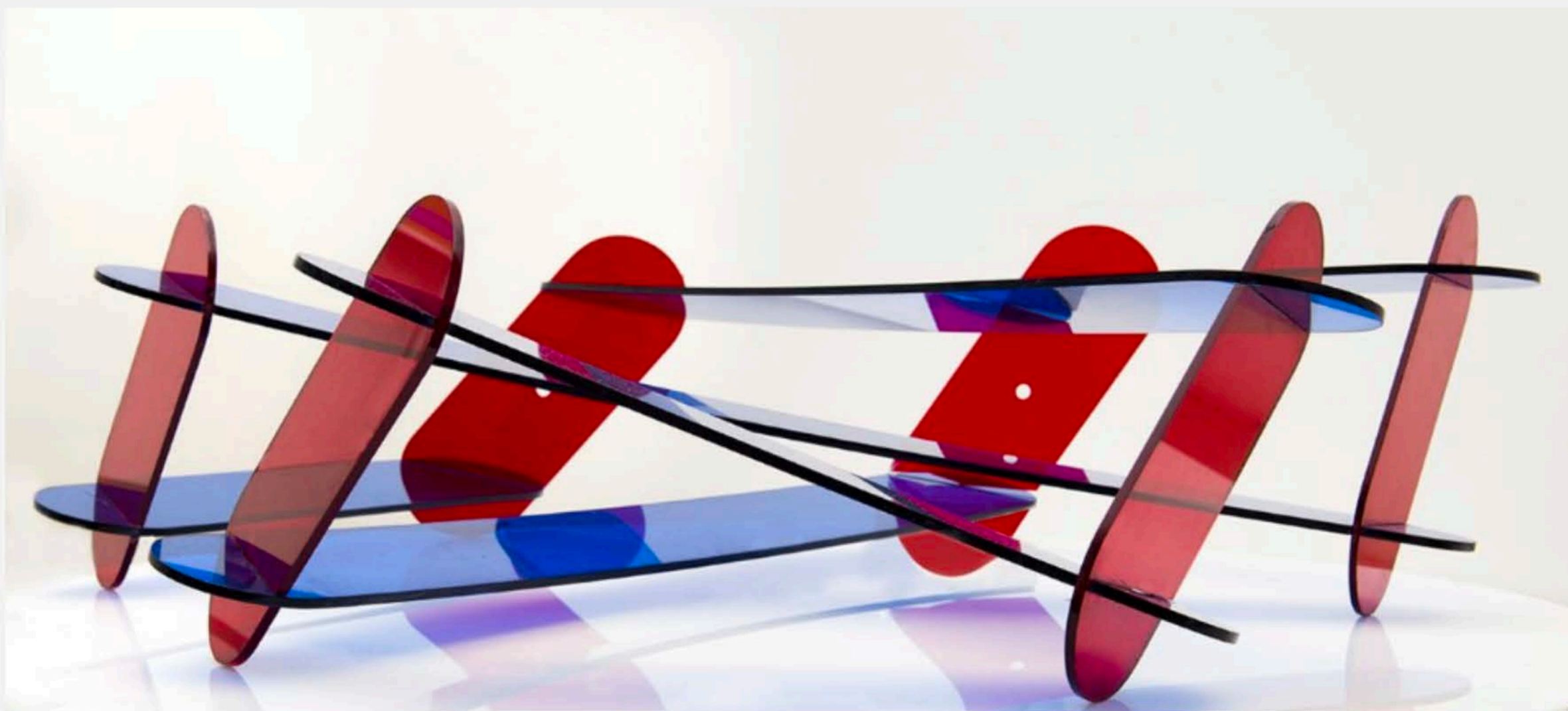


Orléans, France. October 1968 and the origins of digital technology

A retrospective at the Frac Centre-Val de Loire portrays the incredible adventure at the University of Madrid Computing Centre, where the first computer made its appearance in 1968. Experimental architecture and digital exploration followed.



AUTHOR

Luca Galofaro

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The year 1968 is very special. In France, Jean Baudrillard released *The System of Objects* with the publisher Gallimard. In Germany, Joseph Beuys wrote, "Everyone is an artist" (*Jeder Mensch ist ein Künstler*). In the United States, John Cage posited how everything we do that makes sound is music.

