S,M,L,XL
Small, Medium, Large, Extra-Large
Office for Metropolitan Architecture
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Typical Plan is an American invention. It is zero-degree architecture, architecture stripped of all traces of uniqueness and specificity. It belongs to the New World.
The notion of the typical plan is therapeutic: it is the End of Architectural History, which is nothing but the hysterical fetishization of the atypical plan. Typical Plan is a segment of an unacknowledged utopia, the promise of a post-architectural future.

Just as The Man Without Qualities haunts European literature, "the plan without qualities" is the great quest of American building.

From the late 19th century to the early 1970s, there is an "American century" in which Typical Plan is developed from the primitive loft type (ruthless creation of floor space through the sheer multiplication of a given site) via early masterpieces of smooth space like the RCA Building (1933)—its escalators, its elevators, the Zen-like serenity of its office suites—to provisional culminations such as the Exxon Building (1971) and the World Trade Center (1972–73). Together they represent evidence of the discovery and subsequent mastery of a new architecture (often proclaimed but never realized at the scale of Typical Plan).

The ambition of Typical Plan is to create new territories for the smooth unfolding of new processes, in this case, ideal accommodation for business. But what is business? Supposedly the most circumscribed program, it is actually the most formless. Business makes no demands.

The architects of Typical Plan understood the secret of business: the office building represents the first totally abstract program—it does not demand a particular architecture, its only function is to let its occupants exist. Business can invade any architecture. Out of this indeterminacy Typical Plan generates character.

Raymond Hood, one of its inventors, defined the typical plan with tautological bravura: "The plan is of primary importance, because on the floor are performed all the activities of the human occupants."

(Typical Plan provides the multiple platforms of 20th-century democracy.)
Typical Plan is an architecture of the rectangle; any other shape makes it atypical—even the square. It is the product of a (new) world where sites are made, not found. At its best, it acquires a Platonic neutrality; it represents the point where pragmatism, through sheer rationality and efficiency, assumes an almost mystical status.

Typical Plan is minimalism for the masses; already latent in the first brutally utilitarian explorations, by the end of the era of Typical Plan, i.e., the sixties, the utilitarian is refined as a sensuous science of coordination—column grids, facade modules, ceiling tiles, lighting fixtures, partitions, electrical outlets, flooring, furniture, color schemes, air-conditioning grills—that transcends the practical to emerge in a rarified existential domain of pure objectivity.

You can only be in Typical Plan, not sleep, eat, make love.

Typical Plan is deep. It has evolved beyond the naïve humanist assumption that contact with the exterior—so-called reality—is a necessary condition for human happiness, for survival. (If that is true, why build at all? And anyway, aren't the disadvantages of the exterior—ozone-depleted, carbo-charged, globally heated—by now well established?)

Air conditioning, which is the sine qua non of Typical Plan, imposes a regime of sharing (air) that defines invisible communities, homogeneous segments of an airborne collective aligned in more powerful wholes like the iron molecules that form a magnetic field.

Heroically, Typical Plan delivers a world laundered of ego.

Typical Plan is Western. There is no equivalent in any other culture. It is the stamp of modernity itself. In the ever-increasing dimension from skin to core—the hidden potential of depth—it proclaims the superiority of the artificial to the real which remains, whether admitted or not, the true credo of Western civilization, the source of its universal attraction.
Typical Plan knows what European architecture will never learn: that modular coordination is at most postponed failure, a temporary rollback of the frontiers of chaos.

Typical Plan is gridded, not in the absolute, clumsy manner of European Platonics (a moralistic system to measure misfit and thus create unhappiness), but on the contrary, through the development of anti-ideological devices: a metaphysics of slack that gives an aura of crispness to even the most severely conflicted geometrical coexistences, bestowing the appearance of modular conquest on the essentially messy, reasserting orthogonality from the most compromised givens.

Typical Plan is neutral, not anonymous. It is a place of worship. More austere than a Cistercian monastery, it accommodates infinitely greater numbers, a 20th-century church without doctrine.

Although the dominant emphasis of Typical Plan is on abstraction, there is plumbing. It doesn’t deny those residual features that make humans animals still.

Ingenious architectural arrangements of miniature, very understandable labyrinths organize the traffic between the exalted and the impure zones of Typical Plan. These spaces—restrooms, urinals, pantries, service stairs, trucking bays—are the sanctuaries for all those primitive aspects upon whose exclusion the correct unfolding of business depends.

