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Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Presents

The Open Workshop: New Investigations in Collective Form



The Open Workshop: New Investigations in Collective Form, 2017. Courtesy The Open Workshop.

Exhibition features design experiments by Bay Area Design-Research Firm The Open Workshop and examines how collectivity can be formed today

Named one of the [top ten architecture shows to see in 2018](#) by Architect's

Newspaper

Exhibition on view: March 9–July 29, 2018

Opening Night Reception March 9:

6–7PM Artist Conversation

7–9PM Reception

SAN FRANCISCO—(February 9, 2018) For the third installment of The City Initiative, which highlights architects, designers, planners, and artists creating provocative work in urban environments, **Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (YBCA)** features The Open Workshop, a Bay Area design research office founded by architect and urban designer **Neeraj Bhatia** that focuses on the relationship between territory, form, and equity.

New Investigations in Collective Form presents a group of design experiments by The Open Workshop that test how architecture can empower the diverse voices that make up the public sphere and the environments in which they exist. **On view March 9 through July 15, 2018**, the exhibition is organized by **Martin Strickland**, exhibitions associate, and **Lucía Sanromán**, YBCA’s director of visual arts.

More than fifty years ago, Pritzker Prize–winning architect Fumihiko Maki—who designed YBCA’s Gallery and Forum building—called for collective form as an organizing device to address the increasingly fragmented city and public sectors in his seminal text *Investigations in Collective Form* (1964). Inspired by Maki’s text, and working within the fluctuating and indeterminate conditions of the urban, public, and ecological contexts, *New Investigations in Collective Form* examines how collectivity can be formed today.

The exhibition features models, drawings, plants, and artifacts arranged into five themes—**Soft Frameworks, Articulated Surfaces, the Living Archive, Re-Wiring States, and Commoning**—that hang in the gallery in an interactive array. This interconnected three-dimensional field inserts visitors into the space of representation between form and the social, political, and environmental realms to reveal the different

ways that architecture can create inclusive forums for collectivity that reflect who we are today.

About the Artists

The Open Workshop is an architectural urbanism practice that focuses on the relationship between form and territory. Specifically, the firm is interested in the agency of form to impact political, economic, and ecological systems. Using a transcalar approach to design research, the office straddles a complex line between permanence and ephemerality, control and choice, legibility and illegibility, the individual and the collective, determinacy and indeterminacy, the figure and the field. The office name, The Open Workshop, is a reference to Umberto Eco's 1962 treatise *The Open Work*. The office is dedicated to evolving Eco's concept into architecture by expanding the subject to include the pluralistic public realm and transforming environmental context. In 2016, The Open Workshop was awarded the Architectural League Young Architects Prize as well as the Emerging Leaders Award from Design Intelligence.

Neeraj Bhatia is a licensed architect and urban designer from Toronto, and the founder of The Open Workshop. His work resides at the intersection of politics, infrastructure, and urbanism. He is an assistant professor at California College of the Arts, where he also codirects the urbanism research lab The Urban Works Agency. Prior to CCA, Bhatia held teaching positions at Cornell University, Rice University, and the University of Toronto. Select distinctions include the Emerging Leaders Award from DesignIntelligence, Graham Foundation Grants, the Lawrence B. Anderson Award, Shell Center for Sustainability Grant, Odebrecht first prize Award for Sustainability, ACSA Faculty Design Award, and the Fulbright Fellowship. He is the coeditor of the books *Bracket [Takes Action]*, *The Petropolis of Tomorrow*, *Bracket [Goes Soft]*, and *Arium: Weather + Architecture*, and coauthor of *Pamphlet Architecture 30: Coupling—Strategies for Infrastructural Opportunism*. He has a master's degree in architecture and urbanism from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and a bachelor's degree in environmental studies and bachelor of architecture from the University of Waterloo.

Project leads: Neeraj Bhatia, Jared Clifton (project manager), Cesar Lopez (representation)

Project team: Hayfa Al-Gwaiz, Shawn Komlos, Blake Stevenson, Laura Williams

Ticket information

Gallery admission: \$10; seniors, teachers, and students: \$9; YBCA members: free
Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, 701 Mission Street, San Francisco CA 94103,
415.978.2787

This exhibition is in the Second Floor Gallery and is included with general admission.

About the Curators

Lucía Sanromán joined YBCA as director of visual arts in October 2015. Over the course of her career, she has curated groundbreaking exhibitions throughout the United States, Mexico, and Latin America. Recent projects at YBCA include, among others, *Tania Bruguera: Talking to Power / Hablándole al Poder* (2017) (co-curated with Susie Kantor, curatorial associate at YBCA), and the upcoming *Futurefarmers: Out of Place, in Place*, opening April 20, 2018.

Martin Strickland is the visual arts exhibitions associate at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. He manages the Second Floor Gallery exhibition programming and is currently collaborating with Lucía Sanromán on The City Initiative, a series of exhibitions and public programs focusing on the urban environment. Prior to YBCA, he worked as the programs assistant at the Arts Research Center (ARC), UC Berkeley, as an independent contractor with the San Francisco Arts Commission (SFAC), and as a community organizer for public health in New Orleans.

Credits

YBCA exhibitions are made possible in part by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Panta Rhea Foundation, American Council of Learned Societies Public Fellows Program, and Meridee Moore and Kevin King. YBCA programs are made possible, in part, by The James Irvine Foundation. Additional funding for YBCA programs: National Endowment for the Arts, Abundance Foundation, Grosvenor, and members of Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. Yerba Buena Center for the Arts is grateful to the City of San Francisco for its ongoing support.

About Yerba Buena Center for the Arts

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (YBCA) is one of the nation's most innovative contemporary arts centers. Founded in 1993, YBCA's mission is to generate culture that moves people. Through powerful art experiences, thoughtful and provocative content, and deep opportunities for participation, YBCA is committed to creating an inclusive culture that awakens personal and societal transformation. YBCA presents a wide variety of programming year-round, including performing arts, visual arts, film/video, and civic engagement. For tickets and information, call 415.978.ARTS (2787). For more information, visit ybca.org.

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