TOWARDS NON-PLACES THROUGH POSTMODERNISM

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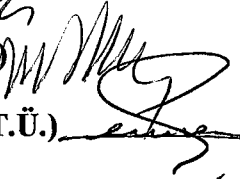
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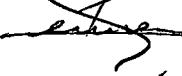Supervisor (Chairman):   Prof. Dr. Hülya YÜREKLİ

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POSTMODERNİZM İLE MEKANSIZLAŞMAYA DOĞRU

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. THE PASSAGE FROM MODERNITY TO POSTMODERNITY

> Does all these need an explanation? Is there any other explanation than the context of a world devoted to advertisements, overproduction and horoscopes? [1, p.34]

Hal Foster, in the introduction of his book *Postmodern Culture* says that modernity, because it is a cultural construct based on special conditions, as an ideology has a 'historical limit'. And then asks:

> "Postmodernism: does it exist at all and, if so, what does it mean? Is it a concept or a practice, a matter of local style or a whole new period or economic phase? What are its forms, effects, place? How are we to mark its advent? Are we truly beyond the modern, truly in (say) a postindustrial age?" [2, p.ix]

Elitism versus populism, high versus low, avant-garde versus kitsch, individual versus mass production, these distinctions, which are mentioned in the book Installation Art by Michael Archer, between the art world and the social world fade away in this century. [3, p.11] This change took place in every discipline, in every field. The name of the change differs from field to field but what can obviously and without any doubt be said that there is a change. The beginning of this research is generally about to mark this change in the society. Therefore it is useful to take a look at the period just before postmodernism which is called by David Harvey as 'the passage from modernity to postmodernity'. [4]

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It is possible to say that the reason therefore was the 'creative destruction' which existed with the question 'what the eternal and immutable might be about in the midst of all the ephemerality, fragmentation, and patent chaos of modern life'. After asking that question with the influence of Nietzsche, 'creative destruction' became the nature of modernity. Or to use the words of Frank Lloyd Wright: "comprehend the spirit of his age but also initiate the process of changing it." [4]

Meanwhile, because of the industrial revolution, the lifestyle of the most people changed. With the scientific revolution the people passed through two world wars using new communications and military technologies. In physics Planck's revised quantum theory and Einstein's relativiteit theory, in philosophy Saussure's structuralist linguistics, Husserl's phenomenology served as the background for the further period. [6] Marx argues that there is a structural difference between the cultural institutions and economical production powers of the society. The changes in the substructure; such as in the economical production fields form the basic of the superstructure; the social fields that contain such as religion, art, politics, etc. The superstructure resists to the changes more than the substructure but by time these changes in the substructure determine the changes in superstructure. The examples which are mentioned above show some of these substructural changes. The rest of this chapter is around one striking point in the art world of this period that gives an introduction to the following themes in the coming chapters. It is an important example to show the problem of representation, the loss of 'aura' and as a result of the loss of distinctions.

Starting with Cezanne, the world of art faced with the question of *representation of the real*. Art could not be the result of what we were seeing anymore but from now on it was the result of what we were perceiving. In the paintings of Picasso, human body and environment are not separate figures anymore, they have strong effects on each other, they effect each other and at the end they penetrate into each other.

Then the question of presentation came to the stage. How was it possible to present the unpresentable? The concept was not enough to represent the real, so the concept had to be set free from all the reality. With his abstract paintings Mondrian purified himself from the association of representation ideas. Only then the *presentation of the unpresentable* was possible.

When Duchamp presents his ready-made, he was opening the question of *'presentation'* of the art work. If we remove a "ready-made" out of its original surrounding, function and meaning, it could be presented as an "art work". To treat a mass product like that meant to treat the aura of art work with contempt. (Un)Fortunately what Duchamp wanted to say about mass products did not reach its aim. Mass production and reproducibility made the original more valuable. Andy Warhol approached the question of the 'presentation' from another way. In his works the aura was reproduced so much that its value was almost lost. Every reproduction itself became the real. In postmodern society every reproduction is taking the reality of the one before, the first reproduction of the original is not the same as the original.

One of the important reason for this story of change was the invention of the photography. Unlike before, it was not anymore the painting which was representing the real, but the photograph. Another interesting example for this change is in cinema. Just like photography is taking in one sense the place of the painting, cinema took the place of the panoramas more radically. The panoramas were travelling exhibitions only with one painting, with a view on the seaside or city, a religious theme or a battle where the audience felt himself at the center of the whole happening. (Figure 1.1, 1.2)
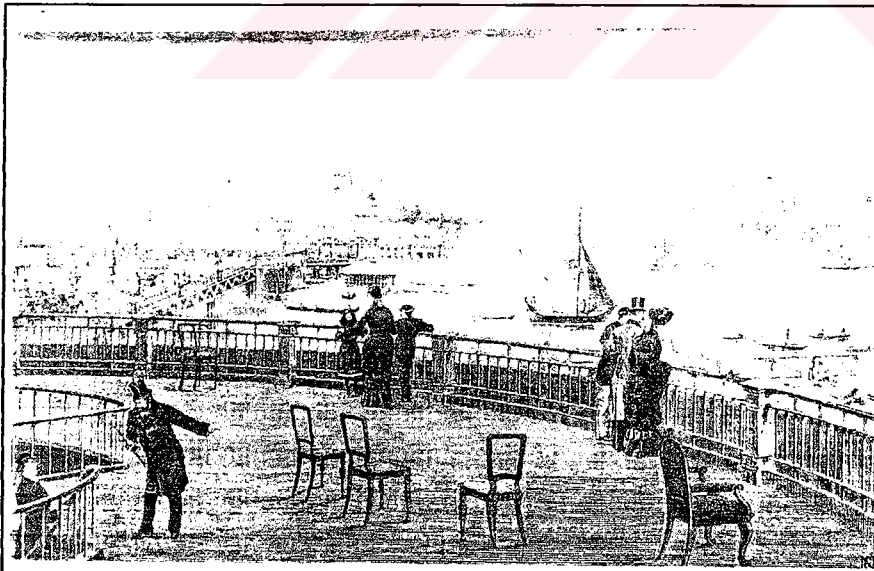
Figure 1.1   "Panorama of Constantinople", 1883 (Het Panorama Fenomen Catalogue, 1981)
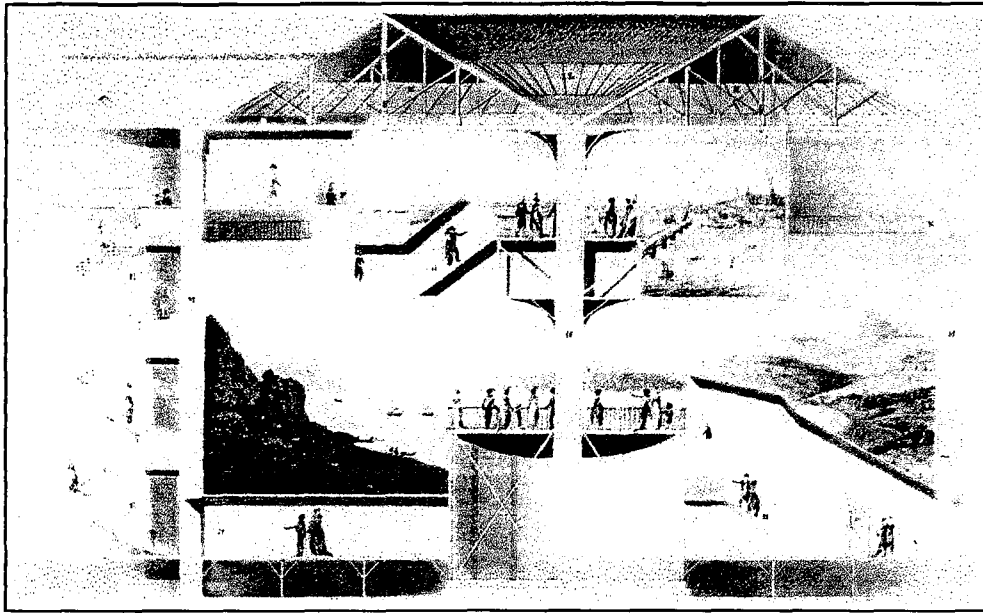
Figure 1.2   Panorama with two floors exhibiting 'London' and 'Spithead' (Het Panorama
                Fenomen Catalogue, 1981)

The buildings where in they were exhibited were round and the painting was covering this 360° wall, without letting us to know where the beginning or the end of the painting. In front of the painting, between the audience and the painting there was a space left to place some three dimensional objects related to the painting. (Figure 1.3, 1.4) That was making the perspective deeper and giving the panoramas their very special, borderless, three dimensional effect. The audience, beginning with their entrance to the building were going into another atmosphere. First the visitors were passing through a dark tunnel, climbing the stairs and finally coming to the platform. (Figure 1.5) The people were the sunrise and sunset in the scene by climbing and going down the stairs. All these small details were belonging to the special atmosphere of the panorama. What Walter Benjamin is talking about in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* is this atmosphere, more precisely, 'aura'. [5] He is saying that with the 'mass reproduction' the aura is not existing anymore. The work of art had always been reproduced; students reproduced their works to practice, masters reproduced their originals to become prevalent. But mechanical reproduction is different than these kind of reproductions. The changing technical capacity to reproduce, distribute and sell books and images to mass audiences, linked with the invention of photography and film, radically changed the material conditions of the artists' existence and therefore, their social and political role. (Figure 1.6)

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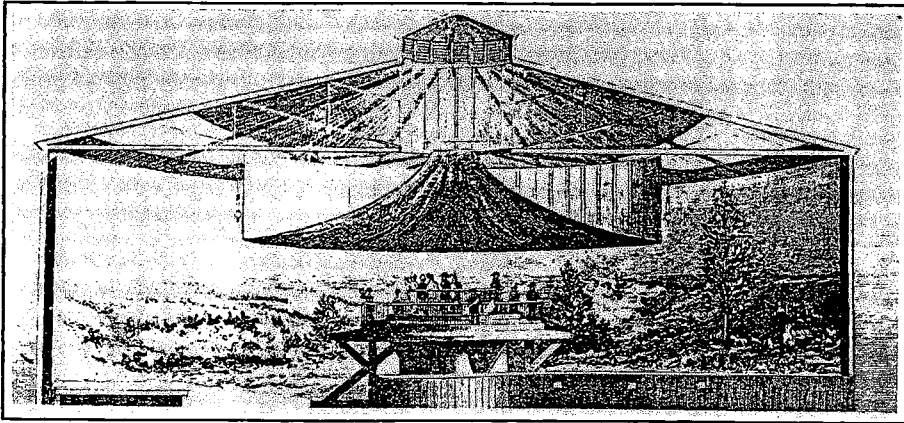
Figure 1.3   Section of a panorama (Het Panorama Fenomen Catalogue, 1981)
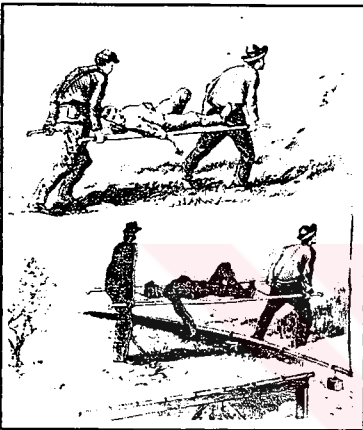
Figure 1.4   Third dimension disappears in two dimensional painting

A.   Entrance
B.   Dark corridor
C.   Observers platform
D.   View-angle
E.   360 degree painting
F.   Front space
G.   Painting
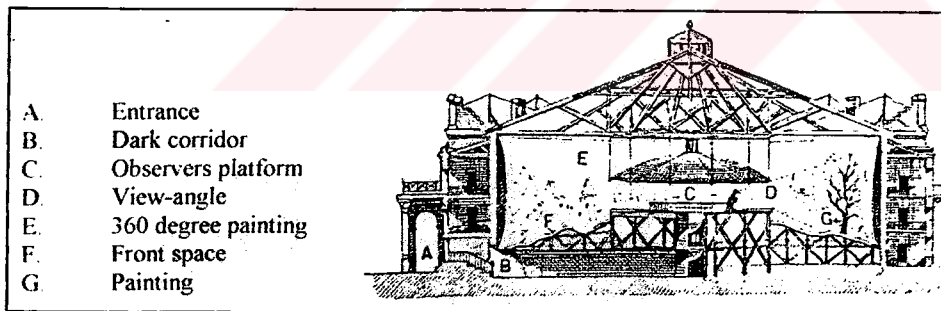
Figure 1.5   Section of a panorama (Het Panorama Fenomen Catalogue, 1981)
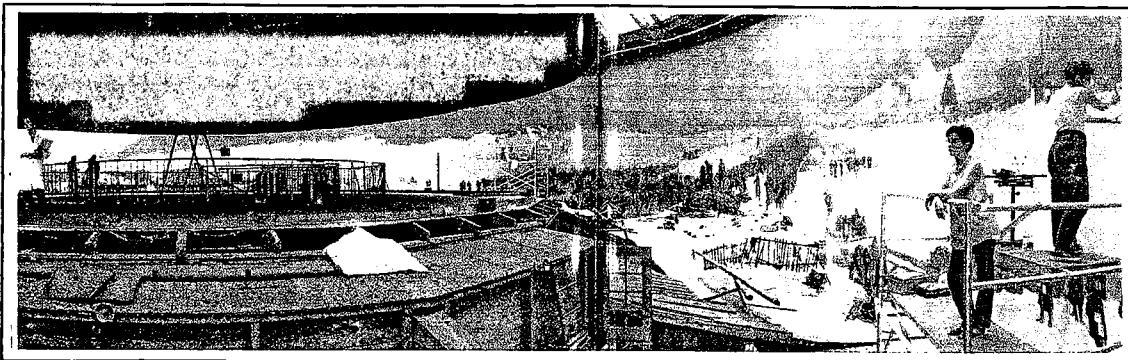
Figure 1.6   A Photo from Jeff Wall, Restoration

To determine the rough outlook of the following themes, this brief look to the subjects of representation, reproduction and loss of aura is important. This point of representation is important because it gives an end to the 'objective reality' and the construction of a new sign systems and imaginary, which is an important aspect of the postmodern condition arises. And this new construction involves the production of simulacra; replications of originals more real, or hyperreal, than the original. [4] This example of the difference between painting and photography or panoramas and cinema shows us that almost everything can be reproduced.

> "By 'simulacrum' is meant a state of such near perfect replication that the difference between the original and the copy becomes almost impossible to spot. The production of images as simulacra is relatively easy, given modern technologies. Insofar as identity is increasingly dependent upon images, this means that the serial and recursive replications of identities becomes a very real possibility and problem." [4]

It is also important to show us an example of how the other disciplines judged their roots in the "passage from modernity to postmodernity". Because afterwards this point of judgement will be the main issue of discussion for architecture.

> "Architecture was one of the first disciplines to go into crisis when faced with the new needs and desires of postmodern society. The reason is: given its direct incidence on daily life architecture could not elude the practical verification of its users. Modern architecture was judged by: the modern city, the suburbs without quality, the loss of local character, the similarity between the places." [7]

CHAPTER 2

(POST)MODERNISM

2.1. POSTMODERNISM

'Postmodern', postmodernity' and 'postmodernism' are terms which we quite often come across in the last years. But what do they exactly mean? Are these terms referring to a concept, an idea, a new style or a totally new period? Are these terms based on a theoretic, aesthetic or a social-economic ground? Or are they mentioning the same 'change'? The answer to the last question is for sure negative. In his book *Thinking about Art, An Introduction to the Art Philosophy* Antoon van den Braembussche makes the difference between these terms clear. [8] In this study this classification is used where according to him, postmodern refers to the concepts of theory, postmodernity to culture and postmodernism to art.

> What is so new about all of this? Do we really need the concept of a postmodernism? ... my point here is that until the present day those things have been secondary or minor features of modernist art, marginal rather than central, and that we have something new when they become the central features of cultural production. [9]

Because it has been attached to so many different kinds of intellectual, social and artistic phenomena, it will be a mistake to search for a single, essential meaning for postmodernism. What is more important than to search for a single and essential meaning for postmodernism is that there are some important developments happening in this age which deserves examination and postmodernism deals with them.

Before theorising the terms 'postmodern', 'postmodernity' and 'postmodernism', there will be mentioned two other approaches which are still talking about modernity. For sure in different ways, but it is important to study them because these approaches give the leading clues to postmodernism. One is saying that modernity and postmodernity are existing together and bounded with each other with a "special critical relationship" while the other is saying that modernity is an "incomplete project" which still has to be completed or extended.

2.1.1. THE END OF MODERNITY OR AN INCOMPLETE PROJECT

Has modernity really come to a closing point, or has it changed in its appearance? Before coming to this question it is necessary to take a look to the terms which Gianni Vattimo uses and which are helpful when we are talking about postmodernity. According to Vattimo the roots of postmodernity goes until Nietzsche's 'European nihilism' and Heideggers ontology. European nihilism is concerned with resolution and dissolution of truth into value. This dissolution stops when all the claims of the traditional metaphysical truth (God, soul, etc.) changes into no less subjective values than other beliefs or opinions. The aim of nihilism is to show that all those metaphysical truths are subjective values of the individual and all systems of reason are systems of persuasion and logic is not more than rhetoric. European nihilism contends also the "philosophy of difference". In the philosophy of difference everything we encounter in our experiences is not more than interpretations and we interpret them in our terms subjective values. Thus the only world we can ever know is a world of interpretations.[10]

Since Plato Being and truth were conceived as stable values, with Vattimo's non-metaphysical concept of Being and truth this comprehension changes. He sees Being and truth as *events* rather than as objects with permanence and stability. It means that truth can be experienced by us, but it can never be transmitted to a kind of rational knowladge. To treat truth like that is to transform it into an object rather than to preserve it as something that *occurs* in the unique circumstances of each encounter. It is necessary to realise that in modernity Being has been reduced to 'exchange-value' and nihilism itself is not other than the 'reduction of Being to exchange-value.' [10, p.22] So all values must stand in an equivalence, all values are equal to each other

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and can be converted, exchanged to another value. So the system of values becomes an infinite process of transformation, in which no value is higher than the other one. Vattimo says that it can be said that the true nature of all value is exchange-value; in this flux of values that the traditional metaphysical Being began to dissolve and disappear.

For Vattimo the generalization of exchange-value is by no means an unlucky event for humanity. On the contrary, the loss of the conditions which made authenticity and genuinity possible predicts 'a possible new human experience' [10, p.26] rather than nothingness and alienation. This experience which may be called postmodern has its origin in the reduction of everything and may be defined as the *infinite interpretability* of reality. In a situation which all the values are exchangable for others, every human subject is in an endless labour of interpretation. Without a highest value humanity is left in a world of interpretation. If every experience is reduced to an interpretation in contemprory existence, from the effects of science and technology to the 'true' and 'real' themselves, then the former 'strong' categories of thought (truth, Being and logic) have been 'weakened', for they have been turned into a *fictional* experience. We have to open ourselves to a 'fictionalized experience of reality which is also our own possibility for freedom' at the end of modernity. 'Weak thought' metaphor serves to explain postmodernity which is concerned with this fictionalised experience of reality, *"hermeneutic ontology"*. [10, p.29] For hermeneutic ontology "is nothing other than the interpretation of our condition or situation, since Being is nothing outside of its 'event', which occurs when we historicize ourselves or it historicize itself."

Vattimo says: "What characterizes the point of view of modernity itself is 'the idea of history' ". The modernity term which he uses here refers to the distinguishable qualifications of the positivist and historicist culture of mid-to-late nineteenth century Europe. Vattimo agrees with Nietzsche and Heidegger about the questioning of the heritage of European thought and the culture of modernity. But disagrees with them about the refusal of "overcoming" of it. Nietzsche and Heidegger reject on the principles of modernity but saying that "overcoming" belongs to the same system and has to be rejected also. According to them it is not possible to overcome a system with the philosophical thought and language supplied by the same system. Since no system can overcome the errors of modernity, we have to continue to use the existing

system. This is the quandary which blocks the way of Nietzsche and Heidegger but this is also the quandary which helps Vattimo to describe postmodernity. Vattimo describes postmodernity itself as a "special critical relationship with Western thought" which works to dissolve the culture of modernity. He does not call postmodernity as a philosophy which comes after the end of modernity or as a different history but he argues that postmodernity is an experience of the end of history. Thus modernity and postmodernity coexist in the same conceptual and historical space and are bounded to each other in "special critical relationship".[10]

Hal Foster in the introduction of his book, *Postmodern Culture*, tells that all the critics in this book hold the belief that the project of modernity is now deeply problematic, except Habermas. [2, p. ix] Insofar as we are self-conscious about acting within a community that shares values, he believes in rational argument. While Habermas defends modernity, he objects the contemporary reduction of human action to the machination of objects and the reduction of rationality to instrumental calculation. He agrees with the problems of the late-modernism, 'where mass consumption and the dominance of the exchange-value over use-value render it more efficiently and locations became similar to one another, reducing their differences to surface decoration'[11], and says: "(Modernist and postmodernist) agree in the critique of soulless "container" architecture, of the absence of a relationship with the environment and the solitary arrogance of the unarticulated office block, of the monstrous department stores, monumental universities and congress centers, of the lack of urbanity and the misanthropy of the satellite towns, of the heaps of speculative building...the mass production of pitch-roofed doghouses, the destruction of cities in the name of automobile."[12, p. 318]

Habermas argues that the Enlightenment project and its liberal values must not be neglected, but has to be refreshed with efforts to integrate art, science and morality which are the three autonomous spheres of reason, with each other and with life. He emphasises on the distinction of modern culture into independent spheres where art is free from outside influences where art, science and law have their interlogic and their own autonomy. "But all these attempts to level art and life, fiction and praxis, appearance and reality to one plane; the attempts to remove the distinction between artifact and object of use, between conscious staging and spontaneous excitement; the attempts to declare everything to be art and everyone to be an artist, to retract all

criteria and to equate aesthetic judgement with the expression of subjective experiences - all these undertakings have proved themselves to be a sort of nonsense experiments." [13, p. 11] Are these so called nonsense experiments eighteen years later not describing exactly a new condition? A condition which was already mentioned by the posmodernist theorists like Jean-Francois Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard and Jacques Derrida. The last which was even called a 'young conservative' by Habermas, which shows the simplification he made of the postmodern condition as a moving backwards. For Vattimo the generalization of exchange value is by no means a catastrophic event for humanity as it is for Habermas who for this reason seems to long for a finishing of the modern project.

