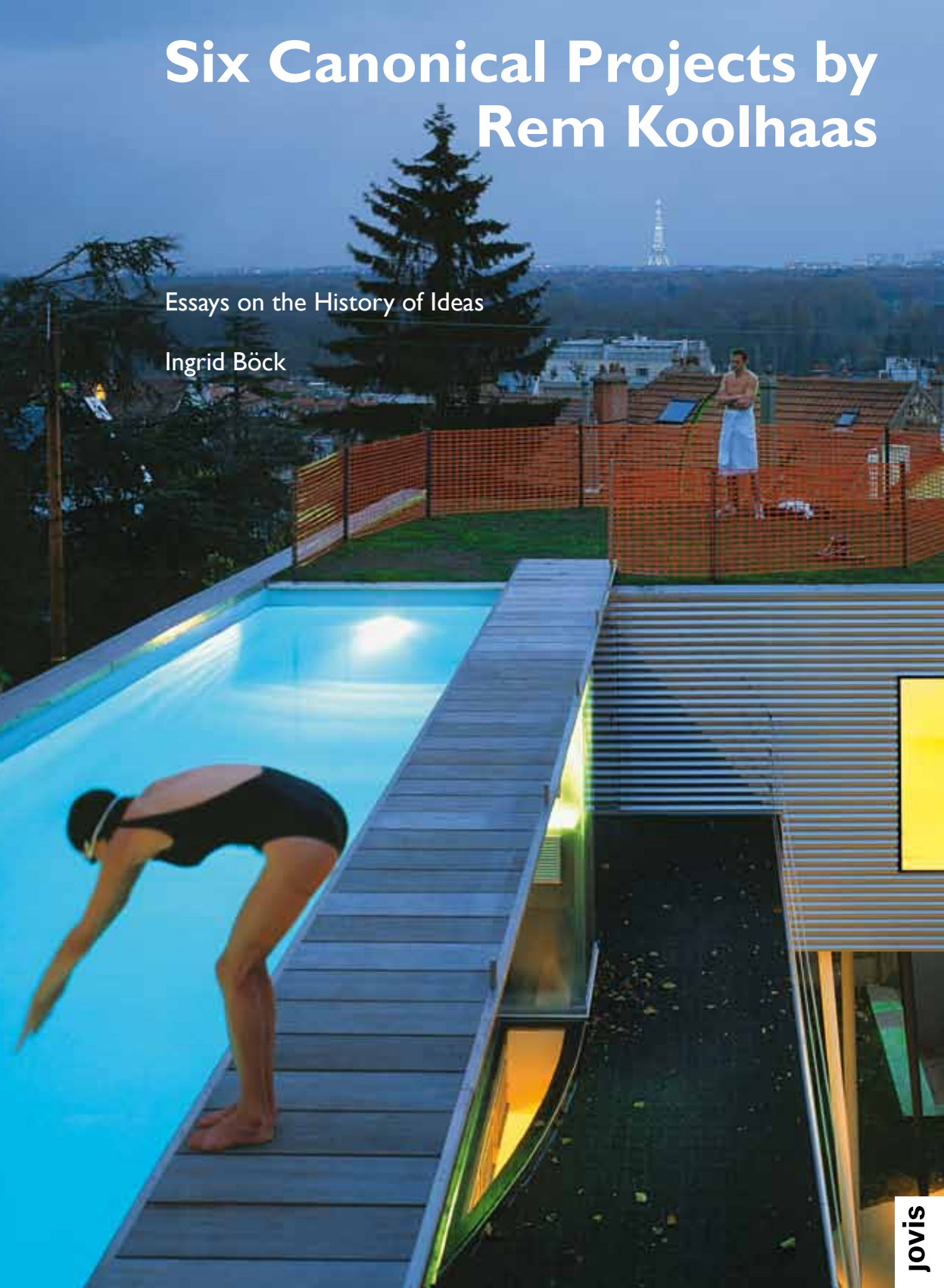
Six Canonical Projects by Rem Koolhaas

Essays on the History of Ideas

Ingrid Böck



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Rem Koolhaas has been part of the international avant-garde since the nineteen-seventies and has been named the Pritzker Architecture Prize for the year 2000. This book, which builds on six canonical projects, traces the discursive practice behind the design methods used by Koolhaas and his office OMA. It uncovers recurring key themes—such as wall, void, montage, trajectory, infrastructure, and shape—that have structured this design discourse over the span of Koolhaas's oeuvre. The book moves beyond the six core pieces, as well: It explores how these identified thematic design principles manifest in other works by Koolhaas as both practical re-applications and further elaborations.
In addition to Koolhaas's individual genius, these textual and material layers are accounted for shaping the very context of his work's relevance. By comparing the design principles with relevant concepts from the architectural Zeitgeist in which OMA has operated, the study moves beyond its specific subject—Rem Koolhaas—and provides novel insight into the broader history of architectural ideas.

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"Despite the prominence and notoriety of Rem Koolhaas … there is not a single piece of scholarly writing coming close to the … length, to the intensity, or to the methodological rigor found in the manuscript by Ingrid Böck…"
Ole W. Fischer, University of Utah, Salt Lake City

"… an innovative and comprehensive analysis of all existing interpretative frameworks of the work of Rem Koolhaas."
Albena Yaneva, University of Manchester

"… an excellent exploration that could pave the way for an advanced study of … recent architectural history…"
Carsten Ruhl, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main

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With Kari Jormakka's unexpected death at the age of fifty-three, the scholarly community had to endure the great loss of a world-class theorist and extraordinary human being. Those of us fortunate enough to have worked with him will always remember his profound sense of academic rigor and clarity, his enthusiasm, and his unique leadership skills.

INTRODUCTION

"Who is speaking thus?," asks Roland Barthes. The answer offered by Michel Foucault is another question, one that originates in Samuel Beckett's *Texts for Nothing*: "What does it matter who is speaking?"[1] Whereas Barthes suggests that, in the end, there is nobody speaking since the author disappears in the text, for Foucault the original question does matter, because in his opinion, the significance of the work depends largely on *who actually* is speaking.

The idea of the author is connected to the moment of individualization in the history of knowledge, when the authenticity of the relationship between a work and its originary figure first started to be valorized. As myths compensate for the death of the Greek hero by providing him with immortality, it now seems that the text has the right to murder the author, to cancel out his individual being and to confirm his absence in order to reach textual immortality. His name surpasses being a reference and becomes a description and designation, so that any change matters in its function within the discourse.

Foucault argues that the methods of modern criticism for proving a work's value for canonization and identifying a rightful author are still similar to the four principles proposed by the Church Father St. Jerome: first, any inferior work should be withdrawn from the record in order to save the stable value of the work; second, texts contradictory to the conceptual unity of other works have to be excluded; third, texts differing in stylistic consistency should be removed; fourth, to preserve historic unity, anything that describe events after the death of the author also must be rejected. The ideological function of the author figure is therefore to determine, limit, and constrict the signification of a certain work—instead of to produce meaning infinitely. This function creates constraints for a discourse that is indifferent to who is speaking, for the real questions are "what are the modes of existence of this discourse? Where has it been used, how can it circulate, and who can appropriate it for himself? [And, after all,] what difference does it make who is speaking?"[2]

Rem Koolhaas and the Office for Metropolitan Architecture, in short OMA, represent not only the architectural avant-garde as one of the most influential, honored, published, and copied architects today, Koolhaas is also one of the most controversially discussed and criticized figures—not only for his work in the Middle East, China, and Russia. On the occasion of the Pritzker Prize presented to Koolhaas in 2000 in Jerusalem, he was characterized as a combination of

[1] Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?," in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. by Josué V. Harari (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1979), 141–60, here 141; Samuel Beckett, *Texts for Nothing* (London: Calder & Boyars, 1974).

