

Roberto Gargiani

Rem

Koolhaas

OMA

Rem Koolhaas | OMA **The Construction of Merveilles**

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ESSAYS IN ARCHITECTURE

Creator of buildings that stand out as surrealistic *merveilles* along the skylines of America, Europe and Asia; author of *Delirious New York*, the book that has revolutionized the reading of the contemporary metropolis; leader of the current generation of architects, Rem Koolhaas with his Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) is justly considered as the most important protagonist of contemporary architecture. This first critical monograph of the work of Rem Koolhaas and OMA does more than just describe projects and buildings, it places his career in a cultural context that allows the reader to better understand the creative process of modern architecture. The works are presented in chronological and thematic order, thus retracing the career of Koolhaas from his student days to his neo-avantgarde experimentation at the end of the 1970s, finishing with his most recent works in Porto, Seoul, and Beijing. The individual projects are analysed from conception to construction, with particular attention to the conceptual and technical reasons for the choice of materials and configuration. Ample space is dedicated to the theoretical formulations of Koolhaas, providing a reflection of the fundamental principles of the contemporary architectural project.

Roberto Gargiani, born in 1956, obtained his degree at the University of Florence in 1983 and his doctorate in the history of architecture in 1992. He has taught the history of architecture in Florence, Rouen, Paris and Rome. He is now Professor of the History of Architecture and Construction at the Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL). Among his books: *Perret e Le Corbusier, confronti* (1990), with G. Fanelli; *Auguste Perret* (1993); *Il principio del rivestimento* (1994), with G. Fanelli; *Storia dell'architettura contemporanea* (1998), with G. Fanelli; *Idea e costruzione del Louvre* (1998); *Principi e costruzione nell'architettura italiana del Quattrocento* (2003); *Archizoom Associati, 1966-1974* (2007); and editor of *La colonne, nouvelle histoire de la construction* (2008).

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Experiences with the Paranoid-Critical Method



1. Manifesto of the Filmgroep, 1966
(R. Koolhaas above to the right).

Studies at the Architectural Association School of Architecture of London: “Berlin Wall as Architecture” and “Exodus”

Remmert Koolhaas was born in 1944 in Rotterdam, where bombing in World War II had erased, as in Berlin, the image of the historical city. With his family he moved to Jakarta, Indonesia, in 1952 and staying until 1956, and then to Brazil, where he admired the works of Oscar Niemeyer. Back in Holland he would often spend time drawing in the architecture studio of his grandfather, Dirk Roosenburg. In 1963 he began to work for the weekly of the Dutch liberal right, “De Haagse Post”, doing layout and writing on cinema, literature, music, politics, sports, sexuality, art and architecture (including articles on Hendricus Theodorus Wijdeveld and Le Corbusier, as well as interviews with Constant Nieuwenhuys and Federico Fellini). Like the rest of the editorial staff of the weekly, Koolhaas tried to purge his work of any comment other than description of the facts. Interviewees, for example, were asked no questions but simply shown a microphone, as if to comply with Surrealist tenets of automatic writing. “Not moralizing or interpreting (art-ificing) the reality, but intensifying it. Starting point: an uncompromising acceptance of reality”, the artist Armando advised, defining the approach of the journalists of “De Haagse Post”, outlined in greater depth in a guide written with the poet Hans Sleutelaar for the composition of articles.¹

In this same period Koolhaas joined the group of filmmakers “1,2,3, Groep”, with Rene Daalder, Jan de Bont, Kees Meyering and Frans Bromet, and the Nederlandse Filmacademie, directed from 1968 to 1978 by his father, Anton Koolhaas, a writer, journalist, draftsman, author of screenplays and fables with animals as characters. With the “1,2,3, Groep”, Koolhaas took part in the production of films, writing screenplays and occasionally acting (*1,2,3 Rhapsodie*, 1964; *Body and Soul*, 1967; *De blanke Slavin. Intriges van een decadente zonderling*, 1969).

