

Inventory of Problems: The Genesis of the Rotterdam Kunsthall by OMA/Rem Koolhaas, 1987-1992

Présentée le 15 avril 2021

Faculté de l'environnement naturel, architectural et construit
Architecture, critique, histoire et théorie
Programme doctoral en architecture et sciences de la ville

pour l'obtention du grade de Docteur ès Sciences

par

Tibor Bonaventura PATAKY

Acceptée sur proposition du jury

Prof. M. Andersen, présidente du jury
Prof. C. van Gerrewey, directeur de thèse
Dr M. Stierli, rapporteur
Prof. P. V. Aureli, rapporteur
Prof. R. Gargiani, rapporteur

Contents

Summary	4
Acknowledgements	8
Introduction	10
Part 1: February 1987 - October 1988	
1.1 An enormous impatience	35
OMA in 1987	
1.2 A pretty strong policy	52
The commission and its origins	
1.3 Towers and villas	75
Two studies for the Dijkzigt area: May - September 1987	
1.4 Dijkzigt and the European city	87
The IBA, Krier and urban renewal in Rotterdam	
1.5 Everyday limits	104
The programme of the Kunsthal	
1.6 Museums, not arts centres	114
A study commissioned by the municipality: March 1988	
1.7 Brussels 1958	126
The first draft for the Kunsthal: April - September 1988	
1.8 The other strand	147
The competition for the NAI: April - October 1988	
1.9 A problem of distinction	166
The MoMA show <i>Deconstructivist architecture</i> and its impact	
1.10 The better half of architecture	188
The Museum Park: June 1988 - February 1989	

Part 2: November 1988 - October 1992

2.1	Welding a paradox	209
	The quest for a new Kunsthall: October - December 1988	
2.2	The circle squared	244
	The circuit and its implications	
2.3	Projects within the project	268
	The impact of Arup and other parties involved: January 1989 - October 1989	
2.4	A new approach for a new Europe: OMA in 1989	303
	The process of European Integration and Koolhaas' re-discovery of the large scale	
2.5	A different kind of fragmentation	341
	The design of the tendering phase: November 1989 - May 1990	
2.6	A postmodern gloss and other last touches	373
	The 29 months from the first pile to the opening: June 1990 - October 1992	
2.7	Destroy the hope of return	415
	The meaning of formal fragmentation in the Kunsthall	

Appendix

Floorplans, sections, and elevations	443
Archival sources	453
Interviews and correspondence	454
Selected bibliography	455
Illustration credits/sources	475
CV	482

Summary

The Kunsthall in Rotterdam is a key work in the oeuvre of OMA/Rem Koolhaas that marks the threshold between the firm's architectural production of the decades before and after 1990. This doctoral thesis aims at a deeper and comprehensive understanding of this work of architecture. It gives a chronological account of the entire process of planning and design from the origins of the commission in 1987 to the completion of the building in 1992. The process is being discussed in a series of pertinent contexts, such as the site and its history, the architecture and the theory of the late 1980s, and contemporaneous political events like the Fall of the Iron Curtain and the dynamics of European Integration so as to reconstruct the historical moment the Kunsthall emerged from. The thesis combines archival research on the Kunsthall and the two closely connected projects of the Museum Park (1987-94) and the competition for the Netherlands Architecture Institute (1988) with text based research on a series of related fields: next to the literature on the production of OMA/Rem Koolhaas and the publications by Koolhaas himself, selected literature on the project's historical backdrop and its above mentioned aspects.

Major attention is being dedicated to the relation between Koolhaas' writings and statements, OMA's architectural production and its reception. In the field of architectural history, both scholarly research and in-depth studies on OMA's architecture are scarce to this day, while its reception is partly overshadowed by Koolhaas' own exegesis. Both the focus on a single building and a methodological distinction between primary and secondary sources are to counteract these tendencies. The study of the primary sources – archival material, the existing building – follows the principle of an immanent reading, in order to re-enact the logic of the project and its development as well as how it 'reflects' the requirements, conflicts, intentions and historical events that conditioned it. The study of the secondary sources – literature on/by OMA, interviews with former team members – compares the logic of the project and its 'reflectivity' to the theoretical discourse and interpretations of the Kunsthall put forward by Koolhaas himself, critics, academics and others.

The account is divided in two parts. Part 1 draws a line from the origins of the commission to the first project of the Kunsthal (I) which was abandoned in autumn 1988. Focal themes are: the situation of OMA in 1987; Rotterdam and the history of the site; contemporary movements of urban renewal and Koolhaas' take on urbanism at the time; the brief and the museum architecture of the 1980s; the Museum Park from the first studies to the final project by Yves Brunier; OMA's competition entry for the Netherlands Architecture Institute, and the MoMA exhibition *Deconstructivist Architecture* in 1988. Part 2 is focused on the second project of the Kunsthal (II) which was eventually built. Next to the inception of the scheme and the completed building, several stages of the design are being discussed in detail. Other focal themes are: the concept of the circuit and architectural precedents; the impact of Ove Arup and the client on the design; the revision of Koolhaas' architectural approach from 1989 onwards and how it relates to the events of European Integration and the Fall of the Berlin Wall; fragmentation as an issue that is key both to this shift and the Kunsthal in terms of design.

Zusammenfassung

Die Kunsthal in Rotterdam ist ein Schlüsselwerk im Oeuvre vom OMA/Rem Koolhaas, das die Schwelle zwischen den Projekten der Jahrzehnte vor und nach 1990 bezeichnet. Die vorliegende Dissertation zielt auf vertieftes und erweitertes Verständnis dieses Baus und seiner Architektur. In chronologischer Abfolge schildert sie den gesamten Entwurfs- und Planungsprozess von den Hintergründen des auf das Jahr 1987 zurückgehenden Auftrags bis zur Fertigstellung des Gebäudes im Herbst 1992. Wesentliche Aspekte des zeitgeschichtlichen Entstehungszusammenhangs werden untersucht: der Ort und sein damaliges Erscheinungsbild; die Architektur und Architekturtheorie der 1980er Jahre; politische Ereignisse wie die Öffnung des Eisernen Vorhanges und die Auswirkungen der seit Mitte des Jahrzehnts rasch voranschreitenden Europäischen Integration. Die Ergebnisse stützen sich auf zwei einander ergänzende Untersuchungsansätze: das Studium von Archivmaterial zur Kunsthal und den eng damit verbundenen Projekten für den Museumpark (1987-94) und das Niederländische Architekturinstitut (1988); sowie das Studium der Literatur von und über OMA/Rem Koolhaas und die zeitgeschichtlichen Hintergründe des Projektes.

Einen Betrachtungsschwerpunkt bildet dabei das Verhältnis von Koolhaas' Schriften und Stellungnahmen zu den Projekten OMAs und deren Rezeption. Bis heute gibt es im Bereich der Architekturgeschichte erst wenige vertiefte wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zu den Bauten von OMA, und deren bisherige Rezeption ist teilweise von Koolhaas' eigener Exegese überschattet. Der Fokus dieser Studie auf ein einzelnes Gebäude sowie die methodische Unterscheidung von primären und sekundären Quellen sollen dieser Tendenz entgegenwirken. Das Studium primärer Quellen – Archivmaterial, das Gebäude selbst – folgt dem Prinzip immanenter Interpretation, um die Logik des Projekts und seiner Entwicklung nachzuvollziehen. Das Studium sekundärer Quellen – Literatur über und von OMA, Interviews mit ehemaligen Mitarbeitern und anderen Beteiligten – vergleicht die Logik des Projekts und seiner „reflexiven“ Eigenschaft mit dem theoretischen Diskurs und Interpretationen von Kritikern, Historikern, Theoretikern und Koolhaas selbst.

Die Arbeit ist in zwei Teile gegliedert. Teil 1 spannt einen Bogen vom Auftrag für die Kunsthal, seiner Vorgeschichte und dem ersten Projekt (Kunsthal I) bis zur Aufgabe des Entwurfs im Herbst 1988. Themenschwerpunkte sind: die Situation von OMA im Jahr 1987; Rotterdam und die Geschichte des Planungsgebiets; die zeitgenössischen Bewegungen der Stadterneuerung und Koolhaas städtebauliche Ansätze dieser Zeit; das Programm der Kunsthal und die Museumsarchitektur der 1980er Jahre; der Museumpark von den ersten Studien bis zum Projekt von Yves Brunier; OMAs Wettbewerbsbeitrag für das Niederländische Architekturinstitut; die Ausstellung *Deconstructivist Architecture* im New Yorker Museum of Modern Art. Teil 2 behandelt den zweiten Entwurf für die Kunsthal (Kunsthal II) und dessen Umsetzung. Neben der Entstehung des ersten Entwurfs und dem fertiggestellten Bau werden einige der dazwischenliegenden Entwurfsstadien im Detail erörtert. Weitere Schwerpunktthemen sind: das Konzept des Hauptrundgangs und dessen Vorläufer in der Architektur des 20. Jahrhunderts; der Einfluss von Ove Arup und dem Auftraggeber auf den Entwurf; Koolhaas' Neuausrichtung in Architektur und Städtebau ab 1989; die Frage, wie sich diese zum Prozess Europäischer Integration und dem Fall der Mauer verhält; die Rolle des Fragmentarischen, die sowohl für Koolhaas' Neuanatz als auch den Entwurf der Kunsthal wesentlich ist.

Acknowledgements

In hindsight, four persons have been seminal for my approach to architectural history: Bernardo Secchi who stirred my interest in the history and theory of architecture through his lectures at the IUAV in Venice; architects Lorenzo Giuliani and Christian Hönger who introduced me to the art of building in their office in Zurich; and Markus Peter who introduced me to writing about construction. It was the example of his research which taught me, while being his assistant at ETH Zurich, to look at construction as a ‘battleground of architectural theory’ rather than as a craft.

To Christophe van Gerrewey I owe deep thanks for his generosity, persistent support, criticism, and trust. He has been the supervisor of this doctoral thesis. I am grateful to Roberto Gargiani for his advice. He and his book on OMA led me towards EPFL Lausanne. Thanks also to student assistants Romain Barth Alice Biber for their commitment to the drawings of the Kunsthal. Further, I would like to thank Fuminori Hoshino for sharing his recollections and thoughts during a series of particularly intense conversations. Thanks also to Petra Blaisse, Toni Adam, Gregor Mescherowsky, Koos Hage, Wim van Krimpen, Kees Christiaanse, Mike Guyer, Oliver Lütjens, Christine Enzmann Giuliani, and Job Floris. To the conversations and correspondence with each of them I owe valuable clues, insights, and ideas.

I thank the Swiss National Science Foundation for generously funding this research. Much of it has been facilitated by archives and their collaborators. Special thanks to the staff at Het Nieuwe Instituut, the Stadsarchief Rotterdam, and to Annemarie Nigten of the Rotterdam Kunsthal for granting access to the latter. Thanks also to the staff at the department of Stadsontwikkeling in Rotterdam, the OMA Archives in Rotterdam, Arup London Archives, Inside Outside in Amsterdam, the architecture collection of the Centre Pompidou in Paris, and the library at EPFL.

Three more people have contributed to this study in ways which are as significant as different: Thomas Padmanabhan during numerous conversations filled with curiosity and astute comments; Michelangelo

Sabatino as a mentor of strategic choices; and most kindly my wife Barbara through a thousand things which only a daily companion can give.

Introduction

The best criticism, and it is uncommon, is of this sort that dissolves considerations of content into those of form.

Susan Sontag

All works of art, as art in its entirety, are riddles.

Theodor W. Adorno

Sometime before I committed to this study, I was struck by the idea that Koolhaas' Kunsthall in Rotterdam, perhaps more than any other building of the late 20th century, exemplifies in architecture what Adorno called 'right consciousness' in art. In Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* Right Consciousness figures as the actual yardstick for art to be judged.¹ The term bespeaks its origins in Marxist thought, Right Consciousness being used as a counter term for the 'false consciousness' of unenlightened ideology. But Adorno's notion of contemporary art did not aim at an illustration of Marxist ideas. Kafka and Beckett, not Brecht, are being proposed as the models of contemporary literature. In 'Trying to Understand *Endgame*' Adorno introduces Beckett as a polymath writer who does reflect the

¹ The *Aesthetic Theory*, first published in 1970, is based on a collection of draft versions, as Adorno died while working on the book. Despite their recurrence and apparent significance, the edited text does hardly offer any generic definitions of the terms 'right consciousness' and 'advanced consciousness'. As regards the relation between art and history Adorno writes: 'The truth-content of artworks on which their importance eventually depends is historical to the core. [...] The truth-content becomes historical through the right consciousness objectified in creation. This consciousness is no vague it-is-time-to, no *καρπός*; this would confirm the course of the world which is not the evolution of truth. Conversely, right consciousness is [...] the most advanced consciousness of contradictions at the horizon of their possible reconciliation.' Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000), 285. When discussing the relation between progress in technology and progress in art, Adorno observes that advanced consciousness in modern art relies on the interpenetration of 'the most forward and nuanced techniques and the most forward and nuanced experiences.' 'Such modernity', he explains, 'must measure up to high industrialization, not merely address it.' *Ibid.*, 57 (author trans.).

consequences of capitalist alienation and the abyss of Auschwitz while using the ‘most advanced artistic means’ of his own discipline so as to absorb what is expressed while changing it through form.² For Adorno, Right Consciousness in art is as much about art itself as about the world as it is. It demands the correspondence between artistic means and the state of affairs in human history. In times of social change, the claim for societal truth implies the artistic imperative of innovation. Highly perceptive in both realms, Right Consciousness in art eschews ‘everything now impossible’ – forms that are no longer adequate or lost their edge through repetition, the cliché. *Dégoût*, Adorno explains, is a major productive force of Beckett’s work.

This study and the research it involved has been conceived of and conducted independently from Adorno’s theory of art; overlaps with its ideas were neither intended nor considered. Nevertheless, at the close of the investigation, the Kunsthall still strikes me as a building that does epitomize the above notion of Right Consciousness in architecture. The Kunsthall as architecture – the physical construct as a bearer of meaning – seems to abound with a similar kind of *dégoût*, an avant-garde sense of newness, a historical awareness of societal conditions, a sensitivity for the relation between these conditions and form. To disclose one by one the different layers of ‘consciousness’ latent in the Kunsthall, to explore the intellectual depth of its architecture: in hindsight it appears as the seminal subject of this thesis.

An expanded reading of form

Ever since the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) came into being in 1975 its architectural production has been accompanied by the writings of the firm’s co-founder Rem Koolhaas. To the extent that Koolhaas has been involved in the design work, these two ‘voices’ have never been entirely independent from one another.³ Neither had it always been clear which of the two actually had the lead. Explanations of how OMA’s architecture would relate to his writings recur in countless talks and

² Theodor W. Adorno, ‘Versuch, das Endspiel zu Verstehen’, in *Adorno. Noten zur Literatur* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), 281-321. Written in 1958, first published in 1961.

³ A few exceptions aside, Koolhaas’ contribution to OMA’s design work appears to be critical throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. According to OMA’s website, it is only in the second half of the 2000s that the first projects were done without the participation of Koolhaas as a partner in charge.

interviews Koolhaas has given in the past five decades. Over the years these talks and interviews together with his writings have grown to a dispersed body of literature which occasionally is referred to collectively as Koolhaas' theory, discourse or thinking. Its impact on the reception of OMA's architectural work can hardly be overestimated. This regards both the architectural criticism and the scholarly literature on OMA, a brief overview of which will be given in the subsequent passage on the state of research. In many a review and essay discussing OMA's work, Rem Koolhaas can be identified as the supplier of keywords, delivering the pivotal terms, phrasings and ideas. In his recent anthology *OMA/Rem Koolhaas: A Critical Reader* Christophe van Gerrewey writes referring to Koolhaas' willingness to accept interpretations that diverge from his own: 'Despite this generosity ... the work of OMA has been overshadowed by the word of Koolhaas himself – a paradoxical situation of which the eloquent and self-conscious architect is well aware.'⁴ Van Gerrewey quotes an interview with Enrique Walker from 2013 in which Koolhaas admits: 'This is in a way the difficulty of my whole career, that it has been mostly defined in my own words rather than in the words of others. Which I think is a real problem.'⁵

Koolhaas' self-exegesis appears not only to have imbued the definition of his career but also what has been talked about when the architecture of OMA is being discussed. This regards, among other things, Koolhaas' insistence on programme at the expense of form.⁶ The declared ideal to supplant programme with form, the methodical eschewal of addressing issues of form in Koolhaas' interviews and writings on architecture, seems to reverberate in much of what has been written on the built and unbuilt work of OMA. There has been a tendency to explicate Koolhaas's projects on the basis of his writings and project statements which hardly ever address issues of form, if not as a function of the programme and

⁴ Christophe van Gerrewey (ed.), *OMA/Rem Koolhaas: A Critical Reader* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2019), 15.

⁵ 'Rem Koolhaas in Conversation with Enrique Walker', in: Enrique Walker, *The Ordinary: Recordings* (New York: Columbia Books on Architecture and the City, 2018), 13.

⁶ For instance, when stating in 1985: 'Duiker is about form and form doesn't interest me. Not really.' Mil De Kooning, 'De economie van de verbeelding', n.p.; quoted after: Van Gerrewey, *A Critical Reader*, 112.

its organization.⁷ Quite often the authors' choice of themes seems to seize on Koolhaas' theory, including the proclaimed rejection of form and discursive confinement of form-related issues to the organizational diagram of the programme. Occasionally it has been suggested to abandon the term altogether. Robert Somol in 2004 proposed 'shape' as a counter term, referring to then recent projects such as the CCTV Headquarters in Beijing and the Casa da Musica in Porto.⁸ In his recent monograph *Projekt ohne Form* (Project without Form) on OMA's competitions of 1989, Holger Schurk explores Koolhaas' methodical eschewal of formal concerns during the design process.⁹ Sanford Kwinter does not reject the term form as such, but describes it as a side effect of programming which he calls the '*the geometrization of the event*': 'All of Koolhaas recent work', Kwinter wrote in 1992, 'is evolved – rather than designed – within the hypermodern 'event-space' of complex, sensitive, dynamical indeterminacy and change.'¹⁰ Forms, he explains, 'follow and fill the wake of concrete yet unpredeterminable events'.¹¹ Similarly, Hubert Damisch suggests a pragmatist disregard for 'aesthetics', when writing in 1987 on the Dance Theatre in The Hague: 'If this is a collage [Damisch refers to Koolhaas' notion of the building as a *Cadavre Exquis*] it was in no way produced with a concern for aesthetics: it was made

⁷ For example: Hans van Dijk (Dance Theatre/*Delirious New York*): 'Ambitie op zoek naar "kritische massa"', *Archis* 4 (1988), 36-43. Jacques Lucan (Media Centre Karlsruhe/'The End of the Age of Innocence?'): 'Rem Koolhaas, une machine qui devient bâtiment', *Art Press* 12 (1991), 112-114. Janny Rodermond (Congrexpo/'Bigness'): 'Bigness; het probleem is de oplossing', *de Architect* 12 (1994), 32-43; Robert E. Somol 1998 (IIT Campus Centre/'Junkspace'): 'Five Easy Miseses', *ANY* 24 (1999), 25-27.

⁸ Robert E. Somol, '12 Reasons to Get Back into Shape', in: AMOMA/Rem Koolhaas et al. (eds.), *Content* (Cologne: Taschen, 2004), 86-87. Somol's notion of shape builds on the essay 'Notes around the Doppler Effect and Other Essays' he co-authored with Sarah Whiting in 2002 (*Perspecta* 33), proposing in place of architecture's critical dimension a 'projective' quality that offers 'alternative (not necessarily oppositional) scenarios.' (p. 75) In his text from 2004, Somol characterizes shape as more accessible than form (opposing its graphic quality to the 'rhetorical excess of form') and as more flexible, not least with regard to the requirements of the market ('shape has been commoditized'), while taking recourse to a number of themes from Koolhaas' manifesto 'Bigness', such as the large scale, and the incongruence between interior and exterior. On Somol's argument of shape versus form, see: Pier Vittorio Aureli, 'Who is Afraid of the Form-Object', *Log* 3 (Fall 2004), 29-36.

⁹ Holger Schurk, *Projekt ohne Form. OMA, Rem Koolhaas und das Laboratorium von 1989* (Lepizig: Spector Books, 2020). As Schurk points out, the book's title and argument, *Project without Form*, denotes 'an uncommonly abstract type of architectural project which is still in the fluid state of the design process, prior to its realization as a building.' *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁰ Sanford Kwinter, 'Urbanism after Innocence: Four Projects: The Reinvention of Geometry', *Assemblage* 18 (1992), 84. Kwinter refers to OMA's masterplans for Melun-Sénart (1987), La Defense (1991), Yokohama (1992), and Euralille (1989-94).

¹¹ *Ibid.* 85. In 1994, when Euralille was completed, Kwinter proposes the approach of 'soft urbanism' quoting Koolhaas' essay 'Whatever Happened to Urbanism?' included in *S,M,L,XL*: 'If there is to be a "new urbanism" [...] it will no longer aim for stable configurations but for the creation enabling fields that accommodate processes that refuse to be crystalized into definitive form'. (p. 969) Sanford Kwinter, 'The Building, the Book, and the New Pastoralism', *ANY* 9 (1994), 16-22.

in order to use financial and volumetric allowances in the most economical way possible.’¹² In 1996, Jeffrey Kipnis discerned in the buildings’ use (‘event-structure’) – as opposed to its ‘aesthetics’ – the primary concern of Koolhaas’ latest work, observing an ‘acceleration away from Architecture towards pure organization’.¹³ With respect to OMA’s scheme for the Tate Gallery in London he explains: ‘It is a work of urban infrastructure whose core strategy is organization, whose techniques belong to engineering, and whose fundamental measure is not aesthetic quality, but performance over time at maximum use.’¹⁴

I have devised this study in reversal of the above tendencies. Focusing on a single work of architecture, I shall privilege the ‘voice of the project’ over the author’s. I will scrutinize its form, albeit form in the widest sense. Next to shapes, proportions, materials, colours, and the structure and construction, I will discuss the concepts and ideas underlying these formal qualities; the imagery and metaphors they convey; the argument and cause these forms imply; their critical as well as their ‘projective’ or utopian quality; the vision they conjure of the building’s future use. Contrary to a formalist reading, the interpretation of form will embrace any of these aspects as well as the architecture’s relationship to its context of origin as another indispensable means to disclose its meaning and intellectual content.¹⁵ As I will show, it is first and foremost through its form that the building of the Kunsthal articulates a ‘response’ to the client, the site and the programme, to contemporary debates on urban design, to contemporary museum architecture, to deconstructivist architecture and the historical backdrop of the late 1980s.

¹² Hubert Damisch, ‘Cadavre exquis. Théâtre nationale de danse, La Haye’, *Architecture Mouvement Continuité* 18 (1987), 21-22.

¹³ Jeffrey Kipnis, ‘Recent Koolhaas’, *El Croquis* 79 (1996), 34. Kipnis refers to OMA’s competition entries for the Jussieu Libraries (1992), the extension of the Tate Gallery in London (1994-95), and the Operas in Miami (1994) and Cardiff (1994). By ‘event-structure’ Kipnis understands the ‘social activities and chance events, desirable or not, that an architectural setting stages or conditions. These include, but are not limited to the expressed activities of the programme.’ *Ibid.*, 30. Neither Kipnis, nor Somol or Kwinter, however, write about the buildings or urban developments in use. If the capacity to trigger and harbour ‘events’ is the main thing, the study of what actually happens in Euralille, the Congrexpo, and the CCTV appears crucial.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁵ In that, my approach is akin rather to the ‘inclusive’ criticism suggested by Michael Hays in ‘Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form’, *Perspecta* 21, (1984), and by Aureli in ‘Who is Afraid of the Form-Object?’ than to the above proposition by Somol and Whiting.

This ‘expanded’ reading of form which interweaves a close look at form with a comprehensive study of the historical context of the architecture is nothing new in itself; it *is* rare, however, with regard to the scholarly literature on the architectural oeuvre of OMA and Rem Koolhaas. It is inextricably connected to what I consider as the most significant contribution of my dissertation to the field of architecture history: first of all, a deeper understanding of the Kunsthal itself as a major work of architecture of the late 20th century, along with a detailed account of its genesis; but also as an approach that may be applied to the work of OMA more broadly. To widen the study of the context of origin beyond the references and influences indicated by Koolhaas himself appears key to disentangle his built work from his discourse so as to show the architecture in its own right. The discrepancy between what Koolhaas says and what he does as an architect has been repeatedly observed, also by himself, but until today this insight has been of comparatively little consequence for how his architecture is being discussed.¹⁶

Recent research on OMA and Rem Koolhaas

There has been few research during the past two decades that covers the oeuvre of OMA and Rem Koolhaas as a whole. Frances Hsu, in her dissertation *The Ends of Modernism: Structuralism and Surrealism in the Work of Rem Koolhaas*, discusses Koolhaas’ writings from *Delirious New York* to *S,M,L,XL* as well as a series of select projects by OMA from the period between Exodus (1972) and the house in Bordeaux (1994-98).¹⁷ Primarily based on textual research, Hsu’s thesis focuses on three major fields of investigation: French structuralism (Barthes, Foucault and Lacan), surrealism (the writings and paintings of Salvador Dalí) and the architectural modern movement (in particular Le Corbusier), in order to disclose the influence of these protagonists and their respective production on the work of Rem

¹⁶ Bart Verschaffel, in an essay from 2004 on OMA’s first private houses, concludes: ‘Koolhaas’s theory and analyses do not encompass what he actually does.’ Verschaffel, ‘The Survival Ethics of Rem Koolhaas: The First Houses by OMA’, in: Véronique Patteeuw (ed.), *What is OMA? Considering Rem Koolhaas and the Office for Metropolitan Architecture* (Rotterdam: NAI, 2004), 164. In a short text from 2014 Stan Allen writes, ‘Koolhaas embraced the difficult intellectual agency of architecture itself, confident that it has capacities unanticipated or in excess of the written word of its own.’ Stan Allen, ‘Without the Built Production, the Writing Loses Force’, *Clog Rem* (2014), 43. Koolhaas himself observed in 1996: ‘There is an enormous, deliberate, and – I think – healthy discrepancy between what I write and what I do.’ Katrina Heron, ‘From Bauhaus to Koolhaas’, *Wired* 4-07 (1996), <https://www.wired.com/1996/07/koolhaas/>.

¹⁷ Frances Hsu, *The Ends of Modernism: Structuralism and Surrealism in the Work of Rem Koolhaas* (ETH: Zürich, 2003).

Koolhaas. The influence of the modern movement and surrealism, and their appropriation in the work of OMA/Rem Koolhaas is also the major concern of Roberto Gargiani's monograph, subtitled *The Construction of Merveilles*.¹⁸ The book's main contribution is its versatility and its – up to now – unique relative completeness. In the chronological account all major projects and texts by Koolhaas are recorded and a wide spectrum of references is being analysed: references to the work of OMA and Rem Koolhaas itself as well as to a broader context of architecture, theory and art. Gargiani elucidates the evolution of the Koolhaasian theory, design strategies, 'iconography', and, what is rare, the meaning of structures and forms, with systematic scrutiny.

In his architectural history of the 19th and 20th century, *Composition, Non-Composition* and the follow-up volume on the architecture of the early 21st century, Jacques Lucan discusses the design strategies of some twenty built and unbuilt projects by OMA.¹⁹ Taken together, the work covers a timespan of more than thirty years, beginning with OMA's design for the parliament in The Hague (1978) and ending with the CCTV Headquarters in Beijing (2002-12). The inevitably synthetic account of both overviews, concentrated on a couple of dozen pages, tends to create the (misleading) impression of a monolithic architectural production without substantial shifts, inner contradictions and counter developments. The same, however, can also be said about the 360-pages monograph by Ingrid Böck, *Six Canonical Projects by Rem Koolhaas* – a study on 'recurring design themes and strategies', in which 'the single cases [i.e. projects] serve as examples of architectural elements or principles that have a central recurring role in Koolhaas' thinking'.²⁰ Covering a similar range of projects and years, Böck analyses systematically architectural and theoretical references, tracking back the flow of ideas within the work of OMA along with many of their presumed and already known sources.

¹⁸ Roberto Gargiani, *Rem Koolhaas/OMA: The Construction of Merveilles* (Lausanne: EPFL/PPUR, 2008).

¹⁹ Jacques Lucan, 'Processus et programme contre composition – Rem Koolhaas', in: Lucan, *Composition, Non-Composition. Architecture et Théories, XIXe-XXe siècles* (Lausanne: EPFL/PPUR, 2009), 542-561. Idem, *Précisions sur un état présent de l'architecture* (Lausanne: EPFL/PPUR, 2015).

²⁰ Ingrid Böck, *Six Canonical Projects. Essays on the History of Ideas* (Berlin: Jovis, 2015), 18.

Perhaps the most conspicuous tendency in recent scholarly literature on OMA and Rem Koolhaas is the focus on the work of the 1970s and 1980s. In a series of monographs, the work is being discussed in the context of a larger argument as one example among others. In a chapter of *Montage and Metropolis* Martino Stierli examines the significance of montage in *Delirious New York* (1978);²¹ a chapter of Emmanuel Petit's study of irony in postmodern architecture is dedicated to Rem Koolhaas, discussing projects from Exodus to the Villa Dall'Ava (1984-91);²² in Alexander Eisenschmidt's book *The Good Metropolis* on the theoretical and conceptual appropriation of the modern city in the 20th century, OMA's approach is exemplified through the project of the Captive Globe (1972) and the projects for Kochstrasse/Friedrichstrasse (1980), Checkpoint Charlie (1980-90), and Zeebrugge (1989);²³ Pier Vittorio Aureli, in a chapter of *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture* on Ungers refers to Exodus, the Captive Globe, and the projects Hotel Sphinx (1975) and Welfare Island (1976).²⁴ The doctoral thesis of Stephanie Bender from 2011, *Le Vide. Nouvelles stratégies urbaines*, pivots around the project for Mélnun-Senart from 1987 and the conceptualization of unbuilt space.²⁵ The 2015 issue of *OASE* on 'The First Decade' of OMA examines projects from the period between 1978 and 1989.²⁶ Christophe van Gerrewey published essays on the IJplein Housing (1980-87), on the Netherlands Dance Theatre (1981-87), and on the reception of OMA's projects for the parliament in The Hague (1978), the NAI (1988) and Zeebrugge (1989) in the Dutch speaking countries.²⁷

²¹ Martino Stierli, 'Montage and the Metropolitan Unconscious', in: Idem, *Montage and the Metropolis. Architecture, Modernity, and the Representation of Space* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 228-267. *Delirious New York* is also the main subject of Gabriele Mastrigli's article 'Modernity and Myth: Rem Koolhaas in New York' *San Rocco* 8 (2013), 81-95.

²² Emmanuel Petit, 'Rem Koolhaas', in: Idem, *Irony. Or, The Self-Critical Opacity of Postmodern Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 177-211.

²³ Alexander Eisenschmidt, *The Good Metropolis: From Urban Formlessness to Metropolitan Architecture* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2019). The projects by OMA are discussed in the chapter 'Extrapolation: Urban Spielraum and the Project of a Metropolitan Architecture', 76-133.

²⁴ Pier Vittorio Aureli, 'The City within the City', in: Idem, *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2011), 177-227.

²⁵ Stephanie Bender, *Le Vide. Nouvelles stratégies urbaines* (Lausanne: EPFL, 2011).

²⁶ Christophe Van Gerrewey, Véronique Patteeuw (eds.), *OMA. The First Decade – OASE #94* (Rotterdam: nai010, 2015).

²⁷ Christophe van Gerrewey, 'A Weissenhofsiedlung for Amsterdam: OMA's IJplein', *Log* 44 (2018), 82-93. Idem, 'Goodbye Paper', *AA Files* 74 (2017), 98-111. "'Hope has Returned": The Glorious Reception of OMA/Rem Koolhaas in the Dutch-Speaking World', *Architectural Theory Review* 18:3 (2013), 356-371.

The accent of the above issue of *OASE* – which includes ten retrospective reviews of single projects by OMA – is on ‘Koolhaas as an architect’ and ‘the art of building’, as the editors explain, implying that these issues have been largely overlooked.²⁸ In fact, the amount of more extensive research focussed on single buildings by OMA continues to be relatively small, especially with regard to the endeavour of building and the issue of form. Peter Eisenman’s essay on the Jussieu Libraries in his book *Ten Canonical Buildings* from 2008 is a counterexample of the opposite extreme.²⁹ In the introduction Eisenman describes his approach as a ‘close reading’ of ideas that involves the study of a building’s capacity ‘to reflect on its particular moment in time and its relation to buildings which both precede it and come after it.’³⁰ But the explication of both – the ideas and the ‘moment in time’ – is essentially limited to arguments of form like the applicability of the iconic diagram to the problem of generating form, or the scheme’s ‘critical’ relation to Le Corbusier’s *maison domino*. The ‘ostentatious disregard of structure, site, and program in favour of a nuanced formal reading’, Stan Allen observes in his foreword, extends also to the wider historical context. How the building does or does not relate to the societal, political, economic or artistic dynamics of its time is hardly ever being addressed.³¹

Little research has been published specifically on the Kunsthal. An article by Michel Moussette from 2003 on the building’s ‘interior-exterior relationships’ is the first publication based on a broader archival investigation.³² In ‘Space of Montage’, published in the book *Architecture’s Pretext* from 2015, Aarati Kanekar discusses analogies between the architecture of the Kunsthal and filmic montage.³³ Kanekar explicates the extreme diversity of several structural components, glazing details and translucent materials in some detail, highlighting one of the most striking features of the Kunsthal which

²⁸ Christophe van Gerrewey, Véronique Patteeuw, ‘OMA. The First Decade: 1978-1989’, in: Idem, *OMA. The First Decade*, 7.

²⁹ Peter Eisenman, ‘Strategies of the Void. Rem Koolhaas, Jussieu Libraries, 1992-93’, in: Idem, *Ten Canonical Buildings. 1950-2000* (New York: Rizzoli, 2008), 200-229. Of course there are more exceptions to this rule, some of which will be listed in the subsequent passages.

³⁰ Ibid., 16, 19.

³¹ Stan Allen, ‘Eisenman’s Canon: A Counter-Memory of the Modern’, in: Eisenman, *Ten Canonical Buildings*, 10.

³² Michel Moussette, “‘Do we need a canopy for rain?’: interior-exterior relationships in the Kunsthal”, *Architectural Research Quarterly* 3/4 (2003), 280-294. Moussette’s analysis involves material held by the archive of HNI (Het Nieuwe Instituut).

³³ Aarati Kanekar, ‘Space of Montage: Movement, Assemblage, and Appropriation in Koolhaas’ Kunsthal’, in: Idem, *Architecture’s Pretext. Spaces of Translation* (London: Routledge, 2015), 134-154.

has been repeatedly noticed by critics ever since its completion in 1992. In a very brief article from 2016 Jacob Comerci draws on some archival material concerning the first project of the Kunsthall, but the circumstances giving birth to the project and the reasons for its abandonment are far from being captured.³⁴ Theresia Leuenberger conducted an extensive sociological case study on the Kunsthall in 2018, which, however, is of little relevance for this investigation.³⁵ In his recent essay 'The Pliable Surface', included in Harry Francis Mallgrave's *Companions to the History of Architecture*, Roberto Gargiani focusses on the principle of the malleable floor slab within the wider context of OMA's oeuvre.³⁶ Needless to say that the Kunsthall is part of further encyclopaedic compilations of 20th century architecture, most notably monographic publications on the oeuvre of OMA. However, a comprehensive study of the project, its genesis and the available archival material is missing.

Monographic studies on one building

The number of scholarly monographs on singular buildings published in recent years is larger than may appear at first sight. Many of these publications embrace or focus on issues of preservation. Examples are Arthur Rüegg's monographs on single buildings by Le Corbusier, Gilles Ragot's and Olivier Chadoin's monograph on the Cité de Refuge, likewise by Le Corbusier, from 2016; Pavel Kuznetsov's book on Constantin Melnikov's house in Moscow from 2017, or the book on the Tugendhat house by Daniela Hammer-Tugendhat, Ivo Hammer, and Wolf Tegethoff.³⁷ As most monographs on single buildings, they are chronological in structure covering the genesis of the building, its users and the way

³⁴ Jacob Comerci, 'The Robot of Kunsthall I', *Log* 36 (2016), 63-67.

³⁵ Theresia Leuenberger, *Architektur als Akteur? Zur Soziologie der Architekturerfahrung* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2018). Leuenberger analyses a series of interviews from the 2010s in which three groups of students describe how they experienced the Kunsthall. The observations of the students are hardly apt to draw generic conclusions on how people experience the Kunsthall, given that the actual range of visitors is much wider, and that the historical moment of the visits – and its impact on the perception – is being ignored. The age of the students varied between 16 and 22.

³⁶ Roberto Gargiani, 'The Pliable Surface', in: Harry Francis Mallgrave (general ed.), *The Companions to the History of Architecture* (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 2017), vol. IV, David Leatherbarrow, Alexander Eisenschmidt (eds.) *Twentieth Century Architecture*, 653-660.

³⁷ Klaus Spechtenhauser, Arthur Rüegg, (eds.): *Maison Blanche* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2019). Gilles Ragot, Olivier Chadoin, *La cite de refuge. Le Corbusier et Pierre Jeanneret. L'usine à guérir* (Paris: Editions du patrimoine, Centre des monuments nationaux, 2016). Pavel Kuznetsov, *The Melnikov House: Icon of the Avant-Garde, Family Home, Architecture Museum* (Berlin: DOM, 2017). Further examples are: Sabine Nemeč-Piguet (ed.), *Le Corbusier & Pierre Jeanneret - Restauration of the Clarté Building, Geneva* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2016); Daniela Hammer-Tugendhat, Ivo Hammer, Wolf Tegethoff, *Tugendhat House: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2015).

it was used, later transformations, surveys of the buildings current condition and eventually its restoration. Other, apparently less frequent monographs, focus on the genesis and original condition of the building. Examples of this second type are the two volumes edited by Marco Pogacnik on Alberto Libera's Palazzo della Regione in Trento from 2007, the books by Pogacnik and Christopher Long on the Loos House on Michaelerplatz in Vienna, both from 2011, Phyllis Lambert's *Building Seagram* from 2013 on Mies' high rise in Manhattan, and the recent monograph on Hans Scharoun's apartment blocks Romeo and Juliet in Stuttgart by Markus Peter and Ulrike Tillmann.³⁸ Each of these books aims at an expanded understanding of the built work of architecture, the focus shifting from issues of structure (Pogacnik), to the contemporary cultural backdrop (Long), to the development of the small scale floor plan ('Kleinwohnungsgrundriss') in German public housing (Peter, Tillmann). My study of the Kunsthal certainly belongs to this second type. Like the partly autobiographical account by Lambert – expanding, for instance, on Mies' earlier work, the role of Philip Johnson, and New York's zoning law – it is emphatically broad in scope. Focal themes are: the structure and construction of the building, contemporary debates on urban design, the museum architecture of the 1970s and 1980s, and deconstructivist architecture as well as the process of European Integration and the Fall of the Berlin Wall, among other things. As indicated before, I believe that only such a broad scope of investigation can do justice to the wealth of relations the architecture does articulate to the historical moment it emerged from.

Some monographic research has been published on buildings by OMA. Beatrice Lampariello's study on the house at Bordeaux covers the processes of designing, planning and constructing the building, including the amendment of defects and works of renovation executed after its completion in 1998.³⁹ A considerable part of the research is based on the evidence of interviews with the clients, team members

³⁸ Marco Pogacnik (ed.), *Il Palazzo della Regione a Trento di Adalberto Libera e Sergio Musmeci* (Rovereto: Nicolodi, 2007). Marco Pogacnik, *Adolf Loos e Vienna* (Venice: Università IUAV, 2011). Christopher Long, *The Looshaus*, (New Haven/ London: Yale University Press, 2011). Phyllis Lambert, *Building Seagram* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013). Markus Peter, Ulrike Tillmann, *Hans Scharoun und die Entwicklung der Kleinwohnungsgrundrisse. Die Wohnhochhäuser Romeo und Julia 1954-1959*. (Zürich: Park Books, 2020).

³⁹ Beatrice Lampariello, *Villa a Floirac: Rem Koolhaas/OMA 1994-98* (Rome: Aracne, 2011). Whereas the study by Lampariello is based on genuine research, Patric Unruh's publication on the Educatorium does not go beyond a synthesis of well-established facts. See: Patric Unruh, *Das Educatorium in Utrecht von Rem Koolhaas und OMA* (Zürich: ETH, 2004).

of OMA and Ove Arup as well as with a building consultant. The book deals with the technical aspects of design issues concerning the structure, building services, detailing and technical equipment. Lampariello retraces architectural themes, motifs and ideas basically within the framework of OMA projects and Koolhaas's theory, the modern movement, surrealism and contemporary art. In *The Making of a Building* Albena Yaneva follows an entirely different approach. Taking the project for the Whitney Museum in New York as an example, Yaneva examines the design and planning process at OMA '[g]aining ethnographic access to this field'.⁴⁰ Yaneva shows the architects in their daily routine 'not through the lens of any particular theory of Koolhaas or *about* Koolhaas' nor discussing other OMA projects.⁴¹ The investigation is largely based on the analysis of everyday proceedings and a number of exemplary events. Far from reconstructing the process of design and planning in its entirety, Yaneva aims at the understanding of behavioural patterns, methodologically excluding any interpretation based on traditional architectural history or theory. Although Yaneva suggests that such 'architectural theory should strive to understand the *architectural specificity* of architectural objects and networks' the conclusions she draws from her field study are always of a generic kind, defining how architects work (in general or at OMA), without ever distinguishing what is specific about the project or the processes generating it.⁴² In *Take One Building* from 2017, the editors Ruth Conroy Dalton and Christoph Hölscher compiled eleven different essays by altogether twenty-one different authors on OMA's Library in Seattle.⁴³ The scope of the essays' arguments is largely informed by most authors' backgrounds in disciplines outside the field of architecture, such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, neuroscience, information studies, media studies, and behavioural geography. As in the case of Yaneva's book on OMA and the Whitney Museum, genuine architectural issues like references and precedents, the building's structure and construction, or the metaphoric content of its form are hardly being addressed. Holger Schurk's recent book on OMA's competition entries from 1989 includes a detailed account of the genesis of the project for the National Library in Paris. Next to the analysis of

⁴⁰ Albena Yaneva, *The Making of a Building. A Pragmatist Approach to Architecture* (Oxford: Lang, 2009), 3.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 196.

⁴³ Ruth Conroy Dalton, Christoph Hölscher (eds.), *Take one Building. Interdisciplinary Research Perspectives of the Seattler Central Library* (London: Routledge, 2017).

the design process and the project's subsequent representation in exhibitions and publications as well as its exploitation for OMA's architectural approach of the 1990s, Schurk elucidates the professional background and collaboration of the various staff members involved. The book provides entirely new information on the – rarely mentioned – role of the Rotterdam collective 'Utopia' and the contributions of photographer Hans Werlemann and model makers Frans Parthesius and Vincent de Rijk.⁴⁴

Sources and method

The amount of available archival material on the Kunsthall is immense. Along with the evidence of the existing building it is treated as a primary source. The material comes from all main parties involved in the planning process and comprises models, sketches, studies, technical drawings, presentation drawings, plans of the structure and the building services, photographs, correspondence, minutes, reports, costs estimates, invoices and time schedules, among other things. Since 1994 the vast majority of the models, sketches, drawings and papers is held by the former Netherlands Architecture Institute, Het Nieuwe Instituut (HNI) in Rotterdam. The NAI acquired the dossiers of altogether 45 projects from the architect's archive in 1987, 1988 and between 1994 and 1996.⁴⁵ Between 1994 and 1995, the institute's then interim director Hein van Haaren initiated the purchase of the dossier of the Kunsthall and five more projects in order to assist OMA in a moment of severe financial difficulties.⁴⁶

Other important sources were Rotterdam's City Archives (Stadsarchief Rotterdam) and Department for Urban Development (Stadsontwikkeling Rotterdam), holding documents that the planning team

⁴⁴ The book being published in mid-December 2020, its content could only marginally be taken into account. On the Rotterdam collective 'Utopia', see also: Patricia van Ulzen, *Imagine a Metropolis. Rotterdam's Creative Class 1970-2000* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2007), 133-143.

⁴⁵ Inventory OMAR Archive, Introduction, 2. The HNI staff emailed the file to the author in January 2016. The inventory currently available on the HNI website does not contain this information.

⁴⁶ Sergio M. Figueiredo, *The NAI Effect. Creating Architecture Culture* (Rotterdam: NAI010, 2016), 267-268. Figueiredo explains: 'Although OMA's financial difficulties were well documented in the press, the NAI's decisive contribution to their resolution remained fairly unknown.' Ibid., 267. Figueiredo reports that the NAI acquired 'a restricted set of material (mostly design and final models) [...] at the [...] cost of 400.000 guilders. Ibid., 268. According to the inventory of the OMAR archive, however, the NAI had bought already the 'basis archive' of the project in 1994, that is, all archival material except the models and drawings for publication, classified within OMA's own archive as 'art work'. Inventory OMAR, 2. The transfer of the complete Kunsthall dossier – apart from some photographic material – has also been confirmed by the head of the OMA Archives in Rotterdam, Talitha van Dijk, in an email to the author.

submitted to the municipality from 1989 onwards, next to the archives of OMA Rotterdam and Ove Arup London. Taken together, the archival material covers the full timespan from the beginnings of the project in 1987 to the opening of the Kunsthal in October 1992 and beyond.

In parallel to the Kunsthal, OMA worked on the Museum Park (1987-94) and – for a couple of months – on the competition for the Netherlands Architecture Institute (1988). Archival research regarding the park and the Architecture Institute is an integral part of this work, given the spatial proximity of all three projects as well as the conceptual interrelations between them. The HNI in Rotterdam holds abundant material on both the competition entry and the Museum Park, permitting to reconstruct the genesis of the two designs in some detail. Additional sources were Rotterdam's City Archives, the archives of landscape architect Petra Blaisse, and the architectural collection of the Centre Pompidou in Paris.

Like most of the scholarly monographs dedicated to a single building, my account of the Kunsthal's genesis is essentially chronological. I will combine two different narratives, often dovetailed within a single chapter: the first reconstructs the various stages and major developments of the Kunsthal's design; the second explores the historical context from which the project emerged. In each chapter I attempt to re-enact the forces the project was exposed to at a specific moment in time, and, ultimately, if and how the design did reflect the circumstance.

A methodical distinction between the different stages of the design and their respective time of origin appears essential, considering the very changeability of circumstance. The client, the brief and the site, were as dynamic a given as the broader contemporary context of the project's genesis. The political, ideological and architectural landscape changed substantially between 1987 and 1992, and so did Koolhaas's approach to architecture and the work of OMA. That the unprecedented pace of European Integration during the 1980s second half played an eminent role in Koolhaas' discourse of the late 1980s and early 1990s is indicated by his writings, lectures and interviews, and the same holds true for the Fall of the Iron Curtain between 1989 and 1991, and the rise of Deconstructivist Architecture in 1988.

I will examine the reverberations of these events and other contingencies in the design of the Kunsthal, and – albeit to a lesser extent – in the two projects related to it.

More than four decades of interviews and talks have given Koolhaas abundant occasion to comment on his own work retrospectively. This regards as much the architectural production of OMA as the texts he published and the ideas he stated in public. The intricate fabric of his architectural oeuvre, theoretical agenda and conversational comment has thus been the subject of permanent re-interpretation. The textual research of my study is based on the observation that, what Koolhaas writes and says, reacts first and foremost to the present. For this reason, priority is given to the literature of the project's time of origin: to what Koolhaas wrote and said, to what was written about him and his work, to contemporary architectural debates, and to the museums built and discussed at the time. Needless to say that the literature on and by OMA/Rem Koolhaas of all periods is being taken into account, namely the more recent scholarly publications on Koolhaas and his oeuvre. But if – for example – Koolhaas patiently accepts being labelled a postmodernist in 2011,⁴⁷ or is willing to discuss the proportions of his buildings in 2018,⁴⁸ his comments appear instructive rather with respect to their historical distance from the 1980s and 1990s than to the ideas he did advocate at the time. OMA's oeuvre as a whole is marked by a series of divergent approaches and results, and the views about architecture Koolhaas expressed during the past five decades do anything but add up to a single coherent agenda. Exactly ten years separate his functionalist manifesto 'Our "New Sobriety"' from the professed need 'to break with the vocabulary of modernism'.⁴⁹

As a general rule, I have taken into account any oral statement or text regarding the genesis of the Kunsthal, albeit as clues of a secondary order. The 'final say' is given to the building as completed in 1992; to the models, drawings and sketches; to the facts recorded in the minutes; to the evidence of

⁴⁷ Charles Jencks, 'Radical Post-Modernism and Content', *Architectural Design* 5 (2011), 32-45.

⁴⁸ Guillaume Houzé, François Quintin, 'Composer les murs de son espace', in in: Idem et al., *9 Plâtre: Lafayette Anticipations - fondation d'entreprise Galeries Lafayette: un bâtiment de OMA/Rem Koolhaas* (Paris: Lafayette Anticipations, 2018), 24-25.

⁴⁹ Paul Vermeulen, 'Metropolitane architectuur. Projekt-Koolhaas voor Zeebrugge', *De Standaard* 28-29 April 1990, (author trans.).

faxes and letters. Plausibility vis-à-vis these primary facts is the test any claim is put to. This regards also the interviews conducted and correspondence exchanged with protagonists involved in the projects of the Kunsthal, the Museum Park and the Architecture Institute in the course of the research. The recollections of former team members certainly were an important source of suggestions, hints and insights. Nonetheless, I have treated the information obtained as an indication of a hypothetical value, not as actual evidence. Not every fact reported could be verified. This holds true in particular for numerous anecdotes, namely those related by architect Fuminori Hoshino who closely collaborated on the design with Rem Koolhaas. Recollections of this kind, if not quoted in full, are indicated as such. The key arguments of this study do not depend on them. But the oral testimony of personal experience appears as valuable in itself, considering how little is known about how OMA had been working, and of how Koolhaas had been working – as an architect – during the first two decades of the firm’s existence. I also had conversations with Petra Blaisse, Toni Adam, Kees Christiaanse, Mike Guyer, Koos Hage, and the first director of the Kunsthal, Wim van Krimpen. An interview with Rem Koolhaas did not happen, despite repeated efforts. Neither he nor OMA has been involved in this study.

Some insights and major themes

The study is divided into two parts. Part I covers the first project for the Kunsthal (I), the Museum Park and the competition for the Netherlands Architecture Institute. Part II gives a detailed account of the second project (Kunsthal II) which was eventually built. Considering the study as a whole, a number of insights and themes seem to stand out in terms of significance and scope. Each implies a thesis and will be outlined in the subsequent passages. To anticipate these themes and theses in the introduction aims at giving the reader a clear idea of what is at stake, and, thus, to allow for a better judgement of the claims when I discuss them in Part I and II in detail. This order may counteract the risk of reductive simplifications, giving the last word to the ‘full account’, prior to conclusive synthesis and interpretation.

How and why

The reconstruction of the Kunsthall's genesis I propose is to a large extent of genuinely historical nature. Like any historical account that goes beyond the well-established facts, it does rely essentially on the interpretation of primary sources and is, to the same extent, hypothetical. This regards issues of chronology and authorship, given the numerous sketches, drawings, collages and models that are neither dated nor signed. In both cases the assumptions made are indicated as such. Former team members have identified some of the sketches, drawings, or models they produced at the time. But for the most part the attributions of authorship rely on the familiarity the author acquired with the hand of Koolhaas and a couple collaborators who had been working on the project. Assumptions concerning Koolhaas' motives, intentions, concepts and ideas are inevitably speculative, and so are the inferences regarding their impact on the design, and the role of extrinsic circumstances, like the wish of the client or the pressure of time. That things happened as related – the how and why – is the implicit claim all along the chronology of events.

To the last

The Kunsthall is a project that, in terms of design, was allowed to evolve freely 'to the last'. Important decisions, some with far reaching consequences, were taken in apparent conflict with deadlines and the progress of the construction site. As regards the second project (Kunsthall II), concepts and ideas were developed, refined and added over a period of four years. It appears that the wealth of ideas which distinguishes the Kunsthall and makes it excel is not owed to a single stroke of genius but to the methodical exploitation of the time at disposal. As the archival material indicates, the mere length of time during which ever new ideas were taken on board and permitted to both upset and enrich the 'givens' were vital for achieving such abundance.

Conservation of matter

What has been observed with respect to OMA's oeuvre as a whole – the recurrence of themes, motifs, concepts in multiple projects – seems to hold true also for the different stages of a single project. In the case of the Kunsthall, 'borrowings' from other OMA projects and buildings are frequent, especially

during the first two years. The design ‘creates’ its own stock of concepts and ideas. What is peculiar is the manner in which the project absorbs all of this, accumulates it, transforms and juxtaposes it to the point of becoming undecipherable. Perhaps it is the privilege of an extensive investigation and stepwise reconstruction of the design’s development to make them legible. In order to re-enact this development, the design process is being screened in layers, like the concealed parts of a body by a MRI. It permits to retrace the introduction, metamorphoses and journeys, the spread and superimposing of concepts, ideas, motifs and themes; for most of them are plain and straightforward at their inception, and then change gradually while becoming increasingly arcane.

Distinction

In an interview from 1985 Patrice Goulet asks Koolhaas: ‘To think differently, is this, for your part, the result of reflection?’ The question follows Koolhaas observation that recent (postmodern) attempts to imitate the past have failed and that there is no alternative to being modern. Koolhaas replies: ‘No, it’s a veritable instinct. That is completely unconscious.’⁵⁰ At other occasions Koolhaas tends to reject similar observations with apparent unease. In 1998, when Jean-François Chevrier looks back at his architectural and urban agenda of the 1970s and 1980s, Koolhaas interrupts him objecting: ‘You are defining a coherence that is in danger of reducing my entire career to a single, uniform formula of contradiction – anti-Archigram, anti-Rowe, anti-Jencks, anti-Palermo. But I see my career from my own point of view, and I think it is not simple as that.’⁵¹ Certainly, it would be wrong to explain Koolhaas’ work solely by the dynamics of opposition. For example, his oeuvre bespeaks a fascination with surrealism, the collective, Mies and Le Corbusier which – even if occasionally counter current –

⁵⁰ Patrice Goulet, ‘La deuxième chance de l’architecture moderne ...’, *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui* 238 (1985), 4 (author trans.). There are numerous statements of similar content. In an interview with Léa-Catherine Szacka, Koolhaas comments on OMA’s contribution to the Venice Biennale in 1980: ‘The text, together with our non-facade, was a way of asserting difference.’ Later in the review he remarks: ‘I love being part of a group, but when the moment is there I find it terribly uncomfortable.’ Léa-Catherine Szacka, ‘Translucent oppositions. OMA’s proposal for the 1980 Venice Architecture Biennale’, *OASE* #94 (2015), <https://www.oasejournal.nl/en/Issues/94/TranslucentOppositions>.

⁵¹ The interview was published only in 2005. Jean-François Chevrier, ‘Changing Dimensions’, *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui* 361 (2005), 102. In 2003 Frances Hsu asked: ‘Why do you think that most of the things that you do or that you’re telling me of seem to be against something else? You have this tendency ...’ Koolhaas replied: ‘I don’t think it a tendency to do things against, its [sic] more an instinct to consider that perhaps certain things which are rejected might actually contain important potentials. It’s more about a kind of automatism of judgement.’ Hsu, *The Ends of Modernism*, 171.

appears to be persistent and to some extent independent from the circumstances of the respective designs; and Koolhaas' at times passionate commitment to the techniques of collage and montage and to formal fragmentation during the 1970s and 1980s appears rather as mainstream than apt or intended to mark a stance of opposition.

If Koolhaas reacts, his reactions seem to fall in two different categories. Either he contradicts, openly and fiercely, aiming at solitary opposition; or, with no less noise, he yields willingly, while claiming to suffuse his surrender with the seeds of a subtle subversion. This has been often observed as much as suggested by Koolhaas himself: the figure of the subversive 'silent dynamiter', and the image of the surfer, smoothly riding the most frightening waves.⁵² Probably because the two attitudes relate to entirely disparate spheres they are hardly ever mentioned at the same occasion. The first regards his peers, the second powers outside the realm of architecture, and, seemingly, beyond its reach. In the above interview with Chevrier, Koolhaas points to his strategy of contextual idealization and the example of OMA's Dance Theatre in The Hague as a form of surrender. But, put in practice, OMA's 'idealizations' used to prioritize the modernist past with modernist forms which were diametrically opposed to the contextualism of Léon Krier and others, privileging the premodern past by dint of premodern forms.

Koolhaas has a reputation for changing his architectural approach repeatedly, promptly and substantially. Rightly, it seems, this trait has been interpreted as a double flight both from his epigones and from his work being locked up in its own cliché.⁵³ And yet, this flight *did* use to coalesce with more aggressive endeavours, marked by a spirit of opposition – against postmodern architecture, against deconstructivist architecture, or, lately, against the city as the ultimate urban consensus. Even if instinctive and of spontaneous origin in each particular case, this urge for opposition against some sort of mainstream appears as a potent constant in Koolhaas' work and thinking, driven by some sort of

⁵² Jean-Louis Cohen, 'The Rational Rebel, or the Urban Agenda of OMA', in: Jacques Lucan (ed.), *OMA - Rem Koolhaas* (Princeton Architectural Press: New York, 1991), 9.

⁵³ See, for instance: Van Gerrewey, Patteeuw, *OMA. The First Decade*, 5.

Bourdieuian desire for distinction.⁵⁴ The perceptive, alert gaze at ‘the others’ does not *aim* at ‘Adornian consciousness’; it does produce it and – in the case of the Kunsthall – articulate it in a tangible, recognizable way.

Fragmentation

Formal fragmentation is a widespread characteristic of the architecture of the 1970s and 1980s. It plays a significant role in the work of architects as different as James Stirling, Hans Hollein, Charles Moore, Arata Isozaki, Alvaro Siza, Frank Gehry, Peter Eisenman, Bernard Tschumi, and Rem Koolhaas, amongst others. As regards the projects of OMA, formal fragmentation served a triple purpose, each being essential to Koolhaas’ architectural agenda at the time: to articulate the diversity of the programme; to echo the heterogeneity of the urban surroundings; to create something new by superimposing divergent modernist ‘borrowings’. The Kunsthall is no exception. Namely the extreme density and intricacy of themes, concepts, ideas and motifs relies largely on formal fragmentation. If the Kunsthall was a homogeneous whole, there would be no room for such abundance. To allow for differences, discontinuities and conflicts in terms of shape, construction, material, colour, and connotation is the very condition of their coexistence.

What distinguishes the Kunsthall from the rest of OMA’s work, it seems, is that formal fragmentation is used as a means to mimic and thus to indicate *contemporary* architectural approaches; or, to put it differently, to extend the pastiche to his own present. It allows the Kunsthall as architecture to step outside the categories of postmodern and deconstructivist architecture which were widely perceived as the two dominant trends at the time. As I will argue, formal fragmentation thus becomes a means of distinction in the above sense, as much as a technique to accumulate intellectual content and to pronounce consciousness.

⁵⁴ There is, of course, a significant difference to Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of ‘distinction’ as explicated in his synonymous book from 1979: Bourdieu refers to a hierarchy of social classes and strata, not to the individual wishing to distinguish itself among its peers, as I do in the case of Koolhaas. And yet, the very urge to distinguish oneself vis-à-vis a specific group of people appears vital both for the dynamics I am referring to and Bourdieu’s theory of distinction.

On the use of some recurring terms

I will make ample use of the terms ‘fragmentation’, ‘postmodern architecture’ and ‘deconstructivist architecture’. Not the terms themselves but the phenomena they denote are central for my argument. As a general rule I will use them in the rather generic way they were used by Koolhaas himself at the time. To consider how he talked about these phenomena, appears necessary to understand how Koolhaas turned his declared opposition to postmodern and deconstructivist architecture into a means to distinguish his own stance as an architect within the contemporary scene of his peers. While rarely naming any architect or building in particular, Koolhaas’ writings, talks and statements – which I will quote and discuss in detail – do indicate the exhibitions, publications, ideas and architects he has in mind.⁵⁵ Among them are certainly seminal events like Charles Jencks’ book *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*, Rowe’s and Koetter’s *Collage City*, the Venice Biennale *The Presence of the Past* in 1980, the MoMA exhibition *Deconstructivist Architecture* in 1988, and the corollary publications and debates in the architectural press.⁵⁶ To the extent that the wish for distinction was a major motive to oppose them, the more apparent, recognizable features of these phenomena rather than a specific definition of the term must have been decisive for his thinking. Much of the work of Stirling, Moore, Hollein, Johnson, Graves, Stern, Portoghesi and Rossi from the 1970s and 1980s is likely to be part of what Koolhaas called ‘postmodernist’ during the eighties. The same applies to much of the work of Hadid, Tschumi, Eisenman, Coop Himmelblau, Libeskind, and Morphosis from the 1980s and 1990s with respect to Koolhaas’ use of the term ‘deconstructivist’. More recent re-evaluations of postmodernist architecture – by Reinhold Martin (*Utopia’s Ghost*), Emmanuel Petit (*Irony*), and Glenn

⁵⁵ By and large Koolhaas’ notion of postmodern architecture appears to be close to what Mary McLeod described as the most common understanding of the term in 1989: ‘The first, and still the most common, understanding of the term [postmodern architecture] refers to the tendency that rejects the formal and social constituents of the modern movement and embraces a broader formal language, which is frequently figurative and historically eclectic. [...] While advocates of postmodern architecture have often agreed more about what they reject than what they endorse, certain themes have been constantly explored: historical styles, regionalism, decoration, urban contextualism and morphologies, among others.’ Mary McLeod, ‘Architecture and Politics in the Reagan Era: From Postmodernism to Deconstructivism’, quoted from: K. Michael Hays (ed.), *Architecture Theory Since 1968* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2000), 680. The essay was first published in 1989.

⁵⁶ Charles Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (London: Academy Editions, 1977). Revised and expanded versions of the book were published in 1978, 1980, 1981, 1984, 1988 and 1991. Colin Rowe, Fred Koetter, *Collage City*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1978).

Adamson and Jane Pavitt (*Postmodernism: Style and Subversion 1970-1990*) – have been valuable sources for my research, above all with respect to those characteristics that OMA’s work from the 1980s *shares* with it, while providing additional clues regarding the relation of postmodern architecture and fragmentation.⁵⁷

As for the latter term – ‘fragmentation’ – I will use this in a metaphorical sense, not in the literal sense meaning the parts of a whole that is either incomplete or lost. With ‘fragmentation’ I refer to an ‘aesthetic motif’ in the sense that Mary McLeod once suggested with regard to deconstructivist architecture, explaining that ‘we use the word when designs look “fragmented”, not because they are literally broken.’⁵⁸ Heterogeneity, multiple diverse shapes, grids, constructions, materials, colours and connotations are the mark of what I understand by ‘fragmentation’ in this work. Nevertheless, I consider the metaphorical charge of fragmentation – and implicitly the relationship between part and whole – as essential for the comprehension of the Kunsthall. The discussion of these issues, too, will focus on the design and its context of origin, barely touching on the theory of the fragment and more global arguments like the relation between the fragment and modernity. The meanings of the fragment Linda Nochlin explicates in her lecture *The Body in Pieces* are contrary: either the fragment expresses nostalgia for a lost whole and the past it stands for, or commitment for a utopia to come; either the whole from which the fragment is taken is being mourned, or it was deliberately destroyed so as to make way for the new. But even the methodical fragmentation of everything – as Nochlin points out with regard to impressionist painting – might go along with the ‘will toward totalization’ and suggest a new whole.⁵⁹ At the Kunsthall each of these options appears to play a role in one way or another. Its fragmentation, like the building as a whole with its mannerisms and ostensive quotes, has something of a riddle that asks for being solved. The architecture of the Kunsthall, however, seems to leave ample

⁵⁷ Reinhold Martin, *Utopia’s Ghost. Architecture and Postmodernism, Again* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010). Glenn Adamson, Jane Pavitt, *Postmodernism: Style and Subversion 1970-1990* (London: V&A Publishing, 2011). The catalogue was published at the occasion of the synonymous exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

⁵⁸ Mary McLeod, “‘Order in the details’, “‘Tumult in the whole’”? Composition and Fragmentation in Le Corbusier’s Architecture’, in: Barry Bergdoll, Werner Oechslin (eds.), *Fragments. Architecture and the Unfinished. Essays Presented to Robin Middleton* (Thames & Hudson, 2006), 291, 316.

⁵⁹ Linda Nochlin, *The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001), 53. The lecture was held and published first in 1994.

space for diverse and downright contradictory interpretations. Certain traits appear ambiguous and continue to do so even when studied in depth and looked at ‘from all sides’.

With good reason the formal fragmentation of OMA’s early work has repeatedly been compared to collage and montage in art and film.⁶⁰ Parallels in terms of form and technique to the artistic production in the respective fields are obvious, and in my study I will use analogies of this kind as a point of reference. The terms ‘collage’ and ‘montage’ will refer to the example of well-known works of art rather than to definitions provided by the theory of art and film. The distinction between collage and photomontage on the one hand and filmic montage on the other is evident: whereas the first two unfold in space, the second unfolds in time; whereas collage and photomontage are largely composed of fragments, the single frames of filmic montage tend to be complete entities in themselves, even if some show collages or montages. Applied to architecture, the comparison with collage and photomontage implies to look at the building – or distinct parts of it like a façade or a space – in its totality in analogy to the contemplation of a picture, whereas the comparison with filmic montage puts the accent on the sequential experience of the spectator in motion. Collage and photomontage, in turn, are distinguished from one another, above all, by the difference of the material used. In *Montage and the Metropolis* Martino Stierli writes:

[...] collages draw their force from the inclusion of objects or object fragments from outside the confines of art; montages, on the other hand, use generally photographic representations of objects or images rather than the objects themselves. [...] Collage is symptomatic of a crisis of representation, directly representing fragments of reality rather than re-presenting them, whereas montage is the affirmation of the work of art in the age of technological reproducibility.⁶¹

⁶⁰ For instance: Stierli, *Montage and the Metropolis*; Cynthia Davidson, ‘Koolhaas and the Kunsthall: History Lesions’, *ANY* 21 (1997), 36-41; Kanekar, ‘Space of Montage’; Mathieu Berteloot, Véronique Patteeuw, ‘OMA’s Collages’, in: *OMA. The First Decade*, 66-74. Wilfried Wang, ‘Drawing together the different perspectives of the Seattle Central Library’, in: Conroy Dalton, Hölscher, *Take one Building*, 207-208. Occasional comparisons of single projects by OMA to a collage recur throughout the literature.

⁶¹ Martino Stierli, *Montage and the Metropolis*, 18.

Both techniques were significant for OMA's architectural production of the 1980s, also as means of representation, that is, in a literal sense. Interiors were rendered as a Miesian combination of perspective drawing and photographic cut-outs, elevations were built as full-fledged collages. Both techniques did resonate with OMA's architectural approach of this period. The Kunsthall as design, however, appears more closely related to collage than to (photo-)montage. Like collage as understood by Stierli, the Kunsthall is less figurative than montage. The Kunsthall, and the designs from the 1980s in general, confront the observer with artefacts that – like scraps of wall paper, newspaper, or table cloth – do not necessarily represent something they are not, and certainly not in the easily accessible manner of a photograph.

Part 1

1.1

An enormous impatience

OMA in 1987

According to the statistics in *S,M,L,XL*, OMA in 1987 was a medium size office with about thirty-five collaborators, the number increasing more or less constantly to approximately 67 in 1992.¹ In 1987 OMA was involved in more than a dozen projects, comprising competitions, studies and buildings, which together are likely to have required a workforce of more than thirty people. There were the competitions for the science park 'Scientopia' in Rotterdam, the Biocenter in Frankfurt, and the masterplan of Melun-Sénart in France as well as the commissioned studies for the Rotterdam Kunsthall, the renovation of the Bijlmermeer area in Amsterdam (1986-87), the Eusebius Tower in Arnhem, and the office park 'De Vendel' in Veenendaal near Utrecht.² In April the Bus Terminal in Rotterdam (1985-87), and in September, the Netherlands Dance Theatre in The Hague (1981-87) were opened.³ Most of the IJ Plein housing in Amsterdam was completed by the end of the year (1981-87), followed by an associated community centre and shops, two Patio-Houses in Rotterdam (1984-88), and two residential towers in Groningen (1983-88) in 1988.⁴ Three more projects were either under construction or to be constructed soon: the 13.000 square metres development for mixed use at Veerleplein in Vlaardingen (1986-89), the 15.000 square metres Byzantium complex in Amsterdam (1985-91), likewise for mixed use, and the Villa Dall'Ava in Paris (1984-91).⁵

¹ Rem Koolhaas, Bruce Mau, *S,M,L,XL* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1995), opening endsheets. The figures vary significantly according to the source. The catalogue of the 1988 OMA exhibition at deSingel in Antwerp lists a total of only 26 collaborators: 21 in Rotterdam, 3 in London and 2 in Athens. In: Carolina De Backer (ed.), *Office for Metropolitan Architecture*, exhibition catalogue (Antwerp: deSingel, 1988), 6. Fuminori Hoshino recalls OMA Rotterdam having a workforce of about 25 when he joined the office in 1988. Interview with the author on 22 September 2017. Mike Guyer, who worked at OMA between 1984 and 1987, remembers almost 50 people being employed when he left the office. Interview with the author on 22 May 2020.

² The study De Vendel is one of at least a dozen literally unknown projects OMA has been involved in during the 1980s. The dossiers of several projects are held by the HNI. Like the apartment towers in Groningen and the House in Holten (1992-95), De Vendel was commissioned by the developer Geerlings. The project did not materialize. See: OMAR 4147, 1986, 1988.

³ Tomaso and Brigitta Zanoni et al. (eds.), *Office for Metropolitan Architecture. Arbeiten 1972-1988*, exhibition catalogue. (Basel: Architekturmuseum Basel, 1988).

⁴ For detailed information on the schedule of the IJ Plein development, see: *ibid.* The catalogue also mentions an urban study for Groningen and a commission for an office building in Utrecht.

⁵ The OMA building at Checkpoint Charlie in Berlin (1981-90), under construction since 1987, was not developed by the Rotterdam office, the partner in charge being Elia Zenghelis.

Chapter 1.1

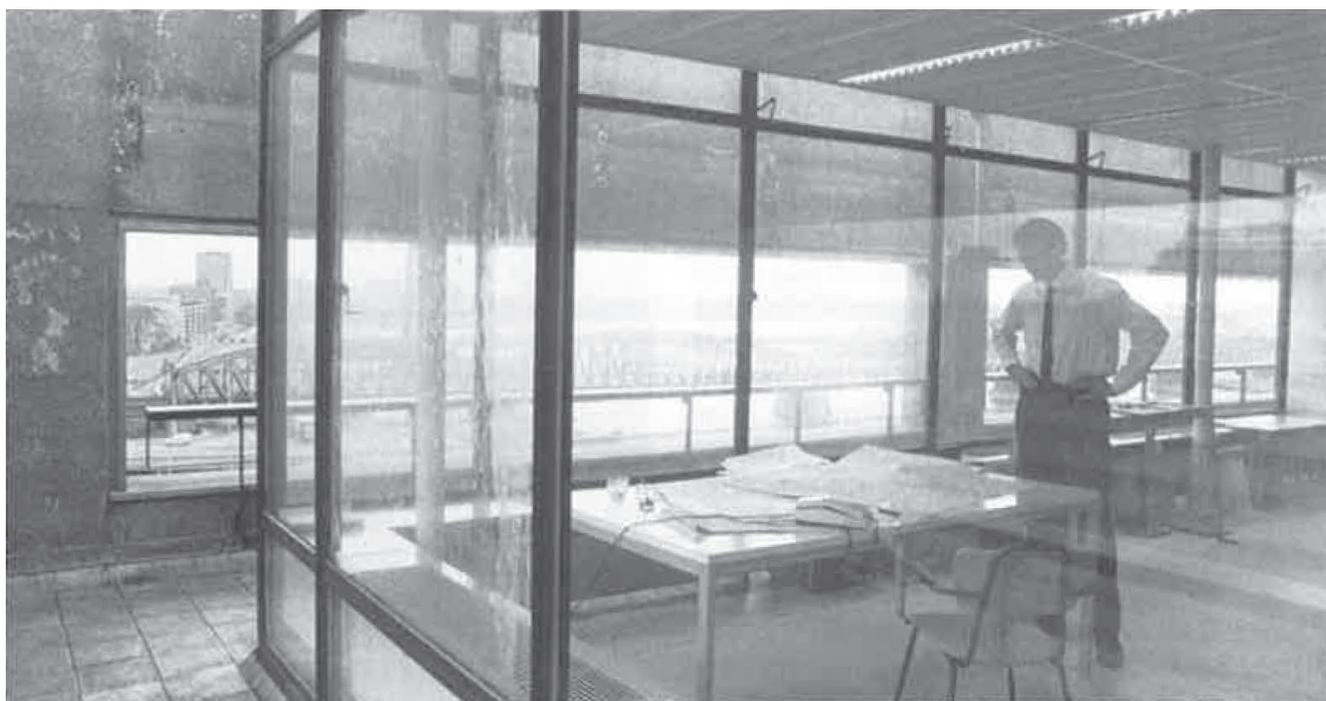


Figure 1. Rem Koolhaas in his office at Boompjes 55, Rotterdam. 1987.

The office had moved in the mid-eighties from the premises in Scheepmakerskade to the top floor of Boompjes 55, a nondescript modernist office building from the 1960s overlooking the Maas River in the area of Rotterdam's old harbour.⁶ [Figure 1] The partnership with Elia Zenghelis, who headed OMA's London office, and the other two founding members of OMA – Zoe Zenghelis and Madelon Vriesendorp – came to an end. Ever since Koolhaas started the Rotterdam office in 1980, the collaboration with Zenghelis became sporadic. The Parisian schemes for the La Villette Park (1982-83), the 1989 Universal Exhibition (1983), and the park Citroën-Cevennes (1985) were the last OMA projects Zenghelis was involved in. Elia Zenghelis – along with his wife Zoe and Koolhaas' wife Vriesendorp – would still occasionally be listed as a partner in the following years, and the Berlin project at Checkpoint Charlie (1981-90) under his aegis would be completed only five years later.⁷ But apparently the actual collaboration with Koolhaas ended in 1985.⁸ Koolhaas' business partners in 1987 were architect Ron Steiner and Kees Christiaanse, a graduate from the Technical University in Delft who had joined OMA Rotterdam in 1980 at its inception, and who had become an associate in 1983 after the tragic death of Koolhaas's first partner Jan Voorberg.⁹

⁶ Mike Guyer in an interview with the author on 22 May 2020.

⁷ In an exhibition catalogue from 1988 Elia Zenghelis figures as a partner, while his wife and Vriesendorp are listed as collaborators. De Backer, *Office for Metropolitan Architecture*, 6. Likewise, the addresses of the OMA London and Athens are listed on OMA's writing paper, e.g. in a letter from April 1988; OMAR 3267.

⁸ In a lecture from 2009 Elia Zenghelis recalls to have left OMA in 1985. Zenghelis, 'The 1970s and the Beginning of OMA', Lecture at the Berlage Institute held on 24 November 2009. (http://www.theberlage.nl/galleries/videos/watch/2009_11_24_the_1970s_and_the_beginning_of_oma). The date has been confirmed by Zoe Zenghelis. Asked in 2014 when Elia Zenghelis stopped working with OMA, she replied: 'When he met Elena. She was working with the office, and she's Elia's wife now. She got Elia to help her with her thesis in 1985. That's when he left London.' Clog, 'Interview with Madelon Vriesendorp and Zoe Zenghelis', *Clog Rem* (2014), 22. In an interview from 2015 Koolhaas recalls, referring to the Boompjes project from 1980: 'It was the moment of separation between Elia Zenghelis and myself. The Dutch parliament project was still a collaboration, while the prison one was already just us. The separation was never about issues, it was just that it became difficult to work on the emergence of an architecture office, as a team.' Léa-Catherine Szacka, 'Translucent oppositions. OMA's proposal for the 1980 Venice Architecture Biennale' *OASE* #94 (2015), <https://www.oasejournal.nl/en/Issues/94/TranslucentOppositions>. Accessed 23 October 2019.

⁹ Interview with the author on 14 April 2020. Both are listed as partners in the catalogue from 1988. De Backer, *Office for Metropolitan Architecture*, 6. According to Mike Guyer, Christiaanse used to be the office manager, while being responsible for numerous acquisitions. Interview with the author on 22 May 2020.

Chapter 1.1

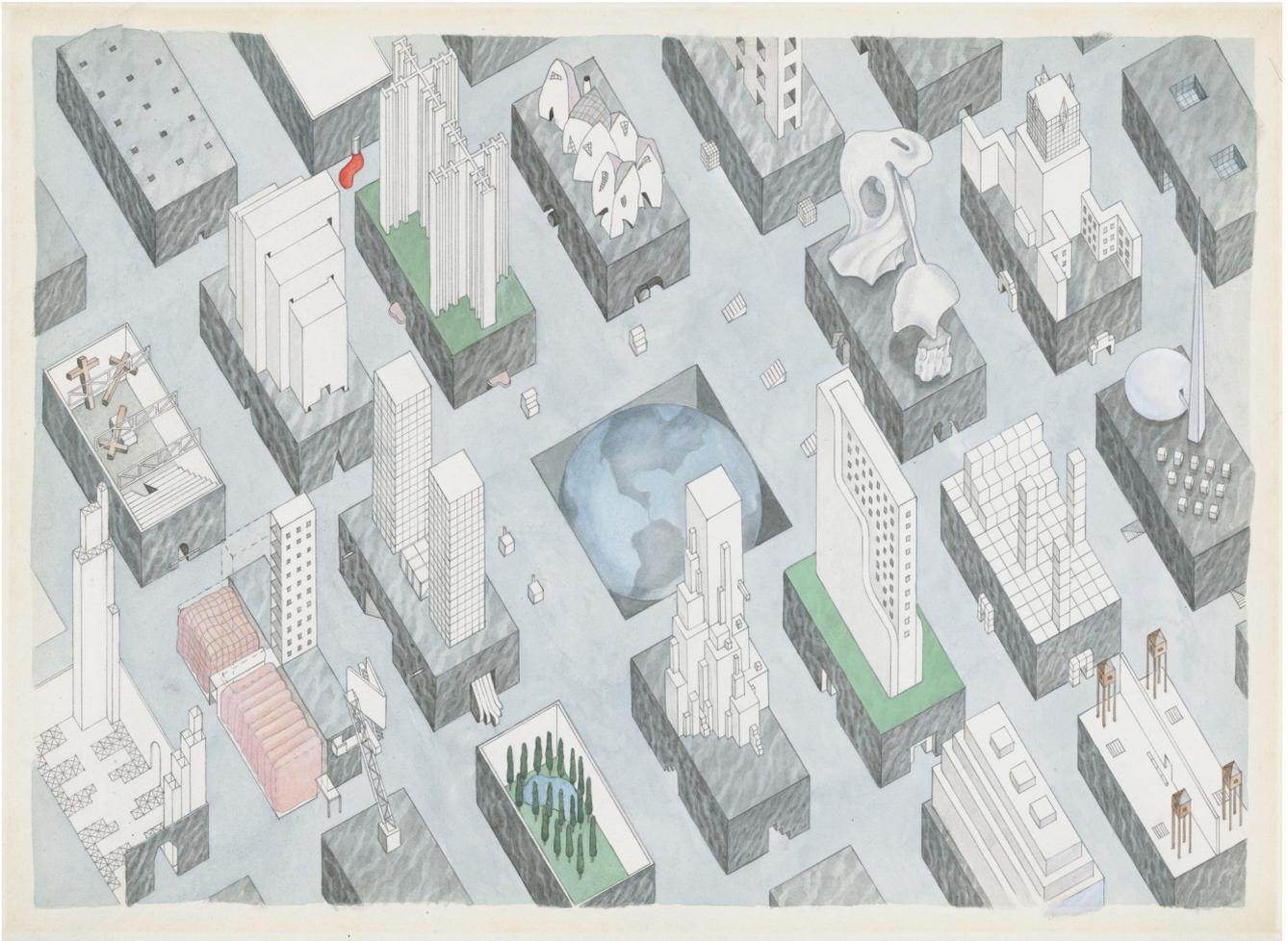


Figure 2. Above: Rem Koolhaas, Madelon Vriesendorp, The City of the Captive Globe, 1972. Gouache and graphite on paper. Below: The picture at the exhibition 'Architectural Studies and Projects' at the MoMA New York in 1975. Sold for \$750.

Drawings and nothing else

During the 1980s OMA was renowned for the beauty and refinement of its renderings and a series of sensational competition entries, namely the proposal for the La Villette Park in Paris. Koolhaas, in turn, had made a name for himself as the author of *Delirious New York* and as a critical voice on contemporary architecture.¹⁰ By contrast, building, for OMA, was a relatively new terrain. The work the firm had produced between its founding in 1975 and the first half of the 1980s widely coincided with what commonly figured in contemporaneous reviews as ‘paper architecture’. The phrase does not only indicate the (relative) absence of built work, but also an architectural production that essentially relies on drawings in the widest sense. In a lecture from 2009 Elia Zenghelis explained: ‘We had become known because of our drawings and nothing else. We had not built anything. So we very heavily relied on drawing and drawing technique, and how to communicate through drawings. [...] Drawing, for us, that was our work.’ Asked whether drawings served also as means to communicate *within* the office, Zenghelis replies: ‘Yes, absolutely. I mean, many drawings we just did for ourselves.’¹¹

Jordan Kauffman, in his recent book *Drawing on Architecture*, explicates how the architectural drawing gained the status of an autonomous object of architecture during the 1970s and 1980s.¹² As Kauffman shows, the development was propelled by the simultaneous rise of architectural publications and emergence of private galleries that sold architectural drawings, either exclusively or on a regular basis. OMA’s drawings were shown at Max Protetch in New York (1978-), Aedes in Berlin (1980-) and Van Rooy in Amsterdam (1980-90) – next to work by Rossi, Grassi, Ungers, Kleihues, Krier, Tschumi, Coop Himmelblau, Hadid, Venturi, Eisenman, Libeskind, Hejduk, Graves, Stern, Gehry, Isozaki, and Ando. [Figure 2] In parallel institutions like the Canadian Center for Architecture in Montreal (CCA), the Deutsches Architekturmuseum in Frankfurt (DAM), and the Getty Center in Los Angeles began to

¹⁰ Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York. A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*, (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1994); first published at Oxford University Press, New York in 1978.

¹¹ Zenghelis, ‘The 1970s and the Beginning of OMA’.

¹² Jordan Kauffman, *Drawing on Architecture. The Object of Lines, 1970-1990* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2018).

purchase, collect and exhibit contemporary architectural drawings. Quoting gallerist Max Protetch, Kauffman suggests that at some point the new market created a dynamic of its own:

As time progressed [...] Protetch found that architects began ‘speaking like artists and insiting on doing a show’, by which Protetch meant that they began to prepare works specifically for display, of their productions as gallery pieces rather than as evidence of their critical practices. ‘It was every one, right from Graves through Isozaki, Zaha, and Rem.’¹³

Doom and gloom

While the emerging market of architectural drawings created a dynamic of its own, the reticence with regard to building – or differently put: a diminished urge to actually implement one’s plans and ideas – seems to correspond to a profound and multifaceted disillusionment in large parts of the world during those years. The creation of a better society based on socialist ideas and technological progress, which had appeared within reach to the pioneers of modernism, must have seemed remote and partly discredited by the 1970s. Hopes for societal and political reform saw a broad violent backlash in 1968 with the Soviet invasion in Prague, the assassination of Martin Luther King in Memphis, and the shooting of Rudi Dutschke in Berlin, among other things. Western countries began to realize that the economic boom in the wake of World War II came to an end. That applies first of all to the US: ‘In 1970 the Japanese economy grew 10.7 percent, and the West German 2.6 percent. The US economy grew only 0.5 percent.’¹⁴ Alarmed by the low domestic growth rates and the rise of the competing economies in Asia and western Europe, the Nixon government took a step which would lastingly destabilize the global economy:

In 1971 the US government acted to defend its own economic interest. By abruptly suspending the fixed rate of exchanging dollars for gold, it in effect devaluated the US dollar against other currencies, helping American exporters and domestic business. It thereby deliberately

¹³ Ibid., 238.

¹⁴ Odd Arne Westad, *The Cold War. A World History* (London: Allan Lane, 2018), 396.

destroyed the Bretton Woods system, in which most other currencies had been pegged to the dollar at a fixed exchange rate.¹⁵

Historian Ivan Berend comments: ‘The main stabilizer of the postwar financial economic system was eliminated and the burden was shifted to the allies.’¹⁶ The oil crisis of 1973 further exposed the economic vulnerability of western economies. Both in the US and in western Europe, the 1970s were marked by ‘stagflation’ (stagnation of markets and inflation) and unemployment. Historian Odd Arne Westad characterizes the economic and political climate in the US prior to the Reagan era as follows:

Economic growth was sluggish and inflation higher than it had been for three decades, reaching 13 percent toward the end of the decade. The Ford Administration’s critics started using the term ‘stagflation’, symbolizing all that was wrong with the US economy. Although almost all major economies experienced the same combination of low growth and high inflation during the 1970s, critics of the US Administration presented it as if it were a particular US phenomenon, and a telltale sign of Washington’s weakness vis-à-vis other countries. In reality, stagflation was the product of free floating currencies, globalization of capital and investment, increasing raw material prizes, and, over time, increasing international competition. Gradually, these developments would actually help the US economy to recover faster than many others. But seen from the mid-seventies all seemed to be doom and gloom.¹⁷

Films like *Mad Max* by Gorge Miller (1979) and Ridley Scott’s *Blade Runner* (1982) bespeak a notion of the future that stands in sharp contrast to the optimism of the post war era, common prosperity and the welfare state. In *Blade Runner* – as in *Westworld* by Michael Chrichton (1973) and James Camron’s *Terminator* (1984) – technology might turn against humans; in Terry Gilliam’s *Brazil* (1985), its blessings are caricatured as monstrous, reframing the enthusiasms of the ‘long boom’. [Figure 3]

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ivan T. Berend, *The History of European Integration. A new perspective* (London: Routledge, 2016), 105.

¹⁷ Westad, *The Cold War*, 487.

Chapter 1.1



Figure 3. Messerschmitt Kabinenroller (Cabine Scooter), 1953-64.
Above: Terry Gilliam, *Brazil*, 1985, film still. Below: Actress Nadja Tiller in 1957 with her Messerschmitt KR 200.

An astonishingly homogeneous milieu

In a talk from 1981, Stanislaus von Moos describes the dissociation of architecture from the realm of building as a typical shortcoming of postmodernism: ‘The discussion on the so-called post-modern architecture regards above all ‘paper’ architecture and journalism. It allows critiques, editors and architects to compensate the lack of direct contact with the shaping of the environment’.¹⁸ In his talk von Moos argues against a debate that pivots around the alleged opposition between modern and postmodern architecture, drawing explicitly on Bernard Huet’s ‘Small Manifesto’ from 1978.¹⁹ The common point of reference of both Huet and von Moos is Walter Benjamin’s ‘The Author as Producer’ from 1934, a lecture in which Benjamin identifies the goal to transform the proper realm of production and, implicitly, society as the ultimate goal and yardstick of any artistic production. Von Moos, however, saw ‘the lack of direct contact with the shaping of the environment’ as a chance due to the autonomy it allows for: a chance not to interfere but to comment on the crisis of the industrial society. After all, von Moos seemed to share Tafuri’s view that ‘there is no hope for architecture to influence structures or relations of production’, expressed in his essay ‘The Ashes of Jefferson’ from 1976.²⁰ The example of Jefferson – the architect-politician who shapes society through building – belonged to a past that appeared lost.

In analogy to Benjamin’s argument, von Moos turns towards the relations of production the respective opponents of the modern-postmodern debate are part of. He infers that both sides belong to ‘an astonishingly homogeneous milieu’, ultimately reaffirming their common sphere of production:

¹⁸ Stanislaus von Moos, ‘Les refusés du post-modernisme’, *techniques & architecture* 339 (1981), 104 (author trans.). The article was published at the occasion of the 1981 exhibition the ‘Présence de l’histoire’ in Paris – a revised version of the exhibition ‘La presenza del passato’ shown at the 1980 Biennale in Venice.

¹⁹ Bernard Huet, ‘Small manifesto’, in: Léon Krier et al., *Rational Architecture. The Reconstruction of the European City* (Brussels: Editions des Archives d’Architecture Moderne, 1978), 54.

²⁰ Manfredo Tafuri, ‘The Ashes of Jefferson’, in: Idem, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth. Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1990) 293. The essay was published first in 1976 in *L’architecture d’Aujourd’hui*.

[a milieu] of ‘theoretician’ architects, members of the architectural haute couture, based at universities and manifesting themselves through a number of international magazines considered ‘avant-garde.’ Seen from the outside, not only Rossi resembles Venturi and Stirling resembles Van Eyck; seen from the outside, Charles Jencks, Bruno Zevi, Léon Krier, Manfredo Tafuri, Paul Chemetov, Claude Schnaidt, is essentially the same thing. They are ‘theorists’ who assure through their activities the functioning of architecture as an intellectual affair.²¹

It is also the milieu in which Koolhaas sought to distinguish, position, and assert himself as an architect, author and intellectual. Although von Moos put the work of OMA forward as a counter-example to the narrow mindedness of postmodernist orthodoxy, the above sociological profile applied to Koolhaas very well. OMA, in 1981, had literally built nothing, and it would take another four years for a first interior to materialize.²² Koolhaas was well connected with academic institutions. He had been a visiting fellow at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies (IAUS) in New York until 1979, and since the mid-seventies he occasionally taught at Delft University and the AA School of Architecture in London.²³ The dissemination of his ideas and theoretical projects and those that did not materialize was largely owed to publications in leading intellectually sophisticated architecture magazines, such as *Oppositions*, *Lotus*, *Casabella*, *Architectural Design*, *L’architecture d’Aujourd’hui* and *Archithese*, amongst others.

As it seems, during the first half of the seventies OMA’s abstention from building was largely in tune with what Koolhaas intended to do as an architect. His last project at the AA School of Architecture, ‘Exodus, or The Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture’ (1971-72), was as remote from the chance of being built as were the speculative projects by Archigram, Superstudio and Archizoom. The aloofness from the realm of building was consciously taken into account, even if the project was conceived as a

²¹ Stanislaus von Moos, ‘Les refusés du post-modernisme’, 104 (author trans.).

²² The interior of the Lintas Offices in Amsterdam (1984-85) was OMA’s first implemented project.

²³ Lucan, *OMA - Rem Koolhaas*, 168.

criticism of contemporary architectural utopias and their naive optimism.²⁴ In retrospect Koolhaas calls *Delirious New York* along with the projects – by himself and other members – shown in the book’s fictional conclusion ‘aggressively realistic’.²⁵ In fact, the book’s demonstrative confrontation between unfulfilled European utopias and realized American dreams prepared some ideological ground for the commitment to building. But neither Koolhaas’ Exodus project, nor any of OMA’s projects shown in *Delirious New York* aimed seriously at building. That he abandoned the AA School of Architecture in London in 1980 while starting the Rotterdam office in the same year, appears as a turning point, reflecting Koolhaas’ determination to end for OMA the era of ‘paper architecture’.²⁶

During the 1970s and 1980s many of Koolhaas’ peers, including those he had worked with most closely, were in a similar situation. Oswald M. Ungers, chairman of the department of architecture at Cornell University from 1969 to 1975²⁷, had not built for more than ten years after the traumatizing experience of the Märkisches Viertel housing (1962-67) until the apartment building at Schillerstrasse in Berlin, completed in 1979. Peter Eisenman, one of the initiators of the IAUS and director of the institute until 1981, refrained from building for several years after his House VI in Connecticut (1972-75). Apart from the ‘unofficial’ project for the Madison Components Plant (1981-82), his first realized projects after the recess were the apartment building at Checkpoint Charlie (1981-85) and the firehouse in Brooklyn (1983-85).²⁸ Bernard Tschumi had taught at the AA in London and the IAUS, and he would become Dean of Columbia University in 1988. In the same year the first stage of his first project, the La Villette park in Paris, was to be completed. In an interview with Alvin Boyarsky he recalls that until 1976 he

²⁴ In 1988, Koolhaas recalls that architecture ‘then could be books, drawings, stories and in some cases even buildings. The tone in contents of these productions was anti-historical, relentlessly optimistic and ultimately innocent.’; in: Rem Koolhaas, ‘Sixteen Years of OMA’, in: Lucan, *OMA - Rem Koolhaas*, 162.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ See: Gargiani, *The Construction of Merveilles*, 90. According to Kees Christiaanse, the decision was preceded by the prospect of three commissions: ‘One was the prison in Arnhem, one was the IJ Plein, and one was the Boompjes building in Rotterdam.’ Interview with the author on 14 April 2020. Unlike the IJ Plein project, OMA’s proposals for Boompjes and the Arnhem prison did not materialize.

²⁷ Martin Kieren, *Oswald Mathias Ungers* (Zurich: Artemis Verlag, 1994), 241.

²⁸ Pippo Ciorra, *Peter Eisenman. Bauten und Projekte* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1995), 217. Publications on Eisenman’s oeuvre consistently exclude the project for the Madison Components Plant. The same applies to his website (<http://www.eisenmanarchitects.com>). Accessed 22 June 2018.

'had not been designing for seven years.'²⁹ Zaha Hadid, a former student of Koolhaas and Zenghelis who became their associate for a brief period, taught at the AA School of Architecture between 1980 and 1987, succeeding them as directors of Diploma Unit 9.³⁰ A couple of minor works aside, her first realized buildings would be the IBA housing project in Berlin (1986-93) and the Vitra fire station in Weil am Rhein (1990-93).³¹ Daniel Libeskind, who had been a research assistant at the IAUS and started teaching at the AA School of Architecture in parallel with Koolhaas, was the director of the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan from 1978 to 1985, and a Senior Scholar at the Getty Foundation from 1986 to 1989.³² The Jewish Museum, in Berlin (1989-99) was his first commission to materialize.

The absence of built work was partly the consequence of a production that never had been really conceived for immediate application, such as the Roma interrotta projects from 1978, Rossi's Citta analoga from 1976, Unger's *City in the City* from 1977, Tschumi's *Manhattan Transcripts* from 1978, Libeskind's Micromegas from 1979 and almost all the projects in a 1977 issue of *Architectural Design* on OMA.³³ Libeskind's Chamber Works from 1983, provoked Robin Evans to speculate sarcastically about a possible disappearance of the edifice: 'The building can be discarded as an unfortunate aftermath, and all the values that are worth keeping can be held in the drawing'.³⁴ In 1988, Mark Wigley would observe, referring to the exhibition *Deconstructivist Architecture* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York: 'For most of the architects the commitment to building is a recent shift that has completely

²⁹ Alvin Boyarsky, 'Interview between Alvin Boyarsky and Bernard Tschumi', in: Bernard Tschumi, *La Case Vide. La Villette 1985* (London: Architectural Association, 1986), 22.

³⁰ Editorial staff, 'biography', *El Croquis* 52 (1995), 5. Hadid on her relation with OMA: 'I was their student for two years and I was their partner for six months. I never worked for them. ... The personalities did not quite gel. Not Elia so much but I and Rem were in a way too similar. I suppose I found it difficult to enter a situation which is already established. My relation with OMA is more fundamental than working with them. There is almost a non-visible dialogue between us, we remain very close friends, Rem and I, we talk a lot.' Richard Levene, Fernando Márquez Cecilia, 'Interview with Zaha Hadid', *El Croquis* 52 (1995), 10. See also: Gargiani, *The Construction of Merveilles*, 56.

³¹ Zaha Hadid, *Zaha Hadid. Das Gesamtwerk*, (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1998), 38, 62. Her first realized projects were: Cathcart Road 24 (1986-87), an interior for a private house in London; the interior of the Moonsoon restaurant in Sapporo (1989-90); the outdoor sculpture Folly 3 for the Expo '90 in Osaka (1990) and a music video pavilion in Groningen (1990); see: *Ibid.* 30, 56, 60.

³² Daniel Libeskind, *Daniel Libeskind. Counterdesign* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), 139.

³³ *Architectural Design* vol.47/ no.5 (1977).

³⁴ Robin Evans, 'In Front of Lines That Leave Nothing Behind', in: Hays, *Architecture Theory Since 1968*, 488.

changed the tone of their work.³⁵ Wigley ascribes to the projects on show – by Libeskind, Eisenman, Tschumi, and Koolhaas, among others – a critical and subversive dimension, which, he reasons, is due to the fact that the designs are buildable or meant to be built: ‘The projects are radical, precisely because they do not play in the sanctuaries of drawing, or theory, or sculpture. They inhabit the realm of building.’³⁶ These considerations, pronounced in his essay included in the catalogue, provoked Catherine Ingraham in her review to ridicule the architects’ fear of being excluded from building:

This comment [by Wigley] about buildability seems meant to soothe the conscience of architects who are terrified by ‘paper architecture’ – terrified because paper architecture seems so facile, so informal, so promiscuous, so without apotheosis to which all architecture aspires. But, as we know, it is precisely the (failed) aspiration for totality, completion, and objecthood that has given way to the contemporary era in architecture – in some way the unbuildability of all architecture, the ‘paperiness’ of all architecture.³⁷

Both Wigley’s statement and Ingraham’s reply bespeak to what degree it appeared disputable within academic circles, whether architects were expected to build at all.

A snapshot from 1982

Léon Krier in 1980 categorically remarked: ‘Nowadays I cannot build because I am an architect.’³⁸ Krier, who in the mid-seventies had taught at the AA School of Architecture temporarily in parallel with Tschumi, Libeskind and Koolhaas, declared the abstinence from building a claim of moral integrity. His anti-consumerism, the air of Marxist radicalism, the uniform vision of city and society, and the utopian distance from the status quo resulting in a self-imposed restraint from built architecture, is not without awkward analogies to the revolutionary positions of the Situationists and Superstudio.

³⁵ Mark Wigley, ‘Deconstructivist Architecture’, in: Philip Johnson, Mark Wigley (eds.), *Deconstructivist Architecture*, exhibition catalogue (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1988), 19.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

³⁷ Catherine Ingraham, ‘Milking Deconstruction or Cow was the Show?’, *Inland Architect* 5 (1988), 65.

³⁸ Léon Krier, Maurice Culot, *Leon Krier: Drawings 1967-1980*, (Brussels: Archives d’Architecture Moderne, 1980), 82.



Figure 4. Conference in Charlottesville, 1982.

But the city Krier envisions is preindustrial, suggesting – not only visually – a return to the pre-bourgeois society. At the architecture conference in Charlottesville from 1982 [Figure 4], he prophesized to those present at the gathering who would not resist the temptation of profit-driven large scale commissions: ‘To you I say, you will burn in hell for what you are doing, because it is wrong and you know it is wrong!’³⁹ The statement was preceded by Philip Johnson’s and John Burgee’s presentation of a 180.000 square metres ‘International Palace’ in Boston. The project, located in what used to be a low rise neighborhood, included two 180 metres high office towers. Johnson brushed aside the persisting criticism of his colleagues, retorting: ‘I am a whore and I am paid very well for building high-rise buildings.’⁴⁰ Jaquelin Robertson, one of the organizers of the event who to some extent shared Krier’s position, lamented a new uncritical surrender of the architect to the forces of the private sector:

Interestingly, the once-hated developer has become our hero, and we have followed him as uncritically as any emperor, king, or bishop of the past, to the point where we architects find ourselves assisting in the privatization of the public realm and helping to turn our cities into a series of ‘high-amenity,’ isolated enclaves, competing commercial islands in a vast urban neglect.⁴¹

Robertson referred to architects in the US and Japan, and, implicitly, to the large scale project, but he suspected that also Europe was not immune to its temptations: ‘Ironically, it seems that when Europeans do get the “big chance” they become, overnight, equally American – i.e. equally commercial.’⁴² Obviously Robertson had in mind Ungers 60.000 square metres office tower for the fairground in Frankfurt, which he was the first to comment, comparing the project to a ‘cigar-cutter or guillotine’.⁴³ Philip Johnson, startled, commented ‘This could be in Kansas City’, insinuating that the project had undesirable American qualities, and he reminded Ungers with wistful nostalgia of his first house,

³⁹ Jaquelin Robertson (ed.), *The Charlottesville Tapes*, (New York: Rizzoli, 1985), 22.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴¹ Jaquelin Robertson, ‘Introduction. Setting the Scene’, in: *Idem, The Charlottesville Tapes*, 9.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴³ Robertson, *The Charlottesville Tapes*, 67.

‘small’ and ‘full of fantasy’.⁴⁴ Eisenman, too, assuring his general esteem for Unger’s work, pressed on the problem of size, calling the tower ‘a small scale idea made gigantic.’⁴⁵ In the subsequent outburst, provoked by Krier’s criticism, Ungers pronounced his new commitment to building: ‘I decided to go back to practice, get my fingers dirty, and work with those big developers. And I wish you [i.e. Léon Krier] would do the same. Then we can talk again. But at this level we can’t.’⁴⁶

Many projects were harshly criticized, especially the large ones, such as Henry Cobb’s 175.000 square metres Fountain Place in Dallas, and a 90.000 square metres project for San Antonio by Michael Graves. For the most part the architects presenting their work were unable to stir enthusiasm among their colleagues, even if there were exceptions, like Moneo showing the Museum of Roman art in Mérida, or César Pelli with a project for a tower in New Orleans. Koolhaas’ project for the Dance Theatre in Scheveningen earns an empathic, respectful comment by Moneo, who speculates that OMA’s approach ‘might be a valuable alternative for the present time.’ But for Moneo everything depends on the ‘proof’ of the built work, and Robert Stern hooks up: ‘This tends to be a problem of drawn architecture: the actual building is not nearly so captivating.’⁴⁷

When asked about his reserve towards nostalgia, Koolhaas unexpectedly seemed to criticize the conference as a whole, the nostalgia ‘hanging heavy in this room for two days’. Koolhaas explained what kind of nostalgia he had in mind. Not nostalgia for

any particular style or any particular period, but nostalgia for an order, for a specific role for architecture, for the role of the architect as some kind of gentleman who appears and unfolds a drawing. I find that kind of nostalgia very unhealthy because it forces us to take part in these

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 72.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 73.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 186.

gloomy gatherings, where nothing is right, everything is a mess, and we have to make beautifully noble statements.⁴⁸

Given the deep involvement with the ‘mess’ of the majority of the participants and the down-to-earth tone and anti-ideological attitude displayed by Johnson, Koolhaas’ criticism seems rather out of place. Perhaps its actual target were the Krier brothers, Léon Krier in the first place, whose ethical agenda forbid him and others to engage with profit oriented developers and their inappropriate briefs. The ‘gentleman’ Koolhaas has in mind is an architect producing his oeuvre aloof from the world as it is, thus reducing his sphere of influence to the attention of his colleagues.

Koolhaas’ disgust of this attitude must have been in direct proportion to his own urge to build. To Koolhaas, Moneo’s lesson was redundant by now, and Moneo was neither the first nor the last to wonder how OMA might translate its drawings into construction. In an interview from 1985 Patrice Goulet wondered how the abstract quality of the OMA renderings might be translated into built architecture. Koolhaas answered uncomfortably: ‘The problem right now is that our projects are not built yet and that they lend themselves to all sorts of speculations ...’⁴⁹ Generally speaking, the questions raised by critics concerned the relation between drawing and building, and likewise between writing and building, taking both drawing and writing, above all *Delirious New York*, as a promise.

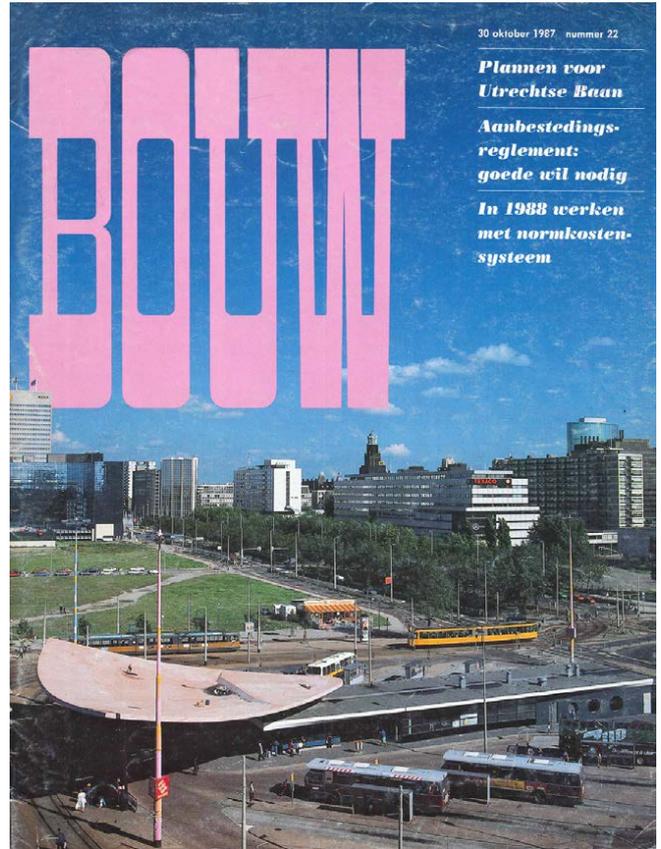
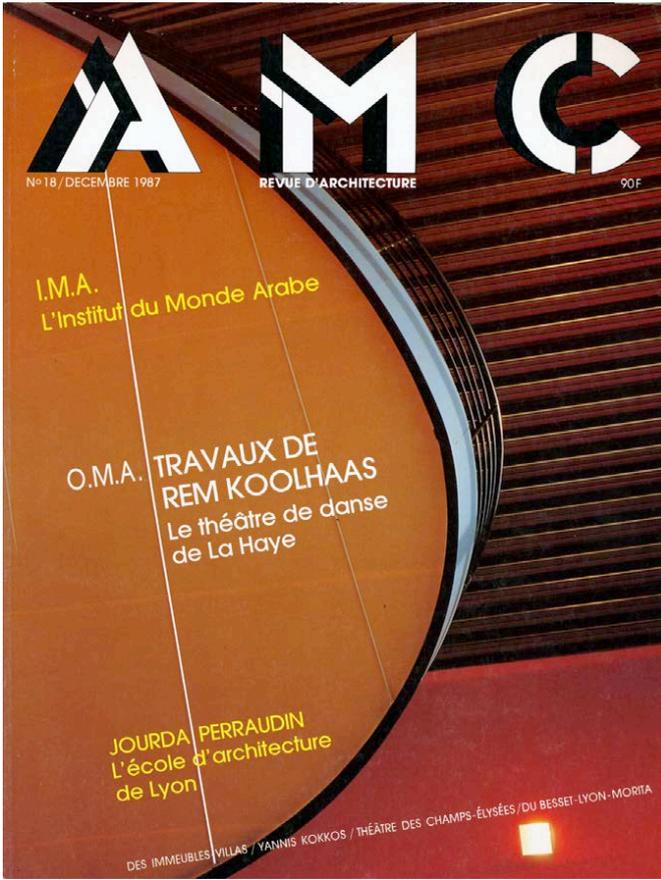
First buildings, first reviews

Meanwhile OMA produced the first build results. [Figure 5] Both the police station in Almere and the interior of the Lintas offices in Amsterdam were completed in 1985, and by 1986 an almost un-known apartment block at Frederiksstraat, facing Vondelpark in Amsterdam.⁵⁰ Together with the apartment towers in Groningen (1983-88), the development for mixed use at Veerplein in Vlaardingen (1986-89),

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Goulet, ‘La deuxième chance de l’architecture moderne ...’, 8 (author trans.). On this subject, see: Gerrewey, ‘Goodbye Paper’.

⁵⁰ The building which still exists has been mentioned by Kees Christiaanse and Toni Adam who both were in charge of the project. Interviews with the author on 14 April 2020 (Christiaanse) and 25 September 2018 (Adam).



Medicine Steigeng

Not without a scratch

In 1986 a police station was opened in Almere-Haven. It is the first realized design of Rem Koolhaas' young architectural firm, the Office for Metropolitan Architecture. The high reputation raised by the office have not been lived up to, they even lead to an anti-climax. Besides being a living translation of the organization of the various police activities in the station, there are other aspects of the realized design which do not stand the test of criticism. This location is anomalous, the concept is dead, the job does not work, and the building is only photographed when photograph is creating weight. The building is literally shaking, there are cracks in the walls. We have lost an illusion: Dutch architecture will not be saved by O.M.A. either.

Kleerscheuren

In 1986 is in Almere-Haven een politiebureau geopend. Het is het eerste gebouwde ontwerp van het jonge architectenbureau Office for Metropolitan Architecture van Rem Koolhaas. De hoge verwachtingen door dit bureau gewekt, worden niet waargemaakt en leiden zelfs tot een anti-climax. Naast het letterlijk vertalen van de organisatie van de verschillende activiteiten van de politie in het bureau, kan ook het gebouwde ontwerp de toets der kritiek niet doorstaan. De situering is abnormaal, het concept dood, de grap werkt niet en het gebouw is alleen fotogeniek als het op kruishoogte gefotografeerd wordt. Het gebouw rammelet wel zo letterlijk dat het scheurt.

We zijn een illustre armer: de Nederlandse bouwkunst wordt ook door O.M.A. niet gered.

O.M.A. schuwt de publiciteit niet. Zij stelt zelf in De architect van juli/augustus 1986 dat de abnormale uitvoering van zijn project haar niet aangerekend kan worden. Allereerst zijn de werksitueringen niet door O.M.A. vervaardigd en bovendien werd het toezicht bij de uitvoering door een 'team' gevoerd, waarin de architect overigens wel zitting had.

De uitvoering van het ontwerp is een kwade periode in de totstandkoming van architectuur. In deze fase staan alle ontwerpbeslissingen onder tijdsdruk, waardoor het gevaar kan ontstaan dat het ontwerp aan architectonische kwaliteit inboest. En, het 'beeldrecht' voor architectuur geldt nu eenmaal pas wanneer het gebouw er staat. De daadwerkelijke uitvoering is echter slechts één fase in de realisatie van een gebouw, en de armoede van dit gebouw zit niet alleen in die paar schuren in de muren en andere technische onvolkomenheden.

In de ontwerpfase is aan een aantal uitvoeringsproblemen voorbijgegaan. De dilatatie van de gevel is op een vreemde manier ontworpen: als een opvallende, zigzaggende kitvoeg in plaats van de 'normale' verticale sneed. Door de aandacht die deze oplossing vraagt, worden de waarschijnlijk immateriële bedoelde muurvlakken teruggebracht tot saai meelwerk. De presentie van 'architectuur' wordt met dit gebouw niet waargemaakt. O.M.A. heeft zich verslet in de metropool Almere.

Het politie-debacle is niet aan het architectenbureau of aan de opgave te wijten. Er kleef veel ongerief aan het bouwproces. Daarbij zijn al heel wat verwachtingen en ambities van architecten te gonde gegaan. Bovendien vraagt nog andere kwaliteiten van de architect dan ontwerpkunst alleen. Het bouwproces begint voor de architect met de opdrachtverwerving, een kunst apart.

Natuurlijk is een architect op zoek naar de ware meesters, iemand met gevoel voor kunst en cultuur, een stimulerende kracht met een geringe Duitse/afgrijsige. Maar, deze zijn dan getuigd. Sommige architecten zijn gegrepen met bouwlastige familiesleden of met een driftig agnustie plegende vader. Anderen kunnen moeilijk achter hun tekenshot blijven wachten tot zij ontdekt worden. Zij moeten publiek zien te krijgen door de boer op te gaan. De meest vruchtbare karaktertek voor een architect is dan ook een sociaal tier te zijn, mensen te kunnen boeien en interessant over te komen.

Een van de weinige manieren voor een architect om zich op inhoudelijke gronden te onderscheiden, is het deelnemen aan prijzen en meervoudige opdrachten. Hierbij krijgen meerdere architecten de kans hun kwaliteiten ten toon te spreiden, en tegelijkertijd wordt de jury/opdrachtgever een ruime keus geboden.

Rem Koolhaas and O.M.A. Teatro di Danza, L'Aia

La prima grande opera realizzata dall'effervescente studio olandese, inaugurata poche settimane fa, traduce la fantasia, l'elaborata e la vivacità dell'architettura olandese in questi costrutti di irresistibile fascino. The first major work built by the effervescent Dutch firm, inaugurated a few weeks ago, translates the imagination, elegance and vivacity of drawn architecture into irresistibly appealing constructed spaces.

Profilisti: Rem Koolhaas, Jeroen Thomes, Willem-Jan Heerling, Frank Boshuis, Jeroen van West, Ron Steiner, Dirk Hendriks, Frank Verbeek, Wim Meesters, Hans Westendorp, S.G.A. (Hans West, Chiel van der Meer), Peter Buisson, Steffen, Stefan Pöschel (1984 - 1987)

Servizi Magazzini: Gabriel Basilio

A sinistra, individuazione del progetto nel contesto; sopra, foto aerea del nuovo complesso; (foto: Mijl van der Wal, Tom Ballys) a destra, planimetria generale (A, Teatro di Danza; B, Piazza C. Albers; C, Sala Concerti); in basso, la sala e la sala; sopra, aerial view of the new complex; right, site plan (A, Dance Theatre; B, Piazza; C, Hall); D, Concert Hall).

di Umberto Barberi Il primo riconoscimento delle qualità architettoniche di Rem Koolhaas e dell'OMA è legato al progetto di concorso per l'impulimento del Parlamento Olandese a L'Aia tentato nel 1978. Le reazioni positive dell'opinione pubblica e della cultura architettonica olandese non trovarono immediato riscontro in incarichi progettuali concreti: dovevano passare quasi dieci anni prima che Koolhaas e l'edizione olandese dell'OMA concretizzassero in un importante edificio le idee architettoniche espresse in teorie, ricerche formali e progetti di concorso.

L'inaugurazione ufficiale del Teatro Olandese di Danza a L'Aia segna dunque una tappa importante nello sviluppo dell'OMA e soprattutto di Rem Koolhaas che ormai ha trovato una collocazione culturale e professionale specifica nella cultura architettonica olandese. L'iter progettuale e di realizzazione di questo edificio è in ogni caso sintonizzato per le difficoltà strutturali che Koolhaas ha dovuto superare per potersi realizzare la sua opera prima. La storia del Teatro Olandese di Danza inizia alla fine degli anni Cinquanta quando la compagnia di danza è costretta ad abbandonare un vecchio edificio nel centro dichiarato pericolante. Dopo diversi spostamenti il direttore del Teatro di Danza si rivolge nel 1980 a Rem Koolhaas per incaricarlo di progettare un ampliamento dell'esistente Circo Theater a Scheveningen. Il Lido della capitale olandese, distante alcuni chilometri dal centro storico e sede provvisoria del Teatro di Danza. Questo teatro doveva costituire sia alcuni spazi per esecuzioni e recite sia una nuova sala per spettacoli pubblici. Nel primo e nel secondo progetto per questa ristrutturazione Koolhaas insiste sul mantenimento della cupola dell'edificio esistente come immagine del Circo-teatro, e introduce il tema della «ricinzione» concentrata in un muro che isola l'edificio. Questi progetti, pur giocando un ruolo importante nella discussione teorica sull'architettura olandese agli inizi degli anni '80, rimangono lettera morta: né il comune de L'Aia né il Ministero della Cultura concedono i nulla osta e i fondi per la realizzazione di questa ristrutturazione. Un radicale cambiamento nella prassi politica della capitale, segnato dall'ingresso nella giunta di alcuni angry young men del partito social-democratico, dà l'avvio a una nuova fase della storia dell'architettura e della città: l'assessore all'urbanistica e opere pubbliche, H. Deyckenstein, si rivolge ad architetti emergenti, al di fuori delle strutture burocratiche pianificate, per affrontare e risolvere alcuni nodi fondamentali nella struttura urbana della città. L'inizio di questa nuova politica urbana è legato al

Prospetta generale longitudinale sud, in colore Fedilicio di Koolhaas.

■ South elevation, in colour the building by Koolhaas.

Figure 5. AMC, Bouw, Forum, Domus, 1987: Issues featuring reviews of recent buildings by OMA.

and the Byzantium in Amsterdam (1985-91), the three projects belong to a group of realizations that received little if any attention by the architectural press. Apparently they were not meant to. A comic strip in *S,M,L,XL* aside, none of them is included in the monographic publications OMA curated of its own work.⁵¹ Kees Christiaanse commented in 2020:

There were very important projects, and there were projects that were, say, more dirty realism projects, which for OMA at that time were also a kind of introduction into the art of building. [...] Dutch building culture is extremely sober. So we really had to get used to making housing in the Netherlands. Specifically, for commercial clients.⁵²

As it seems, many of the commissions had been canvassed by Christiaanse, and Koolhaas was not always interested in the projects or lost interest when changes were imposed that he considered unacceptable.⁵³ Referring to the development at Veerplein Christiaanse explains:

This commission was also [like the Byzantium] a competition, and the client was Blauwwoed woningen, which at the time was a very commercial developer in the Netherlands, making mountains of row houses and so on. And we won the competition, and the competition design was quite interesting, I must say. But then during the elaboration [...] the most qualitative aspects of that project were not wanted by the client, and consequently the project was changed, and it became extremely banal. And we finished it because, I think, we made some money on it, but we immediately forgot about the project after it was realized.⁵⁴

Nonetheless, the buildings at Veerplein, the Almere police station, the Groningen towers, and the Byzantium do share some themes, ideas and motifs with OMA's 'important works' of the same period.

⁵¹ The projects are not included, for instance, in: Lucan, *OMA - Rem Koolhaas, El Croquis 53* (1992), *El Croquis 53* (1996).

⁵² Interview with the author on 14 April 2020.

⁵³ The assumption is based on interviews with Mike Guyer, who worked at OMA between 1984 and 1987, and Kees Christiaanse. Interviews with the author on 14 April 2020 (Christiaanse) and 22 May 2020 (Guyer).

⁵⁴ Interview with the author on 14 April 2020.

Likewise, they do betray a more than economic interest and ambition, even if the results seem only partly successful. Further, it is these ‘dirty realism’ projects that come closest to the non-descript post-war modernism that has often been identified as a characteristic of OMA’s early work. However, if one is to re-enact the ambitions and intentions of Koolhaas as an architect, it appears obvious that one needs to focus on those buildings that he himself wished to stand in the limelight. To Janet Abrams Koolhaas explained in 1988 that he had decided to start his practice in the Netherlands for the very reason that ‘here, if the buildings didn’t work out, I could hide them.’⁵⁵

When Goulet, in his interview, addressed the police station in Almere, Koolhaas played down its importance, explaining that these ‘small projects ... are important ... in terms of construction skills’, as if referring to an exercise – and the issue was being dropped. Conversely, the Netherlands Dance Theatre, opened in 1987, was a building that Koolhaas apparently wished to be noticed and that was noticed indeed. As Christophe van Gerrewey writes, the Dance Theatre ‘featured on the cover of a roll call of international magazines: *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui*, *Architecture Moniteur Continuité*, *Techniques & Architecture*, *De Architect*, *Archis Quaderns Architectural Record*, *Bauwelt* and *A + U*.’⁵⁶ The reviews began to appear in October. Not surprisingly several authors mistook the theatre for OMA’s first building.⁵⁷ In general, the critiques were favourable, some enthusiastic. Many authors used Koolhaas’ writings as a guideline for their interpretation. Critics like Hans van Dijk, Hubert Damisch and Jacques Lucan recognized in the building numerous topics of *Delirious New York*, such as ‘congestion’ and the metropolitan condition, an architecture both ‘popular and ambitious’, surrealism and the technique of the *cadavre exquis*. Altogether there was a tendency to treat *Delirious New York* as a straightforward manifesto rather than a retroactive one, with the consequence that the architecture was being measured by its standards. Van Dijk, for instance, was led to the conclusion that the Dance

⁵⁵ Janet Abrams, ‘Delirious Visions’, *Blueprint* 44 (Feb 1988), 32.

⁵⁶ Van Gerrewey 2017, ‘Goodbye Paper’, 99.

⁵⁷ For instance: Janny Rodermond, ‘Nederlands Danstheater. Een uitermate utilitair gebouw’, *De Architect* (Oct 1987), 77. Barbieri, ‘Teatro di Danza, L’Aia’, *Domus* 689 (1987), 47.

Theatre was too small for OMA's metropolitan ambitions – which says much about the expectations stirred up by Koolhaas' writings and statements but little about the building and its architecture.⁵⁸

Many reviewers even assessed OMA's building skills positively. Olivier Boissière in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* forthrightly asks and answers: 'Does he [Koolhaas] know to build? one wonders. The answer is yes!' Boissière is one of the first to understand that Koolhaas' constructive approach had little to do with detailing 'in a "Scarpa-ist" sense', being rather inspired by a 'certain American architecture, a mixture of neglect and minute care'.⁵⁹ The lead of Umberto Barbieri's article for *Domus* reads: 'The first major built work by the effervescent Dutch firm ... translates the imagination, elegance and vivacity of "drawn architecture" into irresistible appealing spaces'.⁶⁰ But some critics draw contrary conclusions, such as Paul Groenendijk in *architectuur/bouwen*: 'So far Koolhaas' fascinating concepts exist, above all, verbally and visually, but [still] deserve an adequate realisation.'⁶¹ Similarly Deborah Dietsch in *Architectural Record*: 'Sadly, however, the detailing at prominent junctures between the building's disparate elements ... a nagging reminder of the 43-year-old Dutch architect's inexperience with working drawings.'⁶²

In 1987, the magazine *Forum* – since the 1959 the voice of Dutch structuralism, ridiculed by Koolhaas for its misguided 'humanism'⁶³ – published a devastating review by Madelaine Steigenga of the police station in Almere. Meanwhile, that is two years after its completion, technical problems occurred. Steigenga, insisting that architecture 'does not legitimate itself until it has been built', qualified the police station as a 'debacle' and its execution as 'abominable'. Her résumé, anticipated in the opening passage, reads like an irrevocable verdict: 'The location is abominable, the concept is dead, the joke

⁵⁸ Van Dijk, 'Ambitie op zoek naar een "kritische massa"' *Archis* 4 (1988), 36.

⁵⁹ Olivier Boissière, 'La Haye, Le Théâtre de la danse', *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* 257 (1988), 33 (author trans.).

⁶⁰ Umberto Barbieri, 'Teatro di Danza, L'Aia', *Domus* 689 (1987), 44.

⁶¹ Groenendijk, 'Muziek en dans aan het Spui', *architectuur/bouwen* 3 (1987), 56 (author trans.).

⁶² Deborah K. Dietsch, 'First Position. Dance Theatre in The Hague', *Architectural Record* 4 (Apr 1988), 73.

⁶³ Koolhaas, 'Urban Intervention: Dutch Parliament Extension, The Hague', *International Architect* vol. 1 (1980), 50. In September 1959 Aldo van Eyck, Jaap Bakema and Herman Hertzberger became members of the editorial board. See: Wim J. van Heuvel, *Structuralism in Dutch architecture* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1992), 12.

does not work, and the building is only photogenic when photographed at cruising height. The building is literally shaking, there cracks in the walls. We have lost an illusion: Dutch Architecture will not be saved by O.M.A. either'.⁶⁴ Steigenga instead put forward the music centre in Utrecht (1973-88) by Hertzberger as a model and proof of the fact that the ever more difficult process of realization can be mastered and 'great architectonic quality' still be achieved.

Koolhaas' competence as a practicing architect and his willingness to engage with the art of construction would be discussed and questioned for almost another decade. With four projects built and six more either under construction or in preparation, such criticism, at the time, stood in a peculiar contrast to the actual commitment of the office and the daily efforts of a team of more than thirty architects. Compared to the spectacular successes of Koolhaas' earlier career (the prize winning films with Rene Daalder, his final project at the AA published in *Casabella*⁶⁵ and his first book, *Delirious New York*, turning him into a celebrity of widely acknowledged intellectual brilliance) recognition in what many consider the very core of architecture – building – proved rather intractable. Apparently, to do well as a building architect now was high on Koolhaas' agenda of ambitions. '[I]n the intimacy of my own ideas,' he confessed to Olivier Bossière and Dominique Lyon in 1986, 'I have dedicated the next five years to become as professional as Harrison or Skidmore. That is my only true ambition.'⁶⁶ In an interview with Alejandro Zaera Polo, Koolhaas once explained that in the early eighties he 'simply had to learn a vast part of the profession'. 1987, the year the Dance Theatre was completed, he indicated as the turning point: 'we were becoming more confident in our ability and we discovered some courage in our own psychological makeup', Koolhaas recalls, and adds: 'And an enormous impatience'.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Madelaine Steigenga, 'Not Without a Scratch. Police Station Almere', *Forum 2* (1987), 2. The last sentence rings like a reply to Geert Bekaert's enthusiastic essay 'The odyssey of an enlightened entrepreneur. Rem Koolhaas' from 1982, concluding with the firm assertion 'Hope has returned.' Geert Bekaert, 'The odyssey of an enlightened entrepreneur. Rem Koolhaas', in: Christophe van Gerrewey (ed.), *Rooted in the Real. Writings on Architecture by Geert Bekaert* (2011), 294. First published in Dutch in 1982: 'De Odyssee van een verlicht ondernemer. Rem Koolhaas', *wonen-TA/BK* 13-14 (1982), 50-57.

⁶⁵ Rem Koolhaas, Elia Zenghelis, 'Exodus or The Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture', *Casabella* 378 (1973), 42-45.

⁶⁶ Olivier Bossière, Dominique Lyon, 'Entretien avec Rem Koolhaas', *Cahiers du CCI* 1 (1986), 84.

⁶⁷ Alejandro Zaera Polo, 'Finding Freedoms: Conversations with Rem Koolhaas', *El Croquis* 53 (1992), 7.

1.2

A pretty strong policy

The commission and its origins

In his 1990 book *The Condition of Postmodernity* economic geographer David Harvey writes:

The sharp recession of 1973, exacerbated by the oil shock, evidently shook the capitalist world out of the suffocating torpor of ‘stagflation’ [...], and set in motion a whole set of processes that undermined the Fordist compromise. The 1970s and 1980s have consequently been a troubled period of economic restructuring and social political readjustment. In the social space created by all this flux and uncertainty, a series of novel experiments in the realms of industrial organization as well as in political and social life have begun to take shape. These experiments may represent the early stirrings of the passage to an entirely new regime of accumulation, coupled with a quite different system of political and social regulation.⁶⁸

Even though Harvey’s investigation does embrace a global perspective, its actual focus – namely in terms of the ‘new regime’s’ impact on society – is on the developments of the 1970s and 1980s in the US. The Dutch economy, too, was seriously affected by the two oil crises in 1973 and 1979, since the mid-1960s the decline of its manufacturing industries (coal mining, textile, clothing, footwear, leather, shipbuilding),⁶⁹ changing conditions of international competition and inflation, next to an aging population and longer life expectancy, entailing a decade of high unemployment, early retirement, and an increasing national debt due to the inequality of governmental expenditures and income.⁷⁰ But by the 1970s, the Netherlands – like other western countries on the continent – had transformed into a welfare state that continued to guard its citizens against the pressures of the labour market’s persisting

⁶⁸ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2015), 145; first published in 1990.

⁶⁹ Jelle Visser, Anton Hemerijck, *‘A Dutch Miracle’. Job Growth, Welfare Reform and Corporatism in the Netherlands* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1997), 121.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 9, 12.

crisis. With regard to the Netherlands Peter Flora wrote in his encyclopaedic study on the European welfare state from 1986: ‘In no other West European country has the welfare state expanded to such an extent after World War II.’⁷¹ In a study from 1997, Jelle Visser and Anton Hemerijck report, quoting from an article in *The Economist* from 1982:

Foreign observers ridiculed the Dutch, in particular with respect to ‘keeping more than a million people supported by the welfare state’, as ‘cloudy and lacking in realism’. The expression *Dutch disease* made its appearance in economics textbooks as an example of expensive unsustainable public welfare policies.⁷²

Towards the mid-eighties, the Dutch economy began to recover from deep recession, and job growth started slowly but steadily.⁷³ However, a ‘major overhaul of social security’ was implemented only in the early 1990s.⁷⁴ In the second half of the decade, it was the ‘Dutch job miracle’ that drew international attention, the unemployment rate having dropped from almost 14 percent in 1983 to only 6 percent in 1997, albeit at the price of increasing part-time work, low pay, and earnings inequality, on the one hand, and few career prospects, high long-time unemployment and gender inequality on the other.⁷⁵ In the building sector, the government remained strongly committed to the provision of social housing until 1994. During the 1970s and 1980s, more than 60.000 units were produced in peak years, the annual total hardly ever falling below 30.000.⁷⁶ At the same time, policymakers continued to actively develop the country’s cultural institutions. As will be seen, the Netherlands Architecture Institute (NAi), the Museum Park and the Kunsthall were, for the most part, each a brainchild of the Dutch government’s

⁷¹ Peter Flora, Introduction, XIX, in: Idem, *Growth to Limits. The Western European Welfare States Since World War II*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986), XIX.

⁷² Visser, Hemerijck, ‘*A Dutch Miracle*’, 9.

⁷³ Ibid., 26.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 16. On this issue, see also: Ibid., 117-151. On the impact of the Wassenaar Agreement from 1982, see: Ibid., 101, Mara A. Yerkes, *Transforming the Dutch Welfare State* (Bristol: The Policy Press, 2011), 10-11.

⁷⁵ Visser, Hemerijck, ‘*A Dutch Miracle*’, 11, 23-44.

⁷⁶ Marja Elsinga, Frank Wassenberg, ‘Social Housing in the Netherlands’, in: Kathleen Scanlon, Christine Whitehead et al. (eds.), *Social Housing in Europe* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), 29-30. With the ‘grossing and balancing operation’ from 1995 the Dutch government ended its subsidy programme for social housing. By comparison, about 10.000 units per year were produced between 2000 and 2010. Ibid., 28-30.

representatives, both on a national and a municipal level.⁷⁷ The founding of the NAI and the construction of its building was realized under the combined tutelage of the Ministry of Culture (WVC) and the Ministry of Housing (VROM).⁷⁸ The Kunsthal was funded and largely conceived of by Rotterdam's municipality.

In a monograph on the cultural development of Rotterdam during the last three decades of the 20th century, Patricia van Ulzen depicts the second half of the 1980s as a particularly successful period of the city's cultural policy. Next to a broad offer of festivals and events – the film-music festival Celluloid Rock (since 1987), the theatre and music festival Teatro Fantastico (since 1987), an Afro-Caribbean festival, the Heineken Jazz Festival (since 1984), the 'romantic music day' (since 1987), among other things – the implementation of the Museum Park, the NAI and the Kunsthal were among the most prominent achievements of this period.⁷⁹ A major driving force behind these projects were landscape architect H.E. (Riek) Bakker (1944-), who headed Rotterdam's Department for Urban Development between 1986 and 1991; and Joop Linthorst (1948-), who was a member of the Dutch Labour Party (PvdA) and alderman of Rotterdam's city council between 1981 and 1994.⁸⁰ [Figure 1] Van Ulzen describes Linthorst as one of the critical protagonists within the municipal administration who favoured the commitment to concrete projects over long term policies. 'Former alderman Joop Linthorst', she writes, 'has no single policy document to his name, yet is regarded by many artists and entrepreneurs as an administrator who has worked wonders for the urban-cultural climate in Rotterdam.'⁸¹ Linthorst himself recalls:

⁷⁷ On the intricate origins of the foundation and the building of the NAI, see: Figueiredo, *The NAI Effect*.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 188-199, 214-217, 220.

⁷⁹ Patricia van Ulzen, *Imagine a Metropolis. Rotterdam's Creative Class 1970-2000* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2007), 155, 158.

⁸⁰ Geert van Asbeck, Tom-Jan Meus, 'Ex-wethouder steunt Peper', *NRC Handelsblad*, 27 January 2000. Linthorst's tenure as alderman was commemorated with a small publication at the occasion of his farewell in 1994: Gobert Beijer et al., *Over Rotterdam. Toekomstvisies aangebonden aan Joop Linthorst bij zijn afscheid als gemeenteraadslid en wethouder van de gemeente Rotterdam* (Rotterdam: Uitgeverij 010, 1994). The Left-leaning Labour Party governed Rotterdam since the end of World War II. Between 1982 and 1998 Bram Peper of the Labour Party, was mayor of the city. Van Ulzen, who interviewed Bakker in 2004, writes: 'Bakker sees the mayor, Bram Peper, as the motor behind this administrative vitality.' *Ibid.*, 197.

⁸¹ Van Ulzen, *Imagine a Metropolis*, 39.



Figure 1. Alderman Joop Linthorst, mayor Bram Peper, minister Elco Brinkman, actress Pauline van Rehen.
Groundbreaking ceremony for Rotterdam's new city theatre, the Schouwburg by Wim Quist, in 1984.
Billboard to the left: 'Rotterdam Makes It'

You can't say it all happened in the mid '80s, but if you look back you have to conclude that for Rotterdam a number of fairly crucial milestones were reached or thresholds crossed somewhere around that time [...] For the council too it was a time when we pursued a pretty strong policy, and saw it implemented.⁸²

The friendship between Koolhaas and Linthorst is an open secret. Perhaps they became friends while Koolhaas designed and built his private house, the Patio Villa in Rotterdam, commissioned in 1984 and completed in 1988. In *S,M,L,XL* the chapter on the Patio Villa is subtitled 'House for Two Friends'.⁸³ Linthorst's name does not appear in the correspondence that preceded the commission for the Kunsthal. But considering that Linthorst was a member of Rotterdam's Board of Mayor and Aldermen, responsible for the awarding of the Kunsthal commission, it appears rather likely that he supported if not propelled the idea to entrust Koolhaas with the project.

Agreements made

The commission for the Kunsthal seems to trace to an accord from 1986 between Koolhaas and Rotterdam's municipality. On Monday, 9 February 1987, OMA received a letter by J. Laan, the city's alderman for traffic and transport [Figure 2].⁸⁴

Dear Mr Koolhaas,

With reference to your interlocution between the mayor [Bram Peper] and myself on 3 December 1986 and an interlocution that I had with you on 15 January, I report the following so as to confirm the agreements made:

It is being established that some private projects, which concerned you as an architect, will not be realized.

⁸² Van Ulzen, *Imagine a Metropolis*, 103.

⁸³ Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 65.

⁸⁴ Ruimtelijke Ordening, Verkeer en Vervoer. The letter is dated 6 February 1987. OMAR 3267, 4509. (author transl.).

Chapter 1.2

Gemeente Rotterdam
drs. J. Laan, wethouder van
● Ruimtelijke Ordening
● Verkeer en Vervoer

INGEKOMEN 9 FEB. 1987
07/176

Stadhuis Coolsingel 40 3011 AD Rotterdam

 a a n
de heer ir. R. Koolhaas,
architect
Boompjes 55,
3011 XB Rotterdam.

uw kenmerk	afdeling	telefoon
		(010) 417 91 11
uw brief van	ons kenmerk PLvW 600/71706	doorkiesnummer 4172083
betreft		datum
Tentoonstellingshal in z.g. museumpark.		6 februari 1987

Geachte heer Koolhaas,

Met referentie aan uw gesprek met de burgemeester en mij op 3 december 1986 en aan een gesprek dat ik op 15 januari met u heb gehad bericht ik u, ter bevestiging van de gemaakte afspraken, het volgende:

Geconstateerd werd dat enkele particuliere plannen, waarbij u als architect betrokken was, niet zullen worden gerealiseerd.

Onder meer is dat het geval met het plan voor een kantoorgebouw aan het Churchillplein van Mackenzie Hill/Muon.

In die formele relaties was de gemeente in de betreffende gevallen geen partij en van onze zijde werd vastgesteld dat u, als gevolg van het niet doorgaan van die plannen, jegens de gemeente geen rechten kunt ontlenen voor een al dan niet compenserende opdracht.

Wij zijn het er over eens geworden dat het noch in uw belang, noch in het belang van de gemeente Rotterdam is de discussie over een en ander voort te zetten en daarmee hebben we een duidelijke streep onder het "verleden" geplaatst.

Teneinde onze waardering voor uw inspanning te onderstrepen hebben wij u het voornemen van het College van B en W aangekondigd u aan te wijzen als architect voor de door de gemeente te stichten Tentoonstellingshal in het museum-park, voor welk gebied de directeur Stadsontwikkeling een stedenbouwkundig basisplan heeft ontworpen.

 ms

Deze

bereikbaar met tram 6 en bus 49 op Coolsingel; tram 1-3-4-5-7, bus 38-44-45, Westnederland en station N.S., op Hofplein; metrostation noord-zuidlijn Stadhuis.
svp bij beantwoording datum en kenmerk vermelden / per brief niet meer dan één zaak behandelen ed 644/2780-'86

Figure 2. Letter by alderman J. Laan to Rem Koolhaas, 6 February 1988.

This applies among other things to the office building for Mackenzie Hill/Muon at Churchillplein.

Formally the municipality was not involved as a party in the respective case, and it is being stated that you, as a consequence of the not continued planning cannot derive any claims towards the municipality for a not compensated commission.

We agreed that it is neither in your nor in the interest of Rotterdam's municipality to continue this discussion, and thus we have drawn a clear line under the 'past'.

In order to underscore our appreciation of your engagement we announced to you the intention of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen⁸⁵ to appoint you as the architect for the arts centre to be set up by the municipality in the Museum Park, for the area of which the director of the Department for Urban Development has drafted a basis plan.

In *S,M,L,XL* Koolhaas explains that OMA received the commission for the Kunsthal as a 'compensation for a series of unprofitable involvements in inventing the "new Rotterdam"'.⁸⁶ The towers at Churchillplein (1984) aside, Koolhaas – and Laan in his letter – probably had in mind two further 'unprofitable involvements', if not more: the towers OMA proposed in 1980 for Rotterdam's Boompjes Boulevard; and, less known, a commissioned study from 1985 for the harbour area, which included a spherical information centre, called 'De Bol', likewise to be located at the Boompjes Boulevard, on the foundations of the demolished Willemsbrug.⁸⁷

Obviously Koolhaas was not ignorant of the state of affairs at Rotterdam's municipality. Already on the Friday before – on the same day Laan posted his letter – Koolhaas sent a twofold offer to the local authorities. The first offer included an orientation about the last generation of museums, next to a

⁸⁵ 'College B&W' [college van Burgemeester en wethouders]'. Ibid.

⁸⁶ Rem Koolhaas, 'New Rotterdam', in: Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 403. Similarly, OMA was asked to submit a proposal for the masterplan of the '89 Universal Exhibition in Paris after Bernard Tschumi had won the competition for the La Villette Park in 1983. Elia Zenghelis recalled in 2009: 'In the end Tschumi got the commission [of the La Villette Park], and as a consolation we were asked to make some proposals for [...] the International Exhibition of 1989.' Zenghelis, 'The 1970s and the Beginning of OMA' (min 87).

⁸⁷ <http://oma.eu/projects/de-bol>. Accessed on 4 August 2020.

proposal for the programme and a draft of the Kunsthal; the second an urban investigation of the area the Kunsthal ought to be located in.⁸⁸ On 15 June OMA received an answer by the director Department for Urban Development, Riek Bakker. Apart from the urban investigation, Bakker ordered what OMA had offered, the results of the study to be delivered within three months.⁸⁹ In a letter to OMA from 24 June, Bakker confirms an additional commission: an urban study on the Museum Park which should take into account new requirements such as the Architecture Institute and a 'House of Art' (kunsthuis).⁹⁰

60 years of planning

As in the case of the Kunsthal, the client of the Museum Park was the city of Rotterdam. A series of municipal initiatives launched by the representatives of various departments converged in the two projects. By 1987 Rotterdam's municipality had drafted a strategic paper on the conception of the Kunsthal, and the Department for Urban Development had worked out a first scheme for the Museum Park. For OMA these were the givens to start from, constituting a conceptual framework which would prove formative for both projects in one way or another. The municipality would involve Koolhaas in the subsequent process of defining the respective briefs. Concerns of programme being at the core of his architectural approach, Koolhaas urged the municipality to modify some requirements of the brief, and he clearly voiced his idea of how the building should be used. But there were limits to his influence on what had already been agreed on prior to his involvement. In the above letter from 24 June, for instance, Bakker informs Koolhaas that she does not wish to pursue a variant to the plan prepared by the municipality, in order not to threaten the 'consensus laboriously established between multiple parties'.⁹¹ The municipal projects for the Museum Park and the Kunsthal were no isolated endeavours but parts of a comprehensive plan for the further development of Rotterdam's inner city. This plan, along with the city's ideas for the Museum Park, was to a large extent a response to the drastic transformations Rotterdam underwent since the 1920s. To re-enact some of the major transformations

⁸⁸ Koolhaas' letter contains no address, but OMA received a reply to the offer, dated 11 June, by Rotterdam's Department for Urban Development referring to a letter of his from 6 February. OMAR 3267.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Riek Bakker, letter to Rem Koolhaas, dated 24 June 1987. OMAR 3267.

⁹¹ Ibid., (author trans.). It is not clear to which variant Bakker refers. As will be shown, OMA's scheme for the Museum Park diverges significantly from the version worked out by Rotterdam's municipality.

appears indispensable to understand the nexus of ideas and ambitions that informed the municipality's scheme for the Museum Park as much as the subsequent transformation of the scheme by OMA. OMA's idea for the Museum Park – both the analysis of its urban environment and a first proposal for the park itself – would provide the immediate context from which the schemes for the Kunsthal and the NAI emerged.

No trace shall be found

The Museum Park, the Kunsthal and the NAI are located in an area that was purchased by the city in 1924. It had been owned for more than half a century by the Hobokens, a Rotterdam family of shipbuilders. The property was large – 56 hectares, mostly pasture land – and of particular interest for Rotterdam's municipality because of its proximity to Rotterdam's densely built city centre.⁹² In 1926 Willem Gerrit Witteveen (1891-1979), head of the section Expansion and Building of Rotterdam's Municipal Works since 1924, presented an expansion plan specifically for the newly acquired land in 1926.⁹³ At that time, the municipality was alarmed by the fact that wealthy Rotterdamers moved away from the inner city because of its lack of open, green spaces.⁹⁴ To resolve this problem was a primary concern for Witteveen when he became the director of the municipal planning department. Like his 'General Expansion Plan' from 1928 and his expansion plans for single urban districts show, a continuous system of parks and park-like green spaces was to permeate all parts of the urban fabric.⁹⁵

⁹² Noor Mens, *W.G. Witteveen en Rotterdam* (Rotterdam: Uitgeverij 010, 2007), 70.

⁹³ For a detailed account, see: Mens *W.G. Witteveen en Rotterdam*, 34; Koos Hage, 'Westersingel in Historic Perspective', in: Richard Artschwager et al. (eds.), *Beelden in de Stad/Sculpture in the City* (Utrecht: Veen/Reflex, 1988), 25. There are also numerous projects by the architects from the circle of the Nieuwe Bouwen for the Dijkzigt area, since its acquisition by the municipality in 1924. For the site of the later Unilever Offices, Oud prepared two schemes for an adult education centre (Volksuniversiteit) between 1926 and 1927, probably without any commission. Eva von Engelberg-Dočkal, *J.P.P. Oud. Zwischen de Stijl und klassischer Tradition. Arbeiten von 1916 bis 1931* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag Berlin, 2006), 490-93. The programme was ambitious and comprised shops, a garage, a café, administration offices, classrooms, a library, an exhibition space, two large auditoriums and apartments, bearing, regardless of Oud's reserve towards any form of political engagement, in its amplitude and formal treatment some resemblance with constructivist projects for social condensers. Engelberg-Dočkal, *J.P.P. Oud*, 36-37. Van der Vlugt had presented his version for the development of the Dijkzigt area already in 1924, suggesting a square shaped park flanked on two sides by 'functionalist' apartment blocks. Joris Molenaar, *Brinkman & Van der Vlugt Architects* (Rotterdam: nai010 publishers, 2012), 67. Like Oud, he prepared a design for the adult education centre, together with his associate J.A. Brinkman. The studio was awarded the commission in 1928, the site envisaged being again that of the later Unilever Offices. In 1931, Brinkman & Van der Vlugt worked on a larger complex with a concert and assembly hall to be situated at the north west corner of the Dijkzigt area. None of these projects materialized.

⁹⁴ Mens, *W.G. Witteveen en Rotterdam*, 69-73.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 185-186.



Figure 3. Willem Gerrit Witteveen, 1926. Expansion Plan 'Dykzigt', Rotterdam.
Along the eastern margin of the park, the Westersingel leading to the zoological garden to the north.

Full-fledged parks would be tied together by green corridors, for which the parkway of the American garden city served as a model.⁹⁶

Witteveen's expansion plan from 1926 proposed to leave most of the land unbuilt and to transform it into the first and only large public park of Rotterdam's inner city. [Figure 3] The name chosen – 'Dijkzigt' – both for the plan and the park reflects the proximity of the Westzeedijk, a dyke delimiting the area to the south. In plan, the Dijkzigt park shows a funnelled shape that bespeaks its function of linkage. The park's triangular perimeter allowed to connect three green spaces: Het Park next to the Maas River (1852), the Westersingel (1854) and the Zoological Garden (1857), each designed by Jan David Zocher and his son Louis Paul during the second half of the 19th century.⁹⁷ To the north, the tip of the Dijkzigt Park joined directly the Westersingel, a broad boulevard with a green space and a canal ('singel') in its middle. In the 1920s, the boulevard led to the zoological garden some 500 metres further north in the area of the present central station. To the south the Dijkzigt Park widens up to meet the northern edge of Het Park, thus providing one continuous green space between the zoo to the north and the Maas River to the south. Between the two parks, however, there was the embankment of the Westzeedijk, which – as part of a larger dyke system – protects the city from the flood.

Only the eastern and western margins of the Dijkzigt area were assigned for construction. The new street blocks were conceived as a seamless extension of the existing city fabric. In a letter from 1926 Wittveen promises: 'Once completed, no trace shall be found in later times of the here "newly implanted piece."' ⁹⁸ A bird's-eye view complementing his expansion plan shows the new streets and

⁹⁶ Ibid., 185. See also: Egbert, J. Hoogenberk, *Het Idee van de Hollandse Stad. Stedebouw in de Nederland met de interantionale voorgeschiedenis* (Delft: University Press, 1980), 132; Elli Adriaansz, 'A Modern Villa Park in the City. Its History: The History of the Land van Hoboken', *Wiederhall* 20 (2001), 12.

⁹⁷ Hage, 'Westersingel in Historic Perspective', 22-24.

⁹⁸ Letter 1926, Mens, *W.G. Witteveen en Rotterdam*, 75.



Figure 4. Aerial photograph of the Dijkzicht area, 1937.

buildings as a variation of the surroundings' perimeter block.⁹⁹ Witteveen proposes, at least in part, open street blocks and gabled roofs, but at the same time his plans and drawings stress the continuity with the existing city fabric which was built for the most part during the late 19th century.

Parallels between Witteveen's expansion plans for Rotterdam and Hendrik Petrus Berlage's (1856-1934) expansion plans for Amsterdam are obvious. Next to the continuity suggested with regard to the existing city, the influence of Camillo Sitte, a taste for monumentality, and the adherence to the oblong perimeter block as the basic module of the city. In the plan for the Dijkzigt area triangular blocks dominate due to the funnel shape of the park – apparently a compromise between the wish to safeguard the green space's continuity and to provide sufficient land to build on. The outlines of most of the blocks are distinguished by projections and setbacks carved out from the 'mass' of the buildings. The streets and squares are conceived as a sequence of 'enclosed' and carefully proportioned spaces akin in spirit to Sitte's artistic principles of urban planning.

The expansion plan was approved by the city council in 1927 and – although changed repeatedly thereafter – partly implemented in the years that preceded the war.¹⁰⁰ As an aerial photograph from 1937 shows, the park materialized in principle accordance with Witteveen's plan.¹⁰¹ [Figure 4] Its funnel shaped perimeter was slightly modified, but the Dijkzigt park did link the Westersingel with Het Park. As provided by Witteveen, the former villa Hoboken (1850) – dubbed 'Dijkzigt' – and the English landscape garden surrounding it were incorporated into the scheme. The formal garden, or 'Rosarium', adjacent to the east, resembled the 1926 plan quite closely. Also those buildings that *were* constructed at the margins of the park during the 1930s accord in principle with Witteveen's ideas: a number of ordinary city blocks with apartments along Rochussenstraat, Mathenesserlaan and the Nieuwe

⁹⁹ In his commentary from 1927 Witteveen also legitimizes the wedged perimeter of the park. Its 'funnel shape', he explains, increases the depth effect when looking towards the inner city, a view concluded by the 'silhouette of the city towers' (above all the two of the Paradijkskerk), creating the 'illusion of being in a cosmopolitan city'. Hogenberk, *Het Idee van de Hollandse Stad*, 131, 134. See also: Mens, *W.G. Witteveen en Rotterdam*, 75, 180. A series of perspective drawings, included in a commentary to the expansion plan, indicates that the buildings facing the park ought to be composed for panoramic view, the most exposed ones distinguished by towers and tower-like accentuations. Hogenberk, *Het Idee van de Hollandse Stad*, 130.

¹⁰⁰ Mens, *W.G. Witteveen en Rotterdam*, 70, 77. See also: Adriaansz, 'A Modern Villa Park in the City', 4.

¹⁰¹ Molenaar, *Brinkman & Van der Vlucht*, 194. See also: Adriaansz, 'A Modern Villa Park in the City', 14.



Figure 5. Rotterdam's destroyed inner city, 1946.

Binnenweg, complementing the district Oude Westen to the north;¹⁰² the Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum (1928-35) by Adrianus van der Steur directly adjacent to the east side of the park; to the west the Unilever Offices (1930-31) by H.F. Mertens; the Erasmiaans Grammar School (1935-36), again by Van der Steur; and the GEB tower (1927-31) by Van der Steur, J. Poot and Witteveen himself.¹⁰³

All styles and fashions

After the German air raid on 14 May 1940 the inner city of Rotterdam was in flames for four days. Within the Fire Boundary ('brandgrens') the city was almost completely destroyed, whereas most parts of Rotterdam outside remained literally undamaged. [Figure 5] Destroyed was the entire historic centre enclosed in the triangle between the Maas River and the canals Coolsingel and Goudsesingel, but also much of the adjacent areas to the north and to the west. Reconstruction started after the end of the war, following the so-called Basis Plan by Cornelis van Traa (1899-1970) from 1946. [Figure 6] The plan was conceived in general accordance with CIAM principles, such as the segregation of functions, a drastic reduction of density and broad streets securing an efficient traffic circulation.¹⁰⁴ Conceived under the impact of competing traditionalist and modernist ideas, the Basis Plan was distinguished by a strategic 'flexibility'.¹⁰⁵ With reference to 'different approaches' in contemporary Dutch urban planning and architecture, the corollary text infers the need 'to leave room for the work of any truly skilled architect', implying a general restraint with regard to architectural suggestions.¹⁰⁶ By and large, the plan was implemented in the following decades, and it continued to be effective in the 1980s, even

¹⁰² Adriaansz, 'A Modern Villa Park in the City', 13.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 13. See also: Gerrit Vermeer, Ben Rebel, *Historische Gids van Rotterdam: 14 wandelingen door de oude en de nieuwe stad* (Den Haag: Sdu Uitgeverij Koniginnengracht, 1994), 125-126. That the collaboration between Van der Steur and Witteveen was close and that the architecture designed by the former found the consent of the latter seems more than likely: both planners were in the service of Rotterdam's Municipal Works since 1924, both in section III, Witteveen being its head, Van der Steur his substitute. Mens, *W.G. Witteveen en Rotterdam*, 34. Molenaar describes Van der Steur as 'his [Witteveen's] right-hand man', Molenaar, *Brinkman & Van der Vlugt*, 67. Above all, the Unilever Offices and the Boijmans Museum recall the suggestions of Witteveen's perspective drawings: the sense of monumentality displayed, the composition of the volumes, making use of local symmetries and towers as vertical accentuations.

¹⁰⁴ Hage, 'Westersingel in historic perspective', 27. Jan de Graaf reports that in comparison with the situation before May 1940, the amount of housing in Rotterdam's inner city was reduced to less than 50 percent. Jan de Graaf, *Architectuur en stedenbouw in Rotterdam 1850-1940* (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 1992) 34, 32.

¹⁰⁵ On this issue, see: Frank Kauffmann, 'Towards a "modern" city centre', in: Wim A.L. Beeren et al (eds.), *Het Nieuwe Bouwen in Rotterdam 1920-1960* (Delft: Delft University Press, 1982), 78-81.

¹⁰⁶ Quoted after: Donald Lambert, 'De mogelijkheden en de beperkingen van een stedelijk plan. Het nieuwe Binnenstadplan voor Rotterdam', *wonen-TA/BK* 10 (1985), 10.



Figure 6. Cornelis van Traa, Basis Plan for the Inner City of Rotterdam, 1946.

if resembling a patchwork due to the numerous modifications it had been subject to.¹⁰⁷ It has been repeatedly observed that this longevity was owed to the Basis Plan's strategic flexibility in terms of design.¹⁰⁸ This flexibility, however, granting relatively great liberty to architects and urban planners alike, appears also a cause of the extreme heterogeneity of Rotterdam's townscape. In the 1980s, the city's fragmented appearance was generally perceived as a shortcoming, for which a lack of continuity in urban planning was held responsible:

In 1985 Amsterdam celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its General Expansion Plan, and Rotterdam still does not have such a plan, but only a varied assembly of plan projects, procedures, local plans, city renewal plans, GeSPs¹⁰⁹ (Detailed Urban Plans), etc. – and, very much in correspondence with this, buildings in almost all styles and fashions that made their way to the Netherlands.¹¹⁰

In 1985 Rotterdam's municipality introduced the so-called Inner City Plan ('Binnenstadsplan'), conceived for a timespan of ten years. [Figure 7] The new plan, envisaged as a supplement of Van Traa's Basis Plan, focused on the more central parts of Rotterdam and the area destroyed in 1940 in particular.¹¹¹ Koos Hage – a representative of Rotterdam's Department for Urban Development who would accompany the entire planning process of the Kunsthal and the Museum Park – called the plan

¹⁰⁷ Lambert, 'Het mogelijkheden en de beperkingen van een stedelijk plan', 10.

¹⁰⁸ Kauffmann: 'Thanks to its flexibility, the Basic Plan enjoyed an exceptionally long life as a juridical foundation and it is even still valid today.' Kauffmann, 'Towards a "modern" city centre', 82. See also: Ibid., 86.

¹⁰⁹ Gedetailleerd stedenbouwkundig plan.

¹¹⁰ Rob Dettingmeijer, *Open Stad. Planontwikkeling, stedenbouw, volkshuisvesting en architectuur in Rotterdam tussen de twee Wereldoorlogen* (Utrecht: Rijksuniversiteit Utrecht, 1988), 402, (author trans.). Similarly, Jan de Graaf states: 'Rotterdam is a city of fragments. Literally and figuratively. And if there is any tradition, then the one of rupture and change of course. Red today, green tomorrow.' De Graaf, *Architectuur en stedenbouw in Rotterdam*, 12 (author trans.). Arthur Wortmann explains: 'The need for short-term political successes during certain periods and the lack of an all-embracing vision in the various urban planning services created fertile ground for determined action. Quick decision-making allowed things to get past that would have been impossible under other kinds of planning process.' Arthur Wortmann, 'Het Rotterdamse Museumpark. Aselecte verzameling prestigeprojecten', *Archis* 1 (1993), 30.

¹¹¹ Van Traa's Basic Plan remained effective. See: Lambert, 'Het mogelijkheden en de beperkingen van een stedelijk plan', 10. The Inner City Plan was conceived as a basis for the Detailed Urban Plans (GeSP).

‘the final scenario for the last round in the city’s reconstruction’.¹¹² Donald Lambert suggests that the Inner City Plan was, first of all, an attempt to correct the developments so far accomplished:

The fragmentation so typical for Rotterdam in the seventies and at the beginning of the eighties has been reinforced by the attitude of the municipal service, which is mainly concerned with architecture. Some five years ago, when it became clear that reconstruction had not produced positive results, people began to look for remedies. At the beginning of 1985, a new overall plan for this city centre was presented for the first time.¹¹³

At any rate, it was the Inner City Plan that provided the framework of urban planning in which the projects for the Kunsthall, the Museum Park and the NAI took shape. The plan distinguished three focal areas, dubbed the ‘Centre District’, the ‘Water City’, and the ‘Park Triangle’.¹¹⁴ In principle, the purpose of the Inner City Plan was to reinforce the intrinsic qualities of each of these areas while strengthening the bonds between the inner city and the Maas River. For the Park Triangle the municipality envisaged the restructuring of the remaining green spaces next to the construction of series of museums, so as to expand the already existing cultural offer in this area. The three most important projects were the Museum Park, the Kunsthall and the NAI.

Axes to unify

Within the Park Triangle, the municipal planning focused on the future Museum Park at the eastern margin of the Dijkzigt area. The three new museums – the Kunsthall, the NAI, and the Natural History Museum, were located on its perimeter, and its existing open spaces were envisaged for a radical redesign. Before the municipal planners presented their project, an international design seminar was

¹¹² Hage, ‘Westersingel in historic perspective’, 30.

¹¹³ Donald Lambert, ‘Rotterdam, recoller les fragments’, *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui*, 257 (1988), 38-39. A study from Rotterdam’s Department for Urban Development from 1986 admits a lack of ‘spatial and programmatic quality’ in some areas of the city, describing its ensemble as ‘rather an addition of kaleidoscopic differences.’ Stadsontwikkeling Rotterdam, ‘Museumpark. Uitkomst atelier November 1986’, 3. OMAR 1497.

¹¹⁴ ‘Centre District’ denotes the area between the Westersingel and the Coolsingel, ‘Water City’ the area between Leuvehaven and Oudehaven. Each area ought to be developed on the basis of guiding theme, derived from its existing qualities. The theme of the ‘Park Triangle’ was ‘culture and recreation’.

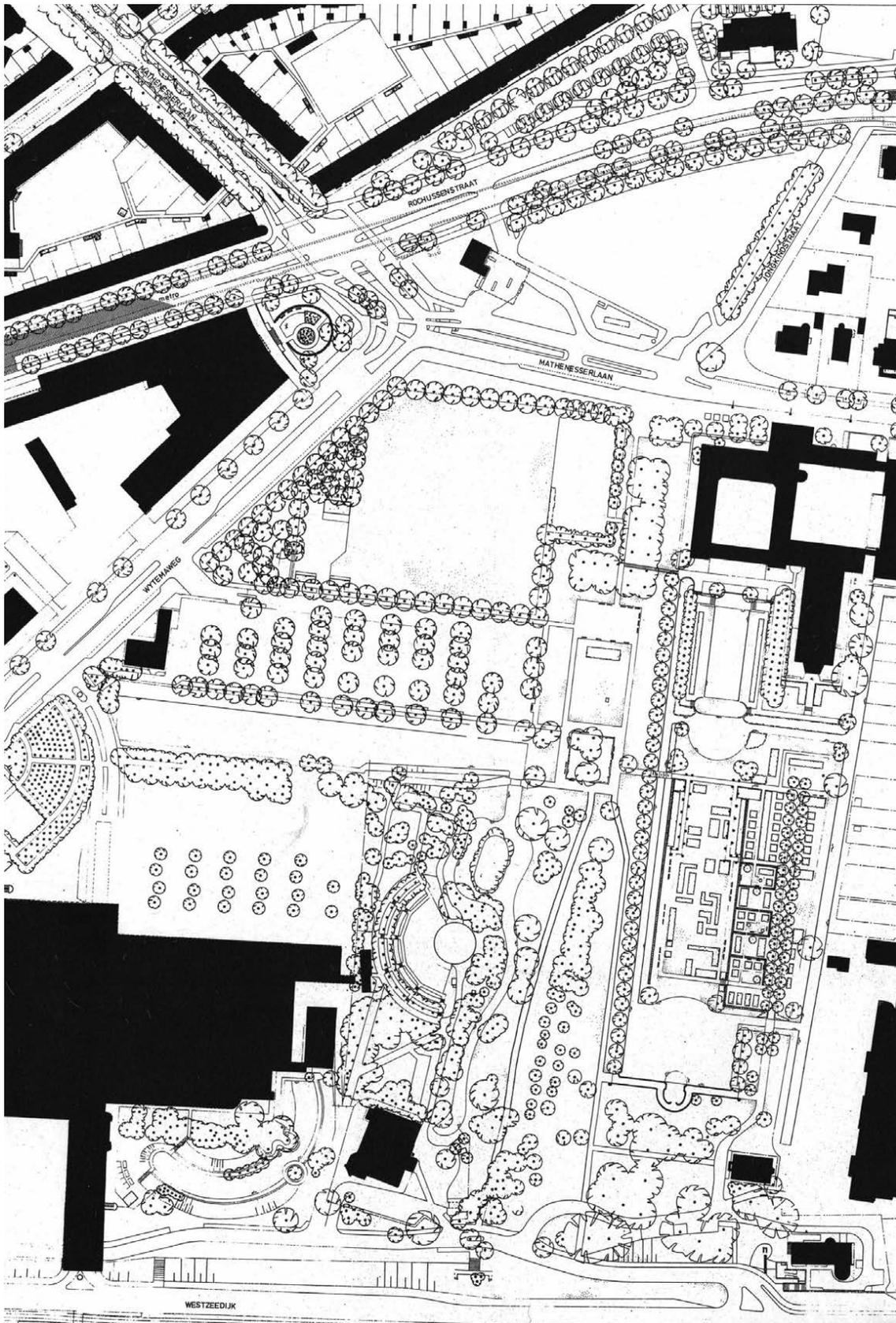


Figure 8. Map handed out to the participants of the design seminar in 1985. The drawing shows the remainders of Witteveen's Dijkzicht park in the mid-eighties. Bottom left: The complex of the Medical Faculty. Centre right: the Boijmans Museum.

held in Rotterdam in September 1985, organized by the city's Department for Urban Development in collaboration with the Department of Landscape Architecture of Wageningen Agricultural University. [Figure 8] Next to the staff and students from Wageningen, teams from universities and art schools in Copenhagen, Berlin, Edinburgh, and Trieste participated in the event. By and large, the subject was the area of what was to become the Museum Park, referred to by the organizers as the 'Land of Hoboken'. The brief handed out to the participants contained many of the municipal ideas for the Park Triangle.¹¹⁵ But there was no mention yet of the Kunsthal and the NAI. Neither was there any stress on the park to become an element of linkage. Most importantly, it was unclear how far the park would extend to the west, a terrain largely occupied by the hospitals, and the students were asked to define the border between the two areas. In fact, during the 1950s and 1960s, most of the western portion of the former Hoboken land had been filled with new buildings: next to the Dijkzigt Hospital (1952-60) by A. Viergever and B.M. den Hollander, the vast hospital complex of the Erasmus University's Medical Faculty (1965-68) by OD 205 immediately bordering the Museum Park. Plans for a new hospital for children – the Sophia Hospital completed in 1994, likewise built by OD 205 in an area directly adjacent to the park – were already underway when the seminar took place.

One year later, in November 1986, the Department for Urban Development held a workshop of its own, entitled 'Museum Park'. The results were synthesized in an A3 booklet of 16 pages, which included a series of plans, explanatory texts, and a picture of a model.¹¹⁶ Probably because of the changed preconditions, the scheme outlined in the booklet does not resemble any of the schemes presented by the students one year before. [Figure 9] Apart from providing the construction of the NAI and the Kunsthal and the stress on a linear connection running north-south, the scheme proposes a straight canal ('Water Axis') marking the western margin of the park. According to Koos Hage, the bold gesture of the canal was to prevent the adjacent Medical Faculty from further extension.¹¹⁷ Originally, the ground

¹¹⁵ J. Bleeker, 'The Landscape Design Seminar: Its objectives, organization and results', in: M.J. Vroom, J.H.A. Meeus, *Learning from Rotterdam. Investigating the process of urban park design* (London: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1990), 88-90. See also: Gerrie Andela, 'Internationale ontwerpteams presenteren plannen voor het Land van Hoboken', *wonen-TA/BK* 19-20 (1985), 4-6.

¹¹⁶ Stadsontwikkeling Rotterdam, 'Museumpark. Uitkomst atelier November 1986'. OMAR 1497.

¹¹⁷ Interview with the author on 28 July 2020.



Figure 9. Department for Urban Development Rotterdam.
Scheme for the Museum Park with Kunsthall and NAI, November 1986.

of the Erasmus University protruded deeply into the northern half of what was to become the Museum Park.¹¹⁸ Hage recalls that it was only thanks to negotiations led by the then new director of the Department of Urban Development, Riek Bakker, that the course of the border between the hospital precinct and the park could be straightened, turning the latter into a corridor-like strip some 500-metres long and about 120 metres wide.¹¹⁹

Apparently the correction of the park's perimeter, allowing for the lost spatial continuity, had been projected with the idea in mind that the open space should link the inner city to Het Park and the Maas River. Not surprisingly, the corollary text of the scheme from November 1986 explicitly refers to the 'Witteveen Plan' as a source of inspiration.¹²⁰ But compared to Witteveen's Dijkzicht plan from 1926 the municipal conception of the Park Triangle from the 1980s meant a pronounced shift from nature, with an almost exclusive concern for a combination of nature and 'culture' in the widest sense. That holds true for the entire sequence of open spaces from Westersingel - Museum Park - Het Park, extending from Central Station to the Maas River. [Figure 10] Already in the Inner City Plan from 1985, one side of the Park Triangle 'connects' to the southern half of the Westersingel. In the mid-eighties several art galleries were aligned along the Westersingel, next to two congress centres and the Rotterdamse Kunststichting, accommodated in the reconstruction of Oud's Café de Unie.¹²¹ In the scheme resulting from the workshop in November 1986, the Westersingel figures as a 'Culture Axis', which the cultural institutions of the Museum Park were meant to continue.

Like the city as a whole the Dijkzicht area had seen significant changes since the implementation of Witteveen's plan, and some of them were a burden for the functioning of the Park Triangle as envisaged by Rotterdam's municipality. Many changes had been made at the expense of the spatial continuity

¹¹⁸ OMAR 1660, 1602. See also the site plans shown in: J.H.A. Meus, 'Openness in Dese Packing', in: Vroom, Meeus, *Learning from Rotterdam*, 122-123.

¹¹⁹ Interview with the author on 28 July 2020.

¹²⁰ Stadsontwikkeling Rotterdam, 'Museumpark', 5. OMAR 1497.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 4. See also: Paul Groenendijk, Arjen Molendijk, 'Museumpark krijgt na vijftig jaar gestalte. De geschiedenis van de lokatie van het Architectuurinstituut', *architectuur/bouwen* 6/7 (1988), 52. A concentration of cultural institutions along the Westersingel had already been suggested by Van Traa's Basis Plan.

Chapter 1.2

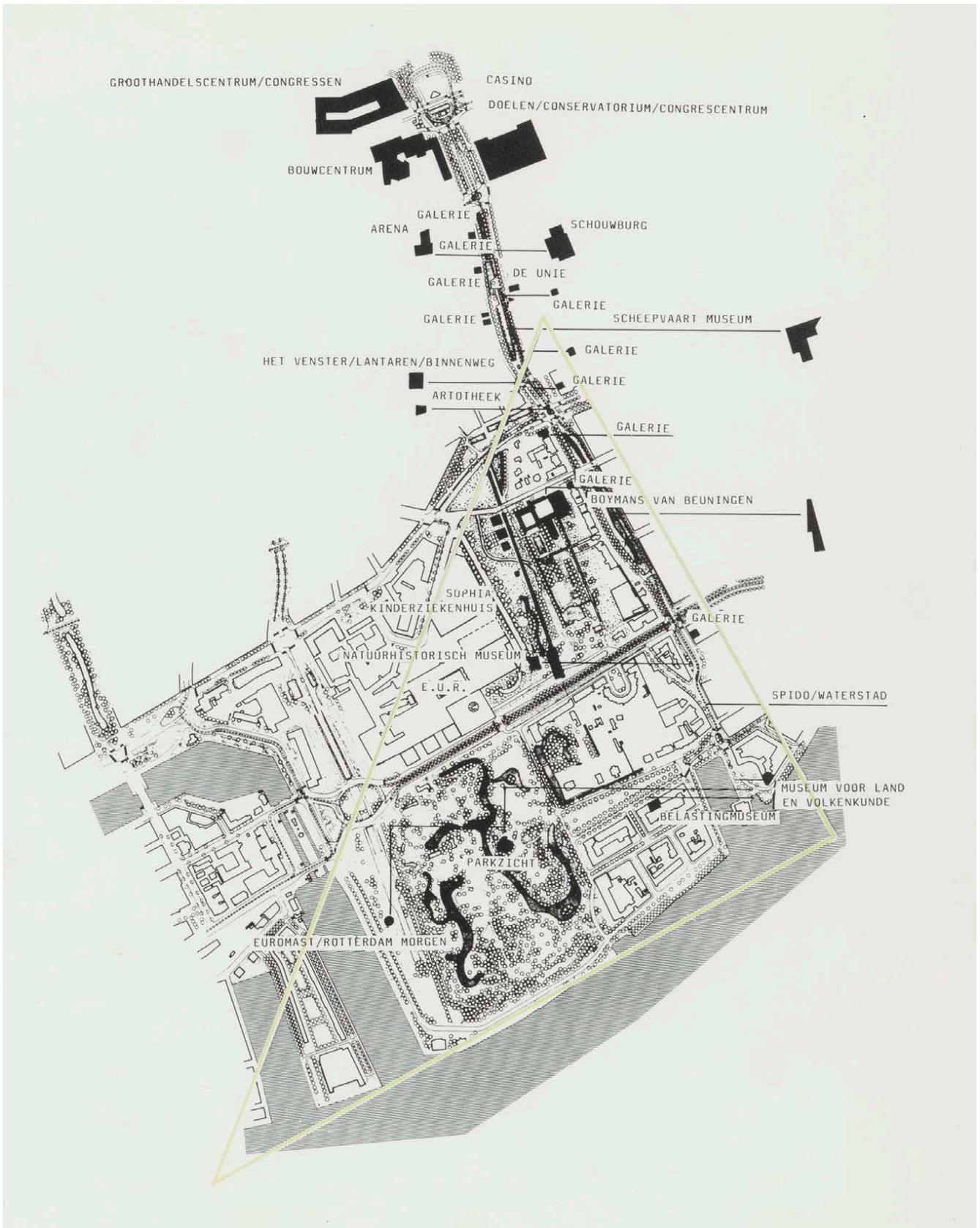


Figure 10. Department for Urban Development Rotterdam. 'Park Triangle' and Westersingel. 1986.

between the Westersingel, the Museum Park, and Het Park. That applies first of all for the ever growing complex of hospitals in the western and central section of the Dijkzigt area. Not only was the Museum Park threatened to be cut into two more or less disconnected halves by the future children's hospital; the whole area opposite Het Park was now filled with the buildings of the Dijkzigt Hospital and the Medical Faculty. Further, the dyke had been broadened and its level raised in 1974.¹²² With four lanes and tramways running both ways in-between, the Westzeedijk – or Maas Boulevard as it is also referred to – more than ever became a physical barrier between the two parks. [Figure 11] No less important, to establish a proper connection between the Museum Park and the Westersingel to the north had become difficult if not impossible. Witteveen's plan from 1926 shows the area west from the Eendrachtsplein between Rochussenstraat and the Nieuwe Binnenweg as an open space. By the 1980s, most of it was covered with buildings. Coming from the Westersingel one had to follow Rochussenstraat some hundred metres before reaching the park, and vice versa.

However, the ambition to tie the three areas together – Westersingel, Museum Park and Het Park – was critical for the municipal layout of the Museum Park. The drawings, along with the picture of the model, show a straight promenade, dubbed 'Axis of Development', that links Rochussenstraat at the park's northern margin and the Mass Boulevard on the dyke to the south.¹²³ [Figure 12] The scheme suggests to locate the two new buildings alongside the promenade: the Architecture Institute adjacent to the Boijmans Museum, and the Kunsthal in proximity of the dyke and the Villa Dijkzigt. The southern end of the Kunsthal ought to align with the Maas Boulevard, albeit raised two metres above the top of the embankment and eight metres above the level of the park. The double purpose behind this idea was to preserve the embankment's volumetric integrity and not to disturb the visual bonds between the Maas Boulevard and the Museum Park.

¹²² Hage, 'Westersingel in historic perspective', 29.

¹²³ Stadsontwikkeling Rotterdam, 'Museumpark', 5. OMAR 1497.

Chapter 1.2



Figure 11. The Westzeedijk/Maas Boulevard in the 1980s.
Visible behind the buildings are the trees of Het Park and the Euromast by Hugh Maaskant (1958-60).

A third major element of the scheme is open space conceived for temporary public events, called ‘Manifestation Field’.¹²⁴ Already the brief of the 1985 design seminar provided a space of this kind. The schedule of requirements specifies: ‘As there is no other room for it elsewhere in the city centre, an exhibition ground of 1 hectare for cultural and other events is to be designed to accommodate, for example, a circus or a theatre tent.’¹²⁵ Providing the requisite facilities for Rotterdam’s theatre and music festival Teatro Fantastico would become an integral part of the Museum Park’s brief. The scheme from November 1986 – and an agreement between Koolhaas and Bakker from May 1987 alike – envisage for the Manifestation Field the former Hobokenplein on which the NAI would be built instead.¹²⁶

The sequence of cultural attractions is complemented by a series of ‘plots’ (‘kavels’) along the main promenade ‘allowing for great liberty with regard to their use.’¹²⁷ The Villa Dijkzigt aside, its English landscape garden is integrated into the scheme, including an open air theatre constructed by means of a job-creation measure during the economic crisis before World War II.¹²⁸ The accent of the project on cultural activity ought to echo the proximity of Rotterdam’s inner city. In a deliberate contrast to the more remote and ‘quiet’ Het Park, the Department for Urban Development envisages the Museum Park as ‘a platform for the exchange of ideas.’

¹²⁴ Stadsontwikkeling Rotterdam, ‘Museumpark’, 5-6. OMAR 1497. For the Department for Urban Development’s plans for the Manifestation Field in 1987, see: Koos Hage, ‘Manifestatieterrein’, 29 September 1987; and: Stadsontwikkeling Rotterdam, Centre District, ‘Manifestatieterrein in Rotterdam’, 2 November 1987. OMAR 4492.

¹²⁵ Bleeker, ‘The Landscape Design Seminar’, 89.

¹²⁶ A paper by Koos Hage from September 1987 identifies the Hokenplein as the appropriate location for its proximity to the inner city. Haage, ‘Manifestatieterrein’, 29 September 1987. OMAR 4492. The paper from May 1987 records, probably mistaking Mathenesserlaan (recently renamed Museumpark) for Mathenesserplein: ‘Event square (Evenementenplein) between Rochussentraat and Mathenesserplein to be designed in unity with the Museum Park.’ Centre District, Stadsontwikkeling Rotterdam, ‘Afspraken betreffende opdracht Kunsthal e.o.’, 8 May 1987. OMAR 3267. The former Hobokenplein, today occupied by the HNI, was located between Mathenesserlaan and Rochussenstraat.

¹²⁷ Stadsontwikkeling Rotterdam, ‘Museumpark’, 6. OMAR 1497. Unless specified otherwise, the booklet is also the source of information of the subsequent passage.

¹²⁸ Hoogenberk, *Het Idee van de Hollandse Stad*, 134. Wortmann, ‘Het Rotterdamse Museumpark’, 38.

Chapter 1.2

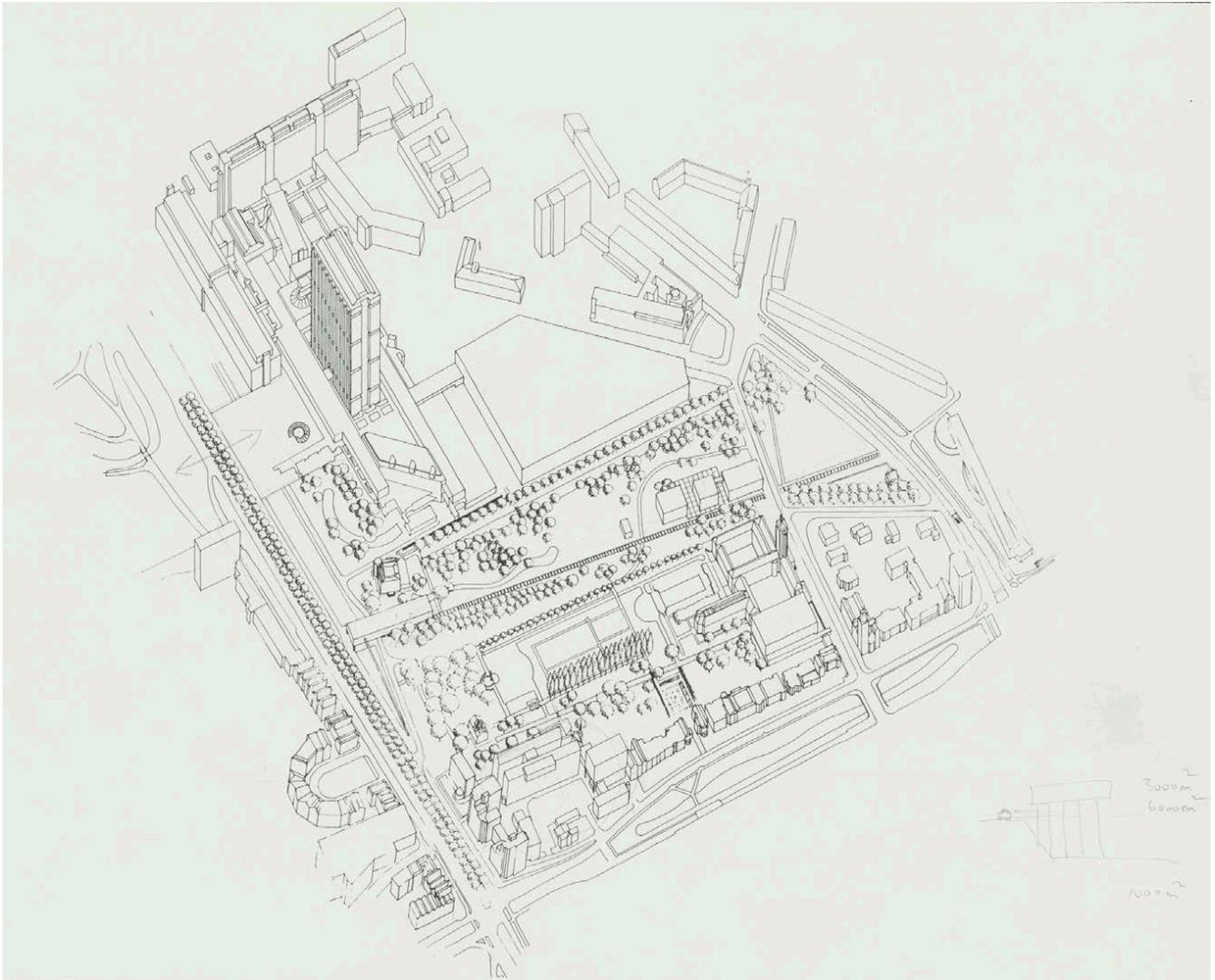


Figure 12. Department for Urban Development Rotterdam.
Scheme for the Museum Park with Kunsthal and NAI, November 1986.

70.000 visitors per week

On 6 February 1986, Joop Linthorst, Rotterdam's alderman for arts, sent a letter to the Dutch Minister of Welfare, Health and Culture. In the letter Linthorst argues that a veritable arts centre, apt to house large temporary exhibitions in the Netherlands is still missing. He writes:

It is conspicuous that large scale exhibitions of modern art or classical art, or other museum collections, are rare in our country, and that, if they occur, it is difficult to accommodate them in the existing museums. The buildings are usually not prepared for that; permanent exhibitions have to be removed for longer periods of time, the museum's organization is temporarily out of order, the institutions are not conceived for assuming large financial risks.¹²⁹

In the same letter Linthorst recommends Rotterdam as an adequate environment for a national arts centre, pointing out the city's 'good reputation' in regard to the organization of such exhibitions. In December 1986, an investigation concerning the institution of a 'National Exhibition Hall' which he had ordered himself was concluded. The 20-pages expertise, authored by Charles E. van Blommestein and Janine A. Verstegen, is based on talks with institutions that might be involved in future collaboration, such as various Dutch museums, the initiators of the Architecture Museum and the National Service for Fine Arts.¹³⁰ Additional information was obtained from comparable foreign institutions, namely the Royal Academy and the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London. [Figure 13] Obviously the investigation was coordinated with the Department for Urban Development and the recent plans for the Dijkzigt area. In their report Van Blommestein and Verstegen explicitly refer to the Museum Park project from November. In principle they support the idea to locate the Kunsthall – or Exhibition Hall, as they call it – to the southern margin of the park, raising the concern, though, that a

¹²⁹ Quoted after: C.E. van Blommestein, J.A. Verstegen, 'Onderzoek naar de behoefte aan een Nationale Tentoonstellingshal' (Investigation on behalf of a National Arts Centre), Rotterdam, 30 December 1986, 4 (author trans.). OMAR 1488.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

Chapter 1.2

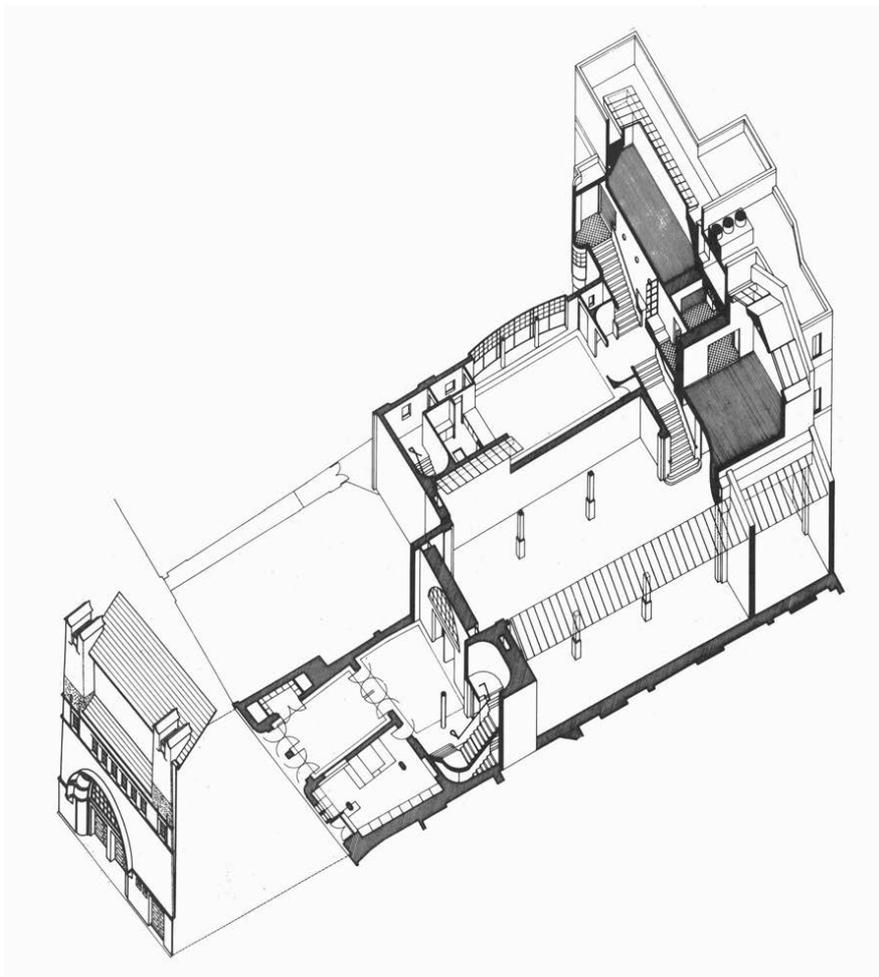
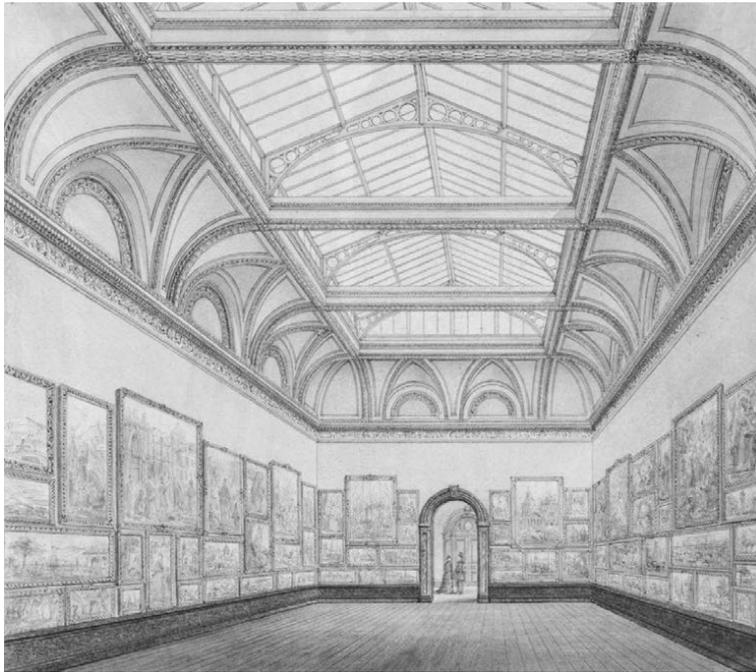


Figure 13. Above: Sidney Smirke, Interior of the Royal Academy, London. 1866-67.
Below: Colquhoun & Miller, Axonometric of the Whitechapel Gallery, London. 1978-85.

location closer to the future Architecture Institute and the Boijmans Museum might allow a shared technical infrastructure, and by consequence, to reduce costs.¹³¹

The Kunsthal was to house temporary exhibitions only. Like many Kunsthallen (arts centres) in German speaking countries – for instance, Philip Johnson’s Kunsthalle Bielefeld (1968), and the Kunsthalle Bern (1917) by Klauser & Streit – it would not have a collection of its own. Like Linthorst in his letter from February, Van Blommestein and Verstegen picture the Kunsthal as a complement to Dutch museums, namely the future NAI and the Boijmans Museum. Like Linthorst, they recommend to focus on large exhibitions, difficult to handle for museums with permanent collection presentations. As examples they mention Dutch blockbusters of recent years, such as the ‘Treasures of Turkey’ (Rijksmuseum Leiden, 1986), ‘The Gold of the Thracians’ (Boijmans Museum, 1984), ‘Masterpieces from the Hermitage. Dutch and Flemish Painting of the Seventeenth Century’ (Boijmans Museum, 1985). Besides, the Kunsthal was meant to host travelling exhibitions of foreign production shown in arts centres such as the Royal Academy in London, the Grand Palais in Paris, the Paleis voor Schone Kunsten in Brussels, the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf or the Palazzo dell’ Arte in Milan. Next to these large exhibitions, the Kunsthal would house experimental art exhibitions or small and medium size exhibitions that did not match the profile of the existing museums.¹³²

The need for spaces to house corollary events, such as symposia, concerts and theatre performances, is likewise taken into account. The ‘Draft for a Programme of Requirements’ attached to the report, however, does neither include an auditorium, nor a café or a cafeteria – indicating, among other things, that these functions were sufficiently covered by neighbouring institutions, such as the NAI and the Boijmans Museum.¹³³ Van Blommestein and Verstegen suggest to conceive the building on the “empty-box” principle’, that is, ‘as flexible as possible’, in order to allow for a maximum range of exhibitions.¹³⁴ They recommend top lit galleries in combination with narrow lateral windows, and a

¹³¹ Ibid., 15.

¹³² Ibid., 8-9.

¹³³ Ibid., 10.

¹³⁴ Ibid.



Figure 14. Dylaby, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1962.
Installation by Daniel Spoerri.

total of 3.000 square metres comprising about 2.000 square metres of exhibition space. Apart from the claim for flexibility and top-lit spaces the report does not voice any architectural preference. No existing arts centres or museums are put forward as possible models.

The main concern of the report is the Kunsthall's future exhibition policy and, implicitly, costs. The estimated expenses are: 10.5 million guilders for the building and 1.75 million guilders per year for the redemption of the investment and operating costs.¹³⁵ The report suggests that the state (Rijk) would cover both, 'based on the assumption that the amount could not be provided with the means of the municipality.'¹³⁶ The suggestion that the Dutch government should fund the project, resonates in the way it is outlined throughout the report: as a *national* exhibition hall that would not only fill a sensitive gap in the Dutch museum landscape, but attract visitors from all over the country.

In order to give the Kunsthall a 'clear profile', Van Blommestein and Versteegen suggest that the range of exhibitions should not be too heterogeneous, recommending a general emphasis on 'old and modern fine arts, architecture and applied arts'.¹³⁷ The above list of exhibitions and foreign art institutions aside, Van Blommestein and Versteegen abstain from suggesting any specific type of exhibition, pointing out that future developments in the art world cannot be predicted.¹³⁸ In fact, little indicates that they aimed at the 'intense, dynamic experience' Bart Lootsma and Jan de Graaf describe as characteristic for arts centres in their review of the Kunsthall from 1993. Lootsma and De Graaf refer first and foremost to art exhibitions and related events from the 1960s and 1970s which took place in museums, not arts centres, namely in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, and the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, under the direction of Willem Sandberg (1945-63) and Jean Leering (1964-73) respectively: 'installations that literally transformed entire galleries into dynamic labyrinths. The viewer's experience took priority – among artists who poured their energy into organizing happenings and performances that could only be

¹³⁵ Ibid., 13-14.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 14.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 7.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 8.

experienced by participating in person'.¹³⁹ Lootsma and De Graaf here refer first of all to Sandberg's exhibition 'Dylaby' with the participation of Robert Rauschenberg, Yves Tinguely, Daniel Spoerri, Niki de Saint Phalle, and Martial Raysse, amongst others. [Figure 14] Sandberg himself explained:

Probably that 'Merzbau' was in the back of our minds and inspired the exhibition 'Dylaby', a dynamic labyrinth that we made in 1962. [...]

It went like this: the artist could fit out his own space and the people could walk through it. I think about the labyrinth of Spoerri that was largely pitch dark, but where you could hear and smell and touch all sorts of things. You could also walk up and down stairs and open doors. If you opened a door, a pulley was attached to it and something or other, I think it was a chair, went upwards. When you shut the door again something would fall with a crash to the ground. So people controlled the objects and found themselves in the middle of things.¹⁴⁰

Lootsma and De Graaf further mention Dutch artist Paul Panhuysen who was 'particularly known for turning museum openings into total anarchist "situations"'.¹⁴¹ Panhuysen, who had close relations to the Fluxus movement and who advocated an art committed to socialist reform, headed the educational service of the Van Abbemuseum under the administration of Jean Leering (1964-73).¹⁴² The Kunsthall outlined by Van Blommestein and Verstegen, however, followed a more pragmatist approach of economic sustainability. In their 1993 review Lootsma and De Graaf characterize the spectrum of contemporaneous arts centres as follows:

Nearby countries have two kinds of arts centres. The relatively smaller ones, such as the Kunsthalle Basel, the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London and Porticus in Frankfurt, exhibit the most recent developments in the visual arts, things which have not yet been picked up by

¹³⁹ Bart Lootsma, Jan de Graaf, 'In dienst van de ervaring. KunstHAL van OMA in Rotterdam', *De Architect* 1 (1993), 22 (author trans.).

¹⁴⁰ Ank Leeuw Marcar (ed.), *Willem Sandberg. Portrait of an Artist* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2013), 213-214.

¹⁴¹ Lootsma, De Graaf, 'In dienst van de ervaring', 22 (author trans.).

¹⁴² See: Paul P.M. Panhuysen, 'In defense of the museum of modern art', in: Carel Blotkamp et al., (eds.), *Museum in Motion* (Gravenhage: Government Publishing Office, 1979), 288-301.

museums for a higher-minded, qualitative presentation. These institutions tend to be highly reliant on a single director who sets out a distinctly personal vision and backs it conceptually. In Basel, that included in the past such legendary curators as Harald Szeemann and Jean Christophe Ammann; in Frankfurt, Kaspar Koenig. Rotterdam too has had Chris Dercon, heading the Witte de With [centre for contemporary art] since 1990. That kind of specific, elitist policy is not what we should expect with the KunstHAL, however.¹⁴³

Instead Lootsma and De Graaf suggest that Rotterdam's municipality – 'with its "new hard-line leftist" approach' – conceived the Kunsthal as an arts centre of the second kind:

In addition to these small arts centres, there are a host of larger institutions, such as Martin Gropius Bau in Berlin, the Stadtische Kunsthalle in Düsseldorf, Schirnhalles in Frankfurt, the Triennale buildings in Milan, Palazzo Grassi in Venice and the recent Kunsthalle in Bonn designed by Gustav Peichl. These arts centres excel at putting together large-scale exhibitions, 'blockbusters', on a famous artist, for example, by assembling pieces from various collections around the world for the first time [...]. These are one-off, but extremely expensive, exhibitions that stand or fall on mass attendance.¹⁴⁴

In fact, the need to attract large numbers of visitors is at the core of Van Blommestein and Verstegen's argument, as is the genuine aptness of temporary exhibitions to do so, and the prospect of covering operational costs with blockbusters. The focus on attendance figures and the idea the museum should meet broad public interest, corresponds to what Dutch architect and theorist Cornelis van de Ven, in 1989, identified as a general trend among planners and politicians. The museum had become an object of economic interest and political prestige, while town planners employed it as an instrument for urban revitalization:

¹⁴³ Lootsma, De Graaf, 'In Service of the Experience', in: Van Gerrewey, *A Critical Reader*, 283. First published in 1993 under the title 'In dienst van de ervaring'.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

The leisure culture has discovered the museum, but also vice versa the museum aims eagerly at the enormous potential of visitors now available. The attention paid to the strong increase of visitor numbers has led to the construction of spectacular buildings in our cities, by what means also new life shall be breathed into the withering centres.¹⁴⁵

In the literature of the time, dedicated to museums, attendance figures are a recurring topic, sometimes related with manifest amazement: 52.000.000 museum visitors in Western Germany in 1982,¹⁴⁶ 61.000.000 in 1985;¹⁴⁷ 7.000.000 visitors per year in the Centre Pompidou, 20.000 per day in Adrien Fainsilber's Cité de sciences (1980-86)¹⁴⁸; 1.600.000 visitors during the first six months after the opening of James Stirling's Staatsgalerie (1977-84) in Stuttgart, since then 70.000 visitors per week; 20.000 visitors per month in Oswald Mathias Ungers' Architecture Museum in Frankfurt (1979-84).¹⁴⁹ 'These high attendance figures', Van de Ven concludes, 'have created the impression, for eager authorities, that a museum may be counted among the main attractions of the city.'¹⁵⁰

It goes without saying that the quest for large visitor numbers, increasing tourism, economic benefit and prestige had consequences for the architecture of museums to the extent that these buildings became major attractions themselves. Resonant names and 'spectacular' designs would seem favourable to this effect. Stirling and his Staatsgalerie provided an early model for this strategy, anticipating in more than one regard what one decade later would be called the 'Bilbao effect'. According to Lootsma and de Graaf it is against this backdrop that the choice for Koolhaas as the architect of the Kunsthall appears obvious: 'it seems only logical', they observe, 'that a world-famous architect would be contracted for the building itself: in the Netherlands that means Koolhaas.'¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁵ Cornelis van de Ven, 'Het museumgebouw, planning en ontwerp', in: Idem, Bob Martens (eds.), *Museumarchitectuur* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1989), 19 (author trans.).

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 20.

¹⁴⁷ Wolfgang Pehnt, 'Das Museum als Freizeitspass', *Deutsche Bauzeitung* 1 (1987), 10.

¹⁴⁸ Van de Ven, 'Het museumgebouw', 22.

¹⁴⁹ David Galloway, 'The New German Museums', *Art in America* (July 1985), 74, 88.

¹⁵⁰ Van de Ven, 'Het museumgebouw', 20. Pehnt calls the visiting crowds 'the pride of the cultural politician'. Pehnt, 'Das Museum als Freizeitspass', 10 (author trans.).

¹⁵¹ Lootsma, De Graaf, 'In Service of the Experience', in: Van Gerrewey, *A Critical Reader*, 283.

Perhaps this view was shared by alderman Joop Linthorst, who seems to have been the driving force behind the Kunsthal project within Rotterdam's administration.¹⁵² In either case, the agreement between the municipality and Koolhaas from February 1986 was also a decision against an architectural competition. Trust in the abilities of the architect is likely to have played a role for this choice, especially when considering the amount of attention the new building was bound to attract. For OMA it meant that the team could approach its task with relative freedom, unburdened by considerations of what the competitors would propose.

¹⁵² On this issue, see also: Van Ulzen, *Imagine a Metropolis*, 39.

1.3

Towers and villas

Two studies for the Dijkzigt area: May - September 1987

In 1987, OMA produced at least two studies of the Kunsthal and the Museum Park. The first, an A3 booklet of 24 pages, entitled ‘Kunsthal Rotterdam. Primarily Town Planning Study’ dates from May 1987.¹⁵³ OMA’s study is based on Rotterdam’s Inner City Plan from 1985 and the Department for Urban Development’s project for the Museum Park from November 1986. The study covers the area of the Park Triangle as whole. It records the givens, comments the municipal plans, and it concludes with a proposal of its own. A ‘Morphological Catalogue’ depicts the site as composed of a multitude of more or less equally represented constituents, grouped in two categories. The catalogue distinguishes: 1) ‘Single Elements’, such as ‘Blocks’ (e.g. the Boijmans Museum), a group called ‘Slab, Tower, Needle’ (e.g. the Euromast in Het Park), and ‘Folies’ (e.g. the Villa Dijkzigt); and 2) ‘Linear Elements’, such as the Westzeedijk, ‘Walls’ (linear apartment blocks), ‘Single elements in rows’ (detached houses), and the ‘Trees and Hedges’ of the park. [Figure 1] There is no corollary text that would comment this catalogue. But it is obvious that OMA’s analysis stresses the morphological heterogeneity and incoherence of the environment. In *S,M,L,XL* Koolhaas would characterize the surroundings of the Museum Park as follows:

the site is a leftover rectangle [...] between four different conditions: the north is defined by a mini-Siedlung of prewar white villas facing the brick and copper of the Boymans Museum (an embalmed frontline in the eternal conflict between modernity and tradition); the western horizon by a 1960s hospital tower, its white enamelled skin one of the last works of Jean

¹⁵³ OMAR 1553. OMA seems to have anticipated the municipality’s commission for the study. In a multiple choice classification on the front page of the booklet, the field ‘to your information’ is crossed, not ‘following your order’. In handwritten letter, received by OMA on 15 June 1987, Riek Bakker admonishes Koolhaas for misbehaving (‘donderjagen’) and advises him to adhere to the agreements. Only in a letter from 24 June 1987 Bakker assigns OMA an “extra” commission for a further study of the Museum Park’. OMAR 3267.

Chapter 1.3

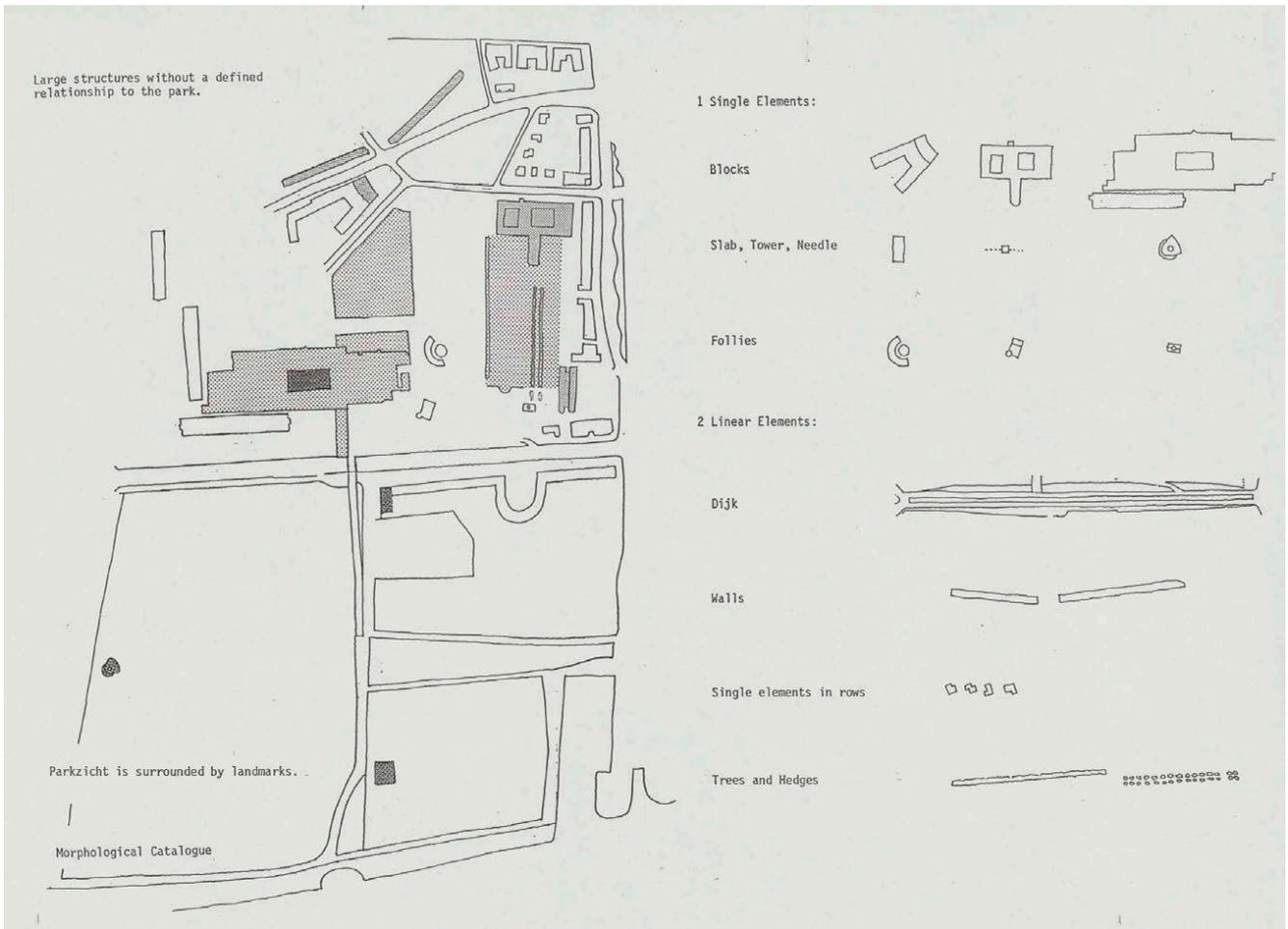


Figure 1. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, 'Kunsthal Rotterdam. Preliminary Town Planning Study', 18 May 1987. 'Morphological Catalogue'

Prouvé; the east by the Boymans rose garden; the south by an urban motorway elevated on a six-meter dike.¹⁵⁴

To judge this notion of incoherence, which was the point of departure for all the – realized and non-realized – schemes OMA produced for this site, it is necessary to reconstruct the state of the Dijkzigt area and the adjacent environment at this moment. Since 1987, the park and its surroundings changed significantly. A number of partly large buildings close by did not yet exist: To the west the Sophia Children's Hospital (1987-94) by OD 205, and the second tower of the Erasmus University (2003-12) by Claus en Kaan; on Rochussenstraat the extension of the Park Hotel (1990-94) and an apartment block (1991-95), both by Mecanoo; within the Museum Park the Netherlands Architecture Institute (1988-93) by Jo Coenen, the extension of the Natural History Museum (1989-96) by Mecanoo/Erick van Egeraat, the underground parking by Paul de Ruiter (2003-13), and the Boijmans Museum Depot by MVRDV (2014-20); to the east: the garden pavilion of the Boijmans Museum by H.A.J. Henket (1989-91), and the extension of the Boijmans Museum by Robbrecht en Daem (1999-2003).

Exceptionally harmonious

Back in 1987, the majority of buildings in the immediate surroundings originated from the late 1920s and 1930s.¹⁵⁵ [Figures 2-4] The design of their exteriors had been subject to the control of Witteveen's municipal department.¹⁵⁶ Apart from the Boijmans Museum, the Unilever Offices and the Erasmiaans School, this applies to the apartment blocks along Rochussenstraat and F.L. Lourijssen's residential

¹⁵⁴ Koolhaas, 'New Rotterdam', 405.

¹⁵⁵ By the 1920s the population of Rotterdam was on its way to double the number it had reached at the turn of the century. The location of the Hoboken estate 'shifted' from its position outside the city to a comparably central one. Densely built perimeter blocks extended far beyond the extremities of the Hoboken estate. The site, along with the zoological garden, had become both Rotterdam's largest and innermost green space, only a few blocks west from the old city's triangle. The municipality had made plans for the development of the area already several decades before, but abstained from the purchase because costs were deemed too high. See: D Graaf, *Architectuur en stedenbouw in Rotterdam*, 52-53; Hage, 'Westersingel in historic perspective', 22-26.

¹⁵⁶ Witteveen's expansion plan from 1926 was complemented by strict building regulations: 'The majority of the buildings had to be allotted en bloc, in a single operation, and were to be built on in accordance with a preconceived, compulsory design. The allocation of the remaining sites would be subject to severe conditions regulating the external appearance of the buildings.' Adriaansz, 'A Modern Villa Park in the City', 13.

Chapter 1.3



Figure 2. The Dijkzigt Area in the 1980s. Above: Boijmans van Beuningen Museum by A.J. van der Steur (1928-35).
Below: Boevé House (1931-33) by Brinkman & Van der Vlugt, Villa Merkes by Jan van Teeffelen (1932-34).

‘hotel’ (1928) on the Maas Boulevard – referred to as ‘Blocks’ and ‘Walls’ in OMA’s ‘Morphological Catalogue’. Elly Adriaansz describes the result as follows:

The various perimeter blocks along Rochussenstraat, Mathenesserlaan, Binnenweg and other connecting streets were finished in the early thirties and subsequently. In compliance with official guidelines, the appearance of the blocks was strictly regulated. [...] All the buildings were brick; some of them had saddle roofs. The architecture of the blocks had a luxurious, modern air. By contemporary standards and in accordance with the Department for Town Planning, the resulting townscape was exceptionally harmonious.¹⁵⁷

In fact, the Witteween’s efforts of the inter-war period to create a homogeneous whole are visible even today and must have been all the more so in the late 1980s. Lourijssen’s ‘New Hague School’ residential hotel with its ‘freely’ grouped volumes, terraces, flat roof and horizontal windows, may appear akin rather to Mies’ houses in Krefeld than to Van der Steur’s Boijmans Museum with its sandstone plinth, monumental stairs, vertical windows, pitched roof and ubiquitous local symmetries – usually classified as ‘Delft School’ or ‘Scandinavian’ for its resemblance to the town hall in Stockholm. But the difference between the contrasting architectural approaches is bridged by the buildings’ rooflines and alignment with the street, the altogether mural impact, the use of exposed red brickwork and vertical accentuations. Most of these characteristics are shared by the Unilever Offices, the Erasmiaans School and the apartment blocks north of Rochussenstraat. They are in principle accordance with the morphology of the perimeter block, the continuous street front and brick facades of the three adjacent areas: the Oude Westen to the north, the Dockland District to the south and the Westersingel to the east. For the most part the buildings in these areas originate from the second half of the 19th century. The municipal wish to articulate old and new as a coherent unity left its mark on the architecture added under Witteveen’s aegis, and is perhaps most evident where – right in front of the Dijkzigt Villa – the neo-renaissance buildings along Westzeedijk meet Lourijssen’s residential ‘hotel’.

¹⁵⁷ Adriaansz, ‘A Modern Villa Park in the City’, 13.

Chapter 1.3



Figure 3. Rochussenstraat in the 1980s Above: Unilever Building by F. Mertens (1930-31).
Below: Apartment blocks along Rochussenstraat (1930s).

The apparent ‘misfit’ in the area were four detached houses – in the 1950s two more were added to complete the ensemble – Koolhaas referred to as ‘white villas’. [Figure 2] There were no such buildings in Witteveen’s plan from 1926, which proposed to round out the adjacent row of houses along the Westersingel to a perimeter block. But the intention to locate a number of villas in the proximity of the park for Rotterdam’s well-to-do – and thus prevent them from moving away from the city – was an integral part of the municipal plans for the Dijkzigt area and had already been incorporated in the expansion plan by A.C. Burgdorffer from 1917.¹⁵⁸ When confronted with this idea, Witteveen dismissed it. Evidently concerned with the morphological coherence of the urban fabric he argued that ‘the area reserved for building is not deep enough to make a harmonious transition from this kind of open development to the more closed and massive existing city.’¹⁵⁹

Nonetheless, in the 1930s the first villas, each surrounded by a small private garden, were built vis à vis the Boijmans Museum, perhaps due to a personal intervention by the director of the municipal works A. de Jong.¹⁶⁰ The overall plan for the small portion of the Dijkzigt area along Mathenesserlaan¹⁶¹ and Jongkindstraat probably was based on a design by Brinkman & Van der Vlugt who prepared several studies for the site in 1929.¹⁶² A version from 1931 shows five villas framed by two (unrealized) slab-like apartment blocks at Mathenesserlaan (the section renamed Museumpark) and Rochussenstraat.¹⁶³ The idea was ‘an exemplary residential area with hypermodern, luxurious villas’¹⁶⁴ that presumably ought to familiarize Rotterdam’s ruling class with the ideas of the Nieuwe Bouwen. Brinkman & Van der Vlugt built two of the houses: Boevé House (1931-33) and Sonneveld House (1929-33), today a

¹⁵⁸ Adriaansz, ‘A Modern Villa Park in the City’, 7, 13. See also: Mens, *W.G. Witteveen en Rotterdam*, 73-75. Molenaar, *Brinkman & Van der Vlugt*, 184. The retreat of prosperous taxpayers had been already a problem in Amsterdam at the beginning of the century, when the inner city was considered unattractive because of its monotony and lack of green. And it was due to this emergency that H.P. Berlage was commissioned with the planning of the extension of Amsterdam South. Sergio Polano, *Hendrik Petrus Berlage. Opera Completa* (Milano: Electa, 1987), 48.

¹⁵⁹ Quoted after: Adriaansz, ‘A Modern Villa Park in the City’, 13.

¹⁶⁰ Adriaansz, ‘A Modern Villa Park in the City’, 13.

¹⁶¹ The street has been recently renamed to ‘Museumpark’.

¹⁶² On this subject: Molenaar, *Brinkman & Van der Vlugt*, 17-23. See also: *Ibid.*, 184, 206.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 206.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 184.



Figure 4. The Maas Boulevard in the 1980s . A 19th century building and the apartments by F.L. Lourijssen 1928).

museum affiliated with Het Nieuwe Instituut. The client, Albertus H. Sonneveld, was one of the directors of the Van Nelle tobacco manufacturer. At the time, Brinkman & Van der Vlugt together with Mart Stam were about to complete the company's famous tobacco factory (1925-31) on Rotterdam's Schie. The two houses by Brinkman & Van der Vlugt, 'much admired in their day', contributed 'greatly to the dissemination and acceptance of "Nieuwe Bouwen" as a style'.¹⁶⁵ Visibly influenced by Le Corbusier's *maison domino* and his *cinq points d'une architecture nouvelle*, the buildings demonstrate the possibilities of an architecture with walls freed from their loadbearing function. Steel columns carry the concrete slabs of the floors, the facades are plastered and painted white, long horizontal openings undercut ceilings and balustrades, and the flat roofs are conceived as terraces. Akin in spirit is the likewise 'white' Kraayeveld House (1938-39) by G. Baas und L. Stokla, at present the seat of the 'Chabot Museum'. The villa for the jeweller P. Merkes (1932-34) by J.F. van Teeffelen is more classical in character, and like the adjacent Remonstrant Church by Evers & Stok (1895-97) it had facades of exposed brickwork, that were plastered in later years.¹⁶⁶ Within the Dijkzigt Park, Brinkman & Van der Vlugt built two tennis clubs in 1936 and 1937 which eventually had to make way for the Medical Faculty of the Erasmus University in the 1960.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Rob Dettingmeijer, 'The fight for a well built city', in: Beeren, *Het Nieuwe Bouwen in Rotterdam* (Delft: University Press, 1982), 35.

¹⁶⁶ Molenaar, *Brinkman & Van der Vlugt Architects*, 185. Stadsontwikkeling Rotterdam, site plan with information on the buildings of the Dijkzigt area, entitled 'Architectuur. DC-87-1091', OMAR 1602.

¹⁶⁷ During the 1930s Brinkman & Van der Vlugt realised three projects in the Dijkzigt Park: the Nuova Tennis Club (1935-36) and the Anglo-Dutch Tennis Club (1936-37) at its eastern margin, and the renovation and enlargement of the Villa Dijkzigt, which at the time housed the adult education centre, originally planned for the site of the Unilever Offices. Molenaar, *Brinkman & Van der Vlugt*, 195. The Van Dam Hospital to the southern section of the Westersingel was completed after Van der Vlugt's death in 1936, under the direction of Van den Broek (1931-38). Stadsontwikkeling Rotterdam, 'Architectuur. DC-87-1091', OMAR 1602.



Figure 5. Dijkzicht Park, 14 May 1940. To the right the Boijmans van Beuningen Museum.

Painting in oils or painting in watercolour

The so-called ‘frontline’ between the Boijmans Museum and the modernist villas seems not to have been the scene of fierce fights.¹⁶⁸ On the contrary, a couple of statements by Van der Steur and Van der Vlugt suggest that both held rather unideological views vis à vis the legitimacy of modernist and traditionalist architecture. In a review of the Van Nelle Factory from 1929, when the building was still under construction, Van der Steur professed: ‘I regard this factory building as the best of its kind that our country possesses.’¹⁶⁹ And a bird’s eye perspective of his from 1931 shows the Boijmans Museum from the south, and, behind it, a meticulous rendering of the modernist villas proposed by Brinkman & Van der Vlugt.¹⁷⁰ Conversely, when the British architect John Brandon-Jones visited Rotterdam in the 1930s, Van der Vlugt showed him the Mees Bank building (1930-34) by A.J. Kropholler, at the time a renowned traditionalist who adopted various historical styles to his architecture almost without exception made of exposed brickwork. In an interview from the 1970s John Brandon-Jones recalls Van der Vlugt’s comment on Kropholler’s work: ‘This is a very interesting building, but of course not the sort of building I would do. Kropholler likes to make everything look as heavy as he can, I as light as I can, but it does not matter – providing you do it well; it’s like painting in oils or painting in watercolour.’¹⁷¹

Not destroyed, but ...

Unlike Rotterdam’s centre, the Dijkzigt area and its immediate surroundings were not destroyed during World War II. The Fire Boundary passed some 500 metres further east, meandering half-way between

¹⁶⁸ Mart Stam – obliged to an agenda of radical social reform – pursued a more conflicting course. When Witteveen presented his project for Rotterdam’s Hofplein square in 1928, the ‘OPBOUW’ association – with Van der Vlugt (1927) and then Stam (1928) as its chairman – answered with a counterproposal published in the *Bouwkundig Weekblad Architectura* in February 1928. The corollary article of the ‘OPBOUW Plan’, authored by Stam, dismisses Witteveen’s scheme along with two previous ones by Berlage in 1922 and 1926. For Stam Berlage’s and Witteveen’s ‘artistic principles’ were obsolete along with the old city itself. On the long run Stam suggests ‘to demolish the old city in order to create thereafter a new inner city as Rotterdam’s commercial centre.’ M. Stam, ‘Kritiek Vereniging “Opbouw” op het Hofplein Witteveen’, *Bouwkundig Weekblad Architectura*, 25 February 1928, 58. On the Hofplein debate, see: Molenaar *Brinkman & Van der Vlugt Architects*, 142; Mens, *W.G. Witteveen en Rotterdam*, 92-99; Dettingmeijer, ‘The fight for a well built city’, 25.

¹⁶⁹ Molenaar, *Brinkman & Van der Vlugt*, 141.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 184. It is true, however, that the ‘Nieuwe Bouwers’ criticized the Boijmans Museum as ‘romantic and anti-modern’. De Graaf, *Architectuur en stedenbouw in Rotterdam*, 133; Dettingmeijer, *Open Stad* 337.

¹⁷¹ Gavin Stamp, “Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive”, *Architectural Design* 10-11 (1979), 98.



Figure 6. Medical Faculty of the Erasmus University by OD 205 (1965-68). 1980s.

the Westersingel and the Coolingsingel. Photographs taken in the afternoon of 14 May 1940 show a large crowd on Hobokenplein, just north of the Boijmans Museum watching the burning city in the background. [Figure 5] In fact, by 1987, the municipal concept of the Manifestation Field (see Chapter 1.2) appears to have embraced another idea. In a note from 3 September 1987, J.W. Vader, from Rotterdam's Department for Urban Development informs that the 'Manifestation Terrain' (Manifestatieterrein) ought to commemorate that many Rotterdamers took refuge in the northern section of the park during the fire caused by the German bombardment in May 1940.¹⁷² After the war, most new buildings in this area followed in one way or another the path indicated by Witteween. Examples are the Greek orthodox church by Taen and Nix (1947-57), the first extension of the Boijmans Museum by A. Bodon (1963-72), the C-shaped blocks by P.P. Hammel (1975-77) along the Nieuwe Binnenweg, and even Ernst Groosman's 13-storey apartment block at Westzeedijk (1949-58) is clad with exposed red brickwork.

Conversely, the medical faculty by OD 205 brought an entirely new scale in the centre of the Dijkzigt area, along with a new, self-contained type of building. [Figure 6] Its affinities are rather with megastructures than with the traditional European city. The first fifteen metres above the ground – critical for any urbanism in the tradition of Sitte and Berlage – are nothing but an indeterminate, ever transforming footing, from which the tower arises as the only distinct shape. Prouvé's façade of white enamelled aluminium sandwich panels displays the virtues of technological innovation and industrial prefabrication, underscoring the alien character of the complex with regard to its built environment. In the park and along the dyke the presence of the tower is inescapable, given its extent and height of 114 metres.

Support for the moderns

Needless to say that the presence of the Medical Faculty was lethal for any aspiration to develop the Dijkzigt area as a homogeneous whole. The conclusions are less obvious. In the 1980s, outside the

¹⁷² J.W. Vader to 'Plangroep Museumpark'. OMAR 3267. Initially the municipality planned to inaugurate the Manifestation Field on the 50th anniversary of the event in May 1990.

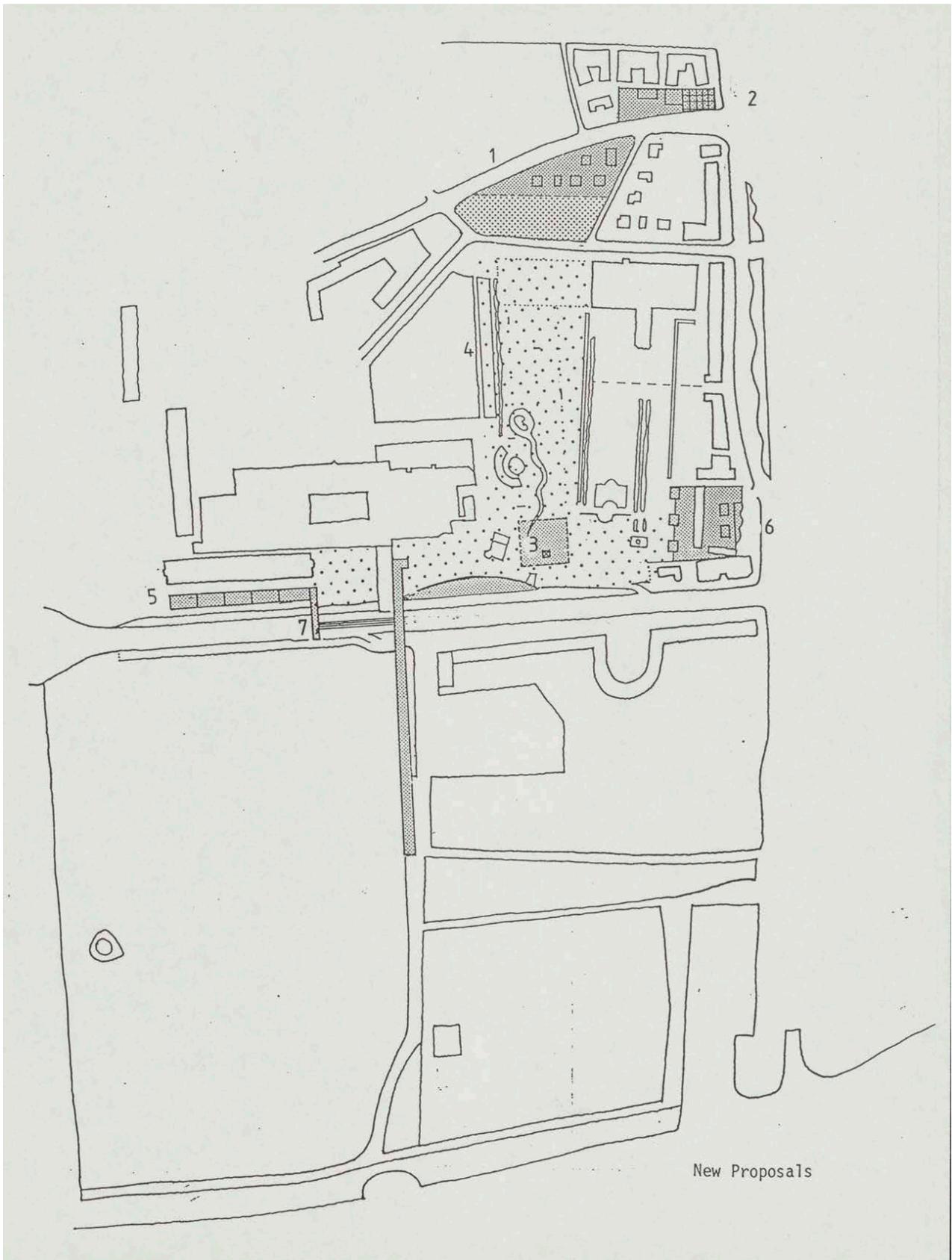


Figure 7. OMA/Rem Koolhaas,
'Kunsthall Rotterdam. Preliminary Town Planning Study', 18 May 1987.

hospital precinct, perimeter blocks, continuous street fronts and rooflines along with the use of exposed brickwork went on to dominate the townscape.¹⁷³ In the Oude Westen, where a large project of urban renewal was ongoing and would continue until the early 1990s, most new buildings complied with this ‘consensus’ in one way or another.¹⁷⁴ To a lesser extent this goes also for the Children’s Hospital by OD 205, Mecanoo’s apartment block (1991-95) at Rochussenstraat and, likewise, the competition entries by Jo Coenen and Luigi Snozzi for the NAI from 1988. One may not find the results convincing, but on the whole these examples bespeak that – in the late 1980s and in this part of Rotterdam – to emulate the area’s ‘premodern’ urbanist legacy still was an obvious thing to do.¹⁷⁵

OMA’s study prepares the ground for an entirely different approach. It ignores that between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of World War II, and even in the decades that followed, most developments of the Dijkzigt area and its surroundings add up to a comparatively coherent urban fabric. In the map section shown in OMA’s booklet, the perimeter block does not exist. The buildings along Rochussenstraat and the Maas Boulevard – figuring as the spatial enclosure of the Dijkzigt area – are cut off from the urban context they belong to, and appear, thus isolated, as linear elements among many others in OMA’s morphological catalogue. The study suggests to add a series of complementary buildings at the margins of the site: seven villas and a small residential block along Rochussenstraat, extending the morphology of the detached houses along Jongkindstraat; three residential blocks in front of the Medical Faculty, and three more as well as two lower buildings with luxury apartments on the site of the Van Dam Hospital by Brinkman & Van den Broek (1931-38), then due for demolition. [Figure 7] All the residential blocks are conceived as detached slabs of vertical, tower-like proportions. Evidently, OMA’s proposals ought to counterbalance the dominance of the ‘street block urbanism’ in

¹⁷³ Despite of numerous exceptions an average height of 12 to 14 metres prevailed. OMA’s files include a copy of a plan with the heights of all the surrounding buildings, probably provided by the Department for Urban Development: ‘Globale hoogtenmaten omliggende bebouwing’. OMAR 1452.

¹⁷⁴ Hans van Dijk, ‘De gezelligheids-revolutie. 1965-1985’, in: Martin Arts (ed.), *Vijftig jaar Wederopbouw Rotterdam. Een Geschiedenis van toekomstvisies* (Rotterdam: Uitgeverij 010, 2005), 161-192. See also: Pim Vermeulen, Fred de Riuter, et al., *Stadsvernieuwing Rotterdam 1974-1984* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1985), 214-221. Paul Groenendijk, Piet Vollaard, *Guide to modern architecture in Rotterdam* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2001), 26.

¹⁷⁵ The last four mentioned projects essentially adopt the average height of the buildings, they align – fully or partly – with the street front, and the facades include large sections in exposed brickwork.

Chapter 1.3

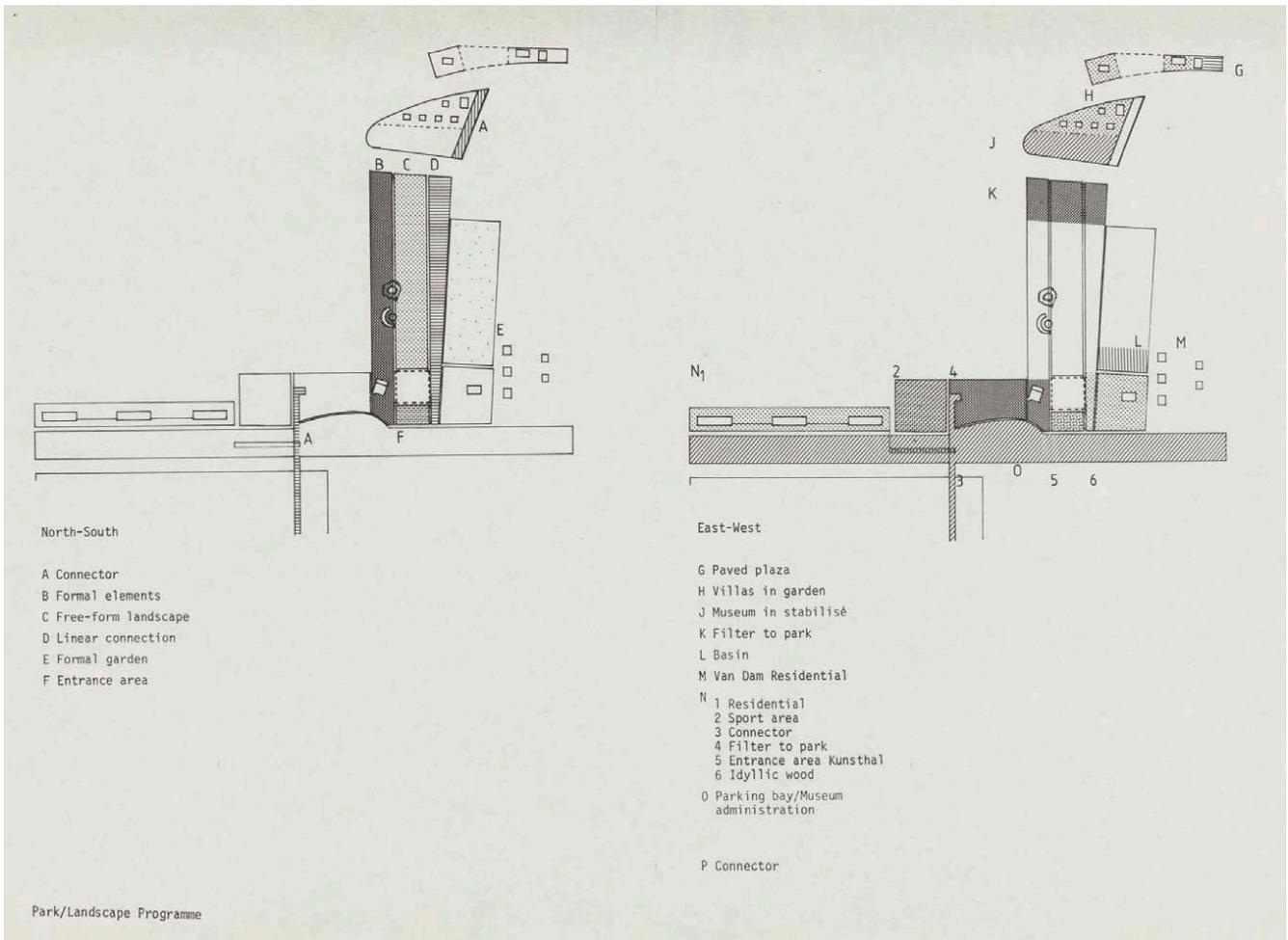


Figure 8. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, 'Kunsthall Rotterdam. Preliminary Town Planning Study', 18 May 1987.

this area by reinforcing the diverging morphologies, which at the time were obvious exceptions: the house-with-garden type of the 'White Villas', Groosman's 13-storey apartment block, and the tower of the Erasmus University.¹⁷⁶

La Villette grammar

The core of OMA's proposal, however, embraces the idea of the municipality to establish the Axis of Development between the Westersingel and Het Park. North of Rochussenstraat and still in proximity of the Westersingel, an 'arthouse' (Kunsthuis) marks the beginning of the axis. A linear 'connector' on the western edge of the former Hobokenplein leads to the Museum Park. With regard to the municipality's idea to use the entire Hobokenplein for the planned Manifestation Field, OMA objects that such an arrangement would turn the area into a 'underused island site', having the unwanted effect of a separation between Westersingel and Museum Park. Instead, OMA's study proposes to split the site in two halves, providing the detached villas to the north and the NAI to the south. Since in the 1986 draft of the Department for Urban Development the NAI was located next to the Boijmans Museum, the shift of the former to Hobokenplein had also the advantage that the NAI would not divide the already scarce surface of the open space in two parts. In OMA's proposal the park extends right to Mathenesserlaan, the street south of Hobokenplein.

In obvious analogy to OMA's project for the Parc de la Villette, the scheme proposed for the Museum Park is organized in a series of superimposed 'layers'. [Figure 8] One of the layers divides the surface in three strips running north-south, one furnished with 'formal elements', one conceived as a 'free form landscape' one serving as a 'linear connection' leading to the Kunsthal and the Maas Boulevard. On a second layer, the terrain is divided in three bands running east west: a 'filter' to the park along Rochussenstraat, and another one along the Maas Boulevard; both filters are defined by a stabilized

¹⁷⁶ OMA's proposal recalls the urban approach of methodical over-interpretation Koolhaas suggested in 1985: 'each bastard gets its own genealogical tree; the faintest hint of an idea is tracked with the obstinacy of a detective'. Rem Koolhaas, 'The Terrifying Beauty of the Twentieth Century'; in: Lucan, *OMA - Rem Koolhaas*, 155. First published under the title 'La splendeur terrifiante du xx^e siècle' in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* 238 (1985), 15.

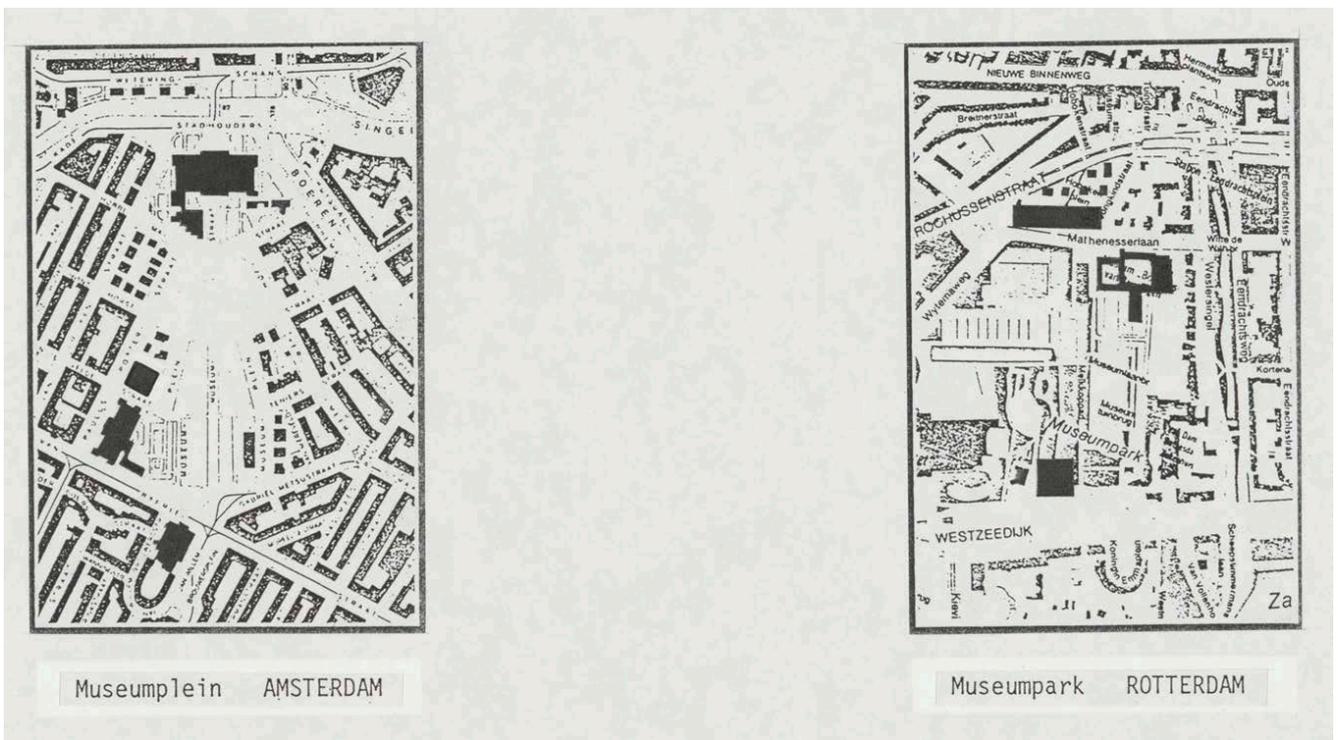
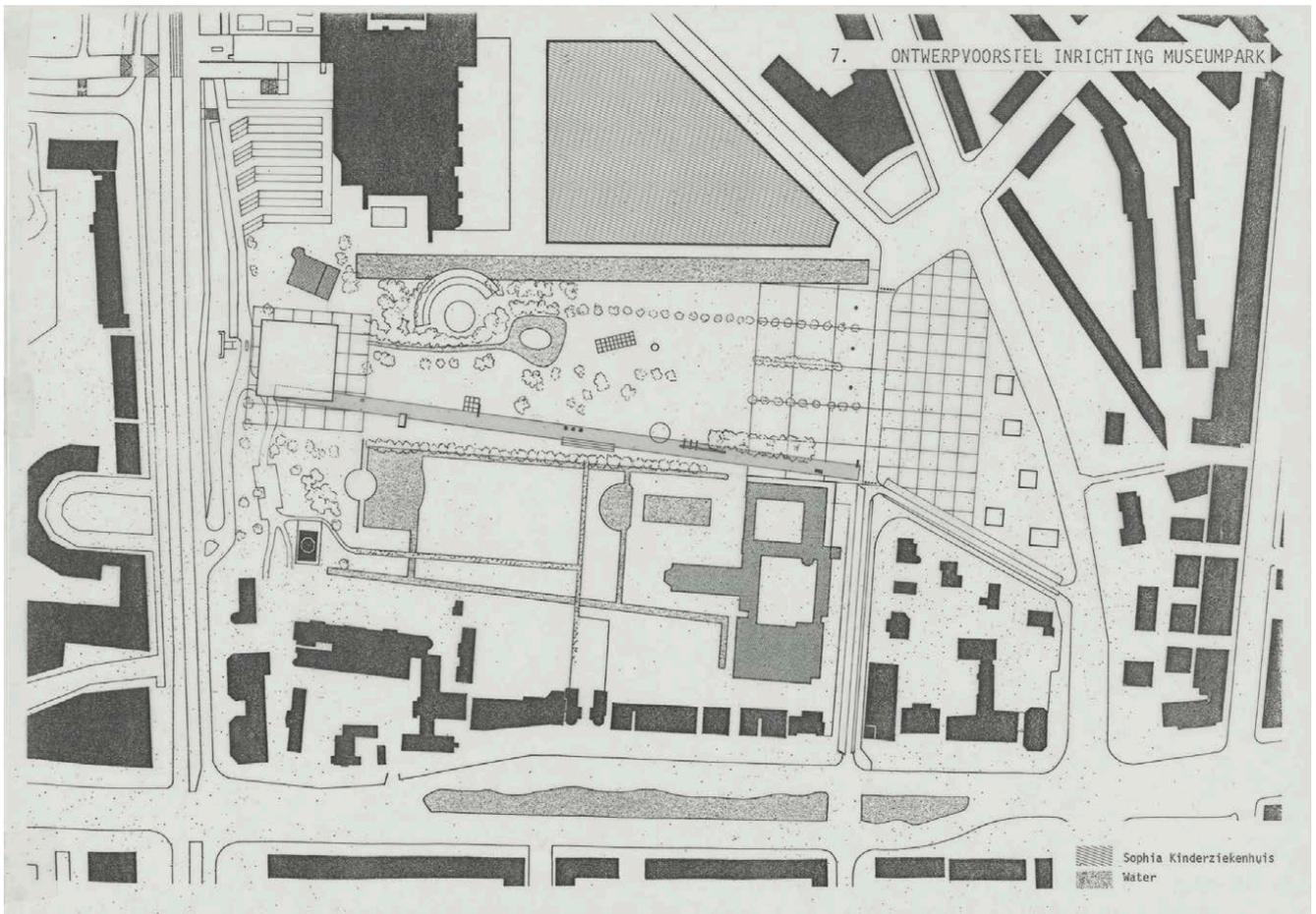


Figure 9. OMA, 'Analysis Museum Park', 17 September 1987.
Above: Layout Park. Below: Comparison Museumplein, Amsterdam – Museum Park, Rotterdam

surface and trees distributed on a grid. In the area between them, the existing park is complemented in the fashion of an English landscape garden and superimposed by a continuous grid of ‘service poles’. On a third layer, six kiosks are distributed at strategic points on the park’s system of circulation.

The Kunsthal, situated next to the Villa Dijkzigt, is ‘set back from the dijk into the park, where it creates four different landscapes on each of its sides.’¹⁷⁷ The scheme of the municipality suggested to locate the Kunsthal directly on the dyke, but OMA’s explanatory text argues that this would have broken ‘the rhythm of alternating closed and open space along Westzeedijk-Boompjes.’¹⁷⁸ The entrance, however, is oriented towards the Maas Boulevard. Both the square shape of the footprint, and, at least roughly, its dimensions correspond to the definitive design of the Kunsthal. A couple of – clumsy – sketches show the building as a floating horizontal slab. Completely detached from the Kunsthal, a ‘storage and administration building along the dijk provides additional parking space on its roof’.¹⁷⁹ Its western tip touches another ‘connector’, in plan a bridge-like element linking the Museum Park with Het Park at the other side of the Maas Boulevard.

On 17 September the Planning Group Museum Park met in the town hall, the previous meeting having taken place on 23 February.¹⁸⁰ At the meeting Koolhaas presented an 8-pages A3 booklet, entitled ‘Analysis Museum Park’.¹⁸¹ Unlike the study from May, which covered the entire perimeter of the Park Triangle, the analysis focuses on the Museum Park, while the interventions suggested were similar. [Figure 9] The idea of the three parallel strips extending north-south is still recognizable but less explicit, while the ‘water-axis’ and the promenade running along the ‘development axis’ correspond more literally to the scheme of the Department for Urban Development from November 1986. The path starts next to the Boijmans Museum at the former Mathenesserlaan and ends next to the Kunsthal. A series of graphic symbols – perhaps representing kiosks, benches and other elements of infrastructure

¹⁷⁷ OMA, ‘Kunsthal Rotterdam. Primarily Town Planning Study’, n.p.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ ‘Agenda vergadering Plangroep Museumpark’, 17 September 1987. OMAR 3267. So far no documents surfaced that would indicate when the group met first, or when OMA started to participate at the meetings.

¹⁸¹ OMA, ‘Analyse Museumpark’, 17 September 1987. OMAR 1552.

– are distributed along the path. Three areas are singled out as suited for building. The area next to the Maas Boulevard is reserved for the Kunsthal, represented as a square volume, in size and position similar to the study from May, whereas the former Hobokenplein and the area next to the Boijmans Museum are indicated as two possible locations for the NAI. Arguably the apparent neutrality with regard to this question was a precaution with regard to the plans of the Department for Urban Development. Similar to the May proposal, six solitaires are located in the northern half of the former Hobokenplein;¹⁸² its southern half along with the area next to the Boijmans being designated as the Manifestation Field. As in the scheme from May, the actual building is not represented in most of the plans, while the siting of the museum and the Manifestation Field coincide.¹⁸³ Perhaps the idea was to locate the museum underground with the Manifestation Field as a roof, taking recourse to the scheme for the museum of photography in Amsterdam Koolhaas had designed together with Martha Polak in 1975.¹⁸⁴ The site – Amsterdam’s Museumplein – in some regard resembled the envisaged Museum Park. Both locations were located adjacent to the inner city in areas of 19th-century urban expansion; both were distinguished by a concentration of museums, representing the city’s treasure house of institutional art collecting, and in both cases the museums were arranged around a central green space. The project for the museum of photography was conceived for Paulus Potter Straat between the Stedelijk Museum and the Van Gogh Museum. In order to preserve the street and its trees, the building was to be located underground, covered by a glass-brick roof as its ‘dominant façade’.¹⁸⁵ As the Manifestation Field in OMA’s analysis, the horizontal surface was represented as a continuous grid. These grids may stand for the neutral ‘supersurfaces’ or ‘histograms’ of Superstudio, as has been suggested by Gargiani.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸² Besides being in tune with the morphology of the adjacent modernist villas from the 1930s, the detached buildings recall the urban villas of OMA’s masterplan for the IJ Plein in Amsterdam. As Bernard Leupen has pointed out, the combination of linear blocks and ‘cubes’ takes recourse to the project “Stadt ohne Höfe” (1927) by the Luckhardt brothers. See: Bernard Leupen, *IJ-Plein, Amsterdam* (Rotterdam: Uitgeverij 010, 1989), 27.

¹⁸³ A plan on the last page of the booklet shows a building to the southern half of Hobokenplein.

¹⁸⁴ Rem Koolhaas, ‘Museum in Amsterdam/1975’, *Architectural Design* 5 (1977), 354-355.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Gargiani, *The Construction of Merveilles*, 17, 23.

It is beyond doubt that Koolhaas was well aware of the analogy between the two sites, when presenting his proposal for the Museum Park to Rotterdam's municipality in September 1987. According to his own account, Koolhaas visited the Stedelijk Museum at the Museumplein regularly since the age of 13, when he went to high school in Amsterdam and Willem Sandberg was the director of the museum.¹⁸⁷ The last page of the booklet from September 1987 shows a plan of the Museumplein and, next to it and in the same scale, a plan of the Museum Park. [Figure 9] The page demonstrates, somewhat surprisingly, that the Museum Park is comparable to its famous counterpart in Amsterdam, both in terms of surface and with regard to the size and number of nearby museums. Perhaps the comparison was to underline what was at stake. It highlights the morphological differences between the two sites. In each plan the buildings are represented as black solids. In the case of Amsterdam as in the case of Rotterdam, there are large museum complexes next to groups of free standing buildings of much smaller scale along with closed street blocks and long rows of houses. But whereas in Amsterdam the surrounding blocks add up to a homogenous 'urban texture', in Rotterdam the whole area – in accordance with OMA's study from May – appears as a collage of morphological fragments.¹⁸⁸

All in all, Koolhaas' September presentation must have been approved by the representatives of Rotterdam's municipality. In the documentation 'Museum Park' issued by the Department for Urban Development in December 1987 – a revised version of the study from November 1986 – the Architecture Institute was shifted to the Hobokenplein, and an axonometric showed three cubes north of the museum, recalling the detached villas suggested by the architects.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ 'That whole thing was from the age of 13 to when I left [the Netherlands].' Hsu, *The Ends of Modernism*, 177, 89. See also: Goulet, 'La deuxième chance', 2; Chevrier, 'Changing Dimensions', 2005.

¹⁸⁸ Koolhaas more than once described the two cities in terms of an antithetical relation. In *S,M,L,XL*, for instance, he asserts that Rotterdam established 'a dialectical relationship with Amsterdam as new vs. old.' Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 403.

¹⁸⁹ Stadsontwikkeling Rotterdam, 'Museumpark', December 1987. OMAR 4477. There are no villas, though, in the photograph of the model on the last page of the brochure. In the model, the whole area of the Hobokenplein, already seems designated for the competition of the NAI. The Kunsthal still is an oblong box high above ground.

1.4

Dijkzigt and the European city

The IBA, Krier and urban renewal in Rotterdam

The peripheral developments proposed in OMA's study 'Kunsthal Rotterdam' from May 1987 distort the actual givens. They force back the dominance of the continuous street front by anticipating the implementation of detached buildings of modernist lineage. Rather than proposing an architectural idea for the Kunsthal, the study creates a partly fictional context for the project. The effort itself and the insistence on the heterogeneity of the built environment and the presence of modernism may astonish. Apparently, there was no risk for OMA of being pressed towards a mimetic relation with the context, given that the Department for Urban Development itself had proposed a pavilion-like Kunsthal on columns for the park. To some degree the additional projects may have served as a creative appropriation of the givens, so as to develop the projects not from the present state of the site, but from a fictional one, a vision of how the area should or could develop as a whole. In this chapter, another explanation shall be examined: that the image of the Dijkzigt area suggested by OMA's study reflects Koolhaas' *concept* of Rotterdam as a whole and of the European city in general.

Koolhaas outlines his vision of the European city in a number of essays published in 1985 in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*. In 'The Terrifying Beauty of the Twentieth Century' he writes: 'the European Metropolis is like a reef on which each intention, each ambition, each solution, each question and each answer implacably run aground. / But like the forms that can be discovered in the clouds it is possible to will this landscape into an amazing spectacle of invention.'¹⁹⁰ In principle, it is the spectacle of diverse architectural approaches and fragments of urban planning in one place and in one time, or, as Koolhaas put it, 'the simultaneous formation of distinct archaeological layers'.¹⁹¹ It is not, of course, the lost unity of the 'historic' European city Koolhaas has in mind, neither the complexity and richness of a city like Rome or Paris. As the title of the essay indicates, Koolhaas' concern is the European city

¹⁹⁰ Rem Koolhaas, 'The Terrifying Beauty of the Twentieth Century', 154.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

which has been largely informed during the 20th century, namely by the double experience of sweeping destruction during World War II and the subsequent developments of (modernist) reconstruction. Next to Rotterdam, Berlin figures as a prime example. ‘The richness of Berlin’, he explains, ‘resides in the prototypical sequence of its models: neo-classical city, early Metropolis, modernist testbed, Nazi capital, war victim, Lazarus, cold war battlefield, and so on.’¹⁹²

In his essay Koolhaas describes Rotterdam and Berlin as cognate cities. As he points out, both had been epicentres of the modern movement, both have suffered extreme destruction during the war, in both this destruction was still visible in the guise of large urban wastelands, and it is clear that Koolhaas considers the kaleidoscopic mix of divergent architectural and urbanist approaches as another feature they share. Koolhaas makes clear that he regards Rotterdam and Berlin as a model for the development of cities in Europe. Traces of diversity are to be seized on and reinforced, gaps to be preserved. In this sense, OMA’s study from May 1987 strengthens those traits of the Dijkzigt area which Koolhaas saw as characteristic for both Rotterdam and the European city of late 20th century.

After the bifurcation

Koolhaas wrote the essay from 1985 and another one, entitled ‘Elegy for the Vacant Lot’, in opposition to the International Building Exhibition in Berlin (IBA, 1979-87) and the urban renewal movements that preceded it during the second half of the 1970s.¹⁹³ Among the architects, academics and critics demanding the preservation and reconstruction of historic city centres, Léon Krier was a key figure whose ideas Koolhaas probably knew first hand from the years 1975 and 1976 when they were both teaching at the AA in London. Krier ran a research programme dedicated to the transformation of selected areas in London marked by spatially ‘wanting’ post-war developments in London.¹⁹⁴ [Figure 1] The students were asked to prepare analyses of the respective areas, masterplans ought to re-establish

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Rem Koolhaas, ‘Elegy for the Vacant Lot’, in: Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 937. First published under the title ‘Eloge du terrain vague’ in *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui* 238 (1985), 46.

¹⁹⁴ Léon Krier, ‘Research and Projects in London’, *A+U* 11 (1977), 105-133. For the dates of Krier’s teaching at the AA see: Vincenzo Pavan (ed.), *Léon Krier. La ricostruzione della città europea* (Venice: CLUVA, 1980), 37.

an urban space of ordinary streets and ordinary squares enclosed by continuous buildings fronts – perimeter blocks for the most part – next to ‘precise architectural proposals within the new street and square pattern.’¹⁹⁵ In 1976, Krier’s entry for the La Villette competition received wide attention.¹⁹⁶ [Figure 2] The project, entitled title ‘*Une ville dans la ville*’, proposes the area of the former La Villette slaughter house as an autonomous district within Paris, and establishes the historical centre as a model for the contemporary city.¹⁹⁷ Much of his subsequent work was dedicated to large scale urban renewal projects – e.g. for Athens (1977), Luxembourg (1978), Bremen (1978) – and in 1978 he signed the declarations of Palermo and Brussels, next to Maurice Culot, Bernard Huet, and Pierluigi Nicolini, the editor in chief of *Lotus*, amongst others. The two declarations stipulating the ‘reconstruction of the European city’ are similar in content and both resonate with Krier’s anti-capitalist, anti-consumerist vision of a return to a preindustrial society. Among the ideas and demands put forward are: the reconstruction of the city as a ‘city of stones’, based on artisanal culture of building; the rejection of industrial methods of production; the preservation of all the cultural heritage of the historic city fabric; Krier’s model of the self-sufficient ‘city within the city’; to abolish the separation of functions in urban planning; to shape public space exclusively after the model of the traditional European street and square; to dedicate architectural schools to ‘teaching and research to the task of the repair of the European city’; to teach artisanal techniques in school.¹⁹⁸

During the second half of the 1970s, Koolhaas critical stance vis à vis Krier’s urbanist ideas was not as obvious as it might appear today.¹⁹⁹ Krier organized the 1975 exhibition ‘Rational Architecture’ in London, and he was the ‘organizational hand’ behind the synonymous book from 1978.²⁰⁰ The book –

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 105.

¹⁹⁶ Alvin Boyarsky, ‘Interview between Alvin Boyarsky and Bernard Tschumi’, in: Bernard Tschumi, *La Case Vide. La Villette 1985* (London: Architectural Association, 1986), 22.

¹⁹⁷ Léon Krier, ‘The City with in [sic] the City’, *A+U* 11 (1977), 86. The design provides a regular grid of small street blocks arranged along a central axis with political and cultural institutions.

¹⁹⁸ André Barey, *Déclaration de Bruxelles* (Brussels: Archives d’Architecture Moderne, 1980), 18, 20-21.

¹⁹⁹ Geert Bekeert, for instance, discusses a 1977 issue of *Architectural Design* on the ‘three European Marxist architects’ Tafuri, Culot and Krier. Today the themed issue appears all the more bewildering as it includes Tschumi’s essay ‘The Pleasures of Architecture’. Geert Bekeert, ‘Une mise à nu de l’architecture par ses ardorateurs, même. Maurice Culot and Léon Krier: A Forgotten Episode’, in: Martin van Schaik, Otakar Máčel (eds.), *Exit Utopia* (Munich: Prestel, 2005), 299-308.

²⁰⁰ Harry Francis Mallgrave, David Goodman, *An Introduction to Architectural Theory. 1968 to the Present* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 61.

