

MONOLITHS OR ARCHITECTURE IN SUSPENSE (1950-2010)

*Artists and architects in the
FRAC Centre collection*

*Exhibition from September 18, 2010 to February 27, 2011
Vernissage : Tuesday October 5th, 2010. 6:30 pm*

*Raimund Abraham, Paul Andreu,
Architecture Principe, André Bloc,
Frédéric Borel, Andrea Branzi, Chanéac,
dECOi, DOGMA, David Georges Emmerich,
Günter Günschel, Hans Hollein, laN+, Jan
Kempnaers, Aglaia Konrad,
Ugo La Pietra, Claude Parent,
Gianni Pettena, Walter Pichler,
Charles Simonds, Superstudio,
Pierre Székely, Marino Di Teana.
Artiste invité : Vincent Mauger.*

GÜNTER GÜNSCHEL

*Sans titre, 1958
Collection FRAC Centre, Orléans*

WALTER PICHLER

*Compact City, 1964
Collection FRAC Centre, Orléans*

AGLAIA KONRAD

*Sculpture House, 2007
Collection FRAC Centre, Orléans*

The monolith runs through the history of art and architecture alike: a “disquieting strangeness” of nature with the Symbolists (The Isle of the Dead, 1883, by Arnold Böcklin) and the Surrealists; a transformational force with the Expressionists (Mendelsohn, R. Steiner, etc). The monolith has always been stamped with a dual nature, both telluric and mental. Its monumentality was interiorized in psychic mass in the work of Frederick Kiesler (Maison sans fin/Endless House, 1930-60).

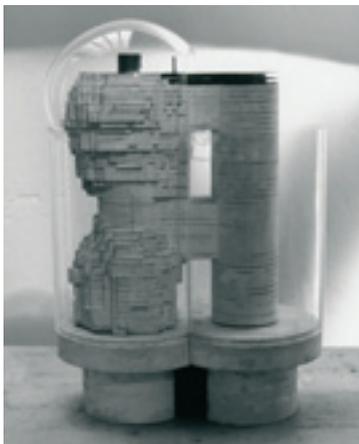
Between fantasizing and archaism, between dream world and critical space stands the anteform of the monolith, catapulted into atemporality, from the megaliths of Stonehenge to Stanley Kubrick’s 2001 A Space Odyssey (1968). The monolith challenges the very foundations of architectural space.

The monolith exhibition at the FRAC Centre traces for the first time the paradoxical history of the monolith, from the 1950s up to now, in several thematic chapters and assembling an exceptional selection of works by artists and projects by architects, including drawings, models, films, installations and archives.



MEGALITHS

In Austria of the 1960s-70s, Hans Hollein re-appropriated architecture in his images, following the example of pop art, by making shapeless rocks and petrified clouds float in the sky. These megaliths attached to the top of architecture or mountains challenged the naturalness and the artificiality of architecture. Hans Hollein’s monoliths are extra-territorial objects, moved only by their strangeness and radicality. Positioned between primitivism and a critique of functionality, these monoliths are a sort of non-form that turns up again in the formal indeterminateness of the Compact City (1963) by artist Walter Pichler.



ARCHITECTURE-SCULPTURE

In the wake of expressionism, the makers of architecture-sculpture seized upon the monolith as the guarantor of the unity of form. The compact and expressive mass of the monolith began to evolve towards more geometric forms (in the work of artist Marino di Teana, for example) or towards more organic expression (Bloc, Székely, La Pietra, etc). Films by artist Aglaia Konrad (2007) bring these examples of Brutalist architecture back into focus, from Fritz Wotruba to the first concrete house in Belgium in the 1960s.





CRYPTIC SPACE

The monolith is the inverted space of the grotto or the cavern, echoing the myths of origin. The church of Sainte-Bernadette-du-Banlay (1963-66) in Nevers, designed by Claude Parent and Paul Virilio, stands at the point of intersection of the grotto of Bernadette Soubirous, the cryptic nature of the bunker and the spatial dynamic of the oblique function. The fault line traversing this fractured monolith seems to be a "negative" kind of architecture, one of refusal (F. Migayrou). Claude Parent's project of a Memorial for Yves Klein (1964) also refers to the notion of "crypticity" developed by Paul Virilio. The cryptic space is the negative form of the globe as well, as seen in the concrete monolith of the Roissy Airport by Paul Andreu (1968).

CRYSTALLIZATIONS



In the 1960s, Andrea Branzi drew "Structures liquefying in space," geometric aggregates that explode into a thousand shards of crystallized monoliths. Geometric space was being eroded by the irregularity of the monolith. During the same period, the complexity of D.G. Emmerich's polyhydric forms challenged notions of topological space following the influence of the "utopia of the crystalline" of the 19th and 20th centuries. His self-supporting stacks appear as a crystalline agglomeration, a monolith with morphogenetic folds. This crystallization that facets form and makes its anchoring impossible is also seen in sculptures by artist Vincent Mauger.

CRITICAL MONUMENTALITIES



A recurring feature of post-war architecture, the figure of the monolith is a brutal concretion of nature and architecture. The monuments to the fallen photographed in the former Yugoslavia (2007) by artist Jan Kempenaers testify to the monolith's role as cenotaph.

In a conceptual register, DOGMA with Pier Vittorio Aureli examines the notion of the anti-monument, the autonomy of form and context through the Stop-City (2007) project, inspired by Superstudio. Here the monolith delimits a closed and impenetrable space that places its environment in a state of suspense.

Standing as a refutation of any formalism, of any aesthetic presupposition, the monolith appears throughout the architectural experimentation of the 20th century.

CLAUDE PARENT

Mémorial Yves Klein, Saint-Paul-de-Vence,
1964-1965
Collection FRAC Centre, Orléans

ANDREA BRANZI

Structures en liquéfaction, 1968
Collection FRAC Centre, Orléans

DOGMA

(PIER VITTORIO AURELI, MARTINO TATTARA)
A Simple Heart. Architecture on the Ruins of the
Post-fordist City, 2003-2009
Collection FRAC Centre, Orléans

Marie-Ange Brayer

Acknowledgments: our thanks to Michel Ragon and Vincent Mauger with Mixar (www.mixar.fr) for the works they have provided on loan.

> PRACTICAL INFORMATION :

> FREE SHUTTLE BUS from Paris on the day of the vernissage: booking with the FRAC Centre administration required:
T. 00 33 (0)2 38 62 52 00
@ : contact@frac-centre.fr

> FRAC Centre :
FRAC Centre - 12 rue de la Tour Neuve - Orléans
T. 00 33 (0)2 38 62 52 00
www.frac-centre.fr

Exhibition from September 17, 2010 to February 27, 2011
Entry free of charge
Monday to Friday, from 10 am to 12 pm and from 2 pm to 6 pm
Weekends and holidays, from 2 pm to 6 pm
Closed December 25 and January 1

> PRESS CONTACT :
FRAC Centre : Sophie Bellé, Adjointe Diffusion
Communication Press
T. 00 33 (0)2 38 68 03 06
@ : sophie.belle@frac-centre.fr
Press photos on request