His experience writing screenplays will later contribute to the development of his idea of the animated building, like actors on an urban stage,

¹ Cf. Bart Lootsma, *Le film à l'envers: les années 60 de Rem Koolhaas*, in “Le Visiteur”, 2001, No. 7, pp. 90-111. In 1966 Koolhaas prepared, with Trino Flothuis and Van Wansbeek, a series of articles against the hippies of PROVO and its charismatic figures of reference, in particular Constant, whom

Koolhaas interviewed with Betty van Garrel (Rem Koolhaas, Betty van Garrel, *De stad van toekomst. HP gesprekt met Constant over New Babylon*, in “De Haagse Post”, 6 August 1966, pp. 14, 15). Cf. Rem Koolhaas, *Architectuur/Een woonmachine: Le Corbusier kreeg f 5000*, *ibid.*, 3 October

1964; Rem Koolhaas, Lili Veenman, *Film-Een dag Fellini. Hij doet altijd dingen die men niet verwacht*, *ibid.*, 31 December 1965, No. 24, pp. 39-41. Cf. John Jansen Van Galen, Hendrik Spiering, *Rare Jaren: Nederland en de Haagse Post 1914-1990*, Amsterdam, 1993.



2. Superstudio, *Monumento Continuo*, 1969.

3. Archizoom, *Quartieri Paralleli per Berlino*, 1969.

episodes organized in narrative sequences. “In a script – Koolhaas has said – you have to link various episodes together, you have to generate suspense and you have to assemble things – through editing, for example. It’s exactly the same in architecture. Architects also put together spatial episodes to make sequences.”²

In 1966, at a seminar on cinema and architecture at the Technische Universiteit in Delft, Koolhaas met Gerrit Oorthuys, a professor of history and expert on constructivism who was working with Gerrit Rietveld. Koolhaas and Oorthuys then conducted research on Ivan Leonidov.³

In 1968 Koolhaas registered at the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London, where the faculty boasted the likes of Peter Smithson, Cedric Price, Charles Jencks, Dalibor Veseley, Alvin Boyarsky and several members of Archigram, including Peter Cook.

The main orientation of the school’s teachings encouraged the design of environments made flexible by the possibilities of fantastic advanced technol-

² Cit. in *Spiegel interview with Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas*, in www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/0,1518,408748,00.html.

³ “Since 1971, research in USSR for book on Leonidov (with G. Oorthuys)”, noted in short biographical notes on Koolhaas (*Unit 9*, in “Prospectus. Architectural Association. School of Architecture”, 1975-76, p. 55). Cf. Otakar Mácěl, *Delft, Mel’nikov e i parcheggi coperti*, in Mario Fosso, Maurizio Meriggi, ed., *Konstantin S. Mel’nikov e la costruzione di Mosca*, Milan, Skira, 1999, pp. 23-26.

⁴ On the teaching activities of Zenghelis, a native of Athens (1937), see Antony Wade, *The*

middle school experiment, in “Arena. The Architectural Association Journal”, June-July 1968, (pp. 7-13), p. 7. “For Elia Zenghelis – Cook writes – had been teaching for some time when, in the early 1970s, a brilliant student (ex-filmmaker) called Rem Koolhaas joined his class. Zenghelis had proved to be the best first year master for several years. But the magic with Koolhaas was greater”. Cf. Peter Cook, *Highlights of Recent History. Cook’s Grand Tour*, in “The Architectural Review”, vol. CLXXIV, 1983, No. 1040, the issue on *The Architectural Association School of Architecture*, (pp. 32-43), p. 36.

⁵ For the definition of

“obsessive image” see Salvador Dalí, *Le Mythe Tragique de l’Angéus de Millet*, Paris, Société Nouvelle des Editions Pauvert, 1963. The atmosphere of the school is recalled by Koolhaas as follows: “THE SCENE. London’s Architectural Association 1970-72: a school awash in sex, drugs and rock and roll, David Bowie hanging at the bar; flash to a person with experimental hysteria quickened by the visionary projects of Archigram, architecture’s answer to the Beatles; galvanized, sort of, by the European action politics of May 1968; intoxicated by the spontaneous American Love-urbanism of Woodstock and its shadow, the erotic violence of Altamont; edited by the froth

of the rumors of French intellectual thought; drawn to design, to mod and Carnaby Street, and to antidesign, to the swagger of the infinite cities of Yona Friedman and Italy’s Superstudio and Archizoom. Anything goes, everything goes. For studio, write a book if you want. Dance or piss your pants if you want. Structure or codes or HVAC? Go to Switzerland” (Rem Koolhaas, Elia Zenghelis, Madelon Vriesendorp, Zoe Zenghelis, *Exodus, or the voluntary prisoners of architecture. 1972*, in Jeffrey Kipnis, ed., *Perfect Acts of Architecture*, exhibition cat., The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus,



ogy. During these years of study Koolhaas nurtured a fundamental relationship of cultural collaboration with one of the professors, Elia Zenghelis.⁴ He also took part in several international competitions, visited Moscow for a first-hand look at constructivist works, and continued to write screenplays. Also in this period, he began to define the initial figures of his symbolic vocabulary, “obsessive images”⁵ he would transform, case by case, into always varying *merveilles* of architecture.