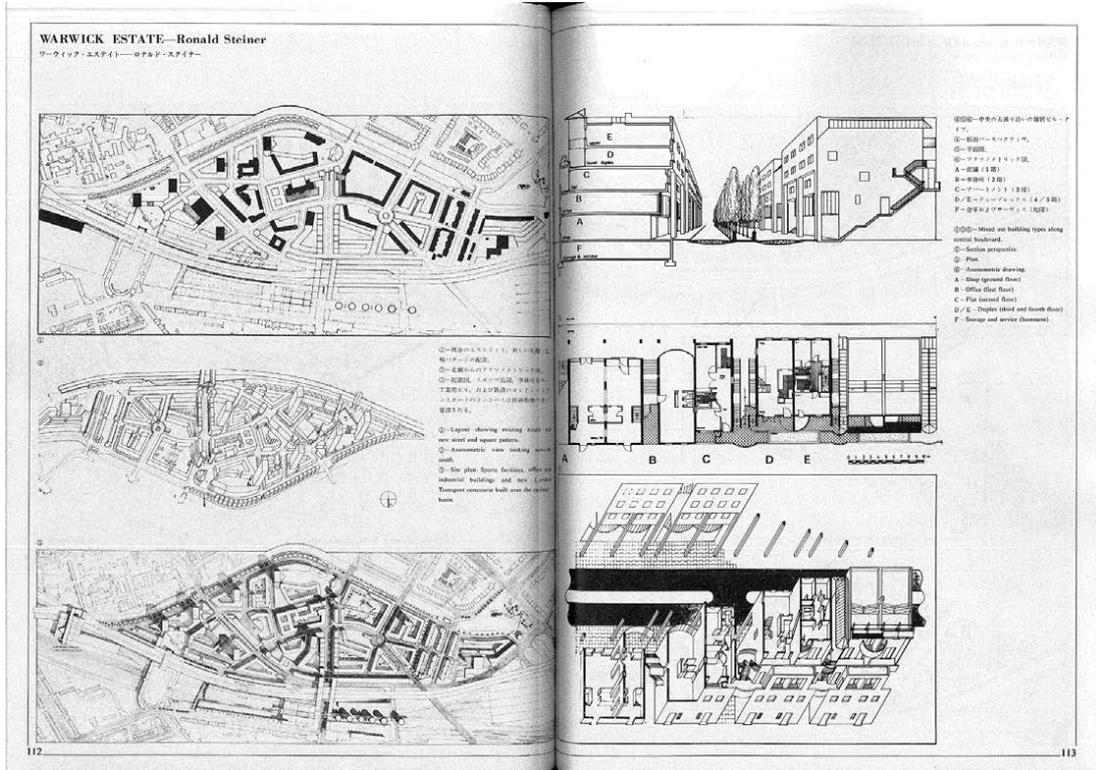
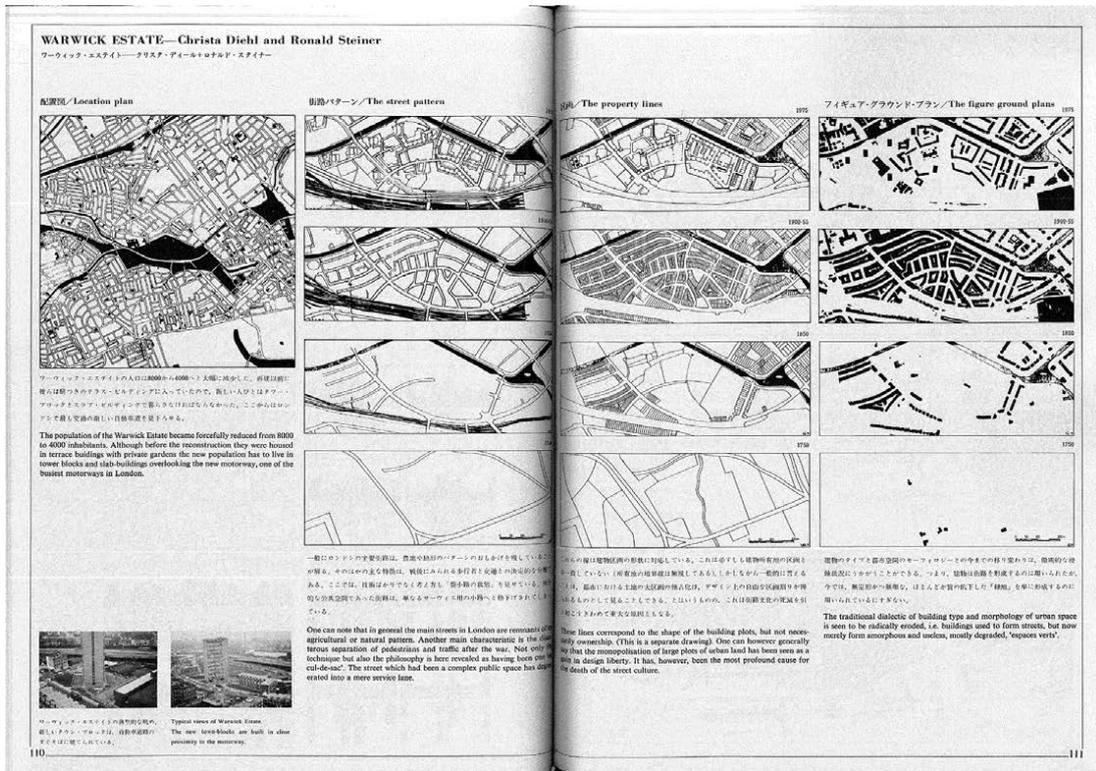


Figure 1. Léon Krier, research program at the AA in London in an issue of *A+U* in 1977. Top: Analysis of Warwick Estate in London. Bottom: A project for the same area by Ronald Steiner.

to which he contributed an introductory essay and which extensively covers his own work next to projects by Rossi, Grassi, Huet, Ungers and Stirling – includes also two projects by OMA for New York: the competition entry for Roosevelt Island (1975) and The Egg of Columbus Center (1973). The inclusion of the two projects was by no means based on a complete misreading of OMA's intentions. The stress Krier puts in his essay on collectivity, a methodical mixing of uses ('all forms of urban life'), and even his stipulation to rediscover 'the primary elements of Architecture' does indicate some common points of departure.²⁰¹ Asked about OMA's Roosevelt Island project and the 'supposed "antimodernist" stance associated with both Rationalism and early postmodernism', George Baird answered in 2001:

I think the Roosevelt Island competition entry has to be seen as an integral part of the critique you mention. Surprising as it may seem from the end of the millennium, the 1970s production of OMA/Koolhaas participated in the developing critique of modernism at the same time that it revived certain strong modernist themes [...] One of the consequences of the bifurcation referred to above has been the laying down of a sharp ideological demarcation line, and most activist architects have difficulty in resisting the strong pressure to declare allegiance to one faction or another. But the fact of the matter is that this line did not yet exist in the 1970s.²⁰²

Among the primary targets of Krier's critique is the Charter of Athens, epitomizing the institutionalization of modernist ideas like zoning and the dismantling of the traditional urban fabric: 'One can say', he writes in his above essay, 'that in the post war years, the European cities have been more destroyed both physically and socially than in any other period of their history, including the two world wars.'²⁰³ OMA's projects – combining housing with public institutions, public facilities, and

²⁰¹ Léon Krier, 'The Reconstruction of the City', in: *Rational Architecture: The Reconstruction of the European City* (Brussels: Archives d'Architecture Moderne, 1978), 42.

²⁰² Ann Marie Brennan, Nahum Goodenow, Brendan D. Moran, 'OMA, "Neo-Modern," and Modernity' *Perspecta* 32 (2001), 33.

²⁰³ Krier, 'The Reconstruction of the City', 38.

Chapter 1.4

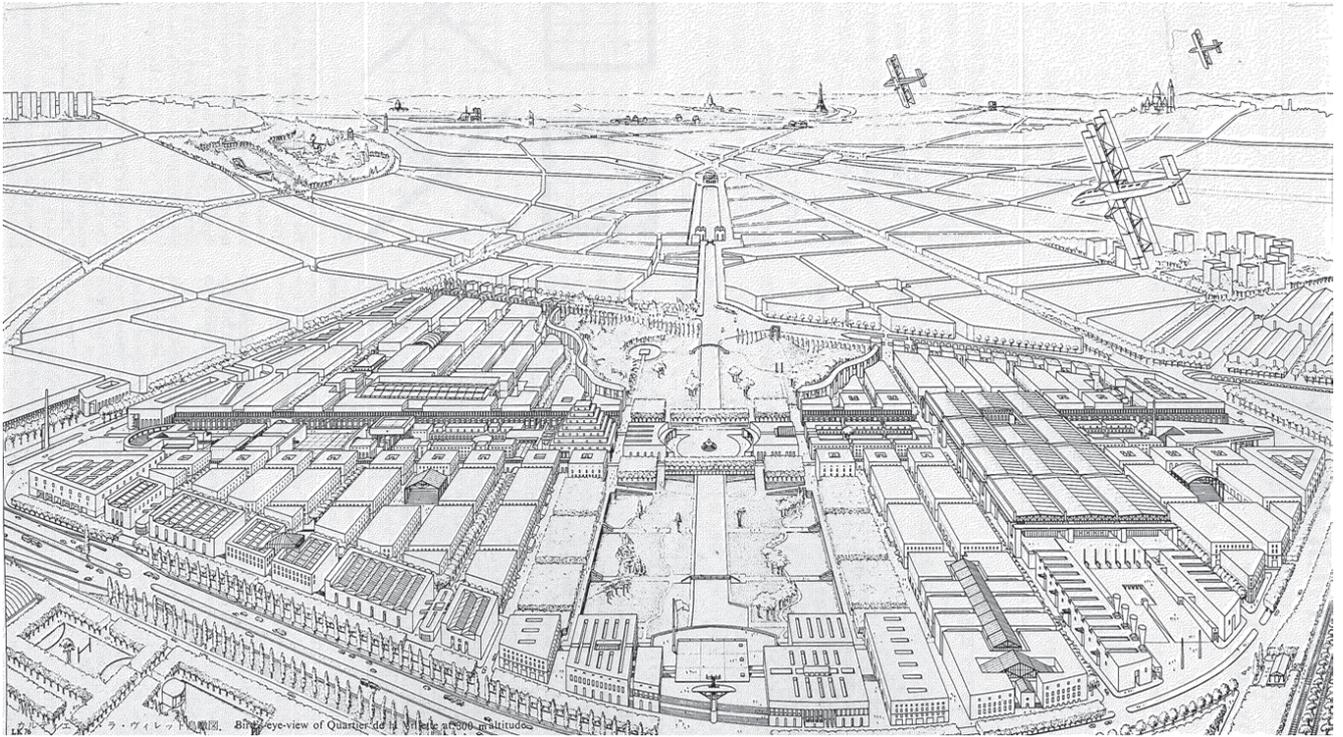


Figure 2. Léon Krier, Competition entry for the Parc de la Villette, Paris, 1976.

shopping – did aim at an urban complexity in terms of programme and ‘linguistic articulation’.²⁰⁴ Likewise did the emphasis on collective use and the recurrence of the term ‘collective’ itself, given its Marxist overtones, resonate with Krier’s anti-capitalist rhetoric, if only superficially.²⁰⁵

A polemic against the ideology of urban repair

In 1976, Joseph Paul Kleihues with whom Krier had collaborated on a series of competitions, launched the initiative for the reconstruction of Prager Platz in Berlin. On ‘the basis of the historical layout and townscape’ Rob Krier and Carlo Aymonino, and later on, Gottfried Böhm, were invited to outline ideas for a ‘critical reconstruction’ of the square.²⁰⁶ [Figure 3] In 1977, Kleihues edited the article series ‘Models for a City’ together with Wolf Jobst Siedler, published by the *Berliner Morgenpost* in January.²⁰⁷ The articles ‘used to promote the idea of an international building exhibition, the role of which was to be the critical reconstruction of a city [of Berlin] destroyed by the war years and the post-war years.’²⁰⁸ Kleihues subsequently became one of the two directors of the IBA Berlin. Initially, Kleihues was to share the position with Ungers, who likewise had supported the plan of a building exhibition in Berlin and presented his ideas to a committee of the SPD in Berlin in September 1977.²⁰⁹ For this purpose he had issued a small publication of some 40 pages, entitled *The City in the City*.²¹⁰

²⁰⁴ Introduction to Chapter VII on housing which includes the two projects by OMA, in: *Rational Architecture*, 99.

²⁰⁵ See, for instance: OMA’s project statements on the ‘The Egg of Columbus Center’ from 1973 and the ‘Hotel Sphinx’ in *Architectural Design* 5 (1977), 336-338; or, in the same issue: Koolhaas’ preview of *Delirious New York*, “‘Life in the Metropolis” or “The Culture of Congestion”, in which he compares the Downtown Athletic Club to a ‘Constructivist Social Condenser’ (p. 322).

²⁰⁶ Josef Paul Kleihues, ‘Prager Platz Area. Disarrayed Feathers, Aggressive Void, Historical Collage’, in: *A+U Extra Edition: International Building Exhibition Berlin 5* (May 1987), 59. Josef P. Kleihues, ‘Prager Platz’, in: Josef Paul Kleihues, Heinrich Klotz, *Internationale Bauausstellung Berlin 1987. Beispiele einer neuen Architektur* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986), 43.

²⁰⁷ Ibid. See also: Heinrich Klotz, ‘Interview zur IBA-Ausstellung’, in: Kleihues, Klotz, *Internationale Bauausstellung Berlin 1987*, 9. The authors of the *Morgenpost* articles were, amongst others: Heinrich Klotz, Wolfgang Pehnt, Carlo Aymonino, James Stirling, Aldo Rossi, and Charles Moore. Kleihues explains that the project was to convey a ‘feeling of future’. Ibid., 59-60. Several projects for Prager Platz were designed by Gottfried Böhm, Rob Krier, and Carlo Aymonino between 1976 and the early 1980s. The initial designs, especially those by Böhm and Krier, as well as the buildings eventually implemented by the same architects are manifestly obliged to the morphological repertoire of the European 19th century metropolis, such as the perimeter block, the colonnade, and the ‘celebrated’ street corner.

²⁰⁸ Josef Paul Kleihues, ‘Prager Platz Area’, 59.

²⁰⁹ Jasper Cepl, *Oswald Mathias Ungers. Eine intellektuelle Biographie* (Köln: Walther König, 2007), 374-375.

²¹⁰ Oswald Mathias Ungers, *Die Stadt in der Stadt* (Cologne: Studio Verlag für Architektur, 1977). An Italian and English translation was published in *Lotus international* 19 (1978), 82-94. See also: Florian Hertweck, Sébastien Marot (eds.), *Die Stadt in der Stadt. Berlin: ein grünes Archipel* (Zurich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2013), 71-72.

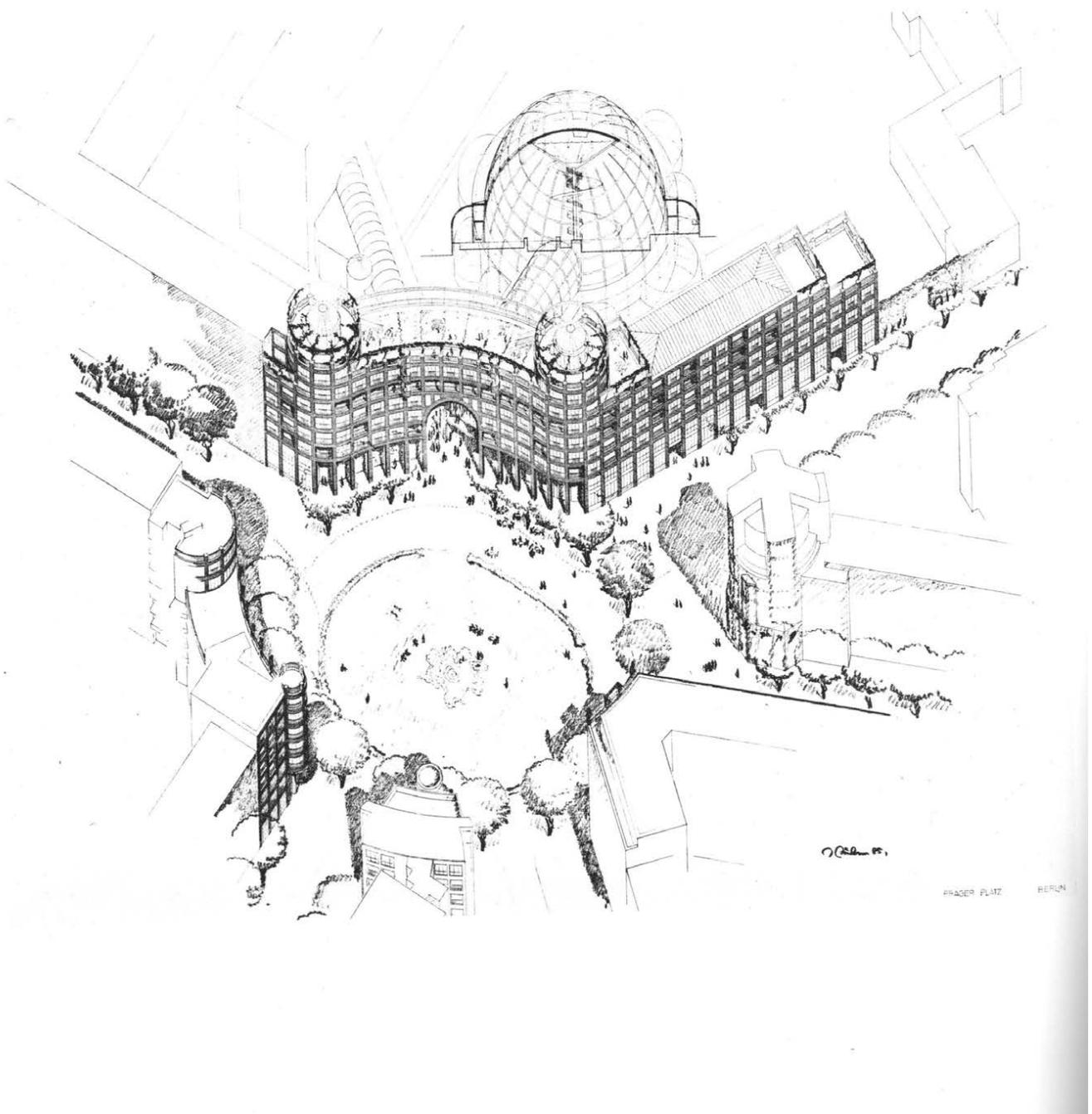


Figure 3. Gottfried Böhm, Urban study for Prager Platz, 1978.
The study is based on the outlines of the buildings destroyed during World War II.

Eleven theses synthesise the results of the Cornell Summer School held in Berlin a couple of months before. The concept outlined by Ungers has little in common with Krier's synonymous La Villette project from 1976.²¹¹ On the contrary, it seems to be devised in opposition to the urban renewal projects by Krier, Culot and Kleihues. In 'Thesis 2', Ungers explicitly dismisses the 'prevailing notion' that the only way to deal with historically grown cities is to preserve, restore and supplement them.²¹² 'Programmes of this kind', he argues, 'are at the most the result of a wave of mistaken nostalgia.'²¹³

Koolhaas visited Ungers' summer school, and to some extent he co-authored Ungers' concept for the future development of Berlin.²¹⁴ Koolhaas drafted a first, manifesto-like project statement, entitled 'Berlin: A Green Archipelago', later translated into German and profoundly reworked by Ungers for his publication.²¹⁵ [Figure 4] More plainly than Ungers' later version, Koolhaas' text was levelled against the initiatives of urban renewal and urban repair. 'The present idea', he writes on the opening page, 'that inner-city area's [sic] can only be rehabilitated through more construction that restores a primordial state, is counterproductive and should be exorcised.'²¹⁶ The proposal for the Tiergarten area he explains as a 'polemic against the ideology of Urban [sic] repair.'²¹⁷ In 1988, referring to the late 1970s, Koolhaas would recall 'the "rediscovery of the European city" by the Krier brothers and other intellectuals and designers', 'completely obsessed with the historic centres of Europe'.²¹⁸ There can be no doubt that, at that time, some of Unger's ideas converged with Koolhaas own, perhaps influencing

²¹¹ For a comparison of the two concepts, see: Cepl, *Oswald Mathias Ungers*, 350-351.

²¹² Ungers, *Die Stadt in der Stadt*, These 2 (author trans.). Pier Vittorio Aureli suggested: 'Berlin as a Green Archipelago can also be understood as one of the earliest critiques of the Krier brother's perimeter block restorations, which would have a decisive impact on the reconstruction of Berlin in the 1980s and 1990s.' Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2011), 178.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, (author trans.).

²¹⁴ In *Die Stadt in der Stadt* Ungers lists Koolhaas as one of four contributors. The others are: Peter Riemann, Hans Kollhoff, and Arthur Ovaska.

²¹⁵ The typescript is published in: Hertweck, Marot, *Die Stadt in der Stadt. Berlin: ein grünes Archipel*, 11-23.

²¹⁶ Rem Koolhaas, 'Berlin a Green Archipelago', in: Hertweck, Marot, *Die Stadt in der Stadt*, 13.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

²¹⁸ Rem Koolhaas, 'Sixteen Years of OMA', in Lucan, *OMA – Rem Koolhaas*, 162. In 1985 Koolhaas wrote: 'Shame to all those who signed the Declaration of Palermo!', ridiculing its vision of a preindustrial 'environment fit for glass blowers and horseshoers'. Koolhaas, 'Elegy for the Vacant Lot', 937.

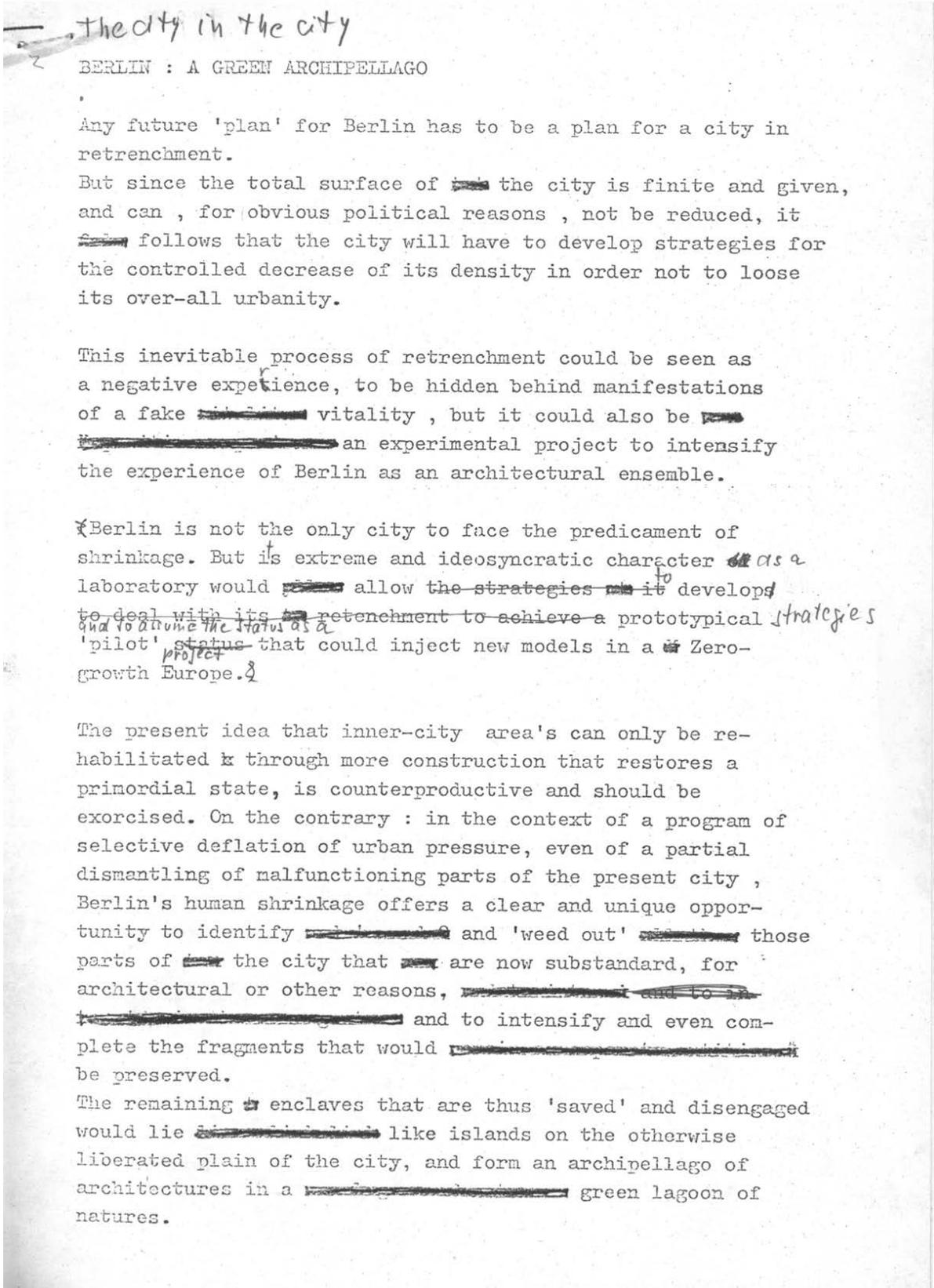


Figure 4. Rem Koolhaas, 'Berlin: A Green Archipelago', typoscript, 1977.

one another mutually. In the 'Appendix' of *Delirious New York*, perhaps written in the same year, Koolhaas calls Manhattan 'an archipelago of "Cities within Cities."'219

A system of fragments

Starting from the assumption that the population of Berlin would continue to decrease, Ungers and his collaborators proposed to shape the process of the city's partial demolition and renaturation. [Figures 5-6] Selected districts were to be preserved and to be developed on the basis of cognate city models, such as the baroque plan for Karlsruhe, the grid of Manhattan or Leonidov's map for Magnitogorsk.²²⁰ The remainder of the urban fabric would to be turned into a continuous green space, encompassing and isolating the remaining archipelago-like districts. The archipelago concept was to play an important role for Koolhaas' urbanist ideas of the 1980s. In the essay 'Imagining Nothingness' from 1985, Koolhaas called it 'the blueprint for a theory of the European metropolis.'²²¹ In the same essay he stressed the fragmented character of the whole: 'The kind of coherence that the metropolis can achieve is not that of a homogeneous planned composition. It can be, at the most, a system of fragments, a system for multiple realities; in Europe, the remnant of the historical core may well be part of such a system.'²²²

Ungers, who adopted the term archipelago for his publication – the subtitle translates: 'Berlin, the Green City Archipelago' – described Berlin as 'a living collage, an assembly of fragments' and between its different parts a dialectical relation of thesis and antithesis.²²³ Ungers, like Koolhaas in his draft, highlighted the 'polarity between nature and culture or nature and metropolis', pointing out at once the synthetic character of the 'grid of nature'. But he introduced an entirely different discourse of legitimation. Ungers stressed the reinforcement of 'identity', intending the morphological coherence of

²¹⁹ Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 296.

²²⁰ In an interview from 1985 Koolhaas explains that 'the areas (îlots) with undeniable architectural and functional qualities' would be preserved. Goulet, 'La deuxième chance', 8.

²²¹ Rem Koolhaas, 'Imagining Nothingness', in: Lucan, *OMA – Rem Koolhaas*, 157. First Published under the title 'Imaginer le néant' in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* 238 (1985), 38.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ungers, *Die Stadt in der Stadt*, Thesis 9 (author trans.).

Städte in der Stadt

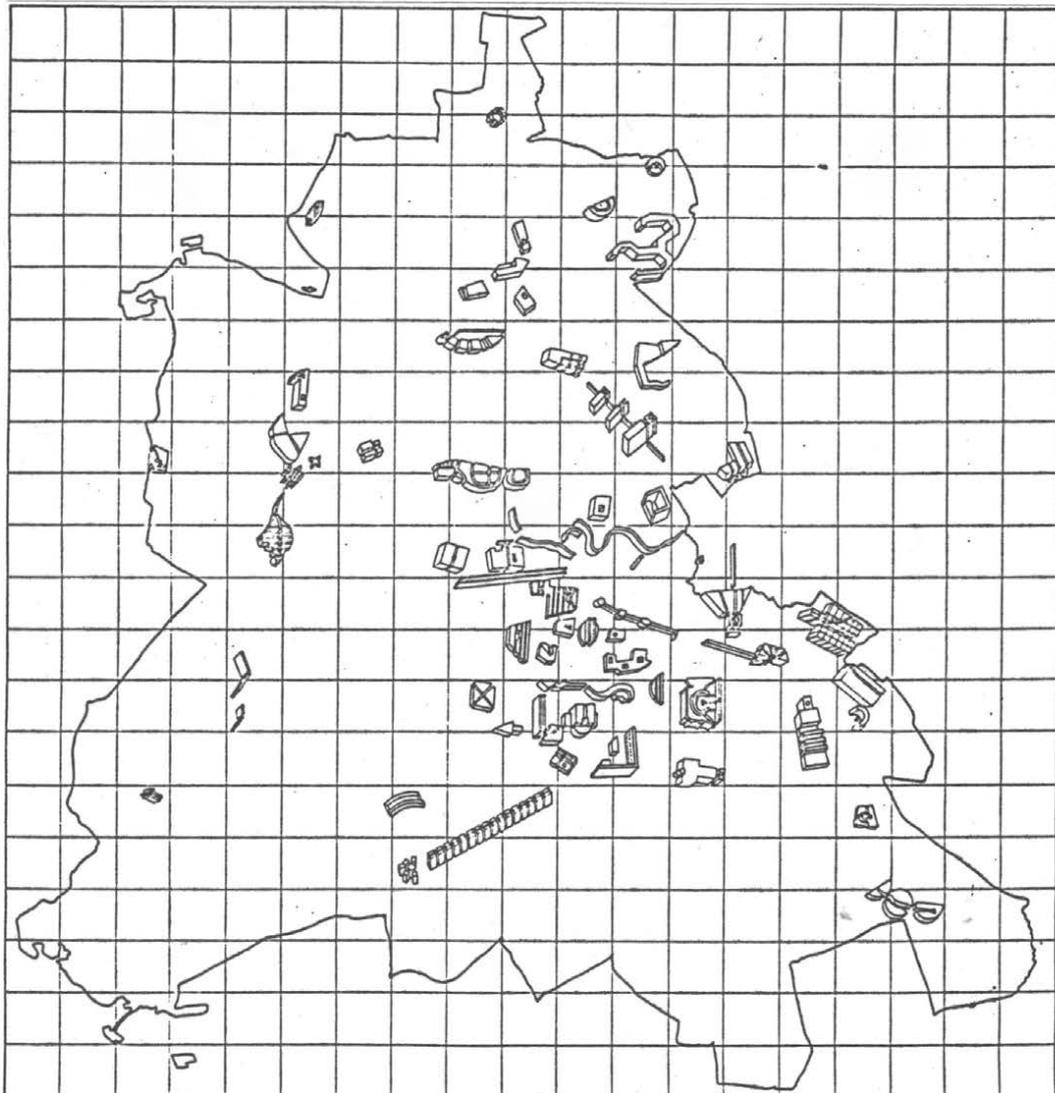


Figure 5. Oswald M. Ungers, Illustrations of 'The City within the City', 1977.

the various ‘islands’ and the residents identifying themselves with their neighbourhoods. He advertised the *City in the City* as a pluralistic concept, appropriate for the contemporary individualistic society, leaving freedom of choice and allowing for the free development of personality.²²⁴ Koolhaas would consistently sidestep ideological overtones of this kind.²²⁵ In *Delirious New York* he puts forward the idea of a unity of diverse separate entities: ‘The more each island celebrates different values, the more the unity of the archipelago as system is reinforced.’²²⁶ In his allegorical project ‘The City of the Captive Globe’ from 1972 unity is guaranteed by the homogeneous grid and the identical granite plinths on which the single works of architecture rest, decontextualized like pieces of an encyclopaedic collection. All antagonisms and affinities are neutralized by the unbridgeable incision of the streets. The pre-established delimitation renders each ‘position’ inoffensive to its neighbours, while contributing through its ‘eccentricity’ to the spectacle of the whole. The Captive Globe, however, is a vision of Manhattan and perhaps of the American city as such. By contrast, in Berlin, as understood by Ungers, the antagonistic approaches used to compete more literally, in the sense that each implied the idea of a coherent if not uniform whole. The archipelago concept breaks with this tradition of single truths, dissolving polyphony and contradictions in an all-embracing historic perspective. ‘Here [i.e. in Berlin]’, Ungers writes, ‘thesis and antithesis corresponded to each other like breathing in and breathing out.’²²⁷ Urban diversity is the coagulation of a never ending dialectical process: ‘The coexistence of opposites is, historically speaking, an expression of the dialectical process the city always has been and still is immersed in.’²²⁸

²²⁴ Ungers, *Die Stadt in der Stadt*, Thesis 5.

²²⁵ In an interview from 2013 Koolhaas explains that he would never have used the word pluralism, considering the term meaningless, at least in an American context. Hertweck, Marot, *Die Stadt in der Stadt*, 137, 139.

²²⁶ Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 296.

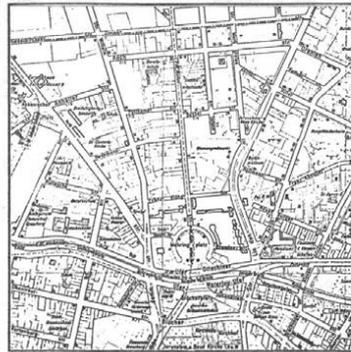
²²⁷ Ungers, *Die Stadt in der Stadt*, Thesis 9 (author trans.).

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, (author trans.). The idea of a pluralist society allowing for divergent ideologies and, ultimately, identities, is vital for Ungers’ concept of the ‘city within the city’. In Thesis 5 he explains: ‘Jeder Stadtteil für sich genommen erhält seine nur ihm gemäße Identität, die sich wesentlich von der eines anderen unterscheidet.’ ‘Es ist auch politisch und sozial gesehen ein pluralistisches Konzept, in dem mehrere ideologisch differierende Ansichten nebeneinander ihren Platz haben. [...] Während in einer anonym, nach einem einheitlichen Prinzip gestalteten Stadt zwangsläufig ein Identitätsverlust und damit eine Entpersönlichung eintritt, kann sich der Bewohner in einem offenen System für den seinen Wünschen und Vorstellungen entsprechenden Identitätsraum entscheiden.’

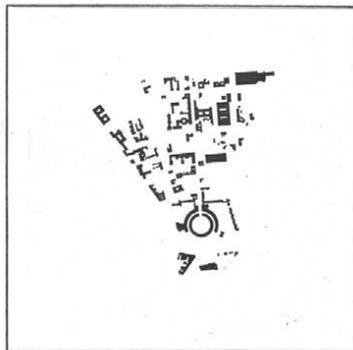
Stadträumlicher Strukturvergleich südliche Friedrichstadt - Karlsruhe



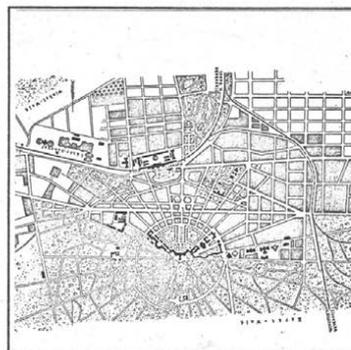
Luftaufnahme südl. Friedrichstadt



Lageplan südl. Friedrichstadt



Stadtinsel südl. Friedrichstadt



Stadtplan Karlsruhe

Stadträumlicher Strukturvergleich Strasse unter den Eichen - Leonidow's



Luftaufnahme Lichtenfelde



Lageplan Lichtenfelde



Stadtinsel unter den Eichen



Stadtplan Magnitogorsk

Figure 6. Oswald M. Ungers, Illustrations of 'The City within the City', 1977.

Spiritedly covered with buildings

Two months after his nomination as one of the two directors of the IBA Berlin Ungers resigned. He was replaced by Hardt Walther Hämer, who eventually would head the exhibition's Old Building Section (IBA Altbau). The director of the New Building Section (IBA Neubau) became Kleihues. Koolhaas, as a planner, had been involved in the IBA first in 1980, when OMA participated in the competitions for Lützowstrasse and Kochtrasse. The two competitions in the Südliche Friedrichstadt area belonged to Kleihues' New Building Section. With the motto 'critical reconstruction' Kleihues explicitly distanced his efforts from a concept of reconstruction that 'degenerates visibly into nostalgia', perhaps referring to Krier and the ideas pronounced in the declarations of Palermo and Brussels.²²⁹ Especially for the Südliche Friedrichstadt he has in mind a 'broader interpretation of reconstruction', which takes into account the diversity of the area's historical traces, and might 'transpose the classical idea of dialectic into the language and living conditions of the Modern Movement'.²³⁰ [Figure 7] Nevertheless, Kleihues regards the preservation and restoration of a baroque ground plan and a uniform height of the facades (18-20 metres), roughly corresponding to six storeys, as a precondition for all designs.²³¹ A look at the plans and buildings reveals that the perimeter block, even if modified, is being largely reconstructed, while modernist approaches in terms of urbanism are virtually absent. As has been observed in more recent years, both IBAs – the Old Building Section, themed 'careful urban renewal', and the New Building Section – 'made a significant contribution to the "rescue" of the traditional city, especially to the repair of the city of the late 19th century'.²³²

From the outset, it had been the ambition of its initiators the IBA would become a model for other European cities. Renowned architects from Europe, the US and Japan were invited to participate. The names of the practices involved read like a who is who of late 20th century architecture. Isozaki,

²²⁹ Kleihues, Klotz, *Internationale Bauausstellung Berlin*, 128.

²³⁰ Josef Paul Kleihues, 'Southern Friedrichstadt Area. Rudiments of History. Place of Contradictions. Critical Reconstruction', in: *A+U* (May 1987), 146, 148.

²³¹ Lore Ditzen, 'Josef Paul Kleihues interviewed by Lore Ditzen', *The Architectural Review* 9 (1984), 42.

²³² Harald Bodenschatz, Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, Wolfgang Sonne, 'Einführung', in: Idem (eds.), *25 Jahre Internationale Bauausstellung Berlin 1987: Ein Wendepunkt des europäischen Städtebaus* (Zurich: Niggli, 2012), 11 (author trans.).



Figure 7. Josef Paul Kleihues, Masterplan for Südliche Friedrichstadt/Südlicher Tiergarten. IBA New Building Section, Berlin, 1984.

Eisenman, Moore, Hejduk, Rossi, Grassi, Gregotti, Stirling, the Smithsons, Van Eyck, Hertzberger, Portzamparc, Siza, Moneo, Hollein, Peichl, Coop Himmelblau, Botta, Reichlin and Reinhard, Krier, Ungers, Kollhoff: all of them submitted projects, many of which were built, securing the IBA an international audience.²³³

With the project for Kochstrasse/Friedrichstrasse from 1980, a competition organized by Kleihues' New Building Section, Koolhaas takes aim at Krier's and Culot's ideas of urban reconstruction. OMA's project statement opens with a sarcastic account of what such an approach would boil down to:

The context of the 4-block area [...] is determined by the 18th century Grid, the remaining pre-war structure (generated by the Grid) and the post-war reconstruction, usually at odds with the Grid. Where the old buildings define – and are defined – by the street, the new buildings diffuse and dissolve it.

Since the recent *rediscovery* of the street as the core element of all urbanism, the simplest *solution* to this complex and ambiguous condition would be to undo the 'mistakes' of the 50s and 60s and to build again along the plotlines of a regained historical consciousness.

This approach would restore the Grid, respectfully connect new buildings to the old, and try as much as possible to hide most of the post-war buildings, attempting to make harmless the mistaken ideologies of the past decades.

But at this juncture, it is important to resist that temptation [...]²³⁴

OMA proposes modernist typologies: a series of vertical 'slabs', rendered in primary colours; and – with reference to 'Mies, Hilbersheimer, Häring' – courtyard houses of 1-2 storeys adding up to a number

²³³ Bodenschatz, Lampugnani and Sonne write: 'The two directors of the IBA succeeded not only in initiating a fundamental turn in urban design, but also in reasserting a positive notion of the task of urban planning, establishing indeed west Berlin as an internationally renowned laboratory for an urban design beyond a functionalist modernity.' Bodenschatz, Lampugnani, Sonne: *25 Jahre Internationale Bauausstellung*, 9 (author trans.).

²³⁴ OMA, *OMA. Projects 1978-1981* (London: Architectural Association, 1981), 33.

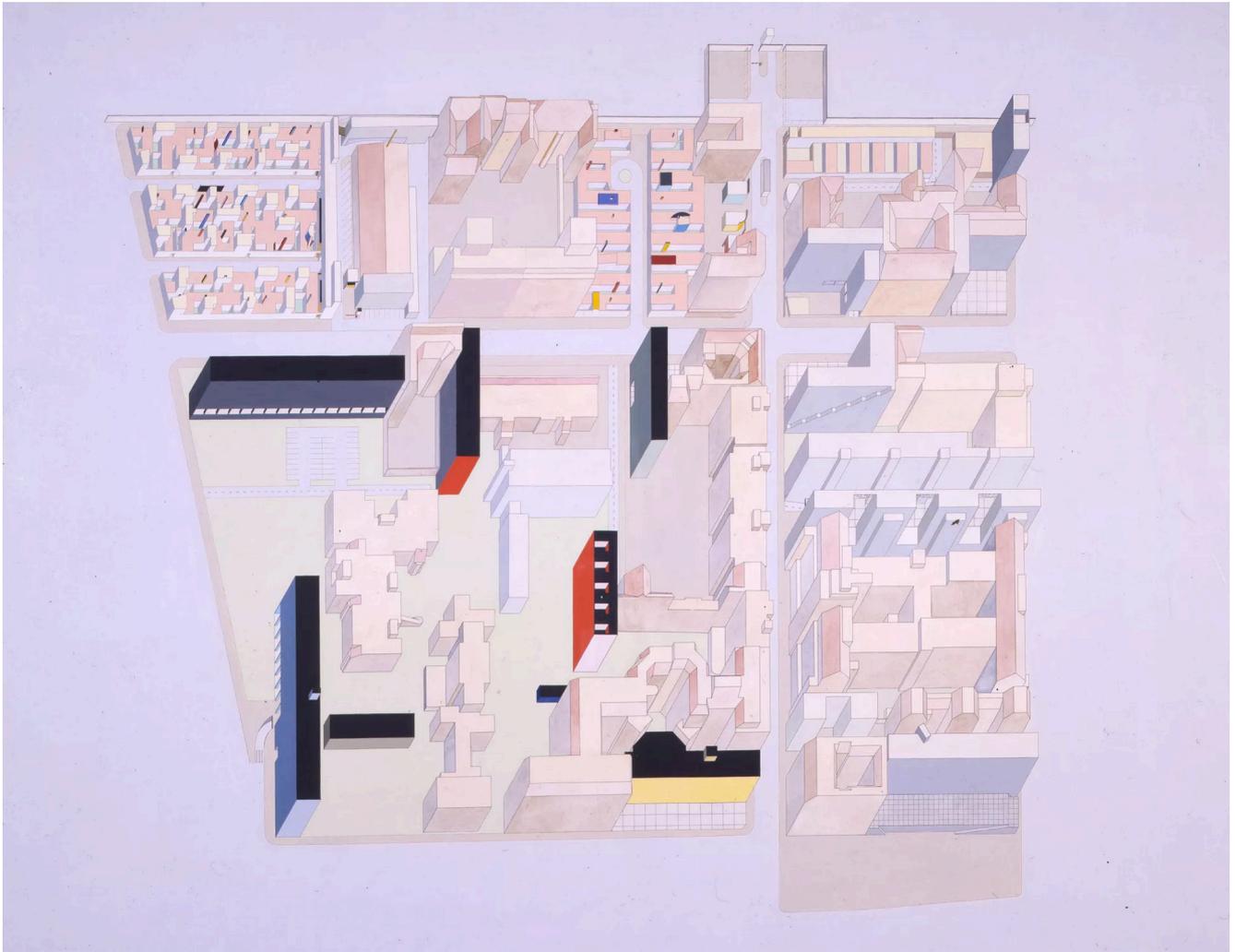


Figure 8. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, Competition entry for Kochstrasse/Lützowstrasse, IBA Berlin, 1980.

of ‘mat buildings’, which Gargiani has interpreted as ‘a symbolic reflection of the Berlin Wall’.²³⁵ [Figure 8] In fact, Stefano de Martino, who was part of OMA’s team working on the project, explained during an interview in 2015:

The Koch/Friedrichstrasse project was an alternative to the idea of the city current at the time – the street, making facades, rebuilding blocks... It took as a model the courtyard house, which has a boundary but no facade, and a void at its core, the inversion of a block. Next to the Berlin Wall, on a site with little substance left, this seems almost contextual...²³⁶

Both building types – the courtyard house and the vertical slabs – fill the gaps between the existing buildings. But instead of restoring the integrity of the block and creating a continuous street front of 18-20 metres, the new buildings perpetuate the street block’s fragmentation and heterogeneity. The slabs do not align with the street, and the courtyard houses, apart from being ‘too low’, contest the supposed opposition of built and open space, as if to unmask the ‘revisionist’ character of Kleihues’ Critical Reconstruction.

In his essays from 1985, Koolhaas re-proposes the city-archipelago concept – more explicitly than in 1976 – as a model for the European city in general. The proposal clearly opposes the IBA’s efforts to turn the remnants of Berlin into a coherent urban fabric, and, ultimately, the ‘historic city’ and its reconstruction as the (sole) paradigm of urban development. As Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani – at the time the scientific adviser of the IBA – asserts in hindsight: ‘Waste land and gaps were spiritedly covered with buildings.’²³⁷ Koolhaas, in essays like ‘The Terrifying Beauty of the Twentieth Century’ and ‘Imagining Nothingness’, advocates the preservation of large open spaces *within* the historical centres, not only for Berlin. He proposes the archipelago of Berlin as a ‘model of urban solid and

²³⁵ Gargiani, *The Construction of Merveilles*, 96.

²³⁶ Léa-Catherine Szacka, ‘Translucent oppositions’, n.p.

²³⁷ Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, ‘Die IBA Berlin, 25 Jahre später. Ein persönlicher Versuch, aus einem städtebaulichen Experiment Lehren zu ziehen’, in: Bodenschatz, Lampugnani, Sonne, *25 Jahre Internationale Bauausstellung*, 157.



Figure 9. Binnenrotte, Rotterdam.

To the left: Public library by van den Broek & Bakema (1977-83).

To the right: The 'Cube Houses' (1978-84) and two more buildings by Piet Blom from the early 1980s.

metropolitan void.’ Solid and void would depend on one another dialectically, the first as a stable element, the second as an instable one, open to new, unforeseen developments.²³⁸ The unbuilt space, far from being conceived as mere greenery, ought to house the ‘panoply of the technological age’, that is, all those functions that do not fit in the patterns of the premodern city: ‘highways, supermarkets, drive-in cinemas, landing strips, the ever expanding video universe.’²³⁹

Even here

Koolhaas was born in Rotterdam in November 1944. Neither did he witness the bombs nor the fire that destroyed Rotterdam’s inner city, but he must have seen the beginnings of its reconstruction. According to his own account, he lived with his parents close to ‘the crater’ before the family moved to Indonesia when Koolhaas was six years old.²⁴⁰ In 1950, Rotterdam’s reconstruction had only started and the larger part of the centre would have been devoid of buildings. Koolhaas’ fascination with empty urban space and the tabula rasa may originate from this experience. When he established OMA Rotterdam in 1980, not much was left of the inner city’s vast unbuilt territory, the era of reconstruction drawing to a close.²⁴¹ Like the competition entry Kochstrasse/Friedrichstrasse, OMA’s Boompjes project dates from 1980, and like the former with respect to the IBA in Berlin, the latter implied a critical comment of recent developments in Rotterdam. The project statement opens with a brief sketch of Rotterdam’s reconstruction:

During the 50s the new Rotterdam became a paradigm: a CIAM city of slabs that were tied together by a Team X-like ‘connective tissue’ by Bakema, the [Lijnbaan].

²³⁸ Koolhaas, ‘Imagining Nothingness’, 157.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Goulet, ‘La deuxième chance’, 2. According to the biography in Lucan’s monograph from 1990, the family lived in Indonesia between 1952 and 1956, that is, they would have left Rotterdam when Koolhaas was between seven and eight years old. Lucan, *OMA - Rem Koolhaas*, 168.

²⁴¹ See the plans of Rotterdam’s inner city from the period between 1930 and 1995 in: Arts, *Vijftig jaar Wederopbouw Rotterdam*, 34-41.



Figure 10. Centre left: OMA/Rem Koolhaas, Boompjes 1980.
Bottom right: The buildings by Bakema and Blom next to Blaak and Binnenrotte.

In the 60s and 70s, the emblematic architecture was discredited: on the periphery of the centre, on the other side of the railway track, a second, revisionist architecture was started – an assembly of buildings by Piet Blom (a small forest of his tree houses), Bakema and others.

The new reconstruction was the absolute opposite of the 50s effort: where they were sober, ordered and logical; the new city was chaotic and obsessively humanist.²⁴²

Koolhaas refers to then ongoing developments at the junction of the former railway route Binnenrotte, the Old Harbour, and a broad Boulevard called Blaak. A large complex by Blom, of which the popular Cube Houses are only one part, was completed in 1984; a public library by Van den Broek & Bakema in 1983. [Figure 9] As for the general acceptance of Rotterdam's post-war construction, a shift of mood had become apparent in the second half of the 1960s. The subject is discussed in some detail in an essay by Hans van Dijk from 2005. To illustrate the negative image of the inner city at this moment, Van Dijk mentions a book from 1968 based on conversations with citizens of Rotterdam. According to their assessment, the 'city was inhospitable, it had too much open space, the atmosphere was cold and business-like, the character was monotonous, straight and rectangular, the buildings were ugly, there was not enough green, there were too many traffic routes.'²⁴³

Koolhaas has related a well-known anecdote according to which he chose the site of the Boompjes project himself: 'The municipality's representative for urbanism [according to Van Dijk, alderman Johannes Mentink of the labour party²⁴⁴] was impressed by *Delirious New York*, and he asked me to meet him. Like in a child's dream he received me, sitting in front of a map of Rotterdam, and asked me to choose a site I was interested in.'²⁴⁵ 'Boompjes' is the name of a street which runs, as a part of the Maas Boulevard, between the river and Rotterdam's historic harbour area. The section chosen by Koolhaas is located directly adjacent to a bridgehead of the former Willemsbrug, which would be replaced by a new bridge 200 metres upstream in the following year. OMA proposed to build five

²⁴² OMA, *OMA. Projects 1978-1981*, 39.

²⁴³ Hans van Dijk, 'De gezelligheids-revolutie. 1965-1985', 171.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 190.

²⁴⁵ Goulet, *La deuxième chance*, 6 (author trans.).

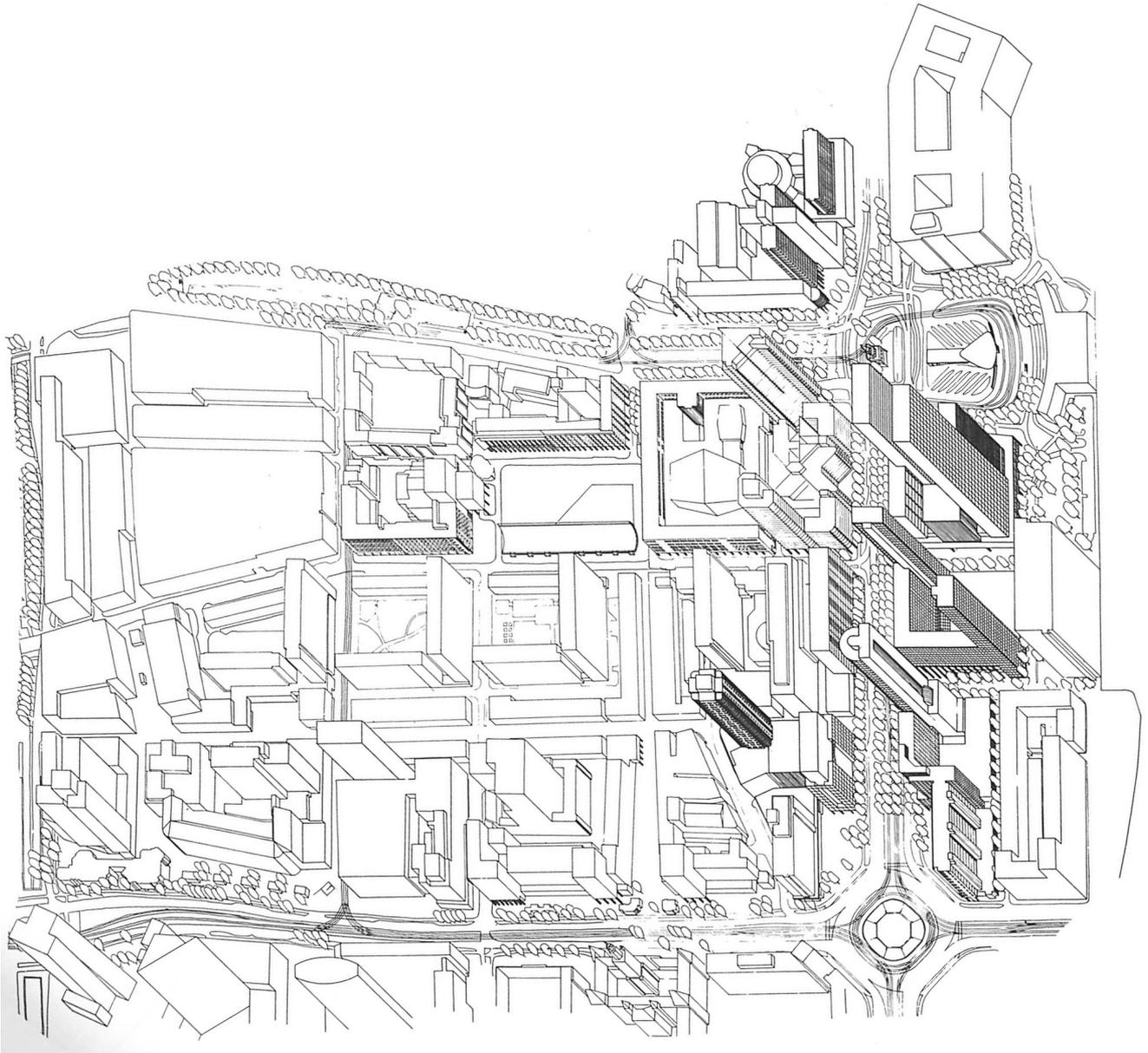


Figure 11. Axonometric of the area between Westersingel (above) and Coolsingel (below), Rotterdam, 1984.
Right margin: Weena development and Central Station (above).
At the centre: The Lijnbaan by Van de Broek & Bakema (1951-53).

towers of about twenty floors that interlock with a slightly taller, 120-metres long slab. [Figure 10] As a metaphor the composition could epitomize Koolhaas' agenda for Rotterdam: while the towers speak of Manhattan, the slab may stand for the city's modernist reconstruction during the 1950s. The programme provided a 'metropolitan' variety of uses: next to apartments, a hotel, and a swimming pool, commercial and communal facilities, parking, a coffee shop, 'a supermarket for sailors, and other half-urban, half-maritime facilities', health and entertainment facilities.²⁴⁶ If the modernist slab, the conquest of the river bank, and the unrestrained embrace of the car, implied by the siting, are a nod to the 1950s, the overtly large size of the building appears as a lesson to the 'humanist' scale of Dutch structuralism, exemplified by Blom's cube houses nearby.²⁴⁷

When Koolhaas compared Rotterdam to Berlin in 1985, the comparison encompassed the threats of urban renewal. 'Now, today', he states in one of the essays, 'both [cities] are caught in the grips of intense revisionism.'²⁴⁸ As for Berlin, Koolhaas evidently aimed at the IBA. In Rotterdam, a project of urban renewal (*stadsvernieuwing*) materialized in the proximity of the Dijkzigt area in the district Oude Westen, just across Rochusstraat. The project, supervised by architect P.P Hammel, was propelled by a local activist group 'het Oude Westen' which had formed in the early 1970s. Van Dijk describes it as the most important of several urban renewal initiatives in Rotterdam from this period, broadly supported by the social democrat city council since 1974.²⁴⁹ 'Building for the neighbourhood', affordable rents, maintenance, and renovation were the watchwords of the activist groups. In the Oude Westen the initiative led to the replacement of several existing buildings by new ones.²⁵⁰ Most of these new buildings reproduced the typology of perimeter block and other characteristics of the

²⁴⁶ OMA, 'Two Structures for Rotterdam 1980-81', in: Idem, *OMA. Projects 1978-1981*, 40.

²⁴⁷ In a project statement from 1980, Koolhaas writes about Dutch structuralism: 'the doctrine preaches that, in the name of humanism, all larger institutions can and should be broken up in smaller components which re-establish the human scale – as if each institution, whatever its nature, will become more transparent, less bureaucratic, less alienating, more understandable, less rigid through the mere fact of subdivision.' OMA, 'Urban Intervention: Parliament Extension, The Hague', *International Architect* 3 (1980), 50.

²⁴⁸ Koolhaas, 'The Terrifying Beauty', 154.

²⁴⁹ Van Dijk, 'De gezelligheids-revolutie', 176-190.

²⁵⁰ Groenendijk, Vollaard, *Guide to modern architecture in Rotterdam*, 26.

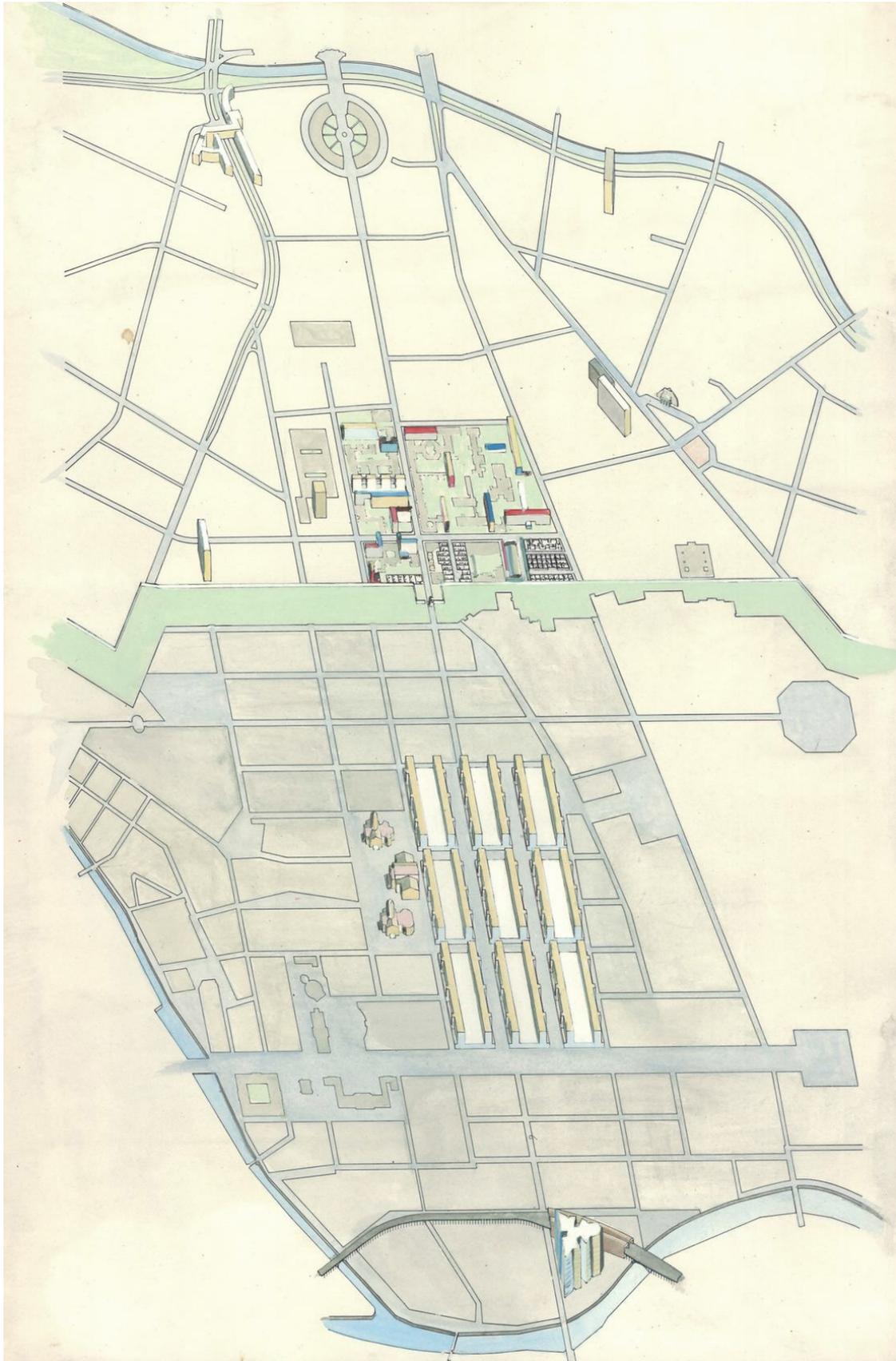


Figure 12. OMA/ Rem Koolhaas, Competition entry for Kochstrasse/Lützowstrasse, IBA Berlin, 1980.

district's 19th century urbanism and architecture – not dissimilar to the projects of the IBA's Old Building Section in Berlin.²⁵¹

However, Koolhaas' main concern in 1985 was not the more or less coherent fabric of European cities, but the cities' large open spaces. In Rotterdam, Koolhaas writes, the 'openness came under attack; plans were made for its densification or intensification, for the realization, even here, of the "compact city"'.²⁵² One year later he insists: 'Rotterdam is an empty city of metropolitan density, there is no spatial coherence to speak of. The openness between the developed areas induces to think of filling in, of "urban repair"'.²⁵³

Apart from the developments around the Blaak, these comments probably refer to the so-called Weena, a broad boulevard between the Central station and Hofplein with vast areas of unbuilt surface on both its sides. [Figure 11] The city had presented first plans for the development of the Weena in the early 1980s.²⁵⁴ By the mid-eighties it was the last of the large unbuilt areas of Rotterdam's inner city, until the railway was removed from the Binnenrotte in the early 1990s. The first high-rises on the Weena were built from the mid-eighties onwards. In 1988, Donald Lambert explained to a French speaking audience in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* that Rotterdam's municipality intended to remedy 'the image of a soulless Rotterdam ... by clearing off at least a million of square metres of surface area, this mainly in the form of offices on the Weena'.²⁵⁵

²⁵¹ Van Dijk mentions that the initiatives attracted international attention: 'Especially from Germany (Berlin, Kreuzberg) experts came to study the 'Rotterdam model'. Van Dijk, 'De gezelligheids-revolutie', 168. For detailed information of the renovated and replaced buildings in the Oude Westen district, see: Vermeulen, De Riuter, *Stadsvernieuwing Rotterdam*, 218-220.

²⁵² Koolhaas, 'The Terrifying Beauty', 154. In this specific passage Koolhaas refers to the 1970s, but the essay as a whole regards the situation when it was written (1985).

²⁵³ To Franziska Bollerey he explained in 1987: 'Rotterdam is an empty city of metropolitan density, there is no spatial coherence to speak of. The voids between the built surface encourage to think about filling-in, and "city repair". "Here you could add something, and there you could embellish something", that is how many politicians and architects think.' Franziska Bollerey, '... immer wieder eine Mischung von Verführung und Ungeniessbarkeit ins Spiel bringen. Ein Gespräch mit Rem Koolhaas', *Bauwelt* 17/18 (May 1987), 632 (author trans.).

²⁵⁴ Lambert, 'De mogelijkheden en de beperkingen van een stedelijk plan', 19-22.

²⁵⁵ Lambert, 'Rotterdam, recoller les fragments', 39. See also: Groenendijk, Vollaard, *Guide to modern architecture in Rotterdam*, 9.

Forces met, forces gained

It is a photograph of the ‘erased’ Rotterdam which introduces the chapter on the projects of the Museum Park, the NAI and the Kunsthal in *S,M,L,XL*.²⁵⁶ The picture does not document the city in ruins right after the fire, but the moment when it was cleared from the rubble, only a few buildings left and all the open ground around ready for reconstruction. The ‘erased’ inner city, though – as captured in numerous pictures, showing a handful of isolated buildings on the deserted plane with only the streets left of what used to be Rotterdam’s historic centre – is not the immediate result of the bombs and the fire from May 1940, but to some degree also a consequence of how the catastrophe was handled by the authorities. During the months that followed, the ruins – still to be seen on the photographs taken before the clearing of the debris – were removed. The option of a partial reconstruction of the inner city as it used to be was excluded: ‘Rotterdam took a radical decision whose consequences were probably not fully recognized. Instead of consolidating and reconstructing the ruins of the city, the decision was made to demolish the centre, with the exception of a few buildings’.²⁵⁷ On May 17, civil engineer J. A. Ringers was appointed the Government Commissioner for Reconstruction. And on May 24, thanks ‘to the centralized powers Ringer[s] was given ... , it was already possible to expropriate all the ruins in the devastated area ... and make a start on the organization of the clearance of the rubble.’²⁵⁸ It took several months to create the sort of tabula rasa situation that so strikingly recalls OMA’s bird’s eye views of projects like Parliament in The Hague, the Arnhem prison, and the competition entries for the IBA Berlin. [Figure 12]

It is the very condition that allowed modern architecture and urbanism to become the major force in the development of Berlin and Rotterdam after the war. OMA’s study from May 1987, as has been shown, extends this image of Rotterdam as its ‘general condition’ to the Dijkzigt area, where, if considering

²⁵⁶ Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 401. In his monograph on Witteveen, Noor Mens mentions as one of the possible reasons for the radical clearing ‘the wish to make short of the unruly historic city once and for all’. Mens, *W.G. Witteveen en Rotterdam*, 141 (author trans.). Mens points to the rigour with which this task is carried out: ‘not only the debris above ground, also all foundations and conducts and tramway tracks are being removed.’ *Ibid.*, 143 (author trans.).

²⁵⁷ Kees Christiaanse, *Rotterdam. Kees Christiaanse. Forum* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2012), 13.

²⁵⁸ Frank Kauffmann, ‘Towards a “modern” city centre’, 77.

the actual givens, it did not really apply. Rather, it blends the specificity of the city with an ‘idealized’ conception of Rotterdam and thus with a number of themes Koolhaas was interested in at this moment. The true counterforces met – first by the study, then by the projects of the Kunsthal, the Museum Park and the NAI – seem to be competing international ideas on how the European city should evolve.

1.5

Everyday limits

The programme of the Kunsthal

In a letter from 10 July 1987, alderman Joop Linthorst expressed his regret that little progress had been made in regard to the projects of the Kunsthal and the Museum Park. According to Linthorst, the main difficulty was that both the schedule of requirements for the Kunsthal and the layout of the park were still missing.²⁵⁹ Neither, with all probability, did OMA deliver a primary draft for the Kunsthal in autumn 1987 as commissioned by the municipality in June. The aforementioned note from 3 September informs the steering group of the Museum Park that Koolhaas has put the planning of the Kunsthal on hold in order to wait for the outcome of the gathering.²⁶⁰ At the meeting on 17 September Hein Reedijk, the municipality's 'coordinator', ought to work out the brief of the Kunsthal in collaboration with Koolhaas and was expected to inform about the 'state of affairs'.²⁶¹ Reedijk (1946-), a former curator of the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven,²⁶² belonged to the municipality's Arts Department chaired by Linthorst, and he already had drafted a first comment on Van Blommestein's and Versteegen's conception of the Kunsthal from 1986.²⁶³

On 10 March, 1988, OMA receives an invitation by Joop Linthorst to the first meeting of the Building Committee of the Kunsthal, scheduled for the 17th of the same month. In the letter Linthorst informs that he intends to keep the activities of the Museum Park steering group suspended until the 'ideas and preconditions have consolidated'.²⁶⁴ Attached to the letter is a revised schedule of requirements for the

²⁵⁹ J.M. Linthorst, 'Aan de leden van de Plangroep Museumpark'. OMAR 3267.

²⁶⁰ J.W. Vader to 'Plangroep Museum Park'. OMAR 3267. Perhaps Koolhaas was waiting for the schedule of requirements. Another issue might have been the pending municipality's approval for the exact location of the Kunsthal proposed by OMA. See also: Chapter 1.3.

²⁶¹ 'Agenda vergadering Plangroep Museumpark', 17 September 1987. OMAR 3267.

²⁶² Blotkamp, *Museum in Motion*, 376.

²⁶³ Letter to J. Linthorst, J. Bronder, W. Crouwel, et al., August 24, 1987. OMAR 3267.

²⁶⁴ J.M. Linthorst, letter to J. Bronder, K. Hage, R. Koolhaas, H. Reedijk, G. Vet. Dated 9 March 1987. OMAR 3267.

Kunsthal.²⁶⁵ The schedule, drafted by Reedijk, is based on the 1986 report by Van Blommestein and Versteegen, the Museum Park concept by the Department for Urban Development and the ‘variant by R. Koolhaas’ from 1987.²⁶⁶ Reedijk calculated 300.000 to 400.000 thousand visitors per year, estimating a ‘a theoretical market of 500.000 to 2.000.000 people’. The numbers were based on the assumption that 10 percent of the population was generally interested in cultural activities, while counting the whole of the Netherlands, Flanders and Rheinland-Westfalen to the catchment area.

Like Van Blommestein and Versteegen, Reedijk envisages the Kunsthal as ‘market oriented’, its expositions as ‘public oriented’. He suggests exhibitions of fine art, applied arts and new media. With regard to high attendance figures and ticket revenues, Reedijk indicates a number of foreign examples: the Kunsthalle in Cologne, the Royal Academy in London, the Grand Palais and the Centre Pompidou in Paris along with the Künstlerhaus in Vienna. The list of spaces proposed by Reedijk provides eight exhibition halls of different sizes, a central patio connecting the building with the park, a bar, and a large lobby which might also be used for events, such as vernissages, receptions and readings. The programme as a whole adds up to a total of 5.625 square metres, half of which are envisaged as gallery space. Reedijk remarks that the budget of 20 million guilders, released by the Department of Urban Development, covers the construction costs of only 5.000 square metres.²⁶⁷ That equalled a cost overrun of approximately twelve percent. Evidently the municipality calculated construction costs of 4.000 guilders per square metre, which appears comparatively low. The amount spent for the Sammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in Düsseldorf (1979-86) was roughly 4.700 guilders per square metre, for Stirling’s Nationalgalerie in Stuttgart (1977-84) approx. 6.200 guilders per square metre. Peichl’s Kunsthalle in Bonn (1986-92) – likewise an arts centre without a collection of its own and built in parallel to the Kunsthal – was built for approx. 114 million guilders (128 million DM).²⁶⁸ From the very

²⁶⁵ H. Reedijk, ‘Programma van eisen Kunsthal Hoboken. definitief concept’. January 1988. A stamp on the cover records ‘Received on 10 March 1988’. OMAR 1437. The brief is mentioned in Linthorst’s letter. By then it was revised at least twice. A 16-pages schedule of requirements, dated 5 November 1987, is indicated as the second concept (‘2e concept’). OMAR 3252.

²⁶⁶ Reedijk, ‘Programma van eisen’, ‘1. Inleiding’. OMAR 1437. Perhaps Reedijk refers to OMA’s ‘Analysis Museum Park’ from September.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 5. Totaaloverzicht benodigde ruimte’. OMAR 1437.

²⁶⁸ Ingeborg Flaggé, ‘Bonner Erbstücke’, *Deutsche Bauzeitung* 4 (1993), 40-49.

beginning there was an imbalance between the budget and the conception of the Kunsthal. Discussions about an ever increasing cost overrun and savings would continue throughout the planning process.²⁶⁹

The first meeting

The gathering of the Kunsthal Building Committee on 17 March – the first of altogether seventy-one meetings – was attended by five representatives of different municipal services, next to Rem Koolhaas and alderman Joop Linthorst.²⁷⁰ As announced during the meeting, Linthorst would chair the committee until the start of the construction phase. In part, the gathering served to sum up the current state of affairs. The client was the city of Rotterdam, with the Municipal Museum Service and the Human Resources and Finance Service, represented by J. Bronder,²⁷¹ as the contracting authorities. Rotterdam's Public Works²⁷² were in charge of the project management. The future director of the Kunsthal was yet to be nominated, and for the time being Reedijk continued to act as the 'project coordinator'. The minutes record that the investment programme of Rotterdam's Department for Urban development providing for the Kunsthal a budget of 20 million guilders had to be considered as 'all-inclusive'.²⁷³ The opening of the Kunsthal, envisaged by the city council for 1990, was met by Linthorst with scepticism. A time schedule was to be prepared for the next meeting. The representative of the Department Urban Development, Koos Hage, explained that the urban planning prerequisites for the Kunsthal were laid down in the Inner City Plan from 1985 and the department's study for the Museum Park from 1987.²⁷⁴

The programme of the Kunsthal was discussed in some detail. Before commenting on Reedijk's proposal, Koolhaas made a general statement regarding recent museum design. 'He [Koolhaas]', the

²⁶⁹ Two letters exchanged between Koolhaas and Reedijk in December 1987 illustrate the tightness of the budget at this early stage. According to Koolhaas' letter from 3 December 1987, the budget did not cover the costs for honorarium, land, equipment, value-added tax (BWT). Reedijk, however, in his answer from 14 December, insisted that the 20 million guilders were too be considered as all inclusive. OMAR 3267.

²⁷⁰ Minutes Building Committee 17 March 1988. OMAR 1517.

²⁷¹ Dienst Gemeentelijke Musea (DGM), and Dienst Personeel and Financiën (DPF). Ibid.

²⁷² Gemeentewerke (GW). Ibid.

²⁷³ Stadsontwikkeling Rotterdam (SOR). Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Hage stressed the importance of the 'development axis' connecting the Architecture Museum with the Westzeedijk. To guarantee its visibility, he suggested to elevate the bottom of the Kunsthal at least four metres above the dyke level. The issue was never raised again.

minutes record, ‘has studied comparable institutions in Europe. The sixties, with the Beaubourg as an evident example, warranted very flexible buildings. As a reaction to that, recent examples, such as Mönchengladbach, Stuttgart and Frankfurt, emphasize a monumentality which leaves little room for change.’²⁷⁵ Koolhaas apparently here referred to Hollein’s Abteiberg Museum (1972-82), Stirling’s Staatsgalerie (1977-84), Unger’s Architecture Museum (1979-1984), and perhaps Hollein’s project for the museum of modern art in Frankfurt (1983-91). For the Kunsthal, he suggested a combination of the two approaches by means of a flexible element in an otherwise stable building. As for the schedule of requirements, drafted by Reedijk, Koolhaas recommends three major modifications: 1) To allow for the ‘necessary multiformity’, that is, more flexibility – obviously referring to the eight separate exhibition halls listed in Reedijk’s brief. 2) To take more ‘proletarian pleasures’ into account, Reedijk’s programme being exclusively oriented towards high culture. 3) To consider other uses complementary to the exhibitions, such as a restaurant, the organization of conferences and other “Palais de Festival” activities’.²⁷⁶

During the subsequent discussion Reedijk did not object the idea that the Kunsthal might house a broader range of events, stressing – in evident accordance with Van Blommestein and Versteegen’s report – quality and high attendance figures as his major concern. Linthorst pointed out that an expanded use, which might include festivals, would mean less confrontation with the Boijmans Museum, while adding that exhibitions would have ‘certainly priority’. The committee eventually decided to postpone any definitive choice regarding the programme until the architects would have presented their scheme for the Kunsthal. For the next meeting on the 28 April, OMA was assigned to prepare a first draft, and an ‘orientation’, apparently referring to the ‘documentation and orientation concerning a certain number of arts centres’ already commissioned in June 1987. The minutes further mention that on the basis of the draft a follow-up contract might be awarded.

²⁷⁵ Author trans.

²⁷⁶ Van Reedijk’s programme provides 250 square metres of ‘gastronomy’, ought to offer drinks and a ‘small menu’ to a fast flow of visitors. A proper restaurant is not envisaged. Reedijk, ‘Programma van eisen’. OMAR 1437.

Proletarian entertainment, *palais de festival* activities

During the meeting, Koolhaas must already have had in mind the scheme he would present in April. The mention of a ‘flexible element in an otherwise stable building’ apparently refers to the ‘Robot’, a system of moveable platforms which would allow to transform the building spatially in multiple ways. The Robot would become the central element of OMA’s first draft. Likewise, Koolhaas’ insistence on flexibility seems to ‘defend’ the Miesian open space of this scheme, incompatible with the differently sized galleries proposed by Reedijk. As for the actual spaces provided, however, the adjustments suggested by Koolhaas do not indicate fundamental differences regarding the ideas of the municipality, a fact which might be owed to his collaboration with Reedijk. Even if extended by a restaurant and facilities for conferences – which would happen at a later stage –, there was nothing unconventional about the spaces specified at this stage. What distinguishes the Kunsthalle most from contemporary arts centre projects like Peichel’s Kunsthalle in Bonn or Siza’s Centre for Galician Art in Santiago de Compostela (1988-93) is the kind of events envisaged. When Koolhaas called for ‘proletarian entertainment’ and “‘Palais de Festival’ activities’, as the minutes record, he thought of more than just exhibitions ranging between ‘high profile’ and ‘low profile’ blockbusters – as his presentation in April would prove. But this aspect of the programme, the arts centre’s cultural agenda and actual later activities of the Kunsthalle, were beyond the reach of the architect, while strongly depending on municipal politics and the future directors running the Kunsthalle.

Nonetheless, at the instigation of Linthorst, Koolhaas had been involved from an early stage in the programming of the project, and he was given the opportunity to voice his concerns. Different from a competition providing the brief as a given, the commission did offer some occasion to influence the programme. Besides, the ideas of the municipality seem to have been far from contrary to those of Koolhaas. In principle, the stress on high attendance figures and blockbusters met Koolhaas’ wish to open up the spectrum of activities beyond art exhibitions in order to address a broader public. The idea is obviously in line with his long-standing strategy to embrace popular culture architecturally, first pronounced in *Delirious New York*. Koolhaas interprets the Manhattan skyscraper as an architecture that is ‘at once ambitious *and* popular’ so as to counter the modernist notion of architecture as puritan,

Chapter 1.5

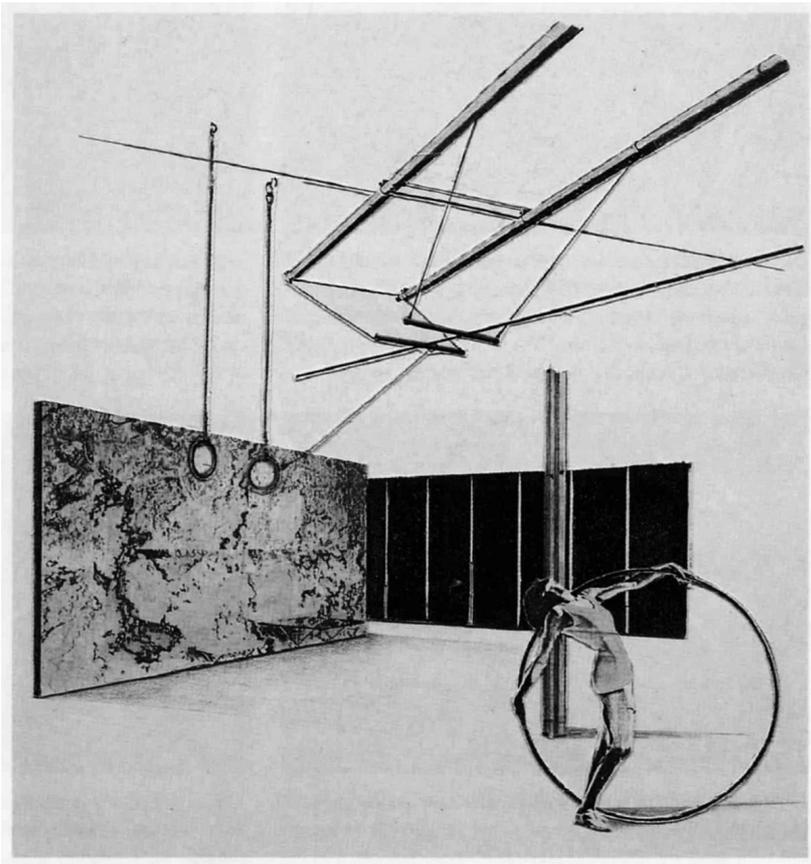
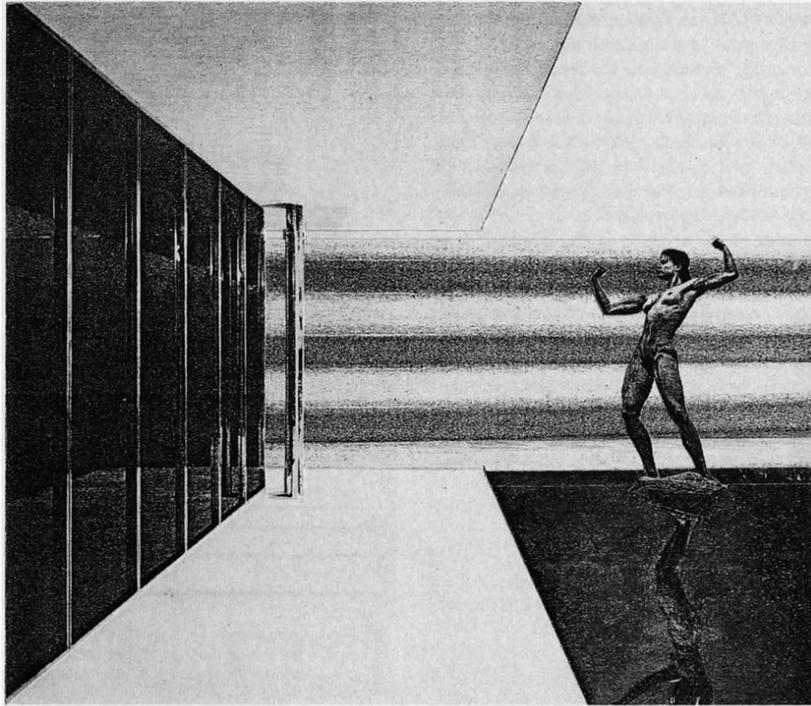


Figure 1. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, Casa Palestra, Triennale 1986, Milan.

elitist and exclusive.²⁷⁷ The idea reverberates in much of OMA's work, not least at the Milan Triennale in 1986, where a bent replica of Mies' Barcelona Pavilion was turned into a gym. [Figure 1] A project statement explains: 'it has always been our conviction that modernism is a hedonistic movement'; OMA's pavilion is about these "hidden" dimensions of modern architecture'.²⁷⁸

At a meeting of the Building Committee in March 1988, Linthorst showed himself ready to consider an expansion of the programme, and in his brief Reedijk proposes antiques markets and art auctions as possible uses, perhaps in an attempt to correspond to Koolhaas' ideas. Nonetheless, when Koolhaas mentions the Kunsthal in an interview six years after the opening of the building, there is a note of disappointment in his comment: 'So is, for instance, the current use of the Kunsthal really a very limited version of what was originally intended. The Kunsthal was actually planned as a multifunctional building in which a whole series of different events ought to be organized.'²⁷⁹ The statement indicates the customary limits of the architect's influence on the programme and use of his projects. It shows the limits to OMA's approach, and its dependence on programmatic invention. In his writings and statements, Koolhaas somewhat obscures these limits by his use of the term 'programme'. Neither does he distinguish between the definition of the programme and its spatial organization, nor between programme – that is, the functions specified by the planner – and the way the building is eventually used. The respective roles of planner, client and user are thus blurred, implicitly expanding the potentials of the latter two to the competences of the architect. Portraits like those by Sanford Kwinter, that depict Koolhaas as literally programming 'like a dramaturge or film director', duly echo the tacit claim.²⁸⁰

Conceptually, the blending of the possibilities of planner, client and user into all-encompassing scenarios is anticipated in *Delirious New York*, namely in the chapter on the Downtown Athletic Club.

²⁷⁷ Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 10.

²⁷⁸ OMA, 'La Casa Palestra', *AA Files* 13 (1986), 8.

²⁷⁹ Anna Klingmann, 'Architektur als kollektiver Erlebnisraum', *Tain* 5 (Sep/Oct 1998), 52 (author trans.).

²⁸⁰ Sanford Kwinter, 'The Reinvention of Geometry', *Assemblage* 18 (1992), 85. Similarly, Fritz Neumeier mentions OMA's habit of 'cross-programming', that is, to conceive bizarre juxtapositions of diverse functions. Fritz Neumeier, 'OMA's Berlin: The Polemic Island in the City', *Assemblage* 11 (1990), 36-53.

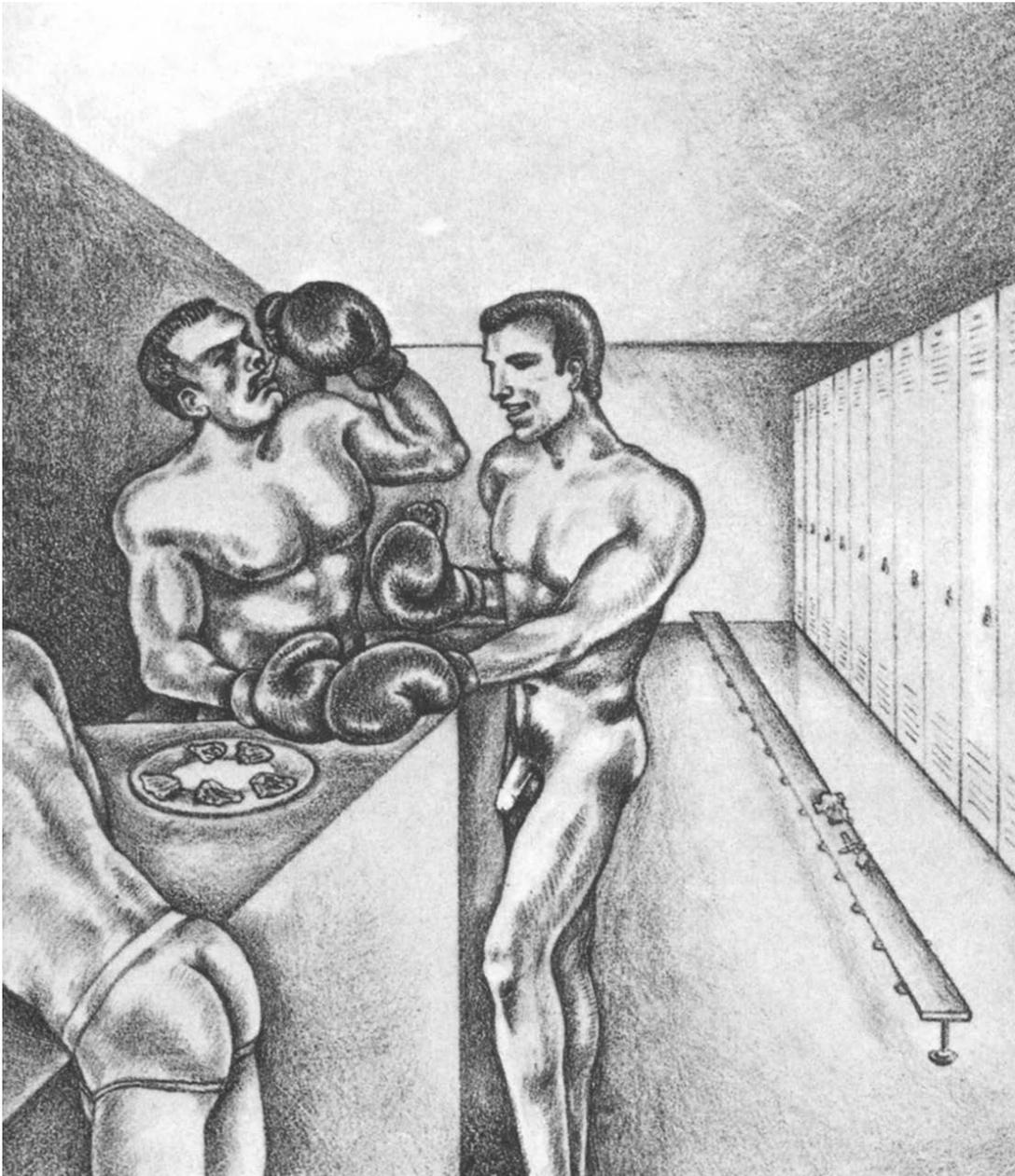


Figure 2. Madelon Vriesendorp.
Illustration included in *Delirious New York* of the Oyster Bar of the Downtown Athletic Club.

Koolhaas shows the metropolitan density and diversity of activities advertised in his book as generated by the programme of the building. The intriguing range and combination of uses is inscribed in the section and the floorplan – that is, tools at the disposition of the architect. In the plan of the 9th floor, there truly *is* an ‘oyster bar’ serving a room with ‘lockers’, door to door with ‘boxing/wrestling’ and ‘showers’.²⁸¹ Koolhaas does not mention, though, who actually conceived this arrangement. It is by no means unlikely that the oyster bar next to the lockers room – along with the remainder of the programme – corresponded to a wish of the client. In the subsequent chapter on Hood and the Rockefeller Center, Koolhaas pictures the planning process as a joint venture of client, developer, architect, with no distinct limits of their respective competences, that is, with the potential influence of the architect on everything. In the case of the Kunsthal and the Museum Park the conditions to some extent approximated to this ideal. Nonetheless, there were obvious limits for the architect’s programmatic imagination to materialize, hinging partly on the client’s willingness or ability to implement it, partly on the user’s acceptance of the Kunsthal’s programmatic suggestions. In *Delirious New York*, the plan figures as evidence for the way the Athletic Club was being used, underscored by Madelon Vriesendorp’s drawing of the nude gloved oyster eating boxers.²⁸² [Figure 2] If it is true what George Baird says, that the drawing is of Koolhaas and himself, the choice of the two real protagonists might have even been a way to underline the picture’s ‘documentary’ character.²⁸³ But when planned by the architect, it was nothing but an assumption that the men in the lockers room would frequent the bar at all. The book, of course, is speculative in character and formulates a vision in the first place, in spite of its guise of an historical account; to verify the claims is not its concern.

²⁸¹ Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 154.

²⁸² What applies to all of New York’s attractions advertised in the book holds also true for the oyster bar: Koolhaas does not mention how it was used, if it ever has been in use. The book focuses the promise of Manhattan’s architecture, virtually eclipsing the question of its fulfilment. On this issue, see also Martino Stierli who calls the drawing a ‘forgery’ and relates it to Koolhaas’ appropriation of Dali’s Paranoid Critical Method as means to establish “‘false” facts’ side by side with “‘real” facts”; Stierli, *Montage and the Metropolis*, 261-262.

²⁸³ George Baird, Introduction to ‘Les extrêmes qui se touchent’, in: *Writings on Architecture and the City* (London: Artifice, 2015), 162.

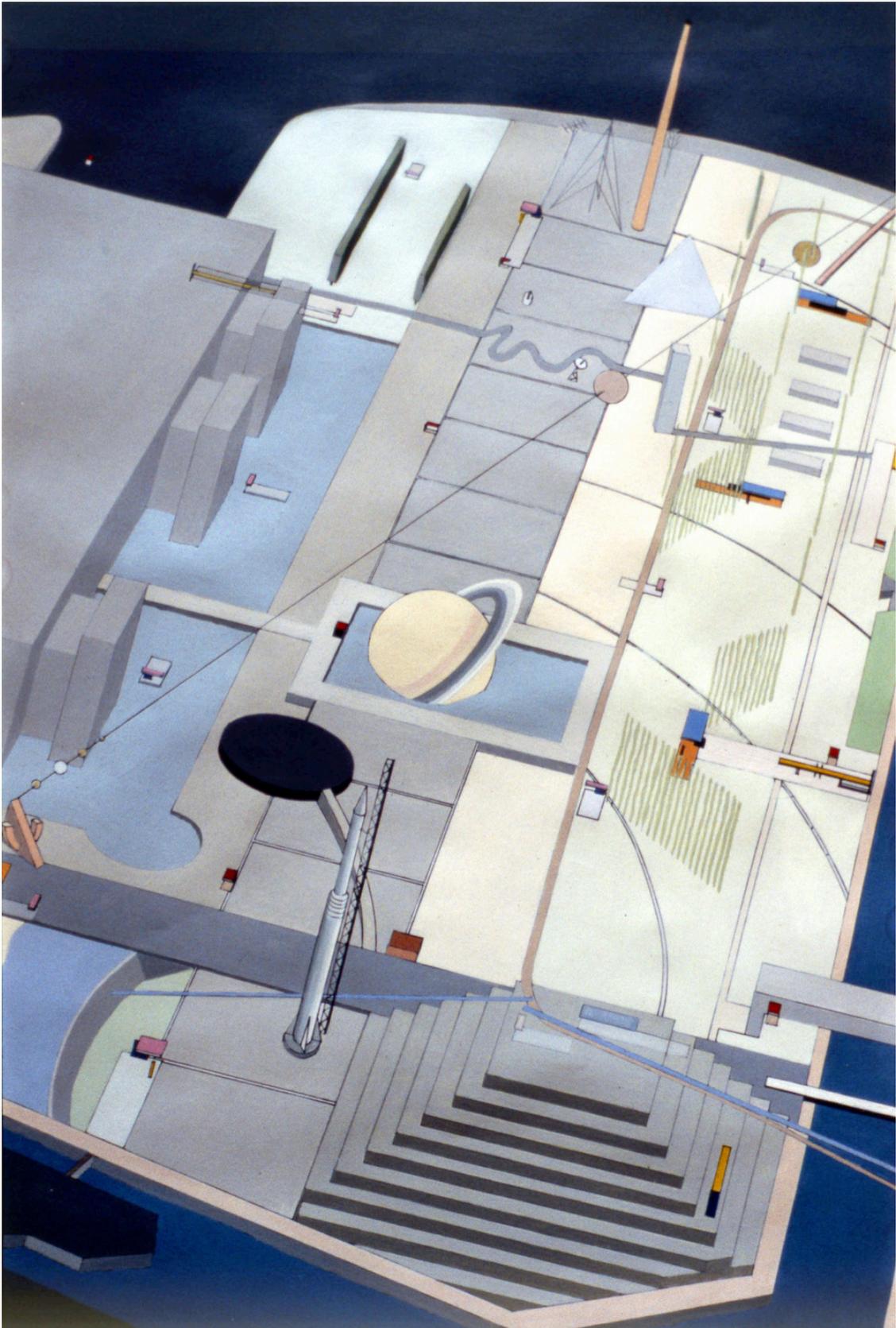


Figure 3. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, Parc de la Villette, Paris, 1982-83. Rendering.

Programme vs. form

In the 1980s, Koolhaas began to stress the significance of programme for the work of OMA. The ambition is voiced for the first time explicitly in the short text ‘Our “New Sobriety”’ from 1980, in which Koolhaas and Zenghelis place their approach in the succession of the ‘programmatic imagination’ of architects like Ivan Leonidov and Raymond Hood.²⁸⁴ In an interview from 1985, Koolhaas recalls his project of the Floating Pool (1977) as the epitome of what he wanted to achieve in architecture: ‘a project that was pure programme and hardly form at all.’²⁸⁵ Other statements and essays of the second half of the decade show that Koolhaas did not refer to an idea which entirely belonged to the past. In the essay ‘Elegy for the Vacant Lot’, he explains that OMA’s competition entry for the La Villette park (1982-83) suggested ‘density without architecture’, while claiming that the programme of the project ‘could not be expressed in form’.²⁸⁶ [Figures 3-5] When Mil De Kooning – sceptical about this issue despite his general esteem of OMA’s work – asked bluntly in an interview from 1985: ‘To what extent is that obsessive attention to programmes not really an act?’, Koolhaas insisted, claiming ‘that architecture enables activities more through its organization than through its physical appearance.’²⁸⁷

Koolhaas adds another argument to his answer: ‘It’s precisely that total disconnect between programme and form which is so interesting. That’s what you have in La Villette too: it could easily also be a

²⁸⁴ In the passage Koolhaas refers also to: Melnikov, Mies (the early work) and Wright (Broadacre City). OMA, ‘Our “New Sobriety”’, in: Paolo Portoghesi (ed.), *The Presence of the Past. La Biennale di Venezia 1980, architectural section* (London: Academy Editions, 1980), 214.

²⁸⁵ Goulet, ‘La deuxième chance’, 4.

²⁸⁶ Koolhaas, ‘Elegy for the Vacant Lot’, 937. Lootsma, in 1985, acknowledges the claim: ‘It [La Villette] would put the Office of Metropolitan Architecture back on its original course, so that physical aspect of the construction or the ‘style’ would always be subsidiary to the programme, the events, the activities and the scenarios.’ Bart Lootsma, ‘The Strategies of OMA’, *Forum* 3 (1985), 124. The notion is echoed in his review of the Villa Dall’Ava: ‘Architecture? What Architecture? Architecture, what architecture? The initial impression is that no attempt has been made whatsoever to engage in architecture here, at least not in a traditional sense.’ Lootsma infers: ‘It is a setting, one in which the decors are not predetermined, but rather materialize through the actors’ interventions.’ Lootsma, ‘Manifest van OMA: Villa dall’Ava in Parijs’, *De Architect* 3 (1992), 30, 32. Quoted after: Van Gerrewey, *A Critical Reader*, 265, 268. Similarly, Toyo Ito reflects on Koolhaas’ method to ‘overcome’ form: ‘It’s as if he’s built up a stock of rules by which to create. [...] Not forms, but rules.’ Toyo Ito, ‘Not Forms, but Rules: Fin de siècle. OMA at IFA in Paris’, *Telescope: The Printed City* 5 (1990), 84.

²⁸⁷ Mil De Kooning, ‘The economics of Imagination’, in: Van Gerrewey, *A Critical Reader*, 114. First published under the same title in 1985.

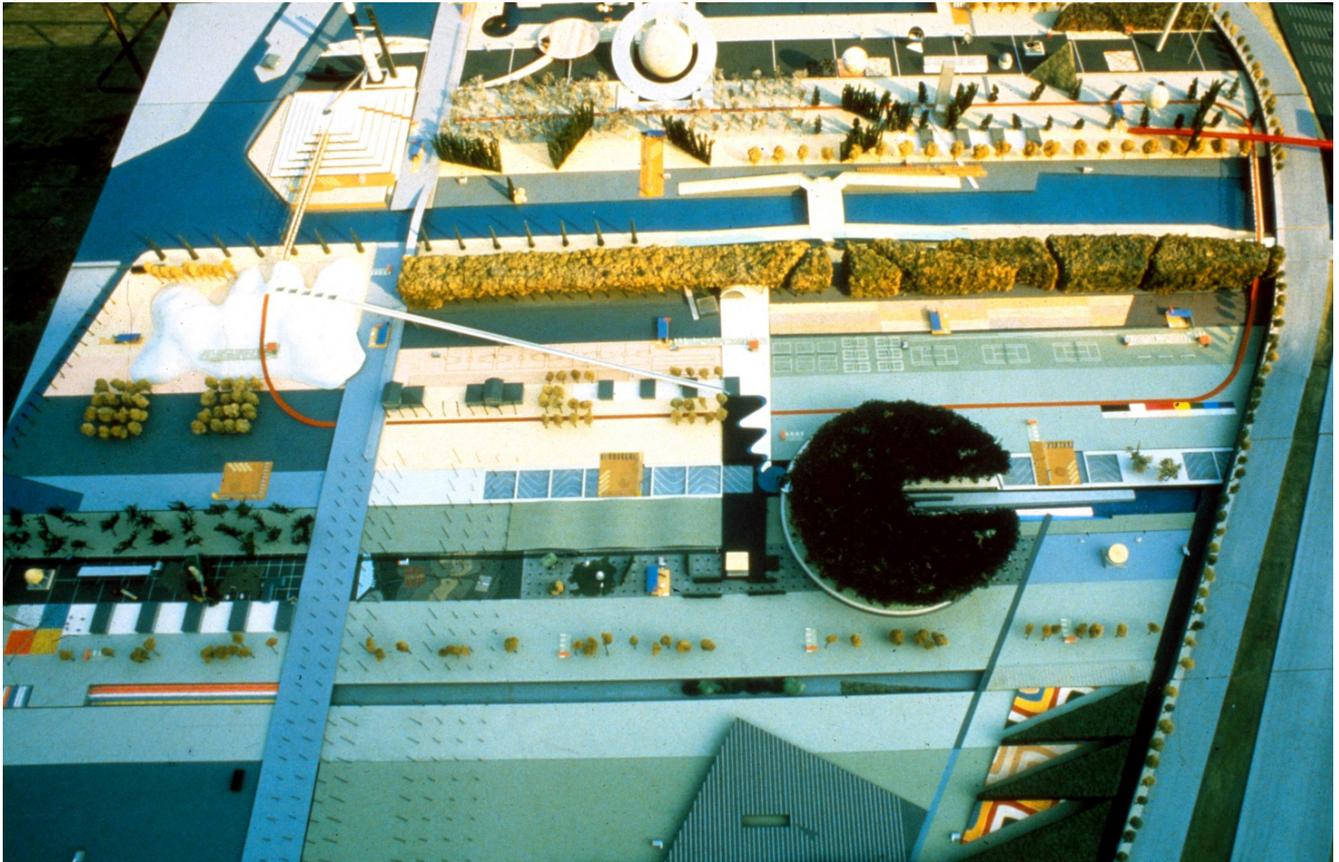


Figure 4. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, Parc de la Villette, Paris, 1982-83. Model.

concentration camp.²⁸⁸ Koolhaas obviously has in mind the principle of ‘programmatic instability’, first articulated in *Delirious New York* and subsequently seized on in the project for the La Villette park. While the metropolitan context of Manhattan – according to *Delirious New York* – entails a constant and unpredictable change of uses within large buildings like skyscrapers,²⁸⁹ the park in Paris is to induce an abiding chain reaction of programmatic mutations by means of the spatial constellation of its different functions.²⁹⁰ The consequence, Koolhaas reasons – or, as in the latter case, the objective – is the destabilization of the programme itself.²⁹¹ The relation of this desired instability to OMA’s insistence on the significance of the programme for architecture may appear contradictory. Why care for the programme at all if it is conceived to be ephemeral, and losing control over the programme is aimed at from the outset? If taken at his word, the answer is Koolhaas’ explanation given at the occasion of La Villette: to set in motion the process of destabilization, programmatic instability being understood as a quality and idiosyncrasy of the metropolis.²⁹²

The professed ‘total disconnect between programme and form’, however, is deceptive. More subtly the same disconnect is also implied in the combination of ‘architectural specificity with programmatic indeterminacy’, a formula often quoted and expanded to OMA’s architectural approach as a whole.²⁹³ But regardless of the later use of a building, the programme – that is the expected use and the spaces

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ In *Delirious New York* and in the essay ‘Elegy for the Vacant Lot’ from 1985, Koolhaas discerns constant change and instability as key characteristics of the metropolis. In *Delirious New York* Koolhaas describes the skyscraper as particularly appropriate for their adoption, due to the relative autonomy of the different floors, only connected by elevators (‘Vertical Schism’), and the disconnection of interior and façade (‘Lobotomy’). See: Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 85 (‘Theorem’), 100 (‘Lobotomy’), 105-106 (‘Schism’). In his essay ‘Bigness’ from 1994, Koolhaas would stress the size of the building itself as the source of instability. Rem Koolhaas, ‘Bigness’, in: Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 495-516.

²⁹⁰ OMA, ‘Parc de la Villette. Paris 1982-1983’, in: Lucan, *OMA - Rem Koolhaas*, 86.

²⁹¹ Koolhaas himself both repeats and varies the formula of this approach. In the explanatory text of the competition he uses the expression ‘programmatic indeterminacy’. Ibid. In the essay ‘Elegy for the Vacant Lot’ from 1985 Koolhaas resorts to the term ‘instability’ first employed in *Delirious New York*. Rephrasing the concept of the competition he writes: ‘a programme that insisted on its own instability’. Koolhaas, ‘Elegy for the Vacant Lot’, 937. Similarly, in an interview with Hajime Yatsuka he explains: ‘So what I tried to do in either case was to devise formulas that combine *architectural specificity* with a programmatic instability’. Hajime Yatsuka, ‘I combine architectural specificity with programmatic instability’, *Telescope: The Printed City* 4 (1989), 11.

²⁹² Koolhaas, as late as 2018, is perfectly consistent with this concept when he remarks: ‘mais je pense également que tous nos bâtiments ont une curieuse disposition à devenir immédiatement des objets d’appropriation par les citoyens.’ Guillaume Houzé, François Quintin, ‘Composer les mesures de son espace’, in: Idem, *Neuf Plâtre* (Paris: Lafayette Anticipations, Fondation d’entreprise Galeries Lafayette, 2018), 22.

²⁹³ OMA, ‘Parc de la Villette’, 86.

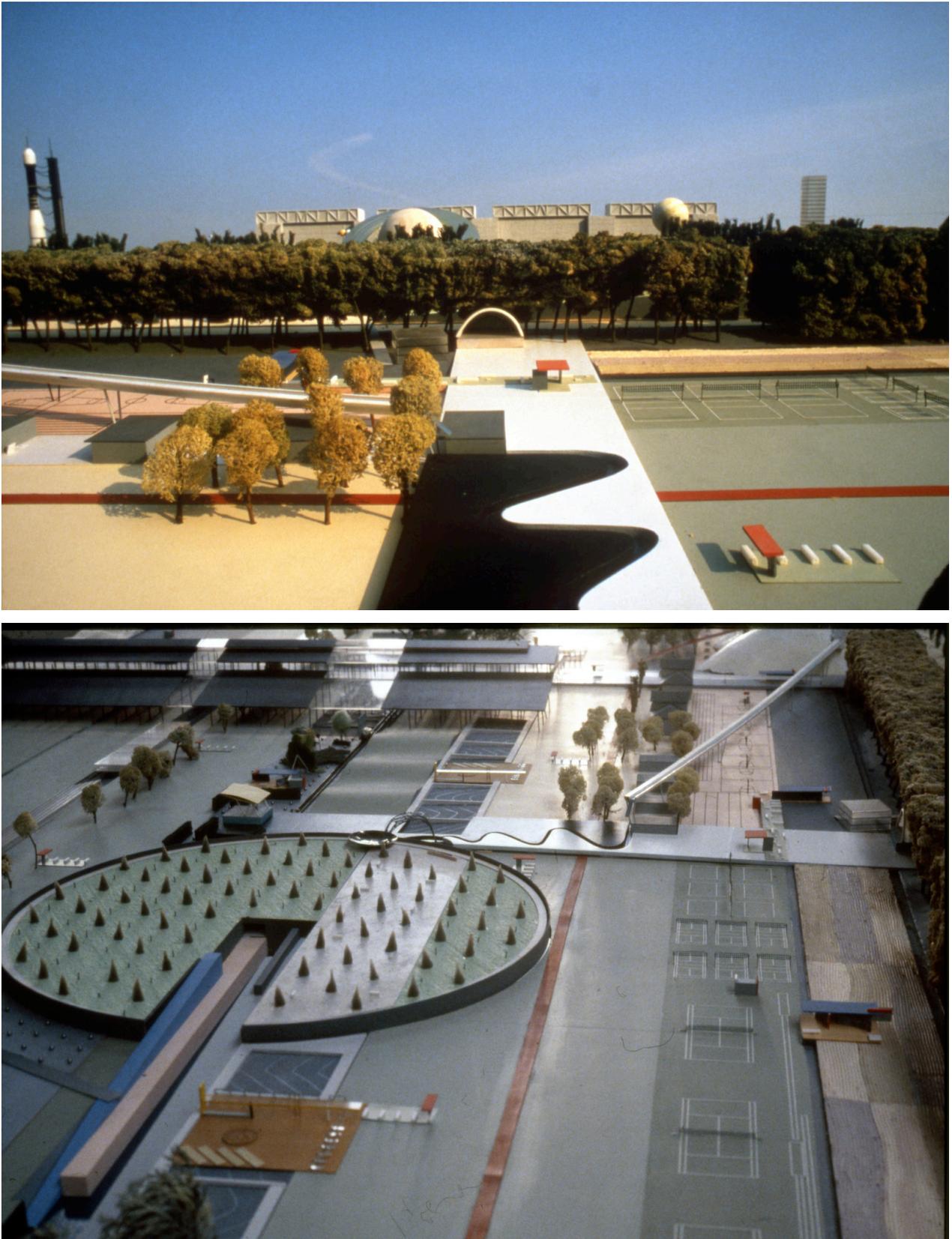


Figure 5. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, Parc de la Villette, Paris, 1982-83. Details of the model.

and facilities provided for it – seems essential as a point of departure and reference for the formal articulation of OMA’s projects. Certainly, the project for La Villette remained a concept. But that ‘its programme could not be expressed in form’, appears to be contested by the drawings, models and renderings OMA produced for the competition.²⁹⁴ Françoise Choay, who had been a member of the jury would recall that ‘among the 471 anonymous entries, the one – and only one – that immediately attracted the eye, puzzled and stimulated the mind by its strangeness and the questions it raised’ was the one of OMA.²⁹⁵

Later, in the same article, Choay claims that Koolhaas does not propose a new image, but a method so as to ‘break off with the totalitarianism of form’.²⁹⁶ But as her above recollection shows, OMA’s drawings and models – rather than being mere organizational diagrams or a method – stood out in their capacity to convey captivating images and atmospheres: the white drawing on black ground with coloured ‘icons’ as much as the renderings by Alex Wall and the photographs by Hans Werlemann. The force of these images, however, is entirely based on a highly articulate spectacle of form, which, of course, was meant to conjure up the spectacle of activities that ought to unfold in the park. It is by no means unlikely that the strong impact of the scheme on peers, critics and historians was, next to the novelty of the concept itself, largely owed to its *visual* impact, suggesting – even by OMA’s own standards – a rarely matched vision of metropolitan vitality. Unlike Mies’ neutral space, which ought to suit unforeseen future uses by means of its generic or ‘neutral’ quality, the ‘architectural specificity’ of the La Villette project – the detail of both the plan and the model – depends on the programme it depicts. It is in this sense that the respective programmes also proved formative for the designs of the Kunsthal and the Museum Park.

²⁹⁴ Koolhaas, ‘Elegy for the Vacant Lot’, 937.

²⁹⁵ Françoise Choay, ‘Critique’, *Princeton Journal: Landscape* vol.2 (1985), 211.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 213.

1.6

Museums, not arts centres

A study commissioned by the municipality: March 1988

Koolhaas' comments on recent museum designs and the brief of the Kunsthal addressed a series of issues that recurred in the discussion about the museum in the 1980s. Koolhaas' rather cautious announcement of a 'flexible element' at the Building Committee's meeting in March would be followed by an emphatically flexible scheme. By then, the flexible museum, providing 'neutral' exhibition spaces with only temporary partitions, was widely considered as a 'dated' concept from the 1950s and 1960s, essentially 'disproved' by unsatisfactory outcomes. At the New York symposium 'Art Against the Wall: Building the New Museum' in December 1985, Philip Johnson states: 'That modern architecture thing – with movable partitions – is gone. We're over that, over, over. We're back to where Schinkel put us. Let's stay there.'²⁹⁷ In the course of the discussion, *Time* art critic Robert Hughes comments on the Centre Pompidou: 'This is *the* archetype and supreme example of everything a museum should not be, beginning with the curious idea of the transparent and modular museum that can adapt to various kinds of functions – a chameleon-like space that can embrace whatever happens to settle in it.'²⁹⁸ Others argued that the relative absence of architecture in flexible spaces forced museum directors and exhibition curators into the role of interior designers.²⁹⁹ Helen Searing, who gave a talk at the New York symposium, confesses that for her 'the most successful museum designs are those that in some way ... reach back to the architectural tradition of the public museum as it evolved as a building type in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.'³⁰⁰ [Figure 1]

Reserve with regard to the 'flexible museum' was not limited to the US. In 1986 Josep Montaner and Jordi Oliveras come to the conclusion that Mies' idea of a continuous flexible space 'does not work to

²⁹⁷ Suzanne Stephens (ed.), *Building the New Museum* (New York: The Architectural League, 1986), 28.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁹⁹ Helen Searing, 'The Development of a Museum Typology', in: Stephens, *Building the New Museum*, 14. See also: Van de Ven, 'Het museumgebouw', 48.

³⁰⁰ Searing, 'The Development of a Museum Typology', 14.



Figure 1. Symposium 'Art Against the Wall', New York, December 1985.
Left to right: Helen Searing, Philip Johnson, Alex Katz, Robert Hughes.

house a traditional art museum, which needs walls, and to some extent enclosures with defined spaces, to create the repose and containment necessary to concentrate on the works of art.³⁰¹ And in regard to the present day, they observe that ‘recent examples of museum buildings use more or less traditional rooms’.³⁰² Similarly, in a publication that followed the symposium on museum architecture in Eindhoven in 1986, Cornelis van de Ven asserts that ‘the revival of the classic museum type in Western Europe has become a fact.’³⁰³ Van de Ven mentions Stirling’s Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart, and the winning competition entry for the extension of the National Gallery in London (1985-91) by Venturi, Rauch & Scott Brown. There were, of course, other well-known examples: the Neue Pinakothek in Munich (1974-81) by Freiherr von Branca, the Clore Gallery in London (1982-87) by Stirling, the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin (1986-97) by Hilmer/Sattler, Gae Aulenti’s Musée d’Orsay (1980-86) and, no less important, Aulenti’s conversion of the Centre Pompidou’s art centre into a museum with a permanent exhibition (1985), which has been deemed as evidence for the complete failure of flexible space.³⁰⁴ According to Van de Ven, this strand in museum architecture can count on the tacit consent of contemporary art: ‘Museum art, once more, wants to be precious and fully trusts in the autonomy of the object itself that prefers to be located against the calm background of the classical exhibition hall.’³⁰⁵

There were projects, of course, that did not converge with this general tendency. Hollein’s Abteiberg Museum, for example, combines ‘classical’ cellular rooms with a large irregular space in which all partitions are movable. Similarly, the galleries of Meier’s museums in Frankfurt and Atlanta are conceptually based on the *plan libre*; partitions are detached both from the ceiling and the *pilotis* so as to allow for the continuity of the overall space. Most partitions of the top-lit galleries of Piano’s Menil Collection in Houston (1981-87), the Sammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in Düsseldorf (1975-86), and the Wallraff Richartz Museum in Cologne (1981-86) are permanent, whereas the seriality of the skylights

³⁰¹ Josep Maria Montaner, Jordi Oliveras, *The Museums of the Last Generation* (London: Academy Editions/New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1986), 14-15.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 17.

³⁰³ Van de Ven, ‘Het museumgebouw’, 39.

³⁰⁴ See, for instance: Colin Amery, Robert Hughes, Philip Johnson, Alex Katz, Helen Searing, Suzanne Stephens, ‘Discussion’, in: Stephens, *Building the New Museum*, 31.

³⁰⁵ Van de Ven, ‘Het museumgebouw’, 39.

recalls the industrial production hall with no or spatially secondary interior walls. Other examples, such as Moneo's Museo de Arte Romano in Mérida, Gehry's Aerospace Museum (1981-84) in Los Angeles, or Hollein's Frankfurt Museum (1983-91) elude the classification of either 'flexible' or 'classical' space.

The nearest thing we have to the temple

Certainly, there was a return to monumentality – the other trend in museum design, observed by Koolhaas during the March meeting of the Building Committee. At the New York symposium, after identifying the museum as *the* new public monument, Philip Johnson explained: 'Also, in terms of what the building looks like, you want what used to be called in the old days "monumentality". You can't use the word anymore, but the desire for that quality is still there.'³⁰⁶ Nine years before, Nikolaus Pevsner had declared the monumentality of the museum obsolete. In his 'History of Building Types' from 1976, Pevsner claimed that since World War II 'no new principles [in museum architecture] have turned up, except that the idea of the museum as a monument in its own right has been replaced by the ideal of the museum as a perfect place to show, enjoy and study works of art.' In 1989, Van de Ven noted the successful abolition of monumental paraphernalia: 'thresholds are levelled, the stairs and temple fronts have disappeared'³⁰⁷ – a trend which he explains with the opening of the museum to a wider public, the quest for large attendance figures, and the impact of the Centre Pompidou in particular.

And yet, since the second half of the 1970s, many architectural elements and qualities, commonly associated with monumentality, found their way back to newly built museums. Montaner and Oliveras observe:

[...] the monumental emphasis is achieved essentially in two ways. On the one hand, clear typological references are used. And on the other, the public and monumental character of the

³⁰⁶ Amery, Hughes, Johnson, Katz, Searing, Stephens, 'Discussion', 28.

³⁰⁷ Van de Ven, 'Het museumgebouw', 22.

museum is expressed by resuscitating the idea of monumental spaces from historic examples like the portico or the circular interior of Schinkel's Altes Museum in Berlin.³⁰⁸

Montaner and Oliveras mention the long central stair in Stirling's Sackler Museum; the circular courts in his museum in Stuttgart, and in Meier's museum in Atlanta; the 'roman nave' in Mérida. Other examples from these years are: the majestic stairs of Venturi's projects in London and Seattle; the stairs and terraces in the Musée d'Orsay; the central halls in Pei's Louvre project; the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin; Hollein's museum and the Schirnhalles in Frankfurt; the Wallraff-Richartz Museum in Cologne (1981-86).

But there is far more that belongs to the tradition of the monumental museum: the rediscovery of the enfilade, for instance, in Stirling's museums in Stuttgart and Harvard; in Venturi's museums in London and Seattle; in the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin. Further, there is the rediscovery of the skylight, not as an industrial device of mere technical qualities, but referenced to the Beaux Art tradition and the sacral space – again in Stirling's museums and, more explicit, in those by Venturi, in the Portland Museum by Henry Nichols Cobb (1978-83) or in Arata Isozaki's Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles (1982-87). Also the frequent use of stone cladding, both of interiors and facades, mostly implies – besides a nod to the museum of the 18th and 19th century – overtones of monumentality. Examples are, once more, the museums by Stirling and Venturi, but also the Musée d'Orsay, Pei's Louvre, in Frankfurt, Hollein's and Ungers' museums and the Schirnhalles, Freiherr von Branca's Neue Pinakothek in Munich, and Isozaki's museum in Los Angeles. And it is not the material alone that evokes the premodern museum: there are plinths, pedestals, cornices, porticos, columns, and a wide spread preference for the symmetrical composition.

It goes without saying that the attributes of monumentality mentioned here, during the 1970s and 1980s, do not appear in the context of museum architecture alone. Classicist leanings and stone clad facades,

³⁰⁸ Montaner, Oliveras, *The Museums of the Last Generation*, 24.

Chapter 1.6

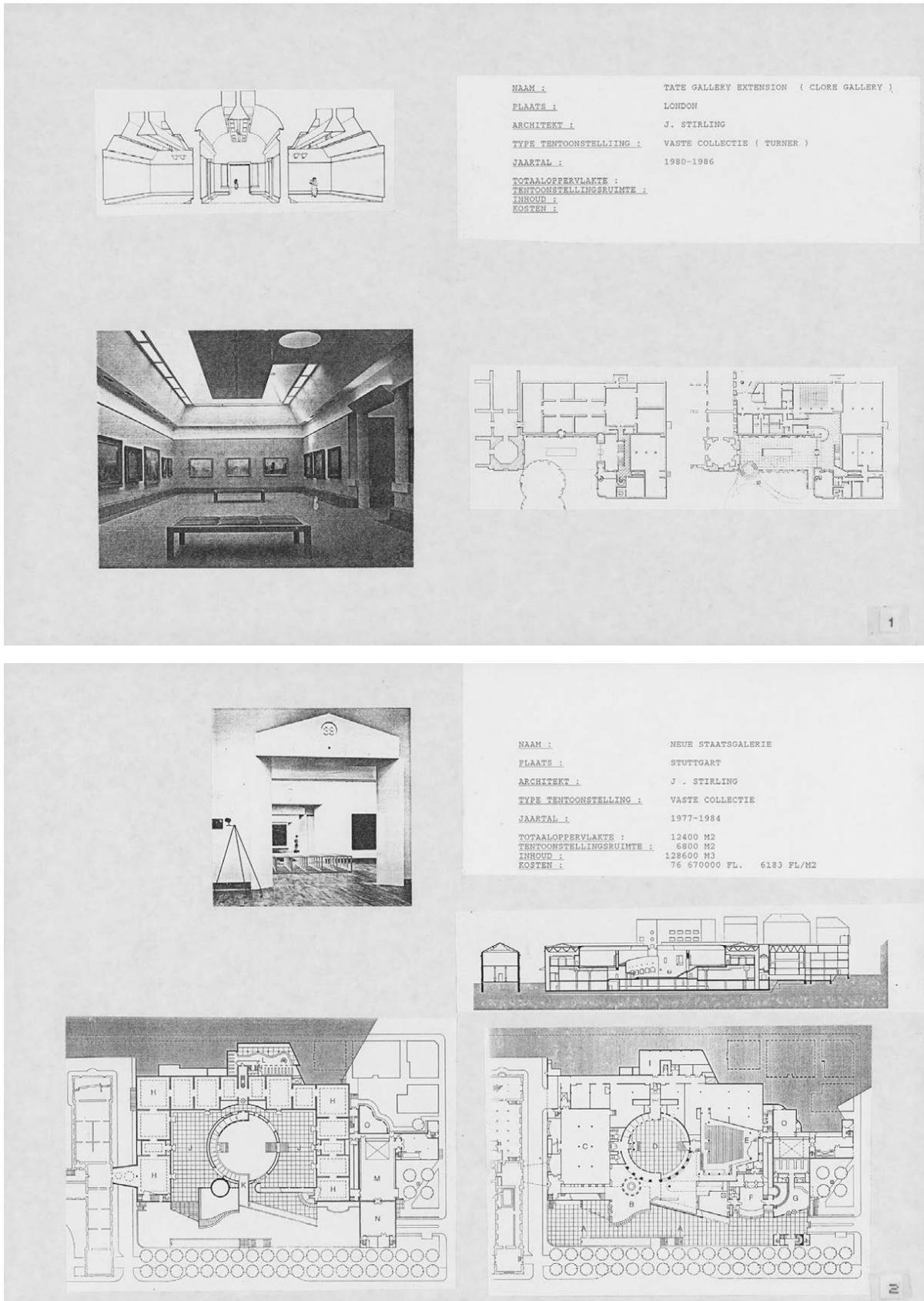


Figure 2. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, 'Kunsthof Hoboken. Documentation museums', 27 April 1988.

for instance, were and still are generally associated with postmodern architecture in general, not merely postmodern museums. On the other hand, monumental gestures of a museum may be ironically undermined.³⁰⁹ The most obvious example is Stirling's Staatsgalerie. The pink, far-too-big handrails inevitably contest the solemn impact the stone cladding seems to aspire for; the strident green, the classicist grey and white of the exhibition halls; the room numbers with Arabic numerals and the pathos of the doorways. But by far not all architects were so careful in 'mocking' the monumental claims of their museums. There is little irony for instance in the work of Pei, Aulenti, Ungers, and Kleihues. On a different note, the same traits that convey a monumental impact at times were used to relate to the built surroundings. Reyner Banham pointed out the 'contextualist' qualities of Stirling's museum in Stuttgart, explaining the stone cladding and some motifs of the façade as nods to the site and its architecture.³¹⁰ In Frankfurt the porticos of the museums by Ungers and Hollein obviously echo the red sandstone of local monuments such as the cathedral and the Paulskirche.

During the 1980s, the museum was repeatedly identified as the 'new church' or cathedral of western society. This holds especially true for the art museum – art having acquired the status of a substitute for religion in secular western society, as has often been observed. 'The church decayed, became profane', Van de Ven writes, 'The museum, in contrast, becomes sacral.'³¹¹ Similarly Philip Johnson observes: 'What makes it difficult is that museums are also public monuments; they have taken the place of churches and palaces.'³¹² The criticism pronounced in the past concerning the museum was not forgotten, though. Authors like Hubert Damisch, Van de Ven, and Geert Bekaert, are well aware of Adorno's scepticism and Valéry's rejection of the museum-mausoleum as a place which is deadly for the art it exhibits.³¹³ Bekaert – like Damisch – also highlights the role of Foucaultian ambiguity the

³⁰⁹ On irony in postmodern architecture, see: Emmanuel Petit, *Irony*. Petit discusses several ironic reversals of motifs from the repertoire of classical architecture, albeit not in the context of the museum. Examples are: Ungers' façade with a column shaped void at the Strada novissima (1980); Graves' Fargo-Moorhead Cultural Center Bridge (1978); Isozaki's Tsukuba Civic Center (1979-83). Petit, *Irony*, 12, 140-143.

³¹⁰ Reyner Banham, 'Celebration of the City', *Architectural Review* 1054 (December 1984), 33-36.

³¹¹ Van de Ven, 'Het museumgebouw', 19.

³¹² Amery, Hughes, Johnson, Katz, Searing, Stephens, 'Discussion', 28. See also: *Ibid.*, 34 (Hughes). Stephens, introduction to *Building the New Museum*, 9; Pierluigi Nicolini, 'New Museums', *Lotus international* 55 (1987), 5.

³¹³ Van de Ven, 'Het museumgebouw', 18-19.

Chapter 1.6

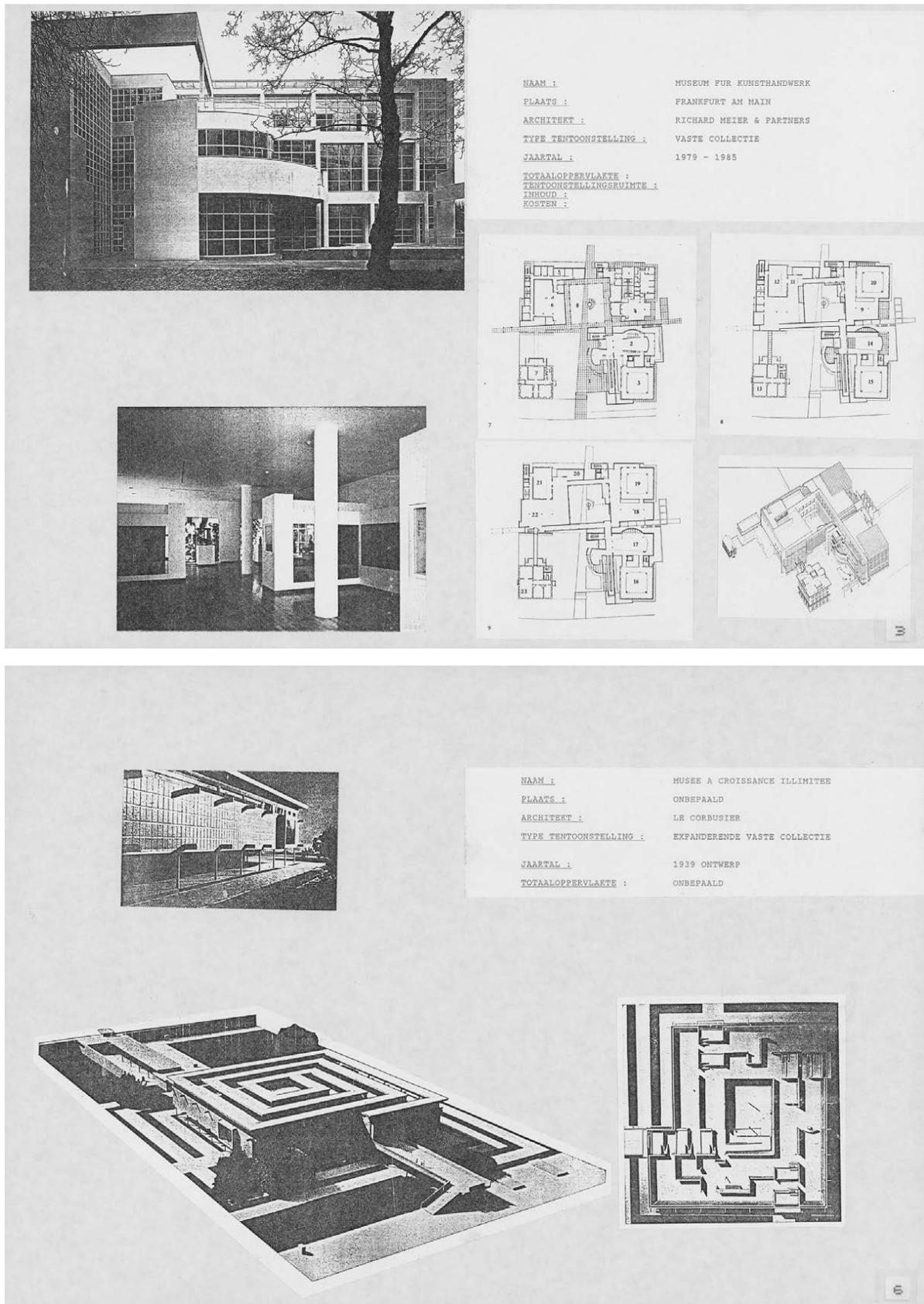


Figure 3. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, 'Kunsthal Hoboken. Documentation museums', 27 April 1988.

museum and its didactic mission plays in our society: ‘Like prisons, hospitals, schools, also the museum is an institution of regulation that assigns art its right place, teaches it its right place. Innocent it is not.’³¹⁴ Damisch wrote in 1982: ‘Certainly today we are especially aware of the ideological functions fulfilled by an institution which is merely one cog ... in the overall mechanism of the state.’³¹⁵

For good or ill, the eminent social, political and, after all, cultural significance of the museum had become a reality. Joseph Rykwert wrote in 1989: ‘It has become a place of cult. Museums are the nearest thing we have to the temple in our time. They are now quasi –, if not wholly, religious institutions.’³¹⁶ Not unlike Adorno in ‘Valéry Proust Museum’, Rykwert concludes his essay with a dash of pragmatism: ‘Whatever it has become, it will be with us for some time yet and we will have to reckon with it.’³¹⁷ Not few authors show concerns that the undisturbed immersion into art might soon become impossible due to the ever larger crowds of visitors and the propensity of recent museum architecture to entertain. Wolfgang Pehnt wrote in 1987, after recalling Heinrich Wackenroder’s ideal of solitary contemplation, as outlined in *Outpourings of an Art-Loving Monk* (1797):

The quiet confrontation of the individual with the work of art appears to be no longer a desirable end of art exhibiting, visitors are being kept in constant motion. Vistas open, terraces and lookouts allure. The walk through Meier’s museum buildings is a reversible-figures game with interiors and exteriors.³¹⁸

Few arts centres

Certainly, the Kunsthall was never meant to be a museum in the strict sense, not possessing a collection of its own. However, beyond this programmatic given and the goal to address a broad public, the

³¹⁴ Geert Bekaert, ‘Een gebouw waar de kunst haar intrek kan nemen. Overpeinzingen over museum en museumarchitectuur’, *Archis* 1 (1987), 14.

³¹⁵ Hubert Damisch, ‘The museum device. Notes on institutional changes’, *Lotus international* 35 (1982), 7.

³¹⁶ Joseph Rykwert, ‘The Cult of the Museum. From the Treasure House to the Temple’, in: *AV* 18 (1989), 83. Similarly Stephens in 1986: ‘Until recently it seemed that the museum had replaced the church as the institution central to our cultural and social life.’ Stephens, introduction to *Building the New Museum*, 9.

³¹⁷ Joseph Rykwert, ‘The Cult of the Museum’, 83.

³¹⁸ Wolfgang Pehnt, ‘Das Museum als Freizeitspass’, *Deutsche Bauzeitung* (January 1987), 10-11 (author trans.).

Chapter 1.6

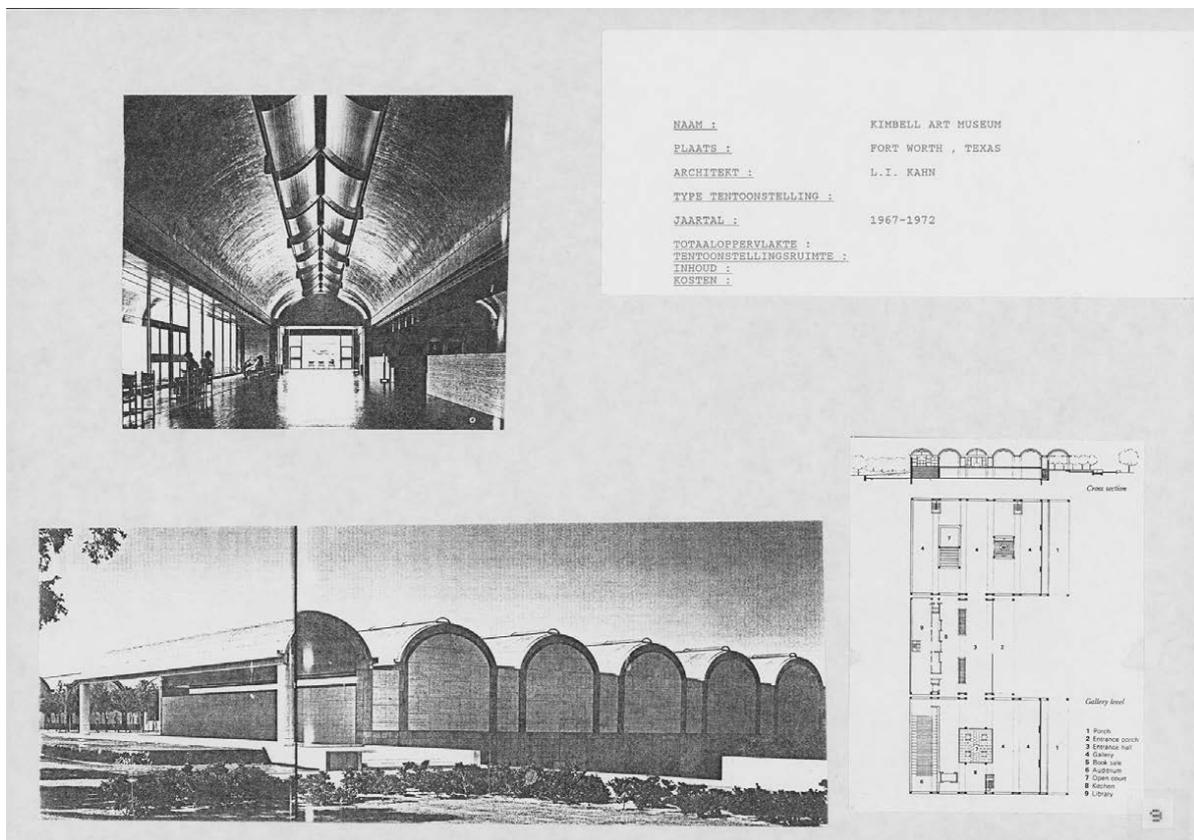
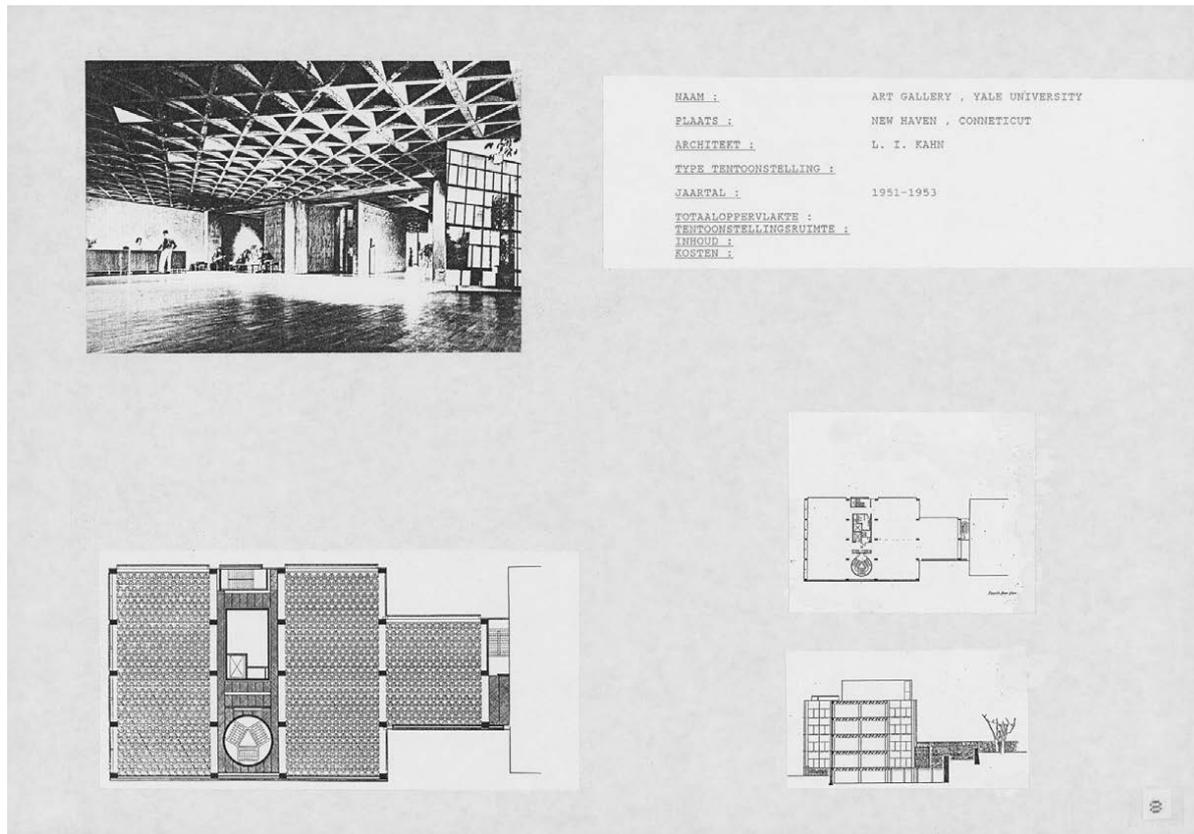


Figure 4. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, 'Kunsthal Hoboken. Documentation museums', 27 April 1988.

municipality's and Koolhaas' idea of the Kunsthal differ significantly. Van Reedijk, and Van Blommestein and Verstegen before him, envisaged the Kunsthal mainly as a venue for temporary exhibitions with the accent on fine arts and applied arts – a focus which apparently was contrary to Koolhaas' ideas. When Koolhaas, at the meeting of the Building Committee in March 1988, suggested 'more proletarian entertainment' and "Palais de Festival" activities' he seems to have had in mind neither a museum nor an arts centre, but a building in the tradition of Rotterdam's festivals, some of which had taken place on the very site in the 1950s and 1960s. In this sense, Koolhaas – not the municipality – proposed to conceive of a Kunsthal that would diverge substantially from the institution of the museum. Not only the municipal interest in addressing a broad public, but also the fact that the Kunsthal was not to house a collection of its own, may have appeared to him as an occasion and an opportunity. Since the late 1970s Koolhaas had been sensitive to the risks of enthroneing the past at the expense of the present. His polemics against rationalism, contextualism and an urbanism based on the paradigm of the historic centre, were all about advocating the 'other', modernist tradition.³¹⁹ But many projects from the 1980s, and the bent, hedonist version of Mies' Barcelona pavilion in particular, show Koolhaas' concern for the right of the present to emancipate from this tradition as well. Perhaps he saw the Kunsthal as a building that would be entirely committed to the present, unburdened by the task of collecting, conserving and exhibiting its share of a more or less remote past.

OMA's orientation on arts centres commissioned by the municipality indicates surprisingly little interest in its actual subject. [Figures 2-7] In charge of the Kunsthal, at the time, were next to Koolhaas himself, his associate Ron Steiner, German architect Gregor Mescherowsky and Xaveer de Geyter, who at the time seems to have chiefly been working on the Villa Dall'Ava.³²⁰ Mescherowsky, who had graduated from Berlin Technical University in 1987 and joined OMA in the same year, was the

³¹⁹ See, for instance: OMA, 'Our "New Sobriety"', 214, 216.

³²⁰ On the schedule of requirements, which OMA received on 10 March 1988, the names 'Ron/Xaveer/Gregor' are noted. 'Programma van eisen. Kunsthal Hoboken'. OMAR 1437. In the catalogue from the exhibition at deSingel in October 1988, Koolhaas, Steiner and Mescherowsky are listed as the team members of the Kunsthal project. Dominique Boudet, the client, recalled De Geyter being deeply involved in the project, during a talk with the author on 31 July 2016.

Chapter 1.6

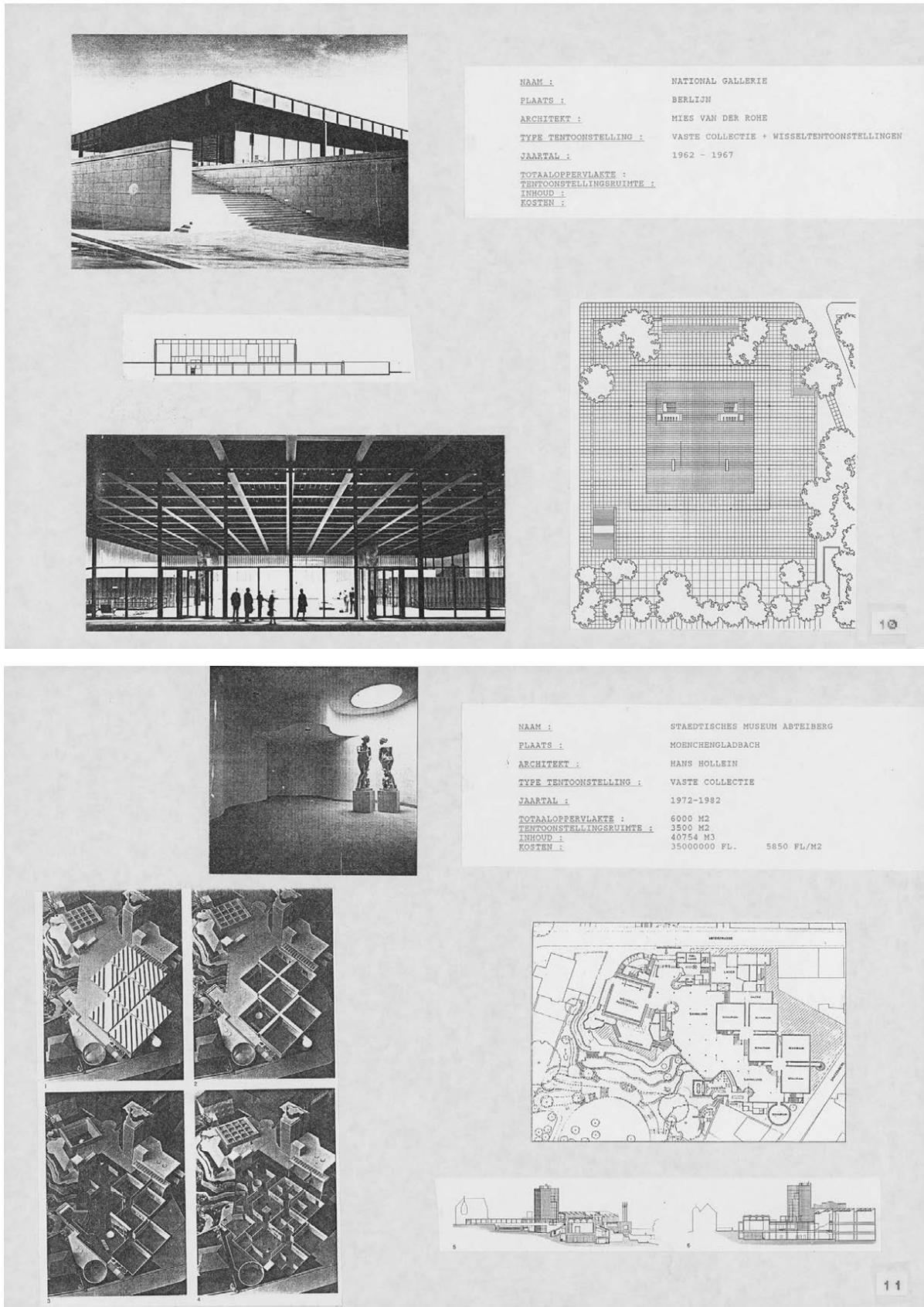


Figure 5. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, 'Kunsthal Hoboken. Documentation museums', 27 April 1988.

project manager of the first project of the Kunsthall (I) and the Museum Park.³²¹ The team collected dozens of photocopies taken from *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, *Progressive Architecture*, *Domus*, *Bauwelt*, Josep Montaner's and Jordi Oliveras's 1986 monograph *The Museums of the Last Generation*, and W. Boesiger's *Le Corbusier – Oeuvre complète*.³²² Seventeen buildings and a recent competition entry were selected. Each was documented with photographs, floorplans, cross sections, and various other drawings, next to a factsheet, assembled on an A3 page. The factsheet contained information, among other things, about costs, floor surface, whether there was a permanent collection, and whether the building was used, partly or fully, for temporary exhibitions.³²³

In their report from 1986, Van Blommestein and Versteegen listed eleven institutions, that might serve as examples in terms of the programme and the disposition of exhibition spaces. All of them were either arts centres or provided exhibitions halls for temporary exhibitions. The list runs as follows: Martin Gropius Bau, Berlin; Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels; Städtische Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf; Schirnhalle, Frankfurt; Joseph Haubrich Halle, Frankfurt; Kunsthalle, Cologne; Royal Academy of Arts, London; Palazzo dell'Arte ('Triennial Building'), Milan; Grand Palais, Paris; La Villette, Paris; Palazzo Grassi, Venice.³²⁴ In his report Reedijk added the Centre Pompidou, apparently referring to the space reserved for temporary exhibitions, and the Künstlerhaus in Vienna. Out of the eighteen examples documented by OMA, only two qualify as genuine arts centres: the Schirnhalle in Frankfurt (1982-85) also listed in the 1986 report; and the competition entry by Josef Paul Kleihues for the Kunsthalle Bonn (1988). Several other buildings do include areas for temporary exhibitions, but – as museums generally do – in addition to the premises reserved for a permanent collection. As it seems, the existing arts centres – built or used as such – were of no particular interest for Koolhaas and his team. About ten more

³²¹ Email to the author by Mescherowsky from 19 December 2018. Mescherowsky left OMA in 1989.

According to Mescherowsky, De Geyter was only marginally involved in the two projects.

³²² OMAR 3277.

³²³ OMA, 'Kunsthall Hoboken. Documentatie Musea', 27 April 1988. OMAR 3339.

³²⁴ Van Blommestein and Versteegen seem to refer to the Joseph-Haubrich Kunsthalle in Cologne, and perhaps, with 'Kunsthalle Cologne' to the DuMont Kunsthalle, a former factory hall, likewise in Cologne, purchased in 1985 and opened as an exhibition hall in 1988. Whether 'La Villette' refers to the former slaughterhouse Grande Halle, renovated and reopened as a cultural centre in 1985, or to Adrian Fainsilber's Science Centre (1980-86) the authors do not mention. Van Blommestein, Versteegen, 'Nationale Tentoonstellingshal'. OMAR 1488.

Chapter 1.6

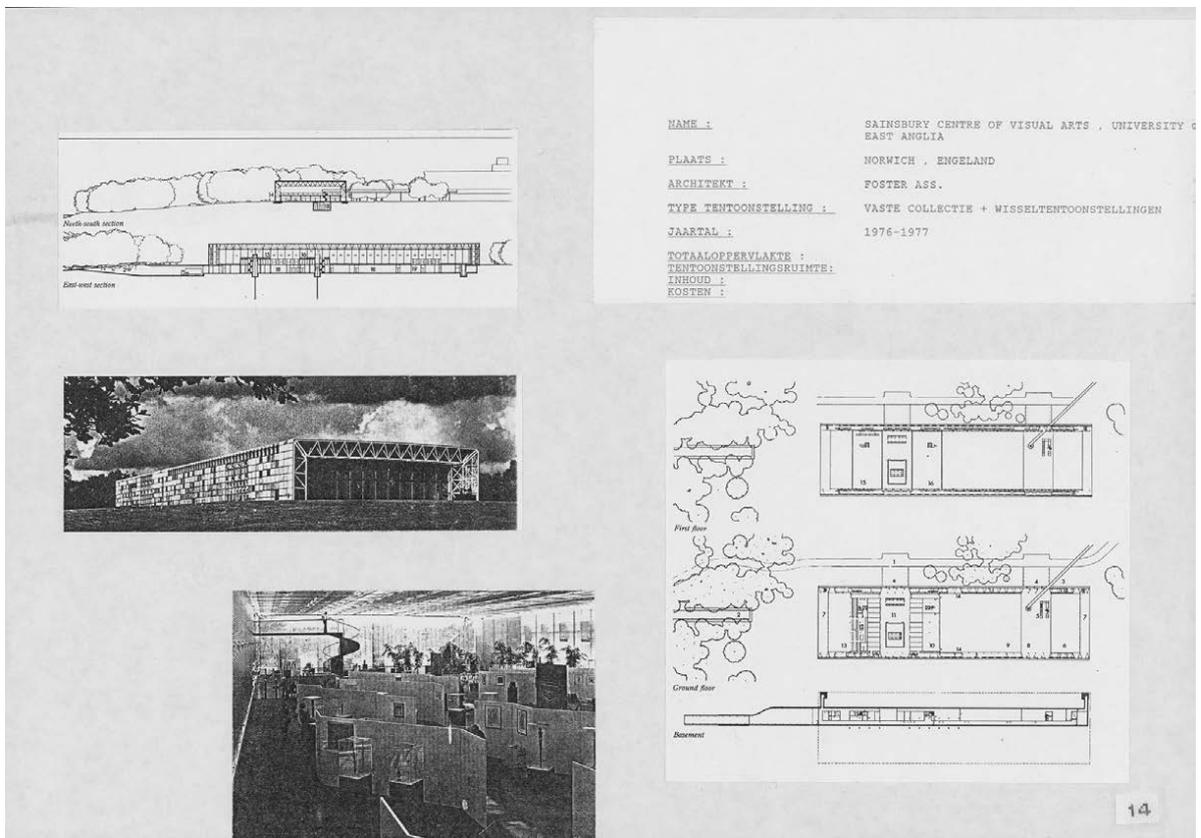
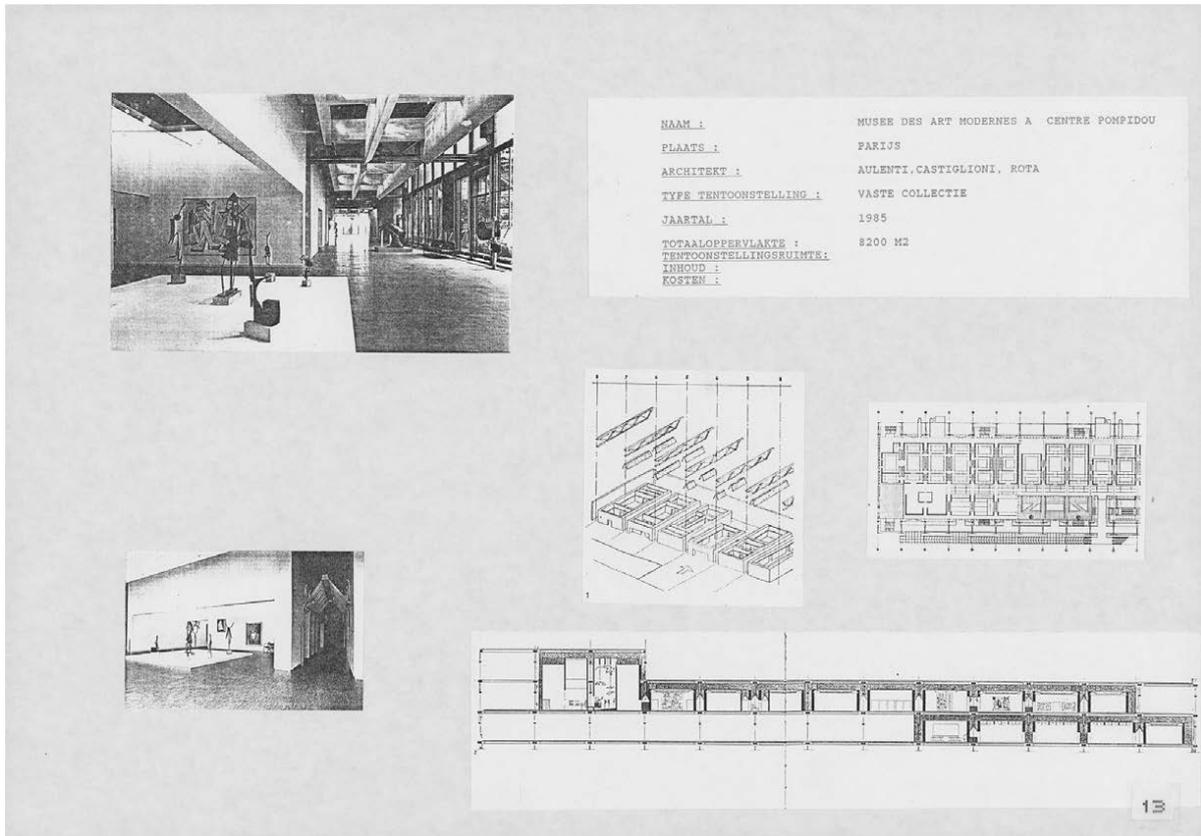


Figure 6. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, 'Kunsthal Hoboken. Documentation museums', 27 April 1988.

buildings had been considered for the documentation, but were eventually not included. None of them qualifies as an arts centre.³²⁵

Instead, most examples selected are world famous museum designs, almost all of them from the second half of 20th century: Mies van der Rohe's Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin (1962-68); Le Corbusier's Tokyo Museum (1957-59) and his scheme for the Museum of Unlimited Growth from 1939; Kahn's Art Yale Art Gallery (1951-53) and Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth (1967-72), the Centre Pompidou, both its original state by Piano and Rogers (1972-77) and the modification by Gae Aulenti (1980-86); Hollein's Museum Abteiberg (1977-82); Foster's Sainsbury Centre in Norwich (1976-77); Stirling's Staatsgalerie and his expansion of the Tate Gallery in London (1980-86); Meier's Museum for Applied Arts in Frankfurt (1979-85); Isozaki's Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles (1982-86); Piano's Menil Collection in Houston (1981-87). Two recent examples are exceptionally large, each built with a budget of more than one billion Francs: Adrien Fainsilber's Sience Centre in La Villette (1980-86) and Gae Aulenti's Musée d'Orsay.³²⁶ Since most buildings documented house a permanent collection, the programmes – providing large amounts of space for the storage, conservation and restauration of the artefacts – differ significantly from that of the Kunsthall, and the total surface and costs of most examples are at least twice as big.³²⁷ In terms of programme, size and budget, they hardly qualified as possible models for the Kunsthall. First and foremost, OMA's documentation was an orientation about the museum design of the past five decades, apt to illustrate the observations made by Koolhaas at the Building Committee's meeting in March. The examples cover a broad conceptual range between large flexible spaces and cellular rooms, monumental gestures and attempts to open the institution of the museum to a wider public. The lesson, however, was taught for the most part with icons of more or less recent architecture. To infer Koolhaas' plans for the Kunsthall from OMA's 1988

³²⁵ Gehry's Aero Space Museum (1982-84); the Kröller-Müller Museum by Wim Quist (1969-77); the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam; Mies' Museum for a Small City (1941-43); the Josef Albers Museum in Bottrop by Bernhard Küppers (1976), the pavilions of the Museum Insel Hombroich by Erwin Heerich (1987); the National Air Space Museum in Waashington by Hellmuth, Obata and Kassabaum (1971-75); Kahn's Yale Center for British Arts and Studies (1969-77). OMAR 3277.

³²⁶ OMAR 3277.

³²⁷ Idem.

Chapter 1.6

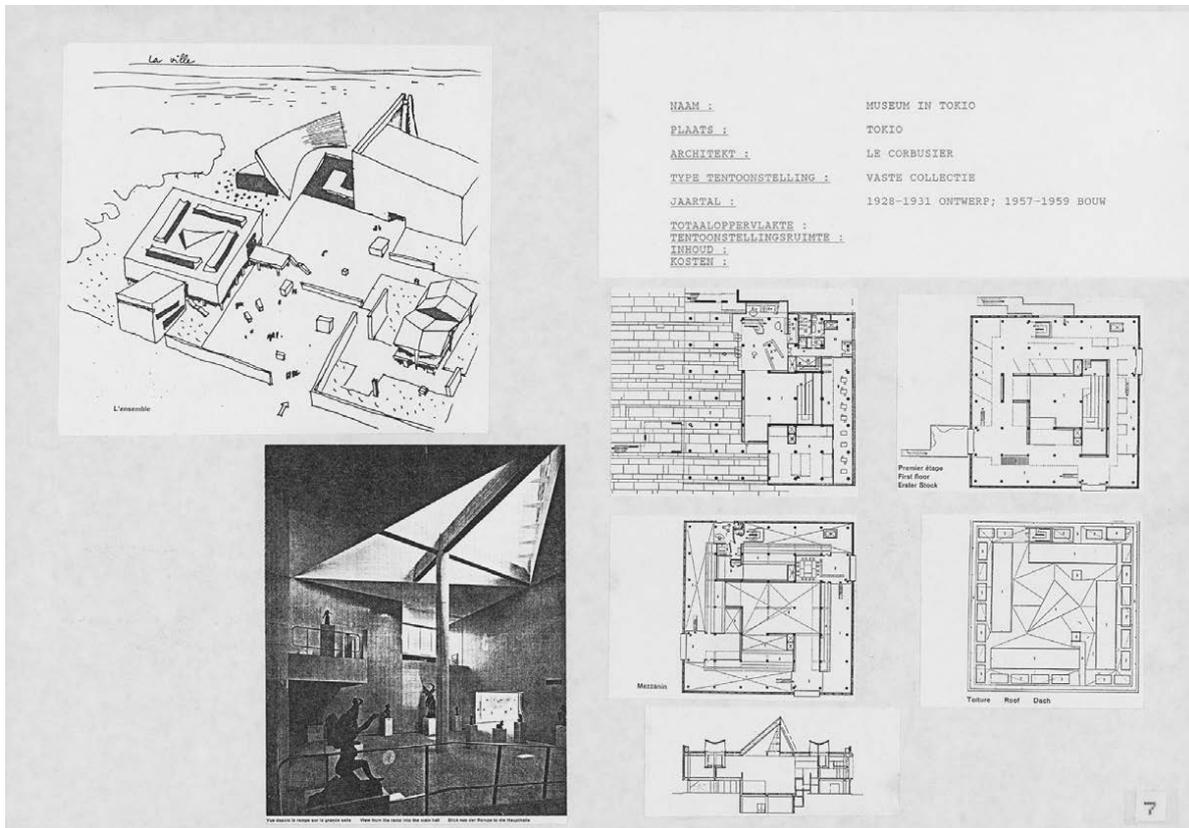
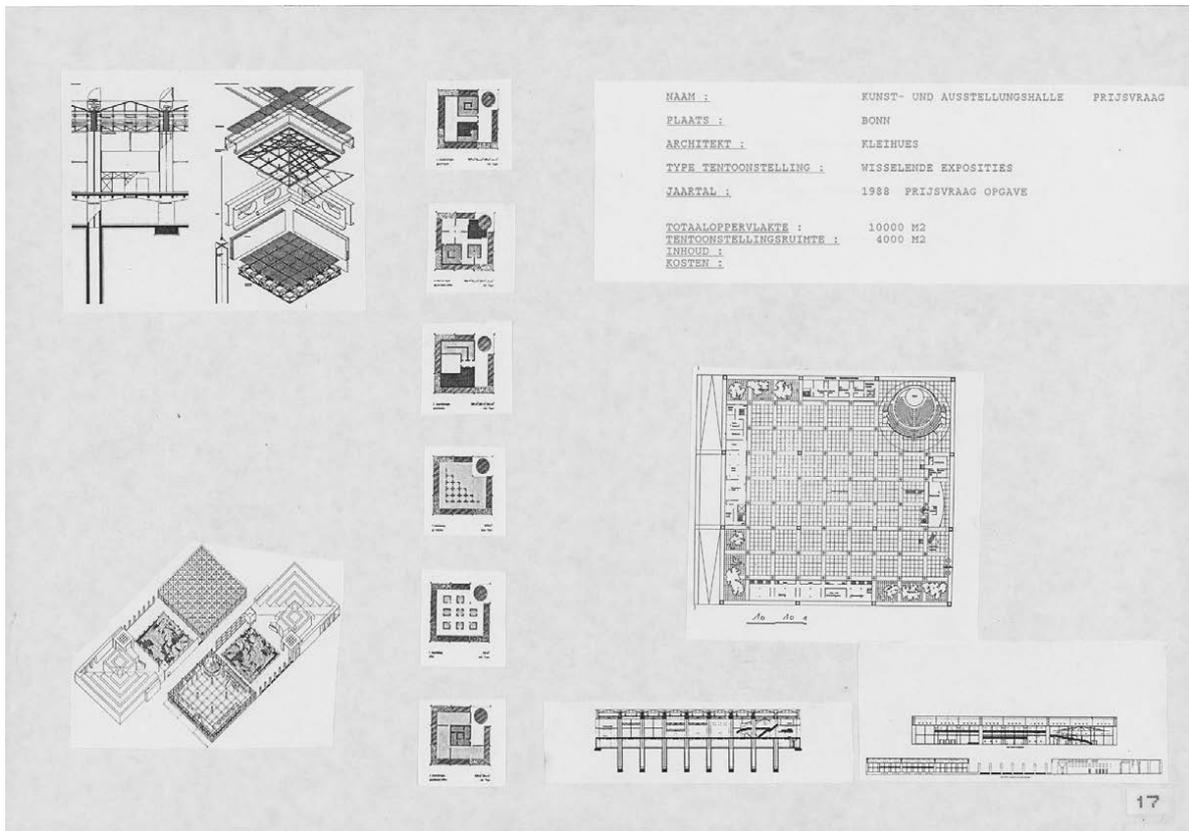


Figure 7. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, 'Kunsthal Hoboken. Documentation museums', 27 April 1988.

documentation is, ultimately, speculative. But one thing seems safe to say: that Koolhaas conceived of the Kunsthal against the backdrop of the museum's recent architectural history, despite his urge to programme a building that would be something else. Perhaps he wanted to make his appearance in what during these years to many appeared architecture's most glamorous arena, regardless of his disapproval of the museum as programme in this particular case.

Please give me a museum to do

If there was something like a 'supreme discipline' of the architecture of the 1980s, it is likely to have been the museum. In an issue of *Lotus international* on museums from 1987, Pierluigi Nicolin observes that the museum replaced the university campus of the English-speaking world as the architectural model to be followed in general, while informing by its example the most influential and debated currents of the field:

The new museums, built above all in Germany and the United States (but also in France, Britain, Spain, and even in Italy) are now influencing architectural thinking to the point where these intriguing buildings are taken as paradigms of the contemporary powers of imitation. [...] In many ways these new museum buildings draw on the finest available resources and put into effect some of the most widely debated architectural ideas, such as how to approach the problem of construction work in historic contexts, the fit design of a monumental building for our age, experiments with architectural language, the use of quotations, assimilation to the context [...].³²⁸

During those years, the issues of architecture magazines, monographs, symposia and competitions dedicated to museums were plenty, trying to catch up with the abiding mutations and variations of this building type in terms of its function, conception and design. The programme of museums became ever more complex and varied, entailing a shifting ratio between exhibition spaces and subsidiary functions.

³²⁸ Nicolin, 'New Museums', 5.

Taking Venturi's project for the National Gallery in London as a symptom of a general trend, Pierluigi Nicolini observed in 1987: 'His "urban museum for the people," pulling in millions of visitors every year, reverses the traditional ratio of exhibition spaces to administrative and logistic services, changing the usual ratio of 9:1 to 1:2.'³²⁹ By the same token, the scope of a 'typical' museum's programme was increasingly difficult to pin down. Bekaert wrote in the same year: 'Everybody knows, or seems to know, what a museum is. But don't ask to explain what the museum exactly does. Probably a more chameleon-like term does not exist.'³³⁰

Meanwhile, the 'museum boom' continued. The topic recurs in the publications of the 1980s on the museum.³³¹ Towards the end of the decade, most of the leading figures of the international architectural scene – such as Meier, Gehry, Stirling, Foster, Piano, Scarpa, Rossi, Moneo, Hollein, Ungers, Isozaki – had all built at least one museum or were on their way to do so, like Venturi in London (1985-91), Grassi in Sagunto (1985-92) and Siza in Santiago de Compostela (1988-93). Nouvel, with the *Institut du monde arabe* (1981-87), had completed an institution akin in character, and the same goes for Eisenman and the Wexner Center for Visual Arts (1983-89). In 1988, the prospect of building the Kunsthal might have appeared to Koolhaas, among other things, as a ticket to the most exclusive domain of contemporary architecture.

Building museums during the 1980s was a prestigious affair for architects none less than for politicians. In addition, architects had relatively ample scope in terms of design. Compared to other building types there were less norms and legal regulations, the programme leaving considerable room for

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Bekaert, 'Een gebouw waar de kunst haar intrek kan nemen', 12 (author trans.).

³³¹ Van de Ven wrote in 1989: 'De in onze tijd om zich heen grijpende opleving voor de bouw van musea, de zogenaamde museum-boom, gaf er alle aanleiding toe bij dit fenomeen stil staan.' Van de Ven, 'Het museumgebouw', 5. Ignasi de Solà-Morales introduces the monograph on museums by Montaner and Oliveras: 'This book discusses the recent upsurge in the Construction [sic] of new museum buildings'. Ignasi de Solà-Morales, 'The Meaning of the Architecture of Museums', in: Montaner, Oliveras, *The Museums of the Last Generation*, 7. Heinrich Klotz observed in 1985: 'While theatres as building projects vanished almost completely from the scenes at the end of the 1960s, [...] museum construction, which also began in the 1950s, increased in importance, only reaching its zenith now, in the early 1980s.' Heinrich Klotz, 'New Museum Buildings in the Federal Republic of Germany', in: Idem, Waltraud Krase, 'New Museum Buildings in the Federal Republic of Germany' (Frankfurt am Main: Deutsches Architekturmuseum, 1985), 8.

interpretation. ‘The museum as a building type’, Van de Ven wrote in 1989, ‘does not have any clear regulations, norms for the design or prescriptions regarding its content and programme, which definitely exist for conventional, more functional building types such as hospitals, auditoria, theatres, sports halls, offices etc.’³³² This holds true especially for the arrangement and character of the exhibition spaces. Richard Meier explained: ‘I love building museums, because they offer the greatest range of spatial possibilities. It’s a chance to create accents, relationships, breathing space for works of art.’³³³ Gehry, for his part, lamented in 1985: ‘I want to do a museum so badly and nobody will give me one. They give it to all the other guys. Please give me a museum to do, world!’³³⁴

³³² Van de Ven, ‘Het museumgebouw’, 12 (author trans.). See also: Galloway, ‘The New German Museums’, 79.

³³³ Galloway, ‘The New German Museums’, 83.

³³⁴ Peter Arnell, “‘No, I’m an Architect.’” Frank Gehry and Peter Arnell: A conversation’, in: Peter Arnell, Ted Bickford (eds.), *Frank Gehry. Buildings and Projects* (New York: Rizzoli, 1990), XVIII.

1.7

Brussels 1958

The first draft for the Kunsthal: April - September 1988

While OMA was working on a draft for the Kunsthal in April 1988, the open air exhibition ‘Sculptures in the City’ (Beelden in de stad) was being prepared. Sculptures and installations of eleven artists and architects were to be seen in summer 1988 in the streets and green spaces of Rotterdam’s centre. Mario Merz, Daniel Buren, Günter Förg, Richard Artschwager, Aldo Rossi, Coop Himmelblau and Zaha Hadid, amongst others, participated in the event.³³⁵ Some of the work was shown in the former arrival hall of the Holland-America line by Van den Broek & Bakema (1937-53), which at the time was used as a temporary arts centre and referred to as ‘Kunsthal’.³³⁶ The arrangement of this space was designed by Rem Koolhaas and Petra Blaisse.³³⁷ [Figure 1] Two intersecting walls of about 50 and 30 metres length respectively formed a Latin cross. Slightly rotated with respect to the orthogonal perimeter walls, the cross divided the space in four quadrants of varying shapes and sizes, in which work of four sculptors was shown, among them Mario Merz and Daniel Buren. The whole event, however, seems to have had little impact on the Kunsthal OMA designed for the Museum Park. This is not surprising, given that in Koolhaas view the two projects must have had little in common besides being connected to the term ‘Kunsthal’. ‘Sculpture in the City’ was exclusively about art, disseminated in the public realm. The Kunsthal at the Maas Boulevard, as envisaged by Koolhaas, was rather meant to do the opposite: to embrace popular culture, and to make it enter the domain of art.

³³⁵ The other participants were: Scott Burton, Isa Genzken, Imi Knoebel, Paul Beckman. See: Richard Artschwager et al., *Beelden in de Stad/ Sculpture in the City* (Utrecht: Veen/Reflex, 1988).

³³⁶ Reyn van der Lugt, ‘Rotterdam – city of statues’; in: Artschwager, *Beelden in de Stad*, 8.

³³⁷ Artschwager, *Beelden in de Stad*, 112 (colophon). The HNI archives hold a dossier of OMA with various documents related to the exhibition, dating from April 1988. OMAR 3349, 1734. See also: Carolina de Backer, *Office for Metropolitan Architecture*, 22-23.

Chapter 1.7

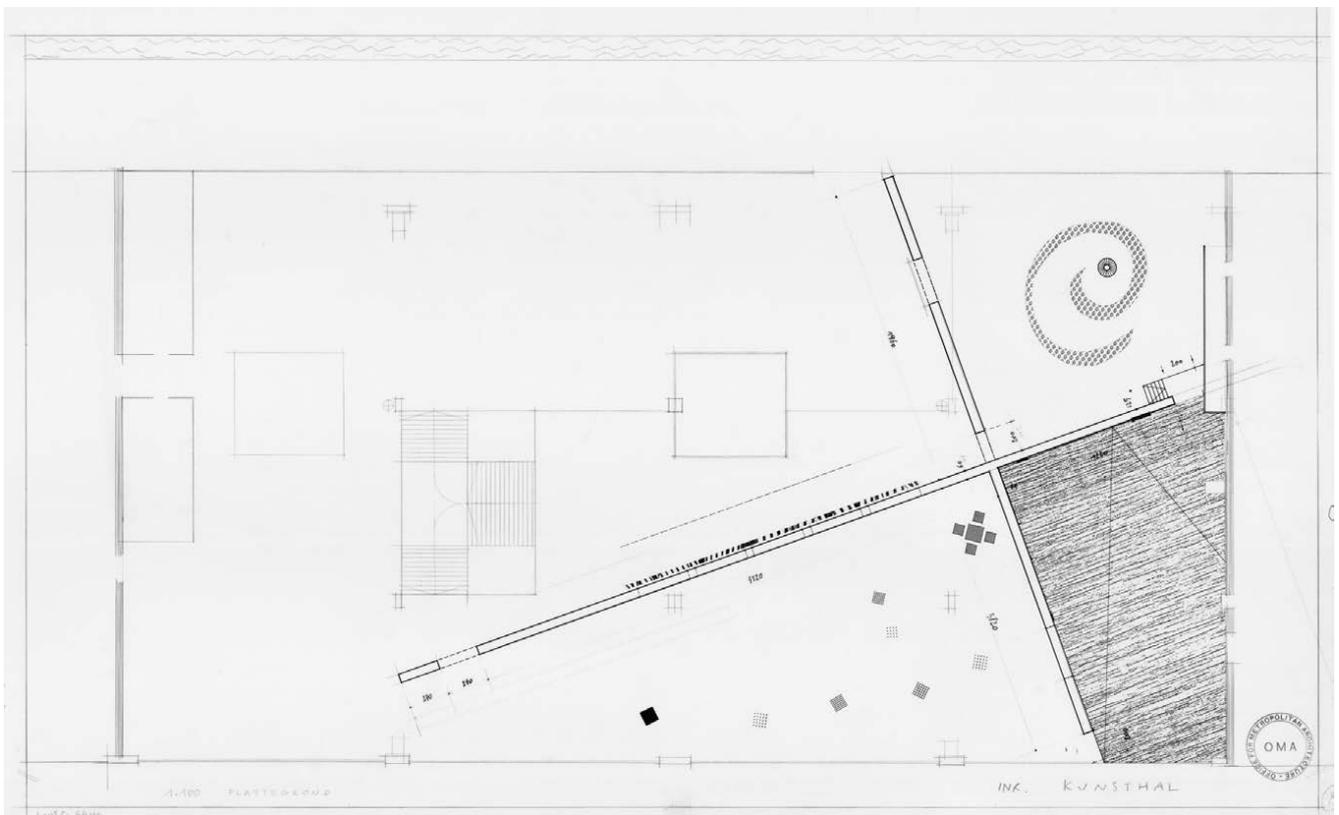
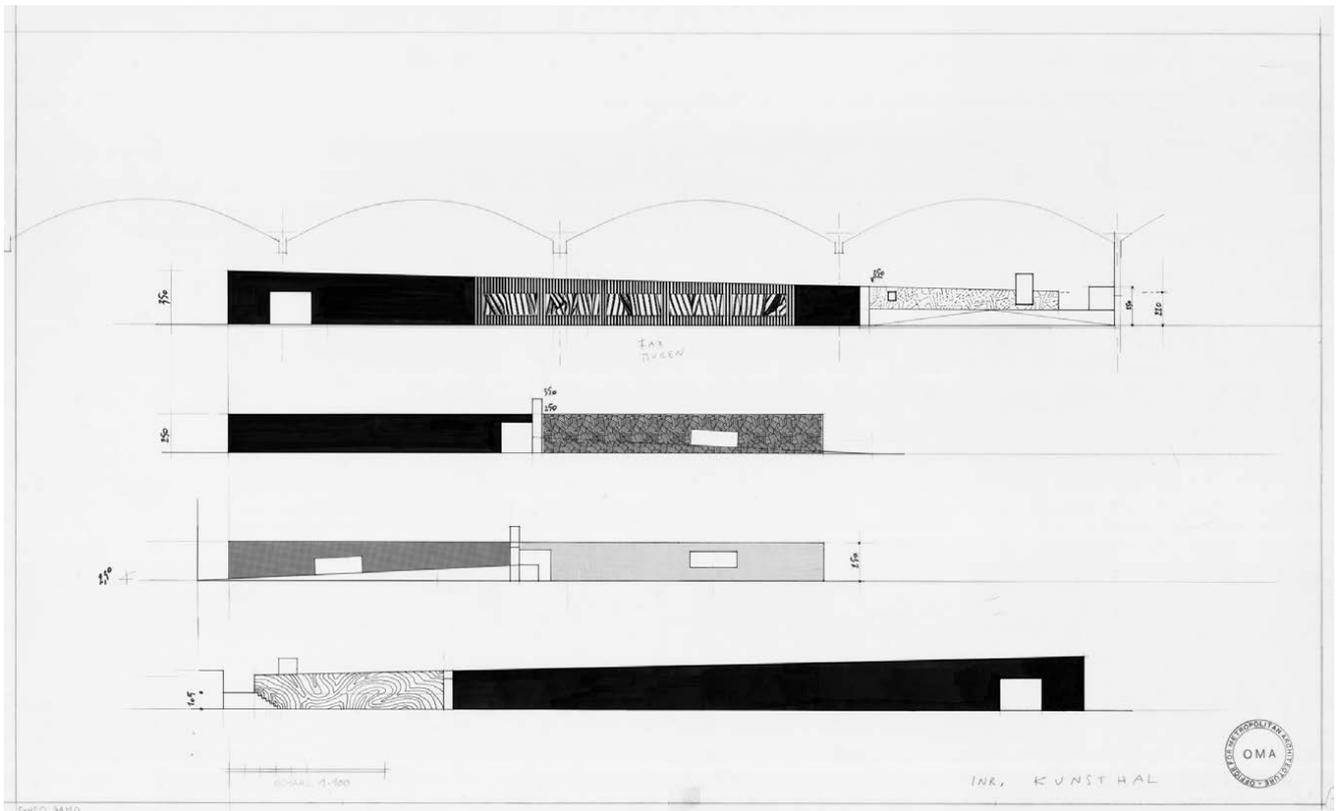


Figure 1. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, Petra Blaisse, Installation exhibition '88 de stad als podium', 'Kunsthall', Rotterdam, 1988.

Koolhaas presented OMA's study on museums at the meeting of the Building Committee on 28 April 1988 together with a first draft for the Kunsthal.³³⁸ An A3 booklet documenting the project was either handed out or presented to the board.³³⁹ [Figures 2-5] In contrast to the renderings and collages OMA was renowned for, there is nothing seductive about these drawings and sketches. Perhaps Koolhaas took the commission already for granted, or regarded graphic representation not as a means appropriate to convince the municipal representatives. In the discussion subsequent to Koolhaas' presentation the committee's major concern was related to costs. The committee concluded that the brief would entail a cost overrun of 8 million guilders, the available budget being 20 million guilders. It was eventually decided that a smaller team would examine a reduced footprint and a lower building standard as saving options.

The draft, presented by Koolhaas, builds on OMA's two studies from the year before. As in the analysis from September 1987, the Kunsthal is located at the southern end of the 'Development Axis', the promenade connecting Rochussenstraat with the Kunsthal and the Maas Boulevard in a straight line. Like in the study from May, the scheme consists of two parts: an elevated, pavilion-like exhibition hall with a square footprint, and a slender volume with subsidiary functions conceived as an extension of the Westzeedijk. There is no direct access, however, from the promenade to the Maas Boulevard on top of the dyke. At the foot of the embankment the promenade meets a service road giving the ambulance access to the hospital. The Service Road passes through the open space under the pavilion in a curve and then crosses a plaza – a square stabilized surface, enclosed by the Kunsthal, and the Villa Dijkzigt on three sides. It is from this plaza that a flight of stairs leads to the Maas Boulevard on the dyke. Compared to the two studies from 1987, the exhibition hall has been moved closer to the embankment. Obviously the intention was to allow for a direct access from the dyke to the Kunsthal, while locating the building 'inside' the park. A sketch on the cover of the booklet shows a pavilion surrounded by

³³⁸ The minutes report that 'Koolhaas geeft de vergelijkingen met internationale musea aan.' OMAR 1517. The A3 booklet of OMA's documentation 'Kunsthal Hoboken. Documentatie musea' is dated 27 April 1988.

OMAR 3339. Present at this and at the subsequent meetings was also Gregor Mescherowsky.

³³⁹ OMA, 'Kunsthal Hoboken. Concept plan', 27 April 1988. OMAR 4134.

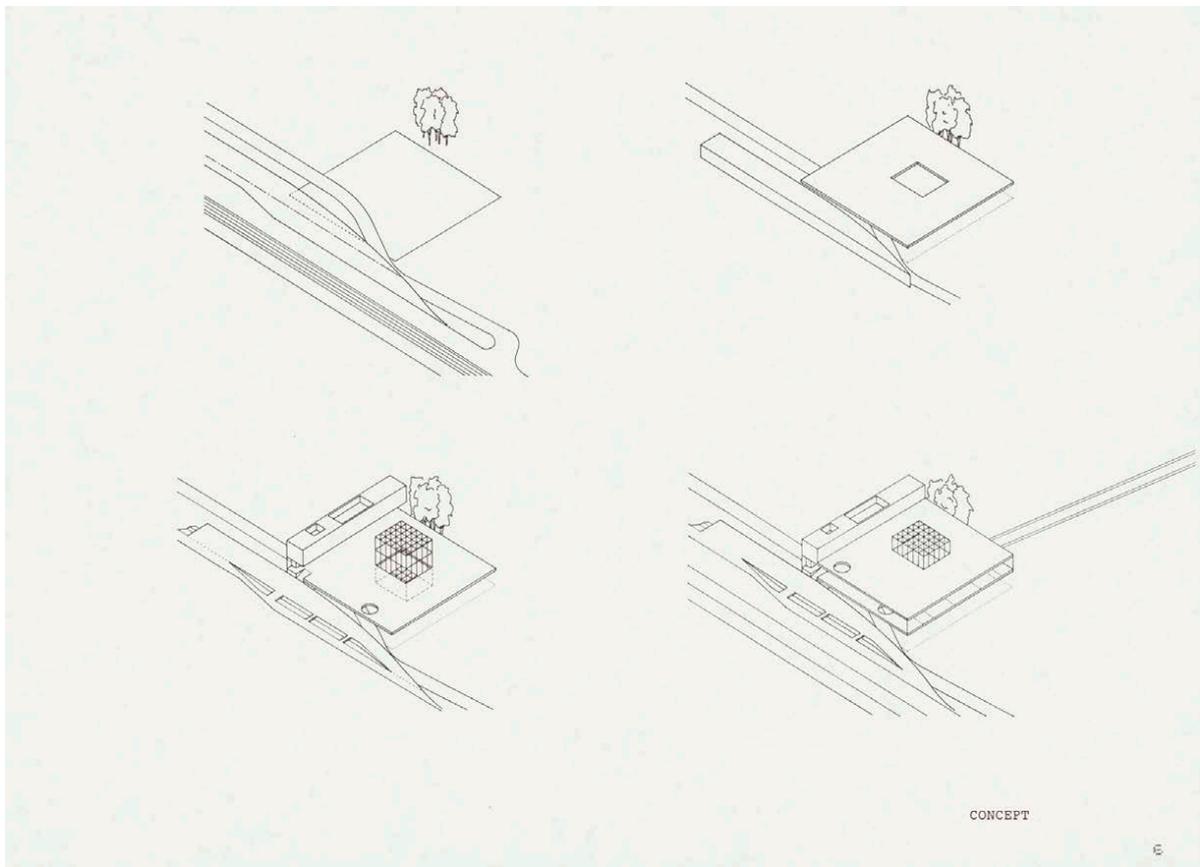
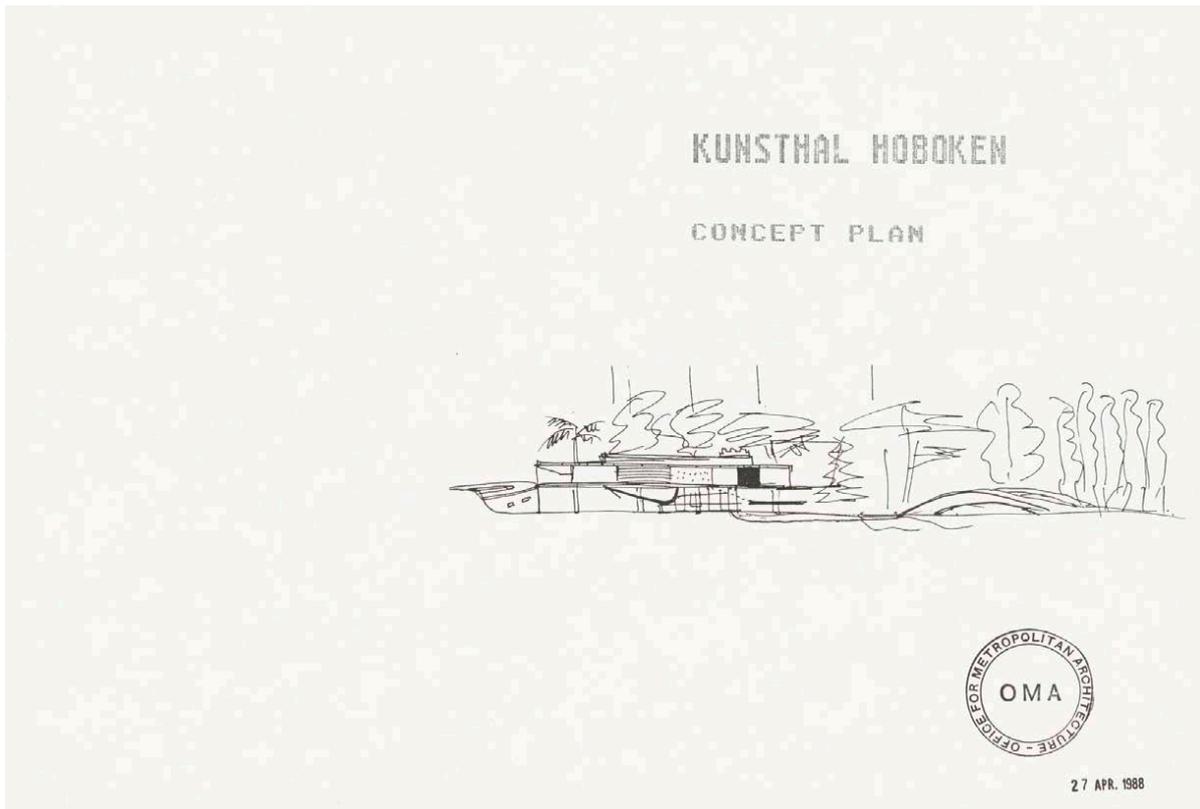


Figure 2. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, 'Kunsthall Hoboken', 27 April 1988.

trees. The building keeps some distance from the dyke, while a curved projection of the embankment touches the elevated floor of the gallery spaces.³⁴⁰

Radio City Music Hall

In plan, the exhibition hall is a perfect square of 60 by 60 metres. Along its east-west axis it is parallel to the dyke while rotated about 19 degrees with regard to the villa.³⁴¹ The 3.600-square-metres main hall is conceived as a double storey gallery of approximately 6 metres height. The space is open to all four sides, sandwiched between two horizontal planes. The linchpin of the scheme is a system of movable platforms, called ‘Robot’, at the centre of this space. In plan the Robot measures about 18 by 15 metres. The version from April 1988 shows the platforms as rectangular segments ‘cut out’ from both the floor and the ceiling. The lower platform may be raised or lowered to the level of the park; it may be split in two and stepped down, or inclined, transform into a ramp, an auditorium, an orchestra pit, or the floor of a patio. The upper platform may be raised, so as to form a lantern, or kept level with the rest of the ceiling. A series of free hand sketches illustrates a wide range of possible uses, such as art exhibitions, car shows, concerts, and theatre performances.

The Robot in the centre of the exhibition hall obviously seizes on a recurring motif of *Delirious New York*: the movable platforms described in the passages on Otis’ spectacular demonstration of the elevator’s safety mechanism, the cartoon from 1909 showing a skyscraper with mobile floors, and the stage elevator of the Radio City Music Hall.³⁴² Like the latter, the Robot is a dynamic element that interferes with an essentially ‘static’ space, and at least potentially it may produce similar stage effects. In *Delirious New York* the movable platform metaphorically figures as one of those technological devices that embody the artificial character of the metropolis and mankind’s emancipation from nature.

³⁴⁰ On OMA’s current website, the sketch is shown together with a series of other early sketches of the Kunsthal, two of them with similar semi-circular projections, ought to bridge the gap between dyke and building. The date attributed – 1989 – is obviously erroneous. <https://oma.eu/projects/kunsthal>. Accessed 30 March 2018. Given its appearance on cover of the above booklet, the sketch unmistakably dates from April 1988 or before. The motif of the curved projection does not appear in any of the later versions.

³⁴¹ OMA, ‘Kunsthal Hoboken. Concept plan’, OMAR 4139.

³⁴² Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 26-27 (Otis), 83 (1909 cartoon), 213 (stage elevator).

Chapter 1.7

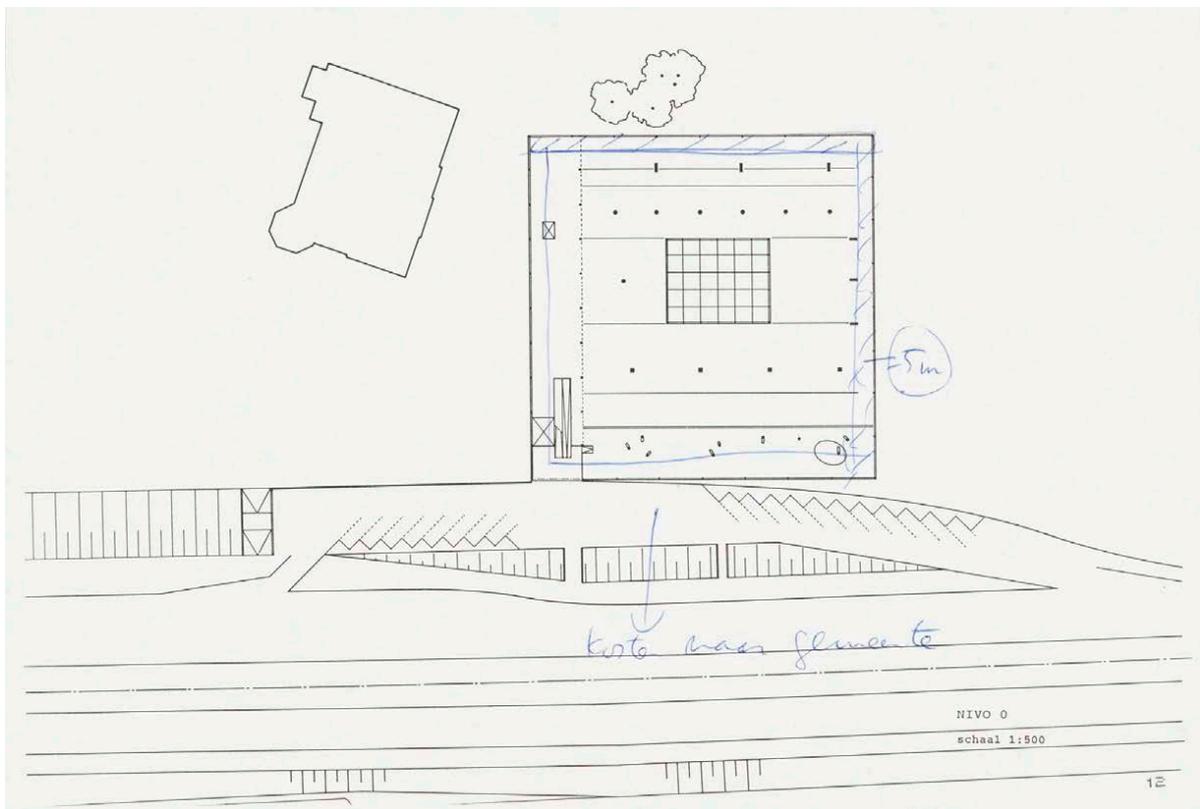
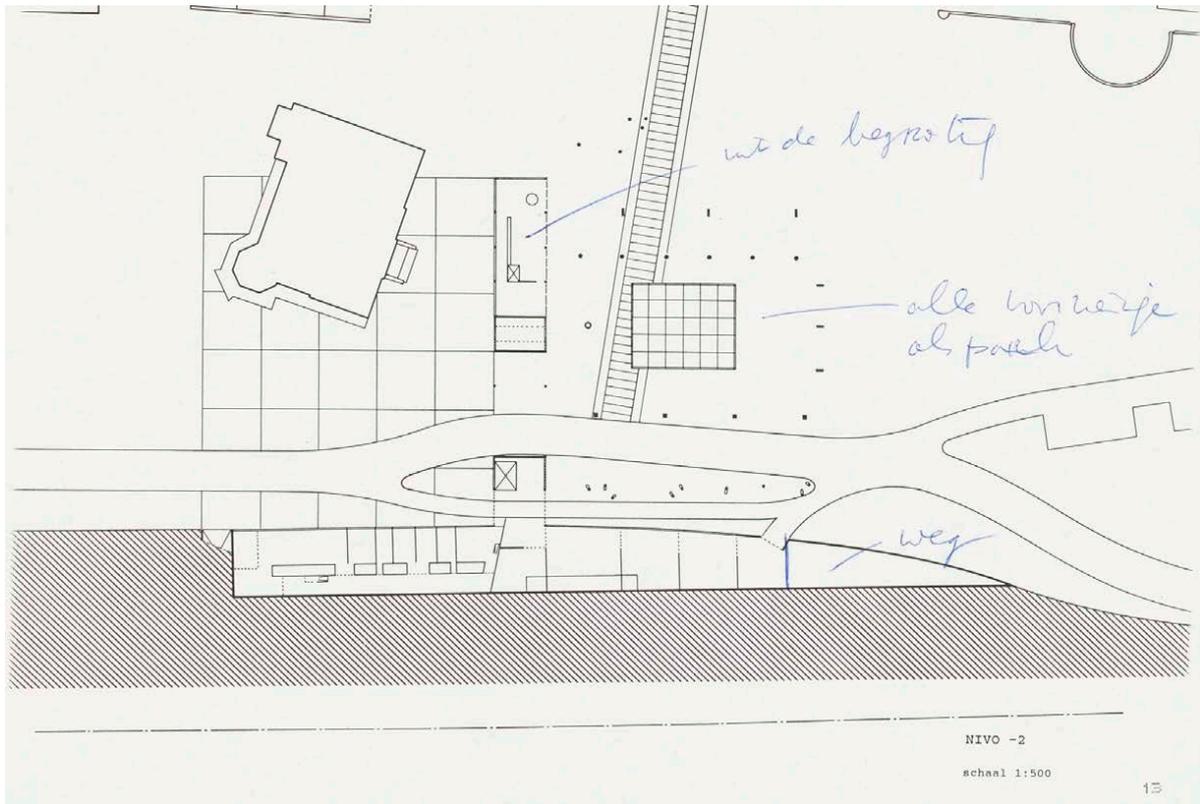


Figure 3. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, 'Kunsthal Hoboken', 27 April 1988. Floorplans: Park level and main gallery.

At the Kunsthal, however, the Robot seems to signal and facilitate, first of all, the openness of the building in terms of use. As proposed by Koolhaas, the drawings suggest exhibitions to be only one option next to live events such as concerts and theatre performance – a ‘boxing ring or lion’s den with the public around it’.³⁴³ In the later work of OMA variations of this idea would occasionally reappear. As Jacob Comerci has observed, ‘Since Kunsthal I several OMA projects have employed “robotic elements” from the Maison Bordeaux [1994-98] – which incorporates a strikingly similar hydraulic plinth – to the recently completed Prada Foundation [2008-18] Theatre, where an exterior wall can be split and repositioned as the floor and ceiling of a performance space.’³⁴⁴ Perhaps the closest approximation to the Robot so far are the – likewise two partite – movable platforms of the Lafayette Foundation in Paris (2012).

Mies between city and nature

Reedijk’s schedule of requirements from January lists a total of about 3.000 square metres of secondary functions, such as gastronomy, sale, conferences, toilettes, security, administration, workshops, storage and building services.³⁴⁵ The surface amounts to roughly eighty percent of the 3.600-square-metres exhibition hall proposed by OMA. The subsidiary functions are accommodated in two additional volumes. The first is a 134-metres long and 11.5-metres wide two storey extension of the dyke; the second is a slab of six-storeys. Both start at the level of the park. The slab figures as an element of linkage, connecting the premises along the dyke with the main hall floating about eight metres above ground. Its third and fourth floor merge with the western margin of the gallery space, while the fifth and sixth floor house a bar-restaurant and rooms for conferences, as suggested by Koolhaas during the meeting in March. To the south the two lowest storeys of the slab touch the long two-storey extension of the dyke at half-length. The entrance at the Maas Boulevard is provided where these two volumes meet. The roof of the two-storey construction is sloped so as to serve as a ramp, the exhibition hall

³⁴³ Quoted after: Jacob Comerci, ‘The Robot of Kunsthal I’, *Log* 36 (2016), 63.

³⁴⁴ Comerci, ‘The Robot of Kunsthal I’, 63. See also: Gargiani, ‘The Pliable Surface’, 659.

³⁴⁵ Total surface provided by Reedijk’s programme: 5.625 square metres; exhibition area: 2.700 square metres. OMAR 1437.

Chapter 1.7

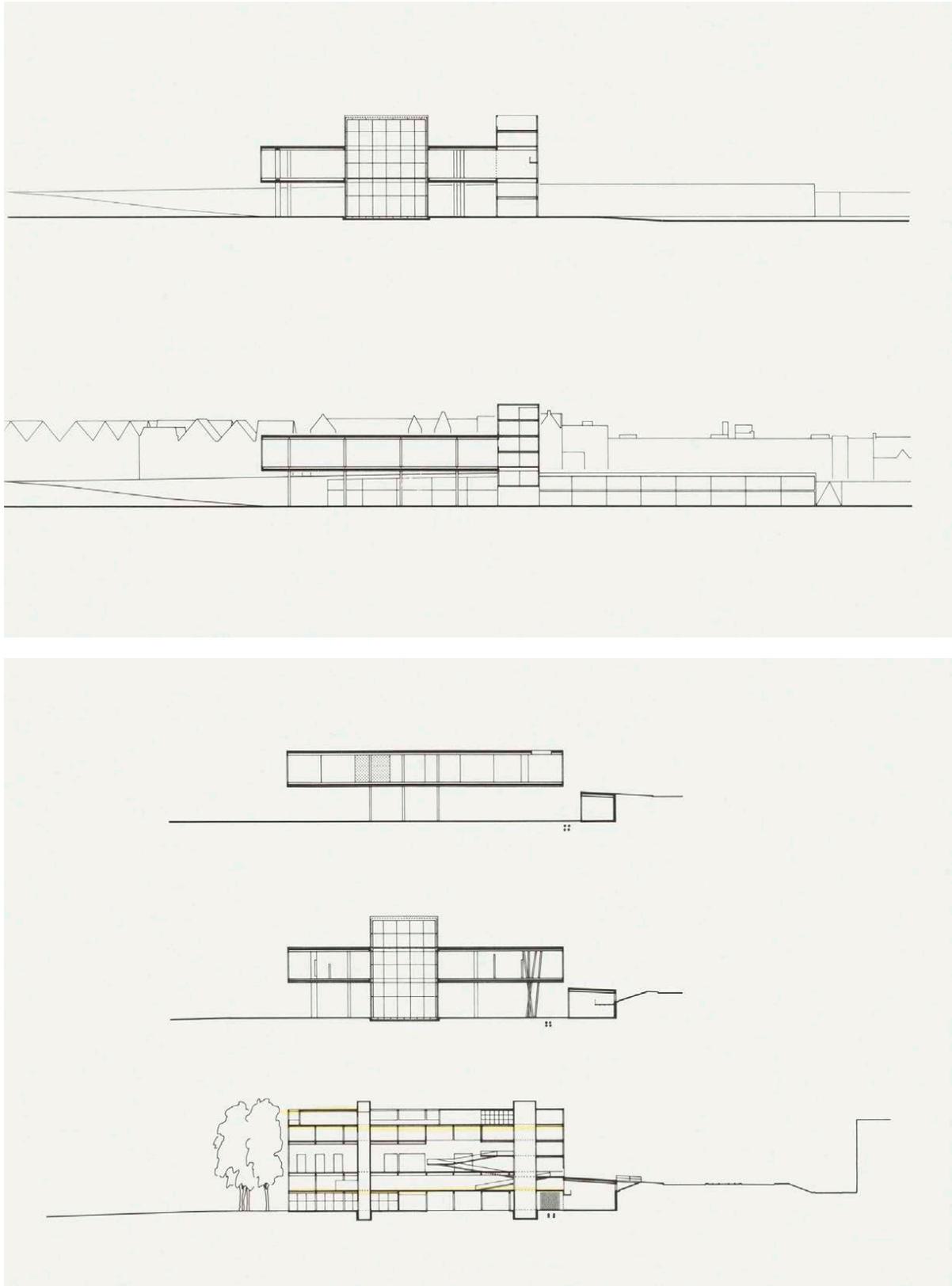


Figure 4. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, 'Kunsthall Hoboken', 27 April 1988.
Cross sections. Above: East-west. Below: North-south.

being raised at least one and a half metre above the top of the dyke.³⁴⁶ In all probability, the difference in height was to secure the visual connection between the dyke and the park, as required by the Department for Urban Development.³⁴⁷

To compose a scheme of multiple distinct volumes that partly connect and interlock was nothing unusual in OMA's work of the 1980s. Often the shape and facing of the single volumes was of a collage-like diversity. OMA's Dance Theatre in The Hague (1981-87), the Byzantium in Amsterdam (1985-91), and the Villa Dall'Ava in Paris (1983-91) are obvious examples. The relative autonomy of volumes, the heterogeneity of their exterior finishes, and some of the materials used seems akin to, if not inspired by Gehry's own house in Santa Monica (1977-78), Gehry's 'one-room buildings' like the project for the Smith House in California (1981), and his Aerospace Museum in Los Angeles (1981-84).³⁴⁸ [Figure 6]

By comparison, the Kunsthal scheme from April 1988 suggests a much more symbiotic relation of parts and whole, even at this stage. Both main volumes are orthogonal prisms, and at the point of intersection their fusion is complete, whereas the third volume – reduced to a single façade – is almost entirely absorbed by the dyke. Only the interior of the main hall introduces elements of diversity. In plan, the main hall is composed of seven parallel strips running east-west. Also the Robot follows this logic. The width of the strips varies and so do the columns in terms of shape, size and rhythm. One row of columns resembles the irregular, needle-thin and partly oblique supports of the Villa Dall'Ava.³⁴⁹ A page from Koolhaas' sketch block indicates that the idea for the interior was related to Koolhaas' interpretation of

³⁴⁶ According to the cross section on last page of the booklet from April 27, the hall is raised 7 metres above the park level, according to the floorplans 8.5 metres. OMAR 4134.

³⁴⁷ The Department for Urban Development wished the building to be raised 4 metres above the dyke level. The minutes do not address the difference in height. However, it would have been virtually impossible to provide a well-functioning entrance, while the presence of the building towards the Maas Boulevard would have suffered significantly.

³⁴⁸ Gehry used the expression 'one-room buildings' when presenting his Smith House at the Anyone conference in 1989. Frank O. Gehry, 'Hook, Line, and Signature', in: Cynthia Davidson (ed.), *Anyone* (New York: Rizzoli, 1991), 189.

³⁴⁹ Roberto Gargiani suggests Dalí's paintings as the source of the motif. There is, however, also a striking resemblance to the supports of Libeskind's City Edge project for Berlin (1987). Whether Libeskind's project or the Villa in Paris (1984-91) was 'first' would require an investigation on the design process of the latter.

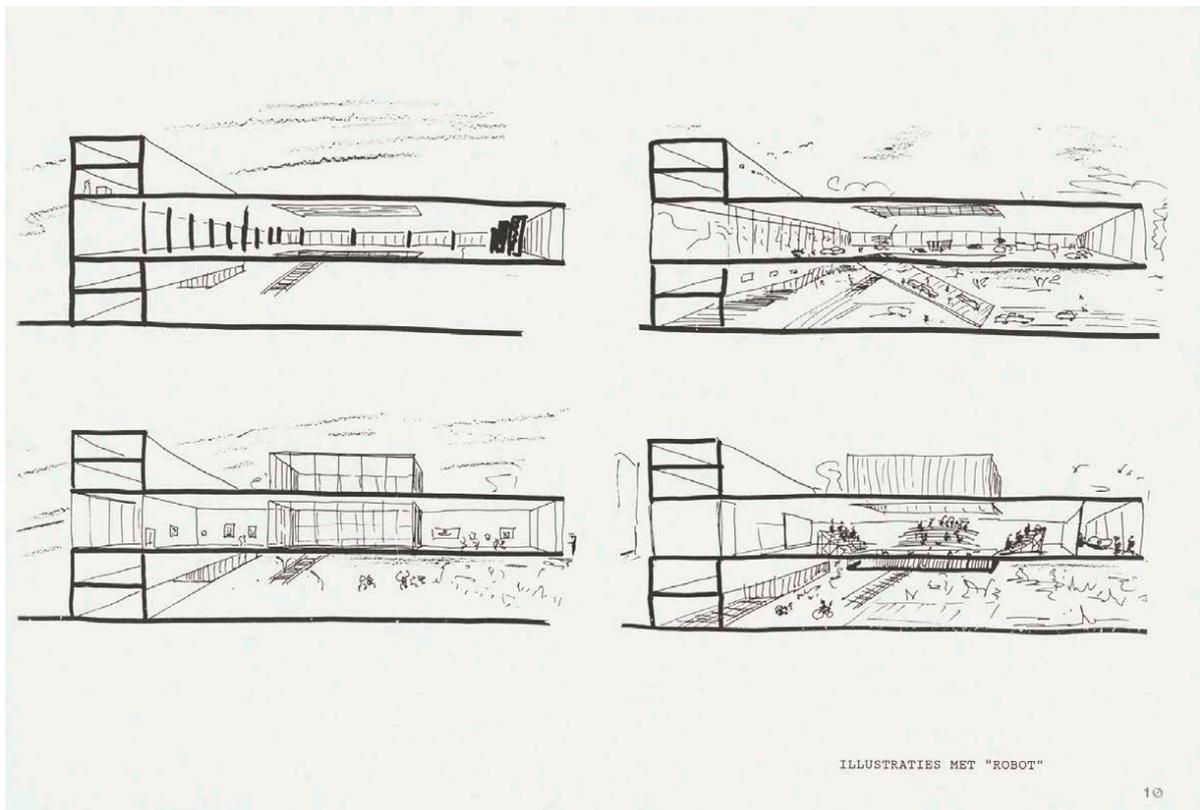
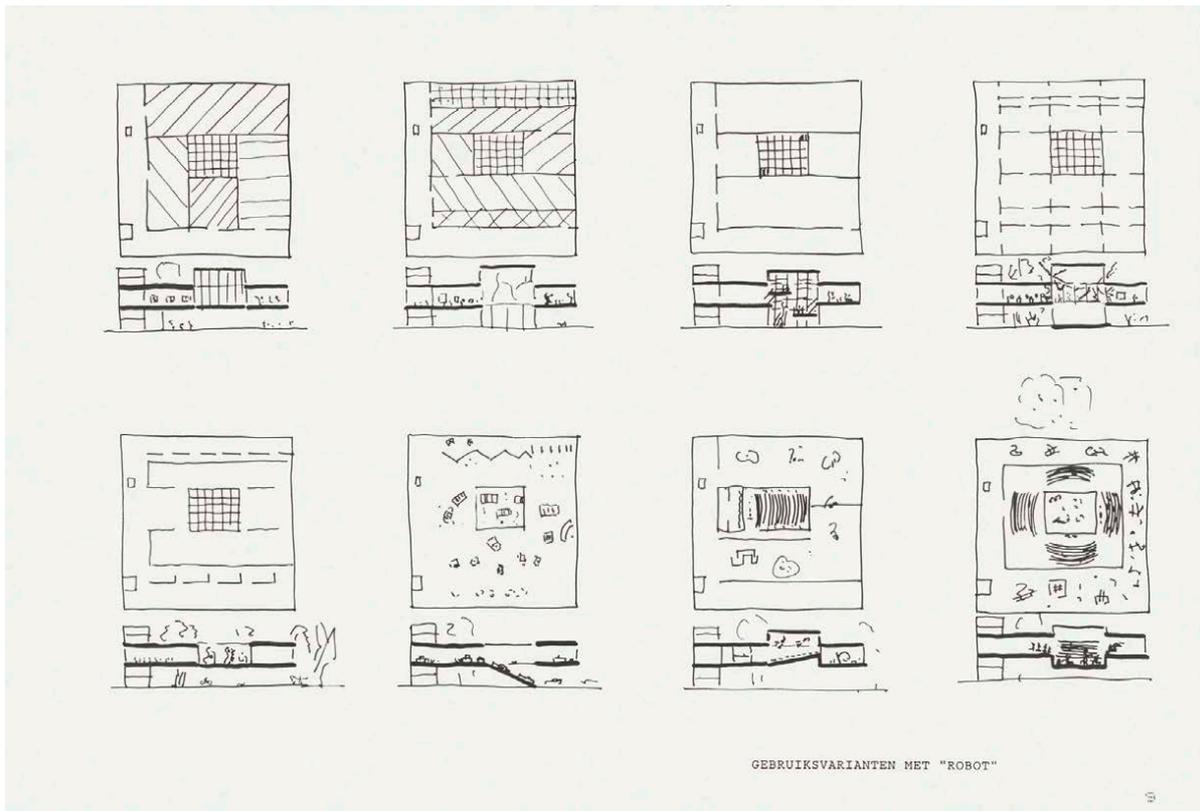


Figure 5. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, 'Kunsthof Hoboken', 27 April 1988. Illustrations showing the programmatic variety the Robot facilitates.

the site. The sketch shows the building figuring as a space of transition between the ‘city’ and ‘nature’. [Figure 7] Instead of facilitating the visual connection between the two sides, a series of parallel strips and partitions running perpendicular ‘obstructs’ it. Similarly, the columns lined up in the draft ‘delay’ both the visitor’s view and the movement from the entrance at the Maas Boulevard to the side overlooking the park.³⁵⁰ The relation between the spatial layering and the surroundings recalls the House in Miami Koolhaas designed in collaboration with Laurinda Spear in 1974. Like OMA’s La Villette Park and Dance Theatre, the project in Miami proposed a sequence of parallel strips as the organizing principle of the plan. Like the first Kunsthall scheme, the House in Miami orchestrates the transition between ‘city’ and ‘nature’ – a suburban neighbourhood on one side, and the beach on the other – ‘delayed’ by a sequence of autonomous walls.

Further sketches indicate that Koolhaas conceived the main hall of the Kunsthall early on as some sort of ‘late Miesian’ box. A number of them show a flat prism with exoskeletal girders on top of the roof, reminiscent of Crown Hall at IIT in Chicago. There is no flexible element yet in these sketches. In Koolhaas’ sketch block, the Robot only appears some pages further. OMA’s website features an annotated sketch by Koolhaas of two square planes pierced by a series of rectangular and round openings. The comment emphasizes the Miesian motif of two space defining slabs: ‘The museum [sic] is a sandwich of space between two ceilings [one ... to nature, the second to the sky/light] both floating above the earth.’³⁵¹ The sketch on the cover of the booklet from April depicts a one-storey building on stilts with a flat, seemingly projecting, roof slab and floor.

Caught by Expo 58

At some point, however, a specific building – the Austrian pavilion at Expo 58 in Brussels – appears to have become a model for the overall composition of volumes. Pictures of the pavilion were among the photocopies collected for the documentation on museums from April 28, next to copied book pages

³⁵⁰ Sketch block, entitled ‘Kunsthall R’dam’, OMAR 4139.

³⁵¹ <https://oma.eu/projects/kunsthall>. Accessed 30 March 2018. The date of origin indicated on the website appears not to be correct, see note 336.

Chapter 1.7

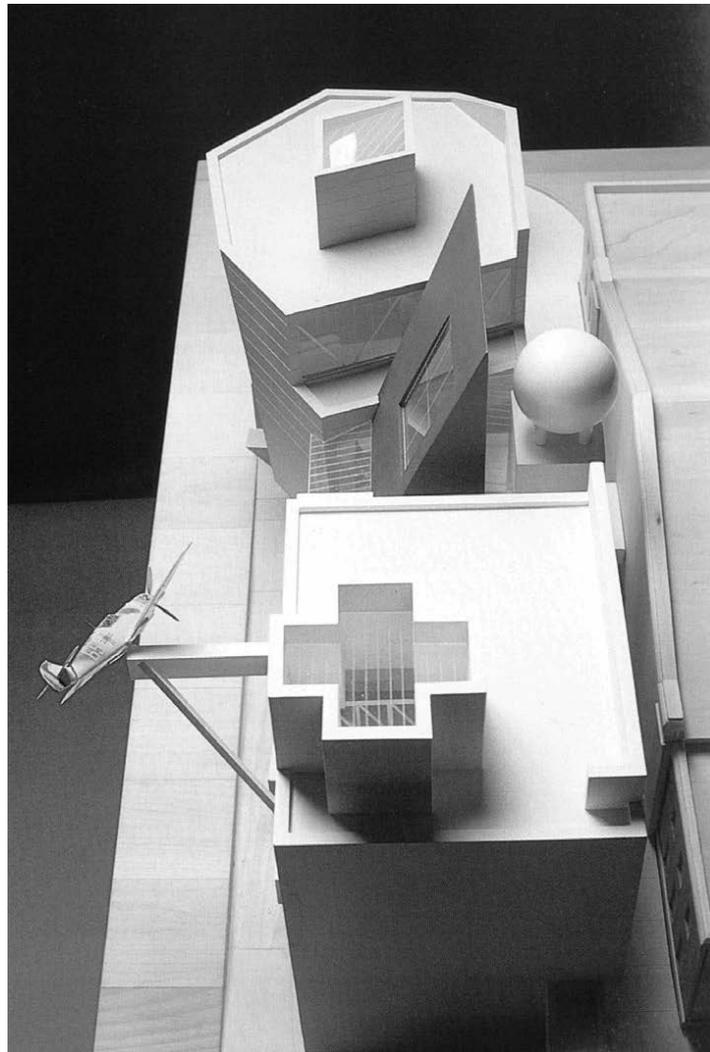
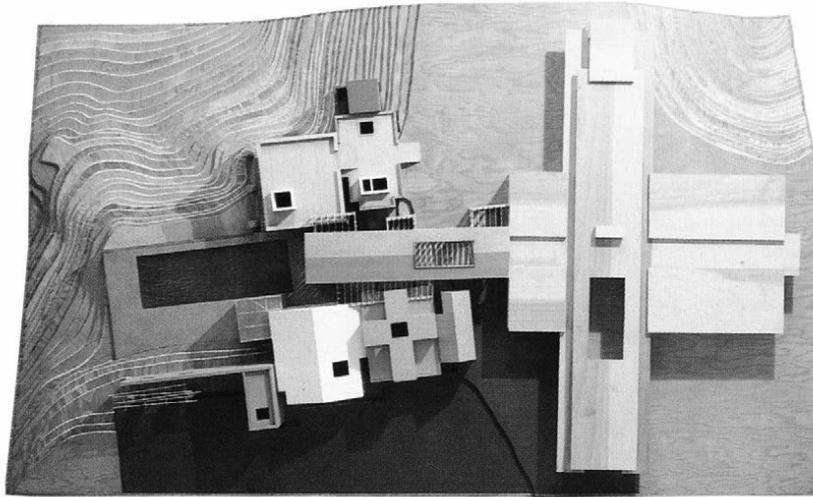


Figure 6. Frank O. Gehry, The principle of 'one-room houses'
Above: Project for Smith House, Brentwood, California, 1981.
Below: Air and Space Museum, Los Angeles, 1982-84.

showing other pavilions, among other things the pavilions of civil engineering, agriculture, and banks, assurances and commerce of the Belgian Section. [Figure 8] The photocopies collected comprise also several pictures of open air theatres by Frank Gehry – the World Expo Amphitheatre in New Orleans (1982), the Performing Arts Pavilion in Concord, California (1975-77), and the 420 Rodeo Drive, in Bel Air, California (1965) – perhaps in order to study possible coverings for the Museum Park’s existing open air theatre from the 1930s.³⁵²

The Austrian Expo pavilion from 1958, designed by Austrian architect Karl Schwanzer – better known for his BMW Museum in Munich (1972-73) – was composed of two volumes: a flat prism with a square footprint and a rectangular patio piercing its centre; and a lower, slightly detached subsidiary building. The prism, containing the main exhibition hall, rested on four steel columns and was raised six metres above the ground. The empty space below was open on three sides. In the patio a large sphere – a constellation somewhat reminiscent of the Captive Globe – was arranged next to a tower-like sculpture of wood.³⁵³ [Figure 8] Apparently Koolhaas visited Expo 58, which would have been two years after the return of his family from Indonesia. Belgian architect Paul Robbrecht, who met Koolhaas regularly while Robbrecht en Daem was planning the second extension of the Boijmans Museum (1999-2003), reports in an interview from 2001: ‘we were both incredibly “caught” by Expo 58. Koolhaas told me: for me that was really the expression of the new.’³⁵⁴ In their 1993 review of the Kunsthal, Bart Lootsma and Jan de Graaf point to the fact that Rotterdam’s ‘tradition of ambitious but temporary expos and festivals’ has been closely related to the area of the former Hoboken land and the adjacent Het Park:³⁵⁵

Rotterdam established an international reputation as a city of festivals with such public events as Rotterdam Ahoy (1950), E55 (1955), the Floriade (1960) and C70 (1970). With Ahoy, under the guidance of the architects Van den Broek and Bakema, a young generation of artists –

³⁵² OMAR 1481.

³⁵³ The sphere in the square patio is clearly visible in some of the surviving photographs.

³⁵⁴ Luc van de Steene, ‘Bouwen aan een humanere samenleving’, *De Morgen*, 28 December 2001 (author trans.).

³⁵⁵ Lootsma, De Graaf, ‘In Service of the Experience’, in: Van Gerrewey, *A Critical Reader*, 282. First published under the title ‘In dienst van de ervaring’ in 1993.

Chapter 1.7

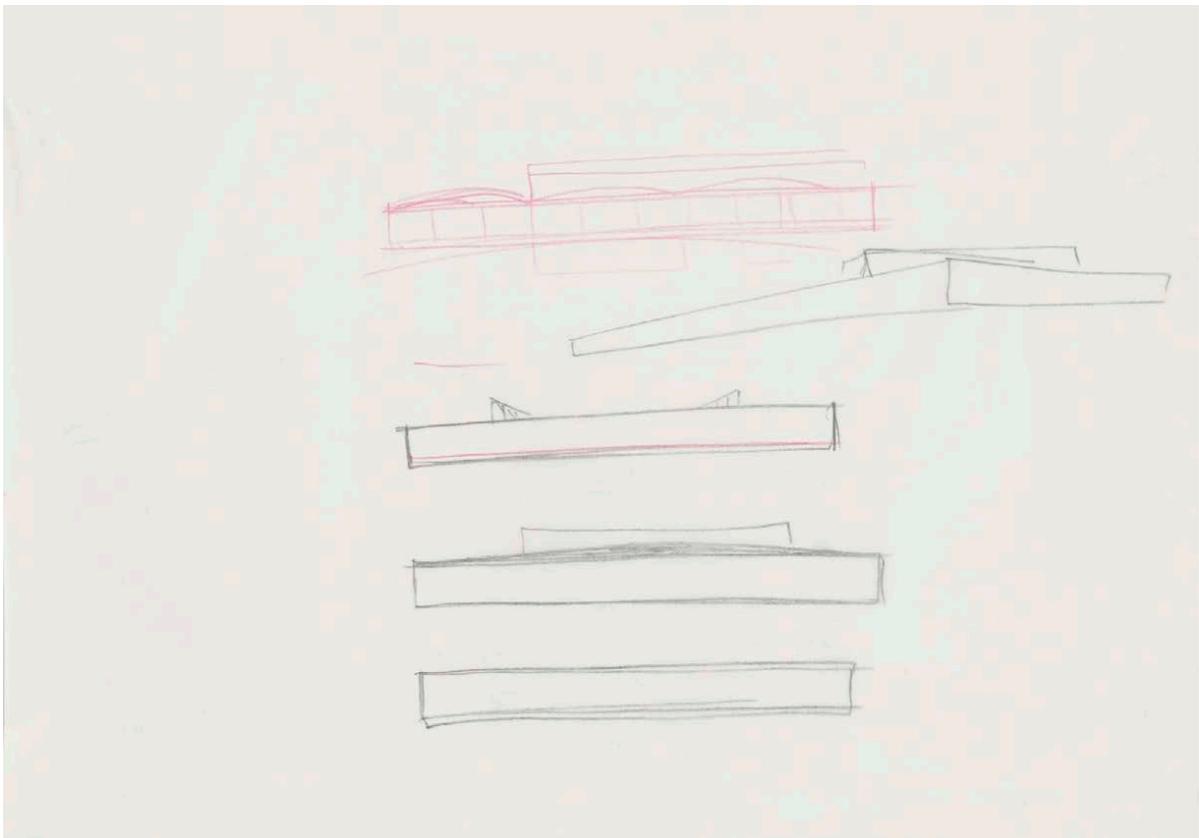
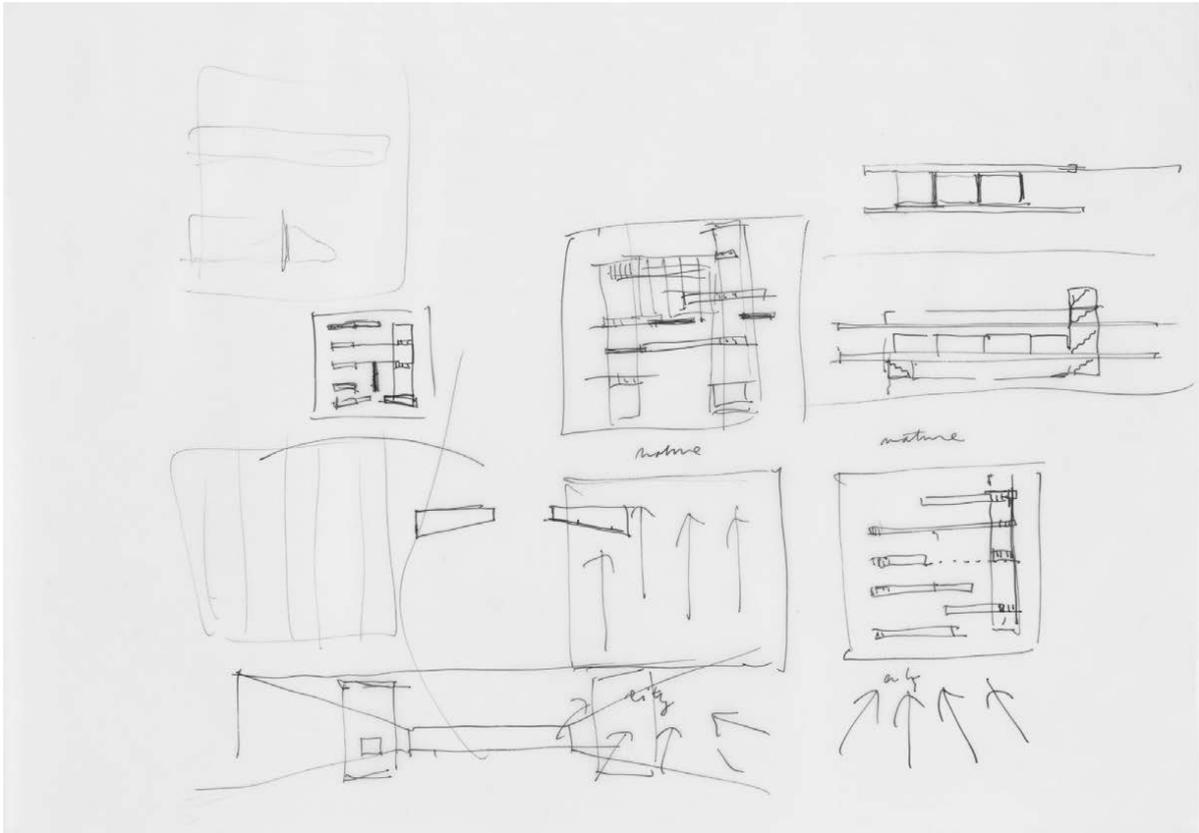


Figure 7. Two pages of Koolhaas' sketchblock. Kunsthal I.

painters, photographers, architects and sculptors – pulled out all the stops with a remarkable zeal to show the world that ‘indomitable Rotterdam spirit’. It attracted one-and-a-half million visitors. E55 [the National Energy Expo] was a kaleidoscopic colour chart of ‘what the combined energy of the Dutch people has managed to produce in the ten years since 1945’. The three million attendees nearly derailed the city. As time went on, these expos would leave a lasting mark. The Floriade, for example, brought not only flower bulbs, but also a redesigned Park and the Euromast. C70, celebrating twenty-five years of reconstruction, joined ‘man and city in festive union’; words such as ‘liveability’ and ‘sociability’ echoed on long afterward. All of these expos sported refreshingly unconventional exhibition design that cleverly combined education with fun and culture with technology. And all of them, except C70, were concentrated at The Park [Het Park] and the ‘Land of Hoboken’ [the Dijkzigt area], just across the Westzeedijk thoroughfare.³⁵⁶

As Lootsma and De Graaf point out, the Robot of the Kunsthal seems to echo the display of technological innovation characteristic for universal exhibitions, and they relate that Koolhaas ‘rather than an “arts centre” [...] prefers to call it a ‘*palais des festivals*’ in the tradition of the world fair pavilions.’³⁵⁷ The apparent borrowings from Schwanzer’s scheme show the importance the idea of the expo pavilion actually had for OMA’s first project in terms of architecture. Its implications are consequential. Embedded in ‘another’ tradition of the site – which, in turn, is related to another building type – the project stands outside the established urbanist discourse of contextual integration. A universal exhibition tends to figure as self-contained demonstration of national skills and achievements, with little or no consideration for its surroundings, neither of the exhibition nor of the city hosting it. This is not to say, that the relation of OMA’s scheme to the environment was arbitrary, but that the very model of the pavilion facilitated a non-mimetic relation with regard to the built surroundings. The choice thus allowed the project to be articulated in opposition to the ideal of a homogeneous city based on a

³⁵⁶ Lootsma, De Graaf, ‘In dienst van de ervaring. KunstHAL van OMA in Rotterdam’, 20 (translation: d’onderkast (vof), Belgium).

³⁵⁷ Lootsma, De Graaf, ‘In Service of the Experience’, in: Van Gerrewey, *A Critical Reader*, 282.



Le pavillon de l'Autriche

Quatre piliers de métal supportent, en un audacieux porte-à-faux, le plan carré du pavillon autrichien, percé d'une cour centrale.

L'entièreté de l'espace au sol, ainsi récupéré sous le pavillon, est traité en jardin et place de repos.

Des constructions basses (bureau et garderie), détachées du pavillon principal, complètent la participation.

Les murs-rideaux du pavillon, réalisés en plastique transparent, permettent le soir un éclairage total.

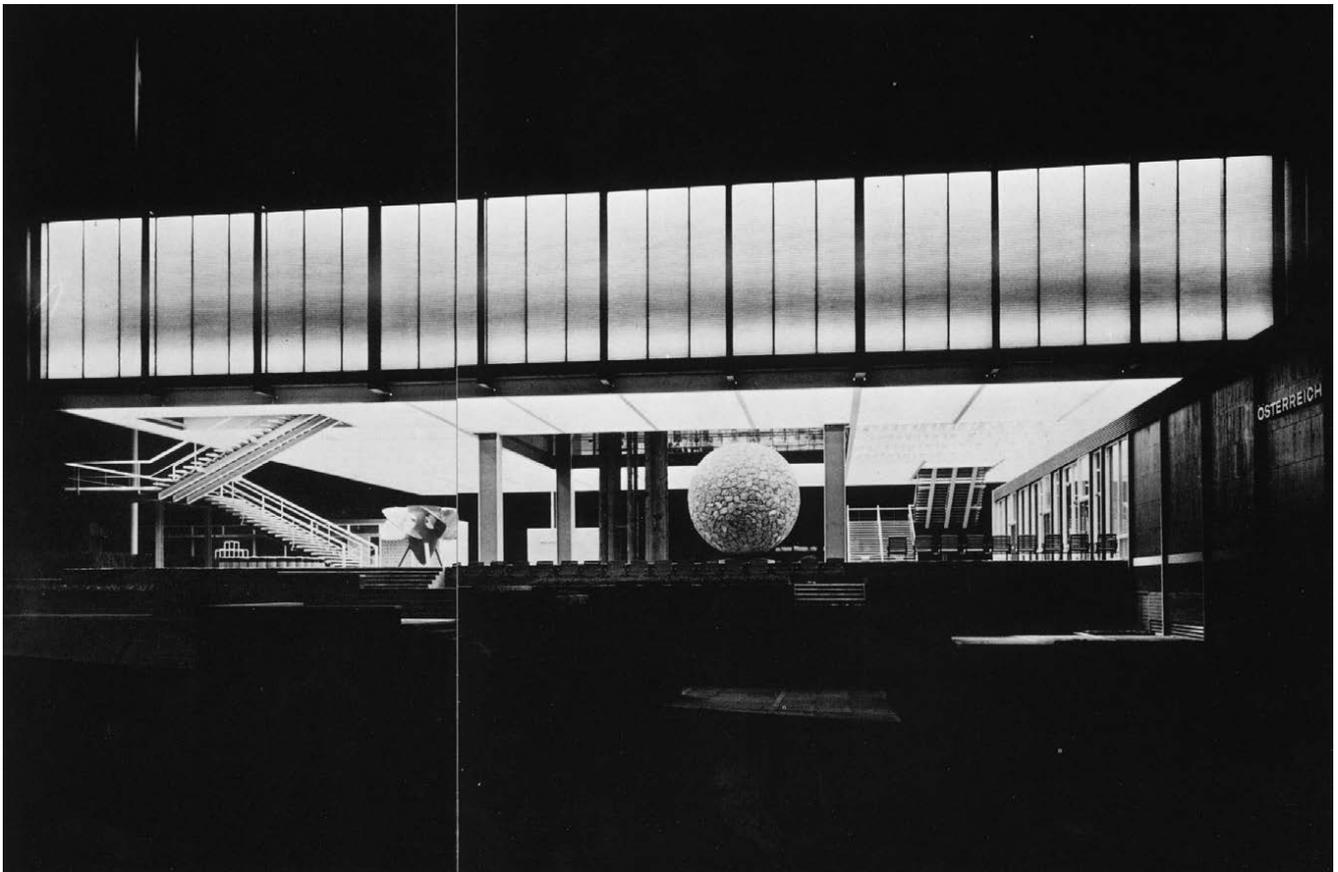
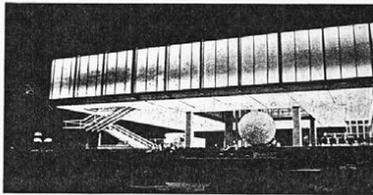
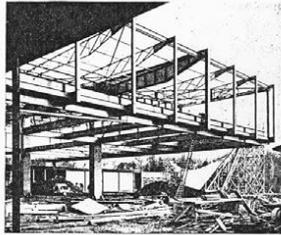


Figure 8. Karl Schwanzer, Austrian pavilion at the Expo 1958 in Brussels.
Above: Photocopy from the files of the Kunsthal team.

premodern urbanist repertoire. Koolhaas, however, reasoned differently. In *S,M,L,XL*, he suggests that the givens in the Dijkzigt area were genuinely heterogeneous – a contestable notion in the 1980s, as has been shown in Chapter 1.3.

To choose Schwanzer's Austrian pavilion as an architectural model appears a demonstration of aloofness and disinterest with regard to the monumental and classicist leanings of the museum design from the late 1970s and 1980s. As little as OMA's scheme was developed at this stage, it omits any claim for 'cultural weight' or institutional authority. There is no forecourt, no ceremonial stair, no enfilade of carefully proportioned galleries. Even if the museum architecture of the 1980s was varied, rarely a design for a museum or an arts centre was based on the building type of the expo pavilion. Having virtually nothing in common with the museums proposed by Hollein, Meier, Stirling, Ungers, Pei, and Isozaki, the model of the expo pavilion might have appeared as key to approach the task of the Kunsthal in a fresh way. Apart from Schwanzer's project, the expo pavilion is endowed with its own modernist genealogy of temporary light-weight constructions, apt to contrast with (postmodern) monumentality.³⁵⁸ Examples are Melnikov's timber pavilion for the 1925 International Exposition in Paris, and Le Corbusier's dismountable pavilion for Nestlé from 1928, a steel structure clad with metal sheeting. Further, the idea of the expo pavilion resonated with a programmatic accent on 'proletarian entertainment'. A project statement by Schwanzer suggests: 'The average visitor is only marginally interested in the competition for spectacular architecture. He is more impressed by what is going on, the vitality, the activity, the spontaneity, the event, the "happening"'.³⁵⁹ To mesmerize a broad public with vitality, activity, spontaneity, events and happenings – all this does appear akin to the future use of the Kunsthal Koolhaas had in mind.

³⁵⁸ After the exhibition in 1958 the steel construction was dismantled, and a modified version of the pavilion was rebuilt in 1964 Vienna, housing the 'Museum of the 20th Century', today called '21er Haus'.

³⁵⁹ Explanatory text on the Austrian 1958 pavilion in Brussels. Karl Schwanzer, *Architektur aus Leidenschaft: 25 Jahre Arbeit Karl Schwanzer*, (Wien/München: Modulerlag, 1974), 38, (author trans.).



Figure 9. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, model Kunsthall I, 1988.

At second sight

At a meeting of the building committee on 6 July 1988, Koolhaas presented a 'Concept Plan' for a downsized version of the Kunsthal.³⁶⁰ The estimated costs could be reduced from about 30 million guilders and a footprint of 60 by 60 metres, to 25 million guilders and a footprint of 55 by 55 metres. Linthorst and Bronder from the Municipal Museum Service announced to seek for subsidies and sponsoring that might fund the amount exceeding the available budget of 20 million guilders. In principle, the scheme for the main building corresponded to the draft presented in April. On this basis, the board commissioned OMA to prepare a preliminary design (voorlopig ontwerp). OMA presented a more elaborate version of the downsized scheme at the meeting of the Building Committee on 7 September.³⁶¹ At the instigation of Linthorst, both the restaurant and the conference rooms in the vertical slab were omitted. The Robot, however, proved more expensive than expected, and the estimated cost total slightly exceeded the limit of 25 million guilders. Concerns were voiced with regard to the quality and light conditions of the large open space under the main hall. Perhaps a model in scale 1 to 200 was shown during the gathering [Figure 9].³⁶²

Unlike the draft versions from April and June, the drawings and the model from September in scale 1 to 200 articulate the architecture envisaged in detail. [Figures 10-13] The most elaborate part is the 55 by 55-metres exhibition hall with the Robot in its centre. OMA's drawings include a detailed plan of the mechanism and its possible transformations in scale 1 to 100. A project statement from October reiterates the focal ideas outlined by Koolhaas in March, such as an expanded spectrum of events and the Robot as a flexible element in an otherwise stable building:

The Kunsthal is apt for a wide range of activities. It can serve as a museum, as a commercial fair, as a conference/performance centre, as a temporary car showroom. [...]

³⁶⁰ OMA, 'Kunsthal Hoboken. Concept Plan', 6 July 1988. OMAR 3340. The reduction of surface area was ordered at the Building Committee's previous meeting in June. See: minutes 9 June 1988. OMAR 3356.

³⁶¹ Minutes Building Committee, 7 September 1988: OMAR 3267. See also: OMA, A3 booklet, 'Kunsthal Rotterdam, Voorlopig Ontwerp', 7 September 1988. OMAR 1744.

³⁶² The minutes mention a model twice, but it is not clear whether they refer to an already existing or a prospect model. OMAR 3267. A model in scale 1 to 200 is held by the HNI: OMAR, MAQV 940.

Chapter 1.7

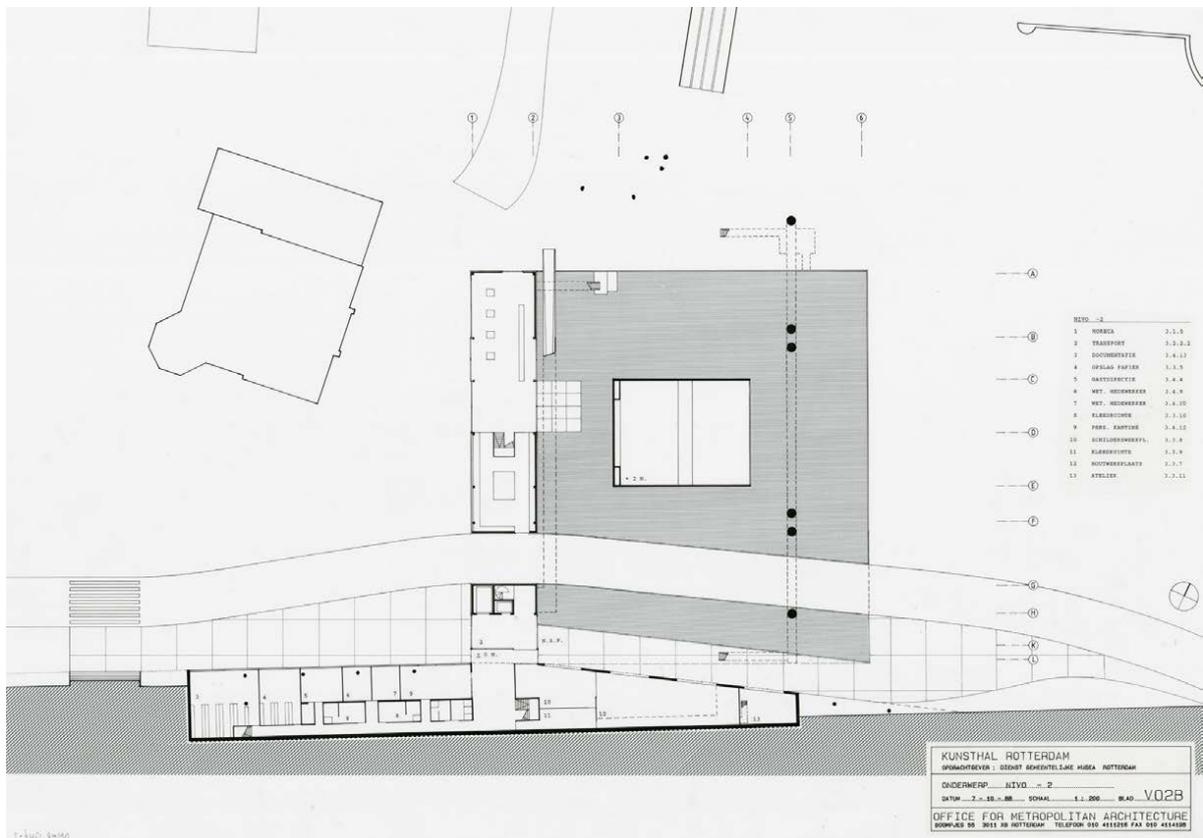
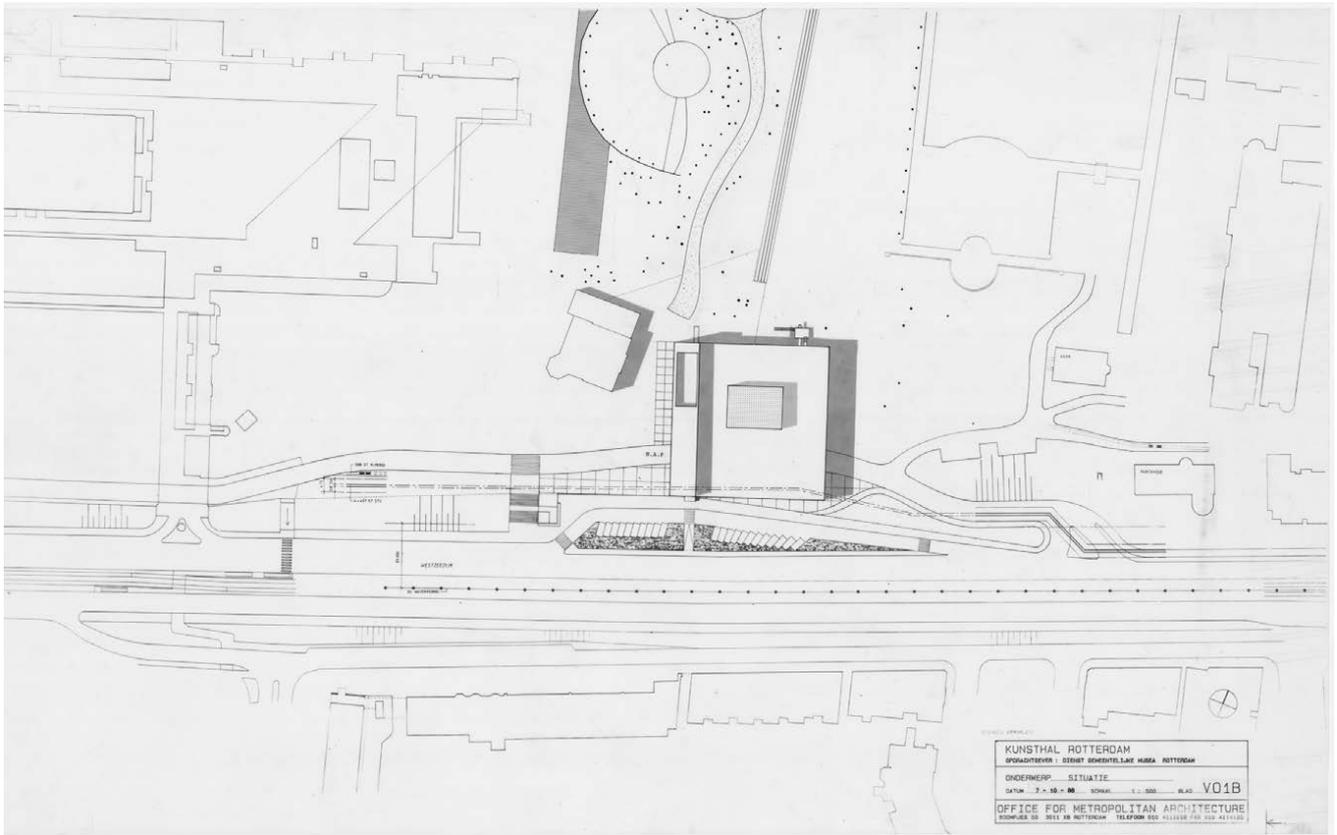


Figure 10. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, 'Kunsthal Rotterdam',
Above: Site plan, 7 September 1988. Below: Floorplan, park level, 7 October 1988.

Considering the persistent alternating between permanence and flexibility that characterizes recent museum architecture, the design aims a duality:

On the main floor – slightly off centre – a ‘robot’ is planned: a vertical, mechanical element of 3 layers that can easily undergo a maximum number of transformations. Walls/screens can shift or disappear, the floor moves up and down, the ceiling can be adjusted, etc.

The west-wall of the robot is equipped with communication media, projectors, video, fax machines, etc., and functions as a ‘brain’.³⁶³

As in the draft from April, the floorplan of the main hall is organized as a sequence of parallel strips. The lobby is located in the first one to the south, accessible directly from the Maas Boulevard. The adjacent strip to the north – again in analogy to the House in Miami, is filled with a 4-metres thick wall, containing the ticket counter, a shop, and storage space, among other things. The strip with secondary functions divides the lobby from the actual main hall. Apart from the Robot, the space is informed by the structural system. The idea to use different types of columns – as provided by the draft from April – was developed further in collaboration with structural engineer Cecil Balmond, then working at the London office of the engineering group Ove Arup & Partners.³⁶⁴ Balmond, born in 1943 in Sri Lanka, joined Arup London in 1968, after studying in Ibadan, Nigeria, and graduating at the University of Southampton.³⁶⁵ He was in charge, among other things, of Stirling’s Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart (1977-84), and he collaborated with OMA on the competitions for the Morgan Bank in Amsterdam (1984-85),³⁶⁶ the Town Hall in The Hague (1986) and the NAI in Rotterdam (1988; see Chapter 1.8). Next to the Kunsthal, many of the best known OMA projects – such as the Congrexpo in Lille, the House in Bordeaux, the Casa da Musica in Porto and the CCTV headquarters in Beijing – were designed in collaboration with Arup and Balmond as the responsible structural engineer. In 1988, however, not a

³⁶³ OMA, A3 booklet, ‘Kunsthal Rotterdam’, 7 October 1988. OMAR 1744 (author trans.).

³⁶⁴ Email to the author by OMA’s former project architect, Gregor Mescherowsky, on 27 August 2019. See also: Gargiani, ‘The Pliable Surface’, 656.

³⁶⁵ David Owen, ‘The Anti-Gravity Men. Cecil Balmond and the structural engineers of Arup’, *The New Yorker*, 25 June, 2007.

³⁶⁶ According to the 1993 essay ‘Last Apples’, the collaboration with Balmond began in 1985. Rem Koolhaas, ‘Last Apples’, in: Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 666.

Chapter 1.7

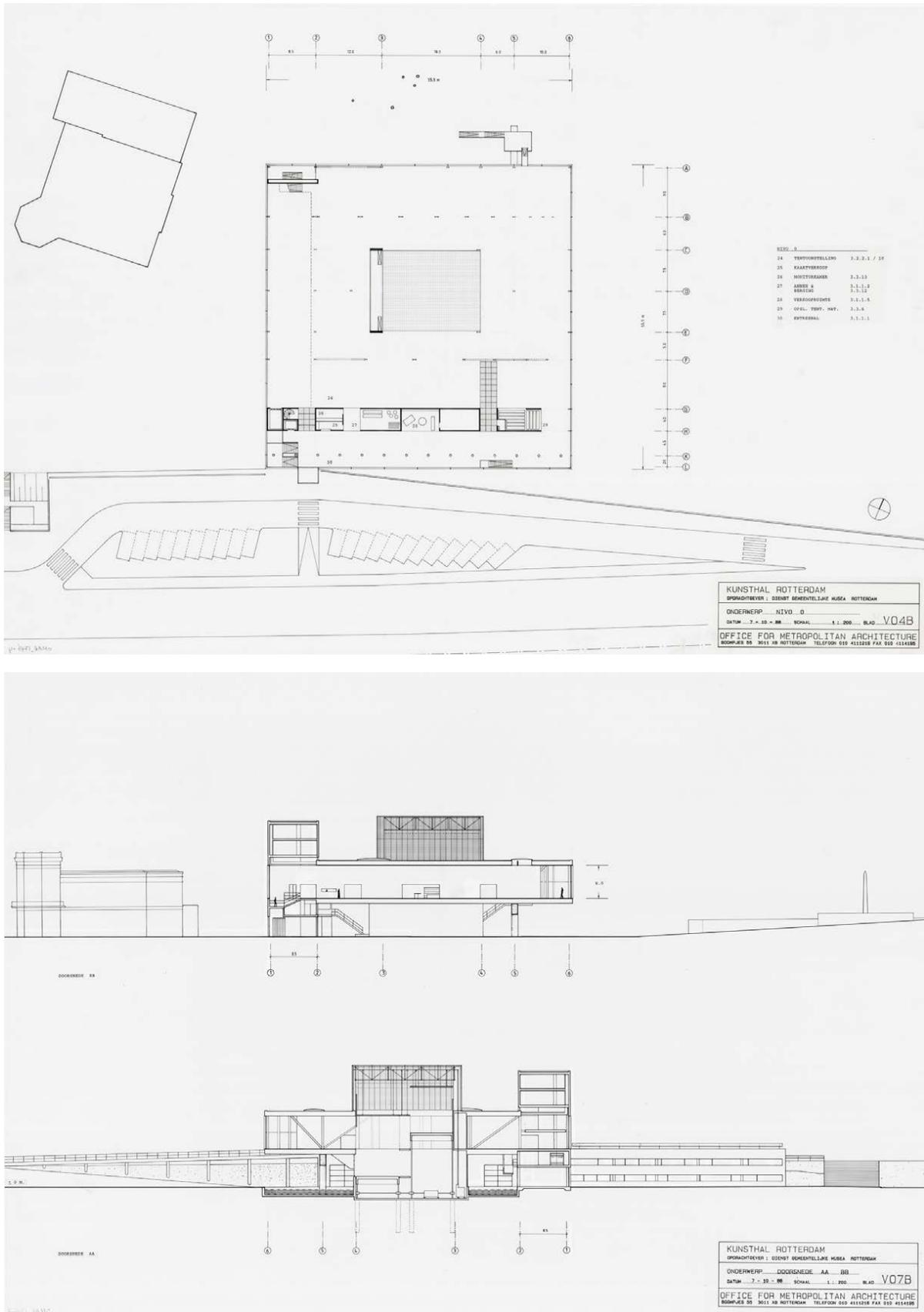


Figure 11. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, 'Kunsthall Rotterdam', 7 October 1988.
 Floorplan main gallery, cross sections east-west.

single project of the OMA-Arup cooperation had been developed beyond the stage of a competition entry. The Kunsthal was the first project to be built, but apparently the involvement of Arup was not yet official. Koolhaas suggested to bring in consultants at the meetings of the building committee in April and June, and in an improvised booklet filled with sketches of Vierendeel trusses there is a note mentioning ‘Arup’ under the heading ‘Main Contract’.³⁶⁷ Perhaps the collaboration between OMA and Arup was based on an informal agreement between Koolhaas and Balmond. According to Gregor Mescherowsky, at the time the project manager of the Kunsthal, ‘Arup had a significant share in the structural concept and its implementation.’³⁶⁸

Instead of columns aligned in several rows, the scheme from September provides a series of parallel Vierendeel trusses the height of which coincides with the height of the main hall. Both joists being covered by the floor and the ceiling respectively, the vertical members of the trusses appear as columns. The drawings and the model from September provide at least seven of them, each being different. The ‘bays’ between the vertical members, or ‘columns’, of some trusses are irregular, and the sections of the latter vary in shape and size. North from the Robot, the cross-section of the columns and the bays increase continuously in accordance with a mathematical sequence.³⁶⁹ Another truss is based on a regular grid of six metres, and the vertical members are identical, but some are omitted, and another truss again is perfectly regular with a spacing of 4 metres between its vertical members. In general, I-shaped profiles are provided, but in one case circular tube profiles. The sequence of the trusses, their visual transformation in perspective and the overall impact of their juxtaposition is the subject of numerous sketches and digital renderings, some of them included in *S,M,L,XL*.³⁷⁰ For the model, sticks of wood with circular and varying square cross sections were used.³⁷¹ OMA would re-propose the use of Vierendeel trusses as space containing structural members, allowing for clear-span halls above and below, one year later for the ZKM in Karlsruhe, likewise in collaboration with Balmond.

³⁶⁷ OMAR 3334. No evidence of a contract or any other official mandate has surfaced.

³⁶⁸ Email to the author, 22 October 2018.

³⁶⁹ Koolhaas in *S,M,L,XL* specifies: ‘logarithmic sequence of ever-increasing intervals and structural dimensions’. Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 429.

³⁷⁰ OMAR 3334. Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 428.

³⁷¹ OMAR MAQV 940.

Chapter 1.7

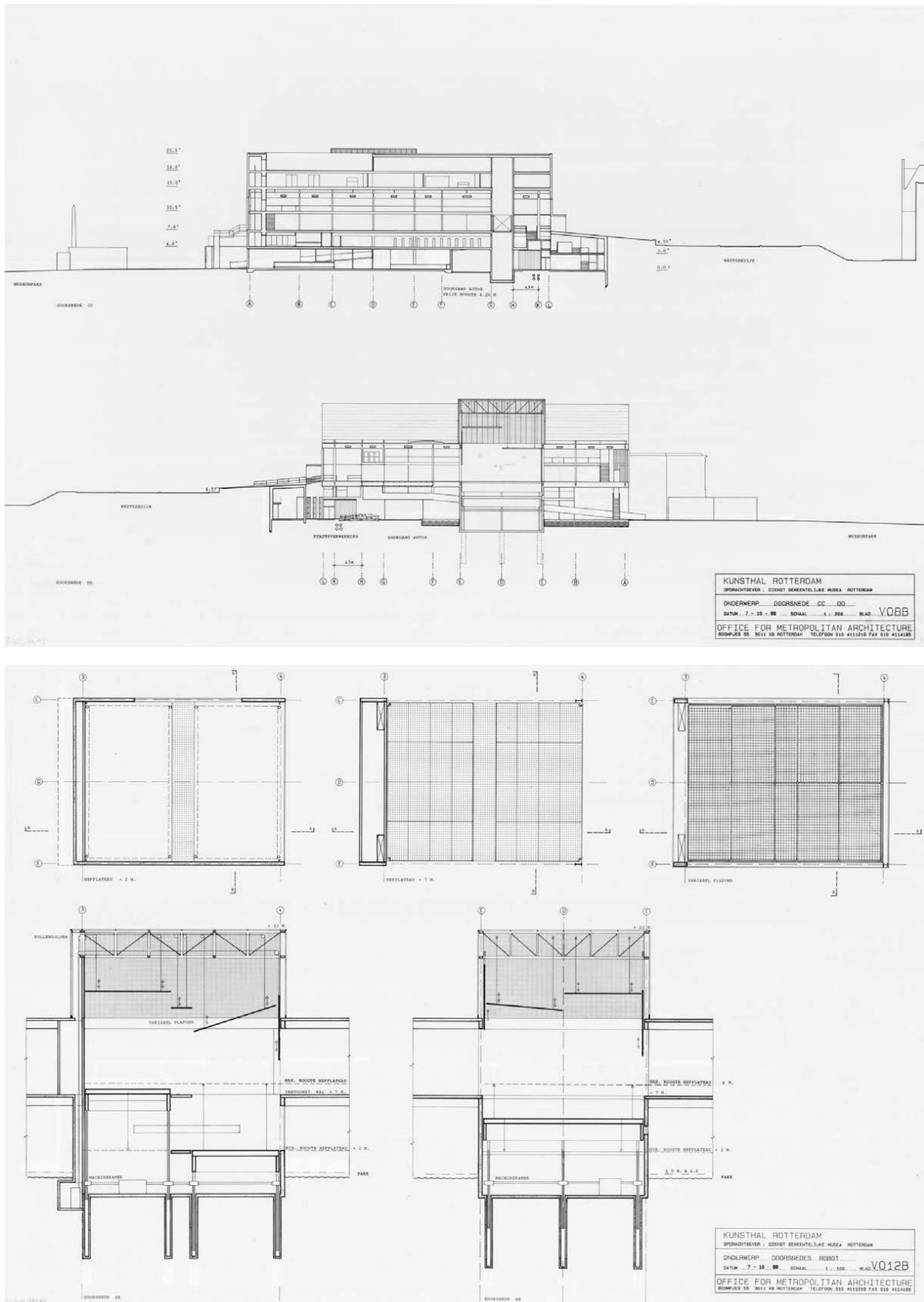


Figure 12. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, 'Kunsthall Rotterdam', 7 October 1988.
Cross sections north-south, details Robot.

Two different ideas overlap in this interior: the Miesian neutral space, and – in apparent analogy to OMA’s May study for the park – a La Villette-like surface, composed of parallel, visually and spatially permeable bands. In contrast to OMA’s concept for La Villette, however, the relation between the spatial structure and the use of the Kunsthall is loose. An A3 booklet by OMA, apparently presented during the Building Committee’s meeting on 7 September, shows eleven different options of zoning which partly accord with the strips marked by the columns, and partly overlap with them.

