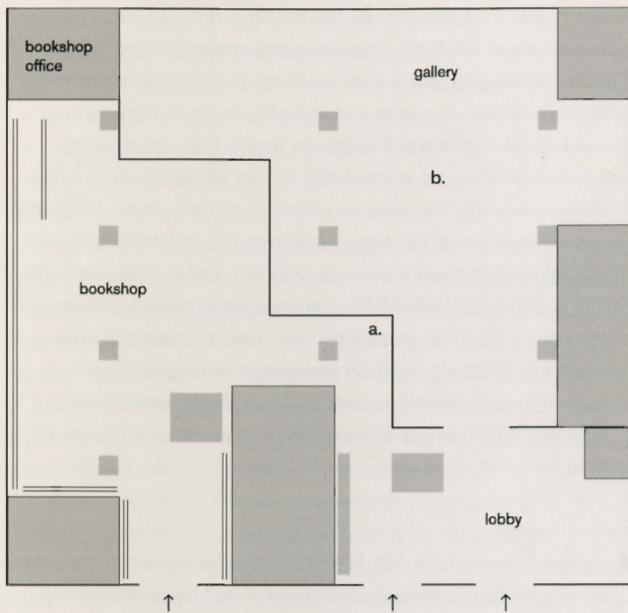


site map and checklist



Project, 2000

3 parts: lobby, bookshop, gallery

overall dimensions: 108 x 108 feet

Commissioned by Dia Center for the Arts, 1998

a. Alvar Aalto, Wardrobe, Patient's Room,
Paimio Tuberculosis Sanatorium, Paimio, Finland, 1929–1933

wood and plywood, iron

80½ x 32 x 12 inches

Collection of Gallery Gilles Peyroulet, Paris

b. Volkswagen AG Design Center, Volkswagen New Beetle

Full-Scale Model, 1995

steel, wood, hardfoam, clay

59½ x 68 x 161 inches

Collection: Volkswagen Design, Simi Valley, California and

Wolfsburg, Germany

Jorge Pardo
Project
September 13, 2000–June 17, 2001



photo: Cathy Carver

Dia center for the arts
548 west 22nd street new york

Jorge Pardo, Project (2000)

"I am more interested in inscribing reflexiveness . . . by pointing to explanatory limits than in making Cliff Notes for an exhibition," Jorge Pardo stated in a recent interview accompanying the first extensive publication devoted to his art.¹ In an attempt to respect his position, this text engages in a reciprocal ventriloquism.

display

Exhibitions of architecture-as-built-structure, as well as of domestic and industrial design, were once a significant feature of the modern museum program. Generated by the Museum of Modern Art in New York and similar institutions from the 1930s through the early 1950s, such shows frequently toured to commercial sites, such as department stores, in addition to public locations. Conversely, modernist architecture at times lent itself as a stage for advertisements and product display—as when a 1936 Oldsmobile advertisement used as a background Richard Neutra's 1932 VDL Research House in Los Angeles. More generically, the conspicuous placement of the car in Le Corbusier's photographs of his houses provided the context for an "advertisement" of the contemporary good life he wanted associated with his architecture. The modernist house was, however, connected to film and photography in other more crucial ways. Not only promoted by denizens of the film world through such individual commissions as Neutra's residence for Erich von Sternberg, it frequently served as a stage for film, notably in Jean-Luc Godard's haunting use of the Villa Malaparte in *Contempt* in 1963. Arguably, it has been influenced, shaped, and determined as much by the camera as by the car due, not least, to the fact that photography and increasingly film and video, have provided the principal vehicles for the dissemination of information about modernist architecture in specialized trade publications as well as the mass media. In turn, architectural experience came to be deemed fundamentally cinematographic in character. Thus, for example, the *promenade architecturale* that Le Corbusier choreographed through each of his houses via a succession of ramps and interconnected spaces is quintessentially filmic, as is his proclivity for such features as emphatically horizontal fenestration. In addition, certain projects, such as the Bestegui Apartment, were organized in toto around a periscope camera obscura and cinema projection.²

installation

Donald Judd housed his collection of modernist furniture, including key pieces by Alvar Aalto as well as Gerrit Rietveld and Le Corbusier, interspersed with furniture that he himself designed and used (tables, chairs, desks), in the former residential quarters of a bank, erected at the turn of the twentieth century, in the small and remote west Texas town of Marfa, where he settled in the late seventies. Downstairs, on the main floor of the building and adjacent to a small studio, he displayed groups of artifacts both indigenous and vernacular from the American West and Southwest, mostly pottery and other domestic items.