Vattimo and Habermas give both clues for the further thinking about the postmodern condition. The first one from a positive point of view (a new experience and freedom) and the second one by rejecting it and by doing so at the same time describing the characteristics well.

2.1.2   THE POSTMODERN CONDITION

The book 'The Postmodern Condition' from Lyotard is a marking point in the theory about postmodernity. [14] In his book, 'postmodern' is used to name a new society, the information society, and a new period in thinking. Here the attention will go to the change from modern knowledge to postmodern knowledge. The importance of the metanarrative is vanished because there is no legitimisation for such all including story anymore. In a time where you know that it is impossible to decide between two things which one is right or wrong, it is only leading to consolidate the power. In society this has extreme consequences which finally end in terror. In science it has led to a reduction of the question what is true or false. Against the search for the 'consensus' of Habermas, Lyotard puts the 'dissensus' as legitimisation because there are many small stories with different meanings. By using different language games and searching for the unknown a new idea can find its way out.

Baudrillard radicalised the thinking of Lyotard by saying that you can't separate the truth from the false. We have to search for the illusion and the appearance, the simulacrum. He sees the object as a sign which lost its meaning because its only left as exchange value. In the theory of Roland Barthes there is still meaning between the

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signifier and signified with a reference to the reality. Because of the loss of meaning, also personal idetity can be seen as belonging to the past.

Derrida has paid attention to the text as object of study by using the method of deconstruction. Every text is referring to another text. To understand the text the difference between what is present and what is absent has to dissolve. In stead of looking to what is manifested, you have to look to the margin of the writing. This is the only way to understand what the writer, or a whole discipline, has excluded. Using this method does not mean that you will understand the meaning of the text at the end. The method will lead to a constant movement of meanings because everytime the reference or interpretation will changed. This moving of meanings, he describes with the term displacement. The hierarchy between the oppositions will fade away by this method.

2.2.   PLACE AND SPACE FOR THE CONSUMER SOCIETY

"If a road sign said: VISIT OUR GIFT SHOP - we *had* to visit it, *had* to buy its Indian curios, dolls, copper jewelry, cactus candy. The words "novelties and souveniers" simply entranced her by their trochaic lilt. If some cafe sign proclaimed Icecold Drinks, she was automatically stirred, although all drinks everywhere were ice cold. She it was the whom ads were dedicated: the ideal consumer, the subject and object of every foul poster." [15, p.240]

Sociologist John Urry, in his book *Consuming Places*, analyses the change in the nature of the places. [16] The places have transformed by the development of consumption. With the title he intends to indicate four claims. First, places are increasingly being restructured as centers for consumption, as providing the context within which goods and services are compared, evaluated, purchased and used. Second, places themselves are in a sense consumed, particularly visually. Third, places can be literally consumed: what people take to be significant about a place (industry, history, buildings, literature, environment) is over time spent, devoured or exhausted by use. Fourth, it is possible for localities to consume one's identity so that such places become almost literally all-consuming places.

After the introduction of mass consumption, with the extraordinary expansion of the leisure industries; tourism, entertainment, the media, the consumer society gained its form. Improved systems accelerated the production and consumption and made the

communication fast, even so fast that it is not possible to follow. Television, telephone are the parts of our daily lives, now it is time of computers and internet which makes our worlds, in one sense, larger, because we are able to get the information from the other side of the world and be conscious of what is happening there. In the other sense, it makes our worlds smaller by locking us up in a room, just behind the computer. (Figure 2.1, 2.2.)
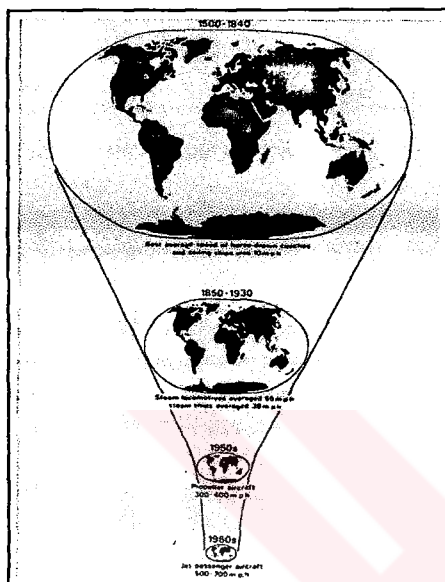
Figure 2.1   The shrinking map of the world through innovations (Harvey,1992)
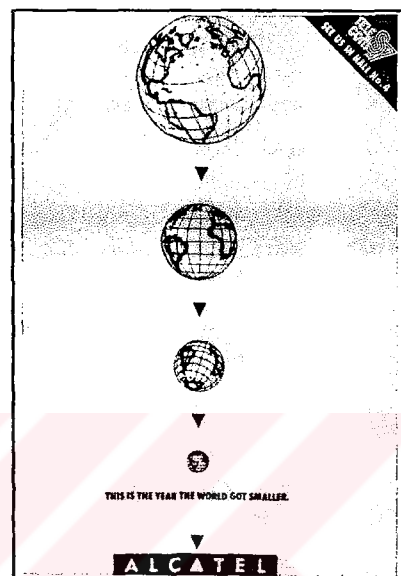
Figure 2.2   An advertisement from Alcatel, the shrinking globe

At that moment it is useful to take a look at what Baudrillard says. After explaining the status of the object as mirror of the subject and the imaginary depths of the mirror as a scene, Baudrillard says: "But today the scene and the mirror no longer exist; instead, there is a screen and network. In place of the reflexive transcendence of mirror and scene, there is a nonreflecting surface, an immanent surface where operations unfold - the smooth operational surface of communication". [17, p.126] Therefore every person begins to see himself in a position controlling the machine, isolated in perfect position and with a distant power. We are in not in our house anymore, but at the controls of an 'micro–satellite', where we are not living as the actors of the scene, but the 'terminal of multiple networks'. As soon as the scenes are not filled by actors and their fantasies, what remains are only 'concentrated effects, miniaturises and immediately available'. These concentrated effects, rapidly moving images and screens break the limits of the traditional language of public and private

spaces, because they are immediately proposed as a prearranged demonstration. Thus there is no longer a spectacle, no longer a secret and this causes the loss of the public and private spaces. Baudrillard concludes like that: " It is our only architecture today: great screens on which are reflected atoms, particles, molecules in motion. Not a public scene or true public space but gigantic spaces of circulation, ventilation and ephemeral connections". [17, p.130]

> "Ours is a brand-new world of allatonceness. 'Time' has ceased, 'space' has vanished. We now live in a global village... a simultaneous happening." [18, p. 63]

As it is mentioned above, in the present situation we are consuming images and appearances. (Figure 2.3) The signs of the products are more important than the products itself. The main reason for this is obviously the improvement in communication; the media, advertisements, television, they manipulate the signs of the products to us.

Figure 2.3   Images, 1998

The documentary about paparazzi in the IDFA (International Documentary Festival Amsterdam) explains what Baudrillard means: "The one is no longer a spectacle, the other no longer a secret." [17, p. 130] In this documentary paparazzi`s are filmed during their journeys after the stars. What is interesting in this documentary, the

camera of the director is the spectacle of the other spectacle. The private life of the people is shown by paparazzi`s and the life of paparazzi`s are shown in a film, where an endless chain begins. The secret which is hidden in the photos fades away, how the photo was taken takes the place of this secret. There could be no talk about the morality of the first step, because the second step becomes interesting and alive in front of our eyes.

"...

> Nothing escapes this. There is always a hidden camera somewhere. You can be filmed without knowing it. You can be called to act it all out again for any of the TV channels. You think that you exist in the original-language version, without realising that this is now merely a special case of dubbing, an exceptional version for the "happy few." Any of your acts can be instantly broadcast on any station. There was a time when we would have considered this a form of police surveillance. Today we regard it as advertising. ..." [19, p.26]

In 1998 two years later than the above mentioned statement of Baudrillard, the film of Peter Weir, The Truman Show is giving a clear example of the "implosion" of everyday life into the hyperreality of the spectacle. The main character in the film is a character in a soap series which is sent in all the tv-channels around the country while he is not aware of anything. The private life of him was recorded through all of his life by hidden cameras and watched by the audience and now we are in the position of watching all this. And the same thing is happening to us in our daily life, we can be filmed everywhere till that there is no secret anymore. Everything can be filmed with close-up, filtered, shown and talked about without any criticism, that is just what is happening. So what we see is the reality, not the reality with a deeper meaning, but just the image, the hyperreality.

The disappearance of 'the boundaries and separations or the erosion of the older distinction between high culture and so-called mass or popular culture' is the feature of the postmodern society, which is the consumer society. [7] The important buildings of the high-modernism were the schools, government buildings and social housing. Now in the consumer society, they are the shopping malls, airports where the consumer can find everything together in one place. It is more than shocking to compare the airports we are seeing nowadays and the one in the beginning scene of "Playtime", a film directed by Jacques Tati in 1967. Almost all the scenes of the film are giving the image of the modern urban spaces from 1960s, where the main

character tries in vain to maintain an appointment in an urban landscape of glass and steel. Airport is a space which has no extra's more than functioning, where the passengers are led by the special airport personal in groups to their arrival or departure terminals. Now all over the world, the airports become the most complex buildings. They are complex, mega-structures which do not only offer space for the functions of an airport but also a lot of facilities which has nothing to do with aviation. Ibelings, by saying that; "Airports are to the 1990s what museums were to the postmodern 1980s"[20], is making the connection with the period in which various contemporary themes came together, all kinds of interesting developments took place and the museums, the depository of all these things became the focus of attention and finally the manner of presentation and the building received more attention than the collection. Besides getting architectural interest, afterwards museums became the focus of the sociology because of their semi-public functioning and because of being the tourist destination. For the similar reasons airports are the focus of interest. Deyan Sudic says in his book, *The 100 Mile City*, "They include not just substantial shopping centers, aimed at both local workers and passengers, but also hotels, offices, massive car parks, often a trade mark and a conference center, all in buildings constructed immediately next to the main terminal building, within the airport perimeter. There becomes less and less need to go into town at all." [21, p.156] Because of all the facilities it preserves, the airport changed into an economic center, so huge that it starts to compete with the city center.

2.3. POSTMODERNISM AND ARCHITECTURE

To let modern architecture end at an exact time, the bombing of the Pruitt-Igoe Housing in St. Louis in 1972 at 3.32 p.m., seems too certain for an ending of a period. Meanwhile, twenty years after the appearance of the book, The Language of Postmodernism of Charles Jencks, modernism is still practised. The ideology disappeared but the form of the language is however present. Hans Ibelings goes in his book 'Supermodernism: Architecture in the Age of Globalization' so far that he characterises postmodernism as a temporary break from the modernism. [20]

A radical break between modernity and postmodernity is not possible. What probably can be said is that in the 1970s postmodernism is a break-through the absolute power of the International Style. The book of Jencks is the most influential

book that came out about the postmodern architecture. [22] At the same time it is a playful and a serious attack to the monotonous architecture of modern architecture. According to Jencks the functionalism brought a one-dimensional architecture. Following Michel Foucault he wants to show that it is no accident that prisons, hospitals and social housing look like each other. Architecture is used as means of power to discipline. The pluralism has to replace the modern city with its boring suburban neighbourhood and the loss of local characteristics because of congruence. Identity and symbolism, which are lost in the modern architecture, became the points of attention for the postmodern architecture.

Jencks talks about postmodern buildings as buildings that can be read at two levels: the level of the architects and the level of the public. Architects can read the implicit metaphors and subtle meanings and the public can react to the explicit metaphors and sculptural appearance. [22] The difference, schizophrenia, between the taste cultures, in intensity and understanding, is accoriding to Jencks the theoretical base for postmodern architecture. Pluralism creates meaning with double coding. The different editions of the book shows that postmodernism goes into a direction of historicism and internationalization. Every city wants its own Micheal Graves and by doing so identity and context are far away from the ideal of postmodern architecture and come close to complains about modern architecture. (Figure 2.4)
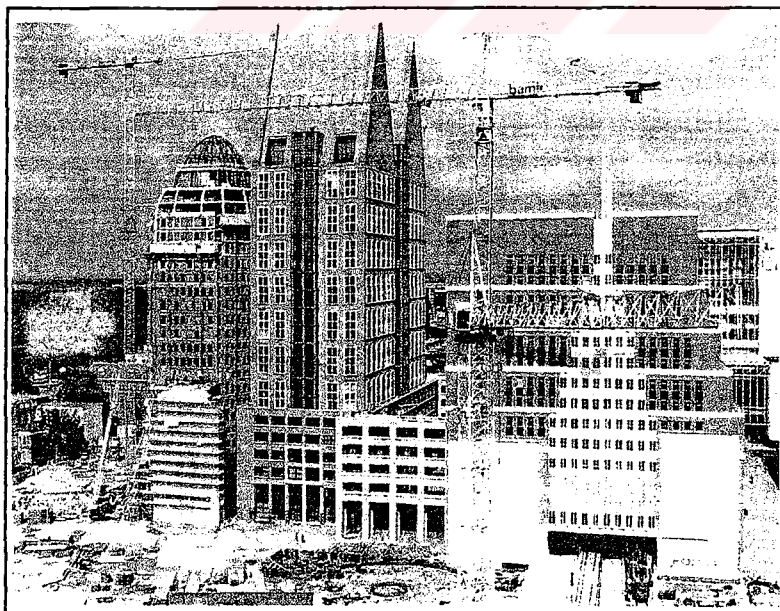
Figure 2.4   Every city wants a Graves: a Graves building in The Hague, Netherlands under construction (NRC, 1998)

Ibelings is aware of a new tendency in the recent architecture which he characterize as supermodernism. A new type of buildings is appearing which he describes with the terms super-cool transparency, neutrality, smoothness, tactile massiveness, construction and technology. In this he sees a superlative version of the modernism where the total transparency of the 'box' became the ideal. After postmodernism there is a renewed interest for the modern esthetic. In stead of symbols there is attention for the visual, spacial and tactile experience of the buildings. Modernisation is again the leading force behind architecture and urban planning. Architects like Wiel Arets, Dominique Perrault, Rem Koolhaas and Herzog & De Meuron have a laconic acceptance of the things as they are. 'Architecture is (fairly straightforwardly) at the service of modernization which is currently most visible in the porcesses of globalization.' [20, p. 133]

Jencks tries with his analysis of double coding to give a base for the postmodern architecture. With his book he want to give a survey of the postmodern architecture. Ibelings analysis is fruitful to name a new tendency in the recent architecture which he connects with the sign of the times. Historical continuity is searched by both writers. One is seeing modernity as an interruption and the other postmodernism.

What is postmodern architecture? Every connection is gone because no style is dominant anymore. Still writers are trying to find a new dominant trend. Jencks categorize and delivers endless schemes. Ibelings sees a new dominant tendecy in architecture connected with the age of globalization. Confusion is there because postmodern architecture is mainly seen as a style. The appearance of buildings is the object of study. Postmodernism is not only style but has to be seen at the level of process, production, design task, and above all function. Jencks' symbolism is a symplistic version of the theory of Roland Barthes' semiotics. In the theory of Jencks there is a direct relation between the signifier and signified. We have seen that such a relation in this time is problematic. In his analysis Piazza d'Italia from Charles Moore has references for historians (Marine Theatre of Hadrian), for the Sicilians (piazzas and fountains) and the modernists (skyscrapers, neon and concrete). [22] But are these symbols read seperately if they are all there at the same time? There is no such a direct relationship between the symbols and the reading of them. Or like Jameson said there is no historical experience anymore when everything is available at the same moment.

One feature of postmodernism is the commercialising and popularising of the architecture. But are not the postmodern architects not just decorating the 'box' of the modernists? The functioning of the building is the same as their predecessors. Architect Bernard Tschumi says 'the talk was mostly about image, about surface; structure and use were not mentioned.' [23, p. 232] He shows this with an analysis of two skyscrapers, one for IBM and one for AT&T. They are nearly identical in content, bulk and use but one is seen as a passé modernist building while the other is seen as an example of new historicist postmodernism. All the attention to the populist postmodern architecture has led to a narrowing of what architecture can be. There is no cause and effect between signifier and signified because in between is a barrier: the use of a building.

In this writing it is important to analyse the projects at the level of appearance and at the same time at the level of structure and use. With the terms events and program in the next part the postmodern architecture will be studied in this direction. It is also in this way that postmodernism can be useful in analysing the architects Peter Eisenman and Rem Koolhaas.

2.4. EVENTS AND PROGRAM

"... there is no architecture without program, without action, without event." [23, p. 3]

It would be too simple to deal with architecture as a binary opposition, the famous 'form follows function' opposition, though it would be so simple to take it as any cause-and-effect relationship between function, use and form in the present situation. Still what we see mostly under the name of postmodern architecture is that the concept of architectural form is overvalued and postmodernism is widely understood and handled as a style and reduced to a language. What is suppressed through all those discussions is the use of the building, which says a lot in the present time about the concept of architecture.

As we have seen from the examples of the section 'Space and Place for the Consumer (Society)', today's buildings do not consist of definite programs and the relation between the spaces and their programs is not simple. That is the apparent character of the contemporary architecture. Traditional ways of handling architecture

are not valid for the contemporary situation. We cannot look to the building only as a form, or only as a content, we have to see the building as an event, "We read the whole sentence, and it is from the interrelationship of its words or signifiers that a more global meaning is derived.". [7, p. 119] But that event is not the simple relation in the building between its space and its program, because in the present time the definition of program is unsteady. Like Tschumi says: "Few can decide what a school or a library should be or how electronic it should be, and perhaps a fewer can agree what a park of the twenty-first century should consist of. Whether cultural or commercial, since they change all the time - while the building is designed, during its construction, and, of course, after its completion." [23, p. 21] Today if we want to talk about postmodern architecture, it is not wrong to say architects have to approach architecture by questioning program, use, function and event. Vattimo was saying that since every value became an exchange-value, we live in a world of experiences of our own interpretations and Being is nothing out of its event. What is meant with this idea is connected to post-structuralist theory. Barthes suggests that signifier has 'the potential for free play and endless deferrals of meaning, which result from an infinite chain of metaphors'. [24, p.34] In our subject, the importance of poststructuralism is that it brings the question of whether the sign really consists of just two components; signifier and signified, or whether the signifier is effected by the other signifiers. The meaning is not the sign anymore, how Bakthin says, "but the whole utterance into whose composition the sign enters". [25] Simply translated to architecture; the public which goes into contact with any building in any way is not only getting effected from the building, the metaphors used in that building, but it is the whole interrelationships, confrontations of program and event, which make the meaning.

The terms 'intertextuality', 'deconstruction' and 'displacement' have great importance to understand and create this *event* what the present architecture mostly is about. These terms are important for the clarification of poststructuralism and they are very much critical about the representation problem which was the central point of poststructuralism. The idea of 'intertextuality', which comes back often in the works of Barthes and Kristeva, has its roots in semiotics. What this idea means can be explained in two steps. First, it points the importance of the earlier texts; when we read a text, this text only has a meaning with the light of earlier writings. The reader

can reach the meaning of the text because the earlier writings have contributed a code which leads the reader to decode this text. The first step makes it clear what the intertextuality is presupposed and how a text contains a meaning. In the second step the idea is radicalised. Intertextuality implies here that the texts refer no longer to the reality, but only to the other texts. That is why this second step is important to understand the dedication of poststructuralism. In poststructuralism the semiotics is radicalised and this relation the term 'deconstruction' is used. The term 'deconstruction' was introduced by Jacques Derrida with the contribution, titled "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences", in John Hopkins University, 1966. After this declaration, the term 'deconstruction' started to be used so often that Derrida regretted that the term became a permit for arbitrary interpretations and even a stylistic nonsense.

What does Derrida himself mean with this term? The starting point of Derrida lies in the second definition of intertexuality. According to him, every text is written in the margins of the other, already existing texts. Every text is still based on the older texts and could be neither existed nor understood without these older ones. Of course there are some questions coming to the mind at this point: Where does the text exactly begin and where does it end? Is the first sentence really the beginning and is the last sentence really the last? What extraordinally important is the margin, the white around the pages and between the lines and the words. There is a remarkable paradox here; the one which is without meaning, because there exists nothing, gives the meaning of what there exists. From this point it is the unsaid, the unexpected, the non-questioned and the forgotten what make the text how it is. Deconstruction is to trace what in the margins stands, it traces the confrontations in the text. It is to bring the tension between what literally exists, the rhetoric, and what does not exist but is full of meaning, the logic, to the surface. [26]

This deconstruction proceeds with displacement. Displacement is a non-stop movement to understand the meaning. But this is already impossible because we would be always too late to understand the meaning; the meaning is never really there. A new term is still necessary to understand the meaning of the latest term. There is only a 'trace'. This is a trace without a beginning or an end point, which man endlessly follows without reaching a final meaning..

