

For Immediate Release



David Hartt, *Carolina I*, 2017, archival pigment print mounted to Dibond, print size 36 x 54 inches. Courtesy of Corbett vs. Dempsey and commissioned by the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts

David Hartt: in the forest
September 14, 2017–January 6, 2018

Opening Reception: Thursday, September 14, 6–8 p.m.

Opening remarks with David Hartt and Graham director, Sarah Herda begin at 6:30 p.m.

Chicago, IL (July 24, 2017)—The Graham Foundation is pleased to present a new commission by artist David Hartt: *in the forest*, a multipart installation opening September 14, 2017 at the Foundation's Madlener House galleries, coinciding with the 2017 Chicago Architecture Biennial and EXPO CHICAGO.

Borrowing its title from a chapter of Claude Lévi-Strauss' 1955 memoir *Tristes Tropiques*, *in the forest* continues Hartt's investigation into the relationship between ideology, architecture, and the environment. Consisting of a film, a suite of photographs, and a series of sculptures, the installation revisits architect Moshe Safdie's unfinished 1968 *Habitat Puerto Rico* project through a contemporary lens.

Begun just one year after the resounding success of Safdie’s visionary design for *Habitat 67* in Montreal—a model housing development created for the Expo 67 World’s Fair—*Habitat Puerto Rico* was one of several *Habitat* housing developments that the architect designed for New York, Israel, and Singapore, among other cities. In Puerto Rico, the experimental housing development was designed to provide 800 low-cost dwelling units for moderate-income families in a system of stacked prefabricated concrete modules cascading down an undeveloped hill in the densely populated Hato Rey neighborhood of San Juan. The project was originally intended to occupy the Bosque Urbano de San Patricio, the former site of U.S. Navy housing, and now an overgrown tropical forest used as an urban park. Consistent with Safdie’s approach to other *Habitat* developments, *Habitat Puerto Rico* was designed to provide inhabitants with a sense of community, privacy, and access to green space, where each unit had a private garden and views of the city.

When writing about the Puerto Rico project in *Beyond Habitat* (1970), Safdie titled the chapter “Breakthrough.” Following a number of false starts in other cities, *Habitat Puerto Rico* appeared to be the first viable project after the success of *Habitat 67*. However, a number of constraints shaped *Habitat Puerto Rico*: the economy of the project was dictated by a federal housing subsidy the developers used to finance the development, and the size and flat, hexagonal form of the individual modules were necessary to make the concrete units transportable by highway or barge because it was not possible to build a factory in close proximity to the original site, as had been done in Montreal. Unfortunately, despite the developments and innovations achieved in *Habitat Puerto Rico*, political and economic forces stopped the project early in its construction.

Central to David Hartt’s exhibition is a meditative film that captures the remains of Safdie’s project. Nearly fifty years after it was initiated, the artist returns to the sites of *Habitat Puerto Rico*: the original wooded hillside of the Bosque Urbano de San Patricio; the alternate site for the project at Berwyn Farm in the Carolina municipality, just east of San Juan (where construction started after the original site was deemed untenable); and a number of remote sites around the island where modules have been abandoned or repurposed. Featuring long takes of the weathered modules surrounded by the encroaching jungle, and environmental recordings layered with a composition by electronic musician Karl Fousek, Hartt’s piece offers a study of this unrealized experimental project—and the optimism from which it was conceived—recontextualized within the political and economic struggles of contemporary Puerto Rico.

in the forest will occupy the first and second floors of the Graham Foundation galleries and its outdoor courtyard. The installation engages the architecture of the Foundation’s historic Madlener House by emphasizing its large-scale windows as apertures, blurring the boundary between interior and exterior, public and private, north and south, and nature and culture. Through film, photographs, sculpture, tropical plants, ambient sound, and stacks of hexagonal ceramic objects that serve as both planters and seats, Hartt crafts an environment for contemplation of the *Habitat* sites from outside and within.

