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Pioneering artist and architect **Dan Graham** gets his first US retrospective

"There's a disease out there—artists want to become architects, and architects want to become artists—which I think I may have started," Dan Graham recently commented. He has a point. With artsy architects like Diller Scofidio + Renfro and David Adjaye increasingly given museum and gallery exhibitions, and artists like Vito Acconci and Pedro Reyes moving fluidly between the two fields, Graham's early and prescient crossover is worth tracking. Taking it upon itself to do just this, the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art is mounting the New York–based artist's first comprehensive North American retrospective. While accounting for Graham's wildly inclusive art production since the 1960s—encompassing photography, performance, conceptual print media, film and video, critical writing, drawing, rock music, and his famous glass-and-metal pavilions—MoCA's survey will trace a theme that appears throughout Graham's growing body of work: the evolving relationship of the individual to society as reflected in mass media, and, particularly, architecture.

In 1965, Graham began his seminal "Homes for America" series, a photo essay accompanied by a text in which he discoursed on tract-home palettes and architectural choices in the context of Minimalist concerns such as seriality. Published in 1967 in *Arts Magazine*, the work functioned as both an experimental art portfolio of deadpan shots of suburban homes and cultural/architectural criticism. By the '70s, however, Graham shifted gears, moving from simply photographing buildings to actually proposing them. He began making models for theoretical architectural projects, like 1978's *Alteration to a Suburban House*, which replaced the front of a home with glass and, inside, featured a mirrored wall running parallel to the facade. The work spoke to Graham's interest in private and public realms, intersubjectivity, and mirroring and perception. It also predicted the psychologically rife material—chiefly, two-way mirrored glass—that would come to mark his later built projects. By the late '70s, inspired by 19th-century artificial arcadias and 20th-century corporate atriums, he made architectural models—for his now celebrated indoor and outdoor pavilions—that would in fact be built. As curators began including these models in exhibitions, Graham slyly suggested: "My purpose is to use these models as tools of propaganda to generate commissions for similar works." Going on, he placed importance on what he called their ambiguity, "since it is difficult to clearly define them as 'artistic' or architectural works." Graham's built pavilions retain some of that uncertainty. Their construction is often minimal to the extreme. However, their materials, and their mostly public site-specificity, point to the artist's long interest in the self-awareness of the viewer as s/he engages with art or architecture—or both.

TOP: Dan Graham, *Performer/Audience/Mirror*, 1977. Performance view, P.S. 1 Institute for Contemporary Art, Long Island City, New York.

ABOVE: *Skateboard Pavilion*, 1989. Architectural model, two-way mirror glass, brushed aluminum, steel, wood, and graffiti, 55 x 57 x 51⅛ in.

TOP RIGHT: Clare Stephenson, *She-who-is-the-Unguarded moment*, 2008. Xerox and collage on paper, 25 x 19 in.

RIGHT: Alex Pollard, *Robin Hood Vortex*, 2008. Oil on canvas, 42 x 39 in.

Graham's much-anticipated LA retrospective was initially to be housed in MoCA's Geffen Contemporary space, a former police-car warehouse in Little Tokyo that was renovated by famed architect Frank Gehry. But at the time of this writing, MoCA's financial straits had caused it to temporarily close the Geffen offshoot, as well as postpone a number of upcoming shows. Graham's show, however, co-organized by curators Bennett Simpson (of MoMA) and Chrissie Iles (of the Whitney), will go on. And considering that the artist recently derided Gehry's voluminous new LA Disney Hall—"They're imitating artists, these architects, and I think it's some of the worst architecture of the world," he said—perhaps it's best that the exhibition has now been moved over to the MoCA's main space. —QL

"DAN GRAHAM: BEYOND," FEB. 15–MAY 25, MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, LOS ANGELES, MOCA.ORG