



The architect's studio in Paris. Photo: Marianne Homiridis

# Yona Friedman Utopias Realizables

## Yona Friedman. Utopias Realizables

June 1st - September 2006

Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo  
Monasterio de Santa María de las Cuevas  
Avda. de Américo Vespucio nº 2. Isla de la Cartuja. 41071 - SEVILLA

### Access

Avda. de Américo Vespucio nº 2  
Camino de los Descubrimientos s/n

### Transport

Buses C1 y C2

### Opening times

April 1st - June 30th

Tuesday to Fridays: 10 - 21 h.  
Saturdays: 11 - 21 h.

July 1st - August 31st

Tuesday to Fridays: 10 - 15 h.  
Saturdays: 11 - 15 h.  
Noches de miércoles a sábados: 20 - 24 h.

September 1st - September 30th

Tuesday to Fridays: 10 - 21 h.  
Saturdays: 11 - 21 h.

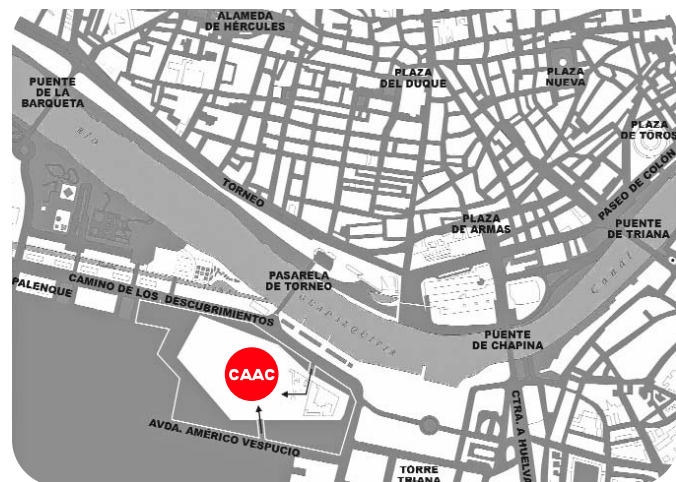
Sundays: 10 - 15 h

Closed: Mondays y holidays.

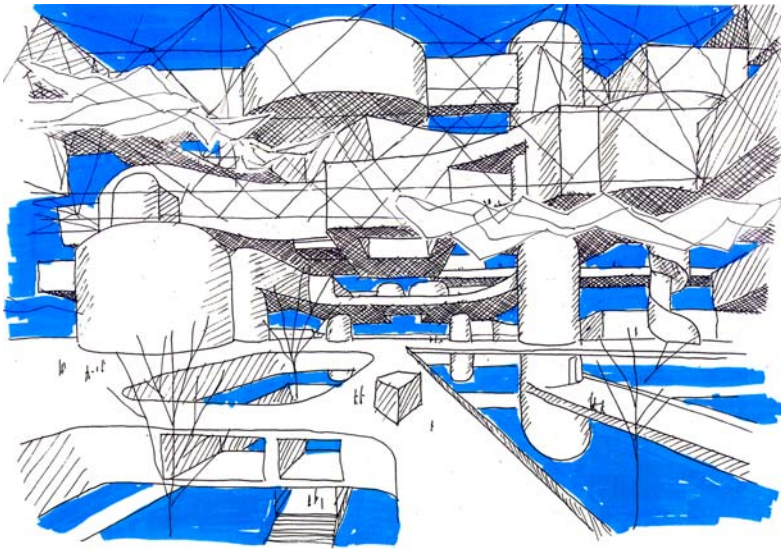
Ticket sales until half an hour before the museum closes.

### Contact details

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Born in Budapest (Hungary) in 1923, but a resident in Paris since the 1950s, Yona Friedman is an architect who has developed a suggestive but controversial theoretical work related to issues such as physical and virtual mobility, migrations, globalization, relations between art and science, sustainable construction or the need to adapt urban solutions to the demands of modern life. Although only a small part of his architectural designs have been implemented, his research and proposals have greatly influenced some of the most important architects and urban designers of recent decades, from famous Japanese architects such as Noriaki Kurokawa (one of the main representatives of the Metabolism group), Kenzo Tange (creator of the Yamanashi Center of Kofu, among other things) and Arte Isozaki (who recently has carried out a variety of projects in Spain) to the emblematic British group, Archigram (creators of a futuristic architectural dream world imbued with technocratic optimism).

YONA FRIEDMAN. FEASIBLE UTOPIAS is a project specifically conceived for the Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, and is the first exposition in Spain of the creative work and philosophy of this eighty-year-old architect who has never regarded himself as a utopian creator since he firmly believes *that from both a technical as well as a social perspective, all projects are feasible*.