[2] Foucault, "What is an Author?," 160.

utopian visionary and functional pragmatist with a tendency towards extraordinarily big dimensions and "a free-flowing, democratic organization of spaces and functions with an unselfconscious tributary of circulation that in the end dictates a new unprecedented architectural form."[3]

In historiography Koolhaas's work tends to be either assigned to structuralist or postmodern theory and design practice, aligned with constructivist and surrealist sensibilities, or he is presented, in the traditional manner of architectural hagiography, as an original genius without identifiable discursive connections. In addition, the cumulative character of the work creates a web of various lineages, multiplied associations, and points of reference, as he employs a series of techniques to address the irrational side of modern architecture beyond its common notions of *Sachlichkeit*, rational structures, and functionalism. However, Koolhaas's architectural practice tackles the challenging question of whether a unifying characteristic, style, and strategy—or what Foucault calls the "author function"—can be identified. Hence the basic inquiries of this research study are as follows: How can we identify conceptual ideas that recur as constant themes over an extended period of time? How can we conceptualize changes and adaptations within those motifs? What is then the function of the architect himself in the discourse and of his claim of reference and originality?

If architectural theorists agree on anything about Koolhaas, it is that his work and thinking are a tangle of contradictions or, at least, paradoxes. One group of theorists—Charles Jencks, Herbert Muschamp, Philip Johnson, Mark Wigley, and Liane Lefaivre (among others)—deal with this agglomeration of contradictions by furthering postmodern readings of Koolhaas's work. For Jencks, Koolhaas adopts a curious position between (and at the extreme ends of) strategies of differentiation, radical eclecticism, and collage, on the one hand, and the pressures for standardization and generic structures, on the other hand.[4] His view on architecture emphasizes the functional organization of the program by generating statistical diagrams (called *datascapes*) in a way similar to Le Corbusier, Hannes Meyer, or Cornelis van Eesteren at the beginning of the twentieth century, which leads to the subsequent design with the inevitability of a mathematical proof. Jencks claims that a strategy that Koolhaas adopts from Frank Gehry's *cheapskate* architecture is to use cheap means or very little money: a kind

[3] Hyatt Foundation, "Jury Citation," The Pritzker Architecture Prize presented to Rem Koolhaas in 2000, n.d., accessed March 6, 2011, http://www.pritzkerprize.com/2000/jury.

[4] Charles Jencks, *The New Paradigm in Architecture: The Language of Post-Modernism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 180–5.

of "Calcutta minimalism" with polyester, *béton brut*, industrial metal sheets.[5] He even compares Koolhaas's architectural thinking and performance to Andy Warhol's trading of the inevitable star system, since both figures put forth a double message of critical resistance and dazzling glamour.[6] His acquaintance for over four decades, Jencks invited Koolhaas to the 1980 Venice Biennale on post-modernism, "The Presence of the Past," and judged the competition for the new CCTV in Beijing in 2002. However, Jencks also stresses that the rhetorics of Koolhaas's iconic buildings and his involvement with political power according to his motto "Go East" cannot be accepted without heavy criticism. Though, following Koolhaas, the recent financial crisis illustrates once more the fragility of the market economy in the capitalist system—as Koolhaas claimed in his announcement of the "¥€$ Regime"—and its ending. Thus, "despite the crashes and catastrophes the neoliberal casino capitalism has been kept alive because 'there are no alternatives' (too big to fail), because 'markets have to be appeased,'" Ana Jeinic and Anselm Wagner claim in *Is There (Anti-) Neoliberal Architecture?*.[7] Hence, addressing political regimes that are prejudiced by the Western world, like China, is despite "the scale and nature of the beast" similar to looking at the "wrong" ideology of shopping and luxury brands.[8] Similar to Jencks, *New York Times* critic Herbert Muschamp associates aura and glamour with Koolhaas's projects. For instance, the Seattle Public Library shines like a "blazing chandelier" in the dark, revealing "the exceptional, the excessive, the extreme" that architecture can engender for a single building, a city, or the architect himself.[9]

Referring to another postmodern viewpoint, Philip Johnson and Mark Wigley included Koolhaas's design Building and Tower in Rotterdam in 1988—alongside projects of Peter Eisenman, Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, Coop Himmelblau, Daniel Libeskind, and Bernard Tschumi—in their exhibition "Deconstructivist Architecture" at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1988.[10] For Johnson and Wigley, the striking similarities of the works on display are the wrapped

[5] Ibid., 184–5.
[6] Charles Jencks, *Iconic Building: The Power of Enigma* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2005), 106–7.
[7] Ana Jeinić and Anselm Wagner, eds., "Introduction," in *Is There (Anti-) Neoliberal Architecture?* (Berlin: Jovis, 2013), 6–10, here 8.
[8] Rem Koolhaas, Reiner de Graaf, David Cunningham, and Jon Goodbun, "Propaganda Architecture: Interview," in *Radical Philosophy* 154 (March/April 2009): 35–47, accessed March 6, 2011, http://www.radicalphilosophy.com.
[9] Herbert Muschamp, "Architecture Review: Rem Koolhaas's New York State of Mind," in *New York Times* (November 4, 1994); Herbert Muschamp, "Architecture: The Library That Puts on Fishnets and Hits the Disco," in *New York Times* (May 16, 2004), both accessed March 6, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/keyword/central-library.
[10] Philip Johnson and Mark Wigley, *Deconstructivist Architecture* (New York: Little Brown & Company, 1988).

shapes and shifted planes, which make use of the hidden master narratives and obvious dilemmas of modernism by distorting the predictability of the right angle and the purity of form.

As opposed to the formal reading of Johnson and Wigley on the basis of single architectural objects, Liane Lefaivre's phrase *dirty realism* is another approach to the work of Koolhaas.[11] The term was initially coined by Bill Buford in his introduction to a *Granta* issue titled with this term and subtitled "New Writing from America," whereas Lefaivre distinguishes the same postmodern features in contemporary architecture and urban culture.[12] For Buford, the periphery of the city is a place of visual ugliness and the grotesque, "oppressive details of modern consumerism," devoted to the strange stories of daytime television, roadside cafes, supermarkets, cheap hotels, junk food, and bingo.[13] In a similar way, Koolhaas addresses the banality of the contemporary city in his writings, such as "What Ever Happened to Urbanism?" and "The Generic City." Additionally, his "retroactive manifesto" of Manhattan in *Delirious New York* presents the metropolitan condition as a different reality, that is characterized by simultaneous, plausible worlds, instability, and indefiniteness.

In addition to the postmodern approach to Koolhaas's work, there are also those theorists—including Jeff Kipnis, Fredric Jameson, and Alejandro Zaera Polo (including the debate on critical theory versus projective practice)—who detect general themes, such as the relationship between power and freedom in architecture, that Koolhaas develops throughout his career in projects that, at first glance, appear quite different. Thereby, they point out that Koolhaas himself often equates architecture with the demonstration of power when he stresses various socio-economic responsibilities and inadequacies, hence describing the discipline as a monstrous instrument of despair and horror.[14] Planning is like a doctrine that determines certain areas and produces division, exclusion, and imprisonment. Despite this hopeless situation, planners are also free to explore the liberating capacity of architecture and to imagine how it can become a tool of change and how it can foster the emergence of unprecedented conditions. For Koolhaas, one strategy for attaining this task is the "programmatic alchemy" of Bigness, which is the extraordinary vastness of space so that the maximum difference of parts makes

[11] Liane Lefaivre, "Dirty Realism in European Architecture Today," in *Design Book Review* 17 (Winter 1989): 17–20.
[12] Bill Buford, "Introduction" to "Dirty Realism: New Writing from America" in *Granta* 8 (1983): 4–5.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, *S,M,L,XL* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1995), 226–7.

possible a nuclear reaction among the single elements.[15] A case in point is the typical Manhattan skyscraper, which presents the final, definitive typology of the city. Similar to Le Corbusier's scheme of the Maison Dom-Ino, its typical plan uses a generic structural system of free-standing columns to create an uninterrupted surface on each floor and elevators to provide a spatial discontinuity between each level. The skyscraper also functions like a constructivist *social condenser* because its scheme can cope with the urban condition of instability, indeterminacy, and discontinuity as regards functional use and any future programming while keeping the illusion of architecture intact in the external shape. He describes the development of the modern city, however, in spite of its appearance of efficacy and functional performance, as a utopian endeavor within a profoundly irrational environment.