"An architectural program is a list of required utilities, it indicates their relations, but suggests neither their combination nor their proportion." [23, p. 113]

This idea of non-stop movement, 'displacement' brings new notations to architecture. So "the true nature of the things may be said to lie not in things themselves, but in the relationship which we construct and then, perceive, *between* them." Seeing architecture as an event means to take its intertextuality into account. Seeing this tension in architecture, or the collapse between the built and the programmed, between the absent and the present, between the real and the fiction means that architecture is something more than representing and presenting. This process gives us the possibility to see the building more than an object and use and interpret it as an event.

"If 'shock' cannot be produced by the succession and juxtaposition of facades and lobies anymore, maybe it can be produced by the juxtaposition of events that take place behind these facades in these spaces." [27, p. 225]
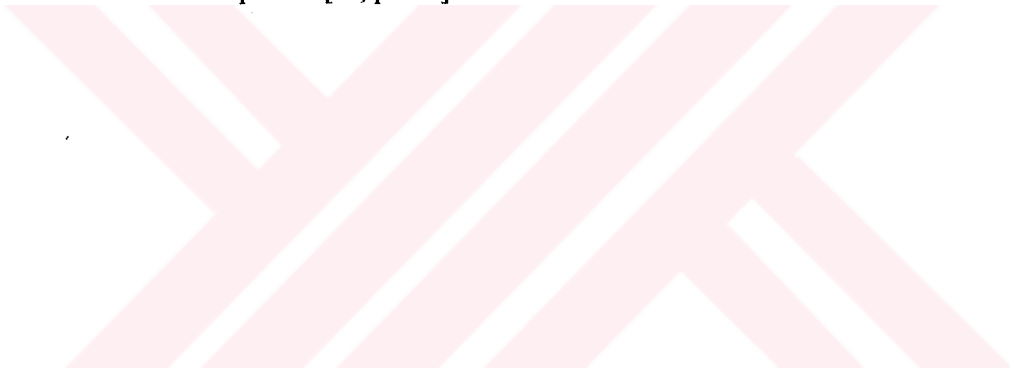
CHAPTER 3

SHORT CUT: Peter Eisenman
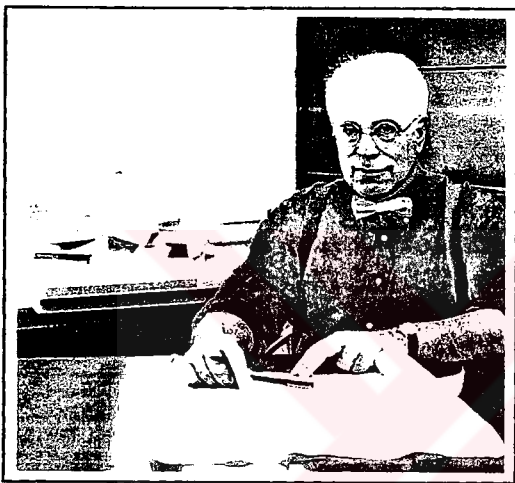
Figure 3.1   Peter Eisenman

What is the act of Architecture, what are its elements, its conditions, its materials, its motives? [28, p.xxiv]

Although none of the architects who were presented as deconstructivists in the MoMA exhibition agreed with that classification, this exhibition opened the way to the deconstruction as a style. That was exactly what the architects had been trying to avoid. Eisenman is one of the seven architects who was named as deconstructivist. (Figure 3.1) According to him he is not a deconstructivist but only an architect who searches for what architecture is (or not) about. Still he is an architect strongly connected with theory of deconstruction. With references to the rhetorical strategies and existing architectural forms, his theoretical work is effected by Naom Chomsky and Jacques Derrida. If these conceptual references cannot be so easily seen and read in his projects, they are still lying in every literal work of Eisenman.

He says that he uses the models from the other disciplines because architecture does not have the models to describe the complexities of the present world. These models borrowed from the other disciplines give architecture the autonomy it deserves. But then he gives away that he reads less and less philosophy, but more and more fiction. In the following section this change is going to be shown.

3.1. THE DECOMPOSITION OF EISENMAN

Taking a look at the works of Eisenman, it is possible to see the shift in his career. From more scientific tendency of the earlier theory which is dependent on structural linguistics to artistic tendency of the later theory which is supported by literature and philosophy. This shift in the projects is not only at the theoretical level, but also clear in the scale of the works. While the earlier projects are studied in the small scale, like 'models', the later projects are in a big scale. This model-like projects find their roots in the questioning of representation.

The earlier studies correspond to the period when Eisenman was the director of the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies and 'Oppositions' magazine. As well as his thesis in 1963, the contributions to the 'Oppositions' and the project of the houses, Eisenman studied the problem of the architectural autonomy. The first projects, the Houses series, from House I to House El Even Odd are examples of his earlier theory where he is questioning the true nature of reality, thus the true nature of representation as the limits of architecture.

Eisenman argues mostly in his articles that unlike the other arts, modernism in architecture did not judge its roots. While every discipline recognised the end of subject/object relationship, architecture remained representational. That means that in other disciplines, like art, philosophy, literature, etc., the subject/object relationship broke down. The object becomes independent, it only refers to its own condition of being; the reading of an object is not dependent anymore on a reading subject. This is exactly what is missing in architecture, namely autonomy.

House I and III are the examples of how far the theory of Eisenman is going. These two houses are infact models where the theory is studied. Thus what appears after the realisation of the projects have no difference than the models. They are just the

enlargement of the models. Everything that is wanted to be said is said in the models. In House III, two three-dimensional grids are opposed to each other at 45 degree and within that framework the spaces are composed. The houses are following a route of transformation. The designs do not represent anything, at least at the level of architecture such an intention is not advocated. Eisenman does not want to express anything. With the help of the linguistic model; the transformational grammar of Naom Chomsky, he worked out the first three houses of the Houses series in a linguistic analogy. In such a concept the architecture refers only to itself, to its only and own reality. Eisenman was so much against the idea of making function thematic in architecture that in House VI there was an upside down staircase which does not work, a gap and a column in the middle of the bedroom which makes it impossible to put a bed in it. The design is, according to Eisenman's vision then, the result of a formulated, transformational process which is independent from the considerations of practical or functional world. In other words, he was defending that it had to be possible to read the process back. However, this appeared impossible. The attempt to read the transformations back shows that the process contains some 'arbitrary' choices. The architectonic terms were less unambiguous than thought in the beginning. (Figure 3.2, 3.3)
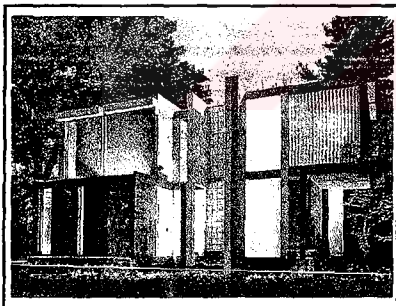
Figure 3.2   House III, 1971
              (El Croquis, 1997)
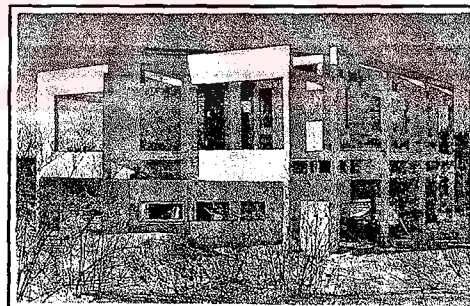
Figure 3.3   House VI, 1975
             (El Croquis, 1997)

These shortcomings of Eisenman's research and design work had lead him to introduce a new idea. After a period of searching to overcome these shortages, in the House X the decomposition idea is executed. The transformational method was changed with the frequency and fragments of decomposition. The linear order of the earlier analyses and designs was changed with the 'other' order. Eisenman says that the conception of decomposition is infact a postmodernist concept in the

philosophical sense. He adds that it is non-hierarchical, non-linear and non-transformational.

The grid was one of the most important organising element in those houses. Those box-like houses were studied to investigate the preposition that there is an 'underlying ordering device that is the natural and logical generator of a design'. Besides these differences between the earlier houses and the House X, the whole researches of Eisenman remained questioning the 'nature' of architecture. According to him, architecture is not considered as a derivation of functionalistic or ideologic schemes. The buildings were studied as autonomous and self-referential, having no dependence with the human context or function, but like the functions in mathematics, universal. Instead of taking the functioning of the building as the first criterion, he took the structural exploration as the basic of the study, and afterwards the functions had to fit in the building as best they can. And also architecture cannot reduced to assumed representational definitions. This last can be illustrated by the House X; this house was 'represented' by an 'axonometric model'. This model was in such a way constructed that only from one exact point the spectator , and only with one eye, can see a view and this is view of the axonometric drawing of the building. Every other perceiving point would give a idiotic, upside down miniature construction. The interesting point about the 'axonometric model' is explained by Eisenman; that a axonometric drawing is a two-dimensional drawing that represents a three-dimensional reality. Thus this axonometric model does not represent the object anymore, but it represents the transformation from a drawing to a model. This model cannot be seen as a presumption of the building before it is built in reality; it has its own reality. Such a relation between the building and the model, between reality and representation is deeper studied in the project House El Even Odd. (Figure 3.4)
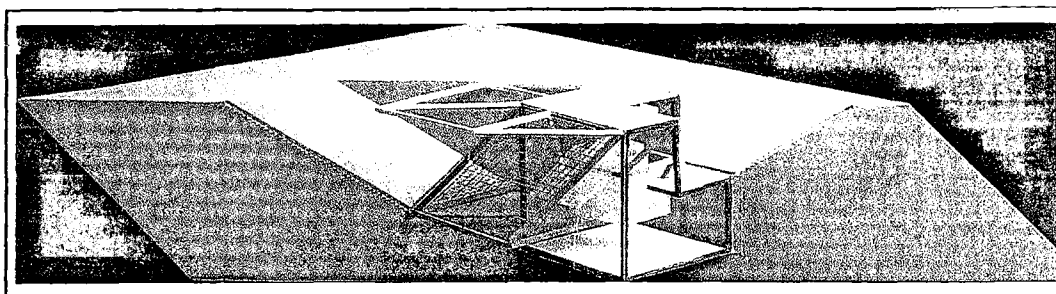

Figure 3.4   House El Even Odd, 1980 (El Croquis, 1997)

In fact the whole story about the 'models' of Houses I-X is interesting. Eisenman says: "House I was built like a model. Its connections between beam and columns could only have been fabricated as one builds a model aeroplane; they were sanded and glued by hand. ... House II was built to look like a model. In fact, in many published photos of the actual building the caption reads 'model photo of House II'. ... Whereas House I was built like a 'life-size' model, House II was a representation of such a model. ... House VI also looks like a model. It is also a model in that it 'represents' a series of transformational diagrams, the process of the house which is its reality. ... In the House X, for the first time in Eisenman's work, the actual building was no longer a metaphorical model. But conversely, the building was no longer the final reality, the model was." [29, p. 46-47]

3.2.   A FICTIONAL EXPERIENCE

After completion of the last house, as well as the change in the scale of the works, a second question, 'the condition of the reading subject' appeared. He remained related to an architecture that emphasises the meaning over form, but he broadened his expression by adding the features 'memory' and 'history' into his designs. Following the deconstruction theory of Derrida, he conceived of architecture as a text. The relationship between architecture and fiction can be manifested in a number of ways. An architect may incorporate narratives and narrative structures into his work; a work of architecture in the city may be a backdrop that allows for the infolding or modification of narrative action; or architecture, through memory and association, may physically embody stories. [30] Eisenman is using all these ways in his design practices.

The IBA Social Housing, Romeo and Juliet and the Wexner Center for the Visual Arts are the projects which Eisenman passed to another direction of architecture; for the first time he started to use the ground, and a change in the scale raised, more an urban scale. These projects symbolise the passing to the 'working out of the deconstruction theory' in architecture. "(The above mentioned projects) are perhaps the best examples of the new direction of his work to escape from the alienation of the architectural object, to try to establish equally abstract affiliations to pre-existing fields." [31, p. 51]

The article of Eisenman, "*Architecture as A Second Language: The Texts of Between*" [32], is helpful to see how Eisenman is looking to the term 'text' and the possibilities it gives to architecture. According to Eisenman, the term 'text' is not a term for meaning, but a term which dislocates the traditional relationship between form and meaning. When we look to a text in that sense, there are two different conclusions coming out. First of all, the text is not a representation of the narrative, but the representation of the structure of the form of the narrative. Secondly, the text is no longer a complete thing, it refers endlessly to another thing, except itself. It is a process. This is also the fundamental condition of displacement. In architecture or in another discipline, this idea of text brings the multivalence. This means that it neither denies or erases the earlier notions nor contains them. It exists with them. It only denies the authority of function and beauty. Because of its presence, architecture is always seen as univocal, and of course will show resistance to that multivalence. It means that the implication of text in architecture will be unnatural. Textuality in architecture can be introduced by dislocation. "Dislocating architecture displays its multiple meanings by representing the various relationships between other texts, between an architectural text and other texts." Dislocating text refuses one single reading, their reading and 'truth' is in flux.

Figure 3.5   Romeo and Juliet Castles, 1985
                 (El Croquis, 1997)

The Romeo and Juliet project for the entry of Venice Biennale in 1985 was perhaps the first trying to present an architectural text which has no dependence on the notions of the traditional architecture. (Figure 3.5) For Eisenman, there was for the first time 'a text of between'. Verona was the site for this project and Shakespeare's famous Romeo and Juliet was the story. It is also the term hyperreality which is proper for this project; it is the fiction of the fiction. The story which was written

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long time ago will be assumed in actual situation. "So that today you can 'actually' visit the 'house of Juliet' ('the point of their division'), the 'church where they were married' ('the point of their union'), and the 'tomb where they were buried' ('the ultimate point of their dialectical relationship of togetherness and apartness'). [33]

Eisenman first rewrites a new text by superimposition of the mentioned three original texts and then the objects coming out of that text are the results of superimposition and rescaling of this text in three layers. So the whole meaning of the project lies in the traces between the new text (the 'first language') and the visual representation (the 'second language').

3.2.1. PROJECT: The Wexner Center for the Visual Arts

"When I became interested in deconstruction, I realised that the value of origin in these houses was problematic, because they began from an a priori set of values. That is when I began to work on breaking down origin as a necessary value in architecture. This began with a move from the cube to the grid. The Wexner Center was the last of the experiments on the superimposition of grids, and the problem of multiple scales." [34]
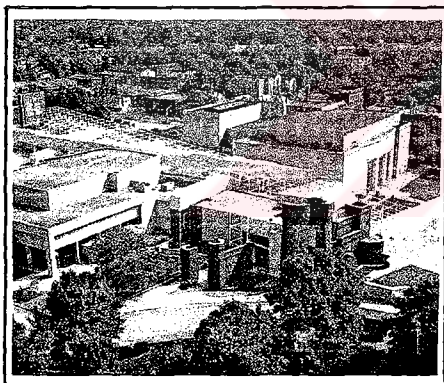

Figure 3.6   The Wexner Center, 1989
                 (Taschen, 1993)

The program of the Wexner Center contained permanent, temporary and experimental exhibition galeries, performance space, a fine arts and graphic library, a film centre, studio spaces, a choral hall and exhibition preparation and storage areas. The betweeness of the site, and of course the building can be seen and read in several ways. Here, instead of choosing one of the proposed sites, the architect preferred to create a site by his own. (Figure 3.6) To broaden the term *betweeness*, the most clear information is coming from Eisenman. He explains that betweeness suggests a weak image. In a condition of a strong image would always give a dominant meaning

referring one or two of the other texts. "Not only must one or the other of the two texts not have a strong image; they will seem to be two weak images, which suggest a blurred third. In other words "the new condition of the object must be *between*, in an imaginable sense as well: it is something which is almost this, or almost that, but not quite either." [35, p. 23] This statement about betweeness is strongly worked out in this project. The center is between two existing buildings without showing its function. It is a *blurred third.* (Figure 3.7) It signals a relationship both within and without the site. This location of the building antagonises our common expectations from a building and a site; this new site was located in between the existing buildings, on this 'non-site', a 'non-building' appears. A non-building, because it is more a passageway than an independent building; a pedestrian passageway where the galleries are hanged along and under. (Figure 3.8)
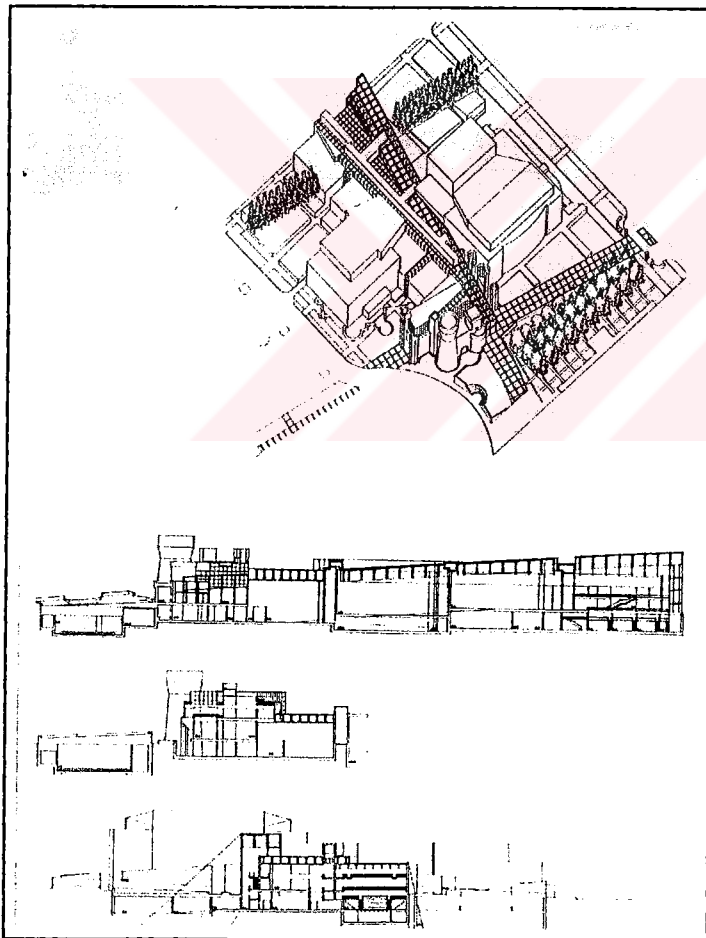

Figure 3.7   Wexner Center for the Visual Arts: perspective and sections

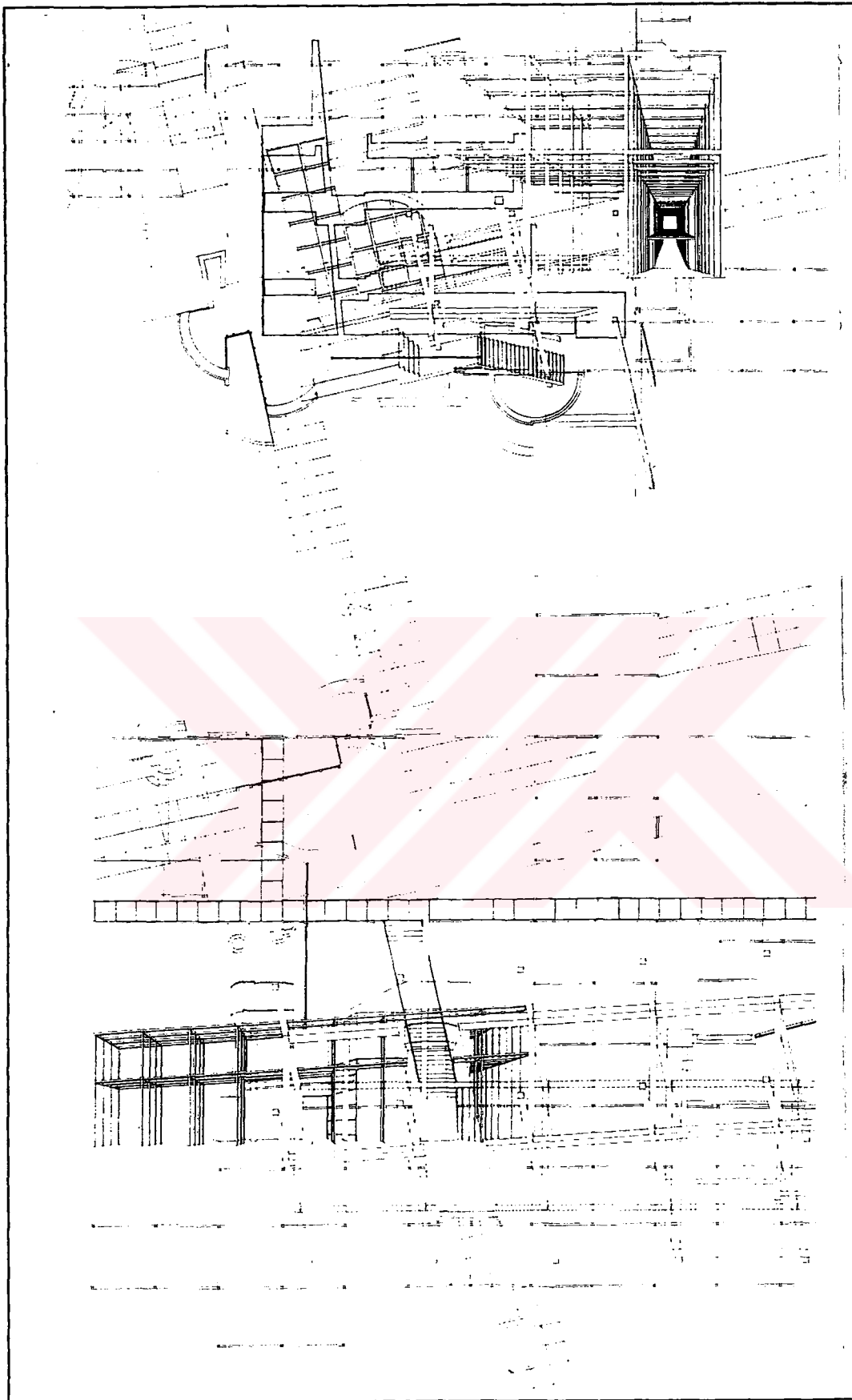(Graafland, 1989)