For this exposition, which includes drawings, models of his projects, and a huge aerial installation with aluminium wires, the Editorial Actar in cooperation with the Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, plans to publish a volume which analyzes Yona Friedman's professional career from different perspectives.

Author of emblematic texts such as *L'Architecture mobile* (1956) and *Pour une architecture scientifique* (1971), Friedman carried out his first projects in Haifa (Israel), where he came into contact with Konrad Wachsmann, whose theoretical work on the techniques of pre-fabrication and three-dimensional structures greatly influenced the shaping of Friedman's discursive proposal. During his stay in Haifa, Friedman began a project in which he tried to get future tenants and residents of a housing development to actively participate in the planning and design of the buildings.

The project was finally never carried out, but it was the vehicle that he used to present his theory on "mobile architecture" at the X International Conference on Modern

Architecture held in Dubrovnik. In this theory he opts for the creation of "mobile settings" of flexible architectural superstructures that can be modified according to the tastes, interests and needs of their future inhabitants, who would be free to build their dwellings inside this grid. Consequently, Friedman's "mobile architecture" is a type of architecture in permanent construction, which is open, adaptable, reconfigurable, neither determined or determining, and in which the process itself is more important than the final result.

In other words, it is an elastic architecture without clearly defined geometric forms, and which is susceptible to "personalization" since it allows the occupants to choose the design of their own house. In this sense it is totally different from the rigid, pyramid-like and impositive nature of traditional composite models, which, according to Friedman, seem to be conceived for make-believe entities, and not for actual users with real needs, hopes, and dreams.

In 1958 Yona Friedman published his first manifesto on "mobile architecture" and founded GEAM (Groupe d'Etude d'Architecture Mobile), which proposed different strategies and actions with a view to adapting architectural creation to modern user requirements concerning social and physical mobility. In this initial manifesto Friedman points out that architectural knowledge cannot be the exclusive property of professionals and specialists, who when designing a building or planning any type of urban intervention put their technical and aesthetic preferences above the needs and desires of potential users. To avoid this type of monopoly, he suggests writing guides ("manuals"), which explain topics related to architecture and urban planning in clear and simple terms. It should be underlined here that in his opinion *all knowledge, however complex, can be explained in language that is easily understandable*.

Twenty years afterwards, this didactic and democratic initiative inspired him to rewrite his book, *Pour une architecture scientifique* (in which he describes his "scientific method" for architectural creation) as a comic strip. This is a strategy that Yona Friedman (who throughout his professional career has been deeply committed to teaching) has often followed. A case in point is the Museum of Simple Technology (Madras India), where he used texts and simple drawings to explain specific problems regarding diet, health, etc. to people who in many cases could hardly read and write.

Yona Friedman's theory of "moveable architecture" is most clearly portrayed in his concept of spatial city (*ville spatiale*). This city is a three-dimensional spatial superstructure, whose elements can change position, and can span areas where there are already buildings (the city) as well as non-urban areas where there can be none such as, such as reservoirs, marshes, and farmlands. These modular grid-like superstructures are placed there to help alleviate the ever present problems of habitability and coexistence in modern cities. According to Friedman, such structures would increase the habitable surface area in cities and metropolitan districts by creating various independent urban levels from both an aesthetic as well as a functional viewpoint. These levels are interconnected by means of a series of large pillars, which house different mechanisms (lifts, stairways) which facilitate access between levels. When interviewed by the Dutch architect, Winy Mass, Yona Friedman stated that he was interested *in elements that can freely change position, in cities where the upper part was independent of the lower [...], and where all urban life was not necessarily at ground level* (interview published in KM3 Excursions on Capacities by MVRDV Studio, July 2003.).

In his "spatial cities", constructions must fulfil three basic conditions: (1) touch the minimum surface area possible; (2) be able to be dismantled and moved; (3) be modifiable as required by each occupant. According to Friedman, who has imagined specific ways of applying this concept to cities such as Tunis, Paris, Venice and New York, this superimposition of independent, but permanently interconnected layers favours peaceful co-existence in industrial, commercial, administrative, cultural, and residential spaces. This would all happen over a suitably large geographic area so that population growth would not result in the displacement of (usually the poorest) inhabitants to slum neighbourhoods in outlying areas that are not well connected to the city, and without the necessary infrastructure.

On the basis of the ideas originally formulated in *Propositions africaines* (1958), Yona Friedman has carried out various projects in developing countries in Asia, Africa and South America. In these projects he has used local construction methods combined with modern architectural techniques. In this sense, one of his most emblematic initiatives is the previously mentioned Museum of Simple Technology (Madras, India), built with materials such as bamboo, and in which he implements one of the ideas that is basic to his entire theoretical discourse: the active implication of future users in the planning and design of buildings. Other projects of the same type, built in the 1970s, are the Dubonnet Factory (Ivry, France) and the Bergson Lycée (Angers, France).