Referring to the recurring subjects in Koolhaas's work, Kipnis, Jameson, and Zaera Polo emphasize that these spatial concepts typify both the liberation *from* (ideological) constraints and the liberty *to* create new structures and social roles. In this regard, they also highlight the idea of utopian thought and social engineering as a constant theme in Koolhaas's work over several decades. Kipnis reveals that the occult yet brazen aim behind everything the Dutch master has created is the intent "to discover what real, instrumental collaboration can be effected between architecture and freedom."[16] Still, there is no universal patent for liberating architectural elements and social engineering via spatial composition, only interventions, strategies, and disestablishing techniques to engender new forms of social life. Kipnis further argues that if the event structure of the building in use is no longer congruent with the pre-written program but exceeds the initial planning, it can lead to both a richer, more diverse performance and irresponsible, harmful behavior of the users that easily escalates out of control.[17] In a similar fashion, Jameson claims that the originality of Koolhaas's work is based "on the relationship between this randomness and freedom and the presence of some rigid, inhuman, nondifferential form that enables the differentiation of what goes on around it."[18] Zaera Polo also speaks of a migration between the controlling elements of structures and programmatic needs, so that an in-between position of provisional organization, experiments, and non-planned situations is possible.[19]

[15] Rem Koolhaas, "Bigness, or the Problem of Large," in Koolhaas and Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 494–517, here 511.
[16] Jeffrey Kipnis, "Recent Koolhaas," in *El Croquis* 79 (1996): 26–37, here 27.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Fredric Jameson, "Envelopes and Enclaves: The Space of Post-Civil Society," in *Assemblage* 17 (April 1992): 30–7, here 33.
[19] Alejandro Zaera Polo, "The Day After: A Conversation with Rem Koolhaas," in *El Croquis* 79 (1996): 8–25, here 9.

The central characteristic of the following accounts, in comparison to the previously discussed concepts, is the change from an object-oriented to a process-oriented reading of the architectural oeuvre. A handful of theorists, like Roberto Gargiani, Bart Lootsma, and Albena Yaneva, who worked with Koolhaas on several occasions or spent extended periods of time in the office or archive of OMA, provide rather different views in a sociological context. Their reading of Koolhaas's design concepts is embedded in a certain culture of architectural knowledge and social framework in the office. Following an updated Zeitgeist approach, Gargiani reads the theories and design proposals of Koolhaas through general intellectual tendencies, beginning with the structuralist thought of the late nineteen-sixties and ending with the post-modern und post-critical agenda at the turn of the millennium. The subtitle of his book on Koolhaas, *The Construction of Merveilles*, indicates that he wants to present his work as a chronological series of metaphorical objects that relate to surrealist sensibility and its notion of *merveilles*.[20] Similar to the ideal unity of the body that is dismantled into pieces, hollowed, and reassembled as distorted composition, as in René Magritte's 1927 painting *The Importance of Marvels* (*L'importance des merveilles*), Koolhaas's architectural concepts question the body of program, structure, and material and unite the fragmentary elements into an unprecedented whole. In this typically postmodern view, the striking contradictions in program and style are resolved or rather dissolved, like the many pieces in a bricolage that are juxtaposed with something completely different.

In a biographical (as opposed to a Zeitgeist) approach to architectural criticism or historiography, the interpretation centers on the individual's experiences and changing perspectives in order to explore design methods and strategies from a historical viewpoint. In line with such thinking, Lootsma connects Koolhaas's *SuperDutch* approach to architecture to the Dutch culture of the nineteen-sixties in general and to the situationist Constant Nieuwenhuys in particular, whom the future architect met at the age of twenty-two for an interview for the *Haagse Post* in 1966 about his work in the Dutch pavilion at the Biennale in Venice.[21] The influence of the situationists and their radical critique of capitalist modes of production, the fetishism of commodities, and the reification of everyday life—what they come to call "the spectacle"—seem to be reflected in Koolhaas's later publications like *Delirious New York* and "Junk Space," though he barely relates him-

[20] Roberto Gargiani, *Rem Koolhaas/OMA: The Construction of Merveilles* (London: Routledge, 2008).

[21] Bart Lootsma, *Koolhaas, Constant und die Niederländische Kultur der 60er* (Nurenberg: A. Brandhuber, 2006); Rem Koolhaas and Betty van Garrel, "De stad van de toekomst," in *Haagse Post* (August 1966): 14–5; Bart Lootsma, *SuperDutch: Neue Niederländische Architektur* (Munich: DVA, 2000).

self to this movement. For Lootsma, Constant's New Babylon presents a fundamentally new way of looking at urban space, drawing out novel ways of life from the traditionally negatively valued trope of a big city. Although Constant understands architecture as a key method to construe social relations, he rejects the typical modernist planning of the post-war reconstruction following the CIAM doctrine. Instead, he developed, over a period of twenty years, a series of drawings, paintings, maps, models, and texts about a megastructure inhabited by *homo ludens* (following the Dutch historian Johan Huizinga), which he also presented in film-like collages with street sounds to accentuate the effect of immediacy and authenticity. Another important influence on the architecture of Koolhaas is, according to Lootsma, the journalism of the group "Nul" and their objectivist way of writing about events by avoiding opinions or speculations and only presenting facts and figures without rhetoric or style (*Nul Stijl*). Hence, Koolhaas's text on Le Corbusier's visit in 1964 starts with the delay of the plane, the impatience of the audience, and a description of the protagonist: "Le Corbusier, 76, kühl und bissig im Auftreten, ein Gesicht mit hellblauen Augen, in dem sich nur die Unterlippe bewegt, macht einen verbitterten Eindruck."[22] In addition, the participation in the film group "1, 2, 3 enz." trained Koolhaas in writing screenplays (together with Rene Daalder). Obviously, any kind of writing involves a (perhaps necessarily) subjective selection of facts, and, what is more, choosing a particular topic can be a means of influencing the general discourse—a strategy that Koolhaas spectacularly deploys, introducing themes such as shopping, Lagos, or China into the discourse.

Another possible, sociological strategy of reading is exemplified by Yaneva's recent research study *The Making of a Building*. In the detached yet engaged manner of an ethnologist, she follows the planning process in Koolhaas's office over a period of more than two years, studying all the drifts, moves, in the development of the design proposal for the Whitney Museum (NEWhitney) in New York.[23] She describes vividly how the members of an architectural design team work feverishly through the nights with diagrams and models scattered around on tables, and traces the sequence of design operations and the production of intermediary objects to identify methods of gaining knowledge about the design process. The general intent is to study the office of Koolhaas in the same way as science and technology studies examine the development and production of prototypes truths. In line with this approach, she scrutinizes the activities in the

[22] Lootsma, *Koolhaas*, 14: "Le Corbusier, 76, cool and snappy in appearance, a bright blue-eyed face, which only moves the lower lip, makes a bitter impression." (Translation I.B.).

[23] Albena Yaneva, *The Making of a Building: A Pragmatist Approach to Architecture* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009).

office in detail—covering varied events such as the historical design inquiry; experiments with physical models and visualizations; the process of option; presentations to clients, users, and the public; their reactions and counter-strategies; and the realization and changes on the construction site. Yaneva's sociological perspective stresses both the social dynamics and the logistics of the practice in and outside the office. Instead of a single moment of invention, there is a complex process of negotiations between many different actors involved.