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Figure 3.8   Wexner Center for the Visual Arts, 1989 (Taschen 1993)

The location of the project is between the campus and the city and that is why the 'building' contains these two different oriented grids. A three-dimensional grid which serves as the spine of the building is also the junction of the grids of the city, Colombus, and the campus of the Ohio State University. Under these two obvious grids there lies also the grids of the state, Ohio, and even the rest of the 'world', signalling the Columbus airport. Thus through these grids Eisenman links this building first to the campus, than to the city, to the state and the world. Anton Vidler, in his book *The Architectural Uncanny*, talks about two different grids in the classic tradition which have been utilised for two complementary purposes. [36] First, the instrumental grid which is used for the arrangement, composition and layout, and second, the structural grid which is used 'for the manifestation of structure in a modelled or real space, as in a column grid'. He continues that in Eisenman's work the grid signals none of these; "the Wexner grid stands as the merciless demonstration of conflict in the mapping of the real, while it definitively rejects any essentialist message with regard to the structural or spatial nature of architecture." [36, p. 141]

"The crossing of these two 'found' axes is not simply a route but an event, literally a 'center' for the visual arts, a circulation route through which people must pass on the way to and from other activities. (Figure 3.9) Thus, a major part of the project is not a building itself, but a 'non-building'." [37, p. 63] This building with its white-grid framework is described mostly as a 'scaffolding', 'which is the most imperiment part of the building'. (Figure 3.10) Scaffolding is used in the traditional way to build, to repair or to demolish the building, but it never has the function to shelter. Although the aim of this building is to shelter the art, by this scaffolding appearance, it does not symbolise that function. "But architecture has always looked like something since Vitrivius uttered his famous dictum of 'commodity, firmness and delight'. In saying this, Vitrivius did not mean that building should stand up, since all buildings stand up. This was the beginning of architecture as representation, of architecture's iconic function. To remove its iconic function, its already given condition of embodiment, one must separate architecture's instrumentality from its iconicity, separate its function as structure and use from the fact that it should look like it stands up." [34, p. 8]

At the south end of this futuristic indicated scaffolding, a brick tower and masses appear.(Figure 3.11) Just like the definition of the axes by Arie Graafland above, this parts of the building are also 'found' during the 'excavation'. 'Found', because they are the reminiscent of the Armony towers that was existing at this place until their demolition in 1958. Those reminiscents of the tower are fragmented and moved away from its original location. It recalls it, but it does not preserve it. Contrary, it questions whether it is possible to preserve the history.

"Our work imposes a conceptual memory on the volumetric massing of an object, and in doing so attempts to subvert icons of presence, the building mass itself, with a striated network of what could be described as lines of memory. Little of the iconicity of these lines of memory comes from the traditional forms of iconicity in architecture, such as function, structure, aesthetics, or a relationship to the history of architecture itself. Rather, the iconicity of these lines comes from a writing that is indexical as opposed to iconic. An index is something that refers to its own condition. In this sense it is iconic role is more one of resemblance than it is one of representation. ... A representation always refers to something external, while a resemblance also refers to internal characteristics. Representations rely on a traditional notion of memory that is linguistic and historical. A resemblance can also be understood as a simulacrum that is not based on a visual relationship. In a sense the simulacrum is a representation without resemblance or the sign of a sign. Such a condition of sign becomes an index. Thus the lines of memory act as a simulacrum rather than a representation." [38]
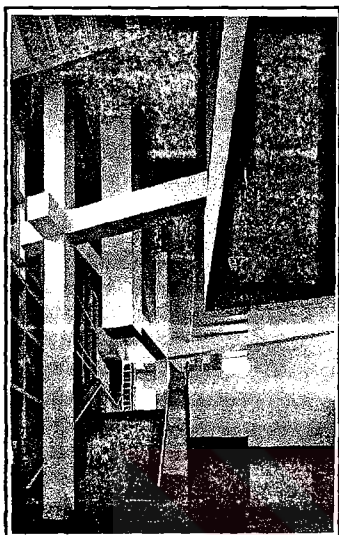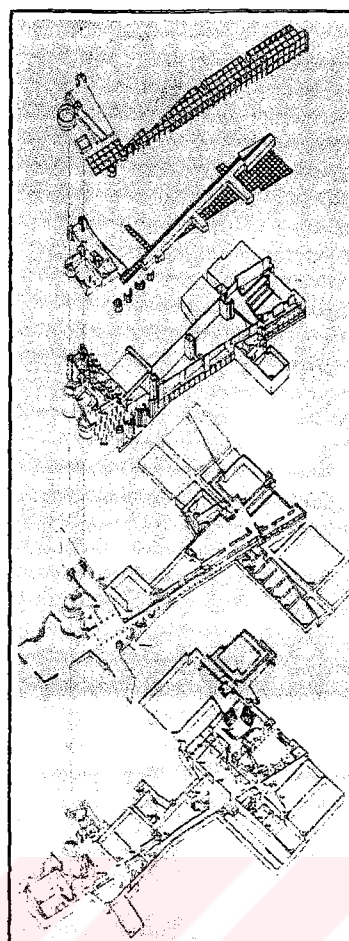
Figure 3.9   Crossing point (Taschen, 1993)

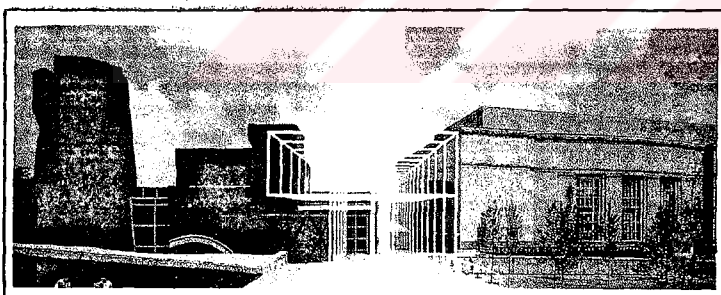Figure 3.10   Scaffolding
(Graafland, 1989)

Figure 3.11   Fragmented reminiscent (El Croquis, 1997)

3.3. EVENTS BESIDES THEORY

"My work does not operate within but rather in the *Zeitgeist*." [39, p. 12] Eisenman talks about the impossibility of repeating a building for example made in the 1920's today. The iconic values which were made then do not have the same value in the present day. So the question has to be how to make icons of today or even whether accepting such a making as a possibility. Now the recent works of him are also shifting from linguistic analogies and structural relations to the 'real' world. The last projects which will be mentioned are the examples of this 'real' architecture of the 'real' world. The Greater Columbus Convention Center, the Emory University Center for the Arts and the Aranoff Center constitute a new dimension in Eisenman's works. Starting with these projects the existing topography, program and the surrounding texture of the site became to have more importance.

3.3.1. PROJECT: The Greater Columbus Convention Center

Figure 3.12   The Greater Columbus Convention Center, 1993 (El Croquis, 1997)

The major factor in obtaining the commission for this second building of Eisenman in Columbus is naturally because of the notorious of the Wexner Center. Comparing with the modest scale of the Wexner Center, the Greater Columbus Center, with a floor area over 50,000 square meters, was perhaps the largest scale that Eisenman ever got. (Figure 3.12) The description of the project declared by the architect aims almost again the same things: "The convention center should not be a conventional center, but must go beyond being an amenity for a visitor, turning on and off according to the convention scheduling: rather it should enter into the daily life of the city as an ongoing participant and contributor." [40, p. 167] The presence of the

absence can again be seen from the form of the project, it is suggestive to the rail yards that once occupied this site and some parts still existing.

To deal with this huge floor area, Eisenman divided the building into platforms; in the plan this division cannot be read, but this will be mentioned later. These divided, curving platforms echo the rhythm of the brick facades on the opposite side of the street. (Figure 3.13) Since the convention center has increased the land values, these buildings are certain to be decided for demolition. This High Street facade, unexpectedly, is very much blank and non-active. Unexpectedly, because that is the only facade of the building where we can talk about transparency with the use of glass and detailed entrances. The pavilions are long, perpendicular to the High Street and extend the truck loading docks along the rear. Although the parts of the building that regard to the structural and spatial grid have very interesting visual plays, the main exhibition space is not using the advantages of this. (Figure 3.14, 3.15, 3.16) Thus this huge structure has visual experiences from outside and in the circulation spine, but not in the exhibition hall. Paradoxically this weakness is explained by Eisenman as the solution of the one of the most persistent problem in a convention design. He calls it 'diagrammatic clarity'. "In our scheme, differences in forms clearly distinguish the various exhibition spaces and parts of the concourse." [39, p. 82] The difference between two forms what Eisenman mentions is the circulation spine which runs from the parking lot through the complex to a pedestrian bridge which crosses the still existing railroad tracks leading to the Hyatt Regency Hotel and shopping areas beyond. (Figure 3.17) On one side of the spine the offices and meeting rooms are located and on the other side the exhibition space. This spine works again like an inbetween space where a series of intersecting viewpoints are created.
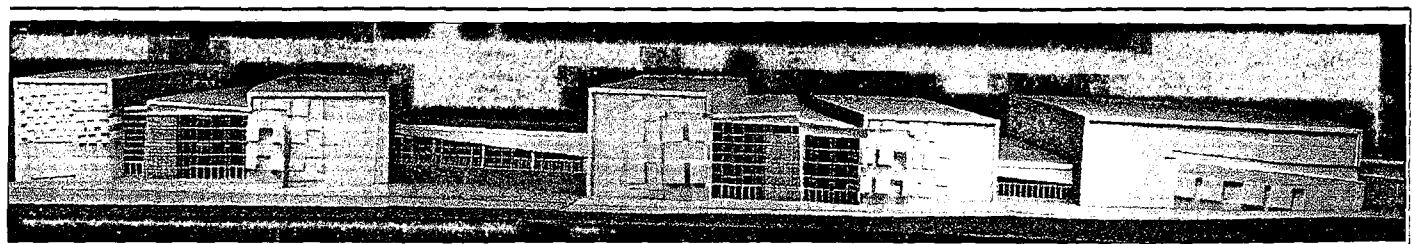

Figure 3.13   High Street facade (El Croquis, 1997)
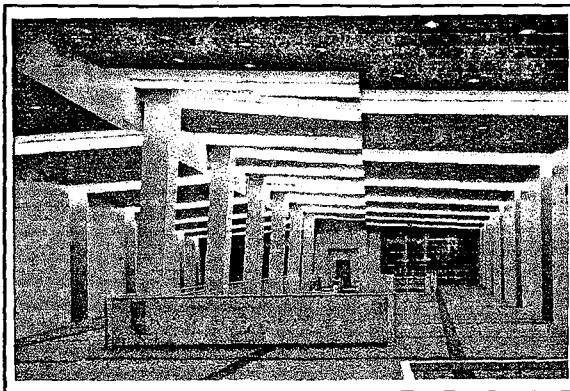
Figure 3.14   View from the spine
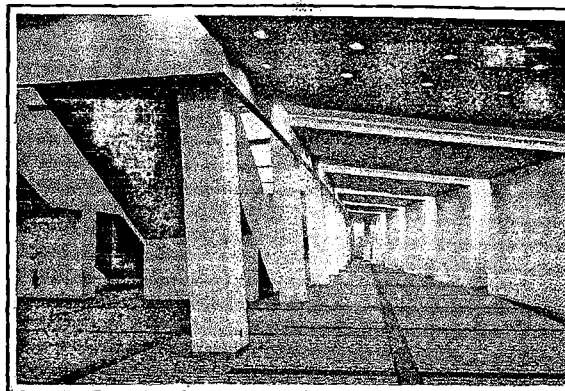
(El Croquis, 1997)

Figure 3.15   View from the spine

(El Croquis, 1997)

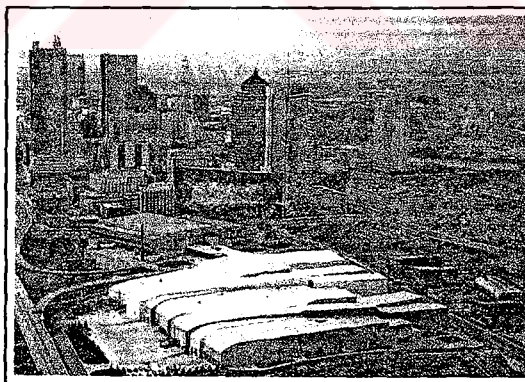Figure 3.16   Plans and facades

(El Croquis, 1997)

Figure 3.17   CCC in the city

(El Croquis, 1997)

3.3.1. PROJECT: Aranoff Center for Design and Art

One of the recent project, the Aranoff Center is a good example to mention the last point of Eisenman's architectural career. It differs from the other works of Eisenman. To compare it with Wexner Center makes it clear to show these differences. First of all, Wexner Center is a building that concerns with the manipulation of the grid and the possibility of the grid to give information. There the grid gives a text, it can be read as an index. In Aranoff Center, this issue whether the observer can read the space or the space can be read as an index has no more importance. Here another relation between the observer and the space is studied and it is more important, as Eisenman himself says, "that the effective dimension of the space concerns the human body and the senses." [41] The visuality is no longer the dominant experience but because of this spatial idea, the body can feel the tension and the movement in this space where a feeling of unconfidence exists. Eisenman says that the Aranoff Center is an example of a period which he started to be more interested in how the building is experienced than whether the theory of the building is understood. (Figure 3.18, 3.19)
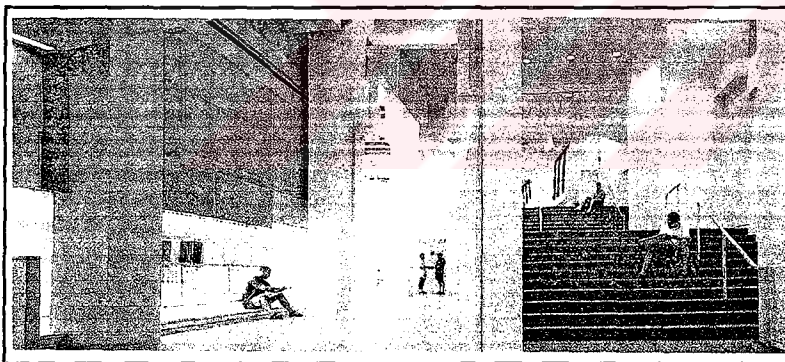

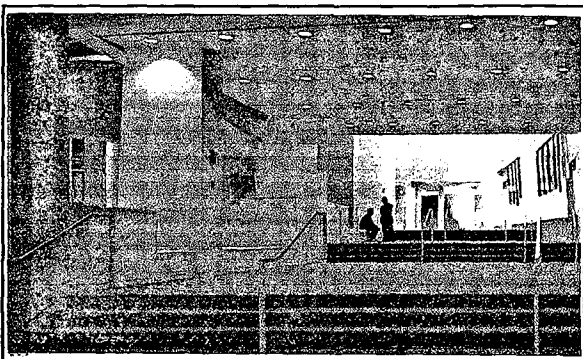Figure 3.18   Central circulation space (de Architect, 1997)

Figure 3.19   Going into the layers (El Croquis, 1997)

Here after selecting a number of specific givens from the site like the curves at the north side of the site and the borders and the forms of the existing building, a complex between the existing building, the natural topography and the new construction is produced. (Figure 3.20) This makes in the Aranoff Center a strong coherence between 'the field and the object, the figure and the background' [42] Then the program of the building is studied which consisted a library, an exhibition space, a theatre, studios and the offices with addition to the existing building. The university wanted to have a plan which is improved in the quality, quantity and the accessibility of the existing building. Because of this reason, the new project is worked out by unifying the four schools within the Collage. And this gives a building like, as Michael Hays says, 'the Aranoff Center has no outside; everything is interior'. [41] (Figure 3.21) From the boulevard at the north side what is seen is only a hill with a building which repeats itself in different colours. (Figure 3.22) But inside the building all the points give another view to the observer, nothing repeats itself.

Next to the existing buildings an object is placed which has the basic formal structure of the existing building. This object forms the interstitial space, or in other words the inbetween space. The inbetween space consists of platforms and terraces in different levels and is worked out in both of the buildings. As well as the spatial effect of the inbetween space, it has also a conceptual existence. Charles Jencks describes the building here as 'the wave form as a transformation of the zig-zag rectangles of the existing school to which it is added. The space between the two is then a fragmented mixture, as if the rectangular and undulating waves washed up and back against each other, leaving traces.' [43, p. 140] This inbetween part is a space where all the events take place, it seems like a between space to connect the two buildings but it is more than that. It forms the main space of the whole building. Walking through this terraced space, people face with different levels, corridors crossing above and closed and open spatial games around. (Figure 3.23) In one sense the observes begin visiting this building in a Piranesian space, where they see along, under and above "partial bodies, partial conversations". The observers do not look to the architecture anymore, but to the other subjects which would look back to the observer. This gives another spatial experience. That is exactly what Eisenman says in the beginning about the importance of experiencing the building.

"The capacity to remain outside the norm is a measure of what I call *presentness* or transgression. I believe the Aranoff Center to be a very trangressive building, not theatrical or scenographic. I believe that it opposes longer resistance to absorption than the Wexner Center or the Colombus Convention Center." [34]
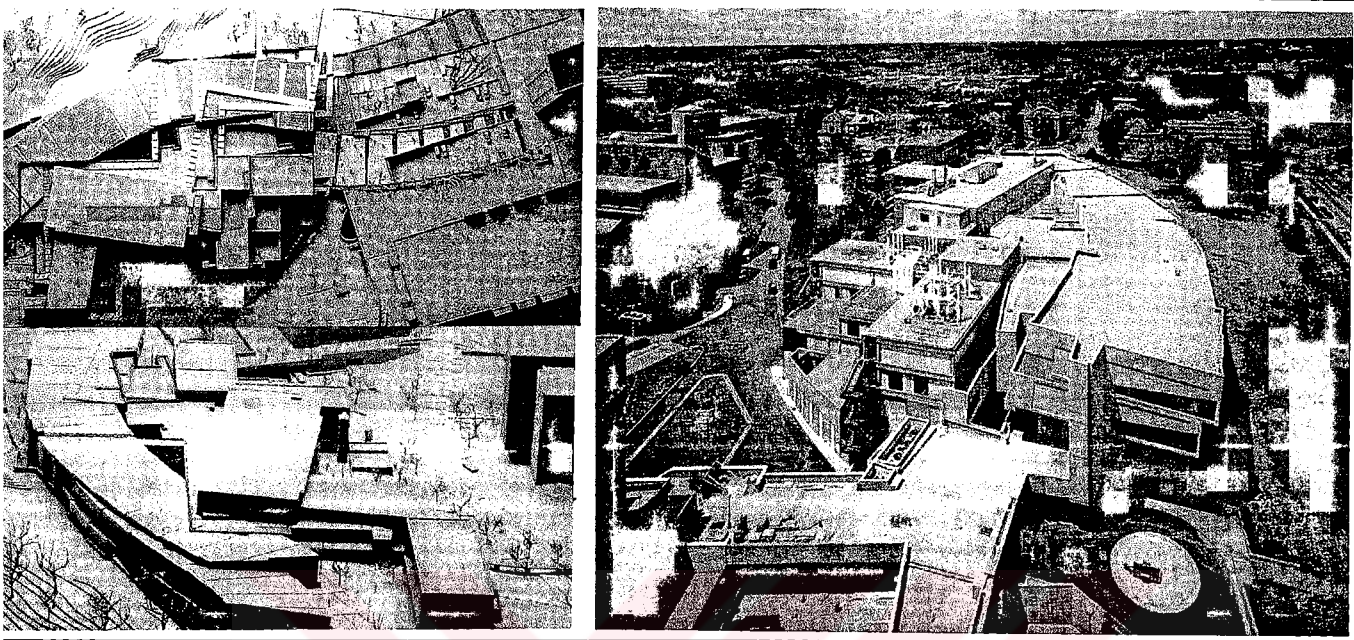

