

INTRICACIES OF LYNN'S MIND

INTRICACY

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Reviewed by Zoë Ryan

Los Angeles-based architect Greg Lynn has become synonymous with an architecture that eschews traditional notions of cubes and spheres and instead harnesses the computer as a tool to create more amorphous forms.

To date Lynn has championed this paradigm shift, utilising animation software and other high-tech programs to create limitless possibilities for highly flexible forms and spaces. Rather than reference theories from architectural history, Lynn responds to the possibilities inherent in computer technology to forge a new way of thinking about and practising architecture.

His work has been diverse, including the design of the Korean Presbyterian Church of New York, the renovation of 500 housing units in the Netherlands and even small-scale projects such as a tea and a set for Italian manufacturer

Alessi's 25th anniversary. Lynn is also part of United Architects, one of seven teams to submit proposals for the rebuilding of the World Trade Center site.

Prone to working collaboratively with architects and artists, Lynn's most recent role is as curator of an exhibition on view at Philadelphia's Institute of Contemporary Art. Based on the theme of intricacy, also the show's title, the exhibit brings together diverse work that addresses the idea of a new spatial and visual language of folding, interweaving and layering elements to create a whole.

Shifting away from the continued redefinition of digital architecture as "blob" architecture, Lynn says he is "interested in developing the argument of techno-organism but one that isn't reliant on digital design, visualisation and manufacturing tools. I wanted to do a show that was not as stylistic in its appeal to technology, but rather explores an emerging structural logic in which different components and shapes come together to create a whole".

Scanning a range of disciplines to



Above, Roxy Paine's SKUMAK (9) (2001); below left, Bonnie Callura's installation Skywalker 2002

illustrate that this unique design strategy is being explored by artists and designers alike, Lynn pulls together work under three themes. In the section dedicated to Aggregates and Assemblages, artist Tom Friedman's molecular sculpture Untitled (2002), made from pink styrofoam packing peanuts strung together to form a cube resembling a scientific model, challenges notions of everyday objects. New York-based Argentinian artist Fabian Marcaccio's series Untitled (560 Conjectures for a New Paint Management) (1989-present) is of ink drawings on vellum showing a variety of painting strokes that create different shapes and forms. In addition, the meticulous masonry patterns in Boston architecture firm Office d'A's wooden model of the Tongxian Art Center, currently under construction in Beijing, and the detailed renderings illustrating the formal structure of Reiser + Umemoto's competition entry for the Yokohama International Port Terminal in Japan, are heralded as a "particular type of cohesion, continuity, holism and organicity of multiple parts in continuous series" – the inherent quality of the idea of "intricacy" as a fusion of disparate elements to form a whole.

British artist Chris Cunningham's acclaimed music video for Björk, All is full of Love (1999), in which two robots intertwine in an embrace, plays on a wall next to New York artist Bonnie Callura's ominous installation Skywalker 2002. Nine heads hang from strips of dark green felt, each made up of dozens of different facial expressions that distort and change as the viewer walks around the piece. Together they are shown as exemplifying the idea of Fused Figures, in which intricate parts are "inextricably smoothed together and fused".

In Voluptuous Surfaces, Roxy Paine's humorous SKUMAK (9) (2001) sculptures that resemble giant globules of red toothpaste are, in fact, polyethylene blobs made by extruding plastic in random intervals from Paine's computer-driven Skumak machine. Pointing to the possibility of mass production of art made with a lack of artistic involvement, they sit alongside a digitally-tooled plexi model of UK Foreign Office Architects' Yokohama International Port Terminal that illustrates its structural tresses.

Also in this section is Boston architecture firm Preston Scott Cohen's competition model for the Eyebeam museum of new media art in New York. Its complex system of tubular volumes that bifurcate the multistorey museum illustrates how a fusion of surfaces is achieved "while accommodating multiple discrete figurative vocabularies".

Hovering above the central group of architectural models and giving the display a much-needed softness is Lynn's own installation. Six shells, resembling natural forms found in Georgia O'Keefe paintings but rendered in fibreglass, hang from the ceiling acting both as a canopy over the models and as a method of diffusing the museum lights.

Lynn admits that the thesis he has presented as an exhibition is difficult to communicate and he is unsure of its success. Yet prompted by the increasing number of architecture shows that deal with technology and construction alone, he wanted to produce an exhibit based on illustrating a new compositional, organisational and visual sensibility. "Perhaps it will not communicate positively," he surmises, "but will just be a beautiful, strange and geometric display. That is the great thing about curating; you never now how people will respond."