Typical Plan is to the office population what graph paper is to a mathematical curve. Its neutrality records performance, event, flow, change, accumulation, deduction, disappearance, mutation, fluctuation, failure, oscillation, deformation. Typical Plan is relentlessly enabling, ennobling background.
Typical Plan implies repetition—it is the nth plan; to be typical, there must be many—and indeterminacy: to be typical, it must be sufficiently undefined. It presumes the presence of many others, but at the same time suggests that their exact number is of no importance.

Typical Plan $x n = \text{a building (hardly a reason to study architectural): floors strung together by elevators of incomprehensible smoothness, each discreet “ting” of arrival part of a never-ending addition.}$

Typical Plan threatens the myth of the architect as demiurge, source of unlimited supplies of uniqueness.

As in the scene of a crime, the removal of all obvious signs of the perpetrator characterizes the true typical plan; its authors form an avant-garde of architects as erasers. Its unsung designers—Bunshaft, Harrison and Abramovitz, Emery Roth—represent vanishing acts so successful that they are now completely forgotten. These architects were able to create aleatory playgrounds (interior Elysian fields accessible in anyone’s lifetime), i.e., perfection in quantities—trillions of acres—that have become, 25 years later, literally unimaginable.

Securely entrenched in the domain of philistinism, Typical Plan actually has hidden affinities with other arts: the positioning of its cores on the floor has a suprematist tension; it is the equivalent of atonal music, seriality, concrete poetry, art brut; it is architecture as mantra.
Typical Plan is as empty as possible: a floor, a core, a perimeter, and a minimum of columns. All other architecture is about inclusion and accommodation, incident and event; Typical Plan is about exclusion, excavation, non-event.

Architecture is monstrous in the way in which each choice leads to the reduction of possibility. It implies a regime of either/and decisions often claustrophobic, even for the architect. All other architecture preempts the future; Typical Plan — by making no choices — postpones it, keeps it open forever.

The cumulative effect of all this vacancy — this systematic lack of commitment — is, paradoxically, density. The typical American downtown is a brute accumulation of Typical Plans, a mass of indetermination, hollowness as core.

Could the office building be the most radical typology? A kind of reverse type defined by all the qualities it does not have? As the major new program of the modern age, its effect is one of deprogramming. Typical Plan is the initial mutation in a chain that has revolutionized the urban condition. Concentrations of Typical Plan have produced the skyscraper: unstable monolith; accumulations of skyscrapers, the only "new" urban condition: downtown, defined by sheer quantity rather than as a specific formal configuration. The center is no longer unique but universal, no longer a place but a condition. Practically immune to local variation, Typical Plan has made the city unrecognizable, an unidentifiable object. Typical Plan is a quantum leap that provokes a conceptual leap: an absence of content in quantities that overwhelm, or simply preempt, intellectual speculation.
What insecurity triggered the crisis of Typical Plan? Where did the rot start? Was it its very apotheosis that turned neutrality into anonymity?
Did the plan without qualities create men without qualities? Was the space of Typical Plan the incubator of the man in the gray flannel suit?
Suddenly, the graph blamed the graph paper for its lack of character.
It was as if Typical Plan created the castrated white-collar caricature, suppressed family photos, frowned on the fern, resisted the personal debris that now—20 years later—makes most offices ghastly repositories of individual trophies, packed with the alarming assertions of millions of individual mini-ecologies.
An environment that demanded nothing and gave everything was suddenly seen as an infernal machine for stripping identity.
Nietzsche lost out to Sociology 101.
In Europe, there are no Typical Plans.

In the twenties, European architects fantasized about offices. In 1921, Mies imagined the ultimate atypical plan in Friedrichstrasse; in 1929, Ivan Leonidov proposed the first office slab for Moscow, a House of Industry. Its rectangles were conceived as socialist Typical Plans: a parallel zone reintroduced the full paraphernalia of daily life—pools, tanning beds, clublike arrangements, small dormitories—to create a compressed 24-hour cycle not of business-life, but of life-business.

In 1970, Archizoom interpreted Typical Plan as the terminal condition of (Western) civilization, a utopia of the norm.