LOCATION

Frac Centre-Val de Loire, Orleans, France

PROGRAM

exhibition

SHARE



On the subject of conceptual art, the American art critics Lucy Lippard and John Chandler wrote *The Dematerialisation of Art*, suggesting that it comes forth from our need for something more essential. In the same year, Hans Hollein published the essay *Everything is architecture* (*Alles ist Architektur*) in *Bau* magazine, which he had founded. Illustrated by photomontages, its content echoed the writings of Marshall McLuhan ("the medium is the message") on the information age and the profound influence it would have on verbal culture.

ALGORITHM LIKE A WATCHWORD



1. The poetry of algorithms

PUBBLICITÀ



Replay

inRead invented by Teads

Hollein was the first to import these ideas into the world of architecture by proposing visual interdisciplinarity where reciprocal influences were essential to the evolution of thinking.

INFORMA. INSPIRA. UNISCE.

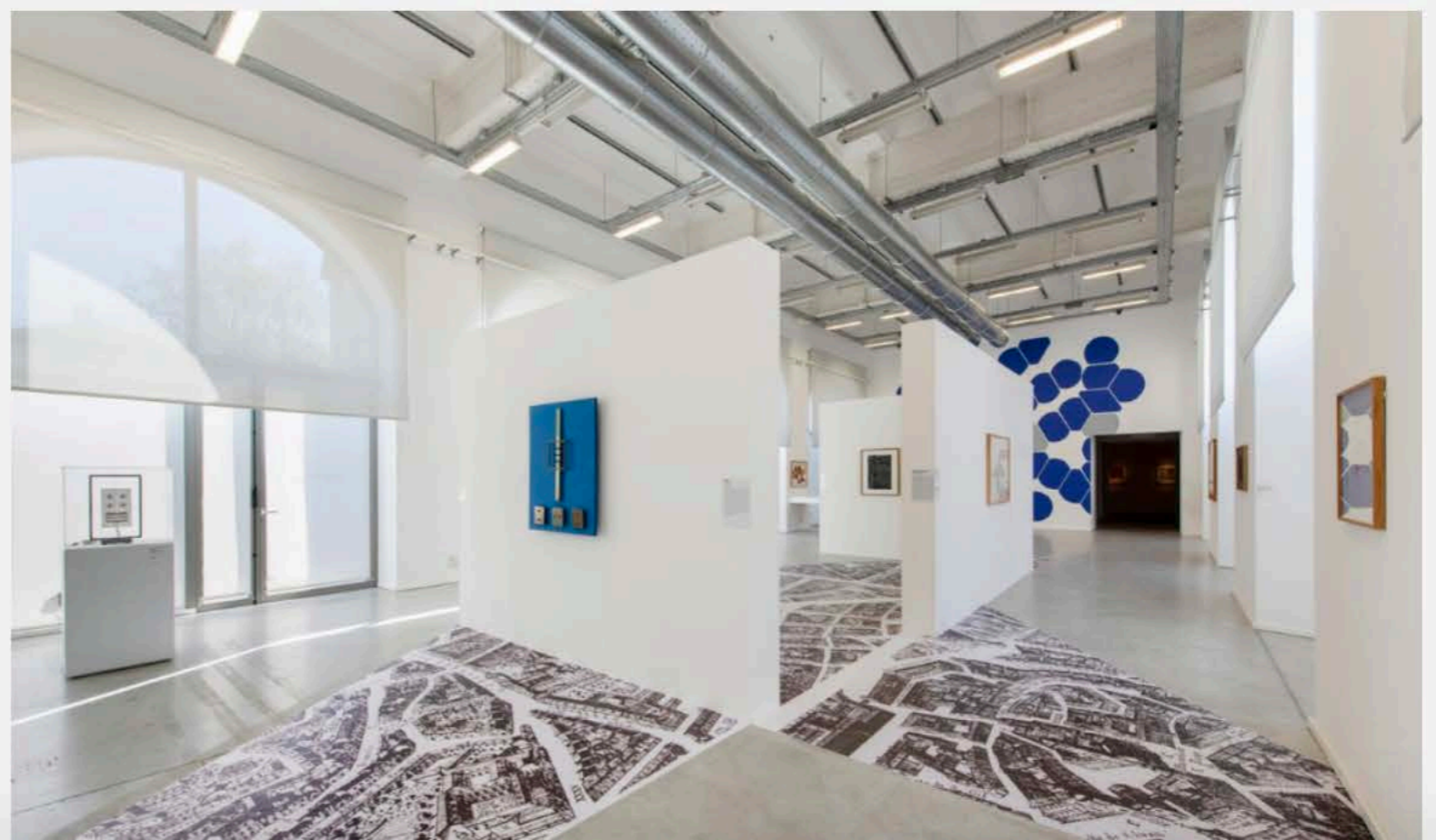
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based on the potential of the first computers and an agreement between IBM and the University of Madrid. The university instituted the Computing Centre (Centro de Cálculo) that year. It was a place where artists, architects, engineers, scientists and intellectuals collectively explored digital technology. It was unique in Europe, and one of the most significant chapters of the final period of Francisco Franco's dictatorship. At the Centre, technology was emptied of its ideological component to enter a new era, the era of exchange and multidisciplinary, the digital era.