Yet another approach to the oeuvre of Koolhaas is the popular historiographical device of identifying precedents as a way of interpreting or explaining a new architectural concept. Koolhaas himself excels in this genre, although he simultaneously undermines its intellectual credentials in *Delirious New York*, a fictional history of Manhattan, in which the historian's cool deliberation of independent facts gives way to a coherent but paranoid conspiracy theory. What this fake history of the skyscraper—one could call it an examination of the skyscraper as mythology in the sense of Barthes—occludes is real history, including the real precursors of or influences on Koolhaas's own designs.

Still, some critics have identified one major influence looming behind Koolhaas. When Kipnis writes, "there is no other way to put it; [Rem] Koolhaas is the Le Corbusier of our times," he could be merely stressing the importance of the two leading architects.[24] However, there are also striking formal similarities between some of their designs, beginning with but not limited to the Villa dall'Ava, a postmodern collage of motifs taken from the Villa Savoye, yet with shifted planes and distorted angles.

More eclectically, William Curtis discerns a host of influences in Koolhaas's other buildings, ranging from the syntax of the Corbusian free plan to Mies van der Rohe's National Gallery in Berlin, the Schröder House by Gerrit Rietveld and other modernist icons to "the atmosphere of 'Euromarketing.'"[25] Curtis's rationale for such a synthetic method of reading is his claim that the authentic works of modern architecture represent personal, intuitive syntheses of the most enduring values of architectural art and issues pertinent to industrial civilization.[26] One of the reasons Curtis seems to prefer Le Corbusier to Koolhaas is that he finds many more references to diverse sources in the works of the functionalist master. In Le Corbusier's Parliament Building in Chandigarh (1953–61), for example, Curtis divines echoes of Tatlin's Monument to the Third International, the minaret of the Mosque of Ahmad ibn Tulun in Cairo, the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, the

[24] Kipnis, "Recent Koolhaas," 26.
[25] William J. R. Curtis, *Modern Architecture since 1900* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1996), 666–7.
[26] William J. R. Curtis, "Authenticity, Abstraction and the Ancient Sense: Le Corbusier's and Louis Kahn's Ideas of Parliament," in *Perspecta* 20 (1983): 181–94, here 182.

Jantar Mantar observatory in Delhi, the Pantheon in Rome, Egyptian hypostyle halls, cooling towers that Le Corbusier saw in Ahmedabad, and, finally, the funnel-shaped chimney stack of the La Cornu farmhouse from 1909.[27] In addition to these sources, Curtis also detects the influence of the Altes Museum in Berlin, the axis between the Arc de Triomphe and the Louvre in Paris, ancient Beijing, the Basilica of Constantine in Rome, and the Pont du Gard near Nimes. Less specifically, he identifies inspiration from colonial verandas, loggias of Moghul pavilions, Hindu temple precincts, and Greek stoas, and also bull's horns and surrealist Minotaurs, cubism and Mondrian, and Le Corbusier's own Swiss Pavilion in Paris, the Unité in Marseilles, and the Governor's Palace in Chandigarh and the Open Hand.[28]

In response to this approach, Kari Jormakka therefore argues that "such an abundant and heterogeneous list of influences, second only to Borges's Chinese encyclopedia, diminishes the explanatory power of each individual source and makes the proposed synthesis into an enigma even more overwhelming than the original work to be explained."[29] Indeed, the problem with the genealogical method is that it operates with vague concepts, such as influence, precursor, and, most importantly, similarity. In some way, any two things always resemble each other, but not every resemblance or similarity counts. Hence, when interpreting architectural concepts and strategies from a historical viewpoint, the influence, precursors, and similarities matter only if they can be put into a relevant discursive context.

In any case, in the text to his exhibition "Fundamentals – Absorbing Modernity: 1914–2014" at the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2014, Koolhaas reconnects his architectural thinking (emblematic of the crucial global situation) to the evolution of generic modernity, which has been splintering into unique and specific histories under the influence of diverse political environments (and wars), cultural memory and erasure, technical inventions, and random individual trajectories.[30] Within these various transformations, he identifies a repertoire of fundamental typologies and narratives that function as a universal architectural language of modernization without proposing a grammar of these elements. For Peter Eisenman, however, the exhibition on the modern century also indicates that in 1964, after the first half of the modern century, when the key proponents like Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, and Frank Lloyd Wright were all dead, Koolhaas became the new totemic figure of the second half of the

[27] William J. R. Curtis, *Le Corbusier: Ideas and Forms* (London: Phaidon, 1986), 29–30 and 196; Curtis, *Modern Architecture*, 427–32; Curtis, "Authenticity," 185–7.
[28] Curtis, *Le Corbusier,* 180.
[29] Kari Jormakka, *Eyes That Do Not See* (Weimar: Universitätsverlag, 2011), 22–3.
[30] Rem Koolhaas, *Fundamentals: 14th International Architecture Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia 2014* (Venice: Marsilio, 2014).

century.[31] He has become the origin of the *archistar* and has killed the other *archistars*.[32] However, the current practice signifies the end of architecture, at least the end of Koolhaas's domination over the profession. Resonating Jim Morrison's famously dark song, Eisenman accounts for Koolhaas's concept of the exhibition: "[This is] the end of my career, the end of my hegemony, the end of my mythology, the end of everything, the end of architecture."[33] For in Eisenman's view, Koolhaas's idea of the discipline relates to performance, events, and filmic narrative—in a tangible architectural space.

In summary, Koolhaas's work can be viewed from a variety of angles and backgrounds, using diverse methods and points of reference: first, in a postmodern, formal reading, the work is understood, on the one hand, as an eclectic collage of iconic elements of modern masterpieces and (hidden) narratives or, on the other hand, as a kind of "cheapskate" architecture and *dirty realism* that adopts the generic space of the typical Manhattan skyscraper. Second, in the discourse of critical ideology (the avant-garde) versus projective practice (muddied by philistinism), theorists proclaim that Koolhaas's architecture is an example of social alchemy that engenders new freedoms and an expanded event structure for the users. Third, in addition to such formal and ideological readings, the sociological approach links the individual project to the design methods and situationist culture in the office of OMA in general. Yaneva's viewpoint dismantles the design process of gaining architectural knowledge as collective teamwork among many human and non-human actors. Fourth, in contrast to studying the individual design and its genealogy in great detail, the historiographical approach to architecture focuses on relevant other projects and proponents—and even calls Koolhaas "the Le Corbusier of our times"—in order to show clear parallels between precursors of his spatial ideas and formal repertoire, and hence to reconstruct the discursive context.

However, even as a vast but by no means endless bulk of essays, articles, and other publications on and by Koolhaas and OMA have appeared over the recent decades, the shortage of scholarly research and monographic studies on the topic has only become more obvious. The theoretical frameworks and research studies scarcely examine Koolhaas's work in terms of recurring design themes and strategies,

[31] Due to anniversary reasons (1914–2014), Eisenman lets Le Corbusier pass away one year earlier and Mies van der Rohe five years earlier: such bending of history for the sake of the punchline of the story is indeed an artifice that is not entirely unknown to Koolhaas.

[32] Valentina Ciuffi, "Rem Koolhaas is Stating 'The End' of his Career, Says Peter Eisenman," in *de zeen magazine*, June 9, 2014, accessed December 28, 2014, http://www.dezeen.com/2014/06/09/rem-koolhaas-at-the-end-of-career-says-peter-eisenman.

[33] Ibid.

which are re-formulated in several projects over an extended period of time. They do not emphasize the question of how such interactive development of architectural knowledge effects the individual building project.

The intent of the present study is therefore a critical in-depth examination focusing on the following key research questions: how can we understand Koolhaas's architectural production and theoretical achievements within his complex process-oriented design practice? Is there a consistency (versus ruptures) of ideas beyond some formal correspondence? What are the leading motifs in the oeuvre? What does the author function mean within this context? Which architectural elements, spatial qualities, and design strategies are transferred and reused from one project to the next? How do these features change during the process of adapting them to different programs?

