

IDEAS FESTIVAL NEW YORK MAY 1-4 CITY

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MUSEUM

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New Museum Brings “Adhocracy” Exhibition to New York for the Second Biennial IDEAS CITY Festival

Exhibition Documents an Emergent Global Culture of Peer Production, Shared Resources, and Collaborative Networks

New York, NY...Opening to the public on May 4 at the New Museum’s 231 Bowery space, “**Adhocracy**” brings together an international group of designers, practitioners, networks, and platforms responding to epochal changes and questioning the very definition of design. The exhibition explores a new direction in contemporary design through **twenty-five projects**—presented through **artifacts, objects, and films**. In the place of standardized, industrialized perfection, the exhibition embraces imperfection as evidence of an emerging force of identity, individuality, and nonlinearity in design. As design welcomes the new technologies of the information age, the field itself is being reshaped. Some have built their practice around the collaborative ideology of the open source movement; others explore the opportunities opened up by new low-cost fabrication technologies. Some are exploring new economic models of production; others are challenging the established hierarchies between designers and end-users.



Curated by Joseph Grima, Editor of DOMUS magazine, “Adhocracy” was originally organized by Grima and IKS V for the 2012 Istanbul Design Biennial. Grima has adapted his original exhibition for New York and the New Museum and opens as part of the second biennial IDEAS CITY Festival in downtown Manhattan (May 1–4). “Adhocracy” will be on view from May 4–July 7 at the New Museum’s 231 Bowery space.

In the last few years, exponential technologies have substantially transformed how we work, communicate, and relate. Network culture today permeates everyday life and this has profoundly impacted the way designers think and work and the nature of the objects they produce. This exhibition explores these transformations and offers a critical contextualization within the history of design. “Adhocracy” is purposefully heterogeneous, embracing everything from medical innovation to cultural and political criticism, and from furniture design to weapons manufacturing. It will include many examples of practitioners whose work embraces open source hardware design, and will particularly emphasize the idea of the “commons” in relation to production.

“Adhocracy” acknowledges that the world of people who make things is in upheaval. In the last two decades, exponential growth in various technologies—from global communications networks to fast, low-cost digital prototyping—have radically transformed everyday life, and many from the industry speak of a new industrial revolution. If the last industrial revolution was about making perfect objects—millions of them, absolutely identical, produced to exactly consistent quality standards—this one is about making just one, or a few. Its birthplace is not the factory but the workshop, and its lifeline is the network. As the theater of a fast-moving debate over society’s future, design is today engaged in a struggle between bureaucracy and improvisation, authority and the irrepressible force of networks, in search of a new language and a new commons. If design is no longer the domain of a select few creating products of consumption for “the many,” according to the top-down model of bureaucratic industrialism, what is it? This exhibition argues that rather than the closed object, the maximum expression of design today is the process—the activation of open systems, tools that shape society by enabling self-organization, platforms of collaboration independent of the capitalist model of competition, and empowering networks of production. Design is migrating from the rigid domain of bureaucracy towards the rhizomatic realm of adhocracy.

The exhibition will include several projects centered around on-site laboratories of production, such as **Blablalab**’s “Be Your Own Souvenir” project, where visitors to the exhibition can have their body scanned and reproduced in miniature by 3-D printers, or **Unfold**’s “Stratigraphic Manufactory,” in which a “digital artisan” will create 3-D-print porcelain artifacts on-site. Visitors will be encouraged to interact with many of the installations, including an app censored by Apple that maps every US drone strike from 2004 through the present.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

OpenStructures (Thomas Lommee)

The most powerful aspect of the networked economy that emerged in the internet age is, perhaps, the bypassing of the middleman of profit-driven companies in the relationship between consumers and producers. Establishing a universal modular grid around which hardware can be designed—an “Esperanto for objects”—OpenStructures positions itself at this juncture, amplifying the conversation by giving diverse users a shared vocabulary and framework. It also opens up the scales of participation: a user might customize a design made by one individual using components designed and shared by yet another person, and then assemble the final object from a mixture of standardized parts sourced online and customized elements printed in a local FabLab. OpenStructures expands the debate on authorship and collaboration, raising questions about its nature and the domain of the designer in the twenty-first century.

DRM Chair

Thibault Brevet’s DRM Chair is a commentary on planned obsolescence and the paradoxes of intellectual property in the age of digital networks. A small sensor detects when someone sits on the chair and decrements a counter. When the person stands up, the chair reduces the minutes allotted to signal the remaining time. On reaching zero, the self-destruct system is turned on and the structural joints of the chair are melted. A model of this chair will be on view in the exhibition.

