Readings/Rereadings

Delirious New York by Rem Koolhaas

Alberto Sdegno

On January 23, 1931, a brief notice was published in the New York Times in which it was reported that the annual Beaux Arts Ball would be held in the evening at the Hotel Astoria [AAVV 1931a]. This is the twelfth time that this event is repeated –the first was dedicated to the theme of Venice through the centuries, held in 1912– and it promises to be full of surprises. The ball will be masked, with a specific request to wear costumes "of the modern era" and in which "fantasy should be the note for subscribers to follow" [AAVV 1931a, p. 29].
Such an event would probably have remained unknown, if it had not been described by Rem Koolhaas in a short essay on *Oppositions* [Koolhaas 1974], the in-depth theoretical journal edited by Peter Eisenman, Mario Galdesonas and Kenneth Frampton, recently reissued in a collected work edited by Michael Hays [Koolhaas 1998]. The text takes its cue from an extravagant photograph of the evening in which American architects wear costumes that call to mind works of which they are authors (fig. 1) [1]. The eccentricity stands out especially in their headgear, which exemplifies, in the outline of a scale model, the stereometric shape of the architectures, some immediately recognizable.

Fig. 1. Architects at the Beaux Arts Ball at the Hotel Astoria in New York, 1931. From left: A. Stewart Walker (Fuller Building), Leonard Schultze (Waldorf-Astoria), Ely Jacques Kahn (Squibb Building), William Van Alen (Chrysler Building), Ralph Walker (One Wall Street), D.E. Ward (Metropolitan Tower), Joseph H. Freedlander (Museum of the City of New York).

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In the margin of the essay, a note states that the text is part of a book being published by Oxford University Press, scheduled for release in 1976, whose title will be *Delirious New York* [Koolhaas 1974, p. 92] [2]. Although the book will be published only two years after the date indicated in the essay on *Oppositions* [Koolhaas 1978a] –accompanied by an exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum in New York– this text anticipates the basic idea of the volume. Before the publication of the book, at least six other essays [Koolhaas 1976a, 1976b, 1977a, 1978b, 1978c, 1978d] anticipated some of its contents –as Marco Biraghi [Biraghi 2001, pp. 298-299] pointed out in the afterword to the Italian edition– of which the one on *L'architecture d'aujourd d'hui* [Koolhaas 1976a], replicates the same title chosen for the volume.
The suspicion that the title of the volume was also suggested to him by this bizarre –and in some ways delirious– photograph may come to anyone who finds himself analyzing the history of the text in its entirety. It is actually one of the countless images –about 10,000, often in the form of postcards– that Koolhaas had found, as he declared in an interview, also thanks to his frequentation of a club of postcard collectors –the Metropolitan Postcard Collectors Club– where he went to consult information archives, which allowed him to feed his research on New York. In fact, as he will admit, "one third of *Delirious New York* is based, both in its iconography and even for its information, on postcards I discovered there." [Colomina, Koolhaas 2007a, p. 355]. On the other hand, a specific chapter deals with the theme of the skyscraper [Koolhaas 2001, pp. 102-121], within which it is possible to find the image present in the essay on *Oppositions* and the extended narration of the event at the Hotel Astoria, although in the notes there is no trace of the reference to the 1974 essay. The image would be published a few years later by Manfredo Tafuri in the volume *La sfera e il labirinto* [Tafuri 1980, fig. 211], who, however, would dedicate to the discussion of the dance only a brief aside in a note [Tafuri 1980, p. 231, n. 43] citing the 1974 essay, while Koolhaas' book –published two years earlier, in 1978– would not be considered by the historian.
The architectural guises of the well-known designers cannot but evoke the visionary character of the city to which the buildings belong. New York is, perhaps, among contemporary metropolises the one that best lends itself to accepting this adjective as an identifier of its own singularity. That anticipatory essay, with good reason, could therefore be considered the natural prologue of the dense book that we are going to reread.

