

Time Out New York

Dec 18, 2003–Jan 1, 2004
Issue 429/430

“Superstudio: Life Without Objects”

Artist’s Space, through Fri 19
(see Soho); Pratt Manhattan Gallery,
through Jan 31 (see Elsewhere);
Storefront for Art and Architecture,
through Jan 31 (see Elsewhere).

During the late 1960s, Italy underwent a major fiscal crisis in which, among other casualties, the architectural profession found itself bereft of work, especially in the public sector. But in the midst of this depression, invention thrived. In Florence, five young hippies formed the antiarchitectural collective Superstudio,

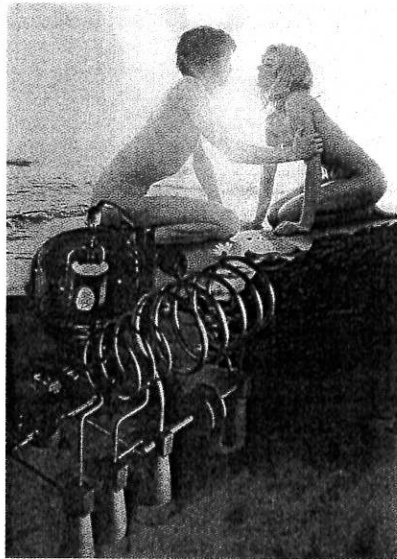
in 1966. The group carved out a niche for itself by advocating an ironic abdication of the architect’s role in anticipation of a design-free future—a “life without objects.”

Yet Superstudio continued to make objects. Their “withdrawal” from conventional design ran the gamut from *The Falling-in-Love Machine* (1972, on view at Artist’s Space), a miniaturized version of the Orgasmatron featured in the film *Barbarella*, to *The Continuous Monument* (1969), a white, gridded megastructure (exhibited at Pratt), which was intended to span from Manhattan to Mecca.

With these three exhibitions, curators William Menking and Peter Lang offer a true labor of love; they’ve uncovered extensive amounts of material long held in storage. The shows present a theoretically complex and visually compelling portrait of a collective whose work remains relevant to current debates on architectural practices. That three venues agreed to collaborate on the exhibition underscores the value of making projects of this sort visible.

The assembled works, many presented for the first time in the U.S., do not betray Superstudio’s avowed retreat from its profession. Rather, the shows reveal a form of protest against architecture’s failure to address the profound transformations experienced by a rapidly evolving world.

—Noah Chasin



Superstudio, *The Falling-in-Love Machine*, 1972