The goal of this research project is to study the dynamics within the current discourse, in order to chart a new perspective on Koolhaas's architectural accomplishment. It closes the gap in the scientific processing and interpretation of the work and links the architectural knowledge of OMA with the current discourse on design science and the changing role of the architect. The purpose of this study is not to provide a biographical reconstruction of the oeuvre or an art historical account of particular design projects. Rather, it advances a new understanding of the design practice by analyzing the evolution, success, and failure of architectural ideas.

In *Content*'s series of "Universal Modernization Patents" Koolhaas registers fifteen fictional patents, including a description of the team of inventors, the abstract, and the initial application of each concept: Social Condenser (Parc de la Villette), Strategy of the Void I (Melun-Sénart), Timed Erasures (La Defense), Loop Trick (Kunsthal), Strategy of the Void II (TGB), Stacked Freedoms (Karlsruhe), Inside-Out City (Jussieu), Disconnect (Cardiff Bay Opera), Everywhere and Nowhere (Bordeaux), Variable-Speed Museum (Tate), Inertness Modified (Universal HQ), Tall & Slender (Hyperbuilding), Skyscraper Loop (CCTV), Cake-Tin Architecture (TVCC), The End of the Road (CBD Beijing).[34] Typically, the term "patent" refers to the exclusive rights over a limited period of time granted to a public enclosure of any new and useful invention or discovery. This right according to national laws should prevent others from industrially applying the patent without permission. Here, the term is used because a certain design solution represents key structures and intentions beyond the specific frameworks, outlining a continuous development of concept and strategies.

In architectural design it is quite common to reuse conceptual ideas and strategies, though, in order to arrive at new solutions. Such

[34] Rem Koolhaas, AMOMA et al., *Content: Triumph of Realization* (Cologne: Taschen, 2004), 73–83 and 510–12.

an architectural practice is not only efficient and useful but also contributes to evolving new concepts during the design process. This evolutionary design model employs earlier design types as a source of knowledge rather than starting from scratch with each new task. It is a method of dismantling and deconstructing the elements, less by interpreting the single positions but calling for new perspectives and applications.

The methodology of the present study is a combined strategy of case study approach and critical discourse analysis. In framing the contours of the design task, the single cases serve as examples of architectural elements or principles that have a central and recurring role in Koolhaas's thinking: Wall (Exodus, or The Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture), Void (Ville Nouvelle Melun-Sénart), Montage (Maison à Bordeaux), Trajectory (Dutch Embassy in Berlin), Infrastructure (Seattle Public Library), and Shape (China Central Television Station).

In addition to offering an interpretive historical basis, the case study methodology also identifies political events linked to the emergence of ideas and considers the implications of their premises. The emphasis is not on the individual object but on the sequence, in order to provide a context for the architectural ideas. This way, the approach connects the project to prior experience and records the design knowledge and interrelationships of themes. It intends to structure the body of information and analyzes the specific relevant details and topics of the case. Since this analysis is concerned with the individual aspects of the case, it requires different levels of specificity corresponding to the relevant data. Thus, the case studies discuss the key principles that govern the process to reconstruct the underlying narratives: why is this case selected as a relevant example to analyze the concepts and assumptions at stake, the questions raised, and the consequences of decisions in the architectural process? What are the most important identified features of the design? What are the significant generative ideas and themes? What are the lessons and applications derived from the case? How does the project represent innovative methods and innovations compared to other avant-garde proposals at that time?

Yet, this research of the history of ideas within Koolhaas's lifetime work does not only focus on the processes of underlying forces and readjustments but also on the large-scale chronological perspective that establishes this system of relations between the individual cases. Referring to Foucault's idea of the archaeology of knowledge, the study shifts from a focus on the continuities of ideas towards a focus on interruptions and transformative moments that "suspend the continuous accumulation of knowledge, interrupt its slow development, and force it to enter a new time, cut it off from its empirical origin

and its original motivations."[35] This view of history discovers discontinuities and ruptures rather than insisting on the existence of various kinds of progressive series that proclaim a continuous chronology of reason. Instead of reading the cases as "a sign of something else," archaeology explores how an oeuvre can be examined with different "types of rules for discursive practices," in order to figure out how disparate discourses function by their own set of strategies and rules.[36] Koolhaas's conception of the Venice exhibition "Fundamentals – Absorbing Modernity: 1914–2014" likewise focuses on a new approach towards the past and thereby rethinks the history of the idea of the modern movement within contemporary architectural practice.

Case study research uses the analysis of drawings, photographic images, physical or digital models representing the project, documents, interviews, et cetera. In addition to focusing on the visual data set, the project examination also includes the relationship to the client and his or her impact on the design (though this topic applies to each case study to a varying degree): did the client choose the architect by means of a competition, a working relationship, or was it another kind of selection? How did the architect come to grasp the interests of the client? Were the client's values and objectives compatible with the architect's values and professional practice? What are the strategies in terms of human resources, performance assessment, financial implications, and market projections?

The boundaries between the case and its contextual setting are not clearly evident and often become, for instance, in projects on an urban scale, virtually inseparable from the overlapping environmental factors. This context can identify patterns of correlation with other projects of OMA, historical precedents, and other contemporary proposals, which all address the conditions that eventually led to the particular design solution. Koolhaas's descriptive and exploratory focus is guided by the development of hypotheses within a conceptual framework. The consistency of this correlational research lies in the discussion of theoretical principles (tested from one case to the other), which are able to identify the complex dynamics, implications, and uniqueness of Koolhaas's designs. An integral part of this study is to examine how his architectural practice intertwine with the concepts and strategies proposed in his writings. Focusing on both, the theoretical work and the building practice, the intention of the combined research approach is hence to test the ideas, their conceptual development, and the significance of different applications.

In addition to the case studies, the method of critical discourse analysis allows for an in-depth investigation of how texts are a form of

[35] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge: The Discourse on Language* (New York: Vintage, 1982), 4.
[36] Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 138–9.

social practice with a constitutive and disciplinary agenda. It is an appropriate and useful method for tracing the system of how the body of texts issued by Koolhaas and his office (and their production and correspondence) create recognizable discursive objects: the generic city, the typical plan, junkspace, manifest, instability, void, paranoid critical activity, deliriousness, the metropolitan, and so on. Discourse analysis demonstrates how language works to produce particular meanings and objects within power relationships. Foucault makes a clear distinction between the history of knowledge and the history of ideas, that is an archaeology as a form of discourse analysis.[37] This archaeological analysis is not concerned with the interpretation of ideas, images, and themes revealed in the discourse but with the rules and practices of the discourse itself. Though the term "discourse" is used in different disciplines with different contents, meanings, and forms of analysis, it basically endeavors to reveal the interplay of an individual text, the setting that surrounds it, and the social process in which it is produced. Statements are hence sequences of signs that implicate a system of formation, deploy a particular vocabulary, and become invested with relations of power and disciplinary control.[38] A key feature of the discursive practice is the "historical a priori," which Foucault describes as the fact that a present discourse also includes the history of the discourse. This aspect is clearly evident in Koolhaas's language and significantly contributes to his influence on architecture and beyond.

The narrative sequence of the chapters focuses on one particular design project (from the early nineteen-seventies to the present) combined with a set of theoretical ideas that form the central thesis for the design process. The chapters are arranged in a chronological order so that the role of the case studies is to demonstrate how the proposition of design concepts is used, tested, changed, and adapted in a series of versions to an individual site. The ideas constituting Koolhaas's work are viewed both in regards to the context in which they were originally proposed and their critical impact to the current discourse on architecture.