As a student, Koolhaas prepared a project for a swimming pool in London, a theme that was to meet with an extraordinary series of variations in his work (he loves swimming in pools, and has said, “when you work out, you can try to guess who else swam there before you”⁶). “The fluidity of water – Veseley writes – which is also the fluidity of desire opposing the solidity of matter, remains a permanent obsession of the Surrealists”.⁷

In the summer of 1970 Koolhaas visited Florence to meet the members of Superstudio and discuss the possibility of inviting them to lecture at the AA-School of Architecture – the lectures were held in February-March 1971 (followed by others over the next few years). “[...] how impressed I was by the work, optimistic about ‘easy’ architecture”, he wrote to his friends at Superstudio at the end of 1970.⁸ Thanks to Superstudio, Koolhaas also came into contact with Archizoom.

The first deep theoretical investigation conducted by Koolhaas was on a contemporary theme that expresses the meaning of separation to the fullest possible extent: the Berlin Wall. “The Berlin Wall as Architecture”, the subject of the Summer Study for 1971, selected against the backdrop of the cultural input of Superstudio and Archizoom, was interpreted by Koolhaas as a system composed of parallel bands, of various constituent parts, and endowed with extraordinary symbolic force.⁹

“The Great Wall of China, Hadrian’s Wall, motorways, like parallels and meridians, are the tangible signs of our comprehension of the earth”, Superstudio writes in 1969, regarding the project *Monumento Continuo*¹⁰ – a thick glass wall that crosses even deserts, as in the works of Walter De Maria and Land Art. That same year Archizoom designed thick, transparent walls that would divide Berlin into “parallel quarters”, and a colossal Miesian curtain wall to cut across Red Square in Moscow.¹¹ Philip Johnson also proposed an

New York, H.N. Abrams, 2001, p. 14).

⁶ Cit. in Jennifer Sigler, *Interview*, now in Sanford Kwinter, Marco Rainò, ed., *Rem Koolhaas. Verso un’architettura estrema*, Milan, Postmedia, 2002, p. 69.

⁷ Dalibor Veseley, *Surrealism and architecture introduced by Dalibor Veseley: surrealism, myth & modernity*, from *Surrealism*, special issue, “Architectural Design”, vol. XLVIII, 1978, No. 2-3, (pp. 87-95), p. 88. Veseley, born in Prague, with degrees in architecture and art history, was a member of the “Continualist group” connected to the Surrealists. In the context of the AA-School of Architecture, he contributed to

a view of Surrealism as a method to regenerate reality, capable of creating “a new myth”, an alternative to the visionary component of the works of Archigram. “The task of poetry in Surrealism – he wrote in 1978 – was not to substitute the existing reality, but to transform it through the alchemy of words and images – in the same way as alchemy transforms the inorganic world”. Bernard Tschumi, who had taught at the AA-School of Architecture since 1970, also cultivated an interest in Surrealism (cf. Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and its Double*, *Ibid.*, pp. 111-16). Tschumi belongs to the same generation as Koolhaas (he was born in 1944). (Cf. Cook,

Highlights of Recent History cit., p. 32).

⁸ Rem Koolhaas, letter to Adolfo Natalini and Cristiano Toraldo di Francia, 15 December 1970 (Archives Natalini).

⁹ For the date see Rem Koolhaas, Gerrit Oorthuys, *Ivan Leonidov’s Dom Narkomtjuzprom, Moscow*, in “Oppositions”, 1974, No. 2, (pp. 95-103), p. 95, where it is indicated as 1970; later (cf. Rem Koolhaas, *Field Trip*, in OMA, Rem Koolhaas, Bruce Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, New York, Monacelli Press, 1995, (pp. 214-33), p. 236) Koolhaas recalls that the trip took place ten years after the construction of the wall (August 1961). Koolhaas had defined Berlin as

“a surface de macadam parsemée ici et là de foyer d’intensité”, in a lecture at the Architectural Association School in 1969 (cit. in Lootsma, op. cit., p. 106).

¹⁰ Superstudio, *Discorsi per immagini*, in “Domus”, December 1969, No. 481, p. 44.

