

# Graham Foundation



Detail of the façade of the Our Lady Flower of Carmelite Parish, Madrid, designed by Miguel Fisac, 1983. Photo: Carlos Copertone

For Immediate Release

## ***Poured Architecture: Sergio Prego on Miguel Fisac*** **February 11–July 2020\***

**Opening Reception: Tuesday, February 11, 6–8 p.m.; 5:30 p.m. comments by artist Sergio Prego and curators Patxi Eguíluz, Carlos Copertone, and Iker Gil**

Chicago (January 30, 2020)—The exhibition *Poured Architecture* establishes a dialogue between the late Spanish architect Miguel Fisac and the contemporary work of the Basque-born, Brooklyn-based artist Sergio Prego. Through a new body of work supported by a Graham Foundation Fellowship, Prego explores the possibility and synchronicity of materials and processes across architecture and visual art in a new series of sculptures and drawings inspired by Fisac’s innovative architecture and construction techniques. Here, Prego plays with scale and texture and creates his pneumatic and concrete structures within the context of Fisac’s methodology—chiefly *arquitectura vertida*, the patented cast concrete system that Fisac created, known in English as poured architecture. Drawings by Prego, displayed alongside facsimiles of material culled from Fisac’s archive, further illustrate the confluence of the two practices that both employ themes of material fluidity and malleability and investigate using materials such as plastic, concrete, and aluminum. This exhibition invites a multifaceted conversation about architectural imagination, experimentation, and material expression.

***\*Please contact us for the most recent exhibition closing dates***

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Archival works selected for this exhibition document the arc of Miguel Fisac’s career, started in the late 1940s, and reveal a certain singularity in his output which departed radically from the more conservative style that dominated the postwar regime in Spain. Informed by his international travels, Fisac distilled his ranging observations of modern architecture—from the grid to curvilinear forms—to develop his unique material manipulations that also incorporated his interest in biology and organic forms executed as affordable prefabricated elements. Key features of Fisac’s work, such as his flexible membrane concrete casts and “bone beams,” inspired by the cross-section of hollow bones, recall morphogenesis, the biological process first described in Goethe’s seminal text *The Metamorphosis of Plants* (1790) whereby an organism develops its shape from the organization of cellular tissue. Fisac’s creative approach to construction and architecture also resonates with current questions in the field as issues related to affordability, modularity, and sustainability dominate architectural discourse.

Drawn to the relevance of Fisac’s practice and to the shared interest in materials and forms derived from organic structures, Prego’s recent focus on Fisac builds on his study of pneumatic constructions and flexible membranes that began in the early 2000s when he collaborated with the renowned conceptual artist Vito Acconci (1940–2017). Through this formative experience where the boundaries between art, design, and architecture were tested daily in the interdisciplinary studio, Prego established his own practice that engages with concepts of mass, void, and scale. In this way his practice also references the history of inflatable interventions in architecture—first introduced in the 1960s as counterculture utopian spaces for experimentation designed by visionaries such as Ant Farm, Archigram, Buckminster Fuller, and Frei Otto. Today, these lines of inquiry remain central to Prego’s boundary-breaking practice across sculpture, drawing, and film as he explores tensions between perceived boundaries within built and natural environments and objects that interject in these spaces.

For this site-specific installation, the worlds of Miguel Fisac and Sergio Prego are united for the first time, showcasing Fisac’s legacy of material experimentation in conjunction with Prego’s interdisciplinary investigations into the experience of space. Pneumatic and concrete sculptures by Prego are layered in direct relationship to Fisac’s archival material—spanning from the late 1940s to the 1980s—and the work temporarily occupies circulatory spaces, or veils clear sightlines within the exhibition, destabilizing conventional ways in which the Madlener House galleries are perceived and negotiated. Additionally, Prego presents a new suite of drawings created as a rigorous rote exercise in which he painstakingly recreates some of Fisac’s original plans and sketches.

