

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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The FOREMAN

ARTIST PIERO GOLIA'S
'TOOL TO BUILD
COMMUNITY' AT THE
NASHER SCULPTURE
CENTER IS UNLIKE
ANYTHING YOU'VE EVER
SEEN — OR EXPERIENCED.
(FUNNY, JUST THE WAY
HE PLANNED IT.)

by AURIEL GARZA
photographs by
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In 2009, for the first time in his life, Piero Golia made some money — a lot of money. The artist didn't want to spend it on himself, so he decided to share it with his friends while also doing something special to benefit the Los Angeles community he'd called home for the past seven years. In the fashion of legendary salons such as the Renaissance court of Lorenzo de Medici and Gertrude Stein's Paris apartment, Golia created a space where his friends and other creative types could congregate to discuss ideas and to host parties, concerts and any number of artful happenings. He called it "an intimate gathering spot for influential and creative minds."





Golia collaborated with the California architect Edwin Chan to design the provocative space. Chan, formerly of Frank O. Gehry & Associates and later Gehry Partners, now heads his own firm in Los Angeles, called EC3. With Chan's help, Golia outfitted the salon with rich materials, including blue Venetian plaster and white oak from a forest in Pennsylvania. The floors were laid with cork to stifle unwanted echoes. Golia then added works to the space, many by well-known artists Golia calls friends, including Pierre Huyghe, Jeff Wall and Mark Grotjahn, an artist whose sculptural

works were on view at the Nasher Sculpture Center in 2014. Construction happened in fits and starts, but after three years and two bankruptcies, the space finally opened its doors in 2012, at a cost of roughly \$500,000, with half the funding supplied by Golia himself.

The overall feeling of the space was cozy yet sophisticated. Chalet Hollywood, as it was later known, took its name from both its location off Hollywood Boulevard and the comfortable common areas found in alpine retreats where visitors mingle with strangers from across the globe. These sites of informal, temporary community guide the social atmosphere of the Chalet. Golia hoped his salon would combat the effects of L.A.'s urban sprawl, which he

thought left people so spread out that they hardly encountered each other outside of highly choreographed social engagements. Golia also aimed to create a work of "total architecture," in the vein of Frank Lloyd Wright. With Chan's help, he equipped the space with modular furnishings specially designed to make the space adaptable to each evening's circumstances, however intimate or bombastic. Breaking from a tedious cycle of patron dinners and opening receptions, one night the Chalet hosted a performance by the L.A. Ladies Choir; on another it held a performance by legendary choreographer Stephen Galloway. Responding to snowbirds escaping the city's cooler months, Golia threw a luau



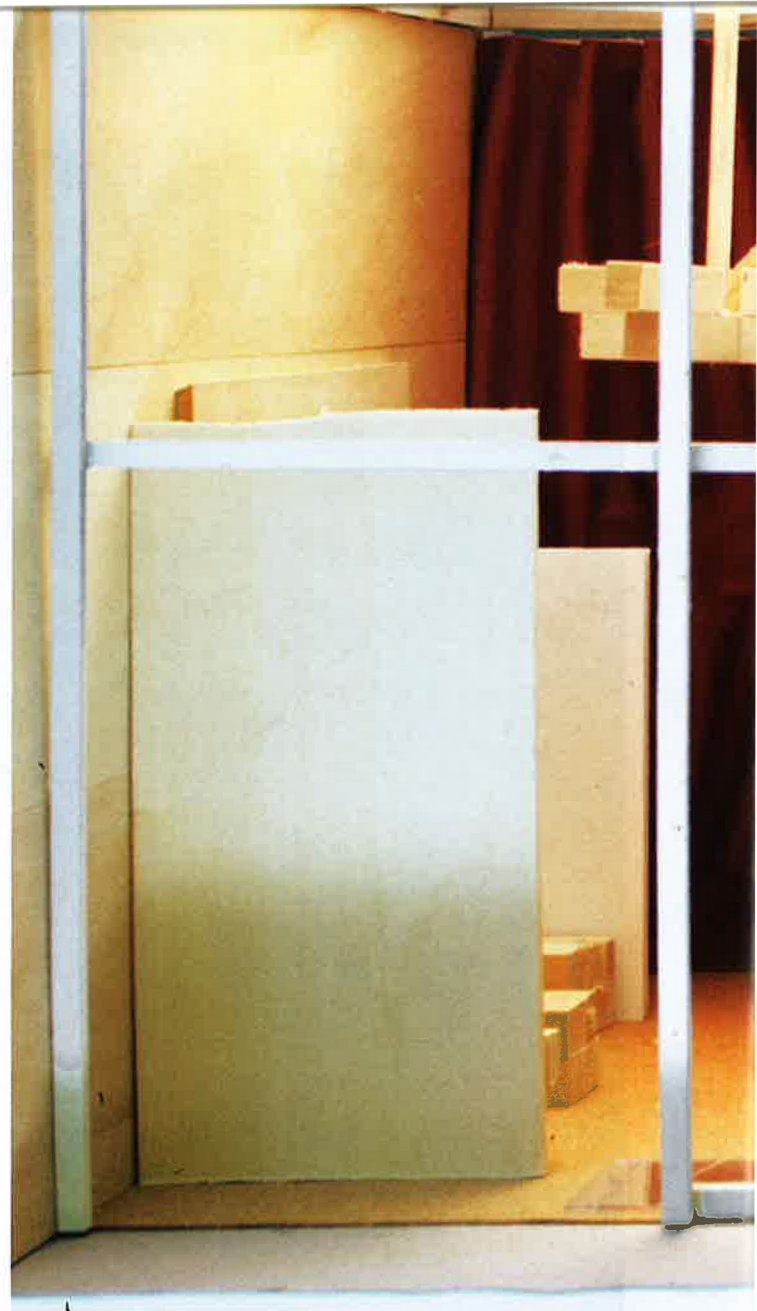
complete with Polynesian dancers. On another night, the UCLA marching band performed a welcome-to-L.A. show for artist Huyghe, who was then beginning work on his LACMA retrospective. There was also an evening where the space hosted a public spanking by a dominatrix. Later, the space became a petting zoo for a pair of alpacas.