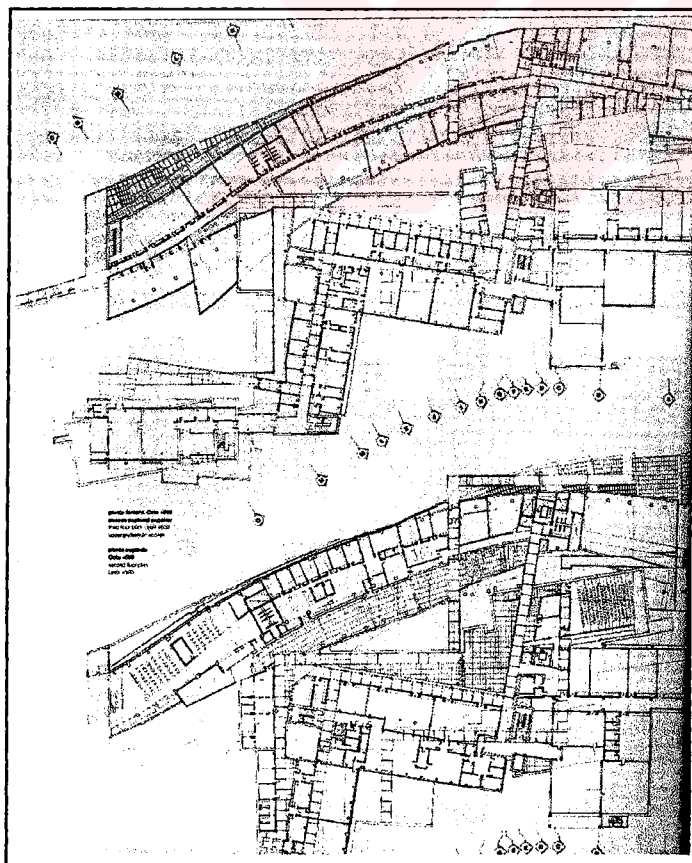Figure 3.20   Model and the real (El Croquis, 1997)

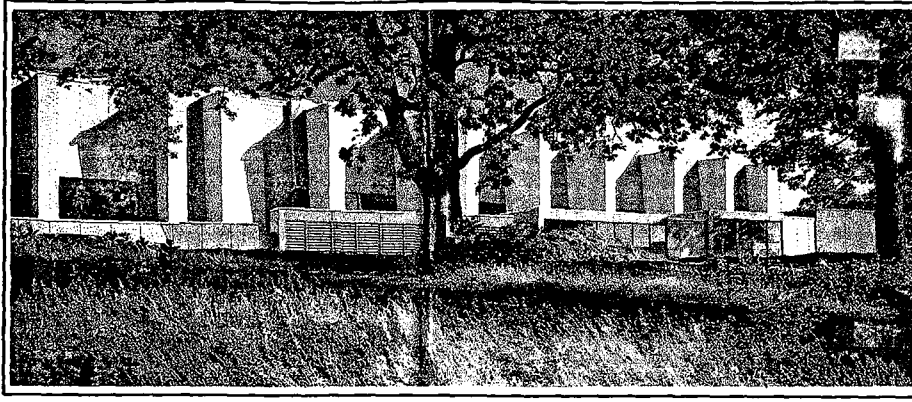Figure 3.21   Plan (El Croquis, 1997)

Figure 3.22   View from the boulevard (de Architect, 1997)

Figure 3.23   Piranesian spaces (El Croquis, 1997)

3.4.   THE IMAGINARY OF MEDIA

"The techniques developed in the (Aranoff) Center prefigure the later work and coincide with the beginning of Eisenman's use of the computer as a design tool that makes available a more complex geometry than the orthogonal grid characteristics of his early work." [42, p. 33]

According to Eisenman, our concept of reality which was oriented by the mechanical paradigm is today questioned by the electronic paradigm. He clears that change by comparing the 'impact of the role of the human subject on primary modes of reproduction as the photograph and the fax'. The photograph corresponds with the mechanical reproduction, while the fax with the electronic one. In photographic reproduction the object is still controlled by the subject, for example by more or less

contrast, texture or clarity. Human being has still the function as an interpreter. With the fax, the human being loses this function; subject is no longer the interpreter, the reproduction takes place without any control. At the end he adds that since for reality our vision always demanded to be interpretative, our whole nature of (what we have come to know as the) reality is challenged by the invasion of media into everyday life. This is the end of production age and the starting of information age as Lyotard says. The electronic paradigm by defining reality in terms of media and simulation challenges also the architecture. Media challenges how and what we see. And the architecture which resisted that questioning because of the domination of the mechanical paradigm; 'since the importation and absorption of perspective by architectural space in the 15th century' assumes a sight to be preeminent. [44]

According to Eisenman, his projects have always been experimental, in the sense that it considers always with the architecture self. The recent projects also show another dimension of experiments; the possibilities of computer. He says that he relies more and more on computers because they conceptualise and draw differently. "For example, morphing is a vectoral operation. An axis is a neutral vector that has no direction, magnitude or intensity. A vector has direction, magnitude and intensity. It confronts form and space differently from an axis. Computers can analyse vectors in a way that a human could not." [34, p. 13] The semantic techniques like displacements, rotations or scalings which were the characteristics of the earlier works are almost replaced with the computer, as an instrument that gives him the possibility to study with more complex geometries.

3.4.1. PROJECT: Church of the Year 2000

Alejandro Zaera-Polo suggests that with the last projects of Eisenman; the Rebstockpark Masterplan, the Max Reinhardt Haus or the Haus Immendorff, there is a 'top-down' understanding to generate a differentiated spatial effect unlike the 'down-up' understanding of previous projects. What he means by the 'down-up' process is that the contextual relations that have to encoded through the qualities of 'site/programme as indexical traces'. [31] And with the 'top-down' process, the spatial experiences have more importance. Church of the Year 2000 can be also considered as one of these projects. (Figure 3.24)
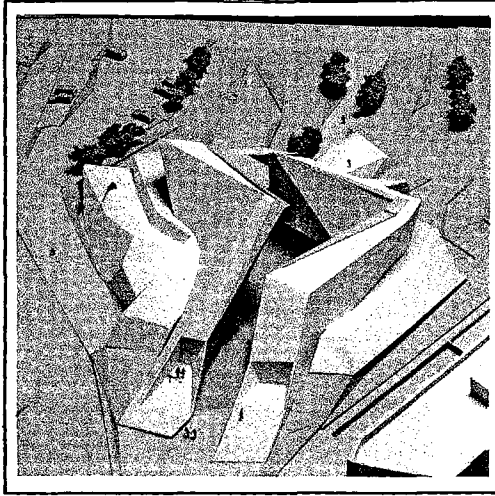
Figure 3.24   Church of the Year 2000, 1996
                  (El Croquis, 1997)

Eisenman, in the interview with Zaera-Polo mentions again the importance of the media and information today. Church of the Year 2000 has the name of the church in the age of information. Here the scenario is about the pilgrims, their understanding of distance which symbolises the needs which were unsatisfied; 'pilgrimage expressed a yearning for intimacy'. But today with the technology and media this concept of distance is collapsed. Media created an universal access to that yearning. Under the title *The Church as Media* in El Croquis, he says that today we are experiencing a change to a world where the information becomes the 'new mediator'. "We can no longer ignore the change but must come to terms with it." [39]

The design process of this project begins with a two dimensional drawing. Here the site is superposed into a grid of liquid-crystal, which 'is a state of suspension between the static crystal and the flowing liquid state' and which forms the panels of the media walls of the church. Following this process of transforming the crystals from solid state to liquid state, the actual form appears. (Figure 3.25, 3.26) Two disjointed masses which seem like evolving out of the ground are surrounding the central outdoor space. These two masses, running almost parallel to each other can be called as passageways. They have visual contact only through the central outdoor space. Although they seem like the reflections of each other in the mirror, it is more a response than a reflection. Contrary to the secrecy by the opaque outside facades, this transparency between two sides gives a kind of spectacle effect. During the ceremonies the public in the both sides of the church are in contact and even more, people passing through the central space are witnessing the ceremonies with the help

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of the media wall. This media wall is a wall in each side of the aisle which can be seen both from the central outdoor space and each side aisle.

> "The church becomes an earthly analogue to heaven. Its aim is not so much to create space as to create the feeling of still greater space. Everything is mysterious and half-hidden, yet everything is revealed; the church in its contemporary contradictions between mystery and clarity, space and mass." [39, p. 154]
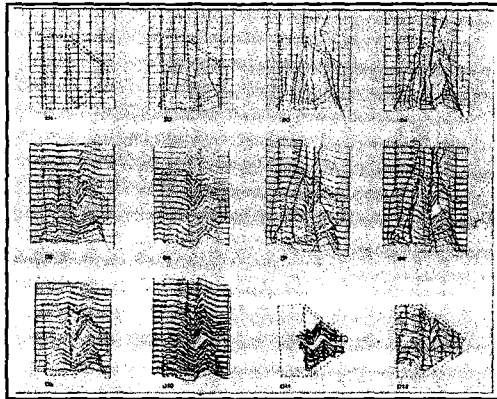

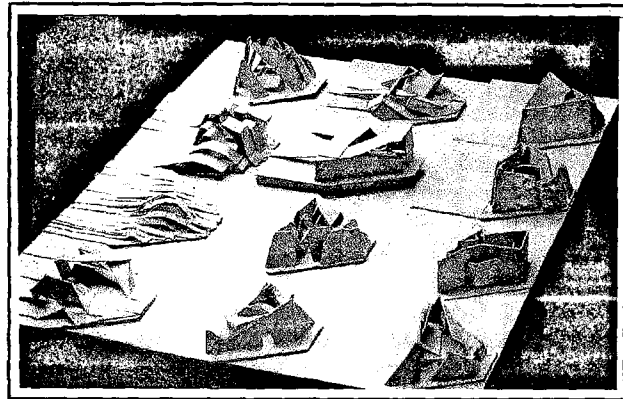Figure 3.25   Concept diagrams
(El Croquis, 1997)

Figure 3.26   Model studies
(El Croquis, 1997)

3.5.   THE LAST QUOTE

It is possible to say that biggest contribution of Eisenman in architecture is the approaches he develops than the designs he makes. The approaches, as Jencks says, shifting from "his early work in 'cardboard architecture' in the late 1960s, based loosely on the theories of Noam Chomsky and his concept of 'deep structure', Eisenman has picked up one *nuova scienta* after another, using devices drawn from fractals (self-similarity, scaling, superposition), from DNA research (his Bio-Centrum project), from Catastrophe Theory (the fold), from rhetoric (catechresis), from Boolean algebra (the hypercube), and from psychoanalysis (too many theories to remember)" to a further going research. [43, p. 139] Because of this wide spread theory, it is almost impossible to generalise Eisenman' works. The only thing which can be said about his projects is that autonomy of architecture is always the most important issue, then comes the process to execute this issue in his architecture.

CHAPTER 4

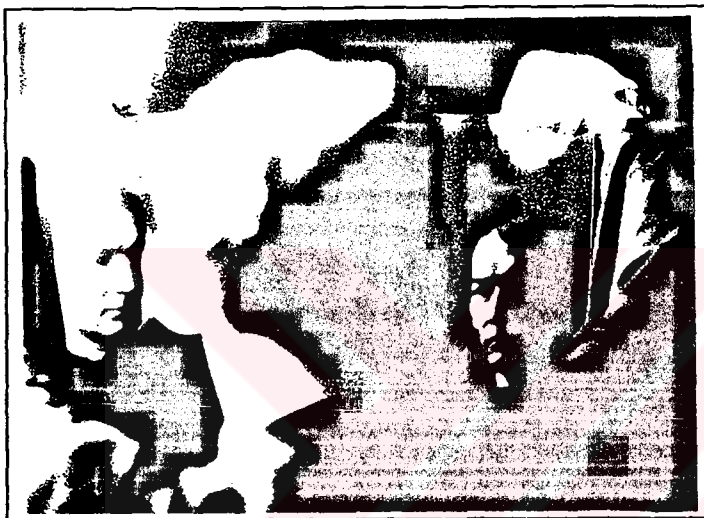## SHORT CUT: Rem Koolhaas

Figure 4.1   Rem Koolhaas

The work of the architect Rem Koolhaas (Figure 4.1) has been named as neo-modern, late-modern, transmodern, postmodern, deconstructivist and supermodern. All this names characterise parts of the work in one way or another. In which way his work can be seen as postmodern will be analysed in this chapter. The aim is not to name the projects as postmodern but to look, as is said before, how the theory of the postmodernity can be helpful in analysing these projects. The word 'postmodern' is studied in the first chapter as a new theory, a transformation of the society, a different style, a change of place and a new way of functioning. It is in this context that the projects get their meaning in the following part.

A long time Koolhaas has the title of an architect on paper. His theoretical work was known all over the world but on a small scale. The first projects that have been realised were immediately compared with his writings. Along the critics there was

disappointment. Koolhaas defended himself by saying that his work cannot be seen as a proof of his writings. These projects are the Dance Theatre in The Hague and the 'IJ-plein' in Amsterdam. (Figure 4.2) Especially the last project contains obvious references to the modern architecture in Europe. At that time, starting eighties, the modern architecture was on its return. Koolhaas made a conscious choice by using the arsenal of the modernists. In the urban studies for IJ-plein he was using various modern projects: Ernst Mays Riedhof, Walter Gropius' Dammerstock, Jan Duikers project for the third CIAM, etc. [45]

Just a few years later Koolhaas put forward another position. Modernism, especially in Holland, became a cliché. According to Koolhaas young architectural offices like Mecanoo only used the existing forms of the modern architecture without further development; modernism without dogma. Also their own work was too much dependent on the precedents in modern architecture. In between the entire postmodernist rise it was a courageous attitude but it became a cliché. What happen after this (self) criticism can be seen in his projects from 1989 till now on. These projects are the main object of study in this chapter.
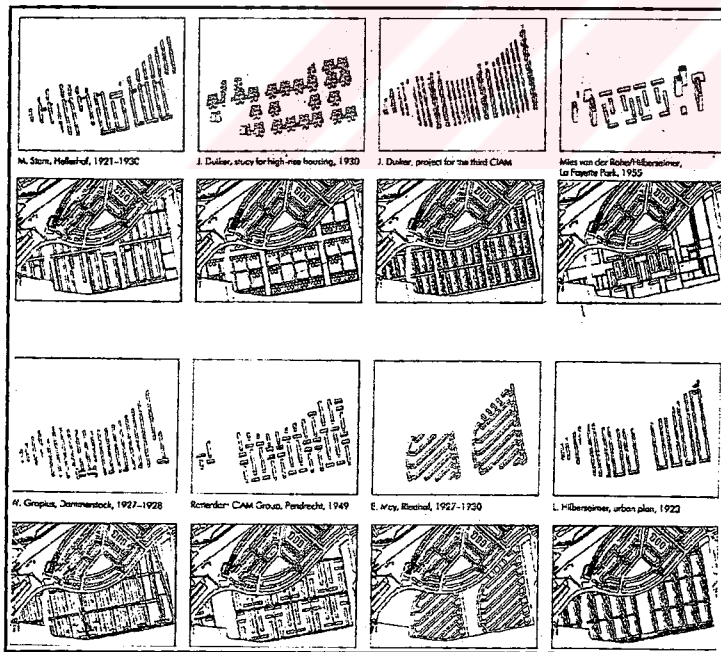

Figure 4.2   Urban studies of IJ-Plein showing the various modern projects for the site

(Lucan,   1991)

4.1   AMERICA OF KOOLHAAS IN EUROPE

'This large number of weakly related sources, readily identified as underlying the Modern in America, begins to suggest the loose, broad, inclusive, less intense, rather indiscriminate, thus democratic, perimeters of the modern movement here as opposed to the impersonal, reductive, exclusive, more idealistic, more moralistic thrust of avant-garde Europe at this time.' (Forrest T. Lisle, 1933) [46, p. 22]

In 1989 Koolhaas got three large tasks: the Sea Trade Centre in Zeebrugge, the National Library of France in Paris and the Centre for Art and Media Technology. (Figure 4.3, 4.4) One year later the project for the TGV-station in Lille. These projects show a change in the work of Koolhaas. As mentioned above, the internal reason of that change was the autocritical reaction to the development in the eighties. As the external reason, there was the influence of 'the whole mythology of 'Europe 92'', which seemed to create an artificial optimism (political and economical) that is reflected into a series of extremely ambitious enterprises. With the future of a borderless Europe, the city areas got more importance. A few regions got a chance to profile themselves, also socio-cultural.

In an interview with the architectural magazine El Croquis, Koolhaas unveiled indirectly a strong desire: to get a position like an architect in the beginning of this century in America. [47] According to Koolhaas the situation is comparable with that time and the employers seem to long for the propagandist potential of architecture again. Koolhaas has explained the above-mentioned tradition in his book Delirious New York. The book is called a retroactive manifesto, a manifest which is written long after. The writing of a manifest is connected with the modern Western thinking, where statements are first put and then followed. Delirious New York is a retroactive manifest. History and reality is replaced, in the words of Vattimo, by a fictional experience of reality, written with an over-developed sense of drama The book gives an image of a historical overview of New York in the beginning of this century, with all the historical references. But in fact it is the interpretation of Koolhaas what it is about. His fascination for the metropolis and its appearance. The book is ending with a fictional conclusion with his designs following his manifest for a city, long after.

In the book he analyses the specific culture of the skyscrapers which he calls the 'culture of congestion'. The pressure of the maximum utilisation of the capital is the essential force behind the culture of congestion. Developers suggested the American modernity that is pragmatic from its nature. Behind this pragmatism Koolhaas sees the most beautiful fantasies sheltered. A number of characteristics become of great importance for the large tasks Koolhaas has to deal with. How are these designs suggested by the theory of congestion? Is it a re-experience of a further going development of a tradition at another place and another time? (Figure 4.5)
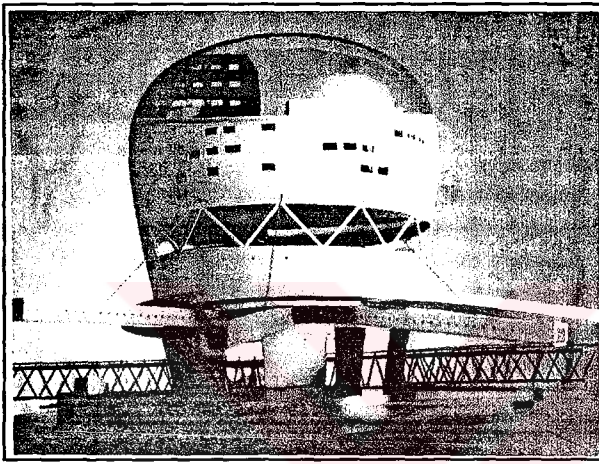

Figure 4.3   Sea Trade Center, Zeebrugge, 1989
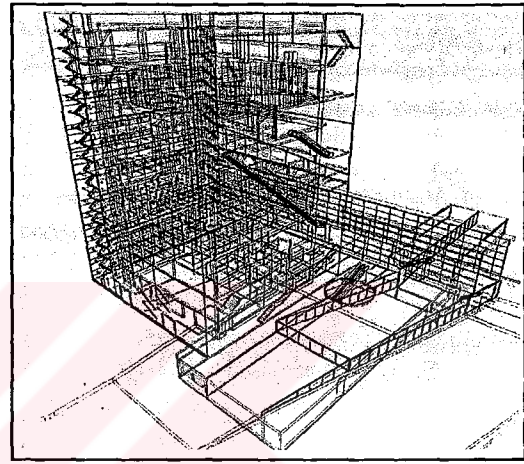   (Koolhaas, 1995)

Figure 4.4   Center for Art and
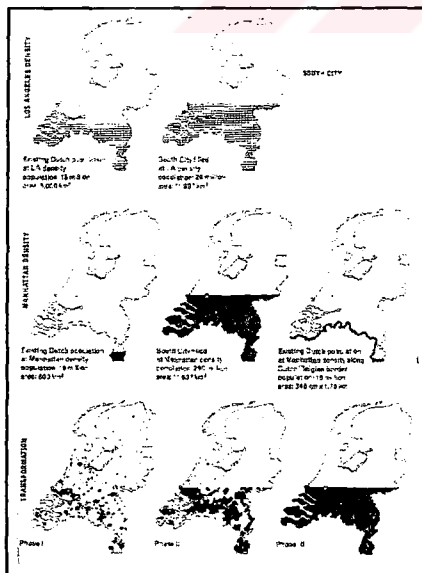   Media Technology
                 (Koolhaas, 1995)

Figure 4.5   'Unlearning Holland', 1993
                 (Koolhaas, 1995)

4.2. THE EXCITING METROPOLIS

Delirious New York shows the fascination from the pragmatic urban style of the American cities. Context and history are less important than economy. The style was a triumph of democracy and capitalism. The arisement of the Rockefeller Centre is a good example of this. The development of the centre is a coming together of business and amusement. The developer Radio Corporation of America (RCA), showbiz expert Roxy (S.L. Rothafel) and architect Raymond Hood found each other making the Rockefeller Centre. The contribution of Roxy was of great importance to lower the financial risks. With his revue shows he could guarantee a commercial success. A monument for improvement was build at the lowest point of a world-wide economic crisis. [46]

In his book Delirious New York Koolhaas explains the exciting metropolis with the following terms: grid, lobotomy, vertical schism and automonument. [48] At the end of this section "Exciting Metropolis', these themes will be tested on the design for the National Library of France.

Grid: In New York the grid became the stage for economic competition. It was not so much a spatial or social planning but a regulation for the economy and traffic. A pattern of islands surrounded by motorways, a kind of modernised Venice. Every future urban thinking becomes irrelevant. 'This radical simplification of concept is the secret formula that allows its infinite growth without corresponding loss of legibility, intimacy, or coherence.' [48] Koolhaas' conclusion is that the fragments of the city has no relation anymore contrary to the historical cities in Europe where the new always has a relation with the existing situation.