Since then, the one really new architectural subject this century has introduced has been endlessly denigrated in the name of ideology—its occupants “slaves,” its environment “faceless,” its accumulations “ugly.” Europe has suffered from a catastrophic failure to accommodate—to “think”—the one typology whose emergence was architecturally and urbanistically irresistible. Typical Plan has been forced underground, condemned to the status of parasite—devouring larger and larger sections of historical substance, invading whole centers—or exiled to the periphery.

For offices, Europe multiplies a plan known since the Renaissance: a corridor with rooms on both sides. (Is there a connection between the notorious absenteeism of the Western European office population and its sacred cow, the private cell?)

The European office is thin, as thin as its more historic substance. The European needs daylight and air, even though a simple extrapolation of the square meters involved reveals that this need will destroy the very decor that reassures him of his historical status.

Where the American office assembles a critical mass, the European office dismantles it, simply because the things that happen in an office are supposed to be “bad”; we like our badness in small doses.

There is something almost insane and masochistic about the quantity of utterly inferior substance that is generated in the Old World—in the name of identity, even.
Morgan Bank is an attempt at a typical plan in Europe. It is a loft building—a block of Typical Plans. Because it is projected in Amsterdam and within Berlage’s famous extension—a fragile composition of axes, coherences, coordinations, controls—it undergoes a minimum of adaptation to perform certain urbanistic duties: a negative corner of two high walls defines an important Berlage plaza and the entrance—a slit that communicates as little as possible about the interior; a roof patio consolidates the “not-office” program—cafeteria, meeting rooms, etc. Otherwise the building is simply abstract office space, its dimensions chosen to enable a maximum of permutations, introducing, in Holland, unusual (and ultimately unwelcome) depth. The raised floor distributes homogeneous conditions of services across the entire surface. Columns give minimal interference. The single “feature” is a glass staircase that connects all floors. Since the project is in Europe, a height limit was imposed. The proportion typical/atypical plan is itself atypical: a typically European 50/50 split.
Amsterdam, 20 years after the sixties... the city still firmly in socialist hands... big dreams, no money... So why not sell old power station downtown — near museums, fashionable shops, exciting conversions (prison turned into casino), and the park?

Mayor's brainwave: replace power plant with modern masterpiece! Marry six architects to six developers; let them fight it out for the biggest gain in money and beauty.

Sorry, there's only one name left. OMA...

Well, if there's no choice, I'll take them, I guess.
But the developer has a plan...

Later, in another part of town, he reveals his "project" to his would-be competitors.

None of us can win alone. Let's make it a sure thing... We'll win with YOUR architect and split the prize three ways...

You mean sabotage through collaboration?

Next day, OMA is invited to meet one developer, but discovers a consortium of three...

My company handles the parking. We like them with nothing on top.

We do housing - bungalow masters.

We specialize in shops and offices. We like them vending.

I'm the architect. We believe in integration and complication.

Back in Rotterdam... 24-hour work day at the OMA office. Day and night shifts. How to create masterpiece from 10,000 m² housing, 5,000 m² offices, 2,500 m² shopping, 15,000 m² parking?

After three months of torturous labor, a project is born...

That's no doubt how it's gonna happen.

Customers, here it your未来...

What about a restaurant here? It's the best place in the entire city...

... only to be quickly dismantled.

This is impossible, not integration!

Take it apart! It's too complex!

Makes it simple! All this extra money!!!
Meanwhile, the power station is almost completely destroyed.

OMA talks to lawyer. All this interference raises issues of artistic integrity.

Forget contracts. You've got a responsibility to your genius.

Forget genius. I have to feed my office.

Final effort to break deadlock...
Man-to-man meeting with developer at his own castle, only days before deadline...

Can things be patched up?

He's cornered.

I want it urban; you want it suburban. I want a round window; you make it square...

Why the hell did you hire me?

The eternal struggle — call it good versus bad — continues...

Ambush for the artist! They're all waiting for him! No truce, no compromise...

