. With their whimsical *LifeWriter*, they invite the public to compose a text using an old-fashioned typewriter with a projection screen standing in for the sheet of paper. When the text appears projected, the written language has been transformed by a computer-generated "genetic code" into living organisms that act, react and mutate. Thus, they effect a virtualization of natural processes.

In light of the new developments in nanotechnology and materials, **Marcos Novak** employs techniques for decoding and recoding genomes into chimerical combinations in his "Allo" series. Here, in *Allo\_Gen(H)ome*, he continues to explore what happens to architecture once we stop building it and start growing it. Composed of cell-like forms derived from magnetic resonance images of the activation of a brain, Novak offers a hulking, alien "presence," the largest member of a family of peripheral forms attached to nearby ceilings and walls. Embedded computers and sensors within the forms activate speakers and projectors, which in turn animate the space.

**ocean D** is a design collaborative based in London, New York and Boston. They focus on applying computational techniques towards new modes of materialization. Their *GenLITE*, an interactive lighting product, is currently being prototyped for a 2007 launch aimed at domestic, commercial, leisure and entertainment environments. The GenLITE is formed by the aggregation and connection of a multiplicity of small volumetric components (cells) that enact scripts designed to achieve highly specific patterns of formation and growth. Inside each cell are colored lights coded to respond with dynamic color changes.

In *Polarized House*, **Philippe Rahm** uses tiny, beam-mounted ionizers to saturate one end of the Schindler House with positive ions and the opposite end with negative ions. Reflecting not only the building's flipped, pinwheel structure, but also its history as a house for two couples, and later a divorced couple, the project integrates social and psychological context with the physical experience of the charged atmosphere. The installation is conceived as a "haunting," dynamically demonstrating that invisible particles have the power to influence moods.

The Texas office of **Weathers - Sean Lally** presents *Amplifications* in the Chace courtyard, an installation of six glassed-in microclimates. By isolating, re-forming and re-presenting aspects of the natural environment, Lally submits nature to genetic modification. Creating self-contained, self-watering systems, he achieves his goal of "heightening and manipulating" the garden space, while exploring the effects of vegetation on the domestic realm.

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Applying an evolutionary stochastic (containing a random variable) algorithm to the two-foot module that organizes the structure of the Schindler House, **Open Source Architecture** generates *The Hylomorphic Project*. This triangulating, open structure occupying the Schindler courtyard is created with software "scripted to negotiate between form and matter, structure and surface, as well as function and program." Much like the work of R.M. Schindler, the modular structure mingles notions of interior and exterior, architecture and nature.

### **MAK Day**

The MAK Center's annual free community day has been scheduled to coincide with the opening of *The Gen(H)ome Project*. Taking the exhibition as its focus, MAK Day runs from noon to 8 p.m., Sunday, October 29. Activities kick off with exhibition tours led by curators and participants from noon to 3 p.m. A keynote address by Martin Bressani is set for 3 p.m., followed by two panel discussions moderated by Eran Neuman and Aaron Sprecher from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. with the exhibition participants, essayists and curators, Helene Furjån, Peter Lloyd Jones, Karl S. Chu, Christopher Hight, Ulrika Karlsson, Sean Lally, Greg Lynn, Marcos Novak, Chandler Ahrens. Finally, the day will end with a reception from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

*The Gen(H)ome Project* will be on view at the MAK Center for Art & Architecture from October 29, 2006 through February 18, 2007. The MAK Center is located at the Schindler House, 835 N. Kings Road in West Hollywood. Public hours are Wednesday through Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Regular admission is \$7/\$17 with the guide book, *Schindler By MAK*; students and seniors, \$6/\$16 with book; free for Friends of the Schindler House and on Fridays, 4 to 6 p.m. Parking is available at the public structure at the northeast corner of Kings Road and Santa Monica Boulevard.

### **IMAGES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**

Special thanks to the Federal Chancellery, Department for Arts and Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture of the Republic of Austria; the National Endowment for the Arts; the Graham Foundation; the LaFetra Family Foundation, étant donnés: The French-American Fund for Contemporary Art, a program of FACE and the Graham Foundation; the West Hollywood Arts and Cultural Affairs Commission, and the Los Angeles County Arts Commission.