In Madrid, architects and artists worked with help from programmers on a new visual language that turned expressive experimentation into the common denominator of diverse disciplines. The exhibition in Orléans shows the moving forms by José Luis Alexanco (1942), who broke away from the traditional conditions of sculpture by introducing randomness in his creative process. Juan Navarro Baldeweg (1939) developed a system by which the computer is integrated into a type of architecture that is continually redesigned.

Francisco Javier Seguí de la Riva (1940) followed a line of investigation where the machine generates an automatic composition of spaces. The creation produced by means of the computer amplifies thinking. Art and architecture blend. The value of imagination dominates mathematical models. The Computing Centre gave birth to a new system of signs to translate. Their meaning was not formal, but conceptual.



UNISCE.

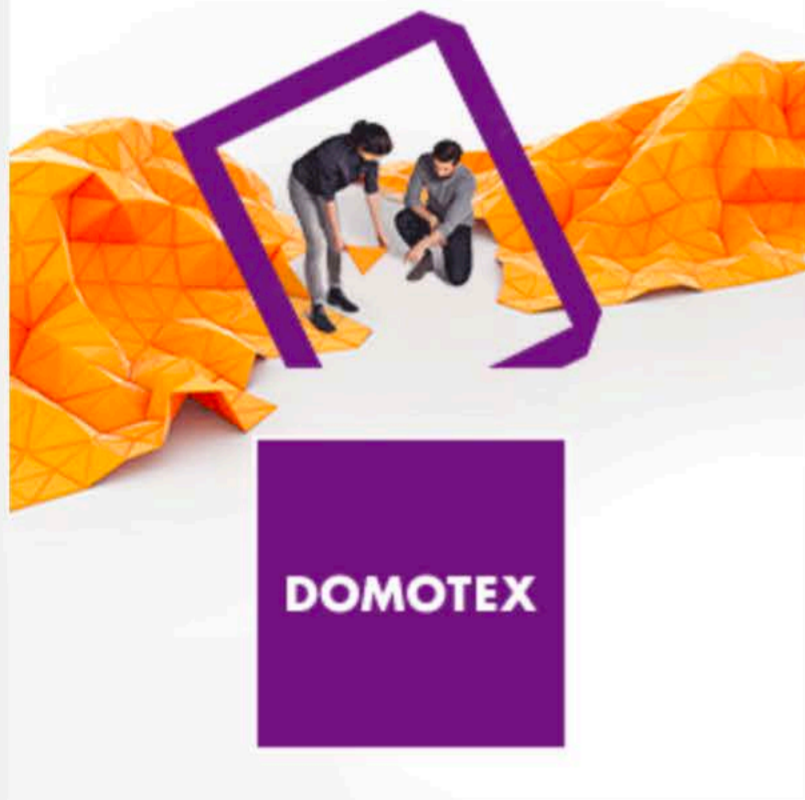


In Madrid, a system of characters printed in sequence by a calculator defined models to interpret. The lineless drawings are reminiscent of the *No-Stop Cityplans* created by Archizoom Associati in 1969 using a typewriter. The narrative intentionality of Italian radical design was substituted in Madrid by a programmed randomness that was the fruit of a dialogue between mathematicians and artists.