¹¹ Cf. Archizoom, *Discorsi per immagini*, in “Domus”, December 1969, No. 481, pp. 46-48, and Archizoom, *Archizoom, Congrès de Turin, 25, 26, 27 avril 1969*, in “L’architecture d’aujourd’hui”, XL, September 1969, No. 145, pp. LXIV-LXVIII. Cf. Roberto Gargiani, *Archizoom Associati 1966 – 1974. De la vague pop à la surface neutre*, Milan, Electa, 2007.

ideal city whose growth was limited by an enclosure wall, a project known to Koolhaas.¹² In 1971 Robin Evans, who had recently graduated from the AA-School of Architecture, wrote an article on the meaning of “wall” in the history of architecture, starting it with a drawing of the Great Wall of China (“It will deal with a strange way in which human beings render their world inhabitable by circumscribing and forgetting about those parts of it that offend them”, he wrote¹³), while Peter Allison proposed “A Wall for London” as a project in his fifth year of studies at the same school, “a wafer thin reflective wall as a screen for alienated reflection.”¹⁴ “My inclination to use a wall or walls for this purpose – Allison wrote – was confirmed by a close look at the Berlin Wall: it clearly combined efficiency with beauty in a most relaxed way”.¹⁵

The Berlin Wall became the fundamental element of the project entitled *Exodus, or The Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture*, which Koolhaas prepared with Zenghelis for the competition *La città come ambiente significante*, held in the autumn of 1971 by the Associazione per il Disegno Industriale of Milan, organized with the magazine “Casabella”.¹⁶ Some of the project panels were done in collaboration with Madelon Vriesendorp, Rem’s girlfriend, and Zoe Zenghelis, Elia’s wife, both painters. So the competition became an opportunity to found an initial group of artists, the embryo of the groups created later by Koolhaas, the “Dr. Caligari Cabinet of Metropolitan Architecture” – a name that combines the titles of two films, *Das Cabinet des Dr Caligari* by Robert Wiene and *Metropolis* by Fritz Lang, made respectively in 1920 and 1926, and the title of an essay by Ludwig Hilberseimer, *Groszstadtarchitektur*, published in 1927.



4. R. Koolhaas, photograph of the Berlin wall, 1971.

5. L. Buñuel, S. Dali, photograph of *Un chien andalou*, 1929.

¹² “You basically made a city that could not extend, because it had walls around it and the notion was that it would forever remain the same size and could not go beyond the walls. But all the walls were kind of modern slabs, so it was a kind of very perverse adjustment: where the real modern is endless, you used the same thing to make a kind of closed, finite, limited form. [...] this was the first thing that I saw of yours, when I was a student. I was really struck by it: how can someone use modern forms for such a notion? So that’s how I was first alerted to the perversity of your work” (*Layout, Philip Johnson, in Conversation with Rem Koolhaas and Hans Ulrich Obrist*, Cologne, Thomas

Bayle, 2003, n.p.). Koolhaas also recalls the border walls of the properties he saw during his years in Indonesia (cf. *Rem Koolhaas*, in “AMC. Architecture-Mouvement-Continuité”, 1984, No. 6, pp. 16-31; contributions by Jacques Lucan, Patrice Noviant, Bruno Vayssière).

¹³ Robin Evans, *The Rights of Retreat and the Rites of Exclusion. Notes towards the Definition of Wall*, in “Architectural Design”, vol. XLI, 1971, No. 6, (pp. 335-339), p. 335. Evans studied at the AA-School of Architecture (in 1969, his fifth year, he did the project “Piezo-electrics”, a city based on the models of Archigram); in 1971-72 he was one of the first-year teachers.

¹⁴ Cf. Cook, op. cit., p. 42.

¹⁵ Peter Allison, *A Wall for London*, Peter Allison, 5th year, 1971, in James Gowan, ed., *Projects Architectural Association 1946-1971*, [AA Cahiers Series, No. 1], p. 91. “It might be related – writes Graham Shane about Allison’s project – to Rem Koolhaas’s contemporary Berlin Wall Project, which can be connected with the work of Superstudio” (ibid.). In 1971, in his fifth year, Allison presented the project for the “Plateau Beaubourg”, dividing the area into five “equal and parallel volumes, three solid and two empty” (Peter Allison, *Plateau Beaubourg*, Peter Allison, 5th year, 1971, ibid., p. 90). Shane describes the project as a synthesis of “simple geometry of Platonic

solids and a post-Miesian aesthetic” (ibid.). Allison’s path of training was similar to that of Koolhaas: he went to Cornell University, where he worked with Ungers, and in 1975-76, the same year in which Koolhaas began teaching at the AA-School of Architecture, he collaborated on the teaching of Unit 2, in the “Diploma School” directed by Léon Krier.