This new body of work is the result of Sergio Prego’s selection as a 2020 Graham Foundation Fellow—a program that provides support for the development and production of original and challenging works and the opportunity to debut these projects in an exhibition at the Graham Foundation. The Fellowship program extends the legacy of the Foundation’s first awards, made in 1957, and continues the tradition of support to individuals to explore innovative perspectives on spatial practices in design culture. Recent Fellows, including Nelly Agassi, Torkwase Dyson, Brendan Fernandes, David Hartt, Martine Syms, and Mark Wasiuta, join alumni from the original class of Fellows, such as Pritzker Prize winning architects Balkrishna V. Doshi and Fumihiko Maki, designer Harry Bertoia, photographer Harry M. Callahan, sculptor Eduardo Chillida, experimental architect Frederick J. Kiesler, and painter Wilfredo Lam, among others.

*Poured Architecture: Sergio Prego on Miguel Fisac* is curated by Carlos Copertone, Patxi Eguíluz, and Iker Gil. It is organized at the Graham Foundation by Sarah Herda, director; Ellen Alderman, deputy director, exhibitions and public programs; and Ava Barrett, program and communications manager.

Special thanks to Fundación Miguel Fisac. Additional support provided by a grant through the Program for the Internationalization of Spanish Culture (PICE) from Acción Cultural Española (AC/E), Madrid. Production support provided by Javier Soto and Ozinga, Chicago. Gratitude for the Graham Foundation staff: Alexis Bullock, Alexandra Drexelius, Carolyn Kelly, Ron Konow, Jillian Lepek, Junxi Lu, James Pike, and Alexandra Small.



**Sergio Prego** (b.1969) is a Basque sculptor, part of the experimental space Arteleku in San Sebastián, and now based in New York. During the five years he spent in Vito Acconci's studio, Prego was the only artist in a group of engineers and architects who contributed to the work of the classic conceptual artist. Along with Itziar Okariz, Prego represented Spain at the 2019 Venice Biennale.

**Miguel Fisac** (1913–2006) was a key figure in Spanish architecture of the second half of the twentieth century and his works contributed to the modernization of architecture in Spain. He graduated from the School of Architecture of Madrid in 1942, and his first work, the Church of the Holy Spirit, was completed that same year. He was awarded the Gold Medal for Spanish Architecture (1994), the Antonio Camuñas Award (1997), and the National Architecture Award (2002).

**Patxi Eguíluz** is an architect, curator, researcher, and critic focused on construction and urbanism. He is an editor of books on art and architecture at Caniche Editorial and has curated several exhibitions and developed projects at various institutions across Spain. His writing has been published in MAS Context, Openhouse, and Architectural Digest (AD España).

**Carlos Copertone** received his PhD from the University of Extremadura, specializing in urbanism and regional planning. He is an editor of books on art and architecture at Caniche Editorial and has curated and developed several exhibitions, programs, and projects with Spanish cultural organizations. Copertone has lectured extensively in Spain and abroad and has been published in MAS Context, Openhouse, and Architectural Digest (AD España).

**Iker Gil** is an architect and director of MAS Studio, an architecture and urban design firm based in Chicago. He is also the editor-in-chief of the journal MAS Context and editor of the book *Shanghai Transforming* (ACTAR, 2008). He has curated exhibitions for the Chicago Architecture Biennial and the US Pavilion, Venice Architecture Biennale. Additionally, he is the executive director of the SOM Foundation and teaches at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

#### OPENING RECEPTION

Tuesday, February 11, 2020

5:30–6 p.m. comments by artist Sergio Prego and curators Patxi Eguíluz, Carlos Copertone, and Iker Gil

6–8 p.m. Opening Reception

For additional upcoming program dates, visit our website [grahamfoundation.org](http://grahamfoundation.org)

#### **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. G. Garden. 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.