In this context, the visual language of the Spanish experimental scene was entirely different from that of the other European architectural radicals. At the Centro de Cálculo, discipline was less important than the generative possibilities given by the programmes. For the first time, there was an exchange between machine and creator, where seemingly random production generated complex spaces. Still today, we attempt to translate this exchange into architecture.

It is the second time that the Frac Centre-Val de Loire is training a spotlight on this experimentation that has been forgotten even in its homeland. The Frac establishes communication between different times by returning to the origins of digital thought. It has brought to the centre of the international debate documentation and a group of extraordinary architects who mustered the energy to share a line of research despite the very tough period in the history of their country. "Madrid, Octobre 1968" started off in Rue Jeanne-d'Arc during the first Biennale d'Architecture d'Orléans (13.10.2017-1.4.2018), where the same architects and artists took part in an exhibition in the urban space of the city.

INFORMA.



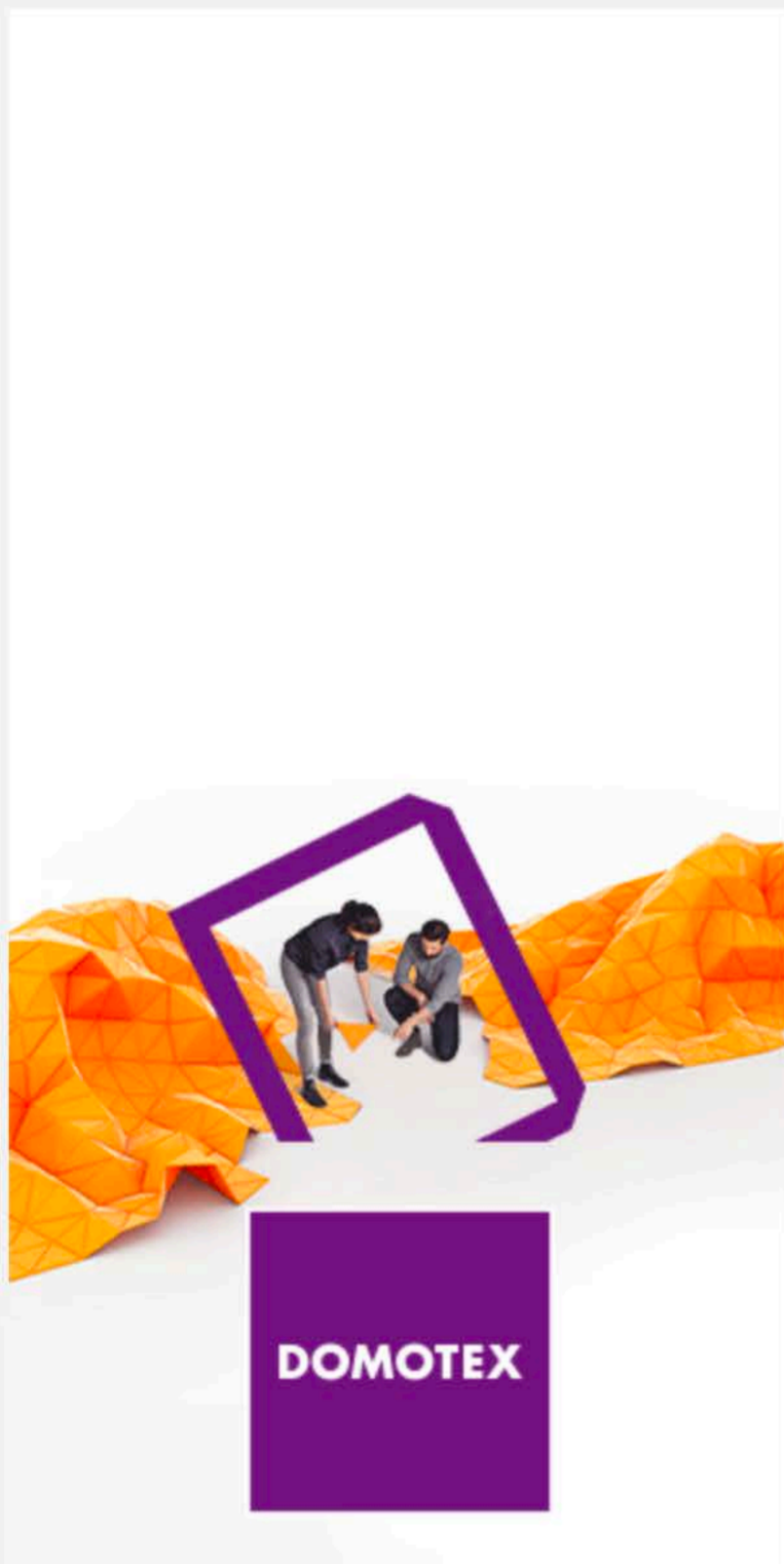
The museum's work on this experimental scene continues at the moment with a themed display. The exhibition occupies most of the museum's rooms, showing two important lines of research at the Frac: experimental architecture and digital experimentation. The show is divided into two sections. One shows the automatic generation of plastic forms. The other shows architectural spaces generated by algorithms. Both research lines have a common denominator. They attempt to liberate human imagination by automating the creative process through the writing of algorithms. These algorithms translate the artists' requests and automate their generative processes to produce interpretative models of reality.