¹⁶ Rem Koolhaas, Elia Zenghelis, *Exodus o i prigionieri volontari dell’architettura, or the voluntary prisoners of architecture*, in “Casabella”, XXXVII, 1973, No. 378, pp. 42-45. The competition was announced in issue 357 of “Casabella”, October 1971 (Alessandro Mendini, *Editrice*

Beginning the architectural romance written by Koolhaas beyond any compositional logic or typological scheme, *Exodus* is an ideal city structure conceived to be inserted in the center of London with the aim of facilitating an intense cycle of metropolitan life, as described by Baudelaire, marked by moments of almost mystical retreat and other moments of participation in forms of social life inspired by the youth counter-culture, the Workers' Clubs of the Constructivists and the visionary programs of Archigram like *Instant City*. All this would be enclosed by one of the original structures of architecture – the wall – giving it the character of a *Continuous Monument*.¹⁷ To accentuate its symbolic value, the wall of *Exodus* – “a masterpiece” – would be made with blocks of concrete inspired from the Berlin Wall, whose “psychological and symbolic effects”, as Koolhaas and Zenghelis wrote, “were infinitely more powerful than its physical appearance”. This symbolic figure, which precisely with *Exodus* becomes his first *merveille*, continued its presence among Koolhaas's concerns until the 1990s.

In *Exodus*, Koolhaas and Zenghelis use, for “positive intentions”, a “force as definitive, intense and devastating” as that of the Berlin Wall, transforming it into two parallel, hollow walls that protect a “Strip”. In this “Strip” vital activities take place, marked by an “intense metropolitan desirability” and therefore capable, in the aims of the authors, of generating an exodus away from the historical city, which would thus be progressively reduced to a “pack of ruins”. The “Strip” is divided into eight Squares, each set aside for one activity. This form bears a certain similarity to the project by Leonidov for an ideal linear urban structure – the Palace of Culture – to be inserted in Moscow and subdivided into four square sectors devoted to scientific research, physical culture, mass demonstrations and expositions.

The description prepared by Koolhaas and Zenghelis is a fundamental part of *Exodus*, explaining its functioning and offering a glimpse of how the sequence of the Squares is roughly based on the idea of a screenplay.

The “voluntary prisoners” who decide to leave London are welcomed at the “Reception Area”.¹⁸ From its roof terrace they can see the activities of the “Strip” and, at the same time, the “exhilarating decay of the old London”. Then they are accompanied to the “Ceremonial Square”, a vast, empty place, like a

Casabella, in “Casabella”, XXXV, 1971, No. 357, p. 1). The project by Koolhaas and Zenghelis was one of 29 projects selected by the jury (cf. *La città come ambiente significante. Relazione della giuria del concorso*, in “Casabella”, XXXVI, 1972, No. 372, pp. 3, 6). After the publication in “Casabella”, No. 378, *Exodus* was included in the first important selection of works of the avant-gardes of the Sixties and Seventies, also published by “Casabella” (cf. Paola Navone, Bruno Orlandoni, *Architettura Radicale*, Milan, Casabella, 1974, pp. 148, 166). Cf. Fritz Neumeier, *OMA's Berlin: The Polemic Island in the City*, in “Assemblage”, 1990, No. 11, pp. 36-53; Lieven De Caeter,

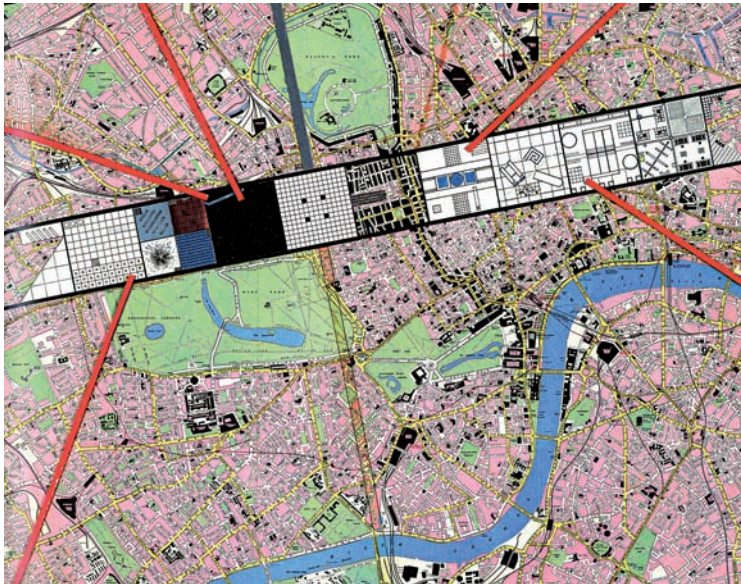
Hilde Heynen, *The Exodus Machine*, in Martin van Schaik, Otakar Mácél, *Exit Utopia. Architectural Provocations 1956-76*, Munich-Berlin-London-New York, Prestel, 2005, pp. 263-76. Cf. *Metropolis. Rem Koolhaas and Elia Zenghelis with Madelon Vriesendorp and Zoe Zenghelis, Exodus or The Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture*, ibid., pp. 236-53.

