

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE -- JANUARY 2003

Exhibition: January 22, 2003 – March 22, 2003

Free Reception: **Wednesday, January 22, 2003**
6:30 – 8:30 PM

“Cities without citizens: statelessness and intimacy in contemporary art and architecture”

This two-part exhibition explores the figure of the stranger in contemporary art, architecture, and cultural life. Works respond to apocalypse in the modern sense, simply making the world uninhabitable, generic. Exhibition curated by Aaron Levy.

Gans & Jelacic's *Extreme Housing* ameliorates living conditions for those persons permanently if internally displaced from the economic and geopolitical order. Lars Wallsten's *Pictures of crime* catalogues the violence that empties out the city, marking the dissolution of the public and private. Katrin Sigurdardottir's *Untitled* suspends the urban landscape in water, producing uninhabitable landscapes at once desirable and desolate. Aaron Levy's *Kloster Indersdorf* series revisits an orphanage in 1945 and recasts the photographic address as a signifier of abandonment. Gregg Lambert's *Of Strangers: Notes on statelessness* reexamines continental philosophy and public culture through the figure of the stranger. Information, artist biographies and curatorial statement online: <http://slought.net/>

Works include:

Gans & Jelacic, Architecture and Design: *Extreme Housing*

Lars Wallsten: *Pictures of crime*

Katrin Sigurdardottir: *Untitled, 2001-2003*

Aaron Levy: *Search String: Kloster Indersdorf*

Gregg Lambert: *Of Strangers: Notes on statelessness and intimacy*

The second iteration will take place at The Rosenbach Museum & Library from July to September, 2003.

Slought Networks emphasizes innovative curatorial and artistic practices through events, exhibitions and publications.

For images and more information, please contact

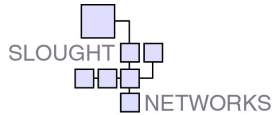
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EXHIBITION SPACE, OFFICES

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Participant Biographies:

Deborah Gans and Matthew Jelacic are partners in the office Gans & Jelacic, Architecture and Design. Their work in the fields of industrial design and architecture has been exhibited at RIBA, London, IFA, Paris and the Van Alen Institute in New York City. Their recent investigation into disaster relief housing has won international awards and a grant for development from the Johnny Walker Fund. Both Gans and Jelacic are Professors in architecture at Pratt Institute in New York. Deborah Gans is the author of *The Le Corbusier Guide* (Princeton Architectural Press) and the editor of a forthcoming book *The Organic Approach* (Architecture/John Wiley- London).

Lars Wallsten was born in 1957 in Stockholm, Sweden, where he currently resides. He has exhibited in individual and group shows throughout Scandinavia, including the 1999 exhibition "Modern Times II" at the Hasselblad Center, Sweden. Recent projects including "Pictures of Crime" and "Crimescape" engage his earlier work as a policeman. Along with Chris Burden, Zbigniew Libera and Olav Westphalen, he was the subject of an extended feature in a recent issue of the bilingual magazine "Index" on Art and the Law.

Katrín Sigurdardóttir was born in 1967 in Reykjavik and currently lives in New York. Her work examines distance and memory and their embodiment in and through architecture, urbanism and cartography. She has exhibited widely throughout Europe and the United States, including the Corcoran Gallery, Washington, the Icelandic National Gallery of Art, Iceland, the Victoria Miro Warehouse, London, the Centre d'Art Contemporaine á Sète, France, and the Hannover Kunstverein, Germany. She received a 2002-2003 fellowship through the Icelandic National Endowment for the Arts, and was a finalist for the Carnegie Art Award in 2002. Recent lectures on her work in the United States include Colgate University and Middlebury College. She is currently preparing for a solo show with Galleria Maze, Torino.

Aaron Levy is founding curator of Slought Networks, an arts organization, gallery, and archival resource. His curatorial projects include ongoing lecture series, conferences, exhibitions and publications featuring artists and theorists including Daniel Libeskind, Slavoj Žižek, Sol Le Witt and Gerhard Richter. He recently edited "Searching for Romberg," essays on artist Osvaldo Romberg, and "Untitled (After Cinema)," essays on photography and cinema (Philadelphia: Slought Books, 2001 & 2002). As an artist, he will curate part II of an extended exhibition on statelessness and intimacy at the Rosenbach Museum, Philadelphia in July 2003.

