

# Graham Foundation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## EXITS EXIST

Barbara Stauffacher Solomon

February 25–July 9, 2022

*Chicago, February 24, 2022*—The Graham Foundation is pleased to present *Exits Exist*, an exhibition by San Francisco-based Barbara Stauffacher Solomon, that features site-specific supergraphics for the Graham Foundation's Madlener House galleries, works on paper, artist's books, and a new series of sculptures.

*Exits Exist* is the title of the first chapter of Solomon's experimental autobiography *Why? Why Not?* She begins the story of her life with her move to Switzerland to study design with Armin Hoffman at the Basel School of Design in the 1950s. There, the only American in the rigorous program at the time, she began her nearly 70-year exploration of letterforms. Armed with the rules of Swiss graphic design, Solomon went on to break them as she combined her training as a dancer, painter, with her study of architecture to establish her own oeuvre. From her work on 8.5 x 11 inch sheets of paper, to the pioneering supergraphics at The Sea Ranch in the 1960s, Solomon shifts in scale from the page to the wall—to make, as she says, the invisible visible.

At the Graham, the bold, hard-edged abstracted letters of black and vermillion painted on the walls proclaim, "EXITS EXIST." She manipulates the bare white expanse of the walls for her composition to completely transform the 1902 interiors of the Prairie style mansion. The letterforms envelop the viewer—from the walls to the ceilings—and extend out into the space in a new series of three-dimensional objects. If the supergraphics are punctuated with empty space, the works on paper fill space with complex grids and collage in "an infinite collection of infinite collages." Throughout the exhibition, including books she has made over the last decade, such as: *Why, Why Not?*; or *Utopia Myopia* with the subtitle: *36 Plays on a Page, Typography & Pornography, Lines & Lies & Clues to Use, Nonsense Invents Events, A kind of Novel Novel*, her penchant for wordplay and graphic invention is in full force.

Originally planned for the spring of 2020, *Exits Exist* was realized through Barbara Stauffacher Solomon's Graham Foundation Fellowship—a program that provides support for the development and production of original and challenging works and the opportunity to present these projects in an exhibition at the Graham's galleries in Chicago. 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. The presentation also reengages with research that Solomon received support for in 1993, when she was first awarded a Graham grant for her work.

California native **Barbara Stauffacher Solomon** (b. 1928) began her career as a dancer, before studying painting and sculpture at the San Francisco Art Institute. She studied graphic design at the Basel School of Design in Switzerland and later established her own graphic design firm in San Francisco—creating the groundbreaking supergraphics and graphic identity for The Sea Ranch. Solomon returned to school in the 1980s to study architecture at the University of California, Berkeley. Her books include *Green Architecture and the Agrarian Garden* (Rizzoli, 1988); *Good Mourning California* (Rizzoli, 1992); *Utopia Myopia* (Fun Fog Press, 2012); *Why? Why Not?* (Fun Fog Press, 2013); *Read Any Good Boots Lately* (Owl Cave Books, 2018); *Making the Invisible Visible* (Owl Cave Books, 2019); *Ditto* (Colpa, 2021); and *WE&ME* (Colpa, 2022). She has exhibited her work widely and is in the permanent collections such as the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and Walker Art Center. Solomon is a fellow of the American Academy in Rome.

*Exits Exist* continues and expands the presentation of Solomon's *Relax Into the Invisible*, originated by LAXART in Los Angeles and curated by Catherine Taft and Hamza Walker in 2019. At the Graham Foundation, the exhibition is organized by Sarah Herda, director; and realized with Ava Barrett, program and communications manager; and Alexandra Lee Small, senior advisor; and features new supergraphics by Barbara Stauffacher Solomon, installed by Nellie King Solomon, and painted by Andrew McClellan and Kelsey Dalton of Heart & Bone Signs. Gratitude for the work and support of Chris Grunder; Amavong Panya of NFA Space; and the Graham Foundation staff: Carolyn Kelly, Ron Konow, Tomi Laja, and James Pike.

#### ABOUT LAXART

LAXART is a nonprofit visual art space that promotes developments in contemporary culture through exhibitions, publications, and public programs. LAXART believes that contemporary art is a means of understanding key issues of our time with all their inherent contradictions. Contemporary art assumes many forms. Rather than provide answers, it raises questions. Through a range of offerings, LAXART contextualizes contemporary art both socially and art historically. The programs are free and designed to be accessible to the general public.

