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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**The MAK Center for Art & Architecture presents**

***SYNTHETIC ECOLOGIES***

**February 10 Panel Considers Crossbreeding of  
Architecture & Science**

(West Hollywood January 19, 2007) Inspired by recent advances in the life sciences, many of today's architects are exploring new design techniques, structures and materials. *The Gen(H)ome Project*, on view at the MAK Center for Art & Architecture through February 25, 2007, presents projects that utilize the methodologies of nanotechnology, climatology, cell physiology, robotics and algorithms to create "genetic modifications" of the Schindler House. Complementing the exhibition, a panel discussion from 1-3 p.m. on Saturday, February 10, 2007 will explore how evolutionary systems, organisms, populations and emergent behavior have engendered new possibilities for architecture. Organized by MAK Center Architects in Residence, Matias del Campo and Sandra Manninger, known as SPAN, the panel will include Hernan Diaz Alonso (Xefirotarch), Marcelyn Gow, Neil Leach, Jason Payne and Michael Speaks. Matias del Campo will moderate.

Ecology studies living organisms and their interrelations, from the level of nucleic acids to proteins, cells, individuals (in botany, zoology and similar disciplines), and finally at the level of populations, communities, and ecosystems, including the biosphere as a whole. A multi-disciplinary science, ecology draws heavily on geology and geography, meteorology, chemistry and physics. Thus, ecology is considered by some to be a holistic science, one that



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over-arches older disciplines. This holistic approach makes ecology an interesting model for architecture. Through digitally-driven design, experimental architects are creating synthetic, computer-generated ecologies, in which architectonic entities lose their static qualities in favor of animated, "living" systems.

The synthesis of various fields within the architecture realm, such as genetic engineering, computer science, biology, geometry, mathematics and, more recently, the medical field, offers a new architectural paradigm. The panel will discuss issues emerging from the crossbreeding between architecture and the idea of the synthetic ecology. Among the topics to be considered are: the cultural consequences of the creation of species, evolutionary systems and populations in architecture; the simulation of biologic processes such as structure, growth, reproduction and metabolism; and the contribution of tissue engineering to the field of architecture.

### **The Panel**

**Hernan Diaz Alonso** is the principal and founder of the award-winning firm Xefirotarch, with studios in Los Angeles and New York. His recent work deals with the emerging aesthetics of the horrific and the grotesque. Born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, he received Architecture degrees from the National University of Rosario, and from Columbia University's AAD Program. Diaz Alonso has worked as a designer in the office of Enric Miralles in Barcelona (1996), and for Peter Eisenman Architects in New York (2000-2001). His projects, which have been widely published, range from academic research and private commissions to national and international competitions. In 2005, Xefirotarch won the competition to design a temporary installation in the courtyard at PS1 MOMA in New York.

**Marcelyn Gow** is a partner and founding member of the architectural design collaborative servo. servo was a finalist in PS1/MoMA's 2004 Young Architects Program and recent exhibitions include *Architectures Non-Standard* at the Centre Pompidou, *Metamorph* at the 2004 Venice Architecture Biennale, and *Glamour: Fashion, Industrial Design, Architecture* at San Francisco's MoMA. servo's recent projects include *Dark Places* at the Santa Monica Museum of Art, and the *Genealogy of Speed* for Nike in Los Angeles. servo's work is in the permanent collections of the SFMoMA and the FRAC Centre. Gow has lectured internationally and currently teaches design studios, as well as research and technology seminars, at UCLA's Department of Architecture and Urban



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Design. She has also taught at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm and the ETH in Zurich. Gow is currently a doctoral candidate at the ETH. Her forthcoming dissertation, *Informational Materialities: Architecture and a Systems Aesthetic 1960-1970*, explores the relationship between aesthetic research and technological innovation.

**Neil Leach** is an architect and theorist. He has taught at the University of Bath, Architectural Association School of Architecture, University of Nottingham, Columbia University, Cornell University, SCI-Arc, Royal Danish Academy of Art and Dessau Institute of Architecture. He was the co-curator (with Xu Wei-Guo) of the *A2 Exhibition* at the 2004 Beijing Architecture Biennial. Leach's theories were first set out in the "cultural reader" he edited, *Rethinking Architecture* (1997). The book contained a selection of well-known writings about architecture by thinkers within Continental Philosophy, ranging from Hermeneutics and Phenomenology to Structuralism and Deconstruction, prefaced by Leach's own introduction. Among the authors included were: Jacques Derrida, Martin Heidegger, Umberto Eco and Andrew Benjamin.

**Jason Payne** is the co-principal (with Heather Roberge) of GNUFORM, established in 1999. The firm is dedicated to innovative architectural, landscape, and interior design projects, research and experimentation. GNUFORM is informed by intensive research and an experimental approach involving the application of material dynamics to the organization of form. Promoting a vitalist materialism, this work exploits the organizational and spatial potentials of the flows of matter and energy that constitute our environment. Payne's writings have appeared in many publications and he lectures frequently. The exhibition GNUFORM: Hairstyle organized for UCLA's Department of Architecture and Urban Design traveled to Ohio State University in 2005. In 2006 GNUFORM was a finalist in the PSI/MOMA Young Architects Program as well as a participant in the Beijing Architecture Biennale. GNUFORM's current projects include residences in Ohio and Los Angeles. Jason Payne has taught at Rice University, Pratt Institute, Bennington College, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and currently teaches at UCLA.

**Michael Speaks** completed a Ph.D. in Literature at Duke University in 1993. He is the founding editor of Polygraph, and served as Senior Editor at ANY magazine and Series Editor for "Writing Architecture" for MIT Press. He has published and lectured internationally on art, architecture, urban design and scenario planning. Speaks is a contributing editor for Architectural Record, on the editorial advisory board of A+U (Japan) and on the advisory board for the

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Storefront for Art and Architecture. Currently Head of the Metropolitan Research and Design Post Graduate Degree at SCI-Arc, Speaks has also taught graphic design at Yale, and in the architecture departments at Harvard University, Columbia University, Parsons School of Design and The Berlage Institute in Rotterdam. \_He currently heads the Los Angeles-based urban research group, BIG SOFT ORANGE.

**Matias del Campo and Sandra Manninger** are the heads of the Vienna-based architecture practice, SPAN. To pursue their shared interest in digital fabrication, innovative material developments and the associated discourse, both joined the Doctorate program for architecture at the University of Applied Arts, Vienna and studied with Wolf D. Prix (Coop Himmelb(l)au), Klaus Bollinger and Greg Lynn. SPAN has been repeatedly recognized, including the young-talent award for Experimental Tendencies in Architecture (awarded by the Federal Chancellery Austria), the University of Applied Arts Travel Scholarship and the MAK Schindler Scholarship. SPAN also designed successful competition entries for the "Ephemeral Structures competition" for the 2004 Olympic Games and the "Individuality and Seriality" competition on the innovative use of synthetic materials in architecture.

The MAK Center for Art & Architecture 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. Admission to the *Synthetic Ecologies* panel is free with general admission to the Schindler House. As a one-day special, the catalogue for *The Gen(H)ome Project* will be offered on February 10 at a 20% discount. Regular Schindler House 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. For further information, the public may contact [www.MAKcenter.org](http://www.MAKcenter.org) or call (323) 651-1510.

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@ THE SCHINDLER HOUSE

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