

The Museum of Modern Art

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SEVEN ARTISTS FEATURED IN NEXT *PROJECTS* EXHIBITION AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Projects: Architecture as Metaphor
April 10–June 3, 1997

**James Casebere, David Deutsch, Y. Z. Kami, Toba Khedoori,
Bodys Isek Kingelez, Langlands & Bell**

On April 10, 1997, The Museum of Modern Art opens a **Projects** show that explores how seven artists have used architectural motifs and imagery as a basis for their work. The artists included are James Casebere (b. United States), David Deutsch (b. United States), Y. Z. Kami (b. Iran), Toba Khedoori (b. Australia), Bodys Isek Kingelez (b. Zaire), and Langlands & Bell (b. England). Like other contemporary artists, the participants in this exhibition have expanded the metaphoric potential of architecture, employing a variety of mediums and treating a range of subjects, from public and social concerns to private quests or obsessions. On view through June 3, 1997, the exhibition is organized by Fereshteh Daftari, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Painting and Sculpture.

“The works in this exhibition reflect a contemporary interest in personal narrative and geometric structure. Architecture, with its abstract geometry and evocative power, is a natural ally to this concern,” remarks Daftari.

James Casebere's prison series, begun in 1992, resulted from his research into the relationship of architecture and social institutions since the Enlightenment. Using a slide of a given site as his guide, Casebere constructs a model out of styrofoam, cardboard, and plaster, then photographs it with dramatic lighting. His photograph *Tunnels* (1995),

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included in this exhibition, depicts The Eastern State Penitentiary, a “progressive” facility built in Philadelphia in the 1820s that favored solitary confinement to corporal punishment and labor. Interweaving the social and the personal, Casebere's fabricated carceral image comments on the condition of isolation.

David Deutsch moves beyond architecture to paint a mental space. In *Plasma* (1996–97), created for the exhibition, he depicts a concave architectural structure, faintly reminiscent of an observatory or rotunda, made up of innumerable anonymous portraits rendered in the sepia tone of ancient manuscripts. In combination with the portraits, the majestic vault, resonating with the grandeur of archetypal spaces like the Pantheon, creates a space conducive to a dialogue with history.

In **Y. Z. Kami's** *Untitled (Dptych)* (1997), also created for the exhibition, computer-manipulated photographic details of two medieval Persian domes are enlarged to gigantic proportions. In one image the bricks seem to gyrate, leading into darkness; in the other they meander upward toward radiating light. When properly positioned between the two images, the viewer enters both spaces at once; the spiral brickwork becomes a hypnotic vortex revealing both the anxieties and the aspirations of the artist.

Toba Khedoori's tranquil scene of a suspended facade takes the viewer to sites familiar but never visited. *Doors* (1995) conjures the epic scale of Abstract Expressionism, which Khedoori tackles not with grand impulsive gestures but with precise craftsmanship and the obsessive brushstroke of a miniaturist. Monumental yet delicate and intricately ornamented, *Doors* is executed on paper as an architect's rendering and then irreverently stapled to the wall. The doors hint at communal living as much as they speak about absence, opening onto a space as flat as the paper supporting them.

The fantastical constructions of **Bodys Isek Kingelez**, better known in Europe than in the United States, are fueled by an unwavering faith in architecture's rehabilitative powers. Kingelez is a self-taught Zairean artist whose urban models affirm his optimistic view of modernity and progress. In works such as *Palais d'Ihunga* (1992) and *Kimbembele Ville* (1992), which are accompanied by commentaries written by the artist, Kingelez reveals a dream that his native village will one day be a booming metropolis.

Langlands & Bell (Ben Langland and Nikki Bell), whose reliefs are shown for the first time in an American museum, reflect on the political agenda of architecture and its control over human behavior. Their pristine and elegant wall reliefs appear as geometric abstractions but in fact are based on the ground plans of actual buildings. *Underground Prison* (1997), created for this exhibition, represents the lower level of the Minnesota High Security Correctional Facility. It is shown with *Unité* (1993), a triptych based on Le Corbusier's communal housing known as "Unité d'Habitation."

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Running concurrently with this show in the Museum's Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden is **Projects: Rirkrit Tiravanija** (April 3–June 3, 1997) (see separate release).

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