The first chapter, "Wall," is the study of Koolhaas's theoretical work as a student at the Architectural Association in London, Exodus, or The Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture (1972). Like his project on the Berlin Wall, it discusses, one of his pet ideas: architecture makes decisions, determines certain orders, and inevitably leads to the reduction of freedoms and options. The proposal for the Arnhem Panopticon Prison and the Nexus Housing in Fukuoka likewise apply the

[37] Margaret Wetherall, Stephanie Taylor, and Simeon J. Yates, *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader* (London: Sage Publications, 2001), 384.
[38] Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 117.

strategy of walling-in and surveillance culture while claiming to provide new freedoms for the users. Similarly, Le Corbusier puts forward a decisionist position and claims that the true nature of architecture is to make choices, so that the plan should become the new authority that realizes an ideal order according to scientific principles. A discussion of examples—such as ancient city walls, the *Roma quadrata*, the Great Wall of China, the Venice Ghetto, and the Kowloon Walled City—elaborates how enclosed space can also provide specific conditions of freedom, so that the voluntarily imprisoned, in fact, dwell in an area with new options.

The second chapter, "Void," examines the 1987 urban proposal for the Ville Nouvelle Melun-Sénart in terms of Koolhaas's claim about the omnipotence and impotence of planning for the city, that is, that the ideal strategy would be a deliberate surrender to chaotic urban growth in order to take as premise the weakness of any urbanism. Other applications of this principle on the scale of single structures are the competition entries for the Zeebrugge Sea Terminal and the Très Grande Bibliothèque in Paris. Chaos und disorder are seen as essential parts of the modern metropolis, which should be abandoned by such plans as Haussmann's radical restructuring of Paris, the rigid zoning scheme for the functionalist city by CIAM, and the "watertight formula" of the Plan Voisin by Le Corbusier. Yet, the young generation of the nineteen-sixties rejected modernist schemes and instead proclaimed *zero degree* of ideology, *non-plan* strategies, and *une architecture autre*. This analysis investigates how the city is understood as complex human ecology creating the diversity and rich social mixture of everyday life.

In the third section, "Montage," various methods of structuralist and post-structuralist theory are reconsidered and used to analyze the Maison à Bordeaux (1994–98), with the Villa dall'Ava in Paris and the Kunsthal in Rotterdam as points of reference. Though the design adopts modernist armature, it decomposes and reassembles the single parts into a collage of various objects. These projects also take up the idea of the *architectural promenade* and the ritual staging of a sequence of rooms that can be associated with French architectural Hellenism, for instance, the procession to the Acropolis in Athens. In addition to the modernist fragments, the study also explores how Koolhaas's architectural concepts refer to the irrational side of modernism—which can likewise be traced in Le Corbusier's work and Salvador Dalí's idea of the paranoid critical method.

In the fourth chapter, "Trajectory," the Dutch Embassy in Berlin (1999–2003), is taken as the starting point of the discussion of Koolhaas's strategy to explore dynamism and motion in architecture by creating a spatial sequence, a kind of filmic reality that serves as narrative of historical events and layers. Similarly, the competition entries to the Très Grande Bibliothèque and the Jussieu Libraries, both

designed for Paris, provide points of reference to the events of May '68. Other architects and artists, such as Bernard Tschumi, Constant, and Guy Debord, also searched for new ways of representing the experience of movement and psychogeographical atmosphere, both in a single building and in the city. The analysis considers Koolhaas's trajectory as a form of *architecture parlante*, a means to communicate single historical features that are significant for the identity and self-conception of the urban ground.

The fifth chapter refers to the strategy of "Infrastructure" as a way to create spaces for social encounters outside of preprogrammed structures. A case in point is the Seattle Public Library (1999–2004), featuring zones of stability and instability, so that areas with fixed functions alternate with parts for a changing agenda. The infrastructural means allow for expanding the event structure of the building in use, similar to Koolhaas's theory of Bigness and the Manhattan skyscraper, in order to promote new performance. His competition entries for the Sea Terminal in Zeebrugge as well as the design for the Casa da Musica provide further examples, that largely rely on an extensive infrastructural organization of the interior wrapped in a unitized envelope. This investigation also examines how the inventions of the escalator, a diagram of continuity and circulation, and the elevator, a diagram of discontinuity and autonomous space, are closely linked to the development of new building types, including the department store and shopping centers, as well as the functioning of subway systems and factories.

In the sixth section, "Shape," the final investigation considers the new China Central Television Station (CCTV) in Beijing (2002–08), which is described as a perceptive and adaptive new species because it communicates with the urban environment. Koolhaas proclaims similar design strategies for other urban megastructures, including the Loop or Bent Skyscraper, the Cake-Tin Architecture, the Tall & Slender model, or simply the End of the Road, which is a field of low-rise structures close to the traditional urban cluster. This study's discussion of shape also involves the sensual and atmospheric qualities of a surface that contribute to the performance of the building in its surroundings. Shape is hence considered opposite to form, which is a highly articulated and idealized medium of modernity and connected to concepts of autonomy, ideology, and criticality in architectural theory and design. The present study also considers the question of whether an extended criticality of a post-vanguard architectural practice might supersede the historical avant-garde.[39]

[39] Michael Speaks, "Design Intelligence: Part 1, Introduction," in *A+U* (December 2002): 10–8, here 12.

Half a century ago, in the nineteen-sixties—that fabled era of free sex and free access to drugs—serious young radicals took aim at institutions, in particular big corporations and big government, whose size, complexity, and rigidity seemed to hold individuals in an iron grip.[40]
Richard Sennett

Well … I would leave out the 'quasi'… And the 'utopian'! [laughs] The 'idea', yes … working for a political idea, as a propagandist for the political idea.[41]
Rem Koolhaas

Born on November 17, 1944, in Rotterdam, Remment Lucas Koolhaas (abbreviated to Rem) spent his first eight years in the Netherlands before his family moved to Indonesia in 1952. In 1956, they returned to Amsterdam after a short stay in Brazil. His father, Anton Koolhaas (1912–92), was a novelist, screenwriter, critic, and director of the Amsterdam Academy of Film; Koolhaas's mother is Selinde Pietertje Roosenburg (born 1920). His grandfather Dirk Roosenburg worked for Hendrik Petrus Berlage before he opened his own architectural office.[42] In 1963, Koolhaas started to write articles for the weekly magazine *De Haagse Post* about artistic and cultural topics. In this capacity, he also conducted interviews, for example, with the Dutch architect and artist Constant Nieuwenhuys and the Italian filmmaker Federico Fellini. In addition to his journalist work, Koolhaas studied scriptwriting at the Film and Television Academy in Amsterdam. His interest in cinema led him to become a member of "1, 2, 3, enz," a group of filmmakers including Rene Daalder. There he was involved in producing film, writing screenplays for Russ Meyer, and also acting in several short movies, like *A Gangstergirl* in 1966, *Body and Soul* in 1967, and *The White Slave* in 1969.

From 1968 to 1973, Koolhaas studied at the Architectural Association School of Architecture (AA) in London, whose teachers at the time included architects and artists like Peter Cook, Cedric Price,

[40] Richard Sennett, *The Culture of the New Capitalism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 1.
[41] Rem Koolhaas et al., "Propaganda Architecture."
[42] Gargiani, *Rem Koolhaas/OMA*, 3; Wikipedia Contributors, "Rem Koolhaas," in *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, accessed March 6, 2011, http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rem_Koolhaas; OMA, "Homepage," accessed March 6, 2011, http://www.oma.eu.

Peter Smithson, Charles Jencks, Alvin Boyarsky, and Elia Zenghelis, who would be one of the founding members of OMA. During his time at the AA, Koolhaas also carried out several theoretical investigations, which demonstrate both the school's educational focus and Koolhaas's central themes found in later works. For example, the study The Berlin Wall as Architecture (1970–72) analyzes an existing architectural object that is not only a rigorous means of separation but also embodies "the secret but true sacred symbol of Berlin."[43] Koolhaas argues that the wall forms an insurmountable barrier that, by encircling one part of the city, creates fundamentally different conditions for the inhabitants because it does not imprison them but makes them "free." Koolhaas adopted this method of interpretation in his examination of metropolitan sites when he moved to New York City as a Harkness Fellow in 1972. From 1972 to 1973, he studied at Cornell University, and was subsequently a Visiting Fellow at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies (IAUS) from 1973 to 1979, at the same time that Peter Eisenman and Kenneth Frampton were program participants. During his stay in the USA he collaborated with O. M. Ungers and taught at Columbia University and the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). In 1976, he also started lecturing at the AA and at Delft University.

