

DENNIS MAHER  
 A HOUSE'S EYE  
 FARGO FRAMES AND FURNISHINGS

DENNIS MAHER • A HOUSE'S EYE: FARGO FRAMES AND FURNISHINGS • November 8 to December 20, 2013

DENNIS MAHER is an artist and architect whose work explores relationships between HOUSE and CITY. For the past 10 years, his projects have engaged processes of disassembly and reconstitution through drawing, photography, collage and constructions. In his ongoing Undone-Redone City project, Maher has continually reformulated the structural and substructural remains of houses, conjuring a new urban core from assembled city fragments. In 2010, Maher established the FARGO HOUSE, a center for the urban imaginary in Buffalo, NY. Maher was selected as the 2012-2013 Artist In Residence at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery. Exhibitions by Maher have also been presented at such venues as Black and White Gallery and Project Space (Brooklyn, NY), Pulse Miami Art Fair, Real Art Ways (Hartford, CT), Galeria Antoni Pinyol (Reus, Spain), Superfront LA, The Carnegie Center (Covington, KY) and Burchfield Penney Art Center (Buffalo, NY). Maher is a recipient of the NYFA Fellowship (2013), the Real Art Ways STEP UP Award (2011), the Black and White Project Space Prize (2010), a NYSCA Independent Projects Grant (2010), and a MacDowell Colony Fellowship (2008). Maher's work has been featured in NYTimes, Architectural Review, ARCHDaily, Architect Magazine and on the national radio program Smart City Radio. Maher is currently a Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Architecture at SUNY, University at Buffalo, where he has taught since 2004.

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The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts



### Function To Form To Flow

For the last several years, artist and architect Dennis Maher has been using his home on Fargo Avenue in Buffalo as an active cultural lab, a Petri dish within which all his previous sculptural tendencies can inhabit what appears to be their idealized space. Structurally repurposed materials have been replanted and set to bloom within a new (or an old and newly repurposed) structure. Aggregate collections of like things have been installed together, quietly overtaking the interior of the house. Floors and ceilings have been opened up to maximize light and transform space. Walls have become planes of architectural relief. And at least one bookshelf, so far, is gradually being obscured from practical use.

While Maher's source materials of architectural forms and details suggest that his repurposed works are new "structures," this allusion often gives way to more ambiguous tangents. Fragments of narrative arise in every part of the

work, as though to both allude to the materials' past, its actual and curious present, and even to suggest its future form. Most of the time, despite its apparently fixed physical state, the work seems to be caught in a moment of transformation. There is a palpable sense that, as purposefully as it is concocted and arranged, Maher's work is never presenting itself in a finished state. Even his precisely-plotted wall drawing for the exhibition altered itself significantly as it was realized. Implications of future growth are abundant and persistent. The first rule of Fargo House appears to be transformation above all.

Maher's Fargo House project is the culmination of a long practice of structurally and spatially hybridized forms that has included large and small sculptures, reliefs, photo collages, and drawings. The connecting threads to Maher's previous works are apparent everywhere—he is using largely the same palette of materials—but it's interesting that works related more directly to the Fargo House seem more restrained than the installation works and sculptures that preceded them. This may be an effect of concision brought about by the constraints of the house itself and this underscores the idea that artist and house are deeply involved in a partnership based around mutual respect and perpetual dialogue.

