

SUSANNE ZOTTL  
ARCHITECTURE

**A STYROFOAM LOVER WITH (E)MOTIONS OF CONCRETE**  
SCI-ARC GALLERY, A SITE SPECIFIC INSTALLATION  
960 EAST 3RD STREET, LOS ANGELES, CA 90013  
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTURE  
DETAILS  
JANUARY-MARCH 2009

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ZUR DEUTSCHEN VERSION

# A STYROFOAM LOVER WITH (E)MOTIONS OF CONCRETE

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JANUARY 23 - MARCH 8, 2009

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DI REINHARD SCHNEIDER/BOLLINGER, GROHMANN UND SCHNEIDER ZT GMBH

**TEAM WORKSHOP:** JOANNE ANGELES, LIONA AVERY, AUSTIN BAKER, KATRINA BALTMANE, JODIE BASS, ERIK BLANCHARD, MATTHEW  
CAVENDER, FADI DABBOUS, MELISSA DIRALLES, DINA GIORDANO, EDDIE GONZALES, JAMES JONES, ERIN LANI, SASHA MONGE,  
CHRISTINE SCHINDLER, BETH SABBAH, AVANI SHETH, AMANDA WEBBER, DANIELLE YIP

**THIS EXHIBITION MADE POSSIBLE WITH THE GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM:**



Following the invitation of the Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc) in Los Angeles the architecture office of Susanne Zottl designed a site specific installation within the school's exhibition space - the Gallery.

## SCI-ARC GALLERY - MISSION STATEMENTS

SCI-Arc Gallery exhibitions are an intersection between the various communities in which the institution participates: architecture, urban planning, design, and art. The gallery provides a space where practitioners, professionals, faculty, students, and the public can learn about and experience provocative architecture.

Located within the school and in the same vicinity as the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), the Disney Concert Hall and REDCAT theater and gallery, the Japanese American Museum and the Chinatown galleries, the SCI-Arc Gallery is the only cultural institution in Los Angeles committed to exhibiting experimental projects by contemporary architects.

The gallery program allows exhibitors to experiment with new materials, concepts or fabrication methods, reflecting SCI-Arc's encouragement of an experimental approach to construction materials and its emphasis on learning through building. Less concerned with identifying design trends, the SCI-Arc Gallery aims to exhibit work that provokes critical discussions of current building practices. Each of the six yearly exhibitions is executed as a workshop in which students work closely with the invited architect to assist in the fabrication and installation/de-installation of the exhibit.

The SCI-Arc Gallery mission statements encourage the experimental approach to new materials, concepts and production technologies in architecture. The emphasis hereby lies in the learning process based on the actual realisation of the experiment.

## **A STYROFOAM LOVER WITH (E)MOTIONS OF CONCRETE**

The list of projects of Susanne Zottl's architectural office is based predominantly on buildings within the context of existing and historically protected structures. According to the guidelines for historic preservation additions to and alterations of the monument are only permitted as long as there is a clearly readable break between the historic substance and the new elements. So the former appearance of the monument could, at any point of time, be reconstructed. This postulation though „freezes“ the monument in a specific - and random - period of time.

The quality of grown structures lies in the traces that the different stages they ran through left on them. Contemporary tasks and questions demand continuous re-interpretations of existing structures. In order to keep monuments as living organisms within the city, their transformation into the contemporary context is inevitable. In comparison, baroque architects and sculptors did not act shyly when transforming Gothic cathedrals according to their view of the world.

The Gallery space represents the point of departure of the conceptual investigations. Clearly this space is not a protected monument, but within the Gallery walls that can only be minimally disturbed the exhibition takes place in a similar condition.

### **THE SUBJECT OF OUR INSTALLATION CONCENTRATES ON TWO ASPECTS OF THIS DISCUSSION:**

1. A new program, or a program that is superimposed on the existing one, asks for a transformation of existing spaces, structures, buildings.
2. Remodeling and renovation of existing buildings in our time are strongly linked to the improvement of their energy efficiency, mostly associated with the application of thermal insulation.