Urban eXperiment

One morning in 2006, Paris’s Panthéon director was mystified when he was given the key of the monument’s nineteenth-century clock, as it had not been ticking since the 1960s. A secret collective of hackers and artists called Urban eXperiment had conducted clandestine repairs to the clock. Founded in 1981 by a group of teenagers, Urban eXperiment now has over one hundred members, quietly working in the deserted public spaces of Paris, constantly seeking new forms of experiments. The group has mastered Paris’s underground network of tunnels and other residual voids left in the city. They used the capital’s monument for artistic performances, have created a subterranean cinema and an underground art exhibition, and are slowly restoring some of the city’s centuries-old, unseen infrastructure. The film *Panthéon: Mode d’Emploi*, a documentary produced by the group itself about its activities, will be on view in this exhibition for its US debut.

Drones+ app (Josh Begley)

Drones+, by the New York–based designer Josh Begley, is an app that sends users a pop-up notice whenever someone is killed in a drone strike carried out by the CIA or the US military around the world. Even though it draws on databases of information already available to the public, it has been turned down three times by Apple as “objectionable.”

Heineken WoBo

In 1957, the owner of the Heineken brewery challenged John Habraken to design a bottle with a secondary use as a modular, translucent brick for construction purposes. 60,000 Heineken World Bottles (WOBOs) were produced, and Habraken even built a prototype hut in the Heineken brewery gardens. The project ultimately proved incompatible with the company’s corporate culture and bureaucracy, giving WOBO little chance to proliferate, and the bottles are now collector’s items. The project was a bold experiment with a compelling and, at the time, innovative idea—that industrial design had the potential to build in user participation rather than simply impose a demand on consumers.

PARTICIPANTS

OpenStructures with contributions by Riccardo Carneiro, Tristan Kopp, Thomas Lommee, Jo Van Boastraeten, Christiane Hoegner, Marijn van der Poll, Fabio Lorefice, Jeroen Maes, Artin Usta; Jesse Howard; Unfold in collaboration with Jonathan Keep, Eran Gal-Or, Mustafa Canyurt & Ahmet Gülkökan; Maker Faire Africa in collaboration with Elizabeth Otieno, Chika Okafor, Sannah Anwar, David Olinayan, Jennifer Wolfe + Esther Adebayo, Alex Odundo, Ugo Okafor / CcHub Nigeria, Salma Adel / ICE Cairo; Minale Maeda; Re-Do Studio; John Habraken; BlablabLAB; Grégoire Basdevant; Markus Kayser; Yona Friedman; Josh Begley; Garnet Hertz; advvt; Arduino with projects by GROUND Lab, Grathio Labs, Botanicalls, Tokyo Hackerspace, et al; Johan van Lengen; Annika Frye; AutLAB; Les UX; Enzo Mari; Thibault Brevet in collaboration with Gianfranco Baechtold, Laurent Beirnaert, Pierre Bouvier, Raphaël Constantin, Lionel Dalmazzini, Edina Desboeufs, Arthur Desmet, Thomas Grogan; Kickstarter; Orkan Telhan; and Defense Distributed.

ABOUT JOSEPH GRIMA

Joseph Grima has pursued a career as a curator, essayist, and critic in the fields of architecture, art, and design. He was the Director of Storefront for Art and Architecture from 2007-2010 and was the co curator of the 2012 Istanbul Design Biennial. Grima is currently the editor of Domus.

“Adhocracy” is curated by Joseph Grima with Associate Curators Elian Stefa, Ethel Baraona Pohl, and Pelin Tan.

ABOUT IDEAS CITY FESTIVAL MAY 1–4

IDEAS CITY is a biennial Festival in New York City with additional annual Global Conferences organized in key urban centers around the world. These global events help to identify urgent issues and invite an ever-growing number of international thought leaders to participate in the initiative. The current theme is Untapped Capital—under-recognized and underutilized resources that can be harnessed as catalysts for change. IDEAS CITY was founded in 2011 by the New Museum, New York, as an unprecedented collaborative initiative that involves hundreds of arts, education, and community organizations in an ongoing, multi-platform discussion on the future of cities around the globe. Members of the Executive Committee are the New Museum (founder); The Architectural League of New York; Bowery Poetry Club; Cooper Union; The Drawing Center; New York University Wagner School; and Storefront for Art and Architecture.

For more information visit ideas-city.org.

ABOUT NEW MUSEUM

The New Museum is the only museum in New York City exclusively devoted to contemporary art. Founded in 1977, the New Museum is a center for exhibitions, information, and documentation about living artists from around the world. From its beginnings as a one-room office on Hudson Street to the inauguration of its first freestanding building on the Bowery designed by SANAA in 2007, the New Museum continues to be a place of experimentation and a hub of new art and new ideas.