Structure of the book

With regard to the title, in addition to what we have said, it is also necessary to reflect on the interest in the figure of Salvador Dalí –which will be recalled at length in the volume– and the association with the artist's way of understanding this adjective. It is no coincidence that he will be grateful when he has to deal with the term in a sort of personal dictionary, under the heading Delirious: "I felt that Dalí was an essential intelligence of the twentieth century, one that had been written out of the script. And I felt I needed to reintroduce the word 'Delirious'" [Colomina, Koolhaas 2007b, p. 379].
The subtitle of the book, however, is clear enough: it is "A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan", i.e. a program that has effect for the past, since, if "the fatal weakness of manifestos is their inherent lack of evidence" [p. 9], in this case we are in the presence of a quite evident fact: "Manhattan's problem is the opposite: it is a mountain range of evidence without manifesto" [p. 9]. The reference to the mountainous dimension, with its geometric peaks and angular summits, is immediately felt from whatever point one observes the peninsula: be it from below, where both the sensation of disorientation and of crossing a canyon are evident; but even more so from above, where the vertical prisms are almost unrecognizable in the morphological value given by the individual designer, but clearly identifiable as threadlike volumetric emergencies, devoid of that natural charm that every mountain massif reserves for the experienced mountaineer and the beginner on a via ferrata. It is no coincidence that Manfredo Tafuri, in an essay published a few years before the book in question –and not quoted by Koolhaas– reserved for the theme the epithet of *disenchanted mountain* [Tafuri 1973], with a subtle reference to the famous novel by Thomas Mann [Mann 2005].
For the author, this urban concentration is "the 20th century's Rosetta Stone" [p. 9], i.e. the conversion table that allows the understanding of different languages, of which he could be considered –as a modern Champollion [3]– as the one who offers a possible interpretation. It is not difficult to perceive –in his words– the same enthusiasm of the mentioned French archaeologist intent on deciphering the well-known stele at the beginning of the nineteenth century, which turns into astonishment when he recognizes the presence in this part

of the city of "an unformulated theory, *Manhattanism*" [p. 10] that the author defines, shortly afterwards, as "to exist in a world totally fabricated by man, i.e., to live *inside* fantasy". The explicit goal is, therefore, to identify such a theory in order to "yield a formula for an architecture that is at once ambitious *and* popular" and to propose that "*ecstasy about architecture*" [p. 10], which evidently became the design principle of his architectural production, since, only a few years earlier, he had founded the *OMA – Office for Metropolitan Architecture*, with Elia and Zoe Zenghelis, and his wife Madelon Vriesendorp –soon to be joined by a young Zaha Hadid– which was to become a studio characterized by the use of architectural morphologies of great compositional articulation.

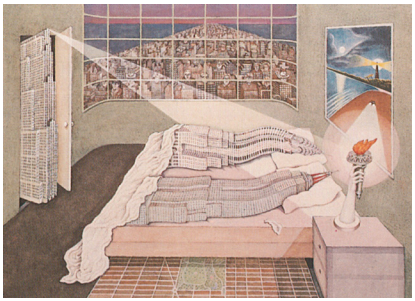
The structure of the book is stated from the outset: as he explicitly states, it is a book as a "simulacrum of the Manhattan's Grid: a collection of blocks whose proximity and juxtaposition reinforce their separate meanings" [p. 11], in which the first four chapters, after the introduction entitled *Prehistory*, are dedicated to describing urban evolution in the light of the different stimuli that arise from time to time, also through the precise analysis of single projects: *Coney Island: The Technology of the Fantastic*, *The Double Life of Utopia: The Skyscraper*, *How Perfect Perfection Can Be: The Creation of Rockefeller Center* and *Europeans: Biuer! Dalí and Le Corbusier Conquer New York*. These are followed by a final chapter, entitled *Postmortem*, with an obvious reference to a body no longer living –the "carcass of Manhattanism" [p. 290], as the author defines it in closing– and then the *Appendix: A Fictional Conclusion*, in which the critic is juxtaposed with the architect who –in collaboration with the other members of the aforementioned OMA– offers design proposals already formulated in the past and determined this time by a conscious understanding of the actual architectural needs of such an urban reality.