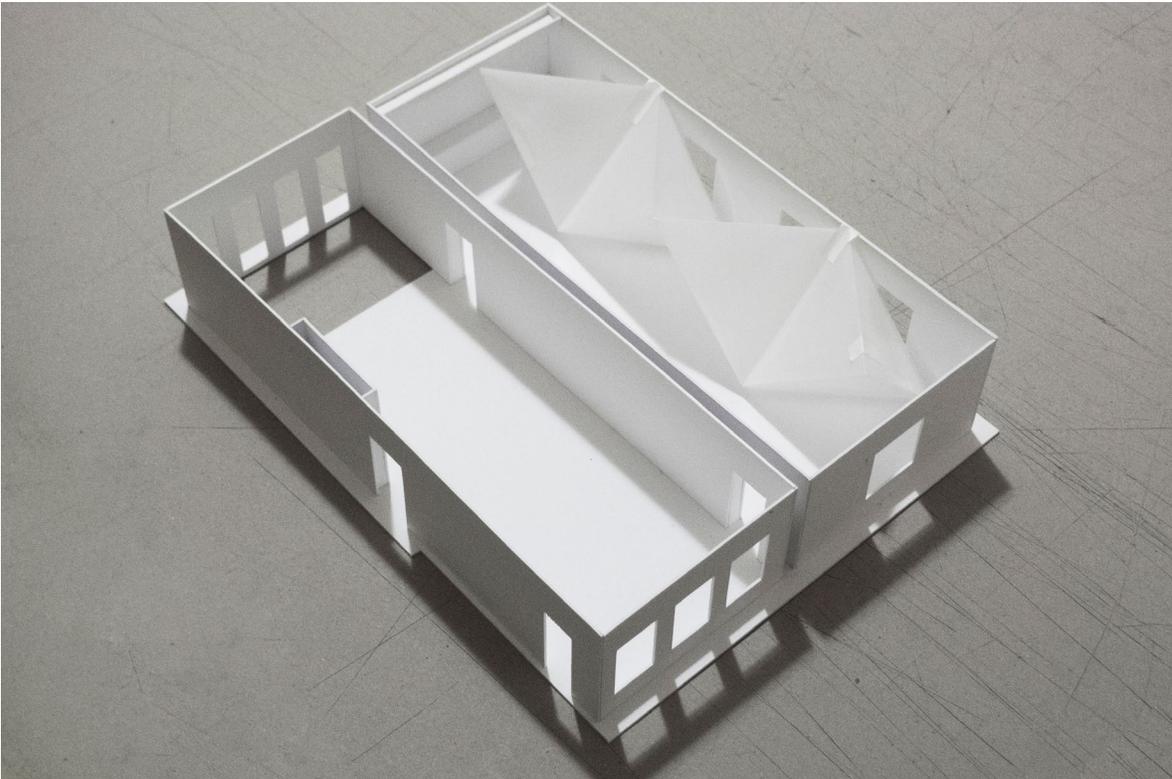
#### **ACCESSIBILITY**

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.

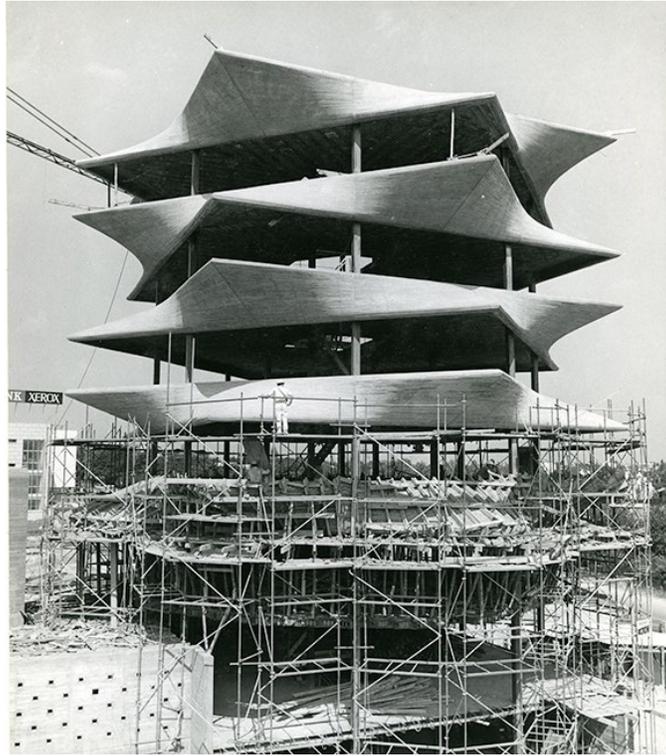
#### **MEDIA CONTACT**

A selection of high-resolution digital images included here, additional images are available on the press section of our website; email Ava Barrett for the press login. Press tours welcome by appointment.