### **THE INVESTIGATION OF THIS INSTALLATION AIMS AT COMBINING THESE TWO FACTORS AND FOCUSES ON THE "WALL" AS ONE ELEMENT OF THE BUILDING BY SIMULTANEOUSLY KEEPING IN MIND THAT THE OBJECTS OF - WHAT WE REFER TO AS - "FLOOR SLAB", "ROOF", ETC. MIGHT BE TREATED IN A SIMILAR WAY:**

**ad 1.** The wall is created not only as a loadbearing element that divides the inside from the outside. It is not a skin, that limits the space. The wall houses pieces of program, the new use. It functions according to the „thick wall“ of historic buildings: There this zone mediates between the geometrically defined interior and the urban context. It houses spaces of various scales as well as circulation.

**ad 2.** The most inexpensive and therefore the most common method of thermal improvement is the „full thermal insulation sealing“. Glueing sheets of polystyrene to a façade is not only an unsatisfactory solution from a designer's point of view. It is also obvious that the technique of applying panels of this material onto an existing wall limits its use to planar surfaces. Therefore an alternative has to be developed that is not simply an offset of the exterior shell.

### **THIS EXPERIMENT PROPOSES TO COMBINE THE NEED FOR A NEW PROGRAM WITH THE NEED FOR ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND ENERGY SAVING.**

As an example for the uses of the „thick wall“ passages, niches and an extension to an „existing“ window were created.

The applied material is a mixture of recycled styrofoam, which provides thermal insulation, and cement, which supports the structure. Originally this special mixture was developed for the insulation of horizontal surfaces. The application of this material in a spatial or sculptural manner has not been tested so far.

This installation is based on the process of casting. The potential of this technique was tested particularly with regard to its design options through the introduction of a flexible membrane as one part of the mold. The objects that were developed within the installation „A Styrofoam Lover with (E)motions of Concrete“ represent prototypes in terms of concept, material and construction.

In the course of the workshop the production technique was revised, adapted and refined. So this material may well be applied to create spatial and sculptural objects that at the same time function as thermally insulating elements. The goal for the ongoing investigation is to develop a technique and a product that, in addition to its spatial potential, can be applied in energy efficient construction.

**THE MATERIAL IS PRODUCED AND SUPPORTED BY: WWW.THERMOZELL.COM**  
**THE FLEXIBLE MEMBRANE IS SUPPORTED BY: SIMON O., WWW.LATEX.AT**