Lobotomy: Buildings have an interior and an exterior. In the European architecture there is a moral relation between these two. The facades of large buildings with complex programs, skyscrapers, cannot show anymore what is inside. These are even hiding the activities which are taking place and happening inside the buildings. This term, which comes from the brain surgery and used to define the separation of the emotional part from the rational part of the brain not to let the patient suffer more, is used by Koolhaas to mention this architectural equivalent.

Automonument: Passing a certain 'critical' mass, a responsible insertion in the city structure is impossible. A 'city within a city' is appearing. The criterions about good or beautiful architecture disappear. A traditional semantically analyse is useless because there is still a direct relation between form and function.

Vertical Schism: The combination of the elevator and the steel skeleton made the skyscraper. The elevator connected the different floors mechanically. On every floor an autonomous program is imaginable. In one building different worlds are thinkable without any relation. The ground plan becomes more important than the spatial experience because the connection between the floors is almost without space. Raymond Hood said: 'The plan is of primary importance, because on the floor are performed all the activities of the human occupants.' [48]

In short terms these are the most important themes from Koolhaas' interpretation of the culture of congestion in New York. Koolhaas is not referring to the academic skyscrapers of today but to the complex skyscrapers of the beginning of this century. The book is also not about style but about program. With two examples of the book this will be worked out a little more: the City of a Captive Globe and the Downtown Athletic Club The City of the Captive Globe is Koolhaas' reconstruction of this ideal Manhattan.

Inside the tight structure of the grid the equality of the blocks can lead to an intensifying of the architectural form. The City of Captive Globe is Koolhaas' reconstruction of this ideal Manhattan. [48, p. 294] (Figure 4.6) On every socle of granite there can be an autonomous plan. The context is of no importance for these programs. Le Corbusiers Plan Voisin, Leonidovs Ministry for Heavy Industry and the Waldorf Astoria Hotel are placed on a socle. The grid is surrounding the whole earth like this in a way that no natural life is possible anymore. Every plot has his own hyperreality, a more intense version of the real world. For Koolhaas the grid is not a remedy for the chaos but a way to explore freedom. (Figure 4.7) The 'ideal' grid never came to existence because of the zoning law in 1916 that is creating unity and coherence. The other themes got their meaning in practice in different buildings, for example the Downtown Athletic Club.
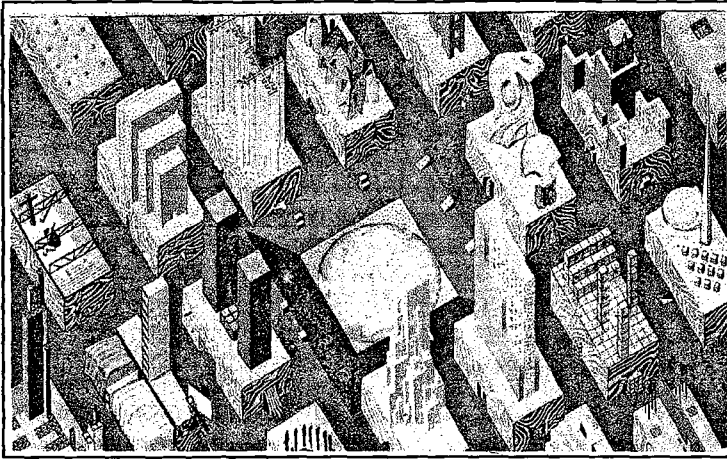
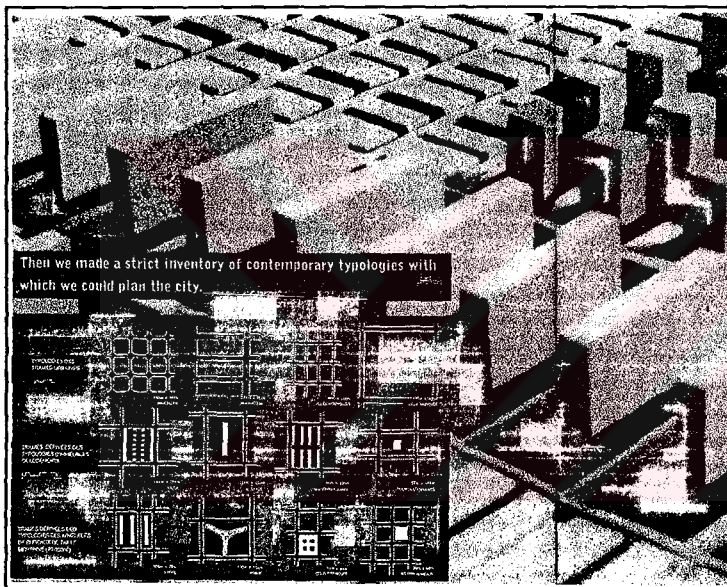Figure 4.6   City of Captive Globe (Koolhaas, 1978)

Figure 4.7   The grid explored in Paris, 1991 (Koolhaas, 1995)

The Downtown Athletic Club is built in 1931 on the bank of the Hudson. [48, p. 152-158] (Figure 4.8) Koolhaas uses this building in Delirious New York to illustrate how the pressure of the city can be handled positively. From the outside, the building looks the same as most of the skyscrapers in that time while inside an artificial world is created. The serene facade is hiding the activities inside (lobotomy) and on every floor there is a different program (vertical schism). The elevator is leading the visitors along the facilities. The activities in the building are organised to keep the man of the metropolis in condition. A gymnasium, golf-links, a swimming pool are

examples of the activities. On the 18th floor, the lounge, the men can meet the women. The women can reach this level only with a separated elevator. It is a total artificial way of coming together which Koolhaas sees as an interesting consequence of metropolitan life. The whole building is an artificial system to perfectionise the existing. The people become the 'voluntary prisoners' of the system.
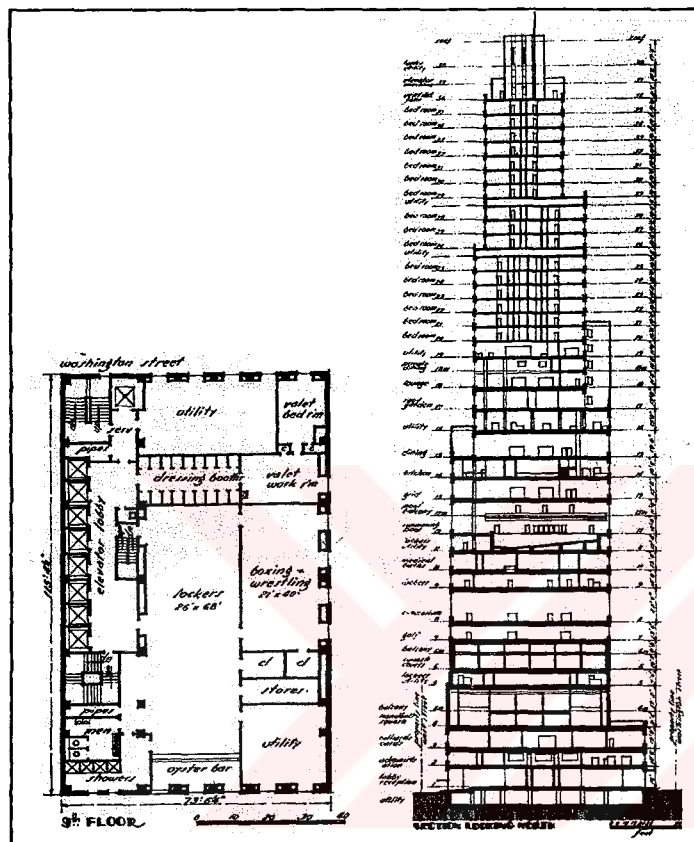

Figure 4.8   Downtown Athletic Club (Koolhaas, 1978)

4.2.1   PROJECT: The National Library of France

One of the ambitious projects that OMA got in 1989 was the task for the National Library in Paris. (Figure 4.9) It was one of the five large projects of Francois Mitterand, intended by strong socio-cultural ambitions. The building or buildings had to contain five libraries (cinematheque, reference library, catalogue library, scientific library and a library with recent acquisitions) on 250.000 square meter. Important is that 60% of the building was for storage. The location of the library was an isolated place near the 'peripherique', facing the Seine. First the office invented a podium where five buildings would stand together, each with its own characteristics. In this concept the form would get the all attention but as Koolhaas explains 'we became

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more and more resistant to the norms of an architecture in which everything has to be resolved through the invention of form'. [49, p. 24-25] The public space, which would appear with the former concept, was taken inside one large building.

From then on the 'fantastic' pragmatism of the culture of congestion was part of the inspiration. A very big building, unfamiliarly to Europe, needed inspiration from somewhere else. Till then the fascination of Koolhaas for the large scale was only 'visible' in his writings. Here Koolhaas got the chance to work his ideas out. In stead of starting to create spatiality, the process was turned. One gigantic block was designed for the storage, every floor having the same groundplan. After that it seems if air-bubbles are appearing in the massive block, because these spaces are arbitrary placed in the building. (Figure 4.10) This was possible because there had to be no relations between the different levels and the different libraries. People are left in the position with possibility to choose the elevator for the library they need to go to. The vertical schism is used here freely to place the libraries accidentally and in free forms.

The building is not about what is present but about what is absent. (Figure 4.11) 'Maybe it was possible to articulate the most important part of the building simply as absence of building, as a kind of refusal to build' Koolhaas says. [49] The whole dialectical thinking about essence and appearance is broken down. [50, p. 12] Or is the essence of the building to store the books? To 'understand' the building the most hidden parts has to be found. The building looks from the outside as a container of books and there is no relation with the context. The places where the libraries are 'by accident' touching the facades are the only point where there is a visualisation of what is happening inside. Like clouds they are covering the building.

Public buildings with such a large program are taking the public space inside. Koolhaas is designing the ground floor as a public space, the reason therefore is that he did not want just an 'inheritance of everything that comes from above'. There are spaces for film, TV and music and of course the nine elevators leading to the libraries. To make the people find their way the elevators will be from glass and 'decorated' with texts. The amount of visitors, with all different aims, will create a real postmodern space, especially in the ground floor which will serve to all the people entering the building and 'not a public scene or true public space but gigantic

spaces of circulation, ventilation and ephemeral connections'. [17, p. 130] (Figure 4.12, 4.13)
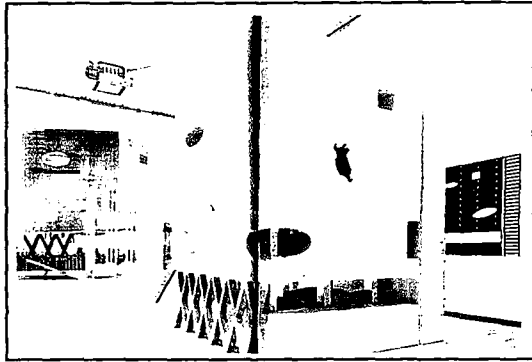

Figure 4.9   The National Library of France
                (Koolhaas, 1995)
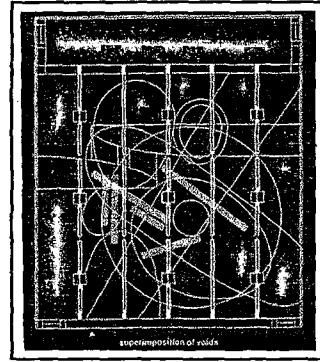

Figure 4.10   Superimposition of voids
                (Koolhaas, 1995)
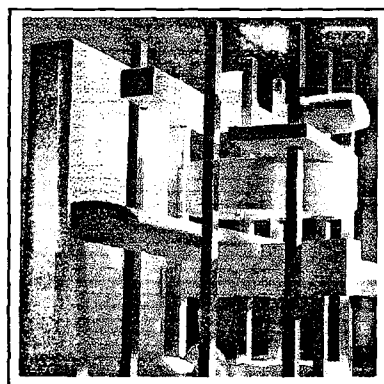

Figure 4.11   Model showing what is
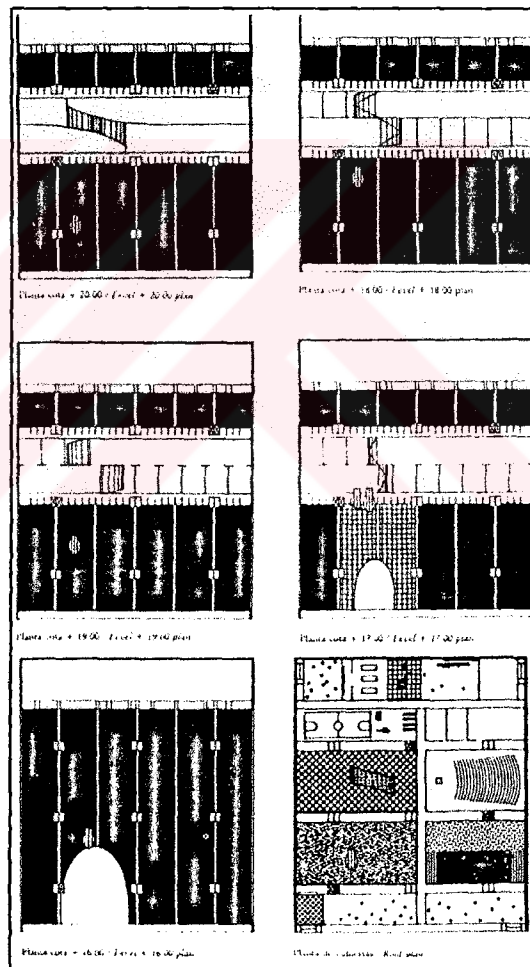   Hidden: 9 elevators
                (Koolhaas, 1995)

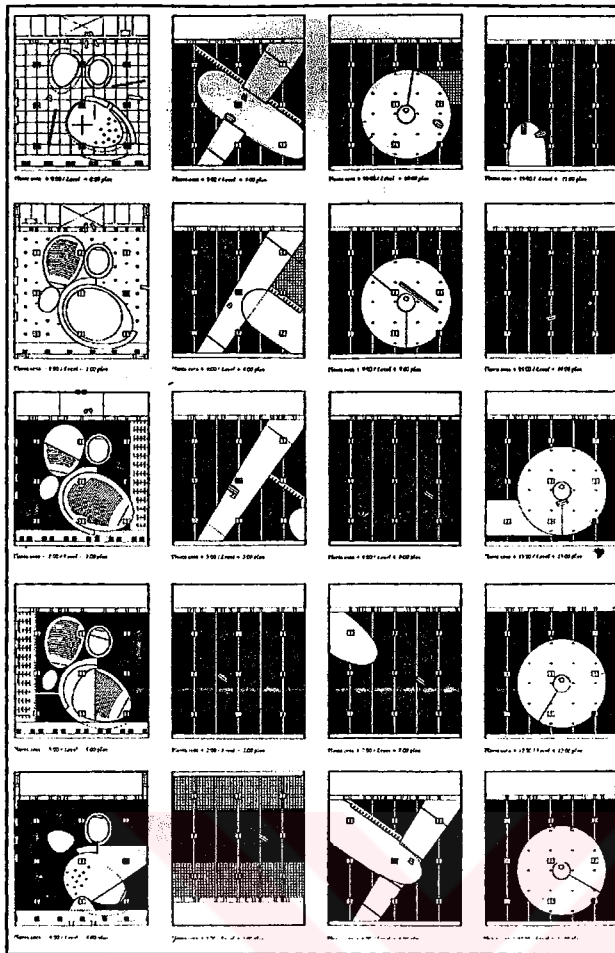Figure 4.12   Plans of different levels
                (Koolhaas, 1995)

Figure 4.13   Plans of different levels (Koolhaas, 1995)

4.3. CIRCULATION AS ATTRACTION

Koolhaas is mostly interested in the organisation of activities. In his designs there is special attention to the program. Beyond a certain scale and complexity, he says, pragmatic solutions can work metaphorical. In his design for the National Library in Paris the programmatic thinking was leading to an organisation scheme. The form is, extremely said, what is left.

In 1982 this programmatic thinking was already shown in his design for Parc de la Villette. The design for a new park in Paris is in fact not a design but a strategy. 'Its 'designs' should therefore be the proposition of a 'method' that combines architectural specificity with programmatic indeterminacy'. [49, p. 86] But who thinks that this architectural specificity means designing objects, is wrong. The plan is not presenting an object but mostly schemes and the processes how the plan is developed. Five layers are forming the plan for the park; a layer of horizontal strips of 50 meters wide with programmatic categories, a mathematics formula for the

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buildings, a circulation system, a composition of major elements and the connections with the context. (Figure 4.14) Every layer has its own 'arbitrary' logic and the superimposition of these layers makes the form of the park. (Figure 4.15) The combination of 'architecture' and program is not neutral. Architecture seems less important than the strategy, but still this strategy is fixing the plan totally: the size of the strips, the routing, and even the buildings that are put with the help of a mathematical formula. [51, p. 128-129] There is freedom but freedom in a straight structure. The difference between the built and the programmed is collapsing. The programmatic indeterminacy is rigidly to Koolhaas regulations and objectivity. For the Parc the la Villette of Koolhaas try to reach congestion with a two-dimensional plan, a horizontal Downtown Athletic Club.
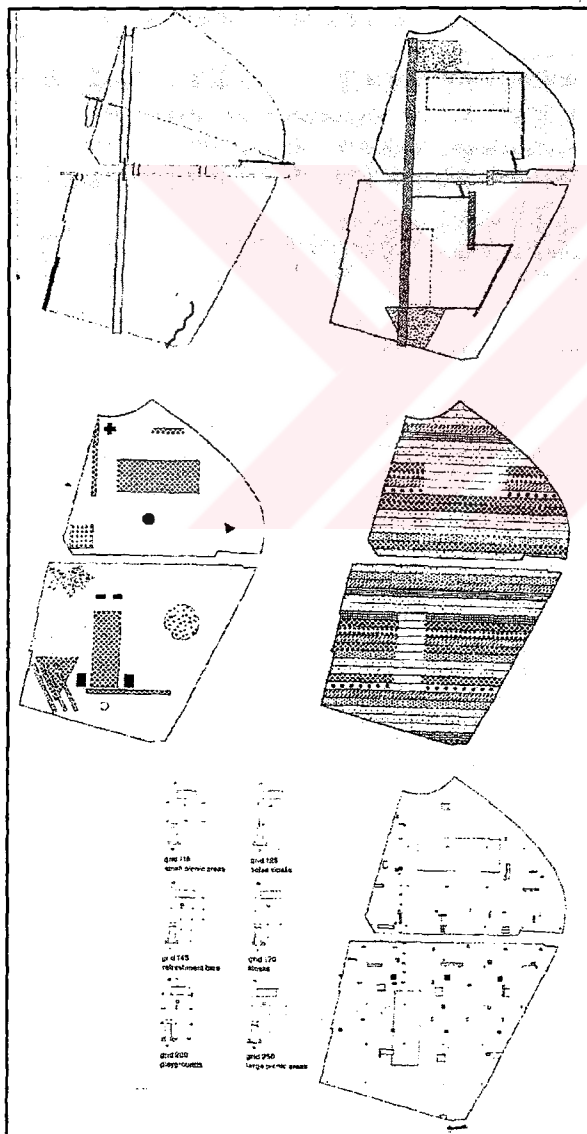

Figure 4.14   Parc de la Villette, 1982: five layers
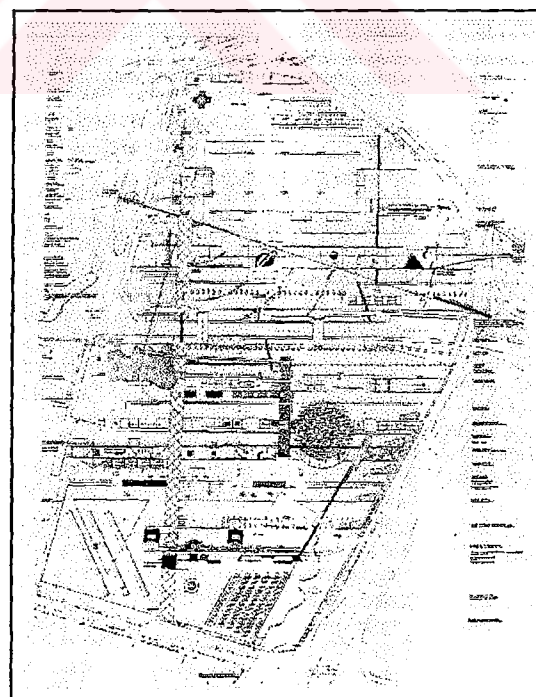

Figure 4.15   Parc de la Villette, 1982

Koolhaas has a strong believe in technical development. The modern statement that 'architecture founded its promise largely on the belief that technology could solve the practical and artistic problems of modern social existence' [52, p. 244] is changed by Koolhaas that the technology is the creator of illusions. The human being is not tide by the technological inventions but can make use of this. The structures Koolhaas is making are based largely on circulation. The meeting of different traffic methods has to be considered as an eye-catcher. The attraction 'Leap Frog Railway' on Coney Island is an example for Koolhaas' intercourse with the traffic. (Figure 4.16) The chaotic scenes are changed into its benefits. The chaos is tied in a regulated system. In this way the attachment of Koolhaas to amusement parks can be find in his work. The project for a TGV-station, an international business centre, a congress expo and a large shopping mall in Lille is the project Koolhaas is longing for. The whole project is based on circulation and complexity. Here the circulation gets its form as an attraction. (Figure 4.17, 4.18, 4.19) The Piranesian space, again an empty one in the dense structure, gives the visitor an overwhelming view on the different means of transport. It is an amusement park the visitors are searching, even paying, for the attractions. In Lille that does not happen voluntarily. For the passengers there is no escape possible because everything can be seen and, in the words of Baudrillard, gets a 'fatal' attraction.[17]