Knock

KUT Details
Competition deadline arrives. Five architects file in with their wares... At the last moment OMA appears, out of breath. Developers back scheme, believing it won't win anyway.
Globalization

According to myth, Wallace Harrison was the "bad" corporate architect—if not simply a hack—who stole Le Corbusier's design for the United Nations building (1947-50) and made it mediocre reality. This myth was sufficiently established to prevent anyone from taking a serious look at the building itself. But a closer inspection of the dry theoretical pretension of Le Corbusier's proposition and the polymorphously perverse professionalism with which Harrison realized it suggested, if not a reversal of the myth, a rewriting: the UN was a building that an American could never have thought and a European could never have built. It was a collaboration, not only between two architects, but between cultures; a cross-fertilization between Europe and America produced a hybrid that could not have existed without their mating, however unenthusiastic.

The Seagram Building (1957) can be reread in the same way as the UN, except that here the roles of Europe and America were enacted by the same person: Mies had to "become" an American to realize his European self. Without the combined intelligence of the two cultures, the Seagram Building could not have been.
Some of Paul Rudolph’s most impossible megastructural speculations for New York—concrete houses of cards in inexplicable states of suspense proliferating over half of Manhattan—stand, 25 years after their initial conception, marooned among the palms in Singapore. Is Singapore an accident or a symbol? Is Singapore now a destination where ambitions spawned elsewhere are realized? Has the terrain of possibility shifted?

There is an Aldo Rossi building in Fukuoka, the “deep south” of Japan. In pictures it looks like a caricature—red Persian travertine facades hermetically closed, overblown copper rooffline. Il Palazzo dominates its surroundings like a samurai castle. It looks cynical—deliciously fascist. It is a hotel; some even say a love hotel. Rossi did not do the interiors or the nightclubs that invade the stoic exterior, but his envelope has a weird fascination. It is pure emblem, Rossi without ideological ballast: hyper-Rossi.

The Japanese have realized Rossi’s poetry on the surface, with a density he seems incapable of on his own ground: a masterpiece unimaginable for the Japanese, unbuildable for Rossi. As a hybrid, it is fundamentally different from the Seagram Building or the UN: its fertilization not the result of fusion, but reminiscent of more contemporary forms of bioengineering. It is a gene splice: Rossi’s poetry, first stripped of ideology, then boosted by Japanese ingenuity.

Beyond Florida, there is an entire “Michael Graves World” in Japan—more than 40 projects, from skyscrapers to city halls for small villages, mimetic devices for a culture unfamiliar with the initial sources, belated signs of a public domain they never had, and never will have.

*Rome imported via New Jersey to Japan*, the literal collapse of time and place.

At a conference in Japan, Japanese architects talk proudly about chaos: Tokyo is rapidly becoming a cliché; its very resistance to organization gives it an unforeseen glamour that paradoxically threatens to promote it to the status of model. The ultimate oxymoron: chaos as project. Injected into the bloodstream of architecture, its effects will be felt in Mexico, Africa, Paris, Lagos, anywhere. After all the imports, finally an export.

Richard Meier everywhere. A new category: *virtual space that exists.*

The very sameness of the buildings is political, their cloning generating a universal currency of civic enlightenment.

We are by now blasé about these instances of transcontinental conception, but it is revealing to restore them to the status of geopolitical alchemy: architecture as compound, unforeseeable contaminations and recombinations triggered by the ever-expanding volume of architectural traffic, the architectonic deposit of globalization—architecture cut loose from its moorings.

Intimations of globalization as movement—a special branch of architecture, so far without explicit agenda—congeal at an American jury which presents a random cross section through the world’s architectural production in a given year—1990.
There is one category of project whose automatic rejection forms a rapidly growing heap. A typical example: project by mild German democratic architect for new airport in rare remaining Asian dictatorship—a kind of quasi-Getty crossed with Albert Speer, complete with Warholesque likeness of the local dictator on an axis of asymmetry (it may have been built by now...).

Projects on this mountain of the refused are all:
1. ugly (still an issue at architectural juries);
2. big, if not colossal;
3. planned for tabula rasa conditions (the original sin of modernism in Europe, now the norm everywhere else);
4. complex montages of program almost Roman in their richness: pools, libraries, concert halls, universities, embedded in throbbing connective tissue of boutiques, malls, entertainment, atriums. They suggest a programmatic renewal, the discovery of a (new) collective; but at the last moment the ingredients curdle, and somehow dissociate;
5. produced by architects not remotely connected to the context for which their works are intended—an ignorance that leads to a "new purism";
6. repeating a single module of invention to its breaking point: this systematic exhaustion of inspiration perversely generates a condition of hyperbolized identity.

