



The Space Between Classrooms
Architecture and Design Series: 5th Edition
Curated by Alia Farid
January 20–April 18, 2021

Including works by Atelier Aziz Alqatami, Mohamed Bourouissa, Olga Casellas and Marco Abarca, Khalid al Gharaballi, Jumana Manna and Haig Aivazian, Nuria Montiel, Abdullah Al-Mutairi, Oscar Murillo, Gala Porras-Kim, Alfred Roth, Cecilia Vicuña

Swiss Institute is proud to present the 5th edition of its Annual Architecture and Design Series, curated by artist Alia Farid (b. 1985; lives/works in Kuwait and Puerto Rico). The works in this exhibition, entitled *The Space Between Classrooms*, respond to the limitations of learning within the prescribed architectural and structural parameters of an archetypal school setting. Farid takes as a starting point the prototype for schools that Alfred Roth designed for Kuwait's Ministry of Public Works during the late 1960s, a period of rapid modernization for the newly flourishing oil state. Roth, a celebrated Swiss modernist architect, developed prefabricated schools that were to be replicated in each district across the country. From his initial report on the existing provision of schools, which opens the exhibition, *The Space Between Classrooms* compares the uniformity of Roth's architecture and the introduction of a modern education system in Kuwait with expanded art practices from Latin America, Southwest Asia and North Africa. These works draw on radical forms of pedagogy and communication as tools for unlearning, exploring how institutionally engineered values might govern imagination.

The exhibition opens with Roth's specific architectural prototype and its influence on the Gulf state. Works by Abdullah Al Mutairi, Khalid al Gharaballi and Atelier Aziz Alqatami reconstruct elements and scenes from the Roth schools to examine the use and afterlife of these modernist buildings. Placing this architectural case study in dialogue with theories of alternative learning, the exhibition concurrently draws from an expanded notion of education and pedagogical practice as seen through the prism of ideas of philosopher Ivan Illich (1926-2002), most notably in his 1971 treatise *Deschooling Society*, a critical discourse on education as practiced in modern economies and a critique of mandatory schooling. In Illich's view, formal education is a means of production, and as such, it is imbricated within a fundamentally circular and capitalist logic. Works in *The Space Between Classrooms* by Mohamed Bourouissa, Olga Casellas and Marco Abarca, Cecilia Vicuña, Jumana Manna and Haig Avazian, Oscar Murillo, Gala Porras-Kim, and Nuria Montiel explore the potential of art as an alternative mode of learning, situated at the intersection of education and self-exploration, to challenge existing power structures and consider systems of knowledge, language and meaning outside the walls of modern institutions. Concurrent and integral to the show is a public program series that brings together activists, artists, architects and historians including Marco di Nallo, Sophie Hochhäusl, Amal Khalaf, and Sofia Olascoaga, to discuss and activate alternative modes of schooling.

Driven by inquiry, the works here demonstrate how understandings of knowledge or what constitutes valuable information cannot be prescribed or confined. With its title taken from a caption that Roth inscribed beneath a photo of a hallway in a school in Kuwait, *The Space Between Classrooms* explores the capacity that we each have to make meaning from the in-between or the outside. Set against our current moment, in which traditional sites of education have been radically reconfigured for many, it makes visible the potential in everyday spaces for moments of thought and learning.

Additional programming for *The Space Between Classrooms* will be held in collaboration with M7, Qatar Museums and The World Around Summit 2021. For more details, please visit: <https://www.swissinstitute.net/>.

SI gratefully acknowledges the support of the VIA Art Foundation, the Barjeel Art Foundation, David Zwirner, the SI Architecture & Design Council, and the Cultural Services of the French Embassy. Production support for *The Space Between Classrooms* is kindly provided in part by the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture. Special thanks to Media Partner PIN-UP. SI wishes to thank the lenders to the exhibition: the Archive of the Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture (gta) at ETH Zürich; Betty Boyd Dettre Library and Research Center, National Museum of Women in the Arts; Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles; Frequencies Project Foundation; kamel mennour, Paris/London; and the artists. Alia Farid wishes to thank Alison Coplan, Huda Abdulmughni, Soleil Gharbeih, Clara Dublanc, Jess Clifford, Hunter Gilliland and Simon Castets.

This exhibition is organized by Alison Coplan, Curator.

About Alia Farid

Alia Farid (b.1985) lives and works in Kuwait and Puerto Rico. She had recent solo exhibitions at Portikus, Frankfurt and Kunstinstituut Melly (formerly known as Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art), Rotterdam. Recent and upcoming group shows include participation in the 32nd Bienal de São Paulo, the 12th Gwangju Biennale, Sharjah Biennial 14, the 2nd Lahore Biennale, *Theater of Operations: The Gulf Wars 1991-2001* at MoMA PS1, and Yokohama Triennale 2020. She has forthcoming solo exhibitions at Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (CAMSTL), St. Louis in 2022 and The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, Toronto in 2023.

Planning Your Visit and Safety Precautions

Swiss Institute will allow a limited number of visitors at a time. Visitors are required to wear masks at all times and to keep six feet of distance to other visitors. Please check our website for the most up to date information: <https://www.swissinstitute.net/visit/>.

Swiss Institute will have hand sanitizer stations available for visitor use. Entry is free as always. Swiss Institute's hours are Wed/Thurs/Fri 2- 8pm, Sat 12-8pm, Sun 12-6pm.

About Swiss Institute

Founded in 1986, SI is an independent non-profit contemporary art institution dedicated to promoting forward-thinking and experimental art making through innovative exhibitions and programs. Committed to the highest standards of curatorial and educational excellence, SI serves as a platform for emerging artists, catalyzes new contexts for celebrated work, and fosters appreciation for under-recognized positions. Open to the public free-of-charge, SI seeks to explore how a national perspective can foster international conversations in the fields of visual and performing arts, design and architecture.

SI Programming is made possible in part with public funds from Pro Helvetia, Swiss Arts Council; the New York State Council on the Arts, with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature; and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council. Main sponsors include LUMA Foundation, the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and Friends of SI. *The Space Between Classrooms* is made possible in part by the Swiss Institute Annual Exhibition Fund with leadership support provided by the LUMA Foundation, Max and Monique Burger, the Garcia Family Foundation, the Kevin Wendle Foundation, and the Freedman Family Foundation. SI gratefully acknowledges Swiss Re as SI ONSITE Partner, Vitra as Design Partner, Crozier Fine Arts as Preferred Shipping Art Logistics Partner, and SWISS as Travel Partner.

Press Contact:
press@swissinstitute.net
212.925.2035