The programs are not only taken pragmatically anymore but also more and more spatial. Especially the small buildings like the Kunsthal and recently a villa in Bordeaux this is done with architectural means.
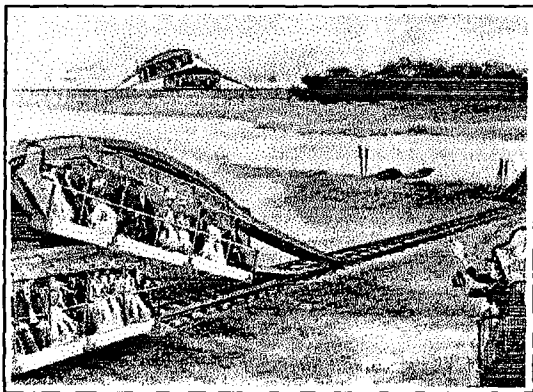

Figure 4.16   Leap Frog Railway, Coney Island
                (Koolhaas, 1978)
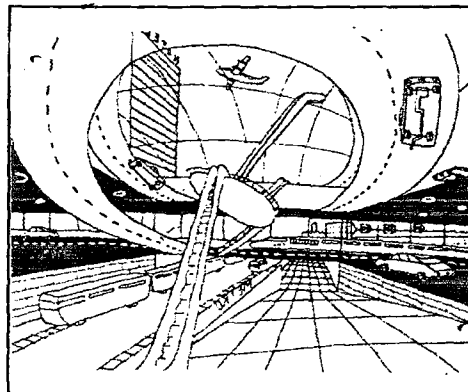

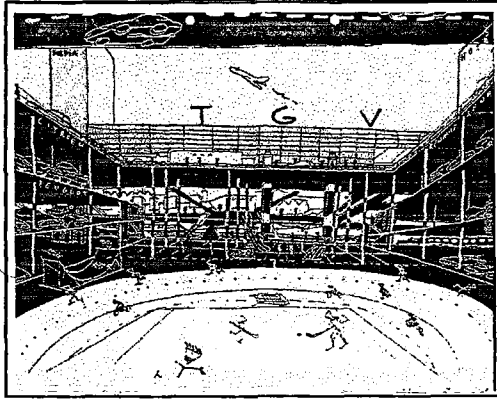Figure 4.17   Piranesian space
                (Lucan, 1991)

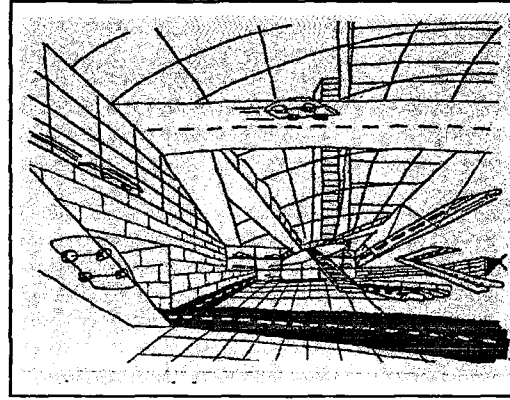Figure 4.18   Perspective toward the parking garage (Lucan, 1991)

Figure 4.19   Network of communication lines (Lucan, 1991)

4.3.1. PROJECT: Kunsthal

'Rather than being seen as an ingenious fusion of Mies van der Rohe's Nationalgalerie, Le Corbusier's Musée de Croissance Illimitée and a multi-storey car park or as a reflection of Koolhaas' ideas about the city, urbanity and architecture, the Kunsthal is interesting because of the intriguing variety of spatial experiences it provides.' [20]

The fragment here above is interesting because it describes exactly what makes this building so special, namely because of its spatial experiences. But, contrary to what Ibelings says, this is related to the use of the scheme of a car park and its different articulation with the urban context. And besides that, it is interesting because of the variety of materials used (plastic next to marble, steel next to wood). There is also playfulness in the construction like the tree-columns inside and the use of three different construction methods at the platform facing the highway: a steel column, a concrete column and a connection from steel. Here the main idea is to take a look at the circulation which the building is really about. The Kunsthal is an exhibition place for temporary shows. It is not a museum because it does not have its own collection. It is part of the Museumpark, designed by Koolhaas and Yves Burnier, in Rotterdam. The Netherlands Institute for Architecture is the other end of the park. The task of this building is to link the park with the five meters high dike. (Figure 4.20, 4.21)

The concept of the building is a box, the symbol of the modernist architecture. Koolhaas is exploring the idea of the box further; the 'inside' turns into a magic box. Derrida's theory about deconstruction seems to be reflected in the building. Not in a way as the deconstructivism of Coop Himmelb(l)au, namely deconstruction as

decoration, where there is 'this naive, banal analogy between a supposedly irregular geometry and a fragmented world'. [47, p. 29] The reference to deconstruction lies in the working of the building.

There is a large 'tower' with commercials (in fact for the installations) to take the attention. The difference between interior and exterior seems very clear looking from a distance. Again a box placed on a dike seems to make a contrast. When you are coming closer the contrast is disappearing. There are two routes crossing the building: one route as a parallel way next to the dike and the other as a route from the dike to the park. (Figure 4.22) Before entering the building you are already passing through the building with your car. The other route gives the impression of being in the building and at the same time still outside. There is a constant replacement of perceiving whether you are in or out of the building. The building at this place, in the ramp of entering the building or just going to the Museumpark from the dike, shelters you. But also there is a division with a glass wall that is separating you from the people inside.

The entrance of the building is halfway down (or up) this ramp. Entering the building there is another ramp going the reverse direction, viewing numerous chairs, the auditorium and the square outside the building. To go to the exhibitions you can go down to the zero level (museumpark) / -1 level (seen from dike) and up to the first level (seen from museumpark) / zero level (dike). (Figure 4.23, 4.24, 4.25, 4.26, 4.27) The 'route' is leading you through the building: first down and then up again along the same ramp as you went 'inside'. (Figure 4.28) The circulation is ending at the balcony of the third floor. In the drawings of the building the route is even manipulated with arrows. To make sure that everyone is walking all right? The playfulness of the circulation is worked out extremely serious. The whole experience of the building is connected to the constantly changing position, inside/outside, above/under, during following the route. (Figure 4.29) During this route the visitors find themselves mainly in an inbetween space. 'The structural concepts of these designs points in the same direction as the initial volumetric determinations: the achievement of an inarticulate space. This inarticulate corporeality of OMA's recent work is again clearly resounding with the disorganised post-capitalist structure.' [47, p. 43]
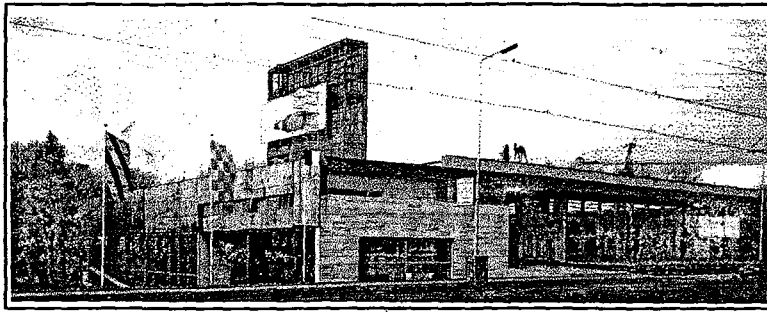
Figure 4.20   Kunsthal: View from the dike (El Croquis, 1996)

Figure 4.21   Kunsthal: View from the park (El Croquis, 1996)
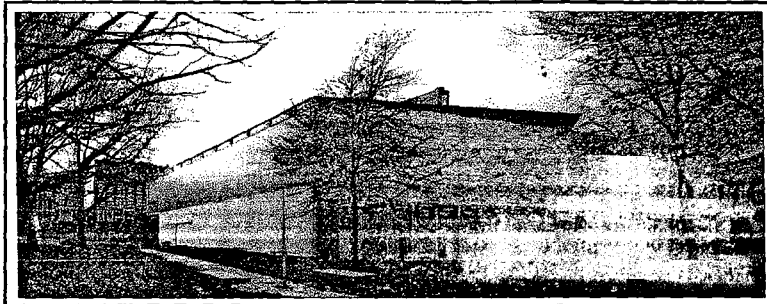

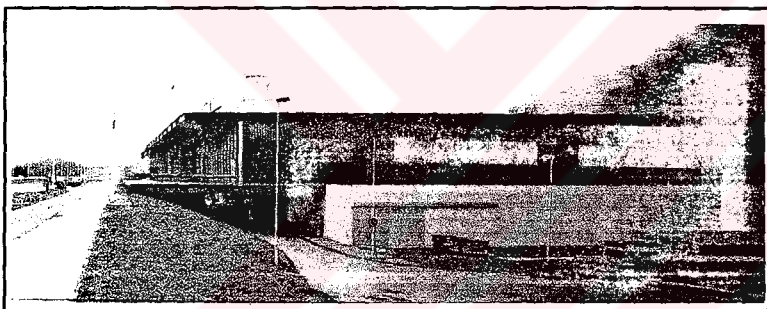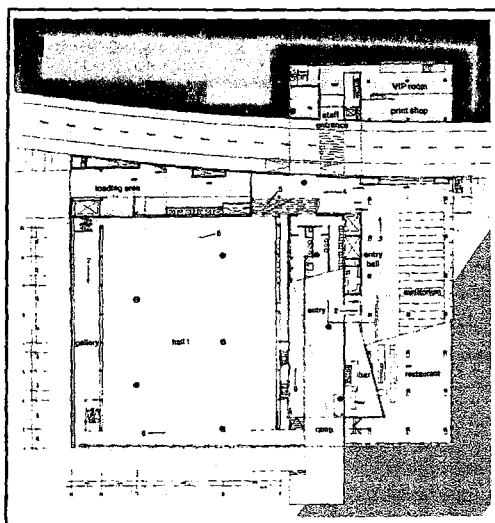Figure 4.22   Kunsthal: View from the parallel way (El Croquis, 1996)

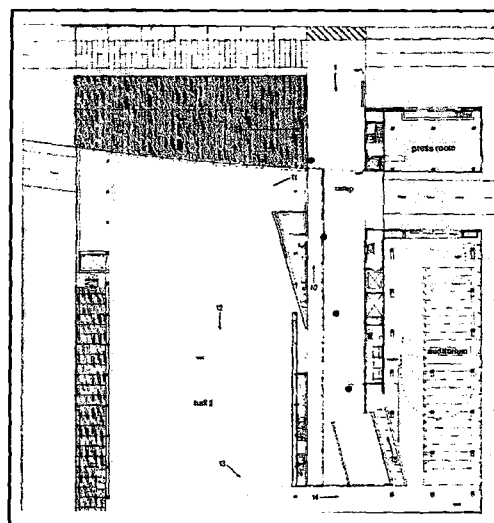Figure 4.23   Kunsthal Plan: Park level

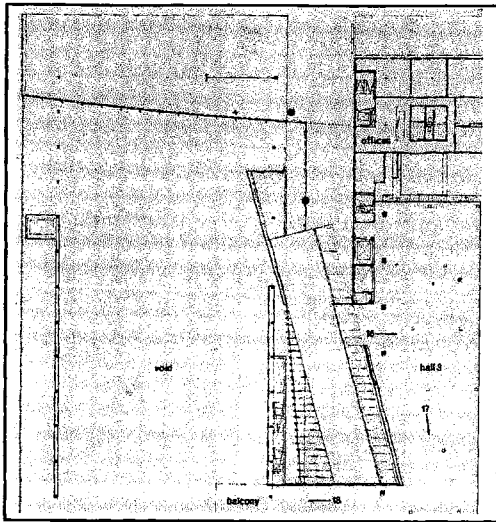Figure 4.24   Kunsthal Plan: Dike level

Figure 4.25   Plan: Third level
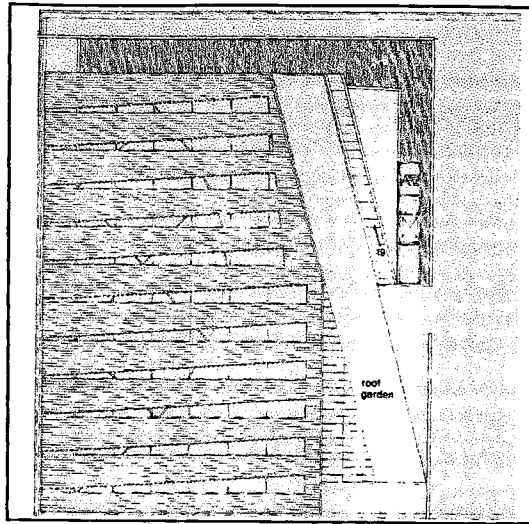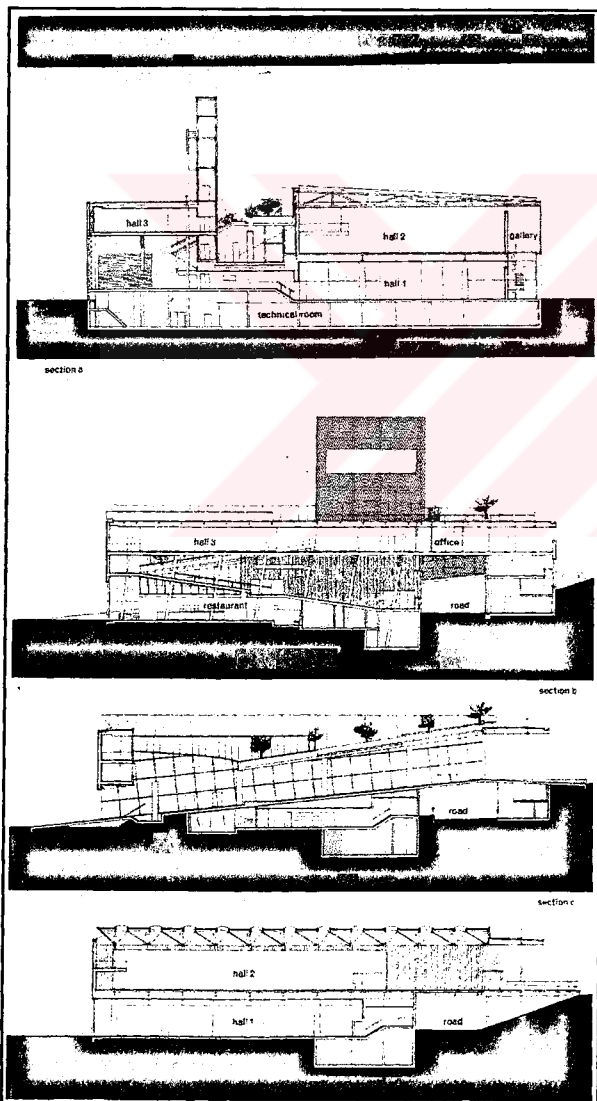

Figure 4.26   Plan: Roof

Figure 4.27   Kunsthal: Sections

Figure 4.28   Ramp through Kunsthal inside/outside

Figure 4.29   View from the bookstore down/up

4.4. THE NEW METROPOLIS AT THE END OF THE CENTURY

In 'Delirious New York' was the culture of congestion that Koolhaas was attached to. Now there is the book 'S, M, L, XL', a three kilo heavy book which became a guide to students and critics, just to refer to. In 'S, M, L, XL' it is the generic city, mainly inspired on the Asian metropolis, that gets the attention. [53, p. 1239-1264] (Figure 4.30) The essay is about 'what was used to be the city'. The destructive elements of modernity has destroyed the city as we know it. Is the generic city the new ideal of Koolhaas or is it part of his irony that is so common in postmodernity? Of course there is a certain irony in the interpretations but the explanation has to be found in the way that interpretation finds its meaning. 'If there is method in this work, it is a method of systematic idealisation - a systematic overestimation of what exists, a bombardment of speculation that invests even the most mediocre aspects with retroactive conceptual and ideological charge.' [53, p.208] In 'Delirious New York' the interpretation became the proof for his own designs in the fictional conclusion and later on for some of his projects. The interpretation of the generic city is again an overestimating of the existing and following the logic of the late-capitalism. Like most of the writings of Koolhaas it is a laconic or ironic acceptance of the things as they are. He is changing the problematic by interpretation into the neutral or (especially in Delirious New York) to the wonderful. An example about housing: 'Housing is not a problem. It has either been completely solved or totally left to chance; in the first case it is legal, in the second 'illegal' ... One solution consumes the sky, the other the ground. It is strange that those with the least money inhabit the most expensive commodity - earth; those who pay, what is free - air.'

'Offices are still there, in ever greater numbers, in fact. People say they are no longer necessary. In five to ten years we will all work at home. But then we will need bigger homes, big enough to use for meetings. Offices will have to be converted to homes.' Baudrillard's explanation of the 'ecstasy of communication' seems to belong also to Koolhaas' generic city. The ecstasy of communication is following on a period when contradictions between private/public and subject/object still consist a meaning. In that 'intimate' period there was still an exploration of the daily life. Now there is only the immanent surface of communication by screens and electronic highways. The dwelling gets more and more a station of sending and receiving messages by

phone, TV, radio, video and computer. In fact the message is already not existing anymore, there is only a manifestation of the medium in its pure circulation. The ecstasy of communication is leading to obscenity where the people are circulating in a system of images, sounds, pulses and short time connection with other people and signs. [54, p. 94]

In the generic city the public realm is achieved by evacuation where are only necessary movements. The infrastructure becomes 'suprisingly sensual, a utilitarian pretense entering the domain of smooth space' with a variety of different experiences that can last five minutes or forty and it can be shared with almost nobody, or with the entire population. In the generic city, the skyscraper is the main typology. Contrary to the culture of congestion it does not matter anymore where it is located. 'It can exist anywhere: in a rice field or downtown. ... Density in isolation is the ideal.' 'The Generic City is fractal, an endless repetition of the same simple structural module: it is possible to reconstruct it from its smallest entity, a desktop computer, maybe even a diskette.' Koolhaas describes the variety of the Generic City with 'varied boredom': '... the infinite variety of the Generic City comes close, at least, to making variety normal: banalized, in a reversal of expectation, it is repetition that has become unusual, therefore, potentially, daring, exhilarating.' Again by interpretation or overestimation the urban sprawl a meaning is given. The style in the generic city is postmodern, not because it is a critical interpretation of the architectural history but because it produces architecture fast enough to keep pace with the development of the generic city. The only activity is shopping. To this Koolhaas is critical: 'It is our own fault - we didn't think of anything better to do. The same spaces inundated with other programs - libraries, baths, universities - would be terrific; we would awed by their grandeur.'

The generic city is a city without identity. 'The great originality of the Generic City is simply to abandon what doesn't work - what has outlived its use - to break up the blacktop of idealism with the jackhammers of realism and to accept whatever grows in its place.' Planning is worked out like the photoshop, a computer program where contrary conditions are stuck together. In this sense the generic city is the analogy of the computer. Koolhaas sees these cities without identity not as a lost but as an advantage because 'it can produce a new identity every Monday morning'. But how? There is no answer available. What Koolhaas is doing is taking 'a strategy that

elevates 'realism' to a holy doctrine'. [55, p. 31] The generic city is beating the idealism with the realism. Koolhaas is idealising this realism again. The starting question of the essay 'The Generic City' was whether the contemporary city is like the contemporary airport, namely 'all the same'. There is a convergence but this is only possible through giving price its identity. And then maybe the most important sentence 'at the scale at which it occurs, it must mean something'.