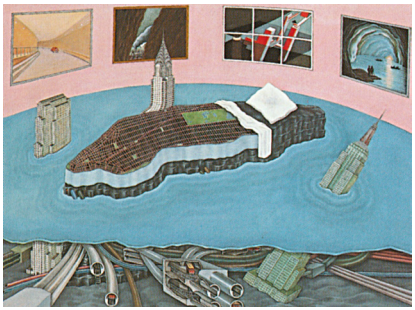
The role of the volume's most exclusive images cannot be overlooked, as they clarify the *intentio auctoris*, i.e. those sleeping skyscrapers –the Chrysler Building and the Empire State Building– signed by Vriesendorp [4] that appear on various editions of the book's covers: *Flagrant Délit*, (fig. 2) on the American, French and Japanese editions, and *Après L'Amour* (fig. 3), on the Italian edition, both made in 1975. Although these images have no reference to the psychoanalyst's couch –both subjects are lying on a normal double bed– they lend themselves well to evoke an explicit reference to the oneiric contents of these strange protagonists of the work and to their possible interpretation in the psychoanalytic field. Another figuration of the same one (fig. 4), produced in the year of the previous ones, recalls in the title *Freud Ulmimited* the reference to psychoanalysis, and exhibits a bed in the shape of the Manhattan peninsula –in which is recognizable the grid of the city– with a Chrysler Building next to it. All these single works, in fact, can be considered frames of a single animated sequence (fig. 5) of which the author herself writes the script, entitled *Flagrant Délit* (fig. 6) [5] that narrates –in evocative form– the visit of the Statue of Liberty to the city of New York, from which, among other things, it is clear that the two skyscrapers lying down had an intercourse, well underlined also by the presence of a deflated airship at the foot of the bed, evident symbol of a condom at the architectural scale.

Fig. 2. Madelon Vriesendorp, Flagrant Délit, 1975.

Fig. 3. Madelon Vriesendorp, Après L'Amour, 1975.

Fig. 4. Madelon Vriesendorp, Freud Ulmimited. 1976.





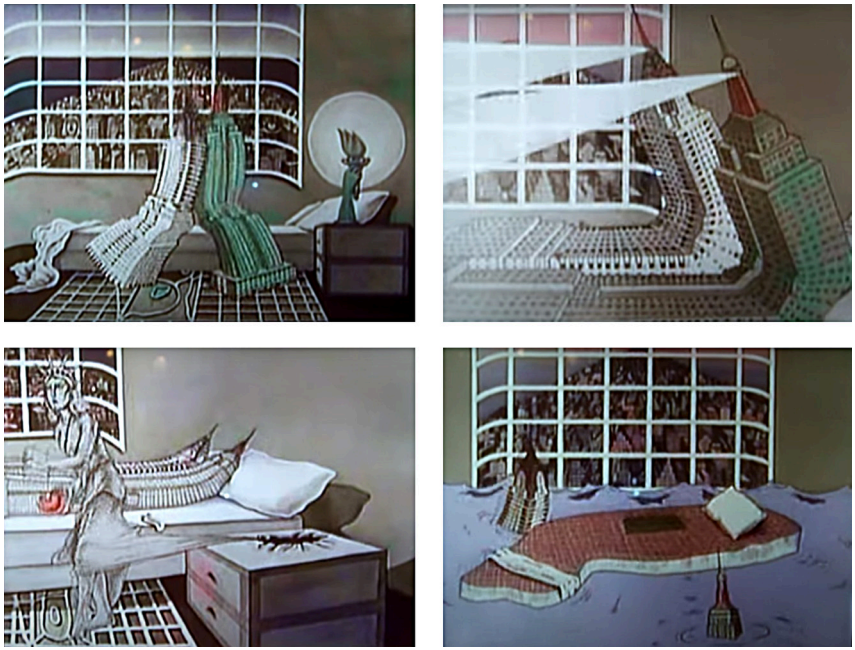


Fig. 5. Madelon Vriesendorp and Teri Wehn-Damisch, stills from the animation Flagrant Délit (Fragran de lit), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=87ZWWqf40J0> (accessed October 10, 2021).

It is unquestionable that, next to the photograph of the Beaux Arts ball we mentioned at the beginning, such figurations should also be included: in both cases, evidently, fundamental assumptions in the conception and writing of the whole volume.