The Vierendeel trusses of the main hall span 36 metres from the vertical slab with subsidiary functions to a single concrete beam resting on six *pilotis*. From there, the trusses cantilever further 10 metres to the edge of the east façade. Like the trusses themselves, the structural grid of the main hall is irregular. There are 6 axes running north-south and 10 axes running east-west. Only few bay sizes occur more than once. Neither are they based on a common module. The spacing between the trusses varies between 4.5, 5, 6, 7.5 and 9 metres, and the facades faithfully echo the rhythm of the structural grid, the intervals ranging from 2 to 6 metres. The square exhibition hall is enclosed by four glass walls with slender mullions, probably envisaged in steel or aluminium, like the exterior fascia of floor and ceiling. A semi-transparent box on the roof indicates the technical apparatus of the Robot. From the three sides, especially towards the Maas Boulevard, the overall impact is ‘Miesian’, serene and elegant. The facades disguise the complexity of grid, structure and interior. At the west facade, the glazed front of the exhibition hall divides the vertical slab containing the subsidiary functions in two halves. Both are clad with stone, renouncing any openings on the two top-most floors. The combination of a floating volume in steel and glass, and a secondary volume ‘in stone’ that rests on the ground is another analogy to Schwanzer’s pavilion from 1958.³⁷² At the same time, the composition recalls Le Corbusier’s Villa in Garches, turning the Miesian motif into a ribbon window, topped by the ‘high forehead’ of a windowless wall. The stone cladding extends to the three other sides of the vertical slab, which otherwise would merge with the main hall into a single T-shaped volume.

³⁷² Photographs show several parts of the lower building clad with stone tiles.

Chapter 1.7

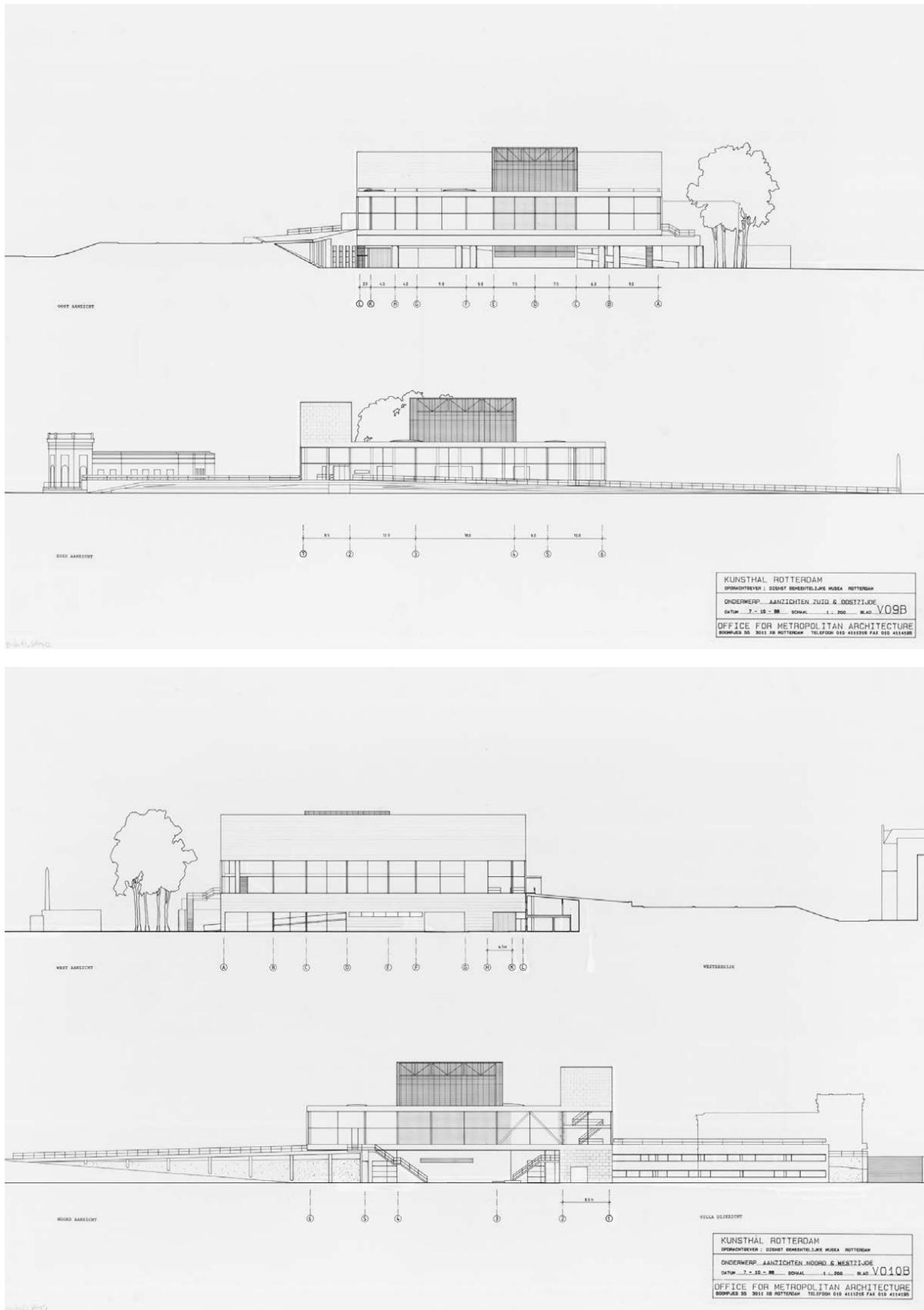


Figure 13. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, 'Kunsthall Rotterdam', 7 October 1988.
Above: East and south elevation. Below: West and north elevation.

The dyke is widened to a small parking lot with a road of its own, branching off from the Maas Boulevard. Compared with the draft from April, the plaza, connecting the Kunsthal with the Villa Dijkzigt, is much larger. The site plan from September shows a squared surface which extends from the Service Road along the foot of the dyke to the central promenade (Axis of Development) starting 30 metres north of the Kunsthal. To the west the plaza borders the precinct of the hospitals, surrounding the Villa on all sides.³⁷³

The exterior of the Kunsthal is completely unrelated to the brick buildings both inside the park and across the street. The closest ‘relative’ in sight is Prouvé’s tower of the Erasmus University, clad with white enamelled steel panels, and – according to the classification of *Collage City* – conceived not as ‘texture’ but as an ‘object’. The hospital’s time of origin further accords with the resemblance of the Kunsthal to Mies’ late work and the numerous pavilion-like buildings following its model, including the one by Schwanzer. But all affinities are undermined by the fundamental structural irregularity of the Kunsthal, contesting the repetitive rationality of construction so important for Prouvé. And, as if to prevent the slightest suspicion that the Kunsthal takes sides with the hospital, it is the ‘anachronism’ of the stone-clad facade that faces the ideology of technological progress embodied by its tower.

Whereas Prouvé’s façade emulates the look of industrial manufacturing, the first project of the Kunsthal appears as a nod to the stylistically modernist architecture of the post-war era. It is close to buildings like the police station in Almere (1982-85), the residential towers in Groningen (1983-88), the bus terminal (1985-87) and the Patio Villa (1984-88) in Rotterdam, and the mixed development at Veerplein in Vlaardingen (1986-89). Conversely, the first project of the Kunsthal is remote from the collage-like appearance of buildings like the Dance Theatre and the Villa Dall’Ava. And yet it is unlikely that Koolhaas had little interest in the design of the Kunsthal at this stage, as seemingly was the case – at least at some point – with the projects for Almere, Groningen, and Vlaardingen. Next to the obvious

³⁷³ OMA, ‘Kunsthal Rotterdam’, 7 September 1988. OMAR 1744.



Figure 14. OMA/Rem Koolhaas,
De Brink apartment blocks, Groningen 1983-88. Police Station, Almere, 1982-85.

‘importance’ of the commission and the considerable freedom OMA was granted, Koolhaas’ sketches, and his regular presence at the meetings of the Building Committee, indicate commitment.

An exhilarating prospect

During the 1980s, Koolhaas has repeatedly expressed his recognition for modernist architecture of the post-war period.³⁷⁴ This fascination with the modernism of the 1950s, as opposed to the ‘heroic’ modernism of the 1920, is the main subject of an interview from 1988. When asked by Patrice Goulet, what he ‘likes about this architecture’, Koolhaas responds: ‘Its simplicity and its banality. Its poetry and its sensuality.’³⁷⁵ The first project for the Kunsthall does bespeak an interest in these qualities: the simplicity and banality of its exterior at first sight; the poetry of the columns in the main hall; the sensuality of Miesian skin in steel and glass flush with rough walls of stone. The drawings and the model from September 1988 betray a serious attempt to artistically appropriate the modernist architecture of the 1950s and 1960s. The borrowings from Schwanzer’s Austrian Expo pavilion are proof of this. Apart from the Austrian pavilion, the preference for glass skins, and, more importantly, the display of ‘daring’ structures, suggesting a substantial collaboration between architect and engineer, were characteristics of Expo 58 which the design of the Kunsthall seems to emulate.³⁷⁶

But it appears that Koolhaas’ penchant for 1950s modernism, his interest in simplicity and banality, and, ultimately, the relative dryness of the first project for the Kunsthall need also to be seen in the context of postmodern architecture. Koolhaas had begun to distance himself from postmodern architecture in the mid-seventies. The corollary text of the ‘Story of the Pool’ from 1976 caricatures the emerging anti-modern climate in architecture: ‘they [the New York architects of the 1970s] complained that the pool was so bland, so rectilinear, so unadventurous, so boring; there were no historical allusions;

³⁷⁴ For example, Koolhaas, asked in 1985 if he liked SOM’s Lever House, answered: ‘Oui, et tout l’architecture des années 50-60 qui, comme les constructions d’Harrison, est moderne sans être névrotique ni hystérique, qui est l’oeuvre d’architectes préoccupés des bien faire, qui possèdent une compétence qui manque maintenant terriblement, et qui nous nous efforçons aujourd’hui d’acquiescer ...’. Goulet, ‘La deuxième chance’, 4.

³⁷⁵ Patrice Goulet, ‘Trente ans après’, in: Daniel Abadie et al. (eds.), *Années 50*, exhibition catalogue (Paris: Editions du Centre Georges Pompidou, 1988), 474.

³⁷⁶ Mil De Kooning, Rika Devos, “‘Les choses ne seront plus jamais comme avant’”. *L’architecture moderne à l’Expo 58*, in: Idem, *L’architecture moderne à l’Expo 58* (Brussels: Fonds Mercator, 2006), 15. Rika Devos, ‘Un grand fiasco? Les architectes Belges à L’Expo 58’, in: *ibid.*, 36.

Chapter 1.7

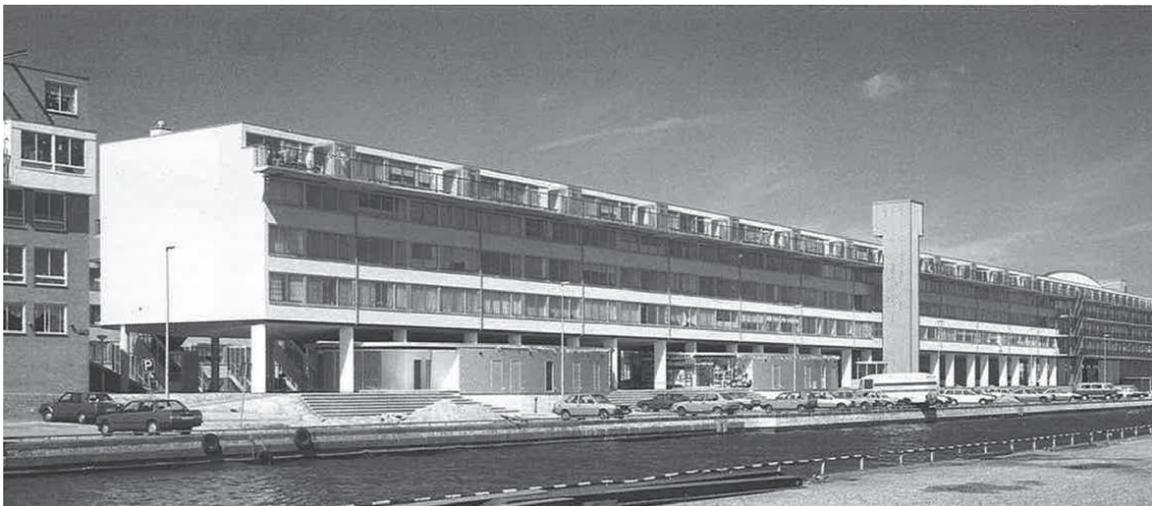


Figure 15. OMA/Rem Koolhaas. Above: Patio Villa, Rotterdam 1984-88.
Centre: IJ Plein Housing, Amsterdam, 1981-88.
Below: Bus Terminal, Rotterdam, 1985-87.

there was no decoration.³⁷⁷ The words read like an architectural agenda in the guise of an imaginary postmodernist critique. Not only the above three projects from the 1970s, also buildings like the police station in Almere (1982-85), the IJ Plein in Rotterdam (1980-87), the Patio Villa in Rotterdam (1988), and the first project for the Kunsthal seem obliged to similar ideas of oppositional dryness. [Figures 14-15]

For the catalogue of the Venice biennale in 1980, 'The presence of the Past', Koolhaas wrote a short piece, half manifesto, half polemic against the postmodern spirit of the event. In the text Koolhaas suggests that '[r]ecent architecture' was obsessed by form, imposing a reductive notion of typology, servile to the past, historicist, dismissive of modernism, and uncritical. Conversely the work of OMA would see 'an era of a new sobriety', faithful to modernism, concerned with programme and content as opposed to form, that is, the articulation of a 'culture based on the givens of density, technology and definitive social instability.'³⁷⁸ In an interview from 2015 Koolhaas explained:

It was the Europeanization of postmodernism. I lived in New York in the 1970s, so I was there when American postmodernism was born and when the arguments for it were being developed. I had an intimate overview of all the authors and how they interacted. I was alert to what postmodernism implied and I was horrified when I realized that it had reached Europe. That is probably why I tried to show a strong opposition to it. Taking part in the 1980 Venice Architecture Biennale was the occasion to make my opposition manifest.³⁷⁹

Thanks to the intercession of Kenneth Frampton OMA was able to participate in the exhibition, contributing a facade of their own to the Strada Novissima in the Corderie of Venice's former Arsenale. At one end of the street – dense with classicist and historicist motifs such as columns, cornices, rustications, and arcs – OMA was represented by a blank undulated canvas, pierced by a pole to which

³⁷⁷ Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 310.

³⁷⁸ Rem Koolhaas, 'Our "New Sobriety"', 214, 216.

³⁷⁹ Szacka, 'Translucent oppositions', n.p.

a sign with the neon scripture ‘OMA’ was fastened.³⁸⁰ The façade poignantly signals two key oppositions outlined by Koolhaas’ text: classicism vs. modernism; an overload of forms vs. the near absence of form. Koolhaas seems to have seen the Strada Novissima and postmodern architecture in general as an occasion to ‘stand alone’. When he called the abandonment of modernism an ‘exhilarating prospect’, it may have been as ironic as honest.³⁸¹ In the above interview he comments rather dryly: ‘The text, together with our non-facade, was a way of asserting difference’, while his then collaborator Stefano de Martino recalls: ‘the Biennale confirmed that we were on the right track. To know that we were in a minority was exhilarating. We upset a lot of people. Everyone else fell into a camp [...]’.³⁸²

Koolhaas continued to reject ideas associated with postmodern architecture: the Popperian refusal of utopias, irony in architecture, an exclusively mimetic understanding of contextual relations, the reduction of morphology and typology to a premodern repertoire, the abandonment of the modernist tradition of social engagement.³⁸³ The message was heard. In 1982 Anthony Vidler rightly acknowledges that OMA had ‘always resisted this great divide between programme and form’, imposed by the ‘so-called post-modernist era’ and bridged by Whites and Grays with questionable success.³⁸⁴ But with no less reason Geert Bekaert interprets – in the same year – Koolhaas’ insistence on the modernist tradition as a ‘social necessity’ in terms of artistic distinction: ‘This places him [Koolhaas] in a comfortable polemical position with regard to the many forms of so-called postmodernism, which still suffer from avant-gardism and desperately try to make the foundation of their identity. Koolhaas’ identity is perfectly secure; his *différence* is unmistakable.’³⁸⁵ Bekaert applauds: ‘The great monument to Koolhaas’ war of attrition with architectural form was unveiled at the Venice Architecture Biennale [...], where he was placed amidst an anti-modernist mob.’³⁸⁶

³⁸⁰ On OMA’s contribution at the Venice Biennale, see: Léa-Catherine Szacka, *Exhibiting the Postmodern. The 1980 Venice Biennale* (Venezia: Marsilio Editori, 2016), 152-153.

³⁸¹ Koolhaas, ‘Our “New Sobriety”’, 216.

³⁸² Szacka, ‘Translucent oppositions’, n.p.

³⁸³ Statements of this kind are to be found in: Hans van Dijk, ‘Rem Koolhaas interview’, *wonen-TA/BK* 11 (1978), 17-20; OMA, ‘Urban Intervention: Dutch Parliament Extension’, 47-50; Franco Raggi, ‘Edonista-puritano’, *Modo* 58 (1983), 26-28; Goulet, ‘La deuxième chance’, 2-9.

³⁸⁴ Anthony Vidler, ‘The Irony of Metropolis. The Office for Metropolitan Architecture’, *Skyline* 5 (1982), 19.

³⁸⁵ Bekaert, ‘The odyssey of an enlightened entrepreneur’, 293.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 293.

Polymorphous pleasures

If one considers the whole production of OMA of the 1980s, not all of it appears unaffected by a number of qualities commonly associated with postmodern architecture and urbanism. Irony – as Emmanuel Petit has shown – surely is one of them, and the interest in popular culture another.³⁸⁷ Especially those OMA projects that won most acclaim share common ground, however involuntarily, with ideas advocated by Rowe and Jencks.³⁸⁸ There are obvious parallels on a formal level to the architecture and urbanism championed by the two authors as well as to the projects compiled by Portoghesi and Klotz. Juxtaposed volumes, materials, grids, references, and the overall impact of heterogeneity, collage and fragmentation was characteristic for the production of a large part of the architectural elite of the 1980s – Hollein, Stirling, Gehry, Venturi, Moore, Meier, Isozaki, Eisenman, Tschumi, Meier, Siza, among others – even if some of these architects did not regard themselves as postmodernists or rejected postmodernist architecture altogether, like Koolhaas did. Regardless of the enormous differences between them, numerous built and unbuilt projects by these architects during the seventies and eighties do challenge the notion of unity. Dick Hebdige wrote: ‘Postmodernism may mean what Paul Virilio calls [...] the ‘triumph of the art of the fragment: a loss of totality, a necessary and therapeutic loss of wholeness.’³⁸⁹ According to Toyo Ito, OMA’s approach – based on ‘rules’ – had turned fragmentation into the product of a quasi-mechanical operation: ‘Until now, all architects worked by collage. Since the ‘20s, fragmentation’s been the only methodology. But Koolhaas has invented the first fragment-generating machine.’³⁹⁰ Even if collage played a certain role for architects like Le Corbusier and Aalto

³⁸⁷ Petit, *Irony*. Koolhaas denied that postmodernist architecture was understandable for a wider public: ‘The most obvious contradiction is that the post-modernists claim they use citation and nostalgia to create a more communicative architecture, more familiar and understandable. I think this is a populist assertion. The actual result is that they make totally incomprehensible and alienating buildings. Incomprehensible even for me, let alone non-architects.’ Raggi, ‘Puritanical Hedonist’, in Gerrewey, *A Critical Reader*, 90. First published under the above title ‘Edonista-puritano’ in 1983.

³⁸⁸ This applies also to Klotz’s notion of postmodernism. One section of his book *Moderne und Postmoderne* is dedicated to the work of Koolhaas. Heinrich Klotz, *Moderne und Postmoderne. Architektur der Gegenwart 1960-1980* (Braunschweig, Wiesbaden: Vieweg&Sohn, 1985), 309-314. For Klotz, who seizes on Jencks’ analogy between postmodern architecture and language, the yardstick for postmodernity is the ability to communicate (‘Sprachfähigkeit’), to develop narratives and fiction. *Ibid.*, 134-136.

³⁸⁹ Dick Hebdige ‘A report on the Western Front. Postmodernism and the politics of style’, in: Chris Jencks (ed.), *Cultural Reproduction* (London: Routledge, 1993), 80.

³⁹⁰ Ito, ‘Not Forms, but Rules’, 85.

early on, it is equally true, however, that to eliminate the stylistic ‘chaos’ of 19th century historicism and to impose a new coherent style on society was the ambition of many modernist architects before the second world war. The ideal of conflict-free homogeneity reverberates in the *cliché* of a White Modernity, so emphatically denied by the essential heterogeneity of postmodernist architecture.

Even Koolhaas’ demonstratively sober House in Miami (1974), OMA’s Museum of Photography in Amsterdam (1975), the IJ Plein housing (1980-87), the Patio House (1984-88), and the first project for the Kunsthall do rely on formal fragmentation, albeit in varying degrees. And yet the stress on simple forms, and occasionally on seriality (House in Miami, IJ Plein), which deferred the introduction of heterogeneity to a level of detailing, was meant to mark a counter position vis à vis postmodernist architecture. ‘Needless to say the projects constitute a polemic with the polymorphous pleasures of so-called post-modern architecture’: with these words OMA introduced the projects for the House in Miami, the Museum of Photography, and the ‘Story of the Pool’, published in the 1977 issue of *Architectural Design* on OMA.³⁹¹ From this and the above statements it is clear, that the relative formal rigor of the above projects was – at least to some extent – an early attempt to do without this quarry of artistic expression to which formal fragmentation was essential and which, as he knew, was characteristic for much of the work of his postmodernist peers. It had also proved fruitful, even indispensable for the work of OMA, but if ‘asserting difference’, or distinction, *was* a vital ambition of Koolhaas, the ‘polymorphous pleasures’ stood in his way.³⁹²

It is equally clear, then, that any sort of imitators meant a serious threat. Koolhaas showed much sensitivity for the issue already in the early 1980s. At the conference in Charlottesville held in November 1982, he addressed the problem of epigones in a tone of utmost concern when commenting on Gehry’s project for the Smith House in Brentwood (1981):

³⁹¹ OMA, ‘Three rectangular projects’, in: *Architectural Design* 5 (1977), 352.

³⁹² A later comment by Koolhaas on Kunsthall I may be understood in the above sense. In an interview with Mil De Kooning he explained in 1989: ‘The first version of the Rotterdam Kunsthall, for instance, is a project that has – to my view – a distinct absence of glamour, which is very important to me at the moment.’ Mil De Kooning, ‘OMA in Holland’, in: Van Gerrewey, *A Critical Reader*, 169. First published in Dutch under the title ‘OMA in Nederland’ in 1989.

Koolhaas: ‘This is a project that presents in a very moving way a serious issue: what is someone to do when his work is being ripped off left, right and center? Frank, how do you continue in the direction that you more or less single-handedly invented? How do you feel your work relates to the countless clones? Do you feel oppressed by them?’

Gehry: ‘I don’t see the clones; people have said this to me, but I don’t see them. I absolutely go blank. One or two maybe ...’

Koolhaas: ‘So you are not aware of them breathing down your neck?’

Gehry: ‘They don’t bother me, no.’³⁹³

There are many statements by Koolhaas and others on OMA and its epigones. Elia Zenghelis recalled in 2005: ‘When I asked him [Koolhaas] why we had to turn our back so fast on what we had just done so well, his answer was that it was necessary to be ahead of being consumed.’³⁹⁴ In 1989 Koolhaas himself told Mil De Kooning: ‘I feel as if the epigones have forced me permanently on the run; it truly is revolting.’ In 1988, former students from Delft University and collaborators like Willem Jan Neutelings might have appeared to him as such, as well as Arquitectonica, co-headed by Laurinda Spear.³⁹⁵ Arquitectonica by then had produced a number of projects and realized a series of buildings – boldly collaged while seizing exclusively on the formal repertoire of modernism – which resembled, superficially but obviously, the work of OMA.³⁹⁶ [Figure 16] The likeness did not go unnoticed. In an issue of *Archis* from April 1988 – when OMA was preparing the first draft for the Kunsthall – there is a 10-pages article on the office, subtitled ‘the popular modernism of America’.³⁹⁷ The authors quote a comment by Zaha Hadid: ‘Ideas get consumed quickly without any importance to where they come

³⁹³ Robertson, *The Charlottesville Tapes*, 190.

³⁹⁴ Elia Zenghelis, ‘Text and Architecture: Architecture as Text’, in: Schaik, Mácel, *Exit Utopia*, 262.

³⁹⁵ The office Arquitectonica was founded in 1977 by Bernardo Fort-Brescia and Laurinda Spears, amongst others.

³⁹⁶ This applies to the Dallas ‘Project for Planets’ (1983) in particular, but also to the Helmsley Center in Miami (1981), the Maba House in Houston (1982), the South Ferry Plaza in New York (1985), and the Banco de Credito del Peru in Lima (1983-88).

³⁹⁷ Marianne Loof, Jurian van Stigt, ‘Form follows fancy. Het populaire modernisme van Architectonica’, *Archis* 4 (1988), 16.

Chapter 1.7

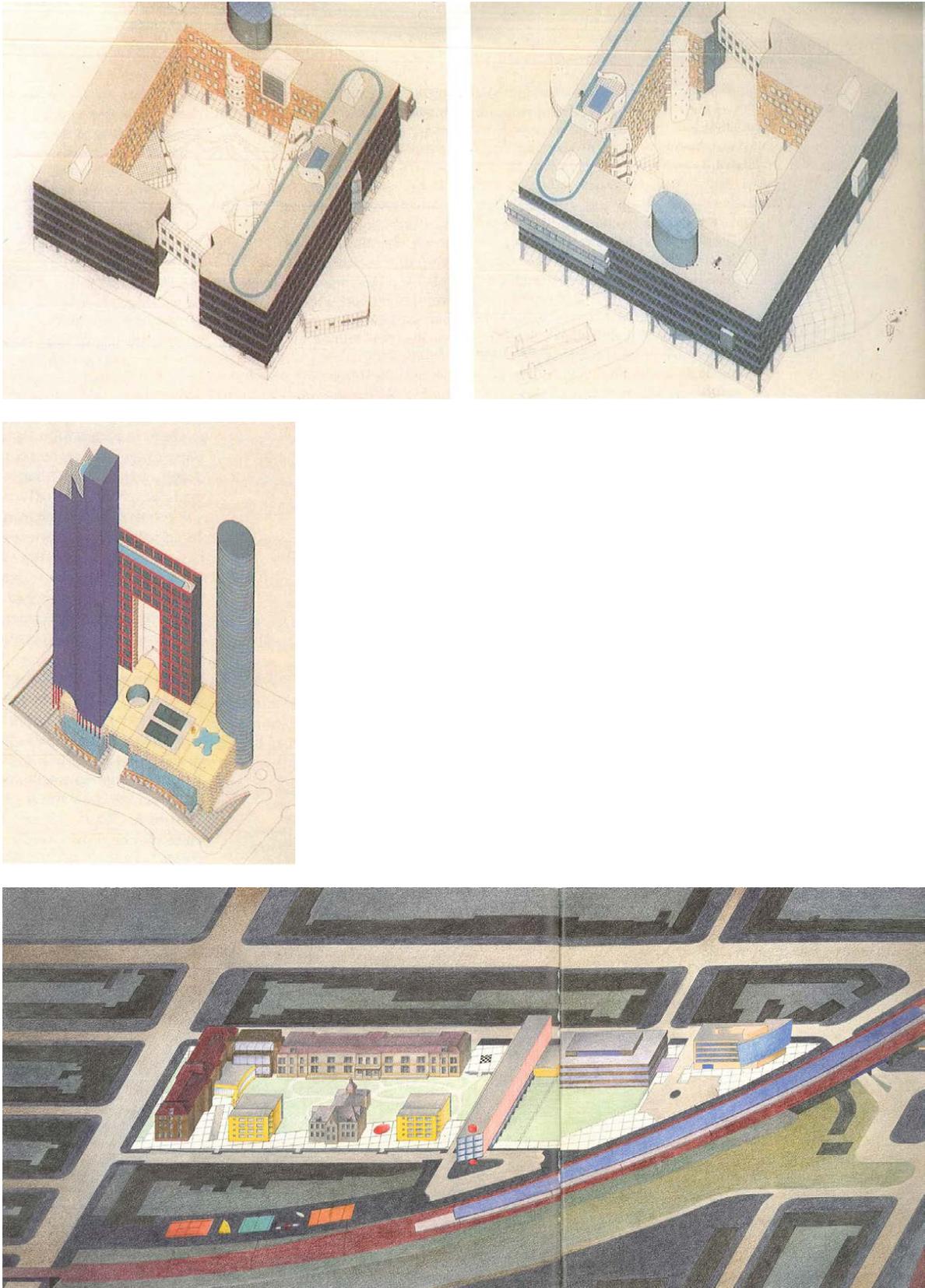


Figure 16. Top: Arquitectonica, Banco de Credito del Peru, Lima, 1983-8.

Middle: Arquitectonica, Helmsley Center, Miami, 1981.

Bottom: Mecanoo, Study for a hospital in Amsterdam, 1987.

from. There are countless examples, including *Arquitectonica vis a vis OMA!*³⁹⁸ The cover of this issue – it included a review by Hans van Dijk of OMA’s Netherlands Dance Theatre – showed a picture of the Banco de Credito del Peru in Lima (1983-88) by *Arquitectonica*. An anecdote, likewise related to *Arquitectonica*, bespeaks Koolhaas’ unease to see his ideas opted by his peers. When asked by Mark Wigley in 2008 about the ‘personal history of the hole’ – Wigley referred to the architectural motif the ‘void’ – Koolhaas remembered having first noticed a building with a hole near Amsterdam:

[...] a generic building built in the sixties or late fifties. I’m not sure if it was a hospital or an old people’s home, but it became significant by virtue of the hole. I told Laurinda Speer [sic] about it, and a couple of years later it turned up in Miami; it turned into *Arquitectonica*! I thought that would be the end of the hole for me [...].³⁹⁹

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

³⁹⁹ Mark Wigley, ‘Rem Koolhaas and Mark Wigley in Discussion’, in: Fundação Casa da Música (ed.), *OMA. Office for Metropolitan Architecture, Rem Koolhaas. Casa da Música* (Porto: Fundação Casa da Música, 2008), 178.

1.8

The other strand

The competition for the NAI: April - October 1988

OMA did a first project for a Dutch architecture museum in Rotterdam in 1984, conceived as an extension of Rotterdam's former central library at the Nieuwe Markt. [Figure 1] The scheme – published in an issue of *Plan* in 1985 – bears no resemblance with OMA's competition entry for the Netherlands Architecture Institute (NAi) from 1988.⁴⁰⁰ Whereas the project itself appears of little significance, the episode illustrates the rivalry between Rotterdam and Amsterdam and the competition for the country's emerging cultural institutions, not without parallels to the Kunsthal. Like the Kunsthal, the NAi was conceived as a national institution. As in the case of the Kunsthal, Rotterdam's municipality was able to convince the relevant ministries in The Hague that their city would provide a preferable environment for the new institution, offering a 'dynamic atmosphere for architecture – filled with events and exhibitions supported by the cultural policies of an enthusiastic local government.'⁴⁰¹ As in the case of the Kunsthal, the programme of the NAi would be based on the study of already existing models from abroad, namely the Deutsches Architekturmuseum (DAM) in Frankfurt and, the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) in Montreal, as Sergio Figueiredo's book *The NAi Effect* explicates in detail.⁴⁰² Different from the Kunsthal, the decision for Rotterdam met fierce resistance. When announced by Elco Brinkman, the Dutch Minister for Health, Welfare and Culture (WVC) in December 1984, it came as a surprise.⁴⁰³ The NAi was a merger of three already existing institutions based in Amsterdam: the Housing Foundation (Stichting Wonen), Netherlands' Documentation Centre for Architecture (NDB) and the Foundation of the Architecture Museum (SAM). Amsterdam's municipality even offered to accommodate the NAi in the famous 'Beurs van Berlage', and the Stichting Wonen organized an architectural competition for the requisite adaption of the building.⁴⁰⁴ In fact, OMA's scheme from 1984

⁴⁰⁰ Joost Meuwissen, 'Architectuur in Rotterdam', *Plan* 7-8 (1985), 41-44.

⁴⁰¹ Figueiredo, *The NAi Effect*, 209.

⁴⁰² Figueiredo, 'Towards an Architecture Institute', in: idem, *The NAi Effect*, 155-199.

⁴⁰³ Figueiredo, *The NAi Effect*, 208.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., 208, 212.

Chapter 1.8

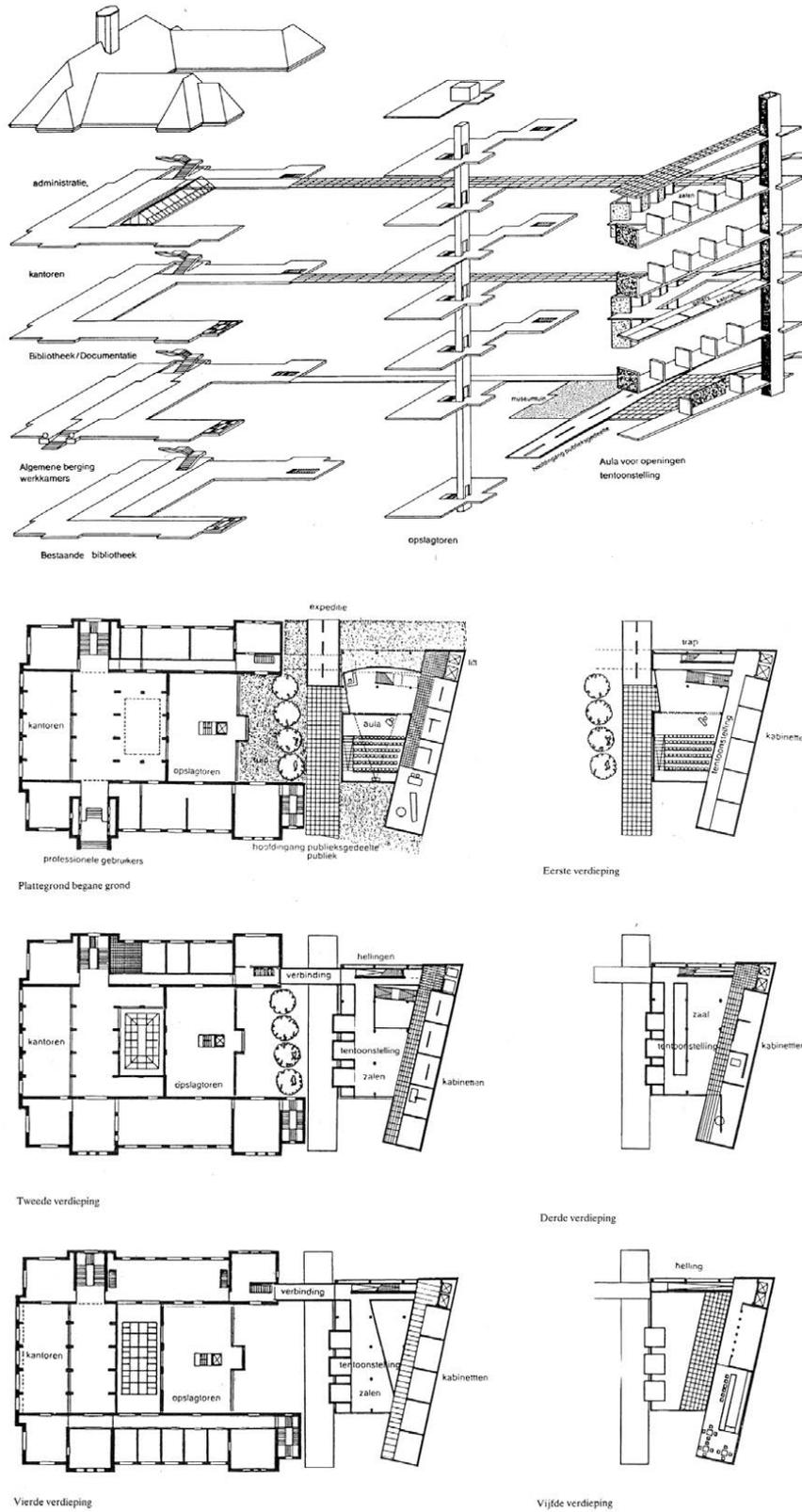


Figure 1. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, Study for the extension of Rotterdam's former library to accommodate the NAI, 1984-85.

had been commissioned by Rotterdam's municipality in order to demonstrate that the city on the Maas was able to offer adequate premises for the NAI as well. But regardless of OMA's project, it became clear by 1985 that Rotterdam's old library failed to convince.⁴⁰⁵

Eventually the minister's determination prevailed. In June 1986 all parties involved agreed to establish the future NAI in a new building in Rotterdam.⁴⁰⁶ Later in the year it was decided to select the architect on the basis of a 'multiple commission', a procedure which differs from a conventional competition by way of the selection process. An assessment committee would draft a report on the designs submitted, and on this, merely advisory, basis the Steering Group NAI – composed of representatives of the SAM, NDB, the Stichting Wonen, and the Ministries of Culture (WVC) and Housing (VROM) – would choose the architect.⁴⁰⁷

In January 1988, OMA was invited to participate.⁴⁰⁸ As a press release enclosed in the letter informed, a budget of 22 million guilders was reserved for the new building, to be furnished by the Ministry of Housing (VROM) and the Ministry of Culture (WVC), which would also account for the operating costs of the NAI.⁴⁰⁹ The competition would be supervised by the Steering Group of the NAI, chaired by J. Jessurun of the Ministry of Culture.⁴¹⁰ It was also the latter ministry that funded the competition and subsequent exhibition.⁴¹¹ Next to OMA, the six teams listed in the press release were: Bentheim and Crouwel of Amsterdam, Jo Coenen of Eindhoven, Ralph Erskine of Stockholm, Wim Quist of Rotterdam, and Luigi Snozzi of Locarno. But Erskine declined and was replaced by Dutch architect Jan Hubert Henket who would later build the garden pavilion of the Boijmans Museum (1989-91).

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., 213.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 214.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid. Among the members of the assessment committee was A. Bodon, the architect of the first extension of the Boijmans museum. See: Ruud Brouwers, Bernard Colenbrander et al., *Six designs for the Dutch Architectural Institute*, catalogue of the exhibition (Rotterdam: Dutch Architectural Institute, 1988), 3.

⁴⁰⁸ H. Anderson (Steering Group NAI), letter to Rem Koolhaas, 7 January 1988. OMAR 2012.

⁴⁰⁹ Project Architectuur Instituut, Persbericht. Undated. OMAR 2012.

⁴¹⁰ A list of its altogether 10 members is enclosed in the letter. Ibid.

⁴¹¹ Lara Schrijver, 'The rise and fall of architecture materialised: the Netherlands Architecture Institute in Rotterdam, 1988–1992', *Journal of Architecture* 19:1 (2014), 131-155.

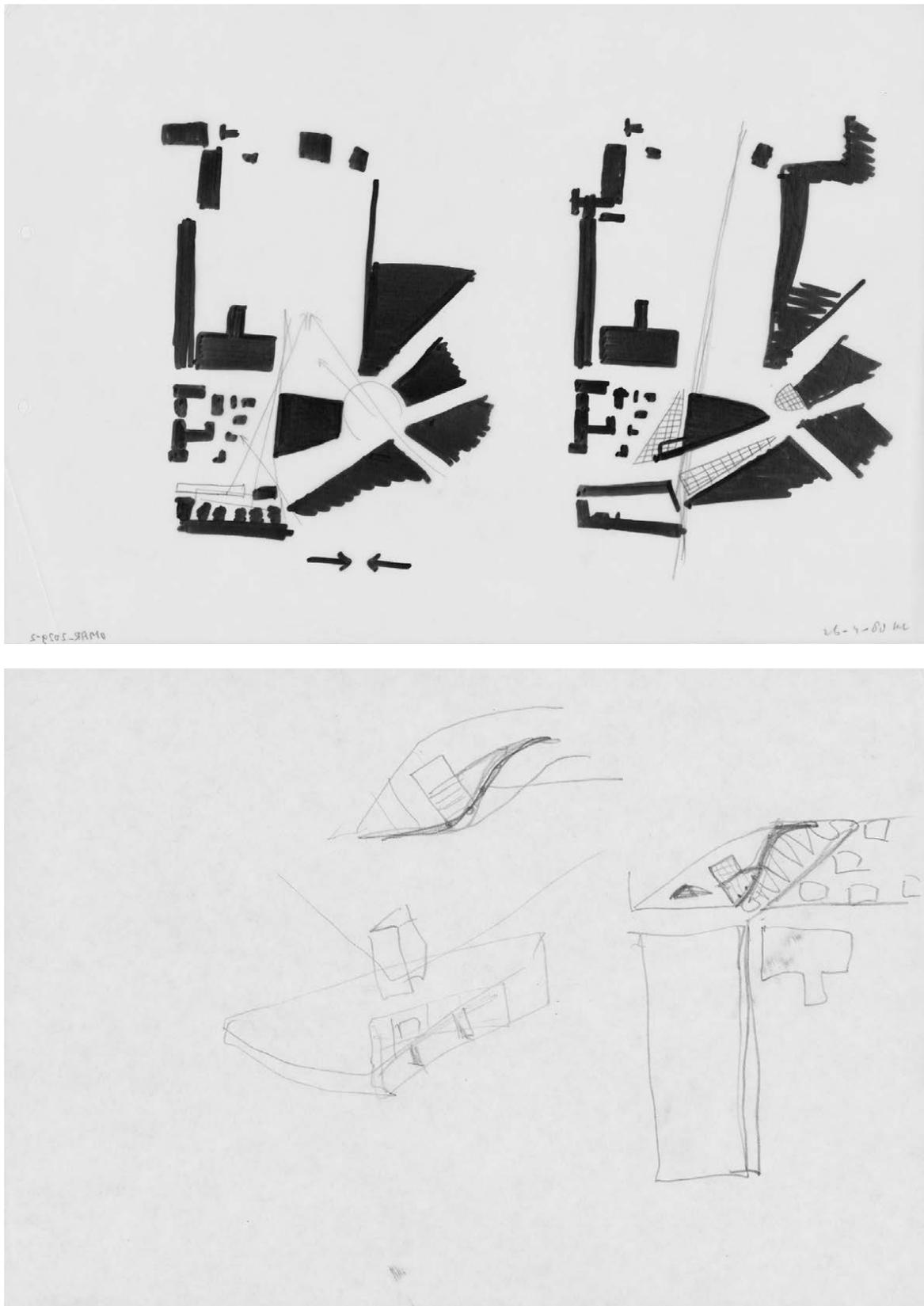


Figure 2. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, NAI, Rotterdam. Early sketches. Above: 26 April 1988.

The choice of the teams stirred criticism. If anything, the reactions showed that the competition was widely viewed as a national affair, many observers considering Van Eyck and Hertzberger still as the country's leading architects. In a comment, published by the Dutch daily *NRC*, Carel Weeber argued that a direct commission for Aldo van Eyck as the practicing architect 'that had made the most striking contribution to Dutch architecture' would have been a more convincing solution.⁴¹² Peter Buchanan called it a scandal that the Netherlands' most famous architects were not invited.⁴¹³ Wim J. van Heuvel found it 'frustrating' that Erskine was selected as a representative of Team X, while Van Eyck was a no less prominent member of the group, and he criticized the choice of Snozzi as the other European architect as arbitrary.⁴¹⁴ Hans van Dijk thundered: 'How is it possible for the architecture institute of the 90s, for heaven's sake, to arrive at somebody as outdated as Erskine?' He recalled the alternatives: 'Ando, Bohigas, Coates, De Portzamparc or Eisenman, to limit myself to the first letters of the alphabet'.⁴¹⁵ That no more than two foreign architects were invited, a stipulation of the Ministry of Culture, likewise illustrates the idea of the building as a national statement on architecture.⁴¹⁶

The polymorphous strand

OMA received a contract for its participation in the 'multiple commission' on 23 February, the submission deadline being scheduled for the 1st of June.⁴¹⁷ Together with the Kunsthal and the Museum Park, OMA was involved in three projects for the Dijkzigt area during the first half of 1988. In *S,M,L,XL*, Koolhaas describes this situation as 'an initial moment of megalomaniacal euphoria with OMA potentially in charge of a zone in which we could conceive two museums and the field between

⁴¹² Carel Weeber, 'Keuze van architecten is aanvechtbaar', *NRC Handelsblad*, 14 January, 1988.

⁴¹³ Peter Buchanan criticizes the decision as symptomatic for the state of the architecture in the Netherlands at the time. In the essay, entitled 'Dutch architecture lost track', Buchanan advocates Van Eyck and Hertzberger as the exponents of a tradition which should not be abandoned in favour of 'trendy internationalism'. Peter Buchanan, 'Nederlandse architectuur is spoor bijster. Eigen traditie is ingeruild voor trendy internationalisme', *architectuur/bouwen* 6/7 (1988), 63-67.

⁴¹⁴ Wim J. van Heuvel, 'Een magere meervoudige opdracht. De architectuurkeuze voor het architectuurinstituut', *architectuur/bouwen* 6/7 (1988), 47.

⁴¹⁵ Hans van Dijk, 'Zes architecten op zoek naar een opdrachtgever. De ontwerpen voor het Nederlands Architectuurinstituut', *Archis* 7 (1988), 8.

⁴¹⁶ Schrijver, 'The rise and fall of architecture materialised', 135.

⁴¹⁷ J. Jesserun (Stuurgroep Architectuurinstituut), letter to Rem Koolhaas, dated 19 February 1988. OMAR 2012.

them as a single complex.⁴¹⁸ The euphoria might have been spurred by the prospect to win the competition, considering the ‘beatable’ five competitors. As it seems, though, until autumn the three projects were not developed in parallel but one after another: the first draft for the Kunsthal until the end of April, the scheme of the NAI essentially in May, whereas the project of the Museum Park was resumed in summer, when the competition entry was already submitted and the scheme of the Kunsthal outlined. As will be seen, the project for the NAI was developed on the ‘premise’ of the Kunsthal, first presented to the Building Committee on 28 April, and not vice versa.

In *S,M,L,XL* Koolhaas depicts the two projects as related to one another as complements: ‘The Architecture Museum and the Kunsthal were conceived as opposites’;⁴¹⁹ the ‘Architecture Museum is a study in weight and heaviness; the Kunsthal floats above the park at the level of the dyke. The core of the Architecture Museum is a solid; the centre of the Kunsthal is a void.’⁴²⁰ Viewed in the context of OMA’s previous work, the schemes represent the two opposite strands outlined in Chapter 1.7. Even if they coexist in any design, mostly one of them prevails. On the one hand, there are the projects marked by an anti-postmodern banality and simplicity, like the Floating Pool, the Police Station, the Patio House and the IJ Plein; on the other hand, designs like the Arnhem Prison, the Dance Theatre, the Byzantium, and the Villa Dall’Ava that indulge in heterogeneity and formal fragmentation. During an interview in 1989, Mil De Kooning suggested that the “‘peace” of the Kunsthal’ was meant to complement the ‘pronounced “charge”’ of the Architecture Museum; Koolhaas agreed.⁴²¹ That it was the scheme for the NAI – and not the one for the Kunsthal – which follows the more eye-catching, and perhaps altogether more successful strand, might be due to the fact that the project was designed for a competition with a jury to be convinced, combined with a determination to build that probably did not exist in the 1970s.

⁴¹⁸ Koolhaas, ‘New Rotterdam’, 405.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ Ibid., 429.

⁴²¹ Mil De Kooning, ‘OMA in Nederland. Rem Koolhaas in gesprek’, *Vlees & Beton* 12 (1989), n.p. (author trans.).

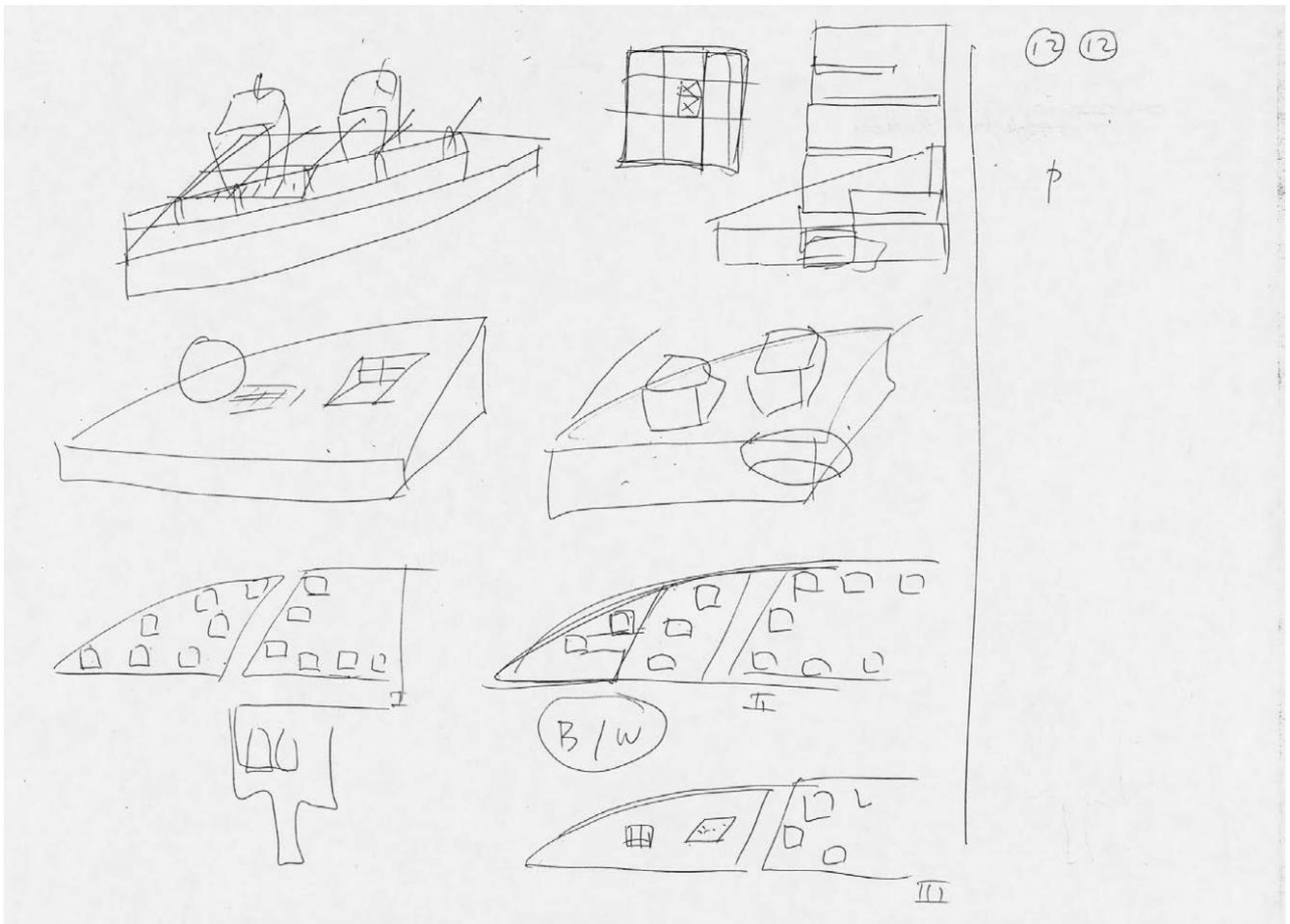


Figure 4. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, NAI, Rotterdam.
Three options to relate to the modernist villas along Jongkindstraat.

The principle of artistic contrast

The teams of the two projects overlapped. For the NAI, in *S,M,L,XL* are listed: Xaveer de Geyter, Luc Reuse, Alexander Nowotny, and Jeroen Thomas, next to the three key members of Kunsthal I: Rem Koolhaas, Ron Steiner and Gregor Mescherowsky.⁴²² The first dated sketches are from 26 April. Apparently, the shape of the footprint was still to be defined: either three or four corners; either all three corners pointed or two pointed and one curved. [Figure 2] Various arrows indicate that the visual connection between Rochussenstraat, the park and the Boijmans Museum was a major concern with regard to the building perimeter.⁴²³ All variants spare a large corridor between the modernist villas by Brinkman & Van der Vlugt and others along Jongkindstraat and the Architecture Museum so that the Axis of Development wished for by the municipality might extend freely from the park to Rochussenstraat. A sketch by Kees Christiaanse, dated April 26, shows a v-shaped building with a covered courtyard in the centre that opens to the villas.⁴²⁴ Another sketch based on the same configuration suggests two towers on top of the northern wing.⁴²⁵ [Figure 3] The idea seems related to a series of sketches – apparently by Koolhaas – considering three options of how to incorporate the typology of the adjacent modernist villas into the scheme. [Figure 4] Option I provides two ‘villas’ on top of the roof; option II suggests to fill the whole of Hobokenplein with villas, similar to OMA’s ‘Analysis Museum Park’ from September 1987; option III translates the volume of the villas into courtyards of corresponding dimensions.

In an interview from 2015 by Holger Schurk, Xaveer de Geyter recalls, referring to the competition of the NAI:

In this specific case Rem got involved very late and he found it completely not good and so there was a kind of a ‘blitzkrieg’ to change the whole project. In a few days, we made the new

⁴²² Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 1276.

⁴²³ OMAR 2029.

⁴²⁴ Ibid. Christiaanse recognized the sketch during an interview with the author on 14 April 2020.

⁴²⁵ Undated. OMAR 2029.

Chapter 1.8

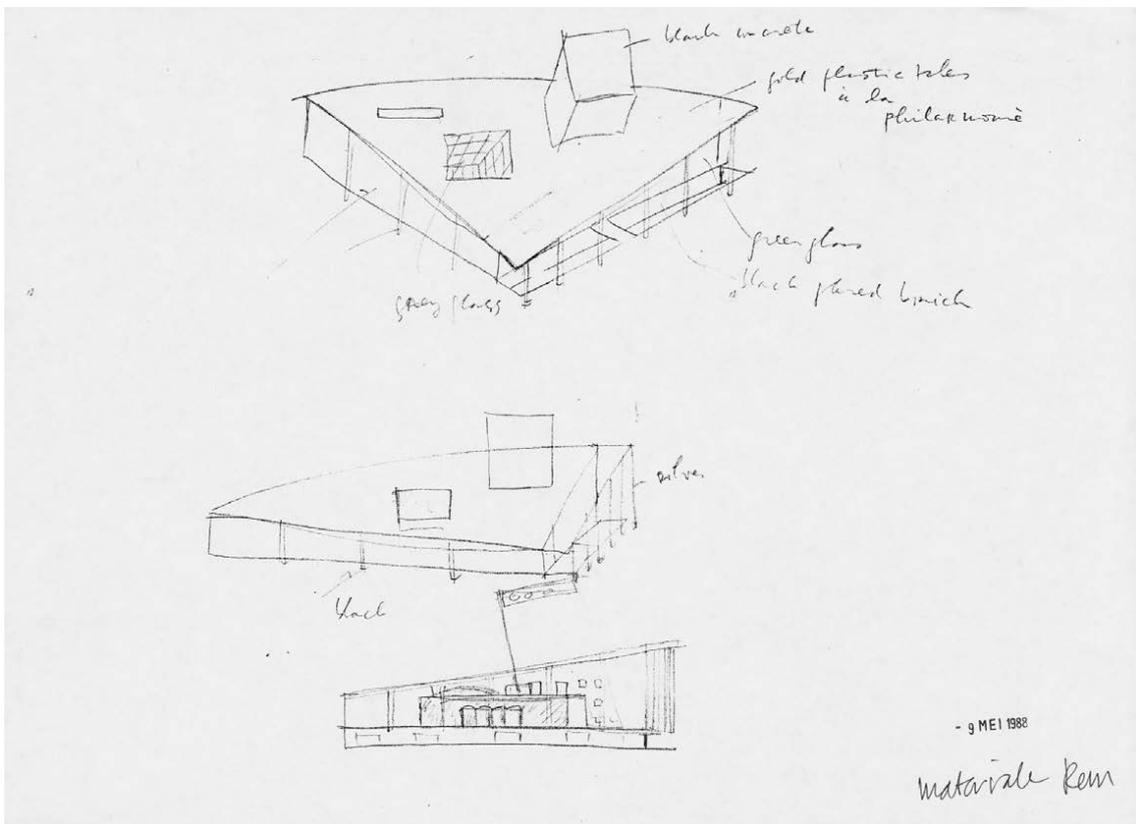
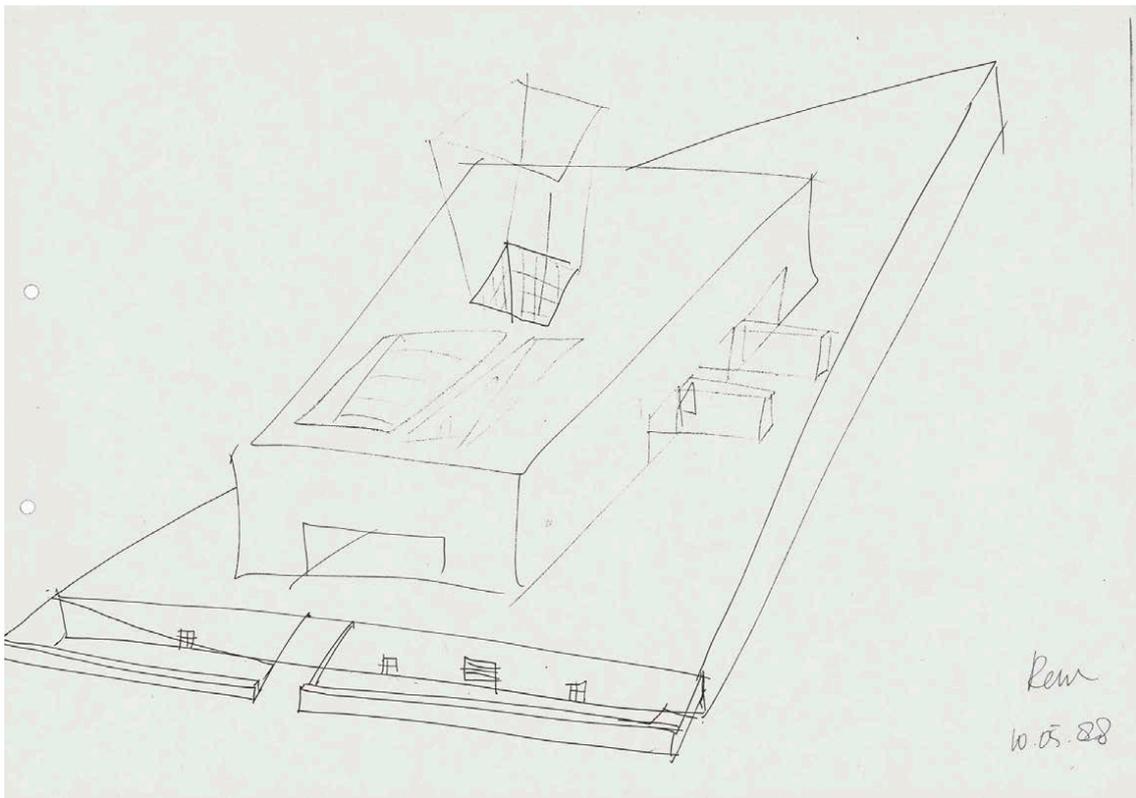


Figure 5. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, NAI, Rotterdam.
Sketches by Rem Koolhaas, dated 9 and 10 May 1988.

plan. I got involved, because he asked and basically the old team was thrown out and we did it with a new team. The project changed completely.⁴²⁶

A series of dated sketches indicates that the conceptual core of the design was established by the second week of May, that is two weeks before the deadline.⁴²⁷ [Figure 5] While the triangular footprint was kept, the relation of solid and void was inverted. Instead of having a courtyard in the centre of two v-shaped wings, the whole building was reframed as a triangular hall with a rectangular solid – later called ‘Podium’ – in its middle. Volumetrically, the scheme does respond to the urban context, but in unconventional ways. Two triangular segments, ‘subtracted’ from the fan-shaped lot of the Hobokenplein, ought to remain unbuilt:

the triangle to the south because of a major sewer;⁴²⁸ the other, along Jongkindstraat, in order to provide a generous spatial and visual connection between the Museum Park and the more central parts of the city. The western edge of this corridor coincides with the Development Axis provided by the municipality. The volume of the NAI occupies the third and largest triangular segment of Hobokenplein. Each of its three corners differs in height. The corner pointing towards the Westersingel and the inner city roughly touches the 13-metres roofline of the apartment houses north of Rochussenstraat; the western corner raises about 8 metres above the street level, and the southern corner about 5 metres. The sequence 5-8-13 is evidently based on the golden ratio. [Figure 6] The tilted roof descends slightly towards the west and steeply towards the open space of the park. As a gesture it articulates the transition from the ‘vertical city’ to the horizontal surface of the park. The roof is pierced by a tower, which likewise leans towards the park.

It goes without saying that the contextual quality of the scheme differs radically from the established ways of relating to a given site. Huge sloped planes and leaning towers did not occur in the surroundings. Neither did most of the materials and colours OMA proposed. While most facades in the

⁴²⁶ Schurk, *Projekt ohne Form*, 90-91.

⁴²⁷ OMAR 2024, 2029.

⁴²⁸ OMA, ‘Architectuurinstituut Rotterdam’, June 1988. Site plan. OMAR 4233

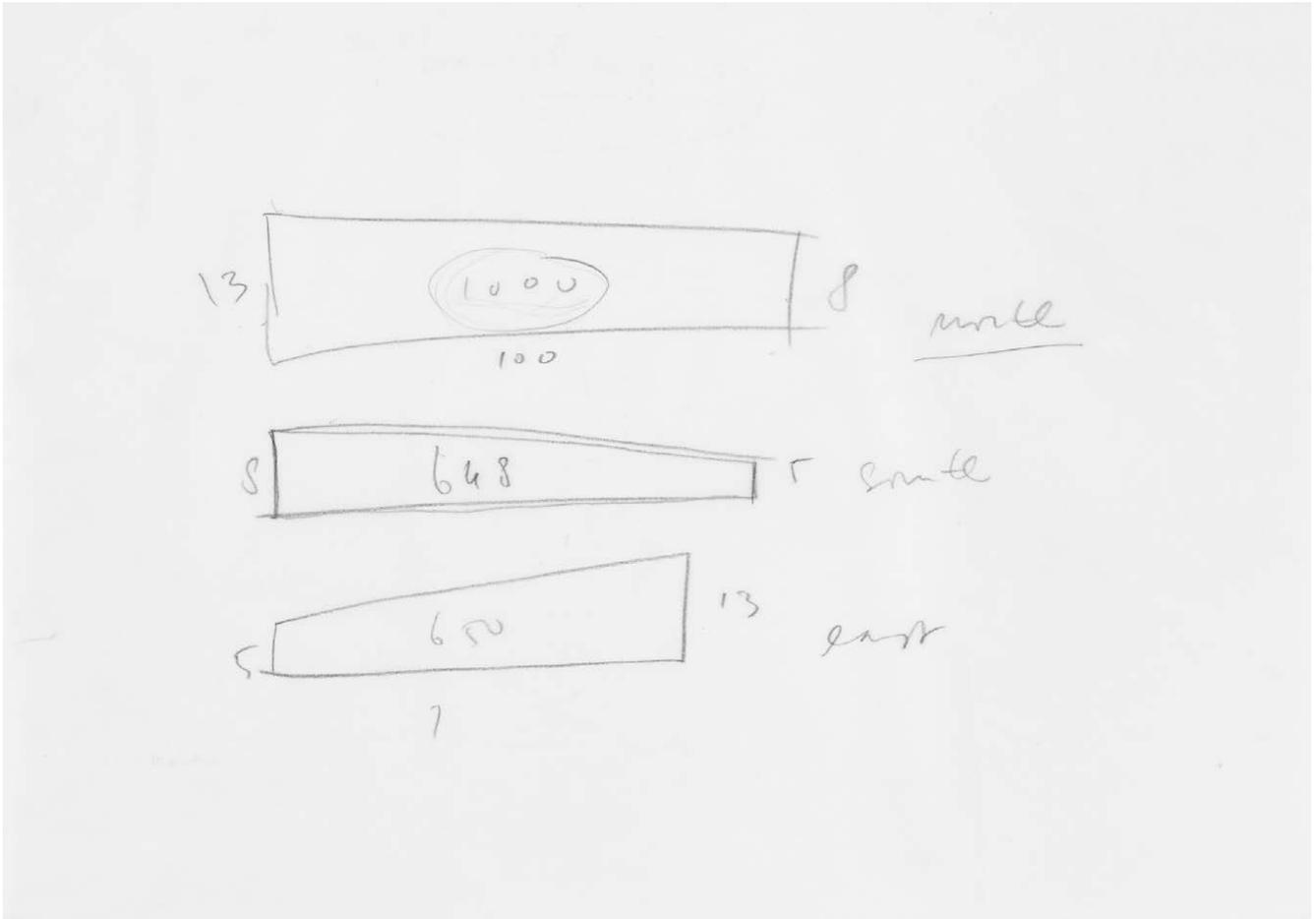


Figure 6. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, NAI, Rotterdam.
Sketch by Rem Koolhaas, showing the heights of the facades at the three different corners.

vicinity were either of exposed brickwork or white, the tower – square in plan and without any openings – was in black concrete. Gold was the colour of the roof. Two of the facades were envisaged as glass walls – tinted grey towards the park, green at the side of the entrance. The façade along Rochussenstraat, to filter the visual disquiet of the traffic, was clad with translucent panels of corrugated polyester. While dismissing any established recipe of ‘contextuality’, the relation between building and context proposed by OMA is made thematic, turned into the subject of creativity and invention. The approach is reminiscent of Ivan Leonidov’s competition entry for the Narkomtjzhprom. Leonidov commented on his proposal, providing three high-rises in proximity of the Kremlin and the St. Basil’s Cathedral: ‘historical elements should be subservient to the dominant object [i.e. Leonidov’s intervention] through the principle of artistic contrast.’⁴²⁹ In their article on the Narkomtjzhprom from 1974, citing the comment by Leonidov, Koolhaas and Oorthuys analyse in detail how this contrast was articulated. They discover a symbolism of material and form allowing the new to relate to the old. Based on the assumption that ‘the curve and the glass represent the future, the square and the stone the past’⁴³⁰, the authors interpret the sequence of the three towers’ shapes and materials as a ‘gradual unfolding of the future away from the past, i.e., from the Kremlin’.⁴³¹

The impact of ‘contrast’, however, prevails in spite of the relations established to the environment. That applies as much to OMA’s design for the NAI as to the office’s architectural production in general. Like the authors of the article on Leonidov, the project for the NAI ‘insists’ on the freedom to choose in what manner the relation between project and context might be established. As for the Narkomtjzhprom, the ‘flamboyance’ of gilded onion cupulas is echoed by hyperboloids and the mushroom shaped golden platforms attached to a high rise. Similarly, OMA seems to propose with the NAI a metaphorical contextualization that has nothing to do with an urbanism of spatial, material and morphological continuity. If the oblique roof ‘points’ to Rotterdam’s city and descends to the park in straightforward

⁴²⁹ Rem Koolhaas, Gerrit Oorthuys, ‘Ivan Leonidov’s Narkomtiazhprom’, *Oppositions* 2 (1974), 99.

⁴³⁰ Goulet, ‘La deuxième chance’, 9.

⁴³¹ Koolhaas, Oorthuys, ‘Ivan Leonidov’s Narkomtiazhprom’, 103. See also: Gargiani, *The Construction of Merveilles*, 38.

Chapter 1.8

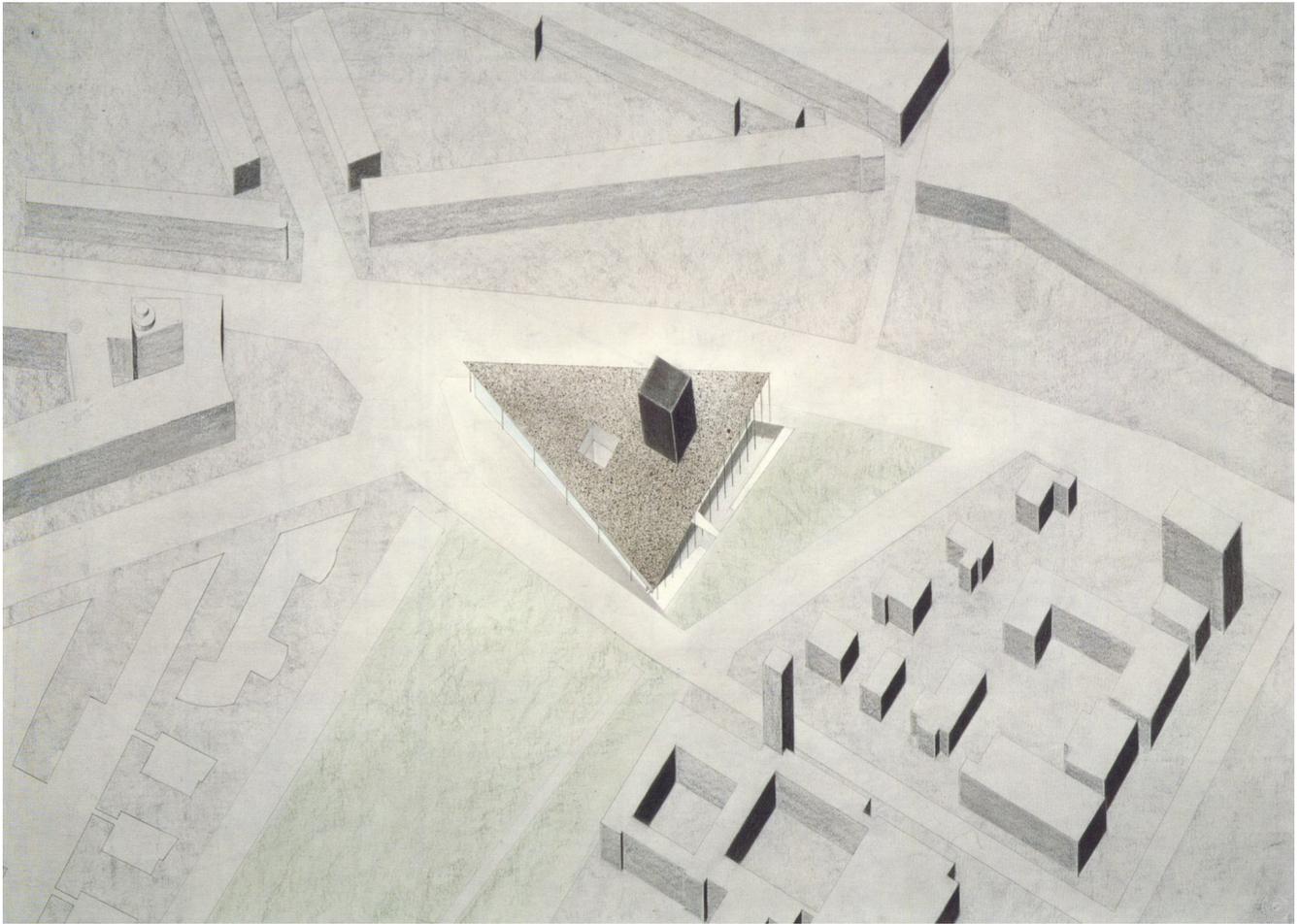


Figure 7. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, NAI, Rotterdam. Aerial view. Rendering. 1988.

analogy to their respective verticality and horizontality, the tower – visually cut off by the roof and perpendicular to its slope – appears as a black counterpart to the modernist villas. [Figure 7]

Relying on collage

OMA's competition entry for the NAI comprised of an A3 booklet of some 80 pages with explanatory texts and drawings. [Figures 8-10] The final 30 pages, explicating the structure, the mechanical and electrical services, were contributed by Arup London.⁴³² The introductory project statement plainly confirms the above suggestion: 'A black cube, roughly of the same dimensions as the white villas, stands at a right angle on the roof.'⁴³³ If one considers OMA's study from September 1987, the ensemble of roof and cube evokes the image of a seismic displacement: as if the ground had lifted with a modernist villa on top of it, bringing to the fore the museum first conceived as underground. The tower does develop from inside the building. But only if entering or approaching it more closely, the black volume would become discernible as a leaning tower. Loaded with the black mass 'on top', the concrete slab looks precariously thin.

The Tower was determined to house the archives. Surfacing from the basement, its tilted shaft merges with the rectangular Podium, which is to harbour activities that need to be more or less secluded, such as the depot, the offices, a reading room and a cafeteria, a ticket desk, cloakrooms, and a bookshop.⁴³⁴ As OMA's booklet explains, the Podium's interior is conceived in contrast to the vast open space enclosed between its exterior and the perimeter of the triangular volume. The entire exterior of the Podium is clad with travertine. Adjacent to the entrance a large rectangular area is 'excavated' from its imaginary mass. Within this cavity, a sequence of ramps leads to the top of the Podium, from which a stair on the other side allows to descend back to the ground floor. A section of the ramp system that widens up to an almost square proportion can be used as an auditorium. It can be separated from the

⁴³² Ove Arup, 'Engineering Concept Report. Architecture Institute, The Netherlands', May 1988. OMAR 4233. A note by Koolhaas, headed 'Questions Cecil' indicates that Balmond was in charge of the structural concept. OMAR 2014. Balmond and Mirvat Bulbul are also listed as structural engineers in *S,M,L,XL*. Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 1276.

⁴³³ OMA, 'Architectuurinstituut Rotterdam', June 1988, 3 (author trans.). OMAR 4233.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

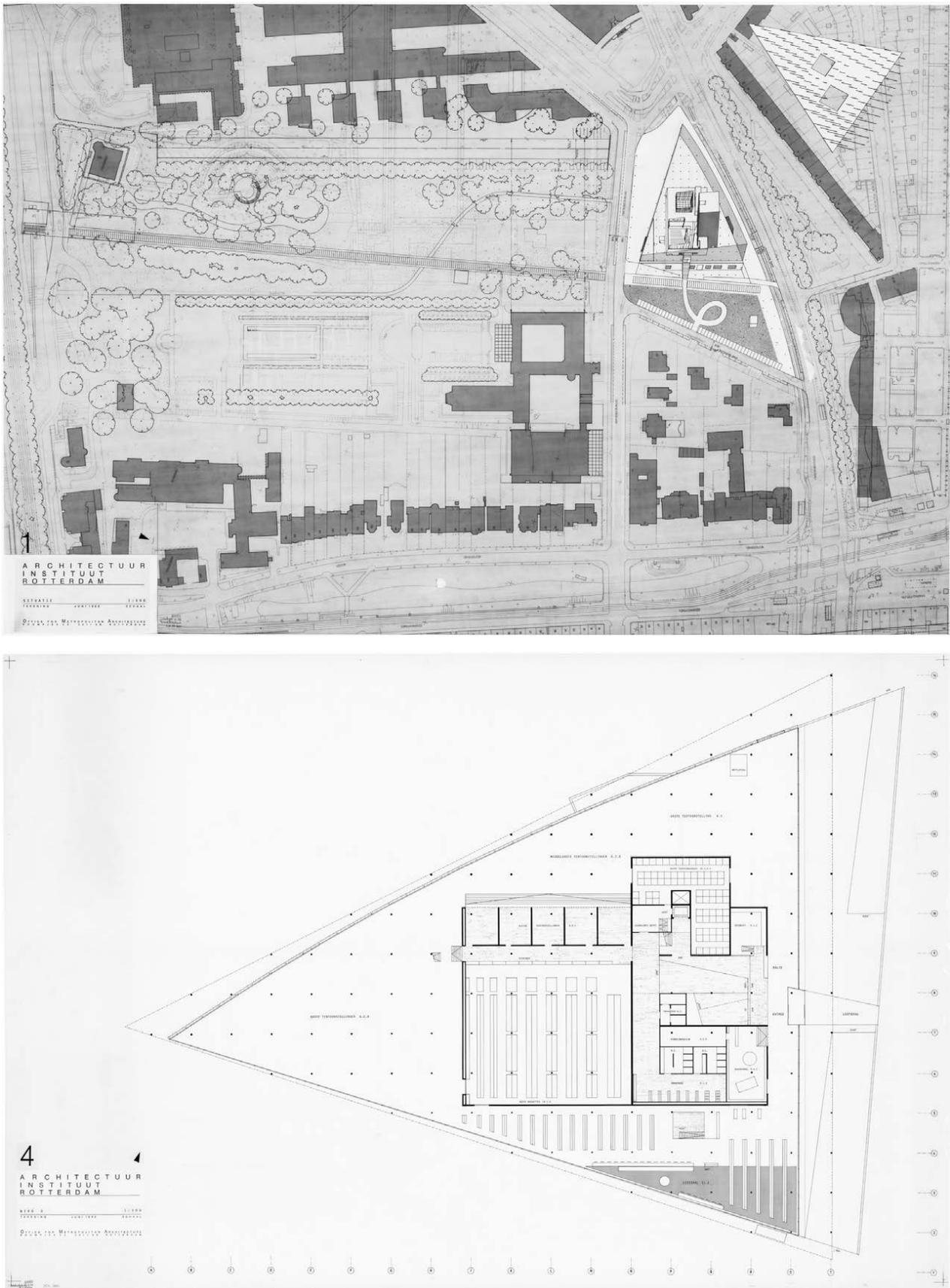


Figure 8. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, NAI, Rotterdam. Site plan and ground floor. June 1988.

circulation space by means of yellow silk curtain suspended from the ceiling. What used to be a second solid on the roof in some of the early sketches, has been inverted into a square patio which gives light to the offices and cafeteria inside the Podium. As the corollary text explains, the bottom of the courtyard is a mirror, so that the visually doubled volume equals the length of the tower.⁴³⁵

The Podium divides the triangular space in three areas of comparable size. Two of them are provided for exhibitions, one as a public library. Steel columns, distributed on a square grid of six by six metres, carry the sloping roof, creating a ‘forest of columns’ or hypostyle hall. The clue given in *S,M,L,XL* – ‘old Moorish device that makes architecture out of a box’ –⁴³⁶ brings to mind the Mezquita in Cordoba with the gothic Cathedral inside the mosque piercing its roof. In the booklet OMA explains that the relative intimacy the columns create is to respond to the ephemeral and fragile character of exhibits: ‘The materials, produced and left behind by the architect, are often not impressive on their own accord. / Yellowed paper, faded drawings, clumsy sketches, wrecked models’.⁴³⁷ The sensitivity for the character and needs of an architect’s inheritance might result from the research on Leonidov Koolhaas had done with Gerrit Oorthuys between the late 1960s and the first half of the 1970s. In an interview from 1985, Koolhaas recalls being struck by the ‘fragility and amateurism’ of the original material, at the time in the possession of Leonidov’s widow.⁴³⁸ But perhaps Koolhaas had in mind his own inheritance too. The above description – ‘not impressive on their own accord. / Yellowed paper, faded drawings, clumsy sketches, wrecked models’ – applies very well to the vast majority of the ‘corollary’ architectural production of both the NAI and the Kunsthal.

The columns’ diameter (20, 22 and 25cm) and colours (black, grey, and white) vary according to the height of the sloped roof (approx. 4.5-13 metres). Both the use of different colours and the ‘needle-like’ proportion of the longer columns bear some resemblance to the exterior supports of the Villa Dall’Ava. The proportions are also akin to Libeskind’s City Edge project from 1987, and among OMA’s sketches

⁴³⁵ Ibid., 5.

⁴³⁶ Koolhaas, ‘New Rotterdam’, 407.

⁴³⁷ OMAR 4233, 8-9.

⁴³⁸ Goulet, ‘La deuxième chance’, 3 (author trans.).

Chapter 1.8

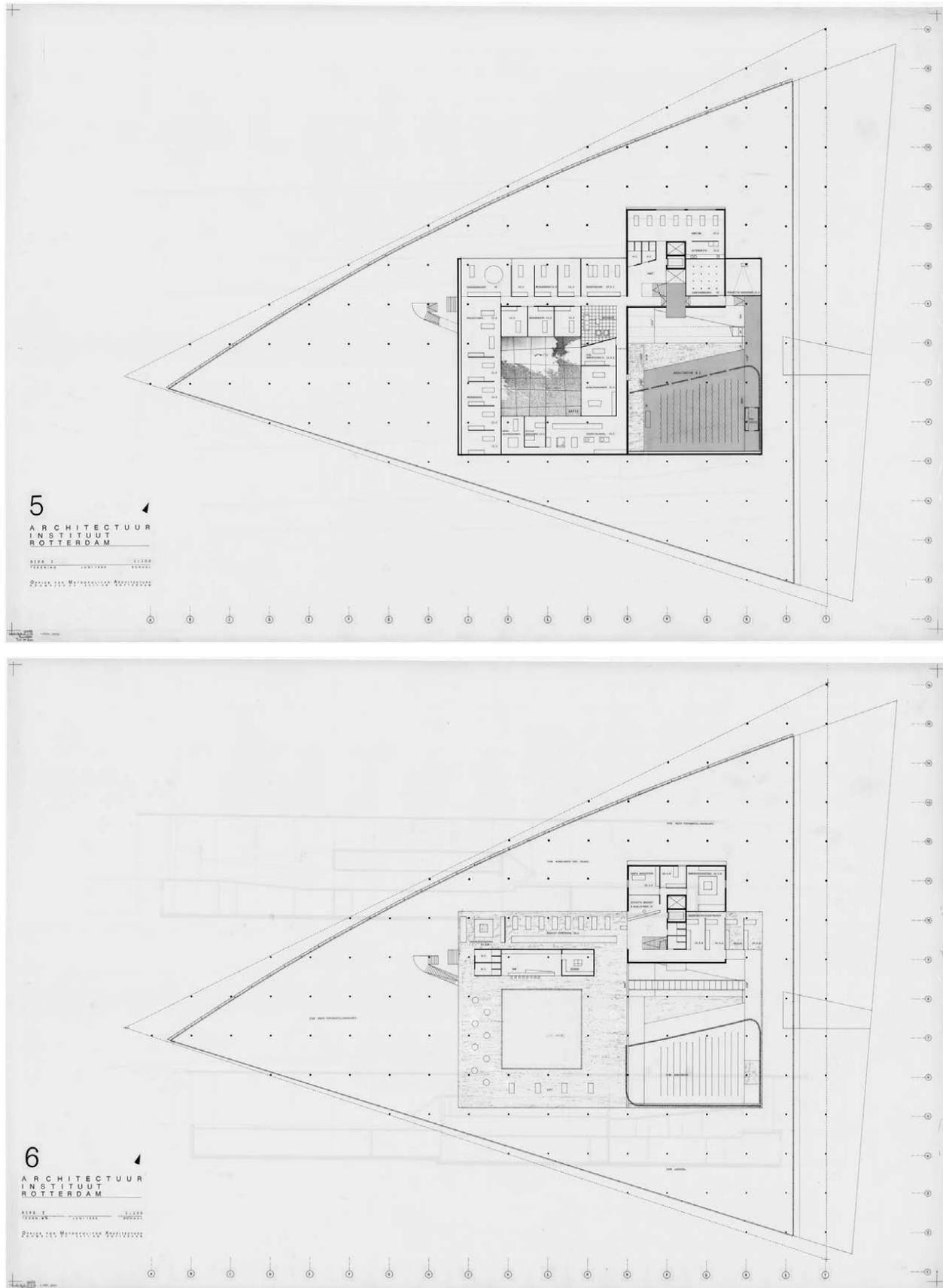


Figure 9. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, NAI, Rotterdam. First floor and second floor. June 1988.

for the NAI there is one that shows a bundle of long columns, annotated ‘Dani Libeskind’.⁴³⁹ [Figure 11] It is not clear, though, whether this is to indicate a reference, or is meant as warning not to repeat what Libeskind has done. Different from Libeskind’s City Edge, all columns of the NAI are vertical, and they end with an exposed round steel plate where they meet the concrete slab of the ceiling. As the booklet explains, the constant diameter of 80 centimetre helps to both unify the space and ‘lessen the effect of span.’⁴⁴⁰ Despite their proportion-denying flatness, architect-visitors might have been tempted to understand these shear heads as a modernist answer in the Miesian tradition to the classical column – as capitals. But perhaps the detail was precisely about denying the purported nobility of the classical column. With their flat projecting tops, the supports rather than as columns appear as nails, and as such they would be an accurate representation of the nails used for the model. [Figure 12]

Two of the collaged elevations – north and east – focus on the ensemble of Tower and Podium. [Figure 13] Its presence towards the outside is filtered in varying degrees by the facades’ respective greenish or corrugated skin, each cut out in the centre, offering an unimpeded glimpse into the interior. The ensemble of tower and Podium in itself recalls a collage. The bright surface of the podium and the black volume of the tower interlock, while intersecting with the yellow silk curtain suspended from the ceiling and the glass cage coming down from the roof before transforming in the two storeys deep courtyard. Further complexity is added by the corrugated surface (the bar) on top of the Podium, by the stairs attached to it, by the openings cut out from its ‘mass’, and by the layering of the partly cut back facades. The heterogeneity is echoed, almost imperceptibly, by the columns’ differing colours – grey, black, and white – partly overlapping in the renderings.

As the model shows, the ensemble of Podium, Tower, courtyard and bar is a ‘collage’ of multiple, partly intersecting solids rather than surfaces. As such, it resembles OMA’s volumetrically most complex, fragmented looking projects. Both the Dance Theatre and the Villa Dall’Ava are composed of several distinct ‘solids’, articulated by means of their form, material and colour. [Figure 14] As in the case of

⁴³⁹ OMAR 2024.

⁴⁴⁰ OMA, ‘Architectuurinstituut Rotterdam’, 2.4.1. OMAR 4233.

Chapter 1.8

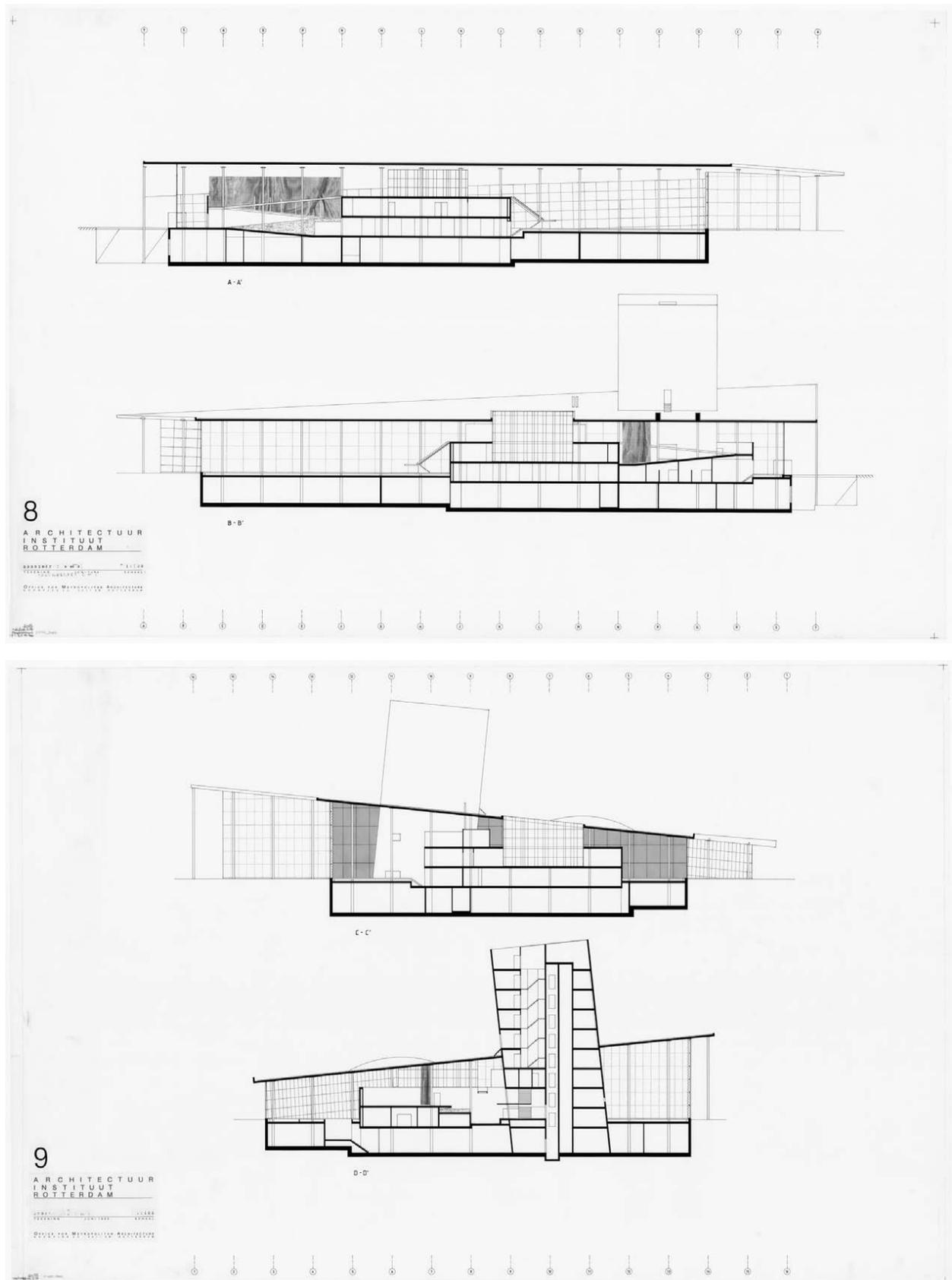


Figure 10. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, NAI, Rotterdam. Cross sections. June 1988.

the Podium, the integrity of most volumes is contested in one way or another – cut off at one side by a wall, for instance, like the stacked boxes by the concrete slab of the Villa Dall’Ava. The different parts of the main facade of the Byzantium in Amsterdam – grey plaster, blue brickwork and black metal panels – are echoed by relief-like setbacks, recalling the cardboard layers of OMA’s collaged elevations.⁴⁴¹ As in the case of the Dance Theatre, and the extension of the Dutch parliament, the impact of unity is undermined to the point that the whole may appear as the result of a piecemeal planning and building process – not dissimilar, after all, to the fake simulations of growth Koolhaas accused the ‘contextualism’ in 1980.⁴⁴² Some parts of the Dance Theatre are reminiscent of the 1950s or might even be taken as a fragment from that period, namely the big windows divided by tapered pilasters. But there can be no doubt that the whole belongs to an entirely different era which indulges in fragmentation, heterogeneity, and dissonance. To the non-descript post-war modernism Koolhaas advocated in the 1980s, that was essentially foreign. Conversely, the projects that approximate post-war modernism more closely, such as the police station in Almere, and the Patio House, the bus terminal and Kunsthal I in Rotterdam, were at risk of being taken for some sort of nostalgic emulation – an individualistic and ultimately arbitrary bent. ‘Retakes’ of early modernism – OMA’s IJ Plein buildings are the best example – generally met with more appreciation, to the extent they were understood as attempts to reconnect contemporary architecture to its lost programmatic dimension and social agenda.⁴⁴³ But the artistic problem of being too close to the original, of not getting beyond mere acts of emulation remained. In other words, to incorporate post-war references or references of any other modernist episode in an artistically productive way – at the time vital for all of OMA’s architecture –, Koolhaas relied on the techniques of collage and montage, entailing in varying degrees an overall impact of fragmentation. In *Montage and the Metropolis*, Martino Stierli discusses extensively the significance of montage for the work of OMA, above all in the chapter ‘Montage and the Metropolitan Unconscious’ on *Delirious New York*.⁴⁴⁴ Stierli suggests that the use of montage was motivated by ‘OMA’s quasi scientific approach to

⁴⁴¹ On the plasticity of OMA’s collaged facades, see: Berteloot, Patteeuw, ‘OMA’s Collages’, 67-73.

⁴⁴² See: OMA, ‘Urban Intervention: Dutch Parliament Extension’, 48.

⁴⁴³ See, for instance: Vidler, ‘The Irony of Metropolis’, 19.

⁴⁴⁴ Stierli, *Montage and the Metropolis*, 228-267.

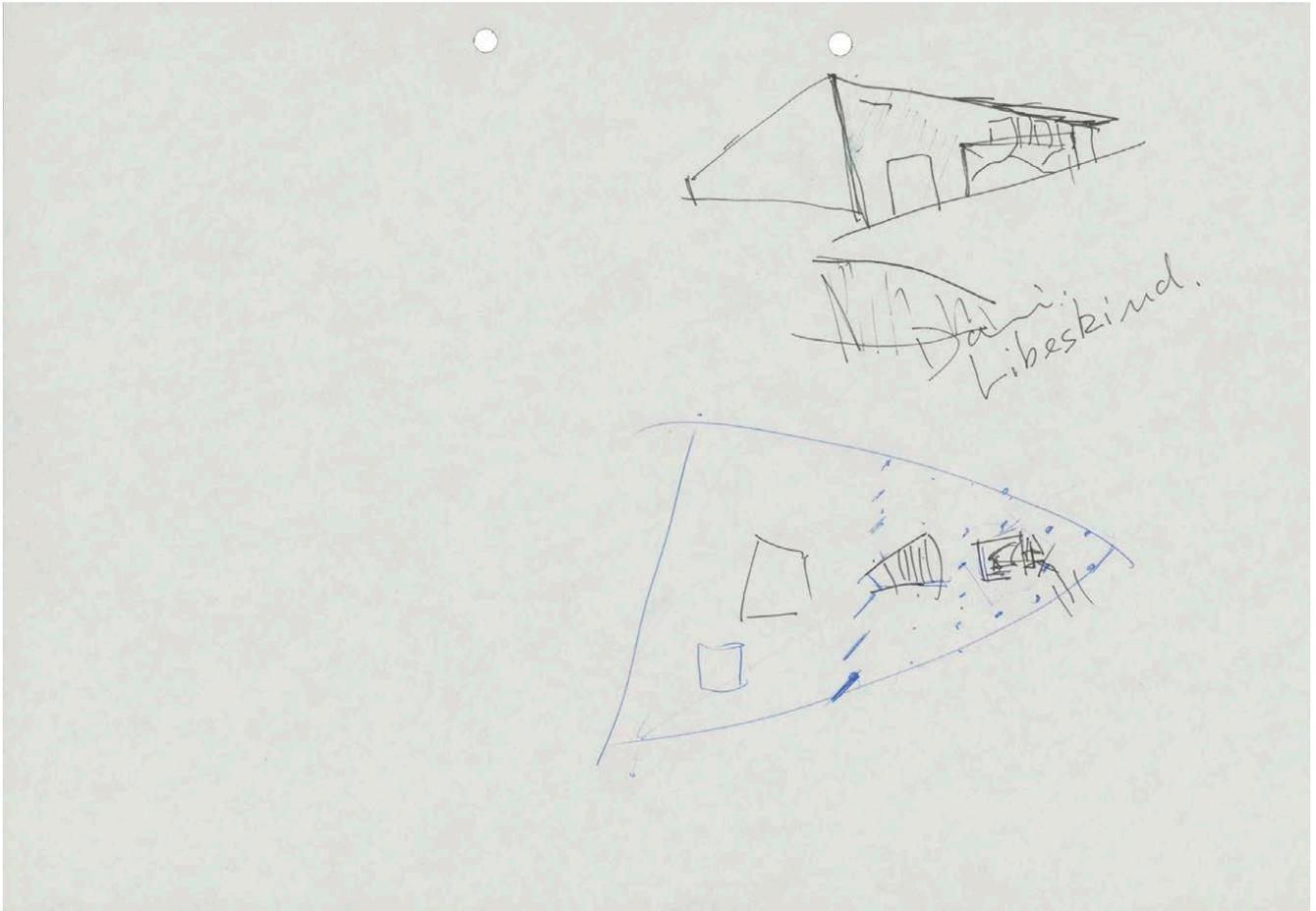


Figure 11. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, NAI, Rotterdam.

design’, opposing ‘the myth of the ingenious creator’, as claimed by Koolhaas himself.⁴⁴⁵ That may be true; but for the above reasons, it appears that collage and montage, in the first place, were the key techniques for the artistic appropriation of the modernist legacy – indispensable for OMA’s architectural production of the 1980s.

The missing half

The triangular envelope of the NAI is anything but a monolithic block. The facades are set back from the roof, each in a different way, creating a variety that builds on the diversity of their colours, materials and transparency. At the side of the entrance – facing the Axis of Development – the roof cantilevers almost 6 metres so as to form a portico with a column on each intersection of the grid.⁴⁴⁶ To the north, the facade is slightly bent while the roof is straight. Only every second intersection of the grid meets the edge of the roof, the spacing between the columns thus being doubled. Towards the park, both roof and façade are straight, albeit not exactly parallel. The cantilever of the roof is minimal, its edge being met by every third intersection of the grid, so that at this side the bay size of the columns is tripled. Two corners of the roof cantilever, the third corner is supported by a column. Everything seems to have slipped out of position, as if slightly rocked by a tremor.

There is an almost evasive ambiguity about the design in terms of composition. The slope of the roof along with the triangular footprint thwart any attempt to pin down the proportions of the main hall, its columns and intercolumnia, or the facades. Given the incompatibility of the roof’s triangular outline with the square grid of the structure, the articulation of the margins seems ‘arbitrary’, with more or less of a roof overhang, more or less columns, with corners both ‘open’ and ‘closed’. The dimensions of the Podium partly do resonate with the grid (the courtyard, one side of the Podium), and two spatially significant walls are aligned with its axes; but both the Podium and the Tower are positioned in such a

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 233.

⁴⁴⁶ Tom Maas discerned ‘Miesian allures’ in the arrangement of a cantilevered roof, columns and set back glazing. Tom Maas, ‘Zes plannen voor het Architectuurinstituut’, *architectuur/bouwen* 6/7 (Jun/Jul 1988), 17. One year before, in 1987, Koolhaas had acknowledged the influence of Mies’ early work. See: Cees Boekraad, ‘De invloed van Mies van der Rohe. Gesprek met Rem Koolhaas’, *Archis* 3 (1987), 28-29.



Figure 12. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, NAI, Rotterdam. Model.

manner that the spacing between their enclosure and the columns differ visibly from side to side, suggesting a rather arbitrary relation. While the triangular volume – given the diversity of its sides – resembles a ‘house of cards’, the tower appears as monolithic.

Perhaps the ambiguities were to challenge traditional principles of composition. Polemics against ‘composition’ in Koolhaas’ writings and statements recur and generally imply the accusation of formalism.⁴⁴⁷ At any rate, Koolhaas must have expected that the project – an Architecture Institute – would invite critics and colleagues to interpret the scheme as a statement on the discipline. Above all the leaning tower, along with the fact that it was to house the archives, did provoke readings of this kind. Herman Kerkdijk and Arthur Wortmann reason that the tower’s obliqueness, ‘making fun of the law of gravity’, may point to the ‘unsteady balance of history, from which we cannot derive any certainties’.⁴⁴⁸ Similarly, for Geert Bekaert the massive appearance of the tower embodies the ‘weigh[t] of the past, dangerously sloping, almost menacing’.⁴⁴⁹ Several critics recognized the black solid as a ‘Kaaba’, among them Tom Maas, who envisioned architecture pilgrims circulating around its base.⁴⁵⁰

Unlike the CCA and the DAM, the NAI archives hold only material of Dutch architects, and from the outset it was clear the institution was to represent the architecture of the country it belonged to. The fact itself gives reason to scrutinize OMA’s scheme for comments on Dutch architecture. Seen from this angle, there appears to be an analogy between the disassembly of the triangular volume into four differently coloured planes and the formal characteristics of De Stijl; likewise, between the structure of columns on the varied topography of the ‘floor’ and Dutch structuralism. The architects of both movements understood themselves chiefly as creators of space. But the scheme of the NAI also contains

⁴⁴⁷ For instance: Marta Cervelló, ‘I’ve always been anxious with the standard typology of the average architect with a successful career’, *Quaderns* 183 (1989), 84; Koolhaas, ‘Bigness’, 502, 507. Occasionally, Koolhaas has used the term ‘design’ with similar implications; for instance: OMA, ‘Urban Intervention: Dutch Parliament Extension’, 48; OMA, ‘Parc de la Villette’, 91.

⁴⁴⁸ Herman Kerkdijk, Arthur Wortmann, ‘The diary of an architect’, *Forum* 4 (1988), 42.

⁴⁴⁹ Geert Bekaert, ‘The storyteller. On the work of Rem Koolhaas’, in: De Backer, *Office for Metropolitan Architecture*, 5.

⁴⁵⁰ Maas, ‘Zes plannen voor het Architectuurinstituut’, 15. See also: Bekaert, ‘The storyteller’, 5; Keersten Geers, ‘Showing Everything. Netherlands Architecture Institute’, in: Van Gerrewey, Patteeuw, *OMA. The First Decade – OASE #94* (Rotterdam: nai010, 2015), 105.

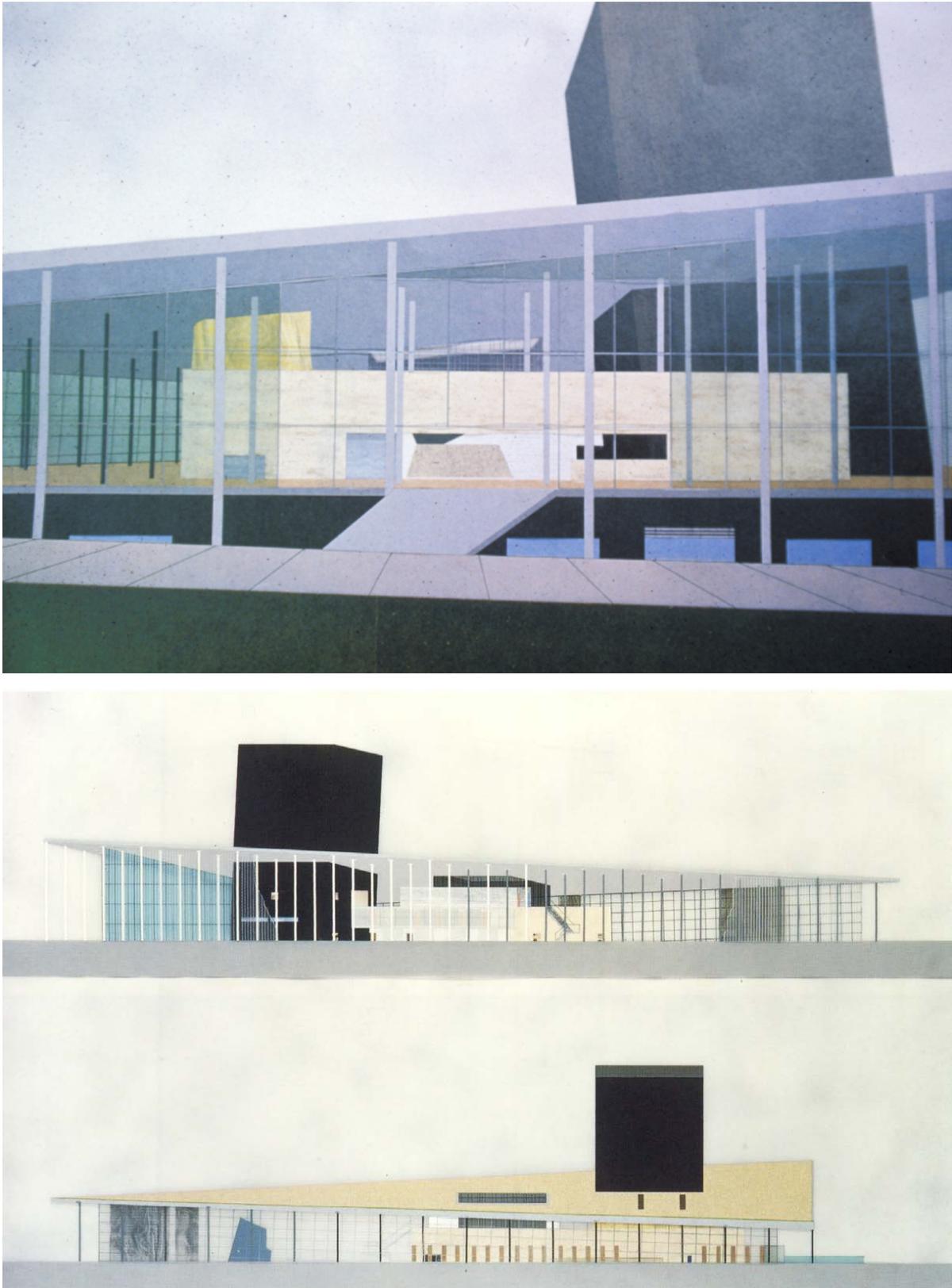


Figure 13. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, NAI, Rotterdam. Collaged elevations.

the contrary. The Podium and the Tower are conceived as solids, and this opposition of envelope and core is also an opposition in terms of materials and character: the transparent and translucent facades vs. the opaque core; thin, partly ephemeral materials (glass, corrugated sheathing) vs. the suggestion of mass and refinement (travertine and black concrete). Viewed through the lens of Koolhaas' theory, the solids point to Malevich's *Arkhitektions*, and the 'lavish' travertine and silk (curtain) to the hedonism championed in *Delirious New York*. In hindsight, the display of these contrasting qualities recalls Koolhaas' famous statement from 1990 in which he compares Dutch architecture to a piano 'of which only the right half of the keyboard works.'⁴⁵¹ The NAI is a design played on the missing half of the keys.

A primitive hut and primitive tower

A detached tower in the centre of the building, a glazed cage of an open courtyard as its counterpart, a colonnade at the entrance introducing a framing grid: these elements, as well as the constellation between them, bear some resemblance to Ungers' *Architekturmuseum* in Frankfurt (1979-84). [Figure 15] Given the likeness of the two buildings' functions and the close collaboration between the two architects during the mid-seventies, it seems rather likely that Koolhaas, to some extent, was aware of the analogies between the schemes, while working on the project. Koolhaas has always shown some susceptibility for the metaphorical dimension of architecture, and in this respect Ungers' museum and its tone of allegory surely had something to offer.

At Ungers' museum the incongruence between the three different grids (interior villa, central courtyard, colonnade and rear courtyards) is being 'neutralized' by the massive exterior walls of the existing building so that the modular order of a single grid seems to permeate the intervention as a whole. If the façade of the villa epitomizes the discipline's tradition, its place within the new order is fixed and its claim of authority confirmed. The ubiquitous white of the interior blurs the differences between the

⁴⁵¹ Rem Koolhaas, 'How Modern is Dutch architecture?', in: Crimson, Michael Speaks, Gerard Hadders (eds.), *Mart Stam's Trousers: Stories from behind the Scenes of Dutch Moral Modernism* (Rotterdam 010 Publishers, 1999), 163. First published in 1990 under the title 'Hoe modern is de Nederlandse architectuur?'.

Chapter 1.8

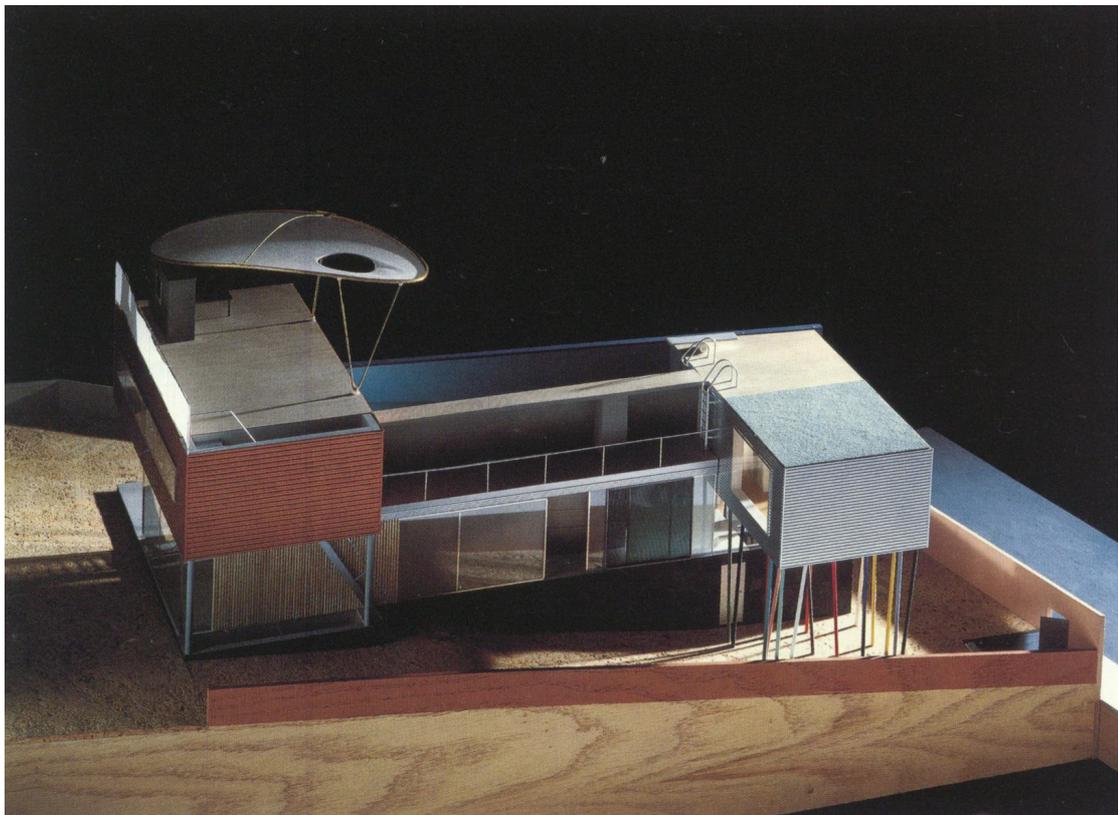


Figure 14. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, Netherlands Dance Theatre, The Hague. 1981-87.
Villa Dall'Ava, Paris, 1984-91.

various materials, pointing to the abstract realm of platonic ideas. The literal ‘house in the house’, which like the tower of OMA’s scheme for the NAI originally was meant to penetrate the roof of the villa – pierced by windows, topped by a pitched roof – has been identified as a ‘primitive hut’.⁴⁵² The white edifice is part of the museum’s circuit as the innermost of three encapsulated layers of space, the perception of space and multiple spatial encapsulation being the key theme of the project.⁴⁵³

The black tower of OMA’s NAI, housing the archive, is not part of the exhibition’s circuit. Of course it is accessible, but its monolithic appearance communicates nothing of the kind. Perhaps Koolhaas had in mind the impenetrable quality of Malevich’s *Arkhitektons*, opposing the widespread idea that architecture is genuinely about space with the vision of an architecture of solids. In 1990 he would state:

The pinnacle of modern architecture for me is still – and I apologize for introducing it so personally – Malevich’s *Arkhitektonics*. These are impenetrable even today – in the sense that they are solid. You can’t go into them. [...] There is a major stream in modernity that has no concern for people, that isn’t humanistic, seeing itself as a part of a whirlwind that spares nothing.⁴⁵⁴

In fact, a number of characteristics of the two architecture museums are virtually opposed. Whereas Ungers aims at immaterial abstraction and homogeneity, Koolhaas displays the heterogeneity of diverse materials and their physical concreteness; whereas Ungers strives for a congruent whole, mediating between the spatial givens imposed on his project by the existing building, Koolhaas creates incompatible orders and exposes the conflicts between them; and while Unger’s museum is strictly symmetrical, and hierarchically organized towards the centre, the Tower of the NAI is placed emphatically off-centre, its authority compromised by obliqueness.

⁴⁵² Montaner, Oliveras, *The Museums of the Last Generation*, 86, 88.

⁴⁵³ Cepl, *Oswald Mathias Ungers*, 420. See also: *Ibid.*, 376.

⁴⁵⁴ Rem Koolhaas, ‘How Modern is Dutch architecture?’, 136.

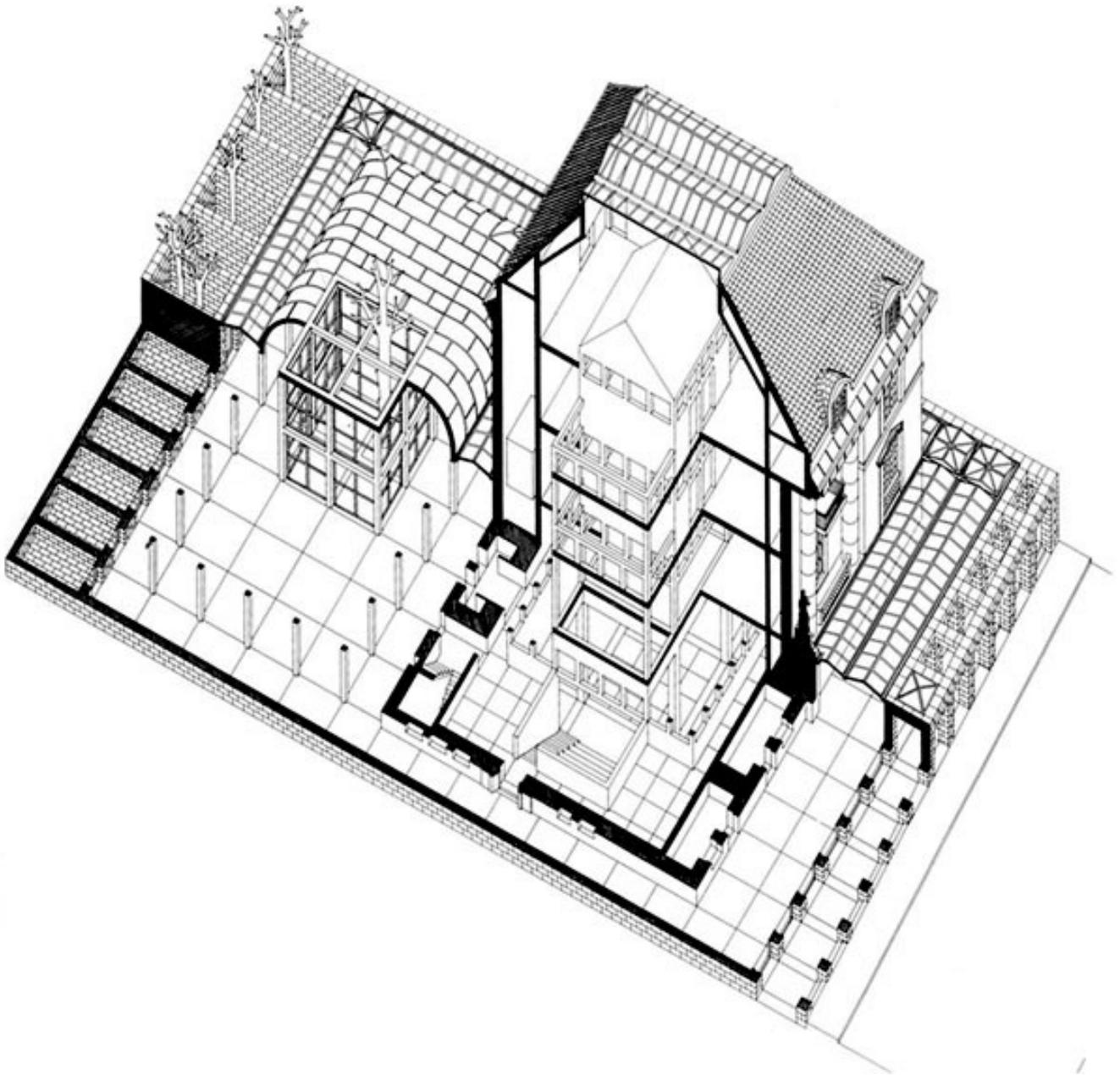


Figure 15. Oswald. M. Ungers, Deutsches Architekturmuseum Frankfurt (DAM), 1979-84.

Friendly monumentality

In the catalogue documenting the six competition entries, Ruud Brouwers (Stichting Wonen) and Bernard Colenbrander (NDB), both members of the steering group, briefly introduce the participating firms, focussing on their respective relations to the tradition of Dutch architecture.⁴⁵⁵ The authors discern sobriety and a focus on the ‘technical aspect’ of the architecture as characteristic for Henket’s work, although ‘in terms of atmosphere ... related to the work of the Forum architects rather than to high tech architecture.’⁴⁵⁶ At the time, Benthem and Crouwel were widely identified as the Dutch representatives of high-tech. Brouwers and Colenbrander describe their approach as pragmatist and in continuity with the modernist tradition of rationalization and industrialization, the building becoming ‘a technical object, equipped with all physical conveniences and organized on a basis of efficiency.’⁴⁵⁷ Also the work of Quist is characterised as marked by a ‘pragmatic slant’, following ‘the great Netherlands’ functionalist tradition’, and ‘untouched by the structuralist tendencies of the last thirty years.’⁴⁵⁸ Next to other interventions, Quist had extended the Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller (1970-77), and the Maritiem Museum in Rotterdam (1981-86). Both Coenen and Snozzi are introduced as architects whose primary concern is the relation between the building and its context. As for Coenen, Brouwer and Colenbrander write: ‘Jo Coenen’s buildings are marked by the designer’s desire to bring coherence and harmony into an environment which would otherwise remain fragmented.’⁴⁵⁹ The entry about Koolhaas indicates *Delirious New York* as the conceptual source of OMA’s work and ends on an almost hostile note. After commenting on the Dance Theatre, the authors bring to mind that the ‘lack of a truly metropolitan milieu in the Netherlands brings with it the danger that Koolhaas’s buildings come no further than the empty, wasted gesture of the prima donna in the provinces.’⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁵ Brouwers, Colenbrander, *Six designs for the Dutch Architectural Institute*, 7-8.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

Chapter 1.8

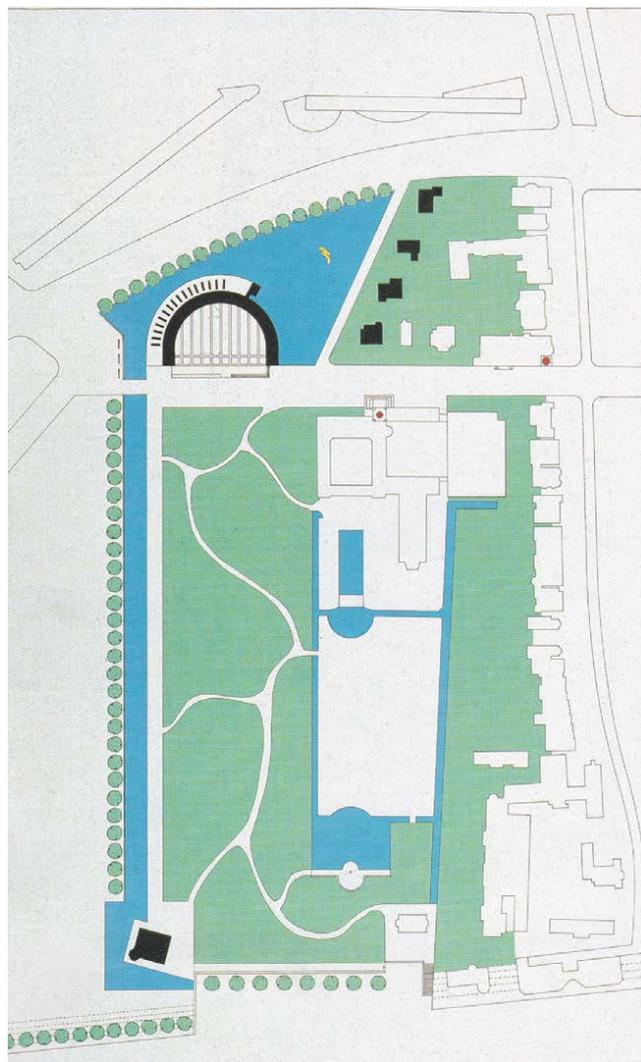


Figure 16. Netherlands Architecture Institute, Rotterdam. Competition, 1988.
Entries by Jo Coenen and Luigi Snozzi.

After the inauguration of the exhibition on the NAI competition in the Boijmans Museum on 8 July,⁴⁶¹ the six entries were reviewed by the major Dutch architecture magazines. In *Archis*, *De Architect* and *architectuur/bouwen* the scheme by OMA was discussed with recognition, enthusiasm, even admiration. The way the project reacted to the site; the character of openness created by way of the transparent and translucent facades; the ‘forest of columns’ as a response to the character of the exhibits; the efficiency of the means employed; the prevention of any monumentality and false pretensions: critics praised these qualities almost unanimously. Van Dijk was reminded of Mies’ Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin, Philip Johnson’s Glass House, Le Corbusier’s Ronchamps and Villa Savoye. The critic’s only concern was the constructive quality of the built outcome. ‘As in the case of Mies,’ van Dijk wrote, and his observation sounds like an appeal, ‘the realization now depends on the perfection of the detailing.’⁴⁶² His remark recalls the critical comments about the detailing, recurring in the reviews of OMA’s first buildings, also mentioned by Van Heuvel, when discussing the eligibility of the six teams.⁴⁶³

But Coenen’s scheme, too, won strong approval, namely its integration into the site. In a first review, Van Dijk laments that Coenen’s project might be too expensive, ‘for it is a wonderful design that in an exciting and subtle way adapts to its environment.’⁴⁶⁴ [Figure 16] Similarly, Rodermond acknowledges that ‘landscape, city and architecture are interwoven in a very elegant manner’.⁴⁶⁵ The curved archive echoes the morphology of the linear apartment blocks on the other side of the street; the exposed brickwork echoes the materiality of the Boijmans Museum and the Unilever Building; the sky reflecting pool ties to the landscape-akin quality of the park; the grill on top of the administration building seizes on the pergola motif, thus linking – metaphorically and by means of its north-south orientation – the city to the park. The rendering shows the box of the administration above the ‘socle’ of the entrance, both towered by the columns of the oversize pergola, in front of the more-than 200-metres-long wall of

⁴⁶¹ H. Andersson (Stuurgroep Architectuur Instituut, project manager), 14 June 1988. OMAR 4215.

⁴⁶² Van Dijk, ‘Zes architecture op zoek naar een opdrachtgever’, 9.

⁴⁶³ Van Heuvel, ‘Een magere meervoudige opdracht’, 49.

⁴⁶⁴ Van Dijk, ‘Zes architecture op zoek naar een opdrachtgever’, 9.

⁴⁶⁵ Janny Rodermond, ‘Zes ontwerpen voor een architectuurinstituut’, *De Architect* 7 (1988), 38.

the archive and its colonnade of concrete slabs resting on a plinth. Rodermond described the arrangement as conveying a ‘friendly monumentality’, Bekaert – grimly – as ‘the Versailles of Dutch architecture.’⁴⁶⁶

A survey, conducted during the exhibition of the NAI competition, revealed that the majority of visitors favoured the scheme by Jo Coenen.⁴⁶⁷ Before the exhibition closed on 28 August, the Steering Group of the NAI organized a series of events, during which all six teams presented their designs to the public. It was up to the ten-headed Board of Netherlands Institute for Architecture and Urban Planning, which had been installed only recently, on 17 August 1988, to select the winning scheme.⁴⁶⁸ The members of the Board gathered on 13 September and invited Quist, Koolhaas and Coenen for a meeting on 22 September.⁴⁶⁹ OMA was asked to present a cost reduction of 15% and to give further explications concerning the construction, issues of organization, soundproofing and the daylight conditions of the working spaces, all of which was addressed in a 19-page booklet, probably handed out by Koolhaas during the meeting.⁴⁷⁰ According to the calculation included in OMA’s booklet the costs arrived at 15.780.000 guilders, that is, more than 20% below the sum estimated by the firm Aronsohn, an external consulting company hired by the Steering Group of the NAI.⁴⁷¹ On 30 September, Koolhaas sent a fax to the project manager of the Board, related to the differences of the two estimates and indicating the possibility of further savings.⁴⁷² Three days later, on the second of October, it was communicated that Coenen had won the competition, and it was his scheme that would be executed.⁴⁷³ In a comment, entitled ‘Coenen, a surprising choice’, Hans van Dijk mentions that a cost overrun for the winning

⁴⁶⁶ Geert Bekaert, ‘A Versailles for Dutch Architecture. The Netherlands Architecture Institute by Jo Coenen’, in: Van Gerrewey, *Rooted in the Real*, 247. First published in 1993 under the title ‘Een Versailles voor de Nederlandse architectuur. Het Nederlands Architectuurinstituut door Jo Coenen’.

⁴⁶⁷ Figueiredo, *The NAI Effect*, 224.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 227. Figueiredo lists the members and their respective institutional background.

⁴⁶⁹ Letters H. Andersson (Nederlands instituut voor architectuur en stedenbouw, project manager), 29 August and 14 September 1988. OMAR 4215.

⁴⁷⁰ OMA, ‘Architectuur Instituut Rotterdam’, 22 September 1988. OMAR 3305, 4232.

⁴⁷¹ Aronsohn estimated a cost total of 20.145.811 guilders. See: ‘Nieuwbouw Architectuur Instituut. Financiële beoordeling meervoudige opdracht. Architect: OMA. Uit: Rapport Aronsohn’, 9 August 1988. OMAR 4215. See also: Figueiredo, *The NAI Effect*, 226-227.

⁴⁷² Rem Koolhaas, letter to H. Andersson, 30 September 1988. OMAR 4215.

⁴⁷³ J.P. Baeten, ‘Catalogus van de collectie “Meervoudige opdracht Nederlands Architectuurinstituut Rotterdam” 1988’, 4. OMAR 4218.

design was to be expected.⁴⁷⁴ In fact, according to the estimates by Aronsohn, Coenen's scheme was more expensive than OMA's.⁴⁷⁵ The report of the assessment committee was never made public.⁴⁷⁶ On what basis the Board took its decision is not clear.⁴⁷⁷ Concerns regarding the feasibility of OMA's scheme might have played a role.⁴⁷⁸ In any case, due to this failure, OMA's competition entry became a quarry of ideas that – adapted and developed further – would enter, enrich and reshape the design of the Kunsthal.

⁴⁷⁴ Hans van Dijk, 'Coenen, een verrassende keuze', *Archis* 11 (1988), 7.

⁴⁷⁵ Figueiredo, *The NAI Effect*, 227, 229.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 225.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 230.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 228.

1.9

A problem of distinction

Deconstructivist Architecture at the MoMA

The obliqueness of OMA's NAI scheme was not without precedent in the work of OMA. Both towers OMA proposed for the Churchillplein competition (1984) partly 'lean forward', as well as significant parts of the development for Boompjes (1980-82), namely the tilted half of the observation tower on the bridgehead of the former Willemsbrug. In the foyer of the Dance Theatre the ceiling slopes down below head-height. Several columns of the Villa Dall'Ava are tilted, and the same applies to the 'Libeskind columns' of the Kunsthal's draft. Also the motif of the sloped triangle as an unstable, or perhaps, dynamic terrain – tipping, sinking, rising – appears in other projects of these years. One of the three main buildings of OMA's scheme for the Eurodisney competition from 1988, is a triangular volume called 'Island'. About one third of its surface is flooded by a lake, while its peak rises from the water like the bow of a sinking ship. An early version of the master plan for Euralille proposes a 'triangular plaza' in front of the train station. The plaza – a triangular building with a sloped roof with a series of detached buildings on it – appears like a gigantic version of the early sketches for the NAI.

[Figure 1]

In his review of the Dance Theatre, Hans van Dijk judged the deviation from the vertical of the golden cone and form the horizontal in the foyer, along with the balancing Skybar, as calculated irritations, evoking a 'destabilizing impact', inspiring a sensation of uncertainty.⁴⁷⁹ Van Dijk interprets the assaults on tectonic firmness as a metaphor for the unstable social condition of the metropolis – intended not as a critique, but as a desire for the metropolitan eventfulness conjured up in *Delirious New York*. According to the book, the dynamics induced by Manhattan's programmatic 'instability' were key to the metropolitan wealth of unpredictable events. Koolhaas hardly ever addressed or explained the image of instability OMA's work recurred to convey. Nonetheless, he must have anticipated that the sloped

⁴⁷⁹ Hans van Dijk, 'Ambitie op zoek naar een "kritische massa"'. OMA's Nederlands Danstheater in Den Haag', *Archis* 4 (1988), 38 (author trans.).

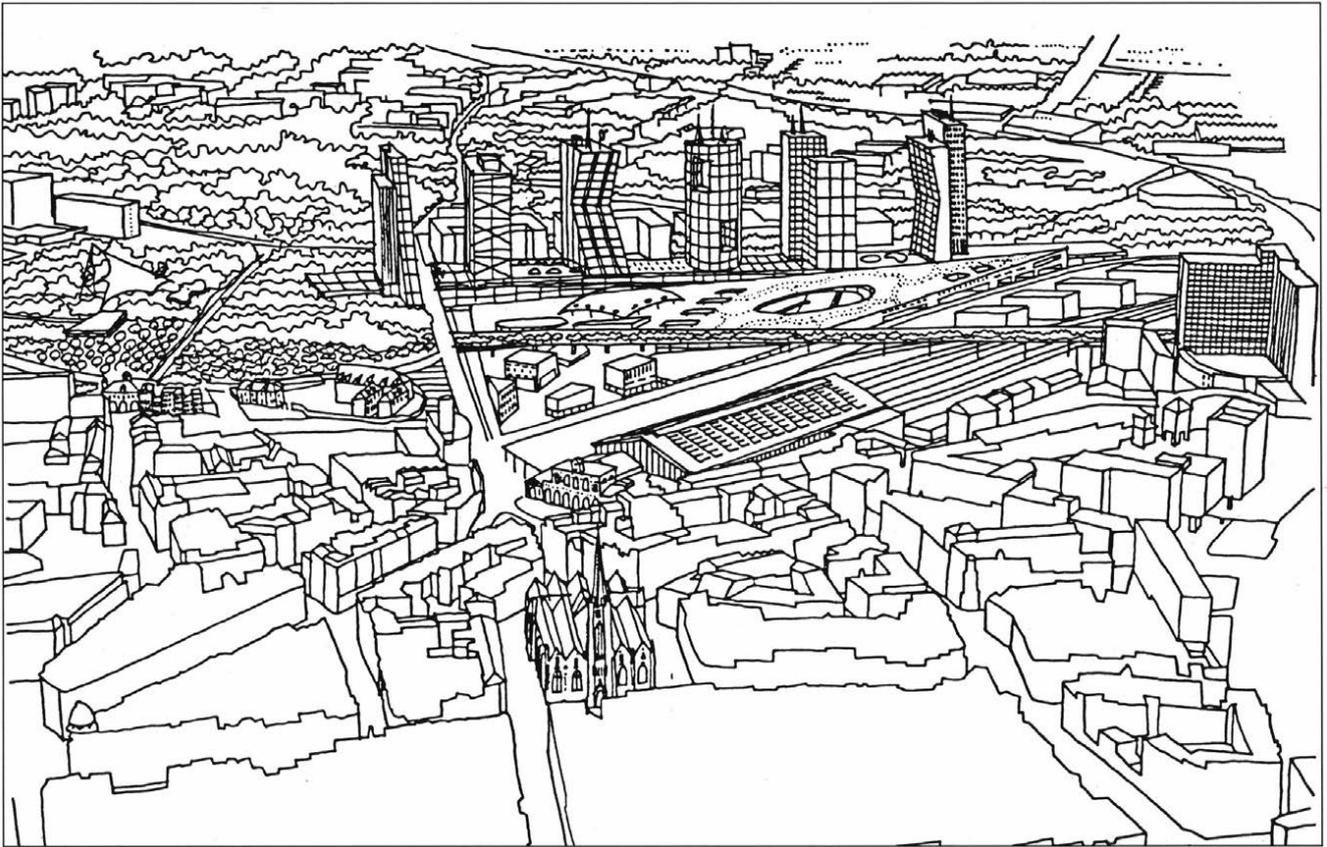


Figure 1. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, Master plan for Euralille. Perspective published in Lucan's monograph from 1990.

and leaning forms of his projects, or precarious looking structures like the Sky Bar of the Dance Theatre, would be understood as such. Besides his manifest sensitivity to the metaphorical dimension of architecture, Koolhaas repeatedly identified ‘instability’ as the paradigmatic condition of the twentieth century. In his preface to Cecil Balmond’s monograph *informal* from 2002, Koolhaas implicitly acknowledges the apparent visual instability of the structure as a means to voice a culturally unstable condition: ‘[...] he [Balmond] has destabilized and even toppled a tradition of Cartesian stability [...] Instead of solidity and certainty his structures express doubt, arbitrariness [...]. He is creating a repertoire that can engage the uncertainty and fluidity of the current moment.’⁴⁸⁰

Three weeks after the deadline of the competition for the NAI, on 23 June, the exhibition *Deconstructivist Architecture* opened at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA), curated by Philip Johnson and Mark Wigley. Rem Koolhaas was among the architects selected for the show, next to Frank Gehry, Daniel Libeskind, Peter Eisenman, Zaha Hadid, Coop Himmelblau and Bernard Tschumi. [Figure 2-6] The exhibition was preceded by a symposium and an edition of *Architectural Design*, both on the topic of deconstruction in architecture, with more or less the same protagonists. The symposium, held in March at the Tate Gallery in London, was opened by a recorded video interview with Jacques Derrida. Among the speakers were Wigley, Eisenman, Hadid, Tschumi and Charles Jencks.⁴⁸¹ The issue of *Architectural Design*, published in April 1988, included essays by Jencks, Tschumi and Elia Zenghelis amongst others, as well as a 14-pages interview with Eisenman, and projects of the architects to be shown at the MoMA. A second symposium was held in New York after the opening of the exhibition. The panel consisted of Rosalind Krauss, Kurt Foster, Anthony Vidler, Michael Hays, Jeffrey Kipnis and Mark Wigley, who moderated the discussion. Koolhaas participated in neither of the symposia, nor did he contribute a text to the April issue of *Architectural Design*. This

⁴⁸⁰ Rem Koolhaas, Preface, in: Cecil Balmond, *informal* (Munich: Prestel, 2002), 9.

⁴⁸¹ Editorial, ‘Deconstruction at the Tate Gallery’, *Architectural Design* 3/4 (1988), 7.



Figure 2. Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, 1988.
Exhibition 'Deconstructivist Architecture'.

silence, or, absence of comment with regard to deconstructivism would continue for more than a year, in spite of the broad and persisting attention the subject received in architectural debates.⁴⁸²

Apparently Koolhaas preferred to keep his thoughts to himself. Perhaps he had no clear idea yet how to react. No doubt, to participate in an exhibition at the MoMA connected to the names of Philip Johnson and Jacques Derrida meant an appearance at the world stage of architecture along with a certain amount of attention and acclaim. But at the same time, the contours of OMA's position within the field of architecture threatened to be smudged. In relation to postmodernist architecture, Koolhaas had successfully cultivated a stance of distinct opposition: programme vs. form; modernist ideology vs. un-ideological formalism; utilitarian concerns vs. semiological arrogance; modernist references vs. classicist leanings; modernist types vs. premodern types; 'artistic contrast' vs. contextualist mimesis. The antagonisms stressed were bold enough to hide the features in common, such as the affinity to formal fragmentation and collage, which OMA's most successful designs did share with many an icon of postmodernist architecture. In the context of the architecture subsumed under the label of 'deconstructivism', OMA's stance and image were much less distinct. Like Koolhaas, many of the architects whose work was identified as deconstructivist were perceived (or positioned themselves) as opponents to postmodernist architecture, rejecting contextualism and classicist references, while drawing in one way or another on the tradition of the modern movement, Russian constructivism and suprematism. A comparison between constructivism and deconstructivism was the conceptual core of the MoMA exhibition. In the first of altogether three galleries, Russian art from the years between 1913 and 1933 was shown, including work of Casimir Malevich, El Lissitzky, Alexander Rodchenko, Vladimir Tatlin, Alexander Vesnin, Chernikov, amongst others.⁴⁸³ Explicitly referencing to the Russian avant-gardes were Tschumi's *folies* of the La Villette park (Chernikov), the tilted open web trusses of

⁴⁸² An interview from 1990 appears to be one of the first occasions for Koolhaas to distance himself from deconstructivist architecture. See: Chantal Béret, 'Rem Koolhaas. La condition métropolitaine', *Art Press* 148 (June 1990), 19.

⁴⁸³ Simone Kraft, *Dekonstruktivismus in der Architektur? Eine Analyse der Ausstellung 'Deconstructivist Architecture' im New Yorker Museum of Modern Art* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2015), 50.

Chapter 1.9



Figure 3. MoMA, 'Deconstructivist Architecture', New York, 1988.
Above: Bernard Tschumi. Below: Daniel Libeskind.

OMA's Boompjes project (El Lissitzky's Lenin stand), and Hadid's project for the Peak Club in Hong Kong from 1982 (Malevich's suprematism).

In the heartland of Koolhaasian discourse

In the essay included in the catalogue, Wigley disclaims any link between 'the contemporary philosophy known as "deconstruction"' and the projects shown at the MoMA, explaining that the 'projects can be called deconstructivist because they draw from Constructivism and yet constitute a radical deviation from it.'⁴⁸⁴ It is a well-known fact, however, that the subject of Wigley's dissertation from 1987 was Jacques Derrida and deconstruction in architectural discourse.⁴⁸⁵ That Wigley's understanding of deconstructivist architecture owes much to Derrida's 'strategy of deconstruction' is obvious and had soon been noticed.⁴⁸⁶ Like deconstruction, deconstructivist architecture would operate 'from within', entering its object, appropriating its structure; like deconstruction, deconstructivist architecture would expose the intrinsic contradictions – or 'imperfections' – of its object, concealed by an enforced unity. Like Derrida, Wigley insinuates analogies to psychoanalysis furnishing architectural form with an 'unconscious' that should be disclosed.⁴⁸⁷ Like deconstruction, deconstructivism, according to Wigley, does not destroy or fragment but distorts and deforms.⁴⁸⁸ Equating regular volumes, such as the cube or cylinder, with 'harmony, unity, and stability', Wigley regards their distortion as an expression of conflict and instability. Such instability would challenge the traditional notion of order and unity. It is in this apolitical sense that Wigley recognises deconstructivist architecture as 'critical' and 'subversive'.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁴ Wigley, 'Deconstructivist Architecture', 10, 16.

⁴⁸⁵ Wigley received his PhD at the University of Auckland in New Zealand. The dissertation is entitled: 'Jacques Derrida and Architecture: The Deconstructive Possibilities of Architectural Discourse'. Wigley's book *Derrida's Haunt* is a revised version of the dissertation. Mark Wigley, *The Architecture of Deconstruction: Derrida's Haunt* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1993), xiv.

⁴⁸⁶ Michael Sorkin, 'Decon Job', *The Village Voice* 27 (July 5 1988), 83; Robin Evans, *The Projective Cast* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1995), 89.

⁴⁸⁷ Wigley, 'Deconstructivist Architecture', 20.

⁴⁸⁸ In his 1986 essay on Tschumi's project for La Villette, Derrida is explicit: 'These *folies* do not destroy.' The project even implies (deconstructive) affirmation. Jacques Derrida, 'Point de folie – Maintenant l'architecture', in Hays, *Architecture Theory Since 1968*, 575. First published under the same title in 1986.

⁴⁸⁹ Wigley, 'Deconstructivist Architecture', 10,11,16.



Figure 4. MoMA, 'Deconstructivist Architecture', New York, 1988.
Drawings by Zaha Hadid.

Considerations regarding the impact of architecture on society – so vital for constructivist thinking – are as absent from Wigley’s introduction as from his subsequent explanations of the ‘deconstructivist’ projects. In the text on OMA’s Boompjes project Wigley does list the main functions the building ought to house, but Koolhaas’ ambitions and ideas related to programme are not even mentioned. Instead Wigley focuses on the building’s formal ambiguity between slab and tower, modernism and constructivism. [Figure 7] Modernist stability, he argues, is contested by constructivist instability. Opposing orthogonal and diagonal shapes, modernist and constructivist references, Wigley explicates:

At one end of the slab, a pure orthogonal tower begins to detach itself. At the other end, an angled open-steel tower escaped altogether. It is produced by taking a section of an old bridge [the Willemsbrug] on the site and lifting it up to form a tilted tower. Suspended between the two – the high modernist tower and the Constructivist tower – the slab becomes the scene of a radical questioning of modernism. It is seen to give birth to both the stability of the one and the instability of the other.⁴⁹⁰

With topics such as instability, subversion, the unconscious, modernism and Russian constructivism, Wigley operates in the heartland of Koolhaas’ discourse and work in terms of references and formal characteristics, while identifying all of this as the common ground of a new strand in contemporary architecture.

Digression on a counterexample

The triptych of OMA’s Boompjes project shown at MoMA had already been on show three years earlier at the Centre Pompidou in the exhibition *Les Immatériaux* (1985), curated by French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard. [Figure 8] It was part of the section of ‘architecture plane’ together with a rendering by Hadid and models of two Arkhitektions by Malevich, among other things. As mentioned in Chapter 1.1, Wigley, in 1988, stressed the deconstructivist architects’ commitment to building which would give

⁴⁹⁰ Johnson, Wigley, *Deconstructivist Architecture*, 46.

Chapter 1.9



Figure 5. MoMA, 'Deconstructivist Architecture', New York, 1988.
Above: Libeskind, Eisenman, Gehry. Zaha Hadid, Tschumi, Libeskind, Eisenman, Gehry.

their work a critical edge.⁴⁹¹ Conversely, the catalogue of the exhibition in Paris presents the projects and their respective representations as an alternative to building:

The building projected on paper constitutes [...] the essence of the architectural message. The design of the architect liberates itself of the constraints of ‘building’ and it approximates those of ‘painting’. A sliding from one code to another which makes the distinction between the two messages – architectural, pictorial – uncertain.⁴⁹²

As for OMA’s triptych, the catalogue comments: ‘The built realization will not be more than its [...] fatally inadequate reproduction and maybe not necessary. Taking the shape of a painting, the drawing of the architect imposes its presence as a thing [chose], a denial of its representative value.’⁴⁹³ That is probably not how Koolhaas felt in 1980, not to speak of 1985 when the office was ever more sternly committed to building. All the more he must have been attracted to the Parisian exhibition’s intellectual ambition. In 2015 he explained:

One exhibition I was happy to be part of was *Les Immatériaux* at the Centre Pompidou in 1985. I really felt at home, much more than at the Biennale, and much more than in the *Deconstructivist Architecture* exhibition. [...] I felt close to that exhibition because it was not connected to an architectural movement: it proposed a kind of thinking through a condition. [...] It had nothing to do with matter or substance – it was concerned with thought.⁴⁹⁴

Les Immatériaux was to demonstrate and to explore the postmodern condition, as outlined by Lyotard’s synonymous ‘report’ from 1979.⁴⁹⁵ Regardless of the narrative – postmodernity vis à vis modernity, and the impact of recent technology: To see architecture embedded in a cultural synopsis encompassing

⁴⁹¹ Wigley, ‘Deconstructivist Architecture’, 19.

⁴⁹² ‘architecture plane’, in: Jean-François Lyotard, *Les immatériaux. Inventaire et album* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1985), *Inventaire*, n.p (author trans.).

⁴⁹³ Ibid., (author trans.).

⁴⁹⁴ Szacka, ‘Translucent oppositions’, n.p.

⁴⁹⁵ Jean-François Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne* (Paris: Edition Minuit, 1979).

Chapter 1.9



Figure 6. MoMA, 'Deconstructivist Architecture', New York, 1988.
Coop Himmelblau and OMA/Rem Koolhaas.

art, literature, music, film, science and modern communication technologies must have appealed to Koolhaas' inclination to transcend the disciplinary isolation of his profession. Likewise, the exhibition's underlying hypothesis that the ongoing technological revolutions would imply a radical transformation of the cultural production as a whole, fitted well in Koolhaas' image of 20th century culture and society as genuinely dynamic and instable.

They break a building into seemingly unrelated parts

The reception of the MoMA show was far from favourable. Formalism was among the most frequent criticisms. More than one reviewer suggested that the selection had solely been based on formal likeness, while pointing to the fact that also the texts of the catalogue discuss the work in exclusively formal terms. The presentation was assessed as reductive, politically inoffensive, so as to level down significant differences between the appearances of the work at show and the respective approaches behind it.⁴⁹⁶ Many contemporary critics, explicitly or implicitly, held Philip Johnson responsible for the superficial take on the architecture on show, which drained deconstructivism and constructivism in particular of their societal implications, as Johnson (and Hitchcock) had done with modernist architecture at the International Style 56 years before.⁴⁹⁷ Koolhaas stated in 2015: 'If anyone was responsible for the Deconstructivist exhibition, it was Johnson. He really felt the need to reassert his power and to declare an agenda. He was convinced of being the true curator of the 20th century.'⁴⁹⁸ Critics like Diane Ghirardo were profoundly sceptical with regard to the 'new fad'. With the bitterness of powerlessness, she wrote a couple of weeks before the opening of the show:

The entire world of architectural critics, theorists and groupies is gearing up to produce the customary avalanche of publications on the new fad. [...] One must understand the operative dynamics here, not just in architecture but in philosophy and criticism. Careers are fashioned, names are made, authorities are designated, sessions are dedicated at professional conferences,

⁴⁹⁶ For instance: Sorkin, 'Decon Job', 81-83; Herbert Muschamp, 'The Leaning Tower of Theory', *The New Republic* 3 (29 August 1988), 36-40.

⁴⁹⁷ For instance, Sorkin, 'Decon Job', 81, 83; Muschamp, 'The Leaning Tower of Theory', 40.

⁴⁹⁸ Szacka, 'Translucent oppositions', n.p.



Figure 7. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, Boompjes, Rotterdam. 1980.

thesis, dissertatins [sic], and books are written. In architecture specifically, symposia are organised, exhibits are held, catalogues and books are published, and finally, in an ultimate spasm of maxi-consumption, gas stations, mini-malls and skyscrapers are all built to look ‘Deconstructive’.⁴⁹⁹

The press covered the exhibition extensively. In American magazines and journals alone at least 55 articles on the event have been published between 1987 and 1989.⁵⁰⁰ The MoMA show left a lasting impact, and it was the breakthrough for ‘decon-’ as a label for contemporary architecture. In 1989 Mary McLeod observed sarcastically, implying the poststructuralist affinities of deconstructivist architecture: ‘Ironically, the rhetoric of the death of the author seems not to dampen the spirit of self-promotion, hype, and commodification that became so integral to the dissemination of postmodernism.’⁵⁰¹ In his 1990 monograph ‘Dekonstruktion? Dekonstruktivismus?’ Gerd Kähler reports that the ‘media spectacle’ is still going on.⁵⁰² The protagonists of the show – the authors of the projects in the first place – would be among the dominating figures of the architectural scene for at least the next two decades. Unlike the exhibition and their curators, their work was exempt from most of the criticism: ‘The majority of the projects on view at the Modern’, observed Herbert Muschamp, ‘are indeed among the most challenging of our time, worth almost any amount of hoopla.’⁵⁰³

As it seems, by 1988, formal qualities that could pass as ‘deconstructivist’ were at the verge of becoming a broad trend in architecture. Mark Wigley recalls that the MoMA exhibition was by no means conceived as the announcement of either a novelty or something to come in architecture, but as a retrospective of certain tendencies of the past ten years.⁵⁰⁴ In an essay from April 1988, Jencks

⁴⁹⁹ Diane Ghirardo, ‘Diane Ghirardo’s exposée of MOMA’s Deconstructivist show’, *The Architectural Review*, 1096 (Jun 1988), 4.

⁵⁰⁰ See the bibliography compiled by Simone Kraft, in: *Dekonstruktivismus in der Architektur?*, 350-354.

⁵⁰¹ McLeod, ‘Architecture and Politics in the Reagan Era: From Postmodernism to Deconstructivism’, 695.

⁵⁰² Gert Kähler, *Dekonstruktion? Dekonstruktivismus? – Aufbruch ins Chaos oder neues Bild der Welt* (Braunschweig: Bauwelt Fundamente, 1990), 7.

⁵⁰³ Muschamp, ‘The Leaning Tower of Theory’, 36.

⁵⁰⁴ Mark Wigley, lecture at the TU Delft, held on 19 June 2018.

http://www.theberlage.nl/galleries/videos/watch/2018_06_19_what_just_happened_revisiting_deconstructivist_architecture_after_30_years; min 51. Accessed 23 July 2018.



Figure 8. Centre Pompidou (5th floor), 'Les Immatériaux', 1985.
Section 'architecture plane', showing work by Malevich, OMA, Zaha Hadid and Piet Zwart.

acknowledges deconstructivism as a new style that gained ‘widespread acceptance’. According to Jencks, the ‘Neo-Constructivist aesthetic unites the work of Gehry with that of such designers as Rem Koolhaas, Arquitectonica, Zaha Hadid and Bernard Tschumi into a clearly identifiable “school”’.⁵⁰⁵ Already two months earlier, Joseph Giovannini announced deconstructivism as a ‘New School of Architects’ in an article for the *New York Times*.⁵⁰⁶ Giovannini had also been among those to advise Johnson while conceiving the MoMA exhibition.⁵⁰⁷ In his article he introduces as deconstructivist architects not only most firms selected for the show in New York, but also Morphosis, David Kesler, Roger Bennett, Bahram Shirdel, Thomas Leeser, Margaret Helfand and Michele Sae, while suggesting that the students trained by these architects in architectural schools on both sides of the Atlantic might follow their example:

Known as Deconstructivists, these architects – who over the last decade have been joined by their students and the students of their students – are designing real and theoretical projects. Unlike conventional designs that strive for architectural unity, theirs look fragmented and accidental: they splinter walls, unhinge corners and shift floors like so many tectonic plates. Uninterested in the 90-degree angle and parallel lines, they break a building into seemingly unrelated parts: walls don’t meet floors; door frames are distorted.

The Deconstructivists have been loosely inspired by Russian Constructivism, the revolutionary art movement of the 1920s, and by Deconstructionism, a contemporary French literary movement. They eschew the classical forms and sense of balanced symmetry that typify much recent design, especially post-modernism.

[...] The designers have turned what they see as the instability of our times into an architectural virtue.⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰⁵ Charles Jencks, ‘The Pleasures of Absence’, *Architectural Design* 3/4 (1988), 17, 20.

⁵⁰⁶ Joseph Giovannini, ‘The Limit of Chaos Tempts A New School of Architects’, *The New York Times*, 4 February, 1988.

⁵⁰⁷ Philip Johnson, Preface, in: Johnson, Wigley, *Deconstructivist Architecture*, 9. See also: Charles Jencks, ‘Dialogues with Philip Johnson’, in: Idem, *The New Moderns. From Late to Neo-Modernism* (London: Academy Editions, 1990), 164.

⁵⁰⁸ Giovannini, 1988, ‘The Limit of Chaos Tempts A New School of Architects’.

Giovannini's article bespeaks the extent to which some cornerstones of OMA's position were diffused in contemporary architecture and discourse: apart from the rejection of postmodernism and the references to constructivism, the catchword 'instability' and formal fragmentation were about to become common places of what promised to become the latest architectural fashion. The prospect must have run diametrically counter to what has been called Koolhaas' desire for distinction. When Koolhaas spoke of 'instability' – in *Delirious New York*, 'Elegy for the Vacant Lot' (1985) or 'How Modern is Dutch Architecture?' (1990) – he did not refer to the visual impact of architecture, but to change in terms of programme, urban transformations and cultural change in the widest sense; likewise, he hardly ever used the terms 'fragmentation' and 'collage' during those years, perhaps *because* formal fragmentation and collage were widely considered key characteristics of postmodern architecture. Johnson's and Wigley's exhibition at the MoMA was like a spotlight cast on these and other characteristics Koolhaas' work shared in varying degrees with that of a larger number of architects. The branding 'deconstructivist architecture' brought them into focus. Examples of such shared characteristics are, limiting the list to the work of the best-known of architectural firms: a strong presence if not dominance of skewed forms (Libeskind, Eisenman, Hadid, Gehry, Lebbeus Woods, Coop Himmelblau, Domenig, Fuksas, Behnisch); ostentatiously unpretentious materials like corrugated sheathing, exposed plywood and mesh wire (Gehry, Behnisch); borrowings from constructivism and suprematism (Tschumi, Hadid); the superimposition of diverse layers of order (Eisenman, Tschumi, Morphosis); and, finally, the absence of a unifying volume in virtually all of the work associated with deconstructivist architecture.

The unconscious and formal fragmentation

There are, however, correspondences beyond mere resemblances of form. Herbert Muschamp, to begin with, points out that all the architects involved in the MoMA exhibition reject the idea of their discipline being secluded in self-referential autonomy, suggesting instead an architecture rooted in and nourished

by its expanded cultural context, such as theory, art, literature, and music.⁵⁰⁹ In fact, most of the architects claim for their work such ‘external’ influences, and with good reason. It is obvious, for instance, that Tschumi’s ‘Manhattan Transcripts’ are indebted to film, Hadid’s Peak Club to suprematism, Libeskind’s Chamber Works to Kandinsky, and *Delirious New York* and much of OMA’s early work to the writings and art of Dalí.

No less important is the interest in the subversive potential of architecture, shared in one way or another by Wigley, Derrida, Koolhaas and Tschumi. Koolhaas uses the term ‘subversive’ in *Delirious New York* and again in the 1980 manifesto ‘Our “New Sobriety”’.⁵¹⁰ In these and other writings, Koolhaas attributes to architecture a subversive potential latent in the instability of its programme and use.⁵¹¹ That Wigley in his essay from 1988 restricted subversion to form, might have been a concession to Philip Johnson.⁵¹² According to Derrida, deconstruction in architecture would measure itself ‘against institutions in their solidity [...]: political structures, layers of economic decision, the material, phantasmatic apparatuses which connects state, civil society, capital, bureaucracy, cultural power and architectural education.’⁵¹³

Tschumi, and Eisenman in his own way, embraced the conception of such (post-)structuralist ‘resistance’. Andreas Papadakis, at the time editor of *Architectural Design*, paraphrases Eisenman’s explication of Deconstruction given during the symposium at London’s Tate Gallery in March 1988 as follows:

⁵⁰⁹ Muschamp, ‘The Leaning Tower of Theory’, 38.

⁵¹⁰ Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 87, 307. Koolhaas, ‘Our “New Sobriety”’, 216.

⁵¹¹ On this issue and Koolhaas’ use of the term ‘programme’ see also chapter 1.5.

⁵¹² Michael Sorkin, who suggests that Wigley – surnaming him ‘Johnson’s current *Gauleiter* for the intellect’ – complied to the latter’s formalist apolitical vision of architecture, ‘meekly carrying out Johnson’s curatorial commands.’ Sorkin, ‘Decon Job’, 81. In a lecture at the TU Delft, held on 19 June 2018, Wigley defends the stance of his 1988 essay, arguing that ‘formalism is not apolitical. And, in reverse, that there is no politics without its formalism.’

http://www.theberlage.nl/galleries/videos/watch/2018_06_19_what_just_happened_revisiting_deconstructivist_architecture_after_30_years; min 109. Accessed 23 July 2018.

⁵¹³ Derrida, ‘Point de folie–Maintenant l’architecture’, 578.

Deconstruction looks for the ‘between’ – the ugly within the beautiful, the irrational within the rational – to uncover the repressed, the real resistant, cut into textuality and displace the system, so that only now does he [Eisenman] see his truly Deconstructivist projects emerging, in projects that tackle ‘the between’, bringing out the unease, creating an architecture for alienated man much the way Edvard Munch had in painting.⁵¹⁴

Tschumi claimed that his project for La Villette would question the idea of order, challenge the ideology of the programme, be the opposite of totality, subvert the context, while looking ‘at new social and historical circumstances’.⁵¹⁵ Charles Jencks, even though incredulous at any such pretensions, synthesized the rebellious gestures of deconstructivist architecture as ‘claims to pluralism, *différence*, “war on totality” and defence of “otherness”’.⁵¹⁶

Koolhaas was introduced to (post-)structuralist thought during his studies at Cornell University by Hubert Damisch at the beginning of the 1970s, and, as Francis Hsu has shown, French critical theory had a lasting impact on his writings on architecture.⁵¹⁷ Perhaps one consequence of Koolhaas’ leanings towards contemporary French theory was his concern for the unconscious as a source and subject of architecture. When he wrote *Delirious New York* Koolhaas seems to have been well aware of Jacques Lacan’s theory and its connection to surrealism and Salvador Dalí in particular. The notes mention Lacan’s dissertation as a ‘reinforcement for Dalí’s theses’, referring to the latter’s Paranoid Critical Method (PCM).⁵¹⁸ For the thinking of Lacan, who had been friends with Breton and at close terms with Dalí, surrealist writings and art played a seminal role.⁵¹⁹ His theory advertises the unconscious as the

⁵¹⁴ Editorial, ‘Deconstruction at the Tate Gallery’, 7.

⁵¹⁵ Bernard Tschumi, ‘Parc de la Villette, Paris’, in: Andreas Papadakis et al. (eds.), *Deconstruction. Omnibus Volume*, (New York: Rizzoli, 1989), 176, 180-181.

⁵¹⁶ Jencks, ‘Deconstruction: The Pleasures of Absence’, *Architectural Design* 3/4 (1988), 31.

⁵¹⁷ In her dissertation Hsu focuses on the impact of Roland Barthes and Jacques Lacan. See: Hsu, *The Ends of Modernism: Structuralism and Surrealism in the Work of Rem Koolhaas*. See also: Stierli, *Montage and the Metropolis*, 262, 267.

⁵¹⁸ Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 316, note 6.

⁵¹⁹ David Macey wrote on this issue: ‘Lacan is not influenced by surrealism, as though it were some external factor impinging upon his subjectivity; his writing is part of the same web.’ David Macey, *Lacan in Contexts* (London, New York: Verso, 1988), 74.

access to the ‘forbidden *jouissance* which is the only valuable meaning that is offered to our life.’⁵²⁰ Puritan repression of unconscious desires by the architectural modern movement of the 1920s and 1930s is a subject that recurs in the thinking of Eisenman, Tschumi, Koolhaas, and Wigley. The focus of interest, however, varies: The repressed – forms of architecture, history, individuality – is a major concern of Eisenman’s thinking and work (‘Architecture has repressed the individual unconscious by dealing only with consciousness in the physical environment.’ ‘Enrich for me is not to give something new value, but to uncover what has been repressed.’);⁵²¹ Tschumi, seizing on Bataille, focuses on the pleasures of seduction and the transgression of norms (‘Behind all masks lie dark and unconscious streams that cannot be dissociated from the pleasure of architecture.’);⁵²² Wigley advocates the ‘unconscious of pure form’ as the ‘hidden potential of modernism’,⁵²³ while for Koolhaas the ‘possible “hidden” dimensions of modern architecture’ reside in its hedonism, as has been seen.⁵²⁴ The idea of European modernist architects repressing unconscious hedonistic and subversive desires is clearly expressed in *Delirious New York*. The skyscrapers of Manhattan figure as manifestations of the unconscious, protected from repressive censorship by the self-imposed unconsciousness of their builders.⁵²⁵ And it is the surrealist expert of the unconscious Salvador Dalí who ecstatically ‘understands’, whereas the purist and puritan Le Corbusier ‘denies’ the whole of Manhattan, proposing its destruction.

As the above example indicates, Koolhaas’ interest in surrealism and Dalí aims at the unconscious as a source of artistic inspiration. In his monograph *The Construction of Merveilles* Roberto Gargiani has shown that surrealist art and theory exerted a seminal and long-lasting influence on Koolhaas’ architectural production. Madelon Vriesendorp’s animated skyscrapers are evidently pastiches of Dalí’s paintings and etchings, and the ‘obsessive’ persistence with which the author of *Delirious New York*

⁵²⁰ Jacques Lacan, ‘Of Structure as an Inmixing of an Otherness’ in: Richard Macksey, Eugenio Donato (eds.), *The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man. The Structuralist Controversy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press), 195.

⁵²¹ Charles Jencks, ‘Peter Eisenman’, *Architectural Design* 3/4 (1988), 52, 59.

⁵²² Bernard Tschumi, ‘The pleasures of Architecture’, in: Idem, *Architecture and Disjunction* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1994), 91, 95. First published in 1977 under the same title in *A+U* 11.

⁵²³ Mark Wigley, *Deconstructivist Architecture*, 19.

⁵²⁴ OMA, ‘La Casa Palestra’, 8. See Chapter 1.5.

⁵²⁵ Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 87, 293.

confirms the claims of his ‘retroactive manifesto’ echoes Dalí’s Paranoid Critical Method (PCM). The title’s epithet ‘delirious’ is apparently borrowed from Dalí’s writings on this method.⁵²⁶ Koolhaas mentions in his book also the *cadavre exquis*, a surrealist technique to create texts or drawings collectively.⁵²⁷ Each author participating adds his contribution ignorant of the previous and following ones, thus bypassing the control of the outcome as a whole through his consciousness. On a formal level, the *cadavre exquis*, especially as a drawing, is akin to the collage and the incompatibility of its parts – and, given the part’s sequential order, to montage in particular. OMA adopted the principle almost literally when designing the competition entries for the Dutch Parliament in The Hague (1978), and the Residence of the Irish Prime Minister in Dublin (1979).⁵²⁸ The tripartite and, respectively, bipartite character of these projects echoes the number of authors, who each had developed their part of the scheme independently from the others.⁵²⁹ Koolhaas and Zenghelis had ‘tested’ the method beforehand at the Architectural Association School of Architecture (AA) in London, asking their students to work in a similar way on the fragments of a ‘Tektonik’ by Malevich, that would only be reassembled when the architectural articulation of the parts was completed.⁵³⁰ Hubert Damisch entitled his 1987 review of the Dance Theatre in The Hague ‘Cadavre Exquis’, referring, among other things, to the building’s collage-like appearance.⁵³¹

In Lacan’s theory, the unconscious and formal fragmentation are closely related. The connection is figuratively expressed by what Lacan calls the fragmented body-image of the unconscious, or the pre-mirror stage. Lacan considers this concealed fragmentation in opposition to the notion of physical unity in a relation of truth and deception. At a conference in 1966 he stated plainly: ‘The idea of the unifying

⁵²⁶ Dalí defines: ‘Paranoiac-Critical Activity: Spontaneous method of irrational knowledge based on the critical and systematic objectification of delirious associations and interpretations.’ Quoted after: Haim Finkelstein, *The Collected Writings of Salvador Dalí*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 254. See also: Gargiani *The Construction of Merveilles*, 62.

⁵²⁷ Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 259.

⁵²⁸ Gargiani *The Construction of Merveilles*, 77-81.

⁵²⁹ Koolhaas describes the division of the two projects in the interview in: Goulet, ‘La deuxième chance’, 4. The project for The Hague was split between: Koolhaas, Zenghelis, and Hadid; the project in Dublin between Koolhaas and Zenghelis.

⁵³⁰ Gargiani, *The Construction of Merveilles*, 77, 50-51.

⁵³¹ Hubert Damisch, ‘Cadavre exquis. Théâtre nationale de danse, La Haye’, 21-22.

unity of the human condition has always had on me the effect of a scandalous lie.⁵³² Fragmentation is truth. Dreams, like desire belonging to the realm of the unconscious, reveal it: ‘This fragmented body ... usually manifests itself in dreams when the movement of the analysis encounters a certain level of aggressive disintegration in the individual. It then appears in the form of disjointed limbs ...’⁵³³ Anthony Vidler – referring to Himmelblau, Libeskind and Tschumi – established a direct connection between deconstructivist fragmentation and French theory: ‘Lacan’s structuralist notion of a repressed fragmentation of the body finds its post-structuralist analogue in Roland Barthes’s *Fragments of a Lover’s Discourse*, in which he describes a body that, subjected to the gaze of desire, is, so to speak, transformed into a corpse’.⁵³⁴ In the passage quoted by Vidler, Barthes describes a change of perception, which turns the desired body into a series of lifeless, fetishized objects. Deprived of their unity, fragmented, they appear as a series of unrelated parts.⁵³⁵

The form of programme

There is also a close relation between fragmentation and the unconscious in Koolhaas’ writings and the architectural production of OMA. The relation is obvious in the designs conceived as a *cadavre exquis*, latent in Koolhaas’ conception of ‘programmatic instability, that is, a programme subject to a process of constant change which eludes all-encompassing planning and control’.⁵³⁶ ‘[P]erpetual programmatic instability’ and ‘unforeseeable and unstable combination of simultaneous activities’⁵³⁷ are at the core of his vision of the skyscraper in *Delirious New York*. What might be gained by such instability is exemplified by the oyster bar of the Downtown Athletic Club. The imaginary scene of naked men ‘[e]ating oysters with boxing gloves’⁵³⁸ charges the skyscraper with the promise of a surrealist loss of control, while recalling Lautréamont’s chance encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a

⁵³² Jacques Lacan, ‘Of Structure as an Inmixing of an Otherness’, 190.

⁵³³ Jacques Lacan, ‘The mirror stage as formative of the function of the *I* as revealed in psychoanalytic experience’, in: Jacques Lacan, *Écrits. A selection* (London: Routledge, 1989), 5.

⁵³⁴ Anthony Vidler, ‘The Building in Pain. The Body and Architecture in Post-Modern Culture’, *AA Files* 19 (1990), 7.

⁵³⁵ Roland Barthes, *A Lover’s Discourse. Fragments* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010), 71-72.

⁵³⁶ The term ‘programme’ refers as much to the specified functions as to the actual use of the space. On this issue, see Chapter 1.5.

⁵³⁷ Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 85, 87.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, 155.

dissecting table, as has often been noticed. The methodical surrender to the dynamics of the large building – filling the role of the unconscious – aims at the transgression of rules and conventions. The chance encounter is an encounter with the unconscious as a realm where rules and conventions are suspended. As for the surrealists, the unconscious figures as a liberating force that can destabilize the existing order.⁵³⁹ On the level of form, however, ‘programmatically instability’ goes along with the spatial fragmentation of the programme. The both spatial and formal fragmentation of OMA’s project for the La Villette Park is manifest. The scheme divides the surface of the park in more than 40 parallel bands with varying uses, superimposed by a confetti of kiosks, bars, playgrounds, picnic areas, a circulation system, and givens such as the Grand Halle and Fainsilber’s museum. The parallel bands simulate the programmatic and spatial fragmentation of a skyscraper through its floors – in *Delirious New York* Koolhaas uses the term ‘Vertical Schism’ – albeit without the physical partitions that the floor slabs impose. In the park, much more than in the skyscraper, the various activities are at liberty to mix. The aim, OMA’s project statement explains, is to ‘orchestrate on a metropolitan field the most dynamic coexistence of x, y, z activities and to generate through their mutual interference a chain reaction of new, unprecedented events.’⁵⁴⁰ Ultimately, the programme was meant to abolish itself and to leave the stage to the events of spontaneous activity which would emancipate from what was planned, suggesting a process of uncontrolled (‘unpredictable’) escalation.⁵⁴¹

A kind of shadow?

Human activity and the event as *the* subversive potential of architecture, is a topic that recurs also in Tschumi’s essays and theoretical projects of the 1970s and 1980s. Like Koolhaas, Tschumi is interested in ‘hybrid activities’ and their ‘most unlikely combinations’.⁵⁴² But whereas for Koolhaas form (‘architectural specificity’) is to articulate the programme, Tschumi envisages some sort of tension

⁵³⁹ Walter Benjamin saw surrealism as an ultimately revolutionary endeavour: ‘Die Kräfte des Rausches für die Revolution zu gewinnen, darum kreist der Surrealismus in allen Büchern und Unternehmen.’; Walter Benjamin, ‘Der Surrealismus. Die letzte Momentaufnahme der europäischen Intelligenz’, in: Michael Opitz (ed.), *Walter Benjamin, Ein Lesebuch* (Leipzig: Suhrkamp, 1996), 161. First published under the same title in 1929.

⁵⁴⁰ OMA, ‘Parc de la Villette’, 86.

⁵⁴¹ See also Chapter 1.5.

⁵⁴² Bernard Tschumi, *Manhattan Transcripts* (London: Academy Editions, 1981), 10, 8.

between architecture and its use.⁵⁴³ In the chapter ‘The Block’ of his *Manhattan Transcripts* ‘acrobats, ice-skaters, dancers, soldiers, and football players all congregate and perform high-wire acts, games, or even the re-enactment of famous battles, in a context usually alien to their activity.’⁵⁴⁴ In 1983 Tschumi explained: ‘As an exploration of the disjunction between expected form and expected use, we began a series of projects opposing specific programs with particular, often conflicting spaces.’⁵⁴⁵

Similar to Koolhaas, Tschumi advocates the issue of programme as ‘a forbidden’ field in a declared opposition to ‘neo-moderns’ and ‘postmodernists’.⁵⁴⁶ In 1983 Tschumi wrote: ‘Our work argues that architecture – its social relevance and formal invention – cannot be dissociated from the events that “happen” in it. Recent projects insist constantly on issues of program and notation.’⁵⁴⁷ Two years later Derrida confirmed his claim, recognizing that Tschumi’s La Villette project ‘indeed describes an architecture of events’, an idea that recalls the Koolhaasian ideal of an architecture that would entirely consist of programme.⁵⁴⁸ That Tschumi was well aware of Koolhaas’ conception of programme and some of its implications is evident from his review of *Delirious New York*, published in 1980.⁵⁴⁹

To some degree the conspicuous overlap between Koolhaas’ and Tschumi’s thinking may reflect the fact that, during the 1970s, they had both been deeply involved with the same two academic institutions: the AA in London, since 1971 chaired by Alvin Boyarsky, and the IAUS in New York, directed by Peter Eisenman. Koolhaas studied at the AA from 1968 to 1972 being temporarily Tschumi’s student who, after graduating at the ETH Zurich in 1967 and working for Candilis, Josic and Woods in Paris in

⁵⁴³ Strictly speaking, the combination of ‘architectural specificity’ and ‘programmatically instability’, too, implies a conceptual disconnection of use and form, at least in a project like OMA’s scheme for La Villette, unless the ‘programmatically mutations’ would entail a physical reshaping of the park.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid., 8.

⁵⁴⁵ Bernard Tschumi, ‘Spaces and Events’, in: in Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, 147. The text is a modified version of *Themes III: The Discourse of Events* published in 1983.

⁵⁴⁶ ‘Architecture and Limits (III)’ (1980-81), in Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, 113, 115. First published under the same title in September 1981.

⁵⁴⁷ Bernard Tschumi, ‘Spaces and Events’, 139.

⁵⁴⁸ Jacques Derrida, ‘Point de folie’, 570. Compare: Goulet, ‘*La deuxième chance*’, 4.

⁵⁴⁹ Bernard Tschumi, ‘On Delirious New York: A Critique of Critiques’, *International Architect* 3 (1980), 68-69.

1968, taught for several years at the London architecture school.⁵⁵⁰ In 1975 Tschumi moved to New York to teach at the IAUS, where Koolhaas had been conducting his research on Manhattan. In the same year Koolhaas began to teach at the AA in London, while remaining a visiting fellow at the IAUS until 1979.⁵⁵¹ Like Koolhaas, Tschumi published in the magazines *Architectural Design*, *Oppositions*, and, since 1981, *AA Files*, more or less directly affiliated with one of the respective institutions.⁵⁵²

It goes without saying, however, that the long list of parallels with respect to references, formal means employed, themes addressed, terms used, and oppositions pronounced, corresponds to as many differences both in the work and thinking of the two architects. Tschumi's monographic publication 'La Case vide' on the La Villette park, for instance, shows the formal genesis of the *folies*, the superimposed circulation and greenery, and close-ups of the architecture, while there is no indication whatsoever of human activity. Despite the variety of the *folies* themselves, despite the incongruence of the underlying grid with the curves of the vegetation and the promenades, the overall impact is a rather homogeneous and controlled composition. By contrast, OMA's plans and pictures of the model incorporate as many indications of use as possible. There are the imaginary exhibits of the Astronomical Garden, markings of a parking lot, markings of tennis and volleyball courts, benches of pick-nick areas, kiosks and other miniscule infrastructure of leisure time outdoor activities. On the whole, the amount of detail and the complex juxtapositions of the four different geometries dividing the programme in four different categories are disorienting, anticipating the chaotic impact of unrestrained metropolitan activity.

⁵⁵⁰ Boyarsky, 'Interview between Alvin Boyarsky and Bernard Tschumi', 22. On the early career of Tschumi and the parallels to Koolhaas, see: Louis Martin, *Architectural Theory after 1968: Analysis of the Works of Rem Koolhaas and Bernard Tschumi*, master thesis (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1988), 34-49.

⁵⁵¹ Koolhaas taught the Diploma Unit 9 at the AA from 1975 to 1980 together with Elia Zenghelis; see: Gargiani *The Construction of Merveilles*, 46. He held his position as a visiting fellow at the IAUS until 1979; see: Lucan, *OMA – Rem Koolhaas*, 168.

⁵⁵² For example: 'Architecture and Transgression', *Oppositions* 7 (1976); 'The Pleasure of Architecture', *Architectural Design* 3 (1977); 'Illustrated Index: Themes from the Manhattan Transcripts', *AA Files* 4 (1983).

Johnson, Betsky, Jencks

Philip Johnson saw the architects of the MoMA show as representatives ‘of a broad group’, and so did Aaron Betsky in his monograph *Violated Perfection* from 1990.⁵⁵³ Next to work by the architects participating at the MoMA exhibition, Betsky’s book features work by Morphosis, SITE, Lebbeus Woods, Diller Scofidio, Mecanoo, Günther Behnisch, Steven Holl, Enric Miralles, and other contemporary architects, mainly from the area of Los Angeles. [Figures 9-10] Betsky discerned as a common trait of these projects an approach that embraces the process of modernization and the technological transformation of our environment it entails, albeit in a critical manner: raising consciousness, unmasking the current state of technology, ‘violating’ the control it exerts.⁵⁵⁴ According to Betsky, the ultimate goal of these architects is to free man to shape the process of modernization: ‘They are investigating the possibility of an architecture of empowerment, an appropriation of technology. This architecture will be critical artifacting allowing us to break open the absent world and place us in a mapped and mirrored construction we identify as our world.’⁵⁵⁵

Charles Jencks, in a monograph from the same year, coins the term ‘Neo-Moderns’.⁵⁵⁶ His genealogical diagram of neo-modern approaches includes most architects from Betsky’s selection. Jencks too features as the key protagonists of neo-modernism the seven architects of the MoMA show, along with Kazuo Shinohara, SITE, and Jean Nouvel. On a table with thirty neo-modern ‘variables’, one finds characteristics such as: ‘*différence*, “otherness”’; ‘fragmented, destructive/constructive’; ‘disjunctive complexity, awkward dissonance’; ‘explosive space with tilted floors, cocktail sticks’; ‘indeterminate functions, flux’; ‘ahistorical, Neo-Constructivist’; ‘fracture, “space of accidents”’; ‘dis-harmony; “random noise”, layering of discontinuous systems’.⁵⁵⁷ Many of these terms have been employed in

⁵⁵³ Johnson, Preface, in: Johnson, Wigley, *Deconstructivist Architecture*, 8. Aaron Betsky, *Violated Perfection. Architecture and Fragmentation of the Modern* (New York: Rizzoli, 1990). As it seems, it has been Betsky who had first approached Johnson with the idea for a MoMA show on what later was called ‘Deconstructivist Architecture’. The title originally envisaged had been ‘Violated Perfection’. See: Diane Ghirardo, ‘Diane Ghirardo’s exposée of MOMA’s Deconstructivist show’, 4.

⁵⁵⁴ Betsky, *Violated Perfection*, 11-13, 15-16.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁵⁵⁶ Charles Jencks, *The New Moderns. From Late to Neo-Modernism* (London: Academy Editions, 1990).

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

Chapter 1.9



Figure 9. Architects whose work is shown in *Violated Perfection* (1990).

Left: Steven Holl, Amerika Gedenkbibliothek, Berlin (1988). Florian/Wierzbowski, Amerika Gedenkbibliothek, Berlin (1988).

Janek Bielski, West Hollywood Civic Center, West Hollywood (1987).

Right: Günter Behnisch, Hysolar Institute Building, Stuttgart (1987). Michael Saez, Angeli Trattoria, Los Angeles (1988).

order to describe the deconstructivism, and the latter word, despite all criticism, entered the terminology of architectural discourse, distinguishing a large part of the contemporary architecture.

However crude and simplistic such groupings and categorizations might appear, they indicate that OMA's work, since the late 1980s, was increasingly perceived not as a singular phenomenon, but as emblematic for a number of widespread tendencies in contemporary architecture. If it is true that Koolhaas' urge for distinction – or in his own words, 'to assert difference' – was a critical impulse of his thinking and work, it appears likely that he would have been highly perceptive of the developments of 1988 and deeply concerned about their implications for his position in the architectural world. He too must have realized that there *were* parallels – chiefly on a formal level, but also in terms of references and discourse – between the architectural production of OMA and the work of some architects which authors like Wigley, Giovannini, Jencks, and Betsky discerned as kindred. Considering that the exhibition on deconstructivist architecture was preceded by the collaboration of Tschumi, Eisenman and Derrida in 1985, curated by Johnson, and housed by the MoMA; considering further, the massing of 'big names' itself, the persistent talk about a new architectural trend, and the enormous amount of attention the event engendered in the architectural press, it was not difficult to foresee that it would have a certain impact on how contemporary architecture would be perceived, discussed, and practiced in the years to come.

Internalizing the Dance Theatre

The curators of *Deconstructivist Architecture* must have contacted OMA by January 1988, the show and Koolhaas' participation being announced in the same month in an interview with Philip Johnson published by the *New York Times*.⁵⁵⁸ The MoMA administration started to inform the press in March, soliciting a broad response even before the opening of the exhibition.⁵⁵⁹ Perhaps Koolhaas already reacted to the harbingers of the event, pondering its possible consequences, while working in April and May on the Kunsthall (I) and the NAI. Viewed in this light, the first scheme of the Kunsthall seems to

⁵⁵⁸ Kraft, *Dekonstruktivismus in der Architektur?*, 31.

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 56-57.

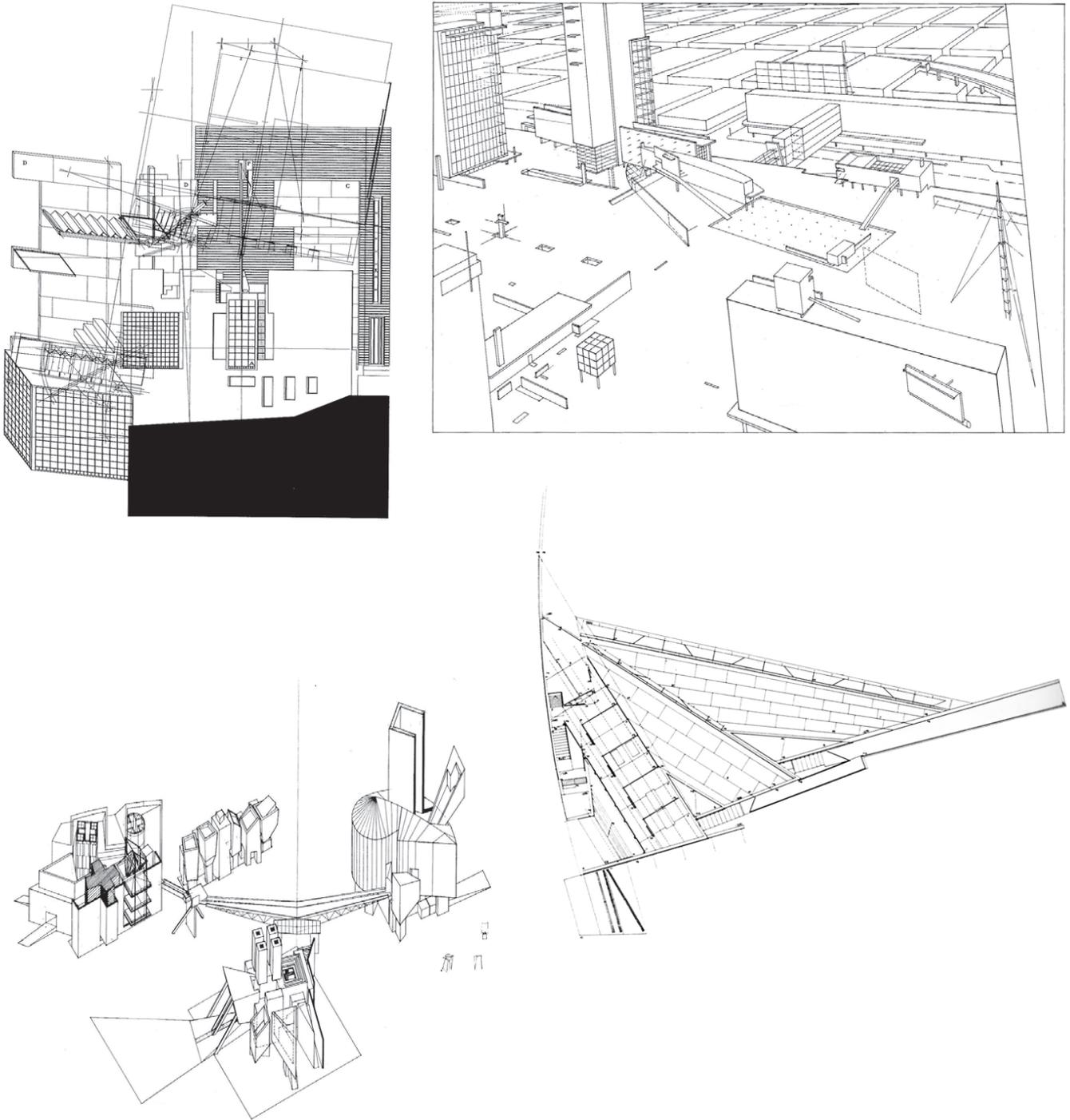


Figure 10. Architects whose work is shown in *Violated Perfection* (1990).
Left: Morphosis, Sixth Street House, Santa Monica, 1987. Tom Buresh, Danelle Guthrie, Observatories, Rome, 1988.
Right: Central Office of Architecture, Urban Study: Object Zone, Los Angeles, 1989.
Enric Miralles, Civic Center, Hostalets de Balenya, 1986-93.

disclaim any affiliation with deconstructivism. The restrained modernism of the exterior reminiscent of the post-war decades has nothing to do with the visionary soviet architecture of the 1920s and 1930s. Except the row of columns reminding of Libeskind's City Edge project and the irregularity of the Vierendeel trusses, the design is devoid of any characteristics that might be categorized as deconstructivist. The three volumes of the exterior hardly feel fragmented or in conflict with each other. The perfect fusion of the vertical 'slab of stone' with the horizontal 'Miesian box' on all three sides smooths over the seeming incompatibility of the two constructions. Rather, the scheme recalls functionalist approaches of freely arranged volumes, adapting the shape and position of each to its function.

It is a different story with OMA's competition entry for the NAI, akin to what has been called the other strand of OMA's work – designs composed of more heterogeneous, fragmented looking parts. If not precluded for reasons of time, the project might have been a worthy alternative for the Boompjes project to show at the MoMA exhibition.⁵⁶⁰ With its sloped roof, leaning tower and collaged interior, the project displays some proverbial deconstructivist characteristics. In a review of the NAI competition, critic Tom Maas promptly recognizes the image of instability OMA's scheme conveys as deconstructivist and idiosyncratic for the office's architecture as whole: 'That certainly is pleasant about Koolhaas: You know that his building will be partly tilted as if the world was instable.'⁵⁶¹

Did Koolhaas not mind, or was OMA's work more 'deconstructivist' than he would admit? Various statements Koolhaas made during the subsequent years indicate that he *did* mind. Perhaps he considered the obliqueness of roof and tower as substantial for the design, and the techniques of fragmentation and collage were far too important for the architectural production of OMA to be abandoned overnight. Koolhaas once mentioned that the idea of the leaning tower is based on an intuition, explaining: 'before the competition, even before knowing the programme, each time when I passed the site, I had the idea

⁵⁶⁰ The competition deadline was on the first of June. The exhibition opened on 23 June.

⁵⁶¹ Tom Maas, 'Zes plannen voor het Architectuurinstituut', 15 (author trans.).

of a tower leaning to the park.⁵⁶² Maybe, at this instant, the impulse of the intuition proved stronger than the fear of OMA's contours to dissolve in the raising deconstructivist wave.

Nonetheless, the scheme for the NAI constitutes a subtle shift with regard to OMA's previous work, which appears as an – arguably unconscious – reaction to the deconstructivist 'threat'. The design seizes on the principle of 'collaged volumes', until then prevalent in a large number of OMA's designs, among them particularly successful ones – not least by Koolhaas' own standards – like the Dance Theatre and the Villa Dall'Ava. But in the case of the NAI, most of the volumetric complexity is withdrawn to the interior, filtered in varying degrees by the facades' partly translucent, partly transparent skin. With the exception of the tower's exposed top, the exterior consists of a single triangular volume. Understood as a design strategy, the relative volumetric simplicity points to an approach that avoids one of the distinguishing marks of deconstructivist architecture, that is, the disintegration and seeming fragmentation of the exterior. Up to that point, compact volumes have been rare in OMA's work of the 1980s, especially in OMA's more collaged designs. But the 'internalized' volumetric complexity of the NAI scheme would allow OMA to pursue further the path of heterogeneity, fragmentation and collage, while coming up with designs that contrasted with the volumetric disintegration characteristic for the work of architects like Gehry, Libeskind, Tschumi, Hadid, Eisenman, Morphosis, Woods, Fuksas, Miralles, Coop Himmelblau, Domenig, and Behnisch.

⁵⁶² Marie-Christine Loriers, 'Sur la crête de la vague moderne', *Techniques & Architecture* 380 (November 1988), 76 (author trans.).

1.10

The better half of architecture

The Museum Park: June 1988 - February 1989

After the competition for Parc de la Villette (1982-83), OMA designed several more parks and projects for large open spaces: the competition for the '89 Universal Exposition in Paris (1983), the Parc Citroen-Cevennes (1985), the long term NNAO study (1986), the Scientopia science park in Rotterdam (1987), the urban renovation project for Bijlmermeer in Amsterdam (1986-87), and the master plan for Melun-Sénart (1987). Further projects do provide the construction of buildings, but as if reluctantly, covered – fully or partly – by a synthetic layer of ‘unbuilt’ surface. The buildings proposed for the Frankfurt Biocenter (1988) and, in part, for the Sport Museum in Flevohof (1988) along with the Eurodisney Hotel in Marne-la-Vallée (1988) are buried into the ground, the roof featuring either as an artificial landscape, as a sports ground, or as a park.

La Villette had been a discovery: the scheme had shown that the programmed surface of the large open spaces allowed to translate some key ideas of *Delirious New York* into a new kind of project that was hardly about building. The scheme was clearly different from more literal adaptations of the ‘Manhattanist’ agenda, like the Boompjes project in Rotterdam (1980-81) or the City Hall in The Hague (1986). OMA’s competition entry for the City Hall proposes a slab of ‘skyscrapers’ with autonomous facades that reveal nothing of the interior, enclosing for the most part open floor spaces without any partitions. The generic character of these floorplans – in evident accordance with the principles Koolhaas would describe in his essay ‘Typical Plan’ from 1993⁵⁶³ – was to meet the uncertainties of programme during the competition and, on the long term, the ‘instability’ of the supposedly changing uses. But, as indicated in the previous chapter, it was the programmed surface rather than the high rise which would allow a diverse range of activities to be experienced and to mix. The adaptations of the American atrium cut into the interior of OMA’s City Hall – or, much later, of the de Rotterdam building

⁵⁶³ Rem Koolhaas, ‘Typical Plan’, in: Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 335-350.

(1997-2013) – mitigates but does not really resolve the contradiction between spatial seclusion and simultaneity of experience.

That Koolhaas did conceive of the programmed surface in analogy to the high rise is beyond doubt. In a project statement and the essay ‘Elegy for the Vacant Lot’ from 1985 he compared the 40 parallel bands of the La Villette scheme to the stacked floors of a high rise.⁵⁶⁴ The programmed bands were arranged in such a manner that most of them bordered differently programmed neighbouring bands. Since the bands of the park were not enclosed by physical partitions, a passer-by would have experienced the overall spectacle of diverse activities, and each activity would have been free to interfere with the differently programmed activities on the adjacent strips. It is hardly a coincidence, that a floorplan, not a section, inspired Koolhaas’ surrealist vision of gloved, naked oyster eating athletes in the Downtown Athletic Club. The same element ensuring the ‘Vertical Schism’, that is, the physical division by floor slabs, prevented to experience the diversity of the uses on the different levels.⁵⁶⁵ In this sense, the park was the ‘better skyscraper’.

Architecture of walls

Koolhaas was well aware of the double nature of physical partitions – be it walls or floors – at once creating and limiting freedom since his studies at the AA in London. Both his study on the Berlin Wall from 1971 and the project ‘Exodus, or The Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture’ (1971-72) were precisely about this subject. In 1988, Koolhaas describes Exodus as reaction to the ““visionary” sixties’.⁵⁶⁶ Referring to ‘groups like Archigram, Archizoom and Superstudio’ he observes that the ‘tone of these productions was anti-historical, relentlessly optimistic and ultimately innocent.’⁵⁶⁷ Exodus, Koolhaas explains, ‘was a reaction to this innocence: a project to emphasize that the power of

⁵⁶⁴ Koolhaas, ‘Elegy for the Vacant Lot’, 937. OMA, ‘Parc de la Villette’, 87.

⁵⁶⁵ In an interview from 1985, Koolhaas himself calls the floors of the skyscraper an ‘obstacle’. De Kooning, ‘The economics of imagination’, 112.

⁵⁶⁶ Koolhaas, ‘Sixteen Years of OMA’, 162.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid.

architecture is more ambiguous and dangerous.’⁵⁶⁸ The reference of Exodus to the giant, city-invading walls proposed in 1969 by Superstudio (Monumento Continuo) and Archizoom (Quartieri Paralleli per Berlino) are obvious, and apparently the whole project was conceived of as a critical pastiche. At the same time, Koolhaas’ work and statements from those years betray a lasting fascination with the phenomenon of the wall itself.

The motif of the wall as an instrument of spatial segregation would play a significant role in OMA’s work of the subsequent decades. Projects like the House in Miami (1975), the Police Station in Almere (1982-85), and the Villa Dall’Ava in Paris (1984-91) are in varying degrees conceived as ‘houses behind a wall’, stressing the spatial incision of a single projecting wall, in a manner that bears some resemblance with John Hejduk’s Wall Houses from the early 1970s. The courtyard houses of the project for Kochstrasse/Friedrichstrasse in Berlin (1980-81), the Nexus Housing in Fukuoka (1989-91), and the House in Bordeaux (1994-98) vary the theme of the impenetrable perimeter wall. Early versions of the IIT Campus Centre (1997-2003) in Chicago envision interior streets that cut through a complex of Pompeian introversion.

1971 was the tenth anniversary of the construction of the Berlin Wall, and next to Koolhaas’ study and the Exodus project, the year saw a series of other publications and projects pivoting around the subject of the wall. Roberto Gargiani mentions, among other things, Peter Allison’s ‘Wall for London’, and Robin Evans’ essay ‘The Rights of Retreat and the Rights of Exclusion: Notes Towards the Definition of the Wall’.⁵⁶⁹ As the title of the essay indicates, Evans, too, addressed the ambiguity of the built partition explicitly, stressing that the seemingly inoffensive act of retreat implies the act of exclusion.⁵⁷⁰ While Koolhaas – provokingly – advocates the liberating quality of the wall, Evans focuses on what it

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid. Similarly, Simon Sadler describes OMA’s early work as critical ‘memoranda’ on the nature of architecture: ‘The collages by Superstudio, Zenghelis, and Koolhaas were memoranda on the inevitable, unending, irreconcilable contradictions of the architectural discipline, ever wanting to alter reality, yet complicit in its concretization.’ Simon Sadler, ‘The varieties of capitalist experience’, in: Peggy Deamer (ed.), *Architecture and Capitalism. 1845 to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 126.

⁵⁶⁹ Gargiani, *The Construction of Merveilles*, 5.

⁵⁷⁰ Robin Evans, ‘The Rights of Retreat and the Rights of Exclusion: Notes Towards the Definition of the Wall’, *Architectural Design* 41/ 6 (June 1971), 335-339.

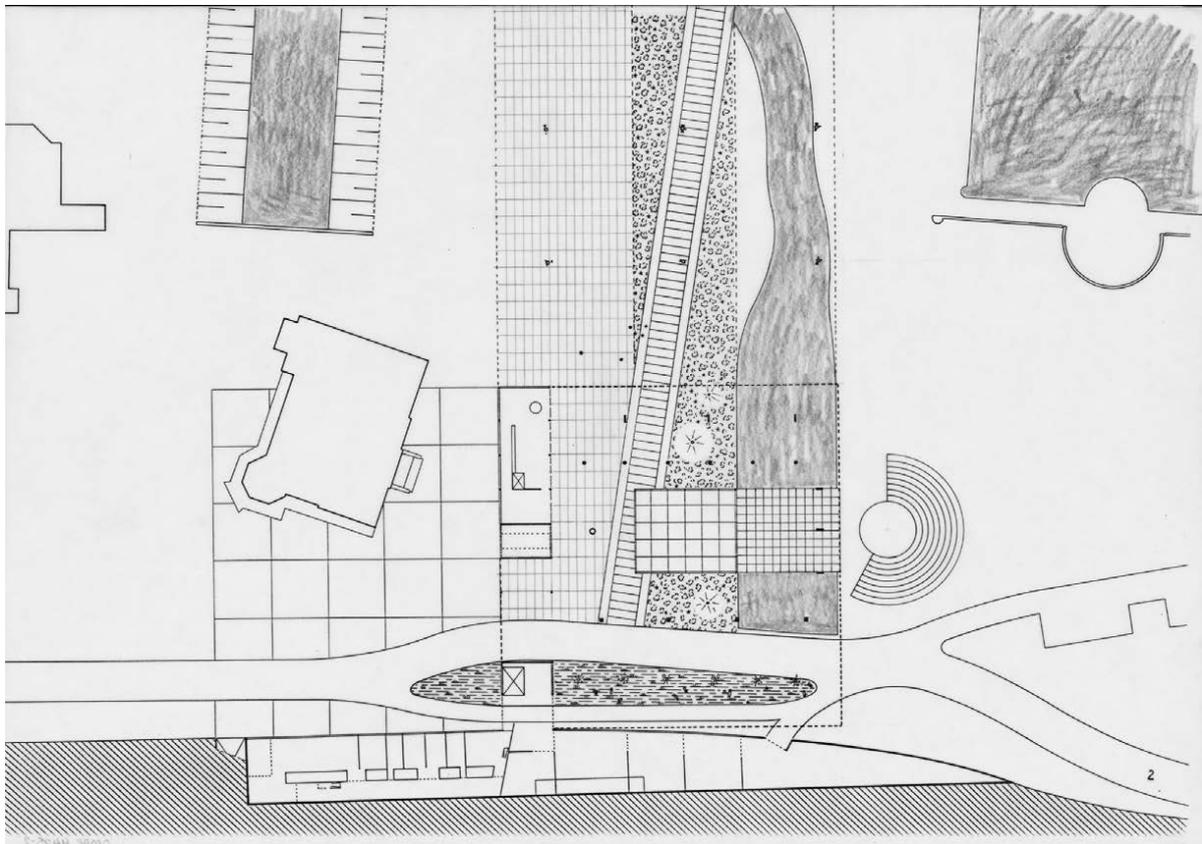
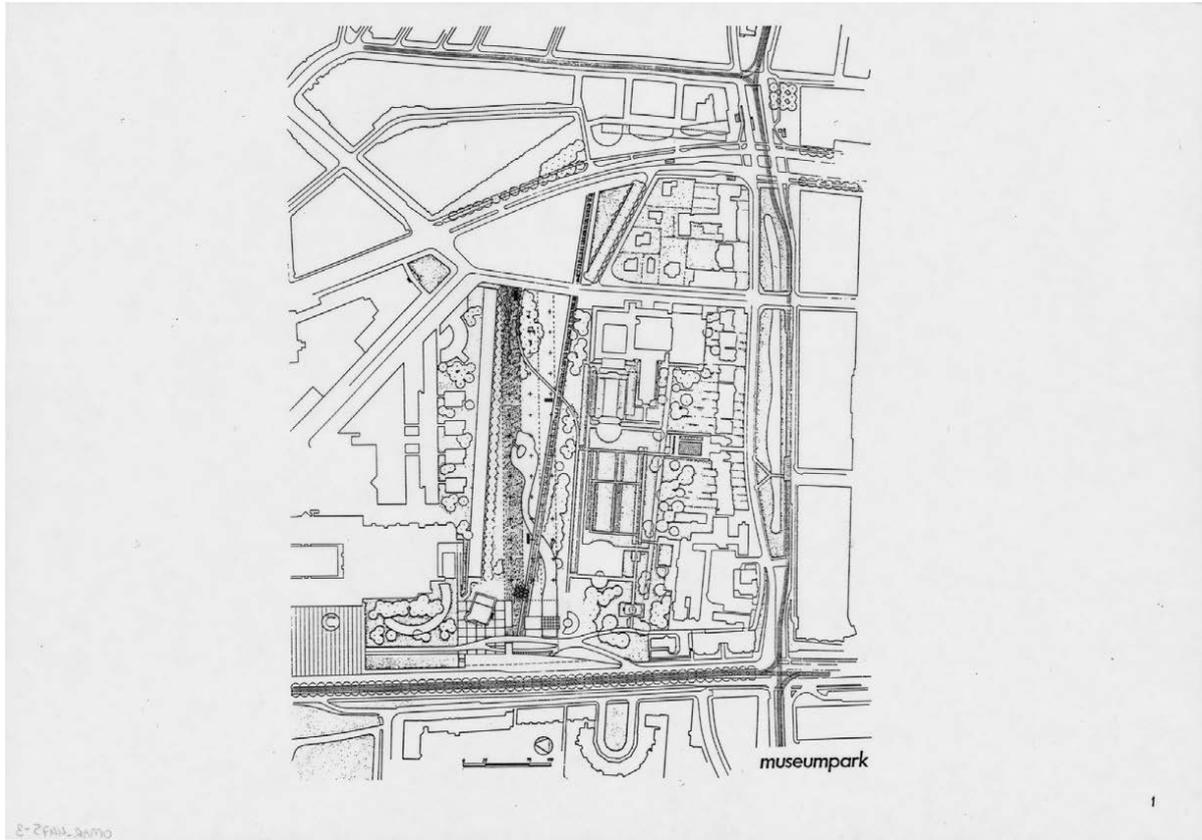


Figure 1. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, Museum Park/Kunsthal, Rotterdam, June 1988.

prevents. He discusses examples both of self-imposed seclusion and seclusion imposed by others: the Great Wall of China, Charterhouses of the Carthusians, prisons and asylums from the 17th to the 19th century. In either case the wall is there to shut out experience, or, to block the free flow of information.

According to his own account, Koolhaas experienced the Berlin Wall as a revelation about the essence of architecture. In his later essay on the AA study, 'Field Trip' from 1993, he wrote: 'It was as if I had come eye to eye with architecture's true nature.'⁵⁷¹ Part of the wall's nature was the irresolvable conflict between its desired and undesired qualities. Inspiring 'despair, hatred, frustration', the '*Berlin Wall was a very graphic demonstration of the power of architecture and some of its unpleasant consequences.*' But Koolhaas experiences the Berlin Wall as beautiful, and concludes: '*The wall suggested that architecture's beauty was directly proportional to its horror.*'⁵⁷² Exodus seems particularly close to this idea. While the text pictures a programme of Brave New World-like manipulation, the corollary collages show marching prisoners, undressed prisoners next to surveying police officers, watch towers, and barbed-wire on top of the walls. It was also his encounter with the Berlin Wall, Koolhaas suggests, that inspired his reserve with regard to issues of form. Another lesson learned in Berlin was that the – mesmerizing – impact of the wall did not depend on its form, form neither being a bearer of meaning: 'its impact was entirely independent of its appearance. [...] I would never gain believe in form as the primary vessel of meaning', Koolhaas wrote in the same essay.⁵⁷³

Wall frustration

OMA's project for the La Villette Park and the projects of programmed surfaces that followed during the mid-1980s were conceived in manifest opposition to Koolhaas' notion of the wall, or, more broadly speaking, of architecture as a 'discipline of walls'. With these projects, Koolhaas seemed to explore the promise of La Villette: an architecture that would be all programme and no walls, more metropolitan because purified from its 'inhibiting' nature. The absence of physical partitions, or their permeability,

⁵⁷¹ Rem Koolhaas, 'A Field Trip', in: Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 225.

⁵⁷² *Ibid.*, 222, 226.

⁵⁷³ *Ibid.*, 227.

allowing for an uncontrolled confluence of differently programmed areas, is critical to the projects for La Villette and the '89 Universal Exposition in Paris. 'Parks', explained Koolhaas in 1986, 'seem to us an appropriate means to reconquer a sort of enthusiasm for architecture.'⁵⁷⁴ During the mid-eighties, Koolhaas repeatedly addressed the inhibiting character of architecture as such. 'Where there is nothing', he wrote in 1985, 'everything is possible. Where there is architecture, nothing (else) is possible.'⁵⁷⁵ In 1988 he explained that projects like those for La Villette and the Melun-Sénart were an attempt to 'create new cultural conditions free of architecture.'⁵⁷⁶

The idea of the park as a programmed surface had its precedent in Koolhaas' insistence on the floor as the venue of any architecture in use. Both in *Delirious New York* and in the 1980 manifesto 'Our "New Sobriety"' Koolhaas quotes Raymond Hood in order to define 'the other' fundamental truth about architecture: 'The plan is of primary importance, because on the floor are performed all the activities of the human occupants.'⁵⁷⁷ Yet Koolhaas' commitment to projects of essentially unbuilt space and his resentment voiced with regard to architecture as an architecture of walls and, ultimately, buildings may astonish if one considers his simultaneous impatience to build. Like any building, the school and the apartment blocks at IJ Plein in Amsterdam (1980-87), the Police Station in Almere (1982-85), the Dance Theatre in The Hague (1981-87), the Patio House in Rotterdam (1984-88), and the Villa Dall'Ava were enclosed by walls.

As it seems, Koolhaas followed two antagonistic notions of architecture in parallel, one championing the principle of the (continuous) floor, the other championing the principle of the (dividing) wall. The antagonism is the subject of Bart Lootsma's essay 'Wall Frustration' from 1995. Lootsma suggests that Koolhaas wishes architecture to be immaterial:

⁵⁷⁴ Boissière, Lyon, 'Entretien avec Rem Koolhaas', 84.

⁵⁷⁵ Koolhaas, 'Imagining Nothingness', 156. Similarly, he assures: 'I [...] find every empty place inherently better than any building whatsoever that could be conceived for it.' De Kooning, 'The economics of imagination', 115.

⁵⁷⁶ Koolhaas, 'Sixteen Years of OMA', 163.

⁵⁷⁷ Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 157; Koolhaas, 'Our "New Sobriety"', 214.

Chapter 1.10

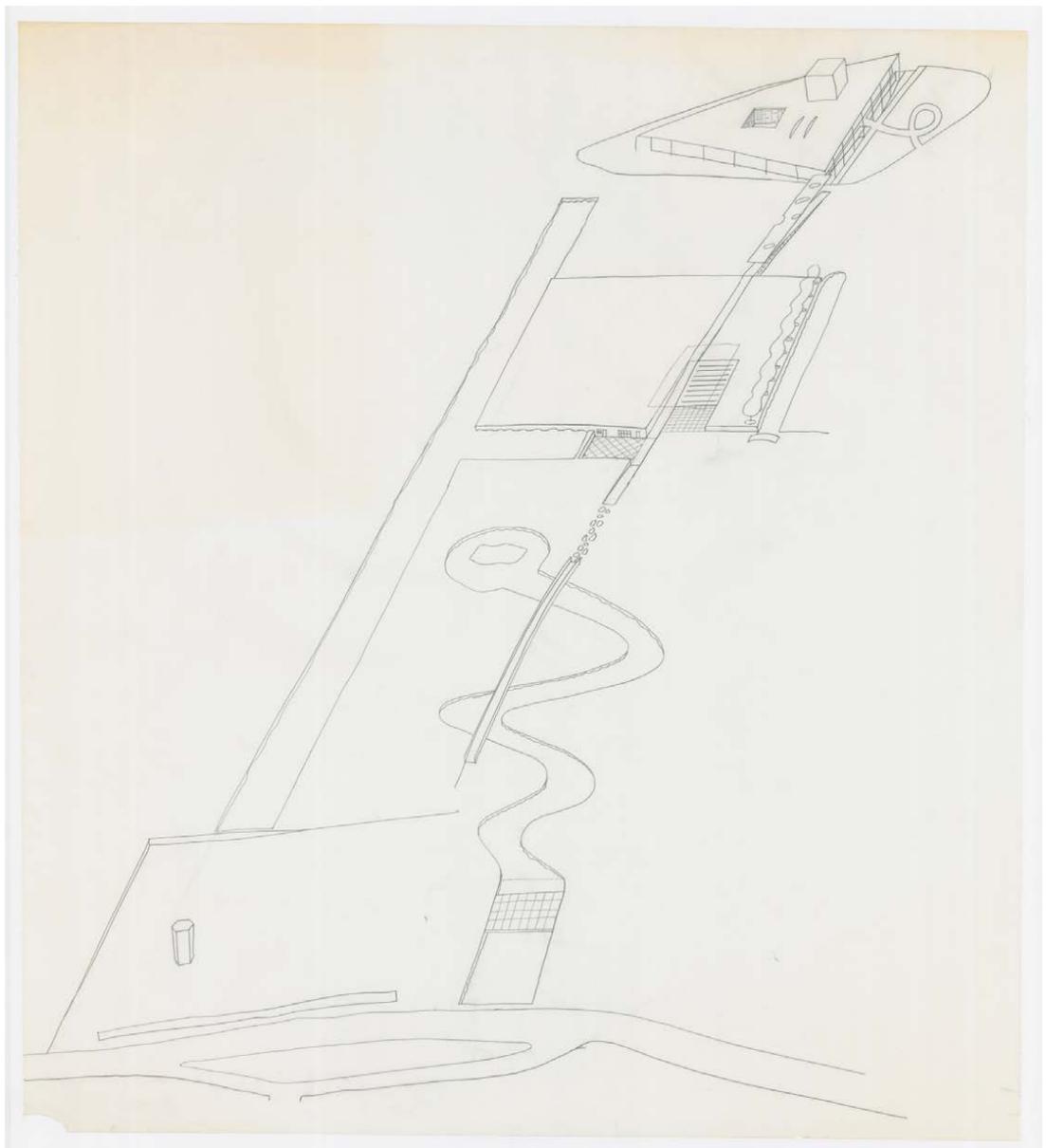
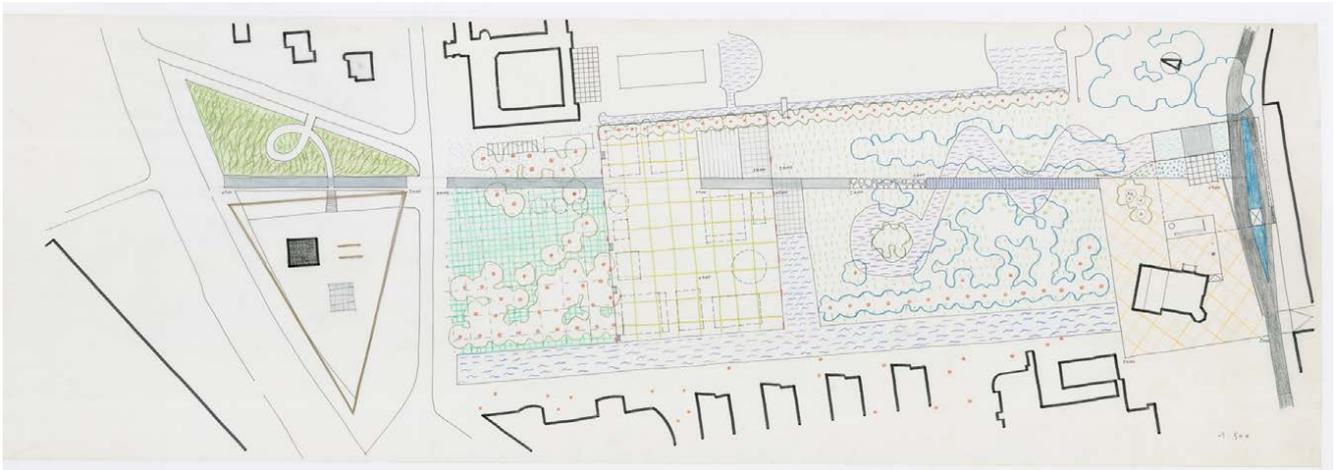


Figure 3. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, Museum Park, Rotterdam.
Early sketches with NAI scheme OMA and artificial river.

Ultimately, Rem Koolhaas' real goal is an architecture which is physically absent, one which dissolves itself, an architecture which above all channels and stimulates processes of social group formation, and which generates scenarios, as expressed most clearly in the competition entry for the Parc de la Villette.⁵⁷⁸

Lootsma varies on Koolhaas' idea of an architecture that would be 'pure programme', shifting the accent from 'no form' to 'no material'. Immateriality in the work of OMA – material representations of physical absence as a transparent skin might imply – indicates those parts of a project that Koolhaas would have preferred to eliminate altogether, Lootsma seems to say. He points to the either transparent, flimsy or ironic qualities of many exterior walls, as opposed to the floors, 'generally made in materials which recall the ground', such as concrete, stone, wood, or asphalt.⁵⁷⁹ Inferring from Koolhaas' 'fixation on the floor', Lootsma concludes: 'OMA would be happiest if exterior walls would be immaterial', 'they should not even exist.'⁵⁸⁰

Parks, or programmed surfaces of open space in general, would thus be the closest possible approximation to Koolhaas' ideal of architecture for their principle absence of exterior walls. But it appears reductive to suggest, as Lootsma does, that the wall for Koolhaas is nothing but a source of frustration which OMA has been able to exploit in productive ways. On the one hand, OMA's glazed facades do not qualify as approximations to immateriality. Like Mies' skyscraper project from 1921, OMA's frequent use of tinted, frosted glass, and translucent corrugated sheathing, or the sculptural glass wall of the Congrexpo in Euralille, indicate a highly developed sense for the physical presence of the transparent, translucent, reflecting, imbuing materials. Neither do all massive exterior walls of OMA's projects and buildings appear as either provocations or derisions of what in reality was impossible to eschew. Not all opaque walls float, and not all of them are clad with materials that imply false pretensions of mass and authority. The layered walls of the House in Miami, the courtyard houses

⁵⁷⁸ Bart Lootsma, 'Wall Frustration', *Daidalos – Magic of Materials* (August 1995), 74.

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., 78, 76.

Chapter 1.10

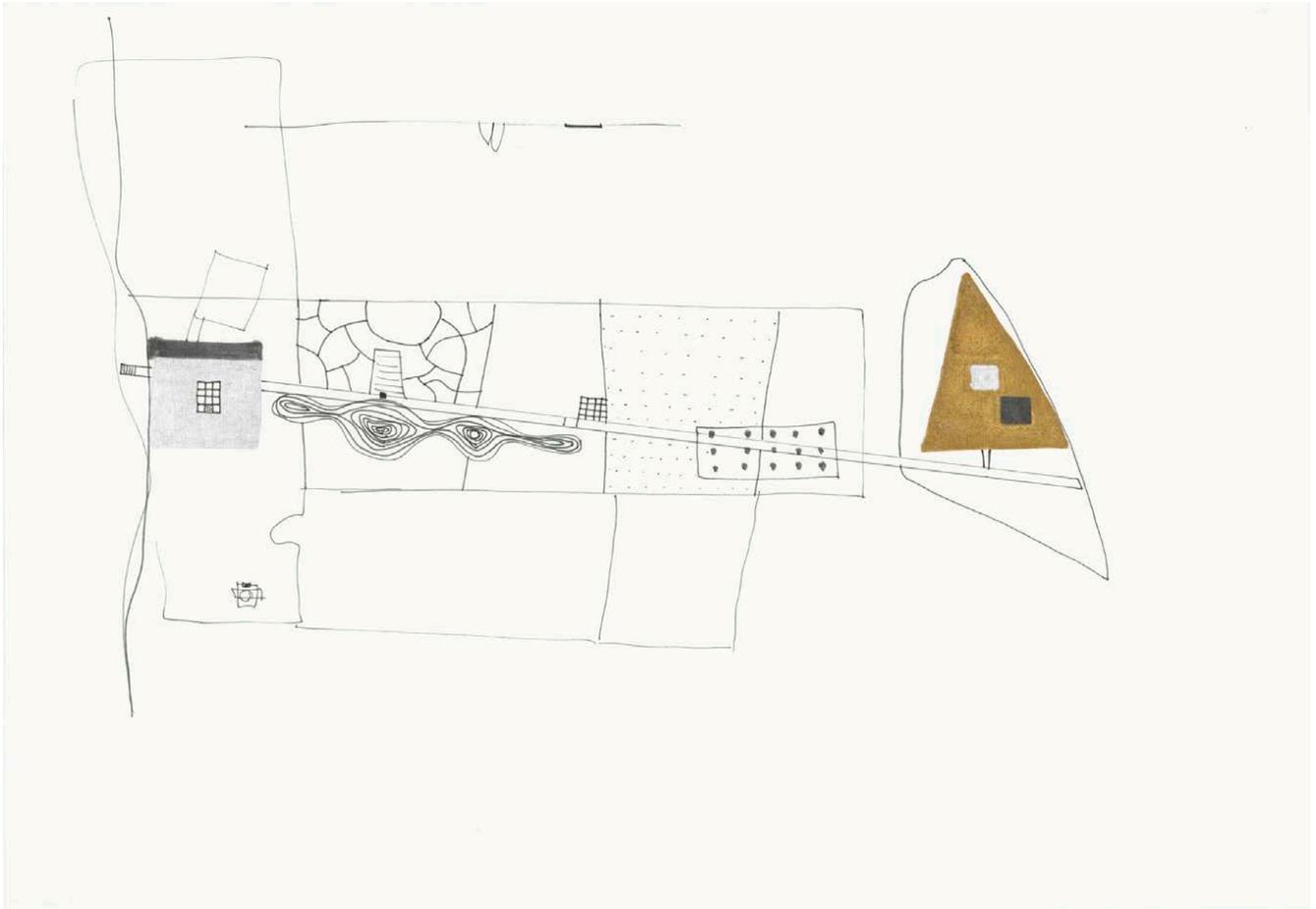


Figure 4. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, Museum Park, Rotterdam.
Early sketch with NAI scheme OMA and artificial river.

at Kochstrasse/Friedrichstrasse, the protective walls of the first project for the Dance Theatre, the Police Station, and the Villa Dall’Ava may figure as counter examples.

The park is but an extreme case of the programmed surface. For the author of *Delirious New York* and the 1980 manifesto ‘Our “New Sobriety”’ it was the floor within a building. Prior to OMA’s commitment to parks and other large open spaces, the two antagonistic notions of architecture – the principle of the wall, and the principle of the floor – coexist in any design. Nonetheless, the conceptual conquest of the park during the La Villette competition offered the prospect of a radical opposition against the architectural profession as a whole. At the same time, it offered the prospect of generating a metropolitan condition – urban space teeming with all sorts of activity – without depending on the other, antagonistic half of architecture, epitomized by the wall.

Koolhaas advertised the park, or programmed large open space, as opposed to the building, chiefly as a resort to freedom. In 1985, when the reconstruction of Rotterdam was about to fill the last large unbuilt areas of the centre, he recalled the city’s spatial openness after World War II with embittered enthusiasm: ‘They were blind to the mysterious qualities of the alleged void, first of all its unlimited freedom.’ In these no man’s lands ‘everything was possible and not a single social trope suppressed by architecture.’⁵⁸¹ Taken together, his essays and statements from 1985 equate the urban ‘void’ with (programmatic) instability and freedom, the two terms being used almost as synonyms. The no man’s land Koolhaas pictures – or *terrain vague*, another term he occasionally employs⁵⁸² – is characterized by the fact that the way it is used has not been planned. The ‘chain reaction of new, unpredicted events’ held out at La Villette seems to aim at similar acts of unplanned appropriation: as if to redeem and outdo the operation of planning itself. But any programming counteracts the expectation of spontaneity and freedom. All the more so if the outcome is partly preconceived: ‘the metropolitan condition in its purest

⁵⁸¹ Koolhaas, ‘The Terrifying Beauty’, 154.

⁵⁸² For instance, in his 1985 essay ‘Eloge du terrain vague’. The term is also used for the English translation in Lucan’s monograph from 1990. Koolhaas’ idea of the *terrain vague* appears close to the notion Ignasi de Solà-Morales would explicate in his synonymous essay from 1995. Ignasi de Solà-Morales Rubió, ‘Terrain Vague’, *Anyplace* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1995), 118-123.



Figure 5. Museum Park, Rotterdam. Drawing with pastels by Yves Brunier. Kunsthall scheme with Robot.

form, even without architecture, pure density and activity’ as Koolhaas put it in 1985, that is, the ‘congestion’ and variety of experience and events advertised in *Delirious New York*.⁵⁸³ The visitor of OMA’s La Villette Park would have been in a position, not unlike that of a child confronted with an adult’s vision of his play anticipated by a playground. And there is something of a playground atmosphere in OMA’s outdoor-activity drawings of those years. The idea seems to have been, so to speak, to bore the child to such a degree that it would invent games of its own.

Building on La Villette

The Museum Park was OMA’s first park – and until today the only one – to materialize. The project was an occasion to test some of the ideas OMA had been experimenting on since the competition for La Villette. As a ‘floor’ or programmed surface in its purest form, the park must have appeared to Koolhaas as complementary to the NAI and the Kunsthal as ‘architectures of walls’, if not virtually in competition to them. The concept of ‘programmatically instability’, however, required a dense programme which in turn depended on the brief of the client. The ‘forest of social instruments’ of the La Villette scheme, had been a direct response to the programme ‘too large, to create a park in the recognizable sense of the word’.⁵⁸⁴ Besides, the Museum Park was an occasion to articulate further the urbanist idea of Rotterdam and the European city, the ‘void’ and the architecture of pure programmed surface being an integral part of this vision.

In summer 1988, OMA seems to resume the project of the Museum Park. Gregor Mescherowsky, project manager of the Kunsthal, was one of the project architects in charge.⁵⁸⁵ A plan from 8 June shows the park divided in three bands running north-south.⁵⁸⁶ [Figure 1] The Axis of Development required by the municipality runs as a straight promenade diagonally through the park. As in the study

⁵⁸³ De Kooning, ‘The economics of imagination’, 112.

⁵⁸⁴ OMA, ‘Parc de La Villette’, 86.

⁵⁸⁵ Email to the author by Mescherowsky, 22 October 2018. Mescherowsky is also listed among team members of the Museum Park in *S,M,L,XL*. Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 1277.

⁵⁸⁶ OMA, ‘Museumpark’, 8 June 1988. OMAR 4475.

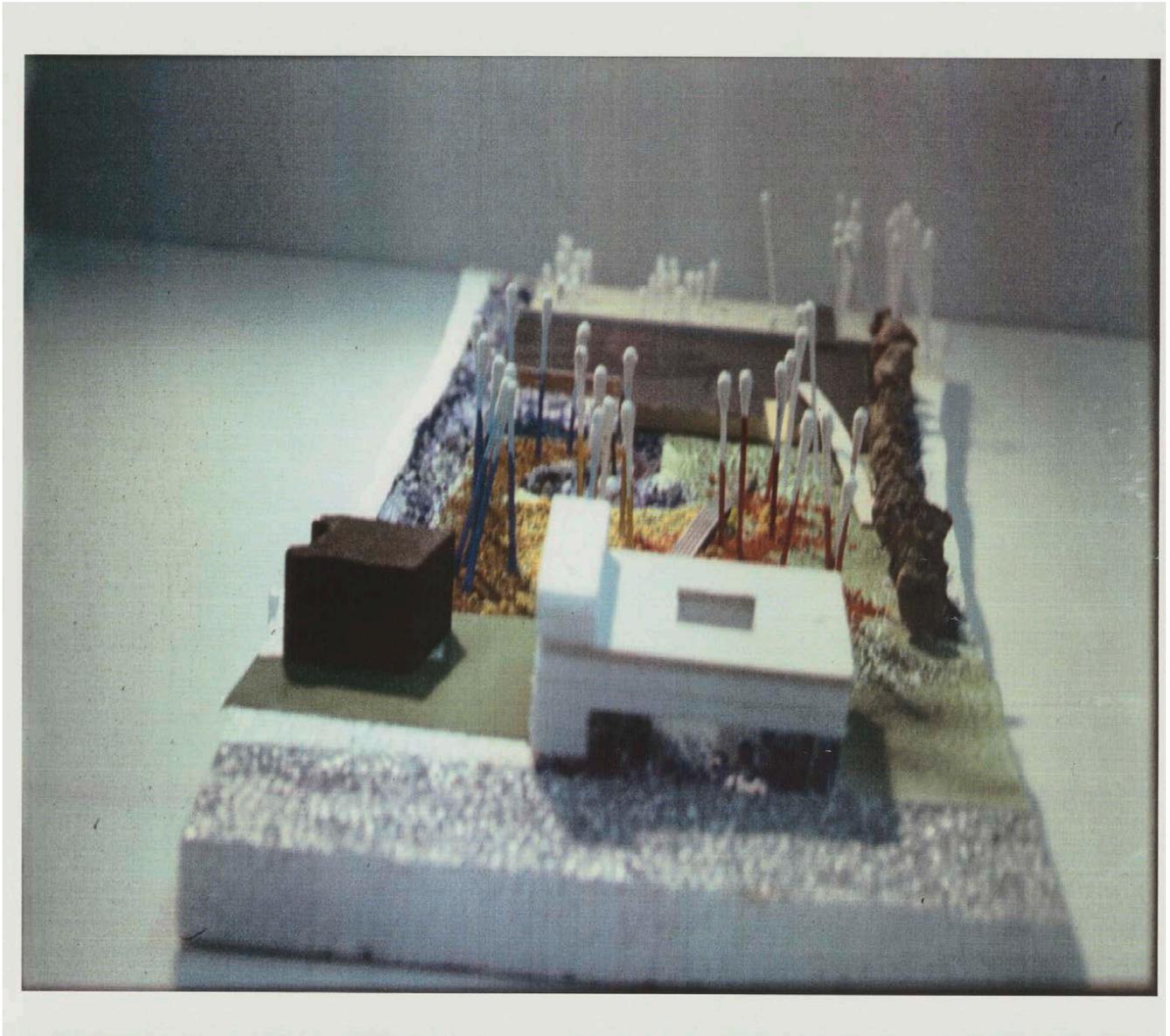


Figure 6. Museum Park, Rotterdam.
Model by Yves Brunier with Kunsthal I.

from May 1987, several kiosks and a grid of service poles are evenly distributed on the three bands.⁵⁸⁷ There are some freely arranged groups of trees and an artificial creek connecting to a small, already existing pond. But compared to OMA's study from May 1987, the scheme appears somewhat schematic and inarticulate. Perhaps Koolhaas was waiting for the brief to be defined, given its vital significance for any park conceived as a programmed surface. There is a 'schedule of requirements' for the Museum Park – arguably the final version – dating from 19 June 1988.⁵⁸⁸ The brief focuses on the cultural events the Museum Park ought to harbour. Next to the facilities for the Teatro Fantastico, it lists an open air theatre for 300 to 400 people, including backstage spaces, storage, restrooms, a ticket booth, and the requisite utilities. Both the stage and the tribune were to be equipped with a removable protection against rain and draught.

The Teatro Fantastico was an annual festival, held for the first time in 1987 in the area next to the Boijmans Museum. [Figure 2] Like the Kunsthal, the Teatro Fantastico was to address a broad public. Next to theatre manifestations and concerts, the programme comprised acrobatics, a dance club, restaurants and cafes, most events taking place in tents. The festival was an instant success, attracting 50.000 visitors in 1987 and 60.000 in 1988. It was run by the synonymous Teatro Fantastico foundation. The board consisted mainly of representatives of Rotterdam theatres, among others the director of the Luxor Theatre and the Schouwbourg. The brief lists eleven tents of varying sizes for cultural events, two tents for restaurants, and a tent for staff and administration, next to restrooms, storage space and various utilities.⁵⁸⁹ A project statement enclosed in the dossier of the brief from June 1988 further mentions the Axis of Development and the new canal dividing the park from the precinct of the adjacent hospitals.⁵⁹⁰ The municipality seems to have envisaged an open (green) space for recreational purposes, as proposed by the scheme of the Department for Urban Development from December 1987.⁵⁹¹ Perhaps,

⁵⁸⁷ The booklet from May 1987 specifies the same symbols as kiosks and service poles. OMA, 'Kunsthal Rotterdam', 18 May 1988. OMAR 1553.

⁵⁸⁸ 'Museumpark programma van eisen', 19 June 1988. No author specified, probably incomplete. OMAR 4485. A slightly different version dates from 9 June 1988. OMAR 4492.

⁵⁸⁹ 'Museumpark programma van eisen', 19 June 1988. OMAR 4485.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁹¹ Stadsontwikkeling Rotterdam, 'Museumpark', December 1987. OMAR 4477.

Chapter 1.10

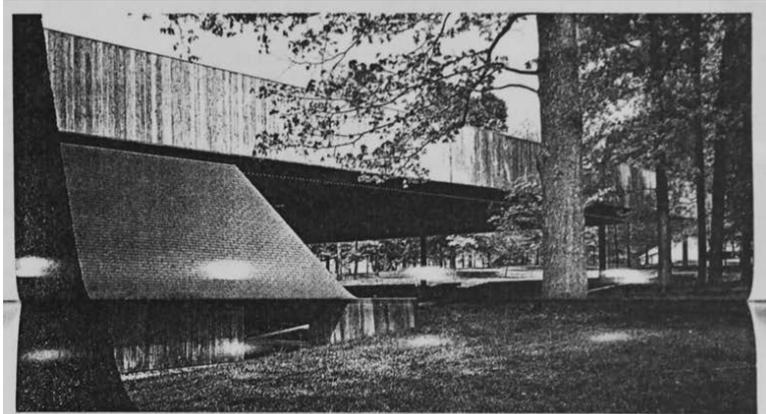
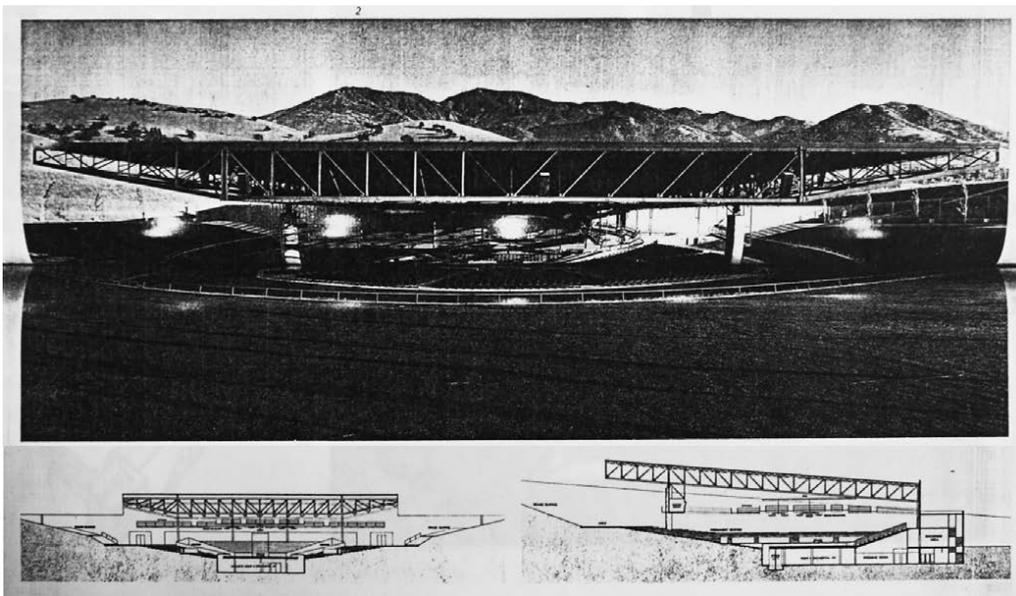


Figure 7. Photocopies from the Files of the Kunsthal/Museum Park team.
Above: Frank O. Gehry, Performing Arts Pavilion, Concord (1975-77).
Below: Merriweather Post Pavilion of Music, Columbia, Maryland (1967).

in June 1988, Koolhaas conceived the entire Museum Park as a ‘parc de festivals’. While the scheme does not single out any particular area for the Teatro Fantastico and the open air theatre, the grid of service poles covers the entire surface. In a sketch, seemingly from April 1988, Koolhaas conceives the whole of the Museum Park as ‘a la Villette like band to connect the 2 museums’.⁵⁹²

An architect of parks

Later in the year, the project of the Museum Park was radically redesigned by Yves Brunier. Brunier had been working at OMA from 1986 to 1987 on projects such as the master plan for Melun-Sénart, the urban renovation project for Bijlmermeer, Amsterdam, and the park like science centre ‘Scientopia’ in Rotterdam. He was trained as an architect, and it seems that Koolhaas had some influence on his decision to become a landscape architect instead. Several years later Koolhaas recalled: ‘I explained to him that, personally, I didn’t find architecture particularly interesting, but that, on the contrary, landscape presented an incredible potential. After much negotiation he agreed to work on landscape again.’⁵⁹³ In 1988 Brunier established his own practice in association with Isabelle Auricoste in Paris.⁵⁹⁴ Converted from an ‘architect of walls’ to an ‘architect of programmed surfaces’, for Koolhaas Brunier is likely to have personified more than anybody else the genre of the park as the ‘better half’ of architecture.

Brunier died of AIDS in 1991 long before the park was completed. As the illness worsened, Petra Blaisse was increasingly involved in the implementation of the project. The collaboration between OMA and Blaisse began in the late 1980s. Next to the already mentioned exhibition *Beelden in de stad* in the former Kunsthall (1988), she designed the golden curtain for the Dance Theatre in The Hague

⁵⁹² <https://oma.eu/projects/kunsthall>. Accessed 30 March 2018. The date suggested on the website (1989) appears highly unlikely. The organization of the park essentially corresponds to the study from May 1987, whereas the curved annex to the dyke – an idea that does not occur in any of the later versions – corresponds closely to the cover sketch of the booklet presented on 28 April, 1988.

⁵⁹³ Odile Fillion, ‘A conversation with Koolhaas’, in: Michel Jacques (ed.), *Yves Brunier. Landscape architect* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1996), 89.

⁵⁹⁴ Michel Jacques specifies that Brunier designed the park ‘in collaboration with OMA-Rem Koolhaas’. Michel Jacques (ed.), *Yves Brunier. Landscape architect* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1996), 125. In *S,M,L,XL*, Brunier is listed among team members of the Museum Park. Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 1277. According to Petra Blaisse ‘Yves became a subcontractor to OMA to work on the park’. Interview with the author on 24 September 2018.

Chapter 1.10



Figure 8. Museum Park, Rotterdam. Two versions of a collage by Yves Brunier.
Above: With the NAI by Coenen, dated 20 February 1989. Below: The version with OMA's NAI shown in *S,M,L,XL*.

(1987), and she curated the OMA exhibition ‘The first decade’ in the Boijmans Museum (1989). Blaisse started her own Amsterdam based office, Inside Outside, in 1991. Her work includes the design of curtains, interiors, exhibitions, and landscape architecture, and she would also have a significant influence on the interior of the Kunsthal. As for the Museum Park, she restrained from any major modifications of Brunier’s scheme. In a commemorative text from 1993, Blaisse describes her role as that of an executor of Brunier’s ideas: ‘He asked me if I would finish it for him. I said I would. And despite all the restrictions and new problems one encounters years after a design and a budget is delivered, I can only hope that we came as near to Yves’ visions as possible.’⁵⁹⁵

An enfilade

Between June and October 1988, the idea to organize the park in three parallel bands running north-south was abandoned. Instead, the park was divided along the east-west axis into five sections of similar size and approximate square proportions. Numerous of such sketched park schemes depict the NAI in the triangular shape of OMA’s competition entry, suggesting that the schemes originate from the period before Jo Coenen had been announced the winner on 2 October, 1988.⁵⁹⁶ [Figures 3-4] Whether the change had been proposed by Yves Brunier is not clear.⁵⁹⁷ As it seems, Brunier began to work on the Museum Park in September 1988, and by then the change from bands to ‘squares’ might have already been accomplished.⁵⁹⁸

Even after the change, the park remained faithful to a number of seminal ideas of the scheme for La Villette. First of all, the Museum Park was not conceived as ‘of one piece’ but as a sequence of sections, with each a distinct perimeter and character of its own. Like in the scheme for La Villette, some would

⁵⁹⁵ Petra Blaisse, ‘A personal impression’, in: Jacques, *Yves Brunier*, 22.

⁵⁹⁶ See, for instance: OMAR 1537, 4467, 4478. There is also a collaged site plan of the Museum Park by Brunier with OMA’s proposal for the NAI. See: OMAR 4462.

⁵⁹⁷ None of these sketches are dated. Some of them, annotated in German, were evidently made by Mescherowsky.

⁵⁹⁸ While the site plan of the Kunsthal’s Primarily Design from 7 September shows no visible trace of Brunier’s redesign, the revised site plan from 7 October coincides precisely with an early scheme for the park by Brunier and vice versa; see OMAR 1746, 1747, 4352. By consequence Brunier must have been reworking the park some time before 7 October. This chronology corresponds in principle with the recollections of Petra Blaisse. According to Blaisse Brunier began to work on the Museum Park in autumn 1988; see: Blaisse, ‘A personal impression’, 21. The issue will be explicated extensively in the first chapter of Part 2.



Figure 9. Museum Park, Rotterdam. Orchard.
Two painted photographs by Yves Brunier.

have an emphatically artificial character, and they would be connected and crossed by a central promenade (Axis of Development). However, the differences with the La Villette scheme are no less significant. Instead of superimposing grids of various facilities on the park as a whole, as proposed in earlier versions, the cultural activities were now concentrated on two different locations: first and foremost, in a central area, apparently envisaged as the Manifestation Field; and, second, the existing open air theatre from the 1930s as a basis for a new project.⁵⁹⁹ At this point it was clear that the largest portion of the park would be about landscaping rather than about a La Villette-like ‘programming’ of activities. At the same time the change from bands to squares implied a shift from a simultaneous to a sequential perception of space. Three equally sized bands, as proposed in June, would have had a depth of about 43 metres (50 metres in La Villette), the Museum Park as a whole measuring 440 by 130 metres. The adjacent sections would always have been in sight. By contrast, the division in five parts allowed each section to have a depth of about 100 metres. Passers-by following the main path would have sufficient time to immerse in each of the sections as if striding through the spaces of an enfilade. ‘The Museum Park had four rooms. It was like a building that you put on its side’, Blaisse commented in an interview with the author – a comparison that seems to echo Koolhaas’ explanation of OMA’s scheme for La Villette.⁶⁰⁰ Brunier himself explained in a project statement from 1989: ‘The idea of differing and even extreme sensations blended into a walk thr[o]u[gh] a park that has taken form in a sequence, a cavalcade of complementary spaces.’⁶⁰¹

You see it as a painting

That it was Yves Brunier who defined the actual character of these spaces is beyond doubt. A plan coloured with pastels and a working model by him, apparently from the beginning of October, anticipate the main features of the park’s final design.⁶⁰² [Figures 5-6] A fragment of Brunier’s plan appears in

⁵⁹⁹ See for instance a series of sketches that presumably dates from a period of October 1988, given the triangular shape NAI corresponding to OMA’s design. OMAR 4467.

⁶⁰⁰ Blaisse here refers to the four sections designed by Brunier. The section with the NAI was designed by Coenen. Interview with the author on 24 September 2018.

⁶⁰¹ Yves Brunier, ‘Museum Park Rotterdam’, *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui* 262 (April 1989), 102.

⁶⁰² The model and the plan are based on the first project of the Kunsthal (I). The coloured plan uses a floorplan of the scheme from 7 October 1988. OMAR 4352, 4459, 1744.



Figure 10. Museum Park, Rotterdam. Painted photographs by Brunier of the Romantic Garden.
Above: Glass bridge. Below: The existing pond.

the site plan of the Kunsthal from 7 October.⁶⁰³ The fact that neither Brunier's plan nor his model of the Museum Park includes the area of the NAI indicates that both were produced after 2 October when Coenen was officially announced the winner of the competition. The open space along Jongkindstraat belonged to the lot of the NAI so that only the four southern sections of the Museum Park would be designed by OMA.⁶⁰⁴

The area adjacent to the Boijmans Museum, facing the NAI, later called 'Orchard', thus was conceived as the actual entrance to the park. Brunier's plan shows apple trees arranged on a diagonal grid, next to the large existing poplar trees. Brunier explained that the aim was to create a welcoming atmosphere, and Koolhaas, in *S,M,L,XL*, described this section of the park as a white vestibule, because of the extensive use of white colour.⁶⁰⁵ The ground would eventually be covered with white sea shells,⁶⁰⁶ and the bark of the trees would be whitewashed, the strong presence of white already being represented by the white circles around the trunks in Brunier's plan and the white Q-tips used for the model.

To the south the Orchard borders at the Manifestation Field, later called 'Podium'. The Podium was conceived as a black, bare counterpart to the white, densely planted entrance section. A few cut-outs for plantings aside ('confetti-patches of vegetation'),⁶⁰⁷ its entire surface would be covered with asphalt. Raised about one metre above the level of its surroundings, the platform would rest on the polluted sand excavated from the area of the Museum Park. Brunier's plan shows a black asphalted ramp with street markings to access the Podium from the Orchard, and a grandstand in metal for open air events and festivals like the Teatro Fantastico. The only 'patches of colour' are the black bamboo, the yellow osiers in two separate planters, and a row of weeping sequoias along the canal.⁶⁰⁸ The space envisioned strikes because of its emptiness. More than any other section of the park, the Podium – especially at this early

⁶⁰³ OMAR 1744. A plan of the whole park, based on Brunier's coloured version, dates from 30 November 1988. 'Museum Park, 1:500'. OMAR 4359.

⁶⁰⁴ Koos Hage in an interview with the author on 28 July 2020.

⁶⁰⁵ Brunier, 'Museum Park Rotterdam', 102. Koolhaas, 'New Rotterdam', 421.

⁶⁰⁶ Petra Blaisse in an interview with the author on 24 September 2018.

⁶⁰⁷ Brunier, 'Museum Park Rotterdam', 102.

⁶⁰⁸ Plan coloured with pastels by Brunier. The plan provides detailed specifications of the plantings. OMAR 4352.

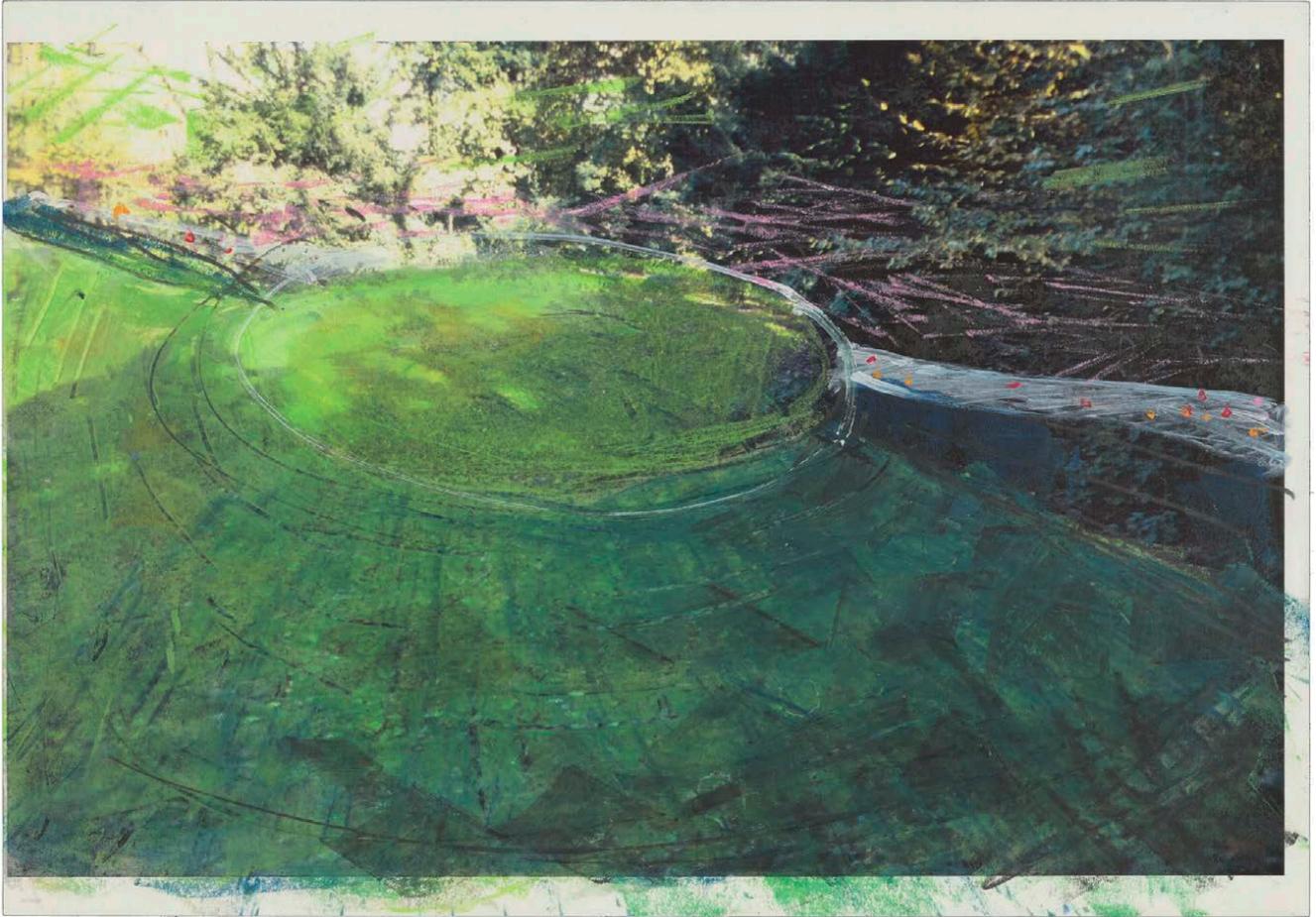


Figure 11. Museum Park, Rotterdam.
The existing open air theatre. Painted photograph by Yves Brunier.

stage – seems to approximate the ‘void’ of Koolhaas’s writings from the 1980s, albeit an institutionalized one.

A second ramp in red descends from the Podium to the adjacent garden of the Villa Dijkzigt, later called ‘Romantic Garden’. The Romantic Garden contrasts in multiple ways with the two previous sections of the park. After the non-colours white and black, a sea of colour – bright colours of different kinds; after the rigor of grid, blank surface and straight lines, the free flow of curved confluent shapes. In Brunier’s coloured plan pink, orange, yellow, and red prevail, contrasted by a group of plantings in blue and green patches of lawn. In the model the colours extend to the ‘trees’ – Q-tips painted in red, yellow and blue.

A ‘glass bridge’ would span most of the Romantic garden. The bridge appears also in several earlier sketches. Apparently the initial idea was to span with the bridge an artificial ‘river’ connecting the existing pond with Kunsthal.⁶⁰⁹ Site plans of the Kunsthal from June and September 1988 show a meandering stream starting from the covered open space below the main hall.⁶¹⁰ By October, however, the idea was abandoned. That is evident from the site plan from 7 October, based on Brunier’s coloured scheme of the park.⁶¹¹ Instead of a proper water course Brunier proposed a curvilinear path of white stones further to the east that was no longer crossed by the bridge.⁶¹² The bridge spanning the Romantic Garden, however, was kept. Next to the ascending and descending ramps of the Podium it was part of an earlier idea: that the promenade – or Axis of Development – should be straight only in plan while undulated in section. The idea is clearly captured by a sketch added to a site plan of OMA’s scheme for the NAI from June, and varied numerous sketches.⁶¹³ With removal of the river and its transformation into a stone path, or river of stones, the meaning of the bridge changed. In Petra Blaisse’ words: ‘You fly over the garden. You have distance from the garden. You see it as a painting.’⁶¹⁴

⁶⁰⁹ The arrangement recurs in several sketches. See, for instance: OMAR 1573.

⁶¹⁰ OMAR 1747, 4475.

⁶¹¹ OMAR 1744, 4352.

⁶¹² OMAR 4352.

⁶¹³ OMAR 4467.

⁶¹⁴ Interview with the author on 24 September 2018.



Figure 12. Museum Park, Rotterdam.
One of the blue glass rocks in the office of Petra Blaisse.

Initially Brunier suggested to reuse the existing open-air theatre from the 1930s, which had the shape of a Greek theatre with wooden benches on a semi-circular slope.⁶¹⁵ His coloured plan from October specifies: 'green theatre'. Perhaps OMA considered to complement the artificial embankment of the seating with a construction similar to the open air pavilions by Frank Gehry. As mentioned before, images of Gehry's World Expo Amphitheatre in New Orleans (1982), his Performing Arts Pavilion in Concord (1975-77), and 420 Rodeo Drive, in Bel Air (1965) were among the material collected by OMA's team working on the Kunsthal and the Museum Park. [Figure 7] Gehry's pavilions essentially consist of cantilevering roofs which cover the seating. A filigree structure aside, only the backstage area touches the ground.⁶¹⁶

The fifth section of the park, the area next to the Westzeedijk, is dominated by the Kunsthal and the Villa Dijkzigt. As in the Romantic Garden, the existing trees would be kept. Apparently it was decided early on to preserve this part of the garden more or less as it was. With its even lawn and scattered large old trees, the area is the only section of the project which corresponds to the common image of a park.

Other worldly

Next to the model and the coloured drawing, Brunier produced a widely published plan in the form of a collage and a series of painted and partly collaged photographs of the existing park. [Figures 8-11] There exist at least two versions of the collaged plan: one with OMA's scheme for the NAI and one with Coenen's.⁶¹⁷ The floorplan representing the Kunsthal at the other end of the park dates from 14 December 1988, indicating that both collages were either produced or modified after this date.⁶¹⁸ Even if less detailed, the collages correspond rather closely to Brunier's coloured plan from October. [Figure 8] The division of the park into five sections is more explicit, especially in the former park of the Villa

⁶¹⁵ For a site plan and photos showing the park and the open-air theatre in the mid-eighties, see: Vroom, Meeus, *Learning from Rotterdam*, 68-87.

⁶¹⁶ Examples are: the Merriweather Post Pavilion of Music, Columbia, Maryland (1967), the Performing Arts Pavilion, Concord (1975-77), and the World Expo Amphitheater, New Orleans (1982); the photocopies are taken from: Arnell, Brickford, *Frank Gehry*. OMAR 1481.

⁶¹⁷ OMA, collage included in the A3 booklet 'Museumpark Rotterdam', 20 February 1989 (NAi Coenen). OMAR 4464. And: OMA, single A3 page (NAi OMA). OMAR 4462.

⁶¹⁸ OMA: 'Kunsthal Rotterdam', 14 December 1988: OMAR 3343.

Chapter 1.10

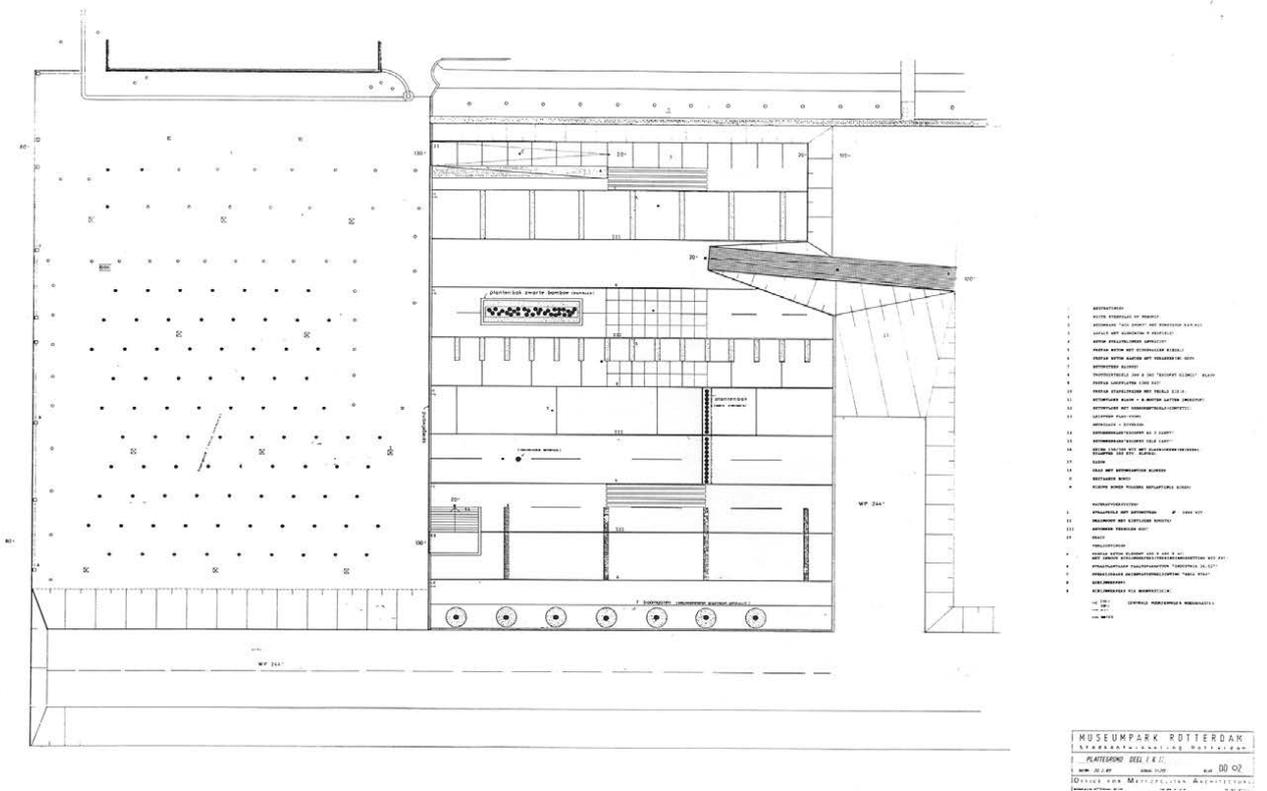
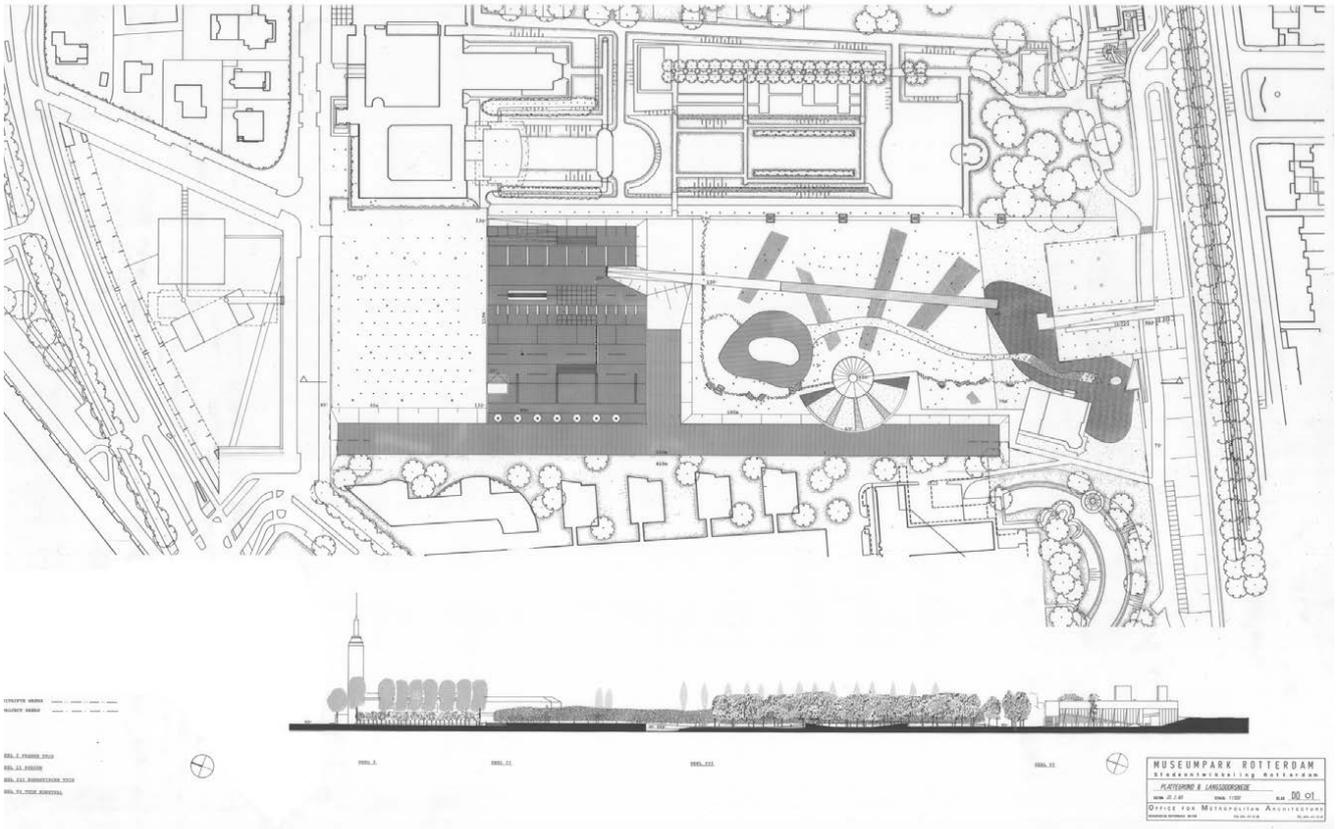


Figure 13. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, Museum Park, Rotterdam.
Drawings from February 1989. Above: Overall plan and section. Below: Orchard and Podium.