¹⁷ “[...] in the late 60s Superstudio – Koolhaas declares – offered one of the few inspiring and stimulating models of the retrieval of a modern tradition applied to a new sensibility. (Next to the Berlin Wall, their *Continuous Monument* was an obvious inspiration for *Exodus*.)” (*The City of the Captive Globe/1972*,

in “Architectural Design”, vol. XLVII, 1977, No. 5, p. 333). In 1988 Koolhaas interpreted *Exodus* as a way of taking a distance from the English and Italian neo-avant-gardes. “In 1972 – he wrote – Archigram was at the height of its power and groups like Archizoom and Superstudio were imagining architectural stories which implied a vast enlargement of the territory of the architectural imagination. Architecture then could be books, drawings, stories and in some cases even buildings. The tone in the contents of these productions was anti-historical, relentlessly optimistic and ultimately innocent. ‘Exodus, or the voluntary prisoners of architecture’ was a reaction to this innocence: a project to

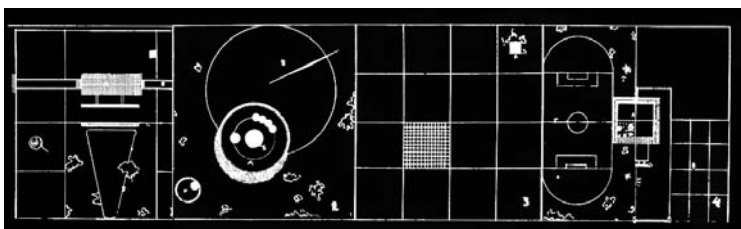
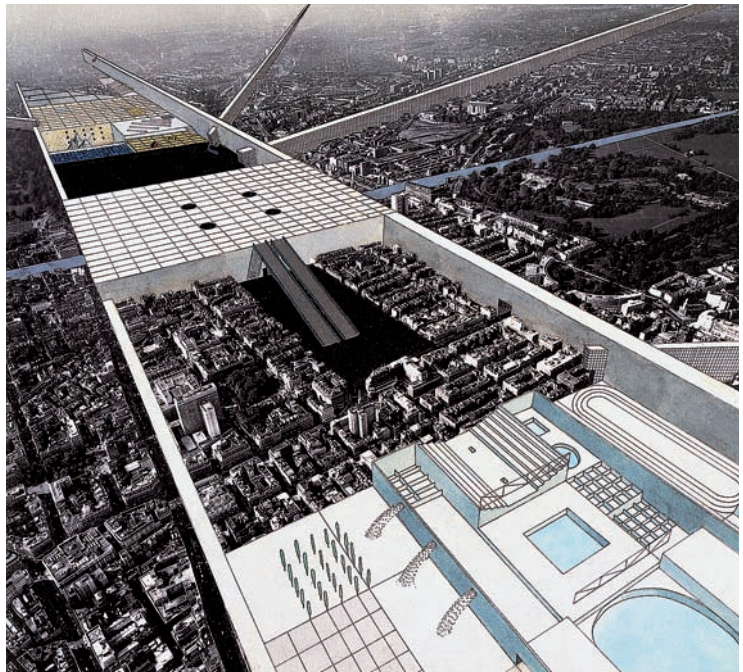
emphasize that the power of architecture is more ambiguous and dangerous” (Rem Koolhaas, *Sixteen Years of OMA*, in “A+U”, 1988, No. 217, p. 16).

¹⁸ The two accesses to the “Reception Area” are preceded by four columns with a triangular fronton, detached from the wall like an ideogrammatic Brandenburg Gate. In a project in 1970 James Stirling and Léon Krier had recycled, in an inclined position, the facade of the Assembly Rooms.