New York Visions

We will not linger to comment on every single chapter, nor would we be tempted to reread the many subsequent design achievements in the light of what is present in this anticipatory text; instead, we will try to understand the elements of visionary spirit that are perceptible in the text, which constitute –in our opinion– the true innovative contribution that made this volume a point of reference for many architects of that and subsequent generations. Think, for example, of the description of the great physical model of New York, exhibited in the same city in 1845 [p. 20] and then moved with traveling exhibitions to other locations. Defined by an advertisement reported by the author as the "counterpart to the great Metropolis" [p. 21], it presents architecture –in the words of Koolhaas– as "Manhattan's new religion" [p. 21]. So even Central Park, the large central leisure area, becomes "a synthetic Arcadian Carpet" [p. 21], to which is added a precise description of the suburban area of Coney Island, the epiphany of mass entertainment of the New York population. It is perhaps no coincidence that Koolhaas pauses to detail all the possible stratagems of that universe of distraction present on the island: from the elephant "as big as a church" [p. 34], which could be visited by tourists; to Luna Park [pp. 36-42], the extraordinary and ingenious inven-

tion that led the two creators, Frederic Thompson –with previous studies in architecture– and Elmer Dundy, to give body to a large amusement park, such that the same name, even today, identifies any place of entertainment equipped with suspended and dynamic structures to provide strong sensations to users. But Thompson will declare – quoted by Koolhaas– that he "built Luna Park on a definite architectural plan. As it is a place of amusement, I have eliminated all classical conventional forms from its structure and taken a sort of free Renaissance and Oriental type for my model […] in order to get the restive, joyous effect to be derived always from the graceful lines given in this style of architecture" [p. 39]. An "architectural plantation" [p. 41] as Koolhaas will call it, which constantly modifies its appearance, and which will give shape to a "magical city" [p. 42]. The author recalls that Thompson, after the experience of Coney Island, will focus his attention on Manhattan, as will other investors on the suburban area: think of George C. Tilyou and his *Steeplechase Park*, anticipator of *Luna*, or even Wilson H. Reynolds and his *Dreamland*, which will host some singular attractions: Lilliputia, a city with three hundred dwarfs as part of a community on a reduced scale, with the architecture to measure the size of its inhabitants; the *Fall of Pompeii*, with the simulation of the eruption of Vesuvius; the spectacle of domesticated animals in the circus; and also *The Canals of Venice* –"a gigantic model of Venice inside a reduced version of the Ducal Palace" [p. 55] [6]–, the *Coasting Through Switzerland*, with a miniature reproduction of the country or *Fighting the Flames*, in which it is simulated the intervention of shrewd firefighters intent on putting out a fire.

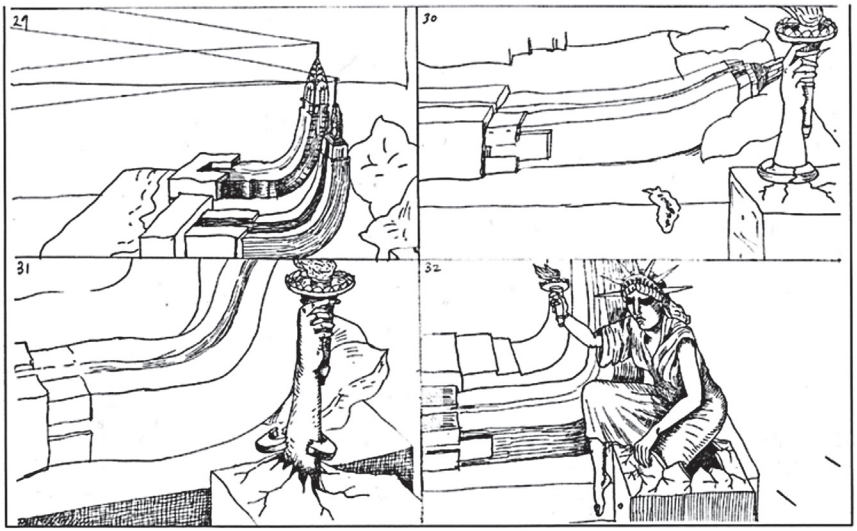


Fig. 6. Madelon Vriesendorp and Teri Wehn-Damisch, storyboards for the animation Flagrant Délit (Fragran de lit), <https://www.madelonvriesendorp.com/copy-of-postcards> (accessed October 10, 2021).