Dijkzigt. The pink of the Romantic Garden and the green surrounding the Kunsthal and the villa meet along a single straight line. The glass bridge descends on a stabilized surface, later called 'Plaza', between the two buildings.

The painted and collaged photographs are 'snapshots' of an imaginary visit to the Museum Park and perhaps more suggestive than the implemented version has ever been. A picture of the Orchard shows a winter scenery in white with dark, green treetops and a dazzling sky behind. [Figure 9] The horizon is cut off by a 'Mirror Wall' which serves also as a parapet for the Podium at its other side. In theory the mirrors would double the Orchard, but that was not really the case due to their uneven surface. Petra Blaisse recalls that the finish 'wasn't real steel. That was too expensive. It was a kind of plastic or pvc plate with a thin layer of thin stainless steel on top. And then it deforms.'⁶¹⁹ More importantly, the mirrors reinforced the self-contained character of the Orchard, and, as Koolhaas explains in *S,M,L,XL*, the impact of brightness and overexposure.⁶²⁰

Most 'snapshots', however, visualize the Romantic Garden. [Figures 10-11] As in the coloured plan from October, the ground is flooded with a 'wave of colour'.⁶²¹ A planting scheme from February 1989 specifies flowers and shrubs in red, orange, pink, blue and yellow, arranged in a patchwork of curvilinear shapes.⁶²² Arthur Wortmann, in his 1993 review of the completed garden, suggests that the landscaping plays 'a game of kitsch with the park's romantic atmosphere.'⁶²³ The impact of Brunier's pictures is effusive, other-worldly. At the foot of the tall shadowy trees, the continuous carpet of bright colours seems rather out of place, like fields of flowers sweeping through a forest. White dots on dark trunks indicate flowering creepers. Captured from an oblique angle, the open air theatre appears as a single large vortex in green.

⁶¹⁹ Interview with the author on 24 September 2018.

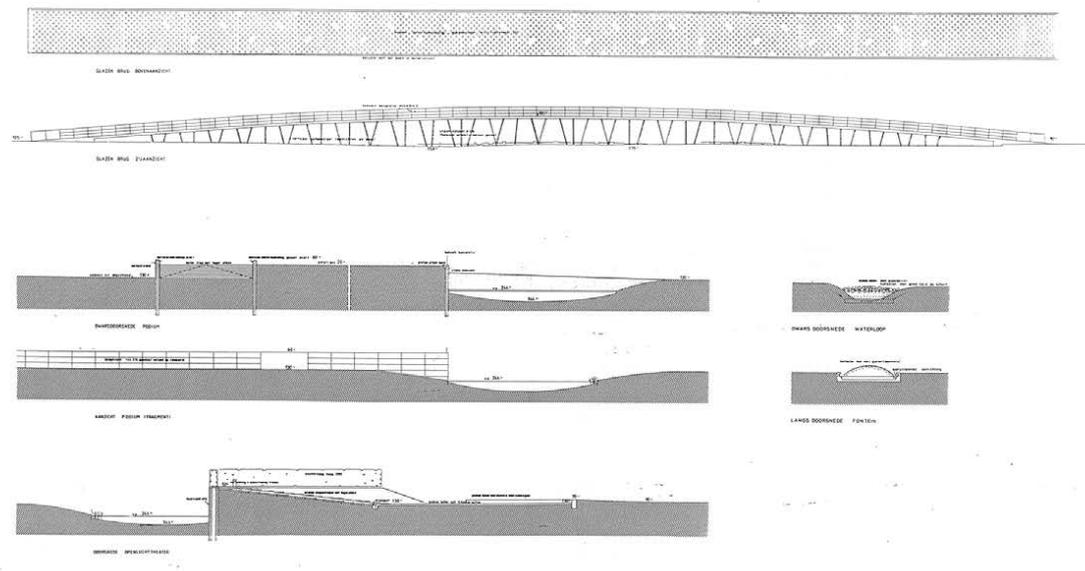
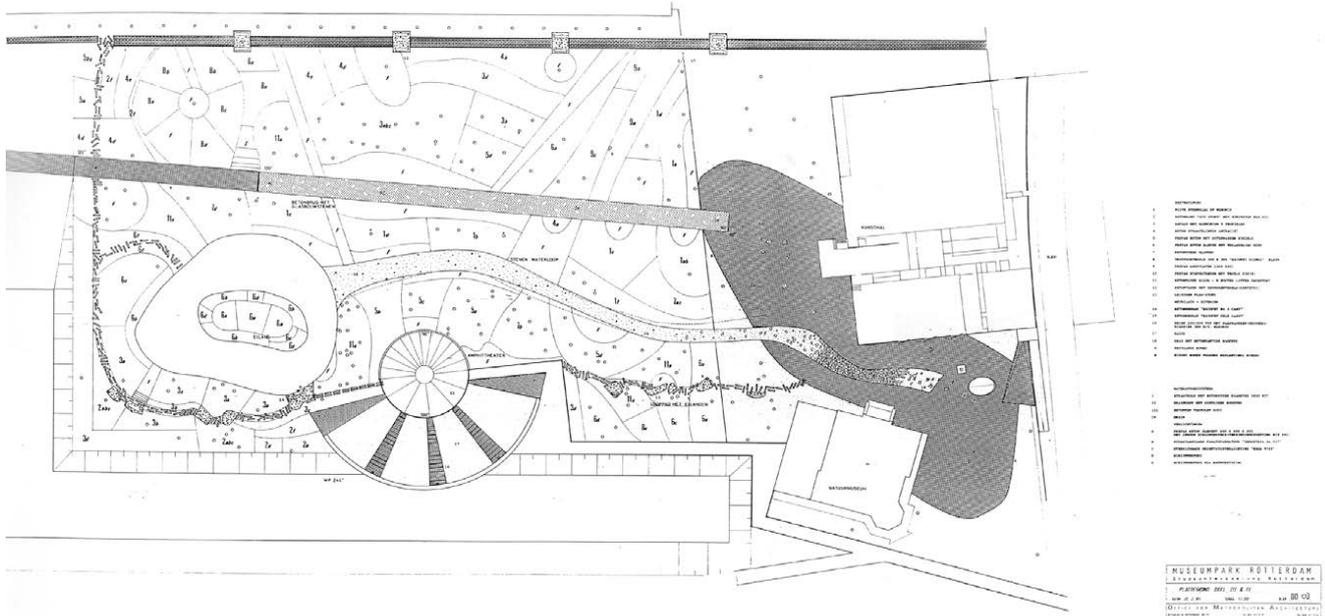
⁶²⁰ Koolhaas, 'New Rotterdam', 421.

⁶²¹ Brunier, 'Museum Park Rotterdam', 103.

⁶²² 'Museumpark Rotterdam. Plattegrond: deel II&IV', 20 Feb 1989. OMAR 4358.

⁶²³ Arthur Wortmann, 'Het Rotterdamse Museumpark', 38.

Chapter 1.10



MUSEUMPARK ROTTERDAM
 OMA/REM KOOLHAAS ARCHITECTEN
 PLANNING: FEB. 1989
 NO. 00 00
 OMA/REM KOOLHAAS ARCHITECTEN

MUSEUMPARK ROTTERDAM
 OMA/REM KOOLHAAS ARCHITECTEN
 PLANNING: FEB. 1989
 NO. 00 00
 OMA/REM KOOLHAAS ARCHITECTEN

Figure 14. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, Museum Park, Rotterdam.
 Drawings from February 1989. Above: Romantic Garden and Kunsthall. Below: Glass bridge.

Second nature

When Ungers proposed the concept of the *City in the City* at the 1977 Cornell Summer Academy in Berlin, he suggested a dichotomy of nature and city, the unbuilt areas being conceived as green space.⁶²⁴ By contrast, OMA, ever since La Villette, articulates the park as an urban space, that can accommodate cultural facilities in the widest sense. Even the greenery at La Villette and the Parc Citroën Cevennes recalls a catalogue of plantings and rigid formal arrangements, rather than a representation of ‘pristine nature’. Françoise Choay wrote about La Villette: ‘Greenery [...] is treated not only as a building material but almost mechanically: it symbolizes artificiality as it is made part of the general evolving system’.⁶²⁵ The same can be said about the Orchard and the composition of linear plantings on the Podium. Like the golf course of the Downtown Athletic Club, the grid of apple trees, the curtain of weeping sequoias, and the block of black bamboo are displayed as ‘Super-Nature’ – a product of civilization, not its opposite.⁶²⁶

In the Romantic Garden, when completed, large rocks of blue glass – looking like fragments of glacier – were glued to the stones of the ‘river’. [Figure 12] The ground below the bridge was provided with lights that would shine through its glazed floor at night. Also the trees were equipped with lights. Blaisse recalls: ‘He [Brunier] had planned in the existing trees to have lamps at night of different colours. So it could either be completely blue, or completely red, or completely yellow, and we hung lamps with cables going up the stems of the trees.’⁶²⁷

A podium of streets

In 1989 OMA worked out the design of the Museum Park in detail. A first set of drawings was issued on 20 February 1989, comprising Brunier’s collage; an overall plan and section; detailed plans of the park’s four segments; first detail drawings of the glass bridge, the Podium with the mirror Wall, the Open Air Theatre, and the river of stones ‘flowing’ into to the pond. [Figure 13-14] During the

⁶²⁴ CepI, *Oswald Mathias Ungers*, 346.

⁶²⁵ Choay, ‘Critique’, 213-214.

⁶²⁶ Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 157.

⁶²⁷ Interview with the author on 24 September 2018.

Chapter 1.10

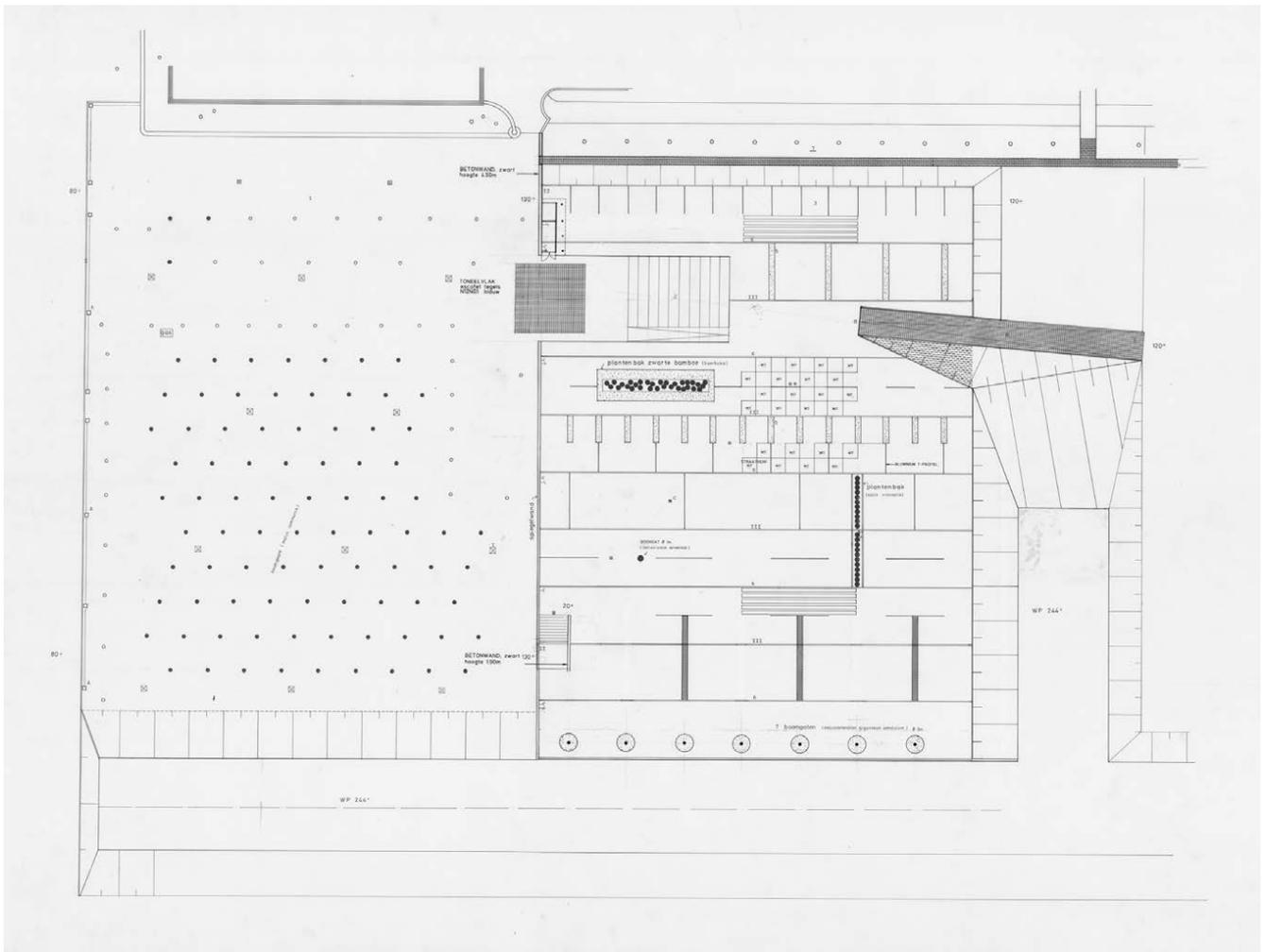


Figure 15. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, Museum Park, Rotterdam.
Drawings from February 1990. Orchard and Podium with Open Air Theatre.

subsequent 12 months the drawings were modified, complemented, and refined. On the basis of OMA's design the engineers of Rotterdam's municipality produced the technical drawings for the tendering, which was held in the first half of July 1989.⁶²⁸ One of the major changes was the abandonment of the old Open Air Theatre in the Romantic Garden. Its semi-circular embankment projected into the canal, almost touching its other side. After proposing several down-sized versions, the theatre was eventually integrated into the Podium. In the final, implemented version, the theatre served as the main entrance to the park. A rectangular area was cut out from the Podium's northern edge, the stepped rows of the seating descending towards the Orchard as the 'scenery' at the back of the stage. The projecting ramp of Brunier's first scheme was removed in order to connect with the Podium alongside the seating. [Figure 15-16]

The motif of the street – Brunier's coloured plan had suggested white street markings on black asphalt – became the actual guiding theme of the entire Podium as planned by Brunier and Blaisse in 1990.⁶²⁹ Its surface – 100 by 75 metres – was organized on the basis of a square 5-metres grid. 0.5-metre wide prefab concrete elements, serving as coverings for concealed gutters, divide the asphalt along the north-south axis into ten strips of 9.50-metres width. A model – photographs were published in 1993 (*Archis*) – show that the colour of the elements was meant to alternate from strip to strip between black and white. Five white lines would make the Podium appear as a surface composed of parallel streets. Occasional 'dashed lines' in stainless steel and zebra-crossings in white (model) would reinforce this impact. [Figure 17]

Road markings, zebra-crossings, a giant piano, a split open-air chess board, fragments of a floorplan and other undecipherable markings suggest activity and occupation in various ways. On a technical level, the Podium offered the facilities and utilities for theatre spectacles, festivals like the Teatro

⁶²⁸ The tendering was held between 2 and 12 July. The drawings were produced by the Ingenieursbureau utiliteits- en waterbouw (IUW), and the Ingenieursbureau groen (IG) between April and June 1990. The drawings are held by the archives of the Stadsarchief Rotterdam and the Stadsontwikkeling Rotterdam. For the written documents of the tendering stage, see: OMAR 4482.

⁶²⁹ Drawings Podium: IG, 'Techn. Plan Podium Profielen etc.', 21 May 1990. Archives Stadsontwikkeling Rotterdam. See also: OMA, 'Plattegrond deel I&II', 22 February 1990. OMAR 4362.

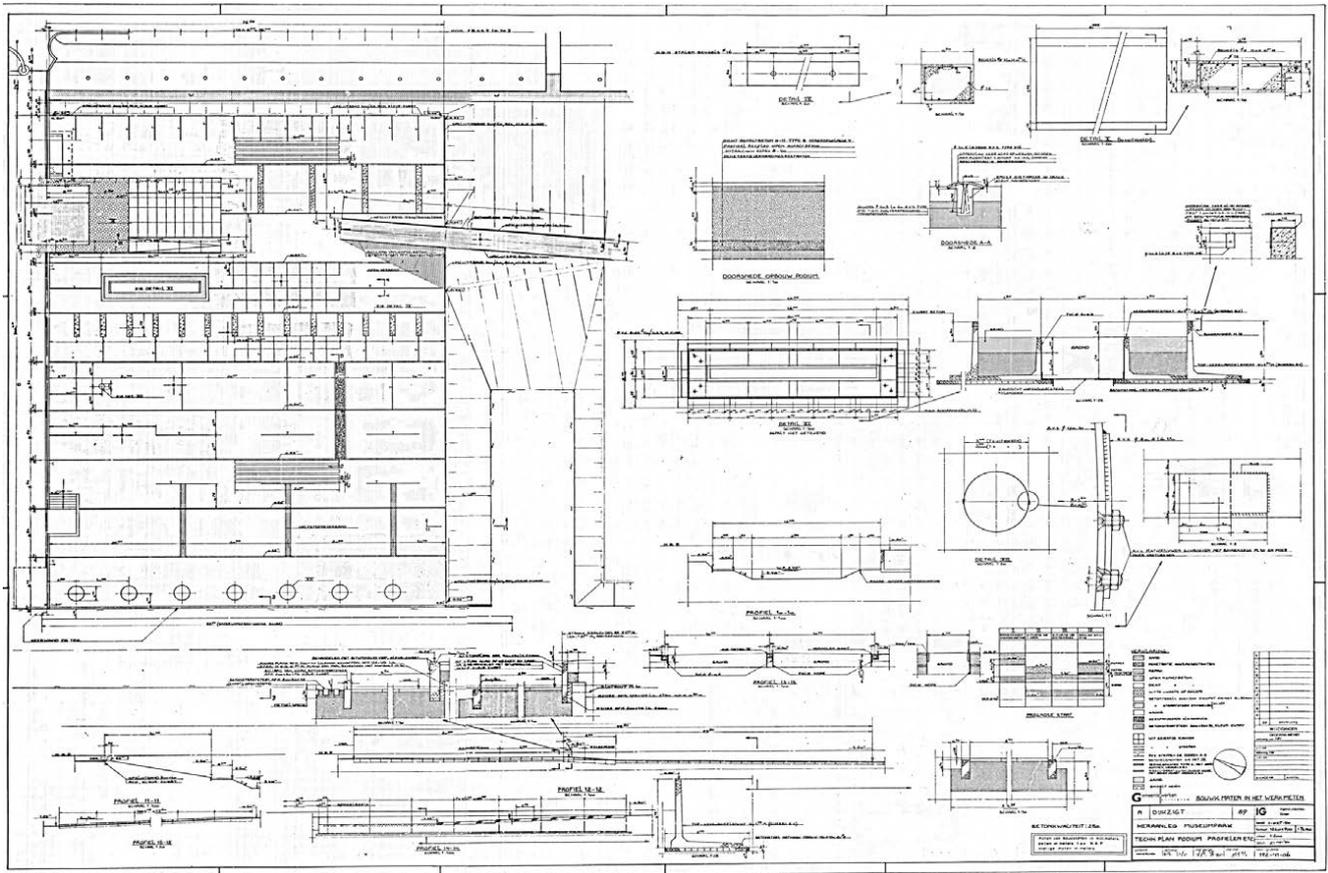


Figure 16. Ingenieursbureau Groen, Museum Park, Rotterdam.
Technical drawing of the Podium, May 1990.

Fantastico and other events. The Podium – no walls, all floor – was a programmed surface in the literal sense. But like OMA’s scheme for La Villette, the Podium anticipated its use – dense, varied, overlapping – as an image. Even the destabilization of the programme held out at La Villette appears implied by the interfering markings and interspersed plantings, methodically overriding the rigid order of the parallel strips.

An effort of imagination

The Museum Park was meant to be completed before the Kunsthal; but when the building opened in October 1992, the park was far from finished.⁶³⁰ The major cause of the delay was the Podium. The excavated sand on which the platform was to rest still needed time to settle down.⁶³¹ The Museum Park was inaugurated on 4 September 1993. The opening event was the Uitmarkt, another Rotterdam annual festival with a programme of concerts, theatre, readings, dance shows, and film.⁶³² In a review of the park published after the opening, landscape architect Anja Guinée reports: ‘At the inauguration of the park at the occasion of the Uitmarkt the asphalt was barely cooled down. Currently the podium is being finished so as to get the desired graphic quality.’⁶³³ Minutes of a meeting on 8 October 1993 on behalf of the Museumpark, perhaps of Rotterdam’s Department of Urban Development, remind that ‘the park is still not finished and not yet handed over’, enclosing a to-do list of several pages.⁶³⁴

Meanwhile the public had begun to dismantle parts of the Romantic Garden: all 500 blue glass rocks which had been glued to the stones of the ‘river’ disappeared during the first two months after the opening.⁶³⁵ [Figure 12] Also the scoria bricks used for the Blue Plaza began to disappear, and the

⁶³⁰ Ineke Schwartz, ‘Kunsthal van Koolhaas heeft internationaal niveau’, *Trouw*, 31 October 1992.

⁶³¹ Petra Blaisse in an interview with the author on 24 September 2018. See also: Anja Guinée, ‘De spanning tussen kunst en openbaarheid in het Museumpark’ *Blauwe kamer* 5 (1993), 20.

⁶³² No author (kunstredactie Amsterdam), ‘Uitmarkt in Maasstad geeft opening park feestelijk tintje’, *Trouw* 3 September 1993.

⁶³³ Guinée, ‘De spanning tussen kunst en openbaarheid’, 20 (author trans.).

⁶³⁴ ‘Museumpark notitie tbv bespreking 11 Okt 93’, 8 October 1993. Archive Inside Outside. A passage headed ‘adjustment and completion’ regards the Podium, the Open Air Theatre, the Mirror Wall, and the Orchard, among other things.

⁶³⁵ Canis Zijlmans, ‘Museumpark is nog lang niet af’ (The Museum Park Is Far from Finished), *Rotterdams Dagblad*, 5 September 1994, (author trans.).



Figure 17. OMA/Rem Koolhaas, Museum Park, Rotterdam.
The photo of the model was shown in the January issue of *Archis* in 1993.

coloured floodlights fixed in the trees and under the glass bridge, including the cables.⁶³⁶ The Romantic Garden became a victim of its fragility but, in part, also of its success. According to Koos Hage, the blue rocks had become popular ‘souvenirs’, and one would occasionally re-encounter them at people’s homes.⁶³⁷ Correspondence between Blaisse, the municipality and OMA, containing to-do lists, commissions, assessments, reminders and proposals were exchanged for another three years. A letter by A. Kegge of Rotterdam’s Public Works to Petra Blaisse indicates that the park was handed over on 29 October 1996.⁶³⁸

The blue glass rocks were never replaced, and there are no lights today that would flood the Romantic Garden with colour at night. The entire Podium was taken down, when architect Paul de Ruiter constructed an underground parking (2003-13) in the soil below. The new Podium, although asphalted, has little to do with the original one and its intricate surface of ‘programmed’ intarsia.⁶³⁹ The Mirror Wall was replaced by a new one with holes, for safety reasons.⁶⁴⁰ The Orchard had to cede its place to the Depot of the Boijmans Museum by MVRDV (2014-), due to open its doors in 2021. To visualize and, ultimately, to judge the Museum Park as it was before its incremental modification, fragmentation, and neglect, requires a major effort of imagination.⁶⁴¹

⁶³⁶ Guinée, ‘De spanning tussen kunst en openbaarheid’, 21.

⁶³⁷ Koos Hage. Interview with the author on 28 July 2020.

⁶³⁸ A. Kegge (Gemeentewerken Rotterdam), letter to Petra Blaisse, 18 October 1996. Archive Inside Outside.

⁶³⁹ The archive of Inside Outside holds photographs of the first Podium, probably from the years preceding its replacement.

⁶⁴⁰ Petra Blaisse. Interview with the author on 24 September 2018.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid.

Part 2

2.1

Welding a paradox

The quest for a new Kunsthal: October - December 1988

At the meeting of the Building Committee on 7 October 1988, Wim van Krimpen was announced as the future interim director of the Kunsthal.¹ According to Van Krimpen, alderman Joop Linthorst had offered him the position.² Van Krimpen (1941-) had begun his career as an art gallerist in Amsterdam. In the 1980s he had initiated the first Dutch fair for modern and contemporary art, the KunstRAI, housed by the RAI Exhibition and Convention Centre in Amsterdam.³ Van Krimpen became the director of the art fair in 1984 and held the position until 1990.⁴ The first KunstRAI in 1985 featured galleries from the Netherlands and Germany.⁵ Among them was the Amsterdam Galerie van Rooy, showing drawings by OMA/Koolhaas, Aldo Rossi and the artists Ricardo Regazzoni and Marc Ruygrok.⁶ In 1986 Belgian and French galleries were invited to participate, and in the two subsequent years, the range of galleries was expanded from fine art to applied arts, such as jewellery, furniture and glass art.⁷ In an interview from 1989, Van Krimpen underlined his resolution to address a broader public for economic reasons: 'I saw many more visitors on foreign fairs. That should be possible here as well. The WVC [Ministry of Health, Welfare and Culture] has subsidised us from the beginning, but in the long run we have to become self-sufficient. That is why we have become bigger and try to bring together different

¹ Minutes Building Committee, 7 October 1988. OMAR 1517.

² Interview with the author on 28 July 2020.

³ Between 2006 and 2011 the fair was called Art Amsterdam. The acronym RAI stands for Bicycle and Automobile Industry (Rijwiel en Automobiel Industrie), the complex having been formally used and owned by Dutch bicycle and car manufacturers.

⁴ Koos Breukel, 'Art Amsterdam. 25 jaar in 50 portretten', in: Wim van der Beek et al. (eds.), *Art Amsterdam. 25 years in 50 portraits* (Deventer: Thieme Art, 2009), 59.

⁵ Wim van der Beek, 'Art Amsterdam. 25 turbulente jaren', in: Idem, *Art Amsterdam*, 12. An exhibition curated by Van Krimpen displayed the work of Thomas Schütte, Günter Tuzina, Isa Genzken and Walter Dahn, Ansuya Blom, Niek Kemps, Erno Verkerk and Henk Visch; *ibid.*, 32. The event attracted 15.000 visitors, about as many as the first Art Cologne in 1967 (15.000) and the first Art Basel 1970 (16.000); *ibid.*, 6. In 1995 the Art Cologne counted 80.000 visitors; Karel Ankerman, 'Internationale kunstbeurzen. De historie', in: Van der Beek, *Art Amsterdam*, 45; 60.000 the Art Basel in 2008; *ibid.*, 47. The attendance figures of the KunstRAI peaked with 28.000 visitors in 2000. Van der Beek, 'Art Amsterdam', 6.

⁶ Kauffman, *Drawing on Architecture*, 262-263.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

audiences. The KunstRAI must become a meeting point for everybody. That is why galleries are invited that deal with other disciplines, such as design, photography and ceramics.’⁸

Both the entrepreneurial spirit and the ambition to establish the KunstRAi as an art fair of international reach, surely resonated with the conception of the Kunsthal as outlined by Rotterdam’s municipality. In their expertise from 1986, Van Blommestein and Versteegen put all emphasis on large attendance figures, a broad audience and the participation in international travelling exhibitions (see Chapter 1.2). Van Krimpen’s task, in Amsterdam as much as in Rotterdam, was a pioneering one – to put up, that is, a cultural institution of international standing, as economically self-sufficient as possible. As interim director of the Kunsthal, Van Krimpen replaced the municipality’s representative, Hein Reedijk, in his function as project coordinator. From this moment on, the brief of the Kunsthal – especially the organization, design and technical requirements of the interior – needed to be negotiated with Van Krimpen.⁹

At the October meeting, Koolhaas explained the recent changes of the primarily design. An A3 booklet with a set of revised drawings, dated 7 October 1988, was probably presented at this occasion.¹⁰ Once more the total floor surface of the project had been reduced in order to comply with the agreed cost limit of 25 million guilders.¹¹ Above all, the long, two storey administration building attached to the dyke had been downsized with respect to the scheme from 7 September.¹² Next to the slightly downsized footprint, the floorplans show several minor modifications of secondary spaces, while the large main hall with the Robot in the centre was kept almost unchanged. Conversely, the immediate surroundings had been completely reworked. The Plaza uniting the Natural History Museum and the Kunsthal is now

⁸ Ibid., (author trans.).

⁹ Both Van Krimpen’s position as the Kunsthal’s interim director and the replacement of Reedijk as the project coordinator were formally confirmed at the meeting of the Building Committee on 14 December. OMAR 3251.

¹⁰ A3 booklet of the Primarily Design (VO), dated 7 October 1988: OMAR 1744. Original plans: OMAR 1746.

¹¹ See Chapter 1.7. The cost limit was envisaged at the meeting on 9 June, 1988. 5 million guilders ought to be funded by subsidies and sponsors.

¹² The length of the administration building was reduced from 97.2 to 85.5 metres, its maximal depth from 11.5 metres to 10.0 metres. In total the floor surface was reduced by roughly 650 square metres from 7.338 to 6.667 square metres. The lateral dimensions of the main building are diminished by half metre from 55 by 55 to 54.5 by 54.5 metres (dimension between axes), while the depth calculated of the façades increased from 0.25 metres to half a metre. OMAR 3251, 1744.

reduced to a narrow strip between the dyke and the Service Road leading to the hospital. The open space under the main building is turned into a pool – a ‘shadow made of water’ as a corollary text explains.

The minutes of the meeting record that the project needed yet to be shown to Van Krimpen, and some other modifications seemed likely. Direct talks were scheduled between Koolhaas, Van Krimpen, J. Bronder from the Municipal Museum Service (DGM), and G. Vet from the Public Works (GW), in order to find out whether ‘the ideas of Van Krimpen correspond with those of Koolhaas.’ Altogether a minimum delay of one month was expected, envisaging a definitive version of the Preliminary Design for the beginning of November.

Changing preconditions

The course taken by Van Krimpen at the KunstRAI must have augured some accordance, not only with the municipality’s plans for the Kunsthal, but also with the ideas entertained by Koolhaas. When Koolhaas presented OMA’s project on the October meeting, the institution was meant to harbour a wide range of events, and there is some kinship between the thrust of his statement and Van Krimpen’s initiative to open the Amsterdam art fair to domains beyond the realm of fine art. Likewise, Van Krimpen’s ambition to address a large public and to make the art fair a ‘meeting point for everybody’ must have met, to some extent, Koolhaas’ longstanding interest in popular culture. Van Krimpen, in turn, appears to have appreciated Koolhaas as an architect and OMA’s Dance Theatre in The Hague in particular.¹³ Nevertheless, Van Krimpen disapproved OMA’s scheme from October.¹⁴ On the night of 15 November, he faxed two pages to OMA in which he listed requirements and preferences. Two of them were hard to reconcile with the project Koolhaas and his team had been developing during the last months: to provide ‘exhibition areas with closed walls and light entering from above’; and to integrate

¹³ As explicated below, a fax of his from 15 November seems to advocate this ‘type’ of architecture for the Kunsthal. During an interview with the author Van Krimpen confirmed his appreciation for the Dance Theatre, while relating that he held Koolhaas as an architect in high regards at the beginning of their collaboration on the Kunsthal. Interview with the author on 28 July 2020.

¹⁴ Koolhaas himself mentions the ‘future director’s dislike’ in *S,M,L,XL* (p. 429).

Chapter 2.1

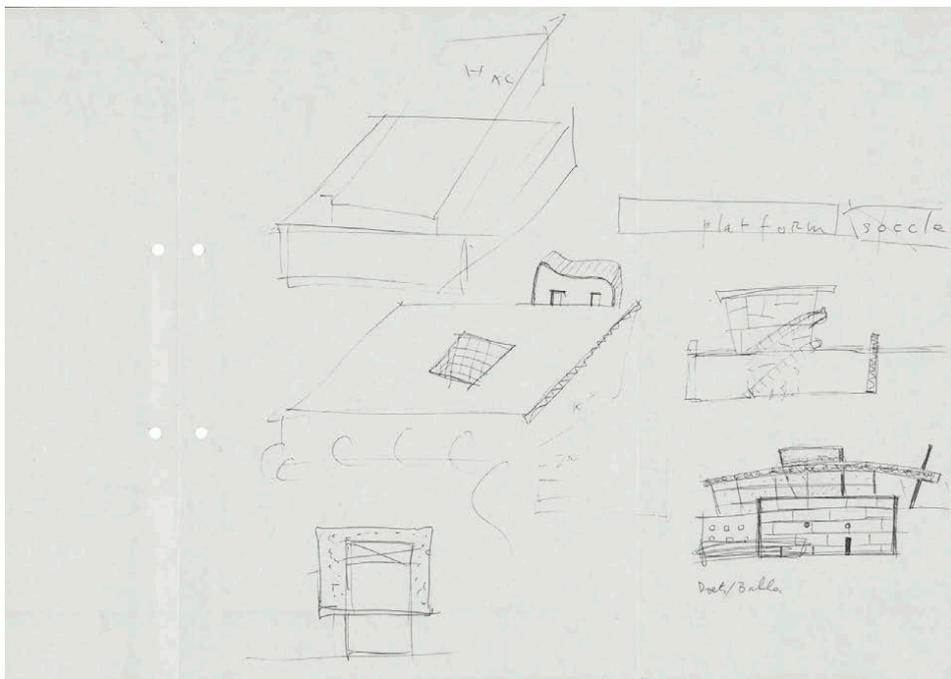
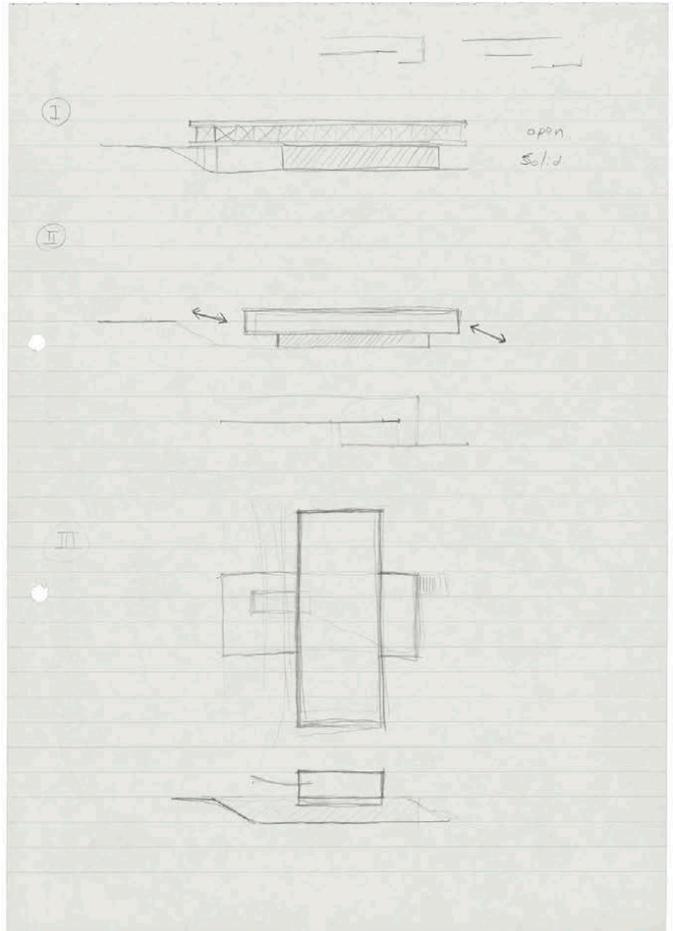
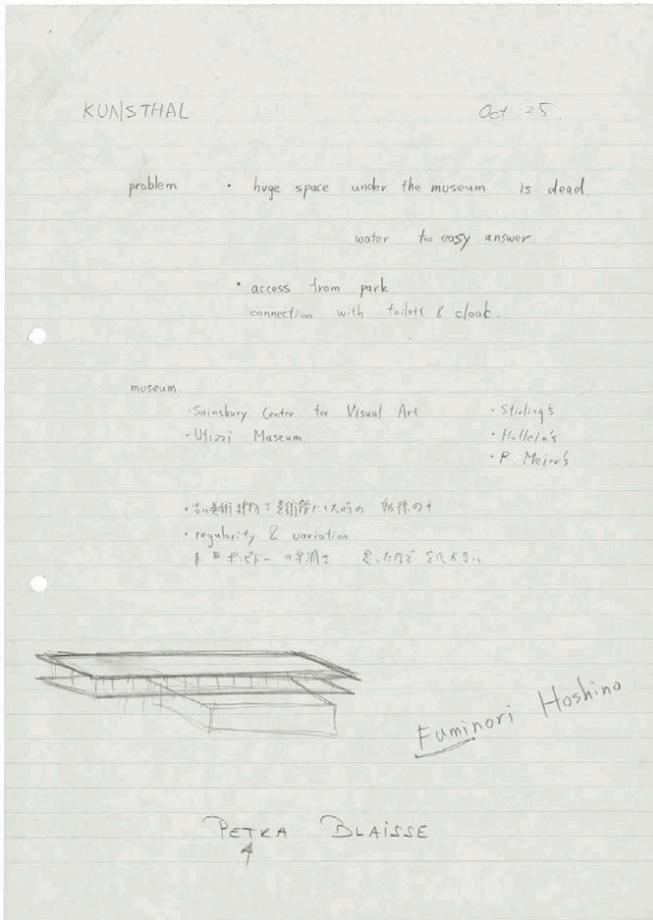


Figure 1. Above: Fuminori Hoshino (OMA), minutes, 25 October 1988.
Below: Undated sketches, presumably by Rem Koolhaas.

the peripheral columns in the exterior walls, obviously envisaging these walls as permanent surfaces for the display of exhibits.¹⁵ In OMA's project, the facades of the exhibition area were entirely glazed, like in Mies' Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin, while 'closed walls', by principle, were conceived as movable partitions.

Besides these technical concerns, Van Krimpen disapproved of the architecture in terms of design. A phrase in large letters on the first page of the fax reads: 'What counts in architecture is variety of form.'¹⁶ Two, apparently photocopied, text excerpts are added; the first one states: 'After years of being dominated by the practically lifeless dogmas of the Moderns, architecture is gradually springing once more from imagination. There is a need for a new architecture. We can no longer tolerate these stereometric, unornamented forms, whose exterior serves no other purpose than to intimate the interior's construction.'¹⁷ The second excerpt demands an 'architecture with aesthetic conviction. [Its] structures are more than mere instruments of use; they possess a clearly defined identity, as opposed to what I would call the horrors of contractors' modernism. People get lost in there for the simple reason that these products have neither recognizable elements nor their own look.' Bart Lootsma and Jan de Graaf suggest that Van Krimpen had chosen these text fragments in order to express a preference for postmodern architecture, which indeed may have been implied by the call for 'variety of form' and a 'new architecture' after an era of modernist domination.¹⁸

Van Krimpen, while composing his fax, might also have had in mind OMA's Dance Theatre in The Hague. Apart from the fact that the building did offer 'variety of form' in abundance, one of the preferences listed in the fax directly refers to the Dance Theatre and the golden cone next the entrance: 'café-restaurant as independent 'entity' visible (see dance theatre)'.¹⁹ Van Krimpen's fax appears as a

¹⁵ OMAR 1436. Next to the fax the file contains two English translations of the requirements listed.

¹⁶ Ibid, (author trans.).

¹⁷ Ibid. The translation of this and the subsequent excerpt quoted after: Van Gerrewey, *A Critical Reader*, 283.

¹⁸ Lootsma, De Graaf, 'In dienst van de ervaring', 25.

¹⁹ OMAR 1436.

Meeting

Nov 2, 1988

○ KONST HAL.

∞ 建物の dijk にする。 (どの範囲に建設可能か Gregor に聞く (=))

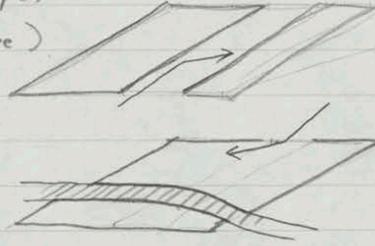
○ 2つの Zone が 建物の横断する

• ROAD (irregular shape)

• STREET (regular shape)

LAMP & ROOF

• OPEN TO PUBLIC



○ EXHIBITION SPACE

GF

• LAMP の下で つながる

1F

LAMP の上で つながる

RF

Terrace + Pavillon.

• Next Meeting

○ International Housing Exposition in Kashi, Fukuoka 1989.

• 担当してくれ!

• イナギ事務所に tel する = >

○ 参加したい 旨 伝える = >

○ 提案したい.

Rem + Steven Holl + Mark Mack. の 3人が

A-1, A-2, B-4, を担当する.

(Rem called Steven Holl 加-0)

(10 16th. to Japan)

Figure 2. Fuminori Hoshino. Minutes. 2 November 1988.

rather overt invitation to conceive of a Kunsthall that would be similar in character in terms of architecture.

According to Van Krimpen's own account he had already rejected the design when Linthorst asked him his opinion during their very first meeting, regarding it 'an art project' inadequate for his purposes.²⁰

Van Krimpen recalls:

And the alderman [Linthorst] said, 'Okay, go to Rem Koolhaas and tell him that.' Very interesting. So I went to his office and I started to talk with him. After five minutes he said 'Wim, okay, what do you think about the project?' After a very short time: 'What do you think about the project?' I said, 'You can put it in the trash.'

Considering Van Krimpen's announcement as the interim director of the Kunsthall on the Building Committee's meeting on 7 October, it appears likely that the first encounter between him and Koolhaas took place soon after the gathering, if not before. But apparently, it was only sometime after the Committee's October meeting that Linthorst acknowledged the need for a new scheme. As mentioned above, the definitive version of the Preliminary Design was scheduled for the beginning of November. That would have been impossible, unless Van Krimpen and Koolhaas reconciled their ideas in one way or another on the basis of OMA's first project. Perhaps Linthorst hoped for a solution of this kind.

Koolhaas, for his part, initiated a research for an entirely new scheme in late October, about two weeks after the Committee's meeting and two weeks before receiving Van Krimpen's faxed list of requirements.²¹ As mentioned in Chapter 1.8, the NAI and the Kunsthall had been conceived as complementary projects in terms of character and form. In *S,M,L,XL*, Koolhaas explains that the 'future director's dislike for the design' was but a 'pretext to start all over again,' the real reason being that

²⁰ Interview with the author on 28 July 2020. In the interview Van Krimpen mentioned concerns about the Robot, the size of the exhibition area, the pool under the building, and the functionality of the restaurant.

²¹ That OMA began to work on a new scheme at the end of the month is evident from notes taken by his collaborator Fuminori Hoshino on 25 and 28 October 1988, as explicated below. OMAR 1546, 1538.

Chapter 2.1

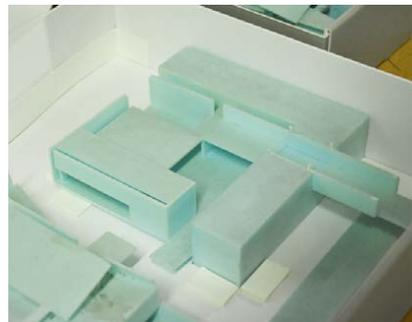
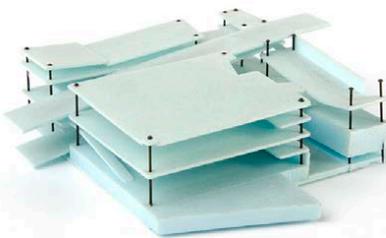
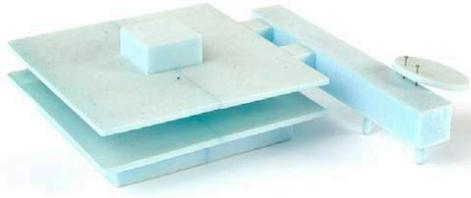


Figure 3. Kunsthal. Reminders of models from October to mid-November 1988.
Scale 1 to 500. Top right: Perhaps 4 November.

OMA would not build the NAI.²² If that is true, the first Kunsthal was obsolete ever since the announcement of Jo Coenen as the winner of the competition on the second of October, and Van Krimpen's irreverent dismissal of OMA's project did indeed offer a pretext to start anew.

By the beginning of October, the relation between OMA's projects for the Kunsthal and the Museum Park had become more loose. In OMA's study from May 1987, the park's three strips running north-south are accurately aligned with the footprint of the Kunsthal, and the site plan from June 1988 still shows three strips that literally extend the geometry of the building into the park: the edge of the west-façade, two sides of the Robot, and the edge of the east façade. Three months later, with Brunier's redesign of the Museum Park, the idea of projecting the building's geometry into the park was altogether abandoned. As explicated in the previous chapter, the fragment of the site plan from 7 October matches precisely Brunier's new scheme for the park, indicating that by then his proposal had been adopted, further isolating the first scheme conceptually.²³

But regardless of these developments, Koolhaas' enthusiasm for the design itself appears to have been limited. In the issue of *El Croquis* on OMA from 1992, the project for the NAI is documented at large, while the first project for the Kunsthal is not even mentioned; and whereas 14 pages of *S,M,L,XL* are dedicated to the former, 'Kunsthal I' is dealt with on 2, showing nothing but a perspective rendering of the Vierendeel girders in the exhibition area. Pictures of the – still existing – model, or drawings that would convey how the design actually looked like were omitted.²⁴ In 1989 Koolhaas explained laconically: 'it wasn't complete or clear enough as a statement.'²⁵

²² Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 429.

²³ OMAR 1746, 4352. See also Chapter 1.10.

²⁴ OMAR, MAQV.940.

²⁵ Mil De Kooning, 'OMA in Nederland. Rem Koolhaas in gesprek', *Vlees & Beton* 12 (1989), n.p. (author trans.).

Towards the end of October, Japanese architect Fuminori Hoshino began to work on the project. Hoshino was soon to become – next to Koolhaas – the leading design architect of the Kunsthall.²⁶ After graduating at the University of Tokyo, Hoshino remained in the Japanese metropolis for another four years, practicing in two local architecture firms.²⁷ When he came to the Netherlands, he was twenty-eight years old and had already been in charge of the planning and implementation a few small houses in Japan. The job at OMA was his first employment in Europe, and the Kunsthall was the project he started with. About five weeks after his arrival at OMA, the essential features of an entirely new scheme – the one that eventually would materialize – were defined. A series of dated sketches and notes along with the account given by Hoshino during a series of conversations with the author allow to reconstruct the process in some detail. A sheet with a few handwritten notes by Hoshino, captioned ‘KUNSTHALL’ and dated 25 October, apparently refers to the Preliminary Design presented to the Building Committee at the beginning of the month.²⁸ [Figure 1] Under the heading ‘problem’ Hoshino noted down: ‘huge space under museum is dead. / water too easy answer’, and ‘access from park.’ Under the heading ‘museum’ Hoshino mentioned the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, the Uffizi in Florence, and the Centre Pompidou, next to ‘Stirling’s’, ‘Hollein’s’ and ‘R. Meier’s’, apparently referring to the Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart, the Abteiberg Museum in Mönchengladbach, and the Museum für Kunsthandwerk in Frankfurt.

The notes indicate that in late October the first scheme of the Kunsthall had not yet been abandoned altogether, even if the variety of museums mentioned bespeak a fundamental reframing of the design. Apparently, the ‘dead’ open space under the exhibition area was considered as the main shortcoming

²⁶ On the website (<https://oma.eu/projects/kunsthall>, 3 June 2020), the firm’s fact sheet on the Kunsthall specifies: ‘Project Architect’, Koolhaas as ‘Partner in charge’, whereas all other collaborators are listed as ‘Team’. However, as will be shown, the archival material indicates that Hoshino, among Koolhaas’ collaborators, made the most significant and comprehensive contributions to the development of the design.

²⁷ Interview with the author on 25 July 2017. The interview is also the source of the subsequent biographical information.

²⁸ OMAR 1546.

Chapter 2.1

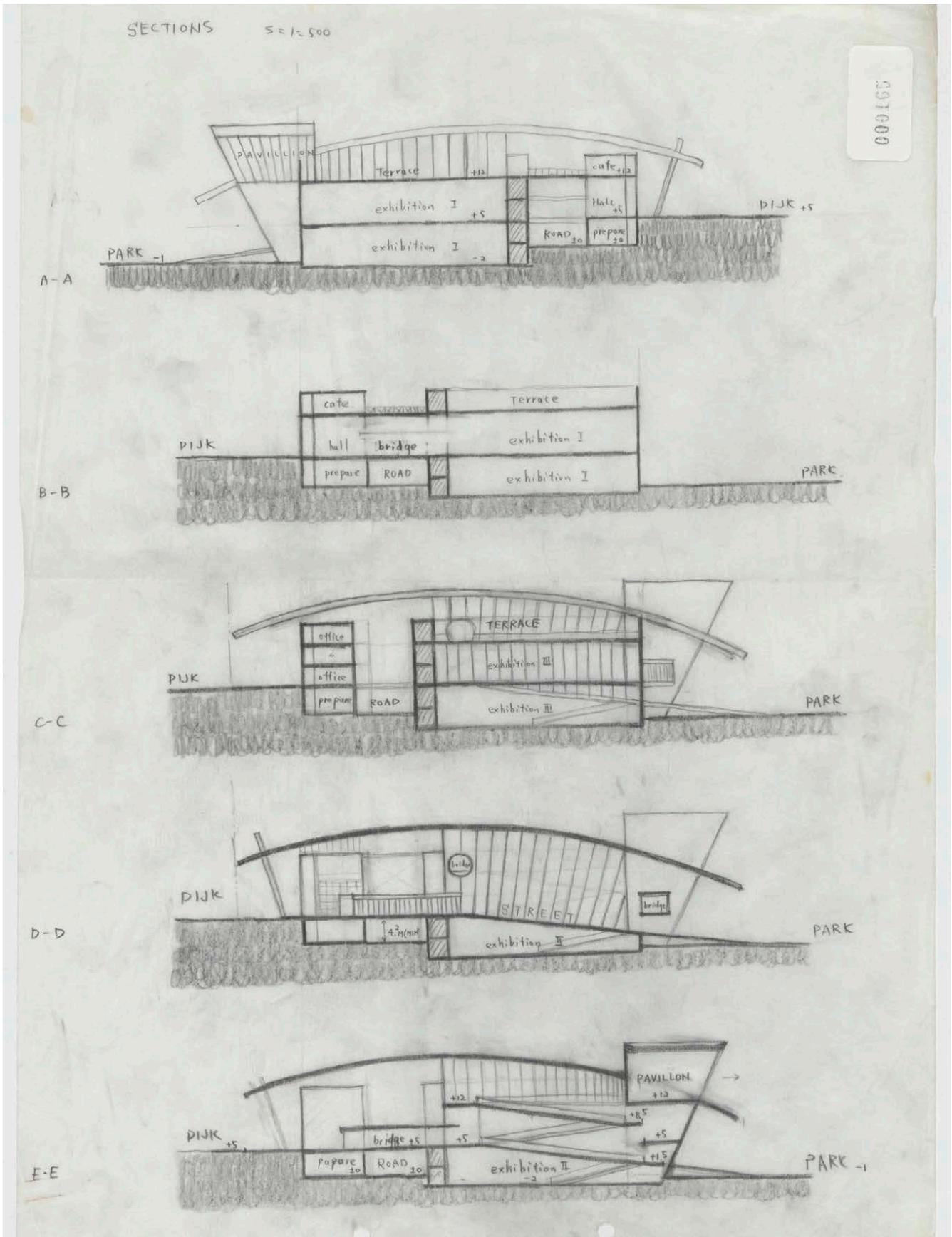


Figure 5. Kunsthall. Cross Sections. 4 November 1988.

of the existing project.²⁹ A model in scale 1 to 500 suggests that it had even been considered to fill this space with secondary functions while keeping the square main hall with the Robot in the centre.³⁰ Another issue discussed was the option to access the Kunsthal directly from the Museum Park.³¹ Although the Preliminary Design from 7 October did provide a ramp which allowed to access the building from the park, the narrow passage ascending to the level below the gallery space had all the characteristics of a rear entrance. Seemingly a detail, the subsequent decision to seek for a solution that would make the Kunsthal equally accessible from both sides – the park and the Maas Boulevard – would prove decisive for the further development of the design.

A page with notes by Hoshino, dated 28 October 1988, captures the prerequisites of what seems to be a start from zero:

SPACE for	exhibition 3000m2
- Brâncusi	sculpture
- motor show	
- performance ³²	

The subsequent notes read: ‘solid + transparent’, ‘solid box + pavilion or temple’, a ‘podium’, ‘socle or platform.’ A sketch added to Hoshino’s notes from 25 October shows two stacked oblong volumes with contrasting qualities: a solid at the bottom, and – rotated by 90 degrees – a cantilevered volume with transparent walls.³³ There is also an undated sketch of a similar configuration, presumably by

²⁹ To what extent the notes echo Hoshino’s own ideas or the key issues discussed at a meeting is not clear. As will be explicated later, Koolhaas expressed his dissatisfaction with the open space under the Kunsthal in a gathering of the Building Committee in December; see: OMAR 3251. Persisting concerns of his regarding this space would explain why none of the various attempts to design the area outside the building have been developed further. As for the six museums Hoshino mentioned, all of them, except of the Uffizi, were among the nineteen buildings selected for OMA’s presentation on 28 April. The name of Petra Blaisse at the bottom of the page – an arrow pointing to her first name – suggests that he met her in person, perhaps during the same meeting.

³⁰ A blue foam model, probably by Hoshino. OMAR, MAQV 502.04c.

³¹ In the interview with the author Hoshino recalls that, when Koolhaas first asked him to comment on the scheme, he suggested to add a proper entrance to the Kunsthal on the side facing the park.

³² A4 page with notes, partly in Japanese, dated 28 October 1988. OMAR 1538.

³³ OMAR 1546.

Koolhaas, the lower volume being identified as a ‘socle’ and the one on top as ‘HAL’. [Figure 1] Two photocopies of the original suggest that the sketch circulated among the team members, probably serving as a common point of departure.³⁴ An A4 page with sketches by Hoshino varies the composition of two binary volumes: 1) the transparent volume (‘open’) serving as bridge from the socle (‘solid’) to the dyke; 2) the entire building detached from the dyke with a minimal socle, lowering the transparent volume on top to an intermediate level between dyke and park; 3) the socle as an extension of the dyke with the transparent volume on top.³⁵ Each of the more or less cantilevered variants rests on a solid, minimizing the covered area below. Apart from that, these variants are still relatively close to the scheme from 7 October. From the sketches it is evident that – as in the latter case – the idea was to provide a single ‘Miesian’ exhibition space at the dyke level, sandwiched between two horizontal slabs, while transparent to the sides. The configuration of the two stacked volumes recalls Philip Johnson’s Wiley House in New Canaan (1952-53). Like in New Canaan, the terrain is sloped and the solid lower volume serves as a platform for the glazed box on top. Like the Wiley House, the Kunsthal is conceived – for now – as a pavilion.

Accumulating ideas

Hoshino seems to have worked on the two partite scheme for no more than three days. Already on 2 November – probably during a meeting with Koolhaas – Hoshino received revised instructions for the design.³⁶ [Figure 2] From Hoshino’s notes it is evident that the Kunsthal should be located ‘adjacent to [the] dyke’. A corollary sketch shows two levels of a square shaped plan. The level on top is divided by a ‘STREET (regular shape)’ – that is, a ramp connecting the park with the dyke –, while the level below is divided by a ‘ROAD (irregular shape)’ – that is, the curved road leading to the hospital along the foot of the dyke. Two arrows indicate two entrances: one from the park and one from the dyke, both located along the ramp. Hoshino’s notes specify ‘OPEN TO PUBLIC’, obviously referring to the two

³⁴ Photocopies: OMAR 1538, 1548.

³⁵ The page is undated, but that Hoshino used the same paper as for the above mentioned notes. It is included in the same folder which indicates that the sketch originates from this period. OMAR 1546.

³⁶ A single page headed ‘Meeting’, dated 2 November 1988 and partly written in Japanese. 28 October 1988 was a Friday. 2 November was a Tuesday. Translation: Nele Noppe. OMAR 1517.

Chapter 2.1

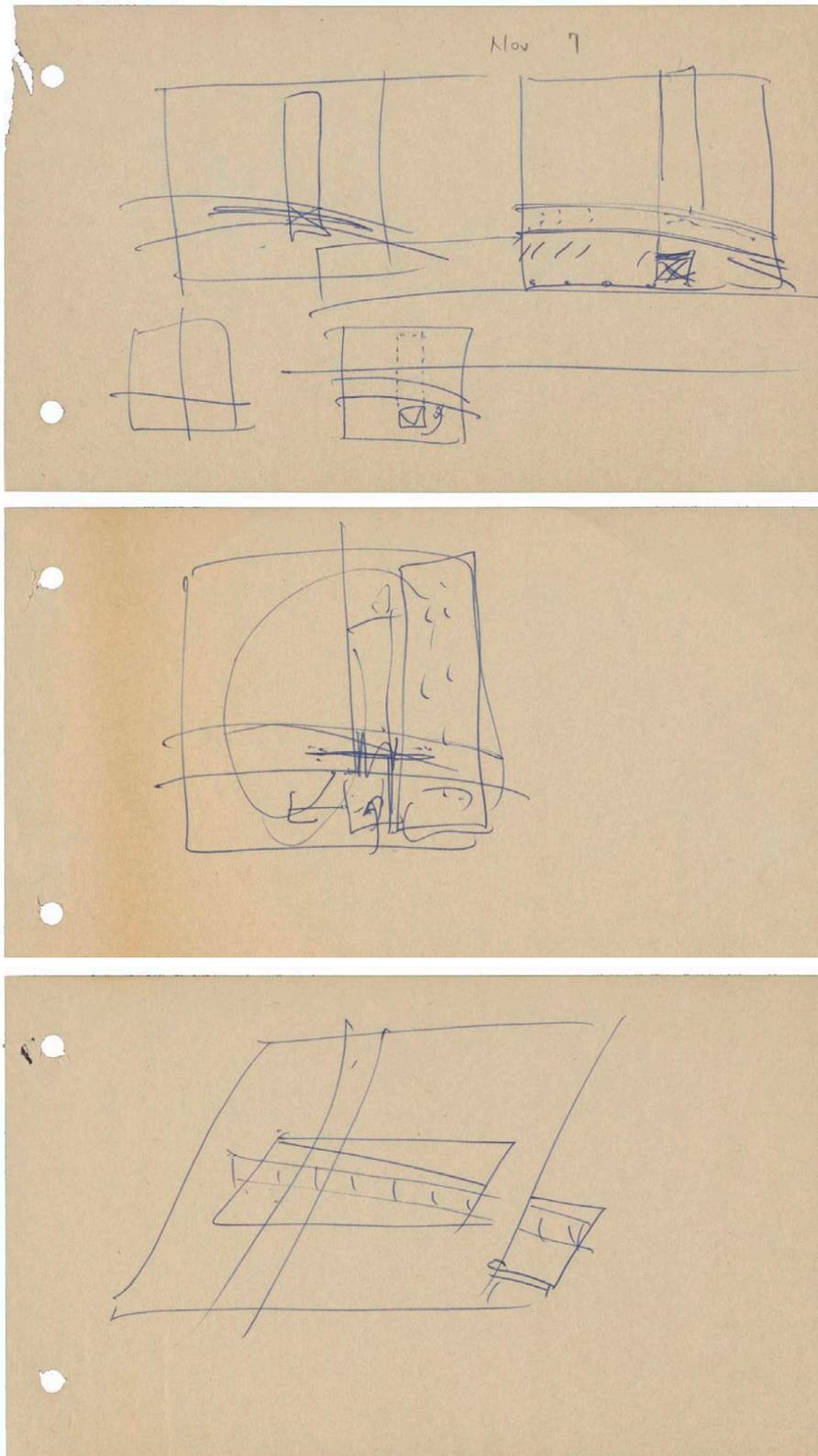


Figure 7. Kunsthal. Sketches of crossing routes, circulation and divided Ramp Street. Probably first half November 1988.

corridors intersecting the building. Since the passages cutting through the volume do not meet on one plane, the two main levels are divided in three parallel segments.³⁷ Hoshino's sketch shows it clearly: each consists of three strips, running north-south above and east-west below. The 'Street' was conceived as a ramp, later called Ramp Street (Hellingstraat), as to connect the park to the dyke. The two floor halves on the park level would connect under the ramp, the two floor halves on the dyke level above the ramp. The 'EXHIBITION SPACE' ought to extend over three levels, the roof being conceived as terrace with a pavilion on top.

After the meeting on 2 November, Hoshino produced at least eight different schemes within three or four weeks, judging from the number of surviving models and drawings – about two or three schemes per week.³⁸ [Figures 3-4] As it seems, for each version a blue foam model was being prepared, along with a set of cross sections and floorplans in scale 1 to 500. An A4 sheet with sections from 4 November faithfully incorporates the ideas recorded during the meeting: the Ramp Street connecting park and dyke, the Service Road below, two levels with exhibition spaces and the roof terrace with a café on top and discrete 'pavilion', cone-shaped like the bar of the Dance Theatre.³⁹ [Figures 5-6] For half of its length the Ramp Street runs parallel to a ramp which is part of the inner circulation, the passers-by outside being divided by a glass wall from the visitors inside the building. A series of additional ramps, directly attached to the slope, give access to the levels below and above, including the roof terrace. The entire vertical circulation is thus concentrated along the passage connecting dyke and park, conceived as an open space that cuts through all three levels of the building. An arched covering – a motif that recurs in several variations –, spanning the whole length of the incision, rises about 7 metres above the roof. As Roberto Gargiani has pointed out, the arch conveys the image of a bridge and seems to figure as a Venturian decoration on the 'shed' of the Kunsthall, to 'communicate' its position on the threshold

³⁷ As has been repeatedly observed, the tripartition of the plan recurs in OMA's work from that period. Examples are: the Dance Theatre and the City Hall in The Hague, the Villa Dall'Ava in Paris.

³⁸ For the models, see: OMAR MAQV 502.02-08. According to Fuminori Hoshino, the model of the final version, documented in the above photograph (Jacques, *Yves Brunier*, 46) of the Museum Park is lost. Interview with the author on 25 July 2017. For the drawings, see: OMAR 1546-1548, 1567, 1692.

³⁹ OMAR 1692.

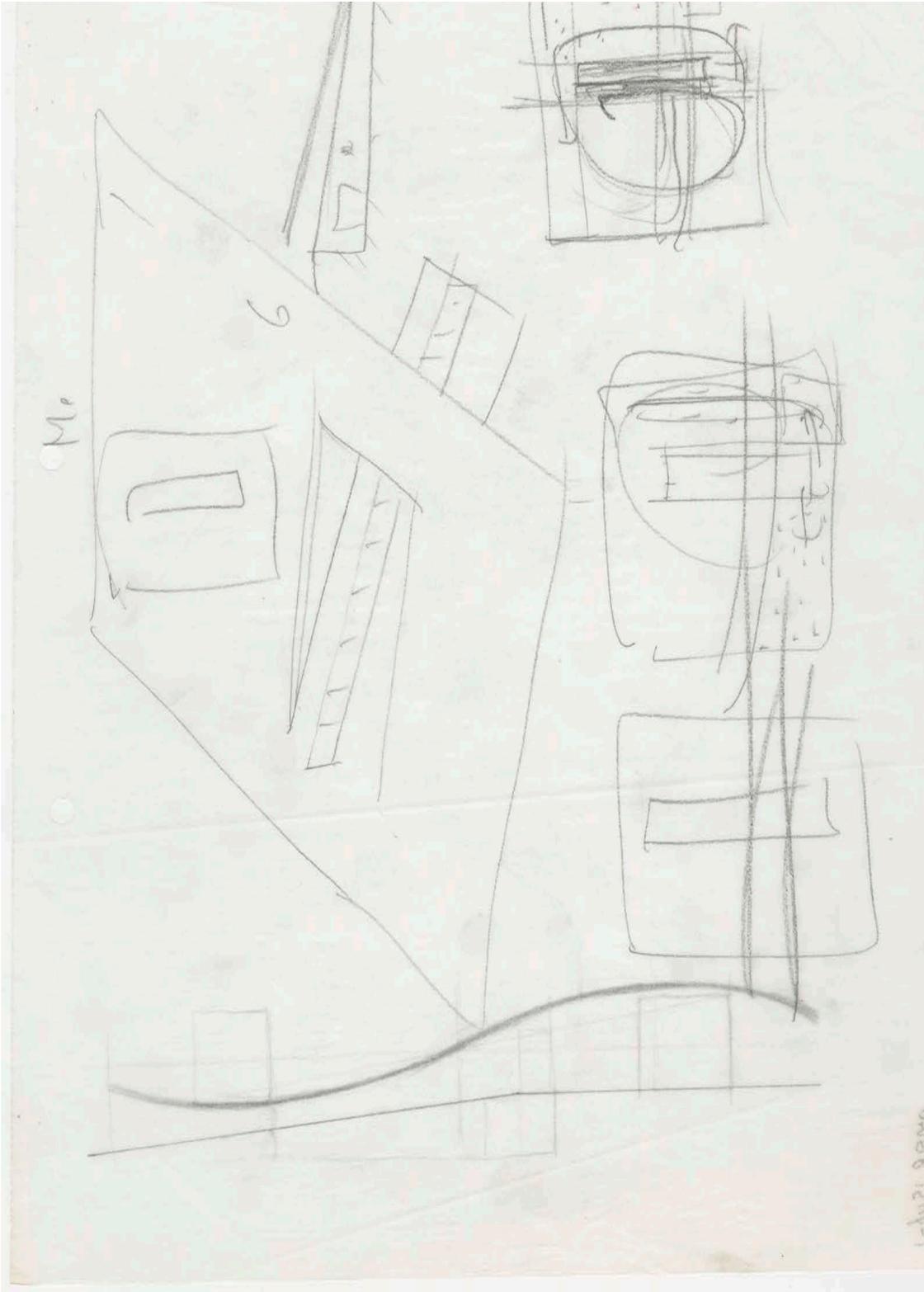


Figure 8. Kunsthall. Page from Koolhaas' sketch block.
Probably First half November 1988.

between dyke and park.⁴⁰ A set of sketched floorplans and a model corresponding to the above sections, show that the curved Service Road along the foot of the dyke cuts through all three levels of the building.⁴¹ Apparently, the Service Road was meant to be left uncovered like a veritable street. Given the factual division of the volume into four parts, the scheme was furnished with a series of bridges so as to ensure the horizontal circulation.

Both the plan and the model show clearly the cruciform arrangement of the two intersecting routes. The whole exhibition area was oriented towards the park. Two large exhibition halls occupied the broad section of the building to the west, two additional galleries the slender section to the east. The entrance hall and secondary functions, such as the café, service rooms, offices, and a bookshop, were located along the Maas Boulevard. Obviously these less sensitive spaces were considered more appropriate to be exposed to the highway. Concerning the distribution of uses and the circulation, the alternative schemes from that period are largely based on the same principles.⁴²

Some of these principles are also the subject of a few quick sketches, probably by Rem Koolhaas. All of them isolate a single issue, as if assorting a tool kit to resolve the scheme, or simply to recollect the ideas at hand, each captured more than once and with not much variation.⁴³ [Figures 7-8] Two sketches, dated 7 November, showing the Kunsthal crossed by the two intersecting routes, record the divide of the plan into what Koolhaas later would call ‘four separate squares’. Other sketches regard the horizontal circulation, bridging the Ramp Street at both of its ends, with the result that the ramp is confined to pass through an oblong opening *within* the floor on the dyke level. At times there are arrows and a loop, indicating an entrance along the highway and the circuit and around the ramp in the centre

⁴⁰ Gargiani 2018, ‘The Pliable Surface’, 655.

⁴¹ OMAR MAQV 502.02, 1692. On the photographs of the model provided by the archive the curved covering is missing.

⁴² With the exception, though, of two schemes from 10 and 11 November, in which the entrance hall and a number of secondary functions occupy the entire first floor of the eastern section of the building, while the main exhibition hall on the same floor extends to the south facade along the Maas Boulevard. OMAR 1692.

⁴³ OMAR 1538, 1546.

Chapter 2.1

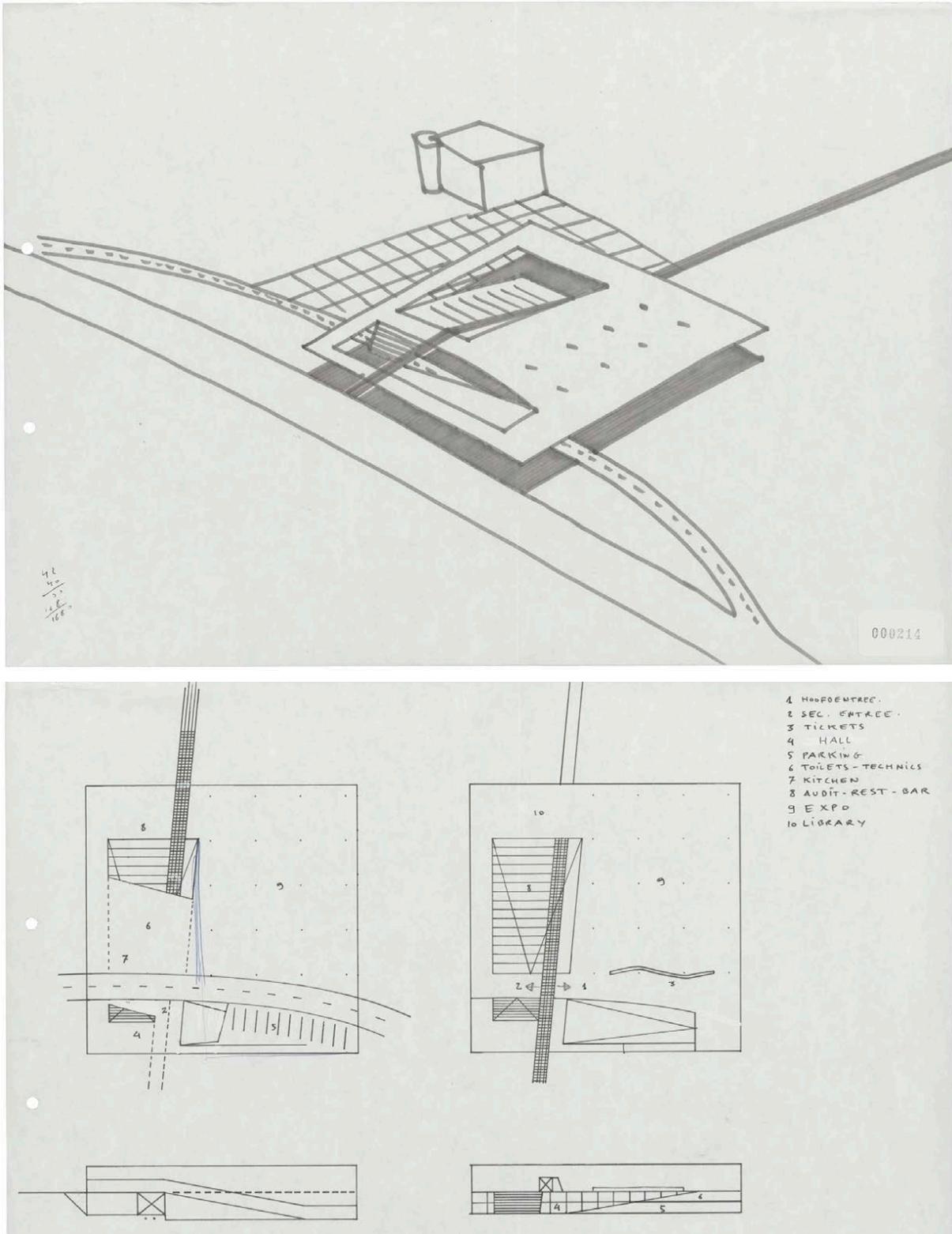


Figure 9. Kunsthall. Axonometric sketch and floorplans. Street Ramp after the switch. Probably second half November 1988.

of the floor slab. Further sketches regard the vertical circulation and show a glass wall dividing the Ramp Street in an interior and an exterior, public half, as provided by the scheme from 4 November.

After the fax: a very fluid whole

When Van Krimpen sent his additions to the Kunsthal's brief to OMA on 15 November, Koolhaas and his team had already been working for two weeks on the new scheme. With some probability, the additional requirements had a significant impact on the design of the Kunsthal – even if not always in the way intended by Van Krimpen –, prompting what in retrospect appears as the final spatial configuration of the project. Among the requirements and changes, such as the increase of the exhibition area from 3.000 to 4.000 square metres, the pronounced preference for top lit gallery spaces and closed walls, might have had a certain impact; but it was a seemingly marginal demand that is most likely to have induced a fundamental rearrangement of the scheme. Under the heading 'Catering' the requirements list: 'large café-restaurant at the square, possibly in the shape of an amphitheatre, to be used additionally as an auditorium or concert hall for major events, as well as for rental to other parties, open on the square as a summer cafe, etc.'⁴⁴ The 'square' Van Krimpen refers to is the area between the Kunsthal and the Natural History Museum, later called the Blue Plaza. According to Fuminori Hoshino, the scheme was mirrored along the north-east axis after working a few weeks on the Kunsthal.⁴⁵ The mirrored scheme was divided, once more, into three segments running north-south. The segments were proportioned 2 to 1 to 4, the large exhibition spaces (4) being located to the east, and the smaller galleries and secondary functions (2) to the west, apparently complying to Van Krimpen's wish to have a café-restaurant next to the Plaza between the Kunsthal and the Natural History Museum.

After the switch of the café-restaurant – henceforth called Restaurant – to the building's western section, an attempt was made to use a single sloped surface as a café, as an 'auditorium or concert hall' and a ramp. Several sketches – neither by Hoshino, nor Koolhaas, nor Gregor Mescherowsky – vary on this

⁴⁴ OMAR 1436.

⁴⁵ Interview with the author on 25 June 2017.

Chapter 2.1

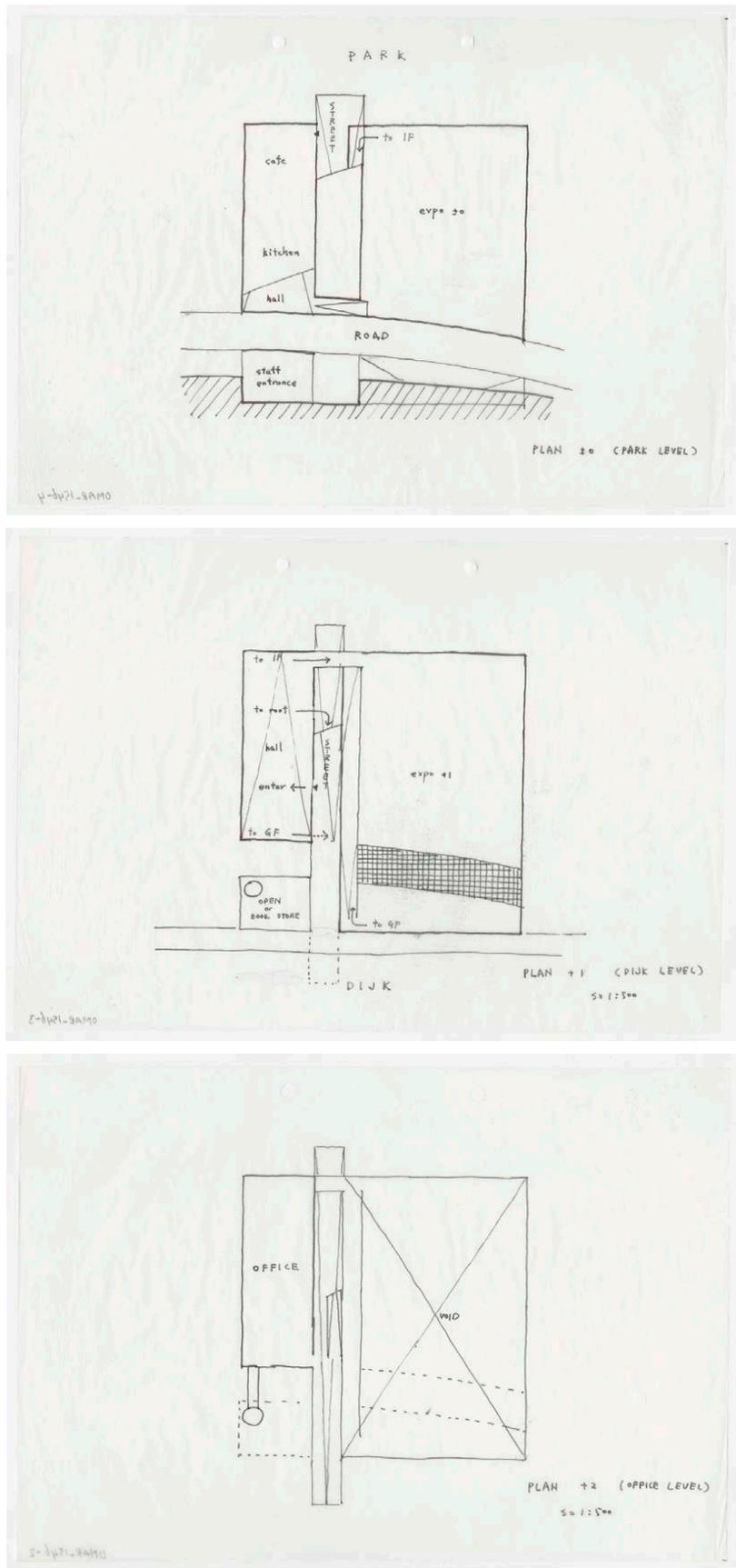


Figure 10. Kunsthall. Floorplans. Street Ramp after the switch. Probably second half November 1988.

idea.⁴⁶ [Figure 9] The sketches are undated, but in all of them the Ramp Street crosses the western half of the building, while the large exhibition halls are located to the east. In accordance with Van Krimpen's demand, the café occupies the north-west corner of the ground floor, facing the Plaza and the Natural History Museum, whereas the pavilion on the roof has been omitted. Some sketches show the Restaurant as a sloped auditorium with large steps to sit on. In all of them the auditorium is coplanar both with the Ramp Street and parts of the inner circulation. Visitors would enter the Kunsthal on the dyke level, proceed to the exhibition area on the same floor, then descend alongside the Ramp Street to the exhibition area on the park level. Depending on the version, a large additional ramp, a stair or both complement the vertical circulation. Obviously the aim was to de-centralize the circulation so as to create a fluid circuit without dead ends that encompasses all parts of the building. The idea appears to have been new, in the sense that the vertical circulation of the variants from the first half of November relies more or less exclusively on the ramps and stairs concentrated in the area of the Ramp Street. A series of axonometric sketches underlines the concept of spatial fluidity: the first floor, level with the dyke, is shown as a single square surface floating above the ground; the various ramps and stairs appear 'cut out' and 'bent' to the level below, emphasizing the unity of the floor. And yet, in spite of the additional ramps and stairs, the goal of a truly fluid circulation remained largely unaccomplished.

Perhaps in parallel, Hoshino integrated into his version of the scheme an auditorium with a tilted floor that descends in the opposite direction of the Ramp Street, towards the Service Road and the dyke.⁴⁷ [Figure 10] It was, literally, the cutting of the Gordian knot. On this basis, a scheme was being worked out in which the tilted floor of an auditorium, the interior part of the Ramp Street and the two main exhibition spaces (later called Halls 1 and 2) add up to a continuous loop-like sequence, traversing the central public passage twice, once above the slope, once below the slope – as envisaged from the beginning. The principle of circulation was singled out in a separate sketch, showing that visitors move

⁴⁶ OMAR 1549, 4139. The dissimilarity to Hoshino's sketches is obvious. Gregor Mescherowsky (project architect of Kunsthal I) denied the authorship of the sketches in an email to the author from 22 October 2018.

⁴⁷ OMAR 1546.

Chapter 2.1

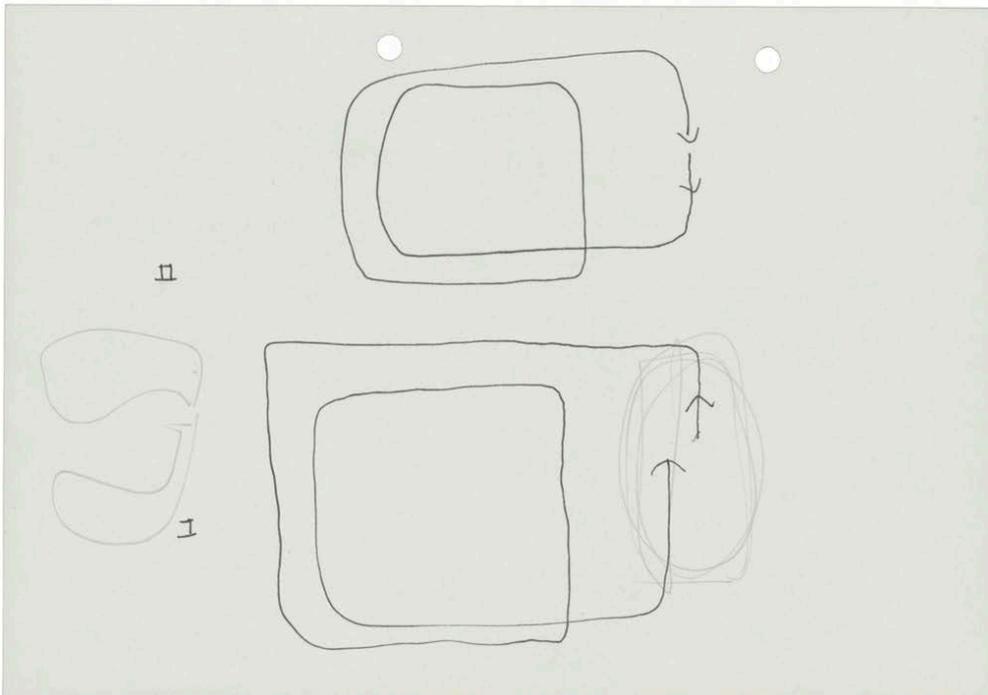
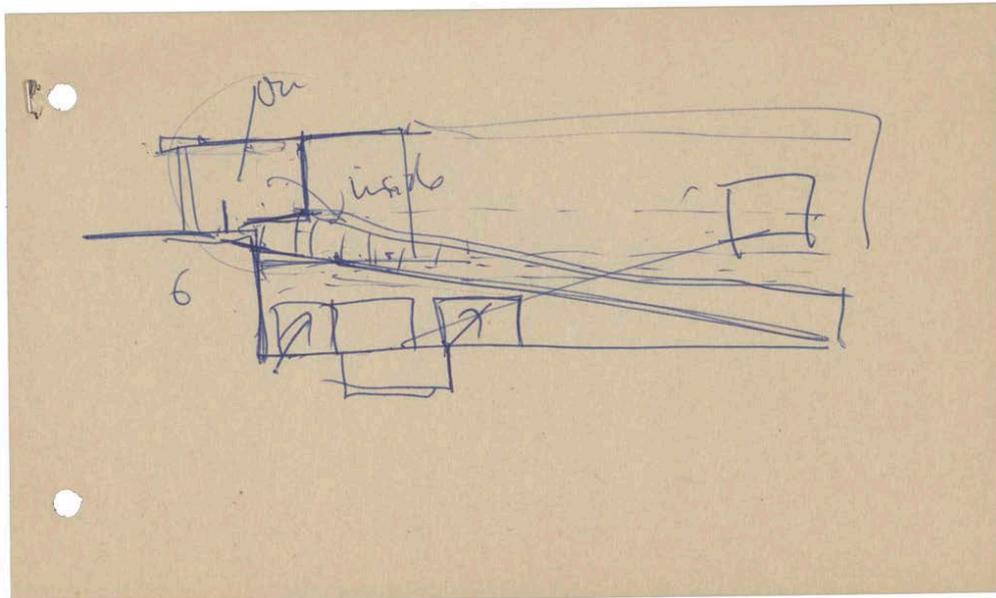


Figure 11. Kunsthal. Above: Sketch of crossing ramps. Below: Sketch of circuit. Probably second half November 1988.

twice full circle before reaching the point of departure, the itinerary working both ways.⁴⁸ [Figure 11] Already in the earliest versions of the new scheme, the building was to be entered from the point where the two crossing slopes meet.⁴⁹ The reason for this choice is obvious: the point of intersection is the only option to access the sloped entrance hall from the Ramp Street, that is, the public passage between park and dyke, where all the entrances were meant to be concentrated, underlining the urban, street-like character of this space.

At the same time, the two crossing ramps implied a significant shift with regard to the *character* of the circulation. Instead of confining all vertical movement to the scheme's central segment, in analogy to a stairwell, an entire floor of the building's eastern section, too, became an integral part of the circuit. The distinction between vertical and horizontal circulation eventually had become more fluid – one year later Koolhaas would describe the Kunsthal as 'a very fluid whole' –⁵⁰ and the same applies to the distinction of uses, the slope along the western facade being three things at once: an entrance hall, an auditorium, and a ramp to access the adjacent spaces.

While the position of the entrance was well defined, there was still some uncertainty how to end the circuit. If the double loop of the Auditorium and the two main exhibition halls truly ought to be a closed system in itself, the roof terrace and any other space on a superior level were excluded. In an early version – comprising sketched floorplans and sections along with a model, all in scale 1 to 500 – the covering of the Ramp Street is used as a ramp, running parallel to the slope of the former and protruding at both ends like the arched variants before.⁵¹ [Figure 12] Half way, the covering ramp gives access to the level above the Auditorium, then conceived of as office space, while a minor ramp, placed in the middle, leads to the northern edge of the roof terrace. [Figure 10] In another version, a minor ramp starts from the back of the Auditorium and leads to the level above, now envisaged for exhibitions, and

⁴⁸ OMAR 1538. The sketch is undated. The same folder contains several sketches and drawings from November and December 1988. See also: OMAR 1546.

⁴⁹ OMAR 1546, 1548, 1567.

⁵⁰ De Kooning (1989), 'OMA in Nederland', n.p. (author trans.).

⁵¹ OMAR MAQV 502.03, 1546.

Chapter 2.1

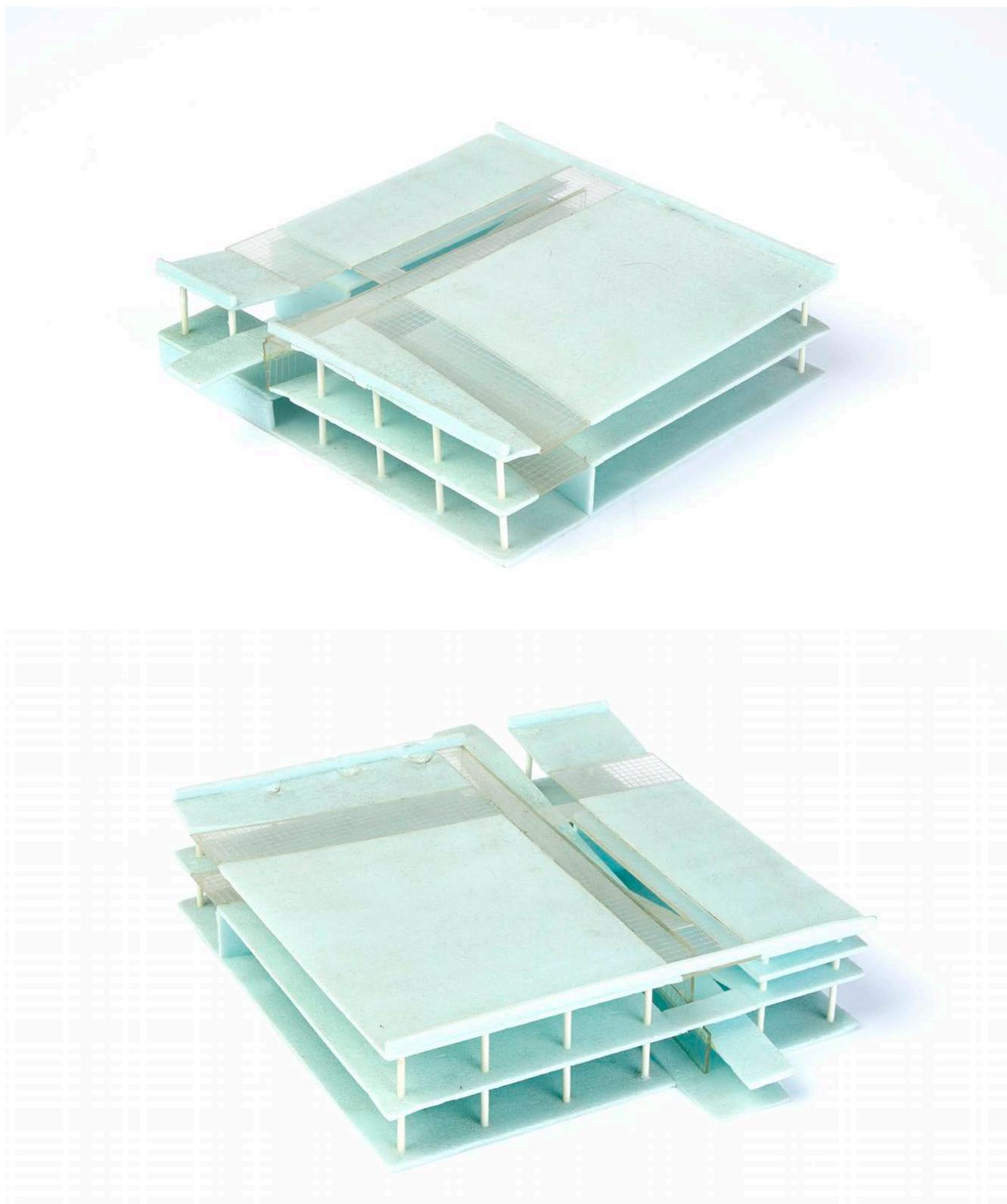


Figure 12. Kunsthalle. Model. Scale 1 to 500. Probably after 15 November 1988.

then continues to the roof terrace.⁵² [Figure 13] The covering of the Ramp Street, level with the roof terrace and protruding toward the Maas Boulevard, is pierced by a series of square openings supplying the space below with daylight.

Several undated sketches announce a different solution: a rotation of the Ramp Street's covering that would override the strict tripartition of the scheme.⁵³ [Figure 14] Similar to previous versions, the sloped and rotated covering was conceived as a ramp which gives access to an additional exhibition space (Hall 3) above the Auditorium and then continues to the roof. To the north, the ramp, later called Skew Ramp,⁵⁴ penetrates the Auditorium and the Restaurant below, while it cuts into the roof on top of the two large exhibition halls to the south. The ends of the Skew Ramp, or covering, no longer protrude from the 60-by-60 metres square, which would have been irreconcilable with the fluidity of the circulation. All the more, the formal integrity of the volume is being preserved. Obviously the rotation was to supply the Ramp Street below with daylight by dint of the two resulting triangular openings. As a continuation of the Auditorium, however, the Skew Ramp, eventually rotated by 15 degrees, draws on OMA's design for the NAI: The slope of the Auditorium at the latter deviates by 12 degrees from the ramps that otherwise align with the orthogonal geometry of the Podium. As Hoshino recalls, in both cases the rotation was to make the subsequent ramp more visible from below: Through the rotation its side would be more exposed to, and noticed by, the ascending visitor's gaze.⁵⁵ Another consequence of rotating and 'truncating' the Ramp Street's covering was of a formal nature: Apart from re-establishing the volumetric integrity of the cube, the otherwise conflictual overriding of the scheme's tripartition binds the building's three segments together, fastening each in its position like a turned key in a lock.

⁵² OMAR 1548.

⁵³ OMAR 1538, 1545, 1548.

⁵⁴ The name would be used for the drawings by Ove Arup.

⁵⁵ Interview with the author on 25 July 2017.

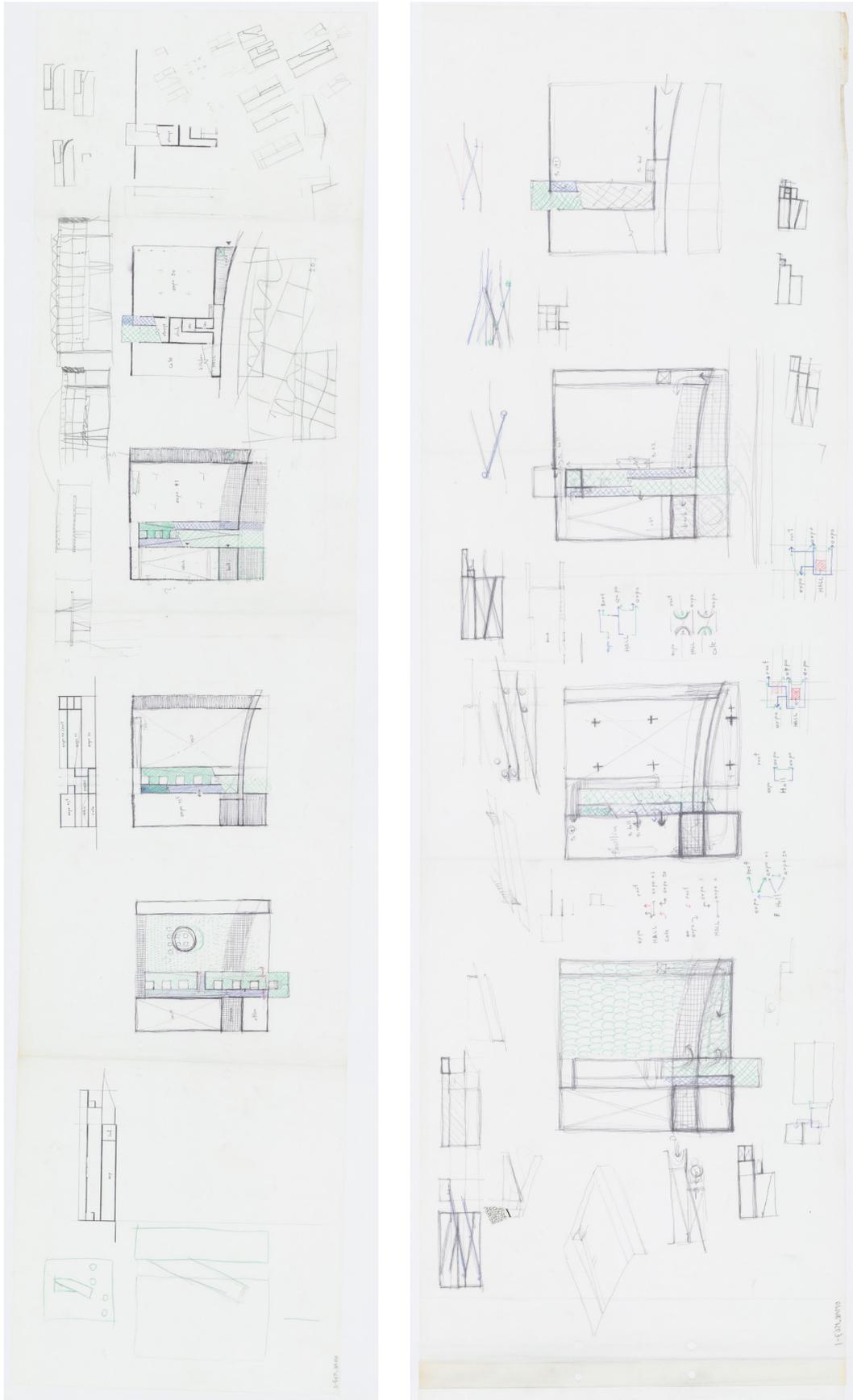


Figure 13. Kunsthalle. Floorplans and cross sections.
Probably after 15 November 1988.

The new Kunsthal

On 2 December, Hoshino sent a fax to Ove Arup London asking Cecil Balmond to pass the message on to Rem Koolhaas who Balmond was supposed to meet a couple of days later.⁵⁶ The subsequent seven pages, containing floorplans, elevations, sections next to an axonometric of the exterior walls, appear to be the first complete version of the Kunsthal's final design. [Figures 15-18] This holds true not only for the itinerary of the main circuit, but, by and large, also for the use and organization of the remaining spaces and the major dimensions of the building: The perimeter measures, again, 60 by 60 metres. The three segments of the plan – from west to east – 17, 9, and 34 metres, roughly correspond to the proportion of 2 to 1 to 4. The facades raise 13.50 metres from the park level, the storey-height of the two main exhibition halls to the east (Halls 1 and 2) – is 6.50 metres. The floor of Hall 1 is elevated half a metre above the park, the floor of Hall 2 one metre above the top of the dyke. Along the eastern façade an oblong opening in the ceiling, called 'void', connects Halls 1 and 2.⁵⁷ The Ramp Street ascends from the park to the level of Hall 2, and then descends to the sidewalk of the Maas Boulevard. To the west, Hall 3 on top of the Auditorium is provided for exhibitions. Like the roof terrace, Hall 3 constitutes a loose end attached to the loop of the main circuit. In this version of the scheme the floor of Hall 3 is diagonally cut off along the Skew Ramp that leads to its entrance, linking the exhibition space visually with the Auditorium below. The Skew Ramp, which continues from Hall 3 to the roof, is bisected by a glass wall, echoing the transparent division of the Ramp Street connecting the park to the dyke.⁵⁸ Of the two triangular openings next to the Skew Ramp the one to the south is smaller and left uncovered, whereas a glass roof protects the larger one to the north. This glazed triangular covering spans across both sides of the glass wall that divide the Ramp Street, underlining the principle unity of the ramp. The space to the south between Hall 2 and the Maas Boulevard is left almost unbuilt: only the floor and the roof extend to the perimeter of the building. The edge of the roof is supported by a

⁵⁶ OMAR 1555.

⁵⁷ In later versions the opening is denoted as '*vide*'. Despite the persistent use of the French term, there is no conceptual relation to the 'system of voids' of OMA's masterplan for Melun-Sénart (1987). Neither does the *vide* connecting Halls 1 and 2 possess a function or formal autonomy comparable to the cut-out spaces of OMA's competition entry for the National Library in Paris (1989). The term appears as a reference to the two-storey spaces of Le Corbusier, usually denoted by the same term.

⁵⁸ A sketch by Koolhaas, probably originating from a later date, captures this principle. The sketch shows the upper landing of the Auditorium and the beginning of the ramp, its two sides annotated 'extern', 'intern'. OMAR 1538.

Chapter 2.1

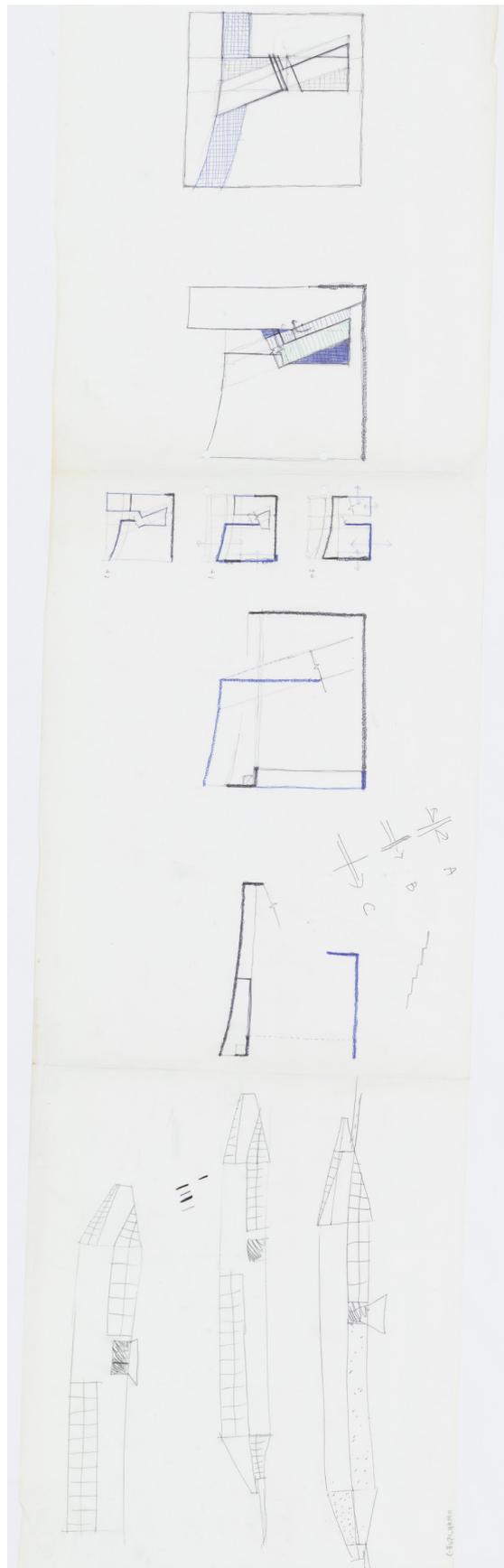


Figure 14. Kunsthalle. Floorplans and cross sections.
Probably after 15 November 1988.

row of columns, the bays of which gradually increase from east to west. Given its position at the south-front of the building as a kind of prelude to the entrance, the open space is endowed with the essential ingredients of a portico. All the remaining areas of the building are filled with secondary functions. At the south west corner – level with the upper landing of the Ramp Street and the terrace – a bookshop is located, sandwiched between the offices on top and the staff entrance along the Service Road. The Restaurant and a kitchen occupy the space under the Auditorium. The toilets and the cloakroom fill the gap under the Ramp Street, while loading facilities border the Service Road to the east.

Up to this moment, Hoshino had developed the scheme in close collaboration with Koolhaas. It is unclear to what extent others at OMA had been working on the project in parallel.⁵⁹ Hoshino remembers the scheme from 2 December as a distinct breakthrough which might have earned him his position as the Kunsthall's project architect: 'So after three weeks, somehow, I hit the jackpot. Looking back, I think that must have given me the project.'⁶⁰ Two weeks later, the cover-note of a fax to Cecil Balmond rings self-confidence if not pride: 'Hello. These are the sketches for a new Kunsthall. Now we are developing from these ones.'⁶¹

In fact, the scheme of 2 December marks a fissure. From then on, changes became subtle in comparison to the profound, incessant metamorphosis of the project during the precedent weeks. Evidently, the search for the new scheme, in terms of its principle spatial configuration, came to a halt. As has been shown, the scheme fuses a multitude of ideas, which appeared not at once, but in several phases and ever changing constellations. Some of the initial ideas were discarded, such as the café and the pavilion on the roof terrace and the arched covering of the Ramp Street as the dominant feature of the exterior; others were kept, such as the two crossing routes, the glass wall dividing the ramp. Most ideas, however, had been added later – judging from the nexus of (partly) dated drawings and notes, and the requirements defined by Van Krimpen, not before the second half of November. That holds true for the

⁵⁹ As mentioned, the authorship of some variants is uncertain, e.g. OMAR 4139, 1549.

⁶⁰ Interview with the author on 25 July 2017.

⁶¹ Fax from 12 December 1988. OMAR 1538.

Chapter 2.1

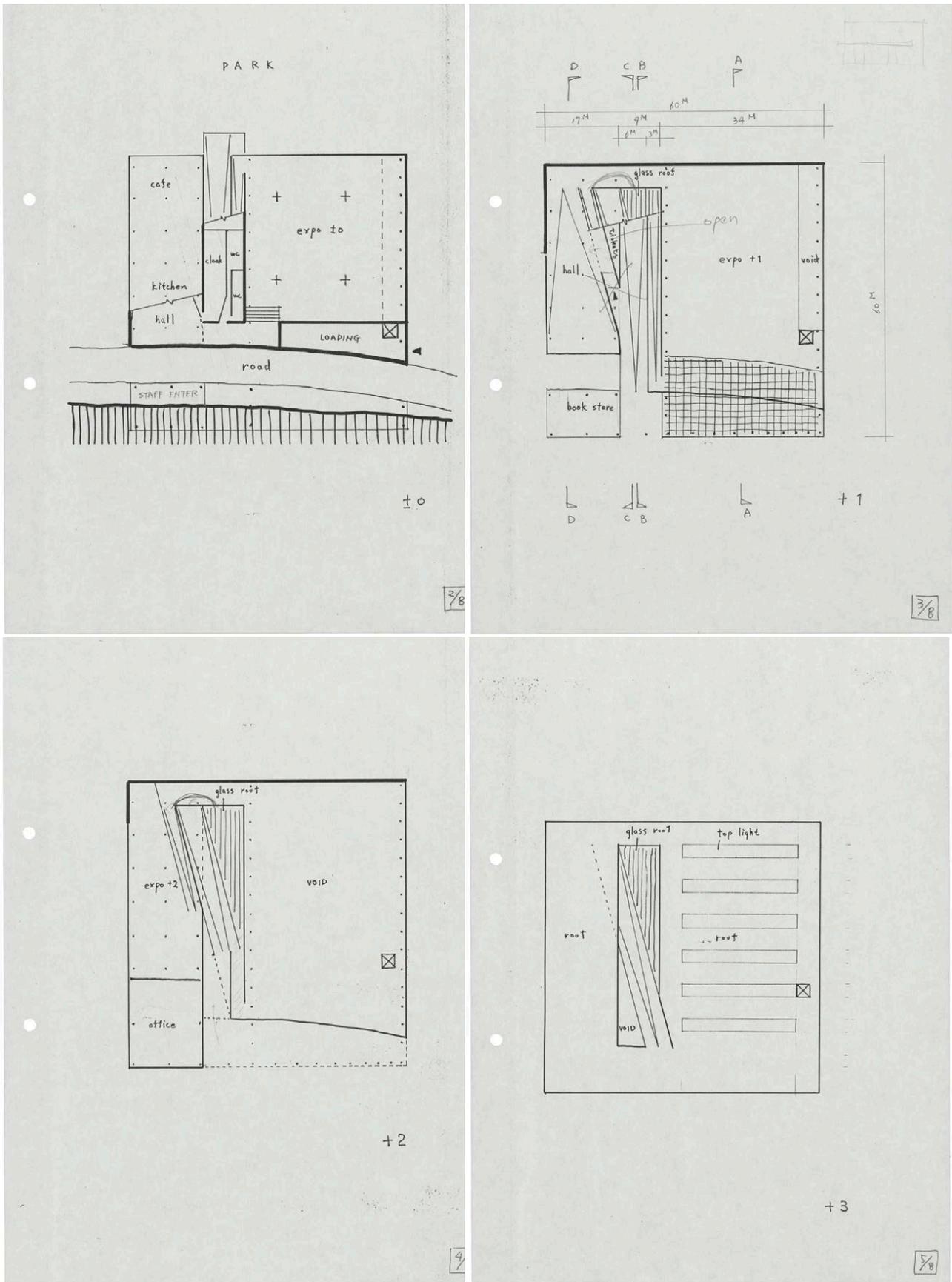


Figure 15. Kunsthalle. Floorplans.
Fax from 2 December 1988.

sloped Auditorium and its simultaneous use as an entrance hall and ramp; the reversal of its slope with regard to the Ramp Street; the Skew Ramp; and the circulation approximating a twisted loop on two different levels, at first, then a spiral.

A spiral in four separate squares

It is clear that the account in *S,M,L,XL* of the design's inception is an extremely conflated version of the actual events:

We would keep the same square [that is, the footprint of the first scheme with the Robot] as a general envelope.

The square would be crossed by two routes: one, the existing road running east-west; the other a public ramp running north-south, the entrance to both the park and the Kunsthal.

These crossings would divide the square into four parts.

The question then became:

*How to imagine a spiral in four separate squares?*⁶²

What Koolhaas retrospectively calls 'the question' was a construct in itself. The 'spiral in four different squares' is a distillation of multiple discrete ideas that were forced into the monolithic constellation of a paradox: to shift the building as close as possible to the dyke, half of it being crossed by the Service Road; to connect park and dyke through a sloped public passage at the centre of the building; to conceive of the circuit as a single, spiralling unity.⁶³ Koolhaas has a reputation for making the inner contradictions of the briefs and conditions he is confronted with thematic: for instance, the overload of programmatic requests through an image of density and fragmentation at La Villette; an extremely low budget through an exterior wall and main entrance 'borrowed' from the adjacent building at the Dance Theatre; intricate

⁶² Rem Koolhaas, 'Life in the Box?', in: Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 431.

⁶³ It is difficult to tell at what point the idea came up to regard the building as divided into four separate squares. Koolhaas might have entertained the idea from the beginning. It is 'latent' in many of the models and sketches from November, but hardly ever explicit. Hoshino's 'brief' from 2 November rather suggests a division into three strips.

Chapter 2.1

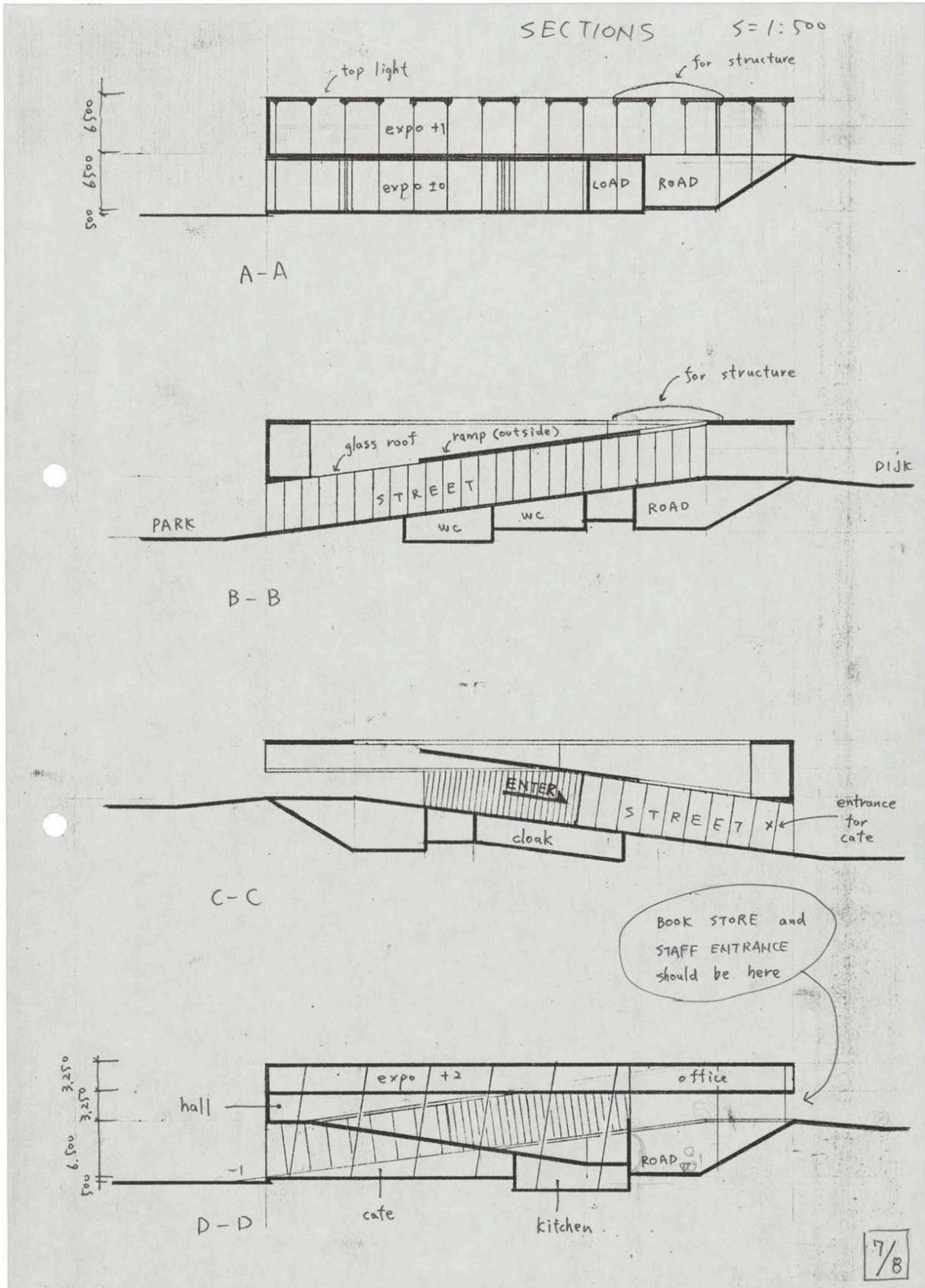


Figure 16. Kunsthall. Cross sections.
Fax from 2 December 1988.

planning regulations through volumetric complexity at the Villa Dall’Ava.⁶⁴ But at the Kunsthal, it seems, the predicament of combined division and continuity was an essentially self-imposed difficulty and ambition.

Some of the later reviews mention that Koolhaas explained the double divide as ‘necessitated [...] by the planning regulations’.⁶⁵ But that appears to be a rather free interpretation of the regulatory givens that legitimate the building’s complexity. The Department for Urban Development described the ‘urban planning prerequisites’ for the Kunsthal in two separate documents, probably both from the first half of 1988.⁶⁶ A paper entitled ‘Prerequisites Kunsthal’ defines the Inner City Plan from 1985 and the more detailed ‘Nota Museum Park 1987’ – probably the department’s updated own study for the park from December 1987 – as the basis for the Kunsthal in terms of urban planning. The subsequent list of regulations stipulates, among other things, a minimal distance of 23 metres to be kept between the building and the watershed of the dyke.⁶⁷ Another paper, ‘Urban prerequisites’, explains that ‘The Kunsthal is located along Westzeedijk so as to lend the route along the dyke a more urban character.’ The new Kunsthal touches the 23-metres line with its south-east corner in principle accordance with this idea. But none of the above regulations would specify with precision how close the building was expected to approach this line. The first project (Kunsthal I) suggests that there was a considerable leeway with regard to this question. The distance between the square main volume and the watershed

⁶⁴ That the complex volume was, at least in part, a response to the building regulations was mentioned by the client and current occupant, Dominique Boudet, during a conversation with the author on 31 July 2016. Koolhaas in 1986 explained: ‘There was a zoning envelope that gave the site the shape of a pyramidal pretzel, which really was one of the difficulties of the project. [...] Anyway, it was a relatively complex area to fit the building into, in combination with the zoning requirements, until I discovered that the one shape that could give a coherent form was not the shape of the house, but the shape of the void that was left by the house.’ *The Chicago Tapes. Transcript of the conference at the University of Illinois at Chicago. November 7 and 8, 1986* (New York: Rizzoli, 1987), 165.

⁶⁵ Lootsma, De Graaf, ‘In Service of the Experience’, 284. First published under the title ‘In dienst van de ervaring’ in 1993. Emmanuel Doutriaux in his review of the Kunsthal quotes Koolhaas explaining that the division was entailed by ‘urban necessities’ (‘nécessités urbaines’). Idem, ‘Le Kunsthal de Rotterdam’, *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui*, 285 (1993), 7.

⁶⁶ ‘Randvoorwaarden Kunsthal’, dated 16 March 1988, and ‘Stedebouwkundige randvoorwaarden’. The latter document is undated, but it is likely to be from a later moment in the same year, as it refers to the document from 16 March 1988. It is signed ‘SO/Dcentrum Ha.’ – SO (or SOR) being the commonly used acronym for ‘Stadsontwikkeling Rotterdam’, the city’s Department for Urban Development. The letters ‘Ha’ indicate Koos Hage as the author of the document. OMAR 4509. Attached to it is a cross section that illustrates the relation of dyke and building.

⁶⁷ The paper was presented by Hage during the Building Committee’s meeting on March 17, 1988.

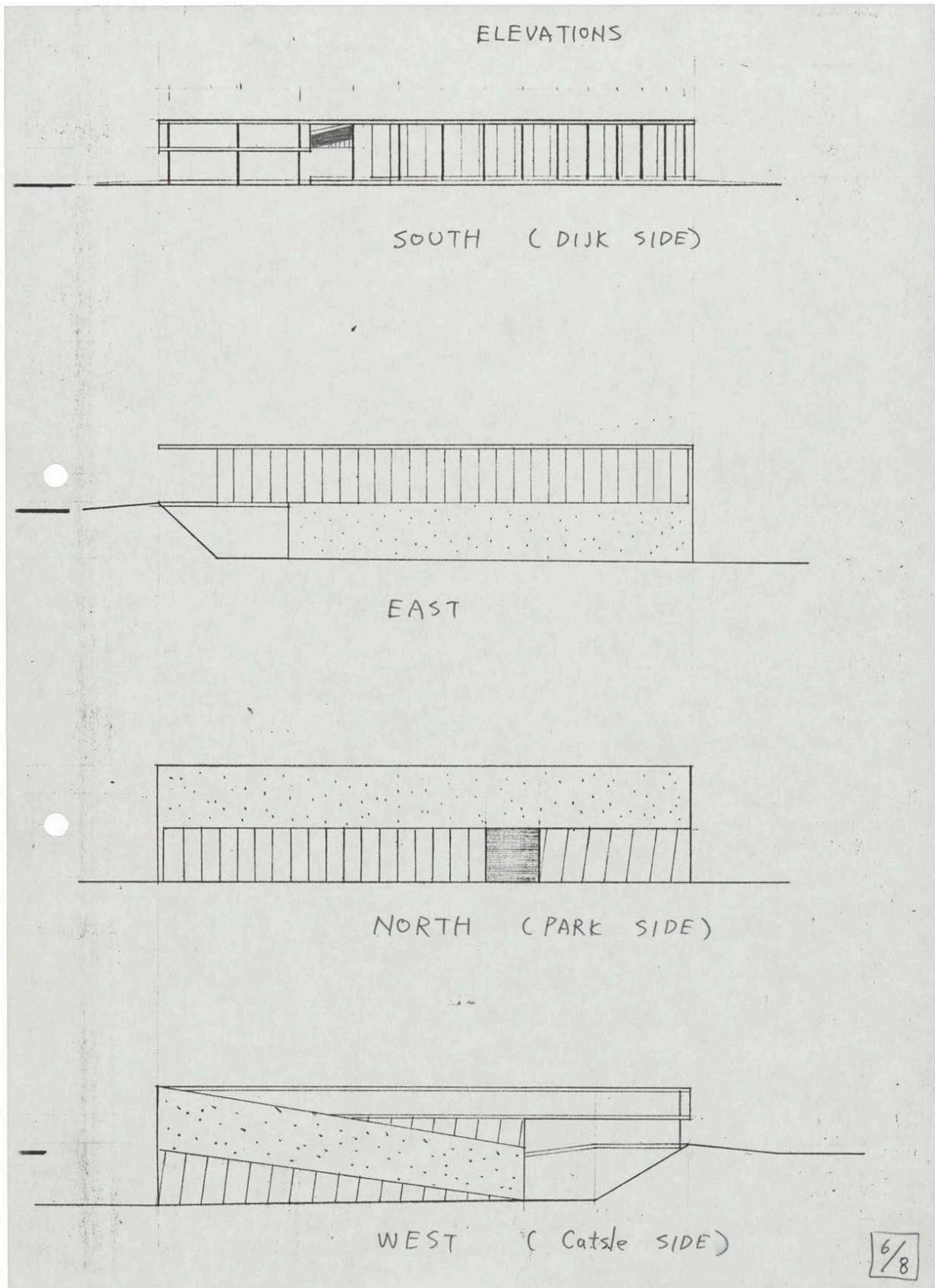


Figure 17. Kunsthall. Elevations. Scale 1 to 500.
Fax from 2 December 1988.

amounted to some 30 metres, the space beyond the 23-metres line being occupied by the low, oblong building incorporated into the dyke. It would have been literally invisible from the Maas Boulevard.⁶⁸

To create a public passage that would connect park and dyke at the centre of the building was obviously the idea of the architects. There is no indication that the urban prerequisites did require such a connection.⁶⁹ Neither does the first project for the Kunsthal provide one. The stairs ascending to the dyke are located west from Kunsthal vis-à-vis the Villa Dijkzigt.⁷⁰ The regulations of the Department for Urban Development *did* require that the main promenade of the park (called ‘axis of development’) would be visible from the Maas Boulevard, as explicated in Part I. To this purpose, the entire building ought to be raised 4 metres above the level of the dyke – an idea that was presented to the Building Committee in March 1988 and apparently abandoned once and for all after OMA’s presentation of the first draft for the project one month later.⁷¹ There is no mention in the minutes, however, of the municipality asking for a public passage connecting the promenade to the dyke under an elevated Kunsthal, or through it.

Note on the issue of authorship

Koolhaas has repeatedly argued that the question of authorship was pointless regarding the work of OMA, given that each project fuses a variety of ideas which may stem from anybody involved in the development of the design. In an interview from 2004, the Kunsthal serves as a paradigmatic example:

The moment in the design of the Kunsthal at which two slopes start to intersect, came after an endless struggle. Imagine that another collaborator of the office has brought the design to the

⁶⁸ That is evident, for instance, from the site plans from 7 October and 14 December 1988. OMAR 1570, 1606.

⁶⁹ Asked by the author how much freedom OMA had with regard to the ideas outlined by the Department for Urban Development for the Museum Park and the Kunsthal, Koos Hage answered: ‘Very free.’ Interview with the author on 28 July 2020.

⁷⁰ See site plans from 7 September and 7 October. OMAR 1744.

⁷¹ See minutes Building Committee 17 March 1988. There is no further mention in the minutes of the idea. The episode indicates that the Department for Urban Development showed some flexibility with regard to its requirements regarding the Dijkzigt area. After all, the department’s study for Museum Park from 1987 was a project of urban planning, not a regular building code.

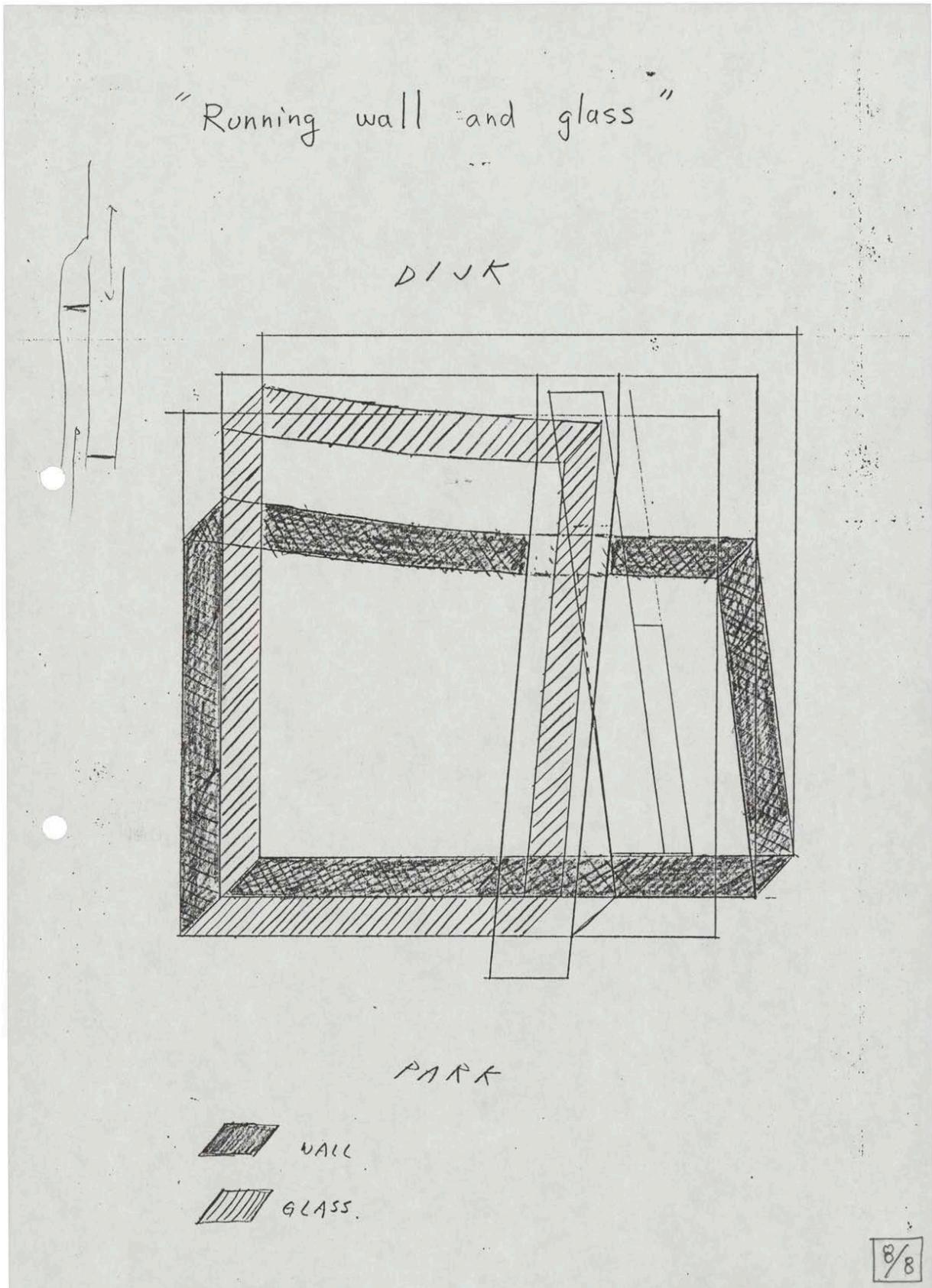


Figure 18. Kunsthal. Axonometric sketch.
Fax from 2 December 1988.

point that enables me to put a step forward: I will never claim that it was me who came up with this particular step.⁷²

But Koolhaas' argument reduces the notion of authorship to the accumulative, indeed collective process of contributing ideas to choose from. The concept of creativity that seems to underlie Koolhaas' persistent rejection of individual authorship – apparently rooted in the art movements of the sixties and endowed with egalitarian overtones – eclipses the other, no less significant components of the design work: to decide; to define the tasks and topics to start from; to judge whether an idea is successful or not; whether an idea fits or does not. For the Kunsthal, it appears that this role was reserved for Koolhaas alone, and that the actual steering of the design process needs to be accredited to him.⁷³ This is indicated by the account of former team members along with numerous drawings and faxes marked with 'ok Rem' or 'Rem's no'.⁷⁴

Note on the issue of concept vs. composition and form

It goes without saying that the schemes of Kunsthal I and II, at this stage, have little in common, their square perimeter aside. But also the methods employed to design them differ significantly. It is true, the sketches, and drawings documenting the design process of the first project are scarce, especially if compared to the second project. However, this much seems clear: a specific building type (the expo pavilion), a specific building (Schwanzer's pavilion from 1958), and a technical feature (the movable platform à la Radio City Music Hall) served as a model for the design from an early stage on. The design of the second project was not developed from a specific model or building type but from a series

⁷² Camiel van Winkel, Bart Verschaffel, "Ik ben verbluft over de rechten die het artistieke zich aanmeet." Vraaggesprek met Rem Koolhaas', *de Witte Raaf*, (May-Jun 2004), 5.

⁷³ In an article from 1997/8 Oswald and Hollwich describe this instant as a general rule at OMA, even if the accent is put on the openness of the discussion that precedes Koolhaas' decision: 'Settling a solution, or to put it more precisely, filtering out a solution from the pool of ideas, takes place very late; the alternatives are developed in parallel over a longer period. ... Rem himself takes the decision, very often asking other people their opinion, sometimes initiating debates. In this process, apprentices and visitors just as much as the project leaders are drawn in.' Philipp Oswald, Matthias Hollwich, 'OMA at work', *Archis* 5 (1997/8), 21. The authors describe the situation of the second half of the nineties, when they both worked at OMA.

⁷⁴ A description of the office's structure by Colenbrander and Bosman from 1995 points to a similar direction: 'OMA operates according to a flat organizational model, with a single orchestrator (Koolhaas) and no middle echelons.' Bernard Colenbrander, Jos Bosman (eds.), *Reference: OMA. The sublime start of an architectural generation* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 1995), 15.

of loosely connected ideas (a square footprint, two crossing routes, a divided ramp, a continuous circuit on multiple levels, a pavilion on the roof) and an expanding set of principles (ramps rather than stairs, no dead ends, maximal transparency within the building, no interior volumes). Ever new combinations of these ideas and principles found their expression in a constant and at times surprising metamorphosis of the design, as is evident from the surviving working models and sketches. The final configuration, it seems, was and was meant to be uncertain.

The genesis of the scheme from December 1988 accords with the principle of ‘non-composition’ based on a conceptual approach to architecture as described by Jacques Lucan.⁷⁵ The prismatic volume of the building aside, the results were not composed as an assembly of forms, but ‘generated’ through a design process based on ‘rules’, bypassing considerations of form as much as references to architectural precedents. If programme was to replace form, concept was to turn form in an unpredictable and heteronomous *fait accompli*. Not unlike the *cadavre exquis*, or the primacy of programme at La Villette, the conceptual approach of the Kunsthal’s second project became a motor of formal invention. Throughout the planning process, Koolhaas and his team would be mindful to base their design work on concept, understood as an ever expanding set of ‘rules’. But this was only one part of the design work. The outcome, it seems, the rule or idea applied, was hardly accepted ‘blindly’, and demonstrably it was often subject to a revision in terms of form – proportion, composition or formal cohesion. The square as a point of departure and the division of the floorplan in three parts with the approximate proportions of 2:1:4 may serve as first examples.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Lucan, *Composition, non-composition*, 544-550.

⁷⁶ The division of the floorplan on the basis of these proportions is also mentioned by Hoshino in an explication of the project from 1995. Hoshino, ‘Kunsthal’, *Kenchiku Bunka* 579 (Jan 1995), 78. Apparently, OMA has not always been contrary to the idea of composition. In a lecture from 2009 Elia Zenghelis refers to OMA’s competition entry for the Dutch parliament in The Hague (1978) as a composition, adding: ‘And I use the term “composition” very deliberately. Especially, as in those days it was a forbidden word.’ Elia Zenghelis, ‘The 1970s and the Beginning of OMA’, Lecture at the Berlage Institute held on 24 November 2009. http://www.theberlage.nl/galleries/videos/watch/2009_11_24_the_1970s_and_the_beginning_of_oma

A diagrammatic turn

Once identified as seminal to the project, the main circuit became the – initially exclusive – theme of the facades. An axonometric sketch on the last page of Hoshino’s fax from 2 December shows that the elevations were conceived in close analogy to the circuit: as a twofold loop of rectilinear strips, half ‘glass’, half ‘wall’ in an exact 1 to 1 proportion. Taken together these surfaces form a single ribbon wrapped twice around the building. The elevations included in the fax correspond exactly to the axonometric sketch. [Figure 17] As a whole, the configuration is reminiscent of a ribbon with two ‘binary’ sides, with the two ends twisted by 180 degrees and subsequently joined so as to form a Moebius loop. The west facade is traversed diagonally by a strip-like wall, the bottom follows the slope of the Auditorium. Based on the same logic, the south-west corner accommodating the offices – and accordingly exempt from the circuit – remains ‘unwrapped’ with the bare floor and roof slabs exposed.⁷⁷ At the same time, the horizontal bipartition of the façade was inapt to depict those parts of the circuit that were organized on three levels. The ribbon ‘ends’ at the back of the Auditorium, completely ‘ignoring’ Hall 3 and the ramp to the roof.

With Hall 3 mounted on the Auditorium – which was necessary to meet Van Krimpen’s wish for an exhibition area of 4.000 square metres instead of 3.000 square metres, as noted by Hoshino in October⁷⁸ – the initial loop of the circuit transformed into a spiral. The circuit, however, works only one way: if visitors first descend to Hall 1, level with the park, and from there continue to Halls 2 and 3. But in terms of circulation Hall 3 is still a dead end that branches off along the way to the roof.⁷⁹ And yet there can be no doubt that Koolhaas, by then, considered the circuit and the two crossing routes as the

⁷⁷ Another set of elevations shows a variation of the same idea: while the bottom of the wall cladding the west façade follows the slope of the auditorium, its top extends to the roof; as the remainder of the ribbon-like wall it is rendered in black, while the volume at the south west corner is clad with masonry, emphasizing by the use of a different material its position outside the loop. OMAR 1546.

⁷⁸ Reedijk’s schedule of requirements from January 1988 provides 2.700 square metres and OMA’s scheme from October 1988 (Kunsthal I) 2.713 square metres. The scheme from 25 January 1989 – which largely corresponds to the version from December 1988 – provides an exhibition area of 3.807 square metres. OMAR 4138.

⁷⁹ Michel Moussette is the first to address the imprecisions of Koolhaas’ description of the circuit, arguing that instead of four squares – as claimed by Koolhaas – the circuit connects only two of them, as it does hardly ever reach beyond the Service Road along the dyke. Michel Moussette, ‘Do we need a canopy for rain?: interior-exterior relationships in the Kunsthal’, *Architectural Research Quarterly* 3/4 (2003), 290, 293. That is not true, however, if one considers the roof as a veritable part of the circuit, as Koolhaas surely did.



Figure 19. Ernest Groosman, Marnix Pinnoo and Floor van der Stoep: Ahoy, Rotterdam, 1969.

conceptual core of the scheme. Several sketches capturing the idea of the loop-like circulation and the intersecting routes bear witness to that.⁸⁰ During the following weeks, OMA would produce a series of brochures, each introduced by three axonometric drawings serving no other purpose than to illustrate these ideas.⁸¹ [Figure 20]

In plan, the course of the two routes crossing the building are being projected onto every level from the bottom to the top, including those not necessarily affected. The exterior wall of Hall 2 to the south and the void between Auditorium and bookshop are aligned with the Service Road below. Not explicitly in the fax from 2 December, but clearly so in some of the models as well as in the drawings of both earlier and subsequent versions, a translucent material is used to reproduce the course of the two passages crossing the building in the horizontal surfaces on top.⁸² [Figure 12] The visual display of the building's division into four parts – emblematically articulated by the roof – overrides the actual structural and spatial tripartition with the Ramp Street at its centre. Instead, the facades, representing the circuit, along with the reproduction of the two routes on both levels above the Service Road reiterate the one concept of the 'spiral in four separate squares' which now was to inform the design in its entirety.

From a purely formal perspective, the concept of the circuit and its motivic counterpart of the facades suggested a principle disintegration of both the exterior's volume and the interior's spatial containers in two sequences of essentially two dimensional planes: the floor slab moving freely in section so as to form a continuous circuit; and, on the vertical plane, the wrapping of the facades in analogy to a Moebius loop. Apparently, Koolhaas and his team were soon aware of the concept's affinities to a thin, flexible, paper-like surface. That is indicated by the means of representation: the already mentioned sketches showing the floor as a floating sheet of paper; Hoshino's conceptual sketch of the facades

⁸⁰ Examples are: a page from a note pad with several sketches in ball pen, dated 7 November, and one more sketch from the same note pad, probably by Koolhaas. OMAR 1538. A sketched diagram of the circulation (A4), undated, in the same file. A sketch on tracing paper, probably by Koolhaas. Undated. OMAR 1546.

⁸¹ A sketch showing a square box crossed by two routes was used for the front page of a set of freehand drawn plans in scale 1 to 500, entitled 'Kunsthal Rotterdam', dated 7 December 1988. OMAR 1537. The same sketch was used for the front page of the brochure 'Kunsthal Rotterdam' from 14 December, containing the first set of drawings. OMAR 3343.

⁸² Earlier: OMAR 1538. Subsequent: Dec 7, 14, Jan Feb 1989, until July.

suggesting a two-sided ribbon; and a shift in the way the models were built: while the earlier models partly consisted of volumes in blue foam, the models built after the switch of the Ramp Street in mid-November consist solely of floors and ramps, disclaiming any suggestion of volume.⁸³ [Figures 3, 9, 12, 18] In a sense, the commitment to 'surface' became a homogenizing principle for the project as a whole, which was relatively new in the work of OMA. During the past decade, a methodical 'undecidedness' between the claim and denial of volume had been characteristic for a large part of OMA's production: the isolated protruding slab that seems to 'cut off' an adjacent volume as, for instance, the wall in exposed concrete of the Villa Dall'Ava, is a motif that recurs in most of OMA's work throughout the 1980s, in projects like the Police Station, the Arnhem Prison, the Dance Theatre, and the Patio House. At the NAI, it is the tilted roof slab which is brought in a similar constellation to the tower of the archives, even if the latter continues in the interior.⁸⁴

Seeds

In the scheme for the Kunsthal from December 1988, there was neither an unresolved tension between volume and surface nor a multiplicity of heterogeneous volumes, as in so many OMA projects from the eighties. And yet, the seeds of diversity were already sown. To begin with: to diversify the circuit's different 'spaces' was the other purpose of the layout of the facades. The analogy to the Moebius strip and the two-faced ribbon wrapped twice around the building, imposed a rigorous binary logic of opening and closure. Three of the four facades are divided in two horizontal strips, one 'open', the other solid (the fourth being crossed by a diagonal wall). By consequence, vertically adjacent spaces open in opposite directions. The proportions and dimensions of Halls 1 and 2 are much alike, but the inversion of the respective openings enhances the difference between the two spaces. Similarly, the Auditorium – at this stage – is entirely cut off from the exterior, while the Restaurant below and Hall 3 above open

⁸³ Perhaps the reduction of the working models and several axonometric drawings to the representation of floors was not a conceptual choice, but simply owed to the narrowing of the focus to the 'question' of the circuit. Still, the permanent production, sight and contemplation of the bare floors might have entailed the thought that the floor itself and, by way of extension, surface, not volume, were to articulate the conceptual essence of the project.

⁸⁴ The facades of the NAI are different regarding their respective colour and degree of transparency. Together with the slightly cantilevering roof they 'dismantle' the triangular volume into a 'house of (four) cards'. But the leaning tower and the Podium are articulated as monolithic volumes: covered with same the material on all sides.

to it. This principle of ‘spatial inversion’ is captured by a freehand sketch next to the axonometric of the ribbon-like facades. [Figure 18] It shows an S-shaped section, apparently of Halls 1 and 2: while the former is level with and open to the park, the latter is level with and open to the Maas Boulevard. The double exposure of the Kunsthal to both the park and the highway, later shorthanded by Koolhaas as a ‘dual situation’, is now to distinguish the character of the two main exhibition spaces, while resonating with the diagrammatic logic of the scheme. Nevertheless, the ribbon-like envelope is a distinct idea in its own right – an *addition* to, not simply a consequence of the ‘spiral in four separate squares’, which apparently was meant to ‘spawn’ other related concepts that nonetheless exceeded its own factual reach. If proof was needed for the envelope’s independency, it is the above divergence between the actual circuit and its representation in the exterior.

The sketches from 2 December announce one further ‘basic’ concept of the design. The black dots representing the columns point to a structural system that is independent both from the concept of the circuit and the one of the facades. At the side of the Auditorium, the columns are distributed on a square grid with a bay size of about 7 meters; at the side of the large exhibition halls the columns are aligned along the lateral walls in intervals of about 4 metres, spanning a distance of about 30 metres. In the centre of Hall 1 four additional cruciform columns are arranged in a square so as to bridge the large span of the ceiling. A sketch shows them tapered towards the top, recalling Mies’ project for the Bacardi administration building in Cuba and the convention hall in Chicago.⁸⁵ Hall 2, for its part, was conceived as a free-span space, covered by an open-web truss.⁸⁶ Already at this point, it seems, the structure was meant to be hybrid, 4-metres being a typical span for steel structures as 6-metres are for concrete structures. Since all columns were meant to be visible, it is obvious that the hybrid quality of the structural system – first and foremost, just like the layout of the facades – was meant to vary the character of the spaces, not unlike the disparate Vierendeel trusses of the design abandoned in October.

⁸⁵ OMAR 1548.

⁸⁶ Ibid. Above the table-like construction the sketch shows an open-web truss.

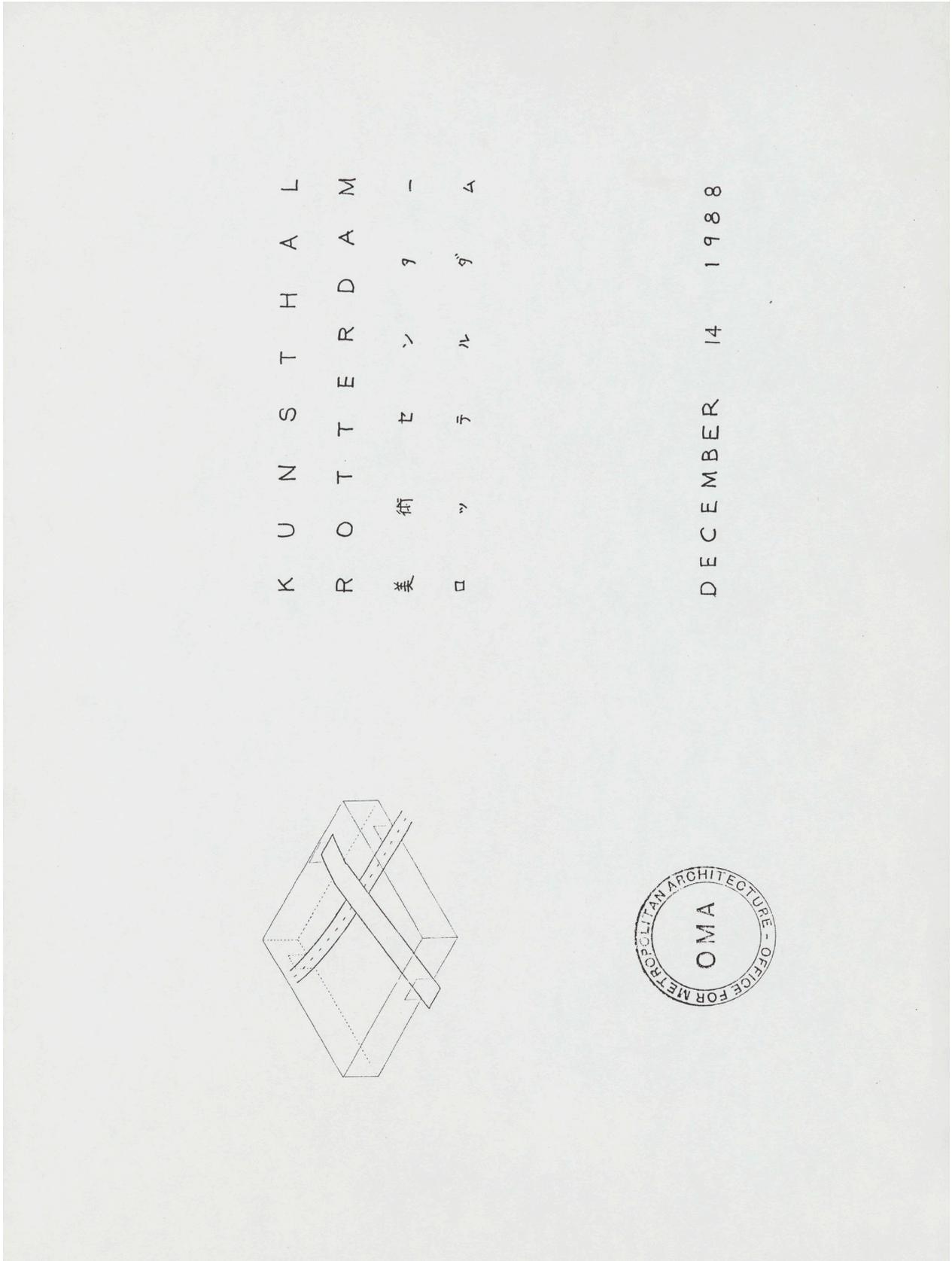


Figure 20. Kunsthall. Cover booklet. 14 December 1988.

A set of drawings from 7 December shows some minor adjustments of the circuit.⁸⁷ The Skew Ramp above the Ramp Street – now divided in a garden and a ramp giving access to Hall 3 and the roof – is shifted slightly to the east, so that the visual connection between Hall 3 and the Auditorium is cut off. Instead the upper landing of the Auditorium is extended to a corridor that projects as a balcony into the north west corner of Hall 2. The new position of the Skew Ramp was to remain unchanged. Perhaps it was defined by way of re-dimensioning the two triangular openings between the rotated covering and the roof, now being exactly of equal size. Shifted, the Skew Ramp penetrates the south-west corner of Hall 2 more plainly. A sketched adjustment in pencil suggests to move the row of columns aligned next to the Ramp Street's interior half a couple of meters to the east, not altogether avoiding the structural conflict with the Skew Ramp, but reducing the number of columns affected. On the one hand, the impression of collision, if not aggression, is reinforced – Gargiani compares the impact of the Skew Ramp to the pool penetrating the raft of the Medusa in *Delirious New York*;⁸⁸ on the other hand, the scheme appears more unified and balanced, both spatially and in plan. Apart from being accurately centred on the Ramp Street, the Skew Ramp now interferes in a visually comparable degree with the two adjacent sections of the building. Just like the beginning of the latter can be seen from the Auditorium, its upper end 'sticks' into the south-west corner of Hall 2.

A better scheme

At the beginning of December, the replacement of Reedijk as the Kunsthall's project coordinator by Van Krimpen was officially confirmed.⁸⁹ Apparently, Koolhaas himself showed Van Krimpen the new draft during the first two weeks of the month and met his approval. Van Krimpen recalls that sometime after their first encounter Koolhaas paid him an unexpected visit in his Amsterdam gallery, putting a model of the new scheme on his desk. According to his own account, Van Krimpen was immediately enthusiastic.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ OMAR 1537.

⁸⁸ Gargiani, *The Construction of Merveilles*, 148, 150.

⁸⁹ At the beginning of December Rotterdam's College of Mayor and Aldermen ('College') nominated Wim van Krimpen as the interim director of the Kunsthall. Minutes of the Building Committee's meeting on 14 December 1988. OMAR 3251.

⁹⁰ Interview with the author on 28 July 2020.

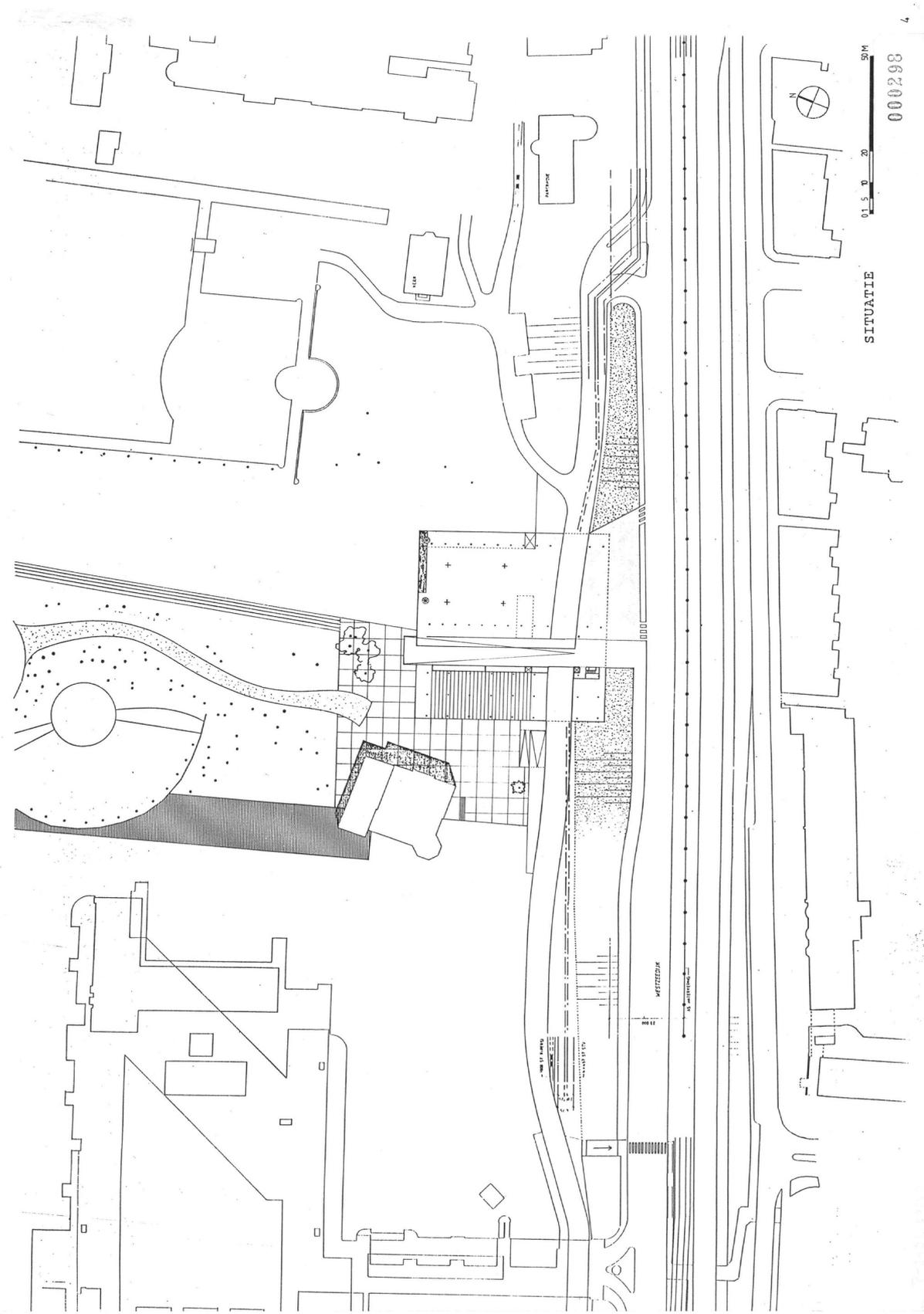


Figure 21. Kunsthall. Site plan. 14 December 1988.

At a meeting of the Building Committee on 14 December, Van Krimpen mentioned his concerns with regard to OMA's first design (Kunsthal I), indicating that a discrepancy between Van Reedijk's programme and the scheme had been a point of discussion.⁹¹ According to Van Krimpen, the first scheme had been based too much on prerequisites that apply solely to museums. The architects had been supplied, he reports, with his principle statement concerning various aspects of the brief, probably referring to his fax from 15 November. And it was on this basis, Van Krimpen implies, that Koolhaas developed 'a different/better scheme'.

With regard to the 'character of the building', Van Krimpen remarked that he had in mind 'something between the Boymans van Beuningen and the Ahoy', a building that lends itself for commercial events and that allows to rent out rooms to third parties. The Ahoy Complex at Zuidplein (1968-70) by Ernest Groosman, Marnix Pinnoo and Floor van der Stoep includes three large exhibition halls of different sizes.⁹² The halls with an exhibition area of altogether 12.000 square meters are covered by light weight open web trusses with a span of 50 meters.⁹³ [Figure 19] Both the scale and the architecture bespeak their occasional use as trade fairs, like the premises used for the KunstRAI in Amsterdam.

Koolhaas introduced the new scheme with a critique of the previous one. The open space under the building proved problematic, he explained, while the restricted budget did not allow for a better solution. With the building standing directly on the ground – as provided by the new scheme – the open connection between park, Kunsthal and dyke would come into its own. According to the minutes, the rest of his presentation contained explanations that Koolhaas would repeat over and over again during the subsequent years: the two routes dividing the building into four parts; the 'punch line' of the two

⁹¹ Minutes of the Building Committee's meeting on 14 December 1988. OMAR 3251.

⁹² The name of the complex derives from 'Rotterdam Ahoy!', which, as mentioned above, took place in the area of the Zocher Park and the former Hoboken Estate in 1950. A large exhibition hall, constructed next to the Villa Dijkzigt on this occasion, remained in use until 1965, when the Medical Faculty of the Erasmus University was built; Helma Hellings et al., *Ernest Groosman* (Rotterdam: Uitgeverij 010, 2001), 70-71. When the new Ahoy was officially opened by Prince Claus in 1971, the complex comprised the country's largest covered sports hall, next to an entrance building and the exhibition halls; *Ibid.*, 77. Later on, the Ahoy was expanded and renovated by Benthem Crouwel (1995-8) and by Zwarts & Jansma, Merckx + Girod (2007-11).

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 76.

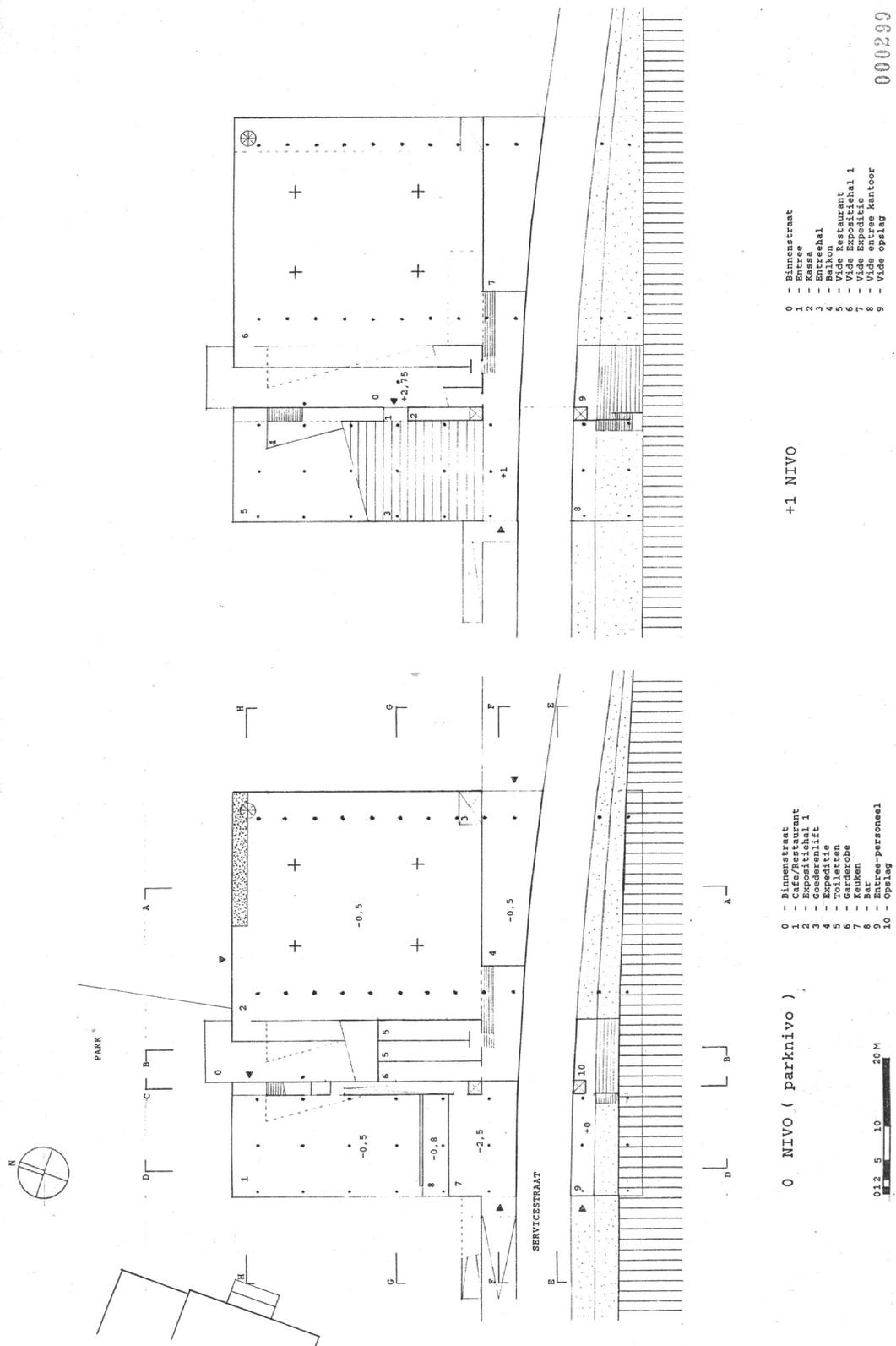


Figure 22. Kunsthal. Floorplans. 14 December 1988.

ramps meeting at one point; the glass wall dividing the Ramp Street in ‘a museum part and a recreation part’; the circuit in the shape of a ‘continuous (square) spiral’; the Restaurant giving onto the Plaza and the Villa Dijkzigt; the autonomy of the spaces allowing for differing simultaneous uses – a request raised by Van Krimpen, seemingly after his fax from 15 November.⁹⁴

The minutes mention that the total volume was larger than the one of the previous scheme (Kunsthal I).⁹⁵ Conversely, the costly construction on columns, and the likewise expensive construction inside the dyke, would be omitted.⁹⁶ According to a first estimate, the new scheme amounted to 26 million guilders, that is 1 million more than the budget provided. The schedule needed to be revised. Based on the new design, a definitive version of the primary design (VO) was to be delivered within one month. The definitive design (DO) was to be completed within four months, that is, by mid-April, 1989. The opening of the Kunsthal was envisaged for January 1992. The current, updated programme of requirements – the minutes apparently refer to Van Krimpen’s additional requests and preferences – would provide the basis for further planning.⁹⁷

Some additional themes

An A3 booklet, entitled ‘Kunsthal Rotterdam / 14 December 1988’ shows the scheme Koolhaas presented to the Building Committee. The ink drawings – the first ones drawn with a ruler – widely coincide with the version from 7 December, a copy of Van Krimpen’s fax from 15 November on the

⁹⁴ OMAR 1436. The requirement occurs in a written comment of OMA’s scheme. In OMA’s files the comment is kept attached to the fax from November 15 together with an English translation of both (page 2 of the English translation). The paper is undated, but the fact that Koolhaas addresses the issue during his presentation along with a couple of minor modifications of the scheme, indicates that he already had knowledge of the comment. Later on, Van Krimpen would insist on the option to use the main spaces independently, up to the demand for separate entrances.

⁹⁵ The minutes do not mention any figures. The total surface of the scheme in October 1988 was 5.666 square metres. See: OMAR 1744. The total surface of the scheme in January 1989 was 7.134 square metres. See: OMAR 4138.

⁹⁶ Koos Hage, the Building Committee’s representative of Rotterdam’s Department for Urban Development (SO), replied that a building on columns had never been a major claim of his department. Significant was the relationship between park and dyke, he explained. The Ramp Street of the new scheme would provide for that. OMAR 3251.

⁹⁷ See note 92. The comment on OMA’s new scheme will be discussed extensively in Chapter 2.3.

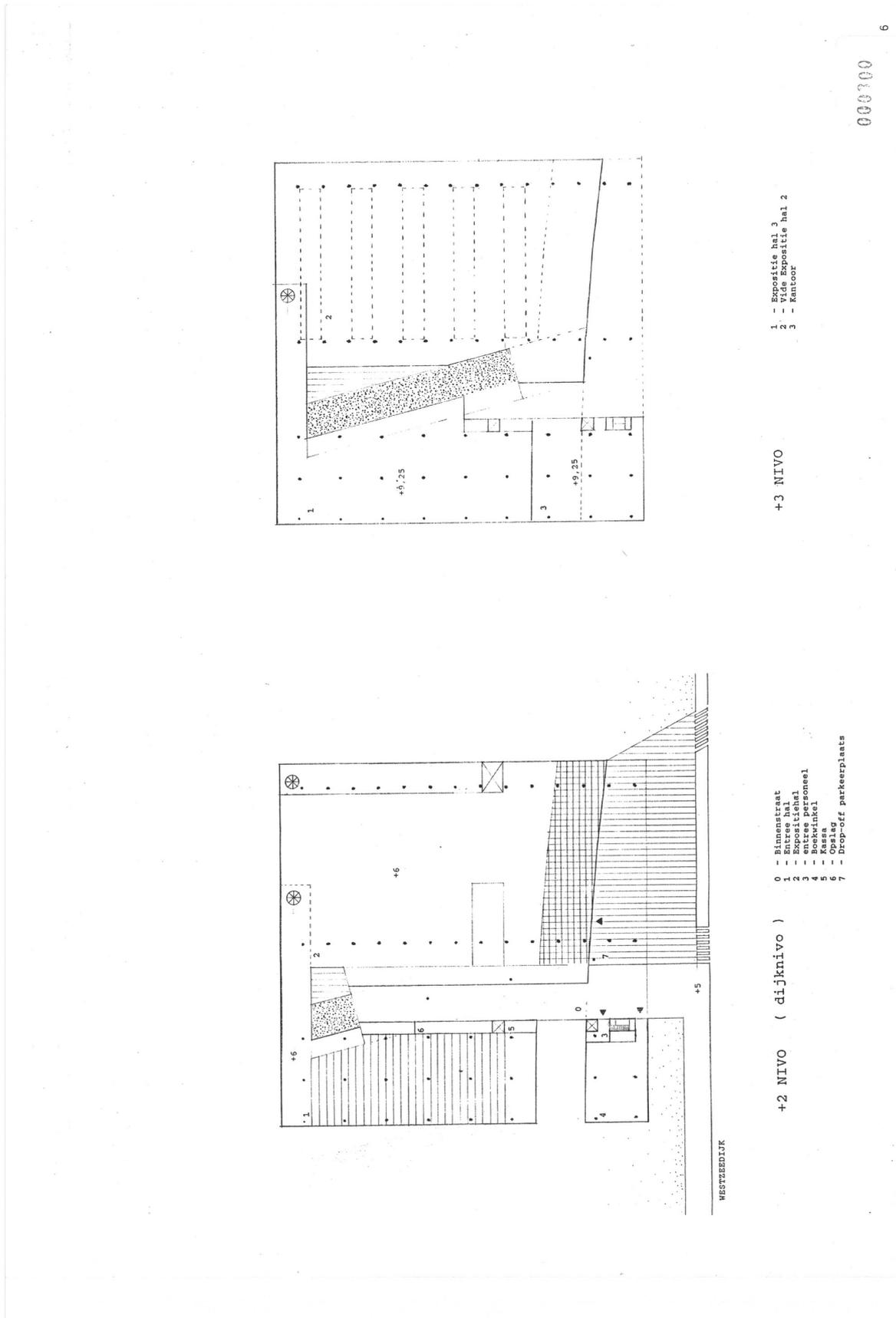


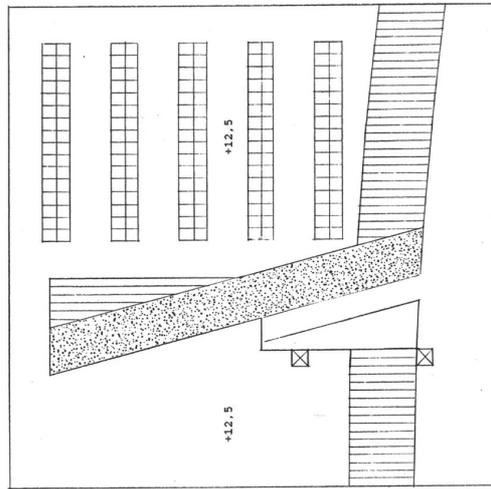
Figure 23. Kunsthal. Floorplans. 14 December 1988.

last page documenting the design's revised point of departure.⁹⁸ [Figures 20-27] Whereas the sketches and models of the past six weeks had been exclusively concerned with the building of the Kunsthal, the brochure from 14 December includes a site plan that shows the arts centre's immediate surroundings. The building had been shifted to the dyke as close as the regulations would permit, just keeping the required 23-metres minimum distance from the watershed. Nonetheless, there remained a gap of some 5 metres between the southern edge of the Kunsthal's perimeter and the sidewalk of the Maas Boulevard. It was meant to be bridged by a sloped, tongue-like extension of the floor that would be used as a driveway. Like the Ramp Street, this platform would descend from the level of Hall 2 to the edge of the Maas Boulevard one metre below.

Between the Kunsthal and the Villa Dijkzigt, the site plan provides a trapezoid Plaza with a stabilized surface, indicated by a continuous grid. To the west the Plaza is aligned with the canal bordering the area of the hospitals, to the east with the glass bridge of the Museum Park's Romantic Garden. The Plaza links the main promenade of the park with the Villa Dijkzigt, the Kunsthal and the Ramp Street leading to the dyke. The north-west corner of the Kunsthal divides its centre in two confluent areas, each 'half' being overlooked by one of the Restaurant's facades. Inside Hall 1, a short strip of a 'garden' stretches along the large glazed opening overlooking the park, perhaps in order to underline the close relation of the space to the park. Also the exterior half of the Skew Ramp alongside the ramp leading to Hall 3 is now conceived as a garden.

The scheme from December 1988 and its largely transparent envelope promise a relation of contrast with the prevailing texture of the surroundings. In a sense, this applies also to the tower of the Erasmus University as the area's dominating building. The constellation of the flat square pavilion – freed from its vertical slab in the new scheme – and the tower of the hospital reiterates the compositional principle of Mies van der Rohe's Federal Center in Chicago and Dominion Center in Toronto, likewise based on a relation of contrast. The new Kunsthal is not endowed with spectacular technical features comparable

⁹⁸ OMAR 3343. Most of the changes were anticipated by sketched adjustments to the set of drawings. OMAR 1537.



+4 NIVO (dak)

000301

7

Figure 24. Kunsthal. Roof plan. 14 December 1988.

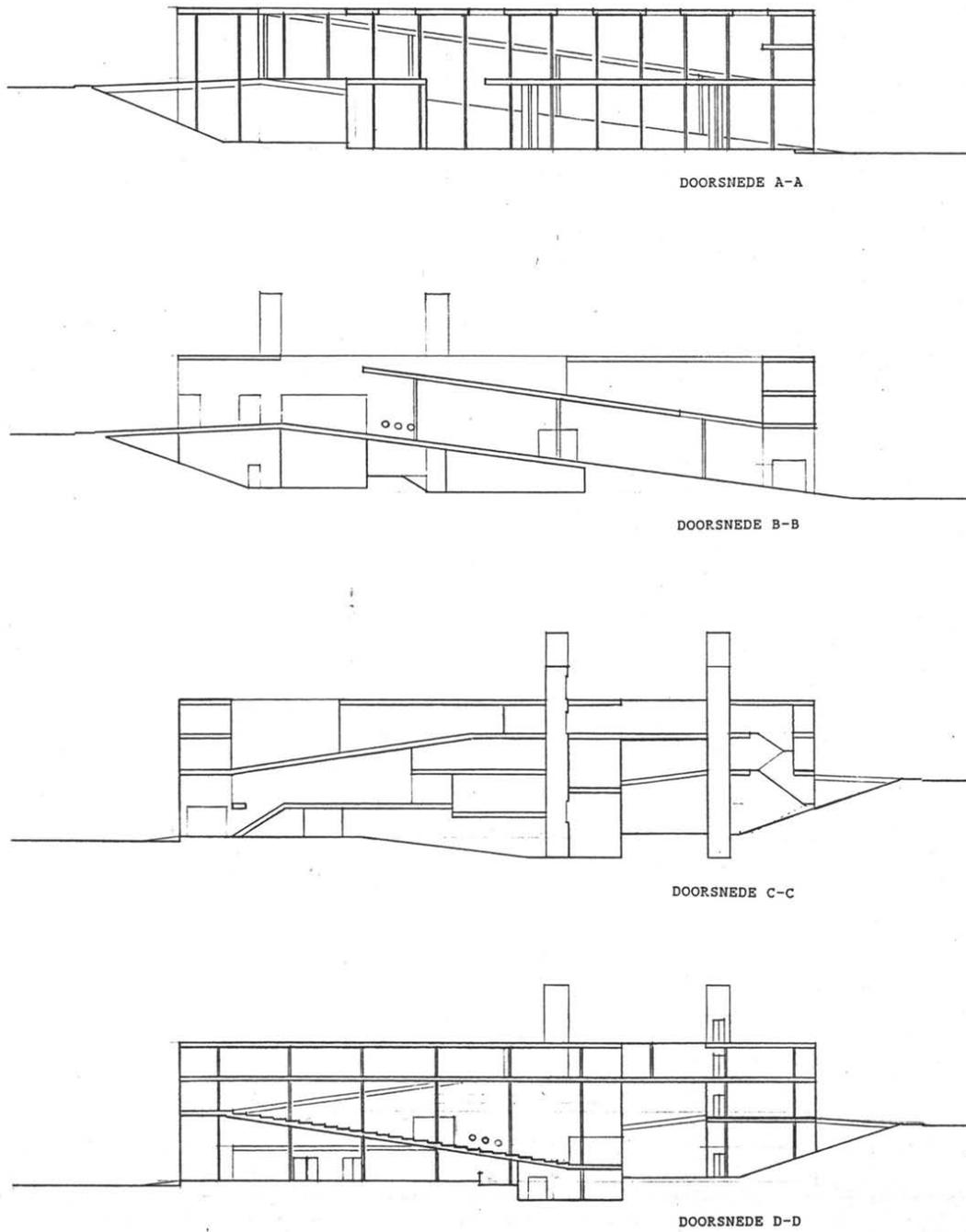
to the Robot. But in their 1993 review, Lootsma and De Graaf report that Koolhaas (still) preferred to call the building a *palais des festivals* rather than an arts centre.⁹⁹ Besides, the scheme from December 1988 and its ingenious circuit do show some kinship to the architecture of spectacle and wonder characteristic for world exhibitions. As Paul Vermeulen pointed out, some parallels to Melnikov's pavilion for the International Exposition in Paris are particularly compelling. 'Melnikov's wooden pavilion', Vermeulen wrote, 'can certainly serve as a rudimentary prototype of a building which is cut into pieces by a half-covered road, has its entrance on this self-generated road and despite the chopping up, forms a spatial unity'.¹⁰⁰

The elevations included in the brochure are the first to show how OMA conceived of the areas outside the Moebius-loop-like wrap. At the southwest corner, a large 'Miesian' slab of marble serves as a façade for the offices and the bookshop along the Maas Boulevard. On top of this slab, a ribbon window connects to the cornice of the roof. The diagonal wall traversing the west elevation from 2 December is replaced by a horizontal one that covers the whole length of the façade.¹⁰¹ Lifted to the height of Hall 3 and the offices, the displacement of the wall breaks with the logic of a Moebius loop, generating two loose ends: next to the wall of the west façade itself, the lower wall one along the Service Road. The remainder of the west elevation provide glazed surfaces. Multiple reasons for this change are conceivable: to open the Auditorium towards the park; to have at least one exhibition space (Hall 3) without any openings for exhibits sensitive to daylight such as graphic works; formal coherence. For it was only now that the binary division into a 'full' and an 'empty' half became a unifying principle for the exterior as a whole. That applies also to the south façade, even if only its upper transparent half is visible from the Maas Boulevard. The binary structure of the façade is further obscured by the projection and the solid slab at its west corner, but the modification of the west façade permits to distinguish clearly the rule from the exception.

⁹⁹ Lootsma, De Graaf, 'In dienst van de ervaring', 20.

¹⁰⁰ Paul Vermeulen, 'Clad in Tonalities of Light', in: Matthijs de Boer, Ruud Brouwers, Vincent Van Rossem, Zef Hemel (eds.), *Architectuur in Nederland: Jaarboek 1992/1993* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 1993), 91.

¹⁰¹ The idea appears for the first time in the version from 7 December. OMAR 1537.



000302

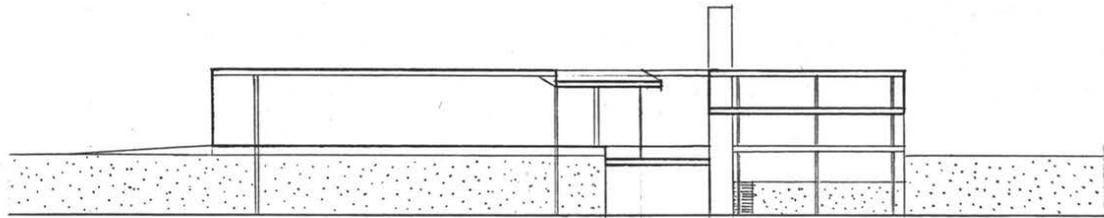
Figure 25. Kunsthal. Cross sections. 14 December 1988.

The glazed surfaces are divided into large square formats of a single unvaried size, including the openings of spaces that were not part of the circuit, like the Restaurant and the bookshop. Taken together, these changes make it virtually impossible to re-enact the motif of the Moebius loop underlying the layout of the facades, as illustrated by Hoshino's axonometric sketch from 2 December. And yet, as has been shown, they are essentially informed by this the idea.

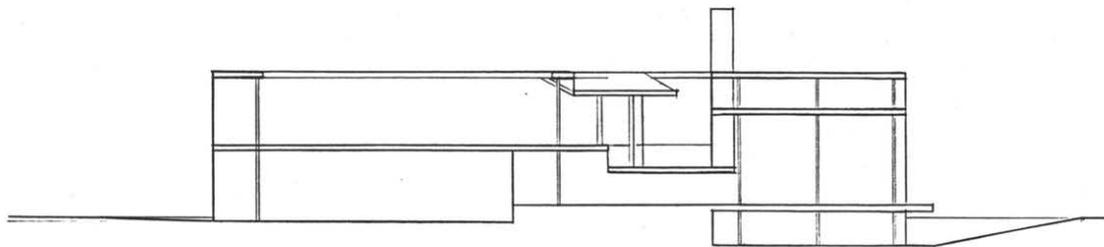
The modifications of the circuit are marginal. A spiral stair reconnects the balcony at the back of Hall 3 to the floor of Hall 2, perhaps to meet a wish of Van Krimpen. In his comment on OMA's new scheme, Van Krimpen suggests a foldable stair so as to 'stimulate circulation/flow towards exhibition area 3.'¹⁰² In the 'vide' between Halls 1 and 2 another spiral stair is added along with a freight elevator accessible from the loading bay next to the Service Road. Parallel to the Ramp Street a straightway connects the area of the main entrance with the Restaurant below. The stair's upper landing is perfectly horizontal and protrudes as another balcony in the void above the Restaurant. In section, the small space overlaps both with the Auditorium and the Restaurant, undermining the complete division between the two spaces. In plan, the balcony's triangular shape accurately reproduces the north-west corner of the Skew Ramp on top. Apparently, the intention was to release the Restaurant from its spatial and visual isolation with regard to the rest of the building. Even if located outside the circuit, the Restaurant was one of the building's major spaces and a likely destination for visitors. With the balcony as a reverberation of the Skew Ramp and its intrusive geometry, a central and inherently connective feature of the design is being 'passed on' to the otherwise cut-off space.¹⁰³ Within the building perimeter, it seems, a maximum of transparency was envisaged. The floorplans do not yet distinguish between solid and glazed partitions. But the sections and elevations – even if rudimentary – suggest that the partitions between the different parts of the circuit, those along the Ramp Street included, were by and large conceived as transparent.

¹⁰² The incorporation of spiral stairs into the drawings is another evidence suggesting that OMA had received Van Krimpen's written comment on OMA's new scheme before the meeting of 14 December. Undated. OMAR 1436.

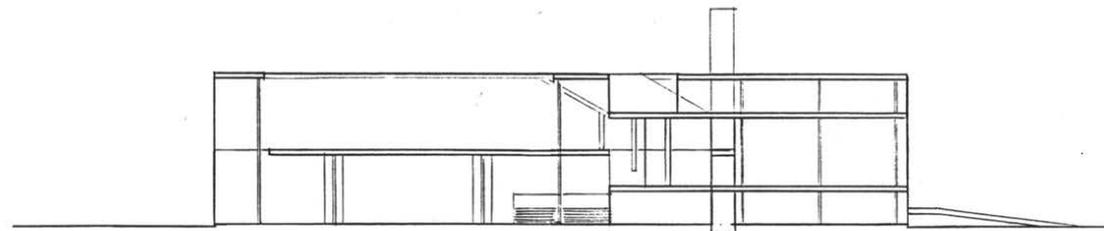
¹⁰³ According to Murray Fraser, Koolhaas – with the glimpse the balcony allows for from the Auditorium to the Restaurant below – is 'suggesting that culture and commerce were closer than many wished to admit.' Murray Fraser, 'Kunsthal, Rotterdam, The Netherlands (1992)', in: Idem (general ed.), *Global History of Architecture* vol. 2 (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 1012. It is obvious, however, that he embraced this proximity, considering that car shows and fair trades were among the uses Koolhaas proposed for the building.



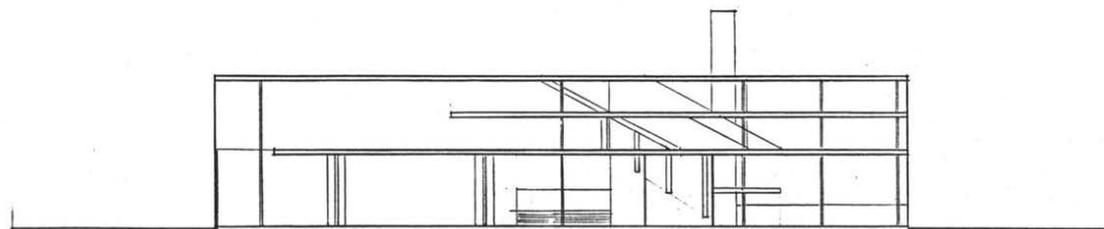
DOORSNEDE E-E



DOORSNEDE F-F



DOORSNEDE G-G



DOORSNEDE H-H

000303

Figure 26. Kunsthal. Cross sections. 14 December 1988.

Regarding the structural system, some concessions are made to the curatorial needs of Van Krimpen. His comments on OMA's new scheme include the demand to integrate the columns of the gallery spaces into the adjacent walls in order not to obstruct the use of these surfaces for the hanging of pictures. In the scheme from 14 December, the rows of columns in Halls 1 and 2 – previously lined up in proximity of the walls – have been shifted by about 4 meters towards the centre of the space. Both structural grids have been moved about three meters to the south, evidently in order to gain some space between the north façade and the columns. Apparently the 'compromise' did not satisfy Van Krimpen. OMA would remove the columns from the proximity of the walls altogether, but only step by step, in a process that went on for more than a year. The reason for complying so reluctantly to Van Krimpen's explicit demand has already been indicated: the columns were an important means of creating spatial diversity. Differences regarding the rhythm, spatial arrangement and material of the columns were to diversify the character of the spaces. After all, the main reason for the structure to be hybrid were the columns, for it was the columns that had been conceived from the outset as a visible structural member. In Halls 1 and 2, most of them were aligned to the walls, so that their removal or invisibility threatened both the goal of spatial diversification and the legitimization of the structure's hybridity.

The scheme of 14 December is the first proposal to support the Skew Ramp by a row of columns. Altogether four columns are aligned on a diagonal axis that slightly diverges from the angle of the ramp they hold in place. The purpose of the additional rotation seems to have been to mitigate some interferences the columns would otherwise cause, their exact position being further defined by the 7-metres grid of the western section and a bay size of approximately 14 metres. If the axis had been perfectly centred and parallel with regard to the Skew Ramp, the northern column would have collided with the western enclosure of the Ramp Street, while the two columns at the centre would have parted both the public passage and the relatively narrow Ramp Street's glazed in half almost in the middle.

Chapter 2.1

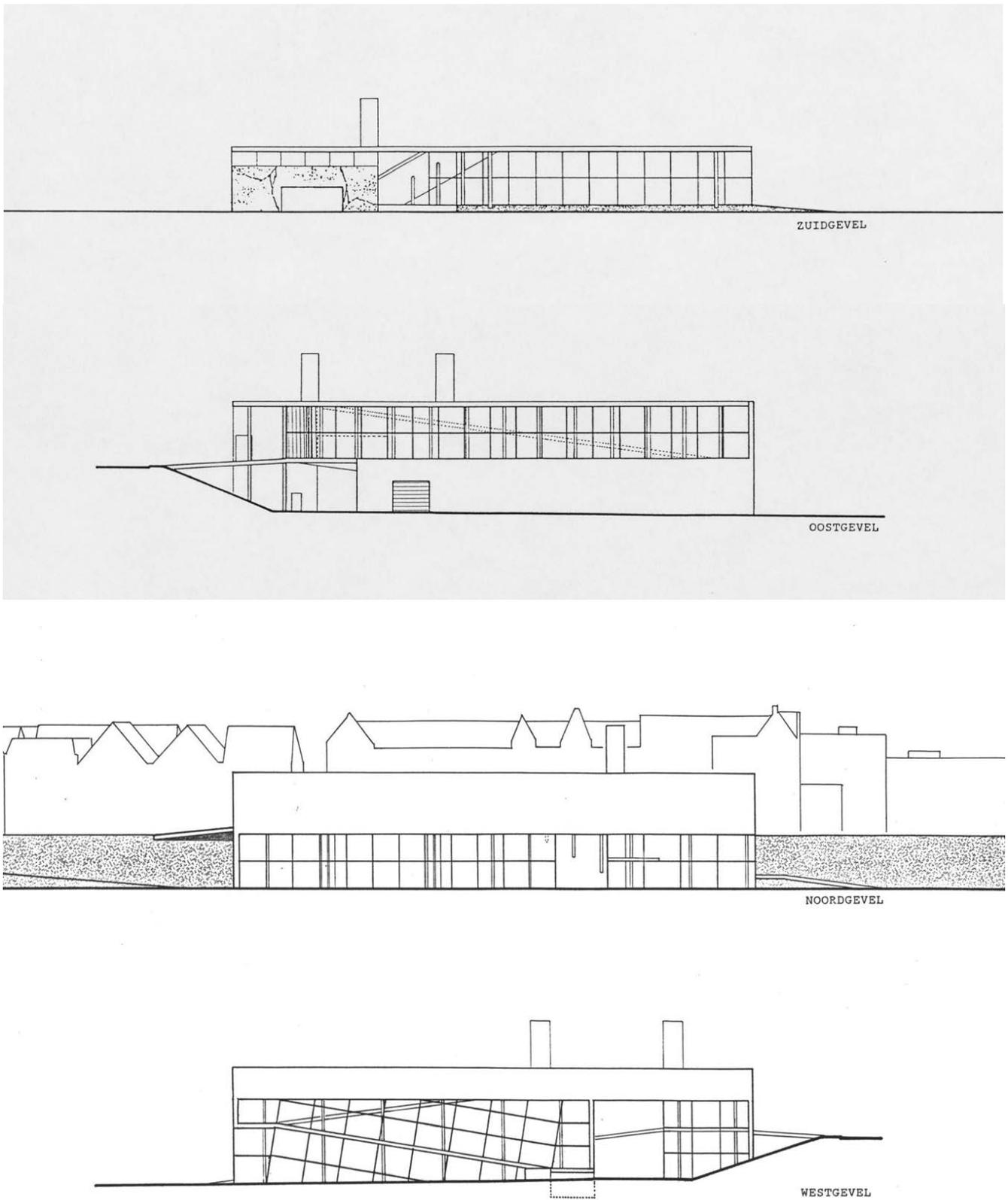


Figure 27. Kunsthall. Elevations. 14 December 1988.

Entirely new in the scheme is a ‘2-metres wide strip’ dividing the Auditorium from the Ramp Street.¹⁰⁴ It accommodates the stair that connects the entrance hall to the Restaurant, two elevators, the stairs of the office area, and the ticket booth of the main entrance, while probably anticipating the need to provide some space for the building services.¹⁰⁵ Both elevator shafts, rising about five meters above the roof level, are faithfully depicted in the elevations, perhaps as placeholders still to be developed in terms of composition. However, none of such architectural paraphernalia would be allowed to interfere with the spaces of the main circuit, as the further development of the design shows. There was a price to be paid: the principle of the ‘space-containing wall’ or *poché*¹⁰⁶ and its implication of ‘mass’ conflicted with the recent commitment to surface as opposed to volume. At once, the impending opacity of the *poché* set limits to the general transparency within the building perimeter, that is, between the areas accessible to the public including the Ramp Street. In fact, the introduction of the *poché* was a first step towards an increasing ‘visual isolation’ of the circuit’s various sections.

Something simple

Fuminori Hoshino relates the design of the Kunsthal to the rise of deconstructivist architecture in 1988: ‘We unconsciously were not interested in complicated design because of that trend. We were more interested in relatively simple ways, which had unexpectedly surprising and mysterious effects.’¹⁰⁷ The statement may surprise, considering the intricacy of the circuit or the self-imposed obstacle of the two routes crossing the building. On the other hand, the project does develop between October and December 1988 toward an increasing simplicity in terms of volume, which appears indeed to have been

¹⁰⁴ The phrase is used in the minutes of Building Committee’s meeting from 14 December 1988. OMAR 3251 (author trans.).

¹⁰⁵ During the meeting of the Building Committee Koolhaas explains that the ‘strip’ would be reserved for vertical circulation and services (voorzieningen). A sketched adjustment of the scheme from 7 December seems to anticipate this idea. OMAR 1537. However, in a fax from 12 December the strip was not yet incorporated. OMAR 1538. As Roberto Gargiani points out, the genealogy of the strip ‘dates back to the “hollow wall” of the Villa in Miami, and those of the “Strip” of *Exodus* and the Floating Swimming Pool.’ Gargiani, *The Construction of Merveilles*, 151.

¹⁰⁶ Although Koolhaas used the term only from the mid-1990s onwards, the motif of the space-containing wall or *poché* recurs in the early work of OMA. The Villa in Miami and the first scheme of the Kunsthal (secondary spaces main hall) are obvious examples. Henceforth the term *poché* will be used in this sense. On the role of *poché* in OMA’s early work, see: Christoph Lueder, ‘The Innominate Evolution of a Koolhaasian Technique’, in: Van Gerrewey, Patteeuw, *OMA. The First Decade – OASE #94*, 124-131.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with the author on the first of August, 2017.

a first reaction of Koolhaas to the 'threat' of deconstructivist architecture to become mainstream. The three intersecting volumes of the first scheme (Kunsthal I), the literal division of the second scheme (Kunsthal II) into four parts, the conical pavilion on the roof, the detached arch bridging the building: all that was abandoned in favor of a compact, prismatic volume of downright 'classical' regularity.

2.2

The circle squared

The circuit and its implications

When critics visited the Kunsthal after its completion in late 1992, Koolhaas used to be their guide. In his review, Emmanuel Doutriaux mentions that Koolhaas ‘would shuttle relentlessly, for several hours, in the labyrinth of the interior, guiding his visitors grouped according to their language.’¹⁰⁸ Koolhaas’ explications, quoted by Doutriaux at length, largely correspond to OMA’s various project statements that accompanied publications on the Kunsthal ever since the first announcements of the building in 1989.¹⁰⁹ With regard to the difficulty of the two routes crossing the building, Koolhaas explained:

Everything was resolved when we found out that the ensemble of the reception/auditorium could be inclined in the direction opposite to the ramp of the public path. The entrance being [...] at the point where the two ramps intersect, we could wind a spiral of the continuous inner circulation around the central axis which crossed it either below or above, constituting a circuit that winds back to itself like a Moebius loop – within a building which does not seem to allow for that: a cube broken in four unequal parts.¹¹⁰

The circuit would become one of the most discussed and emulated features of the Kunsthal. There is hardly a review that would not mention, describe or re-enact the circuit, sometimes even in form of an architectural tour along its itinerary.¹¹¹ The circuit plays also a significant role in the more recent scholarly publications on the Kunsthal by Aarati Kanekar and Roberto Gargiani.¹¹² In her monograph *Six Canonical Projects by Rem Koolhaas* Ingrid Böck identifies the ‘Trajectory’ as one of the

¹⁰⁸ Doutriaux, ‘Le Kunsthal de Rotterdam’, *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui* 285 (1993), 7 (author trans.).

¹⁰⁹ Examples are: *Architecture Mouvement Continuité* (Sep 1989), 30; *El Croquis* 53 (1992), 102; *A+U* 287 (1994), 114; Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 431; *El Croquis* 79 (1996), 74-77.

¹¹⁰ Doutriaux, ‘Le Kunsthal de Rotterdam’, 7 (author trans.).

¹¹¹ That applies in varying degrees to the reviews by Doutriaux, Andrew MacNair, and an essay by Cynthia Davidson from 1997. See: Andrew MacNair, ‘Marathon. Kunsthal by OMA/Rem Koolhaas’, *A+U* 287 (1994), 120-123; Cynthia Davidson, ‘Koolhaas and the Kunsthal: History Lesions’, *ANY* 21 (1997), 36-41.

¹¹² Aarati Kanekar, ‘Space of Montage’, 134-154. Gargiani, ‘The Pliable Surface’, 653-660.

Chapter 2.2

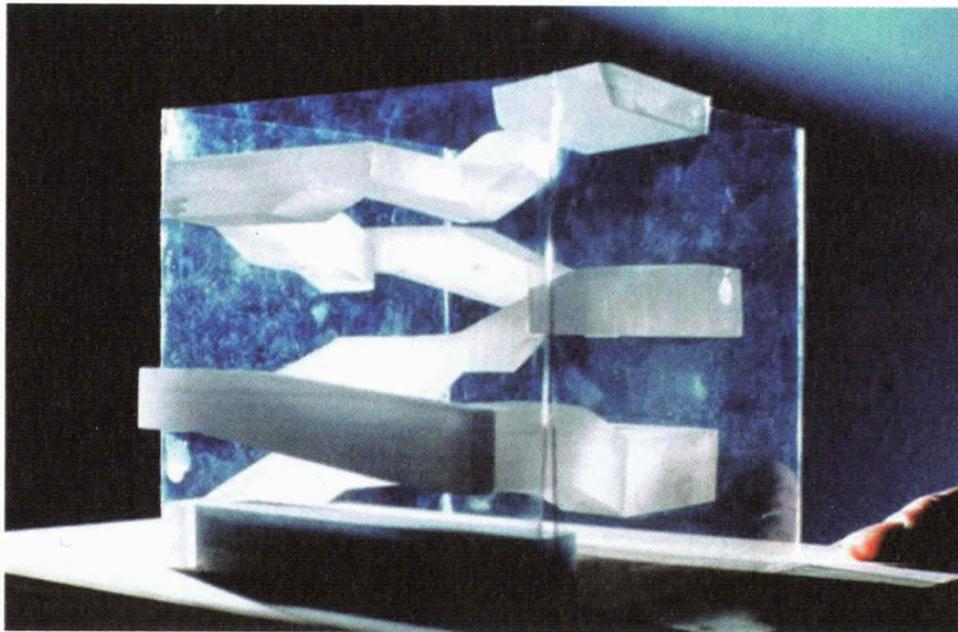
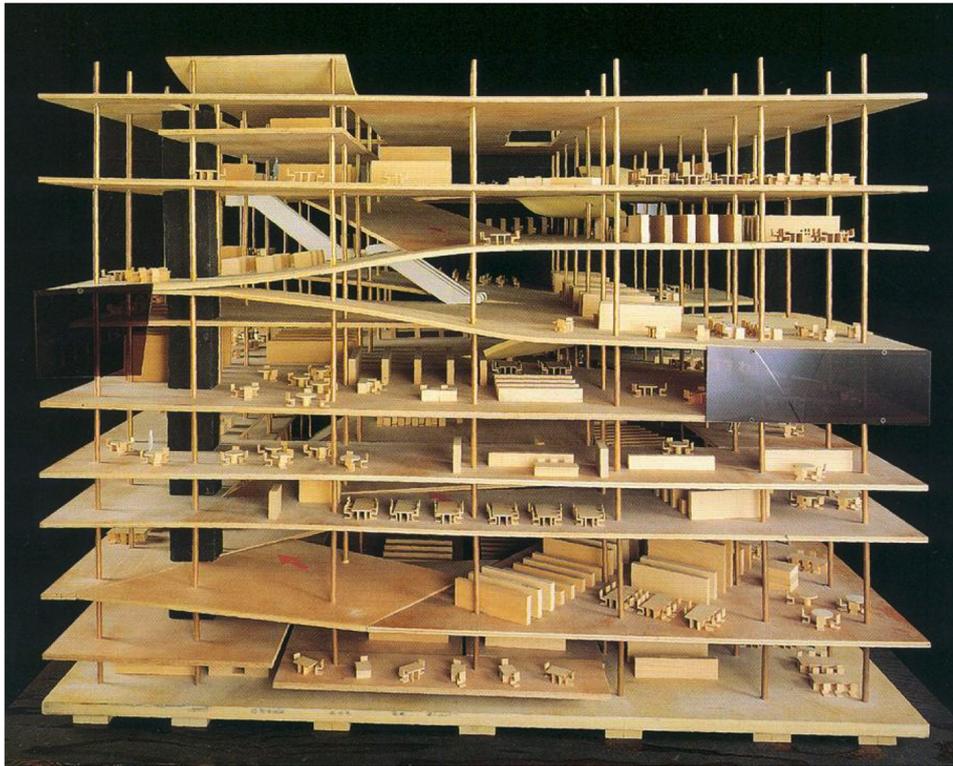


Figure 1. OMA/Rem Koolhaas. Above: Model of Jussieu Libraries, Paris (1992).
Below: Model of Dutch Embassy, Berlin (1997-2003).

‘architectural elements and principles that have a central and recurring role in Koolhaas’s thinking [and work]’, thus taking recourse to a term Koolhaas used to describe spatial sequences of projects that would build on the Kunsthal’s circuit, such as the Jussieu Libraries in Paris and the Dutch Embassy in Berlin.¹¹³ [Figure 1]

The passage from floor to floor

The list of projects, ideas, theories and art works that ‘preceded’ the circuit is long, even when only considering the scheme that emerged in December 1988. Many precedents have been identified by critics, historians and researchers, and Koolhaas himself has laid multiple trails in various statements and publications.¹¹⁴ The most obvious is the work of Le Corbusier and his notion of the architectural promenade. The parallels between an architecture conceived to be experienced while ‘moving about’ and the stress Koolhaas puts on the circuit when explaining the Kunsthal are evident. Le Corbusier introduced the term *promenade architecturale* to describe an imaginary visit to the Maison la Roche (1923): ‘One enters, and the architectural spectacle offers itself to the gaze; one follows a route and the perspectives develop with great variety; one plays with the entering light, illuminating the walls, or creating dimness’.¹¹⁵

Like the work of Koolhaas, the variety of perspectives that unfold in many of Le Corbusier’s buildings, and that he documented in his *Oeuvre Complète* with an abundance of photographs and sketches, has

¹¹³ Böck, *Six Canonical Projects*, 20. On the ‘Trajectory’, see the chapter: ‘Trajectory: Dutch Embassy Berlin 1999-2003’, 199-258.

¹¹⁴ In his research – from *Delirious New York* to *S,M,L,XL* and *Elements of Architecture* – Koolhaas has always been sensitive to pioneering figures. As for the Kunsthal, he claims in the catalogue of patents, included in *Content* from 2004, the rights of innovation only for one single ingredient of the circuit, at this occasion called ‘Loop Trick’. The name denotes the two reversed ramps of the Auditorium and the Ramp Street as means to obtain a self-contained circuit on two different levels: ‘Introducing an X of intersecting floors ... in a two-storey building creates a continuous surface that destroys the status of the individual floor.’ AMOMA/Rem Koolhaas, *Content* (Cologne: Taschen, 2004), 76.

¹¹⁵ Le Corbusier, ‘Deux Hôtel particuliers à Auteuil’, in: W. Boesiger, O. Stonorov (eds.), *Le Corbusier et Pierre Jeanneret. Oeuvre complete 1910-1929* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1995), vol. 1, 60 (author trans.).

been compared to film.¹¹⁶ Analogies between Le Corbusier's and Koolhaas' ideas on the perception of architecture on the one hand, and film and the technique of montage on the other, have been repeatedly discussed outlining a genealogy that begins with Auguste Choisy's analysis of the Acropolis and its subsequent adoption through Sergei Eisenstein and Le Corbusier.¹¹⁷ Martino Stierli, in his recent book *Montage and the Metropolis*, explores in depth the relation between Choisy's notion of the picturesque, Eisenstein's concept of filmic montage and Le Corbusier's architectural promenade next to the role of montage in Koolhaas' work from 1970s.¹¹⁸ Cynthia Davidson and Aarati Kanekar, in their essays on the Kunsthal from 1997 and 2015 respectively, point out the parallels between filmic montage and the building's formal heterogeneity as an experience of discontinuity, opposed to the continuity of movement the circuit implies. Both authors refer to the 34-pages photo spread in *S,M,L,XL* that mimics a guided tour through the building. Together with the directions at the bottom of the pages ('Approach the building from the boulevard.'/ 'Enter the ramp from the dike.' etc.), all emphasis is put indeed on movement and the sequential impact of the spaces.

The argument of the present chapter, however, is focussed on the project from December 1988, that is, the scheme of the Kunsthal in a relatively homogeneous state, prior to the diversification of forms, structures, materials and colours. It is clear that this scheme – endowed with the seeds of a hybrid structure and a façade that would provide for different degrees of openness and ever changing vistas, to the outside as much as to the inside – aimed at the variety of perspective Le Corbusier describes. That Koolhaas, too, prioritized the spectator in motion is implied by the numerous statements in which he compares architecture to the plot of film, that is the experience of architecture as a sequence of spaces; it is evident from his habitual use of the endoscope when inspecting the models of the Kunsthal, a device

¹¹⁶ Beatriz Colomina wrote about Le Corbusier's houses in 1994: 'The house is no more than a series of views choreographed by the visitor, the way the filmmaker effects the montage of a film. Significantly, Le Corbusier has represented some of his projects, like Villa Meyer and the Guiette House, in the form of a series of sketches grouped together and representing the perception of the house by a moving eye. As has been noted, these drawings suggest film storyboards, each of the images a still.' Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1994), 312. See also: Stierli, *Montage and the Metropolis*, 192.

¹¹⁷ Davidson, 'History Lesions', 36-41. Kanekar, 'Space of Montage', 135-144. Böck, *Six Canonical Projects*.

¹¹⁸ On Choisy, Eisenstein and Le Corbusier, see the chapter 'Embodied Spectatorship. Sergei Eisenstein's Theory of Architectural Montage', in: Stierli: *Montage and the Metropolis*, 180-227; on Koolhaas, see the chapter 'Montage and the Metropolitan Unconscious. Rem Koolhaas's *Delirious New York*', 228-267.

that allows to simulate the perspective at eye-level while moving about; and it is indicated, of course, by the eminent significance of ramps for the design.¹¹⁹

As for Le Corbusier's work, the ramp and its relation to (continuous) movement has been the subject of much explanation, indicating that this relation is less obvious than it may appear. On the one hand, there is the issue of physical movement, raised by Le Corbusier himself: 'this communication between floors without the assistance of steps permits, when one has the requisite space, a passage from floor to floor that is hardly perceptible.'¹²⁰ The ramp's gentle gradient is to extend the continuity of the promenade to multiple levels and possibly to the building as a whole. But if effortlessness of movement alone was the goal, the ideal would still be the horizontal plane. Koolhaas' plots of *Delirious New York* are all staged on the horizontal floors of Manhattan's skyscrapers, and the intricate narrative of La Villette, too, unfolds in the horizontal. Surely, the ramp fosters physical movement through the simple fact of its slope, hampering rest in a direct ratio with its gradient; further, the ramp permits direct physical movement – and thus the chronology of events, so to speak – on the axis of its inclination, along with a beginning and an end. But the same is true of stairs.¹²¹

Half the path of life: a digression including the finished project

Giuseppe Terragni's and Pietro Lingeri's project for the Danteum in Rome (1938), defined by the use of stairs and steps, provides many of the above qualities. [Figure 2] All differences conceded, the analogies between the monument in Rome and the Kunsthal appear noteworthy. Like the Kunsthal, the Danteum consists essentially of a single circuit in the shape of an ascending spiral. Like the ramps of the Kunsthal, the stairs of the Danteum are fully synchronized with the circuit, inducing the visitor to follow its spiralling itinerary. Like the Kunsthal's, the floor of the Danteum is a flexible element of ever changing height that can form stairs, stepped platforms, or dissolve into floating slabs of stone. Like in

¹¹⁹ According to Hoshino, Koolhaas often used endoscopes when inspecting working models of the Kunsthal. Interview with the author on 25 July 2017.

¹²⁰ Quoted after: Richard A. Etlin, *Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier. The Romantic Legacy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 126.

¹²¹ This holds also true for the 'dynamism of gentle kinaesthetic experience' of ascending or descending a ramp Richard Etlin mentions. Etlin, *Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier*, 126.

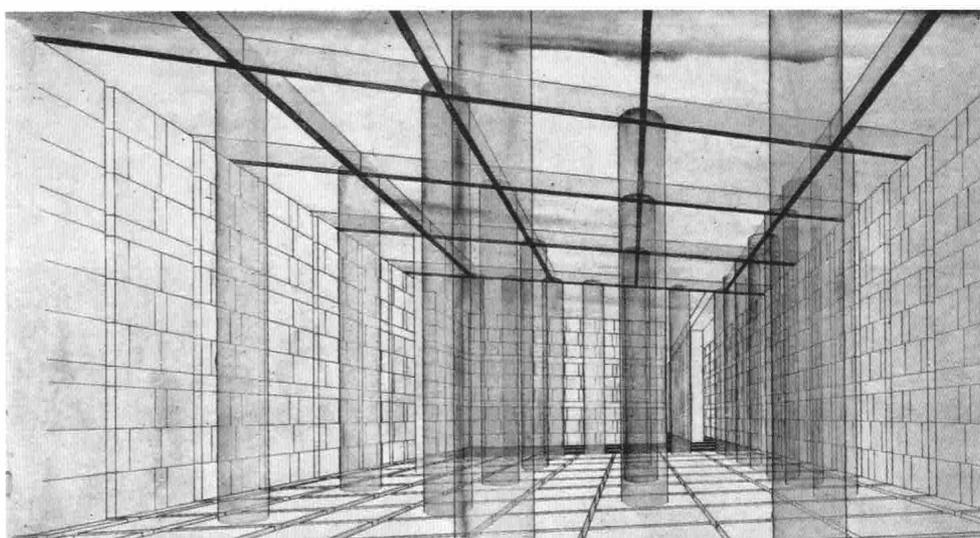
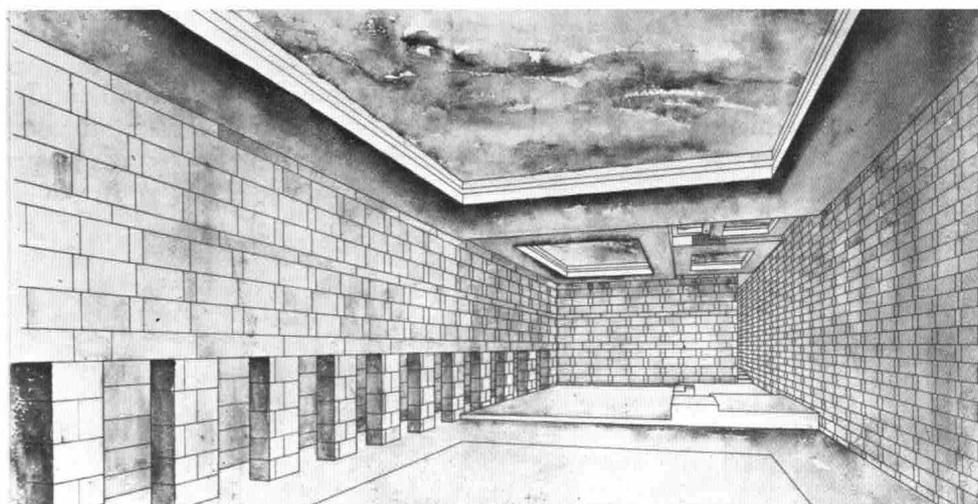
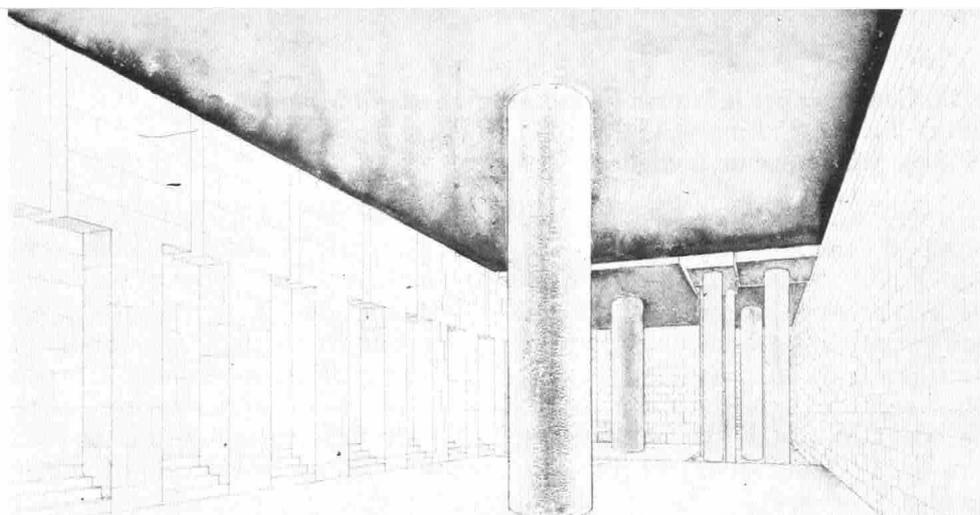


Figure 2. Giuseppe Terragni, Pietro Lingeri. Danteum. Rome. 1938.

the Kunsthall – and contrary to the spiral-shaped schemes by Le Corbusier and Wright – the main circuit consists of four relatively self-contained spaces, each with a distinct character. Like in the Kunsthall, the distribution of columns, the sources of daylight and the treatment of floors tend to produce effects of contrast. The Danteum is explicitly based on the *Divine Comedy*. It is to evoke the progression ‘dark forest’ – ‘hell’ – ‘purgatory’ – ‘paradise’. Koolhaas professedly used to conceive his projects on the basis of a plot. The narrative of the Kunsthall, he seems to suggest in *S,M,L,XL*, approximates the pointless loops of idle hopes described in *Waiting for Godot*.¹²² Beckett was an admirer of Dante, and to transfer the story of the Danteum to the Kunsthall works astoundingly well. The oblique Auditorium and its leaning columns may be ‘read’ as the worrisome forest halfway the path of life; the dark Hall 1 with its black ceiling and landscape of dead trees as hell; the luminous Hall 2 as purgatory; the orchard on the roof as paradise. The *Divine Comedy* is both the story of an adventure and an image of the next world. It is also an image of *this* world, in as much as it is a reckoning with Dante’s contemporaries who the poet settles in the nine circles of hell, inventing punishments that both mimic and comment their deeds. And doesn’t the Kunsthall, too, imply something like a reckoning with Koolhaas’ contemporaries?

Dynamism

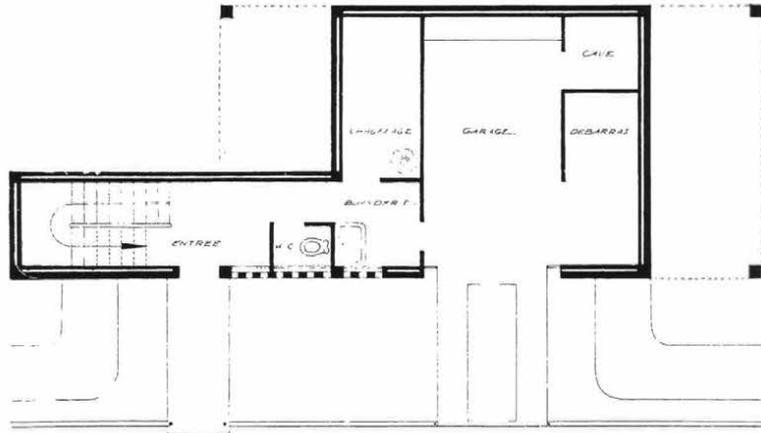
Much of Le Corbusier’s and Koolhaas’ enthusiasm for the ramp seems to regard its symbolical charge. Stanislaus von Moos explains: ‘Motorized traffic with its roadways in the form of bridges, ramps, and loops inspired this symbolism of modernity.’¹²³ Richard Etlin too relates the motif of the ramp in Le Corbusier’s work to the early modernist fascination with technology and speed, suggesting that ‘the ramp offers the pedestrian equivalent to an airplane’s take-off from the ground’.¹²⁴ In the case of Koolhaas and the Kunsthall, the ramp as an image of dynamism certainly plays a significant role, but not as an image of technology, speed and progress. Nonetheless, the ramps of the Kunsthall seem to

¹²² Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 432-466. The spread showing the Kunsthall is superimposed with two excerpts from Beckett’s play. The excerpts are arranged as a loop in a literal sense: the end of the second excerpt coincides with the beginning of the first.

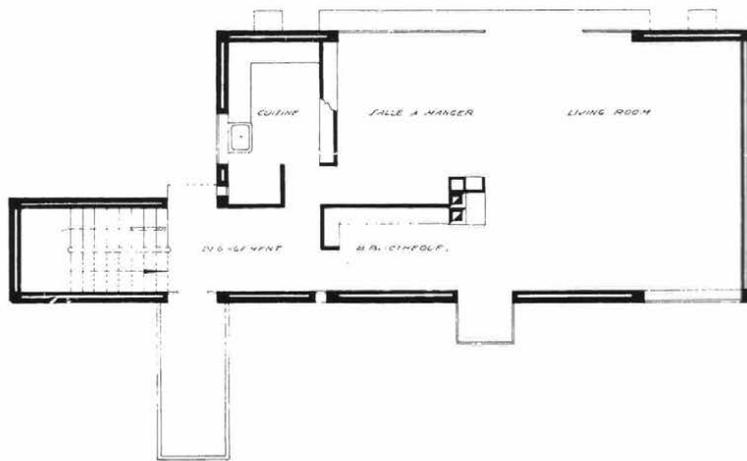
¹²³ Stanislaus von Moos, *Le Corbusier: Elements of a Synthesis* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2009), 109. First published in 1968.

¹²⁴ Etlin, *Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier*, 126.

Chapter 2.2



Rez-de-chaussée bas



Rez-de-chaussée haut



Etage

Figure 3. Le Corbusier. Villa at Vaucresson. 1922.

have preserved something of their modernist charge. The implications of instability and conflict appear akin rather to a dynamism of a societal kind and the revolutionary gestus of early constructivism levelled against the established bourgeois order. At the same time, the motifs of the loop and the spiral suggest the idea of movement and its potentially unlimited continuation. Herbert Muschamp, in a review of the OMA exhibition at the MoMA in New York from 1994, interprets the spiral as an image of growth ‘but of an urban, artificial kind’.¹²⁵ As such the spiral motif appears cognate to the Vierendeel girders of the first project for the Kunsthall. The vertical members of some of the trusses are arranged according to a mathematical progression with similar connotations, and both motifs – the spiral and the mathematical progression – will recur at a later stage.

Muschamp does not only refer to the Kunsthall but also to OMA’s projects for the National Library and the Jussieu Libraries in Paris, rightly observing the square as the spiral’s seemingly antagonistic counterpart. For Muschamp, the coupling reflects Koolhaas’ notion of the city:

The square is a symbol of reason, the spiral a sign of romance. In synthesizing these forms, Mr. Koolhaas shows that clarity and reason are not the enemies of romanticism; they are the essential preconditions for it. A clear-eyed view of the contemporary city and a pragmatic grasp of what architects can reasonably achieve within it form the foundation from which a truly lyrical expression can arise.¹²⁶

The simultaneity of square and spiral seems also related to another idea: the coexistence of reason and the irrational or the unconscious, which Koolhaas discovered in Dalí’s Paranoid Critical Method and which became so important for his work and thinking. Perhaps, the disorientation that visitors

¹²⁵ As opposed to the ‘anti-urban symbol’ the spiral represented for Wright. Herbert Muschamp, ‘Rem Koolhaas’ New York State of Mind’, *The New York Times*, 4 November 1994.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

Chapter 2.2

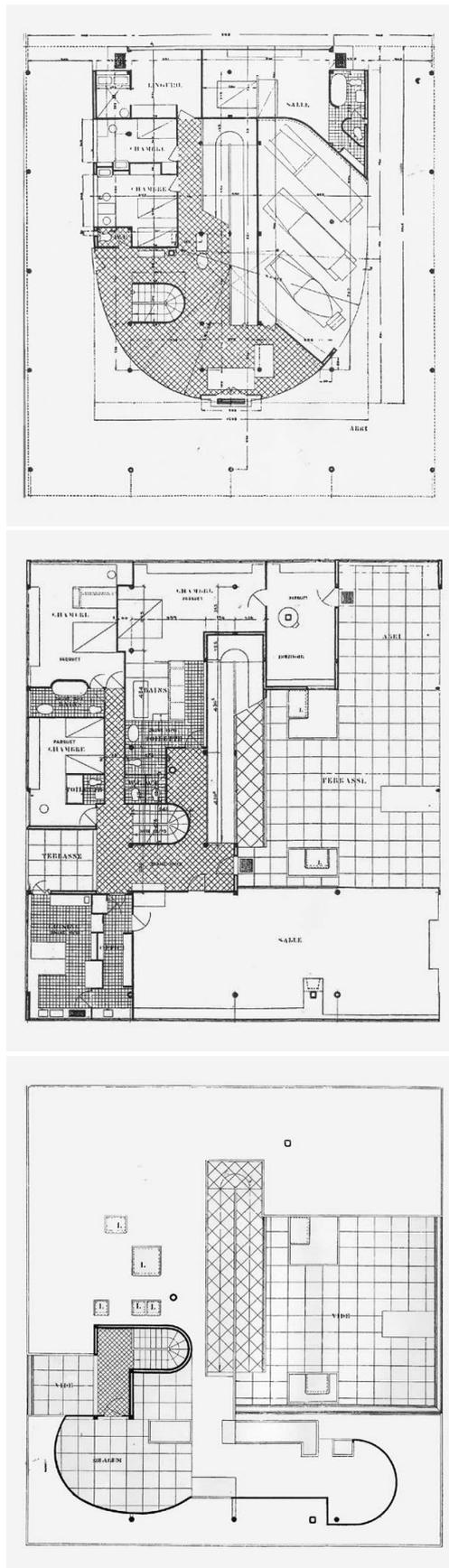


Figure 4. Le Corbusier. Villa Savoye. Poissy. 1929-31.

reportedly experienced in OMA buildings, has its place here.¹²⁷ Philip Ursprung interprets the experience of disorientation induced by Peter Eisenman's Convention Centre in Ohio (1989-93) as another example of the postmodernist sublime as outlined by Frederic Jameson in the context of the Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles.¹²⁸ If, however, Koolhaas did approve – consciously or unconsciously – of the Kunsthall's disorienting impact, his interest in the surrealist loss of control and the unconscious as liberating force is likely to have played a role as well.

A spiral inscribed in a square and a circuit entirely composed of ramps has already been proposed by Le Corbusier with his scheme for the Mundaneum from 1929. Le Corbusier compared the unfolding of the descending circuit to a film showing the process of flowering in slow-motion.¹²⁹ The diagrammatic 'purity' of the Mundaneum stands in stark contrast, however, to the acrobatics of intrinsic conflict at the Kunsthall. If Le Corbusier's scheme literally suspends the distinction between 'floor' and 'ramp', the Kunsthall seems to suggest that the inclination of a floor may vary and that the floor's primary use may overlap with its use as a means of vertical circulation. The Auditorium (= ramp) and the Skew Ramp (= Roof Garden) are 'precedents' for the latter, while the floor as a whole demonstrates a general flexibility with regard to the horizontal – a flexibility, after all, that allows the circuit to encompass the 'totality' of the Kunsthall.

As for the motif of a ramp that either pierces or crosses the volume of a building, Le Corbusier's work is particularly rich; it appears in the Millowners Association in Ahmedabad (1954), the Carpenter Center at Harvard (1961-64), and the project for the Congress Palace in Strasbourg (1964). The motif of a continuous ramp ascending to a roof terrace recurs at the Villa Savoye in Poissy (1929) and the project for the Congress Palace. With respect to the actual space, the circuit of the Kunsthall is largely informed by what Le Corbusier in a text from 1926 called an *enjambement*, applying the term that in

¹²⁷ For instance: Anny Shelton, et al., 'Why people get Lost in the Seattle Central Library', in: Dalton, Hölischer, 'Take One Building', 157-166. Theresia Leuenberger discusses difficulties of orientation that visitors experienced in the Kunsthall; see: Leuenberger, *Architektur als Akteur*, 219-220, 282. In fact, the author incidentally witnessed more than once visitors lamenting of not finding their way through the building.

¹²⁸ Philip Ursprung, *Der Wert der Oberfläche* (Zürich: gta Verlag, 2017), 106-108.

¹²⁹ Le Corbusier, 'Mundaneum 1929', in: Boesiger, Stonorov, *Le Corbusier*, vol. 1, 194.

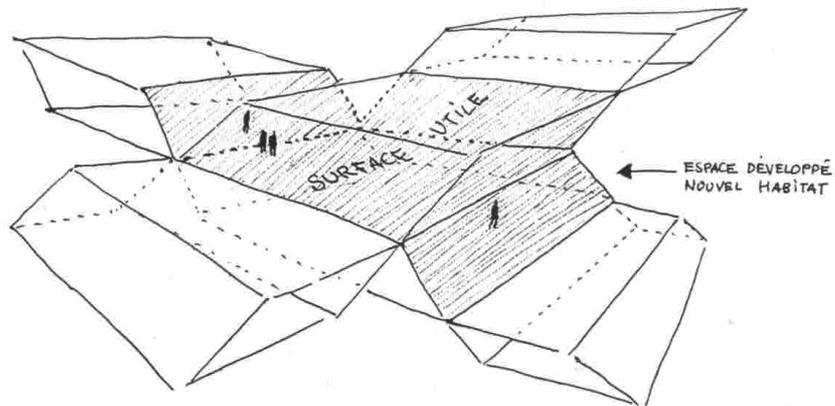
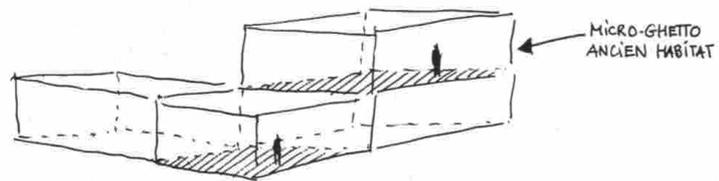
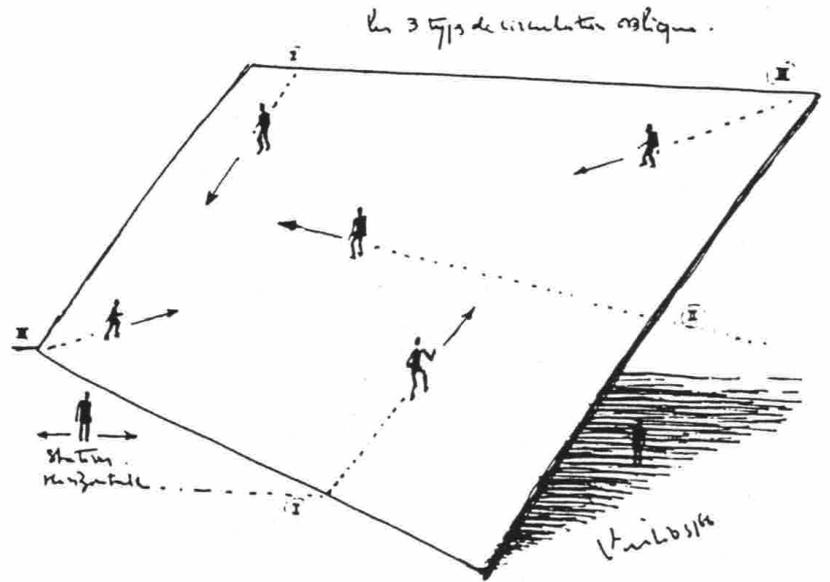


Figure 5. Claude Parent. Habitable circulation.

poetry denotes the ‘jump’ of a phrase from one line to the next to architecture.¹³⁰ With *enjambement* Le Corbusier refers to the ambiguity of the *plan libre* regarding the ‘limits’ of the various areas or uses of a space that are not being defined by (loadbearing) walls. In such interiors, Le Corbusier points out, the different character of their enclosure escapes definition: ‘One wall of one room is the wall of another room.’¹³¹ Bruno Reichlin, who in his essay ‘Jeanneret-Le Corbusier, Painter-Architect’ traces the principle of the *enjambement* back to Le Corbusier’s painting and its roots in cubism, exemplifies this idea with the Villa Besnus at Vaucresson (1922): ‘Once inside, the visitor is forced to the periphery and must discover the interior progressively. [...] Rounded corners [at the top floor] and the absence of doors erode the sense of transition.’¹³² [Figure 3] The corridor shares the same window and exterior wall with a bedroom without a sill or threshold that would distinguish them as two separate spaces, and the same holds true for the bedroom and the boudoir.

The *enjambement*, as understood by Le Corbusier, is a principle that governs the entire articulation of the Kunsthall’s circuit. That is indicated already by the drawings from December 1988, and would become fully apparent when the building was completed in 1992. All spaces of the circuit are confluent, regardless of their function or significance in terms of hierarchy. Most exterior walls act as *enjambements* precisely in the sense of the word, extending seamlessly from one space to another.

For their relative completeness, the correspondences between the ‘whole’ of the Kunsthall and the Villa Savoye merit brief mention: the more or less central ramp system linking all three levels in both buildings; the constellation of a surfacing ramp and a patio; the ‘roof garden’ as the ramps’ final destination; the ‘still life’ of arbitrary shapes crowning both buildings; the constellation of a horizontal volume on an open site; the ground floor undercut by a driveway in either case; the square footprint of both, although not ‘perfect’ in the case of the villa; the horizontal division of each of their facades in a

¹³⁰ Le Corbusier uses the term in: ‘Notes à la suite,’ *Cahiers d’Art* 2 (Feb 1926), 46-52. On this subject and the parallels to Rowe’s and Slutzky’s notion of ‘phenomenal transparency’, see: Bruno Reichlin, ‘Jeanneret-Le Corbusier, Painter-Architect’, in: Eve Blau, Nancy J. Troy, *Architecture and Cubism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1997), 205, 207.

¹³¹ Quoted after: Reichlin, ‘Jeanneret-Le Corbusier, Painter-Architect’, 207.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 202.

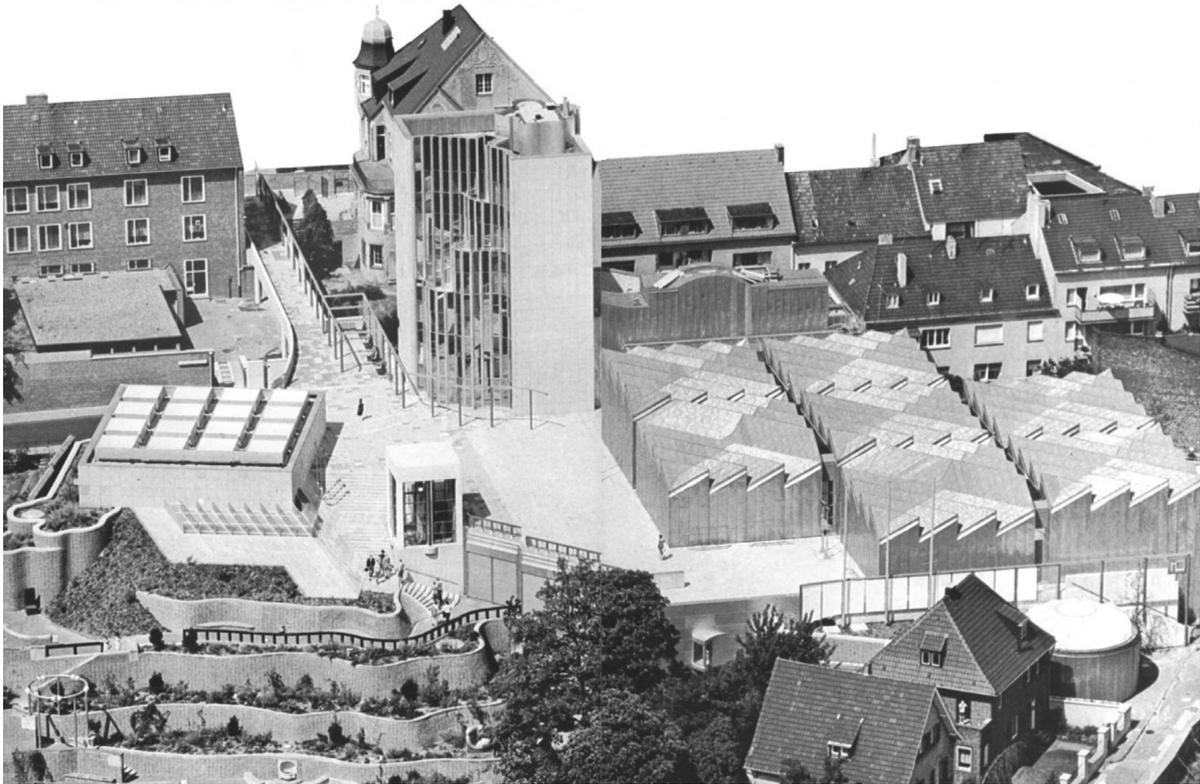


Figure 6. Above: Hans Hollein. Museum Abteiberg. Mönchengladbach. 1972-82.
Below: James Stirling. Staatsgalerie Stuttgart. 1977-83.

full and empty half; the ostentatious thinness of these facades, alienating any desire for solidity and longevity – almost as if a ‘suppressed identification’ with Le Corbusier was forging ahead.¹³³

A recent genealogy by Harvard-AMO

In parallel to the catalogue of the Venice Biennale of Architecture which he curated in 2014, Koolhaas issued, as editor in chief, the 15 volumes *Elements of Architecture* on 15 different architectural components – floors, walls, toilets, windows, escalators and ramps, amongst other things. The publication drew on research which was conducted by Koolhaas’s students at Harvard’s Graduate School of Design in collaboration with OMA’s think tank AMO. The volume on ramps, by Koolhaas and Irma Boom, opens with a select genealogy of ramps, with a structure both chronological and thematic. None of Le Corbusier’s projects is being shown on the 92 pages. The compilation of lost, built, unbuilt and purely imaginary ramps begins with their hypothetical use for the construction of pyramids in Egypt, Herodotus’s description of Babel, the Ziggurat of Dur-Sharrukin in Iraq, and Breughel’s paintings of the Babel tower. Several pages further, it ends with a relatively large section on projects by Frank Lloyd Wright and Oscar Niemeyer.¹³⁴ Most of the examples are spiral ramps. The subsequent two large chapters are dedicated to Tim Nugent, ‘the unsung hero of the accessibility ramp’, and to the French architect Claude Parent.

Parent’s work from the 1960s and 1970s is certainly among the precedents to the circuit of the Kunsthal. Parent’s drawings and his and Paul Virilio’s writings pivoting around the concept of the *fonction oblique*, advocate and illustrate a built environment of primarily inclined surfaces. [Figure 4] Like Koolhaas at the Kunsthal, Parent and Virilio envisaged a space without walls, bending them down so as to provide walkable ramps. Like at the Kunsthal, the oblique floor is not only conceived for circulation but for any kind of use. Parent’s giant oblique structures replacing the ‘vertical order’ of the existing cities, are conceived as ‘liveable, habitable, circulation’. In the passage ‘Functionality and

¹³³ Compared to his open admiration for Leonidov and Mies, Koolhaas’ relation to Le Corbusier appears more ambiguous ever since his caricature of the Swiss-French architect in *Delirious New York*.

¹³⁴ Rem Koolhaas et al., ‘ramp’, in: idem: *Elements of Architecture* (Cologne: Taschen, 2018), 2243-2333. First published in 2014.

Chapter 2.2

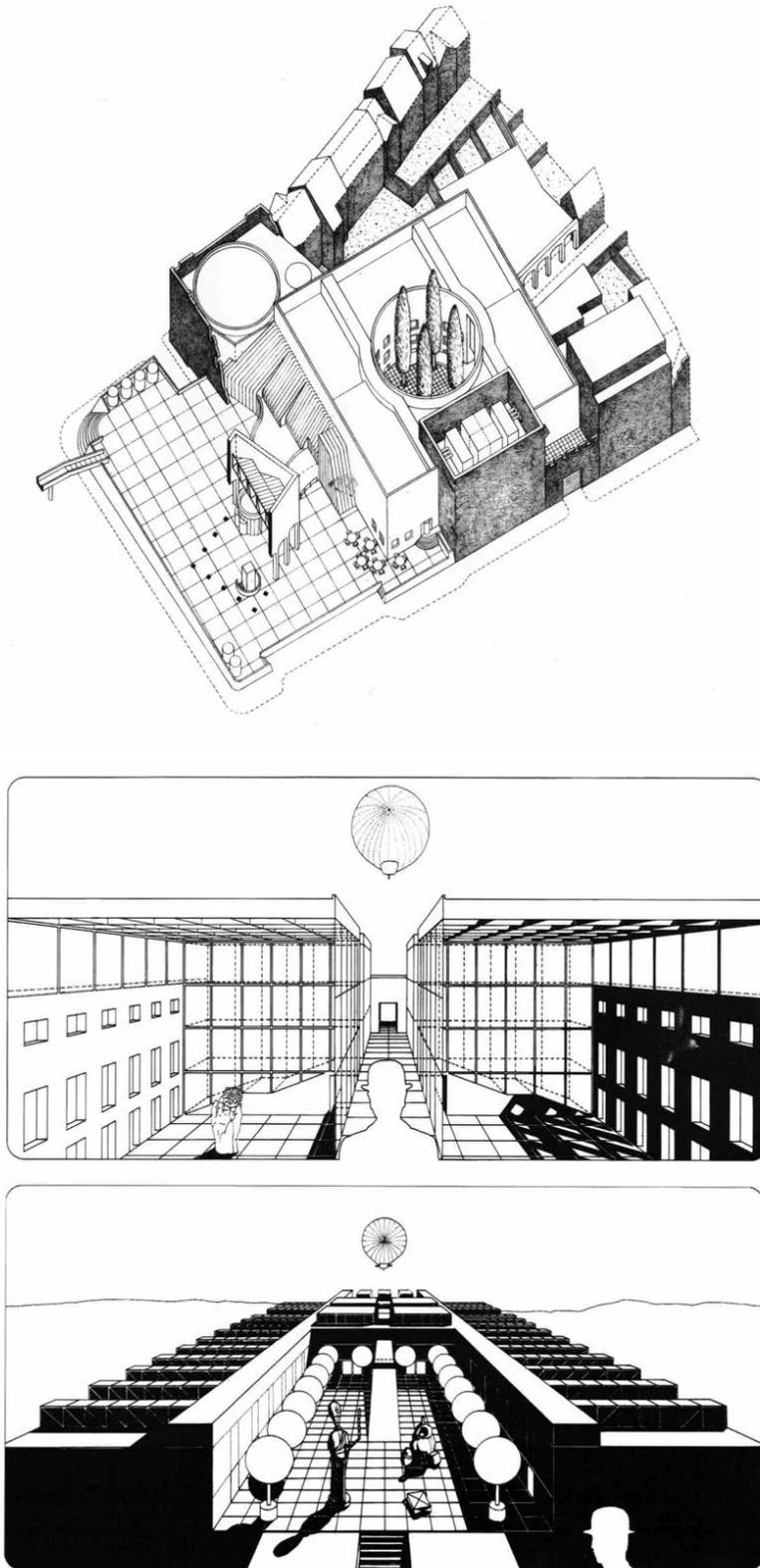


Figure 7. Above: James Stirling. Competition entry. Nordrhein-Westfalen Museum. Düsseldorf. 1975.
Below: Oswald M. Ungers, Competition entry. Wallraf-Richartz Museum. 1975.

Fantasy’ the authors of *Elements* explain: ‘Parent’s ramps for living on would attempt to create hierarchy, destabilize relationships, change how we make love, read, eat.’¹³⁵ In fact, the inhabitants of these structures were meant to move about freely as nomads engaging in no matter which activity; Virilio wrote in 1966:

To bring about change, it is necessary to devise an urbanism in which circulation becomes habitable – an architecture in which an animating oblique function supplants the neutralizing one of the fixed horizontal plane, an architecture in which mankind is propelled by the very profile of its habitat, in which the city becomes an enormous projector, or torrent of every kind of activity, every kind of fluidity.¹³⁶

Taken together, the texts, quotes and illustrations compiled in the booklet contain catchwords and evoke ideas that have been critical for Koolhaas’ thinking ever since *Delirious New York*: ‘a more intense form of interaction’,¹³⁷ a destabilization of human relationships, and, implicitly, the unpredictable encounter of activities. In other words, the dynamism of the oblique floor, of free movement and unspecified use, appears to imply for Koolhaas – at least in 2014 – first and foremost a societal dimension, that does not, however, align with social improvement.

Stirling and others: inspiration and appropriation of recent museum designs

In 1988 the use of ramps and sloped surfaces was comparatively new in the work of OMA. A series of unrealized projects of the same and the previous year were the first OMA projects to include sloped accessible surfaces as a central feature of the scheme: the inclined podium – called ‘urban deck’ – at the foot of the Eusebius Tower in Arnhem (1987); the ‘sinking’ triangular platform of the Eurodisney complex (1988) serving as a beach and running track; and the mound-shaped golf course on the roof of

¹³⁵ Ibid., 2245.

¹³⁶ Paul Virilio, ‘Habitable Circulation’, *Architecture Principe* 3, (April 1966). Quoted after: Pamela Johnston (ed.), *The Function of the Oblique* (London: The Architectural Association, 1996), 68.

¹³⁷ Rem Koolhaas during an interview with Parent about the oblique function. Koolhaas, ‘Tipping’, in: idem, *Elements of Architecture*, 2305.

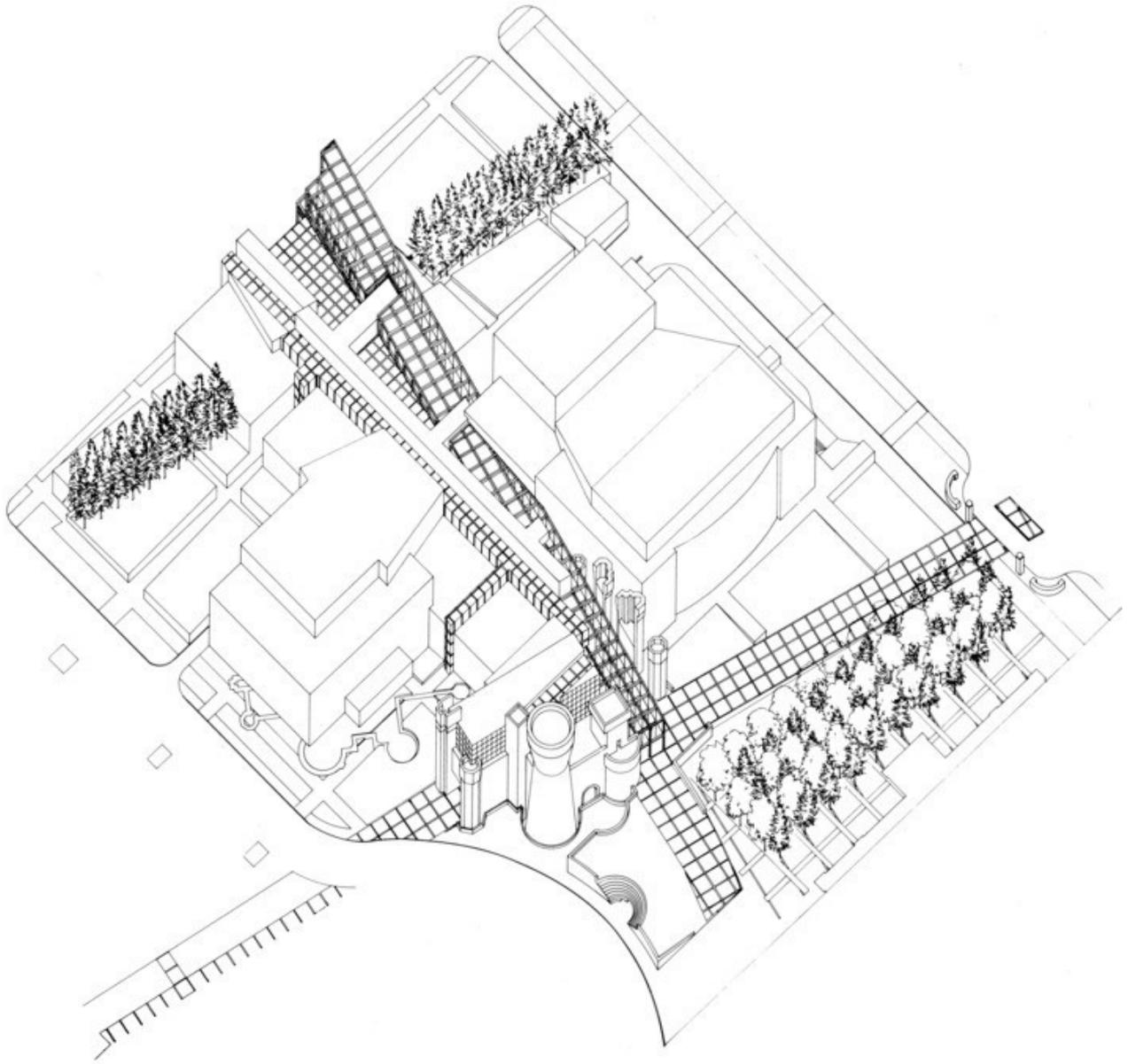


Figure 8. Peter Eisenman. Wexner Center for Visual Arts. Columbus, Ohio. 1983-89.

the Sportmuseum Flevohof (1988). The spiral ramp giving access to the information centre De Bol in Rotterdam (1985) is probably the first example of a ramp that largely informs a design as a whole. The little-known study for a parking garage at Torenstraat (1985) in The Hague aside, the first rectilinear – ‘Corbusian’ – ramp of some significance appears to be the one in the Villa Dall’Ava in Paris, designed in 1986.¹³⁸ The ramp of the villa is integrated into a circulation system, that – with a series of stairs, an enfilade, an open plan and an exterior gallery – allows to move through the building in spirals and loops, the only ‘impasse’ being the terrace and pool on the roof. The four-staged ramp at the NAI is prominently featured as an impressive cascade vis à vis the main entrance, and one of its segments anticipates the combined use as an auditorium and as a means of vertical circulation. As in the early versions of the new scheme for the Kunsthal, the ramp is confined to the equivalent of a stairwell – a limit that only the scheme from December did transcend.

Some of the references are obvious. The study De Bol as a whole is tantamount to a pastiche of Wallace Harrison’s spherical pavilion for the New York World’s Fair in 1939.¹³⁹ The competition entries for the National Library in Paris, the Sea Terminal in Zeebrugge and early versions of the masterplan for Euralille (1989-94) apparently seize on the spiral-ramps recurring in the work of Frank Lloyd Wright. More than once – and this applies also to the projects for the parking garage and the Hilton Hotel (1990) in The Hague – the ramps were requisite to permit the vertical circulation of cars. As for the ramps in OMA’s three museum schemes from 1988 – the NAI, Kunsthal and Sport Museum – precedents of this particular building type may have served as a point of reference as well, of the remote modernist past, but also of more recent projects. Ramps played a key role in some of the best-known built and unbuilt museum designs of the 1970s and 1980s. Examples are Stirling’s Staatsgalerie Stuttgart (1977-84), Stirling’s competition entries for the museums in Düsseldorf and Cologne from 1975, Ungers’ scheme for the Cologne competition, Meier’s museums in Frankfurt (1979-85), Atlanta (1980-83) and

¹³⁸ Koolhaas presented the scheme for the Villa Dall’Ava (1984-1991) in November 1986 at a conference in Chicago. See: Stanley Tigerman (ed.), *The Chicago Tapes. Transcript of the conference at the University of Illinois at Chicago. November 7 and 8, 1986* (New York: Rizzoli, 1987), 164-173. The website of OMA defines 1986 as the year when the villa in Paris was designed: <http://oma.eu/projects/villa-dall-ava>. Accessed 15 June 2018.

¹³⁹ Illustrations of the project are included in *Delirious New York*. Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 284.

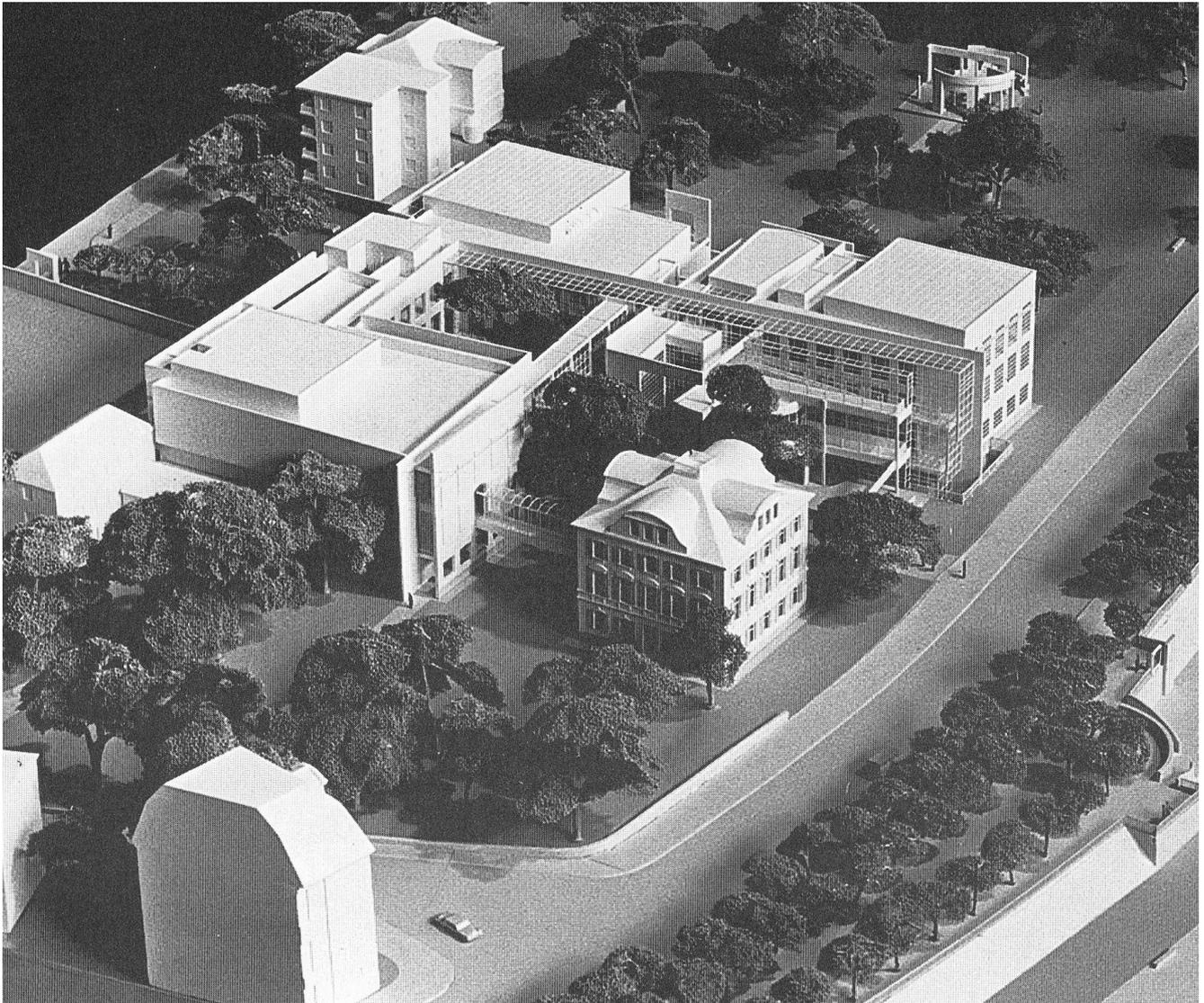


Figure 9. Richard Meier, Museum for Applied Arts, Frankfurt. 1979-85.

Barcelona (1986-93), next to Eisenman's Wexner Centre for Visual Arts (1983-89) – the latter not being a museum, but still a building with an area reserved for the display of art at its centre. [Figures 6-8] It appears not unlikely that the increasing importance of the ramp and the bent surface for OMA's work of the late eighties and early nineties had been propelled by the firm's commitment to museums in 1987 and 1988.

Another common *sujet* of museums built in the 1970s and 1980s is what William Curtis has called the “democratic” path: a public walkway or road that crosses the precinct of a museum, at times cutting right through the centre of the building, signalling, as Curtis has it, the institution's ‘openness’ and ‘accessibility’.¹⁴⁰ Curtis refers to German museums of that period and to Stirling's Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart in particular, explaining that the ‘brief called for a footpath across the block – a common demand in German architectural competitions.’ ‘Democratic paths’ are also incorporated in the above schemes for Cologne, Düsseldorf, and Frankfurt. Further examples are: Hollein's Abteiberg Museum in Mönchengladbach (1972-82); the town hall in Léon Krier's competition entry for La Villette (1976); Dissing and Weitling's Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in Düsseldorf; or the Wallraf-Richartz Museum eventually built by Busman & Haberer (1975-86). Like the Kunsthall, Meier's museum in Frankfurt is crossed and accessed by two intersecting routes, dividing the complex literally into four distinct squares. [Figure 9] In principle analogy to the Kunsthall, a large glazed wall exposes the Corbusian ramp connecting all three levels to the adjacent pathway allowing passers-by to ‘participate’ in the movement of the visitors.

¹⁴⁰ William Curtis, ‘Virtuosity around a Void’, *Architectural Review* 1054 (1984), 41. ‘Democratic’ qualities of contemporary museum design have been repeatedly addressed. According to David Galloway, German juries tended to consider spatial variety as a democratic quality since the late 1970s. Referring to the Sprengel Museum in Hannover by Peter and Ursula Trint (1977-79) he writes: ‘Completed in 1979, the Sprengel Museum anticipated the open plan, multiple view, supposedly “democratic” approach to museum design that has been looked upon with increasing favor by architectural juries, and that has found its most flamboyant champion in the Viennese architect Hans Hollein’. In: ‘The New German Museums’, *Art in America* (July 1985), 77. See also Alan Colquhoun, ‘Democratic Monument’, *Architectural Review* 1054 (December 1984), 19. In Luca Basso Peressut's historical precis on museums, the designs by Wright and Mies figure as the first to reframe the museum as a democratic institution. Luca Basso Peressut, *Musei. Architetture 1990-2000* (Milan: Federico Motta Editore, 1999), 29-30.



Figure 10. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. Nun's Island Esso Gas Station. Montreal. 1967-68.

At Eisenman's Wexner Centre for Visual Arts, the sloped public passage cuts between two existing campus buildings. Like in Frankfurt – and later on in Rotterdam – the passage is divided by a glass wall from a 'twin-space' of inner circulation. But the fusion of inner and outer circulation of Meier's Museum for Applied Arts is developed one step further. As in the case of the Ramp Street, a genuine unity of the two areas is suggested, as the white trellis extends on both sides of the partition, although the covering of the interior half is glazed-in. No doubt, the scheme of the Kunsthalle was deeply rooted in the themes and motifs of contemporary museum design. And yet, at the Kunsthalle, these themes and motifs were radically reframed. Ramps, in the museums dating from the 1970s and 1980s, used to be isolated elements, often with figurative qualities and restricted to circulation. With the Kunsthalle, OMA re-proposed the sloped floor and the principle unity of gallery space and circulation on multiple levels, implicitly expanding the range of possible uses. This principle permitted a truly symbiotic relation between the 'democratic path' of the Ramp Street and the interior's main circuit – stressed by the literally shared floor of the passage – that differs more than gradually from Eisenman's Wexner Center and Meier's museum in Frankfurt.

Like the first scheme for the Kunsthalle, the one from December 1988 marked a pronounced opposition to the monumentality and classicist borrowings of contemporaneous museums, such as Venturi Scott Brown's extension of the National Gallery in London (1985-91), Stirling's Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart and Tate Gallery in London (1980-7), or Ungers' Kunsthalle in Hamburg (1986-96).¹⁴¹ A forecourt, a podium, a perron, a separate vestibule with a ticket counter and bookshop, a ceremonial stair, enfilades and vaulted spaces lit by lanterns from above: all these – seemingly indispensable – paraphernalia of the classical museum were either missing or transformed beyond recognition. In fact, the entrance hall, due to its slope, is hardly recognizable as such.¹⁴² To the extent that it appears as an Auditorium – which

¹⁴¹ See Chapters 1.6 and 1.7.

¹⁴² Sabine Schneider would write in her review from 1992: 'The next surprise comes at the threshold to the entrance hall, for the foyer hardly corresponds to what one understands by a vestibule of museum; rather it resembles an auditorium. Sabine Schneider, 'Kunsthalle in Rotterdam. Trägerische Transparenz', *Baumeister* 11 (1992), 41, (author trans.).

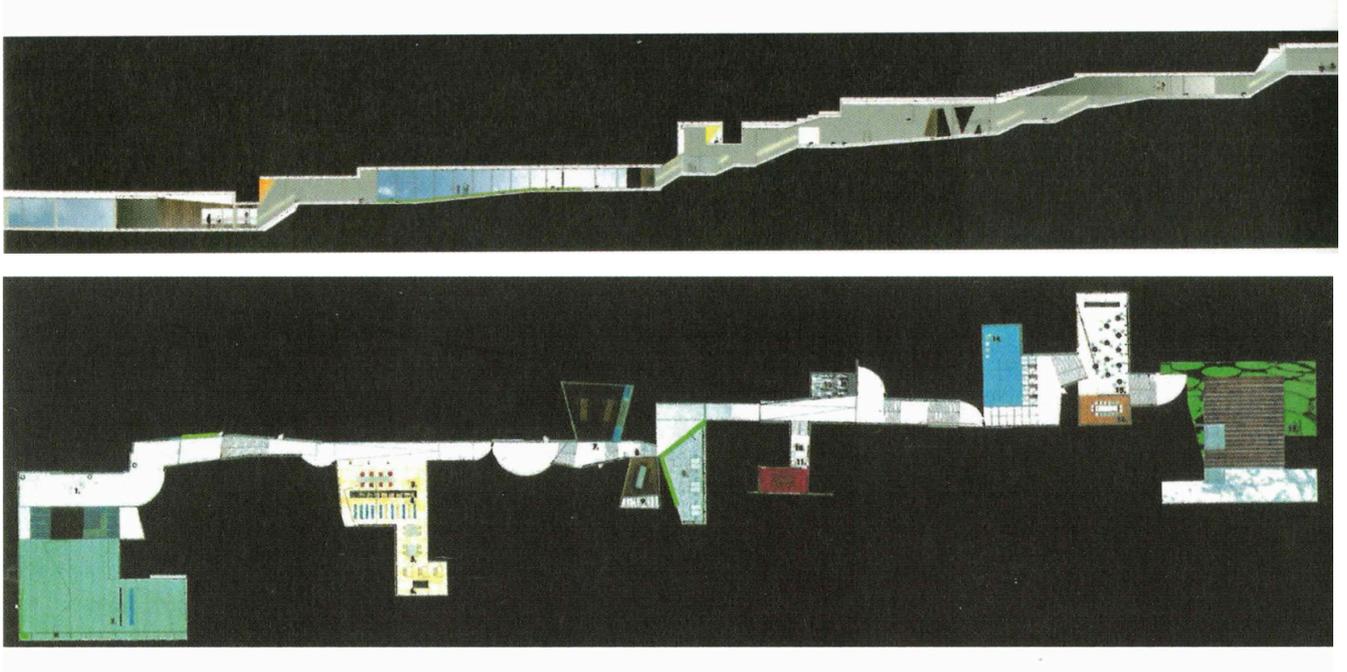
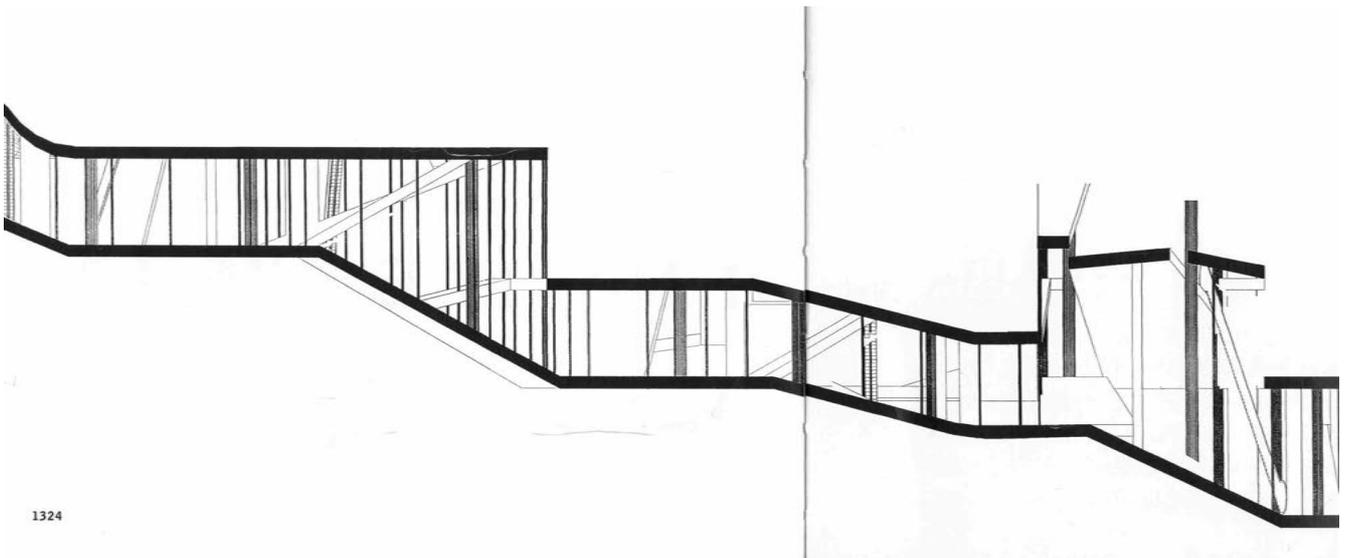


Figure 11. OMA/Rem Koolhaas. Above: Jussieu Libraries. Paris. Section 'Trajectory', detail. 1992.
Below: Dutch embassy. Berlin. Section and floor plan of 'Trajectory'. 1997-2003.

it is in part – or a ‘stair without steps’, the space lacks the preliminary, attuning quality of the (late) 20th century’s museum lobby.¹⁴³

The facade along the Maas Boulevard is ambiguous: while the open space sandwiched by the roof overhang with columns and an ascending platform appears a modernist version of a portico – and would be compared later on by numerous reviewers to Mies’ Neue Nationalgalerie – the south side as a whole is reminiscent of a gas station. The envisaged use of this open space as a driveway would have enforced the resemblance.¹⁴⁴ The Kunsthall surely does recall the gas station on Nun’s Island (1967-68), also by Mies van der Rohe. [Figure 10] The flat roof of the gas station in Montreal also unites two discrete volumes: one flush with its edge and bracketed by two brick boxes; the other set back and entirely glazed. There is, likewise, a broad passage between the two volumes. Black steel columns also support a flat cantilevering roof, while one of the massive walls occupies the left-hand corner if one approaches the building from the street. From a distance the likeness is compelling. Given Koolhaas’ avowed fascination with Mies and the recurring references to his work in the oeuvre of OMA, it is quite conceivable that Koolhaas, at some point, became aware of this partial resemblance to the Miesian precedent.¹⁴⁵ If so, he apparently embraced it.¹⁴⁶

Paper analogies

OMA would repeatedly seize on the nexus of ideas on which the spiralling circuit of the Kunsthall is based. Obvious examples are the Jussieu libraries in Paris (1992), the Educatorium in Utrecht (1993-

¹⁴³ Jeffrey Kipnis, in 1996, used the term ‘disestablishment’ to denote what he saw as an anti-authoritarian quality of the Kunsthall and OMA’s latest work in general. As for the Kunsthall, Kipnis refers mainly to the entrance sequence and the choice of finishes. See: Kipnis, ‘Recent Koolhaas’, 28-29.