David Hartt was selected by Graham Foundation director Sarah Herda to create a new work for the Foundation’s exhibition program. Graham Foundation commissions provide critical financial, production, and administrative support for the creation of a new work or body of work. A commission is also an opportunity to engage new audiences through an exhibition, related programming, and a publication.

“David Hartt is one of the most compelling artists working at the intersection of art and architecture today. Through this commission and presentation, we are thrilled to create a platform for experimentation in David’s practice and to work along with him to present this immersive and thought-provoking work,” said Herda.

in the forest opens September 14, 2017 and will run through January 6, 2018. An opening reception will take place on Thursday, September 14, 2017, from 6–8 p.m., with opening remarks by David Hartt and Graham Foundation director Sarah Herda at 6:30 p.m.

David Hartt (b. 1967, Montréal) lives and works in Philadelphia, where he is an assistant professor in the Department of Fine Arts at the University of Pennsylvania. Recent solo exhibitions have been held at the Art Institute of Chicago; LA><ART, Los Angeles; and Or Gallery, Vancouver. Additionally, his work has been included in several group exhibitions, including *Ocean of Images: New Photography 2015* at The Museum of Modern Art; *America Is Hard to See* at the Whitney Museum of American Art; and *Shine a light/Surgir de l’ombre: Canadian Biennial* at the National Gallery of Canada. His work is in the public collections of The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; the Art Institute of Chicago; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago; Henry Art Gallery, Seattle; the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. Hartt is the recipient of a 2015 Foundation for Contemporary Arts Grant. In 2012, he was named a United States Artists Cruz Fellow, and in 2011 he received a Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award.

Hartt is represented by Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago; David Nolan Gallery, New York; and Galerie Thomas Schulte, Berlin.

SUPPORT

David Hartt: in the forest is commissioned by the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts and organized by Graham Foundation director Sarah Herda and managing director of public programs Ellen Alderman.

Additional support is provided by Oakville Galleries, Ontario, where the exhibition will travel in the fall of 2018.

PUBLICATION

A forthcoming artist book will accompany the exhibition.

RELATED EVENTS

Thursday, September 14, 2017

Opening Reception: 6–8 p.m.

Opening remarks with David Hartt and Graham director Sarah Herda begin at 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, October 18, 6 p.m.

Artist Talk with David Hartt

Monday, October 30, 6 p.m.

Moshe Safdie: Humanizing Megascale

For more information about upcoming events, visit: www.grahamfoundation.org/public_events

ABOUT THE GRAHAM FOUNDATION

Founded in 1956, the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts fosters the development and exchange of diverse and challenging ideas about architecture and its role in the arts, culture, and society. The Graham realizes this vision through making project-based grants to individuals and organizations and by producing exhibitions, events, and publications.

THE MADLENER HOUSE

Since 1963, the Graham Foundation has been located in the Madlener House, a turn-of-the-century Prairie-style mansion designed by Richard E. Schmidt and Hugh M. Gardner. Built 1901–02, it was later renovated by prominent modern architect Daniel Brenner. The 9,000 square-foot historic home now hosts galleries, a bookstore, an outdoor collection of architectural fragments, an extensive non-lending library of grantee publications, and a ballroom where the foundation hosts a robust schedule of public programs.

BOOKSHOP

The Graham Foundation's bookshop, designed by Ania Jaworska, offers a selection of new, historically significant, and hard-to-find publications on architecture, art and design, many of which have been supported by grants from the Graham Foundation.

GALLERY HOURS AND VISITOR INFORMATION

The galleries and bookshop are open to the public Wednesday through Saturday, 11 a.m.–6 p.m. Admission is free. Group tours are available by request.

ACCESSIBILITY

The second-floor galleries and the third-floor ballroom, where events are held, are only accessible by stairs. The first-floor galleries and bookshop are accessible via outdoor lift. Please call ahead to make arrangements.

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High-resolution digital images are available on the press section of our website; email Ellen Alderman for the press login or additional information. Press tours welcome by appointment.