Skyscrapers

But the chapters that are undoubtedly the most interesting are those dedicated to the skyscraper, an architectural entity that will see its full development at the beginning of the 20th century, even if significant precursors can be identified during the previous century. The design and construction of some significant New York *exempla* are described and commented by the author in a timely manner, enhancing the morphological qualities and urban impact, including through quotations of the time. Thus, the Flatiron Building of 1902 becomes "the first icon of the *double life of utopia*" [p. 88], for replicating for twenty-two stories the shape of the lot; the Equitable Building of 1915 is called by the builders "a new continent" [p. 88] and advertised as a "City in itself" [p. 89]; the Metropolitan Life Building of 1893, will be joined in 1909 by a skyscraper with 39 levels, shaped like the Venetian bell tower of San Marco, having on the ridge of the roof a light projector: "a ruby red nipple that caps the structure is supposed, through prearranged signals, to communicate time weather conditions to imaginary mariners on the Atlantic" [pp. 93, 94].

Koolhaas also identifies an obvious feature that will increasingly be considered by design in that area, which he calls "lobotomy": it is the clear separation of interior and exterior, such that the façade conceals the interior destination. "In the deliberate discrepancy between container and contained" – comments the author– "New York's makers discover an area of unprecedented freedom. They exploit and formalize it in the architectural equivalent of a lobotomy – the surgical sever-

Fig. 7. Hugh Ferriss in his studio, c.a 1929.

ance of the connection between the frontal lobes and the rest of the brain to relieve some mental disorders by disconnecting thought processes from emotions" [p. 100]. Here is unhinged, then, the principle formulated by Louis H. Sullivan –so dear to his pupil Frank Lloyd Wright– which prescribes that the form must follow the function, an imperative respected by many architects of the twentieth century. An obvious example is the Waldorf-Astoria and the Empire State Building: for the latter, among others, a new formula is used: "The Empire State Building is a form of *automatic architecture*, a sensuous surrender by its collective makers –from the accountant to the plumber– to the *process* of building" [p. 139], in which is manifested "a surrender to the *process* of writing unhindered by the author's critical apparatus […] with no other program than to make a financial abstraction" [p. 139]. "Pure product of process," Koolhaas concludes, "Empire State can have no content. The building is sheer *envelope*" [p. 141] and, quoting a book of the time produced for promotional purposes [AAVV 1931b], he reports, "Empire State seemed almost to float, like an enchanted fairy tiwer, over New York. An edifice so lofty, so serene, so marveloously simple, so luminously beautiful, had never been before been imagined. One could look back on a dream well-planned" [pp. 141-143].

Speaking of skyscrapers, two important contents are not overlooked: the first is related to the dance we have been talking about, whose image (fig. 1), already commented on, evokes the authorial role that the architect is assuming in the context of sociality. The text on *Oppositions* is in this case dilated, to adapt to the occasion offered by the publication in volume

[pp. 125-131]. The second one considers the role of a significant figure for the definition of an urban imaginary that will be fundamental for the city of New York: Hugh Ferriss. An extraordinary draughtsman of architecture, Ferriss used the charcoal technique to depict any project proposed by even very different clients, so much so that his drawings "represent Manhattan's architecture, regardless of the individual architect who designed each project" [p. 113] (figs. 7, 8). Described as the "perfect *automatic pilot*" by Howard Robertson –future president of the RIBA in London– he "can pump perspective poetry into the most unpromising composition" [p. 113] as Koolhaas reports. A forerunner of synthetic computer images, he found in evocative rather than realistic figurations the key to transform simple parallelepipeds into artistic representations with a strong oneiric connotation, which would be collected in a book [Ferriss 1929].

Ferriss would later play a fundamental role in the prefiguration of many other projects, including those by Raymond M. Hood, creator of Rockefeller Center. Hood, who had previously won, with John M. Howells, the competition for the Chicago Tribune Tower, theorizes a turreted development for NY, making it explicit in an imperative: *a City of Towers*, which he will realize in a series of works such as the skyscraper of the American Radiator, that of the Daily News and that for McGraw-Hill, to which Koolhaas always gives an accurate description. Of the last mentioned, in fact, he observes that "its golden shades pulled-down to reflect the sun […] it looks like a fire raging inside an iceberg: the fire of Manhattanism inside the iceberg of Modernism" [p. 171].