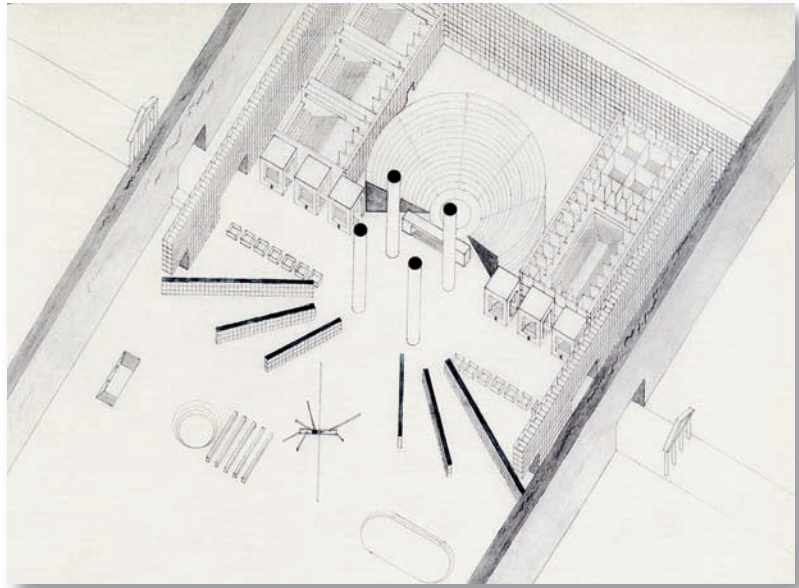


6-7. R. Koolhaas, E. Zenghelis, competition project for an urban structure in London, *Exodus or The Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture*, 1971-72, in collaboration with Z. Zenghelis and M. Vriesendorp. Map and general view.

8. I. Leonidov, competition project for the *Palace of Culture*, Moscow, 1930.



9. R. Koolhaas, E. Zenghelis, competition project for an urban structure in London, *Exodus or The Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture*, 1971-72, in collaboration with Z. Zenghelis and M. Vriesendorp. "Reception Area".



parade ground, where they are informed about the rituals and rules of the "Strip". Their next stop is at the temporary lodgings that have been created inside London residences ("Area of London", redefined in 1977 as "Temporary Housing"¹⁹), preserved in the "Strip" for the purpose of favoring gradual adaptation to the new system. From the roof of the "Reception Area" the "prisoners" reach the residences by means of a pair of escalators. These lodgings are located in the quarters of John Nash, indicated by Koolhaas and Zenghelis as their "conceptual predecessor", probably due to the symbolic form of his works that are wedged into the urban fabric of London, just like the "Strip".

After a short stay in the "Area of London", the "voluntary prisoners" are moved to "The Allotments", an area developed with "small palaces" and designed to purify their awareness, precluding any access to news and engaging them in everyday tasks of ploughing, clearing and beautifying the lots ("The houses [...] are built from the most beautiful and expensive materials – marble, chromium steel [...]"). "The Allotments" are a surreal place capable of acting on the "subconscious" and of stimulating "sentiments of 'gratitude' and 'satisfaction'", so the place is similar to certain residential cells imagined by the Metabolists, like the "capsule" of Kisho Kurokawa, conceived as a "retroactive mechanism", "a device that permits rejection of unwanted information".²⁰

The "voluntary prisoners" devote their days to a range of cultural and recreational activities in the various areas ("The University"; "The Complex of Scientific Research"; "Park of Four Elements"; "The Baths"; "The Square of Culture (British Museum)").