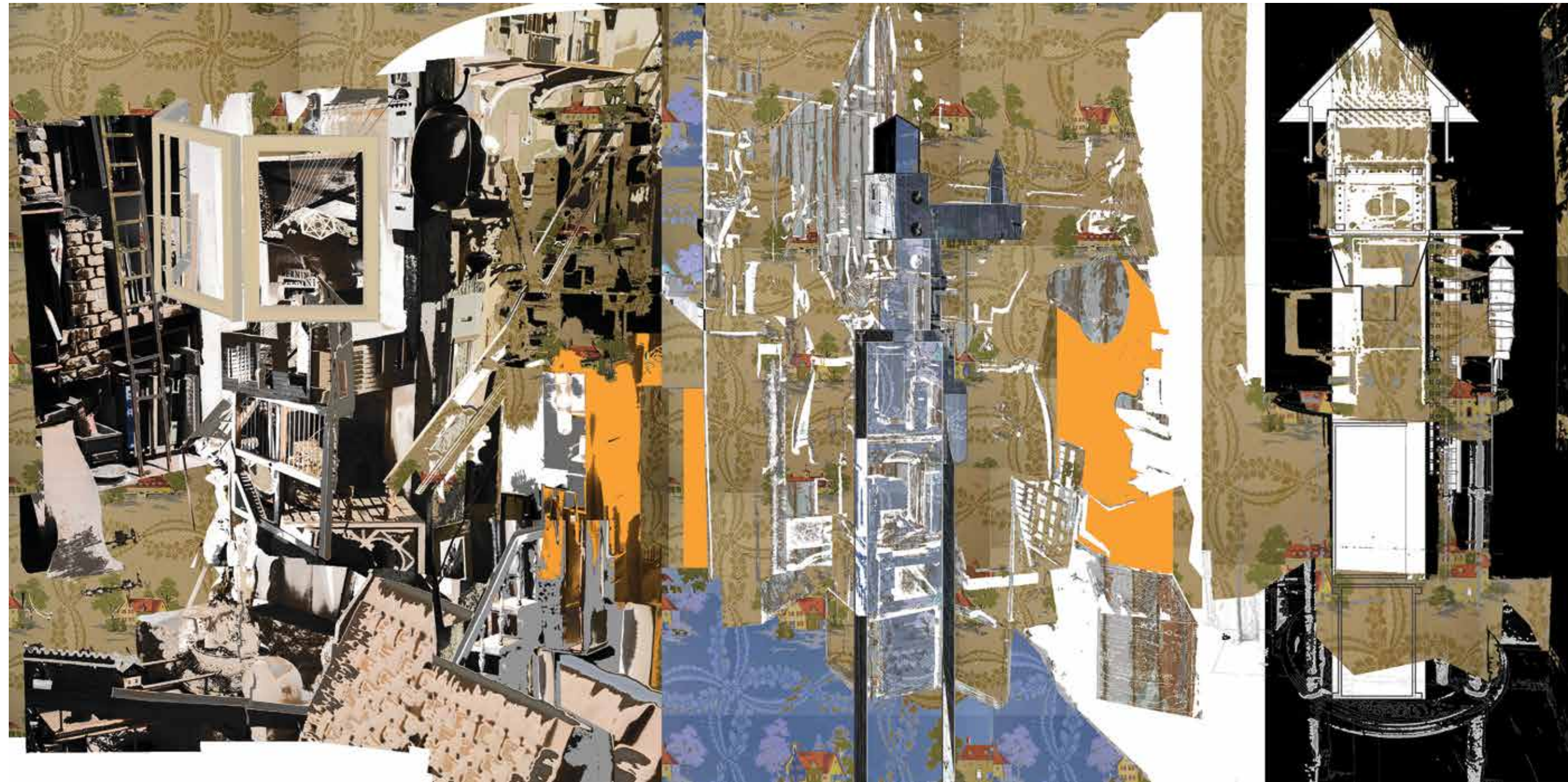
Every element used in the work began as a decidedly functional thing—including table sections, dollhouses, wall trim, hollow body doors, birdcages, and pipe organ parts. But in Maher's iteration, original function gives way to a newly imagined form and form ultimately becomes a means to realizing a certain flow. The solid objects and architectural lines are perpetually coalescing into a more organic realization of themselves. Like an avant-garde graphic score made of hard lines and marks, Maher's drawings and sculptural reliefs define their own sense of musicality, rhythm, and timing. They can be read from multiple directions without a single fixed meaning. They are tightly compressed here, spacious and dreamy there. Tempo shifts continually, elements blare out emphatically and then recede into the background.

Visually, the work often traffics in that deliriously interesting space between representation and abstraction. Familiar and recognizable imagery, sometimes with its own narrative implications, merges seamlessly into zones of abstraction. Perspective is continually shifting—we look into areas, but also look down into areas. And the work is nothing if not maniacally self-referential—structural forms inside structural forms inside structural forms. And in this manner, it's worth recalling that the Fargo House is the heart of everything exhibited here, as though the house were navel-gazing itself. This isn't literally true, the artist is making a host of conscious (or unconscious) choices, but it does sometimes read as though the house has informed the artist about what the best choice might be. Or at least, its preferred choice.

The exhibition, after all, is called *A House's Eye*. Maher appropriately shares credit with his architectural art lab. He has often referred to the Fargo House as "a machine for producing images and objects." In doing so, he draws a clear distinction that the house is not merely a repository of things he himself has accumulated and arranged, but an active agent in the production of its art. An act of self-realization is taking place. Its interior spaces, lights, and its colors and lines are all elements that suggest the contents most appropriate.

Yes, Maher the artist is ultimately deciding, but he is also conceding to what he perceives to be the needs and even the desires of the forms with which he is working. Carl Sagan once suggested that we might exist primarily as a means for the universe to know itself. In a manner real and imaginative, measured and speculative, Maher is a change agent and conduit through which the Fargo House is able to reconstruct and reconsider itself.

John Massier  
Visual Arts Curator



LIST OF WORKS (in order from front cover) Fargo Frame 03: Front Porch Stand With Green Roof, 2013, 40 x 64 in, mixed house parts • Fargo Frame 01: East Façade Mannequin, 2013, 40 x 64 in, mixed house parts • Fargo Frame 06: Library Steeple, Boat House With Wallpaper, 2013, 60 x 120 in, mixed house parts • Fargo Frame 04: Mirror Wall Lighthouse Overlook To City, 2013, 70 x 80 in, mixed house parts • Fargo Furnishing 03: Director Chair House Duplex, 2012-13, 28 x 63 x 54 in, mixed house parts • Fargo Frame 07: Living Room Floor Foundation Drawing, 2013, 43 x 46 in, mixed house parts