Koolhaas's Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) was founded with Madelon Vriesendorp and Elia and Zoe Zenghelis on January 1, 1975 in London. In 1980, it expanded in collaboration with Zaha Hadid, moving its headquarters to Rotterdam and opened offices in other cities, including New York and Beijing. Choosing the name OMA signifies the group's central concept of architecture as urban configuration and not as single object. They started with a series of commissions, studies, and competition entries. Their work includes the Koepel Panopticon Prison in Arnhem (1980), the Parc de la Villette in Paris (1982), the Netherlands Dance Theater in The Hague (completed in 1987), the Très Grande Bibliothèque in Paris (1989), the Zeebrugge Sea Terminal (1989), the Nexus Housing in Fukuoka (completed in 1991), the Jussieu Libraries in Paris (1992), the Kunsthal in Rotterdam (completed in 1992), the master plan for an entire new city—Euralille with the Congrexpo in Lille (1994), the Educatorium in Utrecht (1997), the New York and San Francisco Prada Stores and Catwalks (starting in 2000), the EU Flag (2001), the extension for the Whitney Museum in New York (2001), the CCTV and TVCC in Beijing (2002–08), the Netherlands Embassy in Berlin (completed in 2003), the Public Library in Seattle (completed in 2004), the Casa da Musica in Porto (2005), and the Dee and Charles Wyly Theater in Dallas (2009), as well as projects in Kuwait, Dubai, Singapore, Mumbai, Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen Hong Kong, and Moscow.

[43] Koolhaas and Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 944.

In the last two decades the firm has spread by launching further offices in New York, Beijing, Hong Kong, and Doha, and by expanding in regards to both the content and the geographical scope of their work. In 1999, AMO was established as a research studio, or a so-called think-tank, beyond the conventional field of practice in order to apply architectural knowledge commercially for companies like Prada, Ikea, and Volkswagen. AMO also produced a study for the Hermitage in St. Petersburg and one called "The Image of Europe," which are both panoramic surveys showing the history and iconography of the subject.

In addition to running his architectural office OMA, since 1995 Koolhaas has taught as a professor in the Practice of Architecture and Urban Design at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University. As a scholar, he analyzes themes like China's Pearl River Delta in *Projects on the City I: Great Leap Forward* (2002) and the spaces, techniques, and ideologies of retail and consumption in *Projects on the City II: The Harvard Guide to Shopping* (2001).

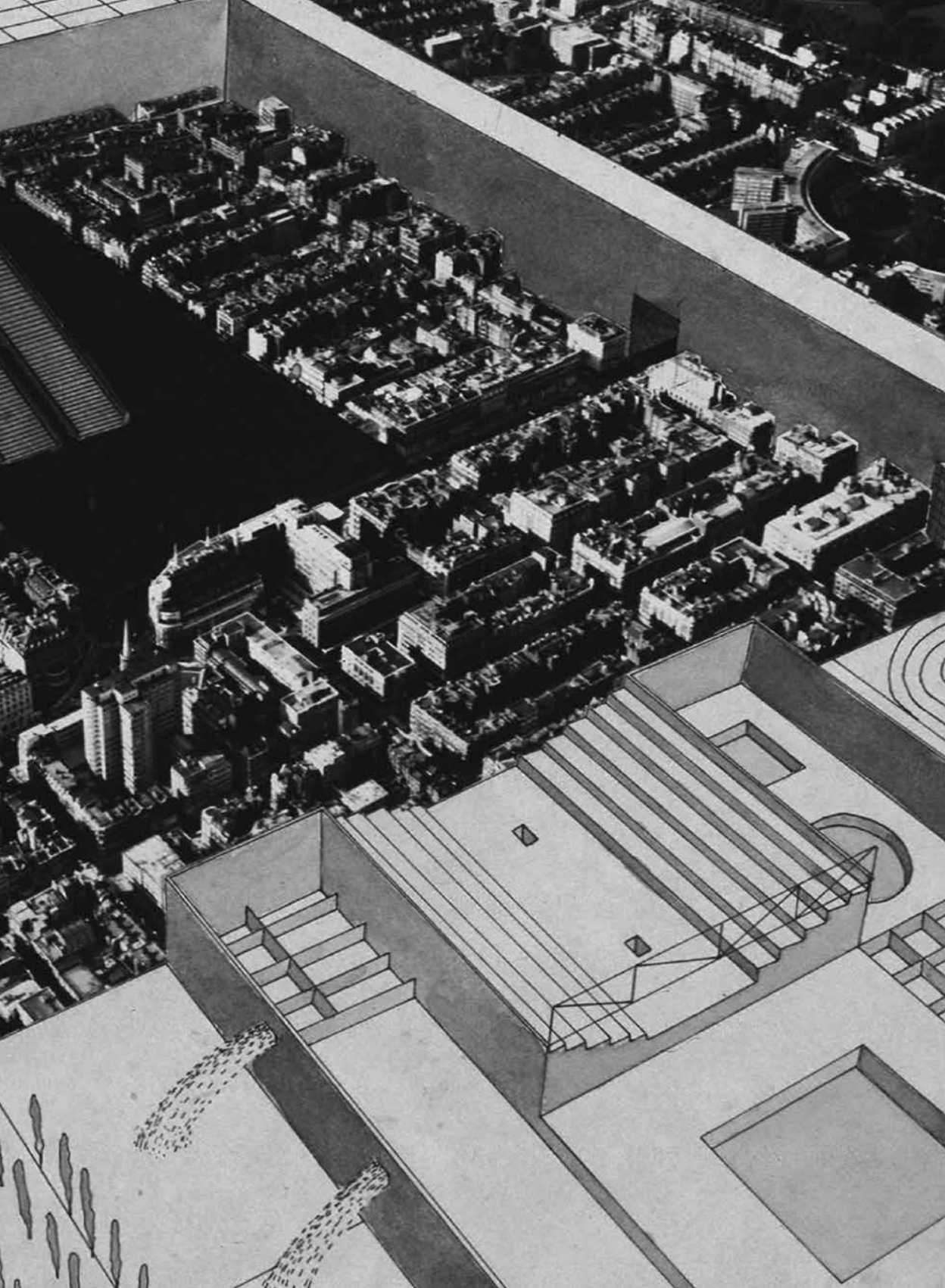
In addition to his design practice, Koolhaas's work consists of his writings about architecture, which are a critical re-reading of the modern movement as well as the constructivists and surrealists. In his first book, *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto of Manhattan* (1978), he gives an account of the functional attainments of the New World and their surrealist application in the paranoid critical method proposed by Salvador Dalí. His opus magnum, co-authored with Bruce Mau, *S,M,L,XL* (1995), is a volume of over 1,000 pages that compiles OMA's work up to that point: their numerous projects, competition entries, and realizations. It also includes a series of essays by Koolhaas that quickly became canonical texts: "Bigness, or the Problem of Large" (1994), "The Generic City" (1994), and "Typical Plan" (1993). For the book-length publication, *Content: Triumph of Realization* (2004), he took the role of editor in a move that clearly reflects the OMA–AMO conjunction of providing a basic research context to architectural practice. He did, however, contribute the essay "Junk Space" (2001) and several shorter texts co-authored with students and other collaborators. Other key publications by Koolhaas (and collaborations with other authors) are as follows: *Euralille: The Making of a New City* (1996), *Rem Koolhaas: Conversations with Students* (1996), *OMA Rem Koolhaas: Living Vivre Leben* (1998), *Mutations: Harvard Project on the City* (2000), *Projects for Prada: Part 1* (2001), *The Dutch Embassy in Berlin by OMA/Rem Koolhaas* (2004), *CCTV by OMA* (2005), *OMA in The Hague* (2006), *Project Japan: Metabolism Talks* (2011).