¹⁴⁴ Deyan Sudjic, in his review from 1993, would compare the Kunsthall to a ‘motorway service station’. Deyan Sudjic, ‘The Museum as a Megastar’, *The Guardian*, 25 January (1993), A7.

¹⁴⁵ Obvious examples of projects with Miesian resonances are: The bent Barcelona Pavilion shown at the Triennale in Milan (Casa Palestra, 1986); the Patio Houses in Rotterdam (1984-88), especially the early versions of the scheme; the Geerlings House at Holten (1992-95); the De Rotterdam towers in Rotterdam (1997-2013).

¹⁴⁶ The further development of the design tends to consolidate if not to reinforce the correspondences: the choice of steel columns with H-sections, the use of a corrugated material for the ceiling, the proposal of parking stalls (later omitted).

Chapter 2.2

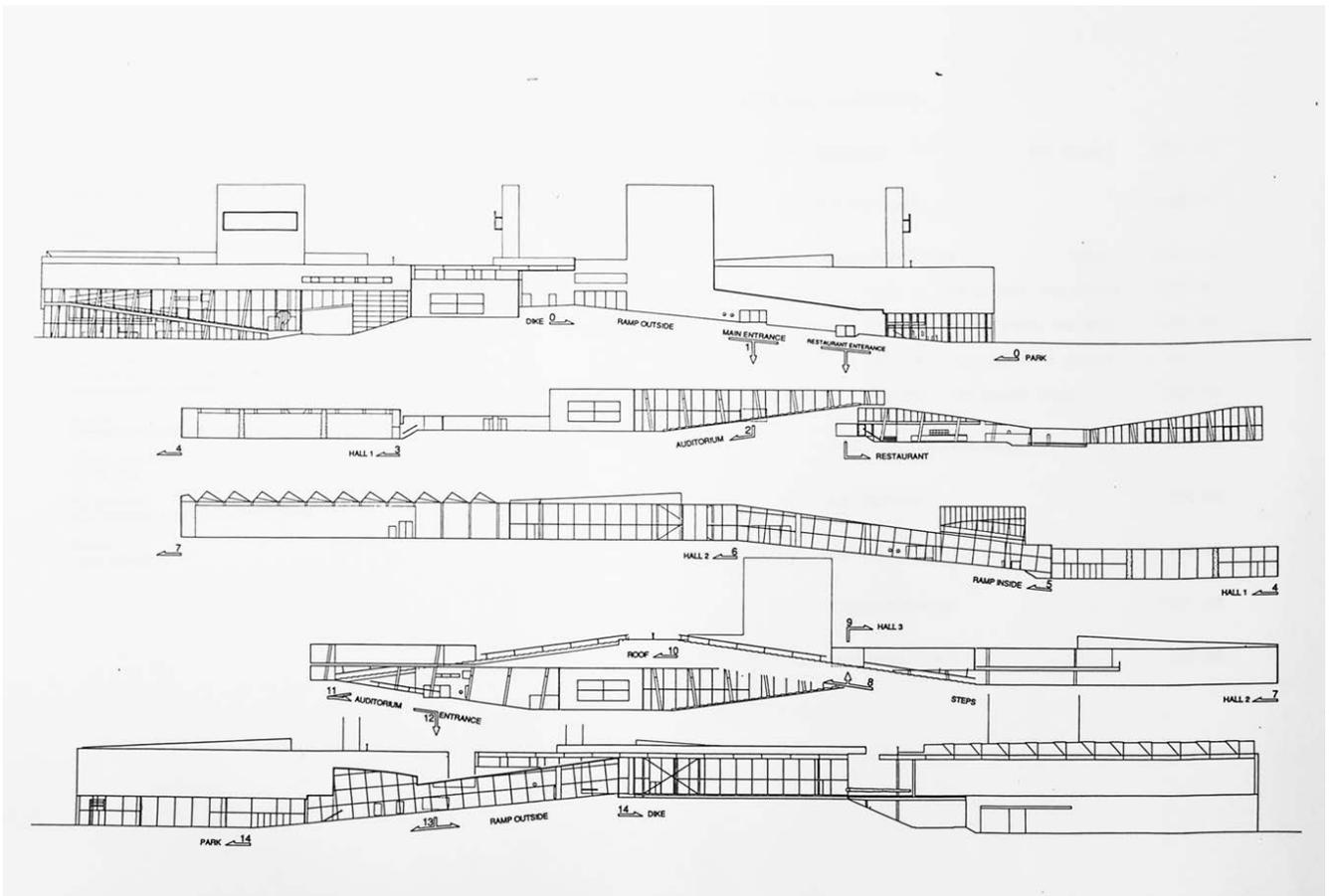


Figure 12. OMA/Rem Koolhaas. Kunsthal. Interior and exterior elevations. Probably 1993.

97)¹⁴⁷, the Dutch embassy in Berlin (1997-2004), the National University Museum in Seoul (1997-2005), and the Casa da Musica in Porto (1999-2005). A glance at the Jussieu Libraries in particular is instructive because at this occasion Koolhaas reframed the theme of the circuit bringing to the fore themes and qualities already latent in the Kunsthal scheme from December 1988. The eight floors of the two libraries are connected by a series of straight and curved slopes so as to form a single continuous surface that permits to ascend from the bottom to the roof in a spiralling movement without encountering stairs or steps. In *S,M,L,XL*, Koolhaas calls this path a ‘trajectory’, an expression which he would subsequently use as a standard term to denote spiralling *rues intérieures* like those of the Casa da Musica or the Dutch embassy.¹⁴⁸ He also refers to the floor as a ‘pliable’ surface so as to convey its principle flexibility to diverge from the horizontal at any point in the requisite angle or curve.¹⁴⁹ As Roberto Gargiani points out in a recent essay on the Kunsthal’s circuit, ‘the diagram of the spiral in the form of a long continuous strip composed of different segments similar to an “exquisite corpse,” would become a constant in the work of OMA that also called for new ways of representation.’¹⁵⁰ Although essentially homogeneous, the sequential montage of cross sections showing the ‘trajectory’ of the Jussieu Libraries in its entirety is a striking example. In *S,M,L,XL*, the reeling-off of the libraries’ spatial sequence spreads over several pages, and variations of this type of diagram were used for many later projects.¹⁵¹ [Figure 11] Its precursor, however, were the diagrams used to visualize the circuit of the Kunsthal and apparently produced shortly after the building was completed. [Figure 12] These drawings, first published in an issue of *techniques & architecture* in June 1993, do not show the circuit as a whole, but sequences of several interior or exterior elevations, such as: Auditorium – corridor – Hall 1; Hall 1 – Ramp Street – Hall 2; west façade – south façade (west corner) – Ramp Street – north façade (west corner). As in the diagrams showing the ‘trajectory’ of the Jussieu Libraries, all emphasis

¹⁴⁷ Dates according to Gargiani, *The Construction of Merveilles*, 194-201. The website of OMA specifies: 1992-95. <https://oma.eu/projects/educatorium>. Accessed 10 June 2020. *El Croquis* 79 (1996) specifies: 1994-97, the building apparently still being unfinished.

¹⁴⁸ Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 1320-1321.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 1310.

¹⁵⁰ Gargiani, ‘The Pliable Surface’, 657.

¹⁵¹ For instance, the ‘trajectory’ of the Dutch embassy in Berlin. OMA produced two different diagrams that single out its itinerary: on showing the sequence of cross sections, the other the sequence of floors. See: Böck, *Six Canonical Projects*, 202, 204.

Chapter 2.2

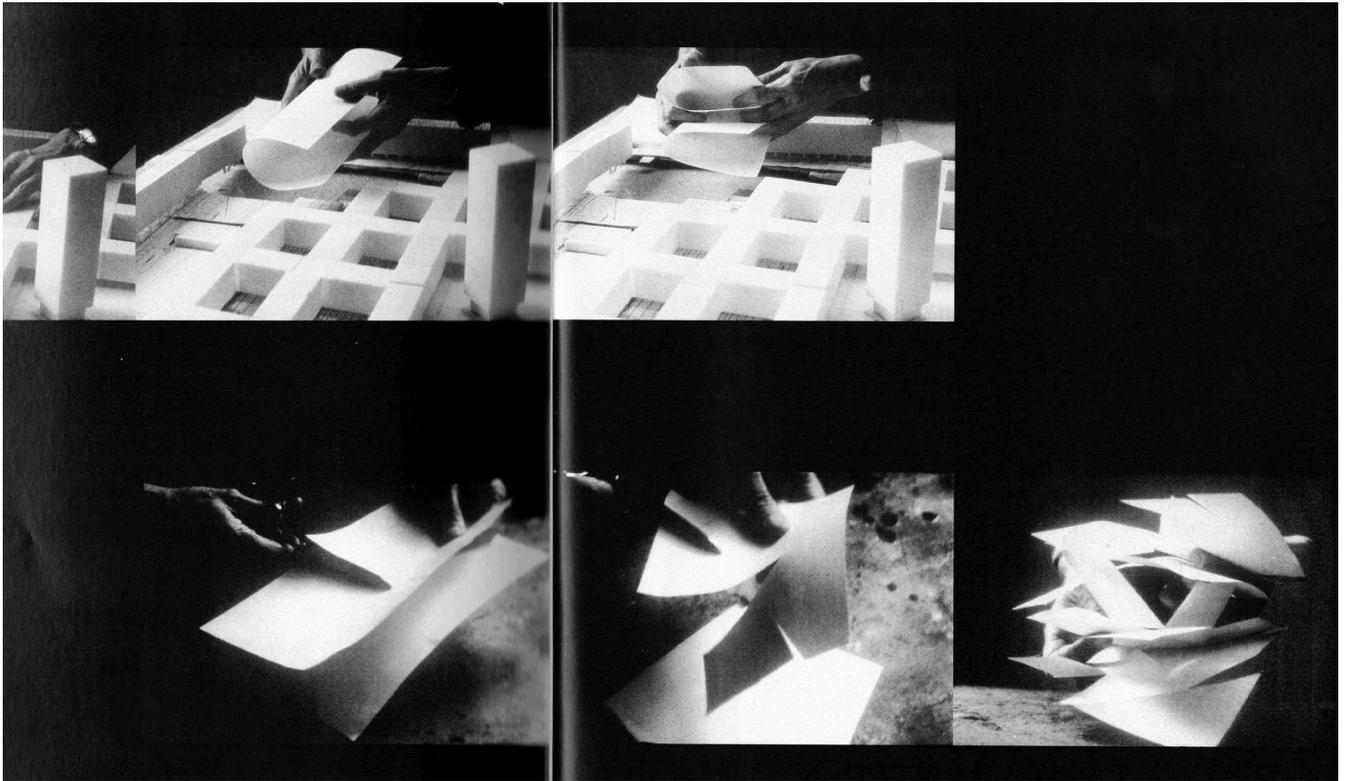


Figure 13. OMA/Rem Koolhaas. Jussieu Libraries, Paris. 1992. Illustration from *S,M,L,XL*.

is put on the sequential perception – not only of the interior but also of the exterior, the public passage of the Ramp Street included.

Gargiani points to a series of formal correspondences between the ‘trajectory’ of the Jussieu libraries and Leibniz’ notion of the fold as discussed by Gilles Deleuze in his book *Le pli* on the one hand, and the project *Caminhando* by Brazilian artist Lygia Clark on the other.¹⁵² In the introductory chapter, when discussing Leibniz’s notion of elastic solids, Deleuze explains:

Thus a continuous labyrinth [of an elastic solid] is not a line that dissolves into independent points, as flowing sand might dissolve into grains, but resembles a sheet of paper divided into infinite folds or separated into bending movements, each one determined by the consistent or conspiring surroundings. [...] The model for the sciences of matter is the “origami”, as the Japanese philosopher might say, or the art of folding paper.¹⁵³

The analogy between the Jussieu Libraries’ ‘trajectory’ and the circuit of the Kunsthal is twofold: the notion of continuity, coherence, and ultimately unity, which is certainly a central issue for both projects; and the image of the folded sheet of paper, or origami, which is already latent in some sketches and the wall-less working models for the Kunsthal from December 1988. It is fully explicit in a sequence of pictures, also included in *S,M,L,XL*, that shows Koolhaas’ hands first folding, then cutting a sheet of paper, and eventually producing the elaborate configuration of the libraries various floors of the libraries in Paris. [Figure 13] At the same time, as indicated by Gargiani, the black and white photographs of hands cutting paper with scissors emulate a photo spread of Clark’s participatory project *Caminhando*.

¹⁵² Gargiani, ‘The Pliable Surface’, 658. As for Deleuze’s *Le pli*, Gargiani refers to the analogy between the combination of rectilinear columns with curvilinear floor slabs and the drawings by Paul Klee which Deleuze used in his book. One of them juxtaposes an S-shaped curve with hatchings of straight, parallel lines, illustrating the curve’s points of inflection. See: Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold. Leibniz and the Baroque* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 15. First published in French in 1988.

¹⁵³ Deleuze, *The Fold*, 6.

Chapter 2.2



Figure 14. Lygia Clark. Caminhando, 1963.

[Figure 14] Pictures from 1963 show Clark's hands with scissors, cutting lengthwise a ring of paper.¹⁵⁴

Clark describes her proceedings in the form of instructions for future participants:

Make the Caminhando yourself with a white strip of paper around the book, cut it across its width, twist it, and glue it in order to get a Möbius strip. Then take a pair of scissors, stick a point into the surface and cut it along its length. Take care not to go into the already cut part – which would separate the strip into two pieces. When you have gone completely around the Möbius strip, choose between cutting to the right or the left of the cut already made. ... As the strip is cut its gets finer and is unfold in unfolded in intertwinings.¹⁵⁵

Clark explains she used the Moebius strip for *Caminhando* because it 'makes us live the experience of a time without limit and of a continuous space.'¹⁵⁶ A sculpture series from the same year is based on the principle of the Moebius strip as well. The title – '*O dentro è o fora*' (The Inside is the Outside) – indicates the unity of supposedly distinct spaces. Art historian Luis Pérez-Oramas explicates: 'It was not just the form of the Möbius strip that intrigued her but also its capacity to determine a spatial coordinate in which there is no discontinuity between interior and exterior. The Möbius strip is a line, but one that no longer functions to separate things, beings or fields.'¹⁵⁷ Some of Clark's work is shown in *S,M,L,XL*, albeit not *Caminhando*, nor any of her sculptures related to the Moebius strip.¹⁵⁸ An interview from 2005, from which Gargiani quotes in his essay, suggests that Koolhaas has been familiar with Clark's work since the 1960s. In the interview Koolhaas explains that art movements like Fluxus, the Situationists and arte povera have always been formative for his work as an architect. 'For me', he adds, 'the work of artists like Hélio Oiticica or Lygia Clark has key importance.'¹⁵⁹ To the extent that this was also the case during the 1980s, it is anything but unlikely that Koolhaas was aware of Clark's

¹⁵⁴ Cornelia H. Butler, Luis Pérez-Oramas (ed.), *Lygia Clark: The Abandonment of Art, 1948-1988* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2014), 198-199.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 160.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Luis Pérez-Oramas, 'Lygia Clark: If You Hold a Stone', in: Butler, Pérez-Oramas, *Lygia Clark*, 39.

¹⁵⁸ See: Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 554, 968.

¹⁵⁹ Jean François Chevrier, 'Changing Dimensions', *L'Architecture Aujourd'hui* 361 (2005), 98.

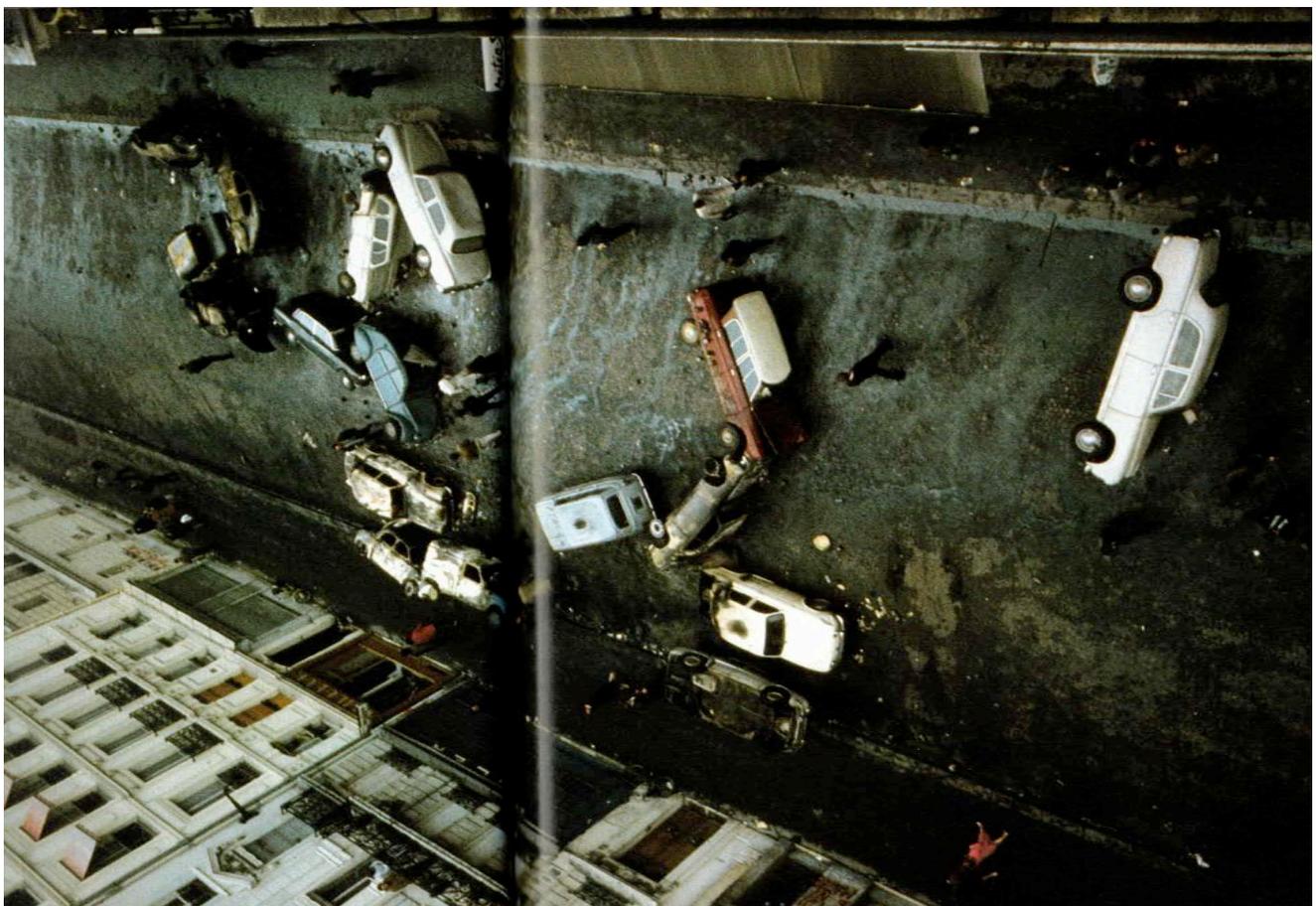
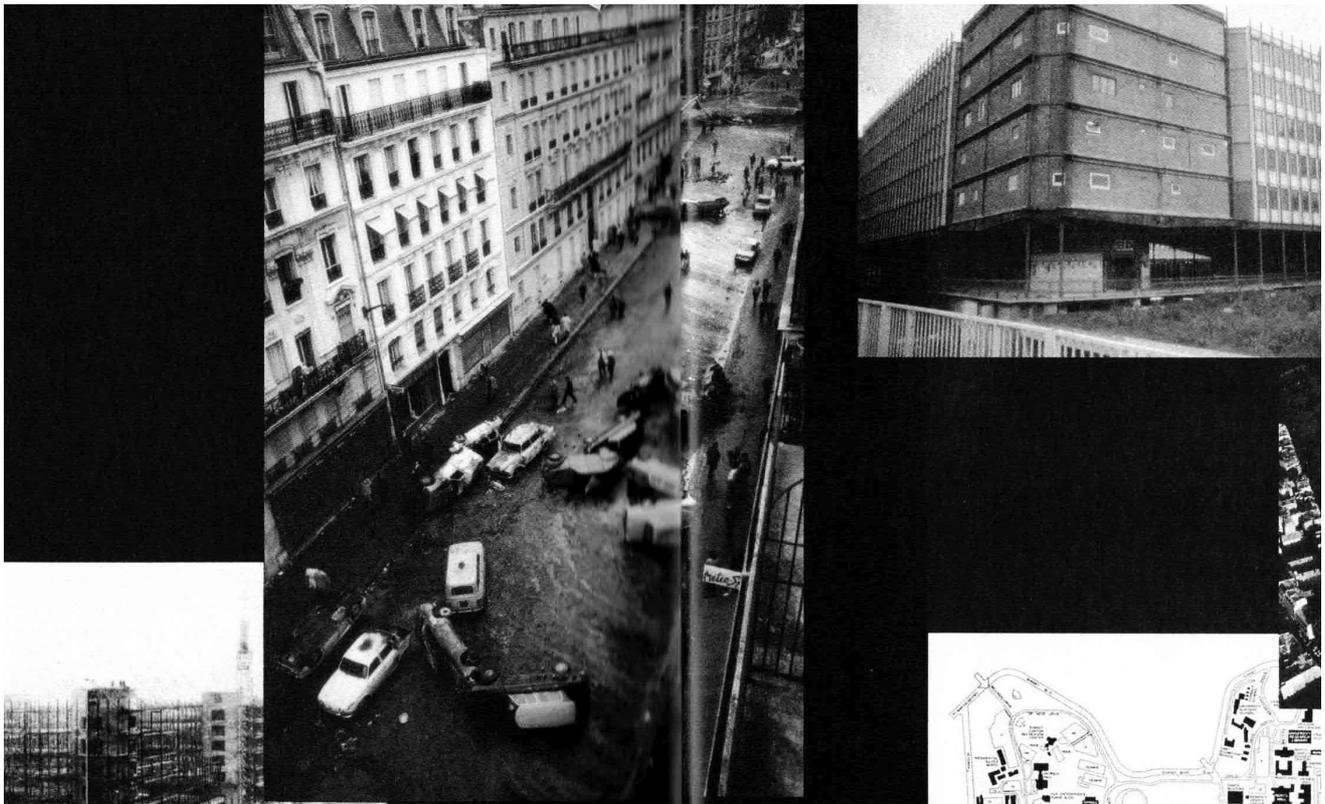


Figure 15. OMA/Rem Koolhaas. SMLXL. Above: Illustrations from chapter on the Jussieu Libraries.
Below: Illustration from the chapter on the Kunsthalle.

notion of the Moebius strip, when the motif became conceptually critical for the scheme of the Kunsthal from December 1988. In either case, there *is* some kinship between Clark's understanding of the Moebius strip as a principle that suspends division on the one hand, and, on the other, the continuity of the arts centre's circuit 'oscillating' between inside and outside; the prospect of permeability of the building as well as its transparency are already discernible at this stage.¹⁶⁰

In purely formal terms, the pliable surface already occurred in OMA's scheme for the Nexus Housing in Fukuoka (1988-91). Fuminori Hoshino worked on the Kunsthal and the housing project more or less in parallel. The walls at the back of the courtyard houses in Fukuoka are 'bent' into the shape of undulating roofs. The distinction between the two architectural elements is suspended, as is the distinction between the bent floors of the Jussieu project or – less explicitly – the Kunsthal. The three stacked main layers of OMA's project for Agadir (1990) are conceived in correspondence to geological strata with a certain depth. The surface of the large space at the centre, called 'plaza', undulates so as to emulate the surrounding dunes; but it does not continue to the levels above and below. Only from 1992 onwards, OMA would conceive floors of a variable bent that extend to multiple overlapping levels in an explicit formal analogy to the origami. The Jussieu libraries aside, this applies to OMA's entry for the Yokohama competition (1992), likewise with Hoshino as a team member, and to the Educatorium in Utrecht (1993-97). At all three examples the occasional curvilinear inflexion of the floor and its factual continuity constitute the dominant theme of the architecture.

1960s overtones

In *S,M,L,XL*'s chapter on the Jussieu Libraries, Koolhaas recalls the student protests from May 1968 in Paris.¹⁶¹ A black and white picture by French photographer Bruno Barbey shows cars scattered on the street, many of them turned over and burned out, perhaps after a confrontation between protesters and

¹⁶⁰ The intricate relation of interior and exterior at the Kunsthal is extensively discussed in an article by Michel Moussette, 'Do we need a canopy for rain', 280-294. The literal correspondence of both the circuit and the facades to the Moebius strip was already abandoned sometime after 7 December. And yet, Koolhaas reportedly did refer to the circuit of the completed building as a Moebius loop. See: Tracy Metz, 'Show Piece. KunstHAL, Rotterdam, the Netherlands', *Architectural Record* 3 (1993), 68. Doutriaux, 'Le Kunsthal de Rotterdam', 7.

¹⁶¹ Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 1306-1307.

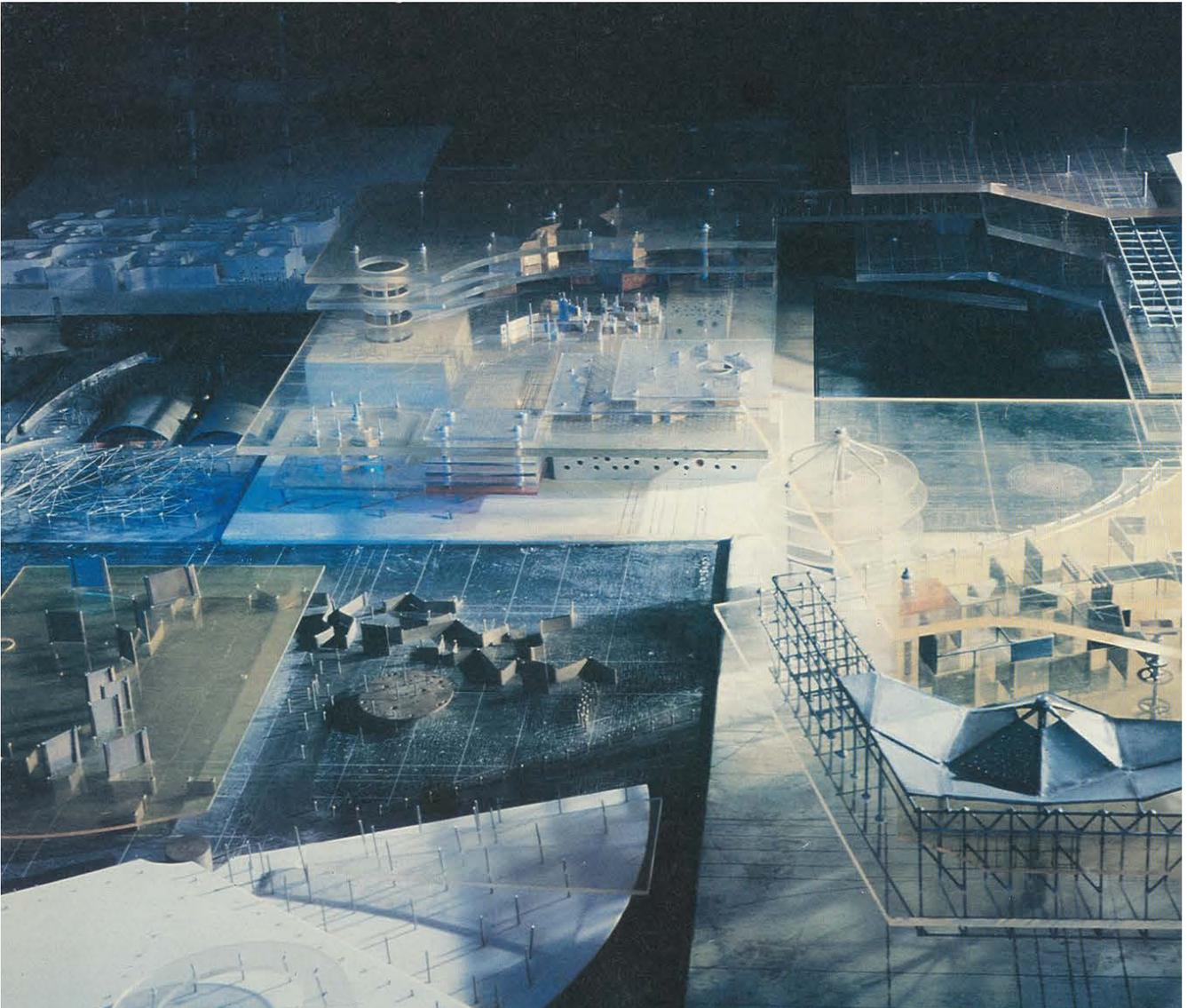


Figure 16. Constant. New Babylon. Model. Combination of sectors.

authorities. Page 1288 explains: ‘Paris Riots, May 25, 1968’. The text running parallel to the illustrations showing OMA’s Jussieu project insists: the interior of the library, its ascending floor, is a ‘warped interior boulevard’, ‘urbanized’, ‘a social magic carpet’. The metaphors link the conception of the interior to the idea of the street as the quintessential public realm. Together with the picture from ’68, a ‘potential’ of uncontrolled escalation is insinuated. The libraries too, Koolhaas seems to say, might be appropriated for a revolutionary endeavour, with the building as a secret accomplice. Accordingly, the formal stress of the design on ‘surface’ gains a metaphorical quality: the ‘trajectory’ is to replicate the continuity of the public space outside the building. The first picture of the photo spread illustrates this ambition: the sheet of paper subsequently folded and cut into the shape of the stacked floors corresponds to the *parvis* outdoors, which, in turn, figures as the equivalent of the street.

Herbert Muschamp wrote in 1993: ‘the design converts to constructive form the explosive forces that erupted here twenty-five years ago.’¹⁶² For Muschamp, the work of OMA in general and the project of the libraries in particular remain ‘philosophically attuned’ to the spirit of ‘68.¹⁶³ In the same year Koolhaas, who according to his own account visited Paris as a journalist during the uprisings, interpreted the design for Jussieu as the result of ‘a horrible “May ’68 programming”’, but also, more positively, as ‘a very political project’ that responds to the ‘thinking back then’.¹⁶⁴

With the street photo from May ’68 among the pictures introducing the Jussieu Libraries in *S,M,L,XL*, Koolhaas establishes a direct connection between the Parisian project and the Kunsthall in Rotterdam. [Figure 15] In the chapter on the latter, a detail of the same picture – blown up and in colour – interrupts the photo spread simulating the guided tour. While ‘visiting’ the Auditorium, the image of revolution

¹⁶² Herbert Muschamp, ‘Some Unfinished Business on St Germain’, *The New York Times*, 14 February 1993.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Nikolaus Kuhnert, Philipp Oswalt, Alejandro Zaera Polo, ‘Die Entfaltung der Architektur’, *Arch + 117* (1993), 22.

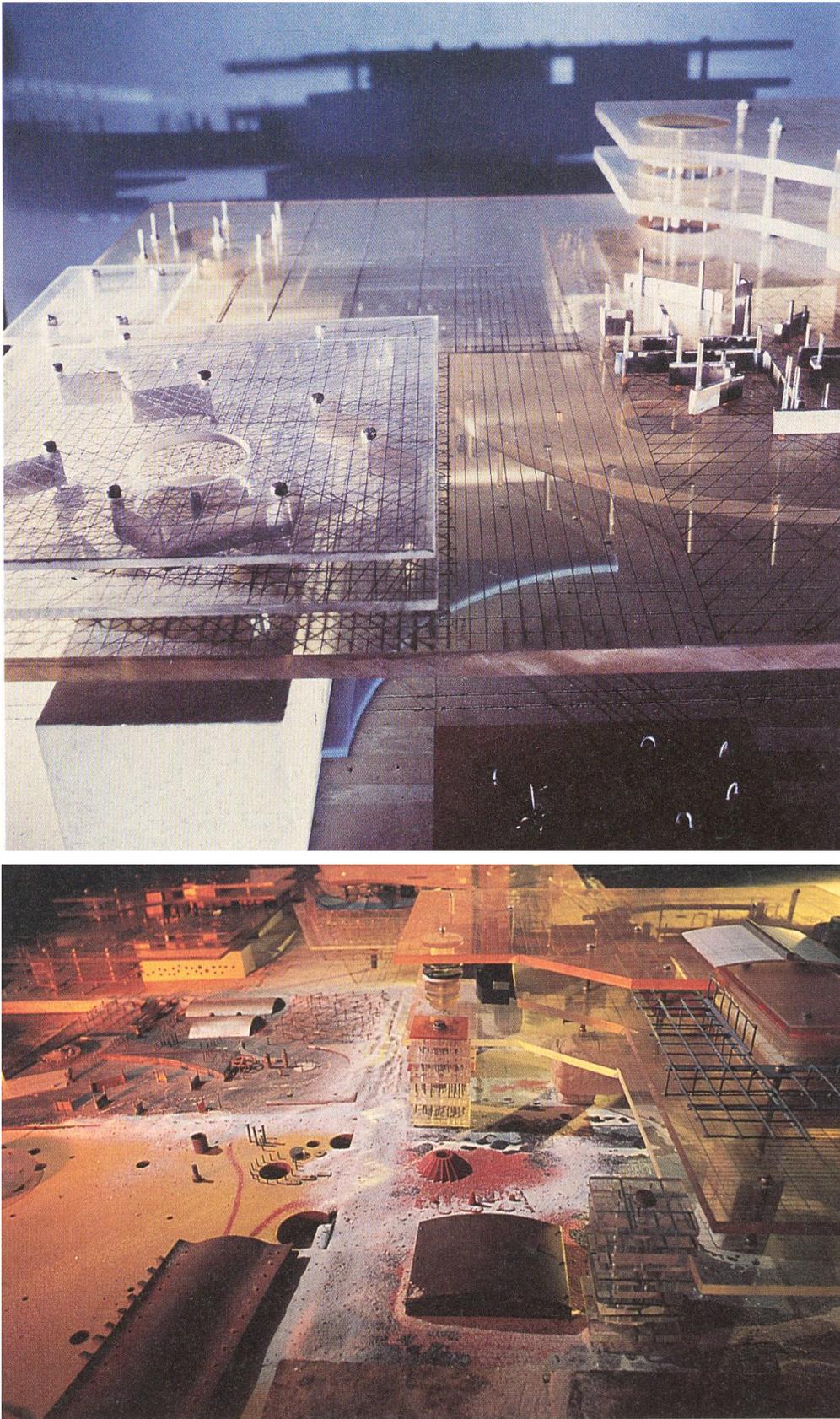


Figure 17. Constant. New Babylon. Model. Combination of sectors.

intrudes, indicating the interior of the Kunsthal too as an extension of the street, a ‘warped boulevard’, with the possibility, if not potential, of uncontrolled appropriation and escalation.¹⁶⁵

After Mark Wigley’s exhibition *Constant’s New Babylon* at Rotterdam’s Witte de With centre for contemporary art in 1998, Bart Lootsma published an article on the possible influence of Constant’s project on the work of Koolhaas. Lootsma mentions an interview that Constant gave to Koolhaas and art critic Betty van Garrel in 1966. At the time, Koolhaas was a journalist for the Dutch weekly *Haagse Post* in which the interview appeared. As Lootsma points out, the interview indicates ‘that Koolhaas was aware of Constant’s ideas in the sixties’.¹⁶⁶ Lootsma also lists a series of ‘obvious visual correspondences between some of the work of OMA and the models and drawings of New Babylon’.¹⁶⁷ Two of them seem directly related to the project for the Jussieu Libraries and the Kunsthal: ‘the continuous folding floor-planes’ and ‘the use of [permeable] constructions instead of walls to define spaces’.¹⁶⁸ [Figures 16-17] Although the societal context of the project could not differ more, Lootsma’s conclusion that ‘these parallels are superficial’ appears somewhat premature.

Besides evident formal analogies, Constant’s New Babylon is saturated with ideas that are of some significance for the Kunsthal and the concept of the pliable surface in the Jussieu Libraries: for instance, ideas of Alison and Peter Smithson, which, as Mark Wigley points out, are likely to have been adopted by Constant, such as the ‘streets in the air’ of the Golden Lane Housing (1952) and the Reconstruction Plan for Berlin Hauptstadt (1958);¹⁶⁹ [Figure 18] and ideas propagated by the Situationist International Constant cofounded in 1957. Constant participated in the activities of the group until 1960 while being engaged in an intense exchange of ideas with the Situationists’ leading figure Guy Debord. In his writings and lectures of this period, Constant envisages the future city – New Babylon – as an entirely

¹⁶⁵ To conceive of the interior of a museum as an extension of public space had its precursors. Basso Peressut mentions in this context Wrights Guggenheim Museum in New York (1943-59), and the sunken plaza that enters in the large entrance hall of Renzo Piano’s and Richard Rogers’s Centre Pompidou in Paris (1972-77). Peressut, *Musei. Architettura 1990-2000*, 29, 43-44.

¹⁶⁶ Bart Lootsma, ‘...Koolhaas, Constant, and the Dutch Culture in the 1960s’, *Hunch* 1 (1999), 155.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 170.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ Mark Wigley, *Constant’s New Babylon. The Hyper-Architecture of Desire* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1998), 28.

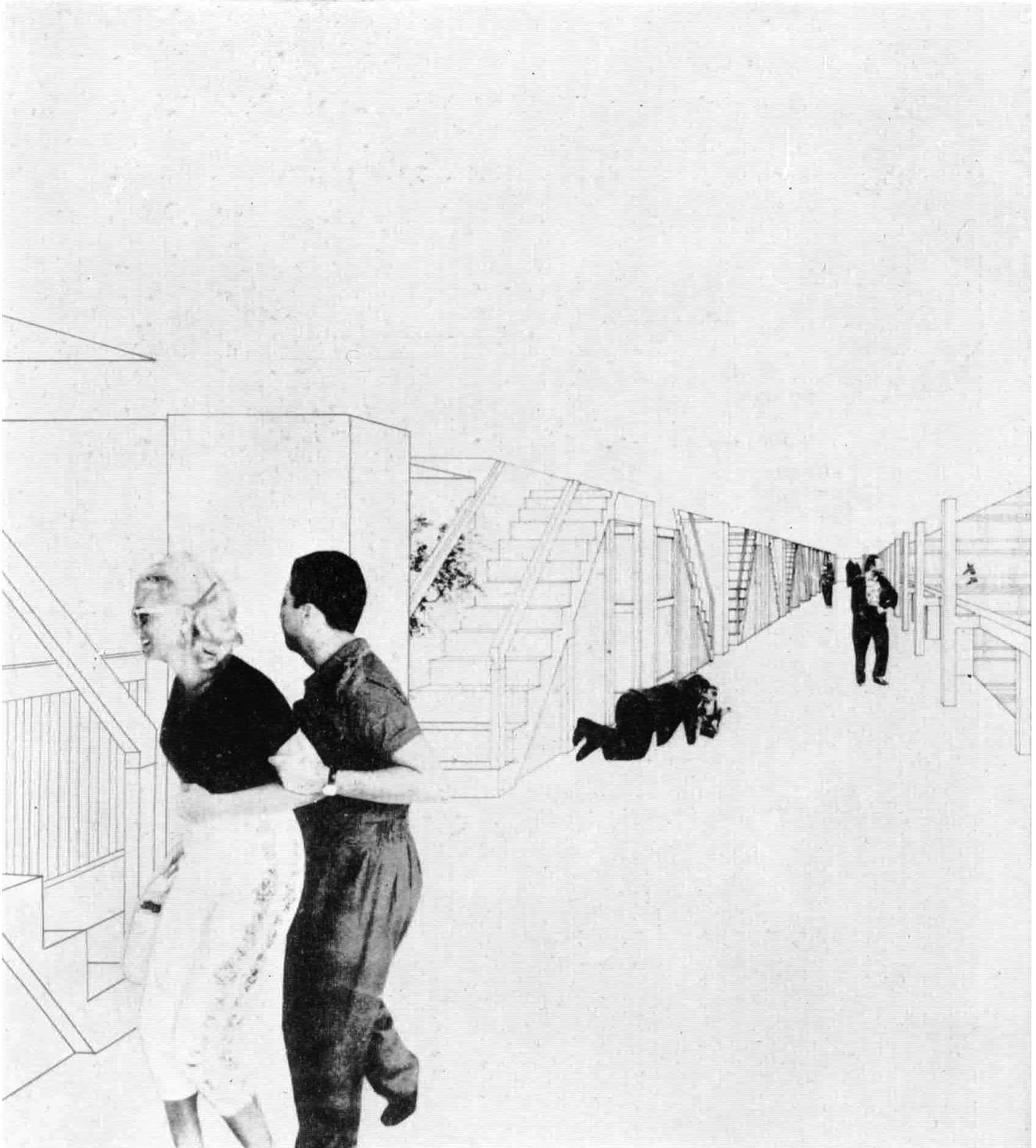


Figure 18. Alison and Peter Smithson. Golden Lane. Competition entry. Collage of 'street perspective'. 1952.

artificial environment of ‘mass culture’ where ‘technology becomes nature’, transferring the ‘social space’ of what used to be the street to the interior platforms of immense structures with multiple levels.¹⁷⁰ Only ‘15% of the internal space of the urban body is taken up by permanent housing or hotels, the rest is social space [...] labyrinths of the most heterogeneous forms’ that provide for unlimited variations of intensified experiences.¹⁷¹ Constant envisions a ‘complete freedom of action’ and movement, a ‘movable interior structure’ and a ‘frequent transformation of the interior’, evoking the idea of spontaneous appropriation.¹⁷²

Let’s imagine, then, that a given moment x number of individuals find themselves inside one of the sectors. That the sector is divided into many spaces of different size, form, and atmosphere. That each of these spaces is at the point of being transformed: being built, destroyed, mounted, dismounted. . . That all the individuals present actively participate in this incessant activity. That each person can circulate freely from one space to another.¹⁷³

The task of the Situationist does not regard aesthetics and issues of form but the ‘construction of new situations’.¹⁷⁴ The analogy to the spatial continuity and variety of the Kunsthall is obvious, as well as the link between the New Babylonian nomad and the Baudelairian *flâneur* of sloped interior boulevards. In more than one regard, the Jussieu Libraries and the Kunsthall qualify as bits, or sectors *en miniature*, of New Babylon. The ‘sprayed’ typography used for the title of *Content*, a follow-up to *S,M,L,XL* published in 2004, curiously resembles Constant’s signature, and the likeness appears to be more than a

¹⁷⁰ Constant Nieuwenhuys, ‘Unitary Urbanism’, quoted after: Wigley, *Constant’s New Babylon*, 132-135. Lecture held at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam in December 1960.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 135.

¹⁷² Constant Nieuwenhuys, ‘New Babylon: Outline of a Culture’, quoted after: Wigley, *Constant’s New Babylon*, 162, 164. Chapter of an unpublished book manuscript, written between 1960 and 1965.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 164.

¹⁷⁴ Constant Nieuwenhuys, ‘Integratie? ... van wat?’, quoted after: Wigley, *Constant’s New Babylon*, 32. First published in *Forum* in August 1959. In the same year Constant wrote: ‘What makes contemporary architecture so boring is its principally formal preoccupations. [...] Even as he [the architect] uses existing forms and creates new ones, the architect’s principal concern has got to become the effect that it is going to have on the dweller’s behaviour and existence. All architecture will then be seen as part of a broader and more complete activity; ultimately, architecture, like the other arts, will actually disappear to the benefit of this unitary activity.’ Constant Nieuwenhuys, ‘Rapport inaugural de la conference de Munich’, quoted after: Wigley, *Constant’s New Babylon*, 34. First published in *Internationale Situationiste* in December 1959.



Figure 19. Frank van Klinger. Above: Meerpaal, Dronten. 1965-67. Below: 't Karregat at Eindhoven. 1970-73.

coincidence. The motto put forward in the editorial, ‘instability as a new source of freedom’, could have been his.¹⁷⁵

Constant’s vision of large open structures providing an internalized public space in which people can move freely, found a built echo in a series of experimental buildings by Frank van Klingereren and Piet Blom. Both Van Klingereren’s De Meerpaal in Dronten (1965-67) and ‘t Karregat (1970-73) at Eindhoven combine a broad range of uses in a covered space for collective use: sports facilities, a theatre, large screens for the collective viewing of TV broadcasts, a café-restaurant, a bar, and a bowling alley in Dronten; at Eindhoven a school, a bank, a café-restaurant, shops, a library. In both cases the floor forms a continuous landscape of minimally varied heights.¹⁷⁶ [Figure 19] The mutual disturbance of the various activities was to foster curiosity and exchange between the different groups of users. Blom’s Kasbah housing project in Hengelo (1969-74) and the Cube houses in Rotterdam (1978-84) are residential projects. But in both cases the space below the dwellings – interspersed with shops in the case of Rotterdam – is freely accessible and conceived as an urban, street-like space where people and activities mix.

An internalized park

When OMA settled for the new scheme of the Kunsthall in December 1988, Koolhaas might have regarded the circuit first and foremost as an answer to a specific site and brief that had become vital to the project. But it must have soon become clear that the circuit and the ideas connected to it would permit to reframe a series of issues that had been central for his notion of architecture throughout the 1980s. If it is true that Koolhaas – during the second half of the decade – envisaged the ‘programmed surface’ of open spaces like parks as an alternative to an ‘architecture of walls’, the principle of the pliable surface, latent in the Kunsthall scheme, offered a ‘third way’ between these two seemingly

¹⁷⁵ Brendan McGetrick ‘Editor’s letter’, in: AMOMA/Koolhaas, *Content*, 16. The signature is prominently featured in the logo of the Constant Foundation: <https://stichtingconstant.nl>.

¹⁷⁶ In his review of OMA’s Dance Theatre in The Hague, Hans van Dijk pointed to a series of parallels between Van Klingereren’s concepts and Koolhaas’ ‘culture of congestion’. Van Dijk, ‘Ambitie op zoek naar “kritische massa”’, 39-42.

irreconcilable alternatives. With the sloped floor – like the one of the Entrance Hall/Auditorium used for horizontal and vertical circulation – it became possible to extend the continuity of the ‘programmed surface’ to the third dimension.¹⁷⁷ Differently programmed segments could be traversed in a single continuous movement like the parallel bands on the rectilinear promenade of OMA’s scheme for La Villette. In fact, when Koolhaas calls the interior of the Jussieu Libraries a vertical landscape and the ‘trajectory’ a boulevard, he takes recourse to terms he used to describe the central promenade of the park proposed for Paris.¹⁷⁸ In *Delirious New York*, Koolhaas advertises the spatial isolation of each floor (‘vertical schism’) as a seedbed of diversity in terms of programme and use; but the partition also obstructs the experience of any diversity and the interaction between programmes and uses. The pliable surface offered a solution to the dilemma, or at least a way in between. A high rise version of La Villette was conceivable – the circle squared.

Projects like the Jussieu libraries, the Educatorium and the Yokohama masterplan are based on this idea. Varied programmes – inscribed into the surface in one way or another – contrast with the continuity of a freely ascending and descending space. Koolhaas’ explanation of the Jussieu libraries opposes the floor ‘that exposes and relates all programmatic elements’ to the ‘serene background’ of the architecture.¹⁷⁹ Due to the comparatively uniform programme, requiring a series of exhibition spaces with ‘neutral’ floors, the Kunsthall necessitated a somewhat different approach. The motif of the Moebius strip, however, seems to echo the new kind of ‘openness’ genuine to the scheme. The Moebius strip, especially as understood by Lygia Clark, epitomized the transformation of a partition into a self-contained surface that transcends the categories of inside and outside. Both the circuit and the facades of the Kunsthall contain traces of this principle. Of a literal translation could not even be thought of, for obvious reasons. The openness of the park, or the street, is being transferred to an all-enclosed interior, as any building to be entered and exited through doors.

¹⁷⁷ With regard to the Kunsthall, Petra Blaisse suggested that ‘the whole building is like a park, going up and then through and on the roof, and then back again.’ Interview with the author on 24 September 2018.

¹⁷⁸ Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 1316, 1320-1321. In OMA’s project statement for La Villette the straight central axis of the circulation is called ‘Boulevard’, while the park as a whole is described as a ‘*designed* landscape’.

Lucan, *OMA - Rem Koolhaas*, 87-88, 91.

¹⁷⁹ Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 1323, 1328.

Still, it was around this time, in the final years of the decade, that OMA's emphatic commitment to parks and park-like projects came to a halt. The Museum Park would be the last of this kind. And it is the project for the Jussieu Libraries that – contrary to the logic of scale – concludes *S,M,L,XL*. Denoted as a 'novel' on its back, the project thus gains the status of an ending. To reconcile the continuity of the 'programmed surface' with architecture appears indeed the argument of a story that begins with the Berlin Wall and *Delirious New York*, and goes on with La Villette. As far as the Kunsthall is concerned, this story ends here: with the consolidation of the spatial configuration of its circuit in December 1988.¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ By January 25, the spiral stairs connecting Hall 2 directly to Hall 1 and 3 were removed, and the stairs descending from the Entrance Hall to the Restaurant were reduced to half their width. After these changes, which re-established the primacy of the main circuit, its itinerary remained unaltered.

2.3

Projects within the project

The impact of Arup and other parties involved: January - October 1989

During November and the first half of December 1988, the collaboration between Koolhaas and Hoshino was particularly close, and the outcome was achieved on the basis of self-imposed goals and the pursuit of genuinely architectural ideas. This was to change in the following year. Especially in the first half of 1989, many impulses for significant developments came from outside: from Ove Arup, above all, but also from Wim van Krimpen, the Building Committee, and municipal authorities. Adjustments to the programme, changes imposed by savings, specifications of the structural system and the building services needed to be incorporated into the design. Given the increasing number of planners and third parties involved, the architects were flooded with ever new requirements, proposals and 'solutions'. The various parts and facets of the project impended to develop a 'dynamic of their own'. In the case of the structural system, Koolhaas embraced these dynamics in principle, since the structure, or more precisely, its visible parts, were meant to display a high degree of autonomy. Conversely, Koolhaas wished the building services to interfere with the interior as little as possible. Technical installations were generally kept out of sight, using the voids of coffered ceilings and hollow walls to hide them. As the requisite space for the ducts conflicted with the methodical avoidance of volume, the team was repeatedly confronted with the task to 'translate' unwelcome depth into surface.

The collaboration between OMA and Arup intensified after the principle approval of the new scheme by the Building Committee in December 1988. Already two days before the meeting, on 12 December, Hoshino faxed a set of drawings to Cecil Balmond as a basis for the further development of the design.¹⁸¹ On 21 December, Moshen Zikri, engineer at Arup, sent to Koolhaas a 'preliminary estimate of the plant and riser areas.' Zikri's fax lists the surfaces required for the building services, mainly to be located in the basement and partly on the roof.¹⁸² On 12 January, Balmond faxed to Koolhaas a series

¹⁸¹ OMAR 1538.

¹⁸² OMAR 3267.

Chapter 2.3

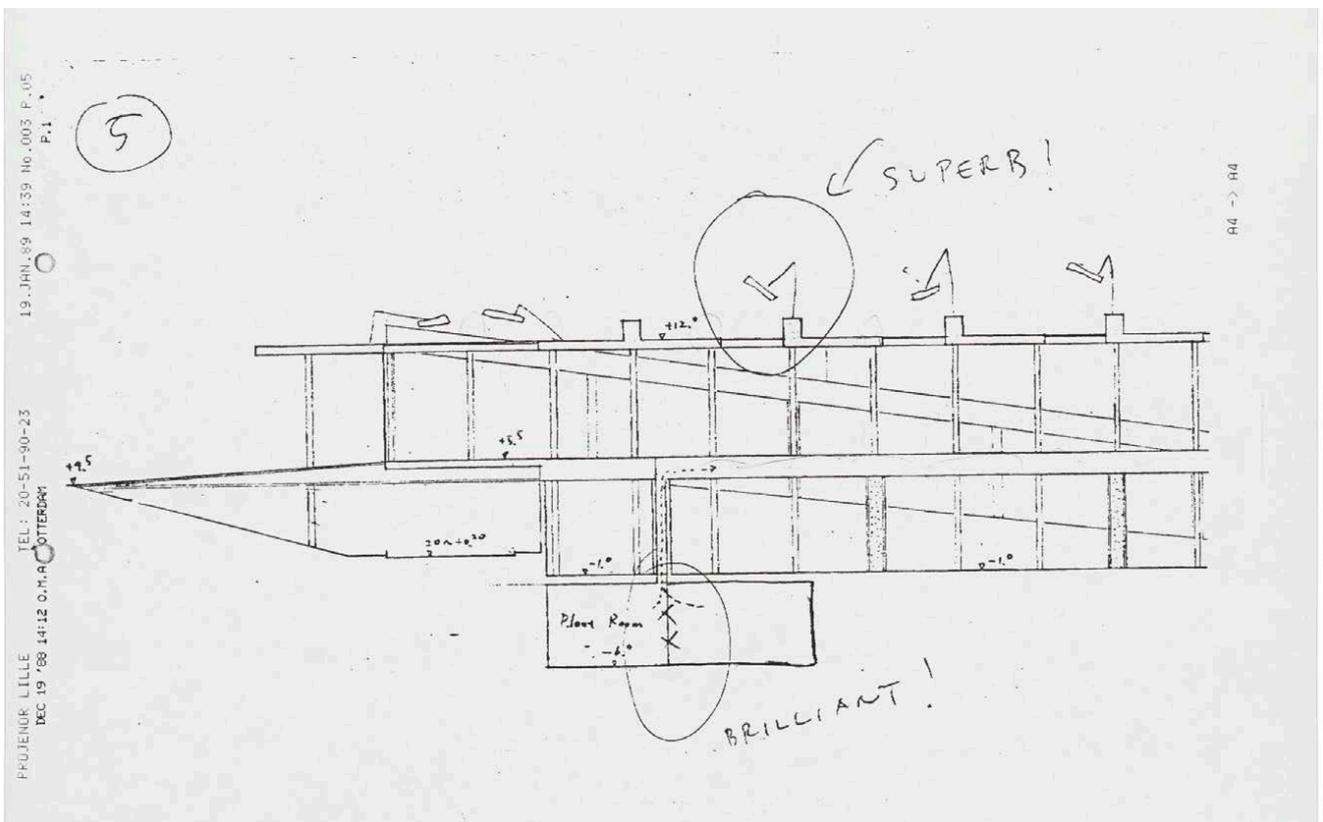
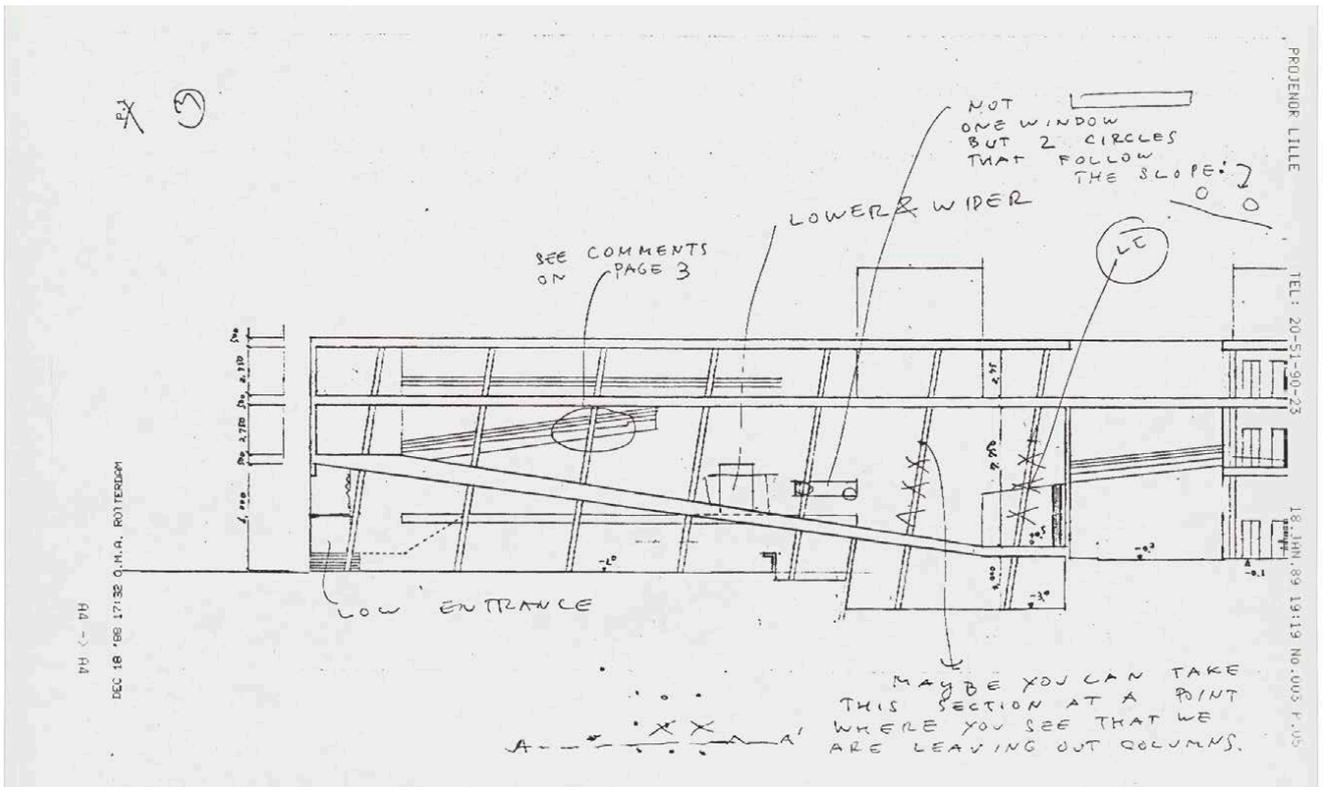


Figure 1. Kunsthal. Fax with comments by Rem Koolhaas. 18 and 19 January 1989.

of alternatives for the structure of the Skew Ramp that was to cover the Ramp Street connecting park and dyke. Each alternative provides an 8.5-metres wide Skew Ramp in concrete with rectangular columns (0.5m x 0.850m), likewise in concrete, as supports. Different from OMA's drawing from December, the axis of the columns is parallel to the Skew Ramp's, even if slightly off centre. At stake were the means to stabilize the slab of the ramp and its transition to the columns. Balmond proposed three options: 1) upstand beams on top of the columns that also would hold the earth of the Roof Garden; 2) large, cross shaped capitals; and 3) a floor slab which would thicken at its bottom towards the centre. On 17 January, Arup engineer Mirvat Bulbul sent a fax to OMA with structural specifications for the eastern section of the building. For Hall 2, he proposed a concrete roof with arched upstand beams so as to bridge the 31.5-metres span between the lateral columns in steel. The structure of Hall 1 was entirely conceived of in steel. Lateral columns – the same as above in Hall 2 – would connect to secondary beams, whereas the two main trusses would rest on four cruciform columns at the centre of Hall 1.

On the same day, Fuminori Hoshino sent a fax to Balmond regarding some changes of the structural grid and the columns in the area of the Auditorium.¹⁸³ Like in several earlier versions of the scheme, the columns of the Auditorium were meant to be turned perpendicular to the sloped floor, and to extend in this oblique angle to the Restaurant below as well as to Hall 3 above. The structural grid consists of three parts: one for the western section, one for the eastern section, and one for the Skew Ramp above the Ramp Street in the centre. In the western section, the bays measure 6 by 6 metres, in the eastern section 4.5 by 4.5 metres, the large cruciform columns of Hall 1 being arranged in a square of 13.5 metres side length. Both sections of the grid align to the north (axis 2) and to the south (axis 20), while being framed on both sides by an additional bay of 3 metres and the two peripheral axes (1 and 21) that confine the perimeter of the building. The peripheral bays of the north-south axes measure 1.50 metres in the building's western section of the building (axes a-b), and 1.25 metres in its eastern section (axes

¹⁸³ 17 January 1989. Arup London Archives.

Chapter 2.3

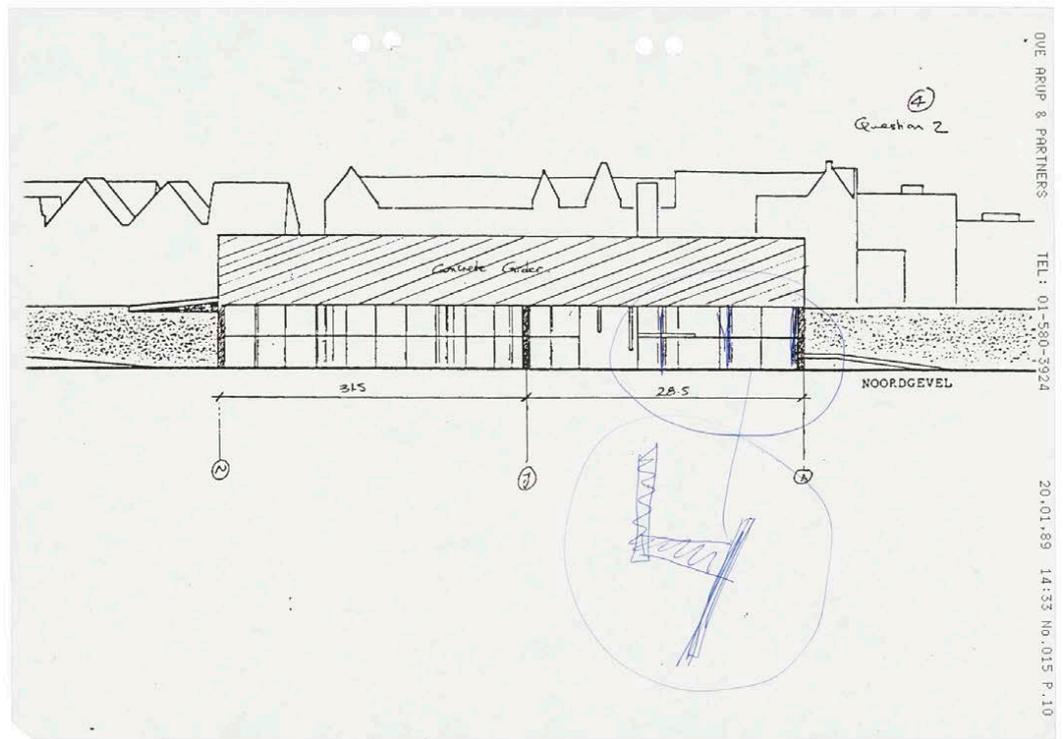
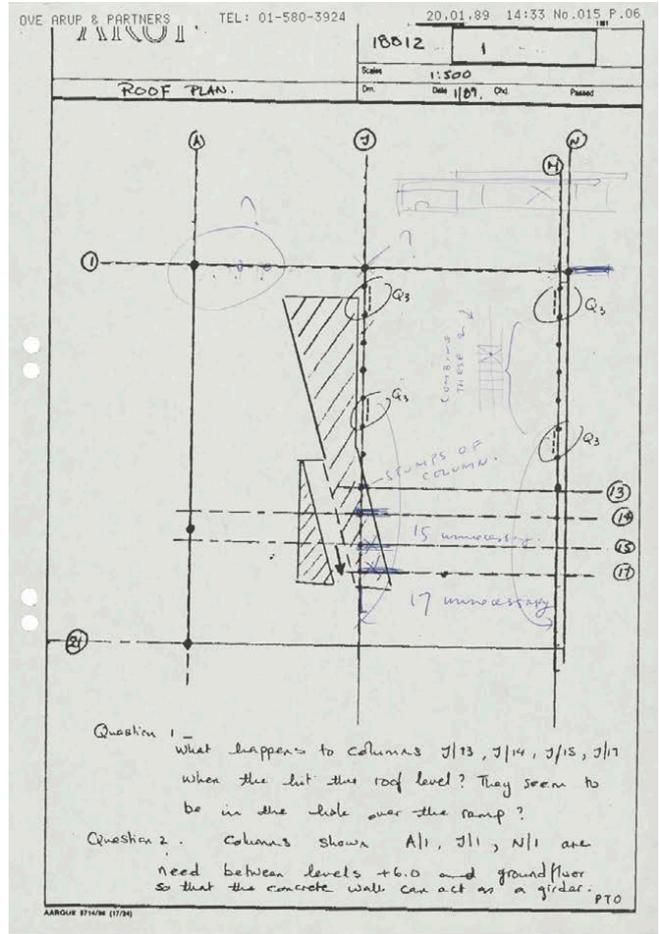
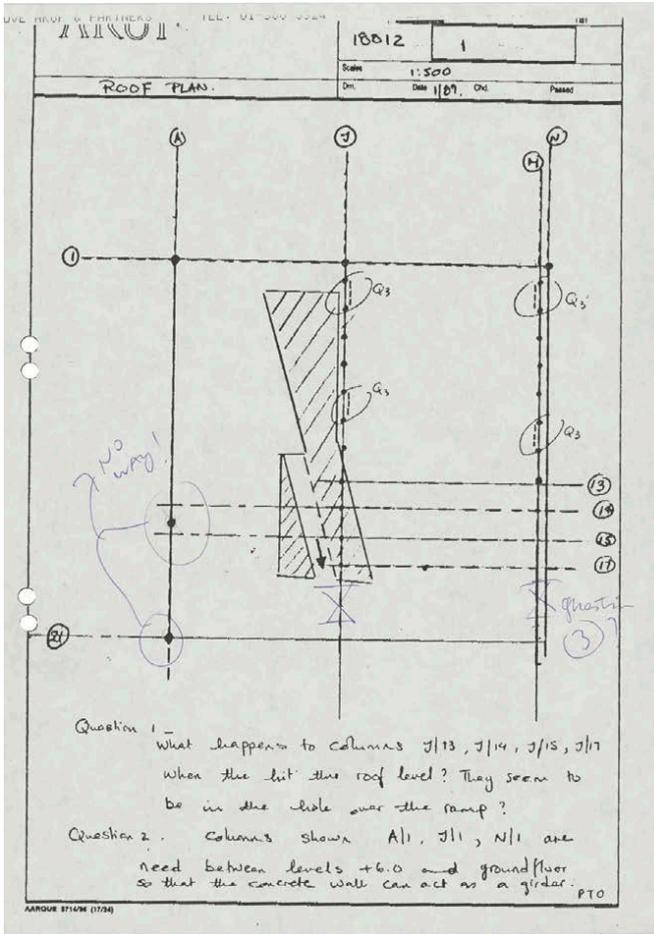


Figure 2. Kunsthal. Fax Cecil Balmond to OMA. Comments by Koolhaas. 20 January 1989.

m-n). The *poché* between Auditorium and Ramp Street is 2 metres wide, the glazed-in part of the Ramp Street 3 metres.

Compared to the version from December, the angle between the axes of the Skew Ramp and its columns (g) is significantly larger, contrary to Balmond's proposal from 12 January, with two parallel axes.¹⁸⁴ At the same time, the grid provides to align six – instead of four – columns with the structural grid of the eastern section, the bay sizes approximating 9 metres. Apparently, the purpose of these changes was twofold: to reduce the dimensions of the columns, and – lessening the angle of the column's axis with regard to the main grid – to 'disentangle' the Skew Ramp and Ramp Street structurally from the eastern section of the building: in the version from December the first column to the south was located within the Portico adjacent to Hall 2, whereas now all columns were confined to the 9-metre wide section of the Ramp Street.

On 18 January, and again on 19 January, Koolhaas sent a set of commented drawings to Hoshino, using the fax machine of the developer Projenor in Lille, perhaps engaged with the acquisition of Euralille.¹⁸⁵ [Figure 1] A series of suggestions deal with details such as the proportions of doors, the transition between the two reversed slopes at the entrance, the stairs descending from the entrance to the Restaurant, and the corridor ascending to the Roof Garden which by then had been modified into a stepped ramp. Despite various adjustments and occasional concerns, there is an overall sense of enthusiasm in Koolhaas' comments, often limited to a simple 'I like it!', 'Superb!', 'Brilliant!'. An axonometric of the west façade, annotated 'quite beautiful', belongs to a series of CAD drawings that show the building from different angles.¹⁸⁶ Perhaps such drawings had been envisaged as a design tool,

¹⁸⁴ The exact position of the axis remained unchanged. It is defined by: the intersection of the axis enclosing the Ramp Street to the west (f) with the second axis from north (2); and the intersection of the axis enclosing the Ramp Street to the east (h) with the second axis from south (20).

¹⁸⁵ OMAR 1610.

¹⁸⁶ One of the drawings is dated 23 January 1989. OMAR 1575. Probably the drawings were prepared by the firm COPRO from Katwijk near Leiden. The title block on a set of similar drawings from February 1989 reads: 'COPRO bv, 3-D CAD tekenburo voor de bouwkunde'. OMAR 1850.

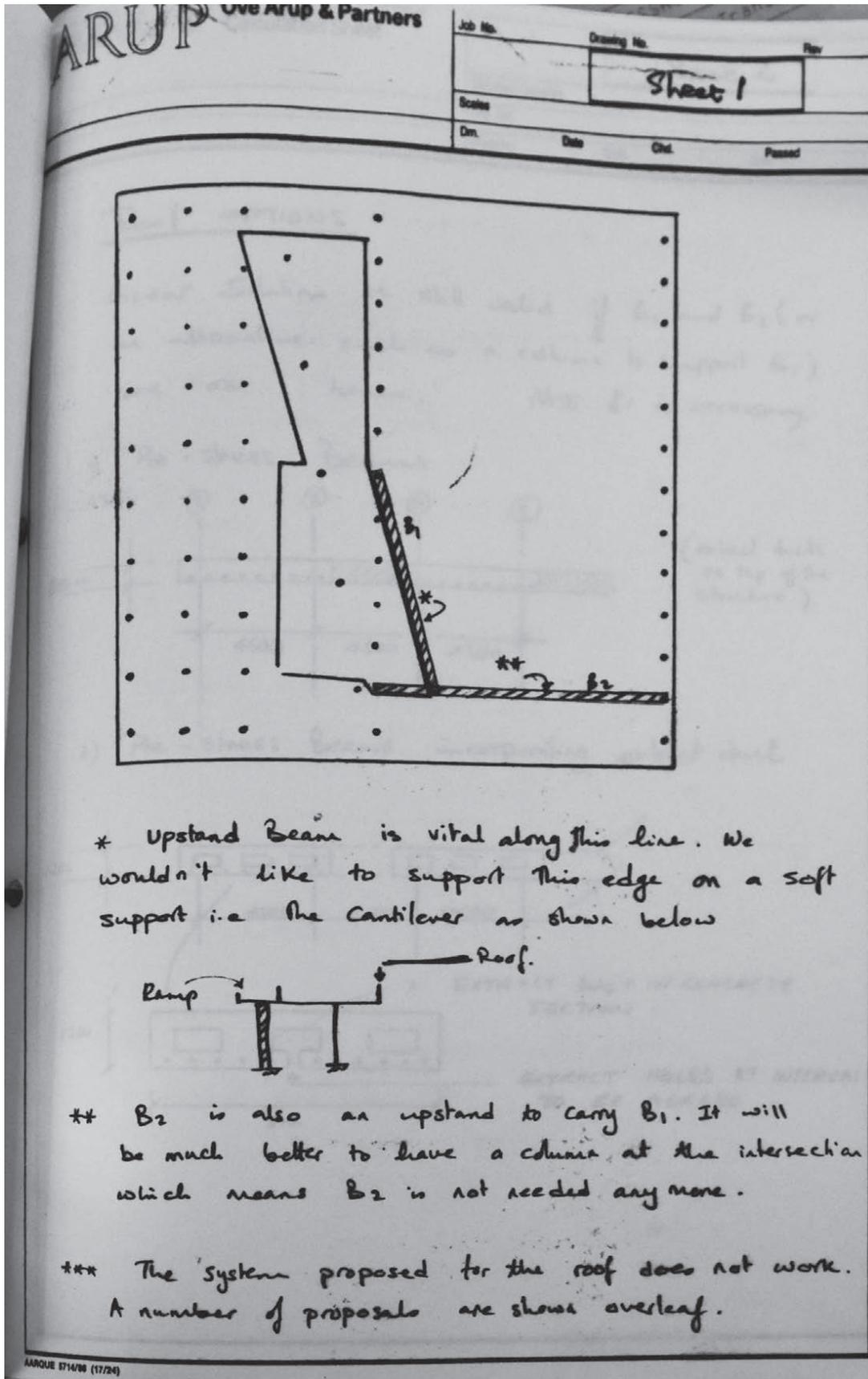


Figure 3. Kunsthall. Fax Cecil Balmond to OMA. 25 January 1989.

or as a means to convince the client. The use of CAD visualizations, however, would remain an episode limited to the first months of the year.

In a fax from 20 January, Balmond brings up a few new issues: In Hall 2, he informs, two bays of each row of columns need to be braced, and – more consequential for the design – he suggests to conceive the two ‘floating’ walls of the west and the north façade as concrete girders. Balmond points out that columns would be necessary to support the girders at the corners and in a central section of either facade. In OMA’s copy of the fax all the columns proposed are crossed out and annotated with question marks. Koolhaas circled two of the columns on the west façade, commenting ‘NO WAY!’.¹⁸⁷ [Figure 2] Apparently, Balmond’s proposal touched a vulnerable point. The facades were meant to materialize as they were represented in the drawings and in the preserved half of a model in scale 1 to 200: composed of surfaces, thin like the pieces of cardboard the model is made of.¹⁸⁸ Strong pillars at the corners would turn the two concrete walls into giant beams of a trilithic system.

In the same fax, Balmond points to the fact that the south eastern edge of the Skew ramp interferes with the structure of Hall 2, intersecting with four columns of the western row (axes 13-15 and 17). Koolhaas, in his copy of the fax, suggests to remove the two southern columns altogether, while truncating at least one of the others, apparently having in mind to let the steel supports connect to the Skew Ramp.¹⁸⁹ Five days later, in a fax from 25 January, Balmond suggests an upstand beam along the same edge of the Skew Ramp, ideally to be supported by a column at its southern end. [Figure 3]

More variety and a very transparent centre

At the meeting of the Building Committee on the same day, OMA’s refined and slightly modified scheme was well received. The minutes record that Wim van Krimpen was ‘enthusiastic’ about the Primarily Design (DO), welcoming the ‘multifunctional character’ of the new project, while Joop

¹⁸⁷ OMAR 1492.

¹⁸⁸ MAQV 502.01. Only the Ramp Street and the eastern section survived.

¹⁸⁹ Whether from below (as a support for the ramp) or from above (as a support for the roof) is not clear. Original fax: Arup London Archives. Copy: OMAR 1492.

Chapter 2.3

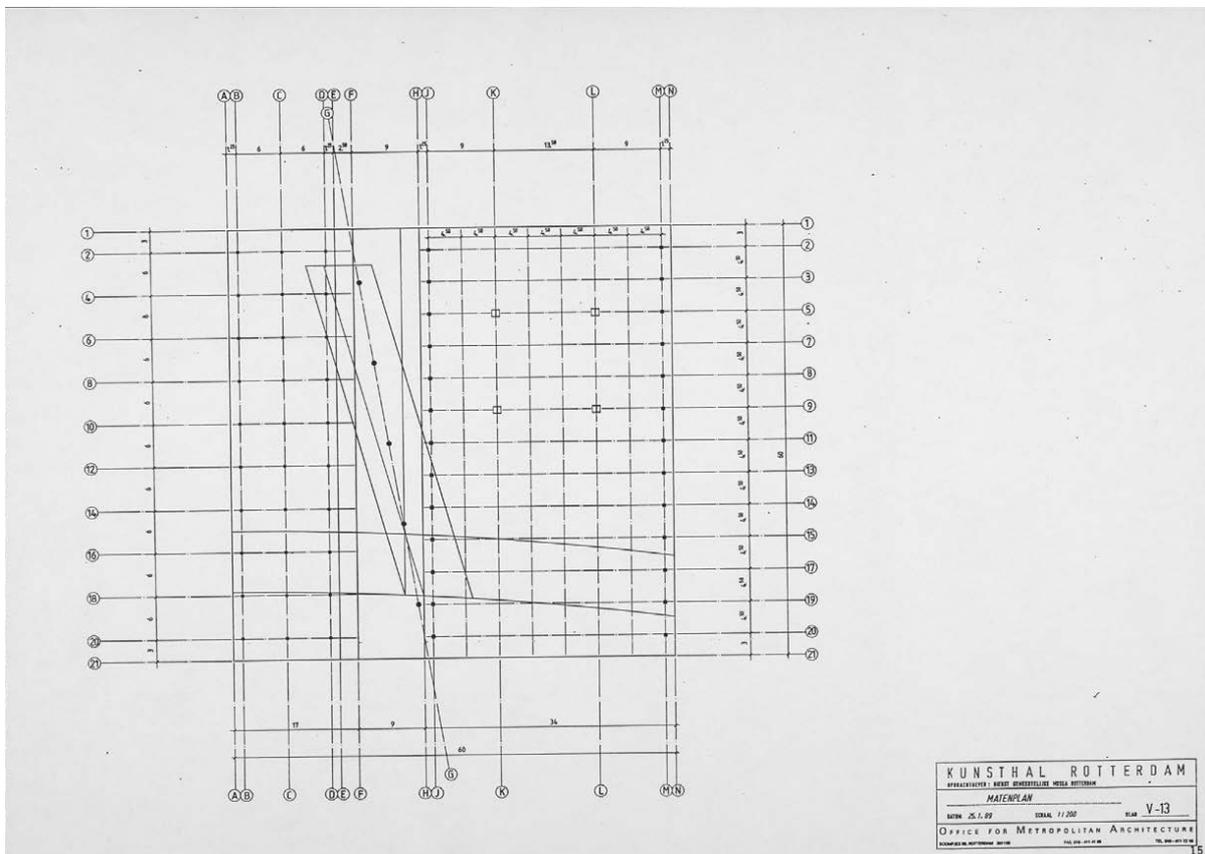
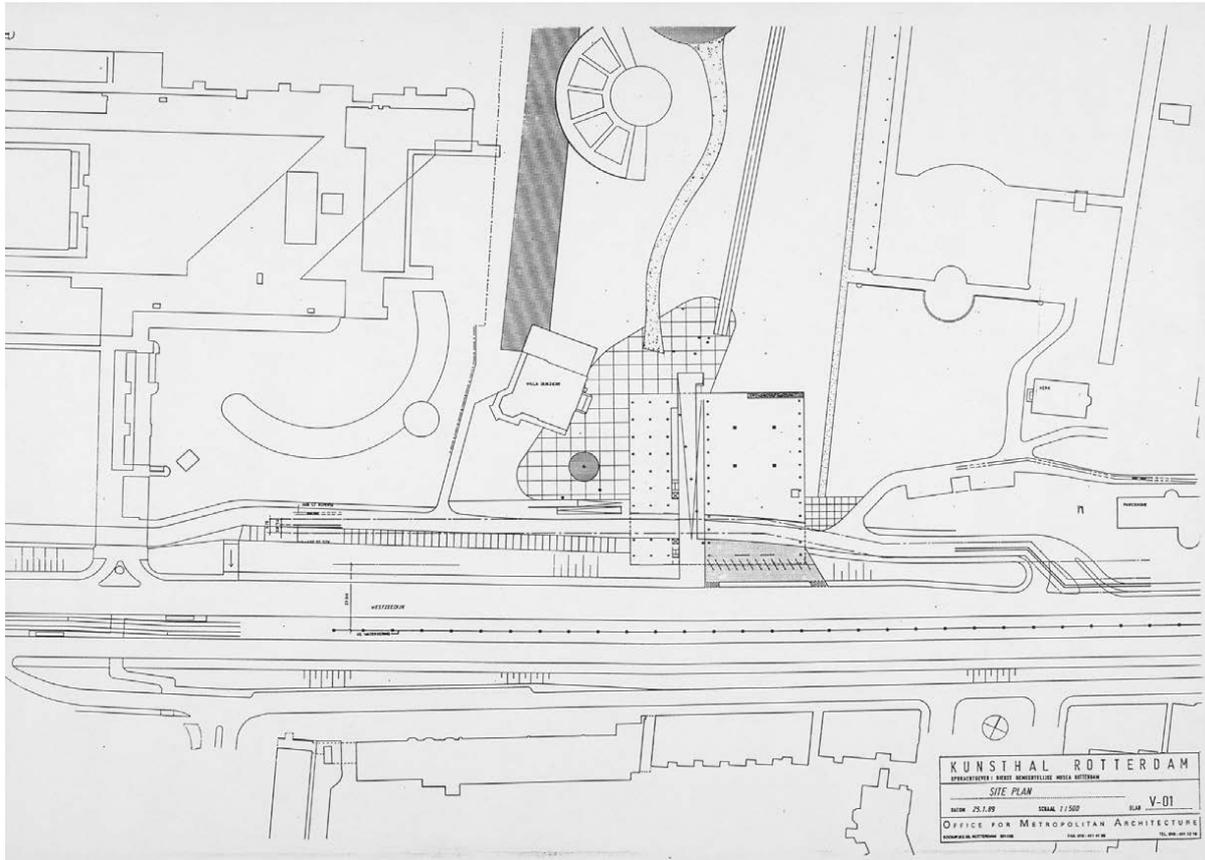


Figure 4. Kunsthall. OMA. Preliminary Design. Site plan and structural grid. 25 January 1989.

Linthorst remarked that the Kunsthal was ‘very interesting due to its complexity.’¹⁹⁰ The A3 booklet Koolhaas is likely to have presented at the meeting comprises, next to a set of plans, three axonometric CAD drawings, and a fact sheet listing the sizes of the different spaces.¹⁹¹ [Figures 4-11] From the figures it is evident that the new scheme – compared to that from 7 October (Kunsthal I) – entailed a significant increase of surface: 3.807 (previously 2.713) square metres for the exhibition area, 627 (previously 312) square metres for the Restaurant, and 491 (previously 260) square metres for the plantroom in the basement.¹⁹²

Most changes of the design as well as most of the new elements regard the structural system. A couple of minor, later changes aside, the grid was modified for the last time. Compared to the version from 17 January, it is slightly more regular. Along the east-west axis, the spacing between the rows of columns and the lateral walls now measures 1.25 metres both in the eastern and in the western section of the building. The *poché* alongside the Ramp Street and the ramp behind the glass partition are 2.50-metres wide each. As a whole, the structural grid now provides a more homogenous frame for the three widely independent sections it contains. The number of columns on the Ramp Street is reduced from six to five, the columns being less obstructive for the circulation and view between dyke and park. Only the columns at either end of the row are aligned with the structural grid of the eastern section (axes 3 and 19). The length between them is divided into four bays of equal size (approx. 11m), with the consequence that one of the columns interrupts the Ramp Street’s glazed partition.

In the Auditorium, three columns of the central row are truncated to not block the view. The lower part is removed, cable trusses connect the bottom of the pendent remainder to the tops of the two lateral columns.¹⁹³ [Figure 12] At the back of the stage area, a wide opening is cut out of the wall, echoing the

¹⁹⁰ OMAR 3267.

¹⁹¹ OMAR 4138.

¹⁹² The total surface increased from 5.666 to 7.134 square metres, a figure which corresponds to the floor surface of the completed building. A fact sheet by OMA from 2020 specifies 7.000 square metres. For the figures from 7 October, see: OMAR 1744. The mezzanine was provided for exhibitions as well.

¹⁹³ OMAR 1850.

Chapter 2.3

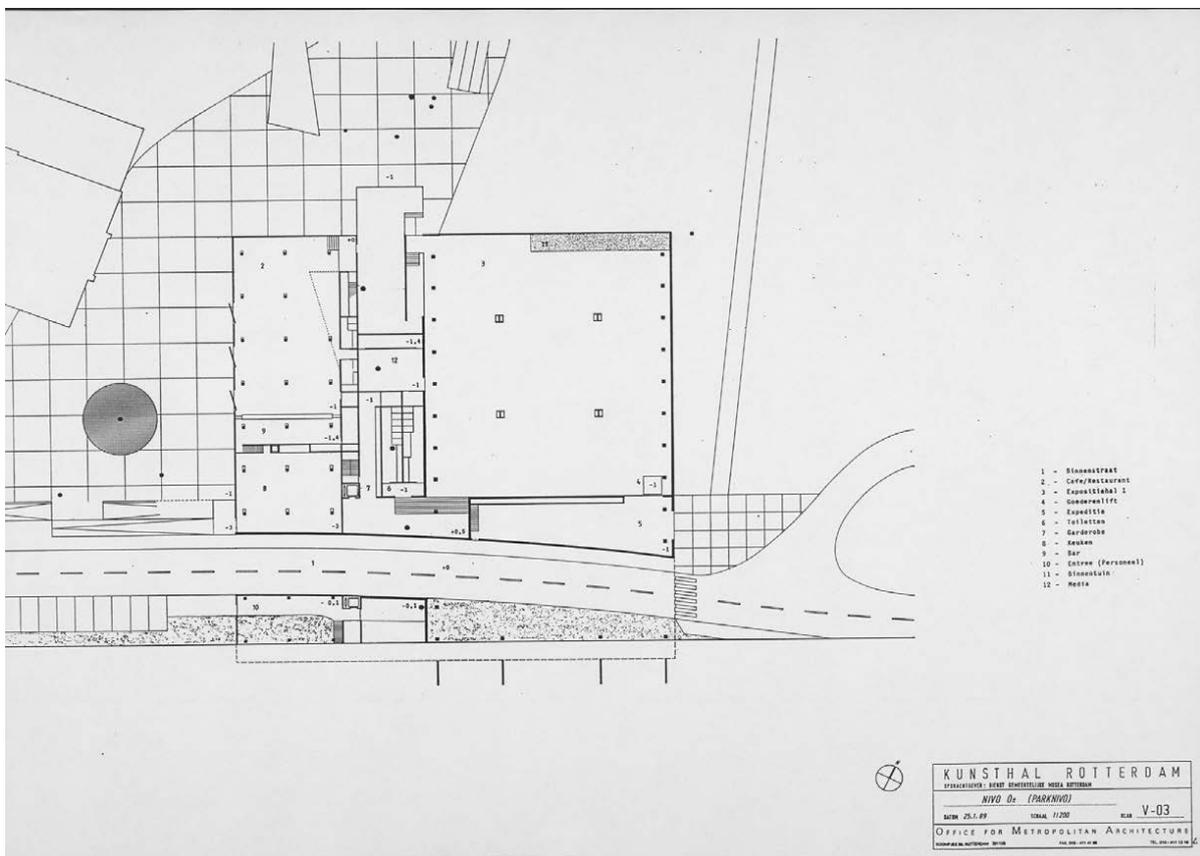
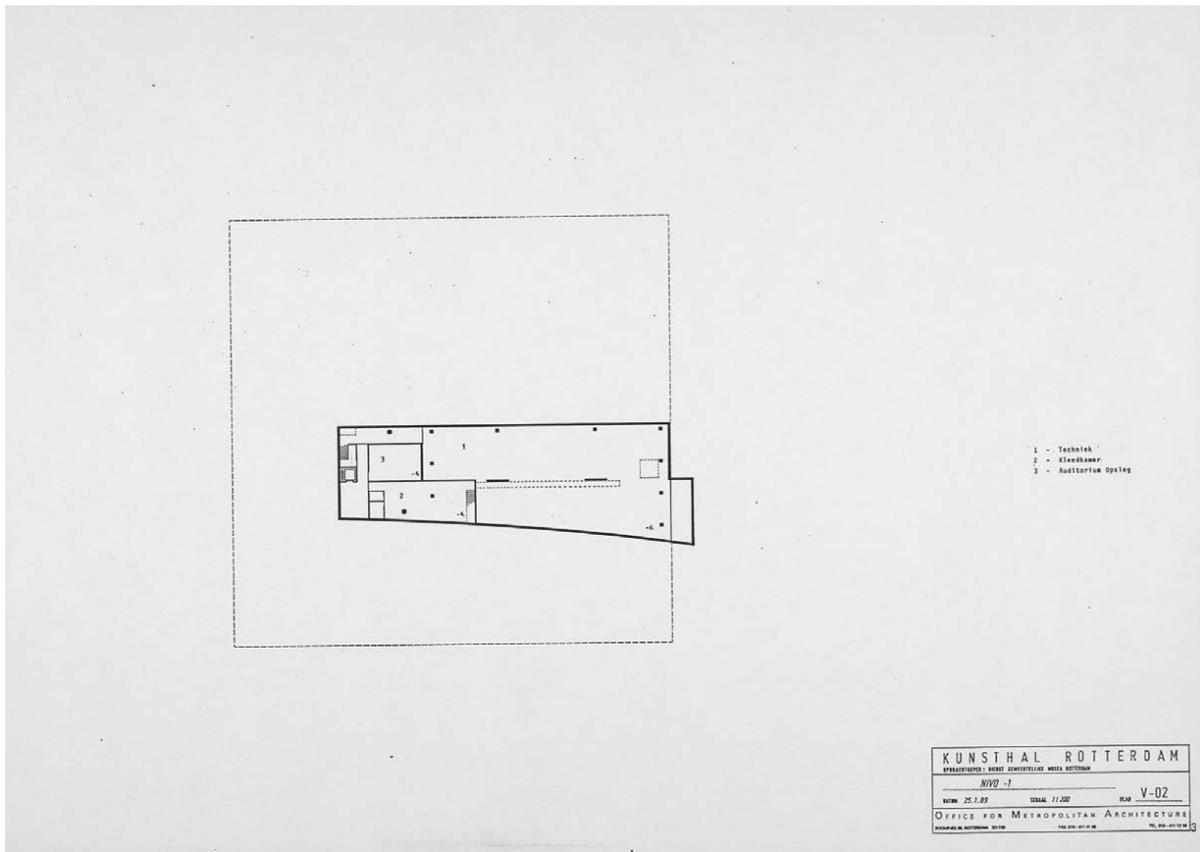


Figure 5. Kunsthall. OMA. Preliminary Design. Basement and floorplan at level +/-0 (park level). 25 January 1989.

large window piercing the massive slab of the south façade.¹⁹⁴ A continuous roof slab of reinforced concrete is to cover both parts of the building.¹⁹⁵ Four oblong top lights pierce the ceiling of Hall 2. The segments between these openings are prestressed and reinforced by the arched upstand beams suggested by Arup. Apparently, Koolhaas wanted the roof slab on top of Hall 2 to be thin.¹⁹⁶ Perhaps he aimed for the affinity of thinness to surface, as opposed to volume, or he wished to evoke both on the south and the east façade the image of a flat ‘Miesian’ roof. Four spotlights bend down like desk lamps from the upstand beams to illuminate Hall 2 from above. To the south, the exact match of the Service Road at the foot of the dyke is cut out from the roof slab. As in the version from 14 December, the curved opening was to be covered with a translucent material, while being bridged at the centre by the Skew Ramp. The covering would have lit the Service Road below, directly to the west, and filtered to the east through the likewise transparent floor along the curved southern margin of Hall 2. Given the covering’s transparency and the two-storey void above the western section of the Service Road, the offices and an Information Centre – the former bookshop – form a distinct volume, or Office Block, at the south-west corner of the building.¹⁹⁷

The floor of the Portico is still conceived as a driveway: the plan shows markings for a series of parking stalls. On top of the Portico, the steel plate girder with the cross section of an outsized I-beam appears for the first time. The exoskeletal girder – painted orange in the end – connects the two steel columns that end the row of supports along the lateral walls of Hall 2, an option indicated already by a sketch from 7 December.¹⁹⁸ A pair of cross-braced columns, aligned with the four central columns of Hall 1

¹⁹⁴ The opening is indicated in the floorplans, while being clearly visible in the sections and the pictures of a model, included in a brochure from February. OMAR 1749.

¹⁹⁵ See: fax by Mirvat Bulbul (Ove Arup) from 17 and 23 January 1989; and fax by Balmond to Koolhaas from 25 January 1989. Arup London Archives.

¹⁹⁶ The architect’s wish for a thin roof is indicated by a structural report, issued by Arup on 30 January 1989. The report mentions that the ‘architectural requirement of a flat ceiling [of Hall 2] necessitates the structural beam to upstand on the roof.’ Mirvat Bulbul (Ove Arup), ‘Outline Structural Specification’, 30 January 1989. OMAR 3267. Also Hoshino recalls Koolhaas’ ambition to keep the roof thin. Interview with the author on 25 July 2017.

¹⁹⁷ Later on, the balcony between Auditorium and Restaurant would be used as a bookshop. As for ground floor of the Office Block, a floorplan from February 1992 still specifies ‘informatiecentrum’. OMAR 1839. During the first year after the opening, Van Krimpen used the space as printer’s room in which the Kunsthall’s exhibition posters were produced. Interview with the author on 28 July 2020. The floorplans included in *S,M,L,XL* specify: ‘Press Room’. Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 469.

¹⁹⁸ OMAR 1537.

Chapter 2.3

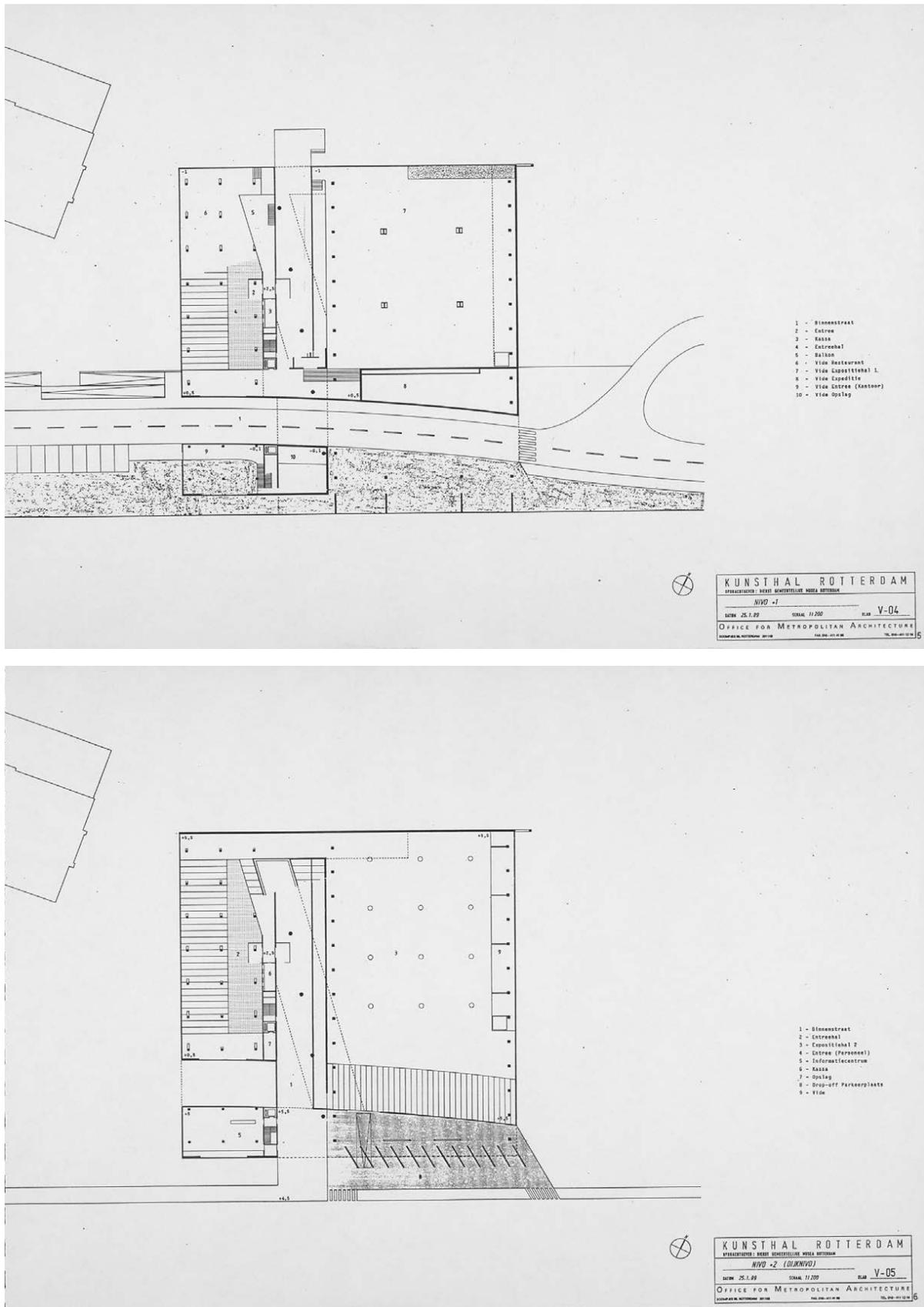


Figure 6. Kunsthall. OMA. Preliminary Design. Basement and floorplans at level +1 and +2. 25 January 1989.

(axes k and l), support its middle section. To the west, the plate girder overlaps approximately 4 metres with the roof of the offices, while protruding three metres to the east. The cantilever echoes a vertical open-web truss which had recently been attached to the north-east corner of the building. The truss looks like a wilfully improvised amendment faintly recalling the canopy at the entrance of Stirling's Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart. Obviously, the truss served as one of the five columns needed to support the 'floating' concrete walls of the north and west facade.¹⁹⁹ Its depth matches accurately the length of the cantilever of the plate girder protruding from the Portico. This is evident from the north elevation, which shows both elements projected onto one another to suggest a single structure.²⁰⁰ [Figure 10]

As for the large glazed parts of the facades, their character now varies. The grid of large squares – covering all of them in the version from 14 December – is still used for the glass walls of the building's eastern section, including the transparent partition of the Ramp Street. But the modular logic suggested is illusive. The bay sizes vary from façade to façade, and sometimes within a single glazed surface. Strictly speaking, there is hardly any window unit with square proportions. Most 'squares' are approximations. The glass wall of the east façade is composed of alternating square and square-like units. The 'squares' of the Ramp Street are rhomboids and shrink – almost imperceptibly – from top to bottom, in order to adapt to the slightly steeper slope of the ceiling (i.e. the Skew Ramp). The flexibility of the approximate square, in turn, allows for the seamless continuity of the grid, covering the totality of all four surfaces, regardless of their dimensions and shape.

The west facade is based on a modular grid of its own with a bay size of 1.5 metres – not aligned but compatible with the 6 metres-structural grid of the building's western section – combined with vertical intervals of about 0.75 metre. The dense grid of horizontally proportioned units is fully developed in

¹⁹⁹ The structural function of the vertical truss as one of the five columns is indicated by a sketch added to Balmond's fax from 20 January. OMAR 1492. Seemingly for the other four columns suggested by Balmond a solution was yet to be found.

²⁰⁰ That the beam represents the one beam on the cantilevered roof to the south is indicated by the tower and the curved upstand beams, both superimposing their contours. The same configuration appears in a set of drawings, dated 25 February 1989. OMAR 1749 A coloured axonometric from the same period shows the plate girder and the truss rendered in black, obviously to strengthen the visual link. OMAR 1575. See also the axonometrics: OMAR 1850.

Chapter 2.3

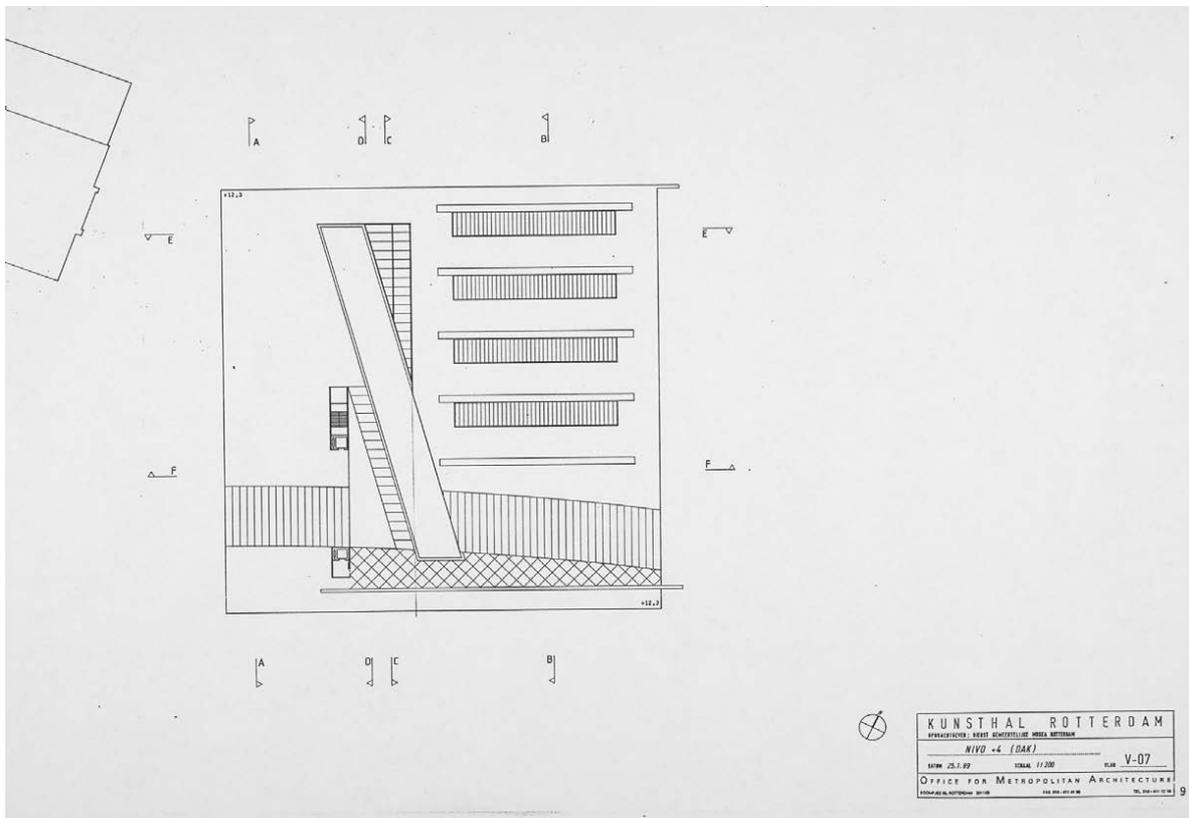
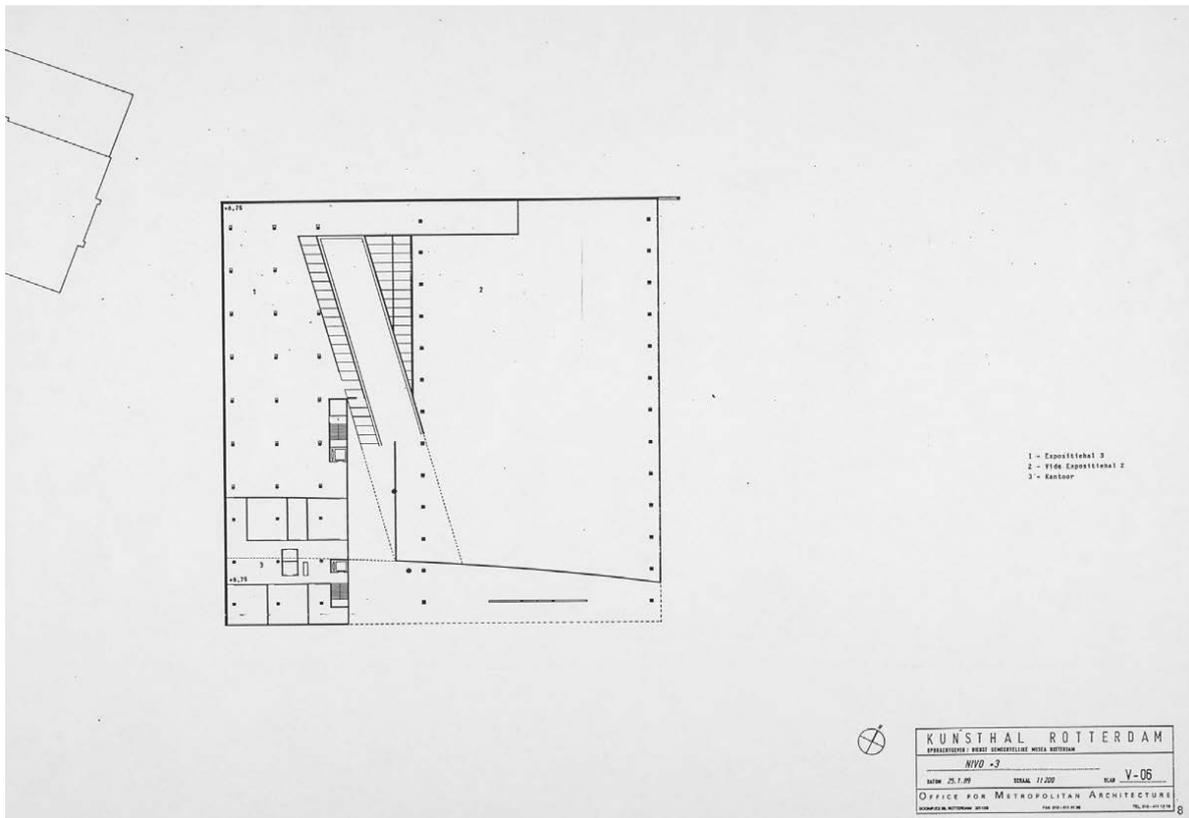


Figure 7. Kunsthall. OMA. Preliminary Design. Basement and floorplans at level +3 and +4 (roof). 25 January 1989.

the glazed area below the offices, accommodating the Information Centre and the staff entrance. The gridded glass wall of the Office Block contrasts strongly with the glazing of the Auditorium for which no horizontal mullions are provided. The window units of the Auditorium are thus much larger, and they vary in height, the proportions are vertical and slender by comparison. As the facades show, the rhythm of the Auditorium's mullions is synchronized with the columns: the tops of both meet every fourth bay. The glazing of the Restaurant, in turn, is divided in two parts: in the upper half horizontal mullions form a grille which continues the grid of the Office Block area minus the verticals; in the lower half vertical mullions are aligned with every second vertical of the Auditorium, each unit forming a compressed square. Both the grille and the squares extend to the north side of the Restaurant. The glazing of the Restaurant holds a mediating position in many regards: within the west façade, the Restaurant connects visually to the Office Block and the Auditorium; the squares at the bottom resonate with the square grid of Hall 1, bridging the gap of the Ramp Street to provide a visual link between the western and the eastern section of the building.

In the scheme from 25 January, the differences of proportion and size of the various window units correspond to a difference of use. Nonetheless, the exterior reiterates the spatial diversification of the circuit's major sections and their partial autonomy, namely in terms of structure. Like the structural system, the glazing is based on two different grids: one for the eastern section of the building, and one for its western section; one informed by the visual likeness of approximate squares, one by an actual modular relation of parts. Not only the spaces of the circuit were meant to differ from one another, but also potentially identical sections of the facades. The contrast between east and west is pronounced, and even within the west façade the different parts contrast with one another in spite of the grid that is to secure their coherence. The increasing independence of the exterior's glazed parts resonates with the disentanglement of structural components like the Portico, the solitary open-web truss, or the Skew Ramp, shown in plan as supported by *pilotis*, differing boldly from the various square cross sections of the columns in the eastern and western halves of the building.

Chapter 2.3

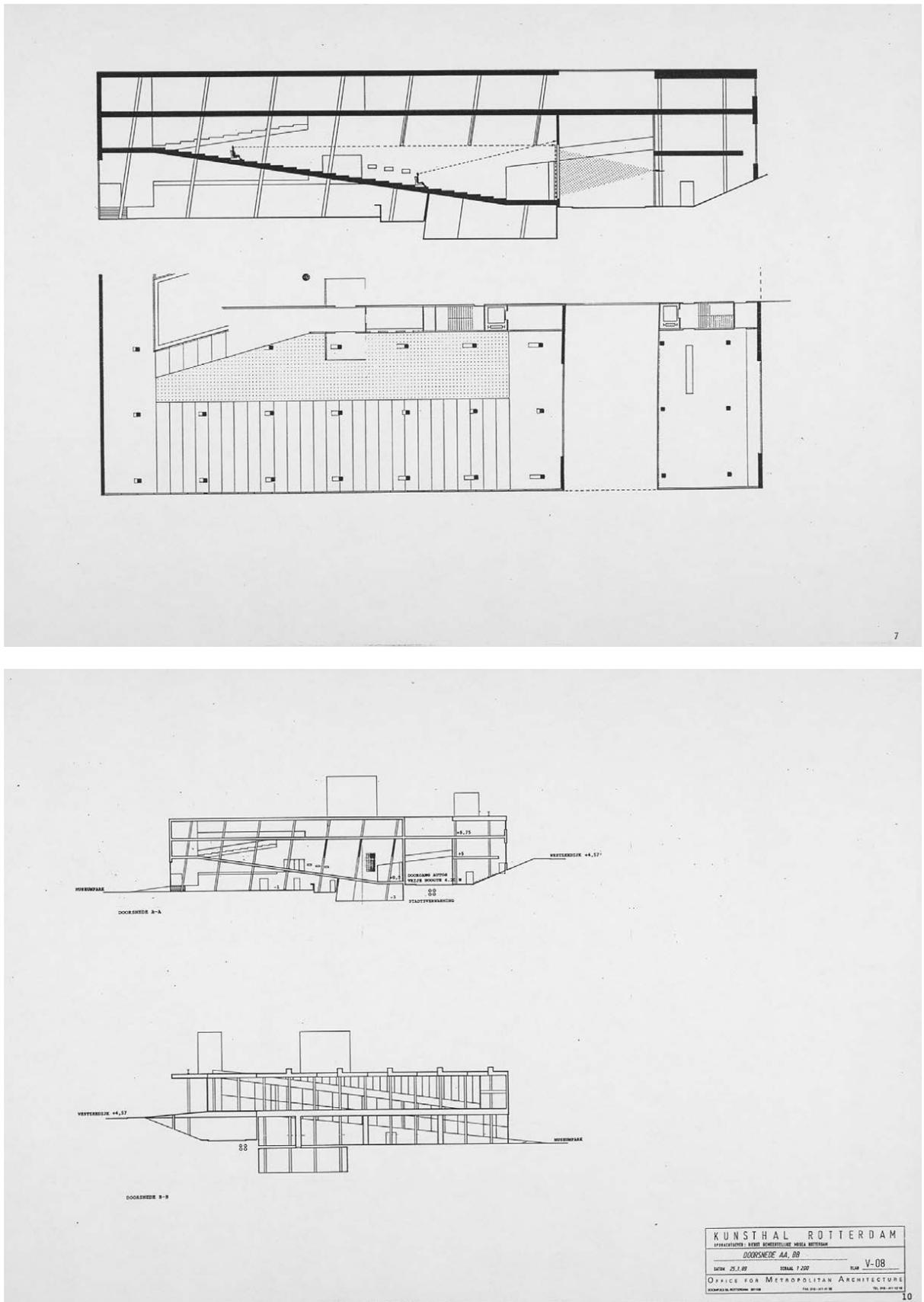


Figure 8. Kunsthall. OMA. Preliminary Design. Cross sections. North-south axis. 25 January 1989.

More explicitly than the drawings from December, those from January give a clear idea of how the different parts of the circuit were meant to relate to one another in terms of visibility. As it seems, the idea was to unite all main spaces in a continuum of views, vistas and layered transparencies. Except for the *poché* along the Auditorium, rendered in the cross section as opaque, the vertical surfaces embracing the Skew Ramp on three sides are shown as glazed. The bay size and vertical proportion of the single window unit approximates that of the Auditorium, thus providing another link between the eastern and western half of the building. Likewise, the glazing does allow for multiple views across the Skew Ramp. From Halls 1 and 2 both the Skew Ramp and the Roof Garden can be seen, the latter being also visible from the upper end of the Auditorium and Hall 3. Additional views are provided by the ‘breaches’ counteracting the hermetic logic of the circuit: the balcony at the entrance overlooking both the Restaurant and the Auditorium; the balcony of Hall 3 giving onto Hall 2; the *vide* linking Halls 1 and 2.

Volume for the mechanical services

Some additions to the scheme from 25 January reflect the requirements of the building services. North from the Service Road, a basement of about 600 square metres was added, for the most part used as a plantroom. [Figure 5] One of the two vertical volumes crowning the roof increased in size, now housing – besides the elevator – stairs and a riser shaft. On the same day, 25 January, perhaps in preparation of the Building Committee’s meeting, Ove Arup issued the first overall concepts for the structure and the building services. A 5-pages draft suggests for the exhibition halls to supply and extract air with controlled humidity from the ceilings, complemented by convectors for the heating which would be aligned along the perimeter of the building.²⁰¹ For the Auditorium and most of the other spaces, the draft recommends to limit the environmental control to mechanical ventilation in combination with radiators for heating. Arup proposes vertical risers at both sides of the Ramp Street that would connect the plantroom in the basement to the various levels of the building. The estimated cross-sections of the risers are considerable: 24 square metres for the building’s western half and 13 square metres for its

²⁰¹ OMAR 3267.

Chapter 2.3

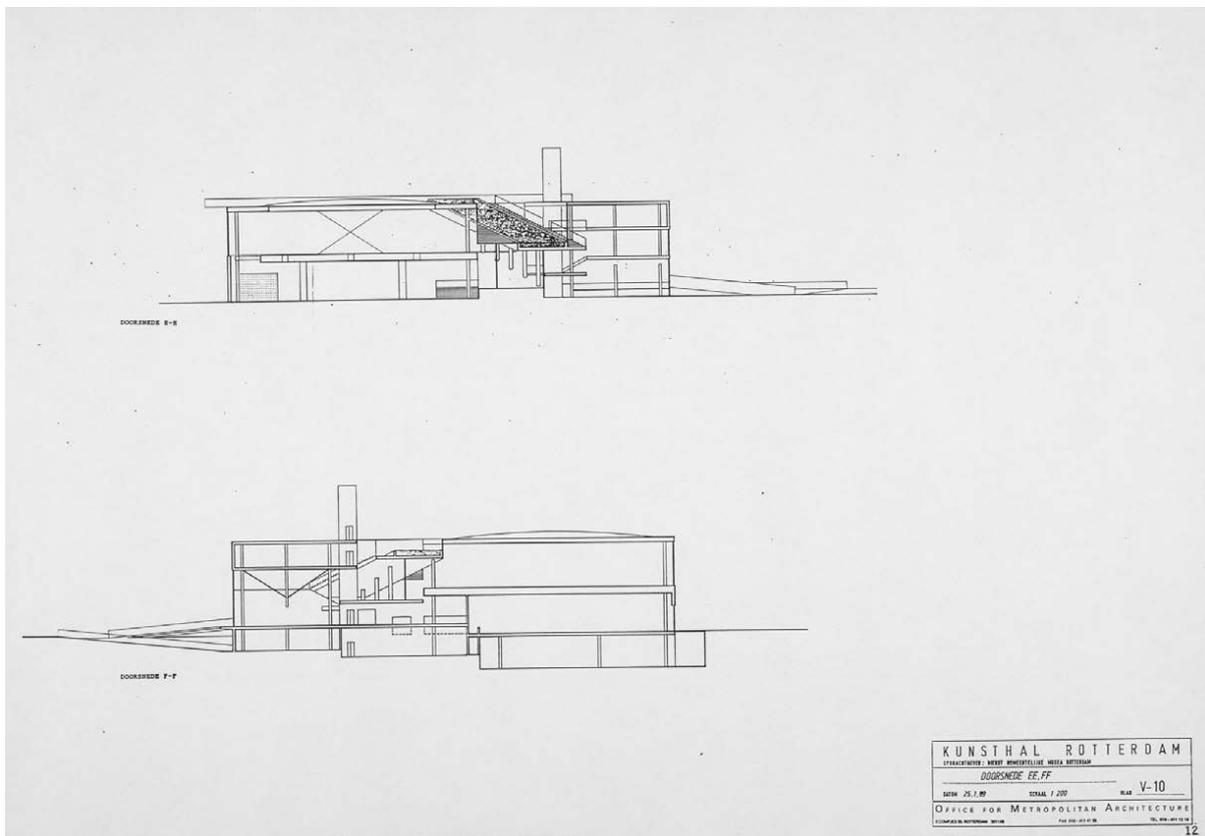
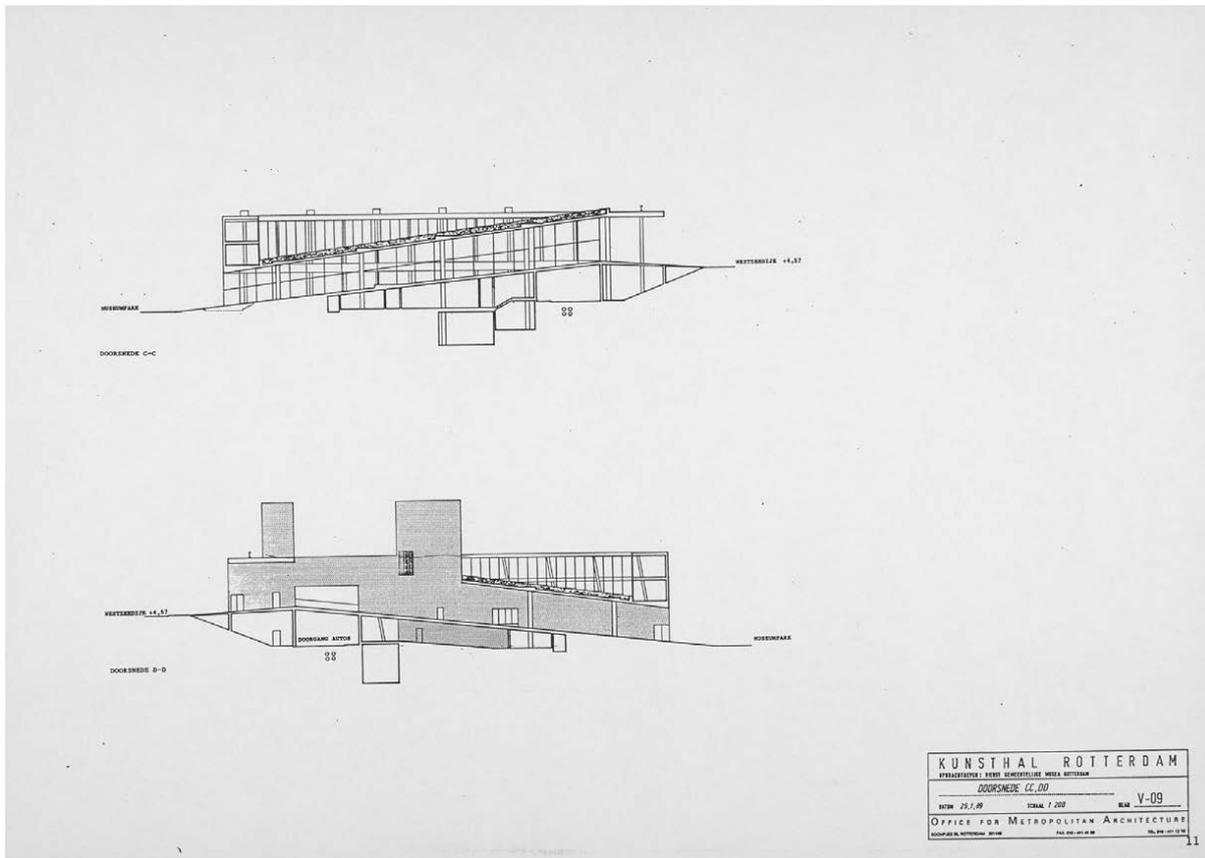


Figure 9. Kunsthall. OMA. Preliminary Design. Cross sections. Above: North-south axis. Below: East-west axis. 25 January 1989.

eastern half. Additional facilities are provided on the roof, among them an extract plant on top of Hall 2 (2.5m x 6m), and, on the west side, cooling units (5.5m x 3.5 m) and a water tank (4.5m x 2.5m).

Tripartite in principle

On 30 January, Mirvat Bulbul sent to OMA a 4-pages draft version of the structural report.²⁰² The report begins by stating that ‘the building can be viewed as two independent structures separated by a central ramping system’, already implied by the structural grid from December 1988. The structural tripartition – occasionally mentioned in later descriptions of the project – would also regard issues of stability:²⁰³ ‘All lateral loads on the structure are resisted by shear walls and braced frames. Each area has its own lateral stability system.’ Apparently the actual tripartition of the structure was less strict than the report suggests: the Skew Ramp and the columns of Hall 2 overlap; the plate girder of the eastern Portico rests on the roof of the western section; and the concrete wall of the north façade spans all three sections of the building. Neither does the tripartition entail a strict division in terms of materials. While the structure of the western section and the central ‘ramping system’ are entirely conceived in concrete, an intricate mix of steel and concrete is being suggested for the eastern section. The two rows of columns in Halls 1 and 2 are specified as circular hollow sections in steel (in OMA’s plans square); the floor plate and the cruciform columns of Hall 1 (1.8 x 1.8m) are provided in concrete; the two layers of beams on top in steel (primary 1.2 m, secondary 0.6m), to be covered by a concrete floor; the roof above Hall 2 in concrete, indicating that ‘the final solution may result in a steel solution being adopted which will be lighter though not as robust in terms of long term maintenance and durability.’

²⁰² OMAR 3267.

²⁰³ A project statement and a couple of reviews of the Kunsthal indicated that Koolhaas and Hoshino used to explain the structure in such terms. Ed Melet wrote in 1993: ‘Structurally, the KunstHAL can effectively be seen as three separate buildings.’ Ed Melet, ‘Perfect Disorder: Detailing and Construction’, in: Van Gerrewey, *A Critical Reader*, 287. First published under the title ‘De perfecte wanorde. Detaillering en constructie KunstHAL’ in 1993). Joseph Govannini wrote in the same year: ‘The architects engineered this seemingly simple pavilion with three autonomous structural systems’. Joseph Govannini, ‘Kunsthal Rotterdam, Netherlands Office for Metropolitan Architecture’, *Architecture* (Sep 1993), 88. Hoshino explained in 1995: ‘Different structures were used for each of the three sections’. Hoshino, ‘Kunsthal’, 78.

Chapter 2.3

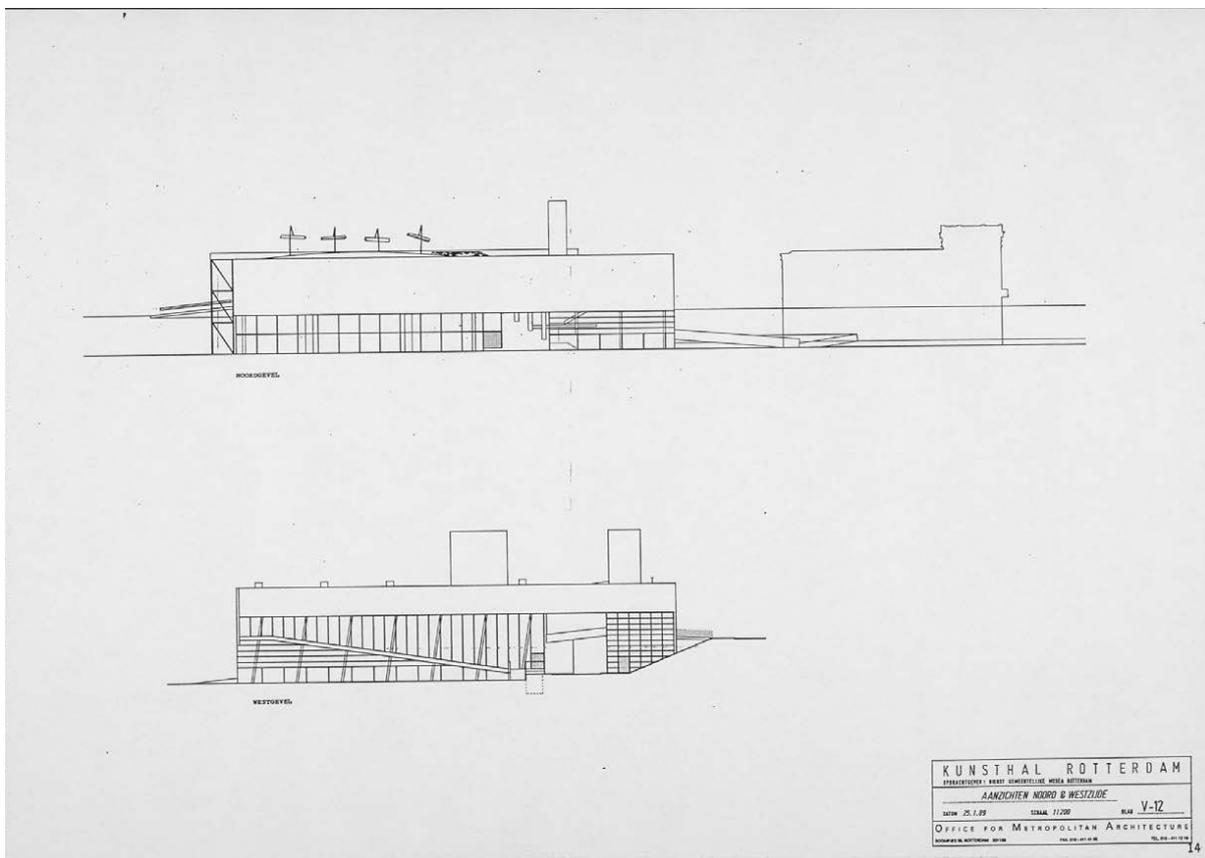
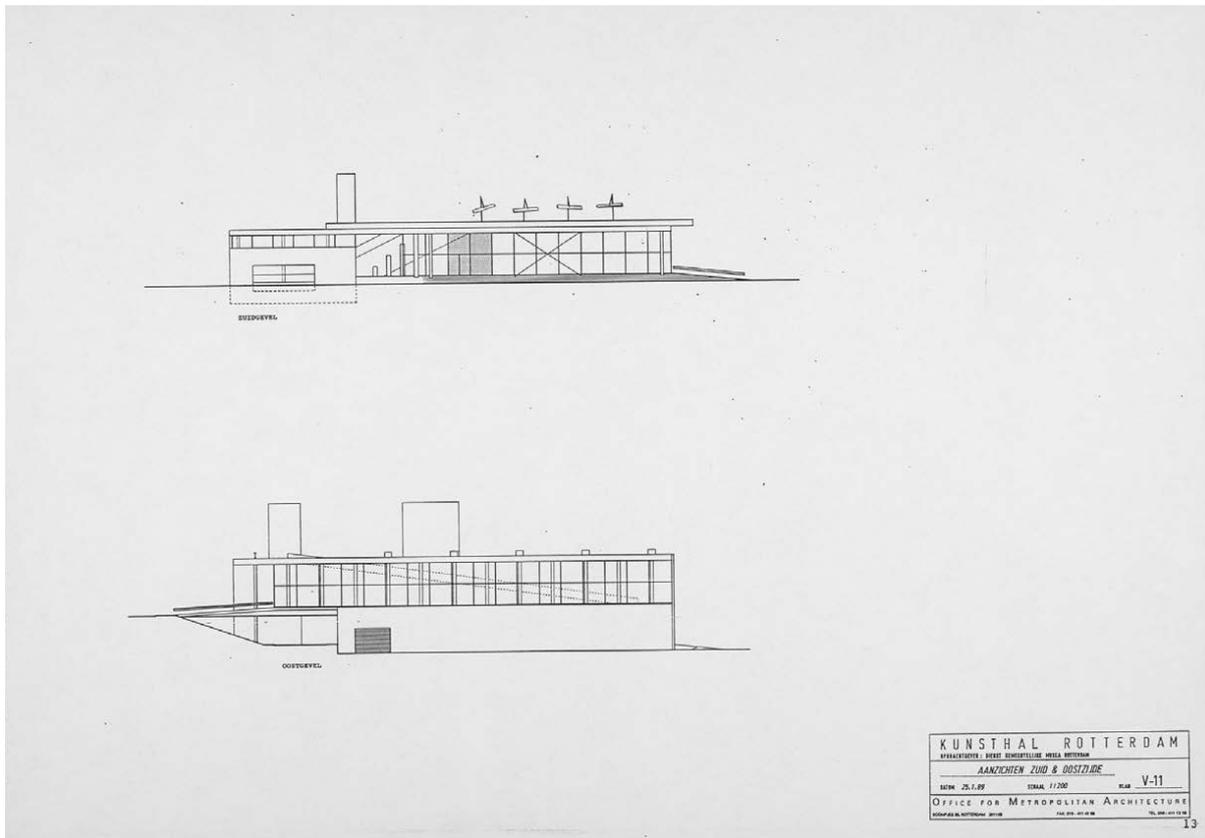


Figure 10. Kunsthall. OMA. Preliminary Design. Elevations. Above: South and east. Below: North and west. 25 January 1989.

Arup's mandate

In February, OMA and various representatives of the municipality exchanged a series of letters regarding the organization of the project and the revision of its programme, the latter having been announced already at the Building Committee's meeting in January. On 17 February the director of Rotterdam's Public Works (Gemeentewerke), A.J.C. Dekker sent a letter to Joop Linthorst on behalf of the constitution of the 'Building Team' (Bouwteam) to be entrusted with the further development of the project.²⁰⁴ Dekker suggests the team to be composed of: OMA as the architects; Ove Arup as 'artistic/technical support'; the Public Works as responsible for the project management, the structural system and the mechanical services; the Municipal Energy Company (G.E.B.) for the electrical services; and the local firm DURA as building contractor.

In the same letter, Dekker reminds Linthorst of the discrepancy between the budget and the estimated costs, at the time at least 5 million guilders. Apparently, the suggestion to commission DURA as the contractor of the Kunsthal was motivated by an offer of the firm to contribute to the funding of the project. 'During the last months', Dekker writes, 'the Rotterdam contractor DURA intimated that in terms of sponsoring they intend to do something in the art sector and for the Kunsthal in particular. Considering the budgetary tensions, it seems reasonable to me to accept the offer of DURA under certain conditions.'²⁰⁵ The exact sum DURA would sponsor as well as the order amount of the Kunsthal were still to be agreed upon.

Koolhaas reacted to Dekker's initiative in a letter from 21 February, addressed to G. Vet, representing the Public Works in the Building Committee. 'The proposal to collaborate with a Building Team to which DURA is admitted as the future contractor we accept as a given', Koolhaas writes, adding a couple of conditions to be agreed on with the contractor.²⁰⁶ But he does not approve of the Public Works as the consultants in charge of the planning of the structural system and the building services. Instead,

²⁰⁴ OMAR 3267.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., (author trans.).

²⁰⁶ Ibid., (author trans.).

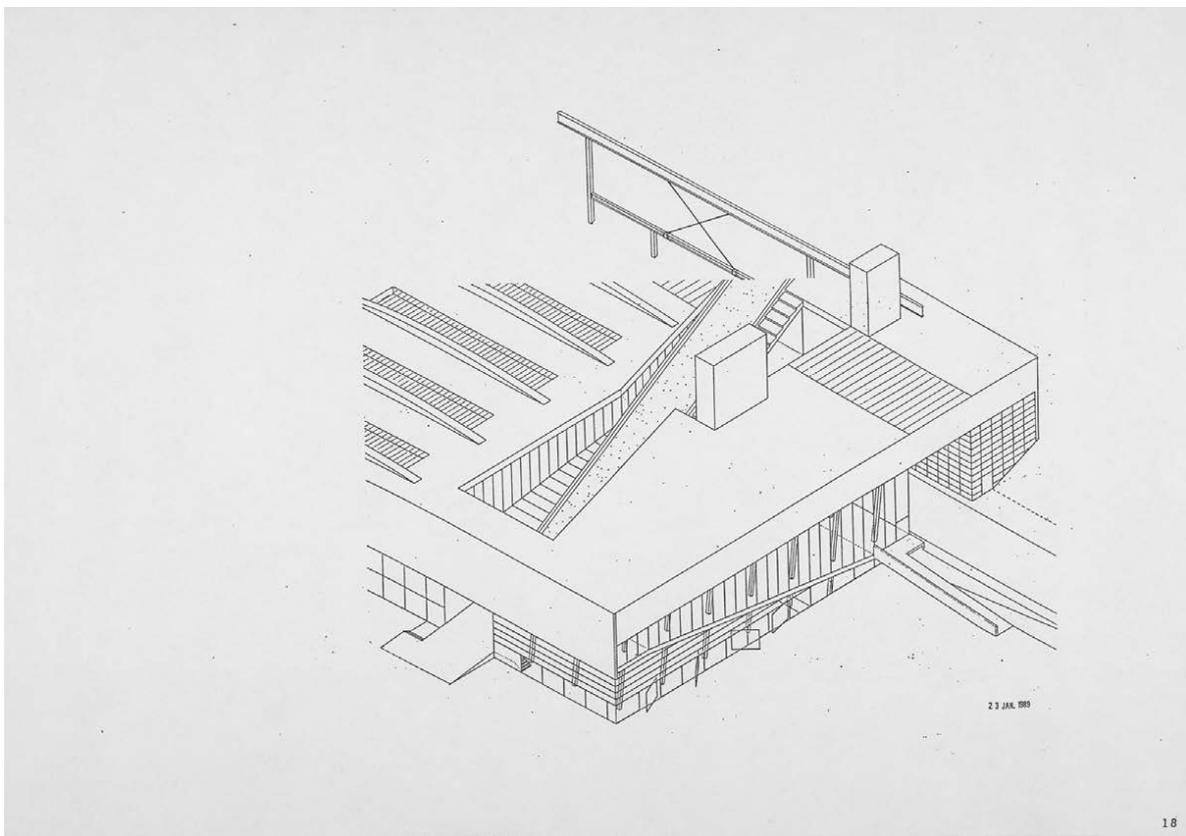
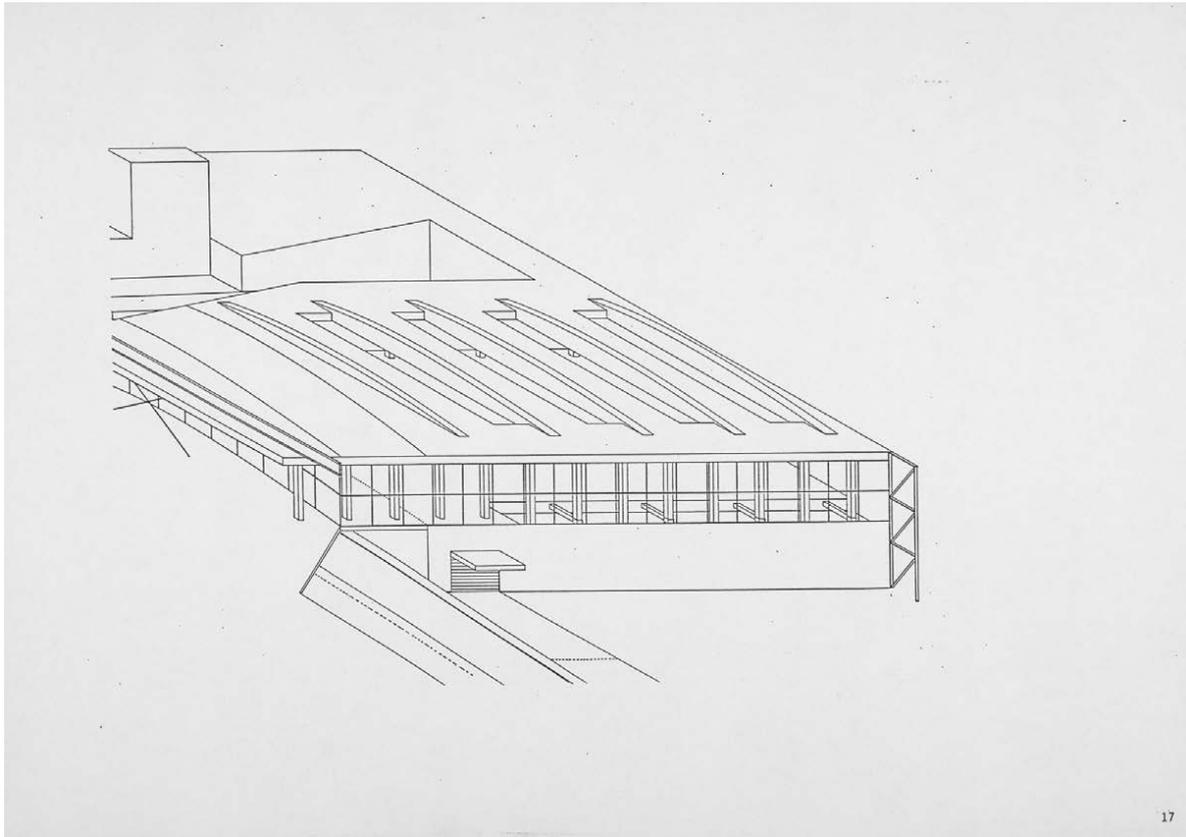


Figure 11. Kunsthalle Copro. Preliminary Design. Axonometric drawings.
Top: South-east corner. Bottom: North-west corner. January 1989.

Koolhaas proposes that Ove Arup provides the consultants of both the structure and the services, suggesting that Arup's engineers collaborate with Rotterdam's Public Works. The primary responsibility, however, would fall to Arup. Seemingly, up to this point, Arup had no official mandate for their services, in spite of the considerable amount of work then already invested into the project.²⁰⁷ Surely, the collaboration with Arup was significant for the development of the project. That the Kunsthal with the Public Works as the sole consultants in charge would have materialized as it eventually did, seems unlikely, especially when considering the complex and highly unconventional structural system. In an interview with the author, Toni Adam – project manager of the Kunsthal between 1989 and 1991 – suggested that Ove Arup was necessary to 'change the minds' of the Public Works, pointing out solutions that would diverge from the established standards of planning.²⁰⁸

The negotiations between OMA and the municipality continued. On 17 March, Koolhaas sent a revised proposal for the constitution of the Building Team to Rotterdam's Public Works: Ove Arup figures as the consulting office in charge for the structure and the building services in collaboration with the Public Works, limited, though, to the phase of the Definitive Design (DO).²⁰⁹ The division of tasks for the planning phases was to be agreed upon thereafter. Arup would audit the further planning. The minutes of the Building Committee's meeting from April simply record: 'The collaboration between Arup and the Public Works has been discussed', while mentioning that a presentation of Arup's Primary Design was scheduled for the end of the month.²¹⁰ On 19 May the Building Committee approved the concept for the engineering mandates. Arup is among the planners listed, next to OMA and the Public Works. The first set of drawings by Arup dates from April 1989. An invoice by Arup from August charges fees for the structural system and the building services of both the Primary and the Definitive Design.²¹¹

²⁰⁷ As has been mentioned before, Koolhaas already made several attempts to engage Arup as consultants in 1988. In a letter from the municipality to Jo Schippers (OMA) from 31 January 1989 regarding an invoice for the recent project changes there is no mention of Arup's services. Ibid.

²⁰⁸ In an interview with the author on 25 September 2018.

²⁰⁹ OMAR 3267.

²¹⁰ OMAR 1518.

²¹¹ M.S.S. Zikri to J.M. Dekker (Dienst Gemeentelijk Musea Rotterdam), 8 August 1989. Arup London Archives.

Chapter 2.3



Figure 12. Kunsthall. Copro. Preliminary Design. Axonometric drawings. January 1989.
Above: South-west corner. In the Auditorium with truncated columns and cable trusses. Below: Portico.

Adjustments to the programme

On the basis of OMA's Preliminary Design form 25 January, Van Krimpen compiled a further list of requirements, dated 18 February, which in all likelihood was to be incorporated in the Kunsthal's revised and definitive brief.²¹² Van Krimpen once more voices his preference for skylights and closed walls. Along the building perimeter in particular, he suggests to restrict openings to occasional 'views to the outside'. Most requirements, however, regard the building's technical infrastructure and equipment, such as power connections, broadcast-systems, lightning options and the security system. In order to allow for different events taking place in parallel, the exhibition halls ought to function independently from one another in terms of lightning, darkening, heating, ventilation and broadcast. For the same reason, each exhibition area was to be provided with a separate entrance and a cash desk as well as a direct access to the toilets and the cloakroom. At a meeting of the Building Committee on 7 April, Koolhaas dubbed the revised programme a 'programme of wishes', deeming the technical requirements irreconcilable with the agreed cost limit.²¹³ But Linthorst decided to defer the reduction of costs to the phase of the Definitive Design. The revised programme was passed by the Building Committee in May, as it seems, without major changes.²¹⁴

When Koolhaas presented a slightly modified version of the Kunsthal scheme at the meeting of the Building Committee on 24 February, some of the concerns raised by Van Krimpen seem to have been taken into account.²¹⁵ [Figure 13] On the ground floor a narrow corridor is added between Hall 1 and the ramp ascending to Hall 2 so as to give them direct access to the toilets and the cloakrooms, thus facilitating their autonomous use. On both levels, the new partition merges with the row of columns

²¹² Just like many other documents, the list was translated in English, probably with regard to the planners of Arup. It is headed: 'Re: Kunsthal, Rotterdam. / List of requirements with regard to the optimum use of possibilities on the basis of the drawings already developed by OMA, dated 25 January 1989.' OMAR 1436. The revised Programme of Requirements had been announced at the meeting of the Building Committee on 25 January.

²¹³ Minutes of the Building Committee's meeting on 7 April 1989. OMAR 1518.

²¹⁴ OMAR 1518. There is no mention of any changes concerning the programme in the minutes of this period. The minutes from 7 April and 19 May refer to a brief issued by the Public Works ('Projectteam Kunsthal'), entitled 'Programma van eisen. Kunsthal Rotterdam [sic]'. The A4-brochure, dated March 1989, is exclusively concerned with detailed technical specifications. Arup London Archives.

²¹⁵ OMAR 1518. As the minutes record, the drawings presented are dated 25 February. OMAR 1749.

alongside the Ramp Street (axis J). In Hall 2 a triangular ticket booth is attached to the wall's surface providing an optional second entrance to the building. A diagonal wall adjacent to Hall 2 connects the ticket booth to the edge of the Roof Garden above, while the short wall facing the entrance coincides with the northern margin of the Service Road below. To the east, a partition aligns with the *vide* at the margin of Halls 1 and 2, forming a closed screen in front of the columns along the outside wall to the east. In Hall 3, two rows of columns – one at the centre and one along the west façade – are omitted. Evidently, the partial elimination of columns as well as their 'replacement' and 'concealment' by additional partitions were the result of Van Krimpen's wish to avoid any supports in the vicinity of the exhibition areas' permanent walls. Obstructive columns are also a major concern of his written comment on OMA's scheme which probably relates to an early version from December 1988.²¹⁶ According to Van Krimpen, Koolhaas accepted the partition between Halls 1 and 2 only reluctantly, calling the oblong space it created 'Gallery Van Krimpen'.²¹⁷

Exoskeletal girders

During the meeting, Koolhaas presented a cardboard model in scale 1 to 100, with pictures included in the booklet.²¹⁸ [Figure 14] Apparently the model was 'ahead' of the drawings, anticipating a series of adjustments that were soon to be incorporated into the design. Two of the pictures show that the previously two separate shafts on top of the roof – containing stairs, an elevator and a riser – merged into a single service tower. To the east, the arched upstand beams in concrete spanning Hall 2 are replaced by exoskeletal girders that are identical with the plate girder framing the Portico along the Maas Boulevard. Whether a lighter – and less costly – roof structure in steel was already envisaged for the whole of the roof, as taken in consideration by the structural report from 30 January, is not clear. However, the sequence of parallel girders extends without interruption to the cantilevering girder on the Portico, three of the girders intersecting with the roof's transparent replica of the Service Road. To

²¹⁶ Undated. OMAR 1439.

²¹⁷ Interview with the author on 28 July 2020.

²¹⁸ OMAR 1518. Fragments of the model are held by the HNI archives. MAQV 498.

Chapter 2.3

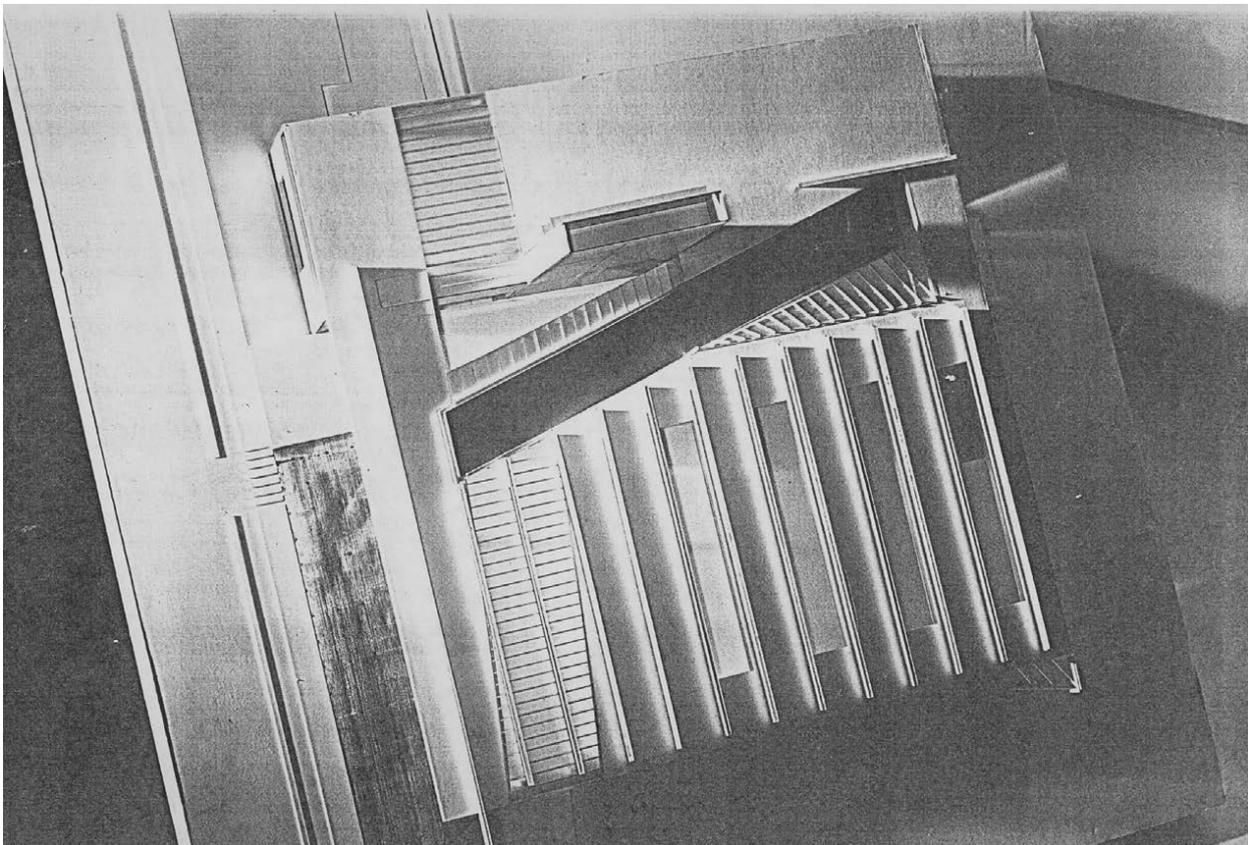
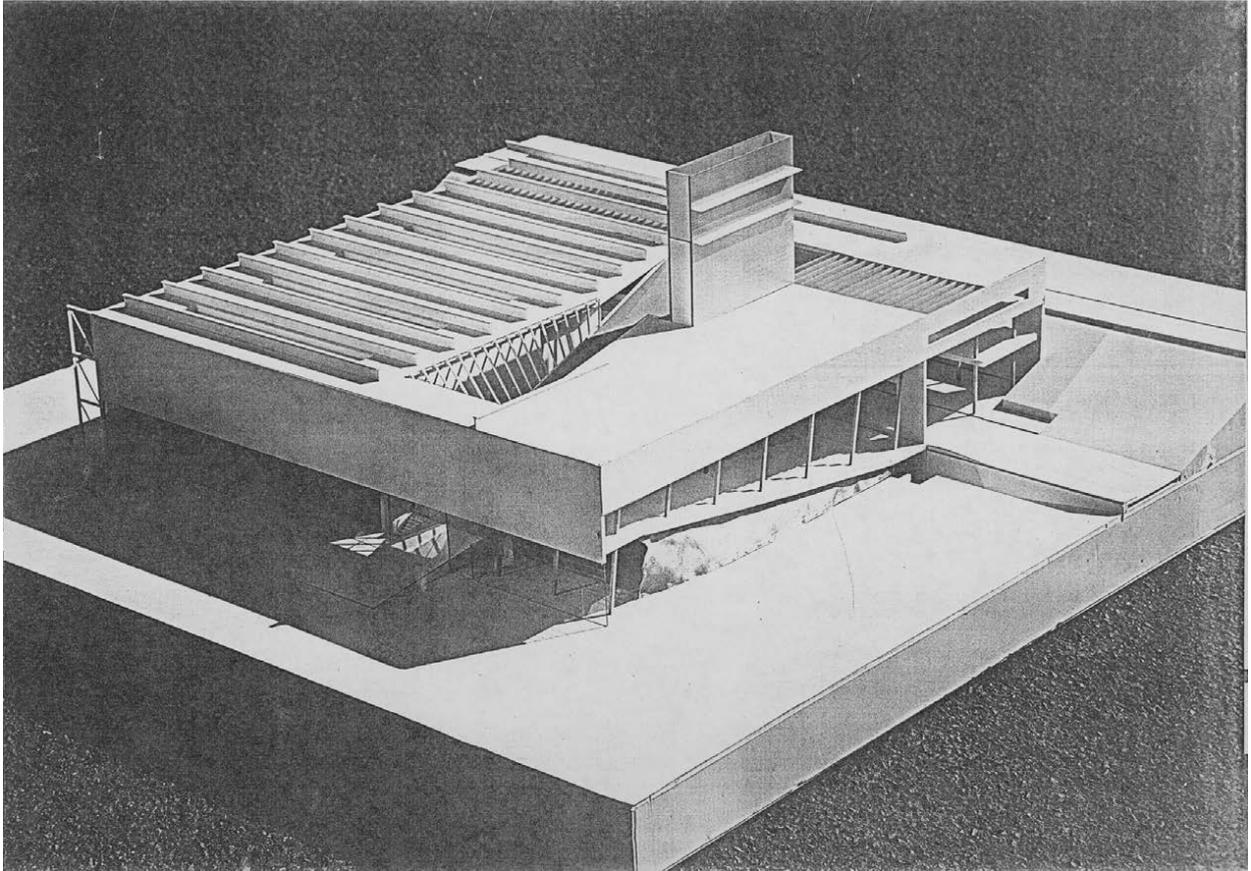


Figure 14. Kunsthall.OMA. Photos included in the booklet from 25 February 1989, showing the model in scale 1 to 100.

the north another, identical plate girder was added on top of Hall 3. Its purpose was twofold: first – as pointed out by Roberto Gargiani – to bridge a concrete column that had been removed from Hall 3 due to the shift of the Skew Ramp leading to the roof; second – as reported by Ed Melet – to suspend the ‘floating’ concrete wall of the north façade from above.²¹⁹ Like the open-web truss at the north-east corner, the plate girder thus facilitated the eschewal of the columns proposed by Balmond in January. Taken together, the exoskeletal girders formed a homogeneous group of elements that spread over a large section of the roof. On top of three of the facades, one or more of the girders would be visible. Given the persisting congruence of the cantilever of the Portico’s plate girder with the depth of the open-web truss at the north-east corner, the latter was apparently meant to be part of this group.

The duality of the situation

The corollary text included in the booklet from 25 February is OMA’s first comment on the building’s relation to its environment. Variants of the argument would become constant in OMA’s later project statements: ‘Any design for the Kunsthal needs to do justice to the duality of its location: *in* the Museum Park and *at* the Westzeedijk. / An urban face [stedelijk gezicht] symbolizes its orientation towards a “mass”, the park side implies traditional museal contemplation.’²²⁰ Apart from the ‘orientation towards mass’, arguably referring to the solid slab of the Office Block, Koolhaas does not explain in which qualities he thinks the respective urban and contemplative character of the facades resides. As it seems, the main response of the scheme to its surroundings are the exterior’s different degrees of formal diversity. If one equates heterogeneity with urbanity and homogeneity with contemplation, the north elevation is the building’s most contemplative side, and the south facade its most urbane.

Towards the Maas Boulevard a Miesian roof unites two distinct volumes under a horizontal surface; one is a ‘solid’ slab with a window, the other one is a transparent box; one has a straight front, the other

²¹⁹ Gargiani, *The Construction of Merveilles*, 152. Later on, two columns would be omitted, the beam on the roof spanning altogether three bays. In his review from 1993, Melet apparently refers to explanations of the structural system delivered by Koolhaas while showing the author around the Kunsthal. Melet, ‘De perfecte wanorde. Detaillering en constructie KunstHAL’, *De Architect* 1 (1993), 37.

²²⁰ OMAR 1794, (author trans.).

one a curved one; one is figurative, the other one repetitive; one is aligned with the roof, the other one is clearly set back from its edge with a series of columns and a cross of bracing outside, while the inclined platform of the driveway ‘transgresses’ the building’s otherwise square perimeter. By comparison the flat façade facing the park is composed of only a few elements: the foot of the Ramp Street aside, two essentially homogeneous halves – one solid, one transparent. Regarding their formal diversity, the east and west façade mark a position in between, being exposed – more than the other two sides – to ‘the dual’ condition of the site.²²¹ And yet, the east and west facade are closer in character to the side facing the park. That is especially true for the east façade, even if the volume is cut out at one end as well as undercut by the dyke. The west façade is almost as heterogeneous as the south side. The unity of both facades is contested by an opening that pierces most of the height. In fact, the west façade faces a more urban environment than the east and north facade: next to it there are stretches of green and a couple of trees, as well as the Nature History Museum, and, at its back, the white, towering mass of the Erasmus University’s Medical Faculty. Nonetheless, all parts of the west façade meet in the same plane, and the concrete wall on top of the glazed surfaces is a much stronger bond than the thin roof plate along the Maas Boulevard.

The Primarily Design passed the Building Committee without any objections. According to a report by F. Meier (Public Works) in collaboration with Jo Schippers, the project was to cost roughly 26.6 million guilders, that is, 1.6 million guilders more than the already expanded budget provided.²²² A reduction of the total surface as well as a reduction of the building standard were discussed as savings. But Linthorst decided, once more, to postpone any resolution with regard to cuts to the next planning phase, that is, the Definitive Design (DO). In April 1989, the daily *Rotterdams Nieuwsblad* wrote: ‘The funding of the Kunsthal in the Museum Park is highly uncertain. The City Council is supposed to invest 20 million for the arts centre designed by Rem Koolhaas. Sponsors shall cover at least five million guilders.’²²³ Joop Linthorst is mentioned stating that the construction would not start until the funding

²²¹ Project statement OMA, *El Croquis* (1992), 102.

²²² OMAR 1518.

²²³ Photocopy of article: ‘Financiering van Kunsthal onzeker’, *Rotterdams Nieuwsblad*, 8 April 1989. OMAR 3267 (author trans.).

of the missing 5 million guilders was secured. According to Linthorst, it was Koolhaas whom the city council expected to make sure that the costs would not exceed the limit of 25 million guilders.

The day shift

In 1989, at least four staff members of OMA were involved in the project, next to Koolhaas and Hoshino. Jo Schippers, a civil engineer by training, became increasingly involved over the years.²²⁴ As a general rule, it was either Koolhaas or Schippers who attended the meetings of the Building Committee in the company of one further member of OMA's staff, and it used to be Schippers who represented the office in the meetings with contractor Dura.²²⁵ His key responsibilities were costs, the time schedule and organizational issues.²²⁶ Between February and May, it seems, architect Jan Verwijnen was envisaged as the Kunsthal's project manager. Verwijnen attended several meetings of the Building Committee, he met the contractor DURA with Schippers, and the correspondence from these months indicates that he was in charge of communication with Arup. But in June, Verwijnen's name disappears from the records, and by July the position was filled by Italian-Dutch architect Toni Adam (1951-).²²⁷ Adam had joined OMA in 1984. By 1989 he had considerable experience in building, having worked, among other things, on several buildings of the IJ-plein development, an apartment block at Frederiksstraat, likewise in Amsterdam, and – just before joining the Kunsthal team – on a workspace 'de Stapsteen' for mentally disabled people in Amersfoort.²²⁸ Adam was responsible for the collaboration with Arup and the local authorities, including those departments of the municipality

²²⁴ In the 1988 catalogue of the exhibition at deSingel, Schippers is listed as a technician. See: De Backer, *Office for Metropolitan Architecture*, 6.

²²⁵ His name appears in the project files from May 1989 onwards. From the very beginning, it was Schippers who represented OMA in the regular meetings with the contractor DURA and the municipality dedicated to the technical details of the planning process. The meetings are recorded in the 'Building Reports', the 'Coordination Records', and the minutes of the Building Team.

²²⁶ That costs, the time schedule and organizational issues were Schippers' key responsibility, is evident from the above minutes and reports as well as from the extensive correspondence exchanged between Schippers and the contractor and the municipality. During the interviews with the author on 25 July 2017 and 25 September 2018 Hoshino and Adam described Schipper's role in similar terms.

²²⁷ The minutes of a meeting with the municipality on 11 April 1989 appear to be the first to mention his name in the context of the Kunsthal. OMAR 1520. Adam had also worked on the first project of Kunsthal (I) at a very early stage together with Gregor Mescherowsky. Interview with the author on 25 September 2018. The interview is also the source of most of the subsequent information related to Adam.

²²⁸ Adam recalls that the building was visited by Van Krimpen who was particularly fond of its interior due to the closed walls and skylights.

which, next to Arup, were in charge of the structural system and the building services. Within OMA he built up and supervised a team of draftsmen. According to Adam, the first technical drawings were prepared by the recently started firm Bureau Bouwkunde, offering support for architectural planning. Adam recalls that it was from this office that draftsman Leo van Immerzell was recruited, who subsequently would prepare a large amount of the detail drawings. Van Immerzell had his drawing table next to Hoshino for the next couple of years giving the latter plenty of occasion to supervise his work.²²⁹ It is evident that Koolhaas' associate Ron Steiner was involved in some of the detailing too, and according to Hoshino he did some of the earlier drawings. His main contribution, however, might have been the large working model in scale 1 to 50, published twice in *El Croquis*.²³⁰ Isaac Batenburg, hired as an interim at a later stage, seems to have played a significant role during the construction phase.²³¹ The number of OMA staff members involved in the project, however, is much larger. In *S,M,L,XL* Jeroen Thomas, Eduardo Arroyo Munoz, Jim Njoo and Marc Peeters are mentioned as team members;²³² Hoshino and Adam recall Maartje Lammers and Alexa Hartig having temporarily worked on the project, and some other (first) names appear in the files.

Not a single team member worked on the Kunsthal exclusively: Hoshino was deeply involved in the Nexus project in Fukuoka since 1989; Van Immerzell was working on the development at Veerplein in Vlaardingen, completed in 1989, and, likewise, on the Nexus project; Adam was also the project manager of the Museum Park and recalls to have been involved in other projects as well.²³³ Apparently, most of the Kunsthal team corresponds to what Koolhaas once called the 'dayshift'. 'We've also arranged the office', he explained in 1989, 'so that now, in the same building we've got an area for the professional – the day shift – separated from a kind of experimental "play room" where we can organize

²²⁹ Interviews with the author on 25 July 2017 and 25 September 2018.

²³⁰ According to model maker Frans Parthesius, who frequently collaborated with OMA during those years, the model is likely to have been built by OMA's own staff. Email to the author (10 June 2020). Adam supposes that the model was built by Ron Steiner. Email to the author (11 June 2020). *El Croquis* 53 (1992) and 79 (1996). The model is held by the HNI (MAQV 494).

²³¹ Hoshino in an interview with the author on 25 July 2017. Batenburg's name recurs in the OMAR files.

²³² Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 1275. Probably Thomas, Arroyo Munoz, Njoo and Peeters worked only temporarily on the Kunsthal. The author has been unable to find any of these names in the files. Neither were they mentioned by Hoshino or Adam. Arroyo (Munoz) published a review of the Kunsthal in *a+t* in 1993: Arroyo, Eduardo, 'Do Nomads Dream?', *a+t* 2 (Oct 1993), 18-36.

²³³ Interview with the author on 25 September 2018.

perpetual chaos.’²³⁴ With ‘play room’ Koolhaas would refer to the section of the office where the competition entries and studies were produced as opposed to the ‘dayshift’ in charge of the projects due for construction. Koolhaas himself, and apparently Ron Steiner who participated in numerous competitions during those years, commuted between the office’s two halves. As for Hoshino, Adam, Schippers, Van Immerzell and Batenburg it appears most likely that they were largely absorbed by implementing the Kunsthal, the Museum Park, and the Nexus Housing for a couple of years.

Models, not faxes

The amount of sketches and drawings of all sorts produced for the Kunsthal is enormous. Nonetheless, it seems that the principle tool for the development of the design were not drawings but models. This is not so much indicated by the dozen surviving models and pictures of models dispersed among the papers, but first of all by the accounts given by Hoshino and Adam. Hoshino recalls to have struggled throughout the process to get a hold of the project by graphic means – be it floorplans, vertical sections, perspective or axonometric drawings. In fact, it is not easy to visualize the spatial relations of the Kunsthal with plans. The various slopes and rotations tend to escape the means of orthogonal projection, and neither were the axonometric and perspective computer drawings able to capture the knot-like intricacy of the circuit. Apparently, the accurate 3D-drawings furnished by COPRO ought to clarify certain ‘visibilities’ from specific vantage points, some of them commented by Koolhaas. After the summer of 1989, however, no further 3D-drawings were commissioned. The drawings showing several sections of the itinerary in sequence were only produced after the completion of the building in 1992, and it is unclear whether they would have proved a useful tool for the development of the design. Showing only one of the four interior elevations, the drawings convey the notion of a sequential movement through space, while giving only a rudimentary idea of the circuit’s actual spatial impact.

Repeatedly the fax has been described as a medium that used to be critical for the development of OMA’s designs. In an interview with Koolhaas from 2008, Mark Wigley suggests that ‘the fax machine

²³⁴ Cervelló, ‘I’ve always been anxious’, 82.

Chapter 2.3

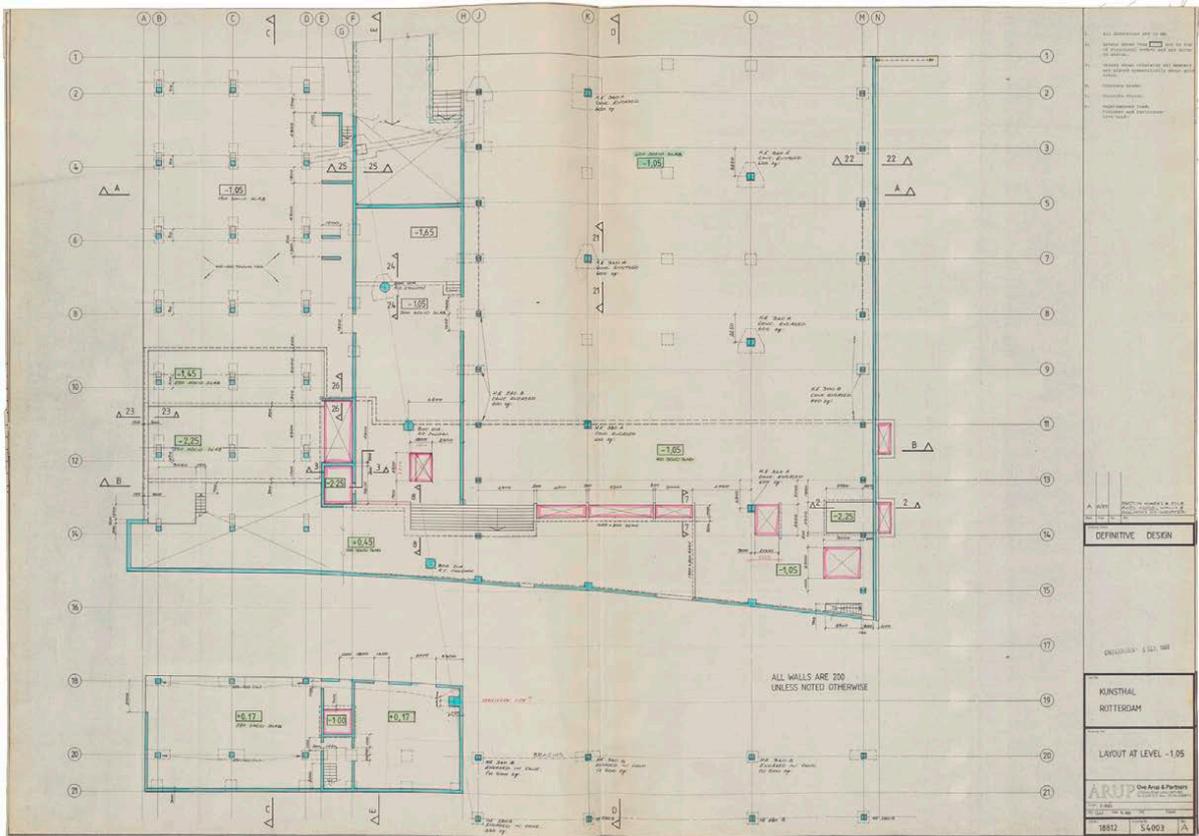
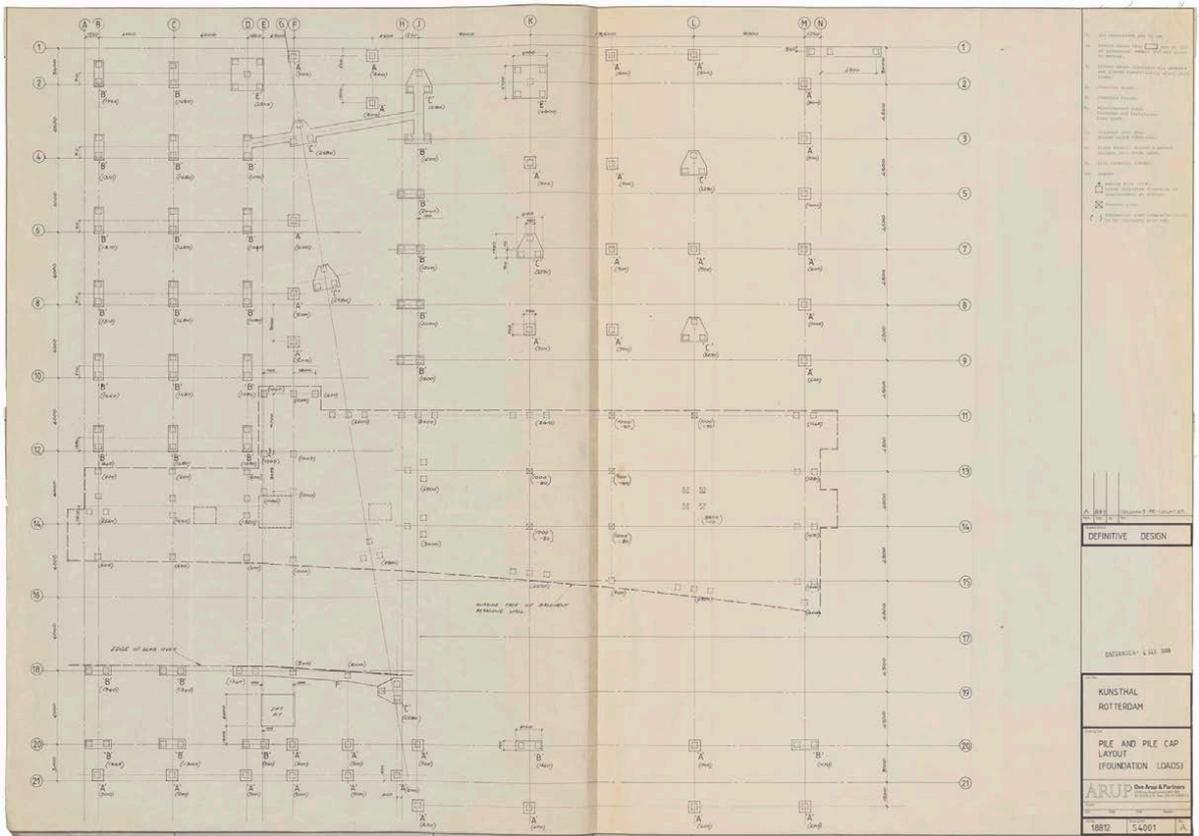


Figure 15. Kunsthal. Ove Arup. Structural System. Definitive Design. Foundations and floorplan at level -1.05. August 1989.

is the single most important design tool in your studio.²³⁵ Koolhaas eventually agrees, praising the format it imposes, the need to focus on ‘essences’, the instant that the fax ‘liberates one from meetings’, and the continuity of focussed production it induces. Philipp Oswald and Matthias Hollwich who had been working at OMA in the second half of the 1990s report:

Fifty percent of the time Rem is on the road [...] and he wants to be kept up to date about the development of the projects on a daily basis. Therefore towards the evening, the teams look at the results of the day, structure and select the material and reduce it to its quintessence – in small diagrams, easy to read and to fax, short explanations and mottos – on 10, 20 or more pages. The necessity to convey the results to someone ‘from outside’ in a comprehensible fashion leads to reflection of the essentials, and to checking whether new thoughts and ideas are in agreement with the basic concept.²³⁶

According to Hoshino, faxes of this kind were also a common practice while he was working on the Kunsthall:

‘[...] because Rem was often away from the office and it was very difficult to talk to him in person. He often took off, saying that he was reachable at this number at this hotel in Miami or where ever. So many of my colleagues in the office sent him many faxes, sometimes out of despair. But I couldn’t send him models which were crucial for this project. Somehow he kept on coming to me and the models I had made, so that we could discuss about the Kunsthall. But I never really knew beforehand when he would come exactly. So I needed to be ready all the time to discuss with him whenever he showed up. I got used – whatever the issue is – to find two or three at-least-reasonable solutions, pay attention to the consequences for the rest of the

²³⁵ Wigley, ‘Rem Koolhaas and Mark Wigley in Discussion’, 169.

²³⁶ Philipp Oswald, Matthias Hollwich, ‘OMA at work’, *Archis* 5 (1997/8), 21. In the short article ‘Fax!’, Galia Solomonoff describes the team waiting for ‘a fax response from Rem’ in summer 1998, noting: ‘The email invasion had yet to come; at that point the fax ruled.’ *Clog: Rem* (2014), 76-79.

Chapter 2.3

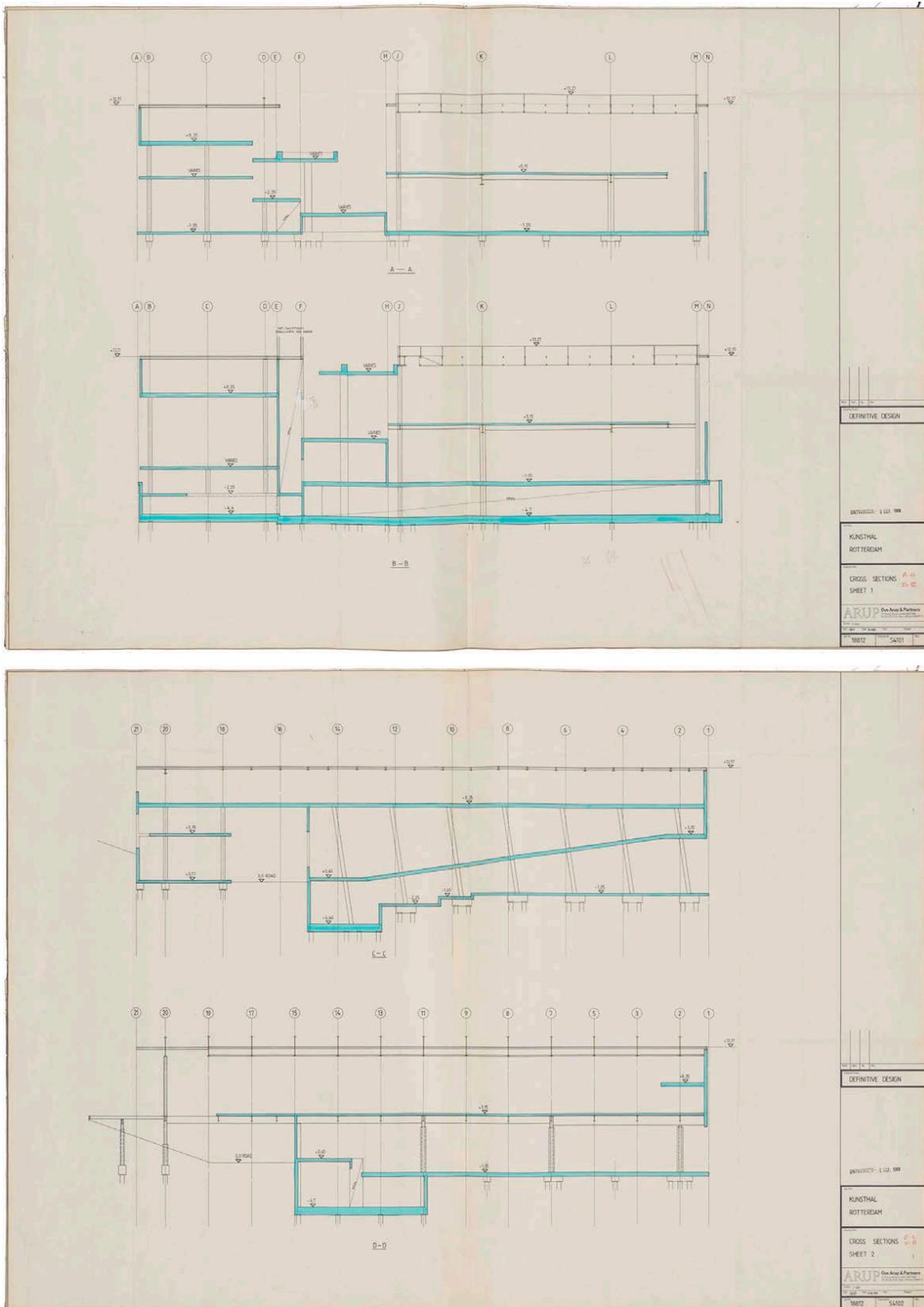


Figure 16. Kunsthall. Ove Arup. Structural System. Definitive Design. Cross sections. August 1989.
Above: East-west. Below: North-south.

design, and to keep the dossier in a pile. Whenever Rem came, I grabbed the whole pile and went through it with him.²³⁷

The amount of faxes exchanged on behalf of the Kunsthal is huge, but the number of faxes regarding design issues – comprising drawings that Koolhaas would return with comments – appears to be relatively small. Hoshino recalls to have met Koolhaas about once a week, albeit not on a regular basis. Sketches, Hoshino remembers, served as a point of departure: ‘Every study we started with a sketch, and then we made models to see if the new idea worked, and to find out what worked and what didn’t.’ Apparently, the model was the favoured tool to test ideas and to take major decisions:

[...] we looked at it [the model], you know. We talked about it and at that moment we took the decisions. Of course some of the issues we could solve in 2D. Sometimes, because we could not make models all the time, and we didn’t have 3D on the computer. Then, of course, we could make a sketch and based on the sketch we could make decisions. But the crucial issues we checked in the model.²³⁸

Koolhaas – while working on the Kunsthal – used an endoscope to bring the visual impact in scale.²³⁹

Hoshino remembers:

It was a must for Rem. [...] Every time Rem came to me, I showed him the latest model and explained what I had done. Then he just looked at the model from many places with the

²³⁷ Interview with the author on 25 July 2017. The interview is also the source of the subsequent comments by Hoshino.

²³⁸ Interview with the author on 25 July 2017. Also Oswald and Hollwich, in their article from 1998, stress the importance of models for Koolhaas and the design work: ‘Rem loves models. He can touch them, take them in his hands, manipulate them. The working models can be changed, parts can be added or taken away and in this way many ideas are developed on the model. ... The model is the tool in which the sum of the ideas are [sic] investigated in their mutual influences and in relation to the context, with which proportions and spatial interrelations are tested.’ Oswald, Hollwich, ‘OMA at work’, *Archis* 5 (1998/7), 21.

²³⁹ Apparently, Koolhaas used an endoscope also for the Dance Theatre in The Hague. That is indicated by the cover of *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui* 238 (1985), featuring a still from a model video.

Chapter 2.3

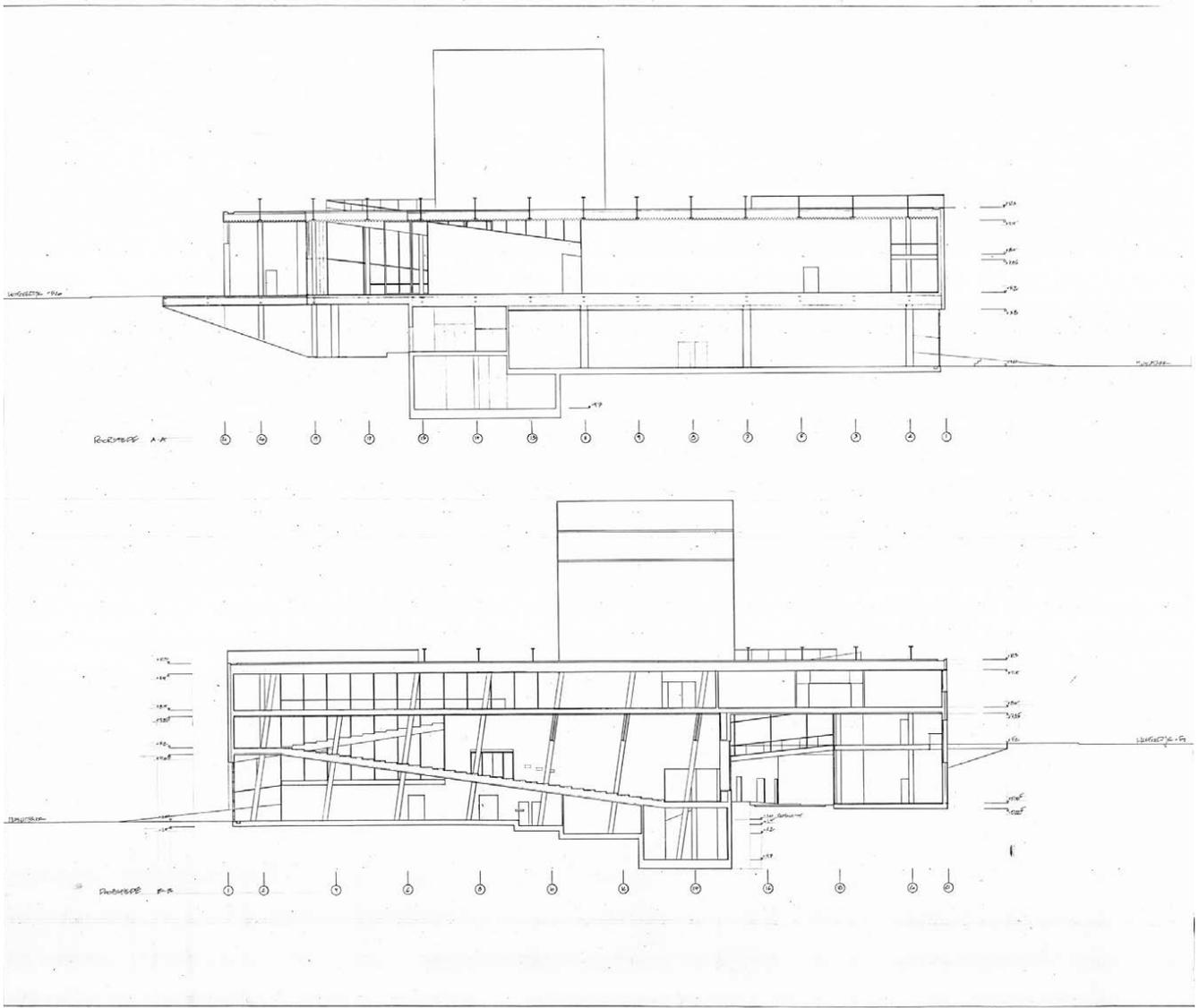


Figure 17. Kunsthall. OMA. Definitive Design. Cross sections. North-south axis. 19 July 1989.

endoscope: ‘From this angle it looks nice but from this angle it is not working ...’ That was how we evaluated the result at the time, and we started discussing from there.

According to Toni Adam, at some point a sample of the Auditorium’s slope was built so as to convince the municipality that the gradient was not too steep: ‘We made a model 1 to 1, and I was living near the watertoren, and there was a carpenter and he made it. So everybody of the municipality and the city council could walk on this model.’²⁴⁰

The cardboard model presented at the Building Committee’s meeting on 24 February probably served as working model until autumn 1989.²⁴¹ During that period, it is likely to have been the model to test ideas in the way described by Hoshino, while being kept up to date with the development of the design. In general, few pictures of the models survived that would date from the time of origin, and of the models preserved each shows only the latest stage after presumably numerous modifications.²⁴² By consequence, it is for the most part on the basis of drawings and sketches that the development of the design needs to be reconstructed, bearing in mind, though, that they were but an approximation of what Koolhaas and his team had learned from the model in the first place.

A new type of model?

According to Toni Adam, Hoshino’s career at OMA was unusual: the circumstance that an entirely new employee became the design architect of an important commission, and the fact that he held that position from beginning to the end: ‘[...] for me it was very surprising to see Fumi coming into our office and [Koolhaas] giving him the full benefit to start. First design, second design. Let’s say five designs in models, and for us this was new.’²⁴³ For Adam, at the time, such ‘models in a very small tiny scale’, ‘so fine and secure’ were ‘amazing to see’. Adam’s considerations refer to Hoshino’s blue foam models in scale 1 to 500 from late 1988. The models show not only the overall volume, but also the

²⁴⁰ Interview with the author on 25 September 2018.

²⁴¹ MAQV 498.

²⁴² This in contrast to the blue foam models from 1988 which document different stages of the design.

²⁴³ Interview author on 25 September 2018.

Chapter 2.3

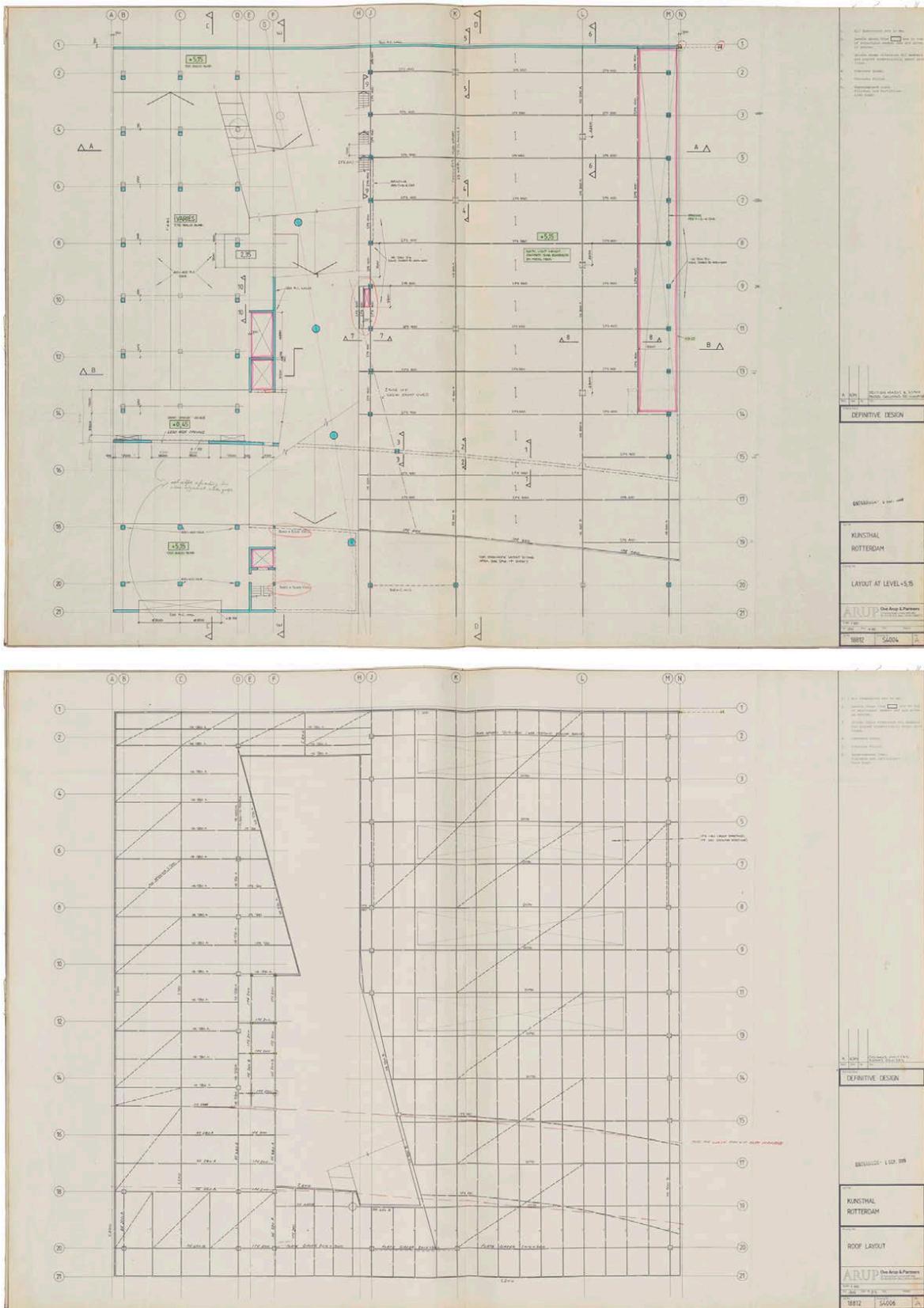


Figure 18. Kunsthall. Ove Arup. Structural System. Definitive Design. Floorplan at level +5.15 and roof layout. August 1989.

main walls and floors of the interior, conveying an idea of the spatial impact. Hoshino had been used to work with this kind of model in Japan, while Adam remembers that it was something new for OMA, in 1988.²⁴⁴

Hoshino's professional profile slightly differed from that of the typical novice at OMA. Oswald and Hollwich report – always referring to the situation in the second half of the nineties:

An important precondition is that the majority of the employees are quite inexperienced and young. Not only do they work unbelievably hard for relatively little money and thereby make it possible to pursue thousands of ideas, to try them out and reject them, which no client would ever want or be able to pay for, but more importantly, it is the naivety with which they approach the tasks they are set. Ignorant of how the problem would normally be solved, they can experiment with a childlike lack of inhibitions and thus develop new ideas.²⁴⁵

Hoshino, by contrast, had already been in charge of the construction of a couple of houses in Japan, and thus was acquainted – at least to some extent – with the difficulties of implementing a design. But as it seems, he showed the same fearlessness with regard to unconventional solutions that Koolhaas would expect from a novice. This fearlessness must have been encouraged by the division of labour within the team. Hoshino – as a design architect and also due to the fact that he spoke no Dutch at the time – was never burdened with managerial responsibilities. Colleagues like Adam and Schippers had to face the struggle with technical problems, manufacturers, the contractor, authorities, costs, time.

A proper restaurant

Costs were a major concern for all parties involved throughout the summer of 1989. At each of the monthly meetings of the Building Committee, savings were discussed. Most of them regarded technical facilities, such as the security system, the electronical services and the standard of the mechanical

²⁴⁴ Hoshino. Interview author on 25 July 2017. Adam. Interview author on 25 September 2018.

²⁴⁵ Oswald, Hollwich, 'OMA at work', 13.

Chapter 2.3

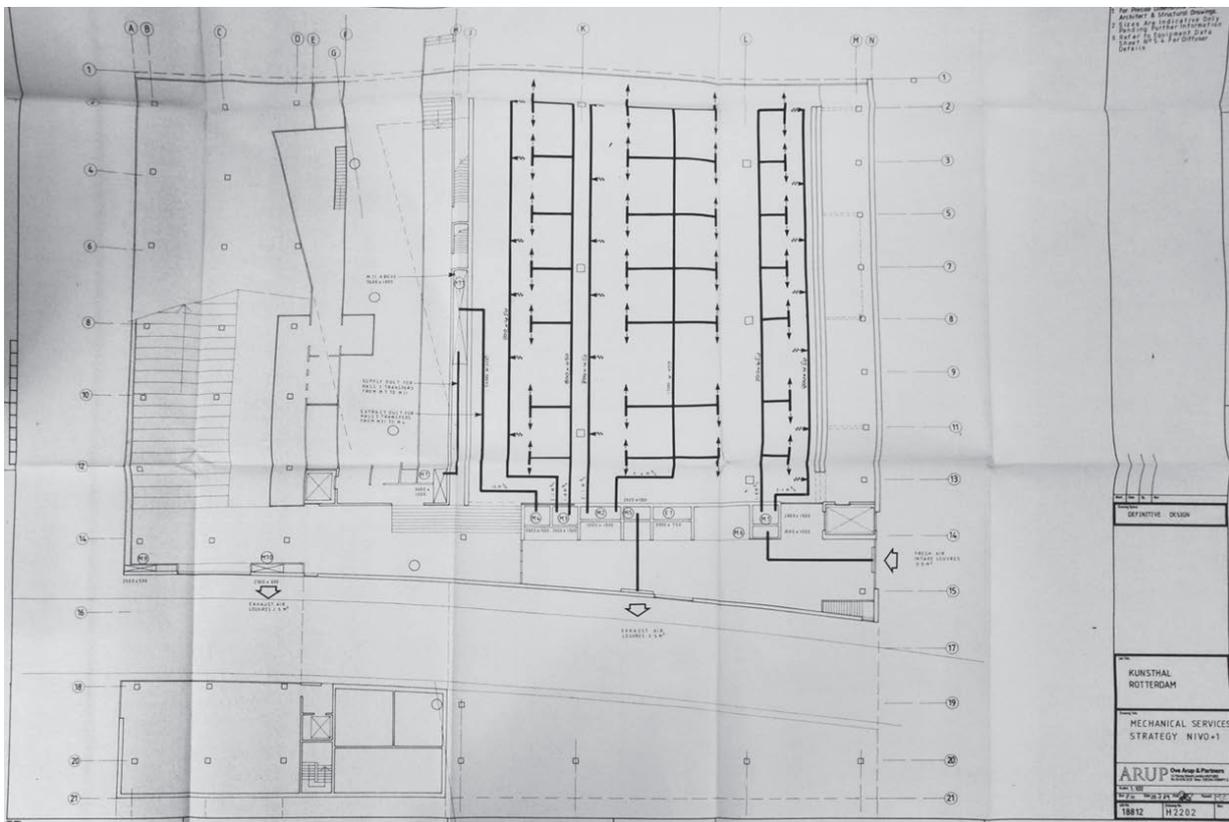
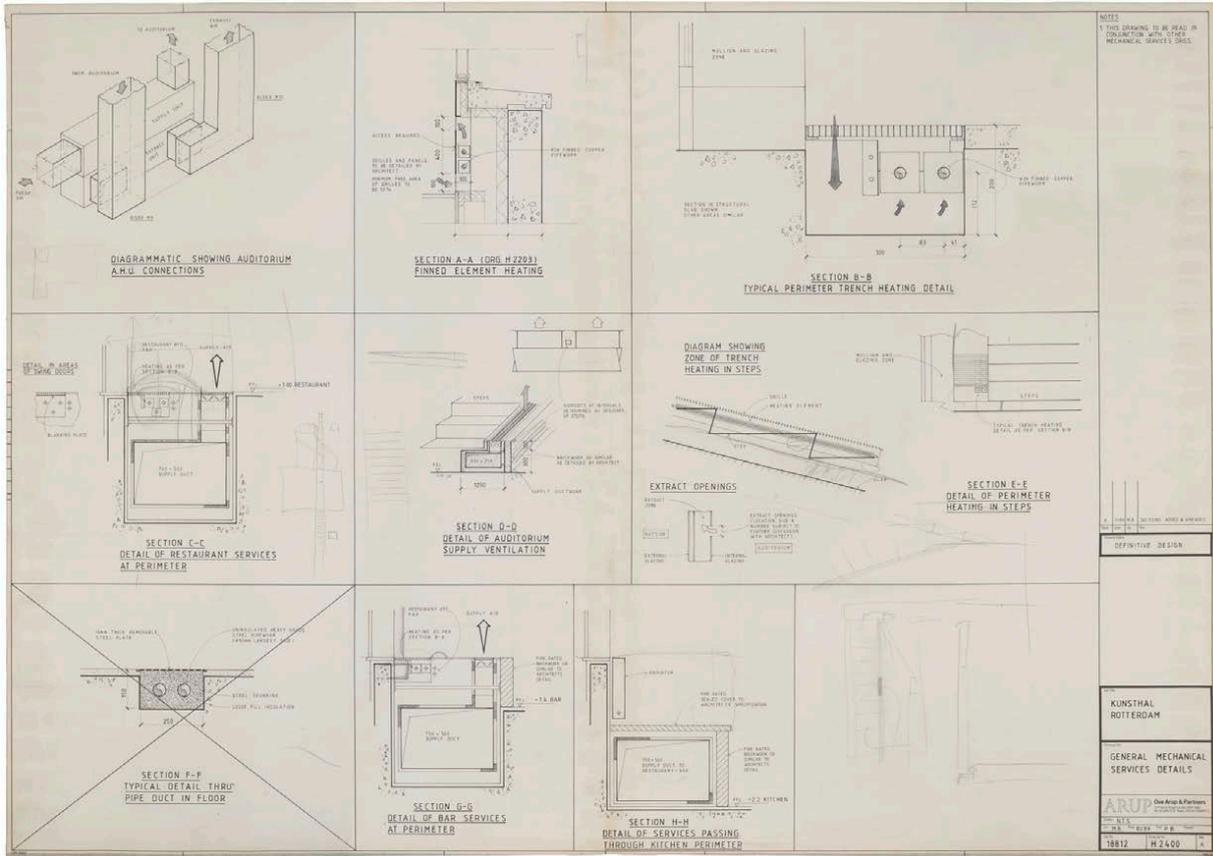


Figure 19. Kunsthall. Ove Arup. Definitive Design. Mechanical services and heating. August 1989.
 Above: Details. Below: Layout at level +1.

services. Another recurring cost issue was the conception and budget of the Restaurant.²⁴⁶ Van Krimpen advocated to provide for a proper restaurant that would be run independently from the Kunsthal, an idea opposed by Linthorst who envisaged a restaurant – apparently of a lesser standard – which would be frequented exclusively by the visitors of the arts centre.²⁴⁷ In August, the Dutch Minister of Welfare, Health and Culture, Elco Brinkman, provided additional 5 millions guilders for the Kunsthal, so that the budget totalled 25 million guilders without any help of sponsors.²⁴⁸ But even the extended budget was exceeded by 2.4 million guilders according to an estimate from September, indicating 800.000 guilders more than in February.²⁴⁹ Due to savings, the cost overrun was brought down to 100.000 guilders by mid-October.²⁵⁰ Among the cuts that had an impact on OMA's scheme was a reduction of the kitchen area in the basement, and the replacement of the roof's concrete structure by steelwork as a less costly alternative. With regard to the sponsoring announced, DURA now held out a donation of 300.000 guilders for an artwork, provided for the Museum Park, along with a possible contribution to the funding of the Restaurant.²⁵¹ The budget for the latter totalled 1.2 million guilders, half of which would be covered by the future tenant.²⁵²

Visible or not, different or not

In July, OMA and Ove Arup issued a first version of the Definitive Design. An 'Engineering Report' by Arup summarizes the concepts, standards and specifications of the structural system and the building services (mechanical, electrical, health, and fire).²⁵³ Together with the surviving drawings by Arup from July and August in scale 1 to 100, the report allows to reconstruct in some detail the structure as envisaged in summer 1989.²⁵⁴ The layout of the structure implies a series of architecturally relevant

²⁴⁶ See minutes Building Committee: 24 February, 7 April, 23 June, 13 September, 12 October 1989. OMAR 1518, 1519.

²⁴⁷ Minutes Building Committee 24 February 1989. OMAR 1518.

²⁴⁸ 'Brinkman geeft vijf miljoen voor kunsthal', *Rotterdams Nieuwsblad*, 28 August 1989. OMA's files held by the HNI include a copied version of the article. OMAR 3267.

²⁴⁹ Minutes Building Committee 13 September 1989. OMAR 1519.

²⁵⁰ Minutes Building Committee 12 October 1989. OMAR 1519.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Minutes Building Committee 13 September and 12 October 1989.

²⁵³ 'Engineering Report. Definitive Design. Kunsthal, Rotterdam. 18812. July 1989'. OMAR 1495/Arup London Archives.

²⁵⁴ Next to a few drawings from July both the HNI and the Arup London Archives hold numerous plans from June and August 1989.

Chapter 2.3

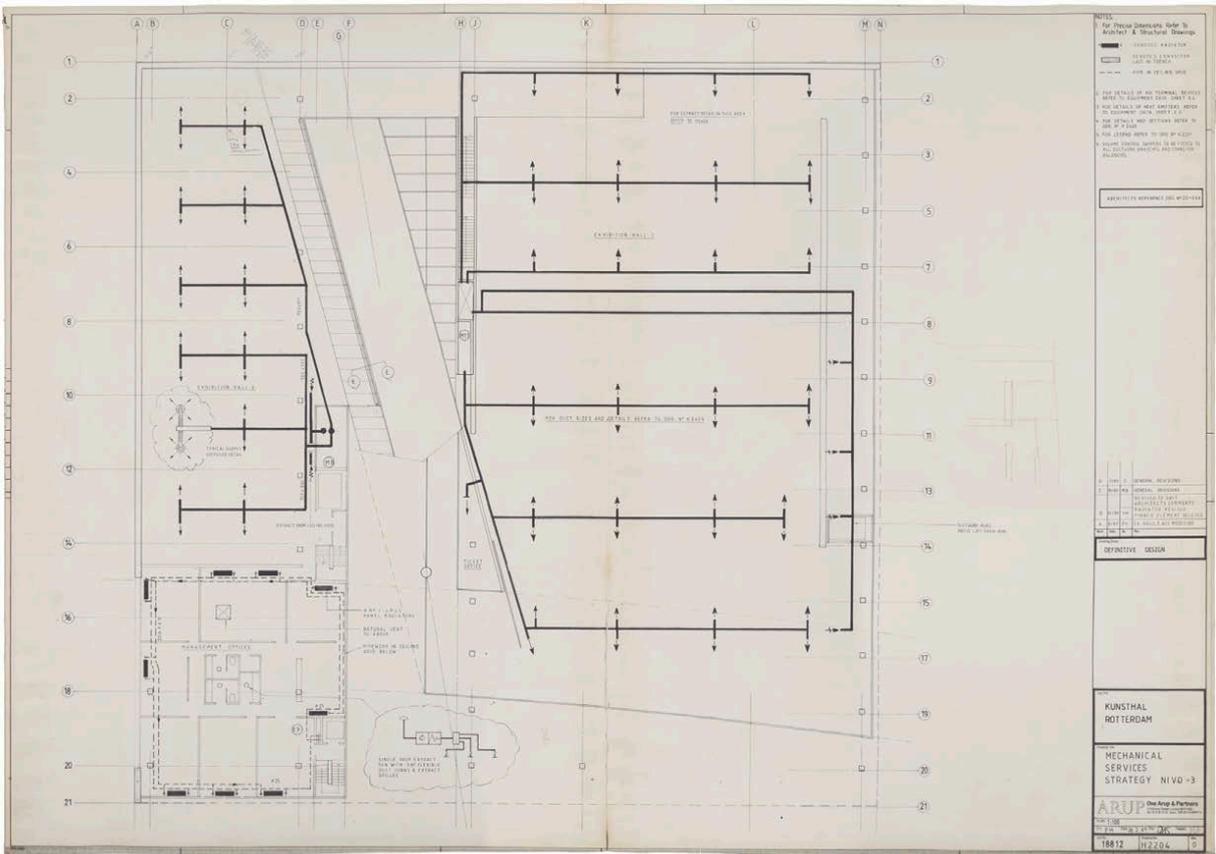
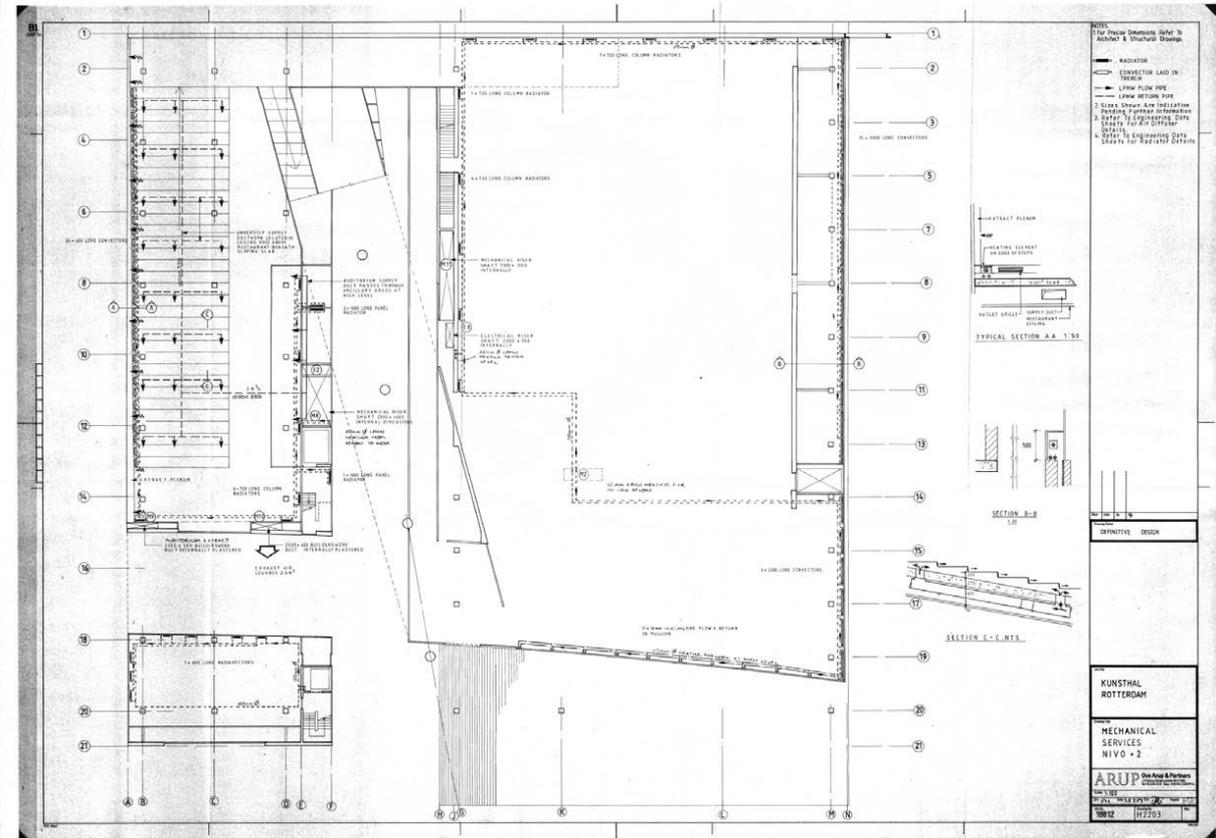


Figure 20. Kunsthal. Ove Arup. Definitive Design. Mechanical services and heating. August 1989.
 Above: Layout at level +2. Below: Layout at level +3.

developments of the project and is inseparably connected to OMA's simultaneous work on the Kunsthal as documented by a larger number of drawings from July, likewise in scale 1 to 100.²⁵⁵

Due to the weakness of the ground – consisting of sand for the most part – and a shallow water table, the report suggests precast concrete piles for the foundations to be driven 4 metres into the sand. 1-metre deep concrete caps ought to connect the piles to the columns and loadbearing walls, except for the 0.8-metre thick floor slab of the basement where no pile caps were needed. A foundation plan from August shows that the number of piles per cap varied between one and five according to the loads expected.²⁵⁶ [Figure 15] In general, two piles are provided for the slanted columns, three for the columns of the Skew Ramp and the central columns in Hall 1. For two columns in proximity of the north façade, five piles were needed in order to absorb the loads of the 60-metres concrete wall 'floating' above the open ground floor: a slanted column of the Auditorium and a central column in Hall 1, both located in vicinity of the Street Ramp. The column of the Auditorium (axes 2/d) was to support the exoskeletal girder on the roof from which the wall would be suspended; the column in Hall 1 (axes 2/k) was to carry the main load of a cantilevering primary beam on which the same wall would rest. Together with vertical open-web truss at the north-east corner, columns directly and visibly supporting the concrete wall could be avoided.²⁵⁷

As for Hall 1, this solution had significant implications willingly embraced by the architects for the most part. The plans show six instead of four central columns, arranged in two rows of three, shifted against one another by one bay. [Figure 15] In his monograph *informal*, Cecil Balmond suggests that the adjustment was motivated by spatial considerations: an unease felt with respect to the 'inner enclosure surrounded by an outer promenade which the central four columns would have dictated.'²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ OMA's first drawings of the Definitive Design (DO) are dated 19 July 1989. OMAR 3276.

²⁵⁶ OMAR 1761.

²⁵⁷ Arup London Archives. OMAR 1492. In his review from 1993 Ed Melet argues with regard to the shifted columns: 'Since this made the span bigger than normal, the steel beams would have to be higher than Koolhaas intended.' That, however, appears not to have been the case, as the span of the secondary beams (east-west axis) supporting the metal cast of the concrete floor remained the same (13.5m in the centre, 9m on the sides). Neither did the span of the primary beams (13.5m) increase.

²⁵⁸ Balmond 2010, 79.

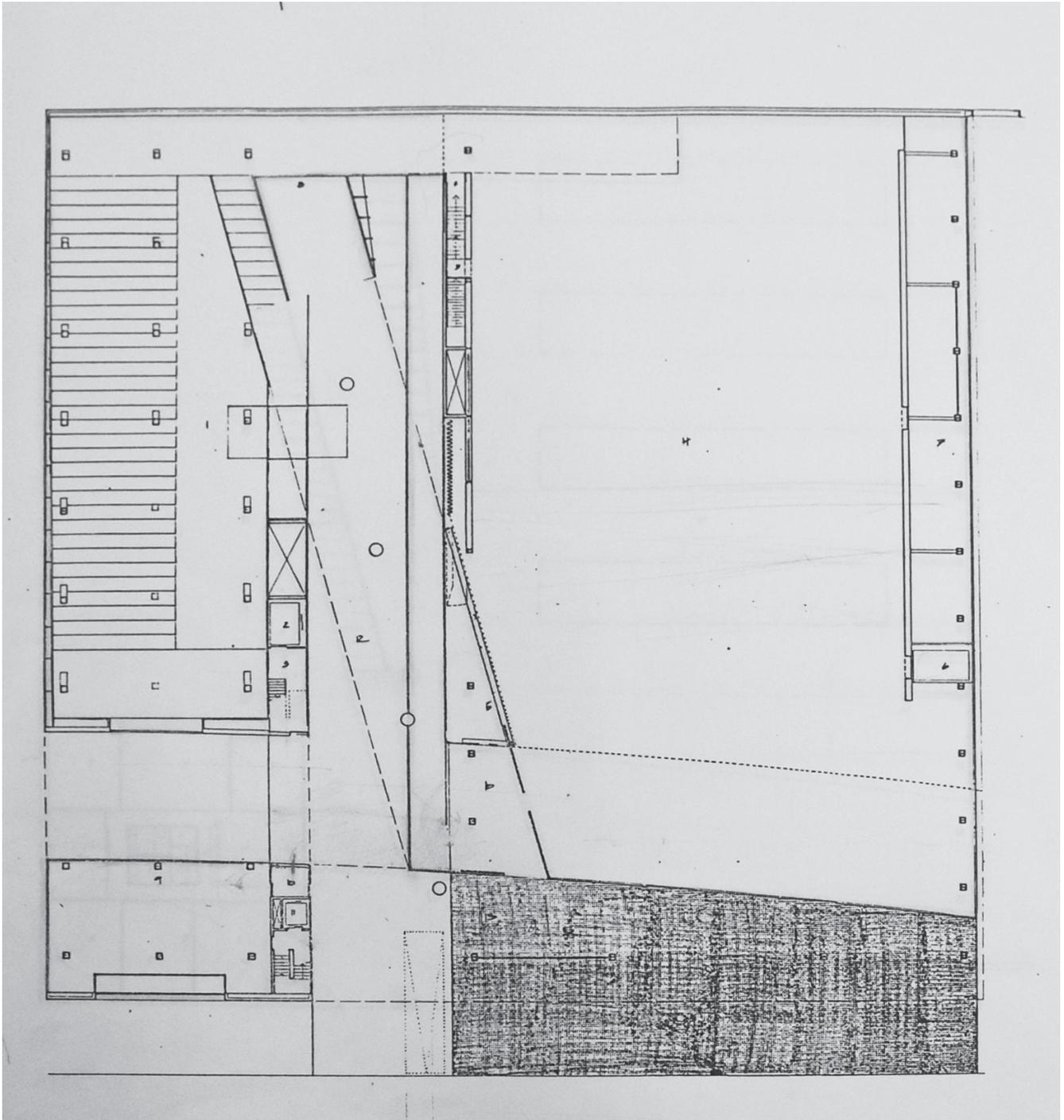


Figure 21. Kunsthal, OMA. Definitive Design. Floorplan at dyke level (Hall 2). 19 July 1989.

Similarly, Hoshino remembers Koolhaas' and his own dislike for the division of the space in two distinct areas, and that they used to call it 'a box in a box'.²⁵⁹ But he does also recall that the columns were displaced for the very structural reasons indicated by the drawings as well: to support the concrete wall of the north facade. Shifting the western row of central columns by 4.5 metres, the cantilever of the primary beam could be reduced from 7.5 metres to 3 metres: dissolving the 'box in the box', while allowing for the primary beam to carry a central section of the wall. To this end, the height of the cantilevering part of the beam needed to be increased from 0.8 metres to 1 metre. The architects made an abortive attempt to avoid any such increase.²⁶⁰ Obviously, all the slanted columns of the building's western section, all the central columns of Hall 1, and all parts of the primary beams on top were meant to appear identical, even if the loads they had to carry differed significantly. It is true, however, that other components of the structural system were developed with considerable independence beyond the use of three different grids and the hybrid character of the overall structure. Local amendments like the open-web truss at the north-east corner, the cantilevering plate girder mounted on the Portico and Hall 3, or the three cable trusses of the Auditorium appear as irregularities within the respective structural system. To what extent a structural element should disentangle from the system it is part of was apparently decided case by case. For Hall 1 and the Auditorium, any hint to the effort of making the solid part of the façade float was unwelcome, and the same goes for any further irregularity regarding the columns.

In principle accordance with Arup's Structural Report from the end of January, the structure of the building's eastern section is conceived for the most part in steel. Columns with H-shaped cross sections are envisaged for the two rows of lateral columns in Halls 1 and 2.²⁶¹ The columns would be encased in concrete, obviously to provide for the requisite fire protection.²⁶² Also the cruciform concrete

²⁵⁹ Interview with the author on 25 July 2017.

²⁶⁰ See sections Ove Arup, S 4102, S4105, dated August 1989. Arup London Archives. The red corrections and hand written comments (e.g. 'NO – AS WE SAID') were obviously added by OMA.

²⁶¹ Structural plans Arup: S002, P4, 'with comments to Arch 30/06/89'; S4004 'first issue to arch 29/7/89', S4005 'issued to all parties 29/7/89'. Arup London Archives.

²⁶² See Hoshino's 'Comments about technical drawings for Definitive Design of Kunsthall', dated 8 August 1989. Arup Archive.

Chapter 2.3

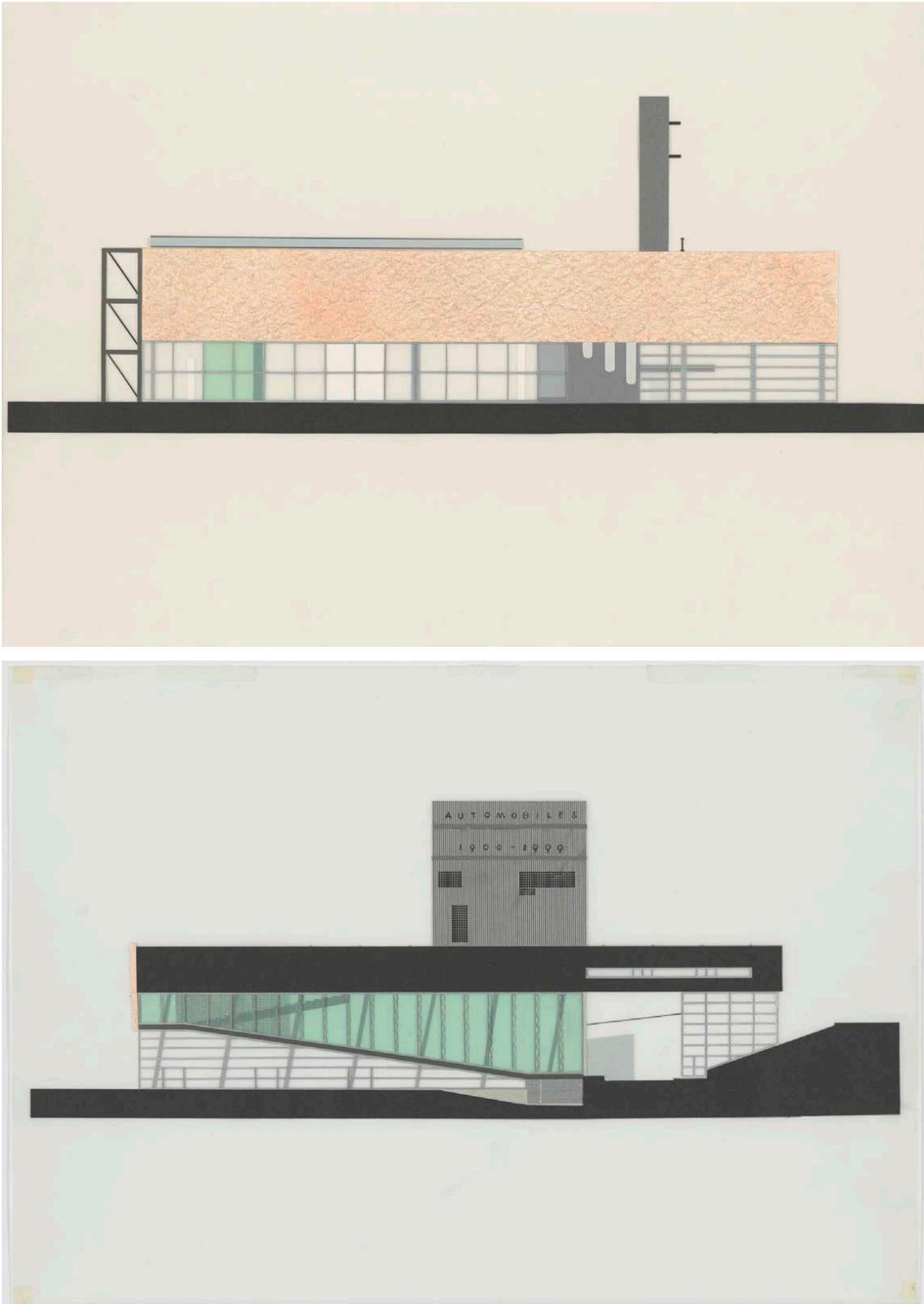


Figure 22. Kunsthalle, OMA. Collages. Above: North elevation. Below: South elevation.
Published in the September issue of *AMC* in 1989.

columns in Hall 1 are replaced by encased H-columns, albeit of larger dimensions. As envisaged from the outset, the primary and secondary beams carrying the ceiling are likewise provided in steel. For the floor the report from July specifies a '[c]omposite steel/concrete structure', consisting of a metal deck and a 160-millimetres in situ light-weight concrete slab.²⁶³ Both the principle of a lost shuttering combined with in situ concrete and the minimal dimensions of the floor slab would eventually be implemented allowing for a maximal height of Hall 1.²⁶⁴

Arup's Engineering Report provides for the entire roof of the Kunsthal a structure in steel – a switch from concrete to steel was one of the saving options listed at the Building Committee's meeting from 23 June. For the eastern section huge steel plate girders with I-shaped cross sections are envisaged, free-spanning the 32-metres wide space of Hall 2. [Figure 16] A cross section by OMA shows the lower half of the girders – the one of the Portico included – covered by a suspended ceiling, the upper half exposed. [Figure 17] A roof plan specifies for the remainder of the roof a continuous steel frame of common rolled I-beams (200-280 mm height), partly supported by larger primary beams (450 mm height). [Figure 18] The entire structure below the roof is conceived of as in situ-cast reinforced concrete: columns with square cross sections (400x400mm) – tilted in the section of the Auditorium, vertical in the area of the offices – and, renouncing to an intermediate layers of beams, flat slab floor plates of varying strength.²⁶⁵ [Figures 15-16] The ramp system in the centre by and large corresponds to OMA's drawings from February: all parts in situ-cast reinforced concrete; 5 *pilotis* to support the Skew Ramp; 30-centimetres concrete slabs for both ramps; the Skew Ramp reinforced by upstand beams on top of the columns and along the margins of the Roof Garden.

The means to secure stability vary according to the area of the building. The report defines four of them:

²⁶³ Already the report from 30 January provided a composite construction: 'The slab between these elements is cast using a metal deck as a permanent shutter and for tensile strength.' OMAR 3267.

²⁶⁴ This is evident from the as built plans of the Public Works. IUW, 'Vloer 5.300+ STR H-N/1-19-20', dated 28 August 1993. Stadsarchief Rotterdam. Different from the solution proposed by Arup, precast concrete slabs were used for the lost shuttering.

²⁶⁵ Floor strengths provided: Restaurant: 250 millimetres; Auditorium: 275 millimetres; Hall 3: 400 millimetres.

Chapter 2.3

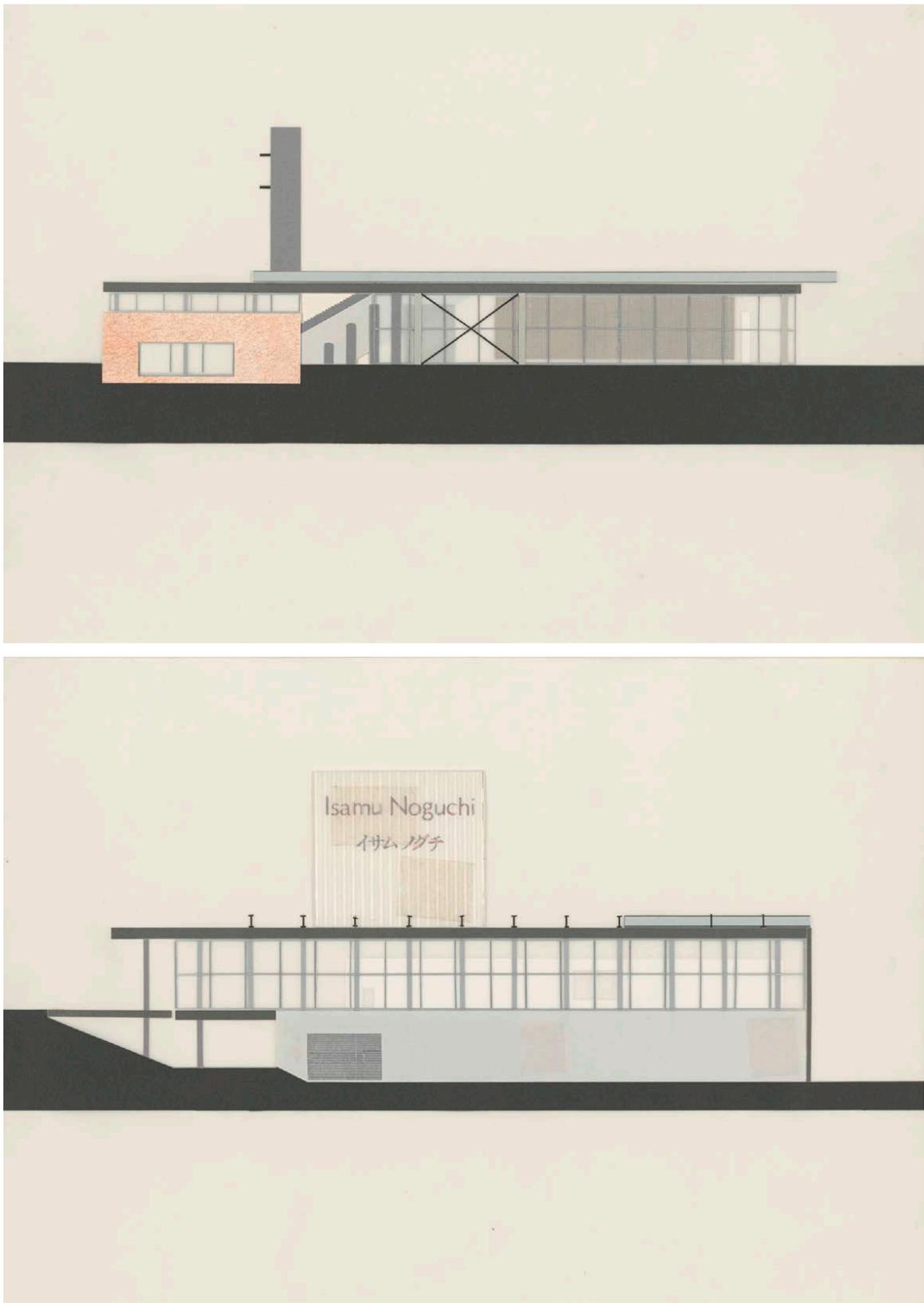


Figure 23. Kunsthall, OMA. Collages. Above: South elevation. Below: East elevation.
Published in the September issue of *AMC* in 1989.

a) Roof Areas

Local minimum steel bracing systems transfer forces to vertical diagonal bracing

b) Exhibition Area East

The rigid body plate action of the floors transmits stability loads to bracing systems continued down from roof level.

c) Exhibition Area – West and Auditorium

A combination of frame action and shear walls will contribute to maintain the stability of this area

d) General

In other areas shear wall configurations provide stability.²⁶⁶

The drawings of Arup and OMA from July and August provide local bracing for the roof structure, the lateral columns of Halls 1 and 2, and the columns of the Portico. Regarding the slanted columns of the building's western, section Balmond explains in *informal* that the columns and floor slabs of the Auditorium and Restaurant act together as moment frames.²⁶⁷ Most of the concrete walls, apt to resist shear forces, are distributed along the building perimeter, namely the wall adjacent to the Service Road and the lower half of the east façade. Several minor loadbearing walls are located in the 2.5-metres wide *poché* that extends from the Auditorium to the Office Block. Elsewhere in the report it is mentioned that a basement in watertight concrete with a 0.8-metre thick base slab 'will contribute to the stability of the building by transferring stability forces to its supporting piles in collaboration with the remainder of the piles and pile caps.'²⁶⁸

As in February, the division of the structure into three parts was not a strict one, different from what the tripartition of the structural grid suggests. Balmond, retrospectively, would dub the structural system

²⁶⁶ Ove Arup, 'Engineering Report. Definitive Design', 1.6.5. July 1989.

²⁶⁷ Balmond, *informal*, 81. Toni Adam recalls that the Public Works initially opposed the solution: 'They [the columns] are full of steel. So they could not put the concrete in the moulds, there was so much steel [...] That is why the construction engineers [of the Public Works] didn't want to do it.' Interview with the author on 25 September 2018.

²⁶⁸ Arup, 'Engineering Report. Definitive Design', 1.5. July 1989.

Chapter 2.3

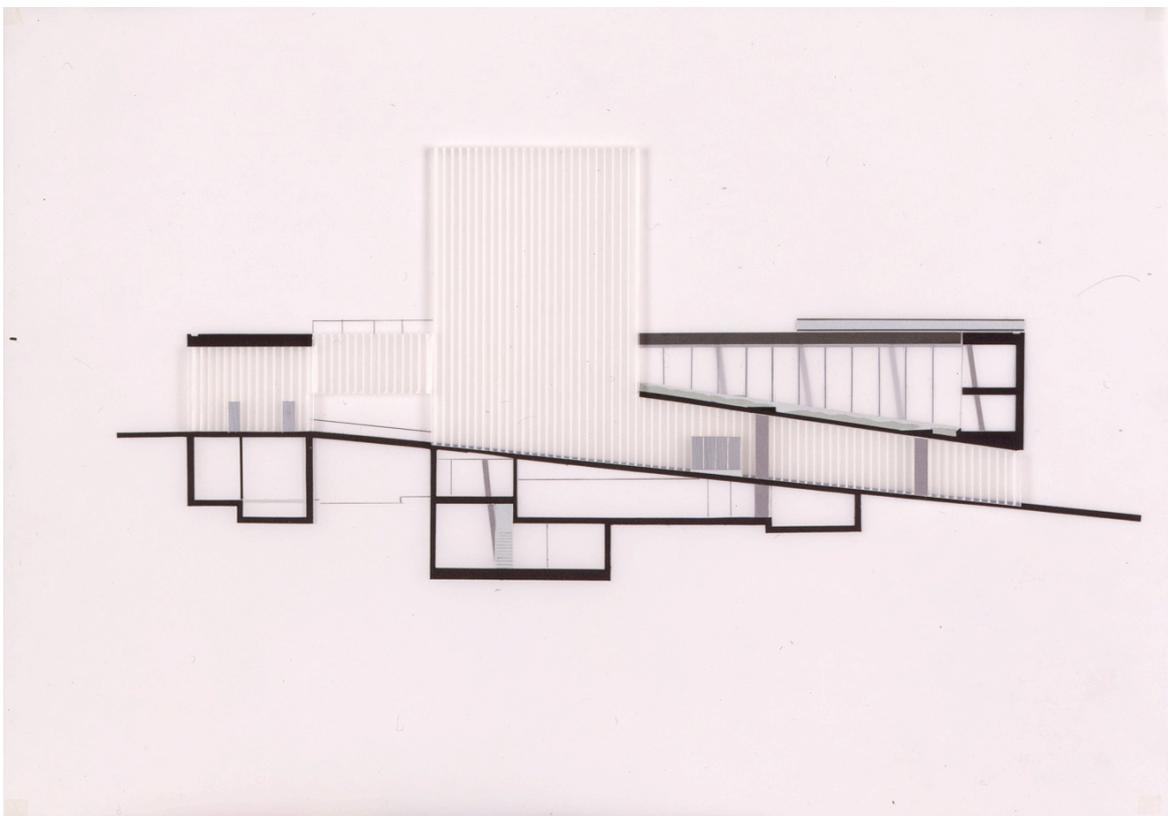
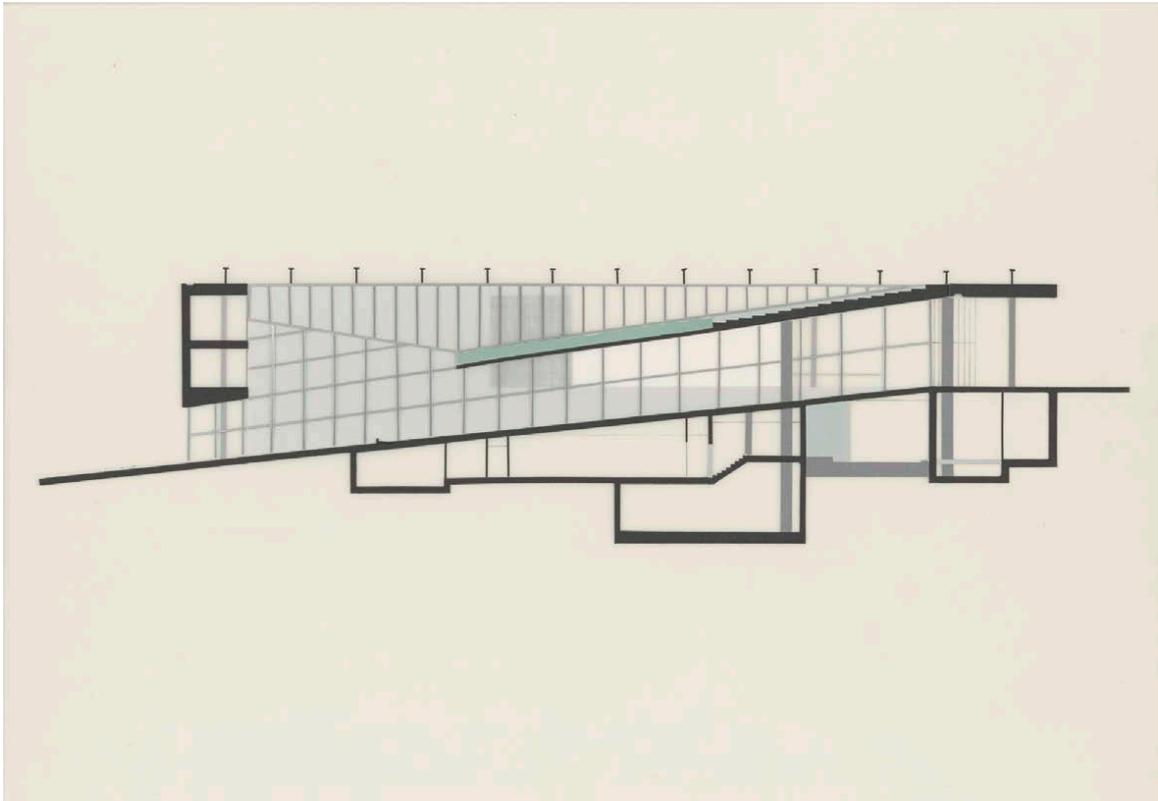


Figure 24. Kunsthal, OMA. Collages. Cross sections along the Ramp Street.
Probably autumn 1989.

of the Kunsthal as a ‘catalogue of juxtapositions’, while Arup’s report from July states somewhat pragmatically: ‘The various accommodation levels will be accessed by using a central ramping system which effectively divides the building into two main areas.’²⁶⁹ But the basement in concrete, the loadbearing concrete wall of the north façade; the concrete wall along the Service Road; the steel frame of the roof forming an irregular but nonetheless continuous grid: all these elements fully extend over the three sections of the building. Much of this is indicated clearly enough by the elevations: the continuous upper half of the north façade, the continuous cornice and curved concrete wall of the two façades to the south. But these inconsistencies are neither sloppiness nor compromise. For to generate a visible variety of form inside and outside the building was the one and only purpose of the structure’s conceptual tripartition, not a neat division into technically autonomous units.

Arup’s report and drawings from July concerning the building services widely coincide with the concept outlined in January.²⁷⁰ [Figures 19-20] As a general rule, the services are to be concealed, ideally in depth of the structural system. The report explains: ‘Wherever possible the structure will be designed to accommodate the building services in efficient and integrated arrangements, co-ordinated with the architectural requirements.’²⁷¹ Arup’s layout provides to locate the main plants in the basement. From there, both main sections of the building are served by vertical risers. On the east side, a shaft at the back of Hall 1 connects to the ceiling of the exhibition space. Having crossed the ceiling of Hall 1, parts of the ducts enter a further riser shaft adjacent to the Ramp Street and then spread out in the ceiling of Hall 2. The plant room on the roof of Hall 2, proposed in January, is omitted. To the west, a single vertical riser connects the basement to all levels of the building, including the Service Tower on the roof. The tower is a 13 metres-long steel frame construction of three storeys, emerging from the 2.5-metres wide strip of *poché* below. It houses large air cooled condensers, the extract plant of the kitchen and toilets, and the supply and extract plant of Hall 3. In all three exhibition halls, humidified and filtered air is supplied and extracted from the ceiling. In the remainder of the building, the services are

²⁶⁹ Balmond: *informal*, 395. Arup, ‘Engineering Report’, 1.2.

²⁷⁰ Arup, plans H2201-2204, H2404, dated July 1989, and 28 July 1989. Arup London Archives.

²⁷¹ Arup, ‘Engineering Report’, 1.1.

Chapter 2.3

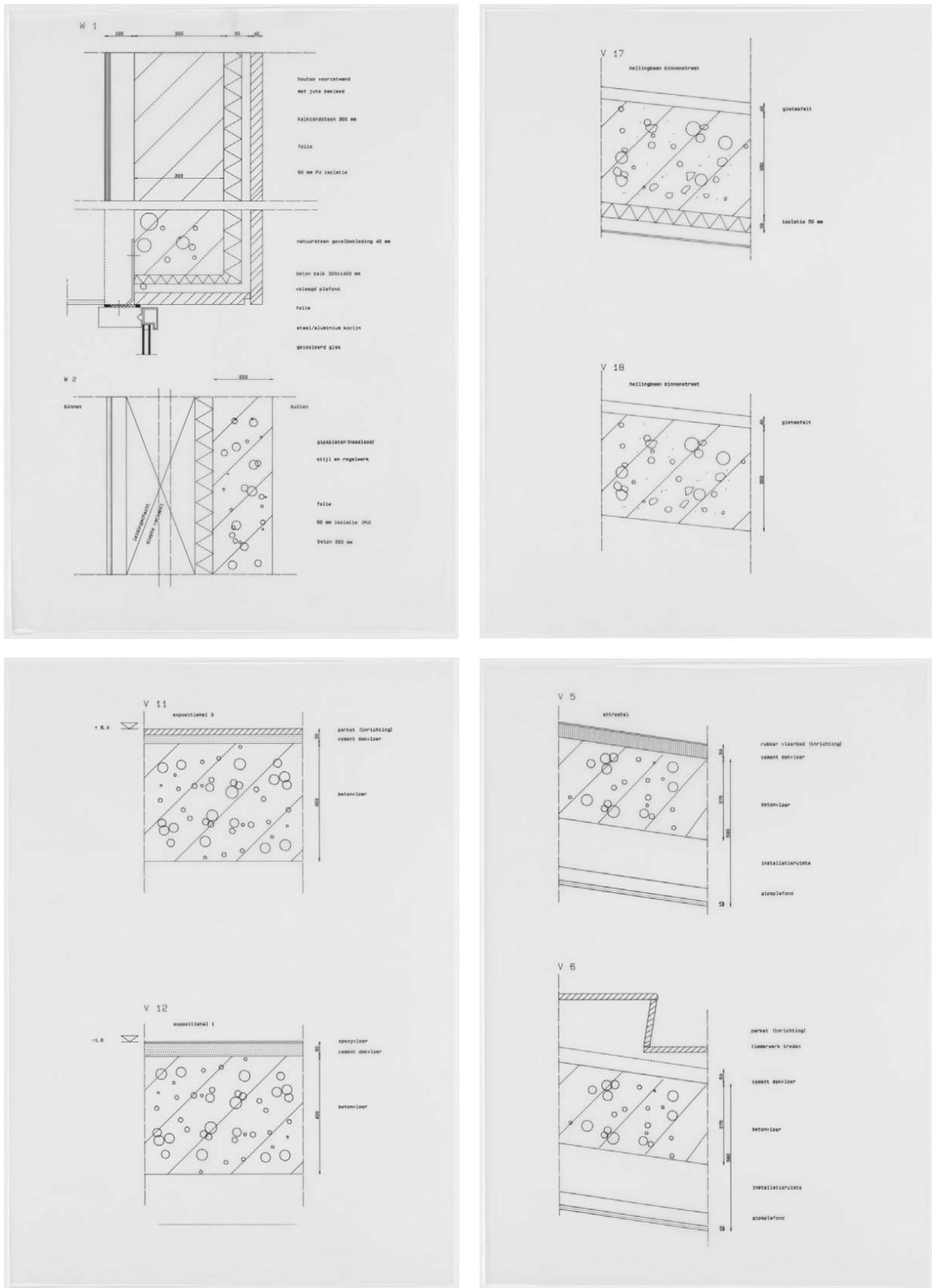


Figure 25. Kunsthall, OMA. Definitive Design. Layers construction. 10 October 1989.

limited to mechanical ventilation. In the Auditorium, air is supplied directly from the adjacent *poché*, and through the front of the steps of the seating rows, the ducts running in a suspended ceiling above the Restaurant. Two additional risers for the air extract are located at both sides of the large window at the back of the stage area. Both Arup's report and drawings provide a combination of convectors and radiators for the heating in all parts of the building, distributed along the exterior walls.

Contrary to the goal proclaimed in the report, the loadbearing structure accommodates virtually none of the ducts required by the mechanical services. In fact, most of the new elements in OMA's scheme are claddings to hide bulky ducts. The attitude approximates what Reyner Banham describes in chapter 10 of his *Architecture of the Well-tempered Environment*: to conceal the building services while being generally permissive with regard to the loadbearing structure.²⁷² OMA's drawings from July 1989 indicate suspended ceilings in the three exhibition Halls and a doubling of the wall at the bottom at the Auditorium around the large window at the centre. More importantly, an additional area of *poché* is singled out between the Ramp Street and the two large exhibition halls to the east. [Figure 21] The *poché* consists of two parts: a slender, 1.25 metres wide volume with one side protruding as a free standing wall to the south; and the triangular volume of the ticket booth, slightly detached from the wall's southern edge. In spite of the formal complexity, the analogy to the *poché* alongside the Auditorium is obvious. The slender volume accommodates two fire escapes²⁷³ and the riser shaft of the mechanical services supplying Hall 2. In the alcove behind the free standing wall a curtain could be stored, allowing to divide Hall 2 along the curved line of the Service Road below.²⁷⁴ The void of the ticket booth's diagonal wall serves to store an extendable fire door which – like the former – connects to the eastern edge of the Skew Ramp above when closed. The ticket booth's diagonal wall adjacent to Hall 2 was envisaged as a two-layered partition, probably in plasterboard, while the front of the ticket

²⁷² Reyner Banham, 'Concealed Power', in: idem: *The Architecture of the Well-Tempered Environment* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 195-233. First published in 1969.

²⁷³ A number of sketches show an alternative with exterior flight stairs combined with the open-web truss at the north east corner. OMAR 4146. Between April and August 1989, OMA had several meetings with representatives of the Fire Department, among other things concerning fire sections, escape routes and the number of persons admitted to the exhibition spaces. A sprinkler system could be avoided, apparently thanks to the intervention of Joop Linthorst. See: minutes of a meeting with the Fire Department from 11 April 1989, OMAR 1520; minutes Building Committee 19 May, 23 June, 20 July 1989. OMAR 1518, 1519.

²⁷⁴ Drawings 19 July 1989. OMAR 3276.

Chapter 2.3

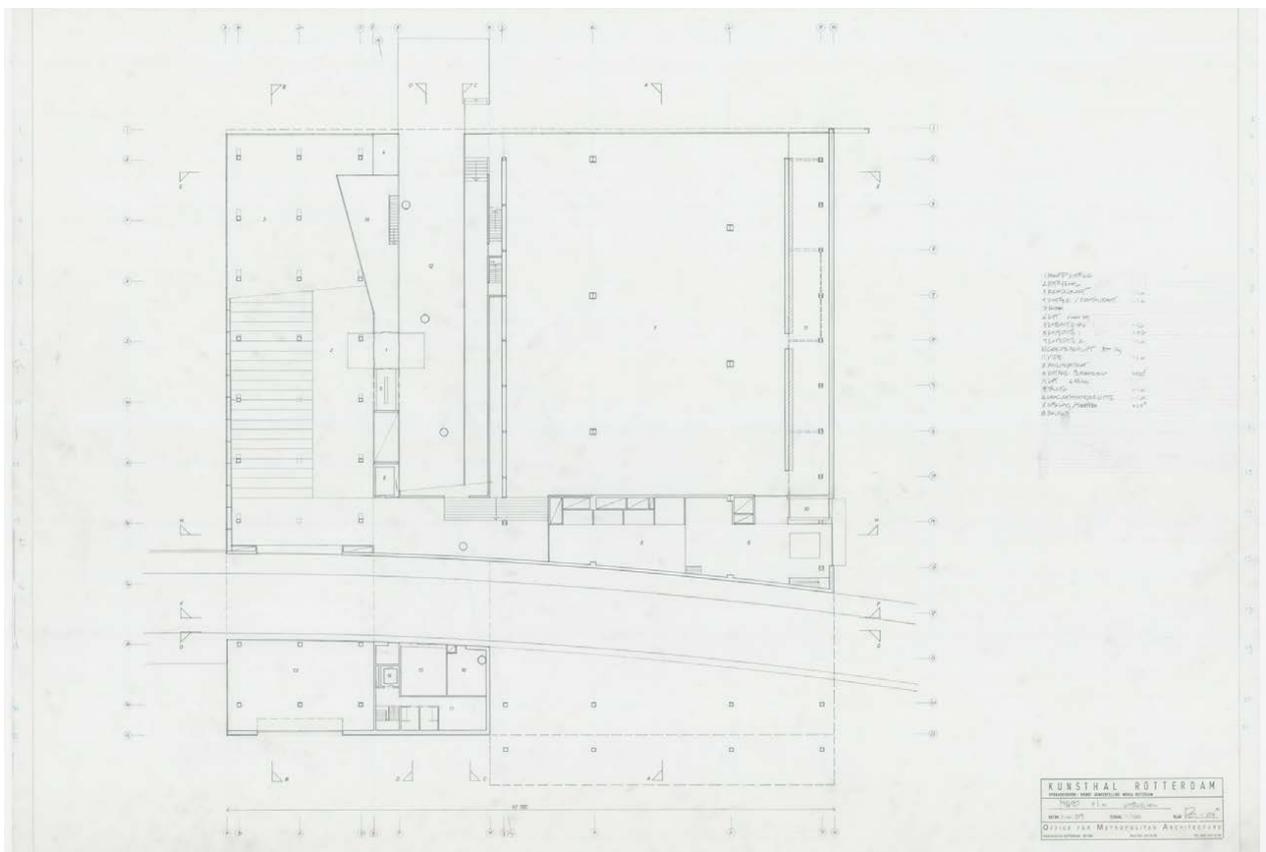
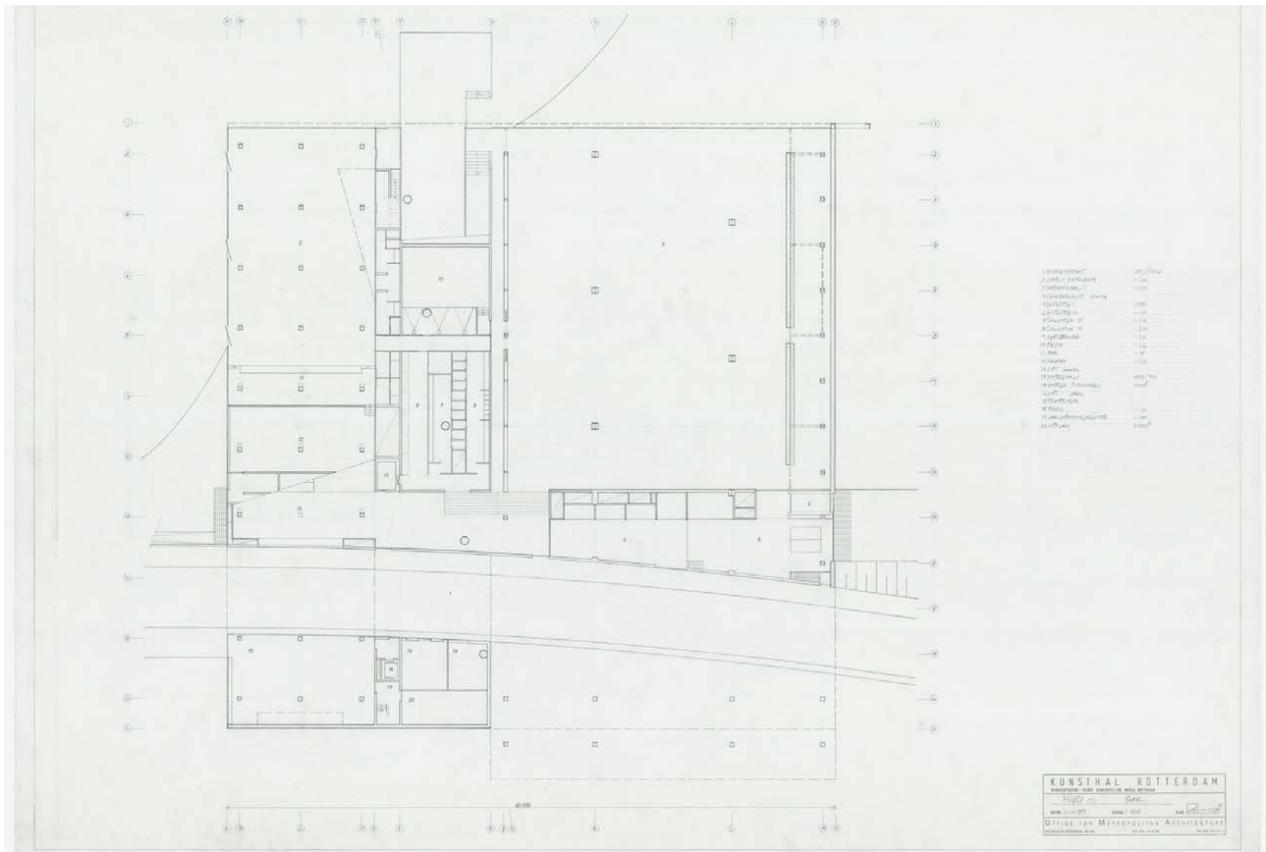


Figure 26. Kunsthall, OMA. Definitive Design. Floorplans at level +/-0 and +1. 10 October 1989.

booth and its side along the Street Ramp are shown as a thin membrane, in all likelihood meant to be translucent.²⁷⁵ This change of material as much as the gap between the tip of the triangle and the edge of the free standing wall – technically necessary to let the curtain pass through – served the same formal purpose: to translate the volumes of the *poché* into an assembly of detached surfaces or walls.

As a consequence of the additional *poché*, the two spaces of Halls 1 and 2 became more self-contained. Only a triangular opening above the ticket booth, shown in a cross section, allowed for a glance on to the Roof Garden on top.²⁷⁶ On the other side of the Ramp Street, transparency was reduced to limited wall sections of Hall 3 and the Auditorium that were not provided as *poché*. The drawings show them as transparent.²⁷⁷ Nonetheless, in terms of visibility the central area with the ramp-system was increasingly cut off from the adjacent spaces. As for the vertical slab of the Service Tower, Koolhaas suggested to the Building Committee to use it as a billboard.²⁷⁸ Two elevations from 19 July illustrate the idea: one side of the tower advertises a motor show, the other an exhibition on designer Isamu Noguchi.²⁷⁹

Feedback in August

A 20-pages comment by Hoshino from August regards the entire set of drawings prepared by Arup for the Definitive Design up to this point.²⁸⁰ Some suggest minor changes: a larger window in the Auditorium's front wall; a 'chain' suspending the balcony in Hall 2 instead of a column supporting it from below; a thinner visible part of the upstand beams along the edges of the Skew Ramp. In Hall 1, one row of the columns in the middle is to be shifted by half a bay (2.25m) towards the adjacent loading bay. As a result, the number of the central columns in Hall 1 is reduced to five, the sixth being concealed by the wall to the south, freeing the latter for the display of exhibits. As regards the building services,

²⁷⁵ That is indicated by a sketch from autumn 1989. OMAR 3276.

²⁷⁶ OMA, cross sections 'DO-09', 19 July 1989. OMAR 1771.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Minutes Building Committee 20 July 1989. OMAR 1519.

²⁷⁹ OMAR 3276.

²⁸⁰ 'Comments about technical drawings for definitive design of Kunsthall', dated 8 August 1989; Arup London Archives. The comment (A3) is based on drawings by Arup.

Chapter 2.3

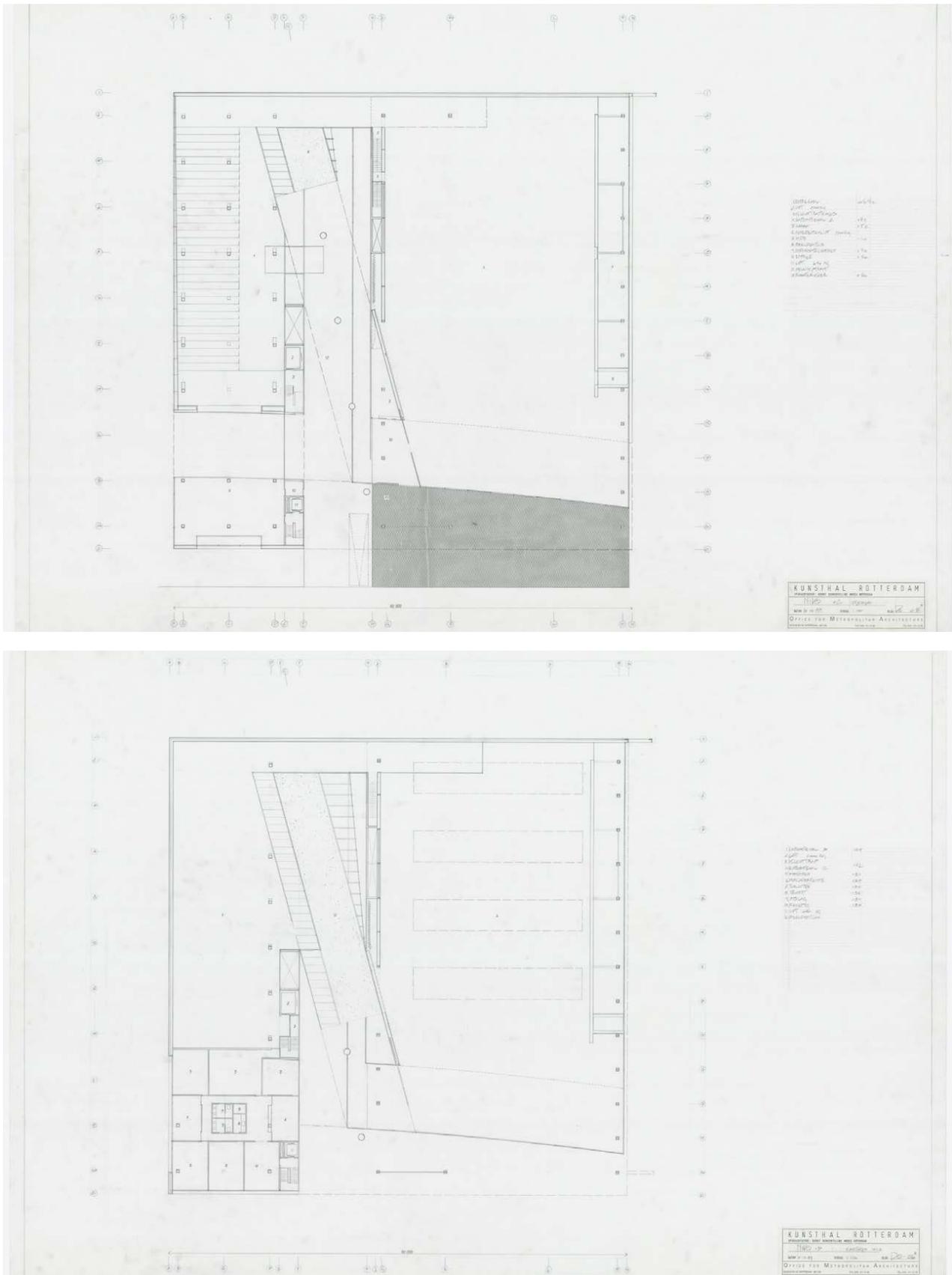


Figure 27. Kunsthall, OMA. Definitive Design. Floorplans at level +2 and +3. 10 October 1989.