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BUILDING THE MOLDS  
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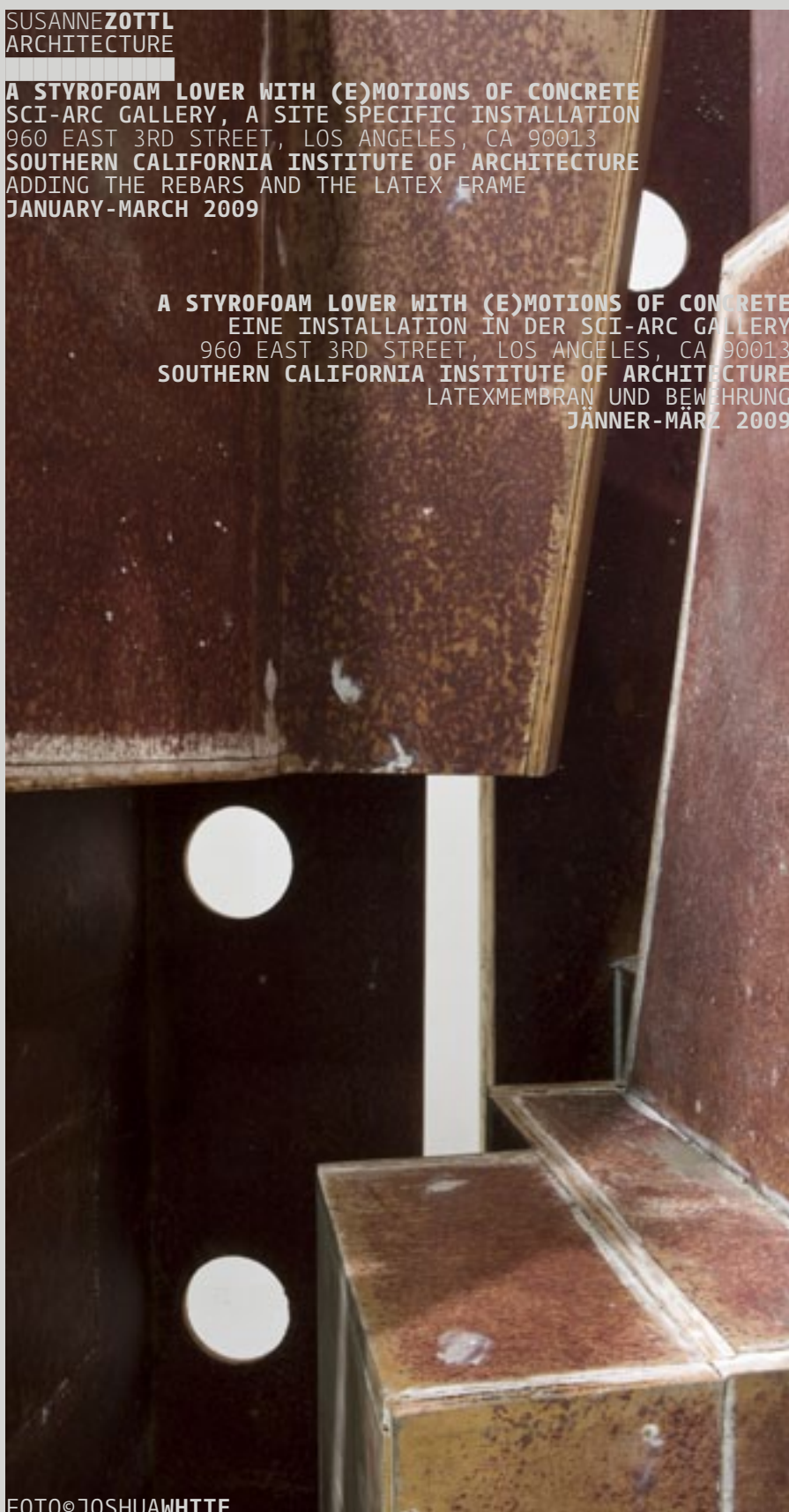
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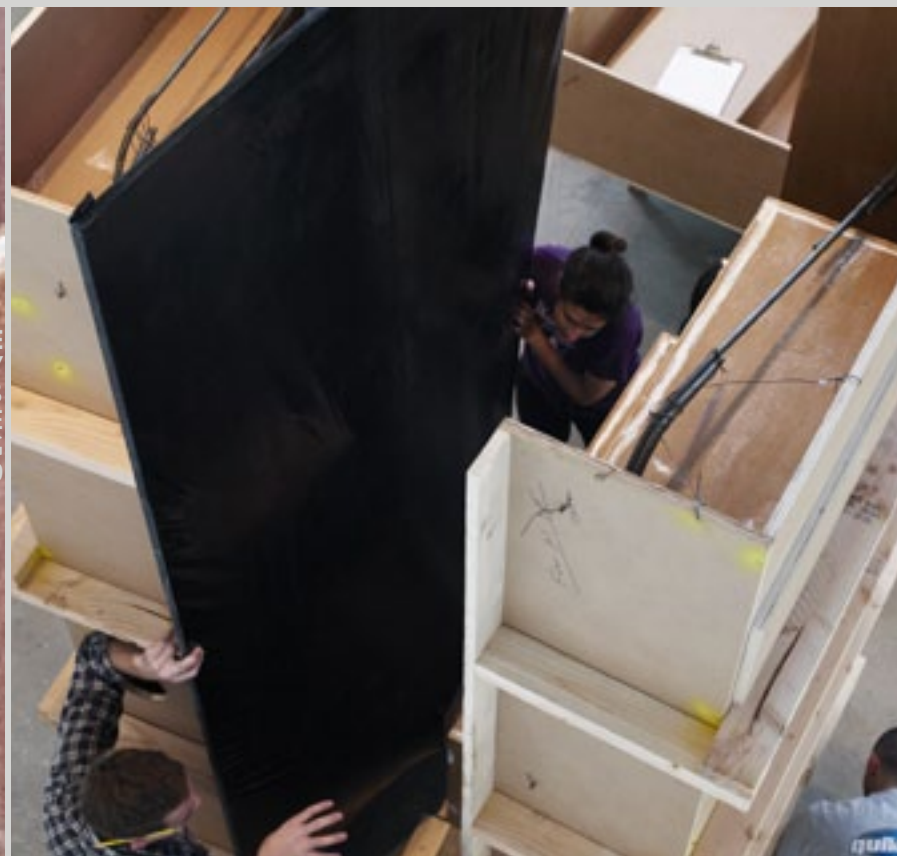
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LATEXMEMBRAN UND BEWEHRUNG  
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SEPARATING THE OBJECTS  
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