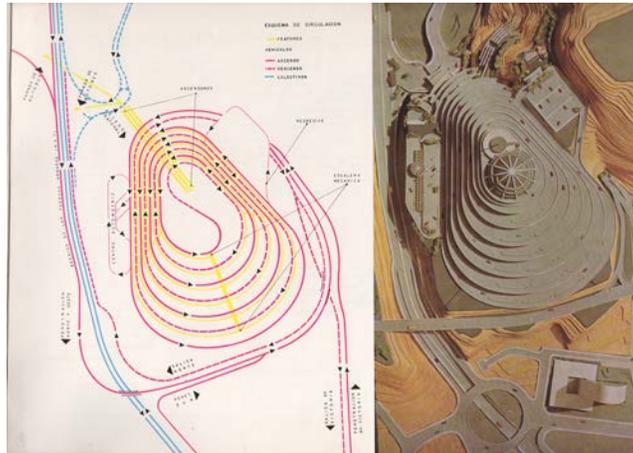


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Center for Architecture Announces *El Helicoide: From Mall to Prison* May 9 – July 13, 2017

*The exhibition traces the development and downward spiral of a Modernist icon.*

**April 20, 2017, New York, NY** – The **Center for Architecture** is pleased to announce the opening of *El Helicoide: From Mall to Prison*, on **Tuesday, May 9, 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM** at the Center for Architecture. The exhibition, curated by **Celeste Olalquiaga** of **PROYECTO HELICOIDE**, explores the collapse of El Helicoide de la Roca Tarpeya, once considered a futuristic icon, in Caracas, Venezuela.

Designed in the late 1950s by architect Romero Gutiérrez and topped off with a geodesic dome, the state-of-the-art, drive-in mall was the star of MoMA's 1961 exhibition, *Roads*, which looked at proposals for a new kind of road-inspired architecture. At El Helicoide, motorists would drive up and down the audacious spiral structure, parking right in front of their business of choice.

Prey to political and financial disruptions, the project was never completed and went through decades of abandonment, eventually becoming home to more than 10,000 squatters. In 1985, Venezuela's intelligence police took it over – the perfect panopticon from which to watch Caracas. Since then, El Helicoide has been a center of imprisonment and torture.

Largely surrounded by the oldest and largest shantytowns in Caracas, El Helicoide portrays the conflicts and complexities of Venezuela's modernizing project. Standing in stark contrast to the grandiose aspirations that fueled its development, the structure epitomizes the dystopian reality of modernist utopian dreams, ultimately presenting the dark side of modernity in Latin America.

"El Helicoide's failure and turbulent history are symptomatic of what went wrong with modern Venezuela," says Olalquiaga. "By showing the building's patrimonial and cultural value, PROYECTO HELICOIDE seeks to highlight the country's outstanding modern heritage in all its contradictory complexity."

Terreform/Urban Research will launch the publication of *From Mall to Prison: El Helicoide's Downward Spiral*, a book about the building, in conjunction with the exhibition. Edited by exhibition curator Celeste Olalquiaga and Lisa Blackmore, the book is a profusely-illustrated history and analytical commentary on El Helicoide.

## RELATED PROGRAMS

### Opening Reception

**Tuesday, May 9, 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM**

**Curator and exhibition designer:** Celeste Olalquiaga

**Graphic Designer:** Álvaro Sotillo

### Architecture and Design in Venezuela

**Tuesday, May 30, 6:00 – 8:00 PM**

**Speakers include:** Celeste Olalquiaga, Curator, *El Helicoide: From Mall to Prison*; Barry Bergdoll, Hon. AIA, Meyer Schapiro Professor of Art History and Archaeology, Columbia University; more TBA

### Oculus Book Talk – *From Mall to Prison: El Helicoide's Downward Spiral*

**Thursday, July 13, 6:00 PM – 8:30 PM**

Published by Terreform/Urban Research

**Speakers:** Celeste Olalquiaga and Lisa Blackmore, Editors, *From Mall to Prison: El Helicoide's Downward Spiral*; Michael Sorkin, President and Founder, Terreform, and Editor-in-Chief, UR (Urban Research)

Members of the press are invited to the opening and related book talk.

Please RSVP to [cschaulsohn@aiany.org](mailto:cschaulsohn@aiany.org)

*El Helicoide: From Mall to Prison* is sponsored by:

Daniel and Estrellita B. Brodsky

### About the Center for Architecture

The Center for Architecture is the premier cultural venue for architecture and the built environment in New York City, informed by the complexity of the City's urban fabric and in dialogue with the global community. The Center shares a home with the AIA New York Chapter and has the unique advantage of drawing upon the ideas and experiences of practicing architects to produce thought-provoking exhibitions, informative public programs, and quality design education experiences for K-12 students. It also leads New York City's annual month-long architecture and design festival, Archtober. The Center for Architecture's aim is to further public knowledge about New York City architecture and architects, foster exchange and collaboration among members of the design, development, building, scholarly, and policy sectors, and inspire new ideas about the role of design in communities by presenting contemporary and practical issues in architecture and urbanism to a general audience. <http://cfa.aiany.org>