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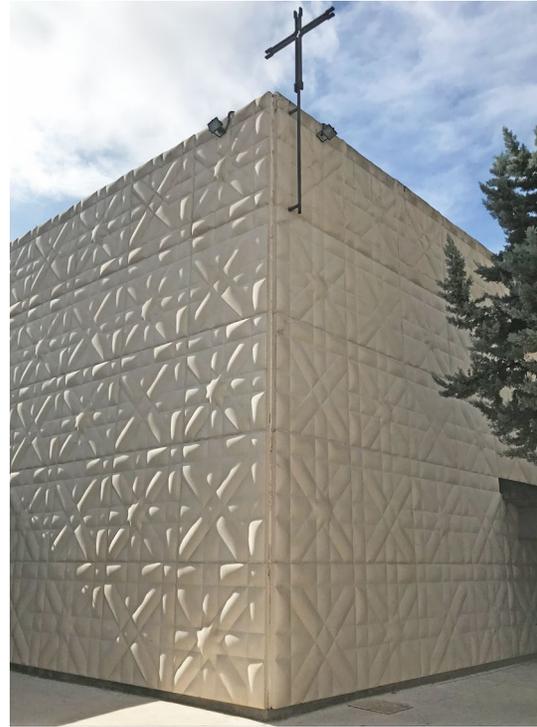
Images: (top) Installation view of *Sergio Prego: Rose-colored Drift/To the Students*, Blaffer Art Museum at the University of Houston, 2017. Courtesy the artist; (bottom) Sergio Prego, model for the Graham Foundation, 2019. Courtesy the artist



Images: (top) Jorba Laboratories under construction, Madrid, designed by Miguel Fisac, 1965. Courtesy Fundación Miguel Fisac. Photo: Portillo; (bottom) Exterior of Jorba Laboratories, Madrid, designed by Miguel Fisac, 1965. Courtesy Fundación Miguel Fisac



Images: (top left) Exterior facade of the social use building for the Hospital Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Madrid, designed by Miguel Fisac, 1984. Courtesy Fundación Miguel Fisac; (top right) Exterior facade of the Juan Zurita residence, Madrid, designed by Miguel Fisac, 1973. Courtesy Fundación Miguel Fisac (bottom) Exterior of Center for Rehabilitation, MUPAG, Madrid, designed by Miguel Fisac, 1969. Courtesy Fundación Miguel Fisac