OMA's policy was still the same: to minimize the equipment's visual interference with the architecture. The comments tended to be harsh when Arup's engineers did not respect previous agreements. Arup's plans show radiators aligned along the walls in the exhibition area. Hoshino crossed them out, commenting: 'Why not convectors? Where is the great Arup museum experience?' An external platform at the service tower is circled: 'No cheating please!'²⁸¹

Like the structure

A series of articles on OMA, issued in autumn 1989, was dedicated, among other things, to the Kunsthal.²⁸² The illustrations shown in these articles, along with a set of drawings by OMA from 10 October, give an idea of how far the design had evolved. A set of details in scale 1 to 5 specifies the layering of floors, ceilings and walls throughout the building providing a first comprehensive catalogue of the materials selected for the construction.²⁸³ [Figures 22-30] Regarding the finishes envisaged for the interior, the exhibition area is the most homogeneous part of the circuit. For the three exhibition halls, suspended ceilings in plasterboard are provided. The closed walls would be clad in a wood-based material covered with cloth, as Van Krimpen wished. For the floors of Halls 2 and 3 the details specify parquet, likewise in accordance with the preferences of Van Krimpen; for the floor of Hall 1 'epoxy', 'rubber' for the slope of the Auditorium, parquet for its seating area, asphalt for the Ramp Street, and metal grating for the Portico.

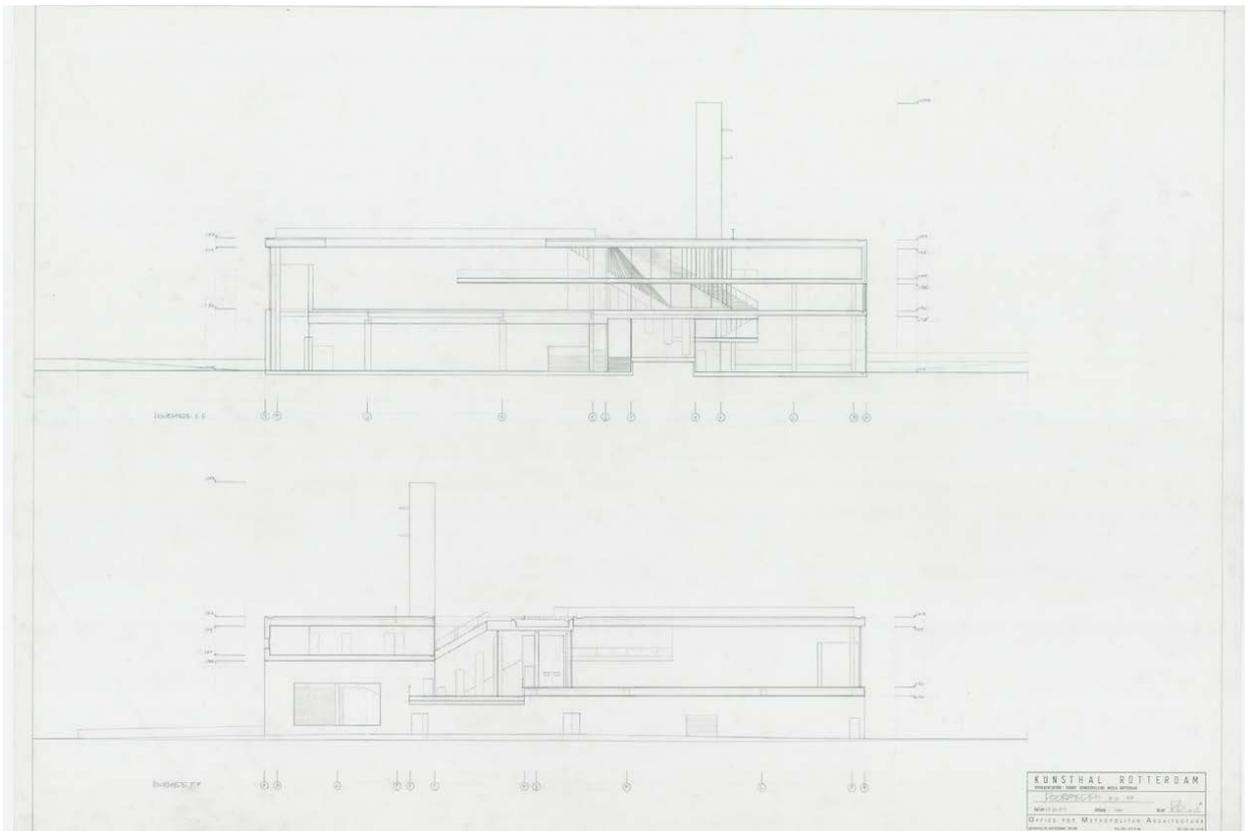
Apparently, the floor was not meant to stress the continuity and coherence of the circuit by dint of a single, homogenous surfacing, neither to celebrate the autonomy of each space by a 'singular' finish. Like some parts of the structure, each flooring tends to extend to more than just one space. Like the slanted columns extending from the Restaurant to the Auditorium to Hall 3, the epoxy extends from the

²⁸¹ Apparently it had been agreed upon to use the two square surfaces for billboards, as suggested by Koolhaas in July. See minutes from meeting on 20 July 1989.

²⁸² OMA/Rem Koolhaas, 'Le Kunsthal de Rotterdam', *Architecture Mouvement Continuité (Sep 1989)*, 30-33. OMA, 'Three Projects for Rotterdam', *Quaderns 183 (1989)*, 85-93; John Welsh, 'Double Dutch', *Building Design* (Dec 1989), 18-24. The plans published in *AMC* and *Building Design* were not up to date with the current stage of planning.

²⁸³ OMAR 1764, 1783.

Chapter 2.3



Auditorium to Hall 1, the asphalt of the Ramp Street beyond its transparent partition, and the parquet of Hall 2 reappears in Hall 3. The drawings show the *poché* next to the Auditorium clad with translucent plastic panels, visible on all three levels of the building's western section. In as much as this wall fosters the spatial diversity of the circuit, it resonates with the diversity implied by the binary pattern of the Moebius-loop-like facades. And yet, the *poché* wall is no such implication. Neither is it a derivation from the concept of the 'spiral in four separate squares.' Like the structure with slanted columns, the *poché* wall is a largely autonomous part of the design. Its display is independent from the spatial development of the circuit.

There is not necessarily a contradiction between the continuity and the diversity of a spatial sequence. In the Palazzo del Te in Mantua, or in the Palazzo Farnese in Caprarola, spaces connect to continuous enfilades, although their shape and size varies, as does the treatment of the walls, ceilings and floors. The Kunsthall is a different story, of course, among other things because the continuity of the circuit implies to some extent the spatial unity of all its parts. Next to the ubiquitous *enjambement* of walls, ceilings and floors, the plans from July and October suggest a complete absence of doors and lintels along the whole of the circuit. Besides the *poché* and the partition along the *vide* – apparently a concession to Van Krimpen's wish for closed walls – the opening between two adjacent spaces is maximised all along the main itinerary, stressing the confluence of the spatial sequence. In the late 1980s, this combination of spatial continuity and diversity is likely to have appeared as contradictory. Many of the best known recent museums shared the essential 'white continuity' of the interior. Examples are the museums by Hollein (Mönchengladbach, Frankfurt), Ungers (Frankfurt), Meier (Frankfurt, Atlanta, De Moines), Piano (Houston), Isozaki (Los Angeles), Dissing+Weitling (Düsseldorf). In the Kunsthall, visitors would find the modernist vocabulary of spatial continuity and unity, but 'contradicted' by the diversity of materials.

The exterior saw an even more pronounced 'estrangement' of parts. The details from October specify exposed concrete as the material for the massive walls of the east and west facade, and 'natural stone' for those of the north and south facade. The elevations in the September issue of *AMC* are collages.

Chapter 2.3

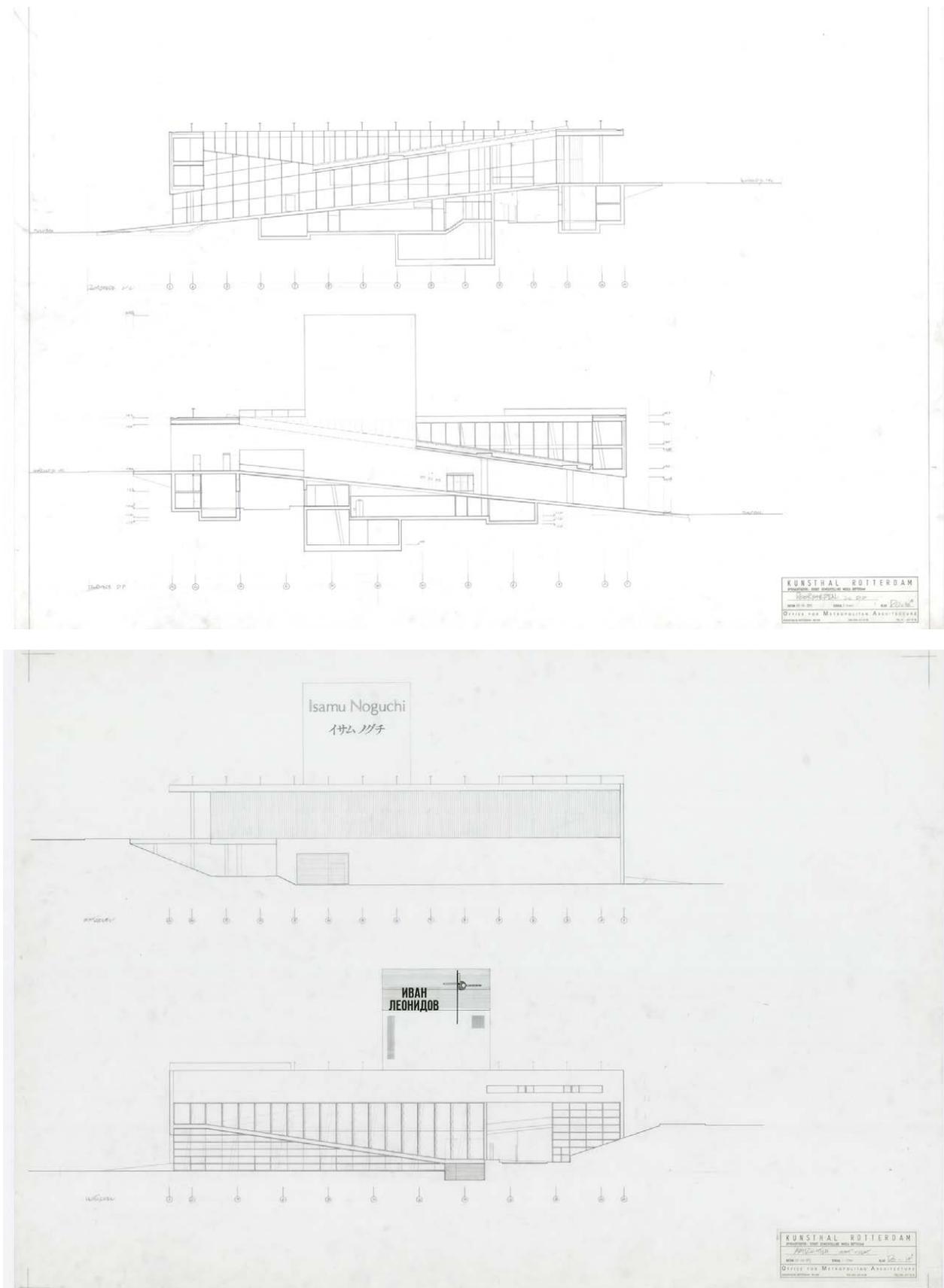


Figure 29. Kunsthall, OMA. Definitive Design. 10 October 1989.
Top: Cross sections. North-south axis. Bottom: East and west elevation.

Black cardboard represents the wall of the west facade, grey cardboard the wall of the east facade, and a yellowish, veined material the stone cladding of the north and south facades. At first sight, the glass walls look as they did in January, but there are a few significant changes. At the west façade, the bay size of the grid increased (from approx. 0.75m by 1.5m) to approx. 0.9 metres (horizontals) by 2.25 metres (verticals). The horizontal mullions of the Restaurant now extend from floor to ceiling. The verticals of the square window units that previously linked the Restaurant visually to Hall 1 and the Auditorium have been removed altogether. The glazing of the Auditorium and two bays of the glazing of Hall 1 are rendered in green, perhaps in order to provide a substitute visual bond between the two facades.²⁸⁴ The vertical mullions of the Auditorium are filigree open-web trusses. They comply to the rhythm of the unifying grid, but the green glass wall seems not to belong to the Office Block, nor to the Restaurant. Neither are the mullions aligned with the rhythm of the six-metre structural grid of the columns; the elevations show the ever changing distance between these two elements.

In the building's eastern section, the glass walls of Hall 1, the Ramp Street, and the south and east side of Hall 2, still form a coherent sequence, as the continuous square grid of mullions still extends to all of them. Compared to the elevations from the beginning of the year, the division in an eastern and a western section is more distinct; at the same time, the hierarchy between circuit and the remainder of the Kunsthal's interior – indicated by the size of the respective window units – is more explicit. However, in the drawings from 10 October, the square window units of the east façade are replaced by a wall of channel glass plunks, turning the glazed surface into yet another element of its own. Perhaps the channel glass was an answer to the *vide* along the eastern façade. Then devoid of a floor and concealed from Hall 2 by a partition, the glazing was – different from the other openings – first of all a source of daylight for the minor gallery adjacent to Hall 1.

²⁸⁴ 'In order to reduce solar gain to an acceptable level', the use of tinted glass had been recommended by Arup already in May both for the east and west façade: grey tinted glass for the east façade; tinted glass of any colour for the west façade. Ove Arup, 'Recommendations concerning external fabrics and glazing types,' 9 May 1989. Arup London Archives.

To the south, the columns of the Portico are now arranged asymmetrically. The cross bracing has been shifted from the centre to the west, while the eastern of the two central columns has been removed. Rather than a row of columns in analogy to those of Hall 2, the three remaining supports now appear as two disparate parts: a solitary column to the east and a braced pair of columns at the centre, forming a group of three with the *pilotis* of the Skew Ramp nearby.²⁸⁵ In retrospect, the methodical multiplication of finishes and ‘emancipation’ of constructive elements, all too evident by October 1989, appears an expansion of the structure’s diversity to other parts of the construction, namely to the surfaces. It goes without saying that both were contrary to the legibility of the ribbon-like layout of the facades. The glass planks do not read as the sequel of the mullioned glass wall to the south, neither does the cladding in natural stone read as a continuation of the black concrete wall to the west. Nonetheless, much of the formal structure imposed by the ribbon-like layout was kept. Each façade continued to be divided in two horizontal halves, most of them treated as pairs of binary, ribbon-like strips. More forcefully than in the case of the interior, diversity did conflict with continuity. And yet, as in the case of the interior, the two concepts coexisted, none was given absolute priority. Neither was there a strict hierarchy. Koolhaas aimed precisely for this undecidedness – some sort of balance between conflicting concepts.

²⁸⁵ OMAR 3276, 1759. See also: OMA/Rem Koolhaas, ‘Le Kunsthall de Rotterdam’, 31.

2.4

A new approach for a new Europe: OMA in 1989

The process of European integration and Koolhaas' re-discovery of the large scale

The progress the project of the Kunsthal made between January and October 1989 consisted to a large extent in elaborating its construction and services. As regards the development of the design, the role of OMA was comparatively passive. Virtually all significant changes were reactions to advances by Arup, the authorities, and the client. Areas untouched by external interference – such as the glazed surfaces – saw only few and relatively cautious changes over a period of nine months. The absence of initiative is obvious if compared to the partly radical redevelopment of the design between November 1989 and April 1990, almost exclusively driven by the initiative and architectural ambitions of OMA. One possible explanation is that the presence of Rem Koolhaas and Fuminori Hoshino was significantly diminished for a large part of 1989. Hoshino might have been working more intensely on the Nexus housing than on the Kunsthal, the former having been completed already in 1991; and much of Koolhaas' attention is likely to have been absorbed by other projects. Fukuoka aside, the recent development for Lille, Euralille, must have been particularly demanding, just as the designs of the well-known three of altogether five competition entries OMA submitted in 1989: the Sea Terminal in Zeebrugge, the Art and Media Centre in Karlsruhe, and the National Library in Paris.²⁸⁶ There were two more competitions for an office complex at Frankfurt Airport and a school for civil engineers in Paris, the urban study 'Stad aan de strom' for Antwerp, and a new small project for a bus-stop in Groningen (1989-91).²⁸⁷ The development Byzantium in Amsterdam (1985-91), the Villa Dall'Ava in Paris (1984-91), the Hotel Furka Blick (1988-91) in the Swiss Alps were either under or due for construction, and the development at Veerplein in Vlaardingen was completed in the course of the year.

²⁸⁶ The three deadlines were: the first of April (Zeebrugge), 7 July (Paris), and 20 August (Karlsruhe). See: Schurk, *Projekt ohne Form*, 136.

²⁸⁷ Koolhaas mentions the two less known competitions in an interview with Marta Cervelló from 1989. Cervelló, 'I've always been anxious', 80.



Figure 1. John Körmeling: 'The Ninth by OMA'. Project for OMA's development at Veerplein, Vlaardingen. The rendering was published in the September issue of *de Architect* in 1989.

Koolhaas did not publish any programmatic essay in 1989. In collaboration with Petra Blaisse, OMA curated the exhibition *OMA – The First Decade*, first shown in the Boijmans Van Beuningen next to the Museum Park, which Koolhaas used to voice his urge to build by showcasing projects that never had materialized, namely in the Netherlands.²⁸⁸ He contributed an essay to a book by Carlo Palazzolo and Riccardo Vio re-narrating the story of Le Corbusier’s failed appropriation of the Manhattan skyscraper told in *Delirious New York*.²⁸⁹ Most of the interviews – Koolhaas gave at least six in 1989 – indicate how he thought about his work and architecture in general at the time. Among the most discussed issues was Koolhaas’ penchant for the modernism of the sixties, fifties and twenties – a topic which also recurred in the reviews of OMA’s buildings, such as the Dance Theatre in The Hague, the IJplein development in Amsterdam, and the Patio House in Rotterdam. Borrowings from the modernist past are at least as characteristic for some of OMA’s less known buildings from those years. Examples are the residential towers in Groningen, the apartment block in Frederiksstraat, adjacent to Vondelpark in Amsterdam, and the development at Veerplein in Vlaardingen, comprising a residential block, a post office and a library. Some renderings of the Veerplein project were shown in the September issue of the *de Architect*, albeit in an article on Dutch sculptor and architect John Körmeling (1951-). Körmeling planned to crown the residential block with a scripture reading: ‘THE NINTH BY OMA’.²⁹⁰ [Figures 1-2] Koolhaas would probably not have been pleased by these words which seems to allude ironically to Beethoven’s ninth symphony. On the one hand, it would have drawn attention to the fact that not few of OMA’s projects *had* materialized; on the other hand, the development at Veerplein seems to belong

²⁸⁸ The layout of the exhibition mimics the construction of OMA’s aborted scheme for the NAI. Slides of seven unbuilt projects for the Netherlands were shown in a central space emulating the black archival tower of the institute. On this subject, see: Christophe van Gerrewey, ‘Outreach extensions: OMA/Rem Koolhaas exhibitions as self-critical environments’, *Architectural Theory Review* vol. 23 (2019), 90-113.

²⁸⁹ ‘La Ville Radieuse’, in: *Sulle tracce di Le Corbusier* (Venice: Arsenale Editrice, 1989), 164-175. A translation of the book appeared in 1991 under the title *In the Footsteps of Le Corbusier*.

²⁹⁰ ‘DE NEGENDE VAN OMA’, see: Cees de Boer, ‘John Körmelings aanschouwelijke architectuur’, *De Architect* (Sep 1989), 56. According to the article, the Veerplein development was the ninth building completed by OMA. A possible compilation of the first eight would be: 1) the Lintas offices 2) the police station in Almere, 3) the bus terminal in Rotterdam, 4) the Dance Theatre, 5) the buildings at IJ Plein, 6) the Patio Houses, 7) the towers in Groningen, 8) the Veerplein development.



Figure 2. OMA/Rem Koolhaas. Development at Veerplein, Vlaardingen. 1986-89.

to the category of projects Koolhaas considered less successful and which he wished to go unnoticed (see Chapter 1.1).²⁹¹

A problem of distinction regarding the Netherlands

In the interviews from 1989, Koolhaas confesses his unease with regard to OMA's modernist image and the ubiquity of modernist references in Dutch architecture at the time. To Koos Bosma and Hans van Dijk he explains: 'I've been trying for a good three years now to shake off that stigma of being modern, for the very reason that it is so casually bandied about in the Netherlands.'²⁹² No doubt, OMA's advocacy of modernist architecture was much less visible and distinct a position in the Dutch context than it used to be on an international level. Aldo van Eyck railed against what he saw as aberration and treason of postmodernist and rationalist architecture vis à vis the modernist tradition with a vehemence that makes Koolhaas' contemporaneous criticisms appear mild and subtle. Next to Léon Krier, the primary target of his 1980 article 'Rats, Posts, and other Pests' were Aldo Rossi, Ungers, and 'the Americans' present at the Venice Biennale from the same year.²⁹³ The model Van Eyck held up was what he called the 'Great Gang' – artists and writers of the early 20th century avant-garde like Brancusi, Joyce, Arp, Ernst, Klee, Miro, Mondrian, Picasso, and, within the field of architecture, Rietveld, Duiker, Van der Vlugt, Aalto and Le Corbusier. In a lecture from 1987, he ridicules with unmitigated malice the 'criminals' 'Léon K.', 'Robert V.', 'Philip J.', 'Robert S.', and 'Richard M.', Duiker and Rietveld figuring as the masters to learn from.²⁹⁴

²⁹¹ According to Kees Christiaanse, the commission had emerged from a competition. Christiaanse recalls that OMA's entry subsequently was changed beyond recognition at the insistence of the client. Interview with the author on 14 April 2020. See Chapter 1.1.

²⁹² Koos Bosma, Hans van Dijk, 'Interview met Rem Koolhaas', *Archis* 3 (1989), 43. Quoted after: Van Gerrewey, *A Critical Reader*, 163.

²⁹³ Aldo van Eyck, 'What Is and Isn't Architecture. A propos of Rats, Posts, and other Pests (RPP)', *Lotus international* 28 (1980), 15-19.

²⁹⁴ As a jury member of the competition for the town hall in The Hague (1986), van Eyck favoured OMA's project over Richard Meier's which eventually was built. In the Delft lecture Van Eyck accuses Meier's project of being a misguided version of Duiker: 'I asked him [Meier], "Please have the good grace [...] not to sell the Dutch fake Duiker." That is the nasty thing about that project. It's a gimmick. It's all tricks.' International Design Seminar (Indesem), TU Delft, 1987. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uf7RyqXIYmM>

Chapter 2.4



Figure 3. Carel Weeber. Above: Peperklip housing. Rotterdam. 1979-82.
Below: Hotel Mercure. The Hague. 1984-87.

In an interview with Mil De Kooning, Koolhaas accuses his Dutch colleagues of having been not so much immune to, but rather oblivious of postmodernism, while imitating OMA's work at large.²⁹⁵ Hans van Dijk, in the 1990s, used to illustrate the adherence of architects in the Netherlands to its modernist legacy with a series of articles from 1980 published in the Dutch weekly *Intermediair* in which 'almost all of the twenty-three invited architects admitted at the end of the day to feeling inspired by the moderns'.²⁹⁶ In his lecture 'School Master Modernism', given at the conference 'How Modern is Dutch Architecture?' in 1990, Hans van Dijk refers to the same event recalling that 'there is talk with evident emotion about buildings such as Van Nelle, Zonnestraal, House Schröder, or the orphanage in Amsterdam, and about teachers from Berlage to Van den Broek, from Duiker to Van Eyck'.²⁹⁷

Like Van Dijk, Hans van der Heijden sees the Dutch adherence to the modernist tradition closely related to the way architects were trained at the Technical University in Delft.²⁹⁸ Van der Heijden pictures the situation during the 1970s and 1980s as a trench warfare in a territory of modernist 'masters', remote from the debates on postmodernist architecture:

The debate was coloured, if not dominated by a paralysing controversy in the setting of the Technical University Delft (the largest of the two architecture schools in the country). The players were divided into two distinct camps, one formed by architects like Aldo van Eyck and Herman Hertzberger and the other led by Carel Weeber.

As former Team-X rebels, Van Eyck and Hertzberger claimed the humanist morals of the early modernist heroes Rietveld, Duiker, Van de[r] Vlugt and Bakema. [...] Weeber, by contrast, fitted into the rationalist line of architects like Berlage, Oud and Van den Broek, who had a much more institutional perception of the profession.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁵ De Kooning (1989), 'OMA in Nederland', n.p.

²⁹⁶ Hans van Dijk, *Twentieth-Century Architecture in the Netherlands* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1999), 144.

²⁹⁷ Hans van Dijk, 'Het onderwijzersmodernisme'; in: Bernard Leupen et al. (eds.), *Hoe modern is de Nederlandse architectuur?* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1990), 177 (author trans.).

²⁹⁸ Van Dijk, *Ibid.*, 147. Hans van der Heijden, 'The Netherlands – Koolhaas and the Profession at Play', in: Paul Davies and Paul Schmiedknecht (eds.), *An Architect's Guide to Fame* (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2005), 106-107.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

Chapter 2.4



Figure 4. Above: Wim Quist. Maritiem Museum. Rotterdam. 1986.
Below: DKV. Agniesebuurt housing. Rotterdam 1984-88.

The almost exclusively modernist frame of reference – as opposed to classicist leanings generally attributed to postmodernist architecture alternatives – comes as no surprise if one considers the leading figures of the Dutch architectural scene of the 1980s: next to Van Eyck, Hertzberger and Blom who were still present, architects and practices like Wim Quist, Carel Weeber, Jan Henket, Mecanoo, Joe Coenen, Benthem Crouwel, DKV (Dobbelaar, De Kovel, De Vroom), or, just about to enter the stage, Wiel Arets and Van Berkel & Bos. [Figures 3-5]

Herman de Kovel, cofounder of the Rotterdam architecture firm DKV and former collaborator of OMA, observed at the same conference a revival of the ‘heroic “Nieuwe Bouwen”’ in the Dutch architecture of the 1980s, namely in terms of form – a quality that applied as much to the Agniesebuurt Housing in Rotterdam (1984-88) of his own practice as to the IJplein buildings by OMA (1979-89).³⁰⁰ [Figure 6] Christophe van Gerrewey, in his recent article ‘A Weissenhofsiedlung for Amsterdam’, observes that ‘during the ’80s, the recuperation of modernist techniques that so defined the IJplein project had become omnipresent in Dutch architecture,’ suggesting that it was the fear of epigones which prompted Koolhaas decision to quit his position at the TU Delft, ‘where the cut-and-paste method of the IJplein project has indeed become omnipresent in studios and publications, and in the work of both professors and alumni.’³⁰¹

The 1990 conference at the TU Delft was held at the occasion of Koolhaas’s leave, and it was Koolhaas himself who had chosen the topic. [Figure 7] In his own talk, he offered a self-critique precisely of the IJplein project, which was also a flagellation of his peers. Without addressing the issue of imitation directly, he observed:

³⁰⁰ Herman de Kovel, ‘Over de actualiteit van “moderne architectuur”’, in: Leupen, *Hoe modern is de Nederlandse architectuur?*, 67.

³⁰¹ Van Gerrewey, ‘A Weissenhofsiedlung for Amsterdam’, 89-90, 90-91.



Figure 5. Mecanoo. Above: Kruisplein housing. Rotterdam. 1981-85.
Below: Hillekop housing. Rotterdam. 1985-89.

This [the IJplein project] made explicit reference to pre-war modernism, though, updating or revising it in accordance with our own ideas ... At the same time that language had become so prevalent in Holland – a triumphalist and ubiquitous cliché, even – that we were beset with serious doubts on this matter.³⁰²

In the often quoted ‘outburst’ that followed, he suggested that the self-assurance of the latest Dutch modernist wave was based on the neglect to reflect the ongoing transformations of society:

How is it possible for Christ’s sake that in a century informed entirely by instability and change, in the art best equipped to reflect society, and in a language, that of architecture, celebrated especially for the capacity of transformation – that despite all this, buildings ranging over a hundred-year period still look so much alike?³⁰³

In the same lecture, Koolhaas gives a sole example of recent architecture conveying the feeling of ‘a new condition’: Il Palazzo (1987) in Fukuoka by Aldo Rossi – a building with a strictly symmetrical plan, a base, a front and columns in red travertine, green steel lintels and a cornice of renaissance-like dimensions. [Figure 8] The exterior seems to announce a place of religious devotion, but the building accommodates a hotel, a restaurant, a dance club, and is flanked by two oblong wings with four bars, each by a different interior designer. To his peers, the architecture of Rossi’s hotel must have appeared as essentially postmodernist and – in 1990, two years after the show *Deconstructivist Architecture* – somewhat hard to comprehend as an outlook on things to come.³⁰⁴

³⁰² Rem Koolhaas, ‘How Modern is Dutch architecture?’, 161.

³⁰³ Ibid., 161.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 166.



Figure 6. OMA/Rem Koolhaas. IJplein housing. Amsterdam. 1981-87.

‘With these forces rather than against’

Among the topics discussed in the interviews from 1989 was *The Contemporary City*, a book about cities like Tokyo, Seoul, Atlanta and the periphery of Paris Koolhaas was working on at the time.³⁰⁵ The book has never been published as the study as which it initially had been intended, but apparently the essays written for *S,M,L,XL* built on the research accomplished for this project. Looking back Koolhaas explained in 1994:

I had started researching *The Contemporary City*. As I progressed, I realized that you cannot write a profound book on that subject unless you concentrate on it for years. [...] The research, which in fact did not reach any real conclusion, also proved to affect our work at the office. [...] At the same time, pressure was being applied to publish a monograph. I didn't want to write a traditional monograph. So, since two books were impossible – a popular monograph and an academically sound book on the contemporary city – the combination of *S,M,L,XL* resulted.³⁰⁶

Koolhaas also held seminars on the same subject with his students at the TU Delft, perhaps with the intent to use some of the results for his book, as he would do later at Harvard.³⁰⁷ To provide for a better understanding of the future development of European cities and the dynamics propelling them, Koolhaas initiated the symposium ‘Whether Europe’ in April 1988 at the TU Delft. Twelve speakers were invited to discuss on a series of tendencies expected to emerge in European architecture and urbanism within the next 15 years: apart from Koolhaas himself, Henri Ciriani, Nigel Coates, Wolfgang Schett, Fritz Neumeier, Zaha Hadid, Bernard Tschumi, Hans Kollhoff, Carel Weeber, Kees Christiaanse, Jean Nouvel, and Stanislaus von Moos. Among the issues raised were: a shift of focus from the city centre to the periphery; open spaces like parks as a new field of intervention; ‘adventurous

³⁰⁵ See: Herman Selier, ‘Voor een beter Nederland. De architectuur van Rem Koolhaas’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 3 March 1989. Cervelló, ‘I’ve always been anxious’, 84.

³⁰⁶ Hans van Dijk, ‘De architect is verplicht om een respectabel mens te zijn’, *Archis 11* (1994), 18-19. Quoted after: Van Gerrewey, *A Critical Reader*, 335.

³⁰⁷ Tracy Metz, ‘Nederland mist respect voor de architect’, *Avenue 24* (Jan 1989), 64.



Figure 7. TU Delft 1990. Symposium “How Modern is Dutch Architecture”. From left to right: Bart Lootsma, Herman de Kovel, Hans van Dijk, Joost Meuwissen, Ed Taverne, Ben van Berkel, Arie Graafland, Mels Crouwel, Bernard Leupen, Rem Koolhaas, Cees Dam, Herman Hertzberger, Jo Coenen.

developers' and 'ambitious municipalities' as a new type of client; a new kind of public space and architecture reflecting cultural and social changes.³⁰⁸ Koolhaas was particularly interested in the dynamics underlying these changes – often simply referred to as 'forces' – and the way they affected the role of the architect. To Marta Cervelló he explained:

One of the most disturbing aspects [of contemporary architecture and city planning] is the persistent attempts to control large parts of the city by systems of architectural or architectonic composition – even if they are “deconstructed” – that clearly have absolutely nothing to do with the forces that now operate.

I've been working to find elements that can be controlled, with these forces rather than against.³⁰⁹

Similarly, he told Bosma and Van Dijk that 'one must simply realise that forces in society have changed.'³¹⁰ Observations regarding the consequences of this shift recur in statements from 1989: the need for architects and urban planners to realize that part of their alleged responsibility or 'control' is lost; the need to acknowledge the supremacy of the new forces reigning; the need to think of ways how to come up 'with concepts for manipulating the forces'.³¹¹ Regarding Koolhaas' notion of the term 'forces' – so critical for his thinking of these years – a statement he made in January 1991 is most instructive. During a discussion with students at Rice University [Figure 9] he acknowledges that the culture of congestion and the culture of consumption are 'at least parallel phenomena':

Marshall Berman's book *All that is Solid Melts into Air* describes modernization and modernism as a kind of maelstrom, which implies that in a way, you have no choice in terms

³⁰⁸ Bernhard Leupen, preface to the reader, in: Technische Universiteit Delft, *Whether Europe. Symposium Reader* (Delft: Technische Universiteit Delft, 1988) 5-6.

³⁰⁹ Cervelló, 'I've always been anxious', 84.

³¹⁰ Bosma, Van Dijk, 'Interview met Rem Koolhaas', 45 (author trans.).

³¹¹ De Kooning, 'OMA in Holland', 166. First published in 1989.



Figure 8. Aldo Rossi. Hotel and restaurant "Il Palazzo". Fukuoka. 1987.

of your fundamental alignment with the dominant forces. It is the kind of alignment that the surfer has to make with the wave.³¹²

Perhaps Koolhaas' famous metaphor from 1985 – 'architecture is carried by the forces of the Groszstadt as a surfer is carried by the waves' – was inspired by Berman's book, which was first published in 1982.³¹³ Based on a rereading of writings by Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche – who always has been crucial for Koolhaas' thinking – Berman draws a picture of perpetual capitalist modernization, which is full of ideas and motifs that mark Koolhaas' thinking ever since the 1970s: the inescapable subjection of modern societies to the forces of (capitalist) modernization; the condition of permanent instability, permanent danger, permanent need for renewal; the conviction that the only sensible way to deal with the governing forces is to surrender in such a manner that one may exploit their powers for oneself:

To be modern [...] is to experience personal and social life as a maelstrom, to find one's world and oneself in perpetual disintegration and renewal, trouble and anguish, ambiguity and contradiction [...] To be a modernist is to make oneself somehow at home in the maelstrom, to make its rhythms one's own to move its currents in search of the forms of reality, of beauty, of freedom, of justice, that its fervid perilous flow allows.³¹⁴

Among other things, Koolhaas in 1989 seems to have had in mind the developer as a new major force that conditioned the domains of architecture and urbanism. In the interview with Bosma and Van Dijk, he recalls the audacious spirit of Dutch housing corporations (De Dageraad), entrepreneurs (C.H. van der Leeuw) and authorities in the 1920s; with regard to his own present, Koolhaas observed: 'But now

³¹² Lynn Fitzpatrick, Doug Hofius (eds.), *Rem Koolhaas: conversations with students. Architecture at Rice 1991* (Houston: Rice University, 1991), 75-76.

³¹³ 'The genius of Manhattan is the simplicity of this split between appearance and performance: it keeps the illusion of architecture intact, while surrendering wholeheartedly to the metropolis: architecture is carried by the forces of the Groszstadt as a surfer is carried by the waves.' Rem Koolhaas, 'Elegy for the Vacant Lot', 937. First published under the title 'Éloge du terrain vague' in 1985. The recurring claim that Koolhaas used the metaphor already in *Delirious New York* appears to be based on a misunderstanding. In the chapter *on* his book from 1978, Koolhaas writes in *S,M,L,XL*: 'This architecture relates to the forces of the *Groszstadt* like a surfer to the waves,' which, however, is not a quote from *Delirious New York*; Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 41-43.

³¹⁴ Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air* (London: Verso, 2010), 345-6. First published in 1982.



Figure 9. Rem Koolhaas with students at Rice University. Houston. January 1991.

no one has enough money and everything is eventually decided by developers, whether it's so-called left-leaning or right-leaning initiatives for the city. The developers have the final say.'³¹⁵ Similarly, in 1992, while elaborating on OMA's strategy for Melun-Sénart to focus on the unbuilt environment ('void'), Koolhaas explains: 'the rest of the city we would declare residual or surrender completely to the typical force, the developer's politics that now dictates so much of the generation of the city.'³¹⁶

A future to be contemporary

Koolhaas's study of the socio-economic transformations in Europe and elsewhere and their potential impact on the city and architecture would prove key to his ambition of being contemporary, that is, to escape the confinement to an inherited modernist repertoire and its recycling that had marked OMA's work of the past two decades. Perhaps he shared the idea that genuine invention in modern societies is profoundly conditioned by the same societies' prospect future, expressed in the last chapter of Berman's *All That Is Solid Melts into Air* on New York:

Many modernisms of the past have found themselves by forgetting; the modernists of the 1970s were forced to find themselves by remembering. Earlier modernists wiped away the past in order to reach a new departure; the new departures of the 1970s lay in attempts to recover past modes of life that were buried but not dead. ... At a moment when modern society seemed to lose their capacity to create a brave new future, modernism was under intense pressure to discover new sources of life through imaginative encounters with the past.³¹⁷

The very title of Koolhaas' new book project – *The Contemporary City* – indicates the research did connect to his wish to get rid of his image of modernist nostalgia and to lessen the reliance of OMA's production on the modernist past. Koolhaas started employing the terms 'modern' and 'contemporary' as opposites. In an interview from April 1989 he declared plainly: 'I'm trying more and more not to be

³¹⁵ Bosma, Van Dijk, 'Interview met Rem Koolhaas', 42.

³¹⁶ Rem Koolhaas, 'Urban Operations', *Columbia Documents of Architecture and Theory*, vol. 3 (1993), 33. Lecture held at Columbia University on 19 October 1992.

³¹⁷ Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, 332. First published in 1982.



Figure 10. OMA/Rem Koolhaas. Competition entry for the city hall at The Hague. 1986.

modern, but to be contemporary.³¹⁸ The issue was closely connected to the emergence of particularly large projects in Europe during the second half of 1980s, such as the competitions for Paris, Zeebrugge, Frankfurt and Karlsruhe and the development of Euralille. Referring to the competitions he told Belgian architect and critic Paul Vermeulen: ‘First we imposed on ourselves a series of obligations. One of them was that we needed to break with the vocabulary of modernism.’³¹⁹ At another occasion, Koolhaas explained that OMA’s scheme for Zeebrugge was to implicate ‘the smallest possible number of references.’³²⁰ In fact, compared to OMA’s earlier work the absence of borrowings from modernist architecture is salient.³²¹ The novelty of the task – to adapt the large scale building and its idiosyncrasies to the European context – Koolhaas argued, would create a situation comparable to that of modernist architecture at its inception. As the modernists of the 1920s and 1930s, architects would enter an uncharted territory, being freed from the responsibility to foresee all the consequences of their urban and architectural visions. It is this sense of an unprecedented experiment Koolhaas has in mind, when envisaging the ‘Very Large Building’ as a possibility ‘to be again “innocent” in the face of architecture’.³²²

Europe lagging behind

Koolhaas announced the ambition to introduce the large scale in European architecture first in 1989 during an interview with Tracy Metz. Referring to the competition entry for the City Hall in The Hague and the size of American developments, he explains:

³¹⁸ Bruno Fortier, ‘La grande ville’, *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui* 262 (Apr 1989), 93 (author trans.).

³¹⁹ Paul Vermeulen, ‘Metropolitane architectuur’, *De Standaard*, 28-29 April 1990 (author trans.). Of course, the break is not complete. Apart from the references to Ernst May (Frankfurt), the giant cross-shaped trusses in the scheme for the library in Paris seize on Leonidovs’ competition entry for the Narkomtiashprom (1933), as pointed out in Gargiani’s *Construction of Merveilles* (s. pages 161, 164). The repetitive small oblong windows that appear in the schemes for Paris, Zeebrugge and Karlsruhe seem indebted to a project by Hilberseimer from 1925 for a Commercial Centre in Berlin from 1925. Likewise, all four competition entries are deeply indebted to modernist motifs such as transparency, seriality or the use of geometric basic forms.

³²⁰ Cervelló, ‘I’ve always been anxious’, 84.

³²¹ In the interview with Paul Vermeulen, he speaks of an attempt to find a form ‘that eludes any reference [associatie].’ Vermeulen, ‘Metropolitane architectuur’, (trans. by author).

³²² Rem Koolhaas, ‘The End of the Age of Innocence?’, in: Lucan, *OMA - Rem Koolhaas*, 165.



Figure 11. OMA/Rem Koolhaas. Masterplan for Euralille. 1989-1994.

That is such a mass of cubic metres, it is often a whole city that is being added. In Europe a comparable large scale hardly exists. In America they have been struggling with this for a much longer time and they experienced the consequences of such a breakthrough. With that, a new chapter of architecture begins, if you like it or not. I want to introduce comparable mutations into European architecture.³²³

The scale of the project in The Hague was unprecedented in OMA's work. [Figure 10] Before, the IJplein development in Amsterdam with a surface of 17.575 square metres had been OMA's largest project; the programme of the City Hall provided a surface of 150.000 square metres.³²⁴ The size of the competitions from 1989 varied between 25.000 and 250.000 square metres: 25.000 at the Sea Terminal in Zeebrugge;³²⁵ 31.000 at the Media Centre in Karlsruhe;³²⁶ 220.000 at the Business Centre at Frankfurt Airport;³²⁷ and 250.000 at the National Library in Paris.³²⁸ By far the largest project was the development of Euralille, a business centre of 800.000 square metres attached to Lille's new TGV station. [Figure 11-12] Like the Kunsthal – with a total surface of less than 8.000 square metres – the whole development was implemented within a time frame of six years by altogether seven different architects. In sheer figures, the projects from 1989 for Paris, Lille and Frankfurt clearly surpassed the largest American developments presented seven years earlier at the conference in Charlottesville.³²⁹ Apart from the scale, Koolhaas' description of the main actors involved in the Euralille project perfectly corresponded to the constellation predicted for the near future at the Delft symposium in April 1988: an 'adventurous developer' and an 'ambitious municipality' in a Europe of socio-cultural change.

³²³ Metz, 'Nederland mist respect voor de architect', 64, (author trans.). The project for The Hague and its large scale is also mentioned in an interview with Hajime Yatsuka, albeit not as a general ambition; see: Yatsuka, "I combine Architectural with Specificity with Programmatic Instability", *Telescope: The Printed City* 4 (1989), 11. The enormous size of American developments is addressed in his lecture 'Atlanta' from August 1988; see: Koolhaas, 'Atlanta', *Quaderns* 1 (1990), 110.

³²⁴ Yatsuka, "I combine Architectural with Specificity with Programmatic Instability", 11.

³²⁵ Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 608.

³²⁶ <https://oma.eu/projects/zentrum-fur-kunst-und-medientechnologie>. 24 May 2020.

³²⁷ Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 476.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 608.

³²⁹ The largest projects presented were: Philip Johnson's and John Burgee's 'International Palace' in Boston (180.000m²), and Henry Cobb's Fountain Place in Dallas (175'000m²). See Chapter 1.1.

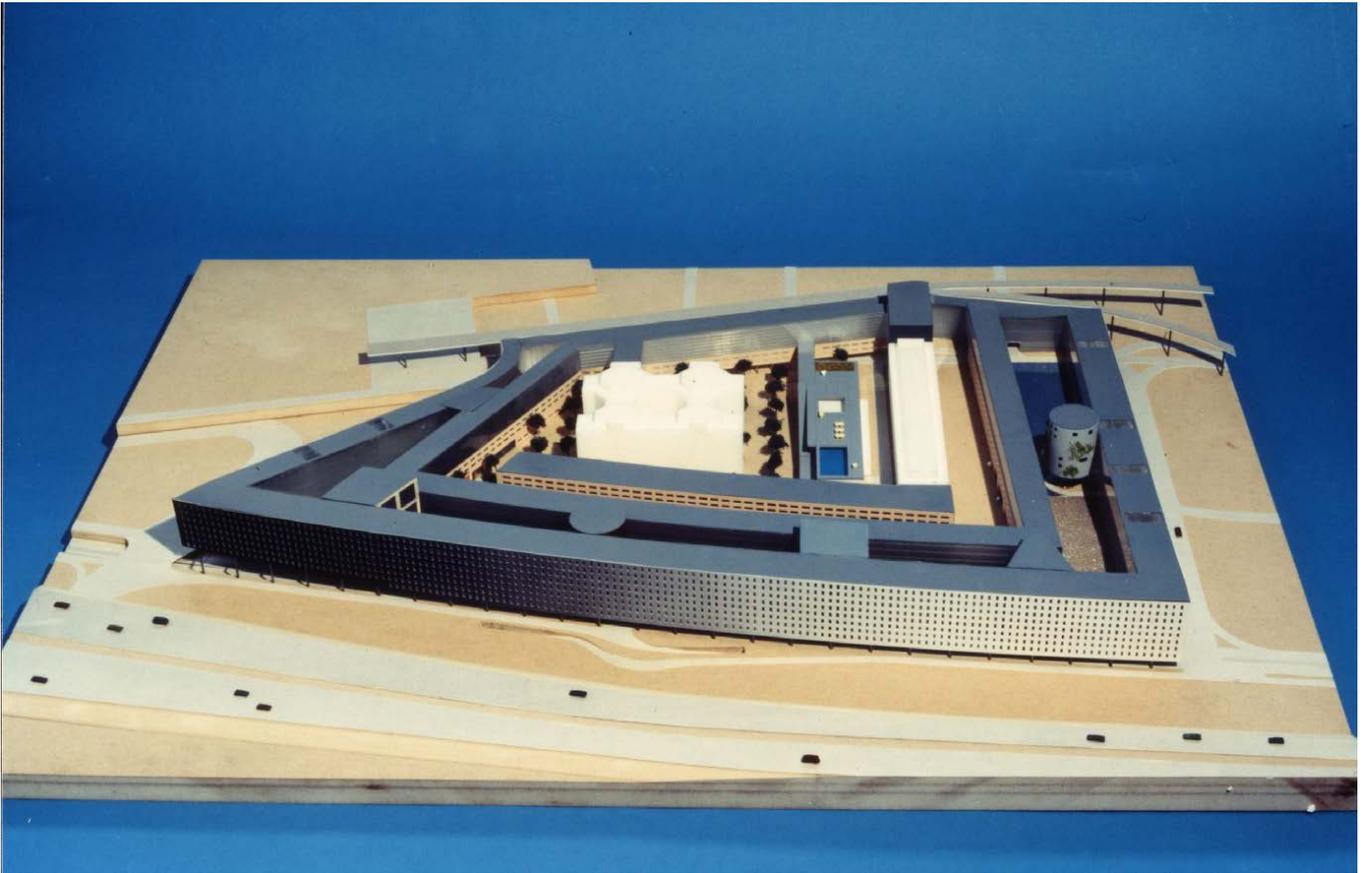


Figure 12. OMA/Rem Koolhaas. Competition entry for Frankfurt Airport. 1989.

In a project statement on the Sea Terminal in Zeebrugge, Koolhaas introduces the scheme as a Tower of Babel ‘for the new ambition of Europe.’³³⁰ Ben van Berkel and Caroline Bos report in a review of the same competition: ‘This too is typical for Koolhaas that he likes to comment on his current designs in the mass media. Nowadays, it is the consequences for Europe of the events in 1992 that are central for newspapers and talk shows; and Koolhaas sees his design as an effortless and entertaining aggregation of the various European countries in a well-oiled machine.’³³¹

Revising the agenda

Since the second half of the 1980s, the process of European Integration was visibly gaining momentum, and Koolhaas was highly perceptive to the implications for his profession. It was under the impact of this process, the experience of Euralille, the competitions from 1989, and the revolutions in Eastern Europe between 1989 and 1991, that he conceived of ways to overcome OMA’s dependence on the modernist past. Koolhaas took the prospect of projects comparable in size to large American developments in Europe as an occasion to reframe the notion of the skyscraper he had outlined in *Delirious New York*. This reworking of his ideas on Manhattan into an architectural agenda would evolve until the mid-nineties; it can be traced back to Koolhaas’ lecture ‘Atlanta’ from 1988, it appears again one year later in the essay ‘The End of the Age of Innocence?’ and in 1991 in the talk ‘Precarious Entity’, while receiving its most elaborate form in *S,M,L,XL*, namely in the manifesto ‘Bigness’ from 1994. The further development of the Kunsthall’s design unfolded against this backdrop.

Initially, Koolhaas’ objective had been to work out a new paradigm for Europe’s cities as much as for its architecture, based on recent developments in the US and a series of east Asian metropolises like Tokyo and Seoul. There are striking correspondences between the agenda of the forthcoming European Union and the revised approach of OMA, which took shape almost in parallel in the form of writings, interviews, lectures, and projects.

³³⁰ OMA/Rem Koolhaas, ‘Une tour de Babel pas comme les autres’, *Architecture Mouvement Continuité* 4 (Sep 1989), 22.

³³¹ Ben van Berkel, Caroline Bos, ‘Terminal als landmerk. Vijf ontwerpen voor Sea Trade Center in Zeebrugge’, *Archis* 8 (1989), 13 (author trans.).



Figure 13. Jacques Delors, president of the European Commission between 1985 and 1995.

At the turning point of European Integration

Historians agree that Jacques Delors played a key role in the sudden and unexpected thrust of European integration during the late 1980s. [Figure 13] In 1983, French finance minister Delors convinced president Mitterrand to abandon his policy of national protectionism and seclusion and to propel instead the vision of a strong Europe governed by transnational institutions.³³² Delors' presidency of the European Commission that followed (1985-95) essentially coincides with what is generally considered the 'turning point in the history of European integration'.³³³ In June 1985, the Schengen Agreement was signed, in February 1986 the Single European Act, in February 1992 the Treaty of Maastricht. [Figure 14] It was during these years that the most significant achievements were made in a process which by the turn of the century transformed the European Community into the European Union with open internal borders, a single market, a single currency, a central Bank, and a partial yet minimal transfer of national sovereignty to European institutions. Meanwhile, the community expanded. Spain and Portugal joined in 1986, followed by Austria, Sweden and Finland in 1995, the increase of member states, markets, workforce and resources of production giving the progress of Europe's integration growing international weight. For a number of years, the EU became 'popular', being monitored closely as a potential competitor in other parts of the world, most notably in the US.³³⁴ In an issue of the *New York Times* from July 1988, Steven Greenhouse argues: 'Individually, the nations of Europe find it hard to be seen as equals by the superpowers. It might be a different story with a united Europe of 320

³³² Mark Gilbert, *European Integration. A Concise History* (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012), 118-119. See also: Antonio Varsori, 'The Relaunching of Europe in the Mid-1980s', in: Kiran Klaus Patel, Kenneth Weisbrode (eds.), *European Integration and the Atlantic Community in the 1980s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 231-232, 234.

³³³ Gilbert, *European Integration*, 6.

³³⁴ 'It was the new thrust towards integration after 1985 which refocused external attention on the EC. There were, for instance, not inconsiderable fears, expressed most notably in the United States, that the market would only be the CAP writ large, a protectionist 'Fortress' Europe. More significant for the Union were the EFTA states which, fearing the adverse effect the single market might have on their own economies, sought not only reassurance from the EC, but also involvement in the market.' In: Derek, W. Urwin, *The Community of Europe. A History of European Integration since 1945* (London/ New York: Longman, 1995), 245. For the impact on the US see: Mark Gilbert, 'A Shift in Mood: The 1992 Initiative and Changing U.S. Perceptions of the European Community, 1988-1989', in: Patel, Weisbrode, 243-264.



Figure 14. Ratification of the Maastricht Treaty. 7 February 1992.

Million people.³³⁵ Three years before, when Delors came into office in January 1985, such speculations would have been unthinkable.

At the root of these dynamics were profound structural changes of global dimensions. One of them was the collapse of the colonial system and its consequences, still felt by multinational companies of countries like England, France and the Netherlands.³³⁶ In addition, European business since the 1970s was struggling to compete with the big corporations from the US and Japan, which were ‘far ahead in technological research and development of the most modern high-tech industries’ such as computer and communication technology.³³⁷ The situation further aggravated during Ronald Reagan’s presidency (1981-89), marked by a policy of *laissez-faire* capitalism, privatisation, deregulation of the financial sector, low taxes and a belief in the self-regulation of markets,³³⁸ which turned the US into the first so-called ‘post-industrial’ society, privileging finance over production.³³⁹ As historian Ivan Berend puts it, ‘American influence and dominance in international organizations allowed the sweeping neo-liberal deregulatory regime adopted in the US to function as the cultural-ideological companion and driver of globalization.’³⁴⁰ Measured by the yardstick of the new regime, Europe’s major deficits were: ‘the fragmentation of markets, inadequate *size of firms*, and lack of significant state sponsorship’, followed by low labour market mobility, rigid wage structures and high social benefits.³⁴¹ What appeared as deficient in the late eighties at least partly coincided with what until then had been deemed as achievements of the welfare state. It was under the acute pressure of American and Asian competition that a ‘joint venture’ of European politicians and corporations – ‘sensing that the danger of

³³⁵ Gilbert, *European Integration*, 147.

³³⁶ For an explication of the significance of the colonies for Europe’s large corporations, see the chapter: ‘Collapse of Colonialism and Third World Markets’, in: Berend, *The History of European Integration*, 125-130.

³³⁷ Berend, *The History of European Integration*, 112.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 136.

³³⁹ Henk Overbeek, Kees van der Pijl, ‘Restructuring Capital and Restructuring Hegemony. Neo-liberalism and the unmaking of the post-war order’, in: Overbeek (ed.), *Restructuring Hegemony in the Global Political Economy. The Rise of transnational neo-liberalism in the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 2005), 19-20. First Published 1993.

³⁴⁰ Berend, *The History of European Integration*, 112. Extensively on this subject: Stephen R. Gill, ‘Neo-Liberalism and the Shift towards a US-Centred Transnational Hegemony’, in: Overbeek, *Restructuring Hegemony in the Global Political Economy*, 246-282.

³⁴¹ Berend, *The History of European Integration*, 108, 110.



Figure 15. Airbus. Beluga. 41st Paris Air Show. 1995.

marginalization was a real one³⁴² – succeeded in overcoming Europe’s ‘backwardness’, and entered a new dimension of European integration, comprising such achievements as the introduction of the single market and the Euro. [Figure 15]

Synchronization

The parallels to these developments in Koolhaas’ statements and in OMA’s projects from 1989 and thereafter are obvious: the notion of Europe lagging behind the US and Japan; the notion of Europe in need to catch up; the emulation of American economic policies, and the emulation of the American city; the deregulation of financial markets and the deregulation of urbanism; the promotion of big corporations, and the promotion of big buildings, the larger the better. On a figurative level, the contraction of programmes into huge compact volumes, characteristic for OMA’s recent projects, echoes the need of European corporations to overcome fragmentation – of markets, legislation, standards, infrastructure – limiting their growth. The shift is remarkable, as virtually all projects of the 1980s and 1970s were composed of multiple, often heterogeneous, fragmented looking volumes. The Dance Theatre, the Villa Dall’Ava and the Byzantium are but the most obvious examples of this general tendency. The scheme for the NAI from 1988 is the first to propose a collage of solids that is largely enclosed by an exterior overall volume, but the notion of the exterior’s volumetric unity is somewhat undermined by the cantilevering roof slab and the leaning tower that passes through it from inside. The volumetric unity of OMA’s schemes for Zeebrugge, Karlsruhe and Paris is more determined. [Figures 16-18] Like the NAI, the design for Zeebrugge provides an ‘internalized’ composite volume: a spiralling parking ramp at the bottom, and, on top, a semi-circular hotel, a wedge-shaped void, a rectilinear office tower and the steps of an auditorium. But – different from the scheme for the NAI – the integrity of the compact curved volume is preserved, and the same holds true for the prism of OMA’s Agadir project from the following year and the three stacked layers it encloses. [Figure 19] The project for the Congrexpo (1990-94) varies the latter principle, its compact egg-shaped volume being composed of three heterogeneous segments. [Figure 20]

³⁴² Ibid., 149.



Figure 16. OMA/Rem Koolhaas. Competition entry for Sea Terminal. Zeebrugge. 1989.

Strictly speaking, neither the National Library nor the Media Centre are solitary prismatic volumes: the ‘cube’ at the centre of the library is surrounded by a series of low volumes, and the lower part of the Media Centre’s vertical prism connects to a volume of exactly the same width, the length depending on the version. But in either case there is a pronounced hierarchy between the verticality and size of the main volume to the lower parts of the building that contrasts with the principle volumetric ‘anarchy’ of previous projects like the extension of the Dutch parliament, the Dance Theatre, the Byzantium, the Villa Dall’Ava and many others. The design for the National Library, like the one for the Media Centre, does convey the image of a solitary prismatic colossus, an image which has been corroborated by the fact that most of the pictures published focus on the main volume.

The scheme for the library in Paris further transforms the principle internalized volumes. Instead of housing the five different sections of the library in five different solids – initially taken into consideration – the reading room of each was turned into a void cut out from the twenty-four floor slabs and five giant loadbearing walls, in apparent analogy to the building-cuts by Gordon Matta-Clark. At the Media Centre in Karlsruhe, four layers of varying depth accommodating the circulation system as well as secondary functions enclose a large centre for exhibitions and events. Different from the schemes for Zeebrugge and Karlsruhe, the contained ‘volumes’ are converted into voids, whereas the surrounding floor plates echo the square proportions of the perimeter.

European giants

In 1990, Koolhaas declares the ‘Very Large Building’ as ‘the theme of the end of the century [...] a type that proliferates effortlessly in North America, Japan and South Korea’,³⁴³ while still being a novelty in Europe. In the same year he explains that the introduction of the large scale in Europe is ‘about Europe’s modernization’: to introduce the large scale in European architecture is no longer a

³⁴³ Koolhaas, ‘The End of the Age of Innocence’, in: Lucan, *OMA - Rem Koolhaas*, 165.

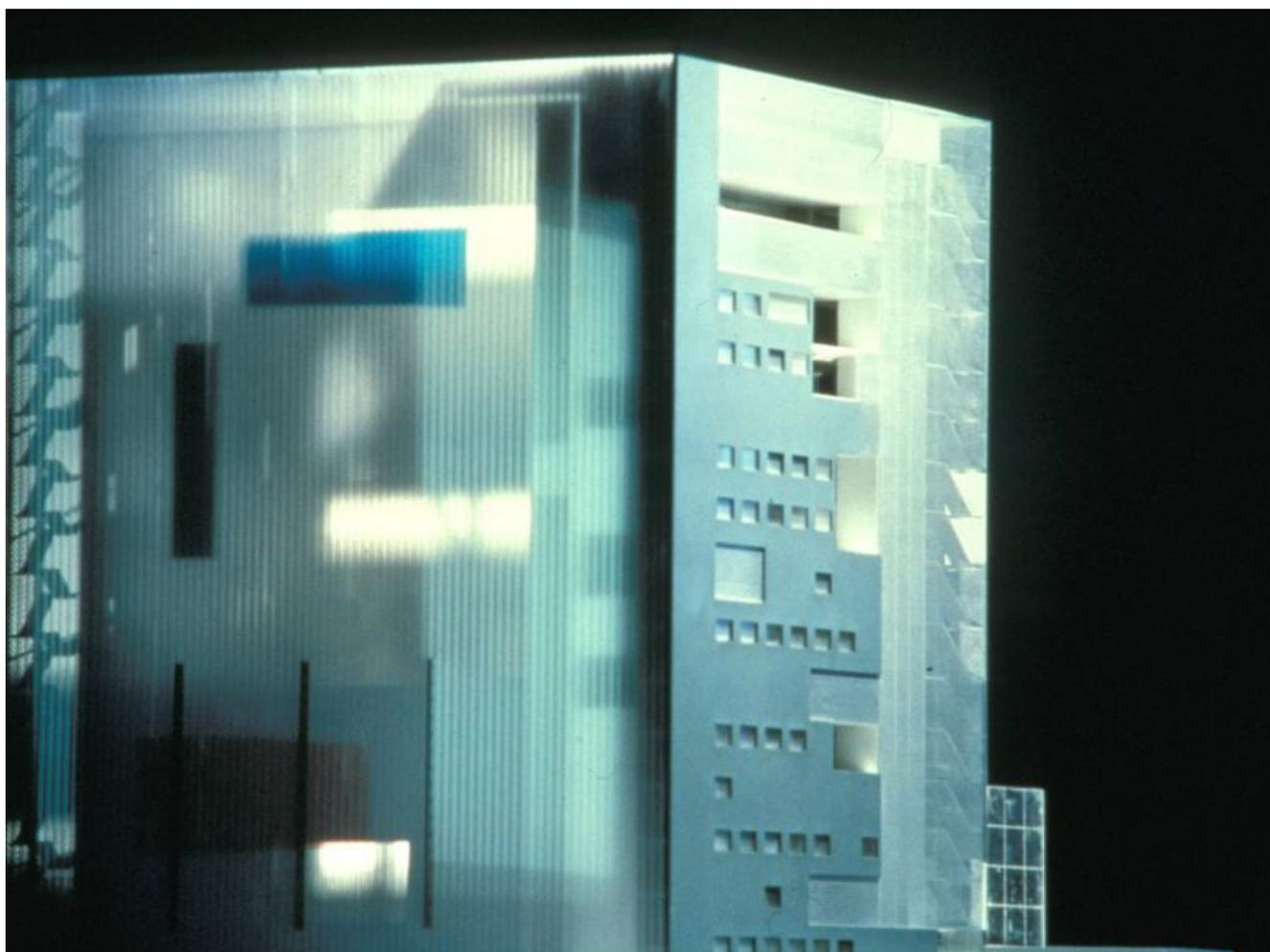


Figure 17. OMA/Rem Koolhaas. Competition entry for Media Centre in Karlsruhe (ZKM). 1989-92.

personal ambition – as in the interview with Tracy Metz – but a necessity.³⁴⁴ One year later, at the 1991 *ANY* Conference in Santa Monica, Koolhaas identifies the shift of scale as ‘the strongest force in operation’.³⁴⁵ He does not claim, however, to have anticipated this shift:

I was sincerely convinced that the explosion of scale that had taken place in America and that was taking place in Japan and all over southeast Asia, would simply never make an appearance in Europe. But in the last three or four years certain modifications in European culture have forced me to revise some of these assumptions, especially the assumption that the issue of scale would never play a major role in Europe.³⁴⁶

The statement indicates 1987/88 as the moment when he reframed his vision of Europe. By then, the Single European Act was signed, and 1992 – scheduled as the year of the Treaty on the European Union – epitomized the prospective of a united Europe with a common currency and a single market. Meanwhile, the process was not limited to political agreements and the ratification of treaties. In Europe, it was paralleled by a wave of mergers:

Mergers [...] progressed rapidly in the late 1980s. Among the 1.000 larger firms, mergers in 1982-83 numbered 117, in 1988-89, 303, in 1987-88, 383, in 1988-89, 492; in 1989-90, 662. Together these increased European companies to sizes comparable with the American giants. [...] The Single Market initiatives were working.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁴ Nikolaus Kuhnert, Philipp Oswald, ‘Die Inszenierung der Ungewissheit. Rem Koolhaas im Gespräch mit Nikolaus Kuhnert und Philipp Oswald’, in: *Arch+* 105/106 (1990), 68. Ellen Dunham-Jones writes in ‘Irrational Exuberance: Rem Koolhaas and the 1990s’, albeit referring to the backdrop of global rather than European change: ‘Equating capitalism with modernization and change, Koolhaas identified early on how global capitalism in the 1990s created dynamic, highly speculative urban conditions that were transforming the contemporary city.’ Ellen Dunham-Jones, in: Peggy Deamer (ed.), *Architecture and Capitalism. 1845 to the Present* (London: Routledge, 2014), 150.

³⁴⁵ Rem Koolhaas, ‘Precarious Entity’, in: Cynthia Davidson (ed.), *Anyone* (New York: Rizzoli, 1991), 148.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 149.

³⁴⁷ Berend, *The History of European Integration*, 164.

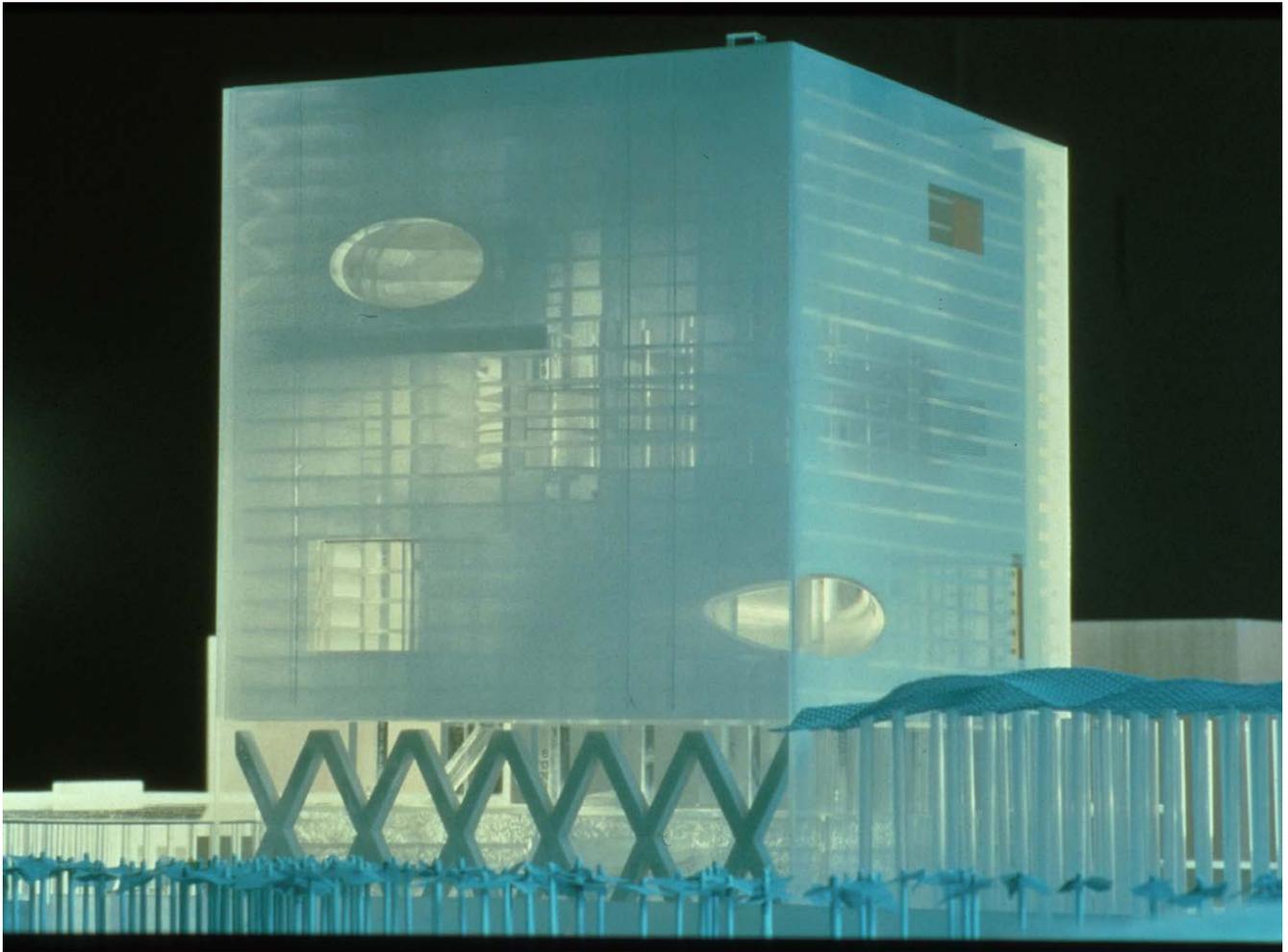


Figure 18.OMA/Rem Koolhaas. Competition entry for the National Library in Paris. 1989.

The common market as a whole, too, should grow to become globally competitive. The fast expansion of the European Community during the 1980s and 1990s was deemed by some an economic necessity, if only to open up new pools of consumers and cheap labour.³⁴⁸ Among the synchronizations requisite for the functioning of the single market, the most consequential for OMA was probably that of Europe's physical infrastructure. The expansion of the high speed railway system of the TGV, the Thalys and the ICE, involved large architectural developments. OMA's projects for Euralille, Frankfurt and Zeebrugge, and to a lesser extent Karlsruhe, are projects of this kind. At the conference in Santa Monica, Koolhaas envisages architecture to (re-)gain a political dimension:

Now I believe that one of the most important things to understand in terms of the present developments in Europe is that architecture has suddenly acquired a genuine, even political, importance, and that for the first time the powerlessness of the architect has been reversed: after two decades of deep unpopularity, there is now a very strong public, political expectation that the architect will be involved and will be able to articulate the self-inflicted, sometimes cosmic surgery that Europe is undergoing at this moment.³⁴⁹

A fait accompli

As long as socialism existed as a factual alternative to capitalism in eastern Europe, the two systems and their respective advocates had been competing with one another. It has often been argued that the successful institution of the welfare state during the post-war era in Western Europe and in the US was a consequence of the fact that decision makers on both sides of the Atlantic felt the need to prove the superiority of the western model through the diffusion of a higher living standard.³⁵⁰ A fundamental revision of the policy had already begun to take shape with the economic crises of the 1970s, and then,

³⁴⁸ See: Ibid., 3-4, 181.

³⁴⁹ Koolhaas, 'Precarious Entity', 149.

³⁵⁰ Mark Swenarton, Tom Avermaete and Dirk van den Heuvel, for instance, point out the significance of this competitive situation for the western welfare state of the post-war era: 'After the Second World War the need for reconstruction propelled economic growth and provided once again resources for welfare state expansion, while rivalry with the Communist block – the Cold War – provided imperative for a non-revolutionary route to social improvement.' Swenarton, Avermaete, Van den Heuvel, Introduction to: Idem (eds.), *Architecture of the Welfare State* (London: Routledge, 2015), 7.

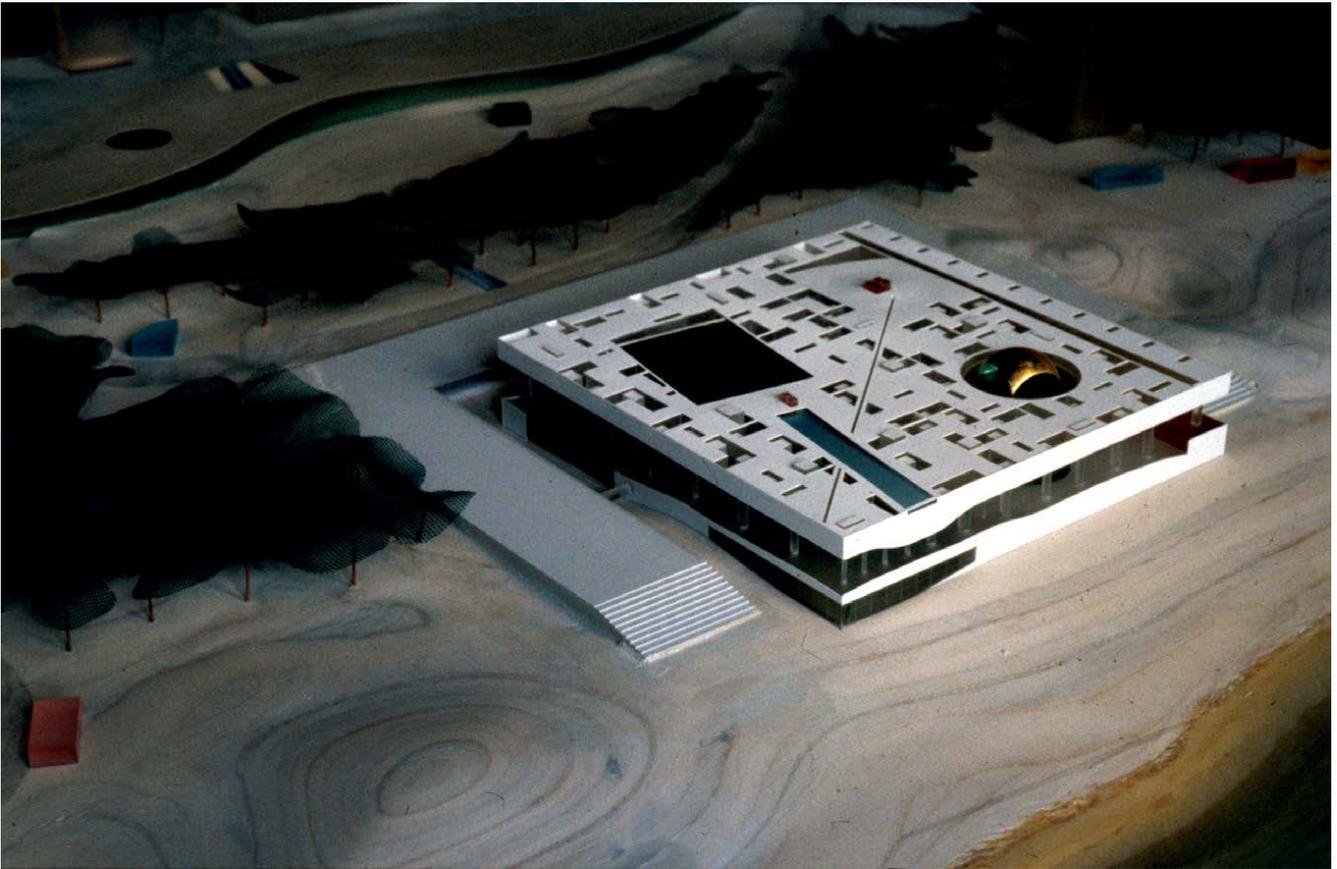


Figure 19. OMA/Rem Koolhaas. Competition entry for convention centre in Agadir. 1990.

ever more visibly, during the tenures of Margaret Thatcher (1979-90) and Ronald Reagan (1981-9). [Figure 21] Berend describes the growing ideological estrangement of the political Left from its socialist origins:

The Keynesian economics that had dominated in postwar Western Europe, and the state intervention and regulation it had prescribed as solutions, were now declared a problem. New ideologies, rooted in the socio-economic sensibilities of post-industrial consumer middle-classes, successfully challenged the policies of Left-leaning parties, which had served the European postwar recovery so well. The Left parties lost their self-confidence, as well as their mass support, and subsequently they shifted their political platforms to the center. The 1970s and 1980s essentially incubated a new political culture and *Zeitgeist*, an amalgam of triumphant neoliberalism, neoconservatism, and postmodern culture and ideology.³⁵¹

With the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in January 1991 the inferiority of socialism was generally considered as a *fait accompli*.³⁵² Koolhaas was quick to draw conclusions. At the symposium at the TU Delft, held in April 1990, he said: ‘I think it’s absolutely essential to – and I utterly fail to understand why it hasn’t happened yet in some way or the other – that there should be an ideological response to the sudden disappearance of socialism, which in almost all cases has latently nourished and provided the justification for our modern architecture, whether we are open about it or not.’³⁵³

Whether the ‘ideological response’ to the disappearance of socialism should align to the ideology that prevailed, Koolhaas does not say, indicating Rossi’s hotel Il Palazzo in Fukuoka as a ‘possible answer

³⁵¹ Berend, *The History of European Integration*, 165.

³⁵² Ellen Dunham-Jones observed in 2014: ‘Ironically, if the Berlin Wall launched Koolhaas’ critique of architecture, it was the Wall’s demolition in 1989 that amplified the relevance of his ideas. Deng Xiaoping’s subsequent opening up of the Chinese markets in 1992 with the exhortation “Enrich yourselves!” was another accelerant. Not only had capitalism won, but the spirit of ’68 had lost. Marxist critiques and labor unions were swatted away by the neoliberal consensus in favour of free markets. Notions of “the public good” were challenged and increasingly replaced by privatization and emphasis on “individual responsibility.”’ (Dunham-Jones, ‘Irrational Exuberance’, 155.)

³⁵³ Koolhaas, ‘How Modern is Dutch Architecture’, 165.

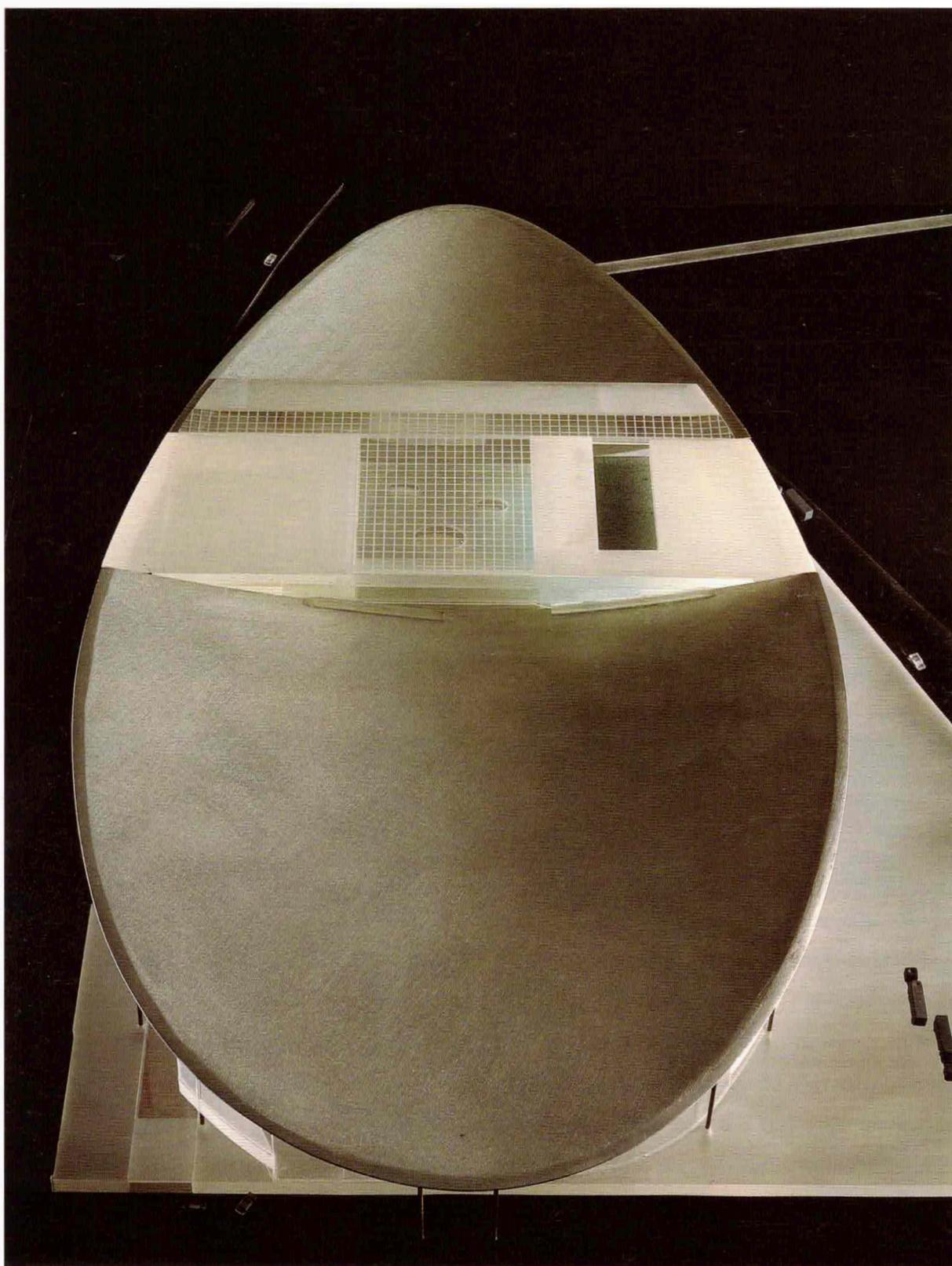


Figure 20. OMA/Rem Koolhaas. Congrexpo. Euralille, Lille. 1990-1994.

to such questions'.³⁵⁴ Three years later, in 1993, it is the very lack of ideological commitment that he advertises as the essential merit of Rossi's project: 'Il Palazzo dominates its surroundings like a samurai castle. It looks cynical – deliciously fascist. [...] Rossi did not do the interiors or the nightclubs that invade the stoic exterior, but his envelope has a weird fascination. It is pure emblem, Rossi without ideological ballast: hyper-Rossi.'³⁵⁵ Koolhaas adds: 'It is a gene splice: Rossi's poetry, first stripped of ideology, then boosted by Japanese ingenuity.'³⁵⁶ Globalization of architecture, Koolhaas suggests, implies the abandonment and principle insignificance of (obsolete) ideological content. A nod to *The Gay Science* at the end of the essay seems to propose a Nietzschean recovery from false scruples.

Manhattanism reframed

In 1990, based on the experience of Euralille and the competitions from 1989, Koolhaas began to synthesize the architectural and urban implications of the large scale in a series of theorems. In the essay 'The End of the Age of Innocence?', included in the catalogue of the IFA exhibition in Paris, he singles out four of them, referring explicitly to 'Manhattan architecture', and implicitly to the principles of 'Manhattanism'.³⁵⁷

1. 'The impossibility of organizing, with a single architectural gesture, a building disconnecting the autonomy of its parts.' Generally speaking, Koolhaas reformulates the principle of 'Vertical Schism' or the '1909 Theorem', that is, the idea that in a skyscraper the floors are autonomous with regard to their use due to the floors separating them.³⁵⁸ More specifically, he seems to have in mind the Rockefeller Centre as the 'most mature demonstration of Manhattanism's unspoken theory of the simultaneous existence of different programs on a single site [...] / Rockefeller Center should be read as five ideologically separate projects that coexist at the same location.'³⁵⁹ Perhaps Koolhaas was

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Rem Koolhaas, 'Globalization', in: Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 364. The essay is dated 1993.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Koolhaas, 'The End of the Age of Innocence?', 164-165. The quotes introducing the subsequent four paragraphs are taken from the final passage, entitled 'Innocence II'.

³⁵⁸ Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 105.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 197.



Figure 21. Left: Ronald Reagan. President of the USA 1981-89. Right: Margaret Thatcher. British prime minister 1979-90.

reminded of the building while working on the National Library in Paris, the brief providing five different libraries. The combined extremes of huge dimensions and programmatic heterogeneity necessitated the abandonment of modernist models: ‘For extremely large, bizarrely composed programmes, such as Zeebrugge, Bibliothèque de France or Karlsruhe “modern precedents” do not exist.’³⁶⁰

2. ‘The liberating potential of the elevator (through its ability to establish connections more mechanical than architectural) which allows architects to step outside traditional categories of composition.’ The emphasis on the idea that architecture is cut off from its tradition, if confronted with the large scale, appears to be new.³⁶¹ The cloudy facades of the National Library in Paris challenge established notions of scale and proportion. The schemes for the library, Euralille, Zeebrugge and Karlsruhe explore methodically the possibilities to connect spaces opened up by the use of elevators and escalators.

3. ‘The façade that can no longer divulge anything about the interior of the building, its center being too far removed from the skin. The idea of the interior and the exterior become two separate projects.’ In *Delirious New York* this principle is called ‘Lobotomy’.³⁶² Regarding the competition entries for Paris, Zeebrugge and Karlsruhe, the connection of exterior and interior is loose, but in none of the three schemes they are completely cut off from one another. Even if akin to the principle of ‘lobotomy’, the façades contain significant remainders that respond to what Koolhaas called ‘the more or less humanistic expectation that a building should disclose what happens inside.’³⁶³ Only later projects, such as the library in Seattle, would be provided with an entirely autonomous skin. Apparently, one of the ‘lessons’ Koolhaas wished his audience to learn from Rossi’s hotel in Fukuoka – regardless of its modest size – was the essential un-relatedness of exterior and interior.

³⁶⁰ Paul Vermeulen, *De Standaard*, 28-29 April 1990, (author trans.).

³⁶¹ In *Delirious New York* Koolhaas merely wrote: ‘The elevator is based on the *absence* of articulation,’ referring to the architectural articulation of the elevator itself. Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 82.

³⁶² See: Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 100.

³⁶³ Koolhaas, ‘Precarious Entity’, 148.

4. 'Finally, these buildings enter – by moving beyond the good and the bad – a dangerous domain, by the single fact of their size: their impact is wholly independent of their quality.' In *Delirious New York* the same idea is put forward in the paragraph 'Automonument'.³⁶⁴ At the *ANY* conference in Santa Monica, Koolhaas stresses the implications of big buildings for the role of the architect: 'they have an impact that by definition is stronger than whatever additional value any architect can give them. [...] Ostensibly megalomaniac subjects, they theoretically dwarf the role of the architect.'³⁶⁵ But to position the large scale outside the categories of 'good and bad' seems also to aim at a strategic restraint with regard to architectural judgement so as to leave room for experimentation. On the scheme for Zeebrugge Koolhaas commented in 1989: 'I can't say whether the project is good or bad from a formal point of view, but I'd like to see what happens if we win the competition.'³⁶⁶

At the *ANY* conference Koolhaas points out the consequences of this building type for the city as a whole: 'It is no longer a public realm but rather a series of privacies that are inflated to the scale of the public or in some cases to the semipublic.'³⁶⁷ In *Delirious New York*, this issue has been addressed repeatedly and extensively.³⁶⁸ This holds true for the competition between the public and the private sphere: 'Through volume alone, life inside the Skyscraper is involved in a hostile relationship with life outside: the lobby competes with the street.'³⁶⁹ New was the suggestion to conceive the European city in such terms. Next to Tokyo, *The Contemporary City* ought to propose as alternative models Atlanta, as a city without centre, and the periphery of Paris. The proposition clearly opposed the notion of the historic urban centre as the sole urban paradigm, to some extent following up on Koolhaas' criticism of the IBA or the 'Reconstruction of the European City'. While the European advocates of the planned city fail to see their limited range of influence with regard to the new urban dynamics, Koolhaas argues, America with its unplanned sprawls 'discovers [...] a vast new area of possibilities and freedom.'³⁷⁰ In

³⁶⁴ See: Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 100.

³⁶⁵ Koolhaas, 'Precarious Entity', 149.

³⁶⁶ Cervelló, 'I've always been anxious', 84.

³⁶⁷ Koolhaas, 'Precarious Entity', 149.

³⁶⁸ For instance, Koolhaas writes in the paragraph 'Control': 'no longer does the city consist of a more or less homogeneous texture [...] but each block is now *alone* like an island, fundamentally on its own.' Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 97. See also the paragraph 'Venice', 120-123.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 88.

³⁷⁰ Rem Koolhaas, 'Atlanta', in: *Idem, Mau, S,M,L,XL*, 112.

his lecture from 1988 at the UIMP in Santander, Atlanta and the developments by John Portman figure as paradigmatic examples. In such a context, the concept of centrality does no longer apply: ‘At the moment when downtown buildings are in direct competition with each other, the whole idea of downtown, of buildings assembled in a reduced place, which is the idea of a centre, falls apart.’³⁷¹

Mixed feelings

At least until the beginning of the 1990s, Koolhaas had ambiguous feelings towards the new urban paradigm and the freedom it provided, similar to the early seventies when he started his research on Manhattan.³⁷² In his lecture on Atlanta from 1988 he says: ‘It is intriguing how Portman’s Architecture, and American Architecture in general, presents the unusual combination of hard-headed business sense with fantastic or imagined solutions; and how this reveals a major tragedy: in spite of its enormous architectural display, it has no architectural quality whatsoever.’³⁷³ To Hajime Yatsuka, Koolhaas explains in 1989, referring to the growth of the urban periphery and its neglect through the architects: ‘it’s very hard, say, when I drive around Atlanta, to actually find things beautiful or exciting – and the same goes for the *villes nouvelles* around Paris – you could go around saying everything is ridiculous there, or you could also surrender to the feeling that maybe it’s a very unique landscape that is emerging there.’³⁷⁴ Similarly, in his lecture from 1990 at the TU Delft, Koolhaas calls Rossi’s hotel in Fukuoka ‘shocking and not particularly attractive’, admitting to have ‘ambivalent feelings towards it.’³⁷⁵

Again: surrender and subversion

When the topic is touched upon in 1992, his collocutor, Alejandro Zaera Polo, observes that Koolhaas seems to accept ‘a certain cultural and productive condition’ as a frame for his work, asking how he articulates this acceptance in his judgements. Koolhaas’ reply betrays unease:

³⁷¹ UIMP: International University Menéndez y Paolo. Rem Koolhaas, ‘Atlanta’, *Quaderns* 1 (1990), 106.

³⁷² In 1973, in a letter to Adolfo Natalini from *Superstudio* he wrote: ‘I am in the grip of a sudden, frenzied investigation and design of the particular, delirious public interiors, embarrassingly ‘pathétique’ [...] all ‘hysterical architecture’. All these things are very enjoyable, but also very nerve-racking, because of the absence of reliable criticism and comment; it is hard to know whether all the interests which have insinuated themselves into my preoccupations, are good or stupid or both.’ Quoted after: Gargiani, *The Construction of Merveilles*, 15.

³⁷³ Koolhaas, ‘Atlanta’, 106.

³⁷⁴ Yatsuka, “‘I combine Architectural with Specificity with Programmatic Instability’”, 11.

³⁷⁵ Koolhaas, ‘How Modern is Dutch Architecture?’, 166.

I have an interest in professional activity, I want to build: to a frightening extent that means basically accepting most of the time. [...] I'm certainly provoked in a deep sense by this acceptance. It engages me. In that sense, my interest in Atlanta, for example, is ambiguous. Basically I try to postpone the moment of judgement as long as possible to derive as many influences as possible from it.³⁷⁶

Zaera Polo insists: 'But how do you deal ideologically with this acceptance? We are talking about the possible end of [the] public realm, of civil society, of the humanist thought [...] Should this acceptance be considered as revolutionary or as complacent?' Koolhaas rejects both options, explaining: 'We are seduced; we feel simultaneously glee and horror. [...] It's not complacency but fascination, and in fascination there is always an element of surrender.'³⁷⁷

Surrender continues to be a recurring motif in Koolhaas writings up to the latest essays included in *S,M,L,XL*.³⁷⁸ 'Beyond signature', he suggests, 'Bigness means surrender to technologies; to engineers, contractors, manufacturers, to politics, to others.'³⁷⁹ In essence, it is the 'surrender to the definitive instability of life in the Metropolis' advertised in *Delirious New York* and conflated later on in the metaphor of the surfer.³⁸⁰ The metaphor of surrender is linked to a methodical relinquishment to control;³⁸¹ as in *Delirious New York* both are linked to the promise of subversion and freedom, even if in less explicit terms. Bigness, Koolhaas proclaims, 'is the one architecture that engineers the unpredictable. Instead of enforcing coexistence, Bigness depends on regimes of freedoms, the assembly of maximum difference. / Only Bigness can sustain a promiscuous proliferation of events in a single

³⁷⁶ Alejandro Zaera Polo, 'Finding Freedoms', 22.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 22-23. In his essay included in the same issue of *El Croquis*, Zaera Polo concludes: 'The work of OMA must be seen ultimately as a strategic retreat, the cessation of ideological resistance to the developments of contemporary civilization.' Zaera Polo, 'Notes for a Topographic Survey', *El Croquis* 53 (1992), 51.

³⁷⁸ For instance, when writing: 'What if we simply declare that there is no crisis – redefine our relationship with the city not as its makers but as its mere subjects, as its supporters?' Koolhaas, 'Whatever Happened to Urbanism?', in: Idem, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 971.

³⁷⁹ Koolhaas, 'Bigness', in: Idem, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 514.

³⁸⁰ Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 157.

³⁸¹ '[...] it [Bigness] can only be achieved at the price of giving up control'. Koolhaas, 'Bigness', 513.

container.³⁸² In his lecture at the UIMP in 1988, Koolhaas qualifies ‘the experiment in Atlanta’ as ‘extremely subconscious’ and the ‘the importance of abandoning the claim of control’ as one of the lessons European architects may learn from it.³⁸³ These and other statements from that period, indicate as underlying paradigm – again like in *Delirious New York* – the surrealist concept of the unconscious as a liberating force (see Chapter 1.9).

Koolhaas has never been explicit about what exactly to expect from this liberation: whether it was supposed to provide a surrealist experience confined to the hours of leisure time; or whether it was expected, after all, to induce revolutionary dynamics of social change, as conjectured by the early surrealists. The repeated suggestion of the Social Condenser as a model for metropolitan culture (in *Delirious New York*, in the project statement of La Villette, etc.), or, Koolhaas’ criticism of Rowe to have amputated modernism of its social agenda, the criticism of his Dutch peers to adhere to modernist forms without ideological content, or the same criticism levelled at deconstructivist architecture: all this lends itself to infer that Koolhaas felt obliged to some sort of Left-leaning agenda or ideology.³⁸⁴ Kenneth Frampton, in 1977, with cautious precision ascribed to the yet unbuilt oeuvre a ‘radical potential which is critical of communism in its ascendancy as it is of capitalism in its decline.’³⁸⁵ George Baird, in the same issue of *Architectural Design*, identified OMA’s projects as ‘Social Condensers’, ‘revolutionary’ in their fusion of modernism and metropolitan ambitions.³⁸⁶ Patrice Noviant, in 1981, read OMA’s work ‘as an activation of modern architecture in its *dimension as a social project*,’ implying a ‘sign of the desire for social change.’³⁸⁷

³⁸² Ibid, 511.

³⁸³ Koolhaas, ‘Atlanta’, 112.

³⁸⁴ In the interview with Patrice Goulet from 1985 Koolhaas explains: ‘The modernism of Colin Rowe – because in his own way he has been one of the messengers of modernism – has been completely amputated of its social programme, the social for him being the pinnacle of the ridiculous.’ Goulet, ‘La deuxième chance’, 9 (author trans.).

³⁸⁵ Kenneth Frampton, ‘Two or Three Things I know about Them: A Note on Manhattanism’, *Architectural Design* 5 (1977), 317.

³⁸⁶ George Baird, ‘Les Extrêmes Qui se Touchent?’, *Architectural Design* 5 (1977), 326-327.

³⁸⁷ Patrice Noviant, ‘Rem Koolhaas. Un européen sans humour’, *Architecture Mouvement Continuité* 54-55 (1981), 59.

‘A parable of unbridled neoliberalism’

S,M,L,XL was difficult to understand in such terms. Many reviews guessing what kind of society the book would imply, diagnosed a general correspondence with the ideas of the political Right. Koos Bosma wrote: ‘If we trace the successive levels of scale of Typical Plan, Bigness and Generic City, we get a parable of unbridled neoliberalism – a consumer world without cultural ambitions.’³⁸⁸ The encouragements for such a reading are varied. The propagation of the large scale itself emulated the neoliberal quest for maximal size – ever larger corporations, the expansion of budgets, markets, labour pools, turnover – informing the process of European Integration. The commitment is underlined by the dimensions of the book, its heaviness and bold typography. A gusto for diagrams and figures, large ones in particular, adopts a tone of managerial fact checking that is new in Koolhaas’ writings. Ellen Dunham-Jones rightly observes in 2014: ‘Although literally referring to big buildings, Bigness also indirectly includes the big business, big government, big firms, and big money required to make them.’³⁸⁹ Koolhaas seems to have been aware of such implications. In ‘Bigness’ he notes: ‘It seems incredible that the *size* of a building alone embodies an ideological program.’³⁹⁰ Richard Sennet wrote in a review from 1996:

S,M,L,XL, Rem Koolhaas’ new book, asks designers to think big. Although commercial architects don’t need such encouragement, socially conscious architects do. The culture of the Left since the 1960s has emphasized smallness. Small is the dimensions of the *gemeinschaft*, of face-to-face relations in communities where people who know each other. Small is also the dimension that least risks damaging others when designing their dreams.³⁹¹

³⁸⁸ Koos Bosma, ‘S, M, L, XL’, *Planning Perspectives* 12 (Jan 1997), 118.

³⁸⁹ Dunham-Jones, ‘Irrational Exuberance’, 157.

³⁹⁰ Koolhaas, ‘Bigness’, 496.

³⁹¹ Richard Sennett, ‘The Dialectics of Scale’, *Harvard GSD News* (Summer 1996), 45.

Koolhaas, who during the eighties used to ridicule the small-scale policy of so-called Dutch Structuralism, could hardly fail to see this dimension of his argument.³⁹² The occasional references to Nietzsche and writings like *Beyond Good and Evil* and *The Gay Science* appear as both a late retort to the humanism advocated by Van Eyck and Hertzberger and an alignment with a neoliberalist ideology that does away with ‘the social thought’. In accordance with both – the latter and Nietzsche’s philosophy of strength – Koolhaas warns that deplorable, yet inevitable social consequences of the new economic paradigm need to be embraced: for example, when identifying the idea of large-scale architecture as an ‘amoral domain,’ breaking ‘with ethics;’³⁹³ when suggesting that ‘we have to dare to be utterly uncritical’;³⁹⁴ or when relating that the new architecture ‘excludes, limits, separates from the “rest”’.³⁹⁵ ‘Housing is not a problem,’ he states, obviously referring to contemporary slums, while putting to death the modernist tradition of socially engaged mass housing: ‘It has either been completely solved or totally left to chance; in the first case it’s legal, in the second case “illegal”’.³⁹⁶ The urbanism envisaged is not to reform and correct: ‘Redefined, urbanism will not only, or mostly, be a profession, but a way of thinking – an ideology: to accept what exists.’³⁹⁷ Richard Ingersoll commented:

To my mind that is tantamount to saying business (or ‘Bidness,’ as we call it in Texas) as usual. My interpretation of the current Koolhaas effect is to take seriously the word ideology and challenge it as the same bourgeois capitalist dream couched in seductively hip hyperboles such as ‘new newness,’ and ‘the liquefaction of program,’ which will probably result in some new clothes for the emperor, or perhaps a new emperor for the old clothes.³⁹⁸

³⁹² ‘Over the last 20 years, large sectors of the architectural world in Holland have been in the grip of the local doctrine of Dutch Structuralism. Claiming Aldo van Eyck’s Orphanage and allied researches of the Dutch ‘Forum’ Group as their ancestors, the doctrine preaches that, in the name of humanism, all larger institutions can and should be broken up into smaller components which re-establish the human scale – as if each institution, whatever its nature, will become more transparent, less bureaucratic, more understandable, less rigid through the mere fact of subdivision.’ Rem Koolhaas, ‘Urban Intervention: Dutch Parliament Extension, The Hague’, 50.

³⁹³ Koolhaas, ‘Bigness’, 502.

³⁹⁴ Rem Koolhaas, ‘What Ever Happened to Urbanism?’, in: Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 971.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 967.

³⁹⁶ Koolhaas, ‘The Generic City’, in: *Idem*, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 1253.

³⁹⁷ Koolhaas, ‘What Ever Happened to Urbanism?’, 971.

³⁹⁸ Richard Ingersoll, ‘Bidness’, *ANY* 10 (1995), 5.

Dunham-Jones draws a parallel to the economic restructuring of the US: 'Instead of empowering communities to envision and administer their future, he calls for a "Lite Urbanism," the equivalent of deregulation. And much like Wall Street's arguments for the deregulation of banking at the time, Koolhaas bathes Lite Urbanism's promises in glowing, liberatory, progressive ambitions, while omitting reference to its risks of abuse by the interests of short-term capital.'³⁹⁹ For Jacques Lucan, the built version of the Euralille and OMA's Congrexpo showed that Koolhaas writings, namely the essay 'Bigness', needed to be taken literally. His review from 1995 concludes with a reconsideration of *Delirious New York* and the closing paragraph on the Downtown Athletic Club as a metaphor:

What did it announce? It announced, according to Koolhaas, the separation of mankind into two tribes: the tribe of those capable of utilizing all the equipment of modernity, i.e. the "bachelors" of the club; and the tribe comprising the rest of the traditional human race, i.e. those who do not belong to the club. One might well ask, while deaf to the accusations of unpardonable tenderness or sentimental feebleness, if it is necessary today, for whatever purpose it may serve, to step up the contrast ... as at Lille.⁴⁰⁰

'I don't want to call it unity'

The concept of 'Bigness', Koolhaas explains in *S,M,L,XL*, is intended as a polemic, levelled against 'contemporary doctrines that question the possibility of the Whole and the Real as variable categories and resign themselves to architecture's supposedly inevitable disassembly and dissolution.'⁴⁰¹ The passage seizes on an often-quoted lament from 1993, in which Koolhaas addresses the influence of French theory on architecture:

There is Derrida who says that things cannot be whole anymore, there is Baudrillard who says that things cannot be real anymore, there is Virilio who says that things cannot exist anymore,

³⁹⁹ Dunham Jones, 'Irrational Exuberance', 159.

⁴⁰⁰ Jacques Lucan, 'The Voluntary Prisoner of Architecture', *Domus* 774 (Sep 1995), 26.

⁴⁰¹ Koolhaas, 'Bigness', 503.

and then there is chaos theory which also has a strong impact. I think – since 1989 – that architecture has the obligation to oppose these tendencies.⁴⁰²

The criticism clearly challenged the theoretical affiliations of close peers like Tschumi, Eisenman and Nouvel. Its scope, however, was broader, aiming at the whole current of deconstructivism along with the penchant of contemporary Japanese architecture towards chaos theory. In an interview from 1990, Koolhaas criticised approaches of this kind as nonsensical simulations of chaos and its aesthetics,⁴⁰³ establishing – as he put it two years later – a ‘naive, banal analogy between a supposedly irregular geometry and a fragmented world, or a world where values are no longer anchored in a fixed way.’⁴⁰⁴ With ‘values’, Koolhaas apparently refers to the constructivist borrowings of deconstructivist architecture and the socialist, anti-bourgeois ideology that spurred the formal inventions of suprematism and cubofuturism during the years after the Russian revolution. For its lack of similar ideological underpinnings, Koolhaas dismissed deconstructivist architecture as ‘ultimately [...] decorative’.⁴⁰⁵ With this view he was not alone. Not only the MoMA show from 1988 was criticized for establishing a formalist relation between deconstructivist architecture and its constructivist precedents, but also the ‘deconstructivist’ architects themselves. Mary McLeod wrote in 1989:

Like postmodernism, this new tendency rejects the fundamental ideological premises of the modern movement: functionalism, structural rationalism, and faith in social regeneration. [...] Finally, deconstructivism, too, emphasizes the formal properties of architecture. (In this regard, it is ironic that Russian constructivism, with its political and social programs, is considered a primary source.)⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰² Nikolaus Kuhnert, Philipp Oswald, Alejandro Zaera Polo, ‘Die Entfaltung der Architektur’, *Arch* + 117 (1993), 24 (author trans.).

⁴⁰³ Nikolaus Kuhnert, Philipp Oswald, ‘Die Inszenierung der Ungewißheit’, 105/106 (1990), 70. Similarly, he commented in 1992 on his peers fascinated by chaos: ‘The ultimate justification or argument of this position has been that of analogy: you are in a mess, we are in a mess, you are unstructured, we are unstructured [...] you are chaotic, we are chaotic ... I am beginning to think that this is a mistake: there is right now an exciting potential to resist this mimesis.’ Zaera Polo, ‘Finding Freedoms’, 16.

⁴⁰⁴ Zaera Polo, ‘Finding Freedoms’, 29.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁶ McLeod, ‘Architecture and Politics in the Reagan Era: From Postmodernism to Deconstructivism’, 691.

Unlike McLeod, Koolhaas did not criticise the predisposition of deconstructivist architecture to enter the cycles of capitalist commodification and consumption, but – like the formal adherence to early modernism in the Netherlands – for the use of forms without the original ideological basis and without any substantial alternative. There is no direct mention in ‘Bigness’ of either the theory of deconstruction or chaos theory, but phrasings like ‘paroxysm of fragmentation’, ‘phony disorder’, ‘orchestration of chaos’ obviously stand for the architecture inspired by these schools of thought.⁴⁰⁷ Koolhaas calls their approach a defence line of dismantlement, referring to the failure of (European) architects to cope with the large scale building. He accuses these architects of making false promises by manufacturing ‘compositions of almost laughable pedantry and rigidity, behind apparent wildness.’⁴⁰⁸ By contrast, it is the seeming inoffensiveness of the large-scale building, Koolhaas assures, that allows for ‘programmatically hybridizations/proximities/frictions/overlaps/superpositions’ – that is, in his terms: destabilisation, subversion.⁴⁰⁹

Koolhaas’ critique of deconstructivism was anticipated by a shift in OMA’s work away from ‘deconstructivist’ volumetric disintegration. In an interview in 1990, Koolhaas explained his commitment to the large scale as a means to ‘break with deconstructivism.’⁴¹⁰ The statement shows that he did wish to distance his work from what was generally taken for deconstructivist architecture, and, implicitly, that he did consider the architecture of OMA, too, as marked, at least partly, by supposedly deconstructivist characteristics. The competitions from 1989 as much as the project for Lille bespeak an emphatic commitment to the large scale and the corollary reconsideration of the skyscraper.

His writings and statements from the mid-nineties, indicate that Koolhaas saw fragmentation as *the* quintessential trait of deconstructivist architecture, that is, in principle opposition to the integrity of the whole. In an interview with Isabelle Menu and Frank Vermandel from 1996, he explains: ‘The whole

⁴⁰⁷ Koolhaas, ‘Bigness’, 506.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., 505-507.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., 506-507.

⁴¹⁰ Chantal Béret, ‘Rem Koolhaas. La condition métropolitaine’, 19.

idea of *Bigness* rests on a debate centred around deconstructivism. I wanted to emphasize the possibility of creating whole things.⁴¹¹ In 'Bigness' the term 'whole' appears five times, precisely in this sense. To Zaera Polo, he explains, again in 1996: 'I think Bigness is useful in terms of counteracting the obsession with traces and ghosts and in terms of overcoming the obsession with the fragmentary or the chaotic.'⁴¹² The statement confirms that Koolhaas, at least until 1994, considered fragmentation not only as an essential feature of deconstructivist architecture, but also an obsolete 'obsession' of his own.

Much of all this accords with what became discernible in Koolhaas' comments and essays from 1990. Taken together, these pronouncements allow to outline two opposed groups of issues, terms and ideas, that can be synthesized in two equations. The first equation groups deconstructivism and its emulation of chaos; the past of (and reference to) modernist architecture; and, in one way or another, the existence of socialism as a lost precondition:

deconstructivism = chaos = modernist references = 'being modern' = language of dead ideology

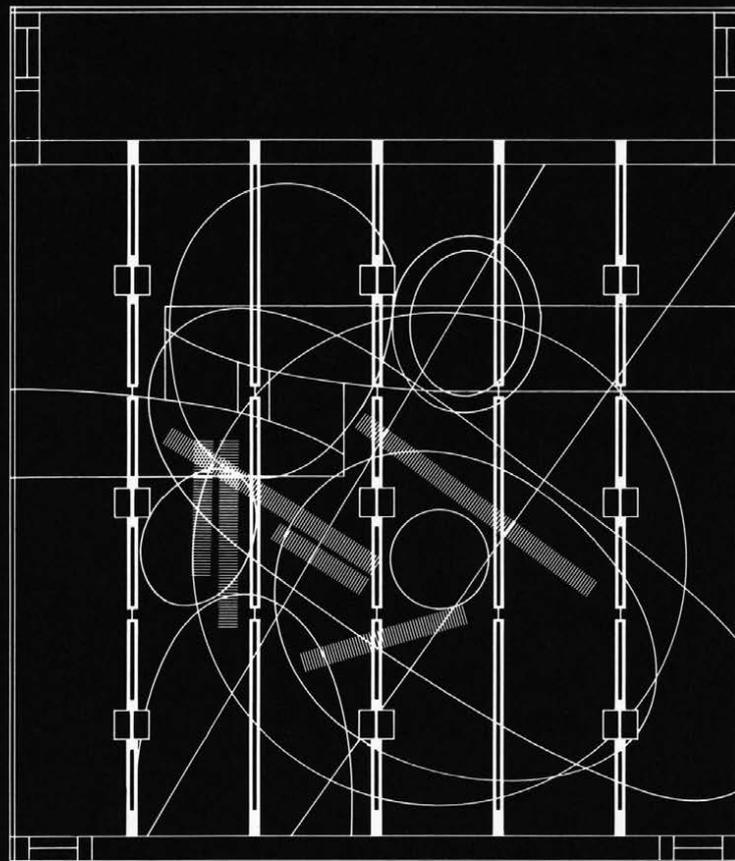
The second equation groups the large scale as a means to re-establish the integrity of the whole; a principle absence of references and precedents; the idea of contemporary architecture as an architecture that is not indebted to the past; the ideology of surrender which is equivalent to embracing the 'new' ideology embodied by the large scale:

large scale = wholeness = no references = 'being contemporary' = surrender to new ideology

The first group contains what Koolhaas wished to overcome, the second what he envisaged as a possible new agenda. The issue of fragmentation is implicit in both, either in terms of form (deconstructivist architecture) or in terms of programme (large scale building). Koolhaas considered the fragmentation

⁴¹¹ Isabelle Menu, Frank Vermandel, 'Interview. Rem Koolhaas', in: Espace Croisé (ed.), *Euralille. The Making of a New City Center* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1996), 62.

⁴¹² Alejandro Zaera Polo, 'The Day After. A Conversation with Rem Koolhaas', *El Croquis* 79 (1996), 23.



superimposition of voids

Figure 22. OMA/Rem Koolhaas. National Library in Paris. 1989. Superimposition of voids (public spaces).

of programme as an inevitable consequence of the large scale. The idea is latent in ‘The end of Innocence’ from 1990, but Koolhaas is fully explicit about it in his lecture at the *Anyone* conference from 1991:

Perhaps the most profound statement of the building, and the one that gave me the most ideological satisfaction, occurred when all of the plans were superimposed in a single image because the image represented the coexistence of all these elements in a single building. I think that after all the dis's or ab's of the 1980s, it seemed to open the possibility that, in spite of the fragmentation, there could also be a legitimate and interesting attempt to assemble fragments in order to create a precarious entity – I don't want to call it a unity – to organize in a single building the coexistence of these autonomous elements without doing any injustice to their specificity or their programmatic delicacy.⁴¹³

The overtones of societal analogy and metaphor are distinct. [Figure 22] The cohesion of the whole is provided by the enclosure. Inside it, no assimilation (‘unity’) is enforced, allowing for diverse (‘autonomous’) entities, which may develop (‘coexist’) freely (‘without doing injustice to their specificity’) both in terms of programme and form. The apparent ideological alignment of the large scale with the new economic paradigm – Koolhaas seems to say, both in his lecture and later in ‘Bigness’ – is compatible with the principles of the Left: non-conformist freedom, the open society, pluralism, even subversion.

In ‘Bigness’, Koolhaas insists on the difference between the autonomy of parts and fragmentation: ‘This impossibility [to control architecture with a single gesture] triggers the autonomy of its parts, but that is not the same as fragmentation: the parts remain committed to the whole.’⁴¹⁴ Koolhaas does not explain in what this commitment consists. Perhaps he had in mind OMA’s two library projects for Paris. As for the National Library, the formal diversity of the five voids displayed their autonomy in terms of use.

⁴¹³ Koolhaas, ‘Precarious Entity’, 155. On the fragmentation of the programme, see also: *Ibid.*, 151.

⁴¹⁴ Koolhaas, ‘Bigness’, 500.

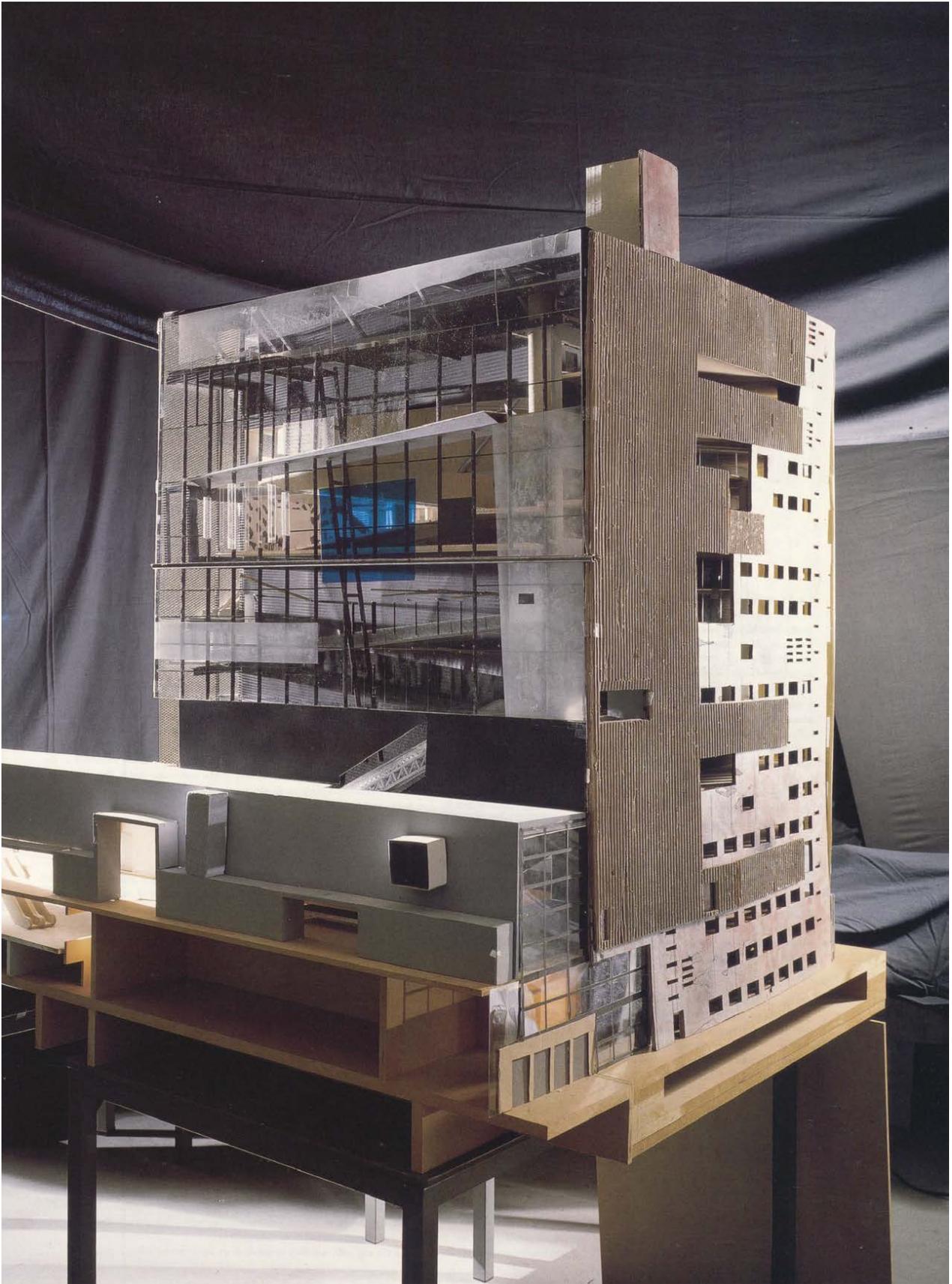


Figure 23. OMA/Rem Koolhaas. Media Centre in Karlsruhe (ZKM). 1989-92. Working model.

But the voids hardly read as fragments, appearing rather as variations of a common theme inscribed in an entirely homogeneous overall structure. At the project for Jussieu, it is the formal unity of the 'pliable surface' and the spatial continuity it allows for that connects the two libraries housed by the building.

OMA did several other projects during those years which in one way or another align with the emerging agenda of the large scale building. In the case of the Sea Terminal, the central void is an obvious means to provide for a sense of the whole; in the Jussieu Libraries, differently programmed areas are connected through the continuous floor, in clear contradiction to the logic of 'vertical schism.' For every large scale project of this period, however, the primary agent to assert the sense of the whole is the clear-cut outline of the exterior's volume. The exterior composed of multiple volumes, virtually disappears from the office's production for a couple of years. At the same time, the heterogeneity of the interior tends to oppose the notion of wholeness also on a formal level, not only in terms of programme and use. That applies in varying degrees to the projects for Zeebrugge, Karlsruhe, Lille, Agadir and, likewise, to the less known scheme for the 50.000-square metres Saitama Arena in Japan (1994). Each is marked by a pronounced contrast between a single clearly defined volume and an inner complexity that tends, especially on the level of form, to the fragmentary as the antithesis of the whole.

A rough periodization of the Kunsthall

Throughout the early nineties, the principles of large-scale architecture remained a focal theme of Koolhaas' writings, interviews and talks, while Euralille provided a veritable testing ground. The political and economic premises of the new approach – the thorough restructuring of the economy in Western Europe, followed by the vanishing of socialism in the east – were confirmed by the persisting staccato of 'historical' events: the election of a non-communist government in Poland, the Fall of the Berlin Wall, and the overthrow of the communist governments in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Romania, all in 1989; the unification of Germany in 1990, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union in 1991, and, six years after the enactment of the European Single Act, the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992.



Figure 24.OMA/Rem Koolhaas. Congrexpo. Euralille, Lille. 1990-1994.

In the year Euralille was completed, 1994, Koolhaas wrote 'Bigness', the most radical vision of an architecture that echoed the contemporary economic model of the large corporation. And yet, a couple of years was to pass until he would embrace this position more consistently as an architect. Many projects between 1994 and the turn of the century re-proposed composite volumes which articulate the heterogeneity of the programme. Some of these projects are of modest or medium size, like the private house in Bordeaux (1994-98), or the projects for the Luxor Theatre in Rotterdam (1996), and the UN Human Rights building in Geneva (1996). But most of them are decidedly large. Examples are the – unbuilt – projects for the Performing Arts Centre in Miami (1994), the Universal Headquarters in Los Angeles (1996), the Hyperbuilding in Bangkok (1996), the Togok Towers in Seoul (1996), and the in MoCA Rome (1999).

It is obvious that the exteriors of these schemes do not comply with the principle of 'lobotomy', declared in 'Bigness' as genuine to the very large building, because the different volumes correspond to differences of use. But the volumetric multiplicity of these projects was not a return to OMA's collage-like work of the 1980s for several reasons. In large buildings, the size of each part of the volume increased to an entirely different scale. The 7.000-square metres Dance Theatre allows to distinguish at least five distinct volumes; the 60.000-square metres Universal Headquarters six or seven, depending on the version; the 766.000-square metres Togok Towers five; the 11.420.000-square metres Hyperbuilding about a dozen. Each tower of the Universal Headquarters is about as large as the entire Dance Theatre; each volume of the Togok Towers is in average twenty times as large; and each volume of the Hyperbuilding more than a hundred times. The single volumetric components tend to have homogeneous skins while being large buildings in themselves. Not much is left from the air of improvisation and randomness characteristic for projects like the Dance Theatre or the Byzantium. No less important: these projects are not meant any longer to recall modernist precedents from the 1920s, 1930s or the post-war era. OMA appears to avoid the impact of familiarity as such, striving for seemingly past-less novelty, often with a bent towards the atmospheric, sci-fi-like image.

Projects with homogeneous skins *and* compact volumes became important for OMA only in the late nineties. Obvious examples are the library in Seattle (1999-2004), the Casa da Musica in Porto (1999-2005); the projects for the Astor Place Hotel in New York (2000), the CCTV Headquarters in Beijing (2002-08), the residential block for the Koningin Julianaplein in The Hague (2002), the Books Building for Beijing (2003), the Wyly Theatre in Dallas (2004-06), the Torre Bicentenario for Mexico City (2006), the Dubai Renaissance (2006), the Shenzhen Stock Exchange (2006-13), the National Library in Qatar (2005-17). The obvious ‘delay’ cannot be explained by the production of *S,M,L,XL* during the early nineties or the lack of large commissions alone. It also shows that Koolhaas’ writings and the architectural work of OMA are not necessarily congruent – as Koolhaas himself occasionally claimed, even if some of his statements bespeak the contrary.⁴¹⁵ Probably the ideas voiced in *S,M,L,XL* were put forward with more conviction than Koolhaas actually felt at the time, surely as a provocation, but first of all, it appears, to provide for the requisite freedom to experiment.

By the beginning of 1989 it was clear that the Kunsthal would combine a single compact volume with a *heterogeneous* exterior. As an approach, the constellation was short-lived. Rather than a period, it marks a specific moment in the oeuvre of OMA. The sudden volumetric contraction of first the NAI and then, more emphatically, the Kunsthal, appears to have been a first, spontaneous reaction to the rise of deconstructivist architecture. Neither of the two projects does anticipate the systematic revision of ‘Manhattanist’ principles proposed by Koolhaas from 1990 onwards. The resistance to what Koolhaas saw as the essential trait of deconstructivist architecture – fragmentation – was limited to the exterior’s volume. The combination of an essentially integer volume with a ‘fragmented’ skin, creating an unresolved tension between the whole and its denial, may have been a way to expose the unquestioned certainties underlying the deconstructivist display of instability, namely the predetermined dismissal of the whole and the application of formal fragmentation and juxtaposition to everything. Likewise does the multi-faceted heterogeneity of the Kunsthal distinguish the project from much of the contemporary

⁴¹⁵ See, for instance: Beatriz Colomina, ‘A Conversation and a Dictionary’, *El Croquis* 134/135 (2007), 385. In other interviews and talks Koolhaas indicates a close relation of his writings and architectural production; see, for instance: Koolhaas, ‘Precarious Entity’; Cynthia Davidson, ‘Rem Koolhaas: ‘Why I Wrote Delirious New York and other Textual Strategies’, *ANY 0* (May/June 1993), 42-43.

work of, say, Hadid, Eisenman, Tschumi and Libeskind which in terms of ideas, materials, constructive means, motifs, and references appears strikingly homogeneous by comparison.

The Kunsthal aside, only the prismatic Media Centre and the egg-shaped Congrexpo belong to this group of projects.⁴¹⁶ [Figures 23-24] Both schemes were conceived in 1989 and 1990, even though the design of the latter changed significantly. Unlike the NAI, the Sea Terminal and the National Library, all three projects renounce the autonomous inner volume as a means of spatial and programmatic articulation. Perhaps the division of the Congrexpo into three structurally diverse segments was inspired by the Kunsthal. Perhaps Koolhaas transferred some ideas from the exterior of the Kunsthal to the Media Centre's and vice versa. The exteriors are particularly close, and in both cases, there is something deceptive and seductive about the seeming 'exposure of everything.' Much is revealed, much concealed, and much is in between. Just like the facades of the Kunsthal, all four facades of the Media Centre are different. Just like the facades of the Media Centre, the facades of the Kunsthal are reminiscent of collages and collage-like fragmentation. Next to its limited scale, this latter quality distinguishes the Kunsthal clearly from the spirit of 'Bigness' and the architectural wholeness the essay conjures. But the compact volume and the concept of the 'pliable surface' as an internalized public space – within OMA's work both first fully articulate in the scheme of the Kunsthal – would become a model for many an insular monolith conceived as a city of its own.

Like the Media Centre and the Congrexpo, the design of the Kunsthal took shape in a moment when several of Koolhaas' more recent ideas began to coincide: his opposition to deconstructivist architecture and his commitment to the new Europe, congruent in their advocacy of the whole and implicit preference for the compact volume; and the disappearance of socialism as something that fundamentally

⁴¹⁶ The Educatorium is already something else. The volume is compact too, but it is not based on a memorable shape like the prism of the Kunsthal or the egg of the Congrexpo. The protruding curve and the halved attic storey of the Educatorium do not diverge from the given of an imaginary solid, they follow the logic of the c-shaped or – at the south façade – meandering cross section of the folded floor. The exterior tends to the heterogeneous, but like the interior it is governed by the same 'single gesture' of the 'pliable surface.' In the designs for the Kunsthal, the Congrexpo and the Media Centre there is no element that would dominate the whole to a similar extent.

questions the adequacy of early modernist and constructivist models on which deconstructivist architecture relies, along with OMA's own work and much of Dutch contemporary architecture. The architecture of the Kunsthall reflects these circumstances.

2.5

A different kind of fragmentation

The design of the tendering phase: November 1989 - April 1990

The compact volumes of the schemes for the NAI and the Kunsthall, both dating from 1988 can be seen as a first reaction to deconstructivist fragmentation. About half of the projects from the subsequent years are not only distinguished by a principle volumetric unity, but also by a homogeneity that differs from the composite character of previous designs: the relation between the different parts of these projects is one of variation rather than addition, of mutation rather than discontinuity; rather than being autonomous elements, the different parts appear as elements of an all-encompassing system, or, at least, to be fully integrated into an all-encompassing whole: this applies to the schemes for the National Library (1989) and the Jussieu Libraries (1992) in Paris, but also to those of the Agadir convention centre (1990), the office tower Zac Danton (1991) in Paris and the Nexus Housing in Fukuoka (1989-91), none of which were built except for the latter.

For the Media Centre in Karlsruhe (1989), the interior of the Sea Terminal at Zeebrugge (1989), and the Congrexpo in Lille (1989-94), formal fragmentation continued to be essential, in the sense that the diversity of materials, shapes and structural elements surely *does* contest the sense of wholeness. The same holds true for the Kunsthall: the scheme from December 1988 and the following months as much as the development of the design *after* autumn 1989. Between November 1989 and May 1990, rather than tuning down the heterogeneity of the projects various parts, Koolhaas and his collaborators increased it, namely at the level of detailing, to an unprecedented extreme for OMA. There is no indication, however, that Koolhaas ever thought of these projects as laggards which failed to keep pace with OMA's new architectural agenda. In *S,M,L,XL*, all four projects are prominently featured. Almost 80 pages are dedicated to the Media Centre, which is more than to any other project, built or unbuilt.

Chapter 2.5

KUNSTHAL INVENTORY OF PROBLEMS

Dec. 11 1989.

GEB. 27th Jan.

CONTENTS.

I ROOF	
I-1 HOW WE MADE IT?	1
I-2 HOW IT LOOKS?	9
I-3 TRIANGLE ZONE	15
II TRANSPARENCY & TRANSLUCENCY	
II-1 SEQUENCE	16
II-2 WINDOW FRAME	19
II-3 POSITION OF WINDOW	21
II-4 ENTRANCE in general	24
III THE OTHERS	
	31

COMPLETE

Fumi
星野文則

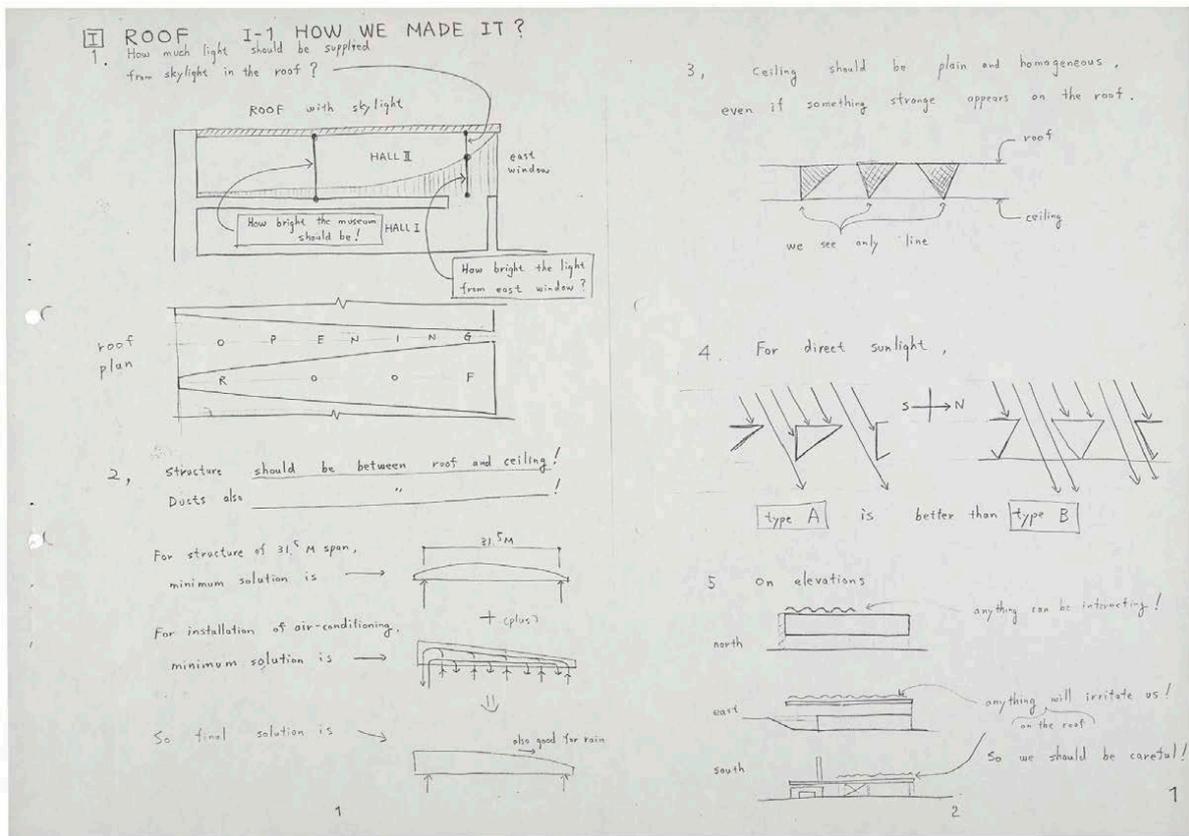


Figure 1. Kunsthall. Fuminori Hoshino. 'Inventory of Problems'. November-December 1989.
Below: Concept for the new roof of Hall 2.

The picture of the bleeding corps at the end of this chapter next to the sardonic obituary 'Passion Play' bespeak bitter regret with regard to the loss of the project in June 1992.⁴¹⁷

The retrospective view tends to overlook and underestimate how groundbreakingly new these designs felt at the time of their inception. In fact, there is a considerable distance gained both to OMA's work of the 1980s and to deconstructivist architecture, as the rigid geometry of OMA's prisms and ellipsoids contrasted visibly with the 'apparent wildness' of contemporary projects by Hadid, Coop Himmelblau, Libeskind, Gehry and Eisenman. The schemes for the Sea Terminal, the Media Centre, the Congrexpo, and the National Library, are essentially 'cured' from the air of nostalgia and pastiche. Rather than being about a bygone era, the projects seem to reach out to the future. That is not to say that there are no precedents. But the accent now is on newness, eschewing familiar images of the modernist past. Whereas projects like the Dance Theatre, the Byzantium or the complex at Veerplein seem to be based on such imagery already on a conceptual level, the new projects emerge from a conceptual thinking that appears to be 'imageless' by definition. The tendency during the 1990s to present projects without any facade, composing the models for the most part of transparent blocks, conspicuously resonates with this shift.

Neither was the scheme of the Kunsthall, as developed between November and December 1988, based on architectural references and imagery, which was to change gradually during the subsequent months, especially regarding the exterior. The same exterior, however, introduced in the work of OMA a substantially revised approach to formal fragmentation. The assemblage of 'fragmented' volumes was being transformed into collages of essentially two-dimensional planes. That has already been observed by Terence Riley. In a brief but astute review from 1992 he writes: 'The intention seems to have been to diminish the significance of the building's form to magnify the importance of the facades as screens. In a sense, the figure of the building is transferred to the facades.'⁴¹⁸ 'Figure' here refers to the outlines

⁴¹⁷ Koolhaas, Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 762-663.

⁴¹⁸ Terence Riley, 'Rem Koolhaas/OMA: Urban Constructions', *Newsline Columbia University*, vol.5 (Sep 1992), 2.

Chapter 2.5

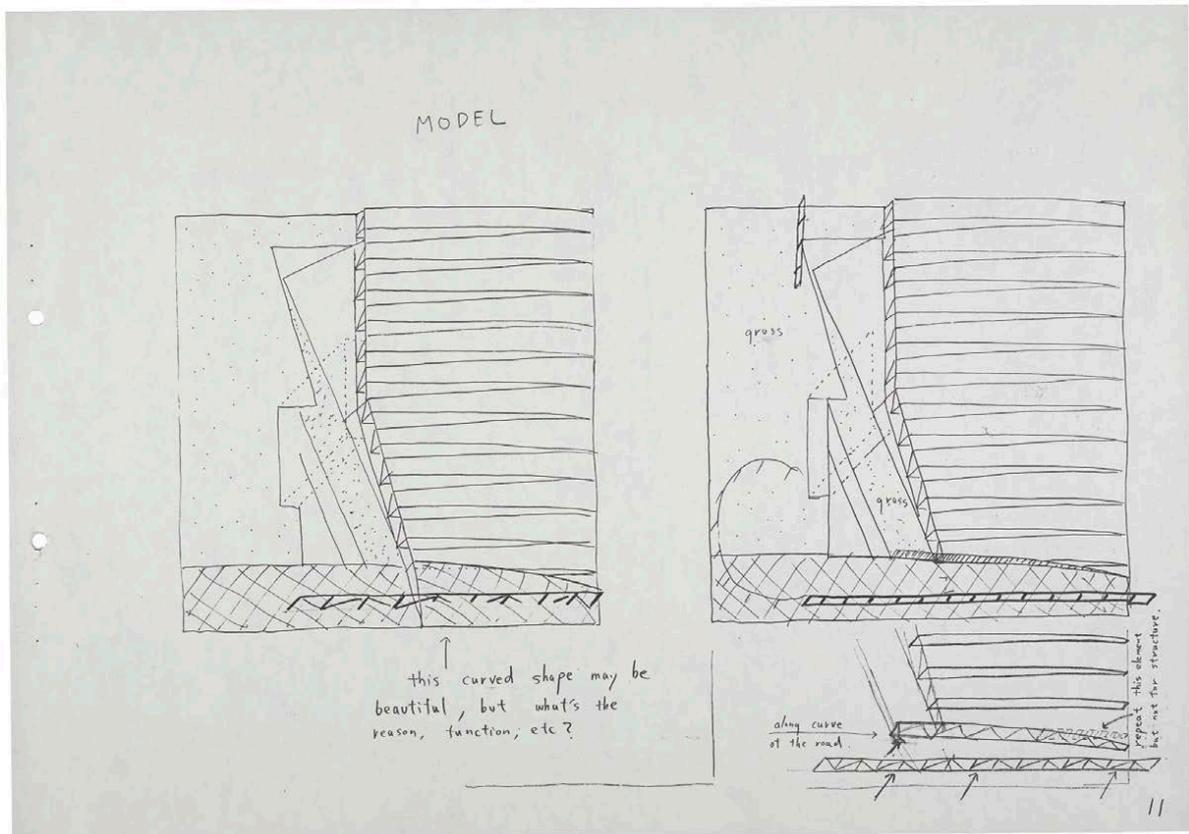
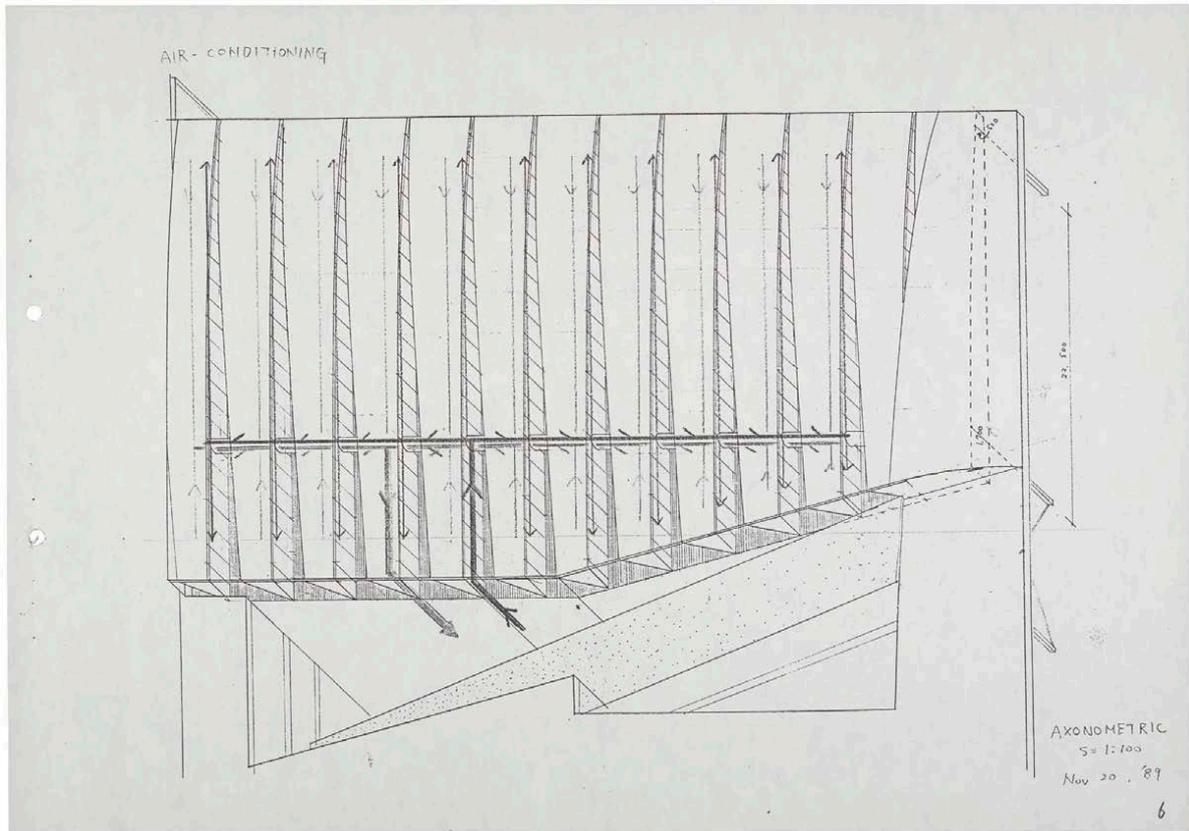


Figure 2. Kunsthall. Fuminori Hoshino. 'Inventory of Problems'. November-December 1989. New roof Hall 2 and Portico.

of volumetrically complex designs like the Dance Theatre or the Villa Dall’Ava. In retrospect, OMA’s elevations of the NAI seem to anticipate such a transfer of figure: the inner assembly of volumes with heterogeneous skins is projected on the transparent screen of the facades, turning them into images of collages. The facades of the Media Centre are likewise based on this idea to the extent to which they display the inner prism, its openings and structural components. At the Kunsthal the constellation is different, as there is no dichotomy of a containing and contained volume. In principle, each main space touches the facades directly with two or three of its sides. The layout and detailing of the facades appears to adopt and to transfigure the projected image of inner complexity of the NAI or the Media Centre, while the degree of formal fragmentation matches up to the most disintegrated composite volumes of OMA’s earlier work, as if to deny all claims of unity that the singleness of the prismatic volume seems to imply.

Back to full force

In November 1989, the first of March 1990 was fixed as the deadline for the specifications of the tendering procedure of the Kunsthal; the driving of the first pile was scheduled for the first of May.⁴¹⁹ This meant that until March the design needed to be as advanced and ‘buildable’ as possible. Once the drawings and specifications for the tendering were submitted, major changes would be more difficult to pass through. OMA was to deliver the architectural drawings, and Ove Arup to conclude the Definitive Design of the structural system and the building services; the municipality would work out the plans and specifications for the bidding.

The planning process was already two months behind schedule in November, and there was a further delay of six weeks for the drawings of OMA.⁴²⁰ The drawings eventually issued are dated 19 April 1990; they comprise floorplans, sections and elevations in scale 1 to 100, elevations of the interiors in scale 1 to 50, next to twenty-four details in scale 1 to 5.⁴²¹ [Figures 16-31] The plans specify much of

⁴¹⁹ Minutes Building Committee 21 November 1989, OMAR 1519.

⁴²⁰ See: Minutes Building Committee from 21 November 1989 (OMAR 1519.), 16 March 1990 (OMAR 1521), and 6 April 1990 (Ibid.).

⁴²¹ OMAR 1784, 1786, 2847. Stadsarchief Rotterdam (box 4, 14 40).

Chapter 2.5

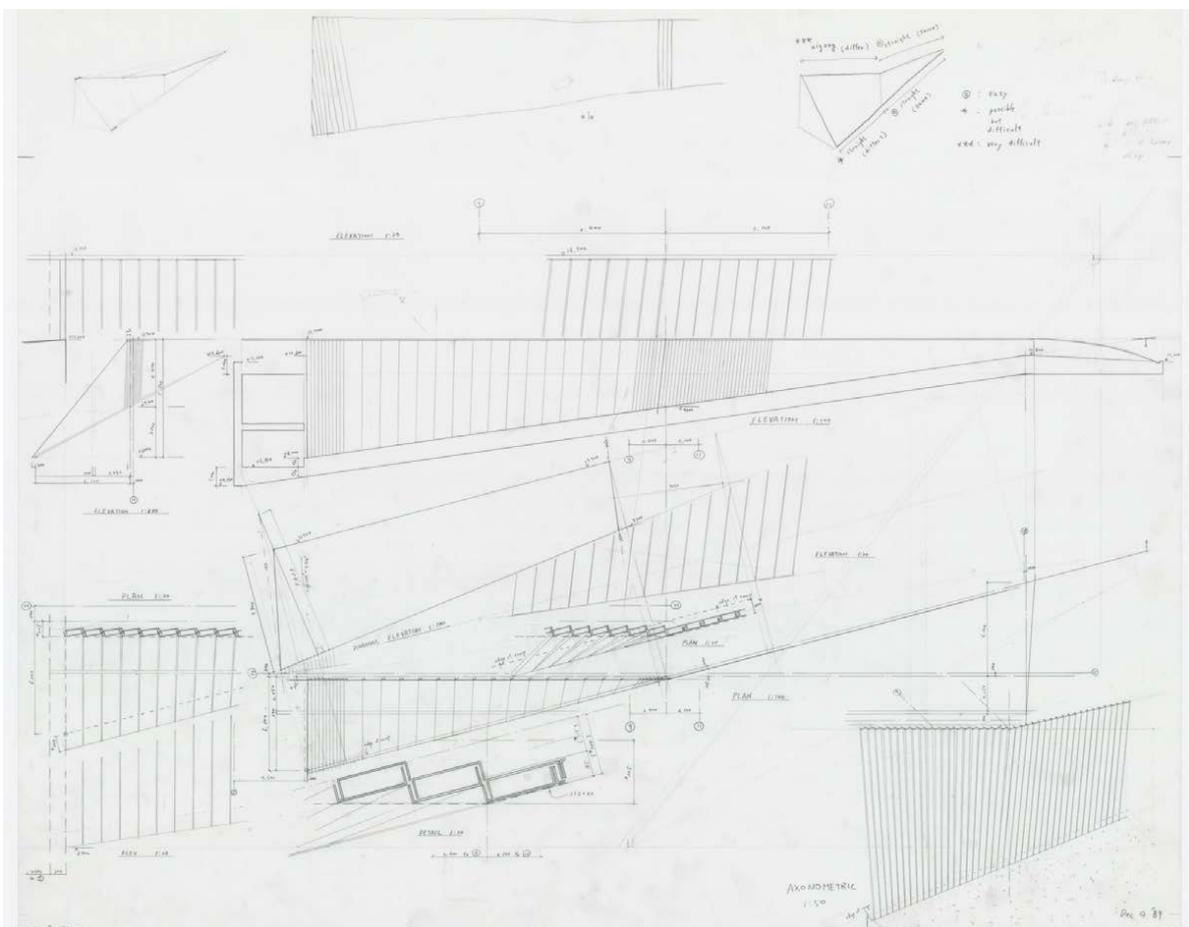
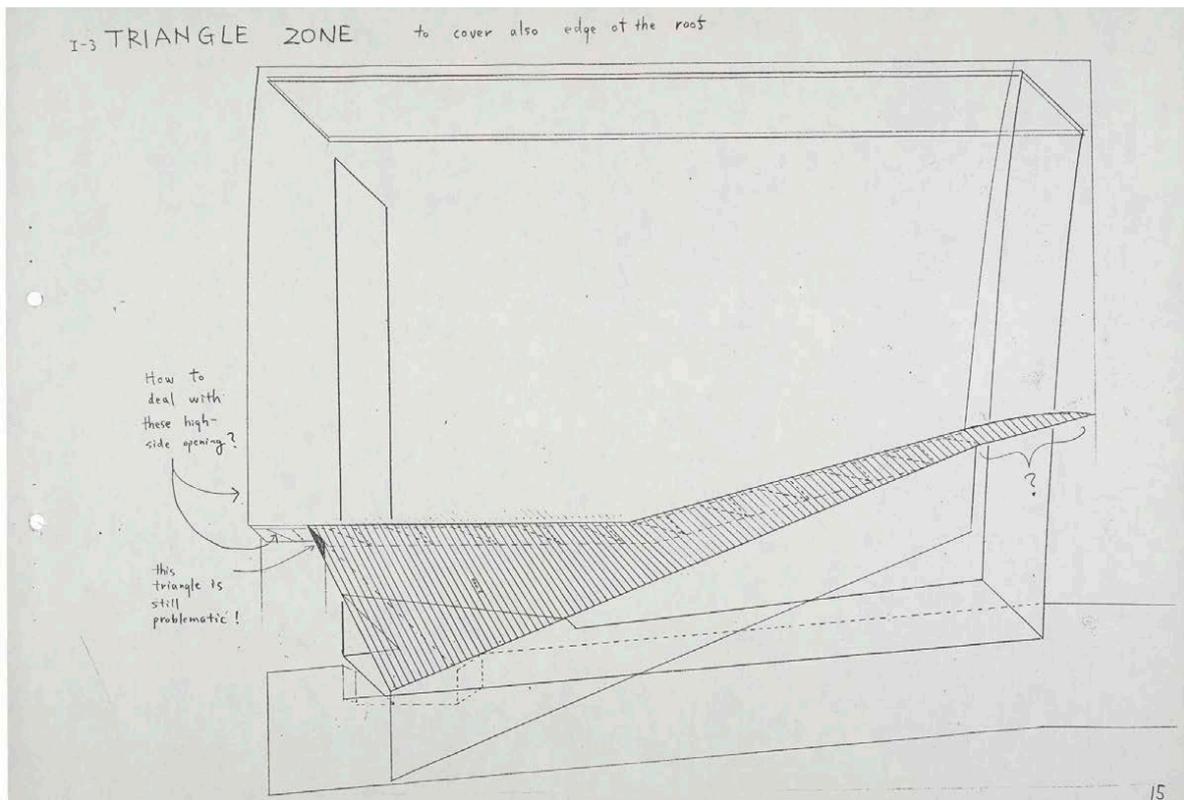


Figure 3. Kunsthal. Fuminori Hoshino. Above: 'Inventory of Problems'. November-December 1989. Below: Study for triangular covering of Street Ramp. 4 December 1989.

the construction of the envelope along with the finishes of the interior. Ove Arup delivered the Definitive Design in January, while the municipality completed the tender drawings for the structural system and the services in May.⁴²²

During the five months between November 1989 and April 1990, Koolhaas and his collaborators did not only work out the construction of the Kunsthal in more detail, they also substantially redesigned many parts of the project. The intensity of the endeavour, its often experimental character and the partly unexpected outcome has much in common with the ‘feverish’ rush for a new scheme in November/December 1988. A note by Koolhaas, stamped ‘6 Jan. 1990’, reads:

To all collaborators of the Kunsthal project: Since we are involved in a very intense effort to complete the design issues before 25th January, it is crucial that we are in the office together during these hours. It is therefore crucial that the work starts at 9.30 AM each day. There will be at least three meetings a week at 18.00 PM. Best regards, Rem K.⁴²³

Principles

In November/December 1989, Hoshino compiled a booklet, entitled ‘Inventory of Problems’, consisting of thirty-nine A3 pages with annotated sketches.⁴²⁴ [Figures 1-7] The booklet gives an idea of the issues at stake: a new roof for Hall 2, the detailing various transparent and translucent surfaces, the organization of entrances (main, secondary, staff), and a series of miscellaneous details. The existence of several copies indicates that other team members used Hoshino’s ‘Inventory’ as a guideline.⁴²⁵ Hoshino explained that the ‘Inventory’ served a double purpose: to provide a basis for the

⁴²² The first structural drawings by the Public Works Rotterdam date from May 1990. The drawings were carried out by the Office for Utility and Hydraulic Engineering (IUW) and the Engineering Office for Steel Construction and Toolmaking (ISW). OMAR 1583, 1785.

⁴²³ OMAR 1160-63. So far, the documents failed to produce a plausible explanation for the deadline of 25 January (1990). Perhaps the date stamp (‘6/1/1990’) was wrong by one year, 25 January being the date of the first meeting of the Building Committee in 1989. In either case, the note illustrates the occasional intensity of Koolhaas’ commitment.

⁴²⁴ The cover of the booklet is dated 11 December 1989, whereas a series of pages is dated 20 November 1989. OMAR 3276.

⁴²⁵ See, for instance: OMAR 3275.

discussion with Koolhaas as well as with consultants, manufacturers and other parties involved; and not to lose control over the design and the increasing diversity of its parts.⁴²⁶ In fact, a significant share of the booklet seems to aim at compiling a catalogue of principles for the detailing of the materials and types of constructions for the exterior: the corners of the facades, the corners between several types of transparent and translucent surfaces, the relation of these surfaces to the adjacent walls (flush, recessed, etc.), the mullions and other joints.

The roof as *poché*

Sometime in November, OMA began to design an entirely new roof for Hall 2, which had far reaching consequences for the eastern half of the building.⁴²⁷ [Figure 1-2] A first ‘final’ version is incorporated in the drawings from April 1990.⁴²⁸ Along the east-west axis the new roof is triangular in section. Its edge along the Skew Ramp is more than two and a half metres high, while the one along the eastern façade measures eighty centimetres, twenty centimetres less than the previous version. The thick edge of the wedge-shaped volume is visible, first of all, from the area around the Roof Garden. Looking from the east, the roof appears a prolongation of the Portico’s flat roof. In order to keep the eastern edge as thin as possible, the columns at this side are shifted several metres to the west (axis M), incorporating them in the partition which separated the *vide* from the two staked exhibition halls. The advantages were multiple: The eastern ends of the girders are turned into cantilevers, requiring the least height along the façade; the main span is reduced from 31.5 to 28 metres, and Van Krimpen’s year-long wish for column-free walls was consistently met. The roof’s triangular section approximated the space required for the mechanical services. Since the central riser shaft is located at the western margin of Hall 2, the dimensions of the ducts decrease from west to east, just like the height of the trusses. Like the trusses in section, the skylights are triangular in plan, widening from almost zero at the east side of Hall 2 to roughly 2 metres at its western edge. The amount of zenithal light decreases from west to east,

⁴²⁶ Interview with the author on 25 July 2017.

⁴²⁷ The first dated sketches regarding the design of the new roof are included in Hoshino’s ‘Inventory of Problems’ and date from 20 November 1989.

⁴²⁸ See: drawings dated 19 April 1990: B05, B07, B10, B11, B15. OMAR 1784.

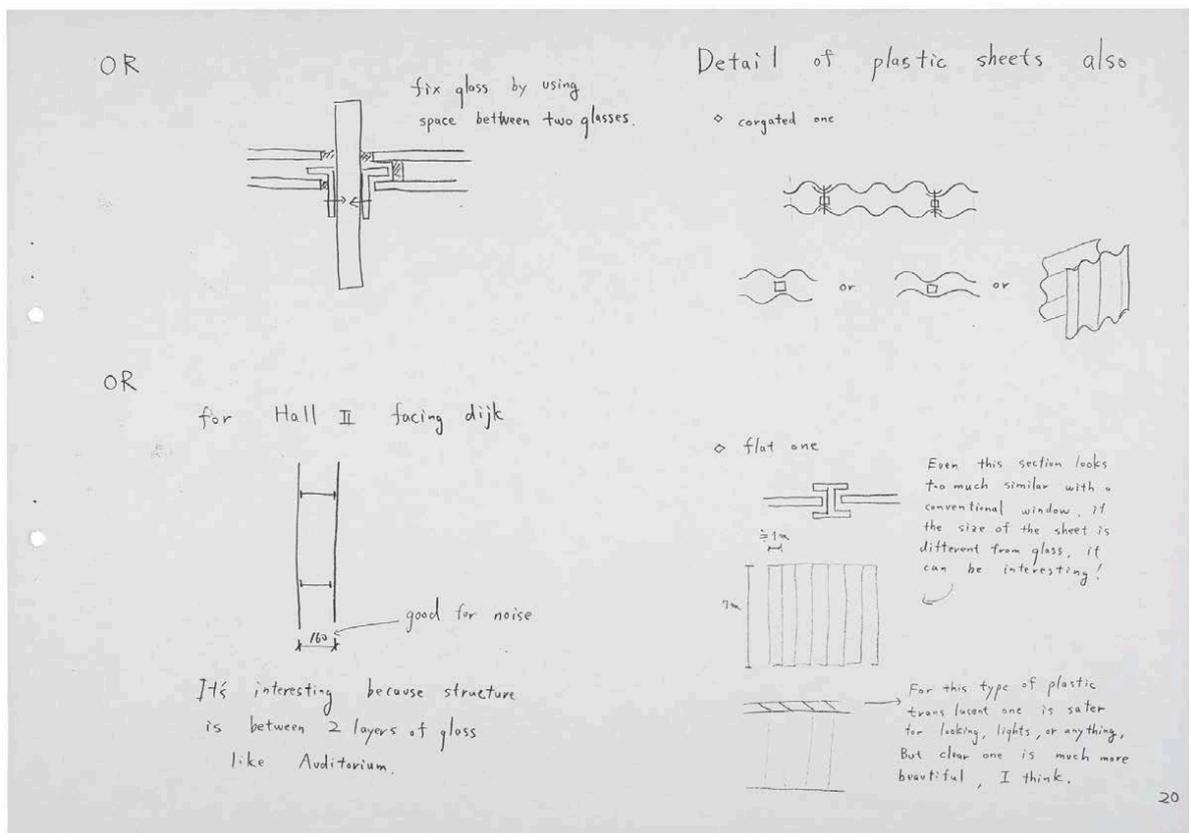
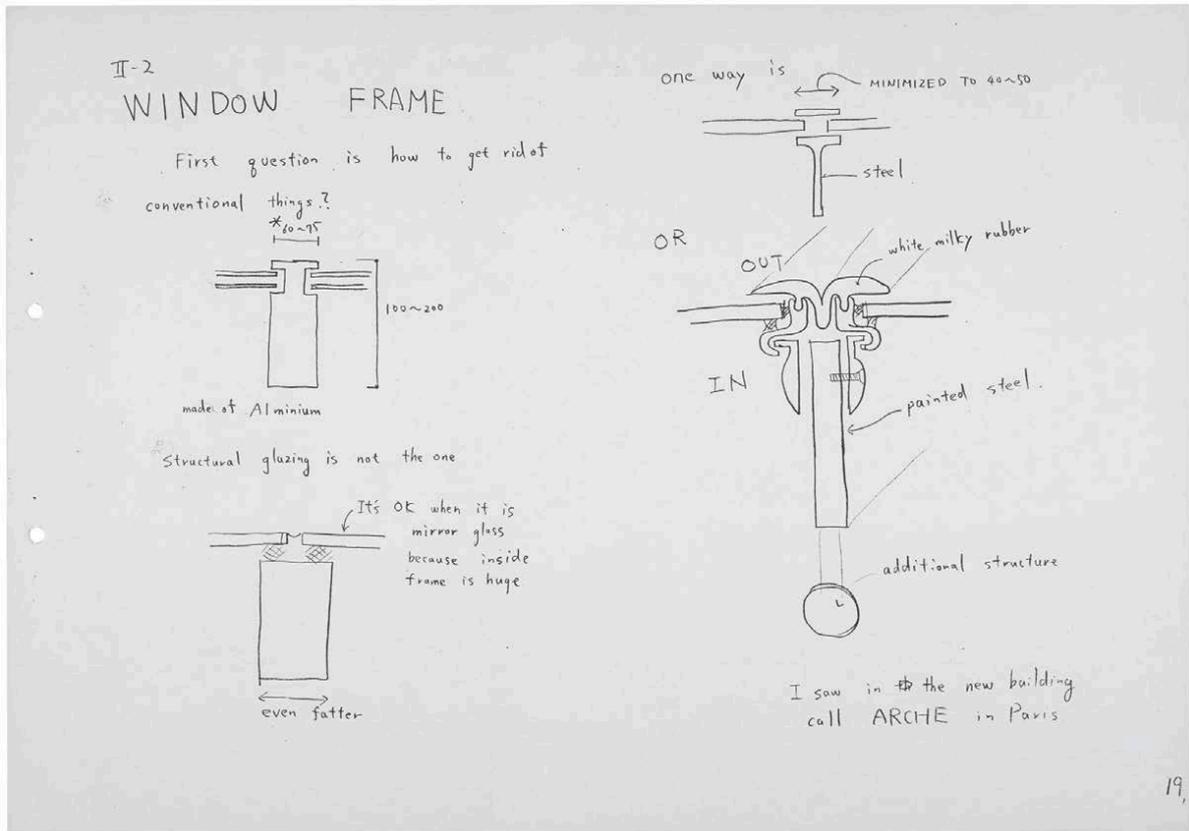


Figure 5. Kunthal. Fuminori Hoshino. 'Inventory of Problems'. November-December 1989. Detailing options for the transparent and translucent surfaces.

while the amount of light entering through the facade increases, approximating constant luminosity throughout the space.⁴²⁹

In collaboration with Arup, OMA developed a structure of triangular open-web trusses to generate the roof's wedge-shaped cross section. The solution can be re-enacted through Arup's plans from January 1990.⁴³⁰ [Figures 8-9] At the western side of Hall 2, 13 single trusses (type 1) cantilever 1.25 metres from the columns supporting them (axis j), before connecting to a Vierendeel truss (axis h) with a constant height of two and half metres. The short span between the row of columns and the cantilever coincides with the depth of the *poché* adjacent to Hall 2. To the south, where the Skew Ramp cuts diagonally into the roof, the Vierendeel of relatively slender cross sections transforms into a heavy primary truss (type 2) with diagonal bracings. This latter truss free-spans all along the cut-out section of Hall 2 from axis 11 to axis 19 (about 27 metres), carrying the load of 4 trusses spanning Hall 2 (type 1). To the south, the primary truss is supported by a single column, with a position (axis 19) that coincides with the junction of: the Skew Ramp, the roof of Hall 2, and the roof of the Portico.⁴³¹ In this area, the length of each truss spanning Hall 2 differs in length (type 1 a-f).

The sketches of the 'Inventory' indicate that in November/December 1989 the eastern columns had not yet been shifted, the open-web trusses did not yet cantilever, their top chord was curved, and the horizontal distribution of the ventilation ducts along the north-south axis was provided in a central section of the roof. Arup's plans from January accord in principle with the solution eventually implemented, and the same applies to a set of drawings by OMA from April.⁴³² But the redesign of the roof would only be brought to a conclusion in late 1991.

⁴²⁹ 'Inventory of Problems', 1, 9. OMAR 3276.

⁴³⁰ Most of Arup's final plans of the Definitive Design are dated '1/90'. They were sent to OMA probably on 18 and 19 January. That is indicated by an annotation ('issued 19/1/1990') as well as by two letters mentioning revised drawings of the structure and the mechanical services; OMAR 1505. For the roof of Hall 2, see drawings: S 4106, 'East Roof Details', and S 4106, 'Cross Sections. Sheet 1'. Arup London Archives.

⁴³¹ In Arup's plan from January 1990 (S4011, 'East Roof Layout') the column is slightly shifted with regard to axis 19. The position, however, would be corrected by April 1990.

⁴³² Drawings dated 19 April 1990: B05, B07, B10, B11, B15. OMAR 1784. The first drawings by OMA that correspond to the new roof layout date from 16 February. OMAR 1772.

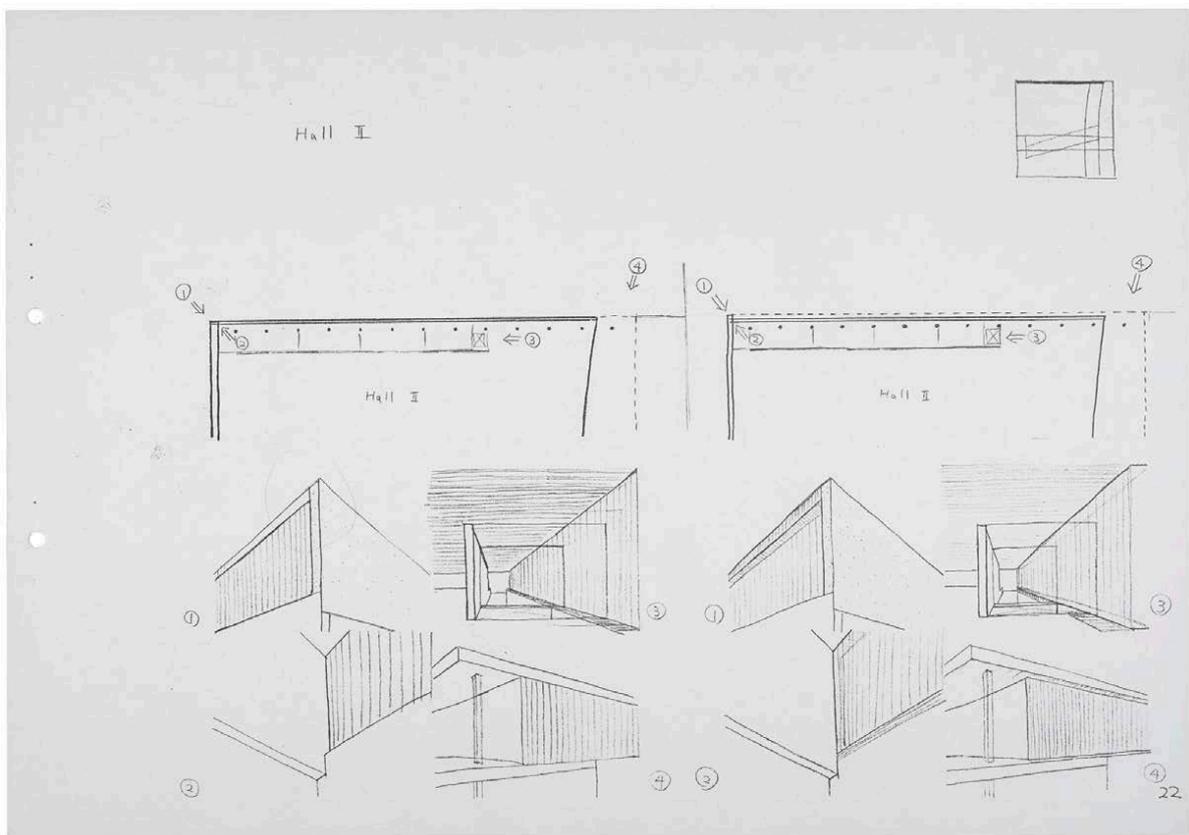
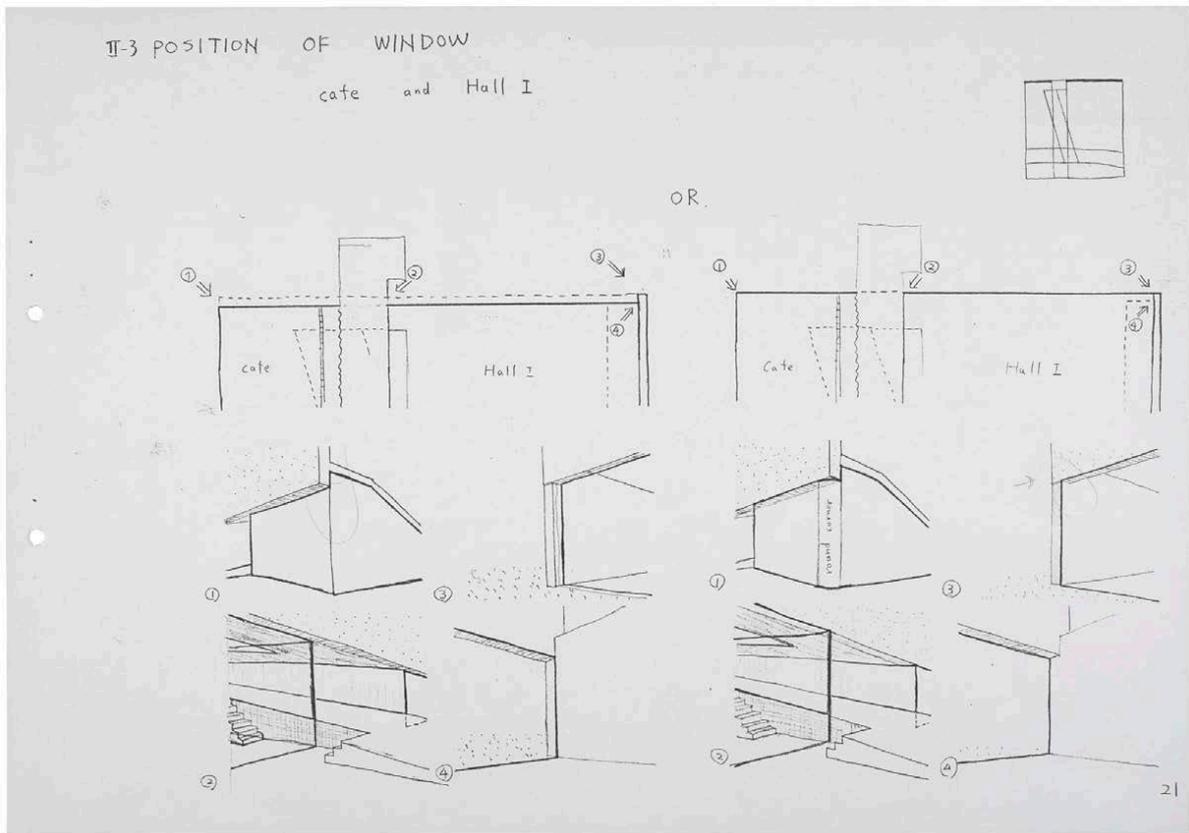


Figure 6. Kunsthal. Fuminori Hoshino. 'Inventory of Problems'. November-December 1989.
Relation of walls and glazed surfaces.

OMA's drawings from 19 April 1990 provide an aluminium covering for the exposed surfaces of the roof of Hall 2 and ribbed roof panels in metal both for the ceiling and the portico.⁴³³ [Figure 16] The triangular skylights are covered with conically vaulted polycarbonate panels, a perforation in the ceiling allowing the light to filter through. The ducts of the ventilation are fastened to the triangular trusses and separated from the skylights by vertical and sloped panels, probably serving as reflectors for the daylight. The bottom chord of the trusses is split in two steel angles, so as to supply the space with air through the gap in between. The air extracts are aligned along the western wall of the exhibition space, likewise concealed in the voids of the ceiling.

The details show the eastern ends of the triangular trusses stepped back in such a manner that the entire construction from the gutter to the ceiling and covering would not exceed the height of 80 centimetres.⁴³⁴ [Figure 17] The edge of the roof, topping the glass planks of the façade, is clad with painted sheet metal, approximating the contours of a Miesian double T-cornice. In OMA's drawings from February, the covering of the roof connects directly to the stone clad wall facing the park; in the drawings from April, the covering is disconnected from the wall, leaving a glazed gap of about two metres width.⁴³⁵ [Figure 24] Nonetheless the ascending upper edge of the roof is visible from the park to the north, rising above the stone clad wall mysteriously, as the origin of this shape is impossible to make out from this side. In the version from April, the roof of Hall 2 appears as a close relative of the *poché* at both sides of Ramp Street. Like the *poché* adjacent to the Auditorium, its shape and skin distinguish the roof as an element of its own, while (partly) denying its 'solidity' by the translucency of the ceiling. As in the case of the two *poché* walls, the factual existence of the volume is being treated as a problem, resolved, first of all, by showing the roof only in fragments.

⁴³³ 'Principe details', 19 April 1990. Detail no. 10, 23. 19 April 1990. Stadsarchief Rotterdam.

⁴³⁴ Ibid., detail no. 2.

⁴³⁵ OMA, cross section B11, 19 April 1990. OMAR 1784.

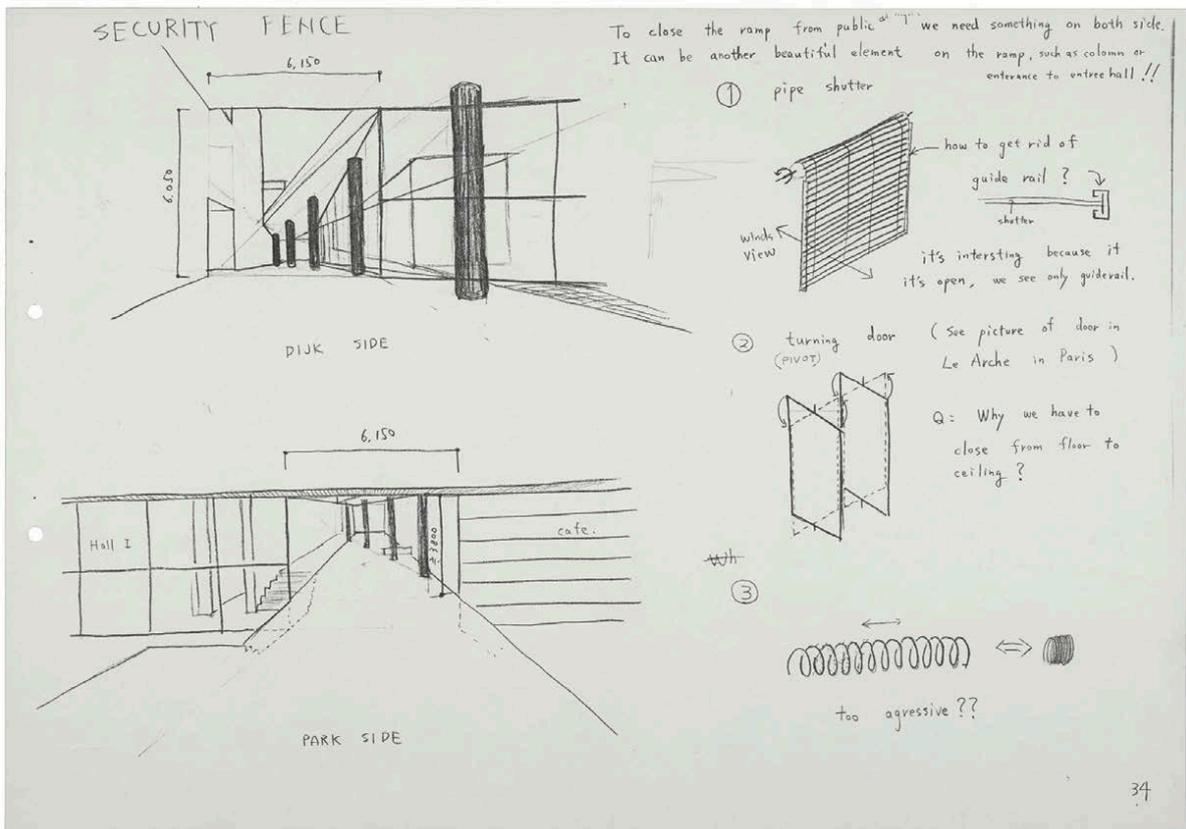
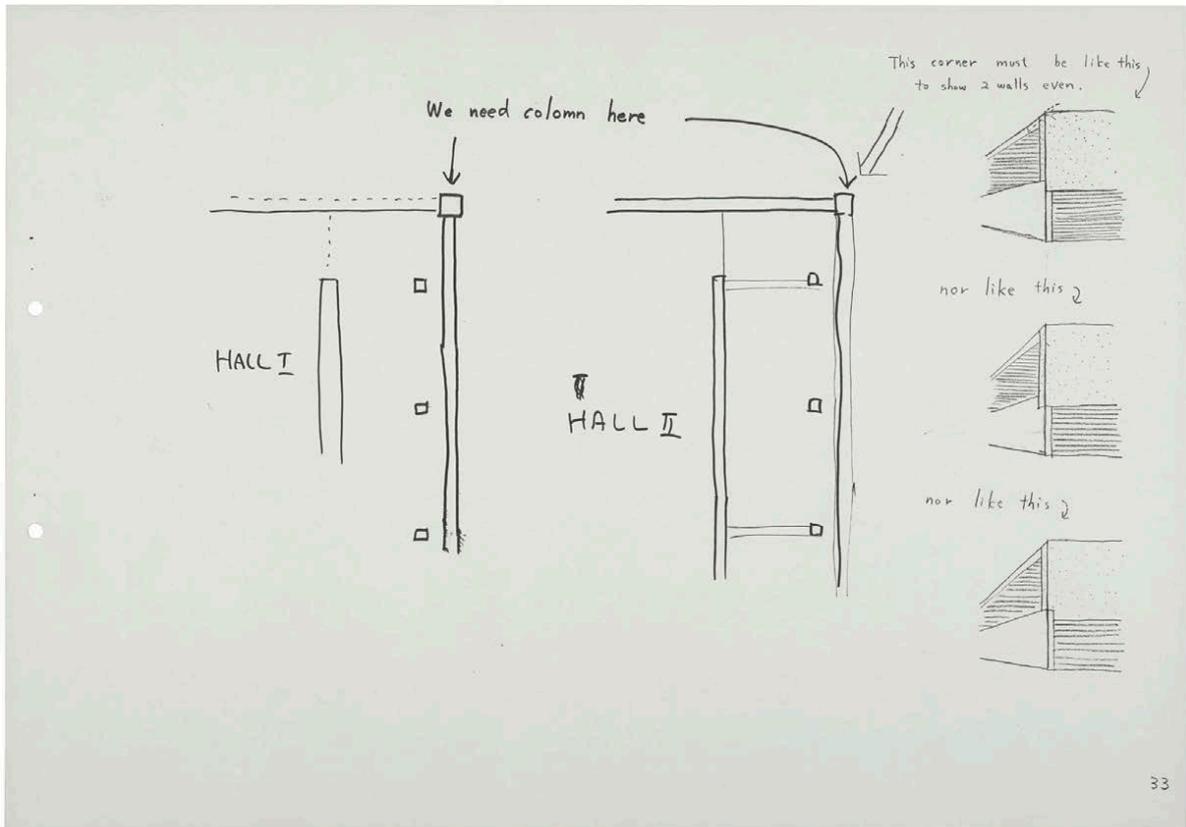


Figure 7. Kunsthall. Fuminori Hoshino. 'Inventory of Problems'. November-December 1989.
Above: North-east corner of Halla 1 and 2. Below: Gate options for Ramp Street.

Remainders

The collages from autumn 1989 show the exoskeletal plate girders on the Portico, those spanning Hall 2, and the one on the roof of Hall 3 as identical. With the new roof structure, the plate girders on the Portico and Hall 3 were the only remainders of what used to be a layer of girders covering large parts of the roof. A couple of sketches, included in the ‘Inventory of Problems’ from December, indicate that Hoshino at some point considered to replace the plate girder of the Portico by an open-web truss that would match the trusses spanning Hall 2.⁴³⁶ [Figure 2] After all, the beam belonged to the same section of the structural system, connecting to the same two rows of lateral columns as the trusses of Hall 2. The plate girder, however, was kept, as was its 3-metres cantilever to the east, which initially aligned precisely with the depth of the vertical open-web truss at the north-east corner. This vertical truss was removed between November 1989 and February 1990.⁴³⁷ Instead the eastern wall in exposed concrete was reinforced at its northern edge to serve as a support.⁴³⁸ Also the idea to reproduce the curved Service Road along the dyke through glazed ‘inlays’ in the two ceilings was largely abandoned. Already in the version from July 1989 the transparent reproduction of the road’s curve disappeared from both the floorplan of Hall 2 and the roof plan of the western section, and by April 1990 – if not before – it was removed from the roof altogether. But the curved curtain and the curved façade of Hall 2 were retained, and so was the curved void undercutting the offices.

From this moment on, the ‘remainders’ – the cantilevering plate girder, the plate girder on top of Hall 3, the curves of the curtain and the glass wall, the void under the offices – were difficult to ‘read’, in the sense that the concepts and ideas from which these forms emerged were almost impossible to re-enact. As parts of a whole that is lost, they are fragments in a literal sense. The surviving drawings and models in no way indicate attempts to tone down the impact of apparent wantonness. On the contrary, there is something methodical about the progressive assembling of inconsistencies like these. The outcome is not without parallels to the *cadavre exquis*: its ambiguous unity, its resistance to rational

⁴³⁶ ‘Inventory of Problems’, 11. OMAR 3276.

⁴³⁷ The vertical truss is still visible in the floorplans from 10 October. OMAR 1773, 1759. A revised set of drawings from 16 February seems to be the first without the truss. OMAR 1772.

⁴³⁸ In his ‘Inventory of Problems’ Hoshino mentions that a column is needed at the north-east corner. Page 33.

Chapter 2.5

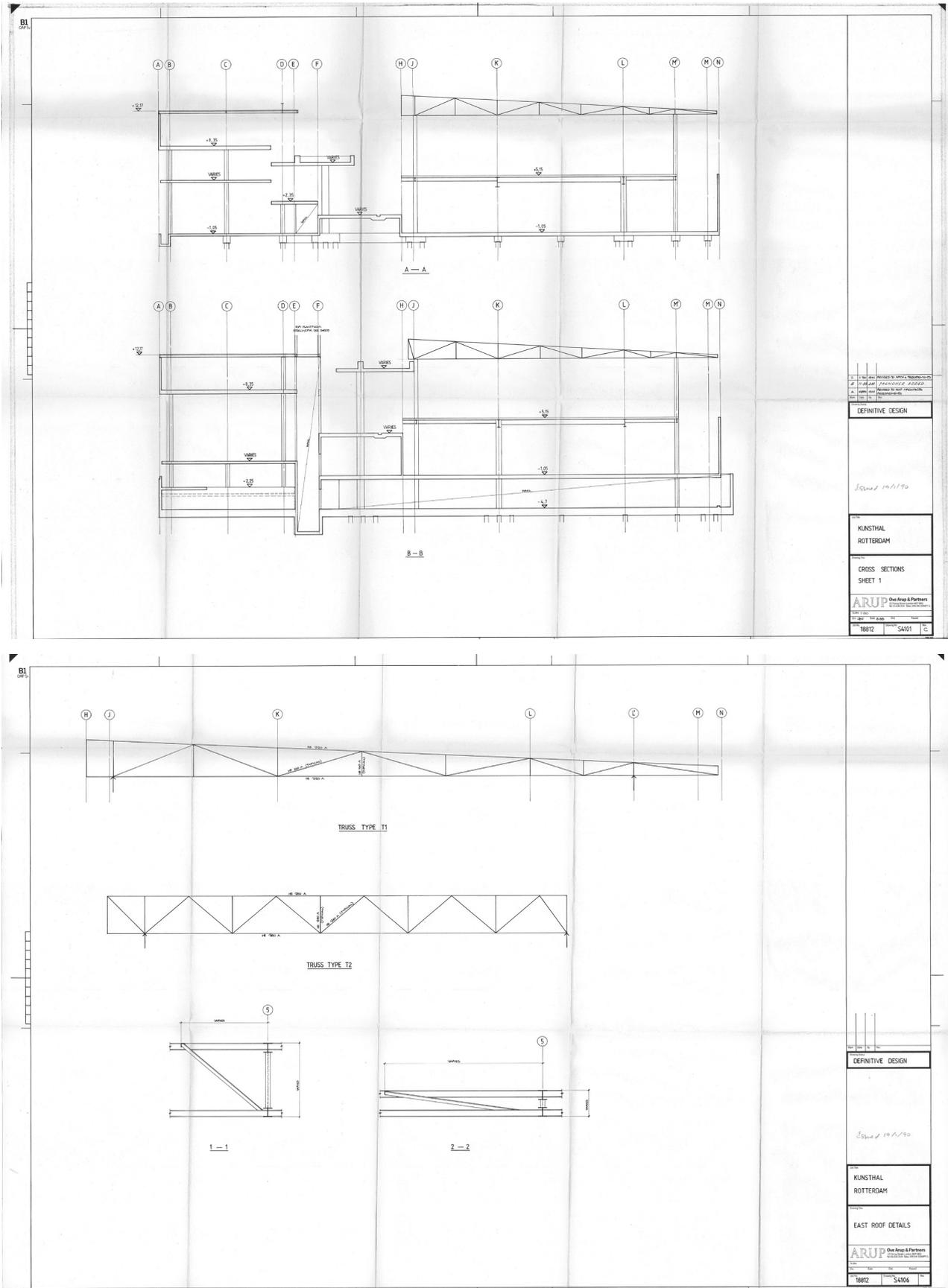


Figure 8. Kunsthall. Ove Arup. Cross sections and trusses of Hall 2. January 1990.

intelligibility, its inclination to baffle, its mysteriousness – or, from the perspective of making: the deliberate renunciation to a consistent whole. Not the plurality of authors, though, was decisive in terms of method for the design of the Kunsthal, but the mutilation and overlap of plural ideas that accumulated over time.

Continue to sketch

A couple of pages with notes by Hoshino from a meeting dated 5 January, in all likelihood from 1990, indicate how work at OMA was organized.⁴³⁹ Present at the meeting were, next to Hoshino himself, Rem Koolhaas, Ron Steiner and Toni Adam. Among other things, the notes announce the construction of a model in scale 1 to 50. Given that there is no other model in this scale, it appears likely that the existing one – later on published in *El Croquis*, now held by the HNI – originates from this period. It was envisaged that Hoshino would build the model with the help of a professional model maker. But, as mentioned before, the model is likely to have been built by OMA's own staff, perhaps by Ron Steiner.⁴⁴⁰ Further responsibilities and proceedings are listed: Adam would support the design work concerning to technical issues and costs, and he would coordinate the activities of external parties.⁴⁴¹ The details developed by Leo van Immerzell would be tested out either at the model or through 'architectural drawing[s]';⁴⁴² another collaborator ('Eda') would work on the corrugated cladding of the *poché* adjacent to the Auditorium. Hoshino, besides building the model, was to 'see every drawing', and he was to 'continue to sketch.'

Hoshino produced countless sketches and drawings. The archives hold hundreds of them, probably far beyond a thousand, the size ranging from A4 to large formats of various dimensions. There are quick freehand sketches on the pages of a fax; there are loose dossiers with annotated sketches or carefully

⁴³⁹ OMAR 1524. No year. But the issues discussed – such as the rhythm of the mullions and the roof of Hall 2 – strongly indicate 1990.

⁴⁴⁰ Hoshino's notes record that Ron Steiner 'should contact Vincent's friend to ask for help for [the] model.' Hoshino refers to model maker Vincent de Rijk. The model, however, was neither built by De Rijk nor by his then associate Frans Parthesius. Emails to the author from 9 April and 10 June 2020.

⁴⁴¹ 'cordinate [sic] with outside people'. Hoshino probably refers to consultants, the client, and the authorities.

⁴⁴² Probably the technical details were 'put to test' by translating them into models and axonometric drawings. The archive holds a large number of axonometric drawings in pencil.

Chapter 2.5

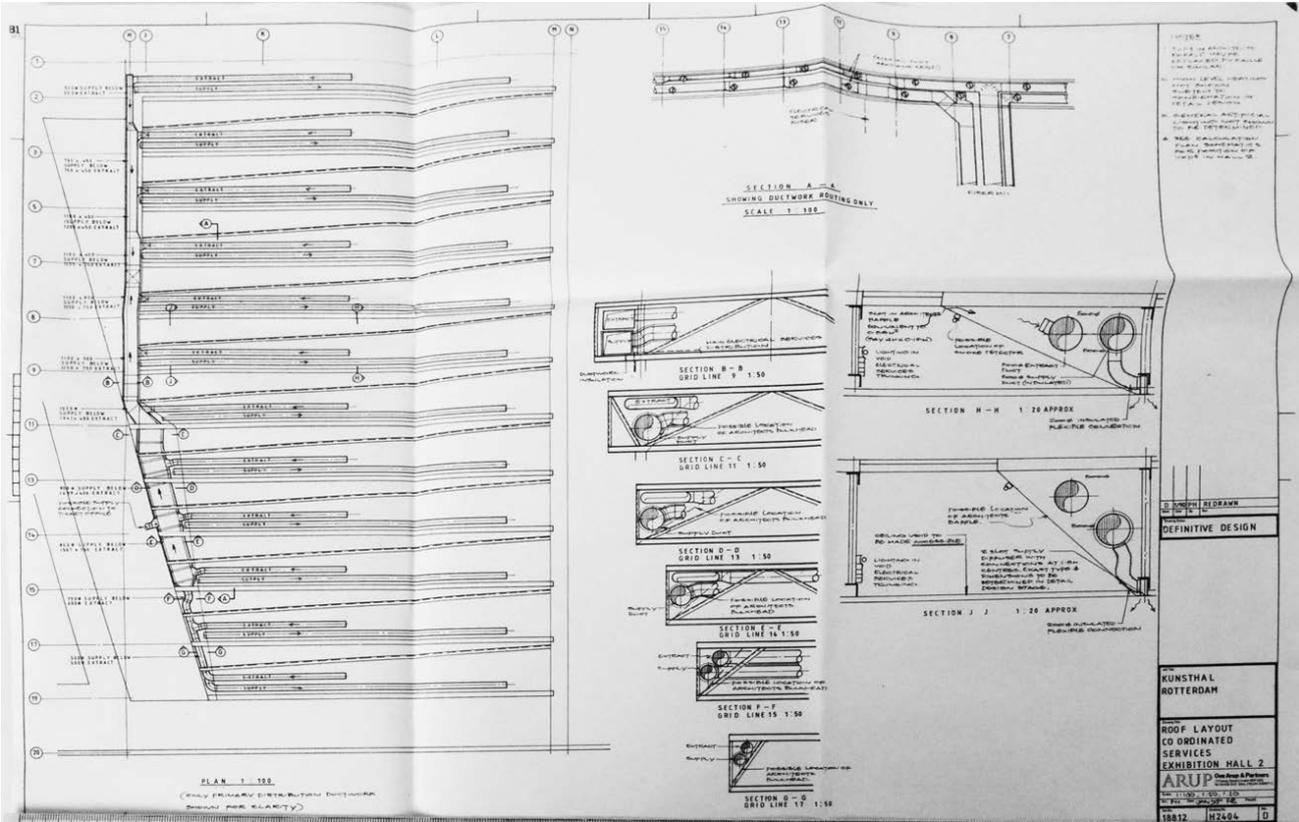
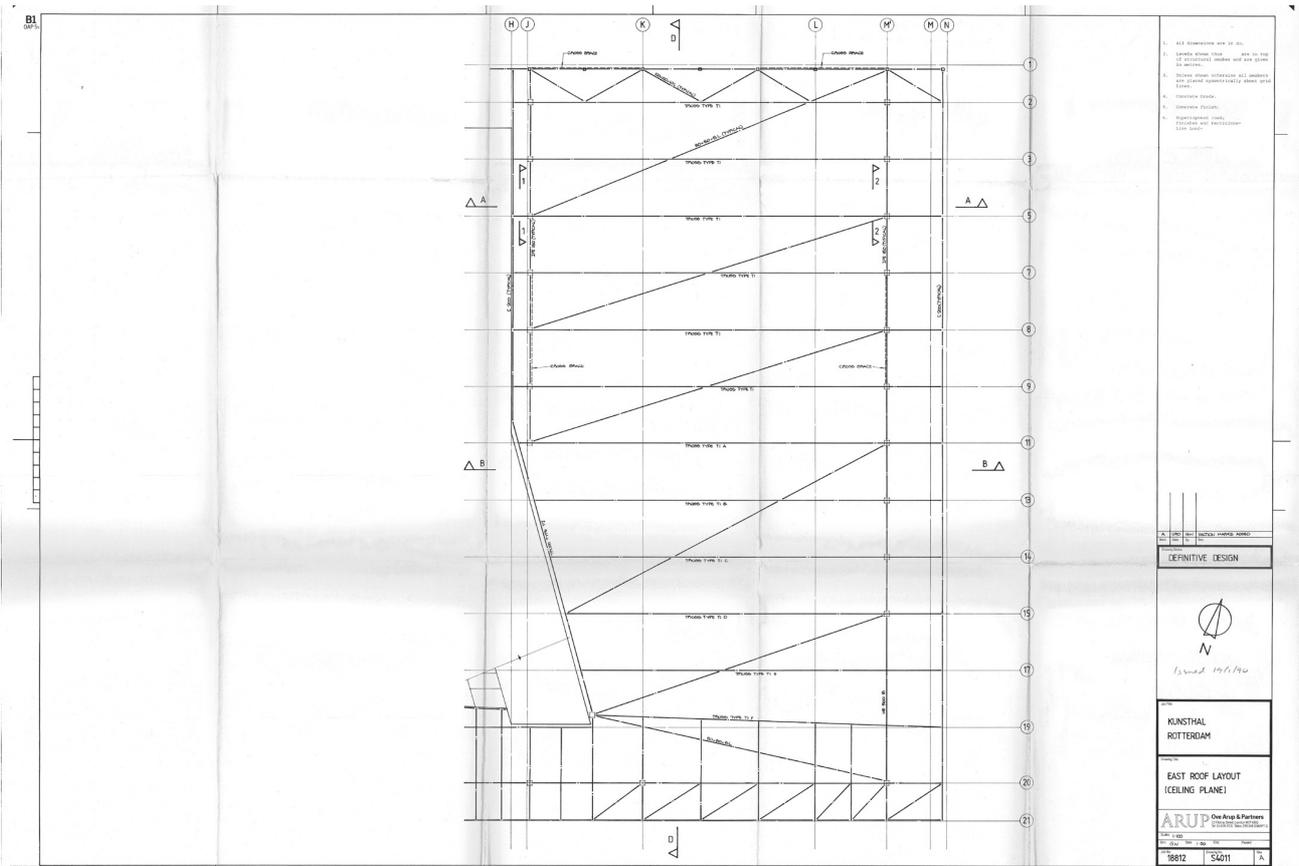


Figure 9. Kunsthall. Ove Arup. Roof Hall 2. January 1990.
Above: Layout structure. Below: Layout mechanical services.

composed booklets of sketches like the ‘Inventory of Problems’, outlining ideas and principles for the development of the design; and there are axonometric drawings in pencil on tracing paper, often in scale 1 to 50, visualizing how parts of the construction would connect. [Figure 10] Probably it is this type of drawing that, next to the model, was to test out Van Immerzell’s details. The sheer number of sketches indicates that they were an important means for Hoshino to steer the planning process. Apart from the possibility to fax them, Hoshino’s sketches had the advantage of being produced very quickly. Speed must have been a vital issue, because only a medium as fast as this would allow him to cover – and to some extent, to control – virtually every detail of the design in close collaboration with Koolhaas. There are dozens of sketches of glazed corners, of the exterior’s corners in general, of the Portico and its structure, of the Auditorium and its technical equipment, of the Restaurant, its bar and furniture, of the ticket booth and its cash desk, of the offices’ lobby and the office’s furniture, of the control room and the arrangement of monitors, of stairs and handrails, of the lavatories, of the doormats, of the signage, and so forth.

Less of a wall?

Another topic discussed in January 1990 were the glazed parts of the facades. Like the roof of Hall 2, the articulation of the transparent and translucent surfaces was subject to extensive research and experimentation. The Kunsthall aside, there is a long list of projects that bespeak Koolhaas’ fascination with transparency and translucency: the Media Centre in Karlsruhe; the Congrexpo in Lille; the Patio House and NAI in Rotterdam; the Villa Dall’Ava, National Library and Jussieu libraries in Paris. Perhaps Koolhaas’ interest in transparency and translucency was intuitive. Perhaps he was reminded by the reconstruction of Mies’ pavilion in Barcelona in 1986 and OMA’s replica at the Triennale in Milan during the same year and of the possibilities that coloured and frosted glass could offer. Another possible explanation is that he regarded partitions in translucent and transparent materials as an approximation to an ‘architecture without walls’, in the sense that they were more permeable than solid walls: to view, to light, or to air and sound, as in the case of the expanded metal separating the Ramp Street from the void above the Service Road. At the Kunsthall, transparency certainly is to challenge the segregation of exterior and interior, making the divide perceptible, and thus thematic.

Chapter 2.5

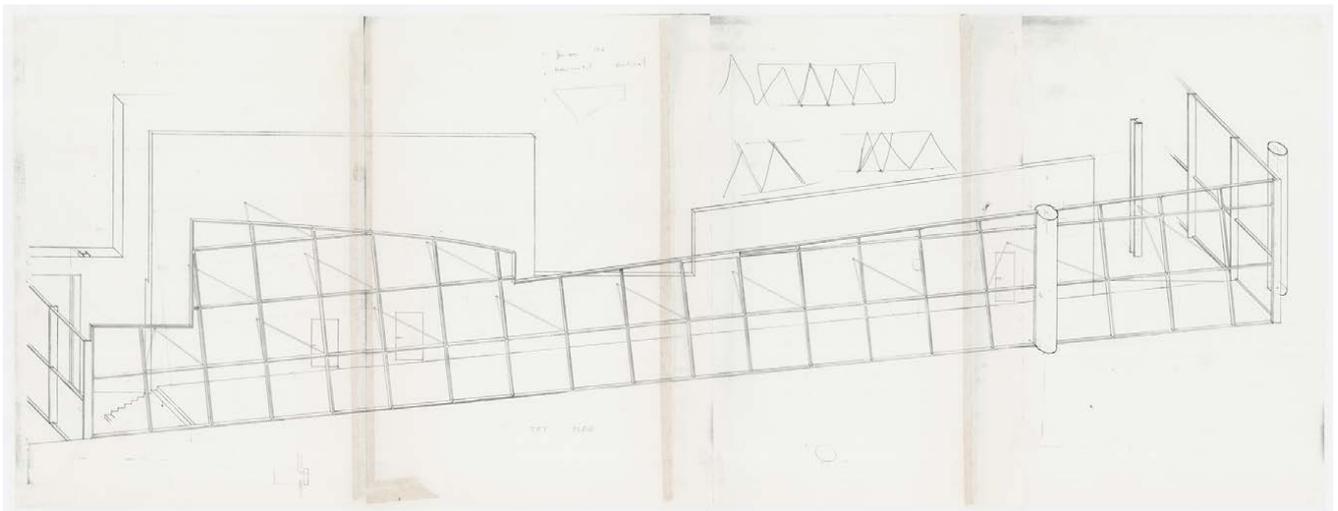
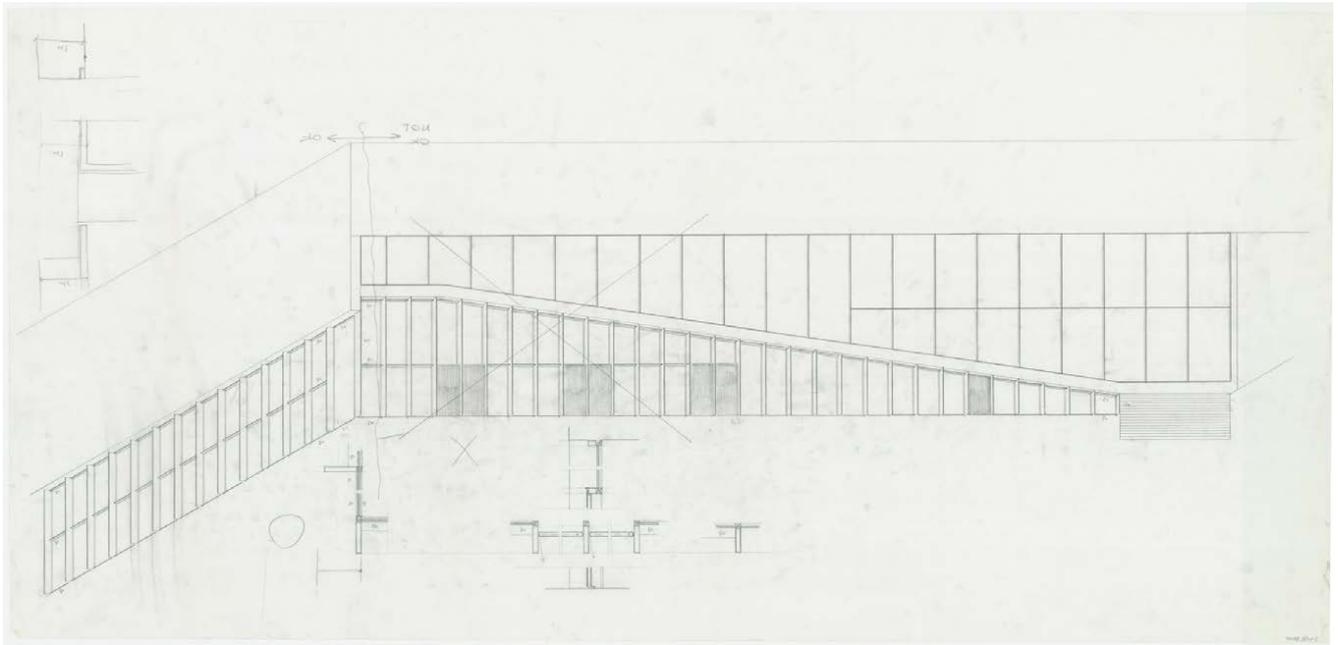


Figure 10. Kunsthalle. OMA. Above: Study of north-west corner.
Below: Study of glazed partition of the Ramp Street.

With regard to the use of transparent materials and colours, Hoshino recalls the Villa Dall’Ava and the Patio House as a point of reference.⁴⁴³ In the second chapter of his ‘Inventory of Problems’, called ‘Transparency & Translucency’, he recapitulates the degrees of transparency aimed for. The sketched floorplans distinguish between clear glass (with and without frames), corrugated sheathing, flat plastic panels, glass planks, and metal grating (service tower to the west). [Figure 4] Hoshino marked twenty-seven corners where two or more either transparent or translucent surfaces meet and shows three different principles of joints. The question how to detail the glazed surfaces was yet to be answered. The ‘Inventory’ lists six different types of mullions, next to a couple of variants for fixing the plastic panels. [Figure 5] Another question raised was how the difference of depth between the glazed surfaces and the solid walls should be dealt with: should the glazing be flush with the interior or the exterior edge? A dozen axonometric sketches illustrate both options. [Figure 6]

The glass walls: calibrate likeness with more diversity

For each façade dozens of elevations were produced between November 1989 and February 1990 with no other purpose than to define the fenestration.⁴⁴⁴ [Figures 11-13] Like the elevations from October, almost all of them suggest large window units for the spaces that belong to the circuit, and smaller units for the spaces that do not. The variants as much as the drawings eventually issued betray the wish to depict the circuit in the facades. Both in the collages and drawings from September/October 1989, the tightly mullioned glass walls of the Restaurant and the Office Block contrast with the large window units of the Auditorium and the eastern section of the building, indicating a different, subordinate category of space.

The project from April 1990 varies and refines this principle. A drawing from 19 April provides a synopsis of all the building’s glazed surfaces.⁴⁴⁵ [Figure 27] A close look at the various bay sizes reveals

⁴⁴³ Interview with the author on 25 September 2018.

⁴⁴⁴ See, for instance: OMAR 3276.

⁴⁴⁵ OMA, drawing B19. OMAR 1786.

Chapter 2.5

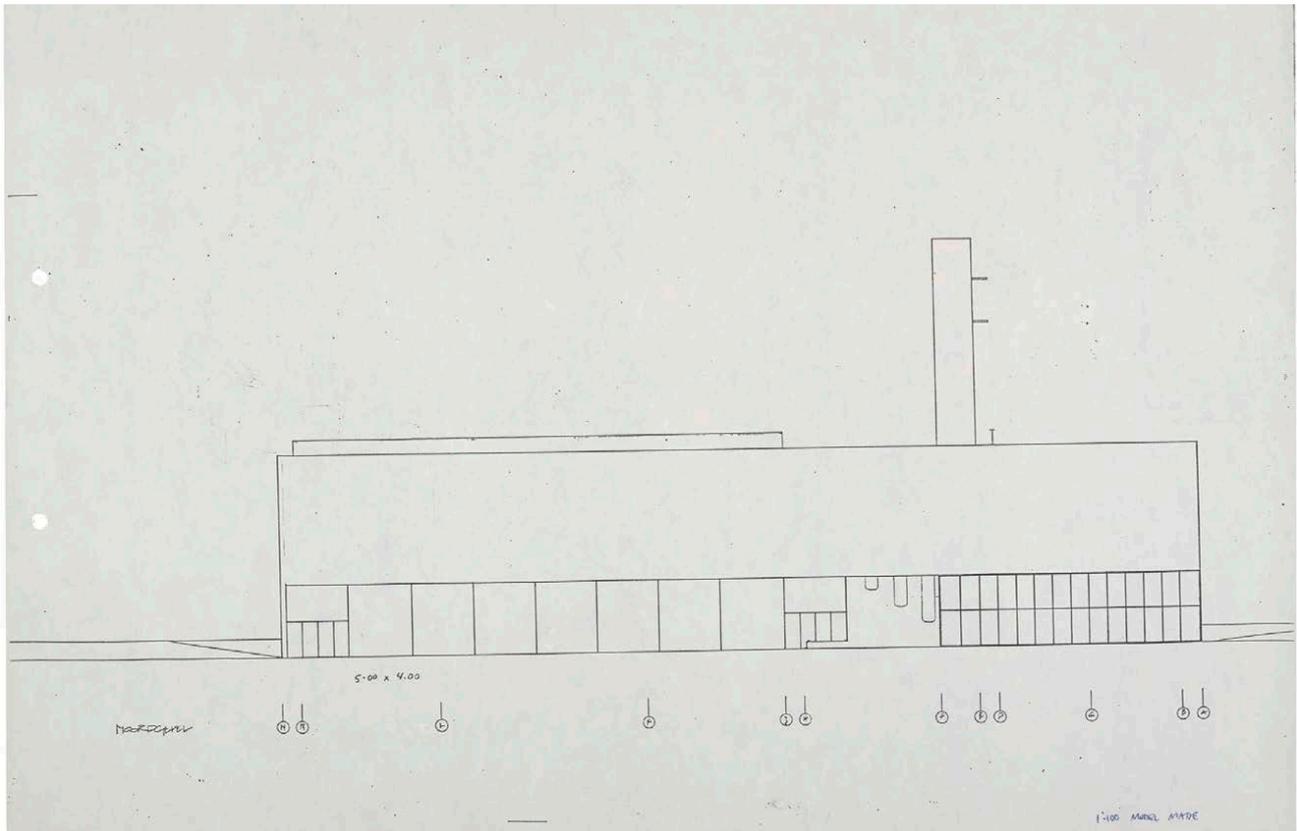


Figure 11. Kunsthal. OMA. Above: variant for north facade. Below: Variant for glass wall of Hall 1.

an almost complete disintegration of the two grids that structured the glazed surfaces of the building's eastern and western section ever since January 1989. As for the building's eastern section, the universal reach of the ('Miesian') square motif was already contested in October, when the continuous strip of translucent channel-glass planks replaced the mullioned glass wall of the east façade.⁴⁴⁶ By April, the glass wall of Hall 1, too, was developed according to an idea of its own: the vertical proportions of the four central bays – the horizontal mullion is omitted – as well as two bays with distinctly horizontal proportions clearly break with the principle of the approximate square. [Figure 26] At the glass wall facing the Maas Boulevard, in turn, the entire horizontal division is lowered so that the proportions of the window units at the bottom are perfectly square, while those of the upper section are vertical. [Figure 25] The motif of the large square is thus turned in yet another remainder, its reach limited to the glazing of the lower part of Hall 2, the Ramp Street, and about half of the bays of Hall 1. The glass wall of the Ramp Street no longer 'mediates' between the glass walls of Halls 1 and 2: the units are perfect squares parallel to the passage's slope, generating irregular remnants along the margins. [Figure 25] The glazing of Hall 1, combining four essentially different bay sizes and five different types of glass, appears as a carefully balanced composition. The three glass walls (Halls 1 and 2, Ramp Street) each follow a logic of its own, lessening through their visible autonomy the formal isolation of the glass planks at the east façade. Also the references vary: the glazing facing the Maas Boulevard is reminiscent of the late Mies; the glass planks of warehouse architecture; the glazing facing the park of Mondrian; the glazing along the Ramp Street of Eisenman's Wexner Center. To the same extent, the categorical difference between the mullioned glass walls and the wall of glass planks is lessened.

Despite the increase of formal diversity, the glass walls of the building's eastern sections do preserve something of their initial likeness. All four of them continue to share comparable dimensions and proportions; they are made of glass; and their transparency and translucency is opposed to the opacity of the 'massive' walls. Three of them share the approximate scale of their units as well as their unit's

⁴⁴⁶ The array of unframed elements reads as a single 56-metres long strip of glass. Until October 1989, this opening was treated in the same way as the other glass wall of Hall 2 to the south. The collages from autumn still show a mullioned glass wall of regular squares, as in the version from December 1988.

relatively compact proportions, making much of the differences appear like ‘variations’ on the guiding theme of the square. It is because of this ‘surviving’ likeness that the conceptual origin of the glass walls is not lost: still these surfaces read as a sequence, reiterating the continuity of the circuit; they qualify as the transparent half of the two-sided ribbon of the Moebius loop.

The grid imposed on the glazed surfaces of the west façade in January 1989 – and modified in autumn – is still fully articulate in the detached right hand section, now accommodating the Offices, a VIP room, the staff entrance and the Information Centre. In the drawings from April 1990 – different from all previous versions – the reach of the grid with a basic unit of 0.9 metre by 2.25 meters ends at the Service Road. [Figure 26] As in the versions from January and February 1989, the bay sizes of the Auditorium (2.0 m) and the Restaurant (1.2 m) are based on the 6-metres rhythm of the structural grid. Again, the mullions do not align with the axes of the columns; but they align with one another in the façade every fifth bay. The glass walls of the Auditorium and the Restaurant were conceived as parts of the same superordinate order. In the case of the Restaurant, the layout is entirely new, as its window units adopt the vertical proportions of the Auditorium. Apparently, the change was to picture more accurately the affinities and dissimilarities between the three areas in terms of use. As a major visitor destination, the Restaurant is surely closer in character to the Auditorium than to the compact block housing the Offices and the Information Centre. But also the size of its space, its sloped ceiling, its tilted columns, and the shared, intruding balcony make the Restaurant a twin space of the Auditorium.

In spite of the common multiple of 6 metres and the alignment of altogether three mullions there is a categorical rather than a gradual difference between the glass walls of the two spaces. In terms of dimensions, the window units of the Restaurant are much closer to the Office Block than to the Auditorium, the ratio of the units’ average surface approximating 2 (Offices) to 3 (Restaurant), to 7 square metres (Auditorium). As in October, the generous rhythm of the mullions distinguishes the Auditorium as the main space of the façade. It is akin to the large window units of the glass walls of the building’s eastern section. The facades ‘admit’ the affinity between the Restaurant and the Auditorium, but they ‘insist’ on the priority of the circuit and the spaces that belong to it.

Chapter 2.5

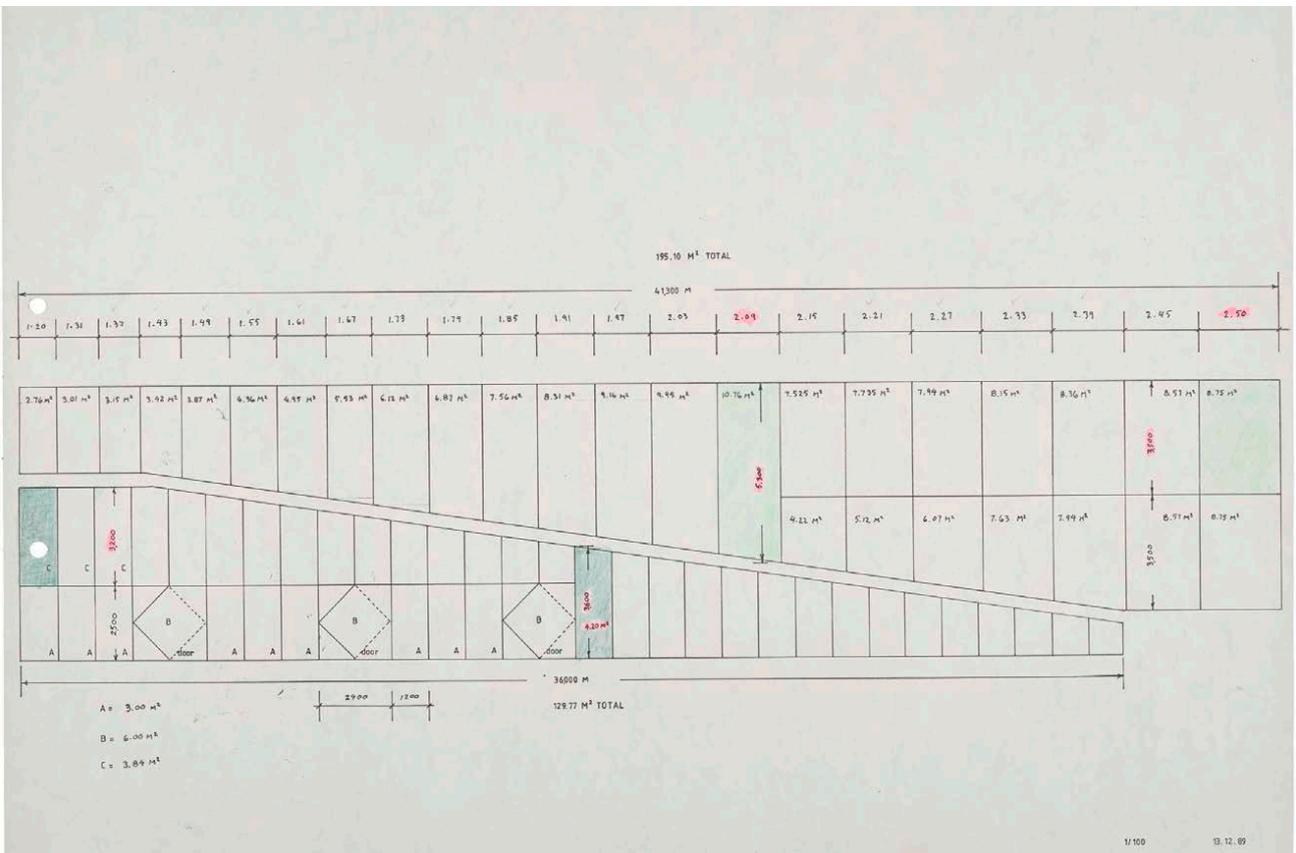


Figure 13. Kunsthall. OMA. Variants for glass walls of Restaurant and Auditorium.

Micro concepts, or concepts of limited range

Most variants of the west façade from this period show the mullions of the Auditorium and the Restaurant superimposed with the tilted columns. A random relation between the two elements, as in the version from October, was not considered satisfactory. Most variants experiment with dividers of the structural grid's 6-metres span. The point of intersection of columns and mullions would be constant, but different from the Auditorium to the Restaurant, since the bays of the latter are smaller. Together with the sloped ceiling between the two spaces, the overall impact continued to be somewhat arbitrary, given the way the mullions do and do not intersect with the columns. At some point, the idea must have come up to avoid the intersections altogether and to frame each column instead with the adjacent vertical mullions.⁴⁴⁷ One of the variants partly achieves this. [Figure 13] As in the version from 19 April, the bays of the Restaurant measure 1.2 metres, those of the Auditorium 2 metres. While the mullions of the Restaurant do frame the columns, the mullions of the Auditorium intersect toward the bottom of the slope.⁴⁴⁸ In another variant – perhaps the immediate precursor of the final version – these intersections are avoided by increasing each bay of the Auditorium from north to south by 6 centimetres, while the 1.2-metres rhythm of the Restaurant remains unvaried.⁴⁴⁹ [Figure 13] Arguably the dimensions of the bays at the southern end proved too large. Intersections of mullions and columns were eventually bypassed by shifting the Auditorium's 2-metres grid about 0.8 metres to the north, aligning its first bay with the one of the Restaurant below. Along the northern front of the Restaurant, the relation of mullions and columns is no less articulate but inverted: the former are perfectly aligned with the axes of the structural grid, and some of the lateral bays are irregular.⁴⁵⁰ [Figure 19]

⁴⁴⁷ That the relationship between columns and mullions was deemed significant, is also evident from Hoshino's above notes from 5 January.

⁴⁴⁸ OMAR 3267.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁰ Two façade details in scale 1 to 50 show the relation of columns and mullions. A version from 29 November 1989 complies strictly to the rhythm of 1.2 metres with the consequence that the columns are slightly off-centre with respect to the mullions. OMAR 3267.



Figure 14. OMA. Kunsthall. Collages of north-east corner.

The accordance of the respective structural grids, or columns with the mullions, was by no means being observed as a general rule. The glazing variants of Halls 1 and 2 are not aligned with any of the interior columns. In the case of Hall 2, the Ramp Street and the Office Block, the unrelatedness of the structural grid and the rhythm of the mullions is pronounced – both in the drawings from April 1990 and in the version built. To the north, the four vertical bays in clear-glass do approximate the interval between the main columns in the centre of Hall 1; but even there the mullions are slightly shifted, and the one in proximity to the window, potentially visible from the outside, is concealed behind panes of frosted glass. If the incongruence of structure and mullions is emphatic along the southern glass wall of Hall 2, the structure of Hall 1 – with regard to the façade – is virtually blinded, and the same holds true for the channel glass planks of the east facade.

A little shift regarding the whole

Little has been said, so far, about the horizontal mullions. As for the eastern section of the building, the principle had been – until autumn 1989 – to divide each glazed surface at half height in order to generate window units with approximate square proportions despite the varying height of the respective interiors. The elevations and cross sections from April 1990 show the horizontal mullions of Halls 1, 2 and the Ramp Street at a constant height of 2.5 metres. [Figures 25-26] In the case of Hall 1, the division continues to be at half height of the interior; along the Ramp Street, there is a second mullion at 5 metres height and partly a third one at 7.5 metres; only at Hall 2, the proportions of the upper window units are vertical: 2.5 by 3.55 metres. The horizontal mullion at 2.5 metres height reappears at the Restaurant's glazing, dividing its north side at half, and the west side in an arbitrary ratio regarding the slope of the ceiling. [Figure 26] The glass wall of the Auditorium, in turn, is divided by a mullion at half height of its maximum extension: 3.55 metres, just like the upper section of the glazing of Hall 2. It is obvious, at this point, that considerations of coherence played a decisive role for the revised layout of the glazed surfaces. No longer ubiquitously 'squared', the glass walls of the building's eastern half appears less hermetic, while the horizontal mullions connect visually to the facades of the western half, even if the connection is subtle, as in the case of the Auditorium and Hall 2.

A kind of balance: the glazing in detail

Much of the development of the project ever since the inception of the scheme in December 1988, however, amounts to a methodical corrosion of the design's formal coherence, ensured through the steady diversification of its parts. For more than a year there were essentially two qualities that tied the exterior's parts together: the relative unity or 'singleness' of its volume, and the binary structure of the facades based on the motif of the two sided ribbon and the Moebius loop. The design of the facades from April 1990 represents the first effort to suffuse the principle diversity of parts with details that add cohesion. Koolhaas aimed at some sort of compositional balance between the opposites of formal autonomy and formal coherence, even if the former dominates the overall impact. This is indicated by the adjustments to the mullion's rhythm as well as by the way of their detailing.

The drawings from April 1990 allow to distinguish eight principles, the windows of the smaller openings not included:⁴⁵¹ aluminium mullions at the inner side of the glazing (Hall 1, offices along the Service Road); aluminium mullions at the inner side of the glazing supported by steel tubes (Ramp Street); aluminium mullions at both sides of the glazing (Hall 2); aluminium mullions at the outer side of the glazing (Restaurant); aluminium mullions combined with open-web trusses, encased between two discrete layers of glazing (Auditorium);⁴⁵² aluminium mullions supported by glass fins (Hall 1); mullions combined with structural glazing (west facade Office Block); mullions combined with flat polycarbonate panels (stepped ramp leading to Hall 3). As for the open-web trusses, their depth increases from bay to bay (north to south), apparently in order to secure sufficient bracing, as the floor of the Auditorium descends and the vertical span augments. But the increase of depth is only partly based on structural concerns, for the depth of the trusses augments also at the back and front of the Auditorium, where the floor is horizontal and the vertical span remains constant. The same principle is applied to the mullions of the Restaurant below. Like the 'algorithmic' Vierendeel trusses of the first

⁴⁵¹ The argument of the subsequent two passages draws on multiple sources. All of them are drawings by OMA, dated 19 April 1990: The synopsis of glazed surfaces in scale 1:100, B19, OMAR 1786; cross sections and floorplans in scale 1 to 100, OMAR 1784. Detail drawings in scale 1 to 5. Stadsarchief Rotterdam.

⁴⁵² OMA, drawing B20. OMAR 1786.

Chapter 2.5

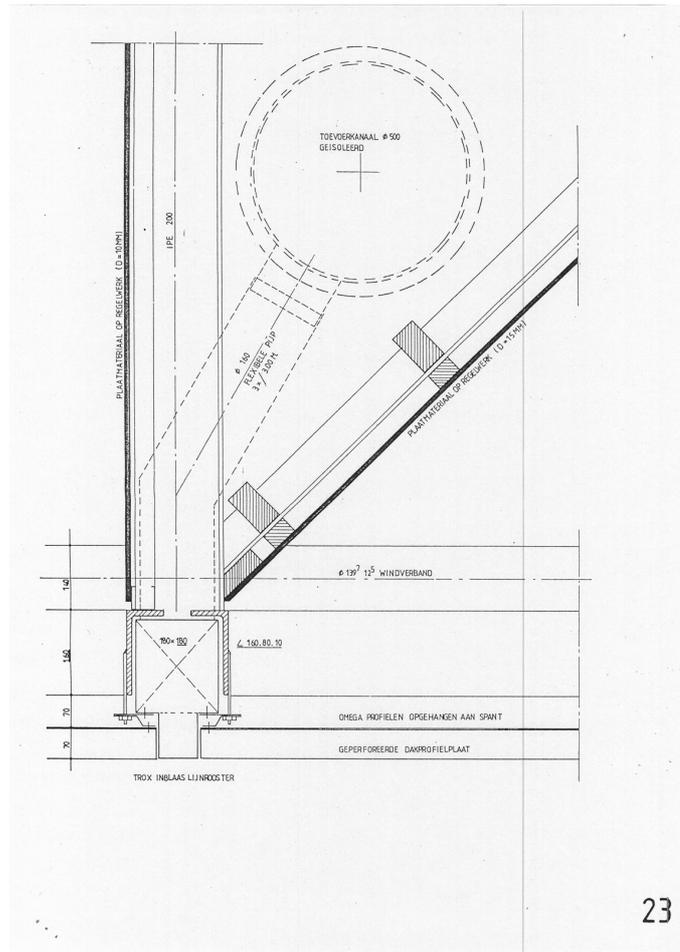
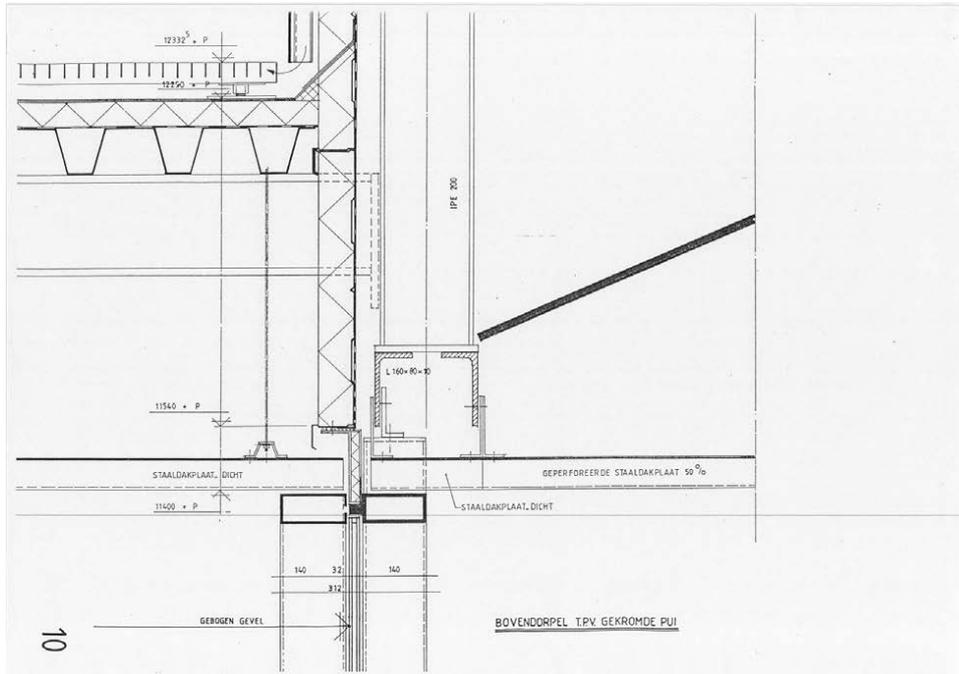


Figure 16. Kunsthal. OMA. Details of the ceiling of Hall 2. 19 April 1990.

project (Kunsthal I, see Chapter 1.7) and the spiral motif of the circuit (see Chapter 2.2), the mullions of both spaces seem to imply a metaphor of growth.

Next to the plastic sheathing – flat along the Roof Garden, corrugated along the Ramp Street – seven types of glass are provided. Most of them have been already mentioned: clear glass (Hall 2, south side; Restaurant, north façade Office Block); green tinted glass (Hall 1); grey tinted glass (Auditorium); glass with a reflecting silvery coating (west façade Office Block, and Hall 1); sandblasted glass (Hall 1); wire glass (Hall 1); channel glass (Hall 2).⁴⁵³ Considering the scale of the building – which is modest in comparison to contemporary museums, medium according to the classification of *S,M,L,XL* – the palette of details and materials envisaged solely for the glazed surfaces of the exterior may appear as an almost caricature-like excess of diversification. On the other hand, many of these details share a series of characteristics: aluminium for the mullions with a constant width of about 55 millimetres including the cover caps, regardless of the mullion's position in relation to the plane of the glazing. Of course, there are exceptions: obvious ones, such as the structural glazing of the Office Block and the channel glass wall of the east façade; and subtle divergences like the open-web-truss bracing of the Auditorium, and the glass fins of Hall 1. As the latter two are confined to the interior, the mullions appear 'regular' from the outside: they become part of the web of thin silvery lines spinning around much of the exterior.

Regarding the opaque parts of the exterior, the plans from April 1990 distinguish two different materials: a 4-centimetres yellow travertine cladding for the north and south façade, and walls of 20 to 25 centimetres width in exposed concrete for the east and west façade as well as for the bottom half of the south facade. The details from 10 October 1989 next to a number of sketches provide exposed brickwork for at least two of the facades: for the upper half of the north facade, and for the diagonal 'spandrel' separating the Auditorium from the Restaurant in the west facade.⁴⁵⁴ But by April 1990, the idea to use brick was altogether abandoned. The drawings from April 1990 specify for each of the three

⁴⁵³ OMA, drawing B19. OMAR 1786.

⁴⁵⁴ OMAR 3274, 1783. A 10-centimetre layer of brick ('outside surface') is also listed in a letter by Arup from May 1989, a 120mm brick cladding in Arup's report from July. Ove Arup, 'Recommendations concerning external fabrics and glazing types,' 9 May 1989. Arup London Archives.

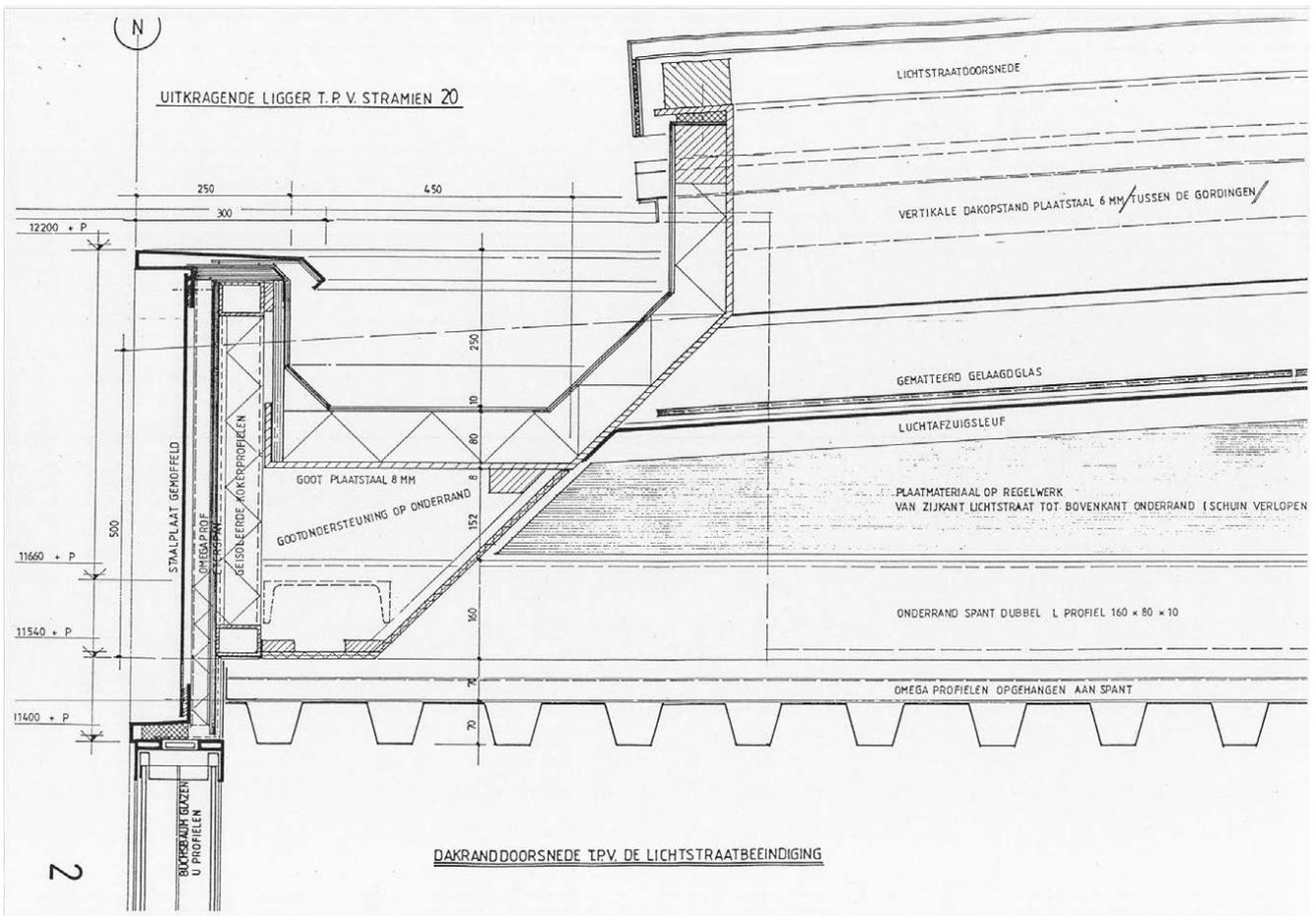


Figure 17. Kunsthall. OMA Detail of the cornice of Hall 2 along the east facade. 19 April 1990.

walls in concrete a different colour: white (east facade), black (west facade) and grey (south facade). Probably the relative uniformity of the solid walls was partly based on a compositional idea: to provide a homogeneous backdrop against which the variety of the glazed surfaces may unfold. At least in terms of impact, that is unmistakably the case at the north and the west façade. The elevations show the walls as monolithic slabs that contrast with the composite glazed surfaces and the diversity of their parts. The total absence of variation within the opaque surfaces thus reinforces the compositional principle on which the facades' coherence depends most: the binary division in two opposites.

A podium, a perron, a ceremonial stair

Compared to the version from October, the Portico facing the Maas Boulevard was subject to a series of subtle but significant changes. What used to be a sloped driveway until February 1989, was turned into a horizontal terrace level with Hall 2, raised 60 centimetres above the sidewalk of the Boulevard.⁴⁵⁵ [Figure 24] Security concerns are likely to have been the reason for this shift. The need to prevent cars from breaking through the glass wall of Hall 2 was discussed by the Building Committee in December.⁴⁵⁶ As an elevated terrace, the open platform bears some resemblance to a podium or socle, even if the detailing undermines this notion: carried by H-columns and visibly detached from the ground, the platform 'floats', and the galvanized metal grating of the decking forestalls any notion of massiveness or nobility, while allowing daylight to enter the Service Road below.⁴⁵⁷ [Figure 30]

Also the columns sandwiched between the roof and the terrace of the Portico saw some changes. The H-column at the east corner as well as the row of columns (axis m) were moved about 4 metres towards the centre, due to the new roof structure of Hall 2. Probably because of this shift and the reduction of span, the column next to it in the centre (axis l) was removed. As mentioned above, one 'irregular' column was added at the juncture of the Skew Ramp, the Portico and the roof of Hall 2 so as to carry

⁴⁵⁵ In absolute terms, the floor was raised only 10 centimetres while the sidewalk of the Maas Boulevard was lowered 50 centimetres. This is evident from the respective elevation labels in OMA's final drawings from 10 October 1989 and the drawings from 19 April 1990.

⁴⁵⁶ Minutes Building Committee, 20 December 1989. OMAR 1519.

⁴⁵⁷ OMA, drawing B23. OMAR 2847.

Chapter 2.5

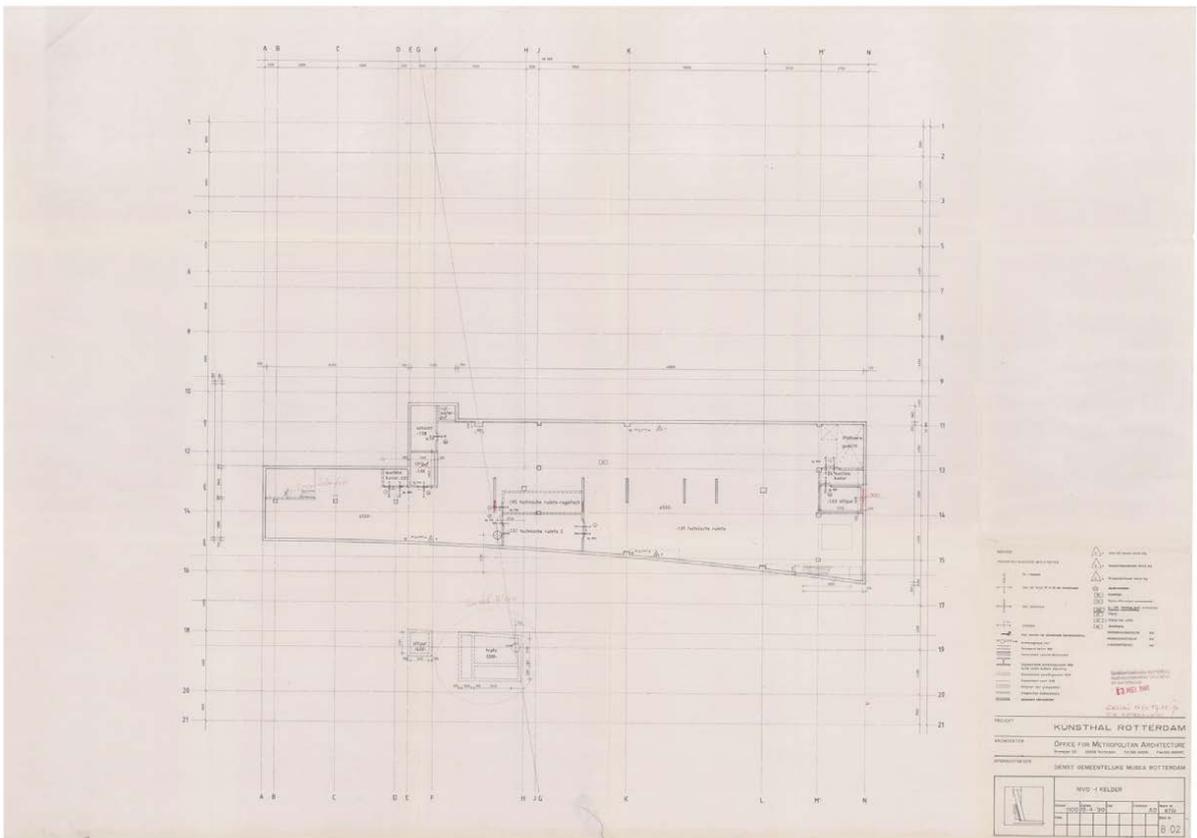
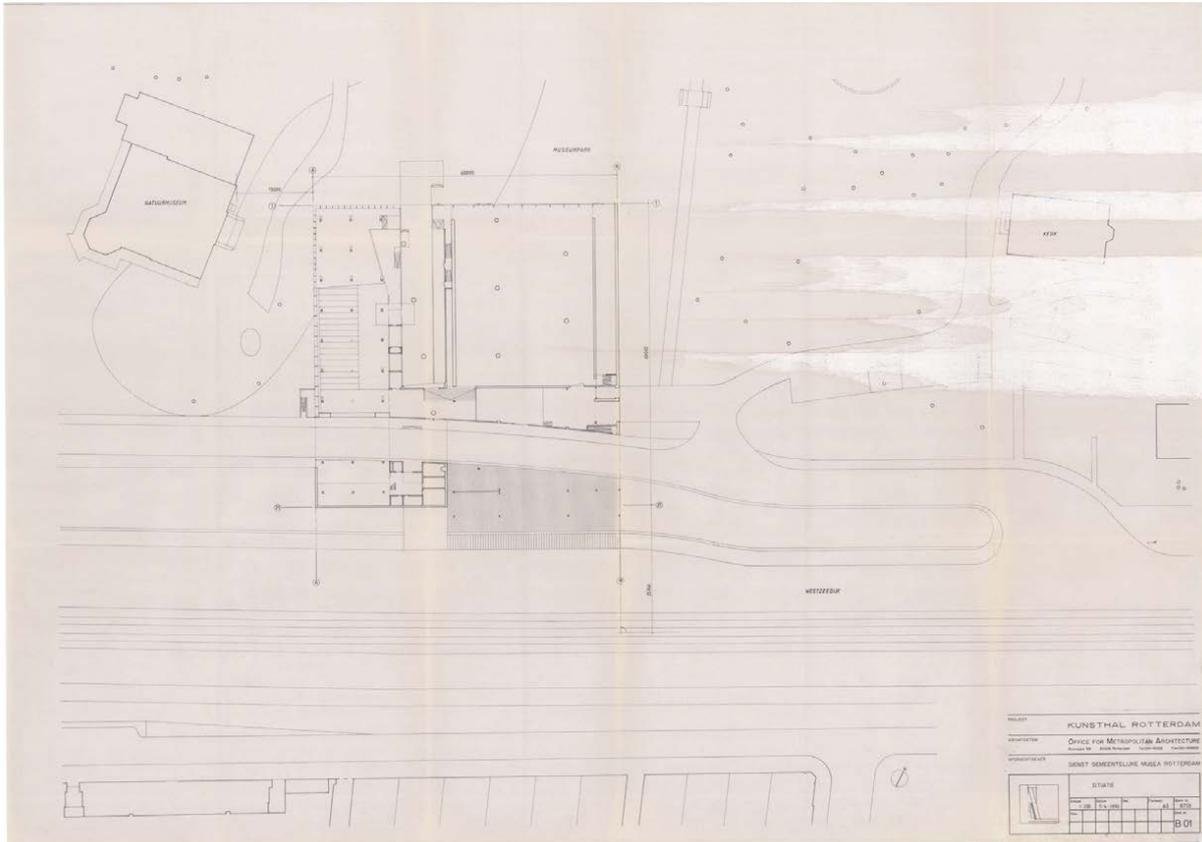


Figure 18. Kunsthall. OMA. Site plan and floorplan of basement. 19 April 1990.

the heavy truss spanning along the diagonal ‘cut-off’ edge of the roof structure. Pictures from the construction site show that this part of the Skew Ramp was eventually suspended from the truss,⁴⁵⁸ perhaps to secure the stability of the former, given the extreme eccentricity of the *pilotis* supporting the ramp. The column carrying the truss and located just outside Hall 2 has a cruciform shape composed of square hollow section profiles in steel. [Figure 15]

Meanwhile, the shape of many columns had changed. The drawings from October 1989 show all the H-columns – both of the exhibition halls and the Portico – encased in concrete. By April 1990, the encasement is omitted, the drawings specifying the H-columns to be painted in black with one exception: the last column of the western row which – yet another remainder of an obsolete design stage – is still provided with the encasement in concrete like in the drawings from October. The column next to it is made from steel and castellated with hexagonal openings. A cross of two tensile bracing rods connects the two dissimilar columns. Together with the first *pilotis* supporting the Skew Ramp, the Portico unites five differently shaped columns, made of steel, concrete or both. Judging from its diameter, the handrail at the east side of the terrace could have been used a column as well. The drawings show it as a tree trunk, mounted on two steel supports. Given that in much of the Kunsthal’s design whatever has accumulated is transformed freely, this trunk ‘in stock’ may represent the sixth column removed from the centre of the Portico. Columns in the guise of trees were provided at about the same time for Hall 1: the five central H-columns are clad with segmented, hollowed-out trunks. [Figure 19]

The irregular distribution and the heterogeneity of the Portico’s columns – implemented without major modifications – seems to ridicule the nobilitating impact that columns arrayed in front of a building evoke. And yet, the columns gained in stature: rather than being ‘interchangeable’ parts of steel frame, the ‘individuation’ of their shapes lends them something of the self-contained character of the classical column. The affinity of the terrace to the podium, and of the columns to the more-than-structural column, corroborates the likeness of the open space with a Portico. That the paraphernalia of the

⁴⁵⁸ OMA Archives.

Chapter 2.5

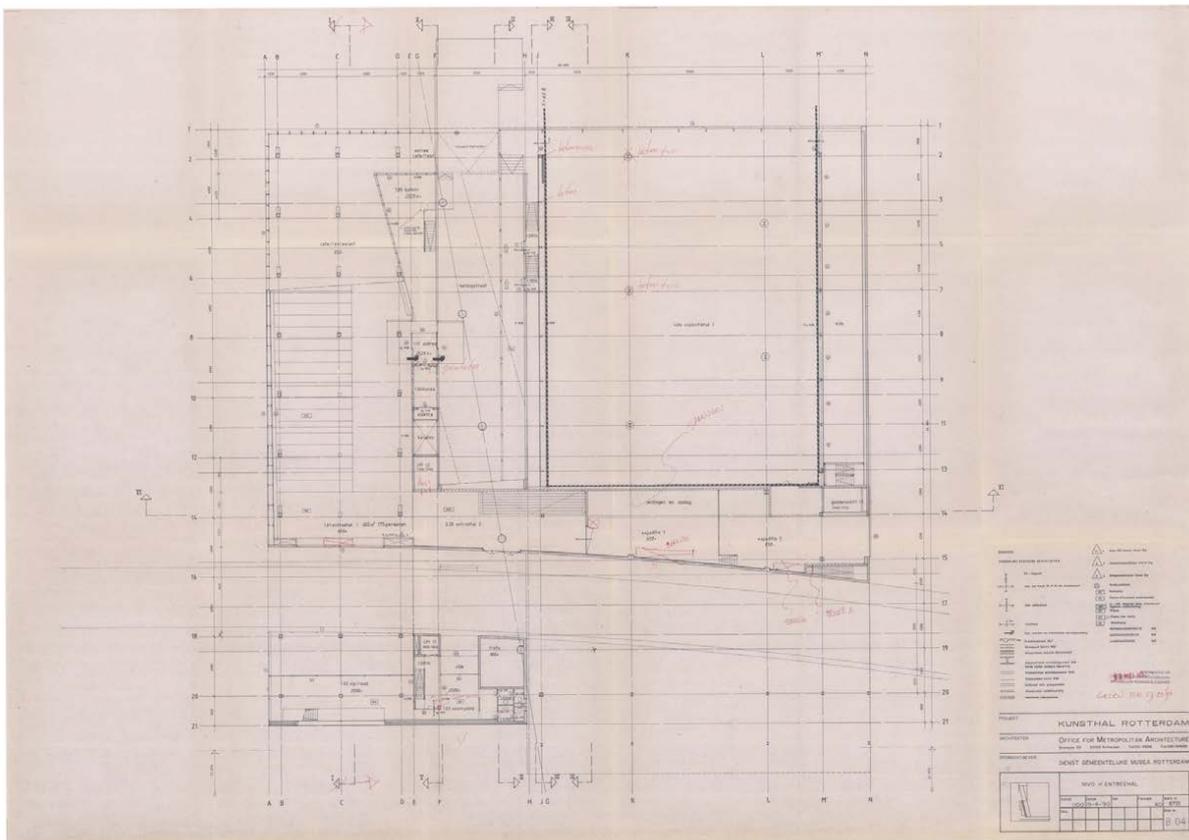
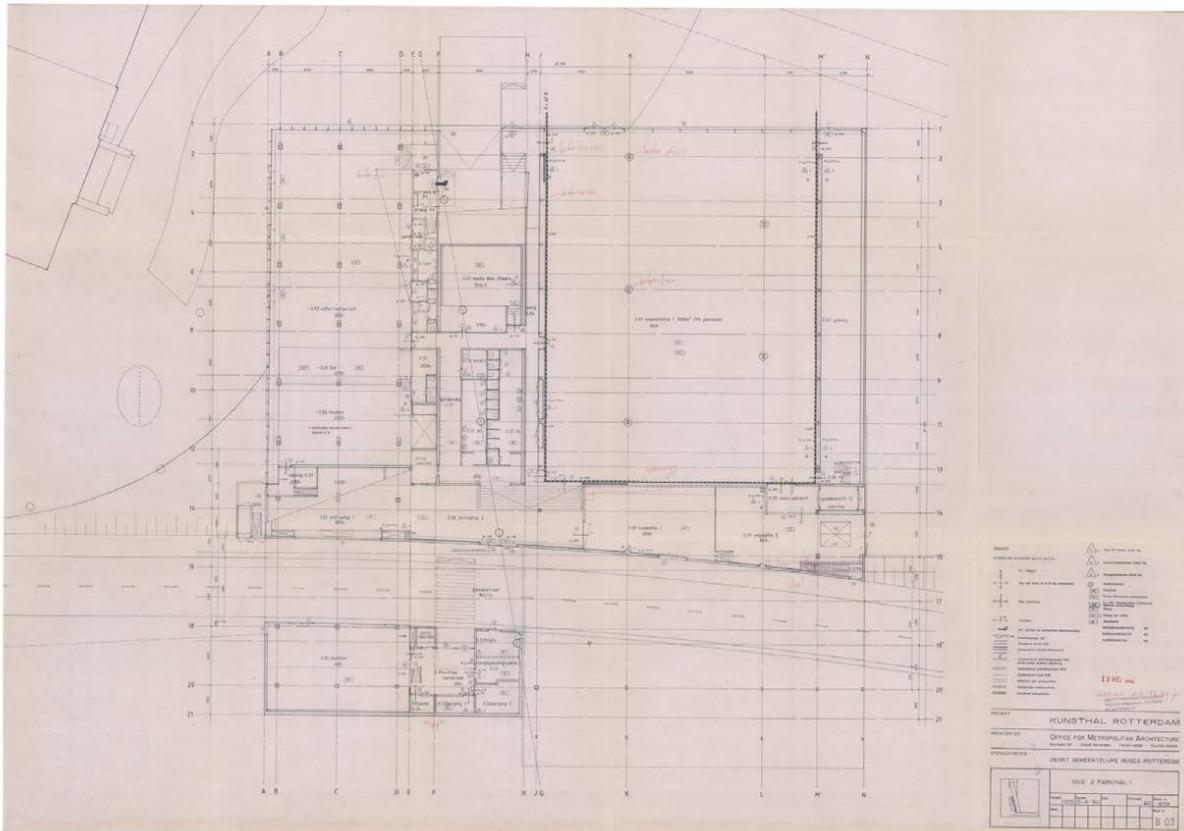


Figure 19. Kunsthall. OMA. Floorplans at levels 0 and 1. 19 April 1990.

classical museum were either missing or transformed beyond recognition, needs to be looked at more precisely. Apart from the classicist overtones of the Portico, there is, as Stanislaus von Moos points out when discussing Le Corbusier's predilection for ramps, a strong affinity between the ramp and the ceremonial stair. The drawings from April 1990 foresee black asphalt for the surfacing of the Public Passage, exposed concrete for the *pilotis* and the bottom of the Skew Ramp, corrugated polycarbonate for the side of the main entrance. As in the case of the Portico, the materials disclaim prestigious implications. But not much imagination is needed to understand the Ramp Street's exterior part as a perron and the interior part as a ceremonial stair. Regardless of their nobilitating function, ceremonial stairs and perrons are architectural elements of transition, suspense, preparation and theatrical exposure – qualities the divided Ramp Street of the Kunsthall is endowed with. Hans Werlemann took several pictures of the public passage, perhaps at the opening in 1992. It is precisely these qualities that his photographs illustrate.

No doors

That the architects aimed for the mutual visibility of the visitor and the prospect visitor or passer-by, is congenially captured by Werlemann's photographs. A fax from January 1990 bespeaks OMA's insistence on an unimpeded view across the glazed partition of the Ramp Street. The fax was sent by Ron Steiner to Arup London, asking for technical advice:

We are now detailing the various glazed surfaces on the Kunsthall project. At the moment I'm dealing with the glass wall on the main ramp, between the outside area and Hall 1+2. In order to achieve maximum transparencies (views) especially for oblique angles, as one walks down the ramp [...] the depth of the mullions should be as slender as possible. We'd like to use a glazing system with 50 mm glazing bar width.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁹ Fax 23 January 1990, addressed to 'Clinton'. Arup London Archive.

Chapter 2.5

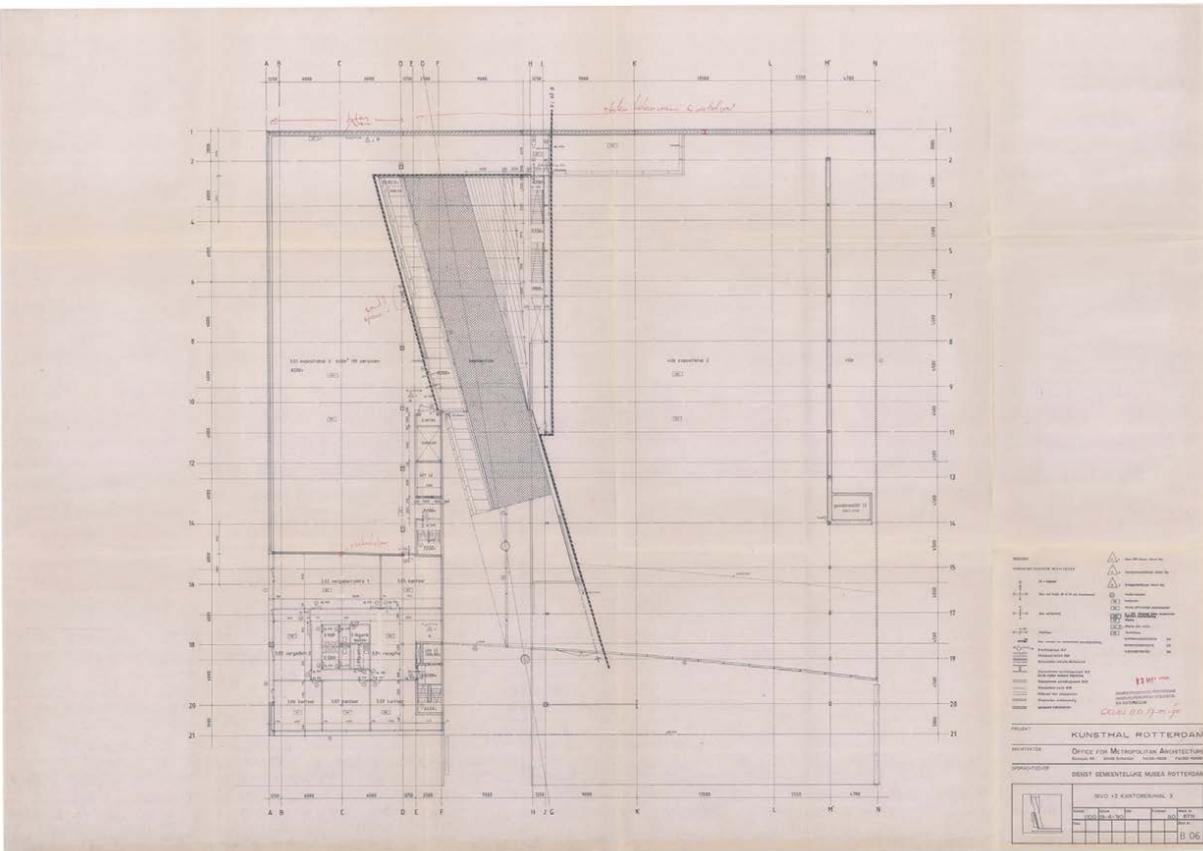
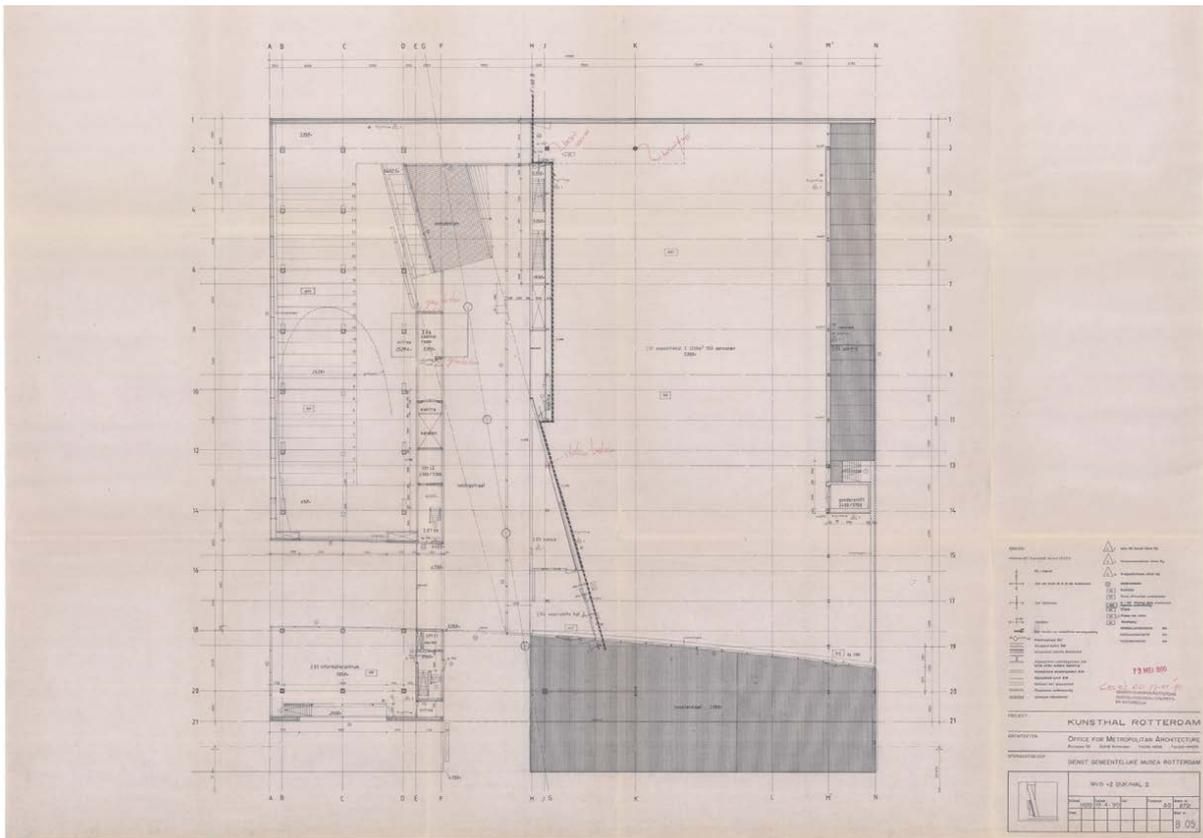


Figure 20. Kunsthal. OMA. Floorplans at levels 2 and 3. 19 April 1990.

Initially the entire central section of the building was meant to be as transparent as possible. The first drawings indicate unimpeded views across the Ramp Street from the building's eastern section to its western section and vice versa. Only incrementally the two strips of *poché* reduced the areas of transparency along both sides of the Ramp Street and the Skew Ramp. OMA ceded this interior openness reluctantly. A sketch from Hoshino's 'Inventory' shows that the team still adhered to the idea in autumn 1989.⁴⁶⁰ [Figure 4] By April 1990 little was left of this inner transparency: the three main exhibition halls and the Auditorium were almost entirely cut off from the view to the two ramps at the centre of the building, all four spaces inevitably becoming more self-contained. But the architects' resistance against the loss of transparency was persistent; perhaps Koolhaas adhered to the idea of the Kunsthal as a single space rather than a sequence of spaces, visually 'accessible' from the Ramp Street – ideally – as a whole.