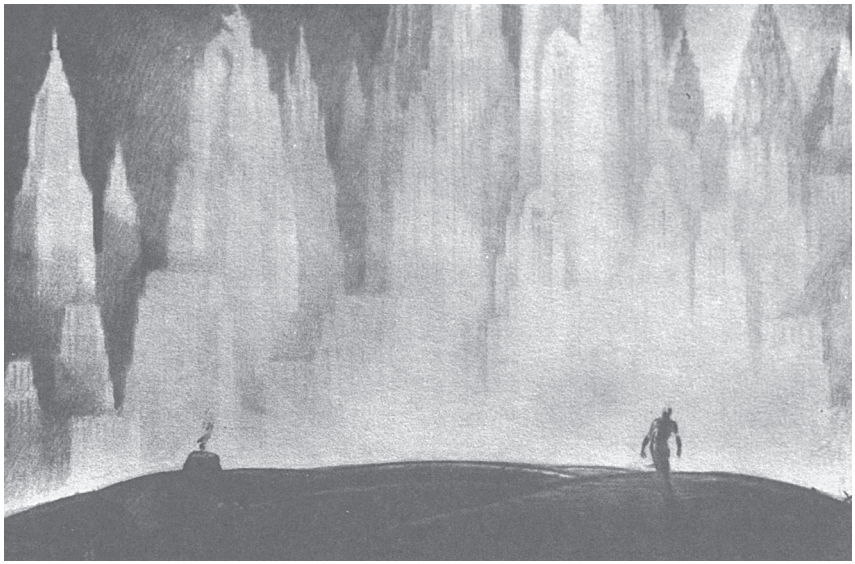
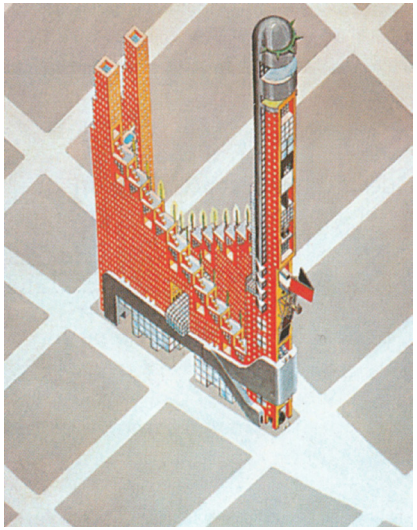


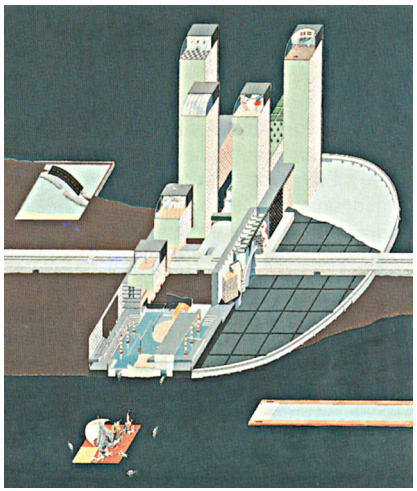
Fig. 8. Hugh Ferriss, The Lure of the City, 1929.

The complex story of Rockefeller Center is then carefully analyzed, even in the different design solutions provided by Associated Architects, among which those of Hood and Harvey Corbet are certainly the most representative and utopian. As Koolhaas recalls, in fact: "Ferriss' renderings bring only the Venetian elements of Corbett's scheme into sharp focus: a Bridge of Sighs spans 49th Street; San Marco-like colonnades […]. The other outlines of the scheme disappear in a mist of charcoal particles" [p. 185]. The various hypotheses are analyzed and commented on by the author, emphasizing the most evocative and visionary aspects. In Project No. 2, for example, he emphasizes "a fantastic ground floor entirely occupied by a more and more theaters: a three-block ocean of red velvet chairs, acres of stage and backstage, square miles of projection screens" [p. 199] commenting then on the "enormous suspended lobby" [p. 199] commenting later that "the antecedents of this theatrical carpet are Steeplechase, Luna Park, and Dreamland" [p. 199] already discussed at length earlier. We have to remember, although not mentioned in the book, that the construction of this important part of New York City was well documented by a series of photographs and films showing workers balancing on beams and slabs hundreds of feet above ground: the image of eleven of them intent on lunching on a suspended beam –entitled *Lunch atop a Skyscraper*– has remained in the collective imagination for the communicative effectiveness of the subject, immediately published in the Sunday supplement of the *New York Herald*

Fig. 9. OMA (Elia e Zoe Zenghelis), Hotel Spinx, 1975-1976.