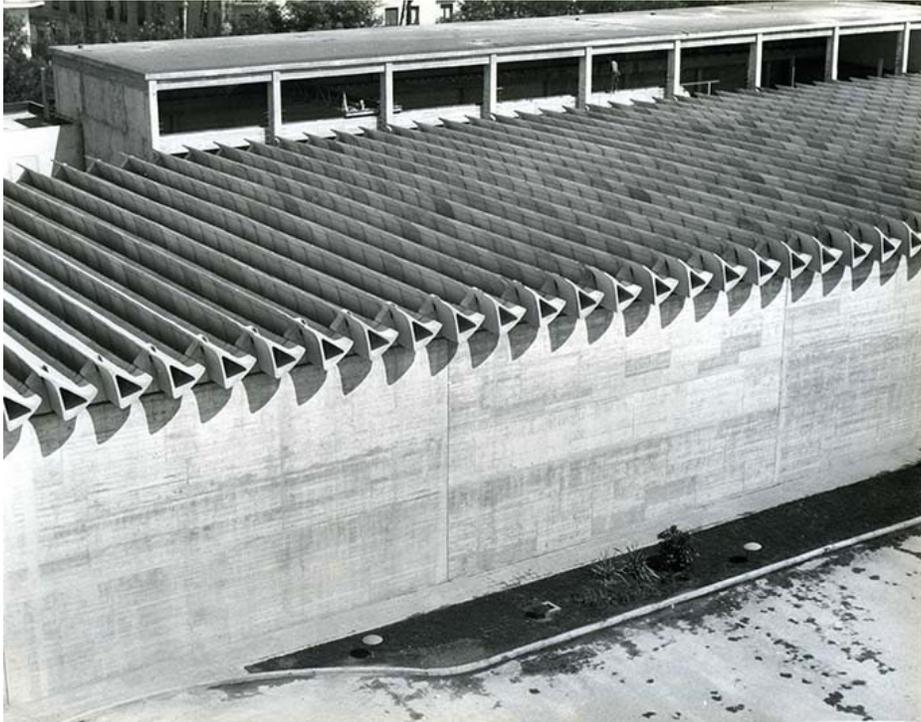
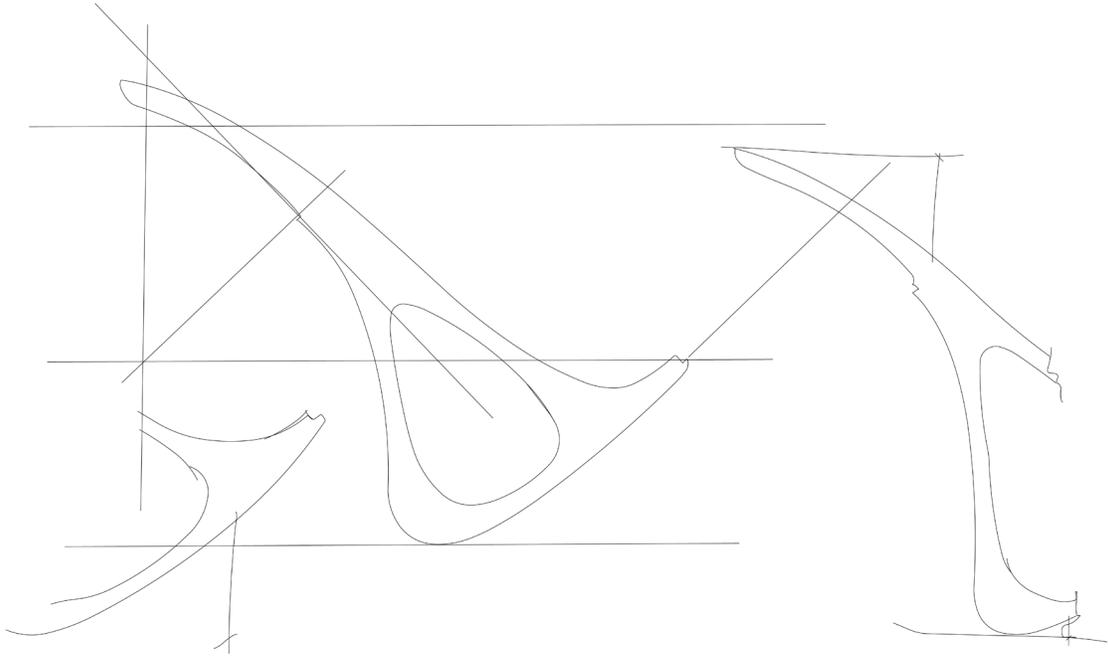


Images: (top left) Exterior facade of the social use building for the Hospital Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Madrid, designed by Miguel Fisac, 1984. Photo: Carlos Copertone; (top right) Exterior of Our Lady Flower of Carmelite Parish, Madrid, designed by Miguel Fisac, 1983. Photo: Carlos Copertone (bottom) Detail of the façade of the Our Lady Flower of Carmelite Parish, Madrid, designed by Miguel Fisac, 1983. Photo: Carlos Copertone

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Images: (top) Sergio Prego, after Miguel Fisac's original drawing for Center for Hydrographic Studies, digital manipulation, 2019. Courtesy the artist; (bottom) Bone beam ready for installation during construction of the Center for Hydrographic Studies, Madrid, designed by Miguel Fisac, 1961. Courtesy Fundación Miguel Fisac



Images: (top) Sergio Prego, after Miguel Fisac's original sketch for Center for Hydrographic Studies, digital manipulation, 2019. Courtesy the artist; (bottom) Exterior detail of the Center for Hydrographic Studies, Madrid, designed by Miguel Fisac, 1961. Courtesy Fundación Miguel Fisac