#### 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 Graham Foundation was created by a bequest from Ernest R. Graham (1866–1936), a prominent Chicago architect and protégé of Daniel Burnham.

#### 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, 12–5 p.m. Admission is free. Reservations are required; book on [exploretock.com/grahamfoundation](http://exploretock.com/grahamfoundation). 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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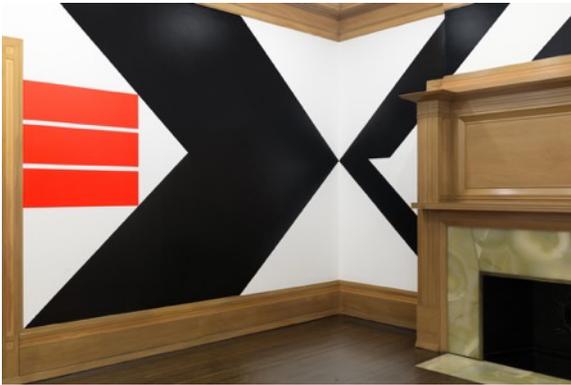
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View of "Exits Exist: Barbara Stauffacher Solomon,"  
Graham Foundation, Chicago, 2022. Photo: Nathan  
Key.



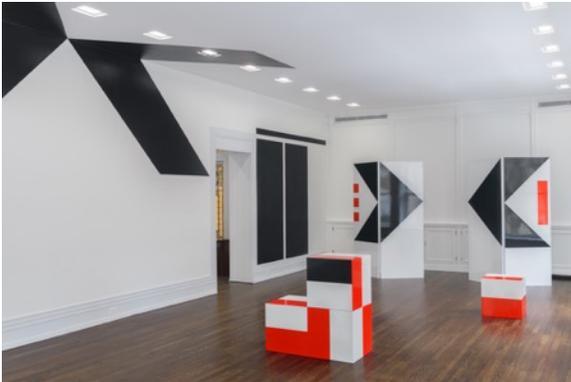
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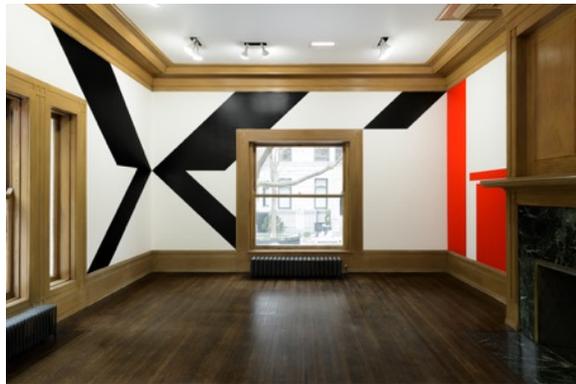
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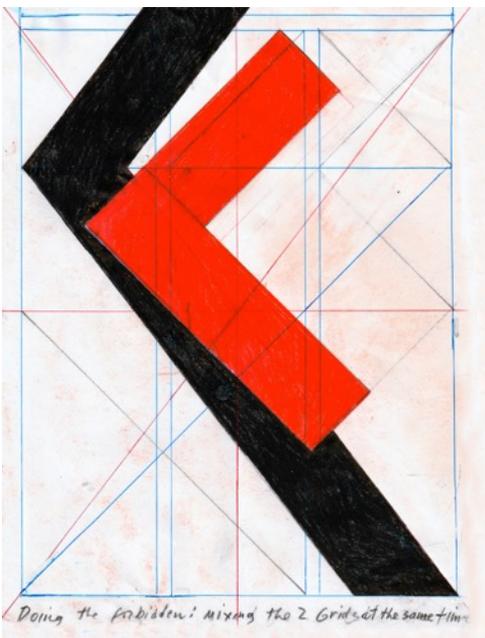
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Barbara Stauffacher Solomon, "Exits Exist" (1 of 9), 2012. Mixed media on paper, 8.5 x 11 in. (each). Courtesy the artist



Barbara Stauffacher Solomon, "This Woman Questions the Quotes," ca. 2018. Mixed media on paper, 8.5 x 11 in. Courtesy the artist



Barbara Stauffacher Solomon, "Doing the forbidden: mixing the 2 Grids at the same time," 2017. Graphite on paper, 8.5 x 11 in. Courtesy the artist



Barbara Stauffacher Solomon, "Question in Quotes," ca. 2018. Mixed media on paper, 8.5 x 11 in. Courtesy the artist