The generic city of Koolhaas is tranquil and quiet. But as Lieven de Cauter puts it: 'The Bronx and the Banlieue do not enter into Koolhaas' picture. (Why not: Hypothesis: the absence of violence signalled in the book is allied to the latent tendency to violence of the book itself).' Therefore he's concluding: "We must therefore indeed take Koolhaas' question 'Is the contemporary city like the contemporary airport?', seriously. As long as we consider the airport in its totality, i.e. not only its lobbies and lounges, its catering services, cargo companies and tour operators, but also the associated transit camps, we obtain a truer picture of the generic city." [55, p. 34] Although De Cauter is concluding this to plead in favour for the traditional, specific cities he is touching the button. In his interpretations Koolhaas is leaving the 'dark' sides of the city outside his writings. Probably because he already thinks he is talking in his 'dangerous writings' about the 'negative' urban sprawl wherein he sees some new chances, especially freedom. The generic city is an answer to the disneyfication which 'is our own sentimentality taking its revenge'. [56, p. 65]

> "I started out from the interest in the city. I always thought that the city was the sum of architecture. But by now I know that it's just not true. The city is the major enemy of architecture, which can only survive here and there in the city. The question that interests me now is: how can you engage with the city and with the architect's profession simultaneously without the question of an irrelevant enclave arising?" [56, p. 66]
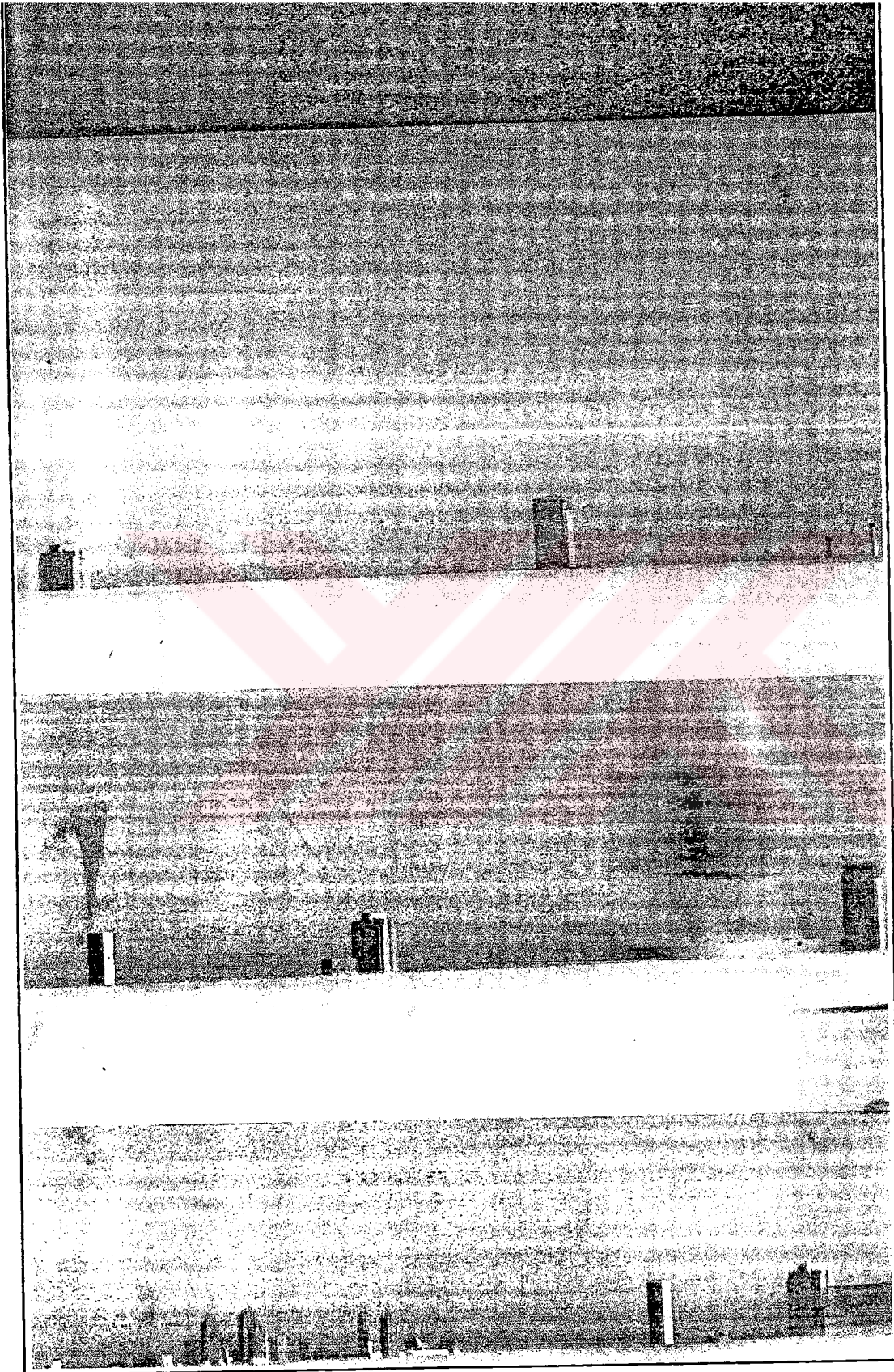
Figure 4.30   The Generic City (Koolhaas, 1995)

4.4.1. PROJECT: New Seoul International Airport City

> "OMA has responded well to the process of globalisation over the past 20 years and this globalisation has also shaped us. We have been able to view this development in theoretical terms and do something with it." [57, p. 8]

Everywhere Koolhaas goes becomes the center of the world. When he was making the project in Lille, the city was the crossingpoint of the connection between Amsterdam - Spain/Italy and the connection London - Moscow. In his interpretation, only looking to time-distance, Lille was closer to London than the suburban areas of London itself. In Yokohama 'our site (A) is next to a future city (B) ... which in thirty, or maybe twenty, years will be the densest part of Japan.' In the project for the International Airport in Seoul this location is the center of the world. "What the idea of the city needs now is a new beginning. At various points in Asia such beginnings seem possible ... But the New Seoul Airport City offers the first *ideal* condition." It seems if this total overestimation of the task is necessary to give Koolhaas his inspiration. No criticism at all! Everything can turn into optimism with his thinking.

If there is criticism, it is a critique of the old. According to Koolhaas in the old cities there is a combination of beauty and uselessness or efficiency and soulless. This project has to *re-create* an optimism where people did not think about the creation of the city but just build them. All this optimism is needed to *reinvent* a hybrid and complex urban condition, an example of beauty *and* efficiency. No history, but artificiality.

The situation in this airport project is a landfill in the middle of the archipelago of Seoul. (Figure 4.31) The program is combination of an airport and infrastructure with residential, business, cultural and environmental zones. The landfill is designed in contrast with the free forms and situation of the islands. The existing islands are left largely untouched, as scenic places for the benefit of the inhabitants of the city. It is a conscious artificial world inbetween the natural beauty. One island is taken into the project where the top has merely a residential area. This is the only place with one program. The rest of the new area is divided into programmatic bands. (Figure 4.32)

The creation of a new airport and a new city is 'a massive infrastructural effort'. "The thesis of this project is that a single effort can produce and sustain two major

ambitions - to create, at the same time, the most modern airport and the most modern city". The efficiency is done by an infrastructure connecting the archipelago with the existing city and the islands with each other. Further efficiency is reached by Koolhaas without problem; "residential away from the airport, close to nature; business accessible from the airport; high-tech on flat, reclaimed land; etc.". These bands are deformed to combine them with each other. The 'World University' is a band as long as the rectangular city is wide, which cuts through all the other zones. (Figure 4.33) The overlapping are creating a 'tapestry of 'accidents''. Some 'utopian points' are left open for the future, as yet unknown structures dedicated to the public good.

Here Koolhaas can make differences at the scale of the city. (Figure 4.34) This is a city that is like the generic city without an existing identity but at the same time avoids the homogenity of the generic city. The bands are disturbed over and over to create differences or to make, as Koolhaas puts it, 'the universal become specific'.

Figure 4.31   New Seoul International Airport City, 1995
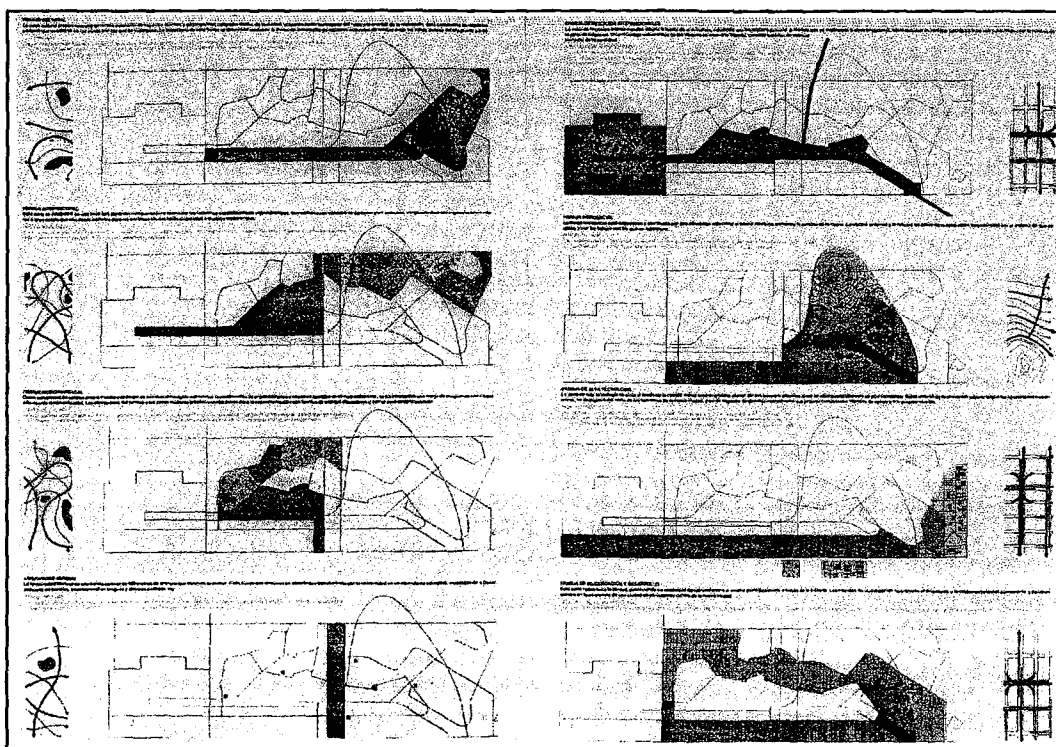   (EL Croquis, 1996)

Figure 4.32   Programmatic bands (El Croquis, 1996)

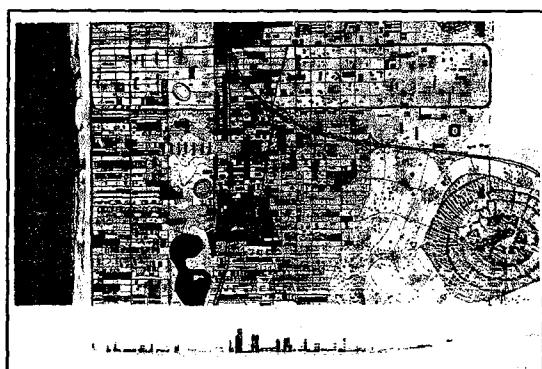Figure 4.33   Differences at the scale of the city

(El Croquis, 1996)

Figure 4. 34   World University (El Croquis, 1996)

4.5.   THE SPECIFIC

"I travel less than I used to, for instance. I now find the pure architectural production the most important thing, and also the most attractive." [57]

The villa in Bourdeaux is again about spatial experience reached with circulation. (Figure 4.35, 4.36) The task was to make a house for family with three children. The father has to live in a wheelchair for the rest of his life because of a car accident. In one sense this is the most important given (mobility) and at the same time has no influence at all (denial of invalidity).

The house has three levels and is situated in a hill. One level with kitchen (Figure 4.37) and tv-room (Figure 4.38) is carved into the hill, one with living and terrace seems without any facade, one with sleeping rooms hidden in perforated concrete block. The different levels are connected with staircases and a platform. In four different ways you can move from one floor to the other.

What is outside and what is inside is changing all over the building. Its starting with the large wall which is surrounding the villa at one side. With the car you go 'through' this wall and entering the courtyard with to the left the accommodation for the staff and a guest wing and to the right the house. At this place there is the main entrance to the house. Three staircases are going up. In the kitchen there is a staircase going to the living and from there to the sleeping room of the parents. At the other side of the house there is a spiral stair in a cylinder going to the sleeping room of the children. Half way you can go out to the terrace. The third staircase is going to the terrace. After entering the house you go out immediately and take a staircase to the terrace. From there you can enter the living room by a moving wall.

In the house are three staircases and none of them can be used by the owner. (Figure 4.39) For him Koolhaas designed a mobile platform of 10 square meter. Depending on its position the organisation and especially the perception of the house is changing. What roof was becomes void, what floor was becomes 'patio', one level becomes three levels.

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The work of Koolhaas is consisting a kind of cruelty. In the Kunsthal the entrance is difficult to find, for people in a wheelchair its almost impossible to follow the routing. In the villa in Bordeaux there is the extreme circled window, the middle floor seems too light to carry the heavy floor above and to design a three levels for man in a wheelchair... but in this house it is the cruelty of a work of art where everything has a smart solution . The only exception can be the entrance to the children sleeping room. To go to there from the living either you have to go outside or first go down. There is an endless working out of architecture, which is larded with paradoxes in spaces and construction. The spaces are varying from a cave-like staircase to a 'glasshouse'. The construction is technically a 'tour de force'. The middle level is left empty to let the heavy mass float in the air. A metal beam in the living room (Figure 4.40), the cylinder and a steel beam on the roof are making this possible. In this house Koolhaas seem to found a balance between *his* adventures and that of the family. The inbetween is part of the articulation of the building and not just a lost area. Koolhaas reveals that he in fact only feels expert as an architect when he is designing houses. (Figure 4.41)

'It is indeed true that Koolhaas is at his best in the private houses, as long as he is allowed to design everything down to the last detail so that a total architectural experience is staged.' [58, p.53]

Figure 4.35   Villa in Bourdeaux, 1998 (de Architect, 1998)

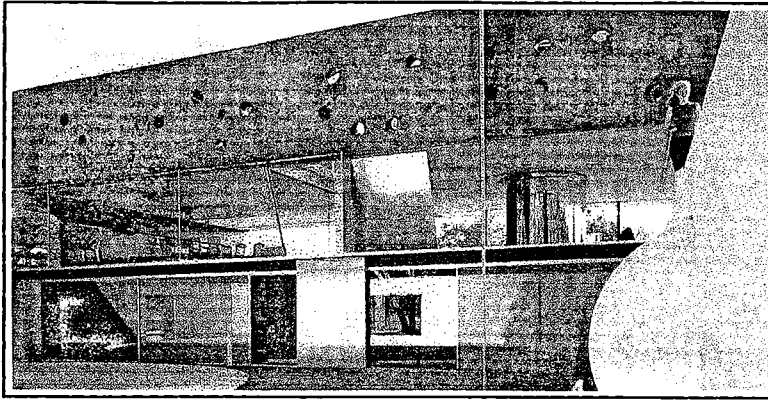70

Figure 4.36   Courtyard with entrance to the house

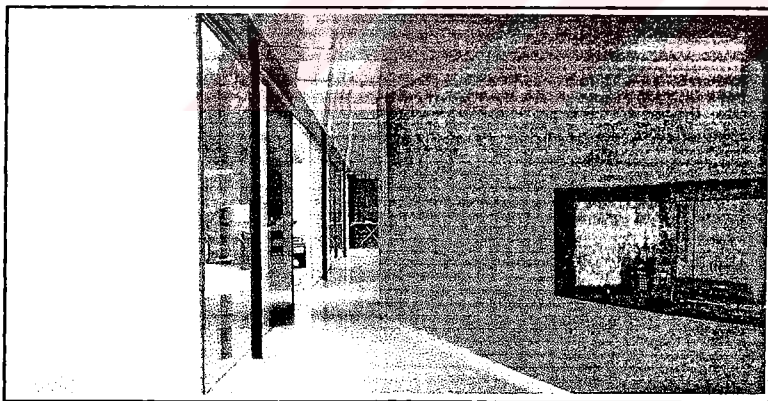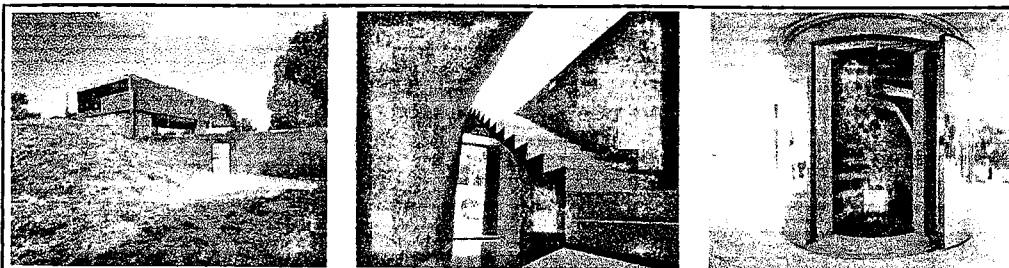
Figure 4.37   Kitchen

Figure 4.38   TV-room

Figure 4.39   Views from the house: staircases
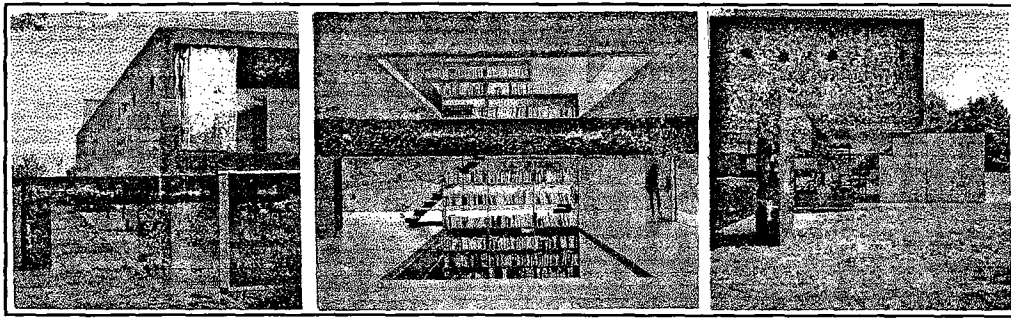
Figure 4.40   Views form the house: beam in the living room
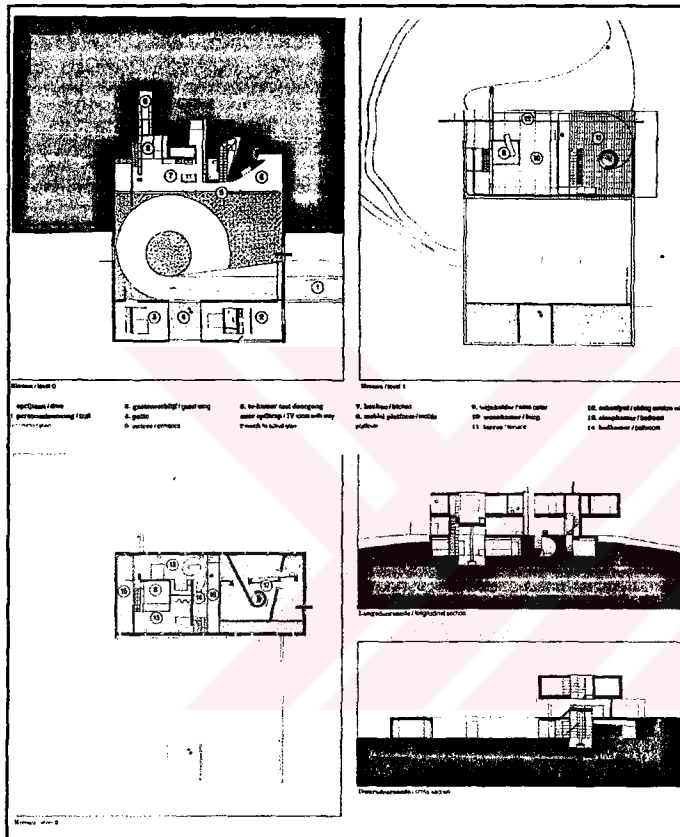

Figure 4.41   Plans and sections

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

For four houndred years, architectural values have arisen from the same humanistic well-spring. Today, this must change...

Eisenman argues: "because of the fundamental insights achieved by philosophy."

Koolhaas argues: "because of the elevator."

Eisenman and Koolhaas are two contemporary architects who are influenced by the theory and society of the contemporary time. Contemporary theory is the main issue of Eisenman's works. A theory which is dealing with the interrelationships of a discipline, questioning every single root of its being. That is the autonomy; for Eisenman, the autonomy of architecture. In one sense it is the declaration of the discourse of architecture by making architecture.

> "In Eisenman's continuing architectural voyage we would thus see enacted a complex passage from a "critical" or self-referantial to a "virtual" or operative conception of the space of thought and intervention." [60, p. 108]

For Koolhaas, it is the contemporary society. Using the features of 'logic of late-capitalism', he executes an architecture of (over)interpretation. From 'Delirious New York' to his recent writings and buildings, this (over)interpretation of pragmatism is always there. In one sense it is the declaration of the world as it is. He uses the *Zeitgeist* of postmodern time. "What reigns in the projects of Koolhaas is actuality, the urgency of the present moment. Koolhaas seem to feel an explicit and intense need to give meaning to the present, to the existing 'reality'." [57, p. 34]

> "(Koolhaas argues) ...we should direct our urbanistic imagination to the other real determinants of the cities: we should pay more attention to infrastructure than to context in the analysis of cities and so of the other possibilities of the cities.." [60, p.112]

This study was not aimed to result with a conclusion that would declare a classification. While examining these two architects, one point became more striking than the others. The interest in 'inbetween'.

Both architects have mentioned the importance of inbetween through their architectural career. Eisenman at the theoretical level discussed this concept and wrote his famous article "Architecture as A Second Language: The Texts of Between", where he argues that the new condition of the object has to be between; non-defined, 'which is almost this, almost that'. Koolhaas designed the Kunsthal, in where there is a constant feeling of not defining your position in the building. According to him 'the installations needed for the accelerated circulation of passengers and goods' have the same importance as 'the means of transport themselves'. [59, p. 34]

Developing in the concept of betweeness, Eisenman shifted from making theory to creating experimental spaces, Koolhaas shifted from programmatic thinking to a more visible in circulation. Both architects chose another approach to make the inbetween.

It is also interesting that we come more often across with the term "Piranesian space" in their statements. The paintings of Italian painter Piranesi from the 18th century say much about this inbetween space. The somber , fantastic and dramatic paintings of Piranesi with labyrinth like spaces, flying bridges are in one sense really giving a clear explanation of what inbetween can mean.

> "If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place." [59, p. 78]

Marc Augé, in his book *From Places to Non-Places*, argues that place and non-place are rather like opposite polarities: the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed. But non-places that never exists in pure form are the real measures of the values of our time. In these places where the relations are restored

and resumed, the individual is often put in contact only with another image of himself.

After giving such a definition to 'non-places', probably it is possible to name the direction of this study.

Towards non-places through postmodernism...

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