Stein

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Judd's first mature art objects date from the early sixties; his interest in architecture flourished later in life. The diverse array of buildings, which the artist converted for a variety of usages, includes industrial, commercial, and domestic structures as well as military barracks. Pragmatic, finely proportioned renovations of two artillery sheds display a monumental work comprised of one hundred mill-aluminum boxes. These sensual yet austere spaces have proven highly influential conceptually as well as stylistically in subsequent resurrections of industrial buildings for reuse as contemporary art venues. Dia's own facility in Chelsea attests to the strength of this legacy. In addition, Judd limned several designs for museums and related commissions in the early 1990s, and a collection of his writings on this subject was published in 1989.³ While his engagement initially stemmed from a need to design appropriate spaces to present his own work and that of certain contemporaries, Judd's interest in collecting, curating, and design developed into an encompassing practice that increasingly tested conventional boundaries between art forms as it formulated larger theoretical as well as more pragmatic tenets concerning art, architecture, and installation.

the wardrobe

In the Paimio Tuberculosis Sanatorium (1929–32) Alvar Aalto, then barely thirty years old, took the radical step of seeking an architectural design based on "a truly usable criteria for people's well-being in their everyday lives." In addition to the well-known plywood chairs designed for this hospital, which are still in production some seventy years later, Aalto created customized furniture for the patients' rooms. Including washbasins, hospital beds, wardrobes, and lamps, these items were based on careful observation of functional, psychological, and physiological requirements. Typical of his approach was the choice of a canary yellow floor in the hallway and main staircase, evoking the experience of sunshine and warmth even during dark winter months. In this seminal revision of the reigning universalist, abstract-modernist platform, this young Finnish architect began to develop a multilayered aesthetic that responded to specifics of cultural and geographical locality, that sought a fusion of tradition and radicality, and that strategized design based in atmospheric cohesion in place of an overriding conceptual framework. Notable in the project's finished structure was the rhythmic spatial flow between areas, defined by permeable borders, areas whose spaces collaged materials, details, and images within an episodic painterly structure. Summarizing his philosophy some years later, Aalto differentiated his approach from that associated with mass production by alluding to a need for particularity in each project that would be the result not of subjective expression but of attentiveness to its site-specificity, in the broadest sense.

Whereas the course of development in relation to the automobile is for more and more effort to be made to concentrate on just a few types, the task of the architectural

production process is exactly the opposite. By all right feeling and common sense, it should not be centralized standardization, but shall we say "decentralized" standardization. In architecture, the role of standardization is thus not to aim at a type but, on the contrary, to create viable variety and richness which in an ideal situation is comparable to nature's infinite capacity of nuance.⁴

the car

Launched in 1994 at the Detroit Motor Show, Concept 1, the forerunner of the New Beetle, was initially aimed at a niche American market. The extraordinary enthusiasm that greeted its unveiling led, through an extended design process in the Wolfsburg Volkswagen Design Studios, to the car's debut some four years later on the mass market. A deliberate reinterpretation of the legendary Beetle—"The Love Bug," which had first been released in the United States some forty years before, in 1955 (and which continues to be manufactured for a less-regulated Central American clientele)—the New Beetle retains in modified form certain of its predecessor's key features, not least an arc-shaped roof whose curve slopes down towards the bottom of the rear hood, the rounded front hood, the bulging fenders, and the symmetrical look. Although under the bonnet technologically much refined, not least because the engine is now located in the front of the vehicle, this latest version was initially conceived to adhere closely in form to a pure geometry of circles and spheres and, where it deviated, straight lines. Neither exactly retro nor appropriation, the final design of this seductive revision subtly tempers the purity of geometric exactitude toward the organic, and away from what is normally coded as mechanistic, rationalistic, or standardized. Simple, compact quasi-biomorphic forms connoting intimacy and a relaxed, personalized ambience are its trademarks. Built to scale, the clay prototype no longer serves a functional purpose as the original source for the mold in the design process: a singular talisman, its role has morphed into that of emblem or icon; an anomalous model, it points to the realm of the hypothetical, the conceptual, the ideal.

project

Jorge Pardo's complex scheme for Dia stems from a tripartite brief: to redesign the museum lobby; to create a substantial bookshop; and to propose an exhibition for the first-floor gallery, a classic white cube. From the outset, these three components were considered an entity, an entity whose parts contained no hierarchy. In contrast to conventional architectural practice, Pardo did not conceptualize his design as an exhaustively detailed totality, that would be executed as closely as possible to plan. After determining that a single key feature—the tiled floor—would unify his conception, Pardo preferred to work incrementally, improvising within an agreed-upon framework as the project progressed. Created from eight different hues in four different sizes,