When presenting the Pritzker Prize to Koolhaas in 2000 in Jerusalem, the jury characterized his work as both visionary and pragmatist, intented to extraordinary dimensions, a free-flowing circulation, and

unprecedented shape.[44] His numerous international awards include the Progressive Architecture Award (for a residential house in Miami he created with Laurinda Spear) in 1974, the Antoni Gaudí Award and Olympics Award (for Euralille) in 1992, the Book Award (for *S,M,L,XL*) of the American Institute of Architects in 1997, the French Chevalier de Légion d'honneur in 2001, the Japanese Praemium Imperiale in 2003, the RIBA Gold Medal in 2004, and the Mies van der Rohe Award (for the Netherlands Embassy) in 2005. In 2008, he was invited to join the European Group of Wise. Two years later in 2010, he received the Golden Lion of the Venice Biennale of Architecture for his lifetime achievement.

In 2014, Koolhaas was curator of the Fourteenth International Architecture Exhibition of the Biennale in Venice and, for the first time, invited the national pavilions to respond to a single theme, "Fundamentals – Absorbing Modernity: 1914–2014," in order to re-visit key moments from a century of the modern movement.

[44] Hyatt Foundation, "Jury Citation," n.p.



1.

WALL: EXODUS, OR THE VOLUNTARY PRISONERS OF ARCHITECTURE, LONDON 1972

THE WALL AS A MEANS OF DIVISION, EXCLUSION, AND DIFFERENCE

Good Half and Bad Half of the City: Exodus, or The Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture

In "Typical Plan" (1993), Rem Koolhaas proclaims that "architecture is monstrous in the way in which each choice leads to the reduction of possibility."[1] Even more dramatically, he argues that, like "often before in this history of mankind, architecture was the guilty instrument of despair."[2] Planning is seen to entail the limitation of freedoms, for it imposes a particular scheme and establishes a system of order onto a given site. However, he goes on to say, "it is possible to imagine a mirror image of this terrifying architecture, a force as intense and devastating but used instead in the service of positive intentions."[3] Rethinking the idea of architecture as a means of restraint, division, and exclusion, Koolhaas investigates new ways in which planning could become a tool for initiating change, for providing freedoms, and for allowing the emergence of unpredictable, virtual events.

In his article "Recent Koolhaas," Jeff Kipnis argues that what really drives the work of Koolhaas, from writings to buildings, is one particular intent: "that aim, so brazen that almost no one but Koolhaas ever mentions it in other than occult terms, is simply this: to discover what real, instrumental collaboration can be effected between architecture and freedom."[4] Though there can be no collection of liberating techniques supported by architectural means, Kipnis claims that Koolhaas's concepts propel open-ended situations of choice and self-rule—even in such constraining, inflexible schemes as the Manhattan grid or the panoptical prison. Yet, how can planning relate to the creation of unprecedented events and new forms of social life? How do architectural decisions function as powerful means of order, division, and control? What are Koolhaas's strategies to present alternative ways of planning and decision-making?

In the 1972 project Exodus, or The Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture, Koolhaas turns the scheme for a prison into a voluntary, desired habitat by a radical mirror inversion of significance and attraction. He proclaims that "division, isolation, inequality, aggression, destruction, all the negative aspects of the Wall, could be the ingredients of a new

[1] Rem Koolhaas, "Typical Plan," in Koolhaas and Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 334–53, here 344.
[2] Koolhaas and Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 5.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Kipnis, "Recent Koolhaas," 27.

(1) Rem Koolhaas/Elia Zenghelis/ Madelon Vriesendorp/Zoe Zenghelis, *Exodus, or The Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture: The Strip*, 1972, project, aerial perspective, cut-and-pasted paper, watercolor, ink, gouache, gelatin silver photograph, 40.6 x 50.5 cm. Source: McQuaid and Riley, *Envisioning Architecture*, 168 © 2015 Rem Koolhaas

phenomenon: architectural warfare against undesirable conditions, in this case London."[5] The form of the prison, implying the notion of institutional order, control, and constraint of individual liberty, is presented as a desirable retreat from the anxiety of an isolated and therefore pointless individual existence. His architectural proposal seeks to make a case against objectionable aspects by presenting the confined space as a series of new extraordinary experiences. Exodus was, initially, Koolhaas, Madelon Vriesendorp, Elia and Zoe Zenghelis's entry for the competition The City as Meaningful Environment, organized by the Italian journal *Casabella* in 1972. In addition to a short text, that describes the various architectural elements and their functions, the project consists of a series of collages of Koolhaas's diploma project at the Architectural Association, combined with a range of items from outside the architectural field, such as images of newspapers, photographs of artworks, and pictures of amorous scenes.

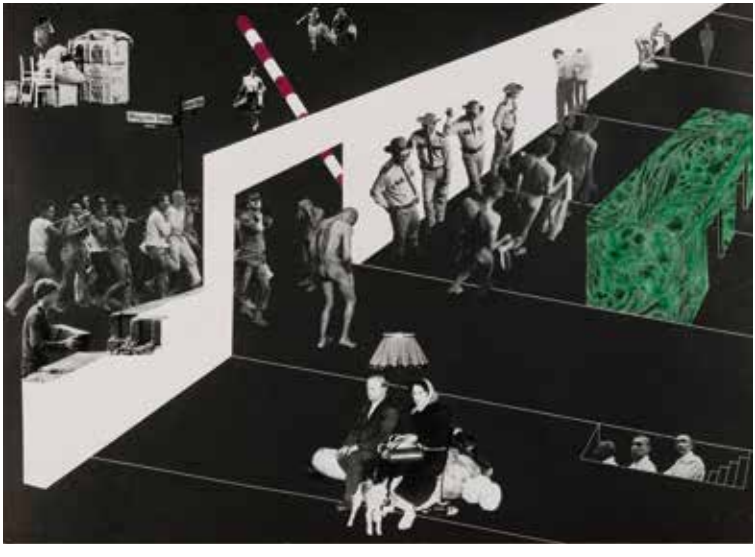
The Exodus project is defined by the hermetically enclosing Walls and the intermediate Strip, cutting through the center of London from

[5] Koolhaas and Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 5.

east to west (→**1**). The tip of the Strip continuously expands into the existing urban fabric of London, even though a few of the old buildings are preserved and incorporated into the new territory. Most of the structures from the past will be destroyed and replaced by the constantly modified models of public monuments and symbols. Thus, the scheme for the monumental linear form of the Strip creates the maximum possible contrast between the new area within the Walls and the context of the city. The violation of the urban fabric through architecture produces the effect of a cynical and blunted rendition of power so that the city of London is treated as an insignificant series of private spheres, whereas the new world is projected as a meaningful environment of public spaces. Accordingly, the Walls of Exodus divide the city into a good half and a bad half, into the disparate spaces inside and outside the enclosure. Inside the Wall, the territory of the Strip presents the important, valuable part, whereas the zone outside the Strip is an underdeveloped and futile area of urban chaos.

The Exodus zone is only accessible from one door leading to the Reception Area, where the "voluntary prisoners of architecture" are received with an overwhelming welcome (→**2,→3**). During their initial training period, the "fugitives" of urban disorder and insignificance reside in a kind of environmental sluice that comprises of preserved fragments of London's old city fabric (→**4**). From here, the new inmates can ascend via a gigantic escalator to the roof of the Reception Square, where they get a first overview of the two different urban structures, the old fabric and the new order.

The area of the Strip is divided into ten programmatically diverse square blocks, such as the Ceremonial Square, the Park of the Four Elements, the Square of the Arts, the Institute of Biological Transactions,



(2) Rem Koolhaas/Elia Zenghelis/ Madelon Vriesendorp/Zoe Zenghelis, *Exodus, or The Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture: The Reception Area*, 1972, project, gelatin silver photograph, color ink, 26.7 x 36.8 cm.
Source: Coates, *Narrative Architecture*