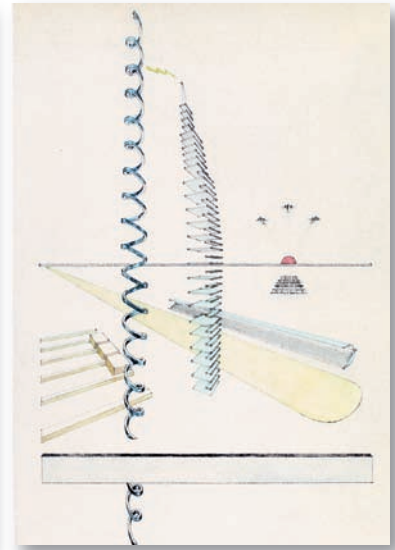
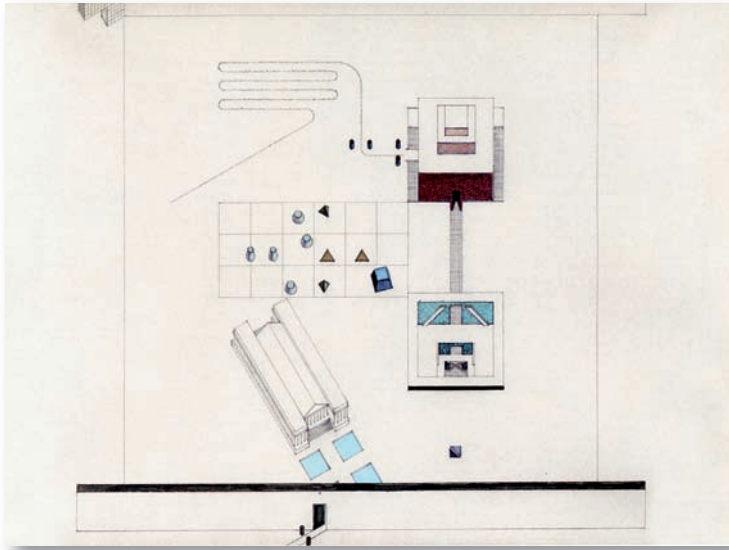
In the "Park of Four Elements", subdivided into four square areas for air, fire, water and earth, they learn about the qualities of the primordial elements.

¹⁹ Cf. *Exodus/1972*, in "Architectural Design", vol. XLVII, 1977, No. 5, p. 328. Again in the case of the application of the *Continuous Monument* to New York, it was

suggested to safeguard "a bunch of old skyscrapers" to "remember the time in which cities were built without a unified design" (cit. in Peter Lang, William Menking,

Superstudio. Life Without Objects, Milan, Skira, 2003, p. 130).

²⁰ K. Kurokawa, *Capsule Declaration*, in "Space Design", March 1969, n.p.



In the air zone, for example, their moods are stimulated by emissions of hallucinogenic gases, as happened at Radio City Music Hall in New York, which Koolhaas would describe in 1978.²¹ In the three pools of the area called “The Baths”, the “voluntary prisoners” get acquainted with one another and then move off, in couples or groups, into cells inserted in the hollow wall and specifically designed to “facilitate the indulgence and materialisation of their intentions”, as in the fantasy project of Oikéma by Ledoux.²² The “Square of Culture (British Museum)” is for their artistic education, and has three buildings: one is in the form of a neoclassical temple and contains artworks, starting with those of prehistoric times; another, in the form of a greenhouse, contains contemporary works; the third is below ground and utilized for the creation of art.²³

In “The University” – the area that was redesignated, in 1977, as the “Park of Aggression”²⁴ – we find two tall Leonidovian towers. The one composed only of a series of slabs is a stack of arenas where the “voluntary prisoners” be-

²¹ Cf. Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York. A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1978, pp. 177 et seq. “The first square, ‘air’ – the text published in Casabella reports – consists of a number of pavilions with very elaborate networks of responsive ducts, which emit different mixtures of gasses and can create various aromatic experiences. Moods of exhilaration, depression, serenity and receptivity can be evoked invisibly, in programmed or improvised sequences and rhythms. Identical in size to the previous one, but sunken below the level of the strip, is

‘the desert’, an artificial recreation of the Egyptian landscape, simulating its hallucinogenic conditions: a small oasis, a fire organ, replacing the sun. At the end of the four linear caves, Mirage-Machines project desirable, but intangible ideals. The secret that the pyramid does not contain a treasure chamber will be kept for ever. (Have its builders perhaps been executed?). Deeper into the earth still is the water square, a pool whose surface is permanently agitated through the regular but variable movement of one of its walls, which produces waves of sometimes gigantic

proportions. The fourth square, on the bottom of the pit, is devoted to ‘earth’. Part of the original stone is left in the form of a Matterhorn, its top exactly level with the surface of the strip. Close scrutiny of the walls of the cavity reveals archaeological clues to the past. Part of a now deserted underground line intrudes in the volume” (Koolhaas, Zenghelis, *Exodus* cit., p. 44).
²² “The function of the baths – the text published in Casabella continues – is the creation and recycling of private and public fantasies. Apart from the two square pools (different temperatures, different temperaments) and the sunken

circular main collector, the whole ground floor is an area of public action and display. The two long walls of the building consist of an infinite number of cells of various proportions to which individuals, couples, or groups can retire. The cells are serviced to facilitate the indulgence and materialisation of their intentions. In the arena, they perform for a critical but eager audience, consisting of their fellow inhabitants. It is here that minds are refueled. Inspired by the performance, the audience descends to the ground floor concourse, looking for those willing and able to share...” (ibid.).