the ceramic tiles were laid in a pattern whose sequential arrangement is fixed but choice among the colors is left open. A resonant filter that absorbs visual accents from across the spectrum, this coloristic web permits a potentially dissonant panoply of miscellaneous book jackets, visitors' clothing, furniture, and happenstance events to be apprehended as an integrated environment. Given its glossy reflective surface this floor generates light, establishing an expansive, luminous horizontal plane parallel to that provided by the regular grid of illuminated ceiling fixtures. Vertical divisions are treated either as permeable, as in the glass walls and doors separating both adjacent interior areas and the inside from the outside, or screened with one or two wallpaper murals. A decorative pattern of ceramic tiles encases the columns, obscuring awareness of their load-bearing features and visually connecting them with similarly toned and hued hand-printed curtains and two computer-generated ink-jet paintings. A cluster of magenta lights for the bookshop manager's office tempers the impenetrability of that zone, while the brilliant hues of the upholstery, which Pardo chose for the store furniture, animate the reading area. Ranging from renowned classics, such as Marcel Breuer's trio of side tables, to celebrated recent designs, including the scarlet Jasper Morrison high stool, this seating is dispersed informally according to visitors' needs. By contrast, most of the permanent features, notably the sales desks and lockers, were customized to the artist's designs. Eschewing finite edges, erasing borders both literal and metaphorical, *Project* problematizes the interface between art, architecture, and design. As in certain of his previous works that also involved the development or renovation of built structures, Pardo does not deem his intervention at Dia an architectural one, recognizing a basic difference in vision—that is, in visual training and practice—between this discipline and the fine arts.

After studying biology at the University of Illinois at Chicago, then painting at Art Center in Los Angeles, from which he graduated in 1988, Pardo began making his first art objects while supporting himself by working in the school library and, later, teaching. His earliest works explored space through diverse guises, sometimes by translating a photographic representation of an everyday artifact into its physical counterpart or, alternatively, recording actual spaces by means of pinhole cameras embedded in items of furniture that he had either made or adapted. Resident now for several decades in Los Angeles, like many of his peers he is well versed in the postwar visual histories of this ultra-contemporary city, in its treasury of residential architecture as well as its vaunted design and filmic traditions.

notes

1. Jorge Pardo, interview by Barbara Steiner, in *Jorge Pardo*, ed. Jörn Schafaff and Barbara Steiner (Ostfildern-Ruit, Cantz, 2000), p. 9.
2. For a more detailed discussion, see Beatriz Colomina, "The Exhibitionist House," in *At the End of the Century: One Hundred Years of Architecture*, ed. Russell Ferguson (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 1998), pp. 126–166.
3. See Donald Judd, *Architektur* (Münster: Westfälischer Kunstverein, 1989).
4. Alvar Aalto, "The Reconstruction of Europe Reveals the Central Architectural Problem of Our Time," in *Alvar Aalto: 1898–1976*, ed. Aarno Ruusuvuori and Juhani Pallasmaa (Helsinki: Museum of Finnish Architecture, 1978), pp. 113–114; quoted in "Alvar Aalto: Toward a Synthetic Functionalism" by Juhani Pallasmaa, in *Alvar Aalto: Between Humanism and Materialism*, ed. Peter Reed (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1998), p. 35.

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- Jorge Pardo*. Philadelphia: The Fabric Workshop and Museum, 1999. Texts by Steven Beyer, Marion Boulton Stroud, Paola Antonelli, Jorge Pardo, and Christiane Schneider.
- Jorge Pardo*. London: Royal Festival Hall, 1999. Text by Jan Tumlir.
- Jorge Pardo*. Ed. Russell Ferguson. Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art and Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1997 (special box catalogue). Texts by Ann Goldstein, Stacia Payne, and an interview by Amada Cruz.
- Jorge Pardo*. Augsburg: Gesellschaft für Moderne Kunst, 1997. Text by Tobias Rehberger.
- Jorge Pardo*. Tokyo: Person's Weekend Museum, 1993. Texts by George Porcari and Timothy Blum.

Born in 1963 in Havana, Cuba, **Jorge Pardo** emigrated to the United States in July 1969. He studied at Art Center College of Design in Pasadena (1984–1988) and has exhibited widely since his first solo show in 1988. Besides participating in numerous international group exhibitions, he has realized various permanent projects, including *Reading Room* at the Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam in 1996, *Pier* in the 1997 Skulptur Projekte in Münster, and, in 1998, *4166 Sea View Lane* (with the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles). Pardo lives and works in Los Angeles.

Pardo has completely transformed Dia's 9,000 square-foot first floor in a complex, multifaceted project that includes redesigning the lobby, creating a new bookshop, and staging an exhibition in the reconfigured gallery. Dia's bookshop, with an independent entrance and expanded opening hours, focuses on postwar and contemporary art and culture, theory, history, and poetry, as well as video work courtesy of Electronic Arts Intermix.

Bookshop hours: Wednesday–Sunday 11am–6pm
Gallery hours: Wednesday–Sunday 12–6pm

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