The repeatedly observed spatial continuity between 'inside and outside' needs to be seen in this context.⁴⁶¹ Some surfaces transcend the glazed barrier between interior and exterior like an arbitrary, technically unavoidable partition. The Ramp Street and the terrace of the Portico reach out to the urban environment. But the actual claims of spatial continuity are restricted to the perimeter of the building: between the two sides of the Ramp Street, and between Hall 2 and the Portico. Along the exterior of the perimeter and its local protrusions, hardly any attempt is discernible to blur the difference between the interiors and their surroundings. The tree trunks in Hall 1 do relate to the trees on the park, but in an entirely different manner.⁴⁶² They do not contest or smooth over the factual partition of the glazing, which is only partially transparent. The contrast between the artificial character of the building and the

⁴⁶⁰ 'Inventory of Problems', 16-17.

⁴⁶¹ The issue is extensively discussed in the essay by Michel Moussette from 2003; Moussette, "'Do we need a canopy for rain?'" , 280-294. See also Hans van Dijk, 'Principes van metropolitane architectuur: OMA's Kunsthal in Rotterdam', *Archis* 1 (1993), 26.

⁴⁶² In 1993, Kenneth Frampton observed that the hollowed-out tree trunks suggest a 'continuation of the wooded parkscape beyond'. Kenneth Frampton, 'Kunsthal a Rotterdam', *Domus* 747 (1993), 44. In his book *informal*, Cecil Balmond explains that the trunks, along with the shift between the two rows, literally suspend the physical division between interior and exterior: 'Hall 1 of the Kunsthal was no longer a room or an enclosure, through an end glass wall its internal space travelled to join up with the park outside.' Balmond, *informal*, 79. See also: Hoshino, 'Kunsthal', 78. In a conversation with the author, Hoshino recalled that the idea to use trunks as columns was inspired by Kazuo Shinohara's Tanikawa House in Japan (1972), which is traversed by the sloped uncovered soil of the surrounding forest.

natural character of the adjacent park remains distinct and is in no recognizable way lessened or tuned down.

Viewed against this backdrop, the Kunsthal is a building ‘without doors’. Given the factual openness of the Portico and the Ramp Street, no physical partition needs to be ‘overcome’ to access it.⁴⁶³ Only at night the latter is closed for concerns of security. Not surprisingly, the architects took much care to make the two gates disappear during daytime. Hoshino’s ‘Inventory’ considers a broad range of options: large, centre hinged turning doors, a portcullis, and – annotated ‘too aggressive??’ – an expandable fence of barbed wire.⁴⁶⁴ [Figure 7] The drawings from April 1990 provide the solution: a roller grille that descends from a cavity of the Portico facing the Maas Boulevard, and a gate of expanded metal grating to be lowered from the ceiling of the passage next to the park.⁴⁶⁵

That the Ramp Street and the Portico should become the arts centre’s actual entrance, is also indicated by the articulation of the thresholds. While the Portico’s gesture of accessibility is bold and generous, the entrance doors’ is subtle. It has often been observed and lamented that the original main entrance, at half height of the Ramp Street, was difficult to find.⁴⁶⁶ In the project from April 1990, as in the first built version, the entrance for visitors was signalled by a horizontal landing, branching off from the Ramp Street, next to two porthole windows for the ticket sale and a pair of sliding doors in aluminium. [Figures 22, 25] The Restaurant was to be accessed by a pit, branching off from the bottom of the ramp. As in the case of the main entrance, its door was cut out from the corrugated polycarbonate sheathing, unmediated by any further signals of accessibility. Perhaps the visual presence of the two main entrance doors was minimized in order to stress the arbitrariness of the physical partitions. No more articulate, however, were the two additional entrances wished for by Van Krimpen to permit the independent use

⁴⁶³ According to Moussette, the invisibility of the entrance as well as the narrow passage between the Ramp Street and the Auditorium undermine the (seeming) openness of the building. Moussette, “Do we need a canopy for rain?”, 287. Everything depends on what one considers the actual entrance of the building: the ‘inevitable’ doors, or the partly open perimeter of the building.

⁴⁶⁴ ‘Inventory of Problems’, 34-35. The idea was eventually used for the reception desk of the office area. Its wooden front is decorated with a bas-relief of a barbed wire-fence.

⁴⁶⁵ Drawing, B12. OMAR 1784.

⁴⁶⁶ The large orange arrows pointing to the entrance today, added during the renovation in 2013/14, bear witness to that problem.

Chapter 2.5

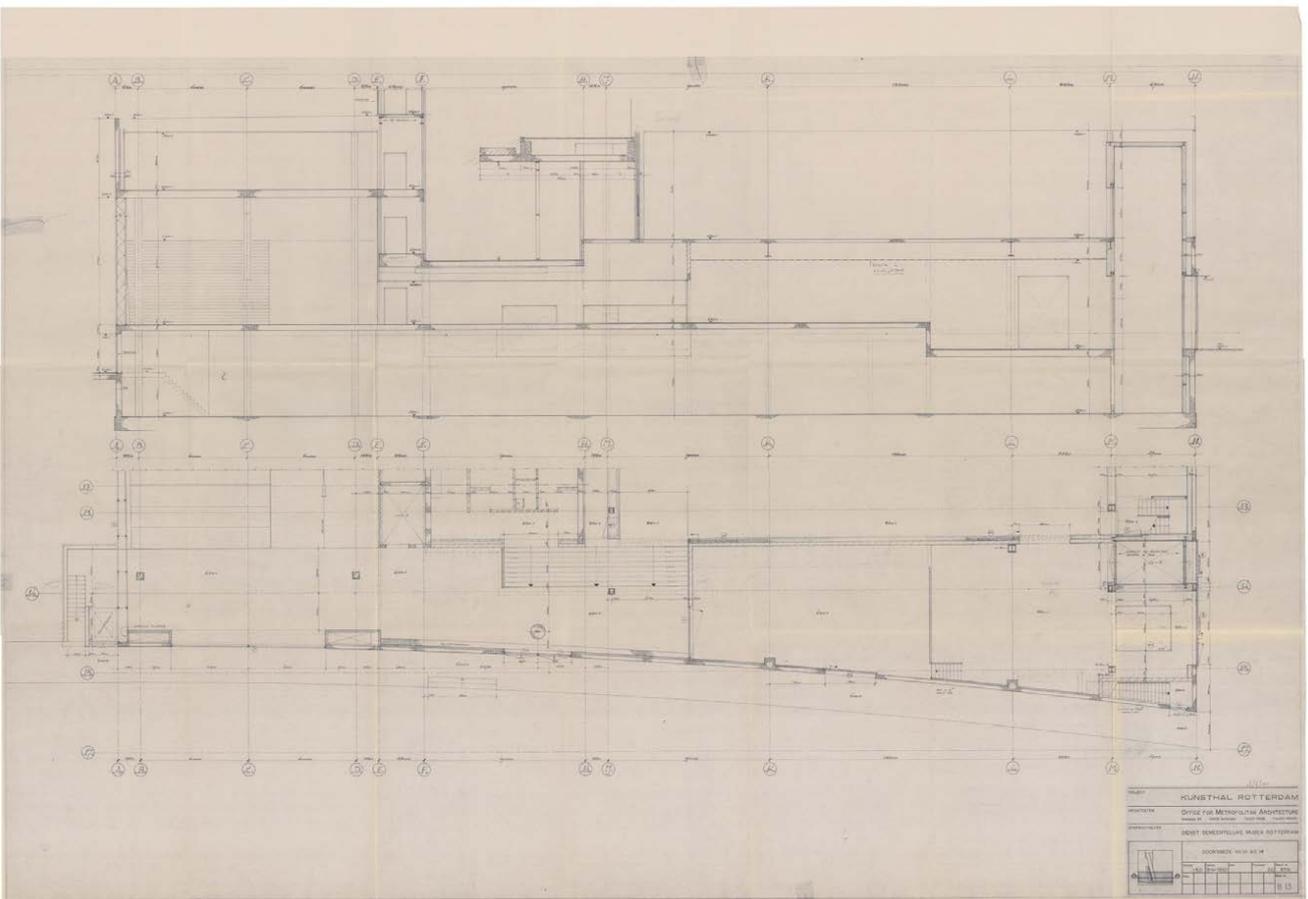
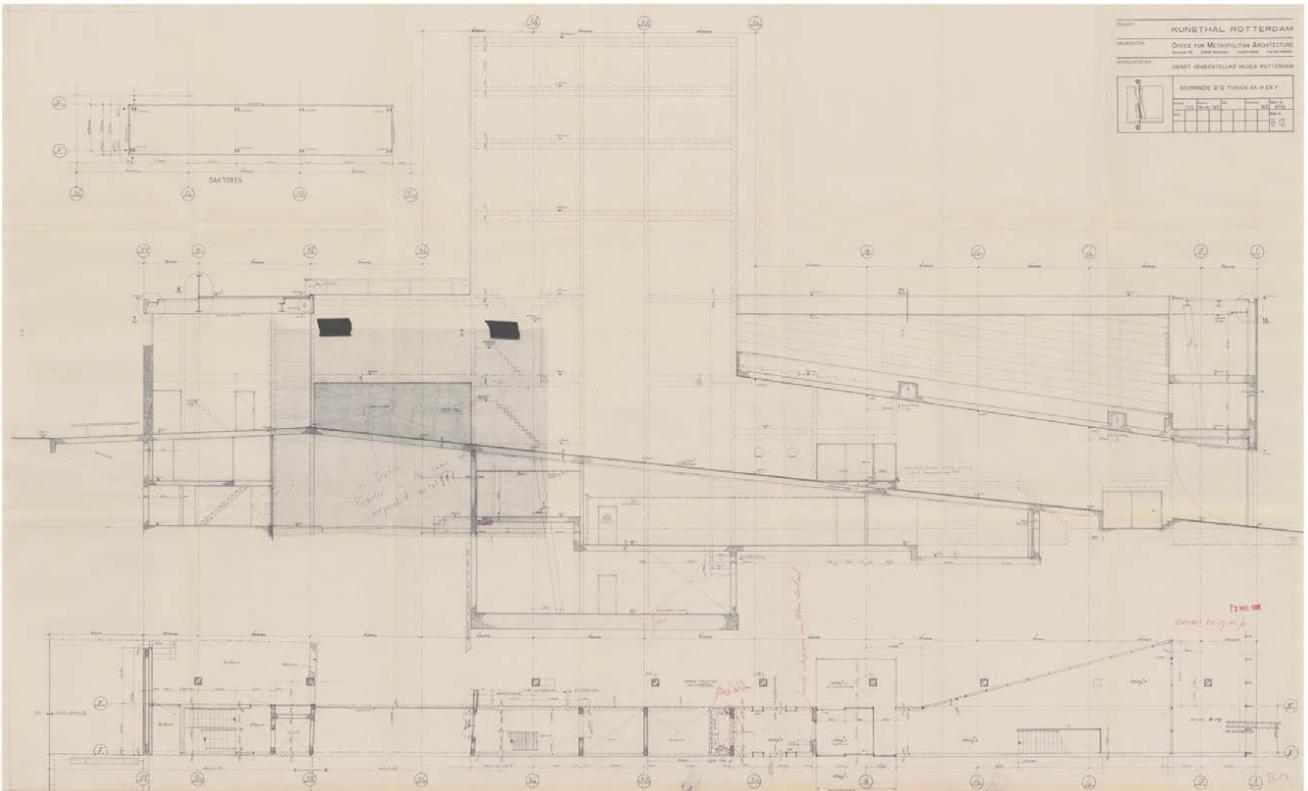


Figure 22. Kunsthall. OMA. Cross sections. Above: North-south axis. Below: East-west axis. 5 and 19 April 1990.

of Halls 1 and 2. The wire glass doors in the drawings from April 1990 to Hall 1, are difficult to distinguish from the likewise glazed fire escape doors. The entrance to Hall 2 is marked by a large steel segment that interrupts the transparent glass wall to the south, while the actual door is small and inconspicuous.

No finish

Among the plans OMA submitted in April 1990, there is at least one drawing in scale 1 to 50 for each major space showing the elevations of the entire envelope with the specifications of the finishes.⁴⁶⁷ [Figures 27-31] In comparison to the drawings from October 1989, most materials are modified, except for the closed white walls of the exhibition area. The changes seem to be about two issues: a seeming absence of finishes or general sense of rawness; and the ‘conquest’ of the galleries’ ceilings to redeem them from their ‘neutral’ whiteness.

The sense of rawness is most obvious in the Auditorium: the ceiling and the square columns are specified as exposed concrete and most of the floor as concrete with a wear layer.⁴⁶⁸ [Figures 27-28] The square columns set back from the enclosure, the flat ceiling without downstand beams, and the concrete-like floor are reminiscent of Maison Domino, just as Le Corbusier’s 1914 rendering shows it: as the bare skeleton of a structure without loadbearing walls. The corrugated sheathing is specified as polyester and pierced by some 20 rows of circular cut-outs. The size varies slightly, and the rows of circles are shifted, the resulting pattern looking like a cheery 1950s decoration.⁴⁶⁹ Behind each circle there is a horizontal fluorescent light tube, the cut-out leaving most of it uncovered.⁴⁷⁰ The motif of the circles obviously echoes the porthole windows of the ticket booth outside, and it was to be echoed again at the inner layer of the façade’s glazing, where ten window units are pierced by circular openings with

⁴⁶⁷ OMAR 1786, 2847.

⁴⁶⁸ Drawing B27, OMAR 1786.

⁴⁶⁹ The drawing B27 from 19 April 1990 specifies: ‘polyesterwand’. Perhaps the illumination (fluorescent tubes) was to be located behind the openings. The drawing B 40 shows that the term denotes corrugated panels in polyester. OMAR 2847. In a detail drawing from December 1990, the same term is used for the corrugated sheathing of the wall alongside the Public Passage. Detail 32. OMAR 1808.

⁴⁷⁰ Drawing B40.

Chapter 2.5

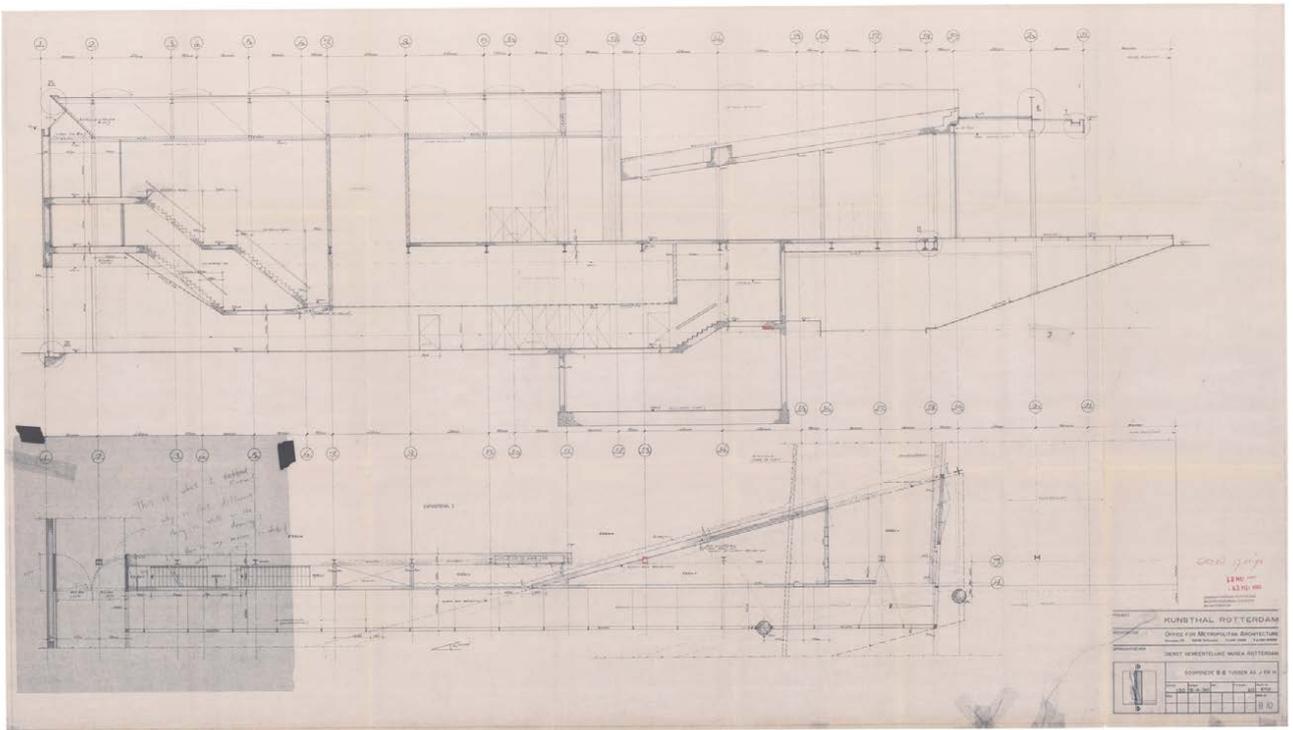
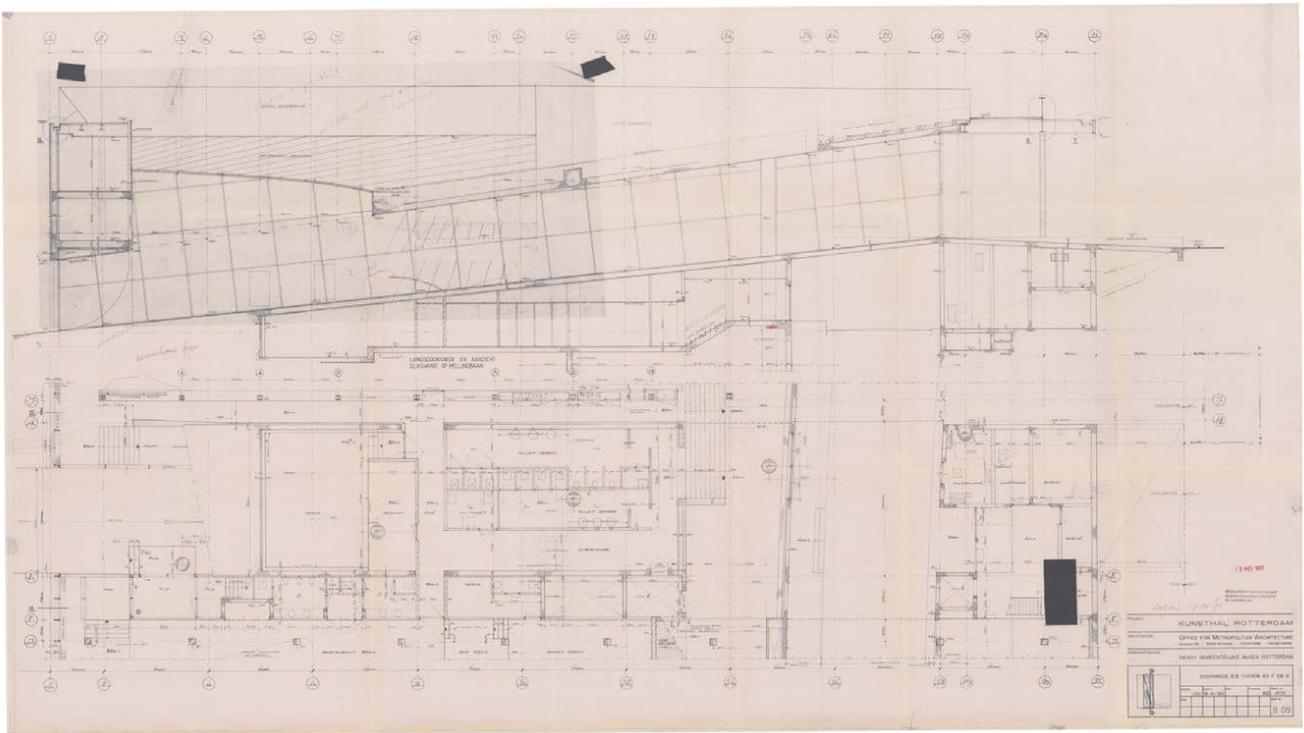


Figure 23. Kunsthal. OMA. Cross sections along north-south axis.
Above: Ramp Street. Below: Poché Hall 2. 5 and 19 April 1990.

a diameter of 500 millimetres.⁴⁷¹ As a material, however, the corrugated polyester strikes as an improvised fitting rather than an actual finish. The same applies to the wall at the bottom of the slope, tellingly specified as ‘underlayment panels’, plywood, in all likelihood.⁴⁷² As in October, for the seating’s 26 steps parquet flooring is provided – perhaps the only ‘proper’ finish in this space. A curtain serves both as a blackout and as a flexible partition, apparently taking recourse to OMA’s scheme for the NAI. The floorplan shows the ovoid curtain rail, allowing to separate the first 16 rows from the rest of the room.⁴⁷³

The concrete flooring of the Auditorium – epoxy in the version from October – extends and, in a sense, leads to Hall 1, as it covers also the short corridor between the two spaces. Van Krimpen might have impinged on this choice of material: ‘a beautifully-finished concrete floor’ was among his preferences.⁴⁷⁴ As Ed Melet mentions, Koolhaas would have preferred to use massive timber columns at the centre of Hall 1: ‘But since the budget would not stretch to solving the structural and detailing problems posed by yet another material, he settled for steel profiles, which he chose to clad in hollow tree trunks.’⁴⁷⁵ According to Hoshino, the cladding provides the requisite fireproof covering of the steel structure.⁴⁷⁶ The suspended ceiling is pierced by about 130 uncovered fluorescent light tubes, spread at irregular distances all over the surface.⁴⁷⁷ Despite the irregular arrangement, the tubes clearly tie on the field of tubes of the Auditorium’s polyester wall.⁴⁷⁸ For the cladding of the ceiling, the drawings specify ‘plasterboard, painted black’. [Figure 29] As one can observe in the Kunsthal today, at five metres height, the black tends to tune out the surface of the ceiling. Perhaps the idea was to evoke a dark spangled sky, into which the ‘tree tops’ disappear.

⁴⁷¹ Drawing B20. OMAR 1786.

⁴⁷² The key reads ‘underlayment plaatmateriaal’. Drawing B27.

⁴⁷³ Drawing B05. OMAR 1784. The ovoid curtain already appears in Hoshino’s ‘Inventory of Problems’, 31.

⁴⁷⁴ List of requirements from 18 February 1989. OMAR 1436.

⁴⁷⁵ Melet, ‘Perfect Disorder’, 287.

⁴⁷⁶ Interview with the author on 25 July 2017.

⁴⁷⁷ Drawing B35. OMAR 1788.

⁴⁷⁸ Drawing B39. OMAR 1788.

Chapter 2.5

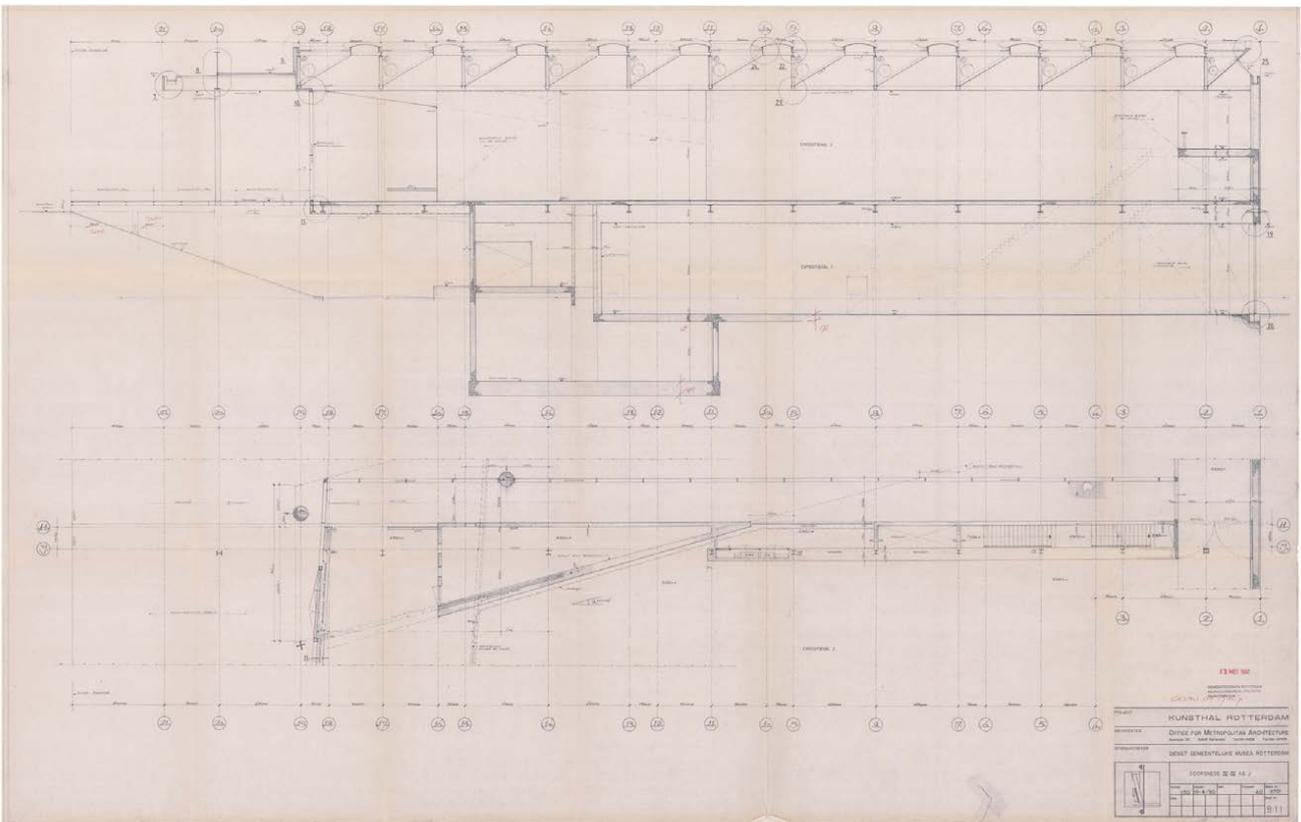
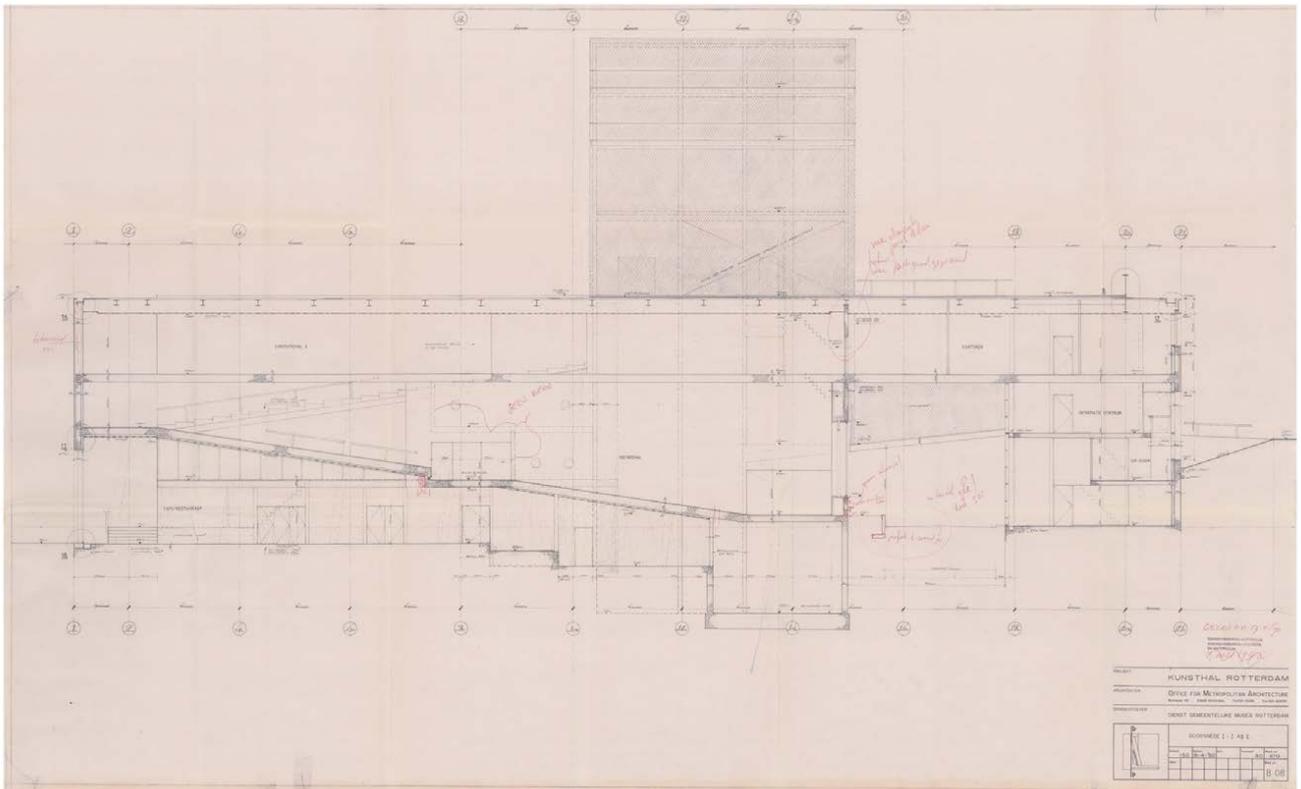


Figure 24. Kunsthall. OMA. Cross sections along north-south axis.
Above: Restaurant, Auditorium, Hall 3, Office Block. Below: Halls 1-2. 19 April 1990.

The image of trees passing through ceilings had also been the theme of Charles Simonds' exhibition 'The Three Trees' at the Architecture Museum Basel in summer 1985. The segmented trunks of three large pine trees were arranged in such a manner that they seemed to penetrate the museum from the ground to the roof, if seen from the outside, while appearing as primordial columns in the interior. Photocopies stemming from the catalogue – which Koolhaas might have encountered at the occasion of the 1988 exhibition on OMA in the same museum – are part of the visual material collected by the Kunsthal team.⁴⁷⁹ [Figure 29]

Like the drawings from October, those from April provide a parquet flooring for Hall 2. The notion of an interior with proper finishes was contested by a suspended ceiling of galvanized 'roof panels' in metal, commonly used for the exterior of a building. [Figure 30] The panels – which replaced the plasterboard ceiling from October – were ribbed and perforated so as to filter the light entering through the skylights.⁴⁸⁰ Galvanized roof panels, albeit without perforation, are also provided for the ceiling of the Portico, perfectly level with their counterpart in Hall 2. Other details, too, insist on the principle unity of the two spaces: the mullions have the same depth on both sides of the glazing; the galvanized metal grating of the Portico's floor 'enters' Hall 2, and the same material is provided for the covering of the convectors along the bottom of the glass wall.⁴⁸¹ Galvanized metal grating is also specified for the floor of the oblong gallery to the east, incorporated as an additional space into the scheme only in February 1990. [Figures 20, 30] Apart from the connotation of 'outsidedness', the visual permeability of the metal grating allowed to retain some qualities of what used to be the *vide* until October 1989, that is, the two-storey gallery adjacent to Hall 1. The partitions which separate the two oblong galleries from Halls 1 and 2 end about 70 centimetres below the ceiling.⁴⁸² Above this height, the H-columns, otherwise encased by the same partitions, are exposed. Inside the building, the tops of the columns provide one of the few occasions to glimpse the steel structure of the eastern section,

⁴⁷⁹ OMAR 1761. Catalogue: Architekturmuseum Basel (ed.), *Charles Simonds. The Three Trees* (Basel: Architekturmuseum Basel, 1987).

⁴⁸⁰ Details no. 1, 2, 10. 19 April 1990. Stadsarchief Rotterdam. The light fixtures would have been located at the bottom chord of each open-web truss. Drawings B37, B39. OMAR 1788.

⁴⁸¹ Details no. 11. 19 April 1990. Stadsarchief Rotterdam.

⁴⁸² Drawings B22, B24. OMAR 1786.

Chapter 2.5

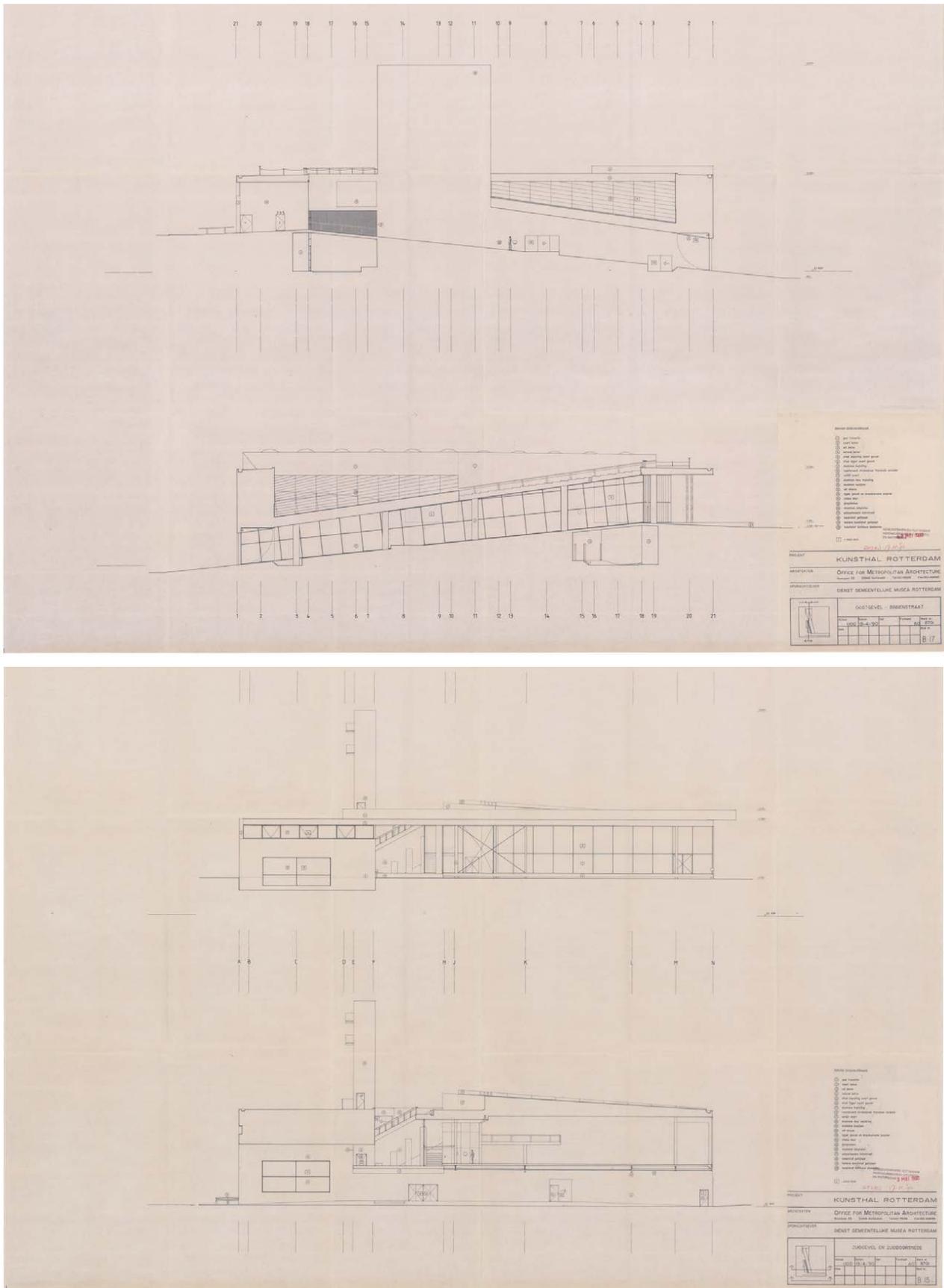


Figure 25. Kunsthall. OMA. 19 April 1990. Above: Cross sections through Ramp Street. Below: South elevation along Maas Boulevard and south elevation/cross section along Service Road.

especially in Hall 1. In Hall 2, the row of these partly exposed H-columns is continued by four columns of the same type and fully visible. Given that one of them is located outside the glass wall to the south, carrying the roof of the Portico, this row of columns serves as yet another visual link between the two adjacent spaces.

The front of the ticket booth of the separate entrance to Hall 2 was to be covered with cowhides, pierced by two more loophole windows.⁴⁸³ [Figures 30-31] The cowhide screen marked the spot where tickets could be purchased, and it translated the triangular volume of the *poché* accommodating the ticket booth into an assembly of three different surfaces. That Koolhaas and his team aimed for this impact is evident from previous versions. Whereas the diagonal side next to Hall 2 is one of the closed walls reserved for the hanging of pictures, the sides next to the ramp and the entrance were conceived of in a translucent material. This is indicated by the minimal width of the two partitions in the floorplans, while a page in Hoshino's 'Inventory' specifies them as 'clear glass', and the short one to the south as 'translucent but less clear to hide ticket office'.⁴⁸⁴

In Hall 3, the only 'raw' elements were the five remaining tilted columns in exposed concrete. The drawings provide linoleum for the floor, white painted plasterboard for the suspended ceiling, and for the closed walls – as for all of the circuit – multiplex panels, likewise painted in white.⁴⁸⁵ [Figure 31] Along the walls, the ceiling is slightly stepped back so as to accept 'hidden' lighting fixtures.⁴⁸⁶ The entire interior of the Restaurant was yet to be defined.⁴⁸⁷ Like in October, the flooring materials of the circuit vary, each extending beyond the limits of at least one major space. The drawings from April 1990 allow to re-enact the full sequence of materials, ramps and corridors included: concrete flooring (Auditorium, corridor, Hall 1 and the adjacent gallery), asphalt (Ramp Street), parquet (Hall 2 and corridor leading to the Auditorium), metal grating (gallery adjacent to Hall 2), concrete (stepped stair

⁴⁸³ Drawing B24. Sketch. OMAR 3348.

⁴⁸⁴ 'Inventory of Problems', 17.

⁴⁸⁵ Drawing B25. OMAR 2847.

⁴⁸⁶ Drawing B39. OMAR 1788.

⁴⁸⁷ Drawing B26. OMAR 1786.

Chapter 2.5

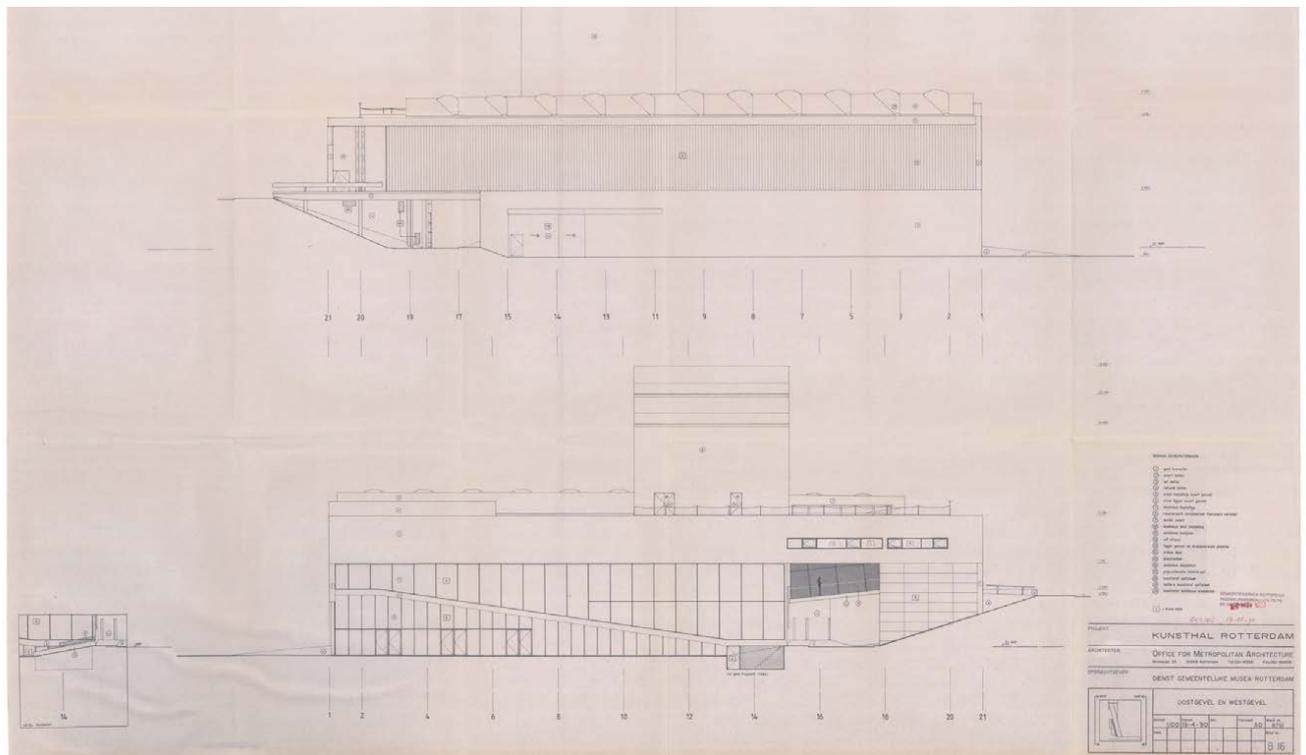
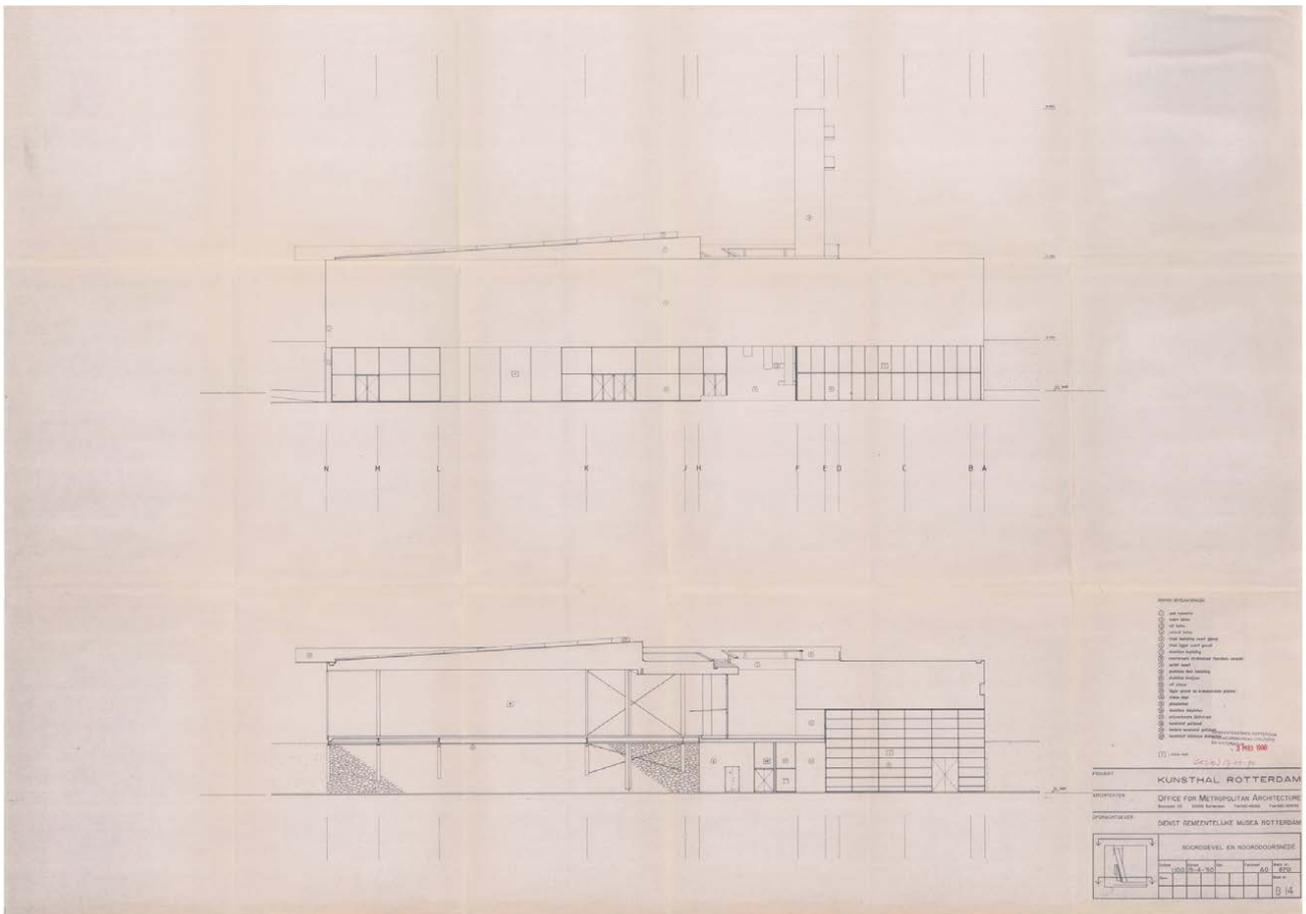


Figure 26. Kunsthall. OMA. 19 April 1990.
 Above: North elevation along park and north elevation/cross section along Service Road. Below: East and west elevation.

ascending to the roof terrace), linoleum (Hall 3, balcony). The pattern is obvious: the flooring of each main space spills over to the subsequent minor space, sometimes even further.⁴⁸⁸ This partial continuity of the flooring implies a sense of direction, ‘guiding’ visitors from one space to the next and eventually full circle back to the Auditorium.⁴⁸⁹

No lintels

The transition from one space to another is fluid in plan and in section. As in the drawings from October 1989, the entire area of intersection between two adjacent spaces is open. There are no lintels along the circuit, no protruding walls that narrow the passage down to a doorway. The only exception is the partition between Hall 3 and the stepped stair leading to the roof. Conceived as transparent until October 1989, it was replaced by a closed wall by April 1990, arguably at the request of Van Krimpen. In general, however, it is the limited width and height of the corridor-like passages that articulate the transition between the main spaces.⁴⁹⁰ By contrast, the exterior walls – glazed ones as much as closed ones – act as *enjambements*, extending without interruption from one space to the next, as they do in the facades. Like the parquet floor, the northern white wall of Hall 2 extends to the back of the Auditorium. Similarly, the Auditorium’s ceiling in exposed concrete continues along the corridor so as to protrude as a balcony into Hall 2. But in most cases, the height of the ceiling changes from one space to the next along with its finish and construction. Like the columns, the ceilings ‘individualize’ the spaces, juxtaposing the spatial continuity with the discontinuity of the materials exposed. Regarding the main spaces, the differences are pronounced: exposed concrete (Auditorium), black paint (Hall 1), galvanized roof panels (Hall 2), white paint (Hall 3).

⁴⁸⁸ Of course, there are exceptions to the rule: the metal grating of the oblong gallery; the stepped stairs leading to the roof.

⁴⁸⁹ The sense of direction corresponds to the spiralling itinerary from the Auditorium to Hall 1 to Halls 2 and 3, which does not work the other way round. Koolhaas and Hoshino followed this itinerary when showing visitors through the Kunsthall, and it is also the itinerary described in *S,M,L,XL*.

⁴⁹⁰ Moussette interprets the spatial contraction of the corridors as thresholds that introduce an element of calculated psychological difficulty into the circuit. Moussette, “‘Do we need a canopy for rain?’”, 289. Conversely, it could be argued that the threshold spaces of the circuit have a preparatory function, enhancing through their intimacy the impact of the large spaces that follow. To some extent, however, these spaces are a consequence of the *poché* that eventually thwarted OMA’s idea of a completely transparent interior.

Chapter 2.5

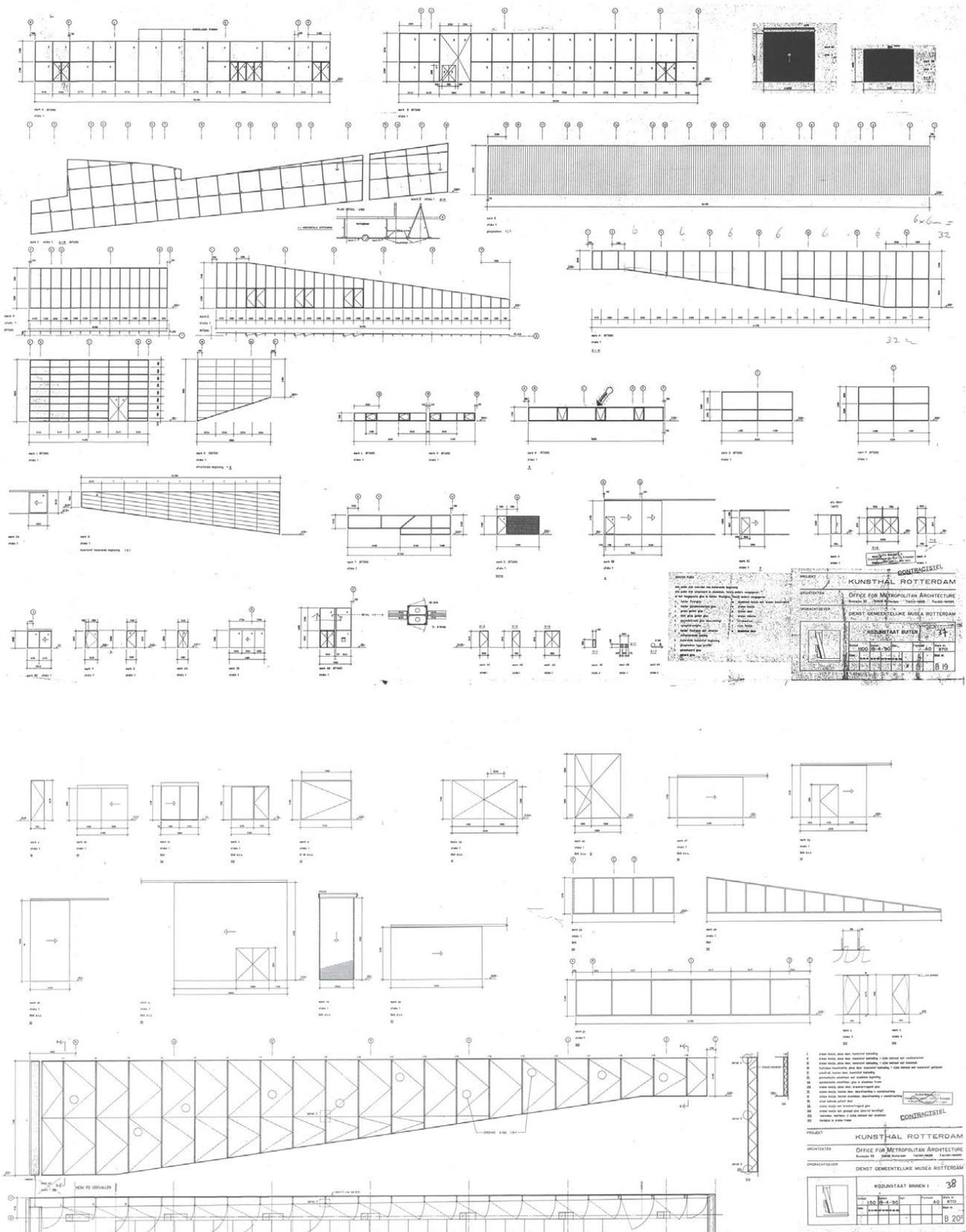


Figure 27. Kunsthall. OMA. Survey of glazed surfaces, windows and doors. 19 April 1990.

The street

In an interview from 1998, Anna Klingmann observes that in Koolhaas' buildings as much attention is dedicated to the circulation as to any other part of the programme. Klingmann, referring to the Auditorium of the Kunsthall and its function to access the gallery spaces, asks why he is rating circulation areas so high. Koolhaas replies:

If you look at most public buildings, you will realize that they demand rather dry inventories of requirements, and that there is no superordinate territory that goes beyond the specification of single activities. For this reason, we treat circulation surfaces as one of the last domains open to a whole series of uses.⁴⁹¹

Klingmann's next question is who the prospect user of such 'staged' circulation areas would be. Koolhaas answer has been quoted before:

There is no supposed user and no supposed use. So is, for instance, the current use of the Kunsthall really a very limited version of what was intended. The Kunsthall was planned as a multifunctional building in which a whole series of different events ought to be organized. The only part of the programme that could be employed for that purpose was something that you might interpret either as circulation surface or as marked space within an urban field, allowing for an intensification of the urban experience.⁴⁹²

Both statements indicate ideas that seem to have been fundamental for the design of the Kunsthall. The Kunsthall, as envisaged by Koolhaas, is not a building for specific use, but open to any use; a building not for a specific target group, but for anybody: the analogy to what is generally referred to as 'public space' is obvious and it reverberates in Koolhaas' description of the circuit as a 'marked space within an urban field'. The statement confirms that the Kunsthall – at some point, to some extent – was

⁴⁹¹ Klingmann, 'Architektur als kollektiver Erlebnisraum', 52 (author trans.).

⁴⁹² Ibid., (author trans.).

Chapter 2.5

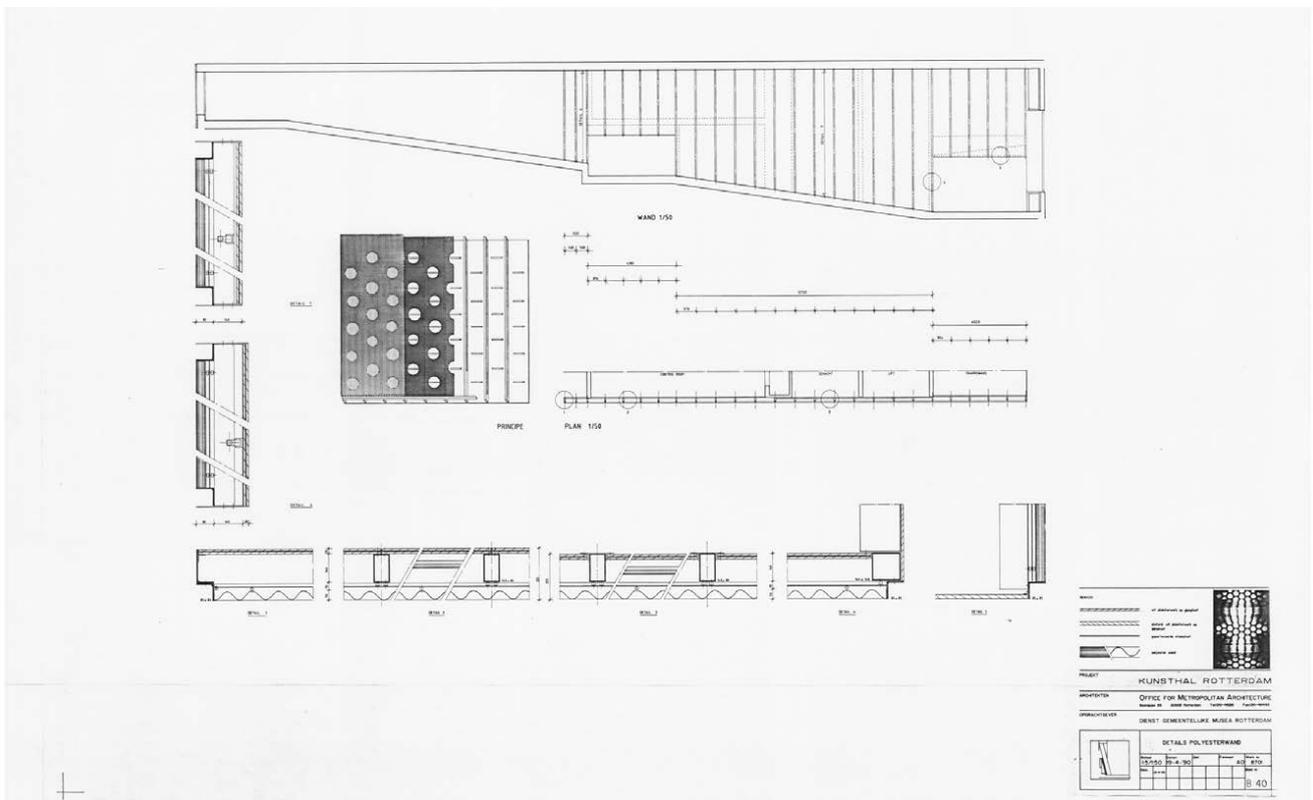
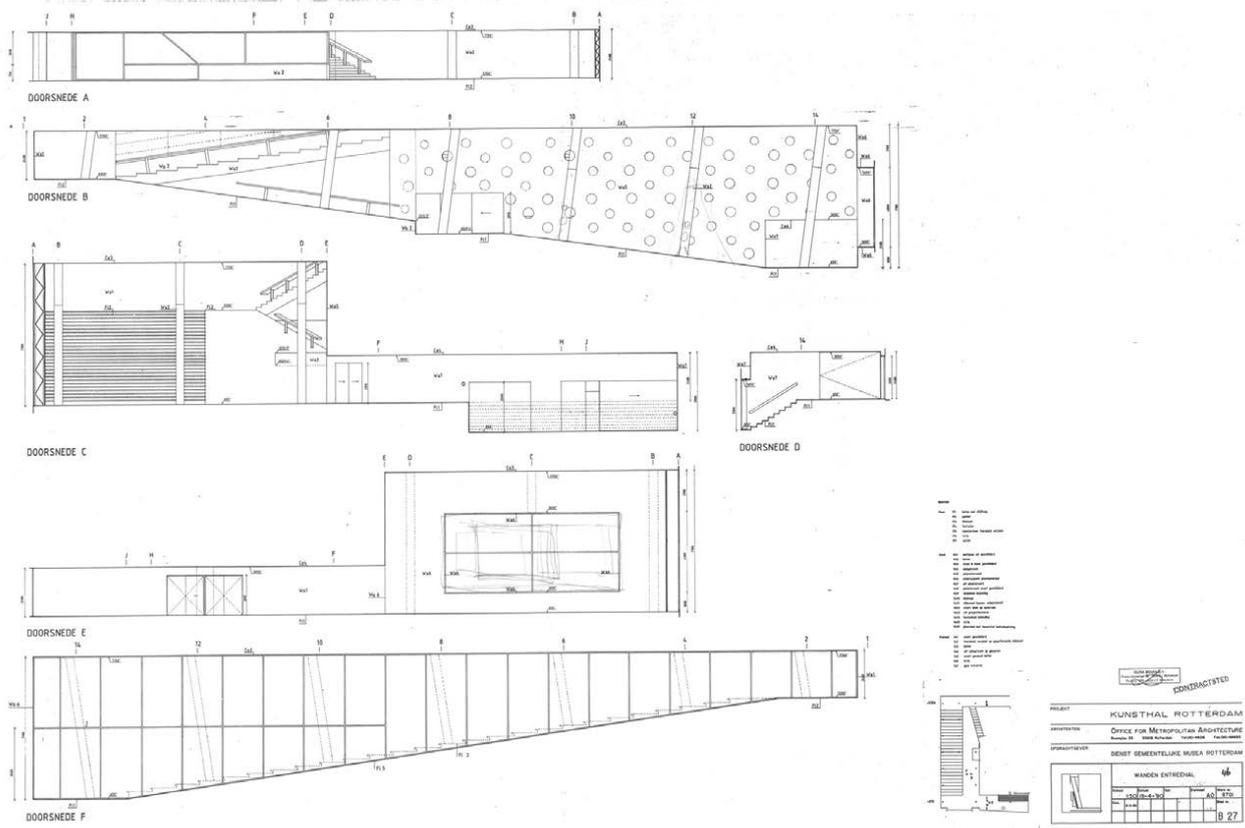


Figure 28. Kunsthal. OMA. Finishes Auditorium. 19 April 1990.

conceived in analogy to the street as a collective space open to any sort of activity and temporary appropriation. As suggested by Michel Moussette, the ‘without-finish’ quality of much of the interior evokes the exterior of an urban space.

A ‘marked space’ – these words suggest something less than a building, a minimalism of means, open boundaries, like the Podium of the Museum Park. The street, in fact, appears to be the paradigm of both, the Podium and the Kunsthal. In the tendering drawings from May/June 1990, the Podium is designed as a succession of parallel streets. A black, asphalted surface with white street-markings – the gesture could not be more explicit. The asphalt surfacing provided for the Ramp Street in 1989/1990 was to conjure up the image of the street in a similarly explicit manner. Visitors crossing the Podium were likely to recognize the Kunsthal as its continuation, or vice versa. The reappearance of the ‘black tarmac’ was to announce what the Kunsthal is about, or rather, what the Kunsthal ought to be. Koolhaas saw the areas of circulation as the built counterpart of the street in a straightforward, matter-of-fact sense: in the realm of contemporary architecture as the last resort for potentially unplanned appropriation, endowed with the key quality he used to ascribe to the *terrain vague*, urban void or park in the 1980s. If so, the circuit was meant to be a street in more than a merely symbolical way.⁴⁹³ In the case of the Ramp Street, at least, unintended forms of appropriation were more than a purely theoretical

⁴⁹³ There are some parallels between this interpretation of the Kunsthal and Herzog & de Meuron’s 1111 Lincoln Road in Miami Beach (2005-10) as described by Lars Lerup in his recent essay ‘Parking Plus’. If anything, the parallels illustrate the enormous shift that has taken place in architecture and culture during the 15 years separating the two projects in time. Lerup ascribes a heterotopian, non-conformist quality to 1111 Lincoln Road, which he discerns both in its unconventional mix of uses – next to parking, stores, a restaurant, event spaces, offices, and a penthouse – and the architecture itself. For Lerup, the exposed concrete structure with flat-slab ceilings echoes the architectural denudation of Le Corbusier’s Maison Domino, while the garage’s inclined and differently shaped columns evoke a building that ‘may not stand entirely still.’ The unrest of the building, Lerup seems to imply, reverberates in its (calculated) appropriation for events like the dinner on a parking deck, probably referring to a photograph shown on the architect’s website. A corollary fact sheet lists level 7 of 1111 Lincoln Road as an ‘Event Space’, apparently for rent, while the project statement explains that ‘[...] the structure can be used for ‘parties, photo or film shoots, fashion shows, concerts or other social or commercial activities, offering amazing views as the backdrop for the stage.’ It goes without saying that this is not the sort of appropriation Koolhaas seems to have had in mind. Lars Lerup, ‘Parking Plus’, in: *The Continuous City* (Zurich: Park Books, 2017), 131-141.

Chapter 2.5

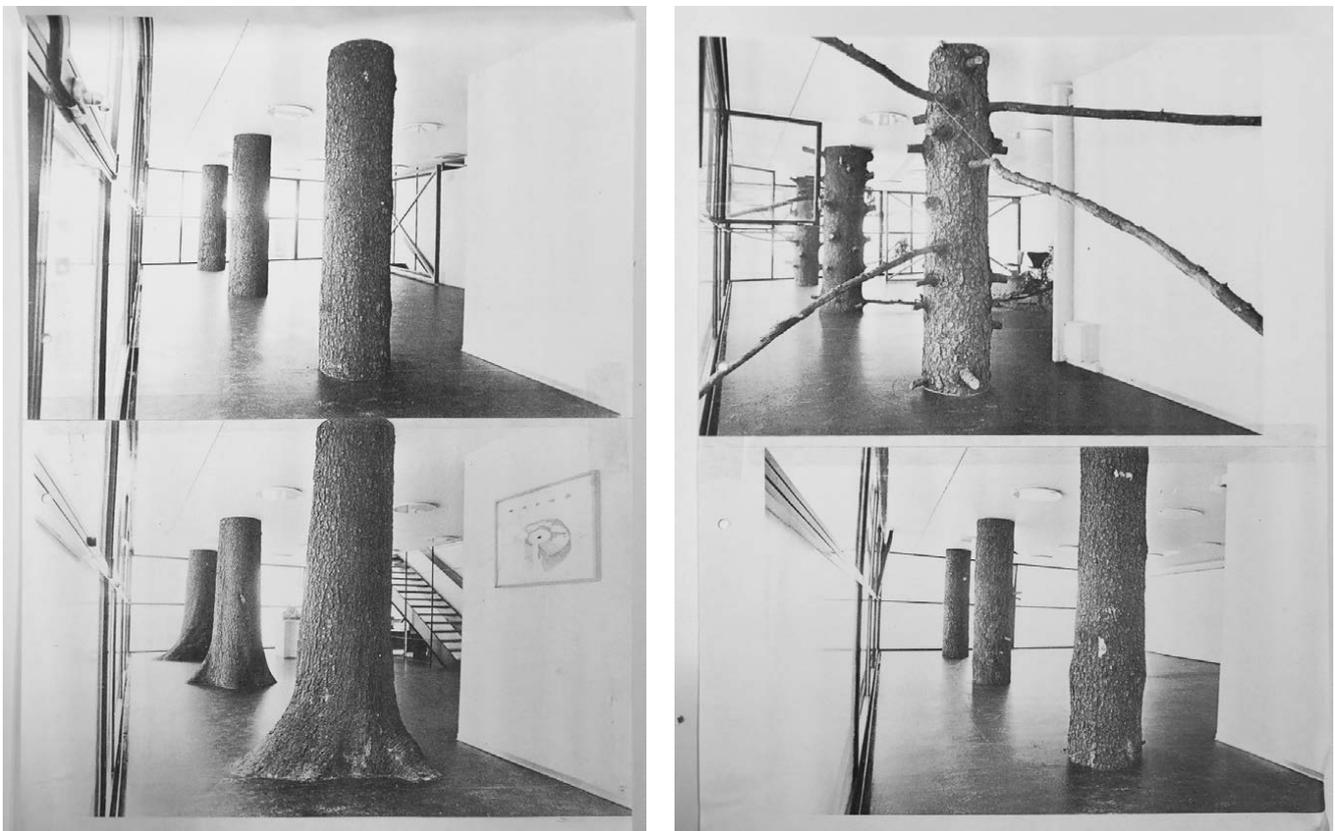
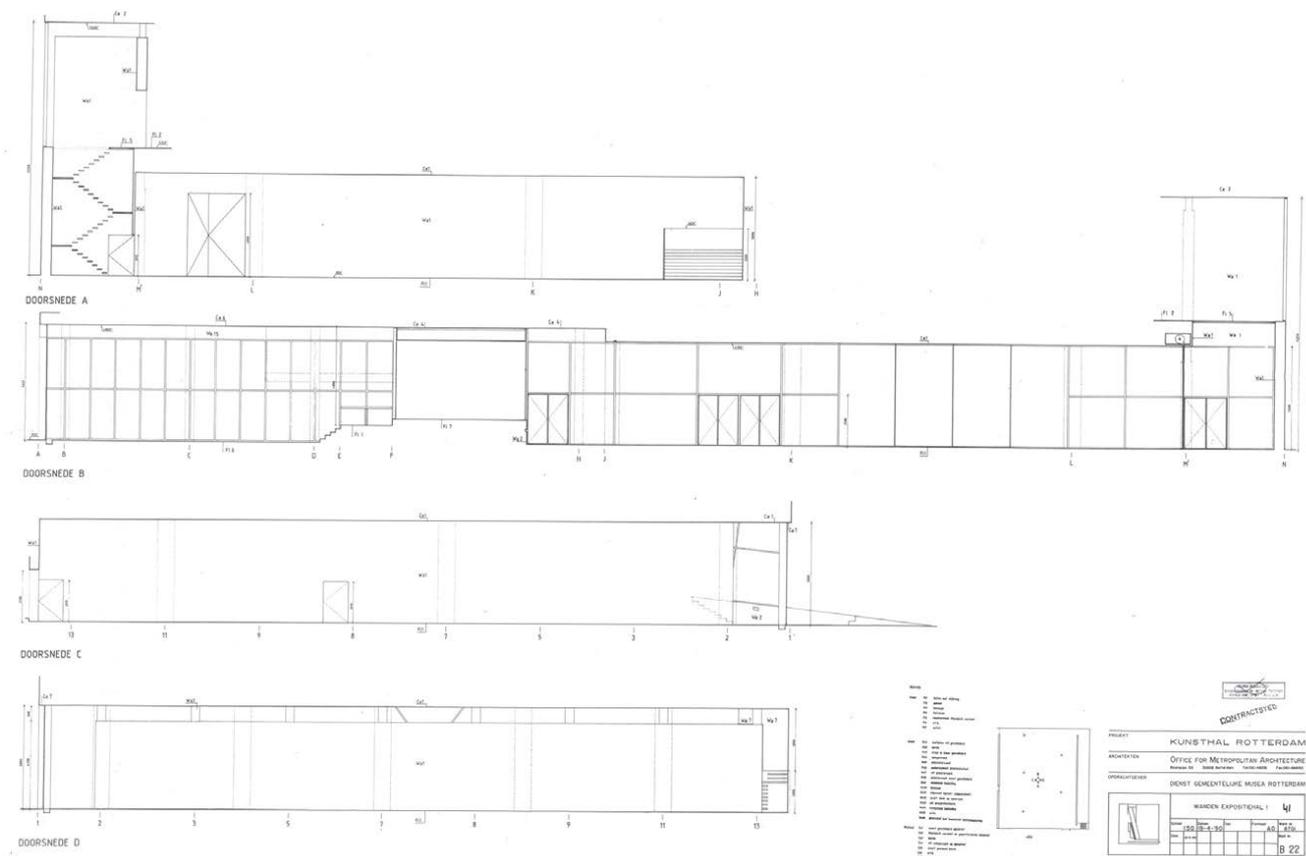


Figure 29. Above: Kunsthall. OMA. Finishes Hall 1. 19 April 1990.
Below: Charles Simonds. 'The Three Trees', Architekturmuseum Basel, 1985. Photocopies collected by the Kunsthall team.

scenario. When the Kunsthal opened in late October 1992, it was feared that drug addicts might enter the passage at night, since the yet unfinished Museum Park was ‘peopled with junkies’.⁴⁹⁴

The openness of the central section initially planned, with no or only few visual barriers, would have revealed at a glance the ‘seamless’ continuity of the circuit and the street-like character of the interior in its entirety, similar to OMA’s project for the Jussieu Libraries. That was not the case anymore in the project from April 1990. To some extent, the interior’s materials marked the circuits’ affinity to the urban exterior. The visitor entering the building would have experienced the transition from the Ramp Street to the Auditorium as a merely gradual shift of environment: no asphalt floor, but the same sheathing of corrugated polyester, and ceiling and columns similar to the exposed concrete structure of the Skew Ramp outside. The drawings specify ‘natural concrete’ for both. The Auditorium would set the tune for most of the circuit. The closed walls, the parquet of Hall 2, striking a different note, would be ‘drowned’ by the presence of the concrete floor, the debarked trunks, the cold galvanized ceiling.

By comparison

It goes without saying that the range of materials, colours and structural solutions the visitor of the project from April 1990 would have encountered along the circuit is unusually wide, heterogeneous and non-repetitive, especially if compared to museums and arts centres that were designed more or less in parallel to the Kunsthal. Examples are, among others: the Sainsbury Wing of the National Gallery in London by Venturi and Scott Brown (1985-91), Alvaro Siza’s Galician Centre for Contemporary Art in Santiago de Compostela (1986-93), Gustav Peichl’s Federal Arts Centre in Bonn (1986-92), O.M. Ungers’ extension of the Arts Centre in Hamburg (1986-1996), Richard Meier’s Museum for Contemporary Art in Barcelona (1987-95), Frank Gehry’s Vitra Museum in Weil am Rhein (1987-89), Mario Botta’s Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco (1988-95), Tadao Ando’s Museum for

⁴⁹⁴ See: Ineke Schwartz, ‘Kunsthal van Koolhaas heeft internationaal niveau’, (author trans.). According to Schwartz, there was at least the intention to keep the two gates at both ends of the passage open, even if the presence of junkies in the adjacent park advised against such unrestricted openness. Today the gates are closed overnight.

Contemporary Art in Naoshima (1988-92) and the Japanese Pavilion at the Expo in Barcelona (1989-92), Peter Eisenman's Aronoff Center for Design and Art in Ohio (1988-96), and Aldo Rossi's Bonnefanten Museum in Maastricht (1990-94).

The main spaces of the Kunsthal are relatively homogeneous. Within each exhibition hall there is but one flooring and, for the most part, one type of columns. The finish of the different walls may change, as it does in the Auditorium; but even there, each wall is confined to a single finish or type of construction, and the same applies to the rest of the circuit, except for the glazing of Hall 1 combining different types of glass and mullions. Within each space, the sense of the whole is not much disturbed, as there is nothing unusual in the finishes of the ceiling, the floor, the columns and walls to differ from one another. What is contested is the formal integrity of the circuit's floor as a whole and the ribbon-like sequence of transparent and opaque exterior walls – in the latter case, as explicated before, to the point of illegibility. The columns relate to whole of the structural system ever more ostentatiously as fragments, especially if one compares the buildings' eastern, central and western section. First and foremost, it is the movement through multiple spaces that conveys a sense of diversity, discontinuity, if not fragmentation. And with good reason it is the experience of the observer in motion that later on has been compared to the montaged sequences of a film.

The same argument has been applied to the exterior. Its heterogeneity is most striking while walking around the building, especially when looking at two facades at once. But at least two sides of the building are so heterogeneous – west and south – that each appears as a collage of fragments that contests formal integrity, just like the exterior in its entirety contests the formal integrity of the volume as a whole. As if – in the case of the west façade, and, by way of extension, the other two flat facades as well – the diversity of the interior spaces, or 'former volumes', has been conflated into the skin of the prism.

The exterior 'communicates' much of the interior's character, also in terms of materials. The use of exposed concrete, metal grating, channel glass, corrugated polyester is characteristic for both. But the

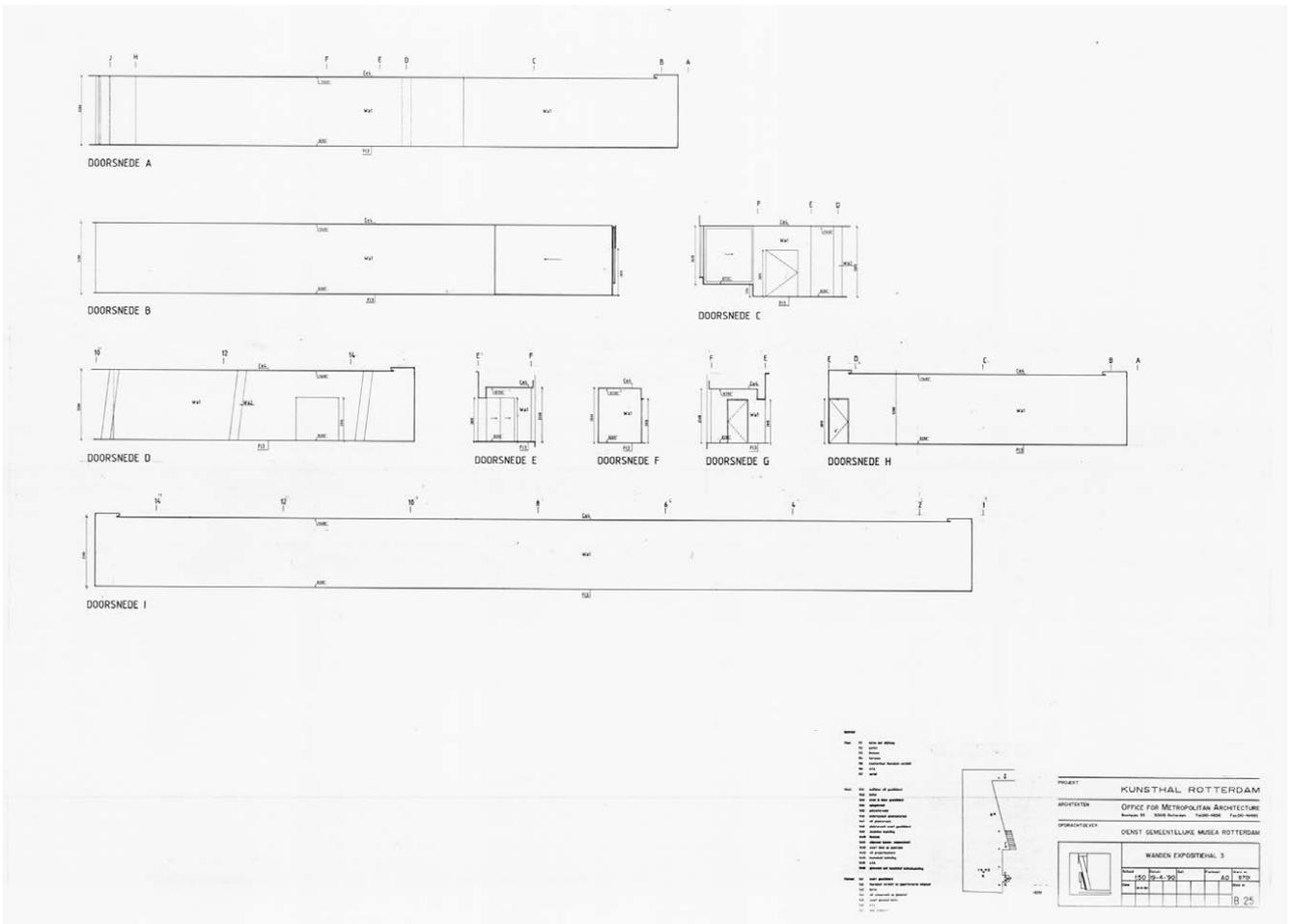
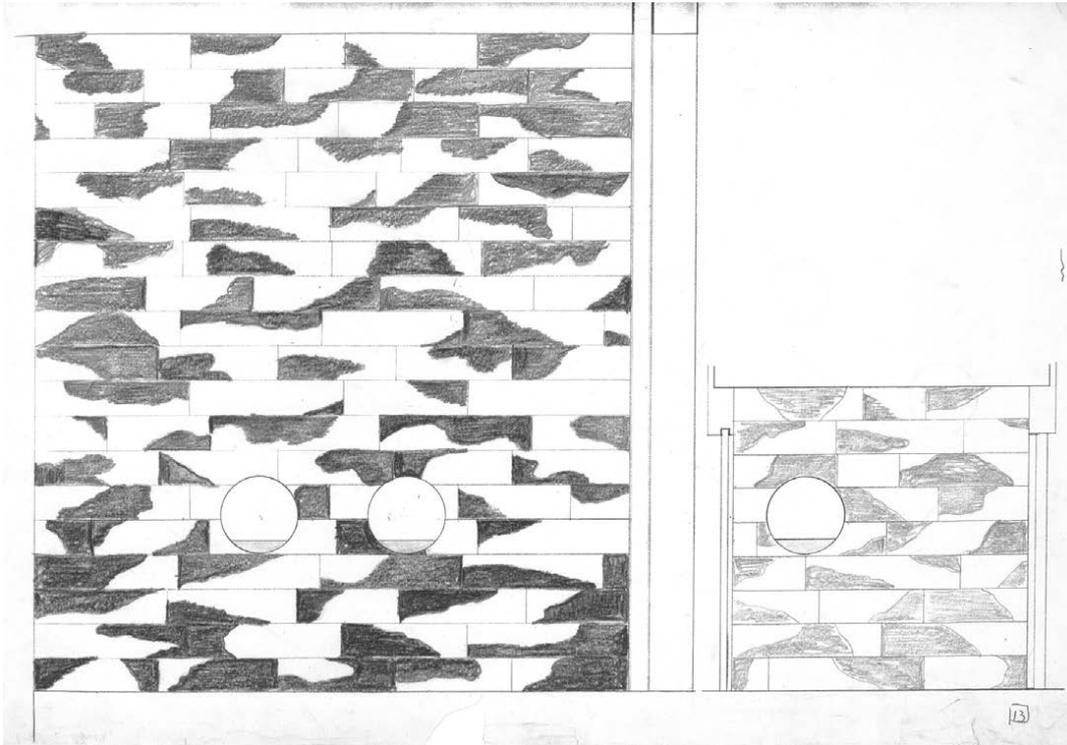


Figure 31. Kunsthall. OMA. Above: Drawing of cowhides, ticket booths Hall 2 and main entrance. Below: Finishes Hall 3. 19 April 1990.

facades seem to translate the interiors' formal heterogeneity into the image of the intensified urban experience Koolhaas wished the building to provide for – experience of in principle undetermined events.

2.6

A postmodern gloss and other last touches

The 29 months from the first pile to the opening: June 1990 - October 1992

The first pile was driven into the ground on 8 June 1990.⁴⁹⁵ Five days later, Cecil Balmond wrote a letter to Rem Koolhaas, in which he commemorates the event.

Dear Rem,

KUNSTHAL

I understand that the first pile driven went in well, cheered on its way with champagne.

I trust this augers [sic] well for a good construction phase on the project and that in addition to your Dance Theatre there will be another modern significant building in Holland.

We have had our problems, let[‘]s hope that our respective teams learn to work together more successfully in the future.

Thank you for the drawing. I shall frame it and use it as exhibit one in a future Arup exhibition regarding OMA’s work.

Yours sincerely,

Cecil Balmond⁴⁹⁶

This letter marks the end of the most intense collaboration between Arup and OMA, which apparently not always went smoothly. Arup and the planning departments of Rotterdam’s municipality switched roles, once the Definitive Design was completed. Since May 1990, at the latest, it was the task of the municipality to provide the drawings and specifications of the building services and the structural system, and Arup’s to assess them as consultants.

⁴⁹⁵ Hélène Damen, ‘Bouw Kunsthal gestart’, *De Architect* (Jul/Aug 1990), 9. The minutes of the Building Committee’s meeting from 11 July mention the building permit by then being issued. OMAR 1521.

⁴⁹⁶ Unsigned copy. 13 June 1990. Arup London Archives.

Much of the project's development between summer 1990 and autumn 1992 regards the 'invisible' depths of its construction and technical equipment. Nonetheless, a series of changes next to the articulation of some of the visible details, amounts to another significant shift with regard to the character of the building as a whole. Apart from the plans of the municipality and the manufactures, the drawings, sketches and papers of the architects help to re-enact these developments. To a certain measure the description of the actual outcome – the building completed in late 1992 – is as much a reconstruction as the account of its genesis. Next to the existing building, it relies on: photos of the construction site; minutes and documents from the construction phase; photos of the Kunsthal from the early nineties; the municipality's as-built plan's from 1993; and old-new drawings by OMA of an extensive renovation and partly transformation implemented in 2013/2014.

More, not less

The extreme diversity of materials and constructive systems along with the numerous non-orthogonal intersections, required an unusual amount of detailing. Exceptions were the rule. But the work of the subsequent two years was not limited to a routine of problem solving so as to bring the project from April 1990 'under control'. To some extent, the increase of detail went hand in hand with a further increase of diversity that would stress the relative autonomy of parts in terms of construction and form. The most obvious example is the roof of Hall 2. [Figure 1] In late 1991, the idea to provide for a flat suspended ceiling of galvanized roof panels was abandoned.⁴⁹⁷ The plasterboard-clad voids containing the ventilation ducts – right triangles in cross section – were now exposed to the view. At this point it was inevitable to renounce the curtain reiterating the inner curve of the Service Road passing through the building below Hall 2 (see Chapter 2.3). However, the recess of the *poché* next to the Ramp Street, provided to store the curtain, was preserved, so that the large alcove became yet another erratic remainder of an otherwise abandoned idea. [Figure 2]

⁴⁹⁷ See, for instance: Details no. 1, 22 November 1991. OMAR 1831. See also: Soffit plan W601A. 30 October 1991. OMAR 1817. The new ceiling details were worked out by the beginning of 1992. See: Details no. 23, 24, 24A, 24B, 25, 400, 401, 417, 418. 28 February 1992. OMAR 1807.

In the new layout of the ceiling, the sloped sides of the triangles in plasterboard were retained as they were, whereas the triangles' vertical sides were replaced by translucent polycarbonate panels to filter daylight.⁴⁹⁸ The polycarbonate panels needed to be tilted as well, connecting the bottom of the skylights – and the upper edge of the surface in plasterboard – to the bottom chord of the open-web trusses spanning Hall 2. In section, the revised ceiling resembles a saw-tooth roof turned inward. The translucent panels are inclined towards the north, whereas the light entering through the horizontal openings and their vaulted covering remains zenithal. The character of the space, however, changed profoundly. The implicit dynamism of the roof structure became visible only now: the triangular trusses, the slope of the roof and the triangular skylights were translated into a series of 'triangular cones' – half translucent, half opaque – with distinct sculptural qualities. Both the plasticity of the cones and the quality of light changes gradually along the east-west axis. A similar effect was obtained with the artificial lightning, as the fixtures were moved from the bottom to the sloped top chord of the triangular trusses.⁴⁹⁹ More importantly, the triangles and bend surfaces resonate with the spatial dynamism of the ramps, sloped floors, slanted columns and angled walls, extending the building's partly 'oblique condition' to Hall 2 in its entirety.

Another consequence of the new solution is the exposure of the horizontal bracing. [Figures 3] It is composed of 108mm steel tubes that connect to the bottom cord of the open-web trusses spanning Hall 2. Most of the tubes add up to a parabola, criss-crossed by four diagonals, extending from the north-east corner of the ceiling (column at intersection of axes m and 2) to the east corner of the Portico's ceiling (column at intersection of axes m and 20). Both the ends of the parabola and the diagonals connect to a straight line of bracing (axis m), which in turn connects to an H-beam in the wall of the northern facade.⁵⁰⁰ [Figure 4]

⁴⁹⁸ The use of polycarbonate is mentioned in the minutes of the Building Committee meeting on 24 August, 1992. OMAR 3266.

⁴⁹⁹ See: Details no. 22, 418. 28 February 1992. OMAR 1807, 1835.

⁵⁰⁰ Detail 25. 28 February 1992. OMAR 1807.

Chapter 2.6

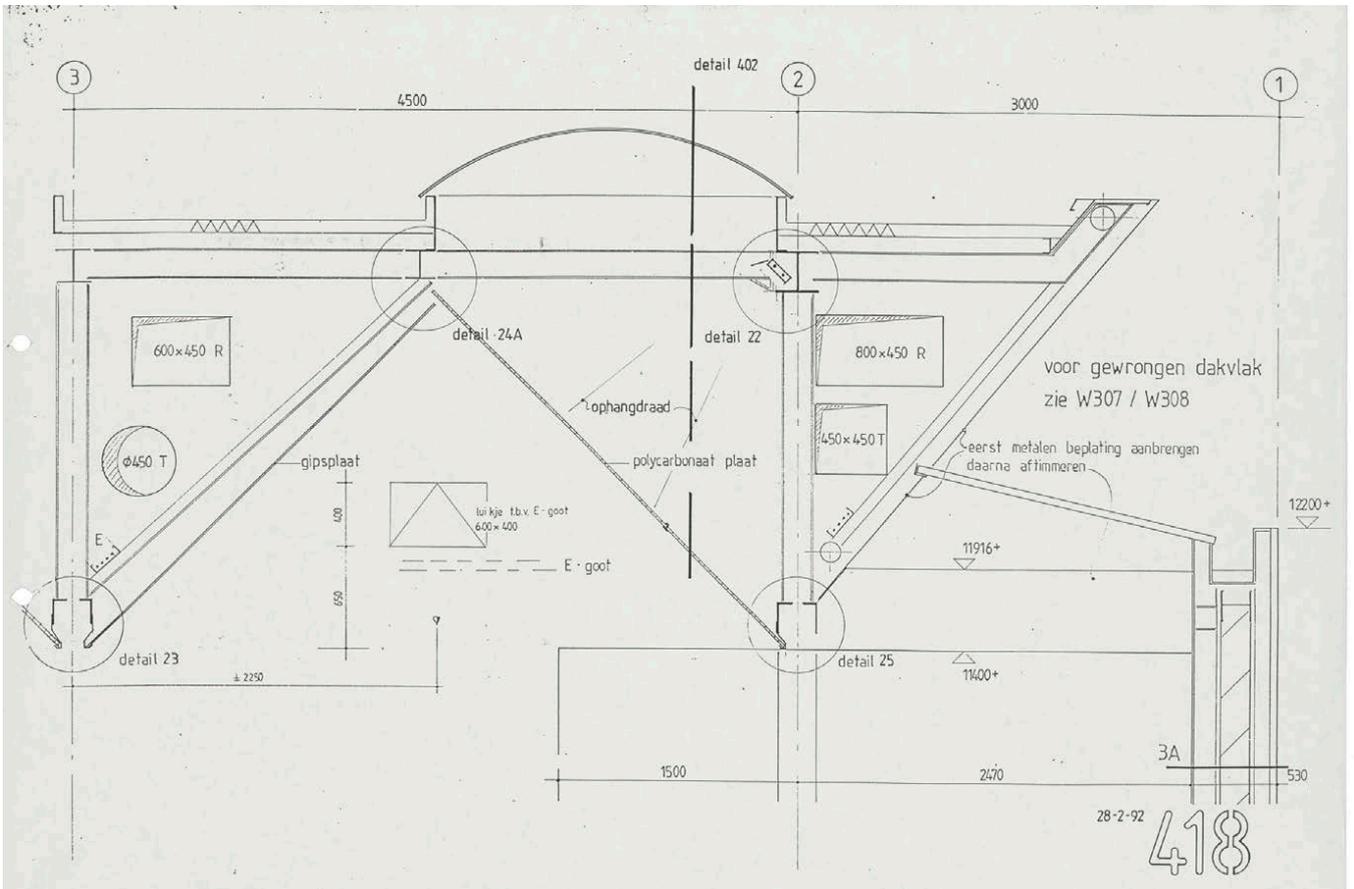
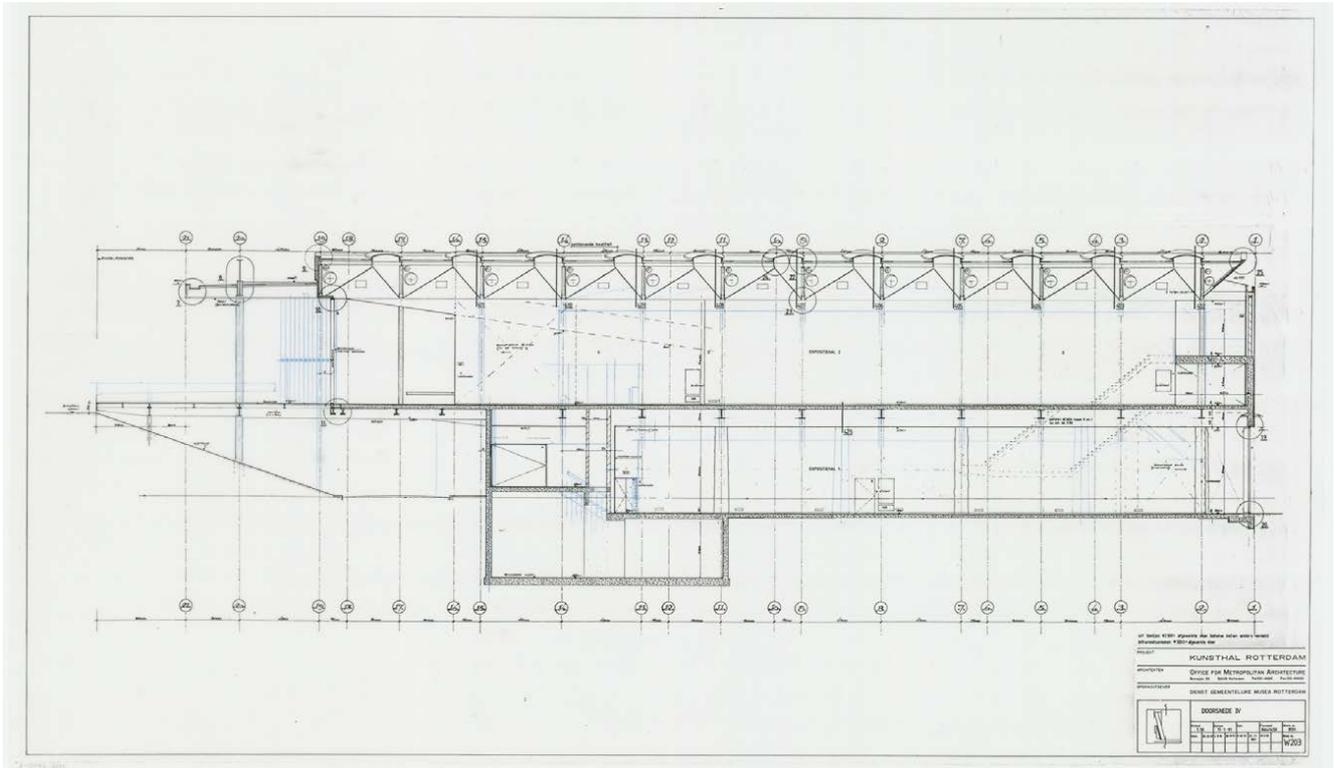


Figure 1. Kunsthall. OMA. Above: Cross section Halls 1 and 2. March 1992.
Below: Detail ceiling of Hall 2. February 1992.

Already in Arup's drawings from January 1990, the northern wall's portion of concrete had been minimized in the building's central and eastern section, in all likelihood to save costs. The structure implemented provides a 25-centimetres concrete wall which begins as a 'lintel' some 10 centimetres above the level of the suspended ceiling of Hall 1, defining the lower edge of the entire wall. In the building's western section, the concrete wall extends vertically all the way to the roof covering Hall 3, probably to stabilize the black concrete wall of the west façade. In the central and eastern section, the concrete wall ends at the floor level of Hall 3, connecting to the adjacent corridor and the balcony protruding in Hall 2. On top of it stands a wall in lime sandstone – 214 millimetres wide and about 3.5 metres high – crowned by the H-beam at the level of the horizontal bracing of Hall 2.⁵⁰¹ Some additional bracing connects precisely to this beam: a zigzag of short diagonals 'sews' the masonry at full length to the open-web truss adjacent to the wall. [Figure 5]

According to Hoshino, the parabola shaped bracing had been proposed by a collaborator of the municipal works.⁵⁰² Arup's drawing from January 1990 showing the roof structure of the building's eastern section, still suggests a conventional solution, connecting the bearings of several trusses diagonally.⁵⁰³ Only a drawing of the municipal works of the roof structure of Hall 2, issued four months later by the Engineering Office for Steel Construction and Toolmaking (ISW), provided the curvilinear bracing implemented. [Figures 4] The distinct figurative quality of the parabola dissociates the bracing from the system of the trusses, turning it into an element of its own. At the same time the ceiling of the Portico, now clad with corrugated polycarbonate panels, became more independent from its counterpart in Hall 2. In turn, the ceiling of the oblong gallery to the east – like the rest of the 4.70-metres wide strip between the lateral columns and the east façade – is covered with flat translucent polycarbonate

⁵⁰¹ Cross section, W 202, 18 March 1992, OMAR 1824. Detail no. 63, 18 October 1991 and detail no. 19, 18 November 1991. OMAR 1812. The limestone wall is visible on a picture of the construction site held by the OMA Archives.

⁵⁰² Interview with author on 25 September 2018.

⁵⁰³ As mentioned before, the structural plans dated January 1990 appear to be the last prepared by Ove Arup. The plan held by the firm's London archive (no. S4011, dated January 1990) as well as OMA's copies held by the HNI show conventional diagonal bracing, while there is no indication of an arc. Only in Balmond's *informal* the same plan with the same date is shown with the parabola shaped bracing of the built project.

Chapter 2.6

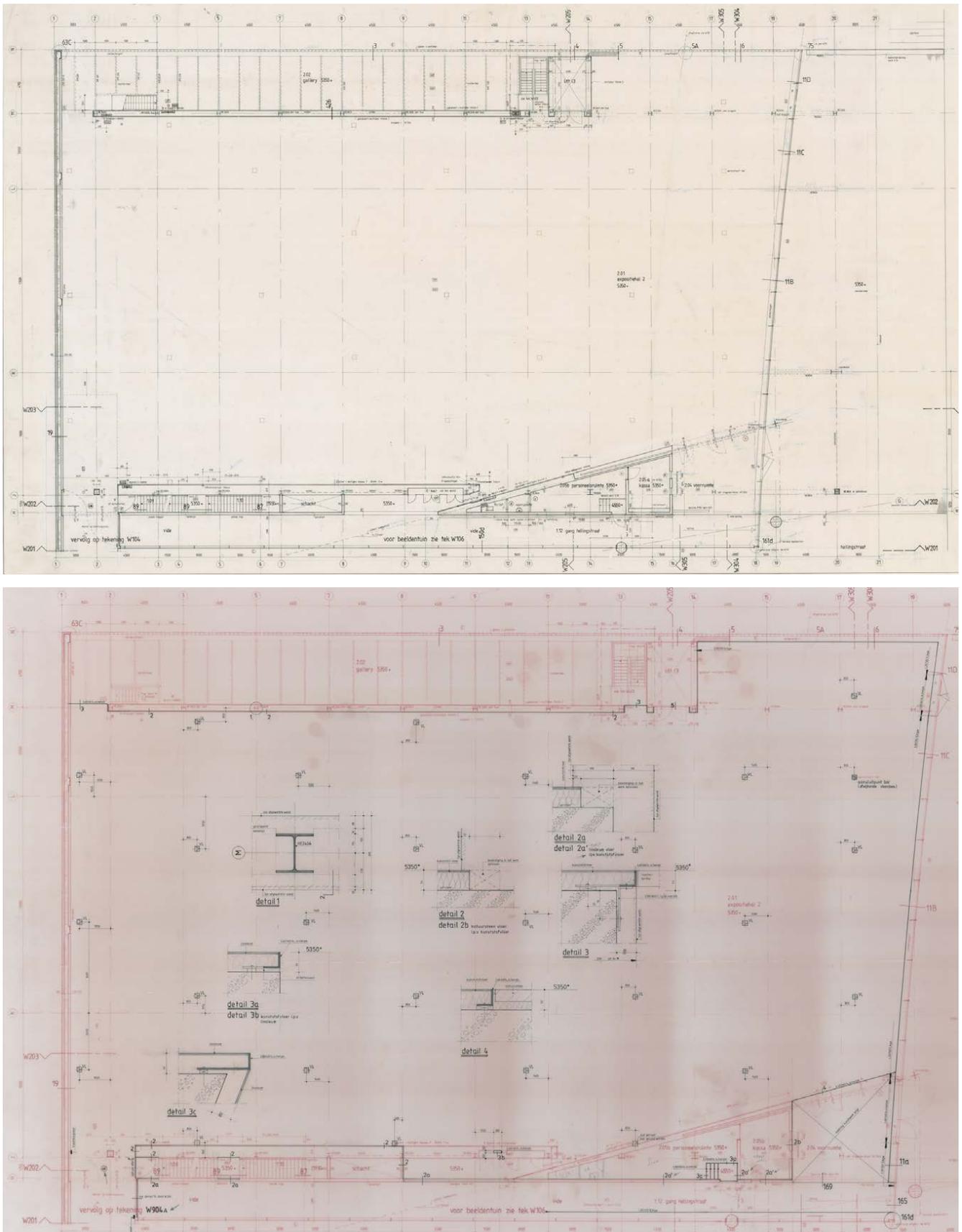


Figure 2. Kunsthall. OMA. Above: Floorplan Hall 2. September 1992.
Below: Details flooring Hall 2. February 1992.

panels.⁵⁰⁴ Both latter ceilings remain perfectly level with one another, as well as with the bottom of the large triangular cones of Hall 2. Instead of the parquet provided in 1990, the drawings from 1991/1992 specify a plastic flooring.⁵⁰⁵ The first pictures from Hall 2 show a grey, rather shiny surface which matches the industrial connotations of the new ceiling and many of the materials of the adjacent spaces: the channel glass planks, the metal grating, the corrugated polyester. And yet the three spaces – the Portico, Hall 2, and the adjacent gallery – each gained in formal autonomy and ‘character’. [Figure 6-7]

In Hall 1 the changes were more subtle. [Figure 8] The final drawings provide a suspended ceiling with cut-outs of 130 centimetres diameter around the five central columns. Circular panels of galvanized metal grating ought to bridge the 30-centimetres gap to the hollowed out tree trunks with a diameter of about 70 centimetres. [Figure 9] The panels apparently never materialized.⁵⁰⁶ As several photographs from 1992/93 show, the cut-outs were left uncovered, the trunks literally fading out in the dark void of the black suspended ceiling. [Figure 10] The detail thus reinforces the suggestion of a nightly sky into which trees of unknown size disappear. The number of the light tubes increased to about 200, while the irregular pattern of an approximately constant density was maintained.⁵⁰⁷ For the floor, the plans specify a cement decking with a wear-resistant quartz finish, which apparently was implemented, the earliest photographs showing a matt grey floor.⁵⁰⁸ Apparently the surfacing was conceived of as an

⁵⁰⁴ Changes of three ceilings were announced at the Building Committee’s meeting on 4 February 1992. They were accepted under the condition that the changes would entail no extra costs. OMAR 1523.

⁵⁰⁵ ‘kunstovloer’. In a set of undated floorplans with annotations by Hoshino the surfacing is dubbed ‘industrial floor’. OMAR 1632.

⁵⁰⁶ The photos of Hall 1 published in the 1990s and thereafter suggest that the opening was left uncovered. See, for instance: *De Architect* (Jan 1993), 33.

⁵⁰⁷ Drawing W600, 22 April 1992. OMAR 1855.

⁵⁰⁸ That is indicated, for instance, by pictures of the opening exhibition ‘Het koninklijk paleis’ (1 November 1992 – 24 January 1992) and the subsequent exhibition ‘Autodesign in Nederland’ (30 January 1993 – 28 March 1991). In: *Kunsthil Rotterdam, 200 in 2000. Acht jaar Kunsthil Rotterdam* (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 2000), n.p.



Figure 3. Kunsthall. Steel structure Hall 2.

approximation to raw concrete.⁵⁰⁹ After a test in the loading area the floor was sealed with a transparent protection.⁵¹⁰

In the Auditorium, the three truncated columns were replaced by chandeliers of exactly the same dimensions and inclination: columns of fluorescent light tubes to be encased by two metres-long coverings of sanded glass with a cross section of 40 by 40 centimetres.⁵¹¹ [Figures 11-12] The coverings were never implemented. For the floor of the seating area, rough plywood was used instead of parquet. Air is blown in through circular outlets in the front and in the sides of each step.⁵¹² The mesh wire covering these outlets is transparent, and the voids below the steps are equipped with light tubes for additional illumination. The seating is loose and consists of stackable chairs in a dozen different colours, randomly arranged, in analogy to a field of flowers.⁵¹³ The idea of the decorative circular openings piercing the inner layer of glazing and corrugated sheathing of the *poché* was abandoned by summer 1991.⁵¹⁴ The shifted rows of light tubes behind the polycarbonate panels were retained but turned by 90 degrees into a vertical position.⁵¹⁵ For the sloped floor the plans specify the same ‘cement decking with a wear-resistant quartz finish’ as for Hall 1, which later on was coated too with a transparent seal.⁵¹⁶ All these details, in one way or another, contribute to the sense of improvisation and rawness this space evokes. [Figure 13]

⁵⁰⁹ In the above mentioned set of undated floorplans the surfacing is dubbed ‘concrete’. OMAR 1632.

⁵¹⁰ The test is mentioned in the minutes of the Building Committee’s meeting on 5 October. The application to Hall 1 in the minutes from the meeting on 16 October. The minutes of the meeting on 21 September mention the product *oxaanolie*. *Oxaanolie Aqua* is an acryl based dispersion for concrete and cement floor finishes. OMAR 3266.

⁵¹¹ Details: W1002, 25 October 1991. OMAR 1822. G, 23 August 1991. OMAR 1823.

⁵¹² The ducts between the steps and the ceiling are supplied by a riser shaft in the kitchen area. The ventilation system of the Auditorium relies on various other components: exhaust along the west facade (covered by the metal grating flush with the ceiling); supply and exhaust from the *poché* wall; supply and exhaust from the front next to the Service Road.

⁵¹³ Petra Blaisse in an interview with the author on 24 September 2018.

⁵¹⁴ Drawings by the manufacturer Van Dool, dated 1 July 1991, correspond to the version eventually implemented. OMAR 1589-91.

⁵¹⁵ Rotterdam’s fire and building department rejected the corrugated polyester panels. Instead, costlier, but fire resistant polycarbonate panels were used. See minutes of the Building Committee on 4 February 1992. OMAR 1523.

⁵¹⁶ Minutes Building Committee 16 October 1992. OMAR 3266. Judging from the first photographs, there was a conspicuous difference between the two floors in terms of their reflectivity. Unlike the floor of Hall 1 the one of the Auditorium looks shiny. The minutes, however, do not mention any further amendments or modifications.

Chapter 2.6

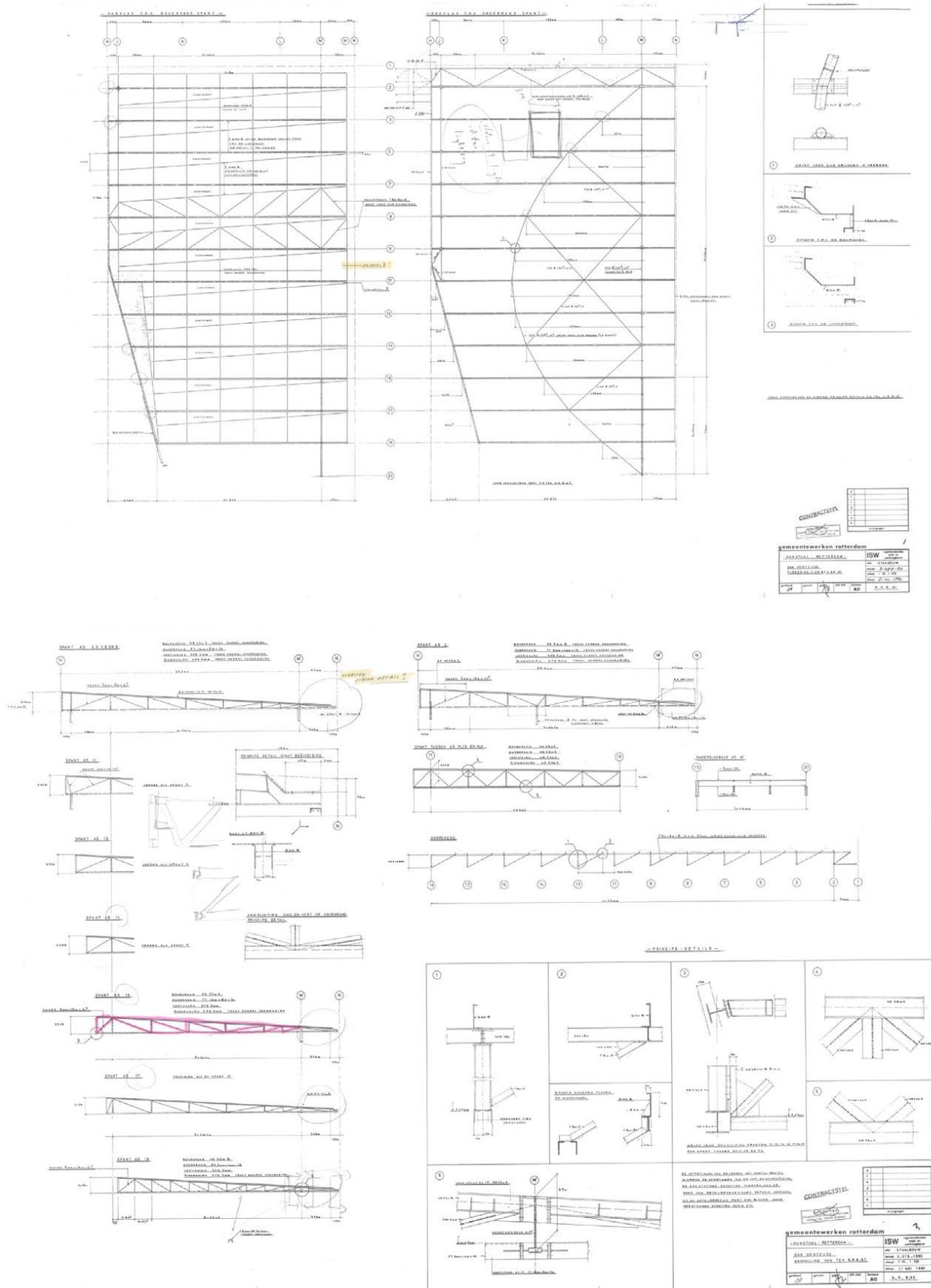


Figure 4. Kunsthall. Municipal Works Rotterdam. Above: Bracing of Hall 2. Below: Steel trusses Hall 2.

The curtain is designed by Petra Blaisse, who was also responsible for the curtains in OMA's Dance Theatre and the Villa Dall'Ava. The ovoid rail is poured-in-place into the concrete ceiling. At the lower landing of the ramp a spiralling track branches off; its exact shape is the subject of numerous drawings and calculations by Hoshino.⁵¹⁷ [Figure 12] The spiralling track winds around one of the columns and serves to store the curtain. Coiled up, the curtain hides most of the column while gaining a sculptural, snail-like quality. Blaisse suggested that the curtain 'encircles the column like an evening dress'.⁵¹⁸ The motif of the spiral and the snail echo the conception of the circuit, resonating with the metaphor of growth embodied by the increasing depth of the Auditorium's mullions.

The curtain embraces about 190 seats, to which 70 saddle-like stools in metal can be added. Shells are provided in the floor of the ramp. The curtain's darkening and sound absorbing cloth integrates speakers for high frequencies, and speakers for low frequencies are incorporated into the steps of the seating.⁵¹⁹ The cloth is double layered: black cotton velvet at the outside, grey glass fibre at the inside. [Figure 13] Certainly the curtain is the most alien looking element in the space. Fully drawn, it reminds of a temporary theatre stage, probably because it is the single soft element in the space, its curved somewhat flexible shape juxtaposing in a seemingly arbitrary way with the determinate, rectilinear forms of the architectural environment. And yet, in the context of this space reminiscent of the Maison Domino, the curtain appears another reference to Le Corbusier, recalling his concept of the *plan libre* and the curvilinear partitions that often appear in his projects.

Visiting the Kunsthal in 1993, Charles Jencks commented while standing in the Auditorium: 'My only criticism really is that there isn't more fabric. So it's so reverberant in here that you wish it was a little bit softer, a little bit more feminine.'⁵²⁰ At this point Hoshino, who guides him through the building, pulls out Blaisse's curtain. Carefully planned 'gadgets' like the curtain do undermine the interior's

⁵¹⁷ Sketches and calculations. Undated. OMAR 2828.

⁵¹⁸ Interview with the author on 24 September 2018.

⁵¹⁹ Inside Outside/Petra Blaisse, 'Kunsthal Rotterdam, 1991-1993, "Noise Dress, Flower Field"', in: Idem, *Inside Outside / Petra Blaisse. A Retrospective*, 9-19 October 2018, ETH Zürich (Zürich: gta exhibitions, 2018), n.p.

⁵²⁰ Charles Jencks, 'Charles Jencks', in: Jenny Borger et al., *PRIMA VISTA!*, 23 May 1993, VPRO.

Chapter 2.6

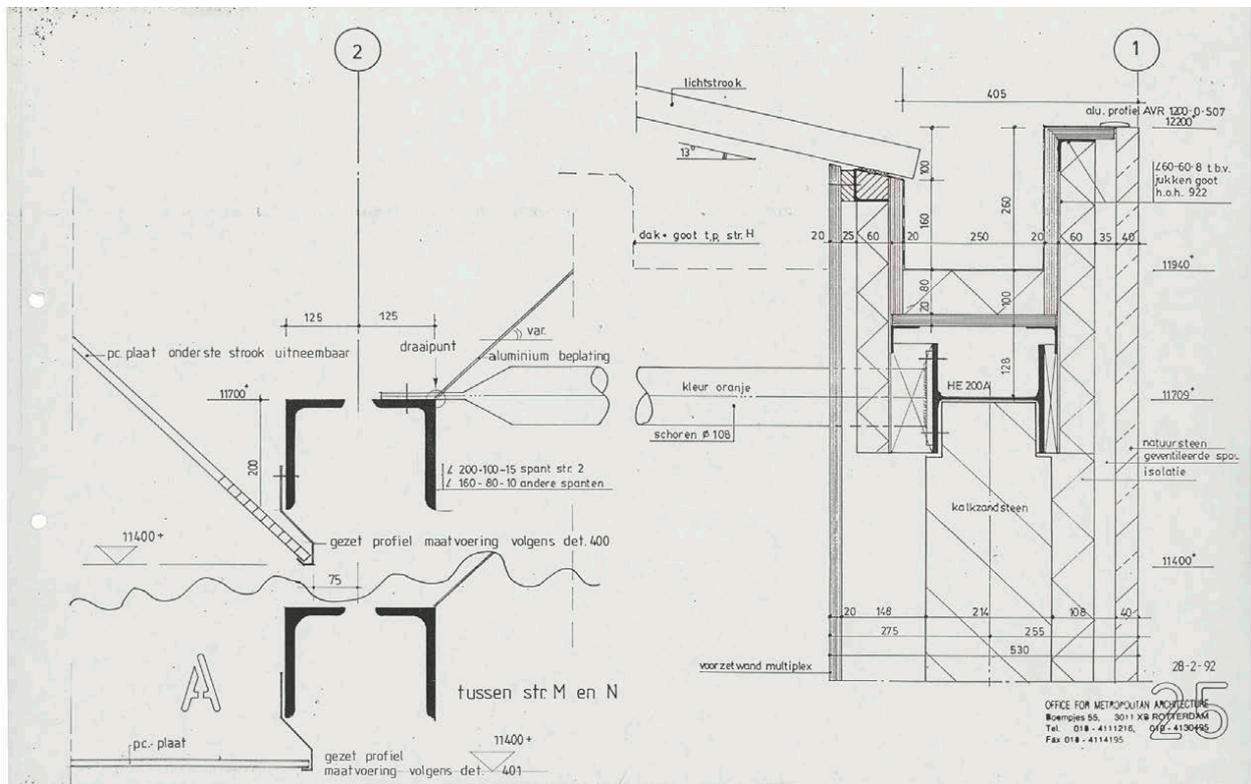
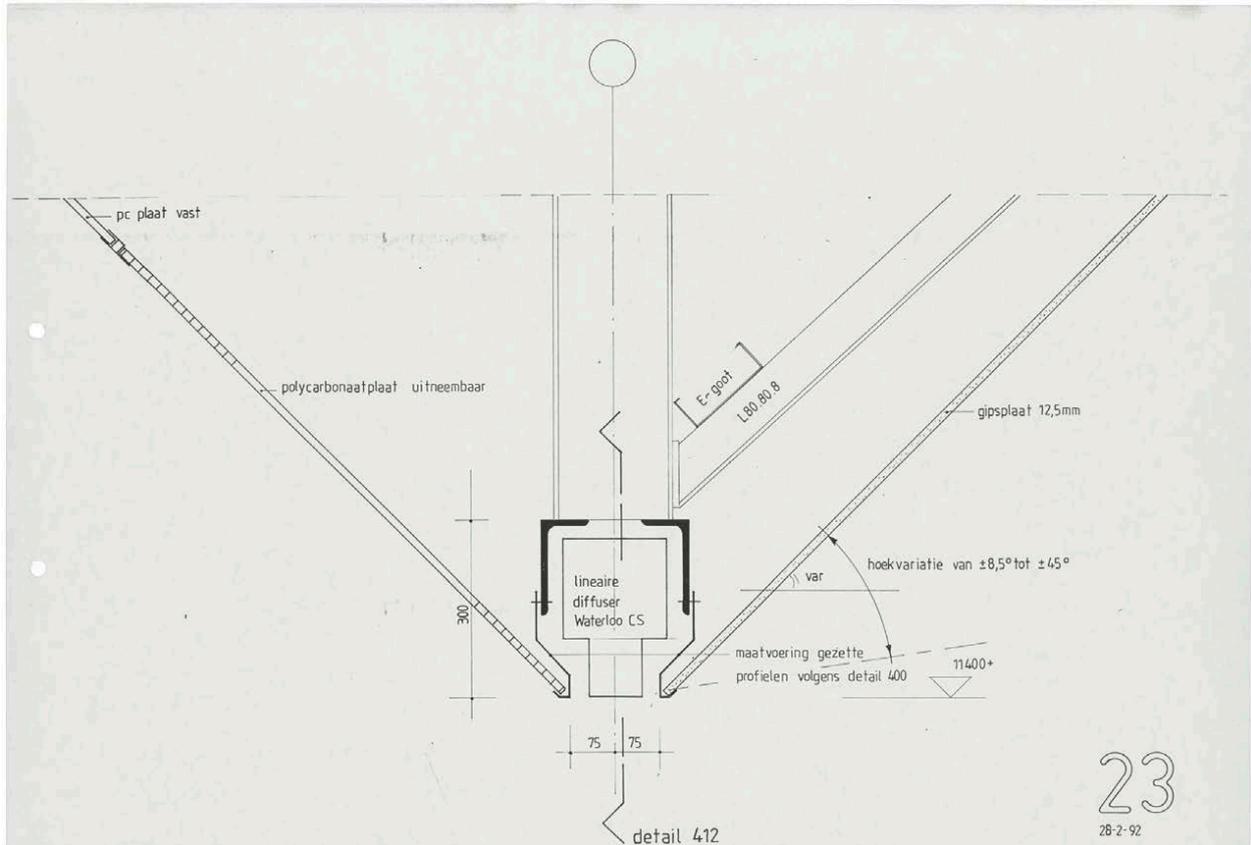


Figure 5. Kunsthall. OMA. Details ceiling of Hall 2. February 1992.

Above: Split bottom chord of the open web trusses with outlet for air supply. Below: Joints of the horizontal bracing.

sense of rawness. The rail inlaid in the concrete ceiling and the shells of the mountable stools, make it clear that the rough materials are not to evoke an actual illusion of improvisation. Especially the theatrical illumination of the seating – somewhat reminiscent of a TV stage – introduces an ironic note in the arrangement as a whole.

Convention as exception

If the circuit is essentially informed by the use of industrial materials and a seeming absence of finishes – evocative of an urban exterior or, say, an abandoned construction site –, Hall 3 diverges from this principle. [Figures 14-15] Except for the five leaning columns in exposed concrete, all its features correspond to a conventional gallery space of a museum: instead of linoleum, as provided in April 1990, the floor received a parquet finish; the suspended ceiling in white plasterboard is equipped with halogen spotlights; all the walls are covered with multiplex panels, likewise to be painted in white. Half hidden fluorescent tubes along the slightly raised edges of the suspended ceiling light these walls up, and the manipulation of the ceiling's section forestalls any illusion of constructive simplicity or improvisation.

Once all the walls of Hall 3 were closed, there was less freedom for the design of this interior than in Halls 1, 2 and the Auditorium. But only the final version seems to embrace the conventional character of this interior in full. Perhaps Koolhaas and his team eventually decided to allow for one 'standard' exhibition hall that underlines the non-museal character of the others. At once, the exceptional condition of Hall 3 resonates with its somewhat secluded position with regard to the rest of the circuit: it was never part of the loop, and it has always been an appendix to the spiral rather than its end, which appears to be the roof.⁵²¹

Rough planks and velvet

The interior of the Restaurant completed in 1992 resembled the Auditorium in its display of rough looking materials. [Figures 16-19] As in the Auditorium, the fair faced concrete of columns and ceiling

⁵²¹ Not coincidentally, Hall 3 is the least photographed major space of the Kunsthall.



Figure 6. Kunsthal. 1992. Ceiling of Hall 2 with bracing.

was exposed. The floor was covered with rough used wooden planks. The front of the bar was clad with rough plywood, similar to the one used for the Auditorium.⁵²² The character of the space changed significantly with the partial transformation and renovation of the Kunsthal in 2013/2014 – likewise by OMA – which affected the Restaurant more than any other part of the building.⁵²³

Parts of the Restaurant from 1992 were designed by Günther Förg, namely 18 ‘scribbled’ neon circles under the ceiling in six different colours. Förg was invited to work on the interior by Van Krimpen, seemingly on an informal basis.⁵²⁴ The Restaurant was Van Krimpen’s brainchild, it had a budget of its own, it was Van Krimpen who chose the operator to run the Restaurant, and OMA and Förg would discuss their ideas for the interior directly with him.⁵²⁵ Apparently, Förg kept Van Krimpen waiting. On the first of April 1992, Van Krimpen sent to Hoshino photocopies of paintings with circles by Förg, asking the architect to adapt the painting to the ceiling of the Restaurant.⁵²⁶ Hoshino returned a proposal on 8 April.⁵²⁷ According to Van Krimpen, Förg gave his consent, commenting: ‘Pay at once!’ (Gleich zahlen!). Also the wall below the triangular balcony was a contribution by Förg.⁵²⁸ It was painted in violet, ‘deliberately “sloppily” with the broad sweeps of a paint roller.’⁵²⁹ A similar if not the same colour was used for the bench at the back of the Restaurant, apparently designed by Hoshino.⁵³⁰ A photograph shows the bench as an opulent and spectacular piece of furniture with an upholstered velvet

⁵²² The plywood cladding, however, was a second choice. The bar had initially been conceived of in travertine which proved too expensive. Four weeks before the opening of the Kunsthal the Building Committee decided that OMA needed to find a less costly solution. Minutes Building Committee 5 October 1992. By 16 October a revised version of the bar was already ordered for 56.000 instead of 96.000 guilders. Minutes Building Committee 16 October. Two of the four detached furniture units to be built in were omitted. OMAR 3266.

⁵²³ The actual decision to renovate the Kunsthal appears to have been prompted by safety concerns. In the year before the works started, on 16 October 2012, a series of paintings by Pablo Picasso, Henry Matisse, Paul Gauguin, Claude Monet and Lucian Freud were stolen from the arts centre. Kate Conolly, ‘Rotterdam art thieves take valuable paintings in dawn heist’, *The Guardian*, 16 October 2012.

⁵²⁴ Interview with the author on 28 July 2020. So far no correspondence has surfaced that would document the commission.

⁵²⁵ Van Krimpen’s search for an appropriate operator and cost estimates are a recurring subject of the minutes of the Building Committee. The HNI holds numerous faxes exchanged between OMA and Krimpen regarding the Restaurant, next to a few faxes exchanged between Van Krimpen and Förg.

⁵²⁶ Interview with the author on 28 July 2020. There is, in fact, a fax by Van Krimpen’s office (KunstHAL) with photocopies of several images by Förg. 1st of April, 1992. OMAR 1465.

⁵²⁷ ‘Ceiling of Restaurant Kunsthal. OMA Proposal’, 8 April 1992. OMAR 1674.

⁵²⁸ Interview with the author on 28 July 2020. Förg proposed the colour in a fax to Van Krimpen on 3 September 1992. OMAR 1471.

⁵²⁹ Ineke Schwartz, no title, in: ‘Kunsthal Rotterdam’, *a&t ediciones* (July 1998), 5.

⁵³⁰ The bench implemented corresponds precisely to a detailed sketch by Hoshino. Undated. OMAR 1674.



Figure 7. Kunsthall. Left: Gallery adjacent to Hall 2. 1993. Right: Portico. 1994.

lining that extends to the entire length and height of the wall, visibly contrasting – like the curtain of the Auditorium – with the ostentatious roughness of the floor and the ceiling.⁵³¹

The balcony above the bar was initially used as a ‘catalogue and coffee shop’.⁵³² The triangular space, glazed towards the Restaurant and the Auditorium, was equipped with an oblong desk which could be used as a book table, as a vitrine for the display of books and as the counter for the cash register. In addition, a small freight elevator connected the desk to the bar of the Restaurant below. Probably the idea was to serve coffee on the balcony. A contemporary picture shows the counter surrounded by bar tables.⁵³³ The floor was covered by a shiny black plastic material, probably linoleum.⁵³⁴

Limiting the palette

In early 1992, Koolhaas and his team planned to use the same flooring for all the public entrances. A series of drawings – coloured and annotated by Hoshino – suggest travertine for the floors of the main entrance (inside, outside and balcony), the entrance to the Restaurant (inside and outside), Hall 1 (inside), and Hall 2 (inside).⁵³⁵ A set of plans with specifications of the finishes from February and April 1992 indicates ‘natural stone’ for the same surfaces.⁵³⁶ In addition, there are several measured sketches by Hoshino that define the pattern of the travertine flooring in detail.⁵³⁷ Eventually implemented was the travertine floor at the entrances of Hall 1 (lower landing of the ramp) and the Restaurant (porch and stair inside). But at the main entrance, both landings (inside and outside) and the porch were covered with doormats, and the same applies to the exterior landing at the entrance of the Restaurant, while the grey floor of Hall 2 was extended to the edge of the Ramp Street’s interior half.⁵³⁸

⁵³¹ See photo in: *De Architect* (Jan 1993), 34.

⁵³² See: Annotated drawing, ‘Catalogue and Coffee Shop’, 16 October 1992. OMAR 1635.

⁵³³ See photo in: *Bauwelt* 46 (Dec 1993), 2497.

⁵³⁴ A sketch by Hoshino specifies a black floor by the manufacturer *bolidt*. OMAR 1635. But the minutes of the Building Committee’s meeting on 16 October 1992 mention fissures in the surface. At the meeting Jo Schippers and Herman Jacobs (OMA) suggest to cover the floor with linoleum.

⁵³⁵ Undated. OMAR 1632.

⁵³⁶ W901, W902, W903B, W905A. OMAR 1840.

⁵³⁷ OMAR 3348.

⁵³⁸ There is an undated sketch by Hoshino with exact specifications for the products, materials and colours of each doormat. Hoshino suggests three entirely different systems for the main entrance (inside, outside, porch), apparently faithful – once more – to the principle of diversity. OMAR 4501.

Chapter 2.6

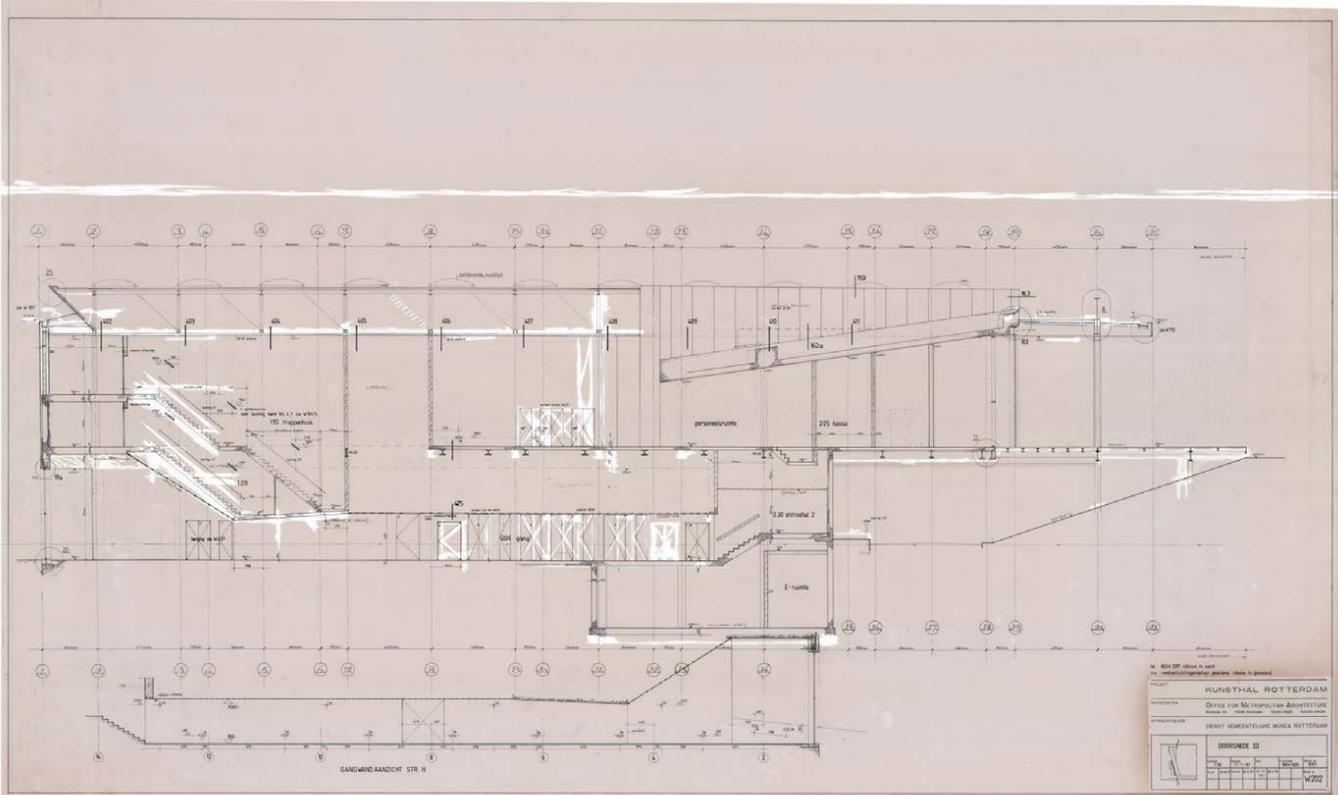
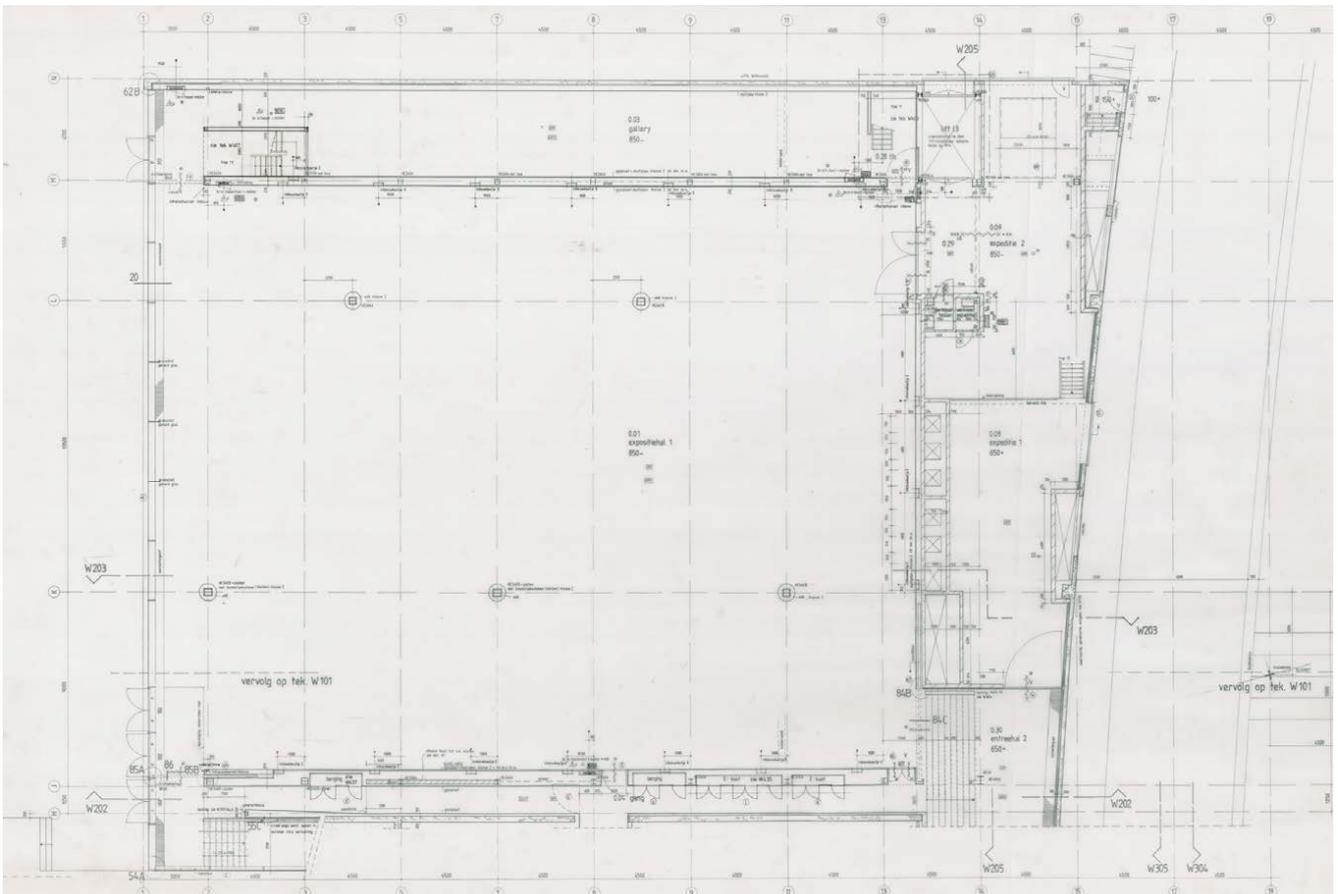


Figure 8. Kunsthall. OMA. Above: Floorplan Hall 1. September 1992.
 Below: Cross section through poché adjacent to Halls 1 and 2. March 1992.

Obviously the use of doormats instead of travertine was the result of practical considerations. On a conceptual level, however, the travertine flooring seems to have been intended as a cipher for 'public entrance', counterbalancing this one time the extreme formal heterogeneity of the design, which in part continued to increase. Nonetheless, during 1991 and 1992, the architects often took recourse to the materials and products already employed: the travertine covering 'spread' from the facades to the entrances to the bar of the Restaurant; the plywood cladding from the Auditorium to the bar; the flat polycarbonate panels from the covering of the Ramp Street to the ceiling of Hall 2 and the ceiling of the adjacent gallery space; the corrugated sheathing from the Ramp Street to the ceiling of the Portico; the galvanized metal grating from the Portico's terrace to the coverings of the underfloor convectors of the Auditorium, Halls 1 and 2, as well as to the gallery floor adjacent to Hall 2, the gallery's stairs and its banisters.

The Kunsthal's otherwise ostentatious heterogeneity was methodically counterbalanced by repetitions and variations that permeate all parts of the building, the exterior included. Surely these repetitions and variations foster the impact of formal cohesion of the whole. But they do so in a subtle, inconspicuous manner that is being felt rather than consciously noticed. The ubiquitous use of fluorescent light tubes is a good example: they are plainly visible in Hall 1, in the adjacent gallery space (under beam), and as pending light columns in the Auditorium; they are covered but visible behind the corrugated sheathing in the Auditorium, along the floor of the Ramp Street, and above the ceiling of the gallery next to Hall 2 (one long straight line); and they are largely concealed but still discernible in the ceiling of Hall 2,⁵³⁹ at the stepped edges of the ceiling in Hall 3, and under the seating of the Auditorium. The light tubes are omnipresent, but the degrees of recognisability vary, often allowing for a rather unconscious kind of recognition.

⁵³⁹ To the pairs of light tubes at the top chord of the trusses, single, fully visible tubes were added in the opening under the bottom chord of the trusses. That is visible from a picture in the 1994 review in *A+U*. *A+U* 287 (1994), 134-135.

Simple but various

That Koolhaas and Hoshino saw – and discussed – the heterogeneity of the Kunsthall as a quality that implied the risk of an arbitrary multiplicity of detail, is indicated by a note of Hoshino, ‘Principle of Window’.

One of the most interesting thing[s] about [the] Kunsthall is that it has many contrasts, or ambiguitical [sic] or even contradictorial [sic] aspects at the same time; simple but various, big but small, bright but dark, wild but delicate, etc.

So for [the] detailing, we know that it’s not so easy, because we don’t like most of the conventional detail and because [the] Kunsthall is too complicated to solve every detail problem with 1 nice detail. But we also don’t want to invent 100’s of different details for 100’s of different situations.

So I want to suggest to make a few principles and to try to apply them as much as possible; from [the] big window to [the] small window, steel door, internal wooden door, sliding door, etc.⁵⁴⁰

The note, dated 17 March 1991, is provided with the cachet ‘Ok by Rem’ and obviously addressed to the members of the Kunsthall team. Attached are four pages with annotated sketches. [Figure 20] The first page gives a synthesis of the different glazing details – there are eight of them, the mullion with a glass fin is missing – which largely correspond to the project from April 1990. On the following pages Hoshino defines principles for the visibility of the frames. He distinguishes two cases: A) frames set back from the exterior walls, and B) frames flush with them. In case A (Halls 1-2, Ramp Street, Restaurant), the frames ought to be fully incorporated into the floor, ceiling and wall. In case B (Auditorium, Office Block), the same principle is to be applied to the floor, while the top and sides of the frame ought to be invisible from the inside, but exposed to the outside.⁵⁴¹ Obviously, the intention

⁵⁴⁰ Copy: OMAR 3302. Original: OMAR 1629.

⁵⁴¹ Two months later Koolhaas implicitly reaffirmed these principles. A couple of annotated sketches shows how to insert and how to exchange the window panes of the mullions fully incorporated into the wall. The pages are dated 29 May, 1991, and footnoted in red: ‘OK by Rem. 30 May’. OMAR 1629.



Figure 10. Kunsthal. Hall 1. 1992/3.

was to minimize the separation between interior and exterior. From inside there would be no frame to remind of the glazed barrier's existence; and from the outside it would be the same wherever the glazing is set back from the edge of the building's perimeter.

The last page of Hoshino's notes regards the detailing of those corners of the exterior where two transparent or translucent façade systems meet. Hoshino suggests two options: corners occupied by a single vertical mullion of one of the two systems; or entirely glazed corners, the first vertical mullions placed with some distance from the joint on both sides. Apparently the aim was, still, to avoid any emphasis of the corner: corners were not meant to appear as exceptional joints and occasions for sophisticated detailing. The intersection of two surfaces ought to be as immediate and inarticulate as possible. Koolhaas' well-known statement 'there is no detail' is precisely about this: to connect different materials or constructive systems without making the connection architecturally thematic.⁵⁴² In a statement from 1996 which is directly related to the Kunsthal, Koolhaas suggests that there is an antagonism between the articulation of the detail and the articulation of the concept or idea of a project:

I have always regarded with suspicion the idea that detail is actually based on turning issues into problems. That is, instead of taking a positive attitude to how a wall meets a roof, there is an amazing problem, that a roof is to meet a wall and how are we to organize that meeting, how we are going to articulate it and how we make an issue of it. [...] With Scarpa as an extreme example. That is why I think that kind of detail is almost always diametrical to the idea, because how a roof meets a wall can never be an idea.⁵⁴³

Between intention and the forces of feasibility

During the first half of 1991, representatives of Rotterdam's Public Works repeatedly accused OMA of changing the details of the tendering stage while lagging behind the schedule for the delivery of working

⁵⁴² Zaera Polo, 'Finding Freedoms', 10.

⁵⁴³ Arie Graafland, Jasper de Haan, 'A Conversation with Rem Koolhaas', in: Michael Speaks, Arie Graafland, Jasper de Haan (eds.), *The Critical Landscape* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1996), 225-226.

Chapter 2.6

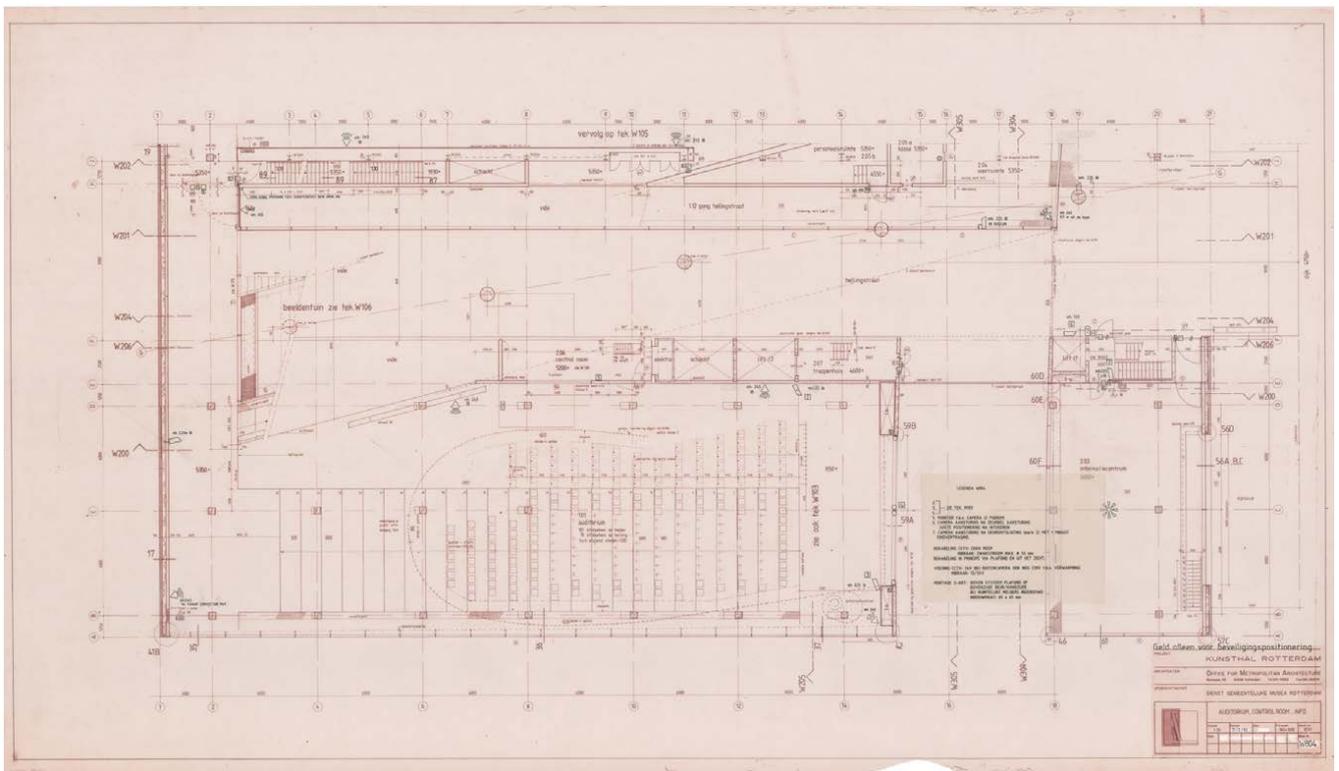
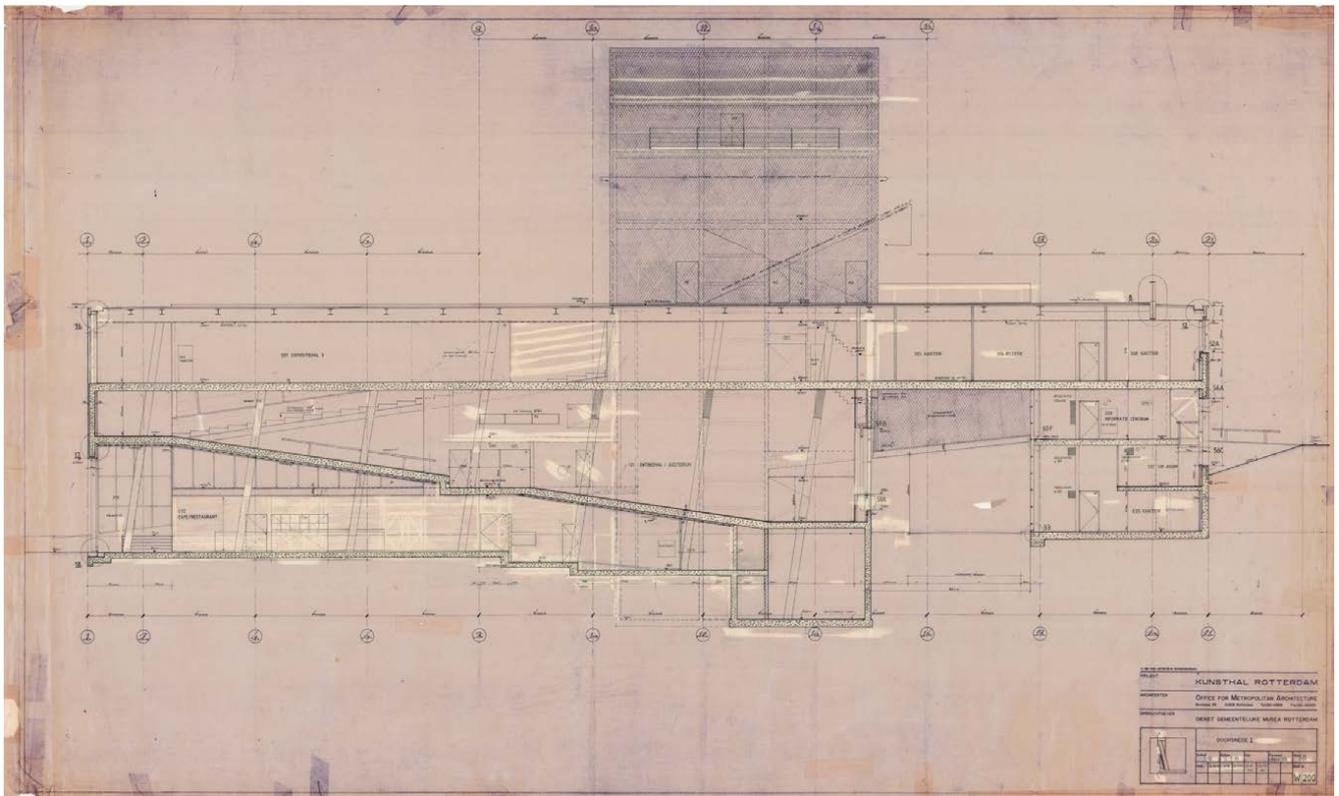


Figure 11. Kunsthall. OMA. Above: Cross section of Restaurant, Auditorium, Hall 3 and Office Block. November 1991. Below: Floorplan Auditorium and Office Block. February 1992.

drawings.⁵⁴⁴ On 23 April the Building Committee recommended: ‘As soon as there is a need for more drawing capacity, OMA should hire it.’⁵⁴⁵ At the next gathering in May, Jo Schippers duly reported OMA having recruited three draftsmen and a space on the construction site for the production of drawings.⁵⁴⁶ At the same meeting, Herman Jacobs, construction supervisor for OMA,⁵⁴⁷ was announced as the successor of Toni Adam, who had been project manager of the Kunsthal.⁵⁴⁸ Jacobs’ task was twofold: to supervise the construction site and to direct the drawing work of OMA which was now done on the construction site.

The details of the exterior were worked out as well as reworked during the subsequent months. [Figures 23, 24, 26, 29, 30, 33] On the first of July, OMA received a comprehensive set of drawings by manufacturer Van Dool: drawings, mostly in full scale, of the glazed walls of the exhibition halls, the Ramp Street, the Auditorium, the Restaurant and the Office Block. Except for the structurally glazed offices, the details are based on a single type of mullion in aluminium with sharp-edged rectangular cross sections and a constant width of 50 millimetres. Both the material and the slenderness of the mullions fully correspond to what the Kunsthal team had been looking for while preparing the drawings for the tendering.⁵⁴⁹ The corners, though, were difficult to resolve with the Van Dool system for two reasons: the system does not allow to connect two glazed planes at 90 degrees to a single mullion; and the mullions are not insulated. Wherever the mullions’ structural part was exposed, it needed an additional layer of insulation and cladding. Both instances were contrary to the minimal articulation of corners suggested by Hoshino in March. [Figure 21]

⁵⁴⁴ See: Minutes of the Building Committee meetings on 11 February, 11 March, 8 April, and 12 April 1991. OMAR 1522.

⁵⁴⁵ Minutes Building Committee 23 April 1991. OMAR 1522 (author trans.).

⁵⁴⁶ Minutes Building Committee 16 May 1991. At the BC meeting on 23 September 1991 Schippers mentions OMA having hired ‘two men’ to work out the details. Whether he refers to the same draftsmen as in May is not clear. OMAR 1522.

⁵⁴⁷ ‘bouwopzichter’. Minutes Building Committee 11 March 1991. OMAR 1522.

⁵⁴⁸ Apparently Adam was no longer involved in the project. His name does neither appear in the minutes nor in the correspondence after this date.

⁵⁴⁹ See: Fax Ron Steiner to Ove Arup from 23 January 1990. ‘Inventory of Problems’, 19.

Chapter 2.6

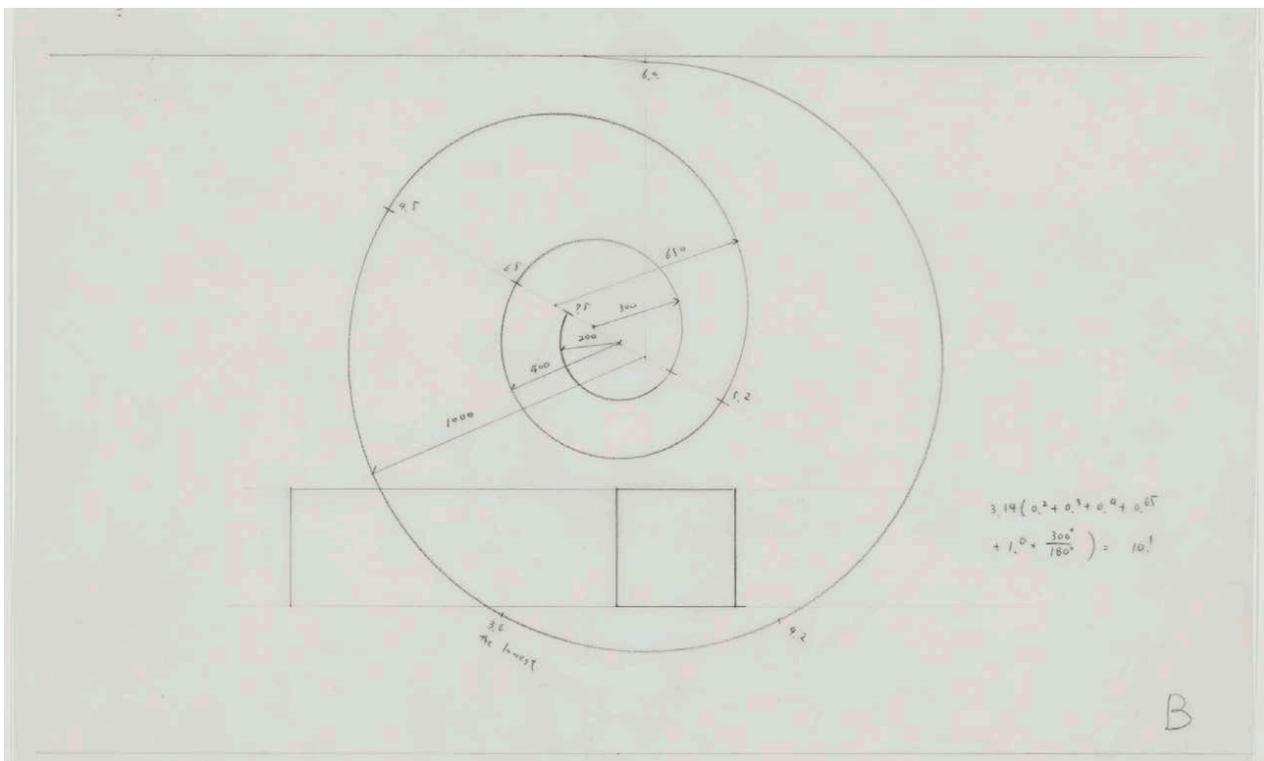
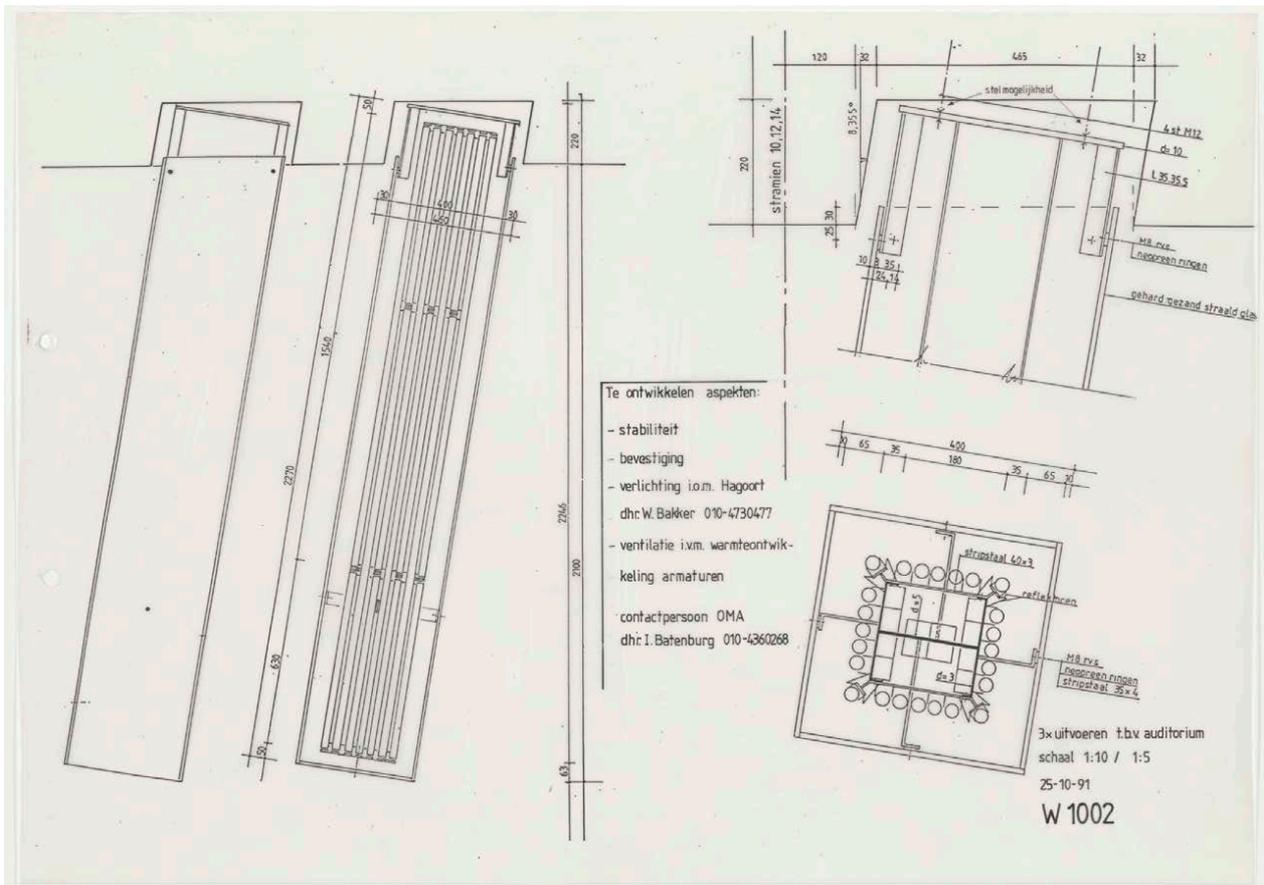


Figure 12. Kunsthal. OMA. Details Auditorium. Above: 'Light column'. October 1991. Below: Variant for curtain rail (spiral).

From a fax Koolhaas sent to Jacobs in August 1991, it is clear, that the Kunsthal team had adapted the principle of minimal corners to the givens of the Van Dool system.⁵⁵⁰ [Figure 22] The sketches included in the fax refer to corner details Koolhaas and Jacobs had previously discussed. According to Koolhaas, the current detailing did not correspond to what had been agreed upon. As in the drawings by Van Dool, the corners sketched in the fax consist of two mullions, partly complemented by a layer of aluminium clad insulation. Koolhaas does not question these givens. But his suggestions seek to minimize the complexity and the dimensions of the corner details in principle accordance with the guidelines defined by Hoshino in March.

By mid-November, OMA completed most of the details of the exterior, namely regarding the glazing.⁵⁵¹ There are two different types of corner details: corners with mullions at the inner side of the glazing (Halls 1 and 2, partition Ramp Street, Office Block, Roof Garden); and corners with mullions at the outer side of the glazing (Restaurant, glazing behind corrugated sheathing). At the restaurant, two 300-millimetres deep mullions form an open 'Miesian' corner at 90 degrees. [Figure 23] The gap between the cover caps facing the interior and the structural part of the mullions is bridged by a diagonal aluminium plate of about six centimetre width. In his fax from August, Koolhaas had proposed to arrange the mullions even more closely and to replace the diagonal covering by a smaller right angled one, inserted coplanar to the mullions. Probably the idea was abandoned because of the thermal bridge this intersection 'without depth' would have caused.

By contrast, the corner detail of Hall 1 and the Ramp Street corresponds closely to the solution suggested by Koolhaas in August. [Figure 23] The actual corner forms a 300-millimetres deep mullion of Hall 1 and a thin layer of aluminium clad insulation, added to the mullions' outer side. At one end, it is connected to the side of a second, 80-millimetres deep mullion belonging to the glazed partition of the Ramp Street. Together, the three elements form a composite slab that is about 89 millimetres wide and 510 millimetres deep. In his fax from August, Koolhaas suggested to limit the width to

⁵⁵⁰ Fax from 12 August, 1991. OMAR 1462.

⁵⁵¹ OMAR 1812.



Figure 13. Kunsthal. Above: Auditorium with drawn curtain. Below: Illuminated steps for seating. 1992/93.

approximately 80 millimetres, even if the second mullion protrudes slightly towards the interior, as is the case at this corner.

The two corners of the curved glass wall of Hall 2 were meant to follow the same principle. [Figure 24] But the detail drawings diverge. At the corner next to the Ramp Street a short mullion belonging to the glazed partition is connected to the side of a 300-millimetres deep mullion of Hall 2. The aluminium clad layer of insulation is 90 millimetres deep, to accept the rail of the gate closing the Ramp Street at night. Together the elements form a regular aluminium slab of 146 by 363 millimetres. The – likewise composite – corner piece connecting the channel glass planks to the east and the clear glass wall to the south measures 97 by 367 millimetres.

All three details were implemented in accordance with the drawings from autumn 1991. Due to the joints between the actual mullions and the cladding, the three elements that make up the corners are clearly discernible. The mullions thus appear as frames connected to a central corner piece of the aluminium clad insulation. The visibility of the joints helps to dissolve the involuntary ‘massiveness’ of the corners into a series of thin, bodiless elements. It is difficult to judge whether Koolhaas approved of this tripartition or merely accepted it as an implication of the glazing system selected.

In a 16-pages fax from October, Koolhaas reminds Herman Jacobs – once more – of a series of agreements regarding the detailing of the exterior to which the latest drawings did not correspond. The corners of Halls 1 and 2 are not among them, despite the fact that their width differs significantly from the 80 millimetres envisaged and that the details differ significantly from one another. Perhaps at the two corners of Hall 2, no better solution had been found, and Koolhaas preferred to have one thin corner to three thick identical ones. What he did list in his fax to Jacobs is that the frames of Hall 1, the Ramp Street (ceiling), and the large window of the Information Centre facing the Maas Boulevard were not concealed in the ‘mass’ of the adjacent walls and ceilings; that the window units adjacent to the glass-fin mullions were held by visible aluminium fixtures; and that the vertical mullions at the north-west corner of the Restaurant were each 300 millimetres deep. [Figure 25] The detail of the latter corner

Chapter 2.6

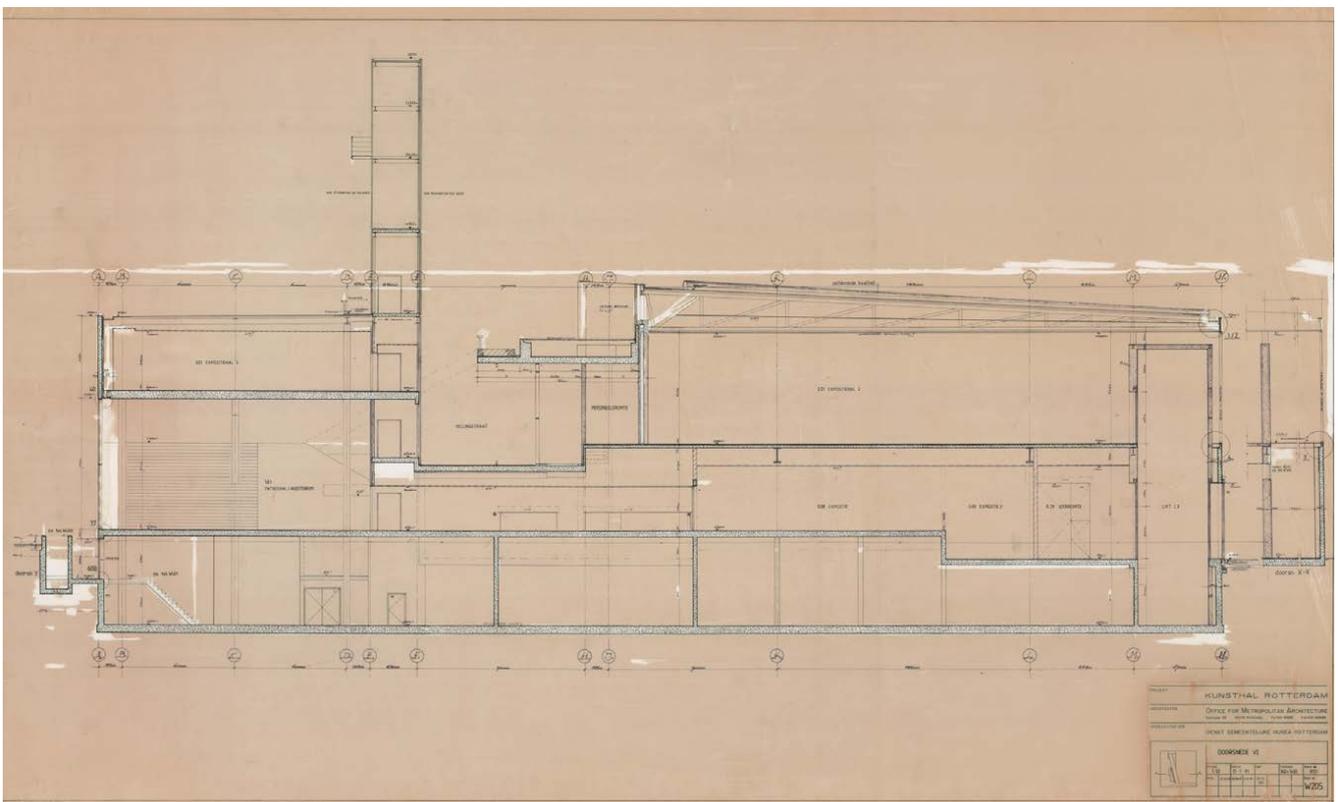
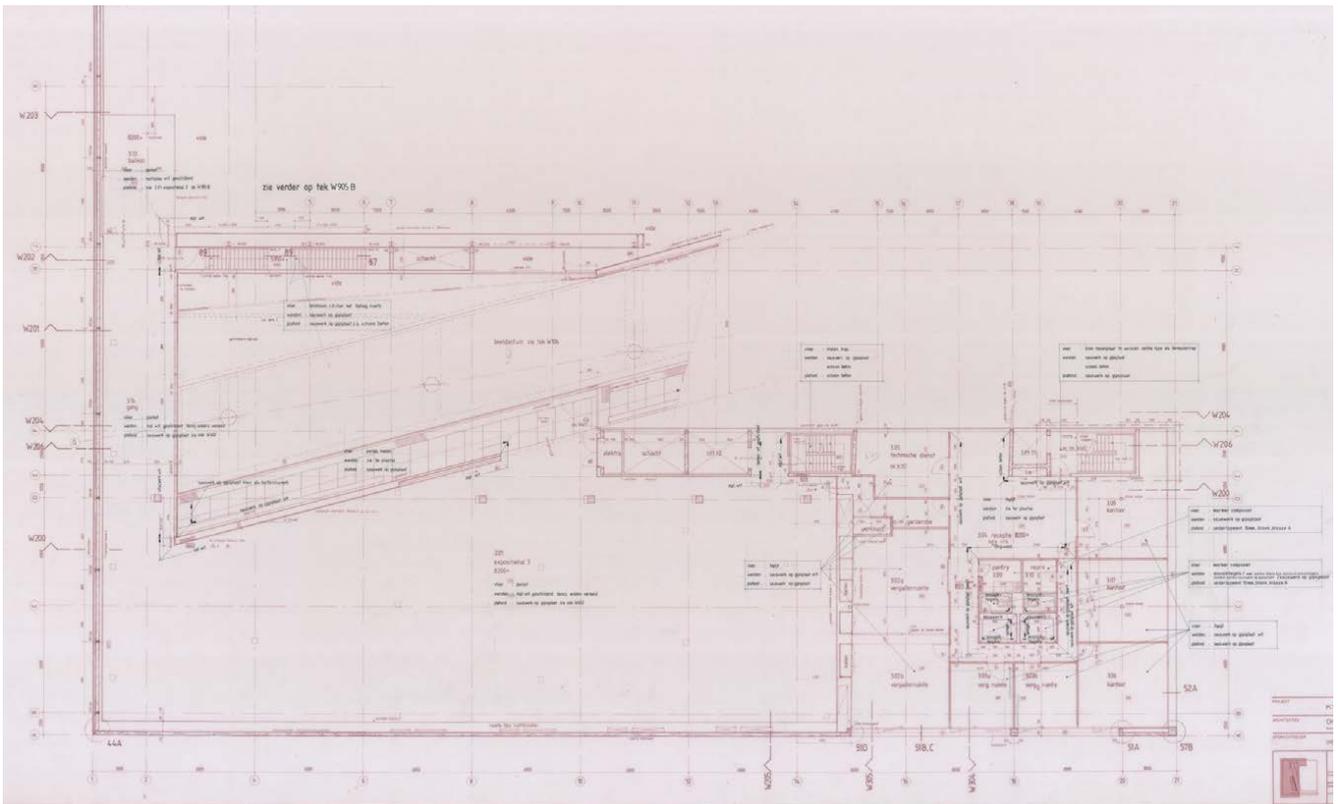


Figure 14. Kunsthall. OMA. Above: Floorplan Hall 3. February 1992.
Below: Cross section. East west axis. Hall 3 top left. November 1991.

would be corrected: the northern mullion was reduced to the depth of the horizontal mullion (180 millimetres). The corner thus approximated Hoshino's suggestion of placing at glazed corners only one regular mullion, the second of reduced depth visually merging with the subordinate horizontals. The window detail of the Information Centre would be corrected too, but the aluminium fixtures at the glass fins were retained, and the frame of Hall 1 and the frame of the Ramp Street partition remained exposed – seemingly in the drawings, manifestly in the building.⁵⁵²

The concepts underlying the detailing are not always easy to identify. After all, there are '100's of different details for 100's of different situations' – regarding both the sheer number of detail drawings and the diversity of the details in terms of construction and form.⁵⁵³ At the corner of the Restaurant and the Ramp Street, for instance, the details provide two mullions forming an open, 'Miesian' corner, just like at the Restaurant's north-west corner. But on the side of the Ramp Street, the 'second' mullion is concealed by the corrugated polyester and a strip of sheet metal framing the translucent sheathing. [Figure 23] In correspondence to the principle defined by Hoshino and Koolhaas in March, only one mullion is visible. A passer-by approaching the north façade before the renovation in 2013/4 would see three glazed corners at once, all three of them based on the principle of a 'suppressed' second mullion.⁵⁵⁴ But each corner would look different, and only a close study, perhaps only the knowledge of Hoshino's sketch, could reveal the common conceptual origin of the respective details.

Nonetheless, the mullions, frames and doors in aluminium do contribute to the formal coherence of large, otherwise diverse parts of the building, both of the exterior and the interior, and thus to the coherence of the whole. Apart from the material of aluminium, several dimensions such as the 50-millimetres width of all the mullions, the 300-millimetres depth of many of them, and the 80-millimetres

⁵⁵² Apparently there are no detail drawings that would correspond to Koolhaas' wishes. Perhaps the manufacturer Van Dool had to start with the production, and there was no time left to develop the details any further. What appears to be a last set of drawings by Van Dool dates from 30 October 1991. Stadsarchief Rotterdam (box 7: 46 40).

⁵⁵³ An inventory of details from September to November 1991 lists about 120 details with numbers between 1 and 200 that regard the exterior, a few exceptions aside. OMAR 1812. The inventory does not list, however, the details with numbers between 201 and 800, or those between 1000 and 1100. Many of these details, next to a set of details from April 1992, concern the exterior.

⁵⁵⁴ The detail was changed due to the re-location of the main entrance to the Restaurant.

Chapter 2.6



Figure 15. Kunsthal. Hall 3. Exhibition 'The Gate of the Present', 27 February - 25 April 1993.

depth of the frames do recur. 50-millimetres wide mullions in aluminium are also used for the Auditorium's rectangular window facing the Service Road, and for the Information Centre's twin window facing the Maas Boulevard. Even the four ribs of the (white) cruciform column of the Portico are 50 millimetres wide. And the oblong opening in black concrete wall to the north, too, is furnished with frames in aluminium by Van Dool, albeit a different system. At the western front of the Restaurant, the depth of the vertical mullions decreases towards the south from 300 to 150 millimetres. [Figure 16] What might appear in plan as a somewhat forced display of variation, looks homogeneous, and goes unnoticed when standing next to the building.

By contrast, the impact of the differences between the glazing of the Restaurant and the Auditorium is large. Especially if one looks at the facade from an oblique angle, the exposed mullions of the Restaurant appear as a colonnade of aluminium slabs that tend to block the view in perspective. [Figure 26] In comparison, the open-web-truss mullions of the Auditorium are either transparent or hardly visible. In daylight, the opening of the Auditorium appears as primarily filled by a wall of glass, merely traversed by a few thin chords of aluminium cover caps. Located at its inner side, the double glazing 'swallows' much of the mullions visual presence.⁵⁵⁵ But also at dark, the contrast between the transparent, filigree trusses and the opaque staccato of mullions below is distinct. Perhaps the either invisible or transparent quality of the trusses had been the actual reason to employ them for the Auditorium so as to maximise the visual and symbolical openness of this space.

More ground for the figure

An annotated sketch by Hoshino outlines three options for the pattern of the shuttering and tie bolts of the exterior walls in exposed concrete.⁵⁵⁶ [Figures 27-28] Option A suggests an unvaried grid of the shuttering and an only minimally varied tie-bolt pattern for all three walls; option B combines three fundamentally different shuttering patterns: rows of shifted panels, a continuous grid, slender vertical

⁵⁵⁵ Whether this effect was fully intended is not clear. Neither the 1 to 50 model nor any of the axonometric drawings anticipates the relative opacity of the glass and its impact.

⁵⁵⁶ Dated 11 December. No year. OMAR 1621.

Chapter 2.6

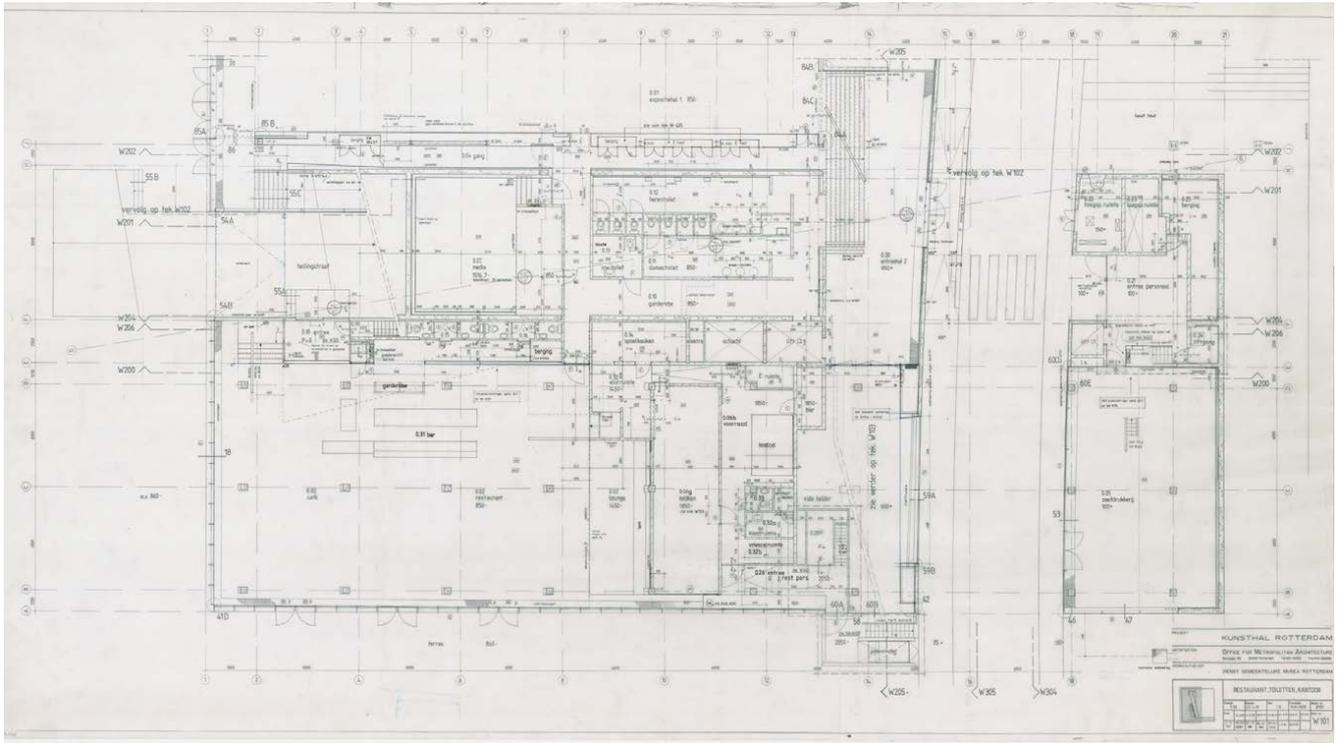


Figure 16. Kunsthall. OMA. Floorplan Restaurant. September 1992.

panels from the bottom to the top; option C varies the latter principle. Options B and C would have meant a significant increase of variety and thus a certain approximation to the heterogeneity of the transparent and translucent surfaces. But apparently, these options were abandoned by the beginning of 1991. A number of elevations from January and March show patterns for the shuttering and tie bolts that resemble option A.⁵⁵⁷ The elevations approximate the version eventually implemented. For all three walls, the same system of shuttering is used, each panel measuring 1.5 by 3 metres. In general, the tie bolts are arranged in horizontal rows (three per panel). On each façade, however, one horizontal row of panels is devoid of tie bolts. After all, the colour remained the only feature to distinguish the three walls in concrete – black, white and grey.

The two travertine clad walls are based on a single unvaried principle: the surface is divided in rows of about 43 centimetres height. [Figure 29] Each row consists of 4-centimetre thick tiles of three varying lengths, arranged in an irregular pattern.⁵⁵⁸ An undated collaged study of the north-east corner shows more slender tile formats, somewhat reminiscent of roman brickwork.⁵⁵⁹ In both cases the irregular pattern and the relatively minimal joints (8 millimetres) pull the surface together. Obviously, the idea was to evoke the image of monolithic slabs of travertine in analogy to the walls in concrete: as such the travertine clad walls are represented in the collages from autumn 1989 and in the model in scale 1 to 50; and as such they were detailed at the corners.⁵⁶⁰ [Figure 31]

Mitre joints

At the corners of the building's perimeter, those edges of the walls that are exposed are about 50 centimetres wide, suggesting a massive wall of the same depth. That applies both to the walls in concrete (bottom north façade, top south façade), and the two walls clad in travertine (top north facade, bottom

⁵⁵⁷ W300, W302, W305. OMAR 1817.

⁵⁵⁸ North elevation, 26 March, 1992. OMAR 2842. Drawings by the manufacturer Stone and Cladding: north façade, 16 July, 1992. OMAR 1596; south façade, 16 July 1992, OMAR 1598. The Spanish travertine eventually used was chosen partly for its yellowish colour, partly for its relatively low porosity, partly for cost reasons. The minutes of the Building Committee meeting on 6 May 1992 record that the Spanish travertine was inspected and ordered in Spain on 4 May. OMAR 3266.

⁵⁵⁹ OMAR 1483.

⁵⁶⁰ OMAR p1, p3.

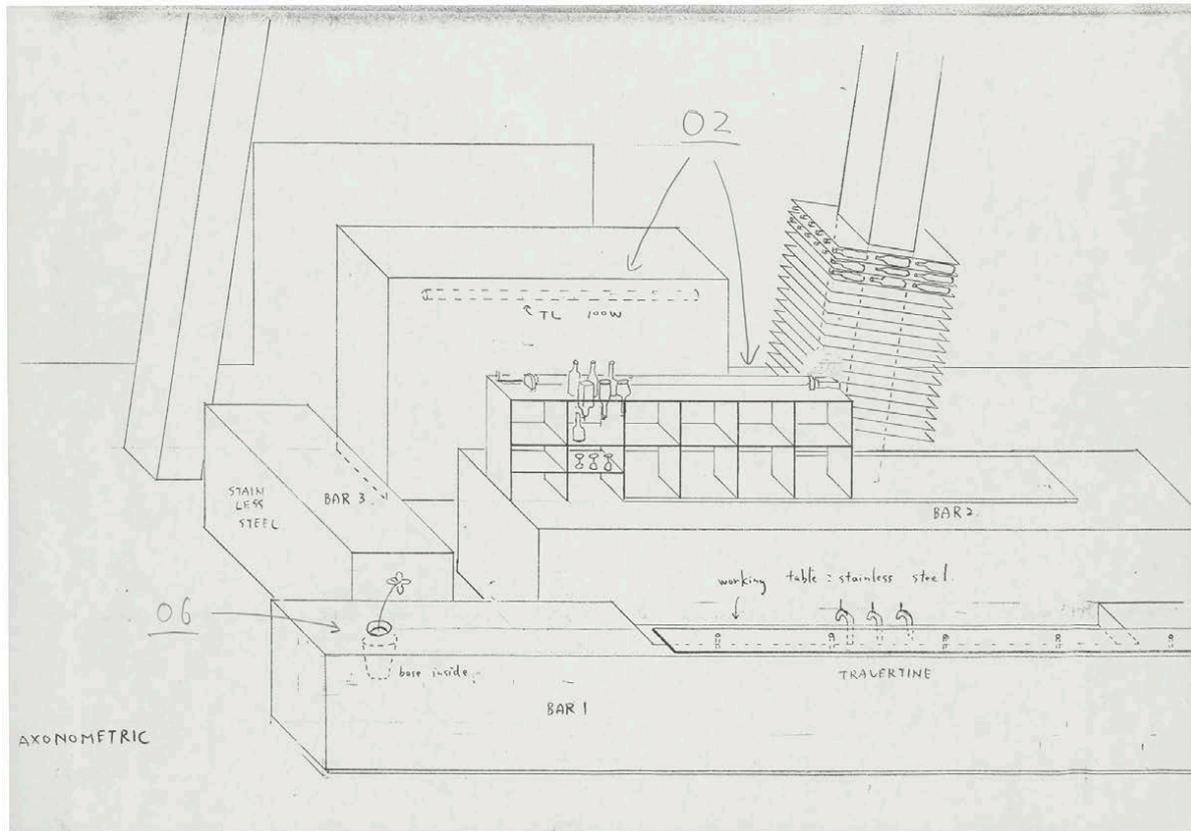
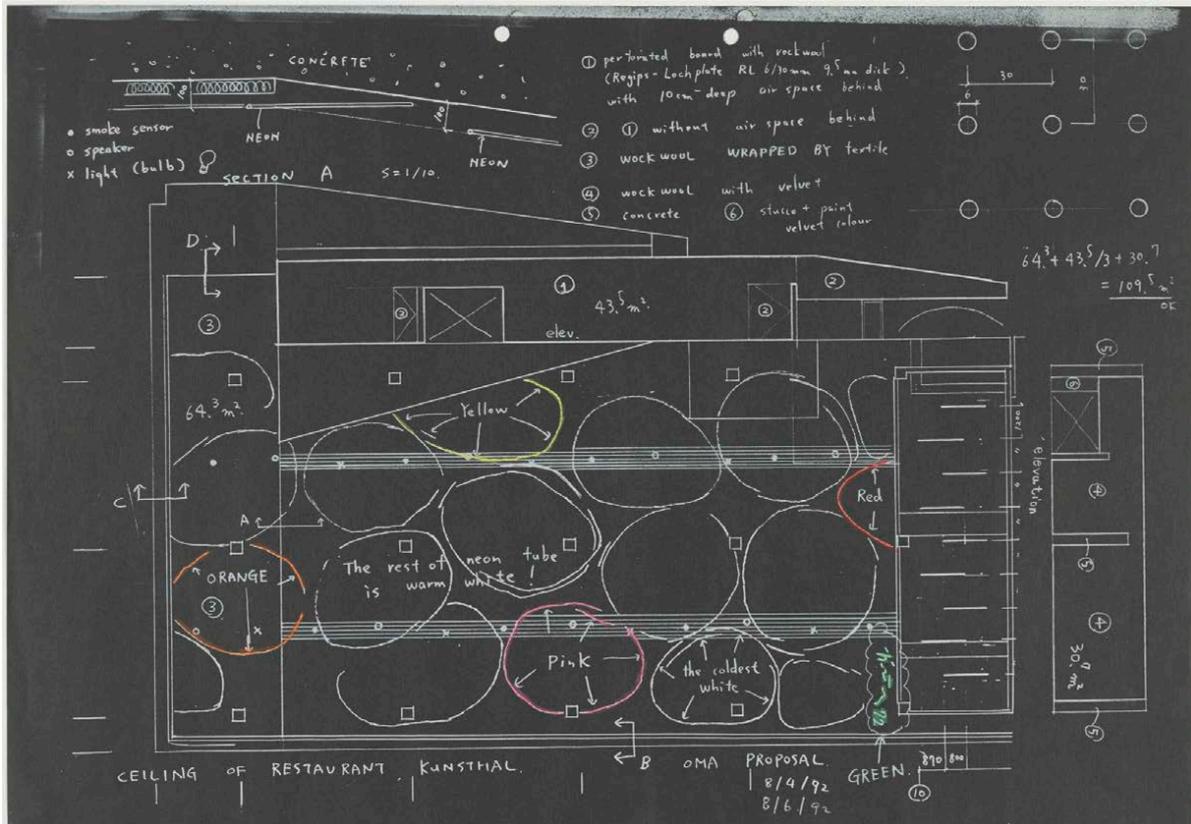


Figure 17. Kunsthal. Above: Sketch Fuminori Hoshino for ceiling of Restaurant. April/June 1992. Below: Fuminori Hoshino. Restaurant. Sketch for the bar.

south facade). This ‘standard’ depth of 50 centimetres derives from the north east corner of Hall 1. The column-like end of the wall supports the 60 metres-long concrete wall above, so that its dimensions (51 by 49 cm) could probably not be reduced any further. Given that Koolhaas wished to avoid any approximation to a column carrying the ‘massive’ upper half of the façade, it apparently had been decided to establish the 50-centimetre depth edge as a standard for the other corners as well. At the north-west and the south-west corner the depth is ‘feigned’, seemingly unrelated to structural concerns, the width of the actual walls being 20 centimetres.⁵⁶¹ A 50-centimetre strip of identic tiles is connected to the walls clad in travertine at right angles with a mitre joint. The impact of the mitre joint is equivocal. While corroborating the monolithic appearance of the wall as a whole, it undermines the notion of mass with regard to the tiles themselves. [Figure 23, 30]

The notion of massiveness – and ultimately, depth – is contested much more manifestly wherever a travertine clad wall connects to a wall in concrete.⁵⁶² Again it is a mitre joint that separates the two sides of the corner, making both the travertine cladding and the exposed concrete appear as surfaces without depth, capable of meeting along an imaginary line like two sheets of veneer. [Figure 30] At the same time, the perfectly analogous articulation of the corners in concrete and travertine reasserts what the very first façade concept from December 1988 implies: that these walls belong to the same category of exterior surface with an essentially binary exterior structure. Where opaque and transparent or translucent surfaces meet, ‘priority’ is given to the former. The detailing of the solid walls and that of the glazed walls as well as the detailing of their encounters, follow different rules.⁵⁶³

⁵⁶¹ See details: 41, 57, dated 18 October 1991; and 62, dated 25 September 1991. OMAR 1812.

⁵⁶² The ambiguity has already been observed by Ed Melet and Michel Moussette. Ed Melet, *The architectural detail. Dutch architects visualize their concepts* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2002), 117. Moussette, ““Do we need a canopy for rain?””, 287.

⁵⁶³ In this sense, the detailing based on a difference of category creates a coherence that transcends, to some extent, the diversity of the parts that belong to it. Apparently, the principles for the corner details were defined at an early stage. Hoshino’s ‘Inventory of Problems’ from November 1989 shows corners that are articulated in the same manner. This holds true for the facades from April 1990, even if there is no indication of drawings that would show the corners in detail.

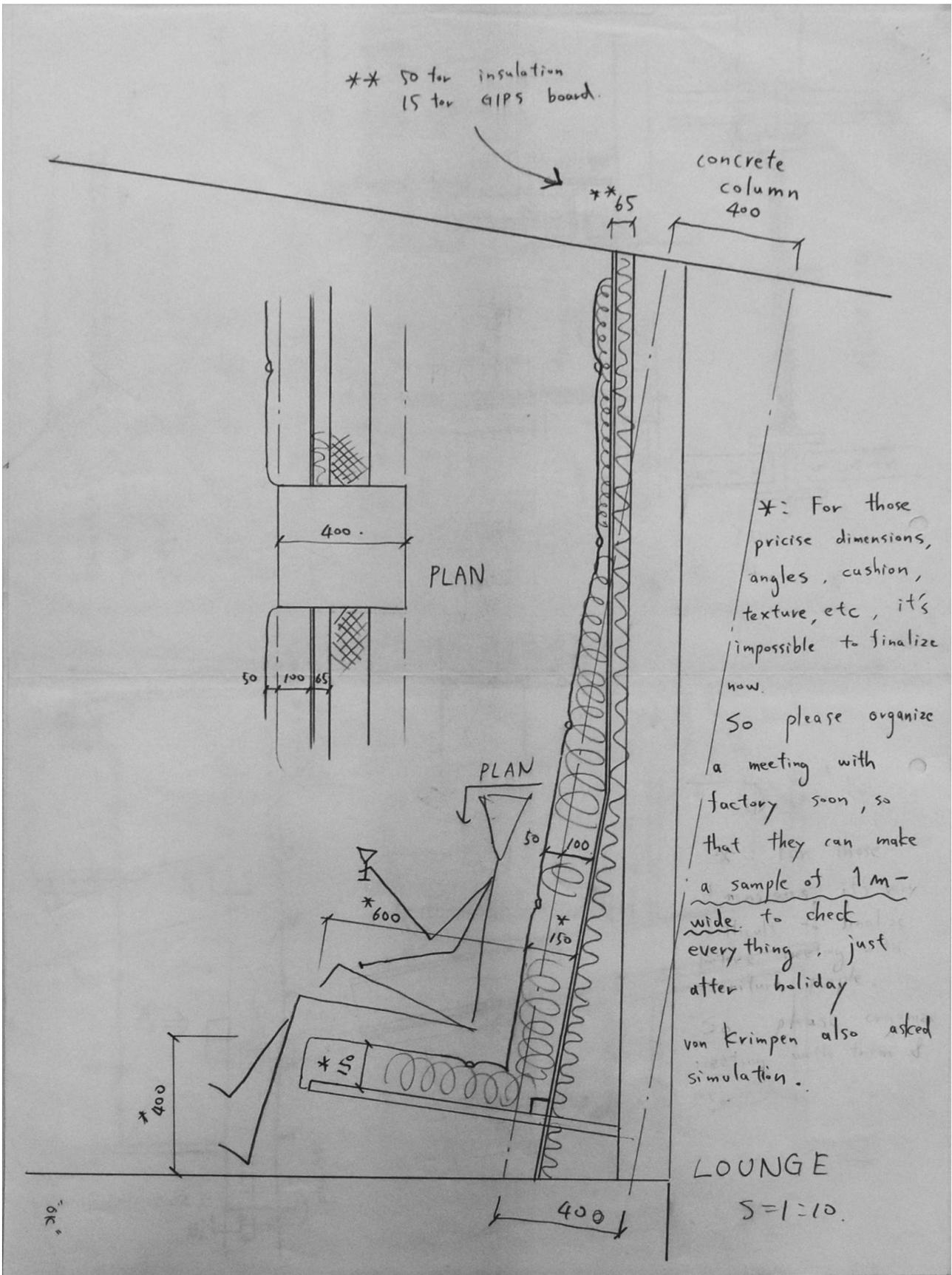


Figure 18. Kunsthal. Fuminori Hoshino. Restaurant. Sketch for the bench.

Surface reigns

The emphasis on surface is palpable in the interior too, where it prevails over ‘space’ at every occasion. This prevalence is implicit in the floor’s origami-like continuity, in the ubiquitous *enjambements* of exterior walls from one space to another, and in the principle diversity of finishes. As the relative autonomy of the facades counteracts the formal unity of the building’s volume, the relative autonomy of the finishes counteracts the formal unity of the main spaces. The former implies a shift of accent from volume to surface; the latter implies a shift of accent from space to surface. In both cases the insistence on surface appears to contest the depth, or volume, of surface itself. The mitre-joints of the façade’s corners are one example. The ‘involuntary’ volumes of the *poché* are another, since they were largely converted to a series of discrete surfaces and walls.

The two *poché* strips on both sides of the Ramp Street and the *poché*-like roof of Hall 2 were introduced to accommodate secondary spaces and spaces for the building services. Each is partly articulated, or rather ‘marked’, as a volume like an intruder in a realm of surface, only to be ‘unmasked’ in a second step as surface. The *poché* along the Auditorium is clad on both its main sides with corrugated plastic panels. But the implicit suggestion of volume is disclaimed at the roof where the *poché* extends as the Service Tower, three of its sides being covered with expanded metal grating while on the fourth side the flimsiness of the corrugated sheathing is exposed. Similarly, in the interior, the inner layer of corrugated sheathing protrudes from the main entrance to the balcony, where it becomes visible as another ‘loose end’, disclaiming any illusion of volume. The sheathing of the exterior protrudes to the north façade, so that customers entering the Restaurant don’t fail to perceive that they are passing through a thin membrane.

The *poché* next to Hall 2 is partly smoothed over by merging the north side with the white parapet of the corridor connecting to the Auditorium. In Hall 2 the *poché* is featured as a single white wall with one gap in between at half length. Regarding the triangular ticket booth, the notion of volume was to

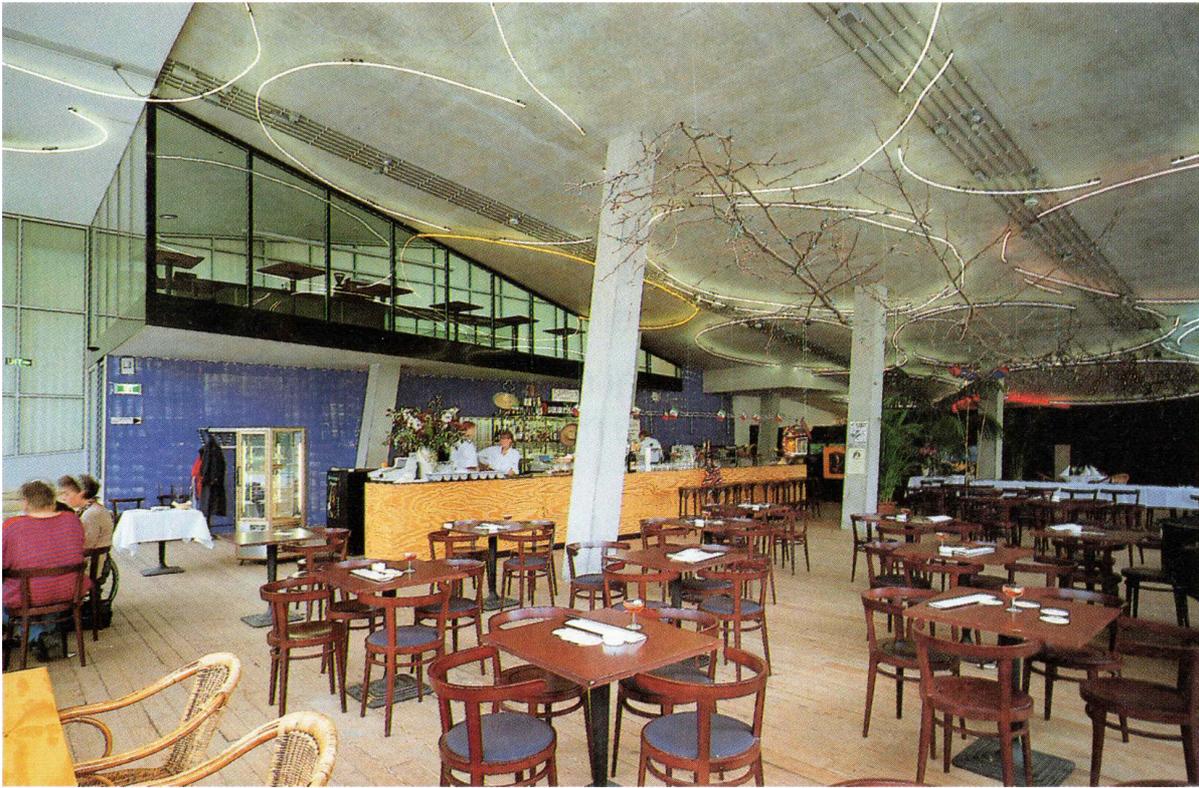


Figure 19. Kunsthal. Above: Restaurant with bar and balcony. 1993.
Below: Bench at the back of the Restaurant. 1993.

be emphatically undermined by the canvas-like front of cowhides at its south side.⁵⁶⁴ Similarly, much care was taken to disconnect the wedged volume covering Hall 2 from the facades so as to make the roof appear flat. Nonetheless, in the model in scale 1 to 50 the roof of Hall 2 is built as a volume, entirely clad with silver coloured cardboard; and the detail drawings from April 1990 too provide aluminium sheathing for the sloped covering of the roof, visible from some of the adjacent buildings.⁵⁶⁵ [Figure 31] Perhaps for reasons of costs the large sloped surface was covered with bitumen roofing, only the edges of the wedged volume – visible from the Roof Garden and the park to the north – are clad with aluminium. But even if the roof would have been entirely clad with aluminium, the ceiling of Hall 2 would have revealed the suggestion of the single large wedge of metal as an illusion. The materials of the ceiling, and the exposed edges of the plasterboard and polycarbonate panels, unmistakably show the roof's enclosure as the assembly of thin, heterogeneous surfaces.

Needless to say that the semi-transparency of most of the *poché* is contrary to the notion of mass. In the Auditorium, large parts are illuminated by the fluorescent lights behind the corrugated sheathing. Not only the light tubes themselves are visible, but also the grid of the substructure, the floor plates and transverse walls, a window frame inserted into the layer of wired glazing, cable routes and junction boxes, suggesting a hollow technical apparatus of machine-like complexity. Parts of the substructure of the corrugated sheathing can be seen from the Ramp Street, and at dark the illuminated openings giving onto the passage become plainly visible. [Figure 32] In Hall 2, the flat polycarbonate panels of the ceiling show almost everything they conceal. Even if blurred, one can discern the open-web trusses, the ducts of the mechanical services, the fluorescent lights, the vaults of the skylights, and the blue sky above.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁴ The cowhides are still visible in the model in scale 1 to 50, held by the HNI.

⁵⁶⁵ Details no. 22, 24. 19 April 1990. Stadsarchief Rotterdam.

⁵⁶⁶ In recent years the skylights are covered with darkening cloth, reducing the transparency of the polycarbonate panels significantly.

Chapter 2.6

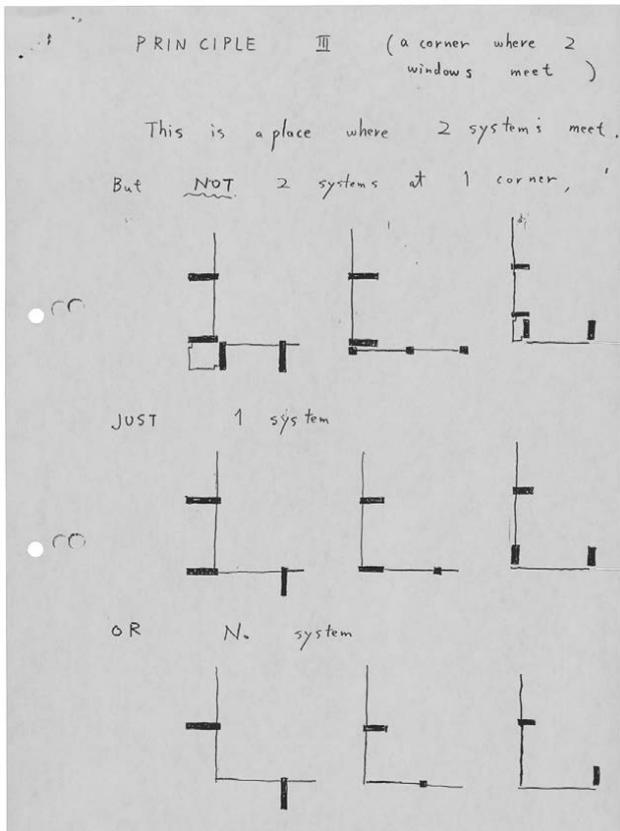
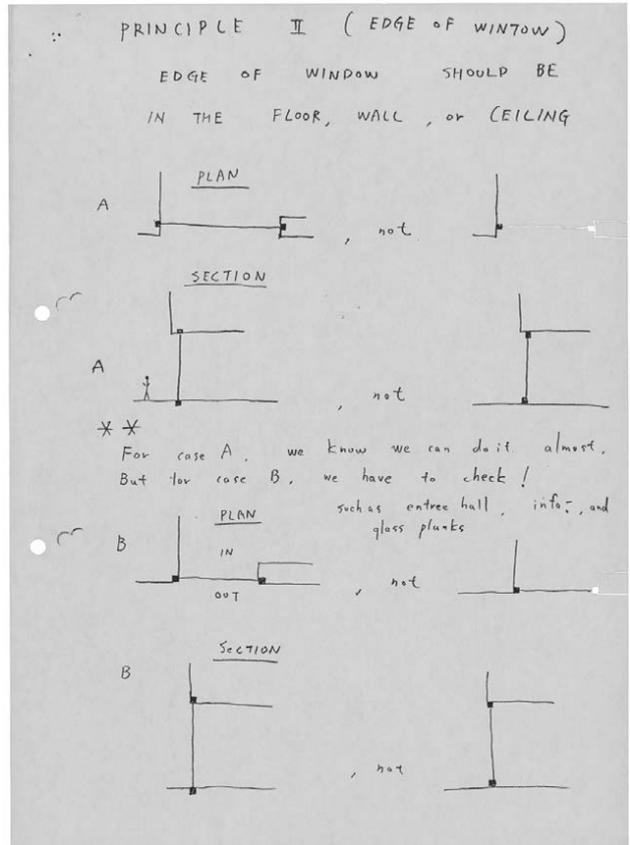
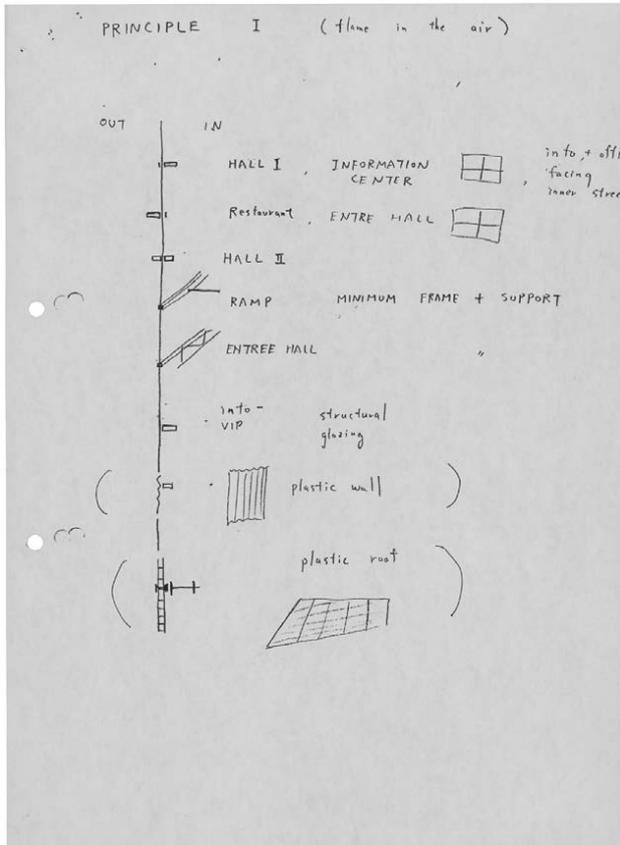


Figure 20. Kunsthal. Fuminori Hoshino. Principles for the glazing details. March 1991.

A postmodern gloss

Between 1991 and 1992, the colour scheme was slightly modified and worked out in detail. A series of drawings, hand-coloured and annotated by Hoshino, shows a configuration that approximates the final design.⁵⁶⁷ [Figure 33] The colours defined entail a further individuation of the columns of the Portico. The drawings provide ‘white’ for the cruciform column, and ‘silver metallic’ for the castellated column. The H-column is rendered in black, the encased H-column in grey (concrete), and the *pilotis* on the Ramp Street in black, perhaps to reinforce the contrast. The most conspicuous modification is the introduction of orange. The sketches provide orange paint for the bracing of the roof of Hall 2, the H-columns in Hall 2 (not implemented), and the two exoskeletal girders on top of the Portico and the roof of Hall 3. Hoshino specifies RAL 2008 and the steel primer Monopox SF-HB, a bright red orange, perhaps the colour eventually used. The orange colour conveys the idea of a primer – normally used as a protection against corrosion, not as a finish – and it announces the sense of rawness that permeates the building, corroborating the orange plate girder’s cantilever eternal need of trimming.⁵⁶⁸

The orange colour of the two exoskeletal girders on the roof and the bracing of Hall 2 strike also another, entirely different chord. Bright, similarly jaunty colours, used to be a typical feature of postmodernist architecture. Several buildings that make use of them, acquired the status of postmodernist ‘icons’: Minoru Takeyama’s tower in Tokyo (1970), shown on the cover of the first edition of Charles Jencks’s *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (1977), Charles Moore’s, Piazza d’Italia in New Orleans (1976-79), many a facade of the Strada novissima at the 1980 Venice Biennale as well as James Stirling’s Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart (1977-83). Stirling used a bright red orange for the revolving doors (main entrance and rotunda), pink and blue for the ‘improvised’ steel structure of the canopy. Especially in combination with the two, no less improvised looking plate girders of the Kunsthal, the orange colour appears to ‘activate’ the building’s otherwise latent affinities to stereotype traits of postmodern

⁵⁶⁷ Dated 5 May, 9 September, no year. OMAR 1732.

⁵⁶⁸ Ed Melet wrote in 1993: ‘It looks as if someone accidentally left it on the roof, or forgot to make it to measure.’ Melet, ‘Perfect Disorder’, 286.

Chapter 2.6

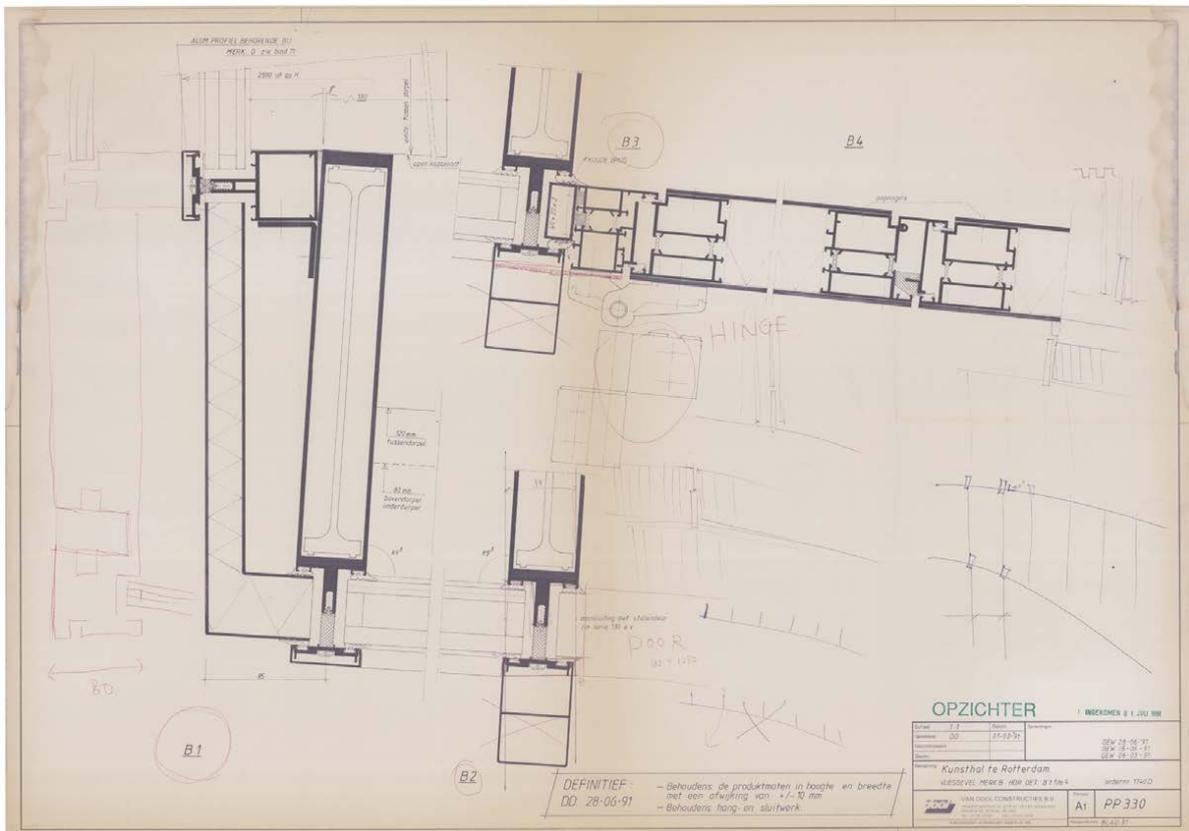
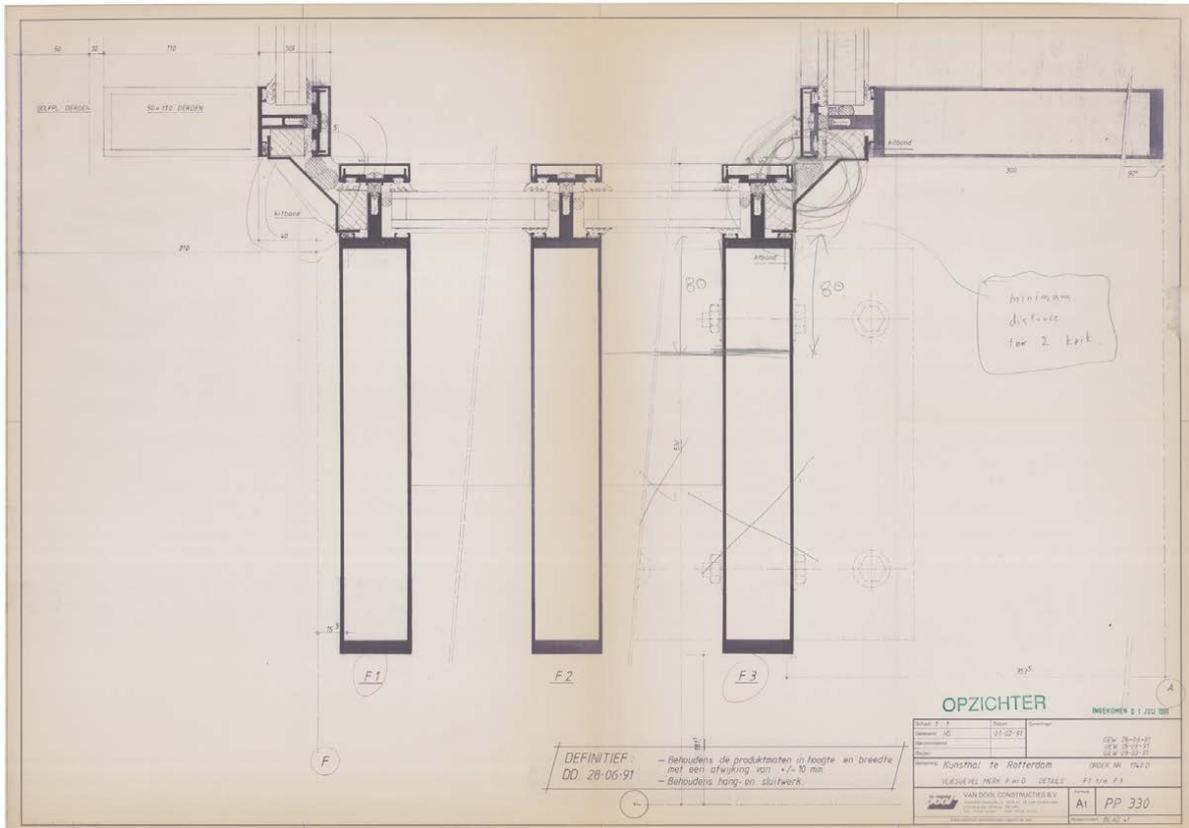


Figure 21. Kunsthal. Van Dool. Corner details glazing. July 1991.
Above: Restaurant. North facade. Below: Corner of Hall 2/Ramp Street.

architecture.⁵⁶⁹ Apart from the use of bright colours and their alleged appeal to popular taste, irony, classical references, a quote-like explicitness of references, and a taste for stage-like, theatrical qualities, are essential characteristics of much of what is widely regarded as postmodern architecture. The above examples share most of them, and the Kunsthal does so too, albeit in varying degrees.⁵⁷⁰

In an essay by Richard Ingersoll from 1994, the Kunsthal figures as a prime example of the use of irony in the built work of OMA. The tree-trunk columns of Hall 1, the tilted columns of the Auditorium, the note of ‘consumerism’ struck by the Service Tower’s billboard are among the ‘jokes’ and ironic ambiguities Ingersoll refers to.⁵⁷¹ For Emmanuel Petit, irony is a largely underestimated quality of postmodern architecture which is closely connected to much of its intellectual dimension. A chapter of his book *Irony; or, The Self-Critical Opacity of Postmodern Architecture* is dedicated to Koolhaas’ work from the 1970s and 1980s.⁵⁷² As Petit points out, Koolhaas uses the parodic distortion of canonical works of architecture or the juxtaposition of seemingly irreconcilable positions to articulate awareness: of the covert motivations of modernist architects (Casa Palestra); of the historical dialectics within modernist architecture and urbanism (project for Boompjes); of the transient nature of ideological primacy (Arnhem Prison). The Kunsthal, even if not discussed in Petit’s essay, is particularly rich in

⁵⁶⁹ As mentioned before, the large orange arrows pointing to the main entrance and the entrance of the Restaurant were only added after the completion of the building.

⁵⁷⁰ Charles Jencks, when visiting the building in 1993 concluded: ‘It [the Kunsthal] is certainly going in the post-modern direction with lots of colour, lots of humour, lots of tactility, lots of mystery, lots of surprise. This is not a typically modern building because it is always putting you off balance and saying: “What’s around the corner?”’ Charles Jencks, ‘Charles Jencks’, in: Jenny Borger et al., *PRIMA VISTA!*, 23 May 1993, VPRO. Jencks’ notion of postmodernism, however, tended to include most of the acclaimed contemporary architects. In the first wave of reviews subsequent to the completion of the building, the Kunsthal is generally seen in opposition to postmodern architecture. Lootsma and De Graaf mention the cantilever of the orange plate girder as a possible postmodernist feature, while stressing that Koolhaas did not comply to Van Krimpen’s implicit suggestions to design a postmodernist Kunsthal. Lootsma, De Graaf, ‘In dienst van de ervaring’, 25. In the lead of Hans Ibeling’s review, the Kunsthal is interpreted as a ‘critical comment on postmodern culture in which the act of displaying art works becomes secondary to the complexity of the architecture itself.’ Hans Ibelings, ‘Una macchina espositiva per la città’, *Abitare* 317 (1993), 189. For Frampton the Kunsthal is a genuinely modern building in a ‘post-modern Rotterdam’. Frampton, ‘Kunsthal a Rotterdam’, 46. In 1997, Cynthia Davidson relates the building’s formal fragmentation to the ‘fragmented time of post-modernism,’ drawing on Deleuze’s second book on cinema, *Cinema II. The Time-Image* from 1985. Cynthia Davidson, ‘Koolhaas and the Kunsthal’, 39.

⁵⁷¹ Richard Ingersoll, ‘Rem Koolhaas e l’ironia’, *Casabella* 610 (Mar 1994), 17. Ingersoll compares the ambiguity of the Kunsthal’s embrace of consumerism to the work of Andy Warhol. For Ingersoll, the Kunsthal is particularly apt to the use of irony, ‘because the content of art in the late 20th century is so dependent upon ironic subversion.’ *Ibid.*, quoted after: Van Gerrewey, *A Critical Reader*, 232.

⁵⁷² Petit, *Irony*, 178-211.

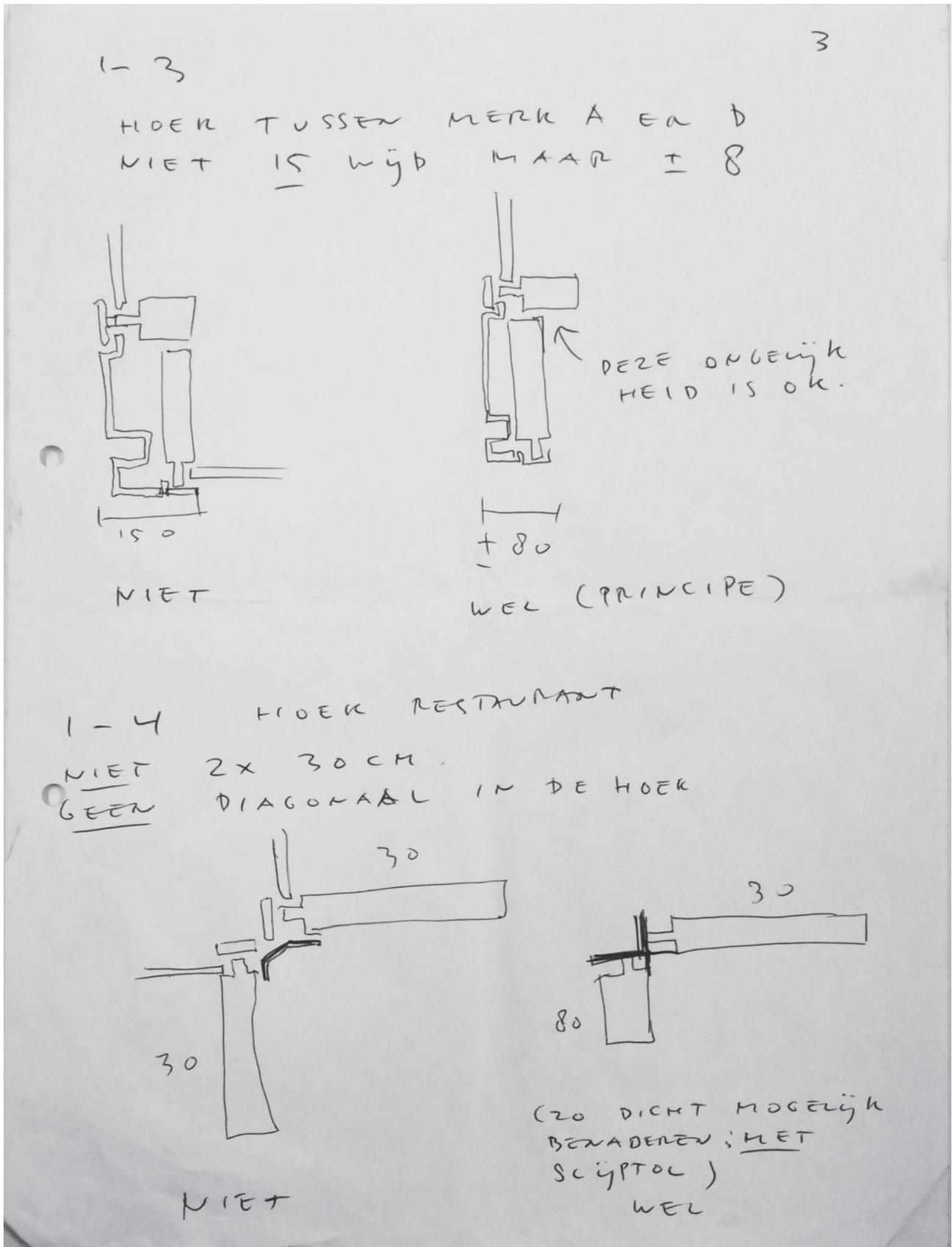


Figure 22. Kunsthal. Rem Koolhaas. Corner details of glazing. Fax August 1991.

such distortions and juxtapositions. There is the ubiquitous opposition of curtain walls and massive walls underlying the binary layout of all the facades; there is the Auditorium as a distorted Maison Domino; the Miesian cruciform column placed diagonally, and the Miesian steel frame construction next to a Corbusian structure in concrete; the Miesian neutral space next to the *plan libre*; a fragment of the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin next to the *promenade architecturale*. The cornice detail of the south and the east façade was modified in 1991/1992, seemingly to resemble more closely the double T-cornices of Mies' late work. The assembly of three bent metal plates from April 1990 was replaced by a single 80-centimetres high element, like the 'original' painted black, and of one piece.⁵⁷³ [Figure 34]

The presence of the postmodern 'quote' is striking. The Casa Palestra aside, the abundance of explicit references is unsurpassed within OMA's built oeuvre. The travertine cladding is both reminiscent of recent museum architecture's classicist tendencies and the postmodern leanings towards the classical tradition of architecture. That is not to say that Koolhaas, while designing the Kunsthal, ceded to a similar penchant; but apparently he chose – at some point – to indulge in proverbial 'penchants' of postmodern architecture so as to make them thematic. The 'excessive' use of quotations and the use of the orange colour seem to serve to the very same purpose.

Not all postmodern leanings, however, appear indebted to this strategy, as they are characteristic for other projects of OMA as well. Most obvious is the design's ostentatious formal fragmentation or heterogeneity which until then was as characteristic for OMA's work as for postmodern architecture. Despite its compression into the boundaries of a single prism, this heterogeneity – of the facades, the spaces, the materials used, the material's connotations – figures as one of the Kunsthal's most commented features in reviews and essays from the 1990s.⁵⁷⁴ Another parallel between the Kunsthal, OMA's earlier work and postmodern architecture is a sense for the staged and the spectacular.

⁵⁷³ Compare detail no. 1, from 19 April, 1990 (Stadsarchief Rotterdam, box 4), and façade detail no. 1 from 28 February 1992 (OMAR 1812).

⁵⁷⁴ See for instance: Schneider, 'Trügerische Transparenz', 41-44; Bart Lootsma, Jan de Graaf, 'In dienst van de ervaring', 25; Davidson, 'Koolhaas and the Kunsthal', 39-40.

Chapter 2.6

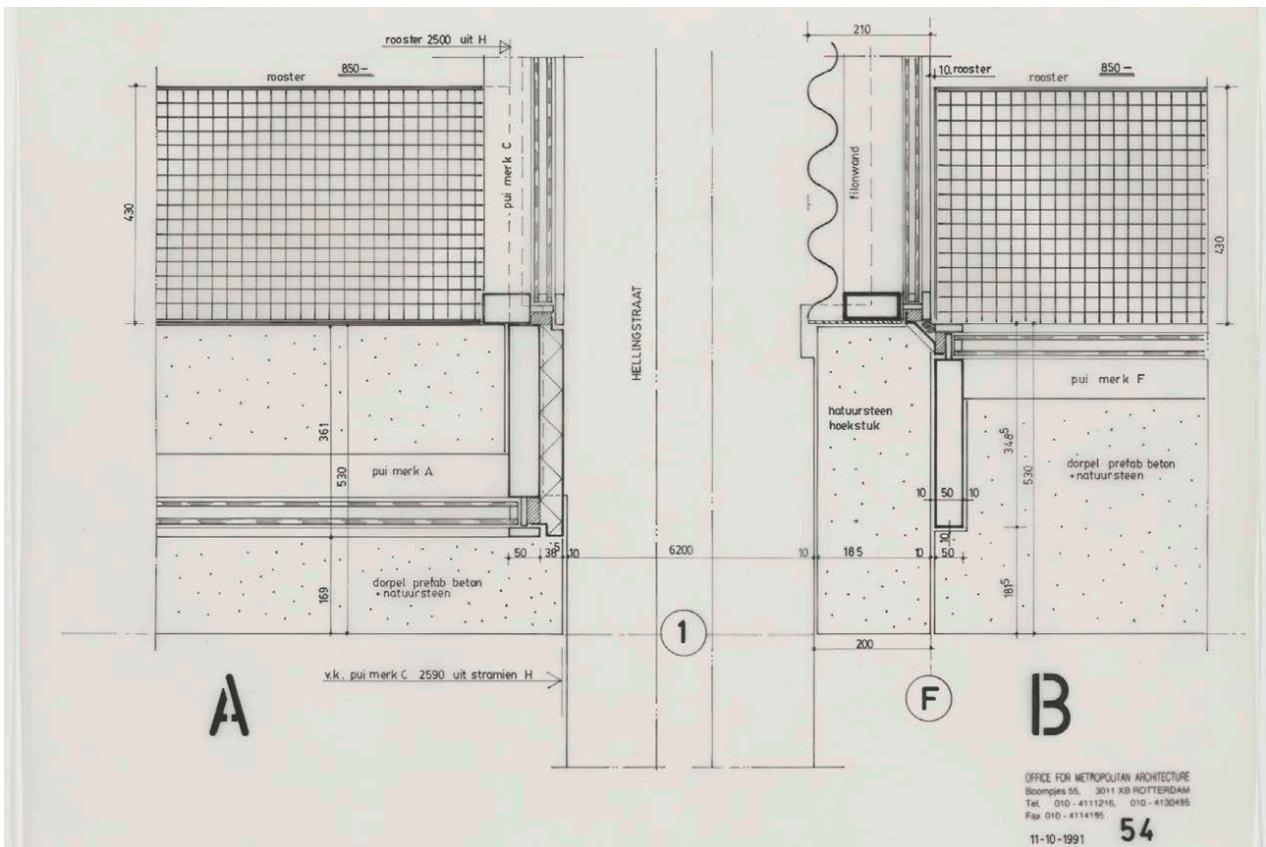
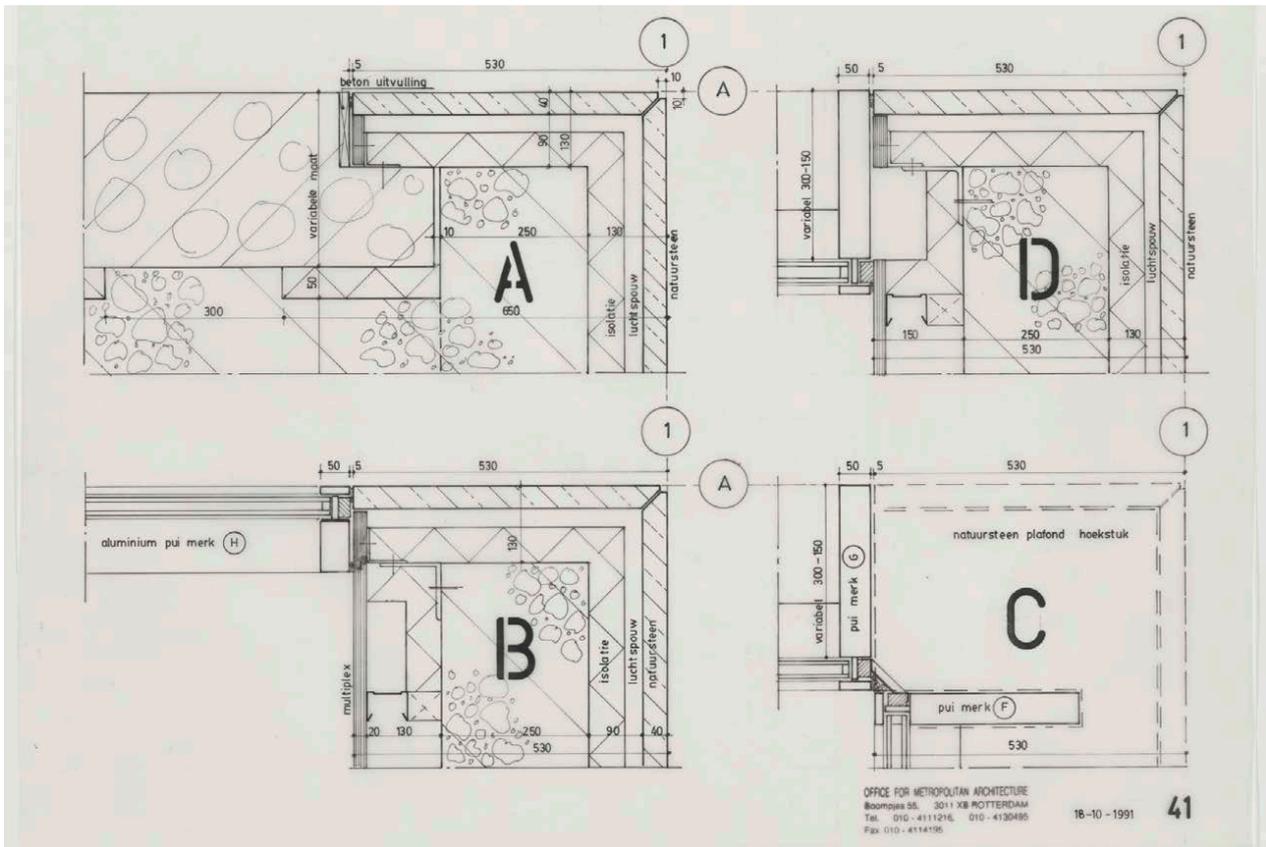


Figure 23. Kunsthal. OMA. Facade details. October 1991.
 Above: North-west corner. Below: North facade. A) Hall 1/Ramp Street and B) Restaurant/Ramp Street.

Koolhaas' fascination with these qualities appears to originate from *Delirious New York*, his study of surrealism and the project to conceive of a hedonist modernism. The 'skybar' and golden cone of the Dance Theatre, the pool on the roof of the Villa Dall'Ava, the ample use of recessed lights and the at times theatrical light effects are surely owed to this.⁵⁷⁵ At the Kunsthalle, spotlights are integrated in the basalt covered slope of the dyke, flooding the Portico through the terrace's metal grating from below. The spotlights integrated into the *pilotis* cast cones of light in 'all' directions.⁵⁷⁶ [Figure 35] The (TV) stage-like illumination integrated into the steps of the Auditorium has been mentioned. Surely Moore's Piazza d'Italia does remind of a TV stage. A significant part of postmodern architecture tends to 'a certain carnival spirit' which Gottfried Semper in a famous footnote of his *Style* defines as 'the true atmosphere of art' when elaborating on improvised festive buildings in antiquity.⁵⁷⁷ The facades of the Strada novissima were built by the set technicians of Cinecittà in Rome and subsequently shipped to Venice.⁵⁷⁸ Hoshino made a detailed sketch for a tree-trunk bar on wheels.⁵⁷⁹ [Figure 36] The mobile bar – integrated into yet another debarked trunk – was conceived for the autonomous use of Hall 2. In the case of festive events like vernissages, the freight elevator could carry two halves of an about 7-metres long trunk to Hall 2. One half would be equipped with a fridge, the other with a sink, beer tanks, and taps.

Reading imperfection

On the corridor between the Auditorium and Hall 2 is a bisected window that overlooks the ascending Roof Garden, which at this point is enclosed on three sides by the building like a semi-patio. The two long, tilted fringes of the Roof Garden are flanked by the translucent screens of flat polycarbonate panels. Along the stepped ramp, they form a vertical wall that ends with the garden exit. On the opposite

⁵⁷⁵ It goes without saying that the use of artificial lights is a means to determine how a building and its spaces are being illuminated. Many photographs of Hans Werlemann show the Dance Theatre, the Patio Villa, and the Villa Dall'Ava in the light of its own, 'choreographed' illumination.

⁵⁷⁶ The columns are diagonally pierced by cylindrical voids. Into each void two spotlights are fixed, pointing in opposite directions. A perspective sketch by Hoshino illustrates the impact. OMAR 1727.

⁵⁷⁷ Gottfried Semper, *Style* vol. I (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2004), 439. First published in 1860.

⁵⁷⁸ Léa-Catherine Szacka, *Exhibiting the Postmodern*, 130.

⁵⁷⁹ The sketch is dated 14 July 1992. There is no indication of the bar ever being built. OMAR 4507.

Chapter 2.6

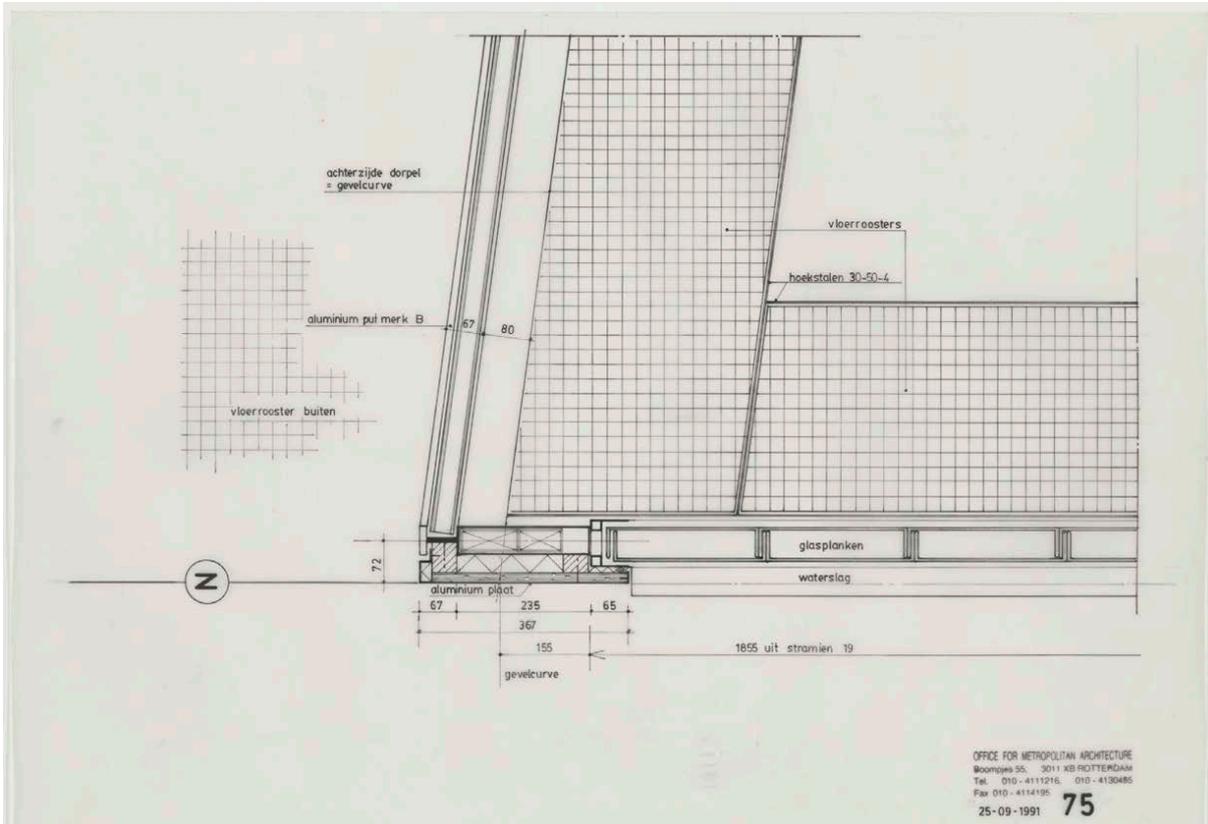
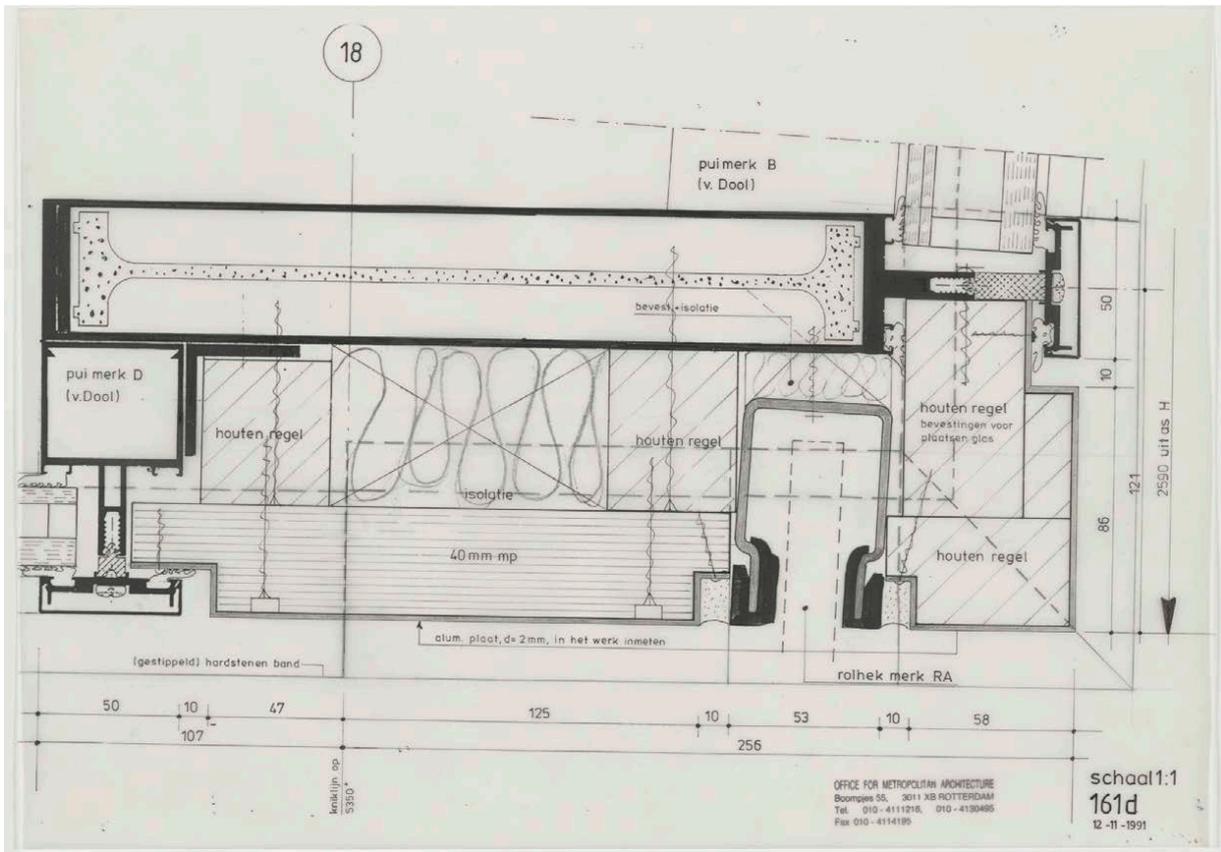


Figure 24. Kunsthal. OMA. Facade details.
 Above: Corner Hall 2/Ramp Street. November 1991. Below: Hall 2/East facade. September 1991.

side, they rise gradually from an angle of 40 degrees in a vertical position before meeting the vertical roof edge of Hall 2, entirely clad in aluminium.

The left half of the same bisected window offers a completely different view: a glimpse at the Ramp Street from above. To the right, there is the underside of the polycarbonate panels flanking the Roof Garden; to the left, the glazed partition dividing the Ramp Street, and behind the partition, a white wall which belongs to the *poché* adjacent to Hall 2. This area – the junction of the roof of Hall 2, the Skew Ramp, and the glazed partition of the Ramp Street below – is perhaps the geometrically most complex part of the building. Referring to its triangular shape in plan, Hoshino dubbed the area ‘Triangle Zone’.⁵⁸⁰ The ‘Triangle’ is one of the two openings that – partly in order to supply the Ramp Street with daylight – were generated through the rotation of the Skew Ramp in December 1988. Since then, several variants had been tried out for its covering.⁵⁸¹

The polycarbonate panels of the built covering are supported by rectangular hollow-section profiles in steel. The profiles – painted in dark grey – rest on the rim of the Skew Ramp, cross the curved edge of the Ramp Street’s glass partition and then connect to the substructure of the *poché* next to Hall 2. The curved edge of the partition is necessary to fit the bent surface of the translucent covering. The gaps between this edge, the covering and the steel profiles, are filled with insulated aluminium panels, visible from both sides of the partition.⁵⁸² [Figure 37] The first profile to the north crosses diagonally just in front of the bisected corridor window between Hall 2 and the Auditorium. The profile is doubled by a

⁵⁸⁰ ‘Inventory of Problems’, 15. OMAR 3276. Hoshino refers to the area enclosed by Hall 2, the corridor and the diagonal edge of the Skew Ramp.

⁵⁸¹ Until October 1989, the drawings show a translucent covering that extends to the Portico, its pointed end cutting a ‘breach’ into Hall 2. The covering was partly vertical, partly sloped, ascending from the tilted fringe of the ramp to the edge of the roof, which then was still flat. Two – beautiful – studies by Hoshino from 1 and 4 December 1989 examine the possibility to cover the opening with channel glass planks, similar to those used for the east façade. The covering transforms from a perfect vertical plane into a bent surface; the bent is inevitable since the surface as a whole was defined by four different points. In order to generate the curvature, the glass planks were slightly shifted against one another – a solution that Hoshino assessed as ‘very difficult’. OMAR 2821. The option was eventually dismissed. By April 1990 the translucent covering was cut back to the point where the Skew Ramp meets the roof of Hall 2.

⁵⁸² An undated sketch by Hoshino suggests to ‘hide’ the infills, setting them back with regard to the edges of the mullions. Contrary to this idea, the infills eventually mounted are almost flush with the inner edge of the mullions. OMAR 1727.

Chapter 2.6

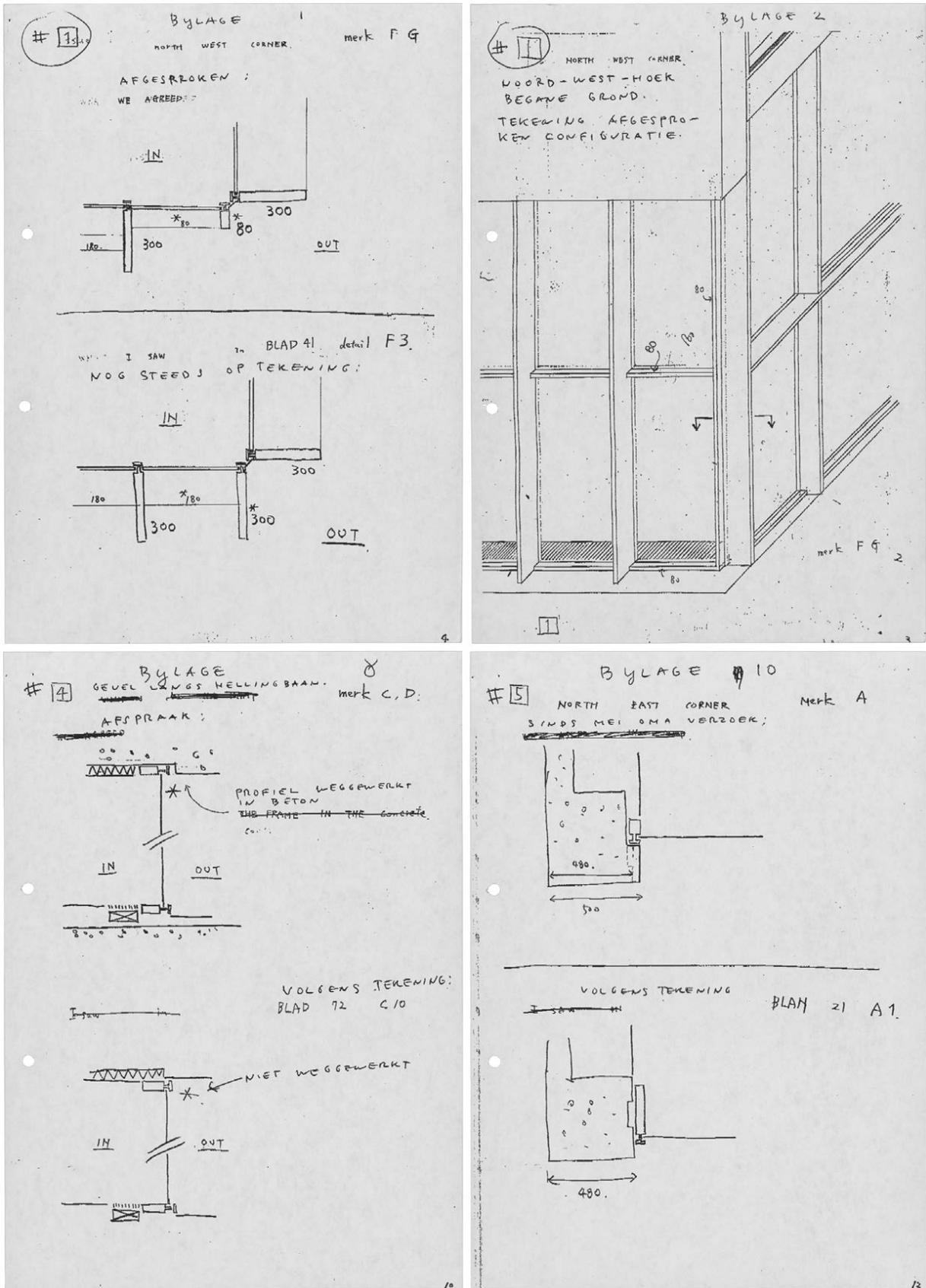


Figure 25. Kunsthal. Rem Koolhaas. Reminder of agreed on detail solutions. Fax October 1991.

mullion which is part of the window frame in Aluminium. To the diagonal mullion a short piece of an ‘auxiliary’ mullion is added below, so as to frame the cut-off corner of the acutely angled glazing. The auxiliary mullion looks somewhat improvised, as if the pointed glazed corner has been sacrificed to a technical concern of some sort.⁵⁸³

For the corridor window, the same type of 50-millimetres wide mullion is used as for the glazed partition of the Ramp Street. In order not to obstruct the view from one side of the partition to the other while walking the ramp, the depth of the vertical mullions is kept minimal (120 millimetres), as envisaged since the beginning of 1990. The depth of the frame (80 millimetres) and the horizontal mullions (180 millimetres) are dimensioned in correspondence to the frames and mullions of the other facades. Where the *pilotis* interrupts the glazed partition, the frame is virtuously fitted into recesses provided in the concrete column on both sides. [Figure 38] From the outside, the grid of square window units looks quite regular and ‘controlled’ in spite of the margins where the collision with either the bent translucent covering or the Skew Ramp generates units of every size and shape. The image on the interior half of the Ramp Street is different. The differences of depth of the horizontal and vertical mullions, frames and aluminium panels are plainly visible. The logic to which these differences do comply is not easy to re-enact, all the more so, as a couple of the frames – contrary to this logic – ‘protrude’ as mullions in order to avoid L-shaped pieces of glazing. [Figure 37]

Comments on faults and imperfections of the building played a marginal role in the reviews of the Kunsthal. But they occurred. Some imperfections obviously resulted from a lack of care on the part of the workers.⁵⁸⁴ Others indicate a lack of foresight on the part of the architects, for which the auxiliary mullion of the corridor between Hall 2 and the Auditorium seems to be an example. Another one is the ceiling in Hall 2, where apparently no proper solution has been found for the steel tubes of the parabola

⁵⁸³ There is no such mullion in the drawings from 19 April 1990. See: Drawing B 27. OMAR 1786.

⁵⁸⁴ Bernard Hulsman, for instance, suggests that the corrugated polycarbonate panels along the Ramp Street were cut with the ‘dullest of blades’. See: Idem, ‘Kunsthal lijkt wel een overdoos’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 31 October 1992. Quoted after: Van Gerrewey, *A Critical reader*, 278. Melet mentions that ‘the ceiling of Hall 3 is full of badly fitted hatches.’ Melet, ‘Perfect Disorder’, 285.

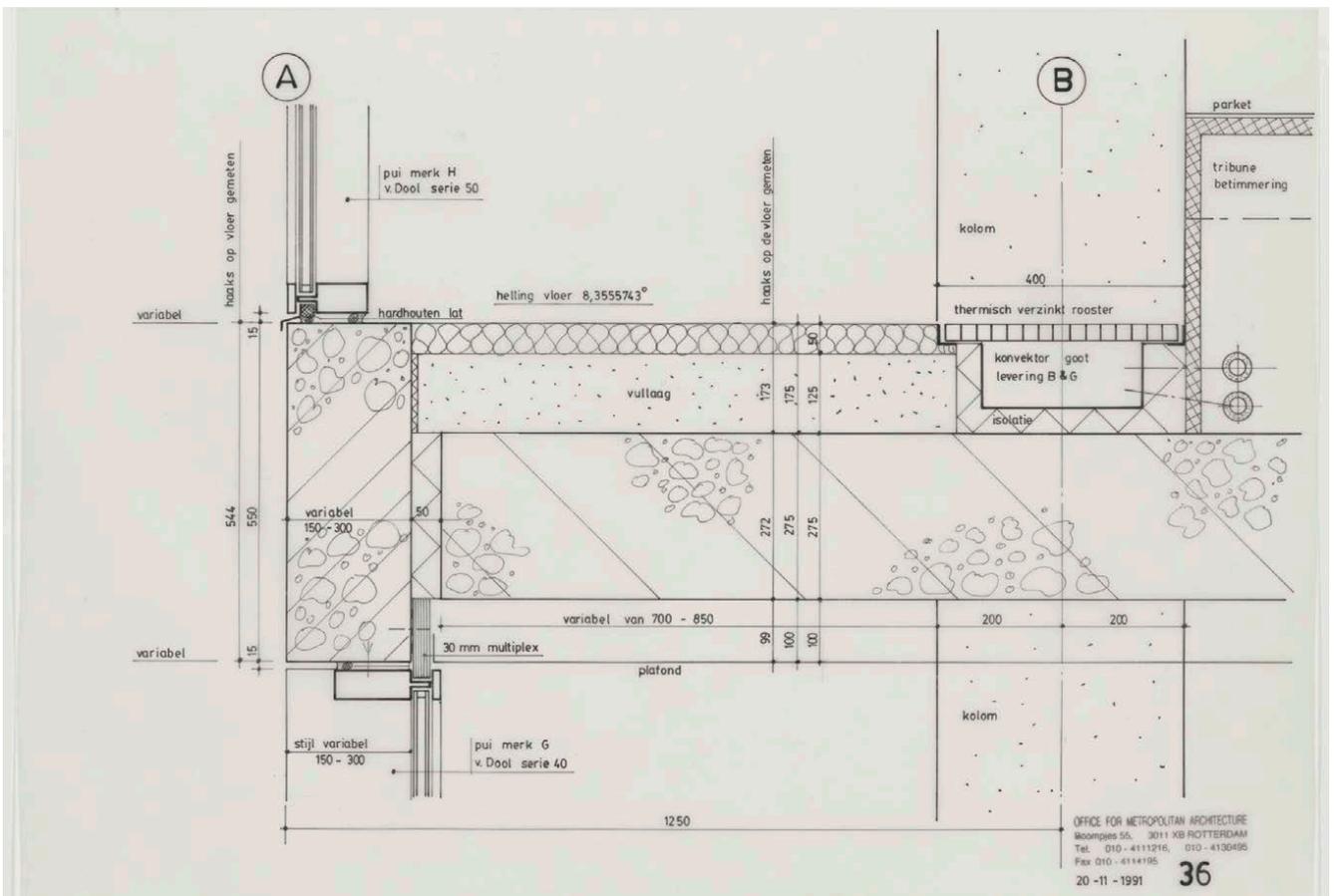
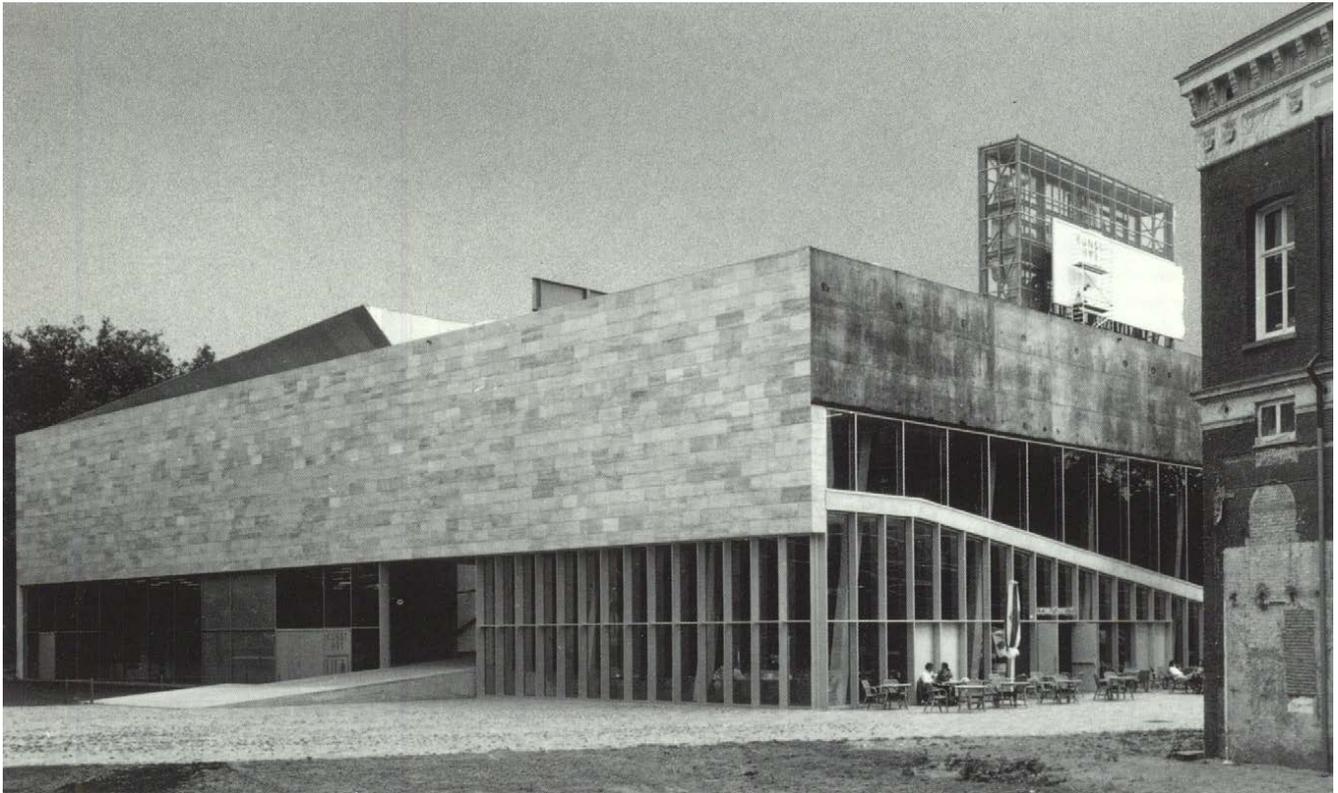


Figure 26. Kunsthall. Above: North-west corner. 1998.
 Below: OMA. Detail of west facade showing the 'inversed' mullions of the Auditorium and the Restaurant. November 1991.

shaped to pass through the polycarbonate panels; most of the holes look smashed rather than cut out. More than a few details were never implemented as planned by the architects, such as the corner of the parapet next to the stepped ramp leading to Hall 3. Today, a strange looking cement block sits next to the window frame at the corner, which was to be clad – no less strange – in aluminium as a kind of appendix to the frame.⁵⁸⁵ Other details, however, are of disputable mastery, like the aluminium clad corners of Halls 1 and 2 at the Ramp Street.⁵⁸⁶ Koolhaas himself explained in 1993:

I feel that at this moment in time the world has nothing to gain from perfection. That's why we try to avoid it, even in our best detailing. There is still an obscene relationship between the complete disintegration and chaos of the world and a strange kind of urge on the part of architects to achieve an ultra-polished end result. Rogers and Foster are a case in point. Although I admire their work, I see it as a misplaced use of energy. Not that we do not put a lot of effort into detailing. On the contrary. But we do not want it to turn into some kind of fetishism.⁵⁸⁷

Koolhaas here inverts the criticism he used to level against deconstructivist architecture. The constructive perfection architects like Rogers and Foster strive for, fails to articulate the chaotic state of the world at the level form. Ed Melet, from whose review of the Kunsthall the quote is taken, concludes: 'With that, the details have become an integral part of the concept. They help visualize the social instability, maybe even the chaos.'⁵⁸⁸ To the extent that Melet is right, one wonders whether Koolhaas' rejection of the 'banal analogy between a supposedly irregular geometry and a fragmented world' was primarily rhetorical, in the sense that he never truly doubted the principle necessity of some sort of formal analogy between architecture and its societal context. In his preface to Balmond's book

⁵⁸⁵ Detail W1022, dated 20 July, 1992. OMAR 1822. Another example is that of the aforementioned mullions which never were integrated into the ceilings and walls as provided by the architects.

⁵⁸⁶ Ed Melet appears to refer to these corners and the added 'third' aluminium clad element as an example of unsatisfactory detailing: 'the connection between the end elevation of the public tunnel and the wall of Halls 1 and 2, where multiplex boards are needed to keep the aluminium profile in the right shape.' Melet, 'Perfect Disorder', 286.

⁵⁸⁷ Melet, 'De perfecte wanorde', 35 (translation: d'onderkast (vof), Belgium).

⁵⁸⁸ Melet, 'Perfect Disorder', 286.