Golia considers the Chalet a “tool to build community.” Now, Jeremy Strick, director of the Nasher Sculpture Center, hopes to offer this same resource in Dallas. The museum is working with both Chan and Golia to adapt the *Gesamtkunstwerk* to its own galleries; Chalet Dallas is set to open on October 3. The Nasher describes the Chalet as an altruistic

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effort. It’s true; the artist spared no expense to perfect the Hollywood space, and he dedicated many hours to programming it. Chalet Hollywood was located in a pair of old storage rooms at the back of Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions. It was a hidden gem found only by those who were in the know. By contrast, the Nasher installation will benefit from regular foot traffic. During the day, the space will be treated like a normal gallery accessible

with the museum’s admission. Daytime visitors will be encouraged to make use of the Chalet’s intimate environment, to bring a friend and lounge upon its surfaces or individually draw inspiration from its curated surroundings, which will include the same artworks used in the Hollywood space. The decor will attempt to replicate the look and feel of the original Chalet Hollywood, once again incorporating modular furnishings, though the



pieces will be adapted to suit the dimensions of the Nasher space. Golia likens the daytime experience to visiting Versailles, where one is equally engrossed in both history and beauty. Some might also compare the experience to visiting installations such as New York University's re-creation of the Danceteria Lounge or the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth's recent installation of "Cosmic Cavern" by artist Kenny Scharf. But unlike spaces that offer visitors the opportunity to time-travel to a community now past, Chalet Dallas will be in use by artists and creatively programmed throughout its installation: It won't just be something to look at. In fact, Golia hopes it will be history in the making.

The Nasher is no stranger to such interactive projects, having recently collaborated with Good/Bad Art Collective and Rick Lowe. But Golia's epic installation continues to test the definition of sculpture, interestingly at a time when the museum will have just announced the winner of its inaugural Nasher Prize, recognizing one artist's "extraordinary impact on the understanding of the art form." Contrary to a typical exhibit, the Nasher will not be conducting a traditional marketing campaign to facilitate attendance to the Chalet's evening programs. While events will be programmed, interactions will be unchoreographed and most likely influenced by local circumstances; as in L.A., they will only

become known through word of mouth. The events aim to be inclusive, building community across individuals who might not otherwise encounter one another. Everyone is welcome and no one will be turned away from its doors. Or, as Golia says, "everything is free and beautiful," including the Champagne.

Golia assures that most everyone who wanted access to Chalet Hollywood found their way regardless of having no formal announcements or signage to guide them. Though he'll be around for most of the evening programs, Golia doesn't consider his presence central to the Chalet's activation. The idea, he says, is to "illuminate our collective capacity for creativity." The Chalet may also be a form of



what renowned art critic and curator Nicolas Bourriaud calls “relational aesthetics.” Central to such projects is not so much the presentation of objects but the creation of relationships through shared experiences. In these cases, the audience becomes a participant and, in a sense, part of the artwork. All that is of interest is creative capital: What can you bring to the Chalet to enhance its creative atmosphere? Nasher assistant curator Leigh Arnold likens Golia’s role to that of the Wizard of Oz. Golia is the man behind the curtain pouring his heart and soul into creating this experience, but ultimately it’s up to the Nasher and all of Dallas to take the reins and make the Chalet special for themselves.

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PREVIOUS SPREAD Piero Golia at home in Venice, California. THIS SPREAD Golia with architect Edwin Chan at EC3, Chan’s studio in Venice. The model is of Chalet Dallas, opening October 3 at the Nasher Sculpture Center.