Gregg Lambert, Associate Professor of English & Textual Studies, Syracuse University, has written extensively on contemporary philosophy and literary theory, as well as on psychoanalysis, ethnography, religion, aesthetics, and current debates around the fate of the Humanities in the contemporary university. In addition to numerous articles and chapters on these subjects, he is the author of *The Non-Philosophy of Gilles Deleuze* (Continuum, 2002), *Report to the Academy* ("Critical Studies in the Humanities," Davies Group, 2001), and *Return of the Baroque: Art, Culture, and Theory in the Modern Age* (also forthcoming from Continuum Books in 2003).

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Cities without citizens: statelessness and intimacy in contemporary art and architecture

Curatorial Statement

1. "Genuinely political phenomena and paradigms," the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben writes, "are sought out and experienced in places which are not normally considered political, or only marginally so." And it is the refugee, he asserts, "formerly regarded as a marginal figure, who has become now the decisive factor of the modern nation-state by breaking the nexus between the human being and the citizen."¹

2. Consider the stateless and impoverished refugee, displaced from the economic and geopolitical order, as an obscene object of desire for the tourist. The global tourist is a nomad by design, traveling in search of authenticity in a distressed landscape.² For a fairly small price, about \$25,000, he or she could have toured the Bosnian war front in 1992 and visited the refugee live. In an age of broadcasts and recordings, there's nothing quite like real distress.³

3. "The hardest hit, as everywhere," Theodor Adorno lamented, "are those who have no choice. They live, if not in slums, in bungalows that by tomorrow may be leaf-huts, trailers, cars, camps, or the open air." "Dwelling, in the proper sense, is now impossible... It is part of morality not to be at home in one's home."⁴

4. The works that comprise this exhibition catalog and counter the evacuation of our homes and our identities. They figure apocalypse in the modern sense, simply making the world uninhabitable, generic. In their concern for and hospitality toward the figure of the stranger, the works also betray a fundamental inquisitiveness towards the modular and the non-specific. A model serves as a prototype for the future; it is a potentiality to be filled. A model may also respond to an imperfect, unfulfilled past; it seeks to ameliorate a damaged or desolate life. It is that cut-out too perfect to occupy, too anonymous to reject.

5. "Many things are useless," the aesthetician Stephen Wright has argued, "and art works scarcely spring to mind as most useless amongst them."⁵ Contemplate these works as useful, then, to the extent that they mark our estrangement from intimacy and the public sphere. Through subtle provocations they unsettle us in our homes and they unsettle our conception of art and architecture. They return to us an image of the violence and instability that empties out the city, the crime scenes that mark the dissolution of the public and private and the violation of life.

6. "The best mode of conduct," Adorno admitted, "in the face of all this, still seems an uncommitted, suspended one: to lead a private life, as far as the social order and one's own needs will tolerate nothing else, but not to attach weight to it as to something still socially substantial and individually appropriate."⁶ "The best mode of conduct," Adorno could also have insisted, "in the face of all this, still seems an uncommitted, suspended one: to lead a public life."

A.L.

January 2003

¹ Giorgio Agamben, *Means Without End: Notes on Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000, X.

² "Why has something become desirable? At the time of the Bosnian War, I once saw a photo on the front page of the Herald Tribune, which showed tourists taking photos inside the burned out library in Sarajevo. Would you go there to do the same? These people seemed to enjoy the trip. At the time, Sarajevo only had water for a few hours per day, and a sniper could get you anytime. I thought this was a real desire for a distressed landscape." Marjetica Potrc in Hans Ulrich Obrist, "Interview with Marjetica Potrc," *ARCONOTICIAS*, Madrid, no 24, Summer 2002, 55-59.

³ The 1992 edition of *Lonely Planet*, the popular guide book, admonishes tourists longing for avant-garde experiences to be careful when visiting distressed cities in times of strife. "[Somalia] fell apart again in late 1989 and throughout 1990 as a result of internecine strife," we read with concern, "and conditions are now worse than they have ever been. It's now hard to visit this country without the feeling of being a *refugee tourist*. (italics mine)" Quoted by Thomas Keenan in Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio, *Back to the Front*. Basse-Normandie: Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain de Basse-Normandie, 1994, 161 & 939.

⁴ Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*. London: Verso, 1997, 38-39.

⁵ "For Adorno, art was not merely useless, but was somehow radically useless, and therefore a subversive force in a world of all-pervasive utilitarian rationality. This notion of art as the Other of such rationality - that endless chain of ends and means, which makes usefulness an end in itself, is so deep-seated in contemporary intellectual culture that the very question of the "use-value" of art smacks of philistinism. [...] Beyond its uselessness, its purposeless finality, art must be of some use to us - why, otherwise, would we bother to engage with it?" Stephen Wright, "Lecture: The Use-Value of Contemporary Art," *Apex Art* (New York: 2000).

⁶ Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*. London: Verso, 1997, 39.