Dec 17

1. concrete wall

1-1 casting

- panel division
- support
- * check colour of concrete & corner detail by experiment

corner detail

* check corner detail with travertine.

	combination A	B	C
East (white)			Same with A
South along binnenstraat (normal)			any cheap, banal system (high way in Paris)
West (black)			
* check colour		same cast as bus station	
* check corner with travertine	same casting same support	E&S are same panel but different layout W is different. Same support	different cast same support.

check corner

check corner with travertine

Figure 27. Kunsthal. Fuminori Hoshino. Options for pattern shuttering and tie bolts.

informal, Koolhaas wrote: ‘Instead of solidity and certainty his [Balmond’s] structures express doubt, arbitrariness, mystery, even mysticism. He is creating a repertoire that can engage the uncertainty and fluidity of the current moment.’⁵⁸⁹ One of the structures explicated in the book is the Kunsthal.

For Melet, the protruding plate girder on the roof of the Portico is a beacon of imperfection in the sense of Koolhaas’ statement.⁵⁹⁰ But to understand the ostentatious roughness of the building as a metaphor of the urban street allows for an additional reading of its gestures of imperfection and incompleteness: not only as a metaphor for a chaotic and instable world, but also as an indication of Koolhaas’ idea of the building in terms of use and its role within the city. The protruding beam is not a simulated slip of some worker who ‘accidentally left it on the roof, or forgot to make it to measure’,⁵⁹¹ it indicates the display of an unobtainable ideal: the minimalism of the ‘marked space within an urban field’ which, like a *terrain vague*, allows for all sorts of temporary, spontaneous appropriation, and, ultimately, an intensified urban experience.

Street columns

Like the curtain of the Auditorium, the sloped Roof Garden on the Skew Ramp’s exterior half was designed and implemented by Petra Blaisse. A recent project statement explains: ‘Seven ancient pear trees, with their irregular shapes, stand spread over a carpet of ivy. Underneath the carpet 6200 bulbs of varied types are planted to introduce seasonal change and colour affects from spring through winter.’⁵⁹² Like the asphalt provided for the Ramp Street echoes the asphalted Podium of the Museum Park, the pear trees echo the Orchard at its entrance.⁵⁹³ The circuit would thus begin with an explicit reference to the park and, after encountering the ‘flower field’ in the Auditorium, the ‘forest’ in Hall 1, conclude with another. Petra Blaisse compares the sloped Roof Garden to the beginning of an imaginary

⁵⁸⁹ Koolhaas, Preface; in: Balmond, *informal*, 9.

⁵⁹⁰ Melet, ‘Perfect Disorder’, 286. As an obviously planned imperfection, it anticipates, conceptualizes and, in this sense, legitimates the ‘slapdash execution’ of details like the ‘badly fitted hatches’ in the ceiling of Hall 3, the ‘haphazardly placed bare bulbs’ of the emergency lightning, and the sockets at the balcony in Hall 2 that were ‘fitted too low, so that part of the aluminium skirting had to be cut out.’ Ibid., 285.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid., 286.

⁵⁹² Inside Outside/Petra Blaisse, ‘Kunsthal Rotterdam, 1991-1993, “Noise Dress, Flower Field”’, n.p.

⁵⁹³ Several drawings from November 1991 specify asphalt for the surfacing of the Ramp Street. See: Details no. 164, 164a, 165, 167, 168. OMAR 1812.

Chapter 2.6

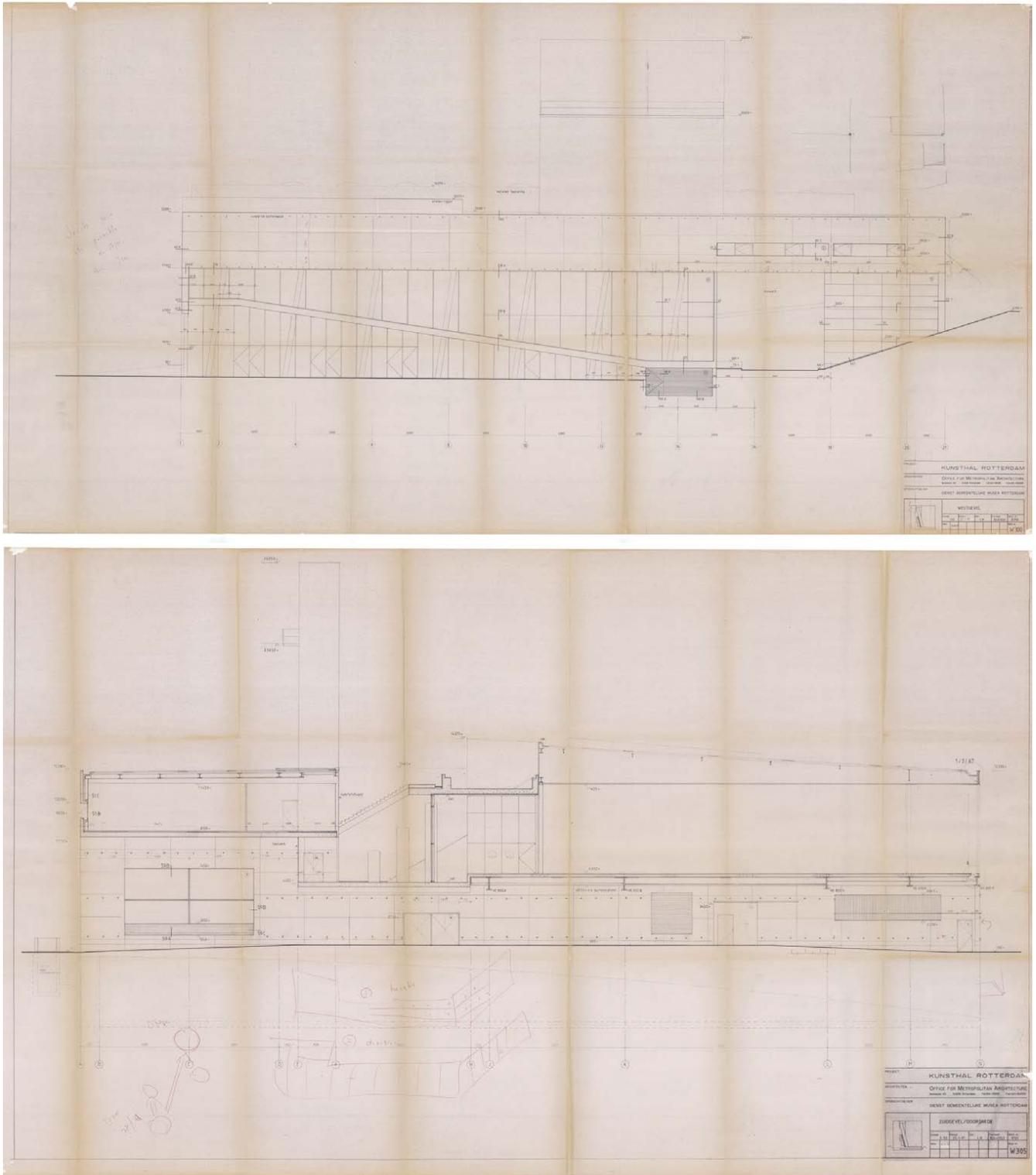


Figure 28. Kunsthall. OMA. Elevations showing pattern of shuttering and tie bolts. March 1991.
Above: West facade. Below: South facade along Service Road. March 1991.

bridge: ‘It kind of flies up and then over the dyke. Connecting, as it were psychologically, with the park of the Euromast, the big park on the other side of the Maas Boulevard.’⁵⁹⁴

At some point, however, Koolhaas turned against the idea to cover the Ramp Street with asphalt, perhaps for the fear of the space becoming too dark. A message by Hoshino, seemingly addressed to Koolhaas, reads: ‘The answer to your question – Can we have normal or white concrete instead of asphalt [sic]? – is almost No.’⁵⁹⁵ In Hoshino’s overview of floorings, the Ramp Street is (still) rendered in black and annotated ‘Not too black/too gloomy’.⁵⁹⁶ The difficulties were overcome, and instead of asphalt the Ramp Street received a raked cement floor. Given the gradient of the slope, the raking was needed to provide for a grippy surface.

A pencil drawing from April 1992 defines a pattern of raked concrete, similar to the solution implemented.⁵⁹⁷ [Figure 39] Based on the bays of the five *pilotis* supporting the Skew Ramp, the entire length of the ramp is divided in eight segments. Alternating from one segment to the next by 90 degrees, the lines are either parallel or perpendicular to the column’s oblique axis. In the drawing from April 1992, the pattern continues from one side of the partition to the other; the frame of the glass wall and the metal grating of the under-floor convectors are the only interruption. But by September it became clear that the concrete in the very proximity (less than 50 centimetres) of the lateral walls and columns needed to be raked in parallel to these elements.⁵⁹⁸ Regardless of Koolhaas’ explicit ‘No’, the columns were encircled as suggested by a separate sketch, seemingly by Hoshino.⁵⁹⁹ [Figure 39] More derailing, however, with respect to the unity envisaged of the Ramp Street’s interior and exterior half, is the

⁵⁹⁴ Interview with the author on 24 September 2018.

⁵⁹⁵ Dated 1 November, no year. OMAR 1463.

⁵⁹⁶ Undated. OMAR 1632.

⁵⁹⁷ 8 April 1992. OMAR 1666. A copy of the same plan is annotated (Hoshino): ‘concrete floor with pattern by brush’. OMAR 3293. The application of the pattern to the finish of the Ramp Street is mentioned in minutes of the Building Committee meeting from 21 September 1992. OMAR 3266.

⁵⁹⁸ The problem is mentioned in minutes of the Building Committee meeting from 21 September 1992.

⁵⁹⁹ The sketch is annotated ‘Rem’s No’. Dated 17 September. No year. OMAR 1727.

Chapter 2.6

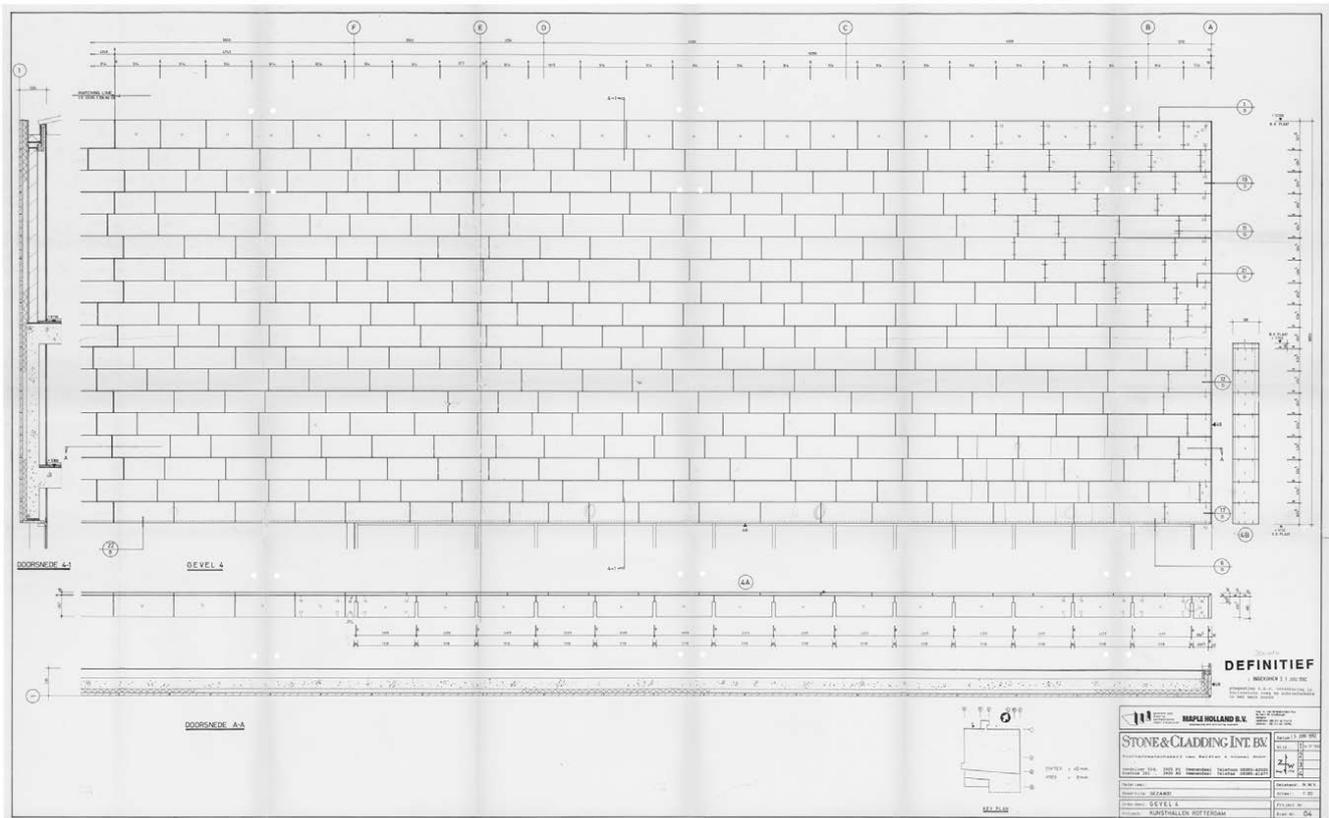
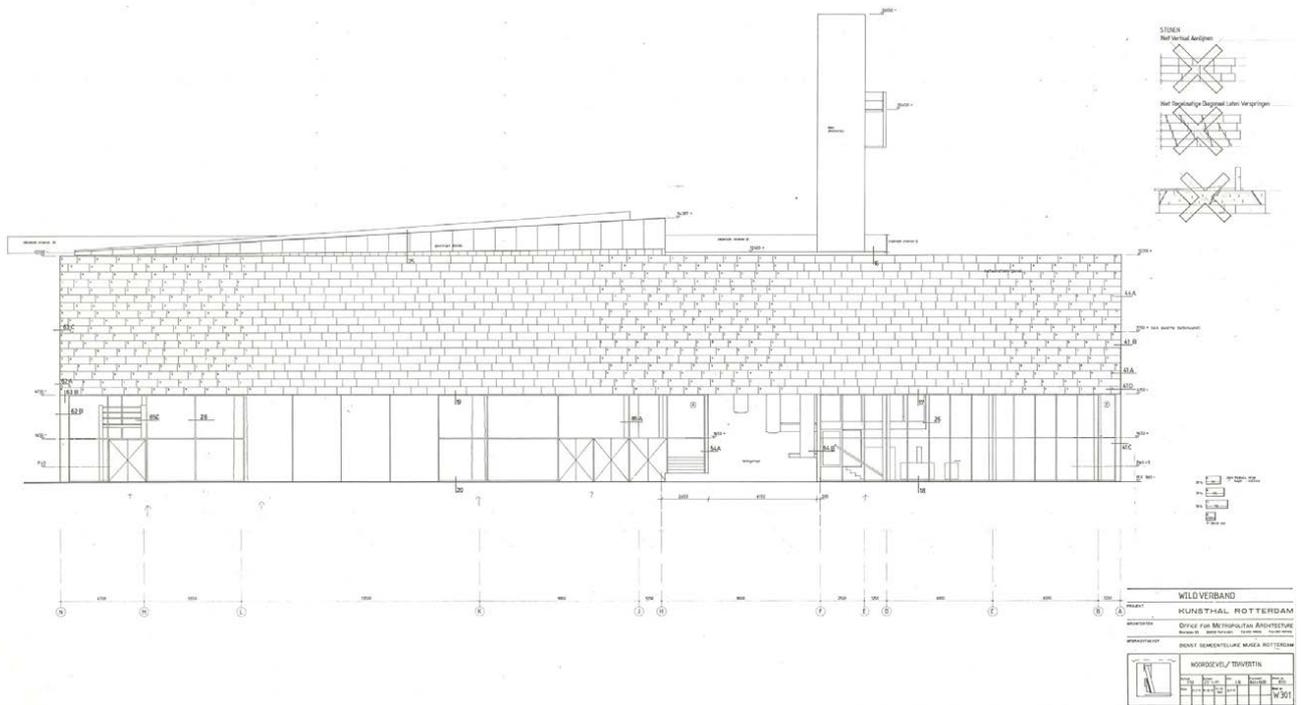


Figure 29. Kunsthall. North facade. Layout travertine tiles.
Above: OMA. March 1992. Below: Stone & Cladding (manufacturer). July 1992.

margin running all along the outer side of the glazed partition, raked in parallel to the partition on both sides.⁶⁰⁰

The change of surface entailed a change of affinities. Essentially of the same material, the floor of the Auditorium now appeared as a direct continuation of the Ramp Street. The explicit image of the street disappeared, giving way to that of the unfinished construction site. But the blackness of the asphalt did not disappear: it moved to the columns, sublimating the explicit street metaphor – and by the same token, the reference to the Podium – once more, to the point of illegibility.

Principle of collage

In his 2002 monograph *The Architectural Detail. Dutch architects visualize their concepts*, Melet quotes a statement Koolhaas allegedly made in *S,M,L,XL*: ‘For years we have concentrated on NO-Detail. Sometimes we succeeded – it’s gone, abstracted; sometimes we fail – it’s still there. Details should disappear – they are old architecture.’⁶⁰¹ Melet explains that this abstraction of detail follows from Koolhaas’ wish to ‘give priority to the concept’.⁶⁰² Apparently Melet draws on Koolhaas’s idea of an antagonistic relation between the articulation of details and concepts, and between the perception of the detail and the perception of the whole. In 1996 Koolhaas explained:

The detailing of the Kunsthal is a mode of detailing that frees the attention for other aspects such as the way the ground is read, the sensing of abstractions, of transparency and translucency, of concrete and of the conditions themselves. The sensing of a whole instead of all that fixation on the joints and the encounters.⁶⁰³

⁶⁰⁰ Apparently Koolhaas did not approve of the outcome. At the meeting on 30 November Jo Schippers complains that the floor finish does not correspond to the ideas of OMA.

⁶⁰¹ Ed Melet, *The architectural detail*, 15. No page number specified.

⁶⁰² Ibid.

⁶⁰³ Graafland, De Haan, ‘A Conversation with Rem Koolhaas’, 1996, 226.

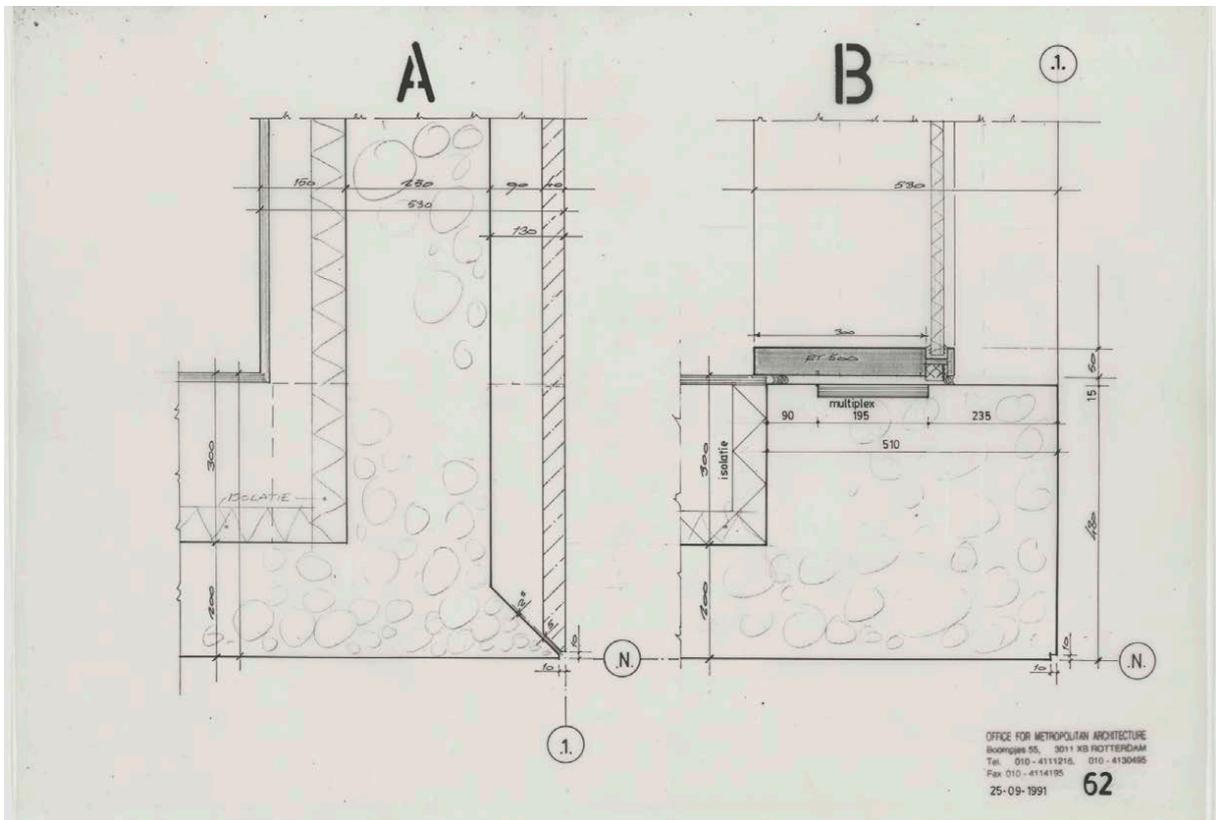
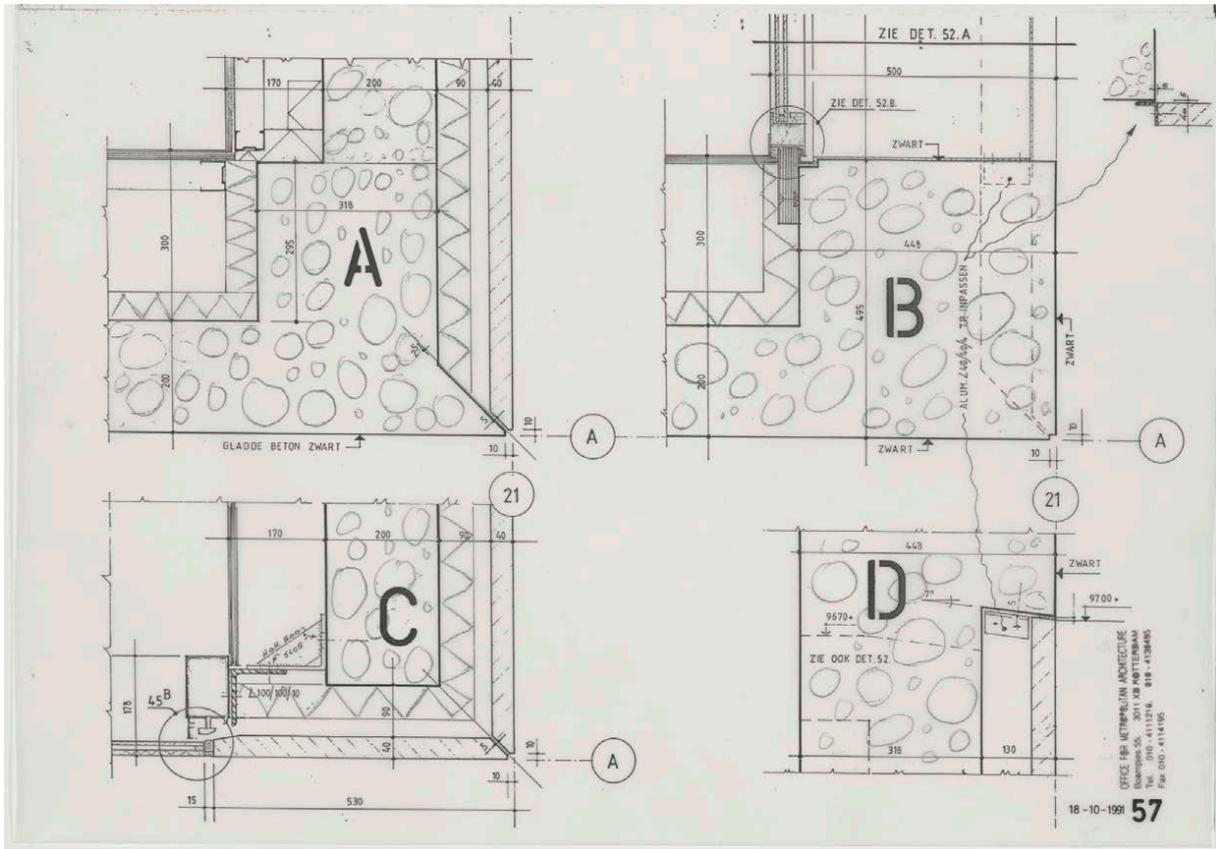


Figure 30. Kunsthal. OMA. Facade details.
 Above: South-west corner. October 1991. Below: North-east corner. September 1991.

When referring to the whole of the Kunsthall, Koolhaas may have had in mind the fluidity of the circuit, the spiral in four separate squares, the street-like constitution its materials convey – concepts and ideas that without any doubt were crucial. But there is an entirely different and no less significant dimension to the methodical eschewal of the articulate joint. It aims at the absence of a third element that mediates between the two different parts which ought to connect. At the Kunsthall, the clearest demonstration of this principle are the three corners of the exterior where concrete and travertine meet in the most immediate manner conceivable. There is no frame or common ground that would contain and separate the two entirely different constructions, nor does one of the two contain the other as some sort of subordinate infill. Rather is the manner of detailing akin to the principle of collage: the unmediated ‘collision’ of incompatible parts is a proverbial characteristic of this technique. Affinities to the technique of collage are critical for the entire architectural production of OMA at least until the end of the 1990s. It goes without saying that these affinities were much more than a habit of design or a formal predilection. They were deeply rooted in Koolhaas’ fascination with surrealism and his vision of the metropolis based on the dynamics of the chance encounter. In Koolhaas’ work, collage is a principle applied to both form and programme. OMA’s project for La Villette is the most dazzling demonstration of such a twofold collage, perhaps indicating the moment when Koolhaas discovered the diagram as form, even if he claims the contrary.

Settle the myth

When Koolhaas used the phrasing ‘no detail’ for the first time, the Kunsthall was under construction. Koolhaas related the issue of detailing to budgetary constraints and the criticism OMA’s buildings had earned during the 1980s by the Dutch press: ‘Critics [in Holland] say the detail of the projects is simply bad, and I say there is no detail. That is the quality of the building. No money, no detail, just pure concept.’⁶⁰⁴ Seemingly the memory of being classified as a ‘paper architect’ was still fresh, and the (Dutch) discussion to what extent OMA’s way of detailing was owed to conceptual considerations, carelessness or incompetence was not yet concluded. Looking back, Koolhaas explains in 1996:

⁶⁰⁴ Zaera Polo, ‘Finding Freedoms’, 10.



Figure 31. Kunsthall. Model in scale 1 to 50.

First of all, I was intensely involved in building the Kunsthall. It was built under my nose, so to speak. All through construction I was there in the morning between seven and nine. The ultimate aim was to settle the myth once and for all. The myth was that we couldn't do it. Not that we succeeded that well, however. But that was why the work on it was so intense.⁶⁰⁵

An anecdote may illustrate both the intensity and the struggle to succeed. Wim van Krimpen recalls that Koolhaas once proposed a poured floor for the exhibition halls that would combine yellow and white, when the building was already under construction:

Then he came one day. Sunday night, I think, at 12 o'clock. He said, 'In one hour I am at the Kunsthall with two French people. You can come to the Kunsthall?' I was three minutes from there so I went there and he came with two French people, and Fumi Hoshino came too, and they brought some black material to cover the floor. They started to put the black material on the floor, and Fumi was there with an arc, and then they started to show an act. It looked like yoghurt, yellow and white yoghurt. They mixed it. It was like that and I was standing there. 'Rem', I said, 'I can tell you one thing. The floor will be grey. Light grey or dark grey. That's your choice', I said, 'and I prefer light'. And then he was very upset.

In 1991, the Nexus Housing in Fukuoka and the Villa Dall'Ava in Paris were completed. Criticisms of detailing were virtually absent. At the same time, it is true that the Villa Dall'Ava and – according to some authors – Fukuoka are more carefully detailed than the Kunsthall.⁶⁰⁶ The detailing appears more controlled, both in terms of planning and execution. Perhaps the intensity of Koolhaas' and Hoshino's commitment to the Kunsthall varied. As for Hoshino, his involvement may have increased when the construction of the housing blocks in Japan drew to a close: the Kunsthall seems to have been the only

⁶⁰⁵ Graafland, De Haan, 'A Conversation with Rem Koolhaas', 225.

⁶⁰⁶ Davidson, 'Koolhaas and the Kunsthall', 39. Sally Woodbridge mentions the high standards of quality in construction of the Nexus development in Fukuoka. See: Idem, 'A Cross Cultural Concert in the Far East', *Progressive Architecture* 8 (1991), 60.



Figure 32. Kunsthal. Corrugated sheathing next to Ramp Street. 1992/93.

project he was working on in 1992. That was different, of course, in the case of Koolhaas. Next to the Kunsthalle, Euralille, the Congrexpo, and – until the abandonment of the project in June 1992 – the Media Centre in Karlsruhe were the most demanding projects. In 1992, the project for the Geerlings House in Holten was launched, and between 1991 and 1992 OMA produced at least seven masterplans and competition entries.

The conditions during the construction of the Kunsthalle were difficult in more than one regard. From early 1991 onwards, OMA continued to be behind schedule with drawings, so that the team was working under increasing time pressure.⁶⁰⁷ One major cause for the delay was that OMA – despite repeated protests of the municipality – continued to change the design: the new roof for Hall 2 is but the most drastic example. Van Krimpen recalls that the contractor Dura counted 79 changes after a single week.⁶⁰⁸ And of course the construction of the Kunsthalle was complex. The various sloped, rotated and curved surfaces, the numerous and intricate intersections with the exterior, the heterogeneity of the materials and constructive systems: all this required an enormous amount of detailing, efforts of planning as well as extraordinary skills of spatial imagination. Merely to foresee all problems of construction must have been a challenge in itself. The transfer of the production of drawings from the office to the construction site in 1991 entailed further difficulties. The draftsmen hired by OMA worked under the shared supervision of Fuminori Hoshino and Herman Jacobs, in charge of the construction site. Jacobs' major concern was to avoid costs and delays, while Hoshino was focussed on the quality of the details in terms of design and the accuracy of the execution. He remembers having been on the site 'almost every day because everything was happening there.'⁶⁰⁹

I was busy all the time and made a lot of sketches during the construction period, too. [...] At the beginning, they were making the foundations with those piles. I didn't see anything important, because everything happened in the ground. But once they started with the actual

⁶⁰⁷ See for instance the minutes of the Building Committee meetings on 11 February, 12 April, 23 April, 22 November 1991. OMAR 1522.

⁶⁰⁸ Interview with the author on 28 July 2020.

⁶⁰⁹ Interview with author on 25 July 2017.

building, there were many oops moments. [...] It felt [...] like endless struggles, mostly dispute with the contractors. ‘Why is this not possible?’ That kind of argument. [...] During the construction of the Kunsthal, Herman Jacobs was a kind of site supervisor for OMA. He didn’t speak English, so I could hardly communicate with him. He shouted often but I understood very little. It was a pity, I had little grasp over him. He had a small office in the temporary building on the construction site, and there was also Isaac [Batenburg]. He was still an intern then, but he listened carefully, and he always found a reasonable solution for me. He was young but very keen on the project, therefore indispensable for me. [...] There were many unpleasant surprises which we hadn’t thought about before. Then I usually went to Toni, and sometimes I warned Rem if it was quite serious. And to be honest, with the language barrier, it was tough
...⁶¹⁰

According to Hoshino, the first travertine tiles of the north façade were not mounted in accordance with the drawings of the subcontractor.⁶¹¹ The tiles have a constant height but three different lengths, and OMA wished the order to be as irregular as possible, whereas the first rows of tiles were mounted according to a repetitive pattern. After Hoshino had discovered the mistake, Koolhaas agreed with the workers that OMA would define the exact sequence of stone sizes for the whole façade on site. Hoshino recalls: ‘Then I got a list of how many pieces they still had of 1 metre, 80 centimetres or 60 centimetres in length, with the same height. For each length I gave different codes: a, b and c. Then I just drew with chalk the exact location of each piece on the wall: a-b-c-b-a, and so on.’⁶¹²

The anecdote indicates how deeply Hoshino was involved in the events even on the site, and how much Koolhaas trusted his judgment. As for the tree trunk of Hall 1, Hoshino remembers:

⁶¹⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹¹ The subsequent anecdote has been related to the author in the same interview.

⁶¹² Ibid.

Chapter 2.6

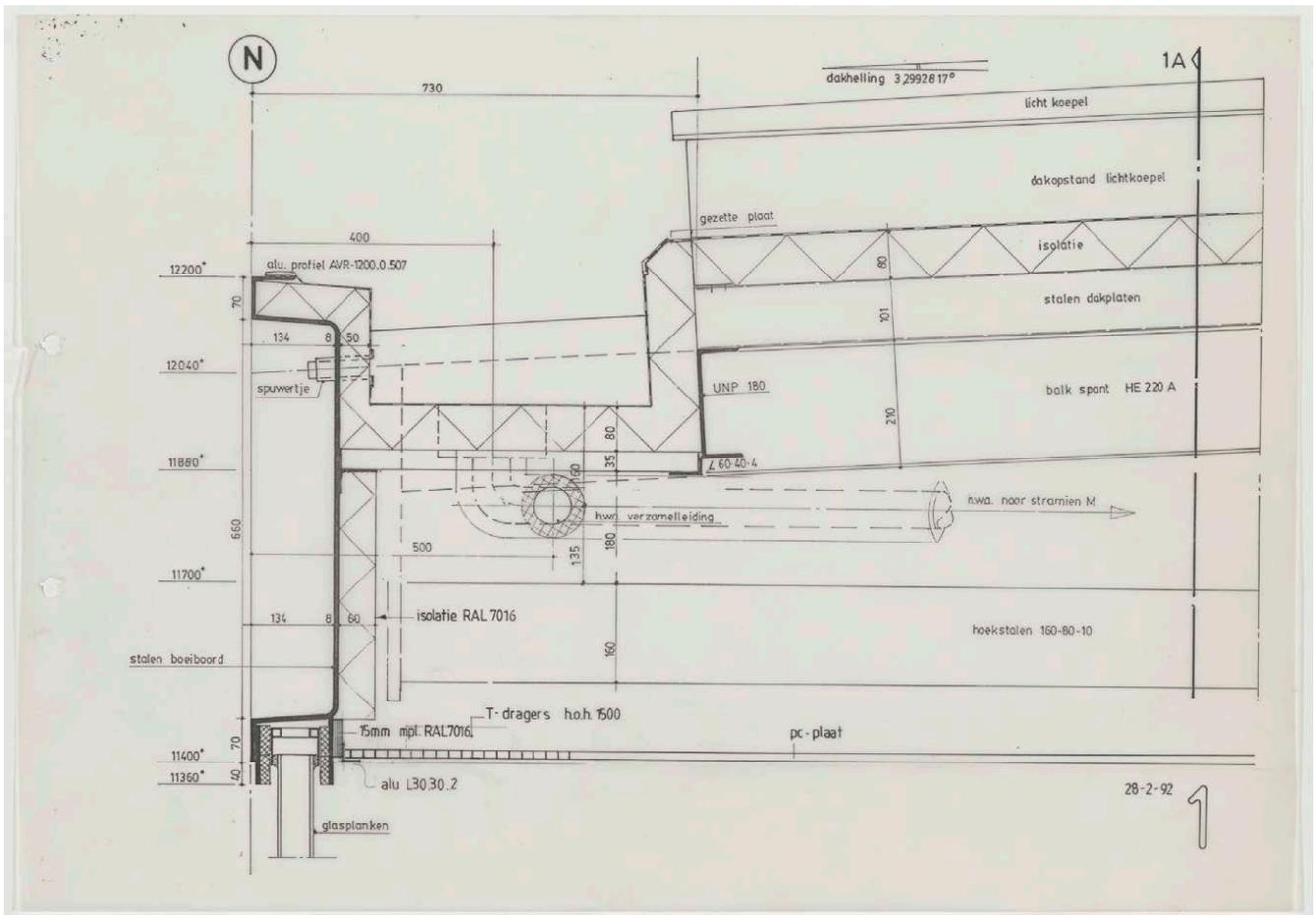


Figure 34. Kunsthal. OMA. Detail cornice. East facade. February 1992.

Once, Toni [Adam] took me to a lumberyard in the forest. He said to me: ‘Ok, we have here twenty trunks, which are big enough to protect the steel column from fire. Which five of them do you like?’ And I said, ‘This one, and this one ...’ After that these trunks were cut in four pieces and reassembled around the steel columns in Hall 1. Someone from the contractors left a small birds’ house at one of the trunks. I liked it as a joke. There were all these kinds of funny or strange things I did.⁶¹³

A chronicle of difficulties

As with any ambitious project, the list of difficulties that had to be overcome to complete the Kunsthal is long. The subsequent paragraphs recall a series of critical moments in the planning process. Some difficulties reflect the experimental character of the building.

November 1989

In late 1989, it became clear that a project by the Rotterdam based architecture firm Mecanoo for an extension of the Villa Dijkzigt was under way.⁶¹⁴ The project would have reduced the 15-metres wide passage between the Kunsthal and the Natural History museum by one third. Koolhaas disapproved of the idea, and his resistance was supported by alderman Joop Linthorst.⁶¹⁵ The extension built by Mecanoo co-founder Erick van Egeraat (1992-96) is limited to a glass box located at the north side of the Natural History Museum.

August 1990

On the third of August 1990 the *Rotterdams Nieuwsblad* headlined: ‘Project costs five million more. Construction Kunsthal will be stopped’.⁶¹⁶ The municipality had received the offer of the main

⁶¹³ Ibid.

⁶¹⁴ Minutes of the Building Committee meetings on 12 October and 20 December 1989. OMAR 1519.

⁶¹⁵ The minutes of the Building Committee’s gathering on 21 February 1990 mention that ‘Linthorst was to contact the SO [Department for Urban Development] as soon as possible.’ OMAR 1521. A Study with site plans and polaroid pictures by Hoshino illustrates the spatial consequences of Mecanoo’s project from January 1990. OMAR 1566, 1616.

⁶¹⁶ ‘Project vijf miljoen duurder’, *Rotterdams Nieuwsblad*, 3 August 1990, (author trans.). Photocopy of the article included in OMA’s files. OMAR 3289.

contractor DURA, for 17 instead of the 12.8 million guilders provided by the cost estimate.⁶¹⁷ After negotiations with DURA, a revised offer for 15.5 million guilders was accepted by the Building Committee on 13 September 1990. In November 1992, despite savings of 1.7 million guilders, costs totalled 30 million, exceeding the budget, again, by 5 million guilders.⁶¹⁸ None of the savings, it seems, entailed major changes of the design, even though not all materials chosen were low budget.⁶¹⁹ The corrugated polycarbonate sheathing of the *poché* between the Ramp Street and the Auditorium is a ‘decorative’ cladding of the glass walls behind it. Costs, though, may have had an impact on the design. For each day of delay, caused by the architects, for instance by failing to deliver drawings in time, the contractor charged an extra fee of 30.000 guilders.⁶²⁰ It can only be guessed to what extent slips and ‘imperfections’ would have been avoided if OMA, the contractor and his subcontractors had had more time.

February 1991

At the beginning of 1991, OMA was informed that DURA excluded all warranties for the cladding in Persian travertine initially provided; the channel glass planks of the east façade; the sheathing in corrugated polyester along the Ramp Street; and the dimensions of some window units.⁶²¹ The Persian travertine was replaced by travertine from Spain. Even the largest glazing units were implemented as drawn by OMA in April 1990. The corrugated sheathing and the wall in channel glass were carried out without any concessions.

⁶¹⁷ Minutes of the Building Committee meeting on 15 August 1990. OMAR 1521.

⁶¹⁸ Next to 2.5 million guilders for the Restaurant, which, however, was funded by a separate budget. Minutes of the Building Committee meeting on 30 November 1992. OMAR 3266. For the savings, see: Minutes Building of the Committee meeting on the 1st of October 1990. OMAR 1521. The cost overrun increased from 3.7 million in May, to 5 million in September, to 5.6 million in 16 October 1992. Minutes of the Building Committee meetings on 6 May, 21 September, 16 October 1992. OMAR 3266. An article on the cost overrun published on 27 February 1993 in the daily *Volkskrant* mentions the fees of the architects as one of the causes. Harmen Bockma, ‘Kunsthall valt miljoenen duurder uit’, *Volkskrant*, 27 February 1993. Jo Schippers drafted a counter statement (‘Kunsthall’) regarding the architects’ fee on 10 March 1993.

⁶¹⁹ Asked by the author whether he thinks that cost issues influenced the design in some way, Toni Adam answered: ‘No, I don’t think so. It is fairly remarkable that we could finish this building how it was supposed to be.’ Interview with the author on 25 September 2018.

⁶²⁰ Letter H. Dijkgraaf (DURA), ‘To the management of OMA’, 15 November 1991. OMAR 1449.

⁶²¹ See minutes of the Building Committee meeting on 11 February 1991. OMAR 1522.

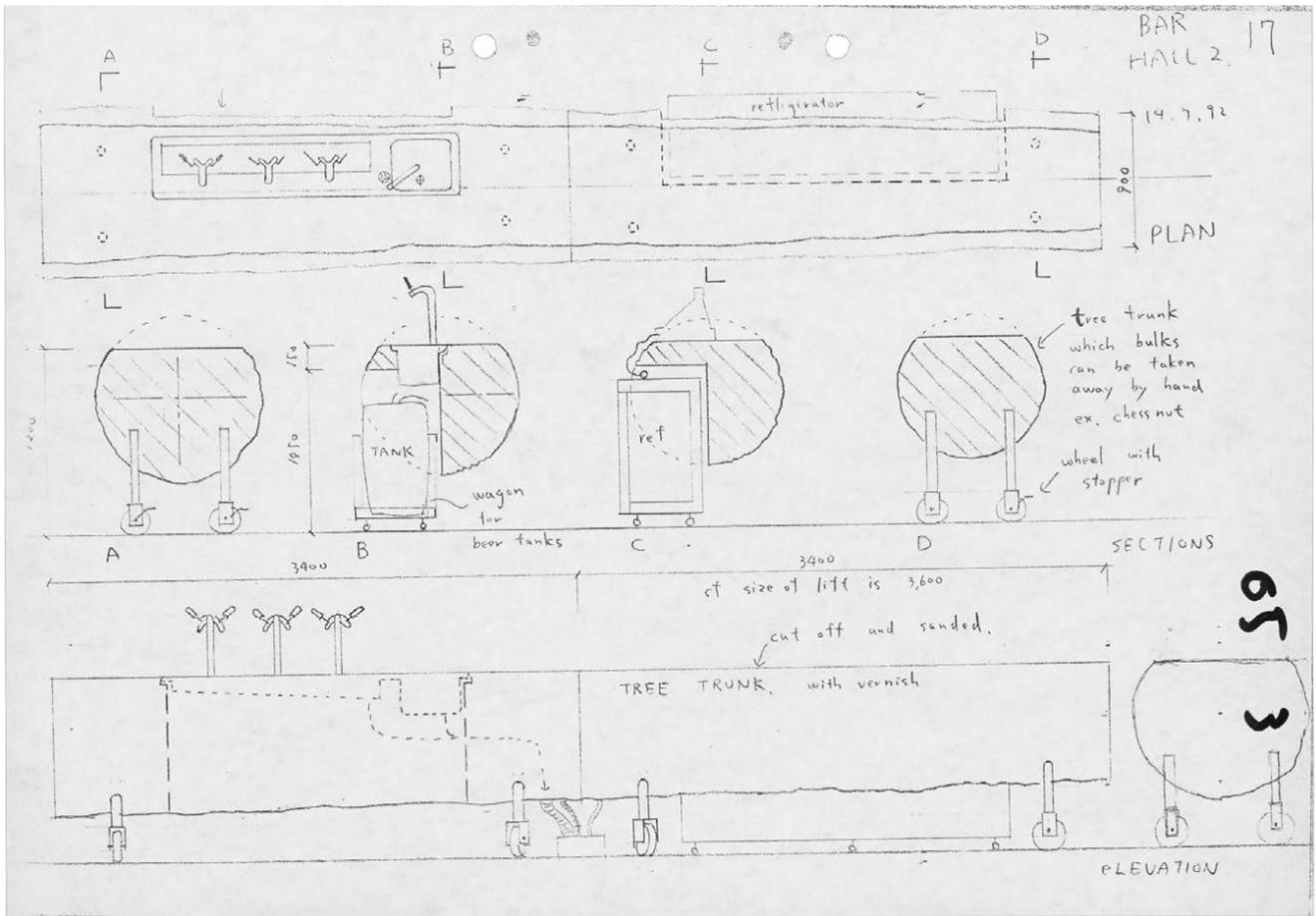


Figure 36. Kunsthal. Fuminori Hoshino. Tree-trunk bar for Hall 2. April 1992.

October 1991

In a fax to Koolhaas from 11 October 1991 Hoshino announces ‘bad news’.⁶²² Grey instead of green tinted glass had been ordered for the glazing of the Auditorium by mistake.⁶²³ Perhaps Hoshino had seen a mock-up on the construction site, as the glass was obviously not mounted yet. In a fax from the first of November, Hoshino informs Koolhaas that the grey glass had already been produced but that the single panes were not yet manufactured into double glazing.⁶²⁴ A request by Jo Schippers at the Building Committee’s gathering three weeks later to order green tinted glass for an extra fee of 80.000 guilders was rejected.⁶²⁵ Nonetheless, the green tinted glass was ordered by the end of the year, maybe thanks to an intervention of Koolhaas behind the scenes.⁶²⁶ When the Building Committee met on 13 January 1992, Koolhaas thanked all its members who had given their consent.⁶²⁷

November 1991

In mid-November 1991, OMA received a letter by DURA with a claim for extra costs of approximately 1.234.100 guilders.⁶²⁸ Most of the costs were ‘stagnation costs’, claimed partly by DURA, partly by the subcontractors Nagelhout (steel structure) and Van Dool (glazing). The matter was passed on to the Building Committee.⁶²⁹ The discussion about which parts of the claim were legitimate and to what extent OMA, or the Municipal Services, or rather Dura itself, was responsible for the respective delays, continued until the completion of the building.⁶³⁰

⁶²² OMAR 1463.

⁶²³ The tender drawings from 19 April 1990 do specify grey (‘grijs’) tinted glass for the Auditorium. Perhaps the mistake propagated. OMAR 1786.

⁶²⁴ OMAR 1463.

⁶²⁵ Minutes of the Building Committee meeting on 22 November 1991. OMAR 1522.

⁶²⁶ The respective drawing by Van Dool, specifying ‘green glass’, is dated 19 December 1991. Stadsarchief, Box 6.

⁶²⁷ OMAR 3266.

⁶²⁸ Letter H. Dijkgraaf (DURA), ‘To the management of OMA’. See also: Minutes of the Building Committee meetings on 3 and 10 December 1991. OMAR 1522.

⁶²⁹ Minutes of the Building Committee meeting on 22 November 1991. OMAR 1522. Jo Schippers, Letter to Vet (DGM), 20 November 1991. OMAR 3301.

⁶³⁰ The author has been unable to find any indication how the dispute was settled. The minutes of the Building Committee meetings on 19 June, the 1st of July 1991 still mention the claim as an unresolved issue. OMAR 1522.

Chapter 2.6

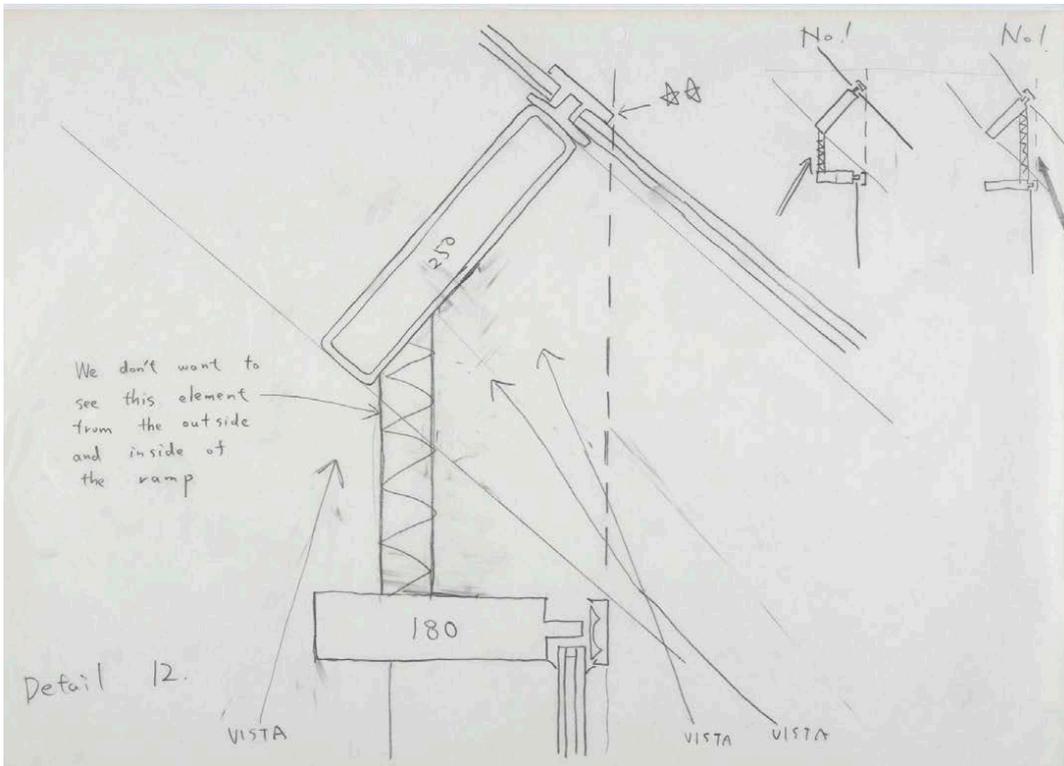
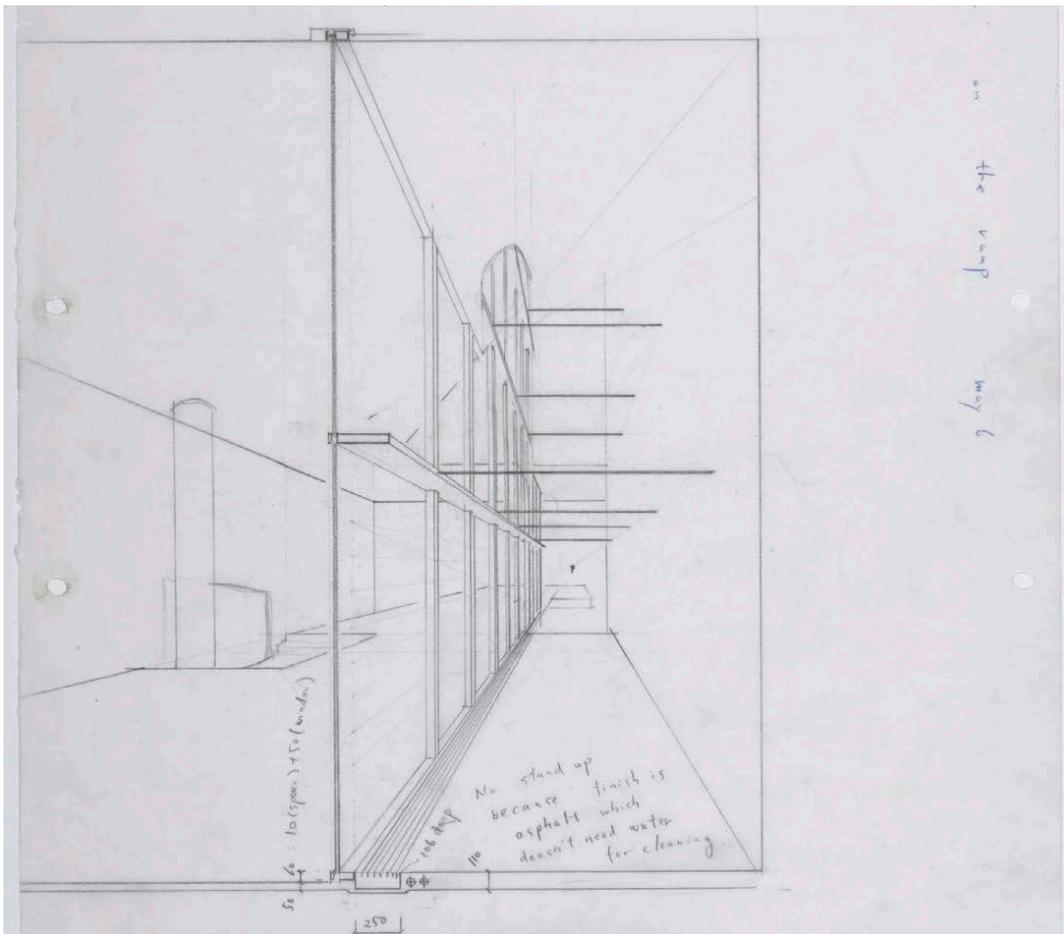


Figure 37. Kunsthall. OMA. Glazed partition Ramp Street.
Above: Perspective drawing of the glazed-in half. Below: Joint of glazed partition and translucent covering.

June 1992

On the building's committee meeting on 18 June 1992, Koolhaas protested against the idea to locate the sculpture of Dutch artist Henk Visch on top of the Kunsthal's Portico. Visch's work had emerged from an art competition, held in autumn 1990. The competition and the subsequent realization of the winning proposal was funded by the contractor DURA as a gift to the city of Rotterdam on the occasion of the company's 135th anniversary. The jury – Koolhaas was one of the members – met in autumn 1990 and selected unanimously the proposal by Visch, out of four submissions.⁶³¹ Visch proposed a sculpture in the shape of a (less than life-size) camel with a guide placed on a blue surface in concrete for the square enclosed by the Kunsthal and the Villa Dijkzigt. Only in June 1992, when it became clear that the budget of 200.000 guilders would cover the sculpture but not the 'blue plaza' of 4.000 square metres, Visch suggested to locate 'the camel' on top of the orange exoskeletal girder protruding from the Kunsthal's Portico.⁶³² In December, the camel was put on the plate girder for a test.⁶³³ Koolhaas and Dura, who both had agreed to the experiment, wanted to see it removed. In January 1993, the camel was still on the roof, where it remains to this day.⁶³⁴

July 1992

In July 1992, when the ceiling of Hall 2 was assembled, Van Krimpen reported that 'Hall 2 can't be used' because of the daylight entering through the roof.⁶³⁵ An investigation by the Netherlands Organization for Applied Scientific Research (TNO) revealed that the polycarbonate panels cast a pattern of lines on the walls if exposed to direct sunlight.⁶³⁶ After testing several solutions, the TNO recommends in November 1992 to insert 'cheesecloth' in the void below the vaulted skylights, entailing

⁶³¹ The other participants were: Günther Förg, Martha Schwartz, Borek Sipek. 'Henk Visch wint prijsvraag KunstHAL', *De Architect* (Dec 1990), 27. The other members of the jury were: W.A.L. Beeren (director of the Stedelijk Museum), R. van der Lugt (representative of the Dutch Ministry of Welfare, Health and Culture in New York), C. Westerik (artist), and Wim van Krimpen. The deadline was 15 September 1990; see: Letter by Wim van Krimpen to Martha Schwartz and Peter Walker, dated 14 June 1990. OMAR 1458. The minutes of the Building Committee meeting on 6 November 1990 mention Visch as the winner of the competition. OMAR 1521.

⁶³² Minutes of the Building Committee meeting on 11 February 1991, 18 June 1992. OMAR 1522, 3266.

⁶³³ *Idem*, 17 December 1992. OMAR 3266.

⁶³⁴ *Idem*, 14 January 1993. OMAR 3266.

⁶³⁵ *Idem*, 10 July, 24 August 1992. OMAR 3266.

⁶³⁶ *Idem*, 10 August, 21 September 1992. OMAR 3266.

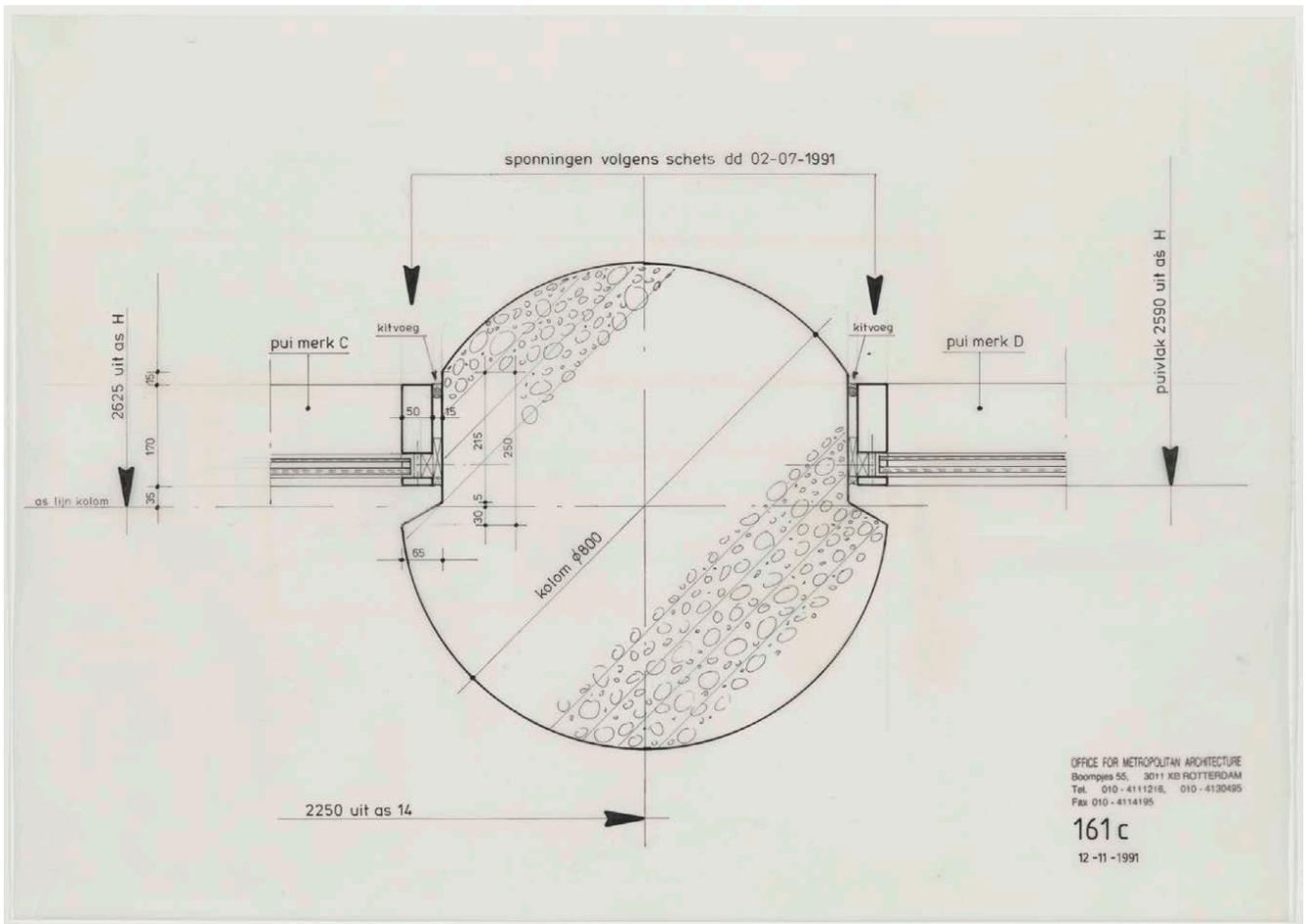


Figure 38. Kunsthal. OMA. Ramp Street. Joint of glazed partition and *pilotis*. November 1991.

a 60%-reduction of daylight. Van Krimpen accepted the proposal as a temporary solution. Jacobs suggested additional light strips – perhaps the light tubes inserted in openings at the bottom of the trusses. A definitive solution was envisaged for May 1993.⁶³⁷

August 1992

By August 1992 it became apparent that the concrete wall of the west façade lost its black pigmentation.⁶³⁸ A further investigation by the TNO – concluded in November 1992 – revealed: The wrong pigment had been used, the treatment had led to efflorescence, and the graffiti protection had partly undone the effect of the water-repellent agent.⁶³⁹ The TNO recommended to clean the surface and to paint it black. Pictures of the west façade taken after the opening of the Kunsthal show the wall as entirely grey. Today the concrete wall is painted black. Sweeps of a paint roller are discernible.

31 October

The opening of the Kunsthal was repeatedly postponed. After the redesign in late 1988 it was scheduled for February 1992.⁶⁴⁰ In November 1989 the date was moved to May 1992.⁶⁴¹ In August 1990 a further delay of ‘four to six months’ had accumulated.⁶⁴² The Kunsthal was eventually inaugurated by Queen Beatrix on 31 October 1992.⁶⁴³ On the first of November the building was opened to the public. The major construction work was completed. The Building Committee continued to meet once a month until April 1993, but the issues at stake were of little consequence in terms of design: defects and corrective actions, billings, the access for wheelchairs, the permit of Rotterdam’s fire department to open the

⁶³⁷ Idem, 30 November 1992.

⁶³⁸ Idem, August 1992.

⁶³⁹ Idem, 30 November 1992.

⁶⁴⁰ Idem, 7 April 1989. OMAR 1518.

⁶⁴¹ Idem, 21 November 1989. OMAR 1519.

⁶⁴² Idem, 25 August 1990. OMAR 1521.

⁶⁴³ Melet mentions that Kunsthal ‘needed to open three months ahead of schedule’. Melet, ‘Perfect Disorder’, 285. Perhaps OMA and/or DURA proposed to open the Kunsthal at a later date. But seemingly no later date has ever entered the schedule approved by the Building Committee.

building which was only obtained in December/January.⁶⁴⁴ Hoshino continued to sketch proposals for a series of minor adjustments at least until 1994.⁶⁴⁵

Copyright

A couple of years later, Koolhaas and Hoshino were confronted with grotesque accusations of plagiarism, entailed by the Kunsthal's implementation.⁶⁴⁶ British architect Gareth Pearce, when visiting the building under construction, recognized in the Kunsthal a project he had done as a student at the Architectural Association in 1986.⁶⁴⁷ Pearce went to court in October 1996, and the affair dragged on until the high court put an end to it in November 2001, ruling that the claim was 'pure phantasy'.⁶⁴⁸

⁶⁴⁴ OMA's files include a photocopy of an article entitled 'KunstHAL open zonder brandvergunning' from 31 December 1991. OMAR 4501. See also: Minutes of the Building Committee meeting on 17 December 1991. OMAR 3266.

⁶⁴⁵ For the most part, the proposals were reactions to requests by Van Krimpen regarding the organization of the entrances and the independent use of the main exhibition halls. Hoshino worked out the glazed partition and sliding door allowing to close the direct access from the Auditorium to Halls 2 and 3, probably implemented in early 1994. His proposal for three arrow-shaped parapets indicating the main entrance and the entrance to the Restaurant – in orange – did not find the approval of Van Krimpen. On the photos published in 1993 there is no floor-to-ceiling glass wall and sliding door between the stepped ramp and the Auditorium; neither are there any arrow-shaped parapets on the Ramp Street. A fax by Hoshino to Van Krimpen, dated 19 January 1994, includes detailed specifications of the glazed partition. OMAR 1548. On some photos of the 1996 *El Croquis* issue on OMA, the partition is visible. A proposal for the arrows that Van Krimpen 'didn't like' is dated 10 January 1994. OMAR 1548. The original parapets were replaced by the current orange 'arrows' during the renovation in 2013/14. Other issues were: adjustments to the bar of the Restaurant; see: Hoshino, annotated sketches 'OMA's suggestion for the problem of Van Krimpen', dated 6 April 1993; OMAR 4502; the extension of the travertine floor at the entrance of Hall 1 to the outside; see: Hoshino, letter to Van Krimpen, 8 April 1993, OMAR 4501; the possible use of the ticket booth of Hall 2 as a cloakroom for visitors; see: Hoshino, 'weekend report', fax to Koolhaas, dated 4 February 1994, OMAR 1474.

⁶⁴⁶ See, for instance: Bob Witman, 'Architecten sluiten plagiaat Koolhaas vrijwel uit', *De Volkskrant*, 8 October 1996.

⁶⁴⁷ Pearce had worked for a couple of weeks at OMA's London office in 1986. According to his own account, he had been asked by Alex Wall to bring the drawings of his project to office so that Koolhaas might have a look at it. As Pearce has it, Koolhaas then copied the plans over the weekend. Judging from an axonometric of Pearce's project, however, the resemblance between the two designs is as generic as insignificant.

⁶⁴⁸ Paul Kelso, 'Architect's copycat claim pure fantasy, says judge', *The Guardian*, 3 November 2001. The British magazine *Building* quotes judge Justice Jacob as follows: 'The case has no foundations whatsoever. It is one of pure fantasy – preposterous fantasy at that ... I am quite satisfied that Mr Koolhaas never copied [Pearce's designs] either graphically or any other way. I am quite sure that Mr Hoshino never saw or heard of Mr Pearce or his plans until this case started. The case of Mr Pearce has not remotely been made out, even to the point when such 'similarities' as there are call for explanation. Moreover, I am quite sure that the Kunsthal was the completely independent and creative work of Mr Koolhaas, assisted by Mr Hoshino.' Tony Bingham, 'Expert witless', *Building*, 30 November 2001.

2.7

Destroy the hope of return

The meaning of formal fragmentation in the Kunsthal

Between 1992 and 1994 about fifteen reviews appeared in European, American and Japanese journals and newspapers. The reception was largely enthusiastic. Terrence Riley held that ‘the Kunsthal is surely OMA’s most important built work to date’; Kenneth Frampton deemed it ‘the most rigorous and exhilarating civic work that Koolhaas has produced to date’; and for Belgian architect and critic Paul Vermeulen the Kunsthal provided ‘the most stimulating experience produced in years by Dutch architecture.’⁶⁴⁹ Dutch critics, too, conceded extraordinary qualities to the Kunsthal. According to Hilde de Haan and Ids Haagsma, Koolhaas had ‘delivered world class architecture with this Kunsthal – the compelling architectural form we have been waiting for nearly in vain all this second half of the twentieth century’.⁶⁵⁰ De Haan and Haagsma, Melet and Hulsman each continued in their own way the ‘Dutch tradition to criticize the poor craftsmanship and detailing of Koolhaas’ buildings’.⁶⁵¹ But now they accepted the faults they observed at the Kunsthal, either because they understood them as an implication of the overall concept, or simply because they found the architecture ‘ingenious, sophisticated and stunning’.⁶⁵²

The fragmented quality of the building – its discontinuity in terms of form, construction, character, references – did not go unnoticed. Marie-Christine Loriers saw it as an echo of the complex juxtaposition of the two crossing routes and spiralling circuit; Sabine Schneider as a surrealist quality; the editors of *ARCH+* as an approximation of the varying stage sets of theatre play; Emmanuel Doutriaux as an unresolved tension between control and instability reminiscent of Michelangelo; Lootsma and De Graaf as a response to the heterogeneity of the surroundings and an architectural

⁶⁴⁹ Riley, ‘Rem Koolhaas/OMA: Urban Constructions’, 2. Frampton, ‘Kunsthal a Rotterdam’, 43. Vermeulen, ‘Clad in Tonalities of Light’, 91.

⁶⁵⁰ Hilde de Haan, Ids Haagsma, ‘Koolhaas verbindt banaliteit en chic in briljant ontwerp’, *De Volkskrant*, 17 September, 1992. Quoted after: Van Gerrewey, *A Critical reader*, 276.

⁶⁵¹ Hulsman, ‘Kunsthal lijkt wel een overdoos’. Quoted after: Van Gerrewey, *A Critical Reader*, 278.

⁶⁵² Ibid.

experience akin to the ‘dynamic experience of art’; Deyan Sudjic as a formal analogy to an ‘uncertain, fragmented world’.⁶⁵³ In her essay from 1997, Cynthia Davidson interpreted the fluidity of the circuit and the fragmented character of the architecture as two complementary features.⁶⁵⁴ Davidson compared the juxtaposition of the continuity of the spectator’s movement and the formal discontinuity of both exterior and interior to Jean-Luc Godard’s use of the filmic jump cut and, eventually, to the discontinuous notion of time described by Gilles Deleuze in his writings on cinema. Aarati Kanekar, in her essay ‘Space of Montage’ from 2015, picks up on Davidson’s argument. Kanekar elucidates the parallels between the Kunsthall’s design and the principle of filmic montage, taking recourse to Sergei Eisenstein’s and Le Corbusier’s reception of Auguste Choisy’s analysis of the Acropolis in Athens. She highlights the diversity of the facades in terms of materials, details and colours comparing it to Eisenstein’s concept of cut and disclosure.⁶⁵⁵ The latter, Kanekar argues, regards ‘commentaries within the architectural discourse’ – which commentaries, or which discourse, she does not say.⁶⁵⁶ It is true, however, that there is something distinctly communicative, commentary-like about the Kunsthall, which has everything to do with the formal fragmentation to which Kanekar, like all above authors, refers to.

It appears that the Kunsthall’s conflicting relation to the whole is particularly apt to explore the intellectual reach of the architecture, its ideological charge, and the way it articulates both. There is also a question implied here, rather overdue: How was it possible to work out passionately, and to add to, the formal fragmentation of the Kunsthall at a moment – from 1989 onwards – when the advocacy and conquest of the whole was as vital for Koolhaas’s thinking and work as was his increasing rejection of formal fragmentation?

⁶⁵³ See: Marie-Christine Loriers, ‘Culture oblique. KunstHAL, Rotterdam’, *Techniques & Architecture* 408 (1993), 82-87. Schneider, ‘Trägerische Transparenz’, 41-44. Editorial staff, ‘Kunsthalle Rotterdam’, *ARCH +* 117 (1993), 50-53. Doutriaux, ‘Le Kunsthall de Rotterdam’, 7-8. Lootsma, De Graaf, ‘In dienst van de ervaring’, 20-25. Sudjic, ‘The Museum as a Megastar’, A7.

⁶⁵⁴ Cynthia Davidson, ‘Koolhaas and the Kunsthall’, 36-41.

⁶⁵⁵ Kanekar, ‘Space of Montage’, 143.

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 144.

Some sort of pluralism at play

The affinities between the technique of montage in art, film, architecture and the notion of the city in the 20th century are discussed in Martino Stierli's recent book *Montage and the Metropolis*. The final chapter is dedicated to *Delirious New York* and related urbanist ideas from the 1970s and 1980s. Stierli points to the analogy between the vision of the modern city Koolhaas' book advocates and a pluralist model of society. 'In the late twentieth century', Stierli writes, 'metropolitan montage becomes an increasingly encyclopedic medium of pluralism.'⁶⁵⁷ Next to *Delirious New York*, Ungers' and Koolhaas' City Archipelago project for Berlin figure as examples. Stierli does not claim that Koolhaas adopted the term of pluralism itself, seemingly aware of the fact that Koolhaas rejected the word and consciously avoided its use.⁶⁵⁸ But Stierli is right in suggesting that the thing itself – pluralism as the idea of multiple ideologies, political persuasions, religions and ways of life coexisting within a single society – is obvious in much of Koolhaas' work from the 1970s and 1980s.

The dismissal of the uniform city as a model for urban planning is indeed an obvious parallel, not only between the City Archipelago and *Delirious New York*, but also between the latter two works and *Collage City* by Rowe and Koetter. In the revised version of the corollary text of the Berlin project, *The City within the City*, Ungers linked the project explicitly to the pluralist model of society: 'Also from a political and societal vantage point', he explained, 'it is a pluralistic concept in which several ideologically diverging ideas coexist.'⁶⁵⁹ Rowe and Koetter, suggested the principle of collage as an urban approach in analogy to Karl Popper's Open Society which was in the first place a rejection of the totalitarian claim to absolute truth. Referring to Rowe's notion of contextualism, Stierli writes: 'the integration of architectural object and urban space was meant not to produce homogeneity, but rather difference and contrast, indicative of a pluralist and heterogeneous urbanism of the present.'⁶⁶⁰

⁶⁵⁷ Stierli, *Montage and the Metropolis*, 26.

⁶⁵⁸ To Florian Hertweck and Sebastien Marot he explained during an interview from 2015: "'Pluralistic" is a word I never would use.' Hertweck, Marot, *Die Stadt in der Stadt*, 137, (author trans.). Later on Koolhaas explains in the same interview: 'I don't say that out of intolerance, but for me any Anglo-Saxon word about politics is completely useless. I don't know what to make of "pluralistic". I think it is a very reduced notion of diversity.', Ibid., 139 (author trans.).

⁶⁵⁹ Quoted after: Ibid., 95, 96 (author trans.).

⁶⁶⁰ Stierli, *Montage and the Metropolis*, 239.

With the reframed version of the city archipelago concept OMA proposed for Melun-Sénart in 1987, Koolhaas, as Stierli puts it, ‘dismisses modernist totalitarian, all-encompassing planning for a piecemeal, insular development of the region.’⁶⁶¹ Koolhaas’ own explanation of the project was indeed not without overtones of societal allegory. Referring to the linear unbuilt areas (called ‘interbands’ or ‘islands’) he asserted: ‘Each island can be developed almost completely independently from the others; the archipelago model ensures that the islands’ unlimited freedom ultimately reinforces the coherence of the whole.’⁶⁶² The figure of thought resembles Koolhaas’ allegory of Manhattan, entitled ‘The City of the Captive Globe’ from 1972 – an ‘ideological skyline’ that rises from the ‘islands’ of the uniform street blocks.⁶⁶³ ‘The more each “Island” celebrates different values’, Koolhaas wrote, ‘the more the unity of the archipelago as system is reinforced.’⁶⁶⁴ Both assertions flirt with the option of being ‘overinterpreted’, evoking the image of a society that prides itself of being essentially heterogeneous, and that considers the individual freedom it allows for – and, ultimately, its believe in individual freedom – a strength.⁶⁶⁵

A farewell to the welfare state

Koolhaas was well aware of the shifting ideological climate of the 1980s and 1990s, insisting on the need of architecture to reflect these changes. Especially during the years when the project of the Kunsthal was under way, the argument recurred. Koolhaas’ dismissal of deconstructivist architecture as a formalist remake of Russian constructivism aimed at the loss of the ideological agenda in which the works of the latter so deeply were rooted. After his visit to the Kunsthal in 1993, Charles Jencks met Koolhaas in his office, who explained while referring to contemporary Dutch architecture: ‘The

⁶⁶¹ Ibid., 241.

⁶⁶² OMA/Rem Koolhaas, ‘Urban Planning Competition. New Town of Melun-Sénart 1987’, in: Lucan, *OMA - Rem Koolhaas*, 114.

⁶⁶³ Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 294.

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid., 296.

⁶⁶⁵ Jencks in particular advertised the pluralistic flexibility of postmodern architecture: ‘And yet it is precisely this vagueness and implied pluralism which the title of this book is meant to convey. [...] If there is a single direction [in contemporary architecture] I prefer, the reader will discover that it is pluralistic: the idea that the architect must master several styles and codes of communication and vary these to suit the particular culture for which he is designing.’ Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*, 7.

definition of modernism without dogma is for me one of the most shocking non-sequiturs and the most repulsive concepts I know.’⁶⁶⁶ ‘Modernism without Dogma’ was the title of the Dutch exhibition at the 1991 Venice Biennale featuring the work of young architects from the Netherlands like Wiel Arets, Ben van Berkel, Willem Jan Neutelings and Mecanoo. Hans Ibelings, who curated the exhibition, referred precisely to the disentanglement of the modernist tradition of form from its socialist ideological roots. In the exhibition catalogue, Ibelings wrote: ‘there is a renewed interest among younger architects in the intellectual tradition of modernism, an interest legible in their attempt to uphold certain principles. No-one, however, harbours the illusion that it is possible or even desirable to revitalize the societal programme to which these were originally linked.’⁶⁶⁷

That Koolhaas was fully conscious of the ideological implications of form in architecture, regardless of its programme and use, is manifest in the ‘Captive Globe’. The ‘ideological skyline’ of the drawing – assembling pastiches of projects by Leonidov and Superstudio, Le Corbusier and Wallace Harrison, among others – celebrates ‘different values’ merely through the shape of the building’s exteriors.⁶⁶⁸ But the argument is intricate. The ‘different values’ the skyscrapers ‘celebrate’ are neutralized through the indifferent uniformity of the grid and plinths. Although the project is to corroborate the lessons of ‘Manhattanism’ within the narrative of *Delirious New York*, the tone is ironic, and the project and its explication can easily be taken for a critique of a formalist attitude – like that of Rowe, in Koolhaas’ view – for which the ideological agenda of architecture does not matter.

With respect to his own projects, Koolhaas has largely abstained from commenting on form and its ideological implications. As in the case of the Dance Theatre, the Byzantium and the Villa Dall’Ava, the formal and constructive heterogeneity of the Kunsthal remained largely unexplained. Neither in *S,M,L,XL* nor in the two issues of *El Croquis* featuring the Kunsthal, Koolhaas would mention this

⁶⁶⁶ Charles Jencks, in: Jenny Borger et al., *PRIMA VISTA!*, 23 May 1993, VPRO.

⁶⁶⁷ Hans Ibelings 1991. *Modernism without dogma. Architects of a younger generation in the Netherlands* (Rotterdam: Nederlands Architectuurinstituut, 1991), 5. Published at the occasion of the Venice Architecture Biennale in 1991.

⁶⁶⁸ Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 294.

aspect. OMA's current website grants the clue that the circuit is to provide 'a series of contradictory experiences', and, of course, the building does provide them. But the profound heterogeneity of the architecture lends itself no less readily for a built image of the society the project emerged from. The Kunsthall's essentially composite, non-hierarchical order, the architecture's relative autonomy of parts – structural parts, spaces, facades, parts of spaces and facades – and the more subtle commitment of the same parts to the whole – 'consensual' concepts like the gestural openness of the building – appear charged with overtones of the societal agendas of western welfare states in the post-war era.

Dirk van den Heuvel describes the huge impact that the Smithsons' reception of *Open Society and its Enemies* by Karl Popper had on Dutch architecture of that era and the Forum Group in particular.⁶⁶⁹ Written during World War II, Popper's book was an answer to the immediate threat of fascism and totalitarianism of these years, but the ideological contest between the western model of an open democratic society and the more or less totalitarian states behind the Iron Curtain continued throughout the Cold War. Van den Heuvel shows how Popper's advocacy of an open, egalitarian, democratic society, based on individual freedom, reverberates in the Kasbah housing in Hengelo (1969-74) by Aldo van Eyck's protégé Piet Blom. In a comment from 1970, Blom draws a picture of the future of residents that clearly embraces the idea of the multicultural, pluralist society:

[...] every house its own situation; houses for singles, houses for the many, for the working-class and migrant workers, students and civil servants, academics and artists, for adventurers, priests, a junk dealer, any trouble maker; for big and small families, for complete and broken marriages; for big and small children, for orderly, noisy, Christian, left-wing, right-wing, socialist, brown, green, yellow, white and black people.⁶⁷⁰

⁶⁶⁹ Dirk van den Heuvel, 'The Open Society and its Experiments: The Case of the Netherlands and Piet Blom', in: Swenarton, Avermaete, Van den Heuvel, *Architecture of the Welfare State* (London: Routledge, 2015), 132-152.

⁶⁷⁰ Quoted after: Van den Heuvel, 'The Open Society and its Experiments', 140.

All 184 houses of the carpet-like development are raised on columns, providing the entire open space below for collective use. The kind of activity Blom envisioned to unfold is not so different from Koolhaas' concept of the Kunsthal as a 'marked space within an urban field' that ideally would be open to any kind of user and any kind of use. Van den Heuvel explains: 'In its original conception the undercroft was meant as a Situationist *terrain vague*, an open landscape to be appropriated by that favourite of the post-war Dutch avant-garde, Johan Huizinga's playing man, or *Homo Ludens*'.⁶⁷¹ Looking back, Constant's New Babylon in all its radicalism appears, too, indebted to the idea of a welfare state, anticipating how such a state may ideally evolve, before the limits of economic growth became apparent during the economic crises of the 1970s: universal, all-encompassing structures that provide for all the material needs of society, with the organization of leisure and the intensification of experience as the last problems to resolve. According to Van den Heuvel, the actual construction of experimental projects like those by Piet Blom – and Van Eyck' Mothers' House in Amsterdam (1973-78), Hertzberger's Vredenburg Music Centre in Utrecht (1973-79), Van Klíngeren's 't Karregat in Eindhoven (1970-73) are further examples – were facilitated by the representatives of the Dutch government, both on a national and a communal level.⁶⁷²

The Netherlands provided some of the most radical experiments in architecture, all under the banner of the welfare state. They were sanctioned by would-be enlightened officials, who supported experiment and innovation as an alternative to the technocratic tendencies that were also part of the welfare-system. [...] Together with an appetite for the new that admittedly included destructive elements too, this resulted in the nowadays derided generous tolerance of the so-called "permissive society" of the 1970s (in a sense, the other face of the Open Society), with its embrace of multiculturalism, sexual emancipation and spiritual open-mindedness.⁶⁷³

⁶⁷¹ Van den Heuvel, 'The Open Society and its Experiments', 141.

⁶⁷² Van den Heuvel mentions a programme for experimental housing initiated by Christian Democrat Minister of Housing Wim Schut in 1968 that 'aimed at the improvement and differentiation of housing typologies', with the realization of 5.000 housing units. Blom's project in Rotterdam backed by Social Democrat Minister of Housing, Hans Gruyters, and Rotterdam's alderman Hans Mentink. Van den Heuvel, 'The Open Society and its Experiments', 140.

⁶⁷³ *Ibid.*, 136.

The Kunsthal too – just like the NAI – emerged from a cooperation of the Dutch government and Rotterdam’s municipality. The Kunsthal *is* a product of a welfare state that – apart from patronizing social housing – planned, built and subsidised cultural institutions. And yet, the Kunsthal was also designed and built in a period that marked the end of the Dutch welfare state of the previous decades. As Bart Lootsma points out, the Netherlands were particularly sensitive to the economic restructuring of western economies, namely to the neoliberal turn of European integration:

As a small trading nation, the Netherlands is perhaps more susceptible to these developments than other countries and therefore forced to anticipate the developing situation, among other things, at a political level. The unification of Europe has played an important part in this because of policies committed to developing open markets. The required process of deregulation has obliged the Dutch government to abolish, privatize or otherwise change countless public agencies, subsidies and laws.

An important byproduct of this process that has significantly affected architecture, occurred when the official subsidies for social housing construction were terminated in 1994. The housing corporations that formerly commissioned projects on a non-profit basis all had their debts annulled, and have had to operate as independent property developers on the free market ever since.⁶⁷⁴

A more recent study on this subject, suggests a causal link between the ‘grossing and balancing operation’ to which Lootsma refers and the process of European Integration:

⁶⁷⁴ Bart Lootsma, *Superdutch. New Architecture in the Netherlands* (London, Thames and Hudson, 2000), 21. In the Netherlands, during the 1980s, the government provided ‘a considerable sum for architecture and planning’, subsidies for housing and emerging architecture firms, and the creation of three new institutions in the field such as the Netherlands Architecture Fund, and the Berlage Institute. *Ibid.*, 13-15. Christophe van Gerrewey mentions that during the 1980s ‘120.000 housing units are produced per year by the Dutch Ministry, only ten percent free market.’ See: Van Gerrewey, ‘A Weissenhofsiedlung for Amsterdam’, 87.

[T]he post-1995 disengagement of government from their activities represents a form of privatization. It was partially motivated by the government's wish to limit its recorded budget deficits, as these were a part of the Maastricht Treaty's convergence criteria for membership of the new European single currency.⁶⁷⁵

The Kunsthal, as architecture, has little in common with the above mentioned examples of welfare state architecture. Within the boundaries of modular variation, Blom's Kasbah – as well as Dutch Structuralism in general – is repetitive to the point of uniformity, implying the idea of an egalitarian society and a state that provides a neutral, homogeneous framework in which the diversity of an individualistic society may unfold. If, on a metaphorical level, structuralist architecture represents the state securing individual freedom, the architecture of the Kunsthal approximates the society *within* the state, whose actions may transcend the freedom granted. At the Kunsthal, there is no universal order to 'govern' the various parts of the whole. It does not need much imagination to translate the formal and constructive autonomy of parts – from the single column to entire sections of the structure or the facades – into the image of individual and collective freedom within a pluralist, profoundly heterogeneous society. Surely, the Kunsthal allowed for identification: to the client – mainly the city of Rotterdam, then governed by the social-democrat PvdA – advocating an open, pluralist society, and to the Rotterdamers in support of such an agenda. Urban historian Wouter Vanstiphout wrote in 2013, remembering his first encounter with the Kunsthal:

Seeing the building from the inside out, resembling an impossibly raw concrete mess in mid-collapse, was mesmerizing. [...]

You felt vindicated and understood as one of Rotterdam's voluntary inmates. As so much great art, it is a merciless portrait of the city as well as its manifesto, and it feels like it has been made just for you.⁶⁷⁶

⁶⁷⁵ Marja Elsinga, Mark Stephens, Thomas Knorr-Siedow, 'The Privatisation of Social Housing: Three Different Pathways', in: Scanlon, Whitehead et al., *Social Housing in Europe*, 397.

⁶⁷⁶ Wouter Vanstiphout, (Listen 1), *Blueprint* 331, (2013), 27.

It goes without saying that the Ramp Street and the Kunsthall's overall sense of transparency, taken as gestures, fit all too well to the principle of an egalitarian 'openness' for everybody. It has already been mentioned that William Curtis identified the 'democratic path' – referring to public passages like the one traversing Stirling's Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart – as a *sujet* characteristic for the West German museum of the post-war era.⁶⁷⁷ The 'democratic path', however, occurred also in museum designs of other western countries from that period, for example in Arata Isozaki's Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles (1982-86), and as a bridged passage dividing the extension of the National Gallery in London (1985-91) by Venturi and Scott Brown to the existing building. In *Utopia's Ghost*, Reinhold Martin picks up on Curtis' argument, suggesting that the accessibility signalled by public passages like the one in Stuttgart was to distinguish the democratic institutions of the west from their authoritarian counterparts in the east.⁶⁷⁸ To extend the right of way for the public to either the interior or the precinct of a building had also been repeatedly proposed by the Smithsons. The Ramp Street and the Portico of the Kunsthall share the essential qualities of a Smithsonian 'in-between space' like the raised plaza of the Economist Building in London (1959-64).⁶⁷⁹

At the Kunsthall – different from the structuralist buildings by Van Eyck, Hertzberger, Blom and others – the structure does not provide a homogeneous framework. On the contrary, it is the structure that is distorted, oblique, out of line and in conflict with other parts of the building, conveying images of instability and collision. The system itself seems out of joint, if not at the point of collapse, or at the moment of its overthrow: as if the acts of spontaneous appropriation – to which the detailing alludes, as well as the street photo inserted in the spread on the Kunsthall in *S,M,L,XL* – spilled over to the order from which they originated. Perhaps the rage is directed against a Foucauldian system of institutions

⁶⁷⁷ Curtis, 'Virtuosity around a Void', 41.

⁶⁷⁸ Martin, *Utopia's Ghost*, 157.

⁶⁷⁹ 'In the design for the Economist Building in London, the principles [of the 'Space Between'] outlined are elaborated in a manner exemplary in both form and material. Max Risselada, 'The Space Between', in Alison & Peter Smithson, *The Space Between* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2017), 259. Dirk van den Heuvel describes the space of the plaza as a 'threshold space' that exemplifies Team 10 ideas like the spatial mediation between different scales, surroundings, and atmospheres. Dirk van den Heuvel: 'The Economist Building, London 1959-64', in: Max Risselada, Dirk van den Heuvel, *Team 10. 1953-81. In Search of a Utopia of the Present* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2005), 136.

that invisibly discipline the purported freedom of a society that unknowingly complies to an inescapable weave of internalized rules. It is through such overtones that the Kunsthal appears faithful to Koolhaas' metropolitan agenda, for which subversion – understood as an at least temporary destabilizing impact on the existing order – has always been essential. But in Koolhaasian theory, programme, not form, is to induce instability. 'In architecture', he explained in 1983, 'you have a series of programmes and things, for example you can have an oyster bar, a gym and a theatre foyer, and you have to combine them in a way that is like the trigger that makes certain events explode.'⁶⁸⁰ At the Kunsthal, however, it is the architecture that does the job.

The analogy's pull

David Harvey, in *The Condition of Postmodernity*, and Fredric Jameson, in *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, explain the fragmentation of form in postmodernist culture by an increasing fragmentation of experience. Harvey uses the term 'time-space compression', denoting both a changed experience of time and space and the economic, political and technological shift during the 1970s and 1980s which this experience reflects.⁶⁸¹ For Jameson, the contemporary experience of fragmentation is akin to the incapacity of 'temporal unification' experienced by schizophrenics which dissolves the continuity of past, present and future in 'a series of pure and unrelated presents in time.'⁶⁸² As the actual cause of the fragmented perception, both authors identify the emergence of new technologies and fundamental changes of the global economic system: the 'emergence of more flexible

⁶⁸⁰ Raggi, 'Edonista-puritano', 26, (author trans.).

⁶⁸¹ In the chapter 'Time-space compression and the postmodern condition', Harvey writes: 'I want to suggest that we have been experiencing, these last two decades, an intense phase of time-space compression that has had a disorienting and disruptive impact upon political-economic practices, the balance of class power, as well as upon cultural and social life.' Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 284.

⁶⁸² Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London/New York: Verso, 1992), 27. Jameson here refers to art, literature and music, but the formal parallels to what is generally referred to as postmodernist architecture (Venturi, Moore, Hollein, Gehry, etc. – not the Bonaventure Hotel) are obvious. Jencks advertises schizophrenia as a virtue of multivalent architecture: 'schizophrenia is the only intelligent approach. The architect should be trained as a radical schizophrenic [...] always looking two ways with equal clarity: towards the traditional slow-changing codes and particular ethnic meanings of a neighbourhood, and towards the fast-changing codes of architectural fashion and professionalism.'; in: Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (1977), 97. Rowe and Kottler use the term 'schizoid' when describing the impact of the Villa Adriana. Colin Rowe, Fred Koetter, *Collage City*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1983), 94.

modes of capital accumulation⁶⁸³ (Harvey) and “late capitalism”⁶⁸⁴ (Jameson), entailing among other things a ‘new international division of labour, a vertiginous new dynamic in international banking and the stock exchanges [...] new form of media interrelationship [...] computers and automation’.⁶⁸⁵ If that is the case, it merely depended on the perspective whether the thrust of European integration and the globalization of markets meant more fragmentation, or less.⁶⁸⁶ The individual was likely to experience these changes as a bewildering fragmentation of his environment in space and time, while the transnational corporation welcomed them as the unification of isolated economic domains. Harvey touches upon this ambiguity:

We thus approach the central paradox: the less important the spatial barriers, the greater the sensitivity of capital to the variations of place within space, and the greater the incentive for places to be differentiated in ways attractive to capital. The result has been the production of fragmentation, insecurity, and ephemeral uneven development within a highly unified global space economy of capital flows.⁶⁸⁷

Woody Allen’s *Zelig* from 1983 and the metamorphoses beyond recognition of Cindy Sherman in her staged self-portraits, appear apt to illustrate the perspective of the individual and the restless gymnastics of transformation it is compelled to perform in the changeable world of late capitalism. Harvey, who mentions Sherman’s work repeatedly, interprets her photography of ‘masks’ precisely in this sense of personal discontinuity.⁶⁸⁸ Allen’s fictional character Leonard Zelig, dubbed ‘the human chameleon’, adopts the appearances and ways of any given social milieu, turning into a Rabbi among Rabbis as readily as into a Nazi officer among Nazi officers, or a psychiatrist among psychiatrists, and so forth.

⁶⁸³ Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, xii.

⁶⁸⁴ Jameson *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, xix.

⁶⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁶ Harvey describes the unity of the two realms (human experience/flow of capital) as antagonistic: ‘We thus approach the central paradox: the less important the spatial barriers, the greater the sensitivity of capital to the variations of place within space, and the greater the incentive for places to be differentiated in ways attractive to capital. The result has been the production of fragmentation, insecurity, and ephemeral uneven development within a highly unified global space economy of capital flows.’ Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 295-296.

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 296.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

Under hypnosis, Zelig wearily confesses two major motives for doing so: to be safe and to be liked. Even if Zelig is apparently attracted by ‘those in the limelight’, his restless metamorphosis is essentially a technique of survival.

Jameson mentions the formal discontinuity in John Cage’s music, namely the ‘too’ long pauses next to a poem from 1981 by Bob Perelman, introduced as an ‘exercise in discontinuities’.⁶⁸⁹ The examples of Sherman, Cage and Perelman are meant to illustrate the correspondence of the structure of the cultural artefact and the socio-economic structure it emerges from, suggesting – in principle – the same ‘banal analogy’ between world and form that Koolhaas identified and dismissed as the conceptual core of deconstructivist architecture. Considering the eminent role of fragmentation and heterogeneity in OMA’s work, one wonders to what extent Koolhaas himself succumbed to the pull of a similar analogy.

It is of some significance, in this context, that Koolhaas studied and taught at American universities and at the AA in London – very much like his peers Ungers, Hollein, Tschumi, Libeskind, Hadid and Wolf Prix who used to be considered as major (continental) European exponents of postmodernist and deconstructivist architecture. Koolhaas’ studies at Cornell and his research in New York in the seventies, as well as the fact that he taught and lived in London during the Thatcher era (1979-90) must have provided plenty of occasion to observe the neoliberalist restructuring of the Anglo-American society at close range, long before it reached the European continent with full force in the wake of European integration.⁶⁹⁰

As much as Koolhaas did believe in the necessity of an analogy between world and form in architecture, it appears likely that he considered some sort of renunciation to the whole a matter of artistic credibility, if not truth. Provided the artistic-architectural inevitability of such an analogy, only a different world or

⁶⁸⁹ Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 28-29.

⁶⁹⁰ It needs to be mentioned, at this point, that the terms commonly employed until the 1990s to describe these developments – such as ‘post-Fordism’, ‘late capitalism’ and ‘flexible accumulation’ – were less charged with negative connotations than today’s notion of ‘neoliberalism’. In 1989, the alignment with Europe’s economic restructuring must have appeared significantly less ‘inaccurate’ than today, or even in the second half of the 1990s.

worldview could redeem architecture from the spell of fragmentation. The ‘highly unified global space economy of capital flows’ did offer such a perspective.⁶⁹¹ The commitment to the large scale from 1989 onwards, essays like ‘Bigness’, and, since the end of the 1990s, an increasing number of projects apparently embrace it. Although the compact volume of the Kunsthal and the internalized public space of its circuit mark the beginning of this development, the building excels in depicting with the ‘brush’ of fragmentation a multitude of different realities: next to the experience of late capitalism, the pluralist society of the European welfare state; the derailing or decay of this system; a metaphor of the metropolitan experience; the anticipated experience of the events within the building; the heterogeneity of its physical environment; and a filmic account of the death of form through fragmentation.

A style directed to the present understood primarily in relation to the past

To this day, the obvious deconstructivist leanings of the Kunsthal play a marginal role in its reception. In the 1990s, Sudjic alluded to them in one of the few critical reviews of the building, while Hulsman identified with caution ‘some features that might be considered deconstructivist’.⁶⁹² Hulsman nevertheless assured that ‘the “fragmented” sections are subordinate to the whole’, insinuating that the fragmentation which he apparently did observe, was not the same as in deconstructivist architecture.⁶⁹³ Hans van Dijk suggested that it was an example of the resistance to deconstructivism Koolhaas himself declared as the task of contemporary architecture.⁶⁹⁴ Perhaps a similar caution, or disdain for deconstructivism, prevented other reviewers from addressing the issue altogether.

That some parts of the project would have made critics – in the early nineties – at least think of deconstructivist architecture is most likely. The rotation of the Skew Ramp implies a violent rupture with the orthogonal order of the structural system. Its spectacular impact depends largely on the conflicting relation to the whole. The shift of the axis on which the *pilotis* are aligned with regard to the centre of the Skew Ramp, dissolves in a likeminded way the unity of this part of the structure. No less

⁶⁹¹ Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 296.

⁶⁹² Hulsman, ‘Kunsthal lijkt wel een overdoos’. Quoted after: Van Gerrewey, *A Critical Reader*, 278.

⁶⁹³ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid.

important are the metaphors of explosion, chaos, instability and, implicitly, collapse, that became synonymous with deconstructivist architecture and that insinuate disintegration, and, ultimately, the process and state of fragmentation. But the largely ironic air of citation that imbues much of the design brings postmodern architecture no less imperatively to mind. This simultaneous exposure of deconstructivist and postmodernist features overtly contradicted Koolhaas declared rejection of either architectural current. At the same time, it questions the alleged opposition of deconstructivist and postmodern architecture, revealing formal fragmentation as their common ground. The ‘postmodern’ quote alone creates a strong sense of fragmentation: first, being extracted from its original context, it becomes a fragment in a literal sense; second, once recognized as a quote, it appears isolated from everything that does not match the original context.⁶⁹⁵

The Auditorium and the Skew Ramp are instructive for another reason. In both cases Koolhaas seems to lay bare that deconstructivism, too, feeds on a formal repertoire inherited from a more or less remote past. In Koolhaas’ terms, deconstructivist architecture is shown as modernist, not as contemporary. The ramps, the *pilotis*, the *domino* arrangement of columns and plates, all is overtly taken from Le Corbusier – like Hadid’s early projects from Malevich’s suprematism, or Tschumi’s follies at Parc de la Villette to the work of Chernikhov. Victor Buchli, in an article from 2011, connects the propensity of postmodernist design and architecture to fragmentation, quotation, parody and pastiche to Claude Lévy-Strauss notion of bricolage as outlined in his book *The Savage Mind*. What Buchli has in mind, is not the amateur’s arbitrary range of means, but a cultural condition which imposes an essential indebtedness to the past, because the new and whole is no longer attainable historically. This postmodern bricoleur, Buchli writes:

[...] accepts the world as it is and reconfigures it, rather than anticipating a new world and inventing it. In this respect the bricoleur has a different concept of time compared to the

⁶⁹⁵ Peter Bürger, *Theorie der Avantgarde* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2017), 91; first published in 1974. By consequence, the combination of incompatible borrowings like those from Mies and Corbusier is particularly disruptive.

modernist: one that is retrospective, based on the continuous reworking of the received elements of the world, as opposed to prospective and filled with imagined new conditions and possibilities.⁶⁹⁶

At the root of this attitude, Buchli discerns the violent backlash against the political movements in 1968 and the subsequent retreat of utopian projections in Western countries.⁶⁹⁷

Bricoleurs are avowedly non-utopian in the sense that they do not imagine a new language or set of material circumstances that would remake the world. It is no accident that postmodernism should have emerged in the wake of the collective disillusionment with progressive movements such as communism, following the Prague Spring of 1968. Any hopes still held by the European left for the project of Soviet socialism were brutally dashed. What some might call a nihilistic impulse, which postmodern design groups such as Studio Alchymia [sic] embodied, can be understood more as an acknowledgment that the utopian promise of Western rationality was doomed. All that could be done was to work with the ready-at-hand, the structures of capitalist industry and consumerism within which postmodern output emerged.

Buchli does not say so explicitly, but it is obvious that he deems the loss of utopia in the twentieth century tantamount to the impossibility of genuine newness, that is, to continue the modernist tradition of progressive invention. But not only the progressive Left was disillusioned; with the economic crises of the 1970s, Western societies seem to have lost confidence in the ‘feasibility’ of their future on a much broader basis. In an interview with Franco Raggi from 1983, Koolhaas compares the general

⁶⁹⁶ Victor Buchli, ‘On Bricolage’, in: Adamson, Pavitt, *Postmodernism*, 113.

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid., 115. Asked in 1991 whether it was possible to ‘reconstitute modernism without utopia’, Koolhaas replied: ‘My work is deliberately not utopia in the sense that it is consciously trying to operate within the prevalent conditions without the narcissism of suffering, disagreeing, or whatever narcissisms we have, which all may be merely a complex series of alibies to justify certain interior failings.’ Fitzpatrick, Hofius, *Rem Koolhaas*, 79-80. The position is fully in tune with the – Tafurian? – criticism of the European avant-gardes, expressed in *Delirious New York*, of having largely failed to materialize their utopian ambitions: ‘[...] with the Downton Athletic Club the American way of life, know-how and initiative definitely overtake the theoretical lifestyle modifications that the various 20th-century European avant-gardes have been insistently proposing, without ever managing to impose them.’ Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 152. The mention of Le Corbusier’s visit to New York in 1935 serves to illustrate this failure.

situation of architecture at the time to a morning after a party: ‘You know, when you’re surrounded by a big mess, and everybody has a hangover headache’. Asked what party he had in mind, Koolhaas replies: ‘The party of an architecture that has social and aesthetic legitimacy, with a “powerful” design’ – apparently referring to the socially and politically engaged modernist projects of the early twentieth century.⁶⁹⁸ In Rowe’s and Koetter’s concept of *Collage City* – which does avowedly draw on Lévi-Strauss’ notion of the bricoleur – utopia survives in the form of the politically neutralized fragment.⁶⁹⁹ Hadrian’s commemorative Villa at Tivoli, understood as ‘an accumulation of disparate ideal fragments’, figures as a model.⁷⁰⁰

Formal fragmentation in the work of OMA is closely related to borrowings from the past. Motifs taken from Mies, Le Corbusier, Russian constructivism or the nondescript modernism of the post-war era recur in Koolhaas architectural production since the early 1970s. As a bearer of yesterday’s modernisms, fragmentation stood in the way of Koolhaas’ wish for genuine newness – or to be ‘contemporary’ as he himself put it – at least since 1989. Much of what T.J. Clark says about Picasso, cubist painting and the bohemia of the nineteenth century does apply to the relation between Koolhaas, modernist architecture and OMA’s work of the 1980s, the *Kunsthal* included:

Cubism [...] is a style directed to a present primarily understood in relation to the past: it is a modest, decent, and touching appraisal of one moment in history, as opposed to a whirling glimpse into a world-historical present-becoming-future. It is commemorative. Its true power derives not from its modernity, that is, if we mean by this a reaching toward an otherness ahead in time, but from its profound belonging to a modernity that was passing away.⁷⁰¹

⁶⁹⁸ Raggi, ‘Puritanical Hedonist’, 91. First published under the title ‘Edonista-puritano’ in 1983.

⁶⁹⁹ The technique of collage ‘might be a means of permitting us the enjoyment of utopian poetics without being obliged to suffer the embarrassment of utopian politics.’ Rowe, Koetter, *Collage City*, 149. Koolhaas quotes the phrase in an interview from 1980, after explain: ‘They [Rowe and others] became the avant-garde of modernity in architecture in England. But they hated its idealism. [...] So from the beginning they always tried to divorce the content from the appearance.’ Cathy Peake et al., ‘The Pleasures of Architecture’, *Transition* 4 (1980), 16.

⁷⁰⁰ Rowe, Koetter, *Collage City*, 90.

⁷⁰¹ T.J. Clark, *Picasso and Truth. From Cubism to Guernica* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 74.

Painted collage

For Koolhaas, the true power, to use Clark's words, of his work from the 1970s and 1980s appears to be a profound belonging to the short, fading modernity of the 1920 and 1930s. It allowed for a reflectivity that indeed recalls Picasso's collages and painted collages of the 1910s and 1920s to which the above quote partly refers. 'Collage', Clark writes elsewhere having in mind exactly this body of work,

[...] entertained the idea that art's main forms and compelling figures could be generated, now, out of nothing but internal, differential play between any old elements. A patch of pure color, a piece of banal illusionism; a pattern of dots, a fragment of newsprint, a calling card, a key signature: what mattered was the energy of the sign's coexistence.⁷⁰²

For the Kunsthal and most of Koolhaas's work from the 1980s, this sort of energy doubtlessly matters as well. At the same time, however, many projects of this period unfold a kind of dialectic reflection on architecture similar, again, to Picasso's work that so overtly is *about* painting and the issue of pictorial representation. In 1983, Koolhaas explained – it is one of the few comments on *his* use of fragmentation: 'I think that fragmentation is a natural condition that allows you to observe things as separate episodes which can be connected, or simply coexist by dint of vicinity so that meaning is ultimately generated through the presence of differences.'⁷⁰³ Eisenstein seems to spell out what Koolhaas has in mind, when outlining his notion of the 'dramatic principle' of montage in the 1920s:

[...] in my view montage is not an idea composed of successive shots stuck together but an idea that DERIVES from the collision between two shots that are independent from one another [...]. As in Japanese hieroglyphics in which two independent ideographic characters ("shots") are juxtaposed and explode into a concept. THUS:

⁷⁰² Ibid., 136.

⁷⁰³ Raggi, 'Edonista-puritano', 26 (author trans.).

Chapter 2.7



Figure 1. Sergei Eisenstein, *Strike*. 1925.

Eye + Water = Crying

Door + Ear = Eavesdropping

Child + Mouth = Screaming

Mouth + Dog = Barking [...] ⁷⁰⁴

In the final scene at the end of his film *Strike* from 1925, Eisenstein combines pictures showing czarist soldiers that persecute and shoot the crowd of strikers with images showing the slaughtering of cattle in order to convey the sense of carnage. [Figure 1] In 1931, John Heartfield mounted the photo of a tiger's head into a portrait of a 'capitalist' with a swastika in his tie, ridiculing the social democrat's idea of supporting capitalism in order to tame it. ⁷⁰⁵ [Figure 2] Picasso's collage *Feuille de musique et guitar* from 1912 evokes the idea of music being played by combining fragments of a musical score with a 'guitar' composed of differently cut and coloured pieces of paper. [Figure 3]

There is, evidently, a basic operation common to all three works of art and their respective techniques of filmic montage, photomontage and collage: to create meaning through the combination of at least two distinctly different images. Similarly, Fredric Jameson saw the principle of 'differentiation' at the core of postmodern art, translating the fragmentation of experience characteristic for late capitalism into formal fragmentation:

I would like to characterize the postmodernist experience of form with what will seem, I hope, a paradoxical slogan: namely, the proposition that "difference relates." Our own recent criticism [...] has been concerned to stress the heterogeneity and profound discontinuities of the work of art, no longer united or organic, but now a virtual grab bag or lumber room of disjointed subsystems and random raw materials and impulses of all kinds. The former work of

⁷⁰⁴ Sergei Eisenstein, 'Dramaturgy of Film Form', in: Richard Taylor (ed.), *S.M. Eisenstein. Selected Works*, vol. I, *Writings 1922-34* (London: BFI Publishing, 1988), 163-164. Italics in the original.

⁷⁰⁵ John Heartfield, 'Zum Krisen-Parteitag der SPD'. In: *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung*, 15 June 1931.

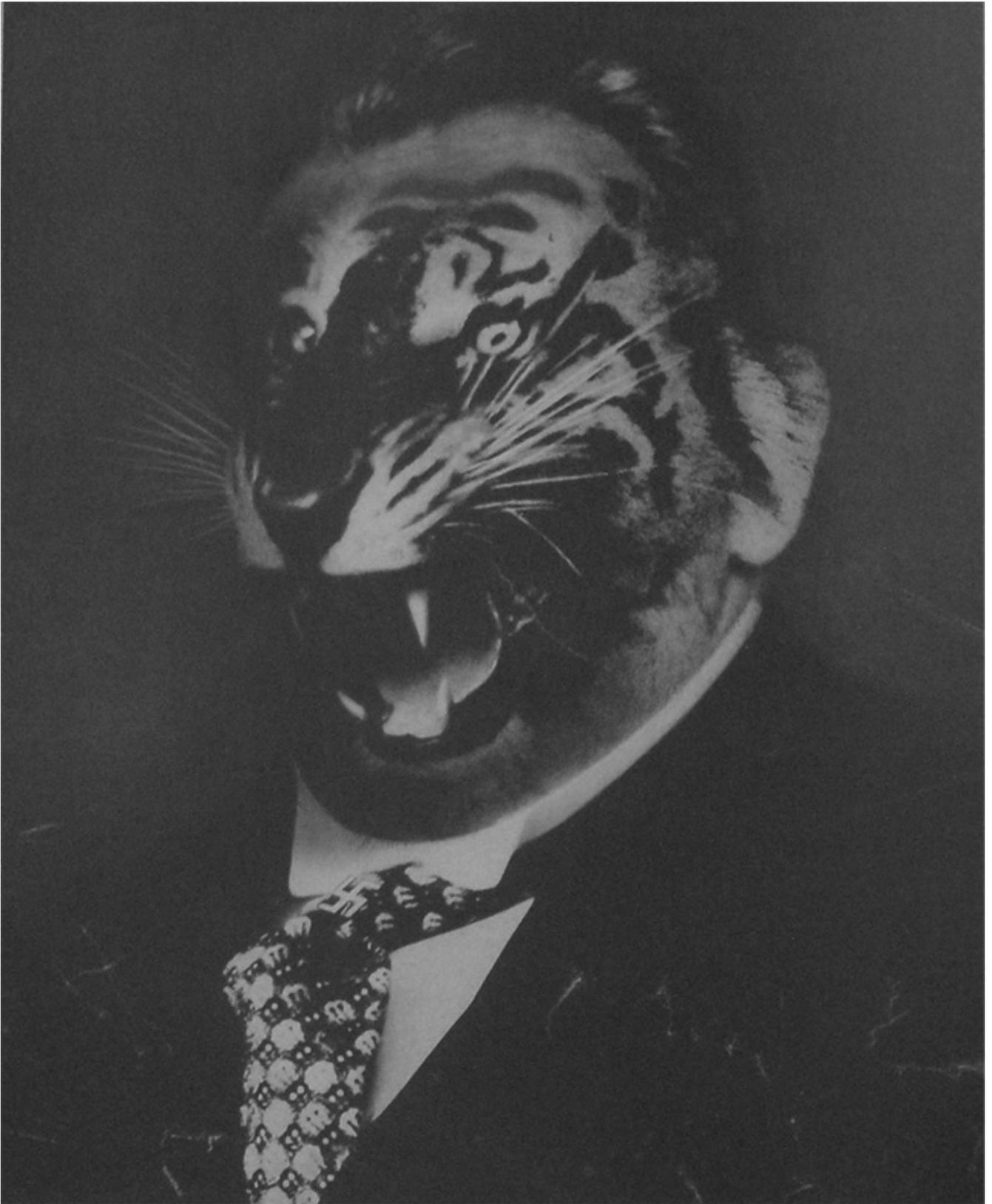


Figure 2. John Heartfield, *Zum Krisenparteitag der SPD*, 1931.

art, in other words, has now turned out to be a text, whose reading proceeds by differentiation rather than by unification.⁷⁰⁶

Jameson takes Nam June Paik's simultaneous display of television screens as an example. Paik confronts the beholder with the 'impossible imperative' to read, Jameson explains, conjuring up the epiphany of a world governed by the incomprehensible flows of multinational capital. But apart from conveying such experiences of what Jameson identifies as the postmodern sublime, the message of the 'text' is unlikely to be tangible and clear. Later in the book, Jameson points out what distinguishes Eisenstein's pedagogical use of montage from the montage in the films of Godard:

It is no longer certain, for instance, that the heavily charged monitory juxtaposition in a Godard film – an advertising image, a printed slogan, newsreels, an interview with a philosopher, and the gestus of this or that fictive character – will be put back together by the spectator in the form of a message, let alone the right message.⁷⁰⁷

Asked in 1993 by Cynthia Davison, whether 'architecture itself is something one can read literally as text', Koolhaas replies: 'I think some of the best works can be read as text.'⁷⁰⁸ Read as 'text', modernist architecture and urbanism is a key theme of OMA's work from the eighties, embracing early and post-war modernism, surrealism, the compatibility of modernism with hedonism and popular culture, and, between the lines, many other ideas and experiences that continue the modernist tradition in one way or another. In the Kunsthall, the historic reflection is extended to the present: to postmodernism, deconstructivism and, implicitly, to OMA's own work of the past decade. This vast scope of diverse, at times contradictory positions would have been impossible to 'address' with such explicitness if not through the 'differential play between any old elements' (Clark) and the fragmentation of form it entails. The Kunsthall as a 'text', however, is no more pedagogical or didactic than the films by Godard Jameson

⁷⁰⁶ Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 31.

⁷⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 191.

⁷⁰⁸ Davidson, 'Why I Wrote Delirious New York', 42.

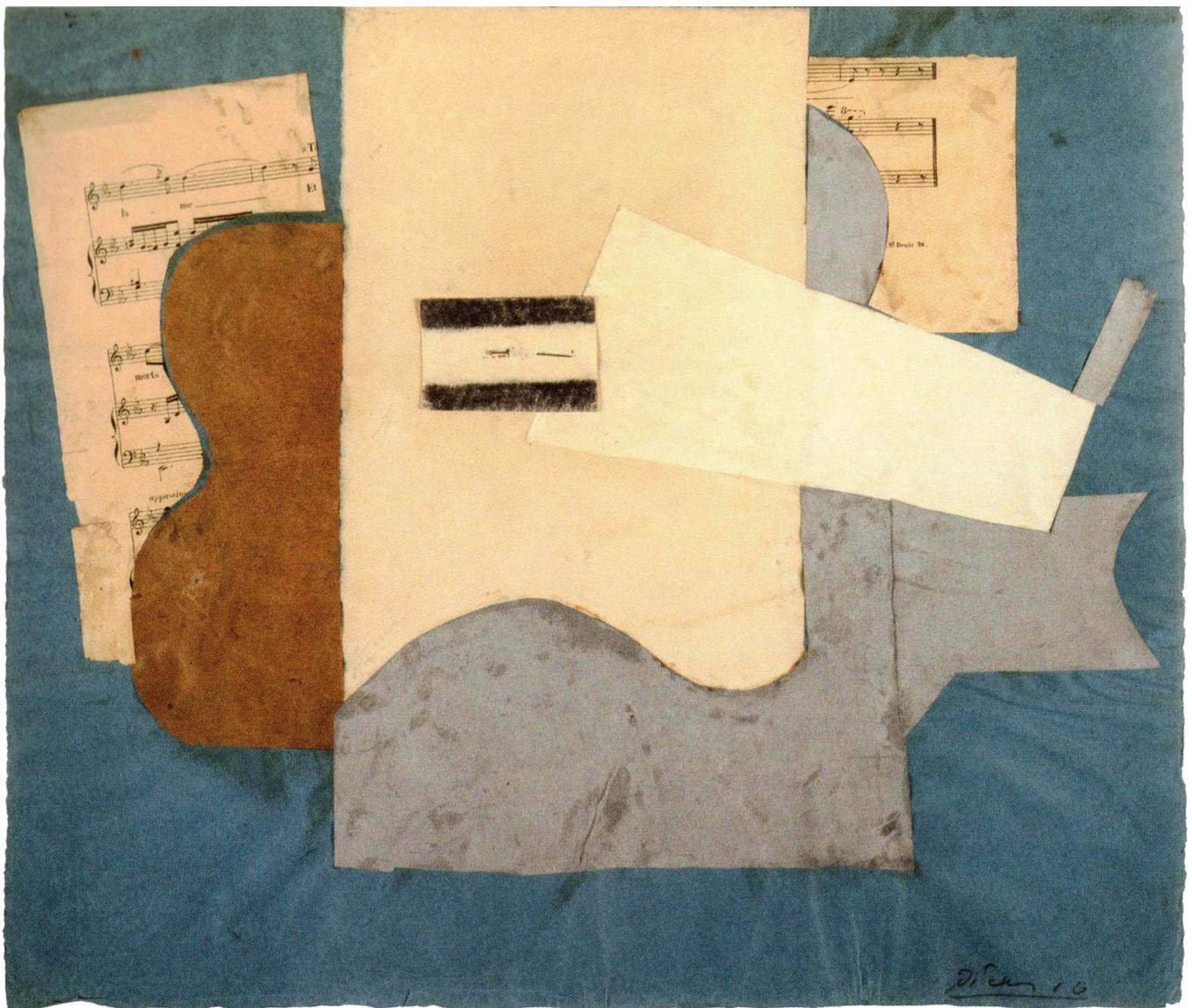


Figure 3. Pablo Picasso, *Feuille de musique et guitar*, 1912.

refers to. Is it hardly possible to pin down a message, ‘let alone the right message’. The reviews, articles and essays on the Kunsthal diverge significantly, and yet, for the most part, their interpretations are legitimate. That the Kunsthal is, among other things, in a similar way about architecture as Picasso’s pictures from the 1910s and 1920s are about painting, is relatively clear; what it actually ‘says’ about architecture much less.

That the medium of collage, throughout the 1980s, played a significant role in OMA’s architectural production is beyond question.⁷⁰⁹ The Kunsthal aside, collages representing the facades were produced for, to give some examples, the Dance Theatre, the Byzantium, the Patio Villa and NAI in Rotterdam, the Villa Dall’Ava, and the Media Centre in Karlsruhe.⁷¹⁰ More importantly, despite their intricate plasticity, many designs aimed at an impact comparable to collage. With the Byzantium apparently an attempt was made to translate the formal characteristics of the collage more directly into architecture, as the ‘low relief’ of the main façade approximates the layering of the elevation and its composition of various types and colours of cardboard. The facades of the Media Centre in Karlsruhe, and to a large extent those of the Kunsthal, are both flat and confined – like a proper collage to the surface of a sheet of paper or canvas – to a compact rectangular shape. This alone might have been tempting as an occasion to work almost literally in the medium that – as a principle of design – had informed so deeply OMA’s work of the past decade.

Strictly speaking, however, neither the Kunsthal nor its facades are a collage or montage, at least not more so than any other building of its time. Each of the Kunsthal’s surfaces – however distinct and different from the adjacent ones – is a construction in itself. Unlike a strip of wallpaper or a frame of a film, it is not ‘of one piece’, and physically it does not coincide with what it relates to. The cruciform column of the Portico was not abstracted from Mies’ dissembled Barcelona pavilion. Rather, the

⁷⁰⁹ That is evident from the article by Mathieu Berteloot and Veronique Patteeuw, ‘OMA’s Collages’, 66-73.

⁷¹⁰ Berteloot and Patteeuw mention several other examples, albeit not the Byzantium and the Villa Dall’Ava. Ibid. Three facades of the Byzantium, featured on OMA’s website, are apparently collages: <https://oma.eu/projects/byzantium>. Accessed 31 December 2019. The collaged facades of the Villa Dall’Ava are held by the Architecture Collection of the Centre Pompidou.

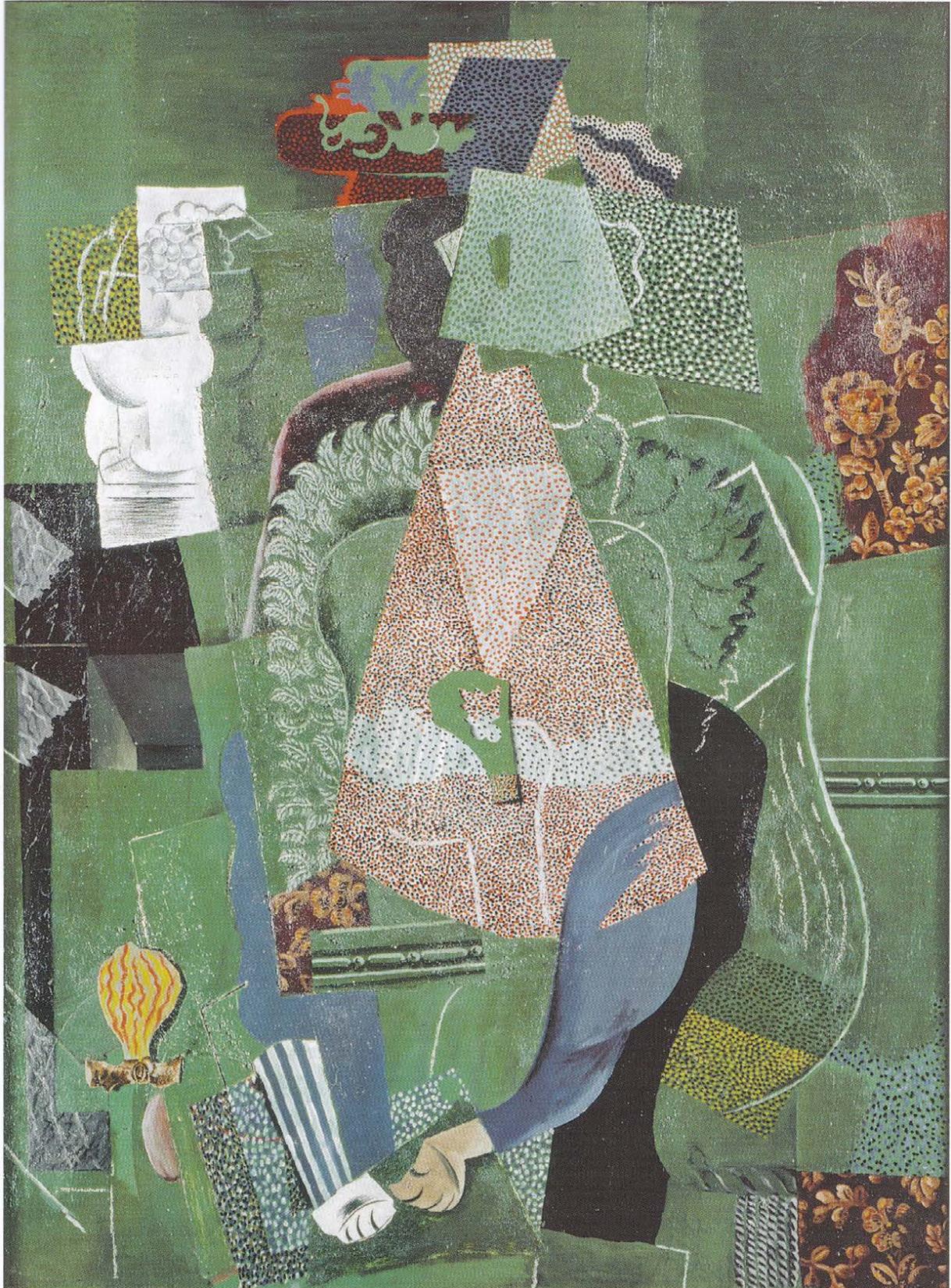


Figure 4. Pablo Picasso, *Portrait of a Young Girl*, 1914.

Kunsthal resembles one of those paintings by Picasso that *imitate* collages. [Figure 4] Like the collage, its painted imitation allows to epitomize a multitude of antagonistic realities without truly committing to any of them. The Kunsthal, as Picasso's painted collages, evinces a taste for incompatibilities, using the formal and referential structure of the collage as a means to recall, to oppose, to reflect, to question, to undermine.

Galic wars

Koolhaas has repeatedly described his design strategies as well as those of other architects in military terms – as a military campaign, a blitzkrieg, a carpet bombardment, a stealth, a strategic weapon, a battle, a war.⁷¹¹ In the lexicon of *S,M,L,XL* the entry at 'war' reads: 'War is the affair that decides the future of the country. Thus, if you wish to win the war, do not start war until you are confident of winning.'⁷¹² The impulse to prevail, in the field of architecture – to prevail through distinction in the Bourdieuan sense – might be one of the strongest and most persistent influences on Koolhaas' strategic choices. His often observed and avowed obsession to oppose has its place here. The study of these dynamics of distinction has been one of the guiding themes of this account, and a consideration of this kind may have the 'last word' in the exegesis of the Kunsthal and the issue of fragmentation.

In his *Galic Wars*, Julius Caesar reports that the Helvetic tribes in order to magnify the determination to conquer the Gaul territory, set fire to all their towns and villages, so that 'after destroying the hope of a return home, they might be the more ready for undergoing all dangers.'⁷¹³ Koolhaas, with the Kunsthal, set a smouldering fire to the ground on which OMA was standing and which had nourished the best of its work for more than a decade: the advocacy of modernism as a position; the modernist tradition as a frame of reference made thematic; formal fragmentation as a way to breathe life into its

⁷¹¹ Mentions in the context of architecture and urbanism: 'military campaign': Cervelló, 'I've always been anxious', 80; 'bombardments of speculation', Koolhaas, 'The Terrifying Beauty of the Twentieth Century', 155; 'Blitzkrieg': Van Dijk, 'De architect is verplicht', 18; 'theoretical carpet bombardment', Koolhaas, 'Atlanta' (*S,M,L,XL*), 850; 'strijd', De Kooning, 'De economie van de verbeelding', n.p./ 'battle': Gerrewey, *A Critical Reader*, 112. 'War': Rem Koolhaas, 'Singapore Songlines', in: Idem, Mau: *S,M,L,XL*, 1035; "stealth": Idem, 'The Generic City', 1262; 'strategic weapon': Idem, 'The Generic City', 1264.

⁷¹² *S,M,L,XL*, 1282. The entry is indicated as a quote from: Sonchi, *Theory of War*; Ibid., 1299.

⁷¹³ Julius Caesar, *The Gallic Wars* (Merchant Books, 2012), 7.

odds and ends, to create built visions of metropolitan activity, to suffuse OMA's work with irony, criticality and subversion, and, ultimately, to stress architecture's potential to dispose of an intellectual dimension. The reasoning of the Kunsthal, in all its kaleidoscopic ambiguity, exposes what Koolhaas identified as the moribund core of postmodern and deconstructivist architecture as well as of OMA's own: the slavish reproduction of a fragmented world and its eventual submission to history – as if to mobilize the forces of desperation for OMA's exodus from this double confinement to the large scale and the conquest of the whole, making sure that there would be no place to return.

In December 1992, one month after the opening of the Kunsthal, according to his own account, Koolhaas began to write *S,M,L,XL*, after having been 'thinking about it long before.'⁷¹⁴ Only in the years that followed, it became fully apparent that Koolhaas and OMA were leaving their supposed homelands. The Kunsthal 'knew' of the departure, and this knowledge is inscribed in its architecture. It is the knowledge of the form's ideological basis being eroded; of depending on forms borrowed from the past; of sharing this dependence both with postmodernist and deconstructivist architecture; and, self-critically exposing this dependence, of such a position being obsolete and eventually untenable. The obliqueness (and fragmentation) of the Kunsthal has nothing to do with the surplus of forces and the optimistic dynamism of constructivist architecture; rather it suggests collapse.

In this sense, the Kunsthal appears as a work of destruction. Its actual 'concern' is not to judge past failures or achievements, be it of modernist architecture, of postmodernist or deconstructivist architecture, or the work so far accomplished by OMA; its actual concern is the architectural production of tomorrow. The Kunsthal, as a work of destruction, is about the dependence *of the present* on a bygone era of modernist architecture and its ideological foundations. Implicitly it demands a departure.

⁷¹⁴ 'In a certain sense our work on *S,M,L,XL* was both long-term and short-term. I say short-term because I only began in December 1992. The book was finished in 1993, but we were thinking about it long before, also with Bruce Mau.' Graafland, De Haan, 'A Conversation with Rem Koolhaas', 220-221.

In the subsequent work of OMA, the issue of nostalgia – nostalgia of the 1920s, 1930s, 1950s, and 1960s – would hardly ever be raised again. Even the two projects closest to the Kunsthal, the Media Centre in Karlsruhe and the Congrexpo in Lille, do not stress their dependence on modernist precedents. Despite their adherence to formal fragmentation, both projects bespeak the search for the new, eschewing the postmodern feel of quotation and pastiche as much as the deconstructivist gestures of collision and collapse. The same applies to almost any project of OMA *after* the Kunsthal Koolhaas has been responsible for to this day: from the Nexus Housing, the Agadir Convention Centre, the Educatorium, and the Jussieu Libraries to the libraries in Seattle (1999-2004) and Qatar (2008-17), the CCTV Headquarters in Beijing (2002-12) and the Performing Arts Centre in Taipei (2009-).

This ‘after’ may explain the extraordinary wealth of ideas concentrated in the Kunsthal. Perhaps Koolhaas, at some point, had a presentiment that the Kunsthal would be something like the ‘last of its kind’: an architecture marked by the reflection of its own modernist past; perhaps, at the eve of OMA’s departure, Koolhaas pushed to the extreme this sort of reflectivity, accumulating and interweaving more quotes, pastiches, transformations, violations of modernist precedents, than ever before. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that the formal condition of this sort of congestion – fragmentation – is at the very heart of Koolhaas’ argument on postmodern and deconstructivist architecture and thus a theme in itself. Exaggeration, it appears, became the means to stress this particular issue. There are other possible explanations, of course: the wish, after having lost the competition for the NAI, to transfer to the Kunsthal as many ideas as possible; the collaboration of Fuminori Hoshino who, fearlessly, never ceased to try out new ideas.

Caesar reports that during the fierce battle lasting an entire day, not a single enemy took flight, and according to Plutarch even the women and children fought back until death. But the Helvetic tribes were defeated by the Roman troops all the same, and Caesar forced them to return to their devastated homelands. By contrast, the ‘exodus’ of OMA was to last. Sanford Kwinter wrote in 1996: ‘Among architects [...] Koolhaas is the true American, for he is the only one to have attempted to engage the

absolute and pure future.’⁷¹⁵ During the 1990s, OMA *did* conquer the new territory marked out by the revised agenda of ‘metropolitan congestion’, while keeping a set of essential themes and ideas: the re-invention of internalized collective space; the methodical exploitation of heterogeneous programmes in the service of dense and intense experience; the interest in the (surrealist) creativity of the unconscious and the destabilizing loss of control; the creation of hybrid structures and heterogeneous interiors that picture, perhaps inspire the envisioned dynamics of programme and use.

The Seattle Central Library is a prime example of the internalized urbanity proposed in ‘Bigness’. The uniform meshes of its homogeneous skin neither reflect the diversity of the 38.000-square-metres programme nor the variety of the interior: the spectacular, square-like platforms and grandiose inner vistas; the glossy red ‘inner organs’ and toy-bright yellow escalators; the both tilted and vertical, somewhat improvised looking columns. ‘In more than thirty years of writing about architecture’, Herbert Muschamp found in 2004, ‘this is the most exciting new building it has been my honor to review.’⁷¹⁶ With 473.000 square metres floor surface, the CCTV Headquarters in Beijing is OMA’s most emphatic demonstration of the large scale building as the embodiment of the (new) whole and the collective to date.⁷¹⁷ The seeming arbitrariness of the Seattle Library’s columns migrated into the loosely knit exoskeleton of the facades, and whereas the building in Seattle does reveal much of its varied interior structure at night, the skin of the headquarters, like that of any big skyscraper, transforms into a – sublimely – incomprehensible binary code of lit and unlit squares. For Roberto Gargiani the CCTV Headquarters, next to a series of other projects from this period, represents the apotheosis of what Koolhaas has been striving for throughout his career as an architect: *merveilles* – projects that stun and surprise, taking recourse to a repertoire of surrealist techniques and imagery.⁷¹⁸ Surely OMA’s

⁷¹⁵ Sanford Kwinter, ‘Flying the Bullet, or when did the Future Begin?’, in: Idem (ed.), *Rem Koolhaas: Conversations with Students* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), 75.

⁷¹⁶ Herbert Muschamp, ‘The Library that puts on Fishnets and Hits the Disco’, *The New York Times*, 16 May 2004.

⁷¹⁷ In *Content* OMA explains: ‘In China, money does not have the last word (yet). There is a conceptual space that could accommodate the construction of CCTV as a whole – a single entity in which all parts are housed permanently – aware of each others [sic] presence. A collective.’ Editorial staff, ‘CCTV’, in: AMOMA/Koolhaas, 486. The narrator – Koolhaas? – of the subsequent paragraph reports: ‘There was surprise at my reading of the building as a collective, a word with complex associations.’ Ibid., 487. The cantilevering corner is being described as ‘a canopy that symbolically embraces the entire population’. Ibid., 489.

⁷¹⁸ Gargiani, *The Construction of Merveilles*, 309-320.

projects from the 2000s and 2010s haven't been largely identified – often dismissively, in part approvingly – with phenomena to which the present as much as the future seemed to belong: globalisation, consumerism, recent capitalism, post-criticality, managerial pragmatism, research based design, iconic architecture.⁷¹⁹

One can only speculate how Adorno, whose notion of Right Consciousness opened this study, would have thought of these buildings. That for him true art, and true architecture, in as much as participating in the sphere of aesthetics, would oppose the rule of capitalism and consumerist culture by definition, is beyond doubt. Neither does it appear likely that the 'defeat' of socialism would have changed his mind. But it might have met Adorno's idea of Right Consciousness to go beyond the 'certainties' of fragmentation, the quote, the pastiche and the display of modernist references after the experiences of postmodernist and deconstructivist architecture. Adorno contested the idea that the wholesale rejection of affirmation was something art could blindly rely on. Against Herbert Marcuse's criticism of the affirmative character of culture, he objected: 'Affirmation does not glorify what exists; it opposes death, the telos of all rule, in sympathy with what is.'⁷²⁰ Affirmation pays tribute to the '*faits sociaux*' in which for Adorno all art is rooted due to its partly mimetic nature. Only the other, autonomous half of art critically transcends the status quo.⁷²¹

In the architectural oeuvre of Rem Koolhaas, an essential means of such transcendence appears to be some kind of formal fragmentation – manifest at the Kunsthall, internalized at the Seattle Library, subtle at the CCTV Headquarters, confined to the loose, 'dangling' ends of its exoskeletal structure. The

⁷¹⁹ For example: Robert E. Somol, Sarah Whiting, 'Notes around the Doppler Effect and Other Essays', *Perspecta* 33 (2002), 72-77. Michael Speaks, 'Design Intelligence Part 1: Introduction' *A+U* (Dec 2002), 10-18. Reinhold Martin, 'Shopping in Silence at IIT', *Architecture and Ideas*, no. 3.2 (Jul 2001), 4-39; Joan Ockman, 'The ¥€\$ Man: Can Rem Koolhaas Make Consumerism Safe for Intellectuals?', *Architecture* 2 (2002), 77-79; Dunham-Jones, 'Irrational Exuberance', 150-169; Andrew Kovacs, 'Business Plan Theory', *Clog*: Rem (2014), 48-49; Wilfried Wang, 'Drawing together the different perspectives of the Seattle Central Library', in: Conroy Dalton, Hölscher, *Take one Building*, 208-209; Mallgrave, Goodman, *An Introduction to Architectural Theory* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 177-179, 192-193. Eisenman, 'Strategies of the Void', 207-208.

⁷²⁰ Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, 374 (author trans.).

⁷²¹ Adorno uses the phrase of the 'Double Character' of art to denote its limited autonomy. 'The Double Character of Art: the one of autonomy and *fait social* always betrays itself anew in substantial dependencies and conflicts of both spheres.' *Ibid.*, 340 (author trans.).

European flag proposed by AMO in 2001 is another example. Merging the colours of the single nations into a ‘barcode’, the proposal seems to curry favour with the logic of universal commodification, as if to signal Europe’s recent rapprochement to the American and Asian models of capitalism: the multi-coloured barcode appears like a flag in fragments. In *Content*, Koolhaas and Reinier de Graaf explain: ‘Instead of suggesting an unwanted homogeneity, Europe should insist on the richness of its persistent diversity ...’.⁷²² The idea was more than a whim. Re-proposed in 2005 and 2006, OMA’s current website classifies the work on Europe’s corporate identity – ‘The [barcoded] Image of Europe’ – as an ongoing project.⁷²³

Does the Kunsthal inaugurate this new Europe? Koolhaas seems to think so.⁷²⁴ During a masterclass on 2 November 2017, he explained: ‘it really is extremely important to understand this building [the Kunsthal] as a manifesto for a new Europe. And in that sense, I really was tangibly and physically inspired, almost, to try to find an architecture, also a new architecture, that would do justice to a new Europe.’ The internalized street and compactness of the building do indeed anticipate two strategies that were key to OMA’s work from the 1990s onwards. But the almost violent stress on openness, the self-assured display of fragmentation, the air of improvisation, spontaneity, imperfection, unruliness: all this seems much closer in spirit to the pleasures of a 1980s cross cultural dystopia than to the rather obliging looks of OMA’s more recent icons. If, however, the Kunsthal does offer a *fin de siècle* image of what Adorno called Right Consciousness, its mimetic-critical accuracy and scope – driven both by *dégoût* and a desire for distinction – may have no equal in the recent history of architecture.

⁷²² AMOMA/Koolhaas, *Content*, 383.

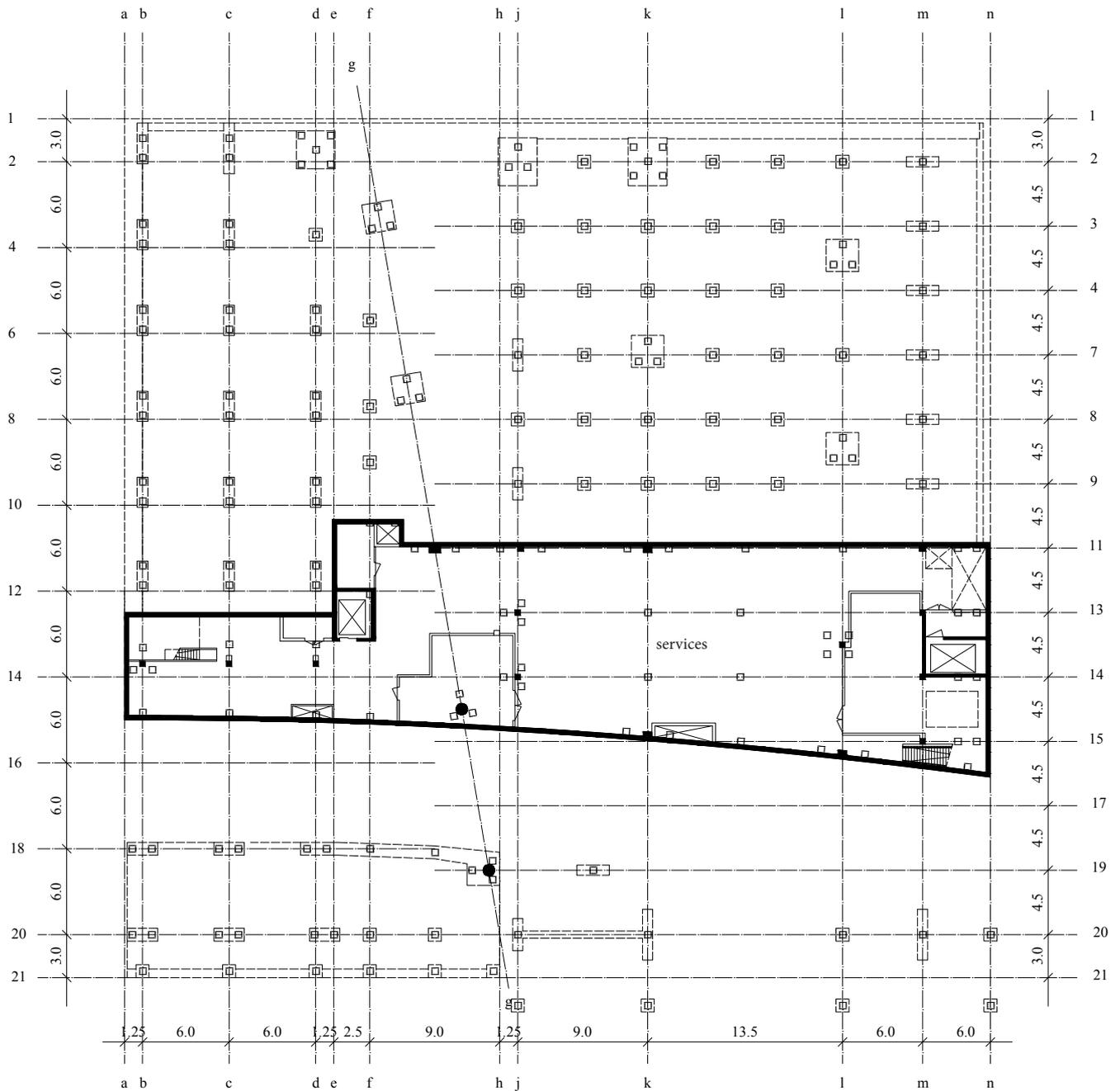
⁷²³ <https://oma.eu/projects/the-image-of-europe>. Accessed 9 July 2020.

⁷²⁴ Kunsthal Rotterdam, ‘Masterclass Rem Koolhaas’, 2 November 2017. The masterclass was held in the Kunsthal at the occasion of the building’s 25th anniversary. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CvJBqgGvq9c>. Accessed 11 July 2020.

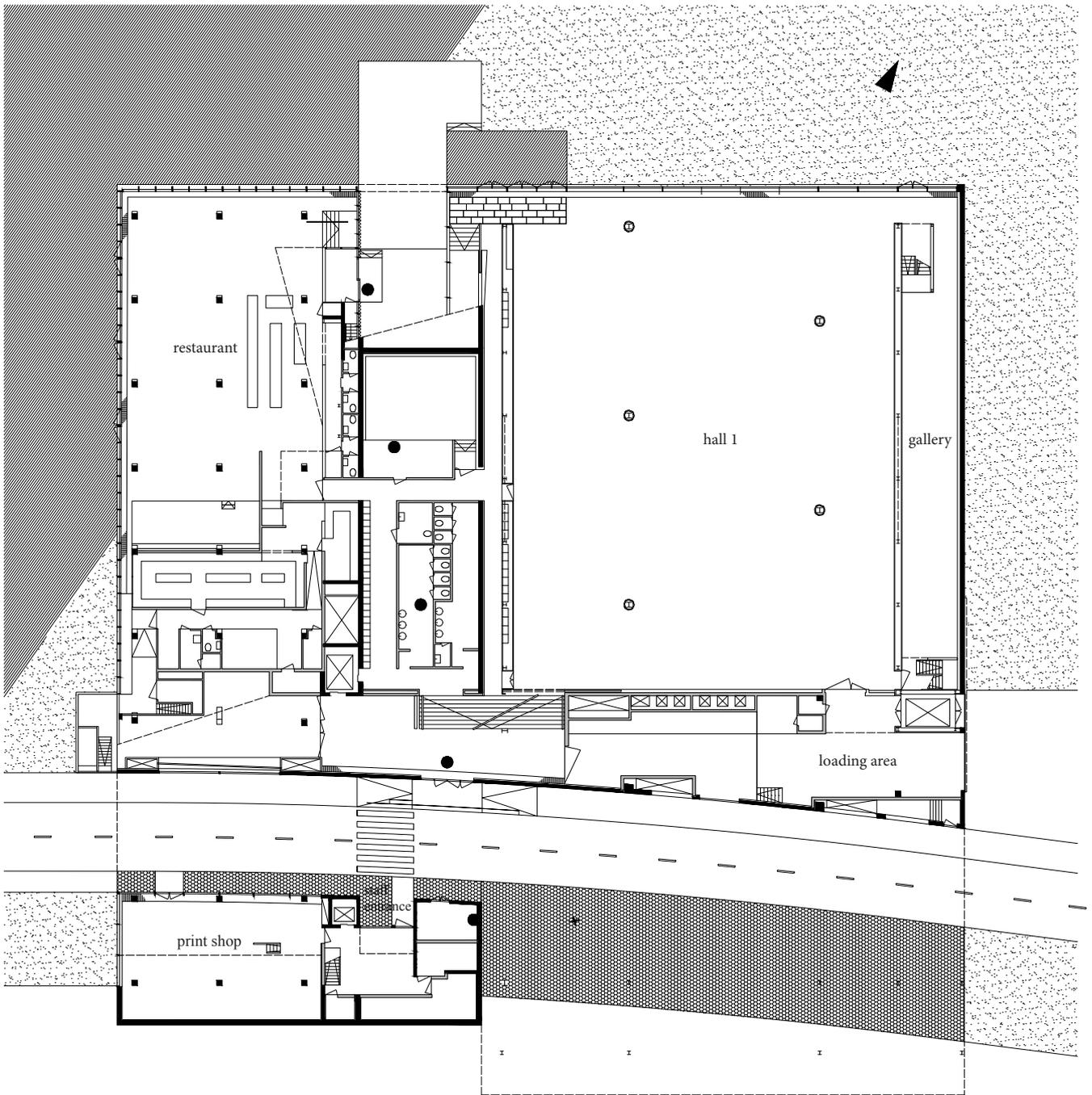
Appendix

Floorplans, sections, and elevations

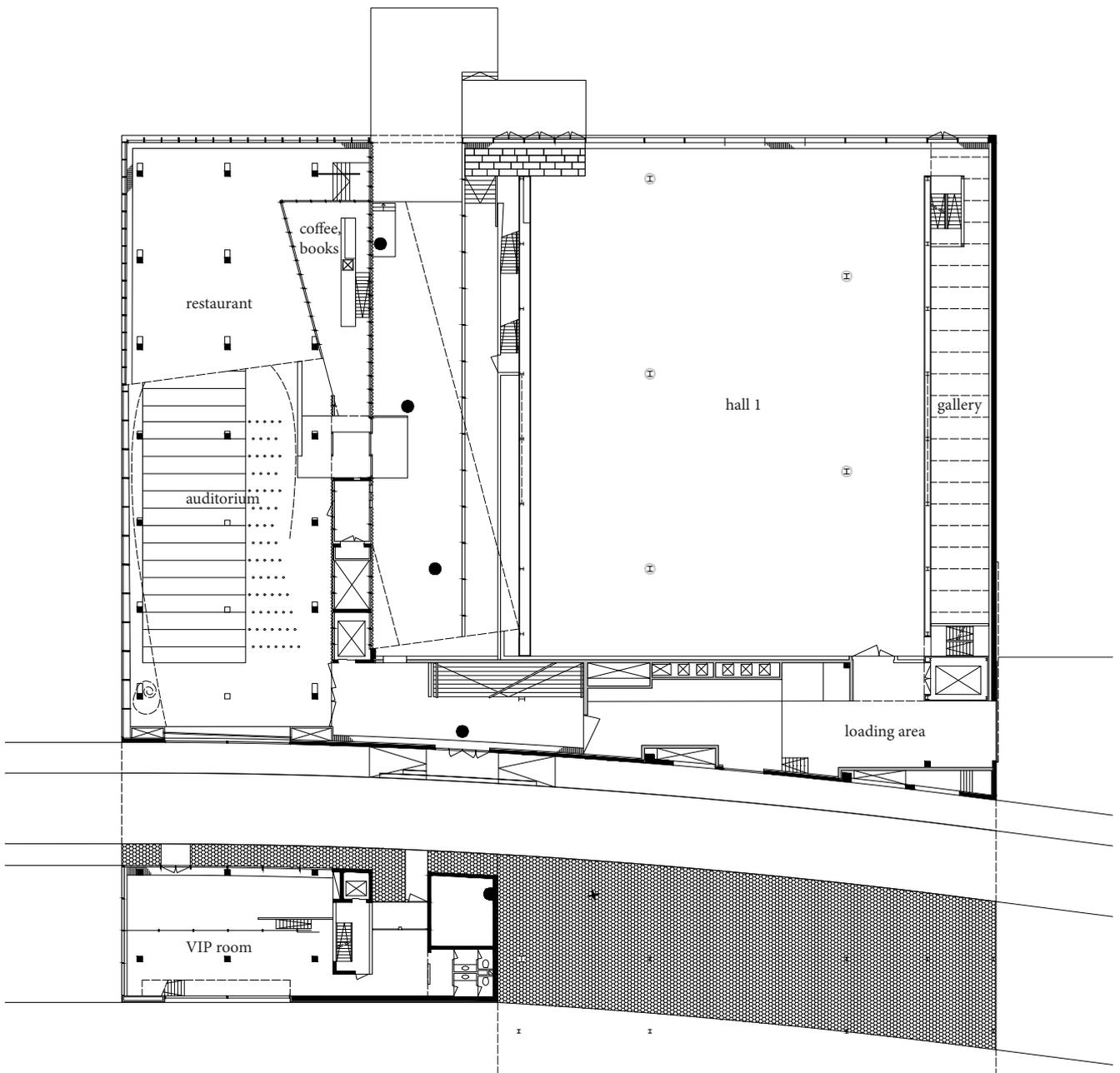
The subsequent drawings are the work of student assistants Romain Barth and Alice Biber. The drawings aim at showing the building as completed in late 1992. They are based on multiple, often contradictory sources: next to the evidence of the building itself, as-built plans by the municipality, publication plans and technical drawings by OMA, structural plans by Ove Arup, drawings by manufacturers, photographs of the building during construction and the first years after its completion. The drawings are the preliminary result of an ongoing comparative study.



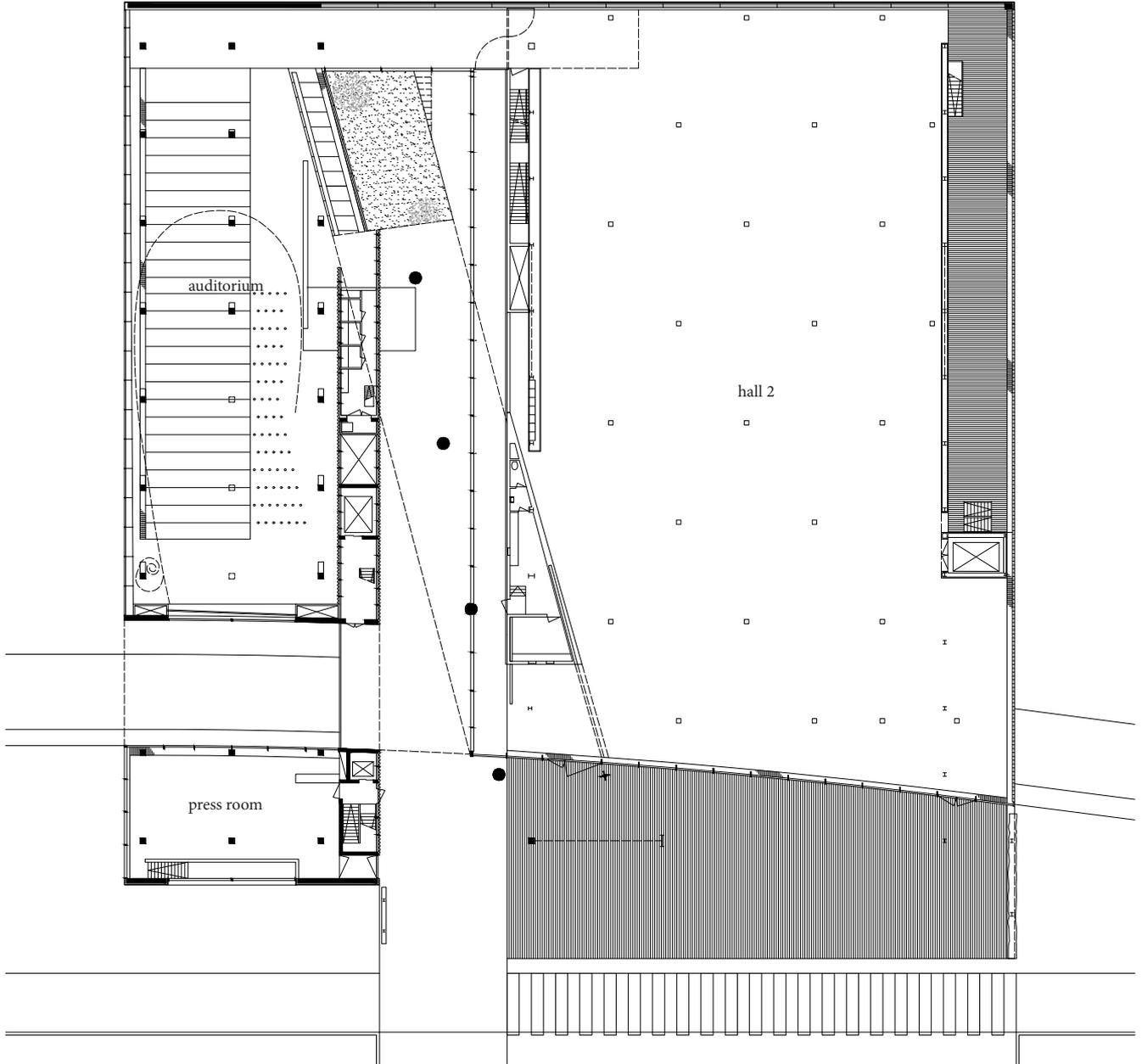
Basement and foundations. 1:400.



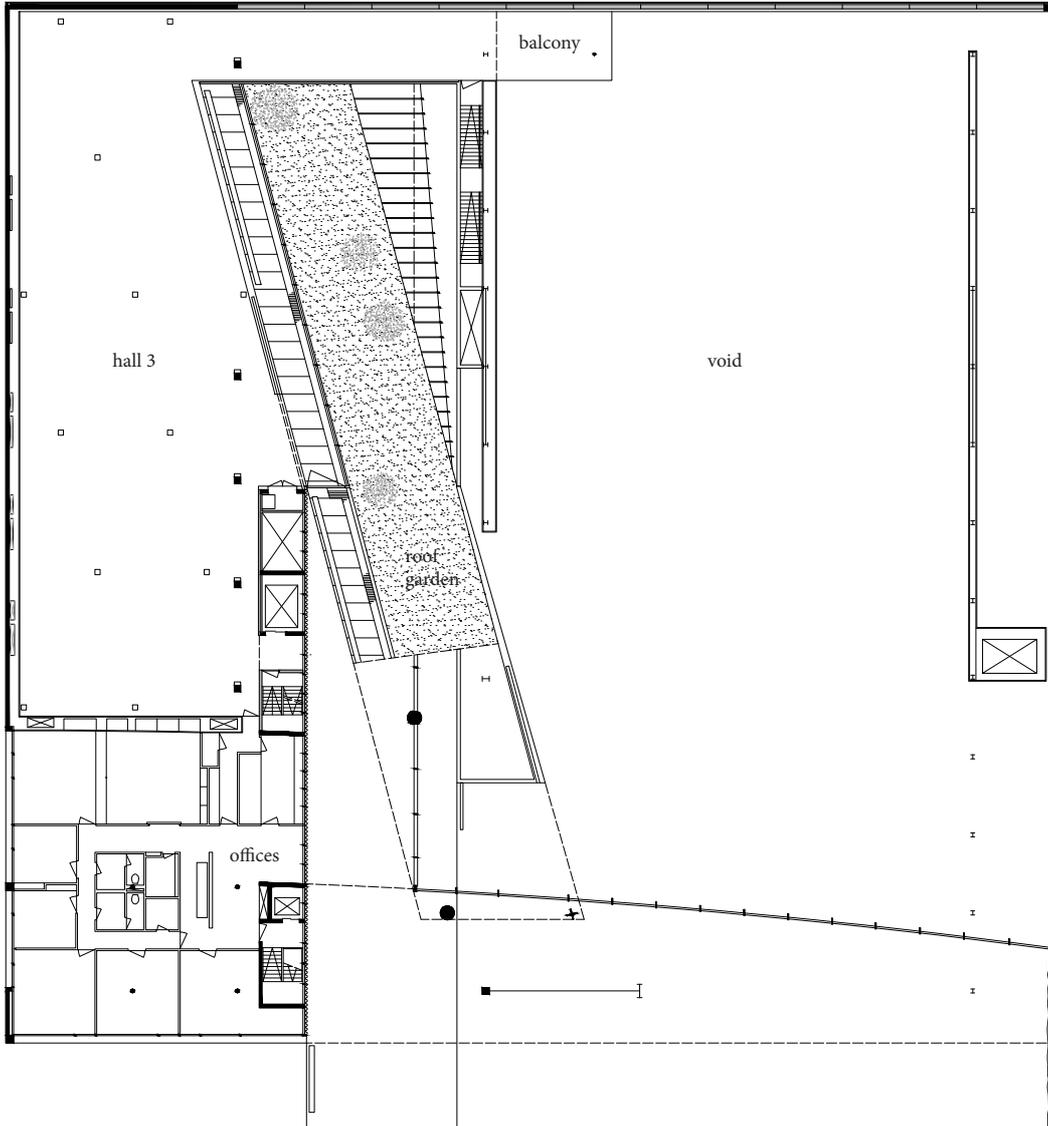
Park level. 1:400.



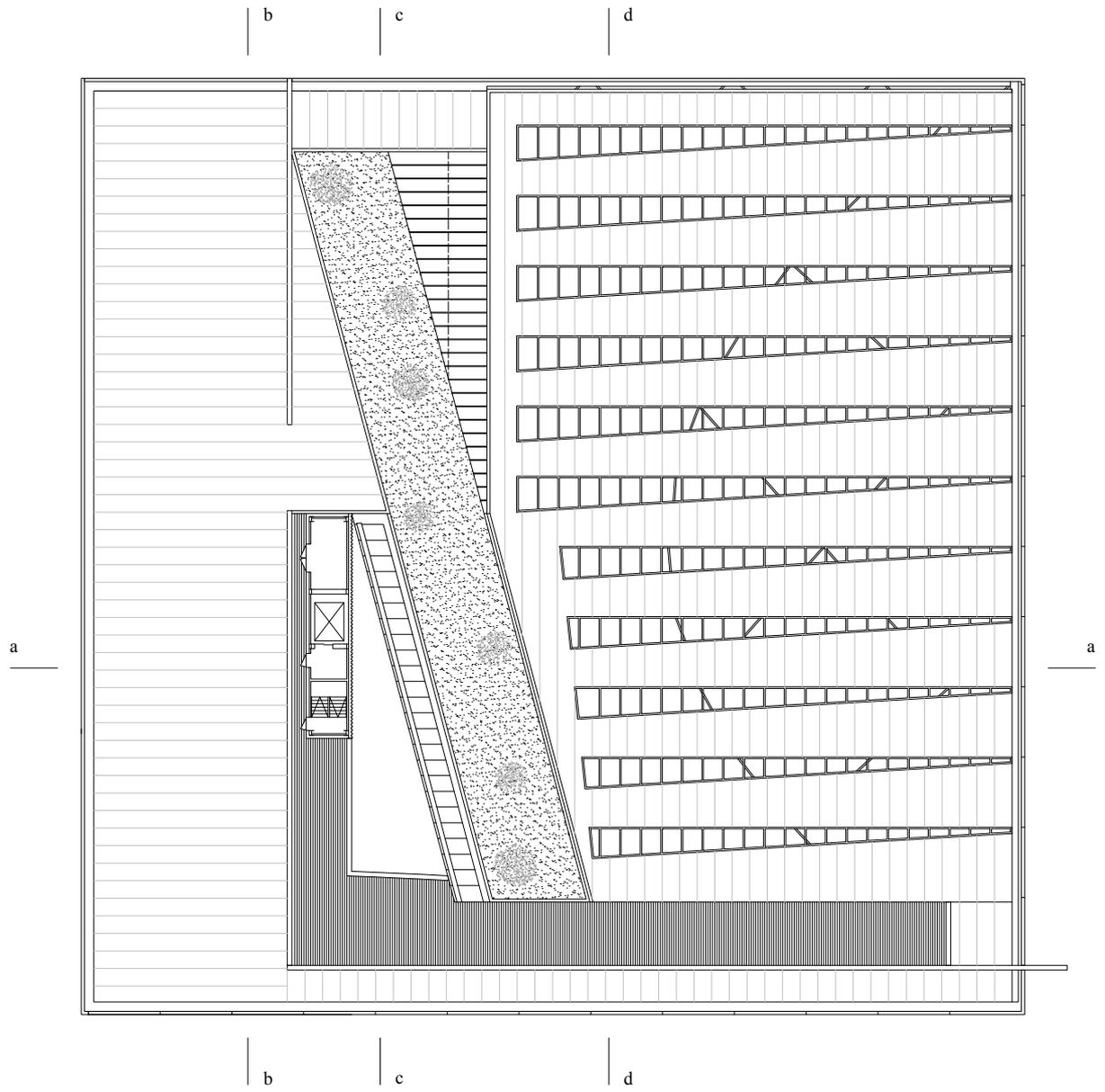
Level main entrance. 1:400.



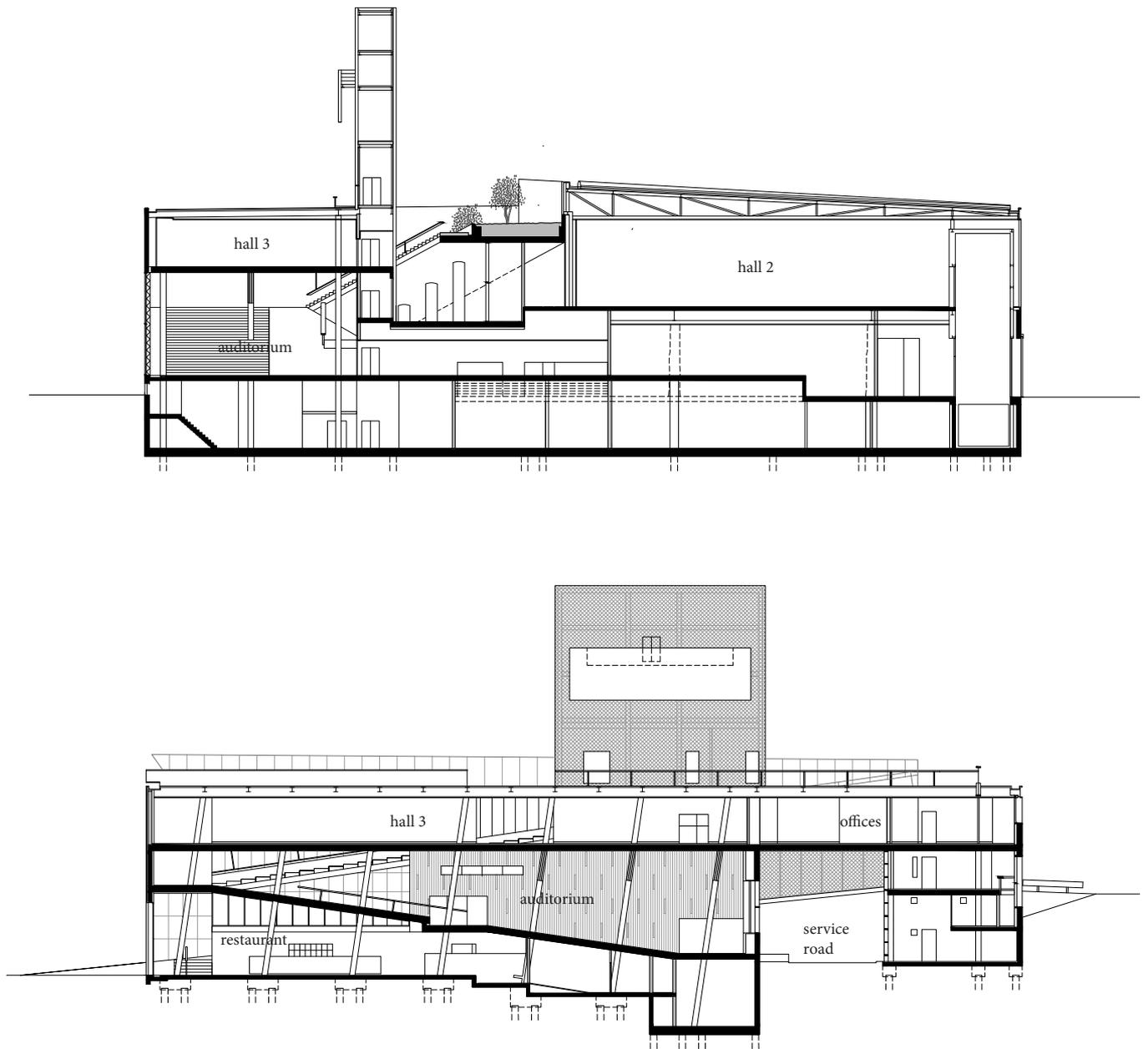
Dyke level. 1:400.



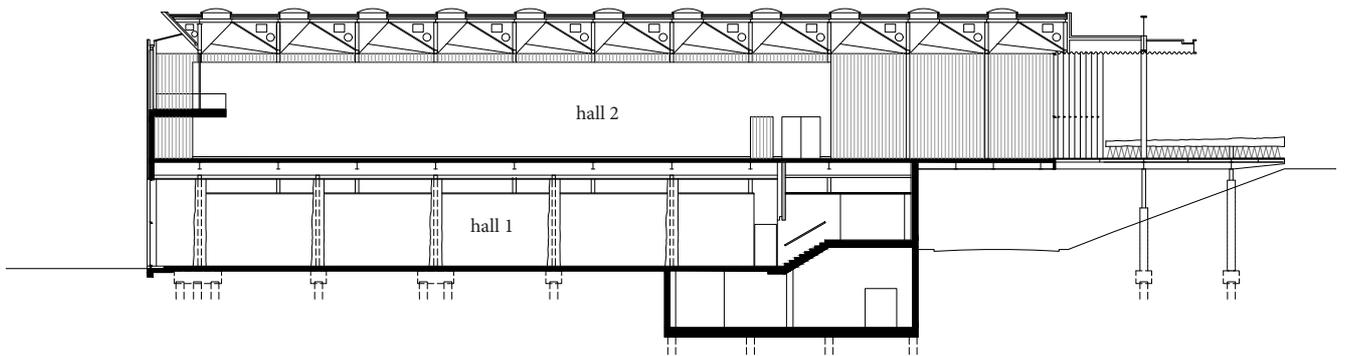
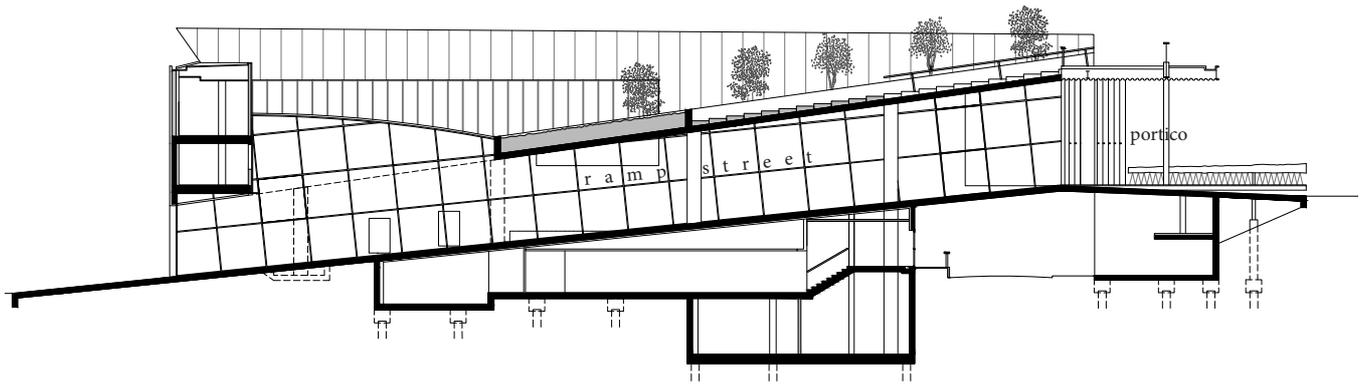
Level Hall 3. 1:400.



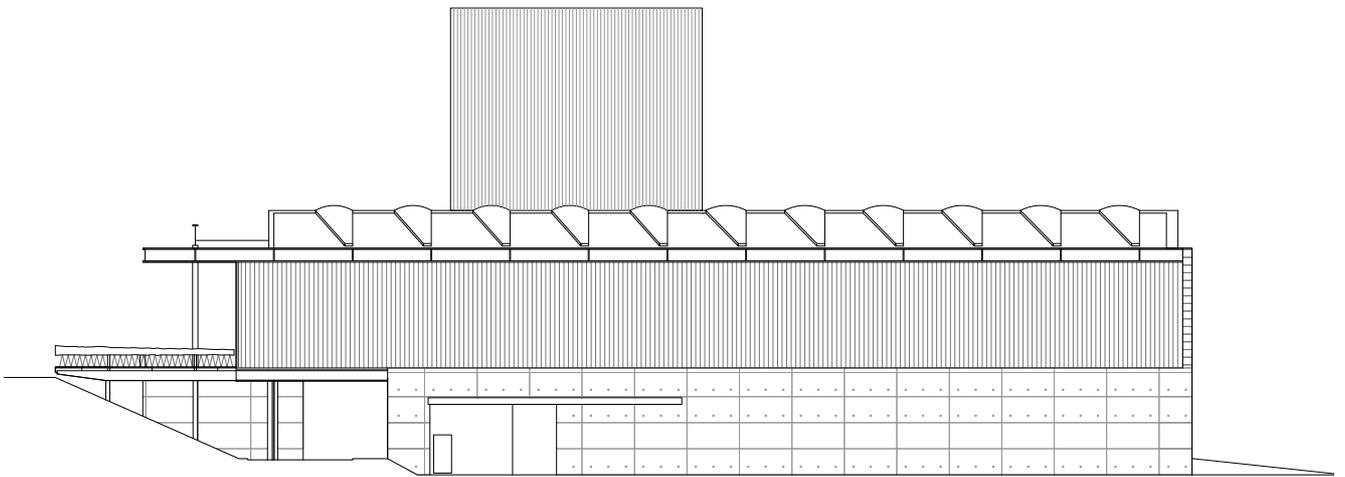
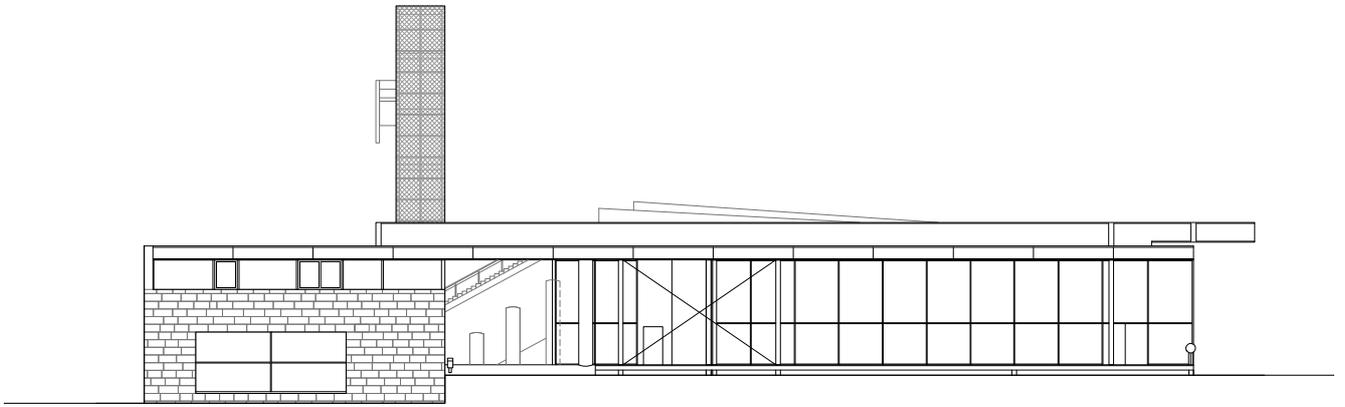
Roof level. 1:400.



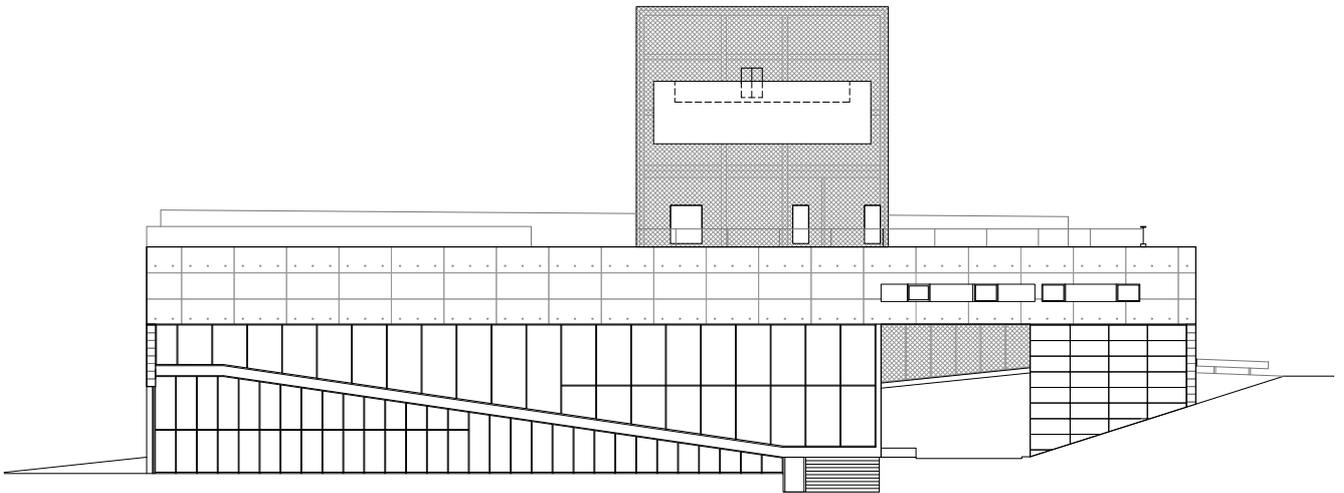
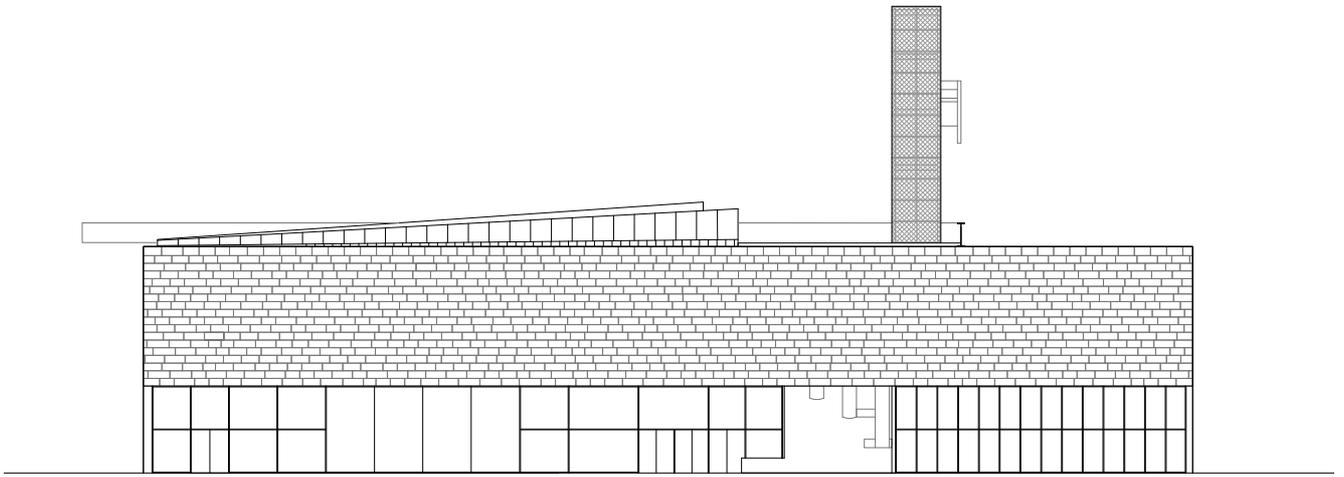
Sections a, b. 1:400.



Sections c, d. 1:400.



South and east elevation. 1:400.



North and west elevation. 1:400.

Archival Sources

Arup London Archives, London

Het Nieuwe Instituut (HNI), OMAR Archives, Rotterdam

Inside Outside, Petra Blaisse, Amsterdam

OMA, Archive Collection, Rotterdam

Stadsarchief Rotterdam, Rotterdam

Stadsontwikkeling Rotterdam, Rotterdam

Interviews and correspondence

Toni Adam: Project manager of the Kunsthal at OMA between 1989 and 1991. Conversation with the author on 25 September 2018, Rotterdam.

Petra Blaisse: Collaborated on the interior of the Kunsthal and largely responsible for the implementation of the Museum Park between 1989 and 1996. Conversation with the author on 24 September 2018, Amsterdam.

Dominique Boudet, client and current occupant of the Villa Dall'Ava. Conversation with the author on 31 July 2016, Paris.

Kees Christiaanse: Collaborator at OMA between 1980 and 1983. Partner between 1983 and 1989. Conversation with the author on 14 April 2020 on Zoom.

Mike Guyer: Collaborator at OMA between 1984 and 1987. Conversation with the author on 21 May 2020 on Skype.

Koos Hage: Representative of Rotterdam's Department for Urban Development in charge of the Kunsthal and the Museum Park. Conversation with the author on 28 July 2020, Rotterdam.

Fuminori Hoshino: Design architect of the Kunsthal at OMA between 1988 and 1992. Conversations with the author on 25 July and the first of August 2017, 25 September 2018, Rotterdam.

Gregor Mescherowsky: Project manager and design architect of the Kunsthal between 1987 and 1988. Emails to the author, 22 October 2018, 19 December 2018, 27 August 2019.

Wim van Krimpen: Interim director and first director of the Kunsthal between 1988 and 2000. Conversation with the author on 28 July 2020, Amsterdam.

Selected bibliography

Texts by OMA/Rem Koolhaas

- Koolhaas, Rem and Zenghelis, Elia, 'Exodus or The Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture', *Casabella* 378 (1973), 42-45.
- and Oorthuys, Gerrit, 'Ivan Leonidov's Narkomtiashprom', *Oppositions* 2 (1974), 95-103.
- , *Delirious New York. A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan* (New York: Oxford University Press), 1978.
- and Zenghelis, Elia, 'Our "New Sobriety"', in: Portoghesi, Paolo (ed.), *The Presence of the Past. La Biennale di Venezia 1980, architectural section* (London: Academy Editions, 1980), 214, 216.
- , 'Urban Intervention: Dutch Parliament Extension, The Hague', *International Architect* vol. 1 (1980), 47-50.
- , 'La splendeur terrifiante du xx^e siècle', *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, 238 (Apr 1985), 15.
- , 'Imaginer le néant', *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, 238 (Apr 1985), 38.
- , 'Eloge du terrain vague', *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, 238 (Apr 1985), 46.
- , 'Architecture: pour qui? Pourquoi?', *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, 238 (Apr 1985), 71.
- , 'Maaskantprijs voor Koolhaas. De wereld is rijp voor de architect als visionair.', *Archis* 8 (Aug 1986).
- , Lecture held at Delft University on 10 April 1987; in: *Indesem 87. International Design Seminar, April 6-10th, University of Technology Delft* (Delft: Delft University Press, 1988), 202-215.
- , 'Sixteen Years of OMA', *A+U* 217, (Oct 1988), 16-17.
- , 'La Ville Radieuse', in: *Sulle tracce di Le Corbusier* (Venice: Arsenale Editrice, 1989), 164-175.
- , 'Hoe modern is de Nederlandse architectuur?', in: Leupen, Bernard et al. (eds.), *Hoe modern is de Nederlandse architectuur?* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1990), 11-20.
- , 'The End of the Age of Innocence?', in: Lucan, Jacques (ed.), *Rem Koolhaas – OMA* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1991), 164-165.
- , 'Atlanta', *Quaderns* 1 (1990), 104-113.
- , 'Das Atlanta Experiment', *ARCH+* 105/106 (Oct 1990), 73-75.
- , 'Precarious Entity', in: Davidson, Cynthia (ed.), *Anyone* (New York: Rizzoli, 1991), 148-155.
- , 'Massakrierte Ideen', open letter to the jury of the Potsdamer Platz competition, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 16 October 1991.
- , 'Urban Operations', *Columbia Documents of Architecture and Theory*, vol. 3 (1993), 25-57.
- and Mau, Bruce, *S,M,L,XL* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1995).

—, 'Junkspace', in: Chung, Chuihua Judy et al. (eds.), *Harvard Guide to Shopping* (Cologne: Taschen, 2001), 408-421.

— and AMOMA, *Content* (Cologne: Taschen, 2004).

— and Wescott, James et al., *Elements of architecture*, 15 vols. (Venice: Marsilio, 2014).

— and AMO, *Countryside. A report* (Cologne: Taschen, 2020).

The Kunsthal, the Museum Park, and the NAI

Andela, Gerrie, 'Internationale ontwerpteams presenteren plannen voor het Land van Hoboken', *wonen-TA/BK* 19-20 (1985), 4-6.

ARCH+ (editorial staff), 'Kunsthalle Rotterdam', *ARCH +* 117 (1993), 50-53.

Arroyo, Eduardo, 'Do Nomads Dream?', *a+t* 2 (Oct 1993), 18-36.

Artschwager, Richard et al., *Beelden in de Stad/ Sculpture in the City* (Utrecht: Veen/Reflex, 1988).

Barbieri, Umberto, 'Due progetti per l'Istituto di Architettura olandese', *Domus* 707 (1989), 43-49.

Bekaert, Geert, 'De Nederlandse architectuur in quarantaine?', *NRC Handelsblad*, Friday 26 August 1988.

—, 'Een Versailles voor de Nederlandse architectuur. Het Nederlands Architectuurinstituut door Jo Coenen', *Archis* 10 (1993), 17-26.

Balmond, Cecil, 'Kunsthal', in: Idem, *Informal* (Munich: Prestel, 2002), 57-107

Blaisse, Petra, 'A personal impression', in: Jacques, Michel (ed.), *Yves Brunier. Landscape architect* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1996), 19-24.

Brouwers, Ruud and Colenbrander, Bernard et al., *Six designs for the Dutch Architectural Institute*, catalogue of the exhibition (Rotterdam: Dutch Architectural Institute, 1988).

Brunier, Yves, 'Museum Park Rotterdam', *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* 262 (April 1989), 100-103.

Comerci, Jacob, 'The Robot of Kunsthal I', *Log* 36 (2016), 63-67.

Davidson, Cynthia, 'Koolhaas and the Kunsthal: History Lesions', *ANY* 21 (1997), 36-41.

de Haan, Hilde and Haagsma, Ids, 'Koolhaas verbindt banaliteit en chic in briljant ontwerp', *De Volkskrant*, 17 September, 1992.

Doutriaux, Emmanuel, 'Le Kunsthal de Rotterdam', *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, 285 (1993), 6-14.

Figueiredo, Sergio M., *The NAI Effect. Creating Architecture Culture* (Rotterdam: NAI010, 2016).

Fillion, Odile, 'A conversation with Koolhaas', in: Jacques, Michel (ed.), *Yves Brunier. Landscape architect* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1996), 89-90.

- Fraser, Murray, 'Kunsthal, Rotterdam, The Netherlands (1992)', in: Idem (general ed.), *Global History of Architecture* vol. 2 (London: Bloomsbury, 2019).
- Frampton, Kenneth, 'Kunsthal a Rotterdam', *Domus* 747 (1993), 38-47.
- Gargiani, Roberto, 'The Pliable Surface', in: Mallgrave, Harry Francis (general ed.), *The Companions to the History of Architecture* (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 2017), vol. IV, 653-660.
- Geers, Keersten, 'Showing Everything. Netherlands Architecture Institute', in: Van Gerrewey, Christophe and Patteeuw, Véronique, *OMA. The First Decade – OASE #94* (Rotterdam: nai010, 2015), 104-106.
- Giovannini, Joseph, 'Kunsthal Rotterdam, Netherlands Office for Metropolitan Architecture', *Architecture* (Sep 1993), 86-89.
- Groenendijk, Paul, 'Muziek en dans aan het Spui', *architectuur/bouwen* 3 (1987), 53-56.
- and Molendijk, Arjen, 'Museumpark krijgt na vijftig jaar gestalte. De geschiedenis van de lokatie van het Architectuurinstituut', *architectuur/bouwen* 6/7 (1988), 50-52.
- Guinée, Anja, 'De spanning tussen kunst en openbaarheid in het Museumpark' *Blauwe kamer* 5 (1993), 18-21.
- Hoshino, Fuminori, 'Kunsthal', *Kenchiku Bunka* 579 (Jan 1995), 74-85.
- Hulsman, Bernard, 'Kunsthal lijkt wel een overdoos', *NRC Handelsblad*, 31 October 1992.
- Ibelings, Hans, 'Una macchina espositiva per la città', *Abitare* 317 (1993), 189-196.
- Kanekar, Aarati, 'Space of Montage: Movement, Assemblage, and Appropriation in Koolhaas' Kunsthal', in: Idem, *Architecture's Pretext. Spaces of Translation* (London: Routledge, 2015), 134-154.
- Koolhaas, Rem, 'New Rotterdam', in: Idem and Mau, Bruce, *S,M,L,XL* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1995), 400-429.
- , 'Life in the Box?', in: Idem and Mau, Bruce, *S,M,L,XL* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1995), 430-473.
- Kunsthal Rotterdam, *200 in 2000. Acht jaar Kunsthal Rotterdam* (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 2000), n-p.
- Leuenerberger, Theresia, *Architektur als Akteur? Zur Soziologie der Architekturerfahrung* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2018).
- Lootsma, Bart, Jan de Graaf, 'In dienst van de ervaring. KunstHAL van OMA in Rotterdam', *De Architect* 1 (1993), 19-34.
- Loriers, Marie-Christine, 'Culture oblique. KunstHAL, Rotterdam', *Techniques & Architecture* 408 (1993), 82-89.
- Maas, Tom, 'Zes plannen voor het Architectuurinstituut. De combinatie van een eenvoudig programma met grote pretentjes', *architectuur/ bouwen* 6/7 (1988), 13-17.
- MacNair, Andrew, 'Marathon. Kunsthal by OMA/Rem Koolhaas', *A+U* 287 (1994), 120-123.
- Melet, Ed, 'De perfecte wanorde. Detaillering en constructie KunstHAL', *De Architect* 1 (1993), 35-37.
- Metz, Tracy, 'Show Piece. KunstHAL, Rotterdam, the Netherlands', *Architectural Record* 3 (1993), 66-73.

- Moussette, Michel, “‘Do we need a canopy for rain?’: interior-exterior relationships in the Kunsthal”, *Architectural Research Quarterly* 3/4 (2003), 280-294.
- OMA and Koolhaas, Rem, ‘Le Kunsthal de Rotterdam’, *Architecture Mouvement Continuité* (Sep 1989), 30-33.
- , ‘Three Projects for Rotterdam’, *Quaderns* 183 (1989), 85-93.
- Pijbes, Wim, ‘New Kunsthal opened in Rotterdam’, *Museum management and curatorship* 4 (1992), 421-424.
- Riley, Terence, ‘Rem Koolhaas/OMA: Urban Constructions’, *Newsline Columbia University*, vol.5 (Sep 1992), 2.
- Rodermond, Janny, ‘Zes ontwerpen voor een architectuurinstituut’, *De Architect* 7 (1988), 29-41.
- Schneider, Sabine, ‘Kunsthalle in Rotterdam. Trägerische Transparenz’, *Baumeister* 11 (1992), 40-45.
- Schrijver, Lara, ‘The rise and fall of architecture materialised: the Netherlands Architecture Institute in Rotterdam, 1988–1992’, *Journal of Architecture* 19:1 (2014), 131-155.
- Schwartz, Ineke, ‘Kunsthal van Koolhaas heeft internationaal niveau’, *Trouw*, 31 October 1992.
- , no title, in: ‘Kunsthal Rotterdam’, *a&t ediciones* (July 1998), 4-5.
- Sudjic, Deyan, ‘The Museum as a Megastar’, *The Guardian*, 25 January 1993, A7.
- van Heuvel, Wim J., ‘Een magere meervoudige opdracht. De architectuurkeuze voor het architectuurinstituut’, *architectuur/bouwen* 6/7 (1988), 47-49.
- van Dijk, Hans, ‘Coenen, een verrassende keuze’, *Archis* 11 (1988), 7.
- , ‘Principes van metropolitane architectuur: OMA’s Kunsthal in Rotterdam’, *Archis* 1 (1993), 17-27.
- , ‘Zes architectuur op zoek naar een opdrachtgever. De ontwerpen voor het Nederlands Architectuurinstituut’, *Archis* 7 (1988), 8-9.
- Vanstiphout, Wouter, (Listen 1), *Blueprint* 331, (2013), 27.
- Vermeulen, Paul, ‘Clad in Tonalities of Light’, in: De Boer, Matthijs and Brouwers, Ruud and Van Rossem, Vincent and Hemel, Zef (eds.), *Architectuur in Nederland: Jaarboek 1992/1993* (Rotterdam: Nai Publishers, 1993), 90-91.
- Vroom, M.J. and Meeus, J.H.A., *Learning from Rotterdam. Investigating the process of urban park design* (London: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1990).
- Weeber, Carel, ‘Keuze van architecten is aanvechtbaar’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 14 January, 1988.
- John Welsh?, ‘Double Dutch’, *Building Design* (Dec 1989), 18-24.
- Wortmann, Arthur, ‘Het Rotterdamse Museumpark. Aselecte verzameling prestigeprojecten’, *Archis* 1 (1993), 29-39.

Newspaper articles related to the Kunsthal and the Museum Park

- Bingham, Tony, 'Expert witless', *Building*, 30 November 2001.
- Bockma, Harmen, 'Kunsthal valt miljoenen duurder uit', *Volkskrant*, 27 February 1993.
- Conolly, Kate, 'Rotterdam art thieves take valuable paintings in dawn heist', *The Guardian*, 16 October 2012.
- Damen, H el ene, 'Bouw Kunsthal gestart', *De Architect* (Jul/Aug 1990), 9.
- De Architect* (editorial staff), 'Henk Visch wint prijsvraag KunstHAL', *De Architect*, (Dec 1990), 27.
- Kelso, Paul, 'Architect's copycat claim pure fantasy, says judge', *The Guardian*, 3 November 2001.
- Schippers, Jo, 'Kunsthal', *Volkskrant*, 10 March 1993.
- van de Steene, Luc, 'Bouwen aan een humanere samenleving', *De Morgen*, 28 December 2001.
- Tabak, Lin, 'Rotterdam wil een eigen cultureel klimaat', *Vrij Nederland*, 5 December 1992.
- Trouw* (no author), 'Uitmarkt in Maasstad geeft opening park feestelijk tintje', *Trouw* 3 September 1993.
- Witman, Bob, 'Architecten sluiten plagiaat Koolhaas vrijwel uit', *De Volkskrant*, 8 October 1996.
- Zijlmans, Canis, 'Museumpark is nog lang niet af', *Rotterdams Dagblad*, 5 September 1994.

OMA/Rem Koolhaas, 1987-1992

- Abrams, Janet, 'Delirious Visions', *Blueprint* 44 (Feb 1988), 32-36.
- Barbieri, Umberto, 'Teatro di Danza, L'Aia', *Domus* 689 (1987), 44-55.
- Bekaert, Geert, 'The storyteller. On the work of Rem Koolhaas', in: De Backer, Carolina (ed.), *Office for Metropolitan Architecture* (Antwerp: deSingel, 1988), 3-5.
- B eret, Chantal, 'Rem Koolhaas. La condition m etropolitaine', *Art Press* 148 (June 1990), 18-22.
- Boekraad, Cees, 'De invloed van Mies van der Rohe. Gesprek met Rem Koolhaas', *Archis* 3 (1987), 28-29.
- Bollerey, Franziska, "'... immer wieder eine Mischung von Verf uhrung und Ungeniessbarkeit ins Spiel bringen.'" Ein Gespr ach mit Rem Koolhaas', *Bauwelt* 17/18 (May 1987), 627-633.
- Bosma, Koos and van Dijk, Hans, "'Ik ben nu al zeker drie jaar bezig om dat stigma van het moderne van me af te schudden, juist omdat het in Nederland zo gemakzuchtig wordt beleden.'" Interview met Rem Koolhaas', *Archis* 3 (1989), 46-51.
- Boissier e, Olivier, 'La Haye, Le Th e tre de la danse', *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* 257 (1988), 28-33.
- Buchanan, Peter, 'Nederlandse architectuur is spoor bijster. Eigen traditie is ingeruild voor trendy internationalsime', *architectuur/bouwen* 6/7 (1988), 63-67.

- Cervelló, Marta, 'I've always been anxious with the standard typology of the average architect with a *successful* career', *Quaderns* 183 (1989), 78-104.
- Hubert Damisch, 'Cadavre exquis. Théâtre nationale de danse, La Haye', *Architecture Mouvement Continuité* 18 (1987), 21-22.
- De Backer, Carolina (ed.), *Office for Metropolitan Architecture*, exhibition catalogue (Antwerp: deSingel, 1988).
- De Kooning, Mil, 'OMA in Nederland. Rem Koolhaas in gesprek', *Vlees & Beton* 12 (1989), n.p.
- Dietsch, Deborah K., 'First Position. Dance Theatre in The Hague', *Architectural Record* 4 (Apr 1988), 73.
- Fitzpatrick, Lynn and Hofius, Doug (eds.), *Rem Koolhaas: conversations with students. Architecture at Rice 1991* (New York: Princeton University Press, 1991).
- Fortier, Bruno, 'La grande ville. Entretien avec Rem Koolhaas', *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* 262 (Apr 1989), 90-93.
- Goulet, Patrice, 'Trente ans après. Entretien avec Rem Koolhaas', in: Abadie, Daniel et al. (eds.), *Années 50*, exhibition catalogue (Paris: Editions du Centre Georges Pompidou, 1988), 474-477.
- Ito, Toyo, 'Not Forms, but Rules: Fin de siècle. OMA at IFA in Paris', *Telescope: The Printed City* 5 (1990), 74-86.
- Kerkdijk, Herman and Wortmann, Arthur, 'The diary of an architect', *Forum* 4 (1988), 39-45.
- Kuhnert, Nikolaus und Oswald, Philipp, 'Die Inszenierung der Ungewissheit. Rem Koolhaas im Gespräch mit Nikolaus Kuhnert und Philipp Oswald', in: *ARCH+* 105/106 (1990), 68-72.
- Leupen, Bernard, *IJ-Plein, Amsterdam* (Rotterdam: Uitgeverij 010, 1989).
- Loriers, Marie-Christine, 'Sur la crête de la vague moderne', *Techniques & Architecture* 380 (Nov 1988), 76-77.
- Lucan, Jacques, (ed.), *OMA - Rem Koolhaas* (Princeton Architectural Press: New York, 1991).
- , 'The Architect of Modern Life', in: *Idem*, 33-41.
- , 'Rem Koolhaas, une machine qui devient bâtiment', *Art Press* 12 (1991), 112-114.
- Martin, Louis, *Architectural Theory after 1968: Analysis of the Works of Rem Koolhaas and Bernard Tschumi*, master thesis (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1988).
- McLeod, Mary, 'Architecture and Politics in the Reagan Era: From Postmodernism to Deconstructivism', *Assemblage* 8 (Feb 1989), 22-59.
- Metz, Tracy, 'Nederland mist respect voor de architect', *Avenue* 24 (Jan 1989), 63-64.
- Neumeyer, Fritz, 'OMA's Berlin: The Polemic Island in the City', *Assemblage* 11 (1990), 36-53.
- Rodermond, Janny, 'Nederlands Danstheater. Een uitermate utilitair gebouw', *De Architect* (Oct 1987), 73-78.
- Selier, Herman, 'Voor een beter Nederland. De architectuur van Rem Koolhaas', *NRC Handelsblad*, 3 maart 1989.

- Steigenga, Madelaine, 'Not Without a Scratch. Police Station Almere', *Forum* 2 (1987), 2-5.
- van Berkel, Ben and Bos, Caroline, 'Terminal als landmerk. Vijf ontwerpen voor Sea Trade Center in Zeebrugge', *Archis* 8 (1989), 12-13.
- van Dijk, Hans, 'Ambitie op zoek naar een "kritische massa". OMA's Nederlands Danstheater in Den Haag', *Archis* 4 (1988), 36-43.
- Vermeulen, Paul, 'Metropolitane architectuur. Projekt-Koolhaas voor Zeebrugge', *De Standaard*, 28-29 April 1990.
- von Moos, Stanislaus, 'Dutch Group Portrait. Notes on O.M.A.'s City Hall Project for The Hague', *A+U* 217 (1988), 86-94.
- Woodbridge, Sally, 'A Cross Cultural Concert in the Far East', *Progressive Architecture* 8 (1991), 60-76.
- Yatsuka, Hajime, 'I combine architectural specificity with programmatic instability', *Telescope: The Printed City* 4 (1989), 6-11.
- Zaera Polo, Alejandro, 'Conceptual Evolution of the Work of Rem Koolhaas', in: Mateo, Josep Lluís (ed.), *Rem Koolhaas: Urban Projects (1985-1990)* (Barcelona: Quaderns, 1990), 52-62.
- , 'Finding Freedoms: Conversations with Rem Koolhaas', *El Croquis* 53 (1992), 6-31.
- , 'Notes for a Topographic Survey', *El Croquis* 53 (1992), 32-51.
- Zanoni, Tomaso and Brigitta et al. (eds.), *Office for Metropolitan Architecture. Arbeiten 1972-1988*, exhibition catalogue. (Basel: Architekturmuseum Basel, 1988).

OMA/Rem Koolhaas before 1987 and after 1992

1977-1986

- Baird, George, 'Les Extrêmes Qui se Touchent?', *Architectural Design* 5 (1977), 326-328.
- Bekaert, Geert, 'De Odyssee van een verlicht ondernemer. Rem Koolhaas', *wonen-TA/BK* 13-14 (1982), 50-57.
- Bossière, Olivier and Lyon, Dominique, 'Entretien avec Rem Koolhaas', *Cahiers du CCI* 1 (1986), 79-84.
- Choay, Françoise, 'Critique', *Princeton Journal: Landscape* vol.2 (1985), 211-215.
- Cohen, Jean-Louis, 'The Rational Rebel, or the Urban Agenda of OMA', in: Lucan, Jacques (ed.), *OMA - Rem Koolhaas* (Princeton Architectural Press: New York, 1991), 9-19.
- De Kooning, Mil, 'De economie van de verbeelding', *Vlees & Beton* 4 (1985), n.p.
- Frampton, Kenneth, 'Two or Three Things I know about Them: A Note on Manhattanism', *Architectural Design* 5 (1977), 315-317.
- Goulet, Patrice, 'La deuxième chance de l'architecture moderne... Entretien avec Rem Koolhaas', *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* 238 (1985), 2-9.

Kuhnert, Nikolaus and Goulet, Patrice, 'Die erschreckende Schönheit des 20. Jahrhunderts', *ARCH+* 86 (1986), 34-43.

Kwinter, Sanford, 'Urbanism after Innocence: Four Projects: The Reinvention of Geometry', *Assemblage* 18 (1992), 83-85.

Lootsma, Bart, 'The Strategies of OMA', *Forum* 3 (1985), 124-130.

—, 'Manifest van OMA: Villa dall'Ava in Parijs', *De Architect* 3 (1992), 29-33.

Noviant, Patrice, 'Rem Koolhaas. Un européen sans humour', *Architecture Mouvement Continuité* 54-55 (1981), 59.

Peake, Cathy, et al., 'The Pleasures of Architecture', *Transition* 4 (1980), 14-18.

Raggi, Franco, 'Edonista-puritano', *Modo* 58 (1983), 26-28.

Tschumi, Bernard, 'On Delirious New York: A Critique of Critiques', *International Architect* 3 (1980), 68-69.

van Dijk, Hans, 'Rem Koolhaas interview', *wonen-TA/BK* 11 (1978), 17-20.

von Moos, Stanislaus, 'Rotterdam lädt Leonidow ein. Zu neueren Arbeiten des Office of Metropolitan Architecture', *archithese* 5 (1981), 57-62.

Vidler, Anthony, 'The Irony of Metropolis. The Office for Metropolitan Architecture', *Skyline* 5 (1982), 18-21.

1993-1999

Colenbrander, Bernard and Bosman, Jos (eds.), *Reference: OMA. The sublime start of an architectural generation* (Rotterdam NAi Publishers, 1995).

Davidson, Cynthia, 'Rem Koolhaas: Why I wrote Delirious New York and other textual strategies', *ANY* 0 (May/Jun 1993), 42-43.

Graafland, Arie and de Haan, Jasper 'A Conversation with Rem Koolhaas', in: Speaks, Michael and Graafland, Arie and de Haan, Jasper (eds.), *The Critical Landscape* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1996), 218-236.

Heron, Katrina, 'From Bauhaus to Koolhaas', *Wired* 4-07 (1996), <https://www.wired.com/1996/07/koolhaas/>.

Ingersoll, Richard, 'Rem Koolhaas e l'ironia', *Casabella* 610 (Mar 1994), 16-19.

—, 'Bidness', *ANY* 10 (1995), 5.

Kipnis, Jeffrey, 'Recent Koolhaas', *El Croquis* 79 (1996), 26-37.

Klingmann, Anna 'Architektur als kollektiver Erlebnisraum', *Tain* 5 (Sep/Oct 1998), 50-56.

Kuhnert, Nikolaus and Oswald, Philipp and Zaera-Polo, Alejandro, 'Die Entfaltung der Architektur', *ARCH+* 117 (1993), 22-33.

Kwinter, Sanford, 'The Building, the Book, and the New Pastoralism', *ANY* 9 (1994), 16-22.

- , ‘Flying the Bullet, or when did the Future Begin?’, in: Idem (ed.), *Rem Koolhaas: Conversations with Students* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), 67-94.
- Lootsma, Bart, ‘Wall Frustration’, *Daidalos – Magic of Materials* (Aug 1995), 74-83.
- , ‘...Koolhaas, Constant, and the Dutch Culture in the 1960s’, *Hunch* 1 (1999), 154-173.
- Lucan, Jacques, ‘The Voluntary Prisoner of Architecture’, *Domus* 774 (Sep 1995), 25-26.
- Menu, Isabelle and Vermandel, Frank, ‘Interview. Rem Koolhaas’, in: Espace Croisé (ed.), *Euralille. The Making of a New City Center* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1996), 51-65.
- Muschamp, Herbert, ‘Rem Koolhaas’ New York State of Mind’, *The New York Times*, 4 November 1994.
- , ‘Some Unfinished Business on St Germain’, *The New York Times*, 14 February 1993.
- Oswalt, Philipp and Hollwich, Matthias, ‘OMA at work’, *Archis* 5 (1997/8), 12-23.
- Polónyi, Stefan, ‘Interpreting the Supporting Structures, of Architecture, with Rem Koolhaas’, *Lotus* 79 (1993), 87.
- Rodermond, Janny, ‘Bigness; het probleem is de oplossing’, *De Architect* 12 (1994), 32-43.
- Sennett, Richard, ‘The Dialectics of Scale’, *Harvard GSD News* (Summer 1996), 45.
- Somol, Robert E., ‘Five Easy Mieses’, *ANY* 24 (1999), 25-27.
- van Dijk, Hans, ‘De architect is verplicht om een respectabel mens te zijn’, *Archis* 11 (1994), 18-24.
- Whiting, Sarah, ‘Spot Check: A conversation between Rem Koolhaas and Sarah Whiting’, *Assemblage* 40 (December 1999), 36-55.
- Zaera Polo, Alejandro, ‘The Day After. A Conversation with Rem Koolhaas’, *El Croquis* 79 (1996), 9-25.

Since 2000

- Allen, Stan, ‘Without the Built Production, the Writing Loses Force’, *Clog Rem* (2014), 42-43.
- Baird, George, Introduction to ‘Les extrêmes qui se touchent’, in: *Writings on Architecture and the City* (London: Artifice, 2015), 162.
- Basar, Shumon and Trüby, Stephan (eds.), ‘The World of Madelon Vriesendorp’. Paintings/Postcards/Objects/Games (London: AA Publications, 2008).
- Bekaert, Geert, ‘Omgaan met Koolhaas’, *De Witte Raaf* 109 (2004), 2-5.
- Bender, Stephanie, *Le Vide. Nouvelles stratégies urbaines* (Lausanne: EPFL, 2011).
- Berteloot, Mathieu and Patteeuw, Véronique, ‘OMA’s Collages’, *OASE* #94 (2015), 67-73.
- Biraghi, Marco, ‘Kritischer Realismus, Manfredo Tafuri und Rem Koolhaas, eine Gegenüberstellung’, *Arch+* 200 (2010), 96-101.
- Böck, Ingrid, *Six Canonical Projects. Essays on the History of Ideas* (Berlin: Jovis, 2015).

- Bosma, Koos, 'S, M, L, XL', *Planning Perspectives* 12 (Jan 1997), 115-118.
- Brennan, Ann Marie and Goodenow, Nahum and Moran, Brendan D., 'OMA, "Neo-Modern," and Modernity' *Perspecta* 32 (2001), 28-37.
- Chevrier, Jean-François, 'Changing Dimensions', *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* 361 (2005), 98-107.
- Clog* (editorial staff), 'Interview with Madelon Vriesendorp and Zoe Zenghelis', *Clog Rem* (2014), 22-27.
- Colomina, Beatriz, 'A Conversation and a Dictionary', *El Croquis* 134/135 (2007), 350-385.
- Conroy Dalton, Ruth and Hölscher, Christoph (eds.), *Take one Building. Interdisciplinary Research Perspectives of the Seattle Central Library* (London: Routledge, 2017).
- Dunham-Jones, Ellen, 'Irrational exuberance: Rem Koolhaas and the 1990s', in: Deamer, Peggy (ed.), *Architecture and Capitalism. 1845 to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 150-169.
- Eisenman, Peter, 'Strategies of the Void. Rem Koolhaas, Jussieu Libraries, 1992-93', in: Idem, *Ten Canonical Buildings. 1950-2000* (New York: Rizzoli, 2008), 200-229.
- Eisenschmidt, Alexander, *The Good Metropolis: From Urban Formlessness to Metropolitan Architecture* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2019).
- Fraser, Murray, 'Beyond Koolhaas', in: Rendell, Jane et. al. (eds.), *Critical Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2007), 332-339.
- Gargiani, Roberto, *Rem Koolhaas/OMA: The Construction of Merveilles* (Lausanne: EPFL/PPUR, 2008).
- Houzé, Guillaume and Quintin, François, 'Composer les mesures de son espace', in: Idem et al., *9 Plâtre: Lafayette Anticipations - fondation d'entreprise Galeries Lafayette: un bâtiment de OMA/Rem Koolhaas* (Paris: Lafayette Anticipations, 2018), 12-32.
- Hsu, Frances, *The Ends of Modernism: Structuralism and Surrealism in the Work of Rem Koolhaas* (ETH: Zürich, 2003).
- Kovacs, Andrew, 'Business Plan Theory', *Clog: Rem* (2014), 48-49.
- Lampariello, Beatrice, *Villa a Floirac: Rem Koolhaas/OMA 1994-98* (Rome: Aracne, 2011).
- Lootsma, Bart, *Superdutch. New Architecture in the Netherlands*, (London, Thames and Hudson, 2000).
- Lucan, Jacques, 'Processus et programme contre composition – Rem Koolhaas', in: Idem, *Composition, Non-Composition. Architecture et Théories, XIXe-XXe siècles* (Lausanne: EPFL/PPUR, 2009), 542-561.
- , 'Diagrammes', in: Idem, *Précisions sur un état présent de l'architecture* (Lausanne: EPFL/PPUR, 2015), 13-59.
- Martin, Reinhold, 'Shopping in Silence at IIT', *Architecture and Ideas*, no. 3.2 (Jul 2001), 4-39.
- Mastigli, Gabriele, 'Modernity and Myth: Rem Koolhaas in New York', *San Rocco* 8 (2013), 81-95.
- Muschamp, Herbert, 'The Library that puts on Fishnets and Hits the Disco', *The New York Times*, 16 May 2004.
- Ockman, Joan, 'The ¥€\$ Man: Can Rem Koolhaas Make Consumerism Safe for Intellectuals?', *Architecture* 2 (2002), 76-79.

- Patteeuw, Véronique (ed.), *What is OMA? Considering Rem Koolhaas and the Office for Metropolitan Architecture* (Rotterdam: NAI, 2004).
- Petit, Emmanuel, 'Rem Koolhaas', in: Idem, *Irony. Or, The Self-Critical Opacity of Postmodern Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).
- Schurk, Holger, *Projekt ohne Form. OMA, Rem Koolhaas und das Laboratorium von 1989* (Lepizig: Spector Books, 2020).
- Solomonoff, Galia, 'Fax!', *Clog: Rem* (2014), 76-79.
- Somol, Robert E., '12 Reasons to Get Back into Shape', in: AMOMA/Rem Koolhaas et al. (eds.), *Content* (Cologne: Taschen, 2004), 86-87.
- Szacka, Léa-Catherine, 'Translucent oppositions. OMA's proposal for the 1980 Venice Architecture Biennale' *OASE #94* (2015), <https://www.oasejournal.nl/en/Issues/94/TranslucentOppositions>. Accessed 23 October 2019.
- Unruh, Patric, *Das Educatorium in Utrecht von Rem Koolhaas und OMA* (Zürich: ETH, 2004).
- van Winkel, Camiel and Verschaffel, Bart, "'Ik ben verbluft over de rechten die het artistieke zich aanmeent.'" Vraaggesprek met Rem Koolhaas', *de Witte Raaf*, (May-Jun 2004).
<https://www.dewitteraaf.be/artikel/detail/nl/2790>
- van der Heijden, Hans, 'The Netherlands – Koolhaas and the Profession at Play', in: Davies, Paul and Schmiedknecht, Paul (eds.), *An Architect's Guide to Fame*, (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2005), 105-118.
- van Gerrewey, Christophe, "'Hope has Returned": The Glorious Reception of OMA/Rem Koolhaas in the Dutch-Speaking World', *Architectural Theory Review* 18:3 (2013), 356-371.
- and Patteeuw, Véronique (eds.), *OMA. The First Decade – OASE #94* (Rotterdam: nai010, 2015).
- , 'Goodbye Paper', *AA-Files* 74 (2017), 98-111.
- , 'A Weissenhofsiedlung for Amsterdam: OMA's IJplein', *Log* 44 (2018), 82-93.
- (ed.), *OMA/Rem Koolhaas: A Critical Reader* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2019).
- , 'Outreach extensions: OMA/Rem Koolhaas exhibitions as self-critical environments', *Architectural Theory Review* vol. 23 (2019), 90-113.
- Walker, Enrique, 'Rem Koolhaas in Conversation with Enrique Walker', in: Walker, Enrique, *The Ordinary: Recordings* (New York: Columbia Books on Architecture and the City, 2018), 9-27.
- Wigley, Mark, 'Rem Koolhaas and Mark Wigley in Discussion', in: Fundação Casa da Música (ed.), *OMA. Office for Metropolitan Architecture, Rem Koolhaas. Casa da Música* (Porto: Fundação Casa da Música, 2008), 169.
- Yaneva, Albena, *The Making of a Building. A Pragmatist Approach to Architecture* (Oxford: Lang, 2009).
- , *Made by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture: an ethnography of design* (Rotterdam: nai010, 2009).

The history of Rotterdam, Dijkzigt and Dutch architecture in the 1980s

- Adriaansz, Elli, 'A Modern Villa Park in the City. Its History: The History of the Land van Hoboken', *Wiederhall* 20 (2001), 4-15.
- Beeren, Wim A.L. et al (eds.), *Het Nieuwe Bouwen in Rotterdam 1920-1960* (Delft: Delft University Press, 1982).
- Beijer, Gobert et al., *Over Rotterdam. Toekomstvisies aangeboden aan Joop Linthorst bij zijn afschied als gemeenteraadslid en wethouder van de gemeente Rotterdam* (Rotterdam: Uitgeverij 010, 1994).
- Christiaanse, Kees, *Rotterdam. Kees Christiaanse. Forum* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2012).
- de Boer, Cees, 'John K ormelings aanschouwlijke architectuur. Buiten de normen van het kunstbedrijf', *De Architect* (Sep 1989), 53-57.
- Crimson/Speaks, Michael and Hadders, Gerard, *Mart Stam's Trousers: Stories from behind the Scenes of Dutch Moral Modernism* (Rotterdam 010 Publishers, 1999).
- Dettingmeijer, Rob, 'The fight for a well built city', in: Beeren, Wim A.L. et al (eds.), *Het Nieuwe Bouwen in Rotterdam 1920-1960* (Delft: Delft University Press, 1982), 19-76.
- , *Open Stad. Plantontwikkeling, stedenbouw, volkshuisvesting en architectuur in Rotterdam tussen de twee Wereldoorlogen*. Dissertation (Utrecht: Rijksuniversiteit Utrecht, 1988).
- Elsinga, Marja and Wassenberg, Frank, 'Social Housing in the Netherlands', in: Scanlon, Kathleen and Whitehead, Christine et al. (eds.), *Social Housing in Europe* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), 25-40.
- de Graaf, Jan, *Architectuur en stedenbouw in Rotterdam 1850-1940* (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 1992).
- Groenendijk, Paul and Vollaard, Piet, *Guide to modern architecture in Rotterdam* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2001).
- Hage, Koos, 'Westersingel in Historic Perspective', in: Artschwager, Richard et al. (eds.), *Beelden in de Stad/Sculpture in the City* (Utrecht: Veen/Reflex, 1988), 22-31.
- Hellinga, Helma et al., *Ernest Groosman* (Rotterdam: Uitgeverij 010, 2001).
- Hoogenberk, Egbert, J., *Het Idee van de Hollandse Stad. Stedenbouw in de Nederland met de interantionale voorgeschiedenis* (Delft: University Press, 1980).
- Ibelings, Hans (ed.), *Jo Coenen. The discovery of architecture* (Berlin: Ernst&Sohn, 1989).
- , *Modernism without dogma. Architects of a younger generation in the Netherlands* (Rotterdam: Nederlands Architectuurinstituut, 1991).
- Hulsman, Bernhard, Kramer, Luuk, *Double Dutch. Nederlandse architectuur na 1985* (Rotterdam: nai010 Uitgevers, 2013).
- Kauffmann, Frank, 'Towards a "modern" city centre', in: Beeren, Wim A.L. et al (eds.), *Het Nieuwe Bouwen in Rotterdam 1920-1960* (Delft: Delft University Press, 1982), 77-107.
- Lambert, Donald, 'Het mogelijkheden en de beperkingen van een stedelijk plan. Het nieuwe Binnenstadplan voor Rotterdam', *Wonen-TA/BK* 10 (1985), 8-26.

- , ‘Rotterdam, recoller les fragments’, *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui*, 257 (1988), 38-40.
- Leupen, Bernard and Deen, Wouter, and Grafe, Christoph (eds.), *Hoe modern is de Nederlandse architectuur?* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1990).
- Melet, Ed, *The architectural detail. Dutch architects visualize their concepts* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2002).
- Mens, Noor, *W.G. Witteveen en Rotterdam* (Rotterdam: Uitgeverij 010, 2007).
- Molenaar, Joris, ‘Visions of Dijkzigt. Brinkmann & Van der Vlugt’, *Wiederhall 20* (2001), 16-23.
- , ‘Brinkman & Van der Vlugt Architects. Rotterdam’s City-Ideal in International Style’ (Rotterdam: nai010 Publishers, 2012).
- Risselada, Max, van den Heuvel, Dirk, *Team 10. 1953-81. In Search of a Utopia of the Present* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2005).
- Stam, Mart, ‘Kritiek Vereniging “Opbouw” op het Hofplein Witteveen’, *Bouwkundig Weekblad Architectura*, 25 February 1928, 57-59.
- van den Heuvel, Dirk, ‘The Event City of Dutch Structuralism’, in: Het Nieuwe Instituut, ‘An Installation in Four Acts. Education, Ideals, Building, the City’, 5-8; in: *Volume 42* (2014).
- , ‘The Open Society and its Experiments: The Case of the Netherlands and Piet Blom’, in: Swenarton, Mark and Avermaete, Tom and van den Heuvel, Dirk, *Architecture of the Welfare State* (London: Routledge, 2015), 132-152.
- van den Bergen, Marina and Vollaard, Piet, *Hinder en ontklontering. Architectuur en maatschappij in het werk van Frank van Klingeren* (Rotterdam: Uitgeverij 010, 2003).
- van der Woud, Auke and Swarts, Kim, *Wim Quist* (Rotterdam: Uitgeverij 010, 1989).
- van Dijk, Hans, ‘Het onderwijzersmodernisme’; in: Leupen, Bernard at al. (eds.), *Hoe modern is de Nederlandse architectuur?* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1990), 173-191.
- , *Twentieth-Century Architecture in the Netherlands* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1999).
- , ‘De gezelligheids-revolutie. 1965-1985’, in: Arts, Martin (ed.), *Vijftig jaar Wederopbouw Rotterdam. Een Geschiedenis van toekomstvisies* (Rotterdam: Uitgeverij 010, 2005), 161-192.
- van Heuvel, Wim J., *Structuralism in Dutch architecture* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1992).
- van Ulzen, Patricia, *Imagine a Metropolis. Rotterdam’s Creative Class 1970-2000* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2007).
- Vermeer, Gerrit and Rebel, Ben, *Historische Gids van Rotterdam: 14 wandelingen door de oude en de nieuwe stad* (Den Haag: Sdu Uitgeverij Koniginnengracht, 1994).
- Vermeulen, Pim and de Riuter, Fred et al., *Stadsvernieuwing Rotterdam 1974-1984* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1985).
- von Engelberg-Dočkal, Eva, *J.P.P. Oud. Zwischen de Stijl und klassischer Tradition. Arbeiten von 1916 bis 1931* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag Berlin, 2006).

Wigley, Mark, *Constant's New Babylon. The Hyper-Architecture of Desire* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1998).

Museums and arts centres (in the 1980s)

Adorno, Theodor W., 'Valéry Proust Museum', in: Adorno, *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft I* (Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), first published in 1953.

Allégret, Laurence, *Les Musées* (Milan/ Paris: Electa, 1987).

—, *Musées. Tome 2* (Paris: Editions du Moniteur, 1992).

Banham, Reyner, 'Celebration of the City', *Architectural Review* 1054 (December 1984), 33-36.

Basso Peressut, Luca, *Musei. Architettura 1990-2000* (Milan: Federico Motta Editore, 1999).

Bekaert, Geert, 'Een gebouw waar de kunst haar intrek kan nemen. Overpeinzingen over museum en museumarchitectuur', *Archis* 1 (Jan 1987), 12-16.

Blotkamp, Carel et al., (eds.), *Museum in Motion* (Gravenhage: Government Publishing Office, 1979).

Colquhoun, Alan, 'Democratic Monument', *Architectural Review* 1054 (December 1984), 19-22.

Curtis, William, 'Virtuosity around a Void', *Architectural Review* 1054, (Dec 1984), 41.

Damisch, Hubert, 'The museum device. Notes on institutional changes', *Lotus international* 35, (1982), 4-11.

Dauids, Wouter, *Bouwen voor de Kunst? Museumarchitectuur van Centre Pompidou tot Tate Modern* (Ghent: A&S books, 2006).

De Kooning, Mil and Devos, Rika, *L'architecture moderne à l'Expo 58* (Brussels: Fonds Mercator, 2006).

Foster, Kurt W., 'Tempio, Emporio, Teatro. Riflessioni su due decenni di museografia americana', in: *Zodiac* 6 (1991), 30-74.

Galloway, David, 'The New German Museums', *Art in America* (July 1985), 74-89.

Klotz, Heinrich, 'New Museum Buildings in the Federal Republic of Germany', in: Idem and Krase, Waltraud, 'New Museum Buildings in the Federal Republic of Germany' (Frankfurt am Main: Deutsches Architekturmuseum, 1985), 8.

Leeuw Marcar, Ank (ed.), *Willem Sandberg. Portrait of an Artist* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2013).

Liotard, Jean-François, *Les immatériaux. Inventair et album* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1985).

Montaner, Josep Maria and Oliveras, Jordi, *The Museums of the Last Generation* (London: Academy Editions/ New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986).

—, *New Museums* (London: Architecture Design and Technology Press, 1990).

—, *Museums for the 21st Century 2003* (Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili, 2003).

Muschamp, Herbert, 'Chez Muse. The American museum scene', *Lotus international* 53 (1987).

- Newhouse, Victoria, *Towards a New Museum* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2006). First published in 1998.
- Nicolin, Pierluigi, 'New Museums', *Lotus international* 55 (1987), 5.
- Pehnt, Wolfgang, 'Das Museum als Freizeitspass', *Deutsche Bauzeitung* (Jan 1987), 10-12.
- Pevsner, Nicolaus, *A History of Building Types* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976).
- Rykwert, Joseph, 'The Cult of the Museum. From the Treasure House to the Temple', *AV* 18 (1989), 81-83.
- Searing, Helen, 'The Development of a Museum Typology', in: Stephens, Suzanne (ed.), *Building the New Museum* (New York: The Architectural League New York, 1986), 14-27.
- , *New American Art Museums* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1982).
- Stephens, Suzanne (ed.), *Building the New Museum*, (New York: The Architectural League, 1986).
- van der Beek, Wim et al. (eds.), *Art Amsterdam. 25 years in 50 portraits* (Deventer: Thieme Art, 2009).
- van de Ven, Cornelis and Martens, Bob (eds.), *Museumarchitectuur* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1989).
- Werner, Frank, 'On the typology of museums of the eighties. The Experience of the German Federal Republic', *Lotus international* 55 (1987), 37-54.

Architectural theory (in the 1980s)

- Adamson, Glenn and Pavitt, Jane (ed.), *Postmodernism: Style and Subversion 1970-1990* (London: V&A Publishing, 2011).
- Allen, Stan, 'Eisenman's Canon: A Counter-Memory of the Modern', in: Eisenman, Peter, *Ten Canonical Buildings. 1950-2000* (New York: Rizzoli, 2008), 9-12.
- Arnell, Peter, "'No, I'm an Architect.'" Frank Gehry and Peter Arnell: A conversation', in: Arnell, Peter and Bickford, Ted (eds.), *Frank Gehry. Buildings and Projects* (New York: Rizzoli, 1990), XIII-XVIII.
- Aureli, Pier Vittorio, 'Who is Afraid of the Form-Object', *Log* 3 (Fall 2004), 29-36.
- , 'The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture' (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2011).
- Colomina, Beatriz, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1994).
- Barey, André, *Déclaration de Bruxelles* (Brussels: Archives d'Architecture Moderne, 1980).
- Bekaert, Geert, 'Une mise à nu de l'architecture par ses ardorateurs, même. Maurice Culot and Léon Krier: A Forgotten Episode', in: Van Schaik, Martin and Máčel, Otakar (eds.), *Exit Utopia* (Munich: Prestel, 2005), 299-308.
- Betsky, Aaron, *Violated Perfection. Architecture and Fragmentation of the Modern* (New York: Rizzoli, 1990).
- Bodenschatz, Harald and Lampugnani, Vittorio Magnago and Sonne Wolfgang (eds.), *25 Jahre Internationale Bauausstellung Berlin 1987: Ein Wendepunkt des europäischen Städtebaus* (Zurich: Niggli, 2012).

- Boyarsky, Alvin, 'Interview between Alvin Boyarsky and Bernard Tschumi', in: Tschumi, Bernard, *La Case Vide. La Villette 1985* (London: Architectural Association, 1986), 22-26.
- Cepl, Jasper, *Oswald Mathias Ungers. Eine intellektuelle Biographie* (Köln: Walther König, 2007).
- Deamer, Peggy (ed.), *Architecture and Capitalism. 1845 to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2015).
- Derrida, Jacques, 'Point de folie – Maintenant l'architecture', in: Tschumi, Bernard, *La case vide: la Villette 1985* (London: Architectural Association, 1986), 4-19.
- Ditzen, Lore, 'Josef Paul Kleihues interviewed by Lore Ditzen', *The Architectural Review* 9 (1984), 42-44.
- Evans, Robin, 'In Front of Lines That Leave Nothing Behind', *AA Files* 6 (May 1984), 89-96.
- , *The Projective Cast* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1995).
- , 'The Rights of Retreat and the Rights of Exclusion: Notes Towards the Definition of the Wall', *Architectural Design* 41/ 6 (June 1971), 335-339.
- Foster, Hal (ed.), *The Anti-Aesthetic. Essays on Postmodern Culture*, (New York: The New Press, 1998), first published 1983.
- Gehry, Frank O., 'Hook, Line, and Signature', in: Davidson, Cynthia (ed.), *Anyone* (New York: Rizzoli, 1991), 186-195.
- Ghirardo, Diane, 'Diane Ghirardo's exposée of MOMA's Deconstructivist show', *The Architectural Review*, 1096 (Jun 1988), 4-6.
- Giovannini, Joseph, 'The Limit of Chaos Tempts A New School of Architects', *The New York Times*, 4 February, 1988.
- Harvey, David, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2015).
- Hays, Michael, 'Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form' *Perspecta* 21, (1984), 14-29.
- Hays, Michael (ed.), *Architecture Theory Since 1968* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2000).
- Hebdige, Dick 'A report on the Western Front. Postmodernism and the politics of style', in: Jencks, Chris (ed.), *Cultural Reproduction* (London: Routledge, 1993), 69-103.
- Hertweck, Florian and Marot, Sébastien (eds.), *Die Stadt in der Stadt. Berlin: ein grünes Archipel* (Zurich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2013).
- Huet, Bernard, 'Small manifesto', in: Krier, Léon et al., *Rational Architecture. The Reconstruction of the European City* (Brussels: Editions des Archives d'Architecture Moderne, 1978), 54.
- Ingraham, Catherine, 'Milking Deconstruction or Cow was The Show?', *Inland Architect* 5 (1988), 61-65.
- Jameson, Fredric, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London/New York: Verso, 1992).
- Jencks, Charles, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (London: Academy Editions, 1977, 1987).
- , 'The Pleasures of Absence', *Architectural Design* 3/4 (1988), 17-31.
- , 'Peter Eisenman', *Architectural Design* 3/4 (1988), 49-61.

- , 'Dialogues with Philip Johnson', in: Idem, *The New Moderns. From Late to Neo-Modernism* (London: Academy Editions, 1990), 153-169.
- , *The New Moderns. From Late to Neo-Modernism* (London: Academy Editions, 1990).
- , 'Radical Post-Modernism and Content', *Architectural Design* 5 (2011), 32-45.
- Johnson, Philip and Wigley, Mark (eds.), *Deconstructivist Architecture*, exhibition catalogue (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1988).
- Kähler, Gert, *Dekonstruktion? Dekonstruktivismus? – Aufbruch ins Chaos oder neues Bild der Welt* (Braunschweig: Bauwelt Fundamente, 1990).
- Kauffman, Jordan, *Drawing on Architecture. The Object of Lines, 1970-1990* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2018).
- Kleihues, Josef Paul, 'Prager Platz', in: Kleihues, Josef Paul and Klotz, Heinrich, *Internationale Bauausstellung Berlin 1987. Beispiele einer neuen Architektur* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986), 42-43.
- , 'Prager Platz Area. Disarrayed Feathers, Aggressive Void, Historical Collage', in: *A+U Extra edition: International Building Exhibition Berlin 1987*, 5 (May 1987), 57-61.
- , 'Southern Friedrichstadt Area. Rudiments of History. Place of Contradictions. Critical Reconstruction', in: *A+U Extra edition: International Building Exhibition Berlin 1987*, 5 (May 1987), 145-148.
- Klotz, Heinrich, 'Interview zur IBA-Ausstellung', in: Kleihues, Josef Paul and Klotz, Heinrich, *Internationale Bauausstellung Berlin 1987. Beispiele einer neuen Architektur* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986), 9-12.
- , *Moderne und Postmoderne. Architektur der Gegenwart 1960-1980* (Braunschweig, Wiesbaden: Vieweg&Sohn, 1985).
- Kraft, Simone, *Dekonstruktivismus in der Architektur? Eine Analyse der Ausstellung 'Deconstructivist Architecture' im New Yorker Museum of Modern Art* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2015).
- Krier, Léon and Culot, Maurice, *Leon Krier: Drawings 1967-1980*, (Brussels: Archives d'Architecture Moderne, 1980).
- , 'Research and Projects in London', *A+U* 11 (1977), 105-133.
- , 'The City with in [sic] the City', *A+U* 11 (1977), 86-97.
- , 'The Reconstruction of the City', in: *Rational Architecture: The Reconstruction of the European City* (Brussels: Archives d'Architecture Moderne, 1978), 38-42.
- Lefaivre, Liane, 'Dirty Realism in European Architecture Today: Making the Stone Stony', *Design book review* 17 (Winter 1989), 17-20.
- Leupen, Bernhard, preface to the reader, in: Technische Universiteit Delft, *Whether Europe. Symposium Reader* (Delft: Technische Universiteit Delft, 1988) 5-6.
- Mallgrave, Harry Francis and Goodman, David, *An Introduction to Architectural Theory. 1968 to the Present* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

- Martin, Reinhold, *Utopia's Ghost. Architecture and Postmodernism, Again* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).
- Muschamp, Herbert, 'The Leaning Tower of Theory', *The New Republic* 3 (29 August 1988), 36-40.
- Papadakis, Andreas and Cooke Catherine et al. (eds.), *Deconstruction. Omnibus Volume*, (New York: Rizzoli, 1989), 175-181.
- Pavan, Vincezo (ed.), *Léon Krier. La ricostruzione della città europea* (Venice: CLUVA, 1980).
- Robertson, Jaquelin (ed.), *The Charlottesville Tapes*, (New York: Rizzoli, 1985).
- Rowe, Colin and Koetter, Fred, *Collage City*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1978).
- Sadler, Simon, 'The varieties of capitalist experience', in: Deamer, Peggy (ed.), *Architecture and Capitalism. 1845 to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 115-129.
- Somol, Robert E. and Whiting, Sarah, 'Notes around the Doppler Effect and Other Essays' *Perspecta* 33 (2002), 72-77.
- Sorkin, Michael, 'Decon Job', *The Village Voice* 27 (July 5 1988), 81-83.
- Speaks, Michael, 'Design Intelligence Part 1: Introduction' *A+U* (Dec 2002), 10-18.
- Stierli, Martino, *Montage and the Metropolis. Architecture, Modernity, and the Representation of Space* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).
- Szacka, Léa-Catherine, *Exhibiting the Postmodern. The 1980 Venice Biennale* (Venezia: Marsilio Editori, 2016).
- Tafuri, Manfredo, 'The Ashes of Jefferson', in: Idem, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth. Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1990) 291-303.
- Tigerman, Stanley (ed.), *The Chicago Tapes. Transcript of the conference at the University of Illinois at Chicago. November 7 and 8, 1986* (New York: Rizzoli, 1987).
- Tschumi, Bernard, *Manhattan Transcripts* (London: Academy Editions, 1981).
- , *Architecture and Disjunction* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1994).
- , 'Architecture and Transgression', *Oppositions* 7 (1976), 55-63.
- , 'Illustrated Index: Themes from the Manhattan Transcripts', *AA Files* 4 (Jul 1983) 65-74.
- Ungers, Oswald Mathias, *Die Stadt in der Stadt* (Cologne: Studio Verlag für Architektur, 1977).
- Ursprung, Philip, 'Verwerfungslinien: Peter Eisenman und die Räume der Globalisierung', in: Idem, *Der Wert der Oberfläche*, (Zürich: gta Verlag, 2017), 97-114.
- van Eyck, Aldo, 'What Is and Isn't Architecture. A propos of Rats, Posts, and other Pests (RPP)', *Lotus international* 28 (1980), 15-19.
- Vidler, Anthony, 'The Building in Pain. The Body and Architecture in Post-Modern Culture', *AA-Files* 19 (1990), 3-10.

von Moos, Stanislaus, 'Les refuses du post-modernisme', *Techniques & Architecture* 339 (1981), 104-105.

The history of the 1980s and early 1990s, of the European Integration and the Netherlands

Berend, Ivan T., *The History of European Integration. A new perspective* (London: Routledge, 2016).

Berman, Marshall, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air* (London: Verso, 2010).

Elsinga, Marja and Stephens, Mark and Knorr-Siedow, Thomas, 'The Privatisation of Social Housing: Three Different Pathways', in: Scanlon, Kathleen and Whitehead, Christine et al. (eds.), *Social Housing in Europe* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), 389-413.

Flora, Peter, *Growth to Limits. The Western European Welfare States Since World War II*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986).

Gilbert, Mark, *European Integration. A Concise History* (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012).

—, 'A Shift in Mood: The 1992 Initiative and Changing U.S. Perceptions of the European Community, 1988-1989', in: Patel, Kiran Klaus and Weisbrode, Kenneth (eds.), *European Integration and the Atlantic Community in the 1980s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 243-264.

Gill, Stephen R., 'Neo-Liberalism and the Shift towards a US-Centred Transnational Hegemony', in: Overbeek, Henk (ed.), *Restructuring Hegemony in the Global Political Economy. The Rise of transnational neo-liberalism in the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 2005), 19-20, 246-282.

Obinger, Herbert, *The Transformation of the Welfare State: Small States, Big Lessons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Overbeek, Henk, van der Pijl, Kees, 'Restructuring Capital and Restructuring Hegemony. Neo-liberalism and the unmaking of the post-war order', in: Overbeek, Henk (ed.), *Restructuring Hegemony in the Global Political Economy. The Rise of transnational neo-liberalism in the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 2005), 1-27.

Patel, Kiran Klaus and Weisbrode, Kenneth (eds.), *European Integration and the Atlantic Community in the 1980s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Scanlon, Kathleen and Whitehead, Christine et al. (eds.), *Social Housing in Europe* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2014).

Swenarton, Mark and Avermaete, Tom and van den Heuvel, Dirk, *Architecture of the Welfare State* (London: Routledge, 2015).

Urwin, Derek, W., *The Community of Europe. A History of European Integration since 1945* (London/ New York: Longman, 1995).

Varsori, Antonio, 'The Relaunching of Europe in the Mid-1980s', in: Patel, Kiran Klaus and Weisbrode, Kenneth (eds.), *European Integration and the Atlantic Community in the 1980s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 226-242.

Visser, Jelle and Hemerijck, Anton, 'A Dutch Miracle'. *Job Growth, Welfare Reform and Corporatism in the Netherlands* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1997).

Westad, Odd Arne, *The Cold War. A World History* (London: Allan Lane, 2018).

Fragmentation

Adorno, Theodor W., *Ästhetische Theorie. Gesammelte Schriften. Theodor W. Adorno* vol. 7 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970).

Bürger, Peter, *Theorie der Avantgarde* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974).

Barthes, Roland, *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1977).

Lacan, Jacques, 'Le stade du miroir comme formateur de la fonction du je, telle qu'elle nous est révélée, dans l'expérience psychanalytique', *Revue Française de Psychanalyse* 4 (Oct-Dec 1949), 449-455.

Bergdoll, Barry and Oechslin, Werner (eds.), *Fragments. Architecture and the Unfinished. Essays Presented to Robin Middleton* (Thames & Hudson, 2006), 291-322.

Nochlin, Linda, *The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001).

Tronzo, William (ed.), *The Fragment. An Incomplete History* (Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute, 2009).

Films, broadcasts, and video recordings

Jencks, Charles, 'Charles Jencks', in: Borger, Jenny et al., *PRIMA VISTA!*, 23 May 1993, VPRO.

Heidingsfelder, Markus and Tesch, Min, *Rem Koolhaas. A Kind of Architect*, (Fridolfing: Absolut Medien, 2007).

Kunsthall Rotterdam, 'Masterclass Rem Koolhaas', 2 November 2017. The masterclass was held in the Kunsthall at the occasion of the building's 25th anniversary. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CvJBqgGvq9c>. Accessed 11 July 2020.

Obrist, Hans Ulrich, Conversation with Lucien Kroll & Rem Koolhaas, Art Brussels. 30th contemporary art fair. 19 April 2012. <https://vimeo.com/40244971>

van Eyck, Aldo, Lecture held at the International Design Seminar (Indesem) at TU Delft in April 1987. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uf7RyqXIYmM>

Wigley, Mark, 'What Just Happened? Revisiting Deconstructivist Architecture after 30 Years', lecture at TU Delft, held at 19 June 2018. http://www.theberlage.nl/galleries/videos/watch/2018_06_19_what_just_happened_revisiting_deconstructivist_architecture_after_30_years; min 51. Accessed 23 July 2018.

Zenghelis, Elia, 'The 1970s and the Beginning of OMA'. Lecture at the Berlage Institute held on 24 November 2009. http://www.theberlage.nl/galleries/videos/watch/2009_11_24_the_1970s_and_the_beginning_of_oma.

Illustration credits/sources

Chapter 1.1

Figure 1: © Michel Boesveld. *Bauwelt* 17/18 (May 1987), 627.

Figure 2: Above: © Rem Koolhaas, Madelon Vriesendorp. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Below: © Sandra Lang. Jordan Kauffman, *Drawing on Architecture. The Object of Lines, 1970-1990* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2018, 90-91).

Figure 3: Above: © Terry Gilliam. Below: Kurt Rohwedder. Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz.

Figure 4: © Dan Grogan. Jaquelin Robertson (ed.), *The Charlottesville Tapes*, (New York: Rizzoli, 1985), 2.

Figure 5: *Architecture Mouvement Continuité* 18 (1987), cover. *Bouw* 22 (1987), cover. *Forum* 2 (1987), 2. *Domus* 689 (1987), 44.

Chapter 1.2

Figure 1: In: Patricia van Ulzen, *Imagine a Metropolis. Rotterdam's Creative Class 1970-2000* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2007), 178.

Figure 2: © Gemeente Rotterdam, HNI/OMAR.

Figure 3: © Gemeente Rotterdam, Gemeentearchief Rotterdam.

Figures 4-6: Stadsarchief Rotterdam.

Figure 7: © Gemeente Rotterdam, HNI/OMAR.

Figure 8: © Jan van de Meijde. Learning from Rotterdam 124.

Figures 9-10, 12: © Stadsontwikkeling Rotterdam, HNI/OMAR.

Figure 11: © Aerocamer/Bart Hofmeester. Learning from Rotterdam, 40.

Figure 13: Above: Sidney Smirke, Royal Academy of Arts, London. Below: Colquhoun & Miller. In: John Miller et al., *Custom and Innovation. John Miller + Partners* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2009), 174.

Figure 14: © Ed van der Elksen. Nederlands Fotomuseum.

Chapter 1.3

Figure 1, 7-9: © OMA. HNI/OMAR.

Figures 2-4, 6: HNI/OMAR.

Figure 5: Stadsarchief Rotterdam.

Chapter 1.4

Figure 1: Above: © Christa Diehl, Ronald Steiner. Below: © Ronald Steiner. *A+U* 11 (1977), 110-113.

Figure 2: © Léon Krier. In: *A+U* 11 (1977), 73.

Figure 3: © Gottfried Böhm. In: Josef Paul Kleihues, Heinrich Klotz, *Internationale Bauausstellung Berlin 1987. Beispiele einer neuen Architektur* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986), 46.

Figure 4: © Rem Koolhaas. In: Florian Hertweck, Sébastien Marot (eds.), *Die Stadt in der Stadt. Berlin: ein grünes Archipel* (Zurich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2013), 13.

Figures 5-6: Oswald M. Ungers. In: Florian Hertweck, Sébastien Marot (eds.), *Die Stadt in der Stadt. Berlin: ein grünes Archipel* (Zurich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2013) 99, 103, 105.

Figure 7: Josef Paul Kleihues. In: Josef Paul Kleihues, Heinrich Klotz, *Internationale Bauausstellung Berlin 1987. Beispiele einer neuen Architektur* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986), 2.

Figures 8, 12: © OMA. www.oma.eu.

Figure 9: © Michiel Verbeek. Commons-wiki.

Figure 10: © OMA. OMA, *OMA. Projects 1978-1981* (London: Architectural Association, 1981), 42.

Figure 11: In: Donald Lambert, 'Het mogelijkheden en de beperkingen van een stedelijk plan. Het nieuwe Binnenstadplan voor Rotterdam', *Wonen-TA/BK* 10 (1985), 19.

Chapter 1.5

Figure 1: © OMA. *AA Files* 13 (1986), 8-9.

Figure 2: © Madelon Vriesendorp. In: Shumon Basar, Stephan Trüby (eds.), 'The World of Madelon Vriesendorp'. *Paintings/Postcards/Objects/Games* (London: AA Publications, 2008), catalogue, no. 34.

Figures 3-5: © Hans Werleman. www.oma.eu.

Chapter 1.6

Figure 1: © Dorothy Alexander. In: Suzanne Stephens (ed.), *Building the New Museum* (New York: The Architectural League New York, 1986), 29.

Figures 2-7: © OMA. HNI/OMAR.

Chapter 1.7

Figure 1-5, 7, 10-13: © OMA. HNI/OMAR.

Figure 6: © Frank Gehry. In: Francesco dal Co, Kurt W. Foster, *Frank O. Gehry. The Complete Works* (Milan: Electa, 2003), 222, 240.

Figures 8-9: HNI/OMAR.

Figure 14: OMA. www.oma.eu.

Figure 15: Above: *Architecture intérieure créé* 228 (1989), 98. Centre: *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* 257 (1988), 12. Below: *Bouw* 22 (1987), 24.

Figure 16: Above and centre: © Architectonica. *Archis* 4 (1988), 21,24. Below: © Mecanoo. In: Stichting Rotterdam – Maskant, *Mecanoo; 25 werken* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1987) 22-23.

Chapter 1.8

Figure 1: © OMA. *Plan* 7-8 (1985), 43-44.

Figures © 2-11, 13: OMA. HNI/OMAR.

Figure 12: © OMA. *El Croquis* 53 (1992), 67.

Figure 14: Above: © Hans Werlemann. Below: *El Croquis* 53 (1992), 67.

Figure 15: Oswald M. Ungers. In: Jasper Cepl, *Oswald Mathias Ungers. Eine intellektuelle Biographie* (Köln: Walther König, 2007), 377.

Figure 16: Above: © Jo Coenen. Below: © Luigi Snozzi. In: Ruud Brouwers, Bernard Colenbrander et al., *Six designs for the Dutch Architectural Institute*, catalogue of the exhibition (Rotterdam: Dutch Architectural Institute, 1988), 10, 70.

Chapter 1.9

Figure 1: © OMA. In: Jacques Lucan (ed.), *OMA - Rem Koolhaas* (Princeton Architectural Press: New York, 1991), 119.

Figure 2: Slide shown by Mark Wigley in: 'What Just Happened? Revisiting Deconstructivist Architecture after 30 Years'. Lecture at TU Delft, held at 19 June 2018.

Figures 3-6: © Mali Olatunji. https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/1813?installation_image_index=0.

Figure 7: OMA. www.oma.eu.

Figure 8: <https://www.art-agenda.com/features/235949/les-immatériaux-a-conversation-with-jean-francois-lyotard-and-bernard-blistne>.

Figure 9: In: Aaron Betsky, *Violated Perfection. Architecture and Fragmentation of the Modern* (New York: Rizzoli, 1990), 85, 119, 138, 194, 137, 157, 193.

Figure 9 (top left): <https://www.stevenholl.com/projects/amerika-gedenkbibliothek>.

Chapter 1.10

Figures 1, 3-4, 6, 13-15: © OMA. HNI/OMAR.

Figure 2: <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/100486635406196893/>.

Figure 5, 8-11: © Yves Brunier. HNI/OMAR.

Figure 7: In: Peter Arnell, Ted Bickford (eds.), *Frank Gehry. Buildings and Projects* (New York: Rizzoli, 1985), 34-35, 84-85.

Figure 12: © Author.

Figure 16: © Gemeentewerke Rotterdam (Ingenieursbureau Groen), Archives Stadsontwikkeling Rotterdam.

Figure 17: © Gemeente Rotterdam. In: *Archis* 1 (1993), 32.

Chapter 2.1

Figures 1-2, 4-11, 13-18, 20-27: © OMA. HNI/OMAR.

Figures 3, 12: © HNI. HNI/OMAR.

Figure 19: HNI/Groosman Archive. In: Helma Hellinga et al., *Ernest Groosman* (Rotterdam: Uitgeverij 010, 2001), 78.

Chapter 2.2

Figure 1: Above: *El Croquis* 79 (1996), 133. Below: Ingrid Böck, *Six Canonical Projects. Essays on the History of Ideas* (Berlin: Jovis, 2015), 201.

Figure 2: Giuseppe Terragni, Pietro Lingeri. In: Ada Francesca Marcianò, *Giuseppe Terragni: opera complete 1925-1943* (Roma: Officina Edizioni, 1987), 219.

Figure 3: Le Corbusier. In: W. Boesiger, O. Stonorov (eds.), *Le Corbusier et Pierre Jeanneret. Oeuvre complete 1910-1929* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1995), vol. 1, 51.

Figure 4: Le Corbusier. In: Willy Boesiger (ed.), *Le Corbusier* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1991), 42-43.

Figure 5: Claude Parent. In: *AA Documents 3: The Function of the Oblique* (1996), 12.

Figure 6: Above: © Siegfried Mayska. State Government Düsseldorf. *Domus 632* (1982), 2-3. Below: © Arcaid – Richard Bryant. In: Robert Maxwell et al., *James Stirling Michael Wilford and Associates. Buildings and Projects 1975-1992* (Stuttgart: Verlag Hatje, 1994), 54.

Figure 7: Above: James Stirling. In: Robert Maxwell et al., *James Stirling Michael Wilford and Associates. Buildings and Projects 1975-1992* (Stuttgart: Verlag Hatje, 1994), 22. Below: Oswald M. Ungers. In: Cepl, Jasper, *Oswald Mathias Ungers. Eine intellektuelle Biographie* (Köln: Walther König, 2007), 320.

Figure 8: © Peter Eisenman.

Figure 9: In: Montaner, Josep Maria and Oliveras, Jordi, *The Museums of the Last Generation* (London: Academy Editions/ New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 102.

Figure 10: Chicago History Museum. Detlef Mertins, *Mies* (New York: Phaidon Press, 214), 433.

Figure 11: © OMA. Above: Rem Koolhaas, Bruce Mau, *S,M,L,XL* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1995), 1324-1325. Below: *El Croquis* 131/132 (2006), 440, 414.

Figure 12: © OMA. HNI/OMAR.

Figures 13, 15: © OMA. In: Rem Koolhaas, Bruce Mau, *S,M,L,XL* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1995), 1310-1311, 1306-1307, 442-443.

Figure 14: In: Cornelia H. Butler, Luis Pérez-Oramas (ed.), *Lygia Clark: The Abandonment of Art, 1948-1988* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2014), 198-199.

Figures 16-17: Constant. In: Mark Wigley, *Constant's New Babylon. The Hyper-Architecture of Desire* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1998), 210-211.

Figure 18: Alison and Peter Smithson. In: Alison and Peter Smithson, *Ordinariness and Light. Urban theories 1952-1960 and their application in a building project 1963-1970* (London: Faber and Faber, 1970), 50.

Figure 19: Above: Frank van Klingeren. Below: © Egidius van Dun. In: Marina van den Bergen, Piet Vollaard, *Hinder en ontklontering. Architectuur en maatschappij in het werk van Frank van Klingeren* (Rotterdam: Uitgeverij 010, 2003), 106, 185.

Chapter 2.3

Figures 1, 4-10, 13, 17, 21-29: © OMA. HNI/OMAR.

Figures 2, 15-16, 18: © Arup. HNI/OMAR.

Figures 3, 19-20: © Arup. Arup London Archives.

Figures 11-12: © Copro. HNI/OMAR.

Chapter 2.4

Figure 1: © John Körmeling. In: Cees de Boer, 'John Körmelings aanschouwlijke architectuur. Buiten de normen van het kunstbedrijf', *De Architect* (Sep 1989), 56.

Figure 2, 3 (below), 24: © Author.

Figure 3: Above: © D. Lemcke. Stadsarchief Rotterdam.

Figure 4: Above: <https://nl.pinterest.com/pin/407575835010274550/>. Below: 010 Publishers Archive. In: Hans van Dijk, *Twentieth-Century Architecture in the Netherlands* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1999), 162.

Figure 5: 010 Publishers Archive. In: van Dijk, Hans, *Twentieth-Century Architecture in the Netherlands* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1999), 161.

Figure 6: www.oma.eu.

Figure 7: © Hans Schouten. In: Bernard Leupen et al. (eds.), *Hoe modern is de Nederlandse architectuur?* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1990), 9.

Figure 8: © Nacasa & Partners Inc. <https://divisare.com/projects/335753-aldo-rossi-morris-adjmi-architects-nacasa-partners-inc-il-palazzo-hotel>

Figure 9: In: Lynn Fitzpatrick, Doug Hofius, (eds.), *Rem Koolhaas: conversations with students. Architecture at Rice 1991* (New York: Princeton University Press, 1991), 33.

Figure 10-12, 16-19: © OMA. www.oma.eu.

Figure 13: https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/history-jacques-delors-europe_V001-0022_ev.

Figure 14: © EC. Audiovisual Service.

Figure 15: © Reuters.

Figure 20, 23: *El Croquis* 53 (1992), 181, 119.

Figure 21: *ABC News*. Ronald Reagan marks birth of Prince William at White House press conference in June 1982.

Figure 22: © OMA. In: Rem Koolhaas, Bruce Mau, *S,M,L,XL* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1995), 659.

Chapter 2.5

Figures 1-7, 10-28, 29 (above), 30-31: © OMA. HNI/OMAR.

Figures 8-9: © Arup. Arup London Archives.

Figure 29 (below): In: Architekturmuseum Basel (ed.), *Charles Simonds. The Three Trees* (Basel: Architekturmuseum Basel, 1987), 14-17.

Chapter 2.6

Figures 1-2, 5, 8-9, 11-12, 14, 16-18, 20, 22-25, 26 (below), 27-28, 29, (above), 30, 33-39: © OMA. HNI/OMAR.

Figures 3, 6 (below): OMA, Archive Collection.

Figure 4: © Gemeentewerken Rotterdam.

Figure 6, 10, 13, 32 (below): © Hans Werlemann. www.oma.eu. *A+U* 287 (1994), 140, 138.

Figures 7 (above), 19 (above): © Waltraud Krase. *Bauwelt* 46 (1993), 2496-2497.

Figure 7 (below): *A+U* 287 (1994), 126-127.

Figure 13 (above): *El Croquis* 53 (1993), 122.

Figure 15: In: Kunsthal Rotterdam, *200 in 2000. Acht jaar Kunsthal Rotterdam* (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 2000). 'The Gate of the Present. Architectuurontwerpen in Lego', 27 February 1993 – 25 April 1993.

Figure 19 (below): *De Architect* 1 (1993), 43.

Figure 21: © Van Dool. HNI/OMAR.

Figure 26 (above): *a+t*/César San Millán.

Figure 29 (below): © Stone & Cladding Int. Bv.

Figure 31: © HNI. HNI/OMAR.

Chapter 2.7

Figure 1: Sergei Eisenstein. In: Luka Arsenjuk, *Movement, Action, Image, Montage. Sergei Eisenstein and the Cinema in Crisis* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 83.

Figure 2: John Heartfield. In: *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung*, 15 June 1931.

Figure 3, 4: Pablo Picasso. Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

Curriculum Vitae

Tibor Pataky
tibor.pataky@epfl.ch

- 01.2016 – **EPFL Lausanne, Prof. Christophe van Gerrewey, Architecture, Criticism, History, and Theory (Acht)**
PhD on the Rotterdam Kunsthal by OMA/Rem Koolhaas, funded by the SNSF
Essay, 'What the Author of Junkspace Told Mies in the Jungle', *Prometheus 2* (2019)
Doctoral Workshop, 'Europe and its Limits', gta, ETH Zurich, May 2018
Symposium 'Chicago Schools', IIT Chicago, November 2017
Reviews for *Werk, Bauen + Wohnen*
- 09.2015 – **Giuliani Hönger Architekten, Zurich**
10.2016
Master plan for Oerlikon Nord. Design architect, project manager (1st prize)
Conception of *Studio*, in collaboration with Quart Verlag, Lucerne
Essay, 'On a spatial category in the work of Giuliani Hönger', *Studio 1* (2016)
- 09.2014 – **Sabbatical, Zurich**
09.2015
Novel *Fruchtmann* about a student of Joseph Beuys. Kommode Verlag, 2015
Play, *Alkeste*, Deutscher Theater Verlag, 2015
- 01.2010 - **ETH Zurich, Prof. Markus Peter, Architecture and Construction**
08.2014
Research assistant, lectures and exams
With Markus Peter: Research based articles for the Chair's textbook on Gottfried Semper, Marcel Breuer, Henry van de Velde, and Jean Prouvé
09. 2008 - **ETH Zurich, Caruso St John Architects, visiting professors**
09. 2009
Teaching assistant, design studio
Novel *Befindlichkeiten*
- 10.2007 **Diener & Diener Architekten, Basel**
09.2008
manager
Siemenspark Munich. Housing, offices, Masterplan. Design architect, project manager
Yuntolovo Urban Design Competition, St. Petersburg. Design architect
Medernach Office Building Competition, Luxemburg. Design architect (1st prize)
07. 2005- **Sabbatical, Berlin**
07. 2007
Short writings, novel *Alex*
07. 2000 - **Giuliani Hönger Architekten, Zurich**
07. 2005
Männedorf High School. Design architect and project manager
Art Museum St. Gallen Competition. Leading design architect
Sihlhof Technical College, Zürich. Design and detailing of auditorium
02. 2000 **Von Gerkan Marg und Partner Architekten, Aachen**
08. 1998 - **Eun Young Yi, Architekt, Cologne**
12. 1999
Bibliothek 21, Library Competition, Stuttgart. Design architect (1st prize)
10. 1992 **RWTH Aachen, Diplom-Ingenieur**
07. 1999
Thesis with Prof. Jan Pieper, History of Architecture
10. 1995 - **IUAV Venice, Erasmus scholarship**
09. 1996
Design studio Prof. Bernardo Secchi, Prof. Carlo Aymonino