

Ant Farm

12 February - 8 June 08

This exhibition is organised by the CAAC or Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo (Andalusian Centre for Contemporary Art) and produced by the FRAC Centre (Fonds Regional d'Art Contemporain), based in Orléans (France), in collaboration with the University of California, the Berkeley Art Museum and the MOMA (Museum of Modern Art) in New York.

Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo

Monasterio de la Cartuja de Santa María de las Cuevas
Avda. Américo Vespucio nº 2
Isla de la Cartuja - 41092 SEVILLA

Tel. +34 955 037 070
Fax +34 955 037 052
educ.caac@juntadeandalucia.es
www.caac.es

Timetable

1 October - 31 March
Tuesday to Friday: 10 - 20 h.
Saturday: 11 - 20 h.

1 April - 31 September
Tuesday to Friday: 10 - 21 h.
Saturday: 11 - 21 h.

Sunday: 10 - 15 h.
Closed on Monday
Holidays: Consult with Centre

Access

Avda. Américo Vespucio nº2
Camino de los Descubrimientos s/n

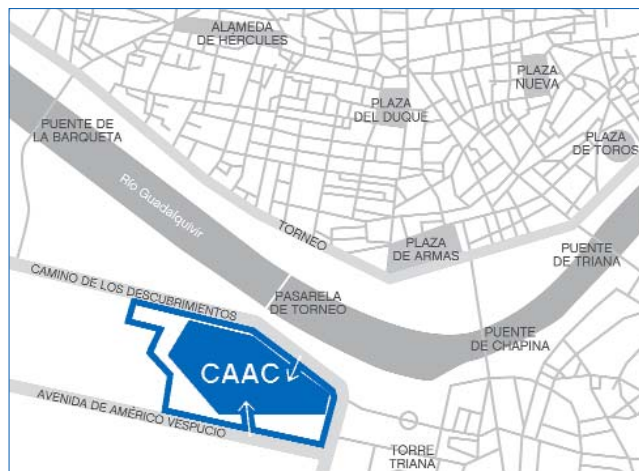
Transport

C1 and C2 buses

Tickets sales until 30 minutes before closing

Library

Monday to Friday (except holidays): 9 - 14 h.



Cover: Space Cowboy Meets Plastic Businessman, 1969, performance. Photo: Ant Farm

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Ant Farm

In 1968, Doug Michels and Chip Lord founded Ant Farm, a group of radical architects based on the West Coast of the US, from San Francisco to Houston, which was later joined by Curtis Schreier, Hudson Marquez and Douglas Hurr.

Their main influences were Buckminster Fuller, Paolo Soleri and Archigram; as well as the nomadic lifestyle of and the choreographic performances by Anna and Lawrence Halprin. Ant Farm defines itself as a group of underground architects. They are fascinated by cars and the pop culture. This group revealed their conceptual world using videos, manifestos, performances and installations until 1977, when their workshop was burnt down and the group disbanded.

Their inflatables criticise the architectural brutalism prevalent in the United States during the 1960s and challenge the American consumerism culture.

In 1971, the project *Media Van* featured a customised Chevrolet van in which they toured and visited various universities showing their *ICE-9*, which was an initiative close to a happening.

In 1972 the group built in Texas the *House of the Century*, a house with organic shapes.

Their projects challenge the contemporary American culture and its obsession for consumerism, such as in *Freedomland*, a



Media Burn, 1975, July 4 performance, Cow Palace, San Francisco. Photo: Jhon F. Turner

shopping centre for teenagers under an inflatable dome and wired-up with TV signal cables.

In *The Dolphin Embassy* they imagined a sea station in Australia to research on the communication between dolphins and humans using the new video technologies.

Cadillac Ranch (1974), is considered one of the most well-known pieces in the history of 20th century art. Ant Farm half-buried 10 Cadillac cars nose down in a wheat field, lining them up in the desert close to the mythical Route 66 in Amarillo (Texas). This installation was subsequently used by Bruce Springsteen to promote his song Cadillac Ranch. This piece is close to the Land Art works by Michael Heizer or Robert Smithson. However, its composition is much more subversive, using the car as an icon of the American culture and referring to an industrial society which had already started to decline, as could be seen in the obsolete city of Detroit, the quintessential cradle of automobile manufacturing. The monumental dimension of this installation -often even compared with Stonehenge- takes the culture of objects to a paroxysmal extreme.

Media Burn (1975), is both video art and performance. Ant Farm staged the literal collision between two major icons of the American culture: automobiles and the

television. A customised car crashes against a pyramid of burning TV sets in front of 400 extras pretending to be spectators. This project followed a very precise script, which is a clear feature of the theatrical and narrative dimension of Ant Farm's installations. This happening was broadcasted in the local television. Media Burn stages the destruction of the media representation, turning media against themselves, giving them a taste of their own medicine.

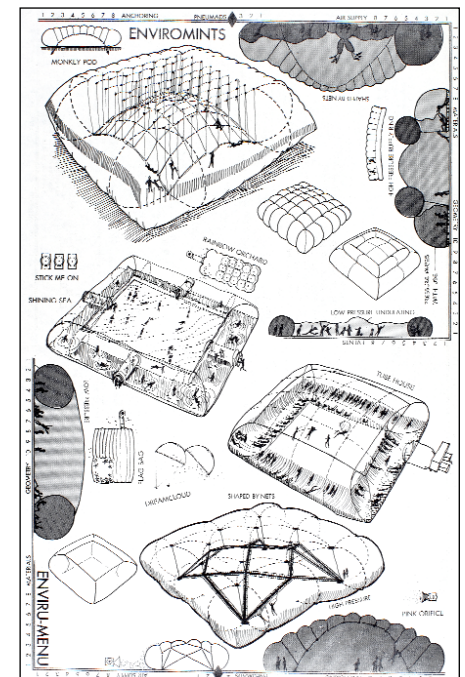
In *The Eternal Frame* (1975), the group produces a video recreating the assassination of President Kennedy. It was the first collective tragedy and it features Doug Michels as President Kennedy. This video fiercely criticises the way events are portrayed in the communication society: events are only their media ghostly rendering and become a continuous repetition of one single image. Ant Farm projects embrace the conceptual art practice, architecture and even theatre or writing, as they have a narrative dimension, circumscribed within a circular and syncopated timeframe. Ant Farm's performative dimension was partly inspired in the architecture experimental workshops organised in San Francisco by Anna and Lawrence Halprin during the late 1970s and attended by artists, architects, dancers... These workshops, together with Robert Venturi's articles analysing the iconic dimension of architecture, left a clear footprint on the group. Ant Farm has been compared to the radical architecture prevalent in Europe in the 1960s and carried out by collectives such as Archigram, Superstudio, Archizoom, Coop Himmelblau and Haus-Rucker-Co. However, the group's unique feature is their social and political references to the American culture as well as their iconic and destructive approach to mass media. Their true radical character lies in the fact that their projects are not only the work of art itself, their projects go beyond that and they are also the mass media rendering of that work of art.



Cadillac Ranch, 1977, Amarillo, Texas. Photo: Dana W. Atchley



House of the Century, 1971-73, Mojo Lake, Angleton, Texas. Photo: R. Jost, Ch. Lord y D. Michels



Inflatocookbook, 1970, interior page. Photo: F. Lauginie