Fig. 10. OMA (Rem Koolhaas and Derrick Snare, Richard Perlmutter), Welfare Palace Hotel, 1976 (painting by Madelon Vriesendorp).





Tribune of October 2, 1932, also for advertising purposes.

Dalí and Le Corbusier

At the conclusion of the New York events, Koolhaas pauses to reflect on the gaze of two authors, Salvador Dalí and Le Corbusier, after arriving in Manhattan. Although they are very different from each other "Dalí abhors modernism, Le Corbusier despises Surrealism" [p. 246], they have some elements in common, including their working methods. If the former based his research on the 'Paranoid-Critical Method', defined by the artist himself as "the spontaneous method of irrational knowledge based on the critical and systematic objectifications of delirious associations and interpretations" [p. 237] [Bosquet 1969, p. 115], i.e. an approach with strong dreamlike and provocative connotations, the latter often employs hyperbole to demolish established concepts and propose new ones. On the one hand, Dalí is so enchanted by the city that he considers it a sort of retroactive monument to his figure; on the other hand, Le Corbusier denigrates it, with the famous phrase "Its skyscrapers are too small" [p. 224] reported by the New York Herald Tribune on October 22, 1935, after the interview he gave to the newspaper upon his arrival in New York, a phrase that will be reproposed in a specific chapter in his book *Quand les Cathédrales étaient blanches* [Le Corbusier 1937]. "For Le Corbusier", Koolhaas recalls, quoting the architect, "New York's Skyscrapers are 'child's play,' 'an architectural accident… Imagine a man undergoing a mysterious disturbance of his organic life; the torso remains normal, but his legs become ten or twenty too long…"' [p. 251], adding that "skyscrapers are 'misshapen adolescents of the machine age' […] immature, *not yet* modern" [p. 251]. But after the theoretical demolition phase, Le Corbusier proposes his solution: "When he finally 'introduces' his anti-Skyscraper, he is like a prestidigitator who accidentally gives his trick away: he makes the American skyscraper disappear in the black velvet pouch of his speculative universe, adds jungle […], then shakes up the incompatible elements in his Paranoid-Critical top hat and –surprise!– pulls out the *Horizontal* Skyscraper, Le Corbusier's Cartesian rabbit" [p. 253].

It is perhaps no coincidence that downstream of Le Corbusier's reflection there is a short chapter, before the appendix, dedicated to *Postmortem*. Just as the French-Swiss architect wished for the end of the American metropolis in order to be able to completely renew the area with its Cartesian skyscrapers, so the last pages of the book reserve the analysis of new geometries, which emerged in the postwar period, and which are expressed in a different way with respect to what was described earlier. The parable of the X-City of Wallace K. Harrison, for example, seems to be the beginning of an epilogue of the parallelepiped form that has characterized New York for many years, where the curve –instead of the straight line– seems to be considered as a possible other morphological solution, in its different components, both planimetric and altimetric. Finally, the author recalls how at the center of the 1964 World Exposition was the Unisphere, an ideal model of the planet, with the emerged lands resting like opaque sheets on the transparent sphere, which cannot but raise in the same the concluding sentence: "Like charred pork chops, the

continents cling desperately to the carcass of Manhattanism" [p. 290].