"Madrid, octobre 68", exhibition view, Frac Centre-Val de Loire. © Martin Argyroglo

The artwork by Manuel Barbadillo (1929–2003) easily translates into machine language. It was the departure point of a conference held in 1968 by Ernesto García Camarero. Barbadillo's pieces are alternated with the work of the other participants: José Luis Gómez Perales (1923–2008), Soledad Sevilla (1944) and Enrique Salamanca (1943). Also the process of organising impossible shapes painted in a traditional way by José María Yturralde (1942) contributed to increasing the generative capacities of the machine.

The Centro de Cálculo contributed to producing an overhaul of the habitual schemes found in the sculpture and artwork of José Luis Alexanco. In the architectural studies on display in Orléans, the work of two exemplary figures comes to the fore: Francisco Javier Seguí de la Riva, who uses automatic composition to create architectural spaces that he uses to study aggregation systems for housing units; and Juan Navarro Baldeweg, who integrates the computer to promote architecture that is mobile, flexible, intelligent and reactive. His work shows similarities to the experimental pneumatic structures by José Miguel de Prada Poole (1938), developed outside the Computing Centre.



“Madrid, Octobre 68. La scène expérimentale espagnole”, exhibition view, Frac Centre-Val de Loire, Orleans, 12.10.2018 - 24.2.2019

The concept of "Madrid, Octobre 1968" is a voyage to the core of digital archaeology. The artwork and visual fragments define an extremely precise line of research that has remained relevant. Extraordinary archive materials on display include screenshots of the project *Mouvnt* by Alexanco and three-dimensional figures by Salamanca. Among the most emblematic pieces are the numerical prints of cellular agglomerations transformed into paintings and drawing by Seguí della Riva and Ana Buenaventura.

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il tuo
biglietto!



Other highlights at the show are automated residences by Baldeweg and annotations on spatial architecture by de Prada Poole. Both projects are attempts to apply theoretical research to a practical field where people are the central focus of the space and where technology is at the service of architecture. The machine is used as an instrument to augment the quality performance of functional space. By showing an atlas of digital archaeology, the exhibition is obvious proof of the constant research conducted by an architecture museum that possesses one of the most beautiful collections of experimental architecture in the world.

Exhibition title: Madrid, Octubre 68. La scène expérimentale espagnole

Curators: Abdelkader Damani, Mónica García Martínez **Venue:** Frac Centre-Val de Loire, Orleans, France **Opening dates:** 12.10.2018 - 24.2.2019

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SECTIONS

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KEYWORDS

juan navarro baldeweg, frac centre, exhibition