Projects for New York

The appendix is "A Fictional Conclusion" [p. 292], as the title that the author reserves for us at the end of the work recites: it is all aimed at describing in evocative, but also explicit form, some of the projects realized by the OMA studio in the years in which he is writing the book. It is not a question of the revolutionary synthesis proposed by Le Corbusier, which subverts the centennial equilibrium of a context with a strong anthropological characterization, but a possible answer to the questions raised in the preceding pages: "these proposals –the author affirms– are the provisional product of Manhattanism as a conscious doctrine whose pertinence is no longer limited to the island of its invention" [p. 293], that is to say, "an interpretation of the same material, not through words, but in a series of architectural projects" [p. 293]. Included as fundamental characters are those that have emerged from the previous analyses: for example, the theme of the urban grid and the lobotomy –that is, the interior-exterior separation described above– along with other considerations. Among the projects we can point out The City of the Captive Globe, a configuration set on a rigorous geometric scheme, based on parallelepiped-shaped granite blocks on which it is possible to place dissimilar volumes that rise without limits towards the sky; the Hotel Spinx (fig. 9) [pp. 297-299], located in front of Times Square, a futuristic project that –even respecting the reticular grid– develops unusual forms and equally eccentric contents, such as a swimming pool at the top of the highest tower, covered by a mobile planetarium; but also the Welfare Palace Hotel (fig. 10) [pp. 282-284] located on Roosevelt Island, formerly called Welfare Island and renamed by Koolhaas with the old title to which he added the suffix 'New'. In this case he speaks of "Cities within Cities" [p. 296], characterized by a series of seven vertical and two horizontal buildings, which also relate directly to the surrounding environment. In some cases, in fact, the architectures continue their sedimentation in the water to become "water-scrapers" [p. 304], as they are defined, that is, volumes that continue in the East River.

At the end of what we have commented, we must remember Cinthia Davidson's interview with Rem Koolhaas published in *Any* journal, edited by her, and dedicated to the theme *Writing in Architecture*. On that occasion Koolhaas returned to the architectural structure of the book, already discussed in the introduction, and to the importance he attributes to the text, also in prefiguring an architectural project, confirming the very close link that binds a written content to a graphic one, which we can summarize in the following words, which unequivocally clarify –if there was still a need– the initial intention of the work: "I wanted to construct –as a writer– a terrain where I could eventually work as an architect" [Koolhaas 1993, p. 42].

Notes

[1] In addition to the above image, you can also find on *Youtube* a short video that shows the participants moving in their unusual clothes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ezXbJ6DMwA> (accessed October 10, 2021).

[2] All quotations are taken from the American edition [Koolhaas 1994], to which reference is made by indicating only the number of pages.

[3] Jean-François Champollion (1790-1832), French archaeologist. Thanks to his knowledge of many ancient languages he was able to decipher in 1822 the hieroglyphics, with the comparison of three texts –in hieroglyphic, demotic and Greek– present on the Rosetta Stone.

[4] Madelon Vriesendorp's series of dormant skyscrapers can be found on the same author's website: <https://www.madelonvriesendorp.com/newyorkseries> (accessed October 10, 2021).

[5] The animation *Flagrant Delit* is conceived by Vriesendorp in 1976, in collaboration with Teri Wehn-Damisch, for French television, then developed by Cartoon Farm, directed by Jean-Pierre Jacquet. Some frames are recognizable in Vriesendorp's paintings, as it is clear from an analysis of the storyboard present at: <https://www.madelonvriesendorp.com/copy-of-postcards> (accessed October 10, 2021), while on *Youtube* it is possible to view the video recorded on the occasion of the 2008 traveling exhibition, held at the Architectural Association in London and then at the Aedes Gallery in Berlin, entitled World of Madelon Vriesendorp <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=87ZWWqf40J0> (accessed October 10, 2021). A catalog edited by Shuman Basar and Stephan Trüby [Basar, Trüby 2008] was also published on the occasion of the exhibition. We point out that the title of the storyboard turns out to be *Fragran de lit*, with a subtle play on words and meanings with respect to the stated title.

[6] Venice has always been fascinated by American entrepreneurship: consider that in the same years as the aforementioned experience in Coney Island, Abbott Kinney gave life to *Venice*, an urbanized area west of Los Angeles, in which palaces and canals, similar to those in Venice, constitute the main urban structure, populated by gondolas and characters in typical costume; but also to *The Venetian*, the largest hotel in the United States, located on the Las Vegas Strip, created by Sheldon Gary Adelson in 1999, in which it is possible to find structures that replicate, among others, the Doge's Palace, the Rialto Bridge and the San Marco Bell Tower.

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