Just as the 40 Graves buildings in Japan, whatever their intended contributions to a new order, represent the true presence of chaos, this work is, in the scientific sense, catastrophic: architecture stretched, pushed beyond its own impossibility to the point of breakdown—the return of Babel.

Globalization:
1. astronomically expands the realm of possibility, for better or worse;
2. exponentially depletes the architectural imagination;
3. exponentially enriches the architectural imagination;
4. scrambles the chronology of individual architects' careers; extends and/or shrinks shelf life;
5. causes, as in earlier collisions of formerly pure cultures, epidemics;
6. radically modifies architectural discourse, now an uneasy relationship between regional unknowing and international knowing.

Globalization destabilizes and redefines both the way architecture is produced and that which architecture produces. Architecture is no longer a patient transaction between known quantities that share cultures, no longer the manipulation of established possibilities, no longer a possible judgment in rational terms of investment and return, no longer something experienced in person—by the public or critics. Globalization lends virtuality to real buildings, keeps them indigestible, forever fresh.
Facing this Armageddon—the violent birth of a new architecture—the profession is in a profound state of denial. Following its fright instinct, it runs away from the possibly ridiculous to miss a rendezvous with the sublime.

This "Babel: The Sequel" contains the promise of a new architectural system; it establishes episodes of a global enterprise: an infrastructural project to change the world, its aim a montage of maximum possibility collected from any point, lifted from any context, pilfered from any ideology. It promises the final installment of the Promethean soap opera.

Together these episodes form a constellation of experimentation and invention—genetic engineering producing a completely new architecture, a revolution without program, instigators, theorists, heroes. It will need its own Frohliches Wissen.

1993

P.S. Globalization starts 35 miles away from a Dutch farm. Suddenly in 1987, in our offices international projects and collaborators started to form a reality. Suddenly OMA was a group, not in the form of multiple offices turning out a single "product," but of one involved more and more deeply in other cultures. We became experts on difference: different possibilities, contexts, sensitivities, currencies, other abilities, rigorous integrities, powers.

From then on, we navigated between the potentials for credit and discredit that globalization implied.

Some days CNN seems like an oracle; a private bulletin board, each story hitting nerve endings directly related to work.
1. Frankfurt is green and diffuse; apart from a small cluster of towers in its center, it is more a federation of towns than a city. The price of its attractiveness is the consumption of what must have been an astonishing landscape.

2. It is so undefined that it is hard to say where it ends. Mini-towns occupy the hills and valleys around it, generating a seamless condition of half-city, half-country.

3. One hill near the center is still relatively intact; covered with a tapestry of agricultural fields, it is colorful in the summer, brown in the winter. It has been designated as the site for a future technical campus. One laboratory already on the site—five concrete cubes rotated for greater informality—gives a taste of things to come.

4. Extrapolation does not yield exhilarating prospects; eventually the entire hill will be covered with architecture. A second building is planned to contain more laboratories, offices, and public rooms for the dissemination of knowledge; lecture halls, a library, and a big room for what Hannes Meyer would call "carbohydrate administration."

5. OMA was invited to participate in the competition for this second building along with Peter Eisenman, Richard Rogers, and a handful of German architects. The site was strategic; located next to the existing eyesore, it was more or less at the center of the hill. A tall building here would condemn the surrounding fields to a premature status of residue.
6. The entire program could form a flat, double-height plate. Embedded in the hill, it would resemble a colossal step: one side exposed, the other half-buried.

7. The laboratories—the location of potentially dangerous processes—are placed in the buried side; six Zen-like patios provide daylight.

8. The public facilities are strung along an interior boulevard. Barely perceptible from the city, they offer a panoramic view of Frankfurt.

9. The patterns of the fields are reestablished in synthetic materials on the roof of the complex, each surface accommodating different open-air activities, including a lecture hall.

10. In the long term, an experimental greenhouse will represent the only connection to nature.

11. When the campus is finished and the hill is entirely covered with architecture, the half-buried building will appear as an absence: a miniature Central Park surrounded by efficient factories of learning.
ALGERIA

The Pesh Talk

A few days ago, after French President François Mitterrand decided to send a delegation to Algiers to try to resolve the conflict, journalist and former politician, André Malraux, wrote a letter to his friend, the late Paul Claudel, expressing his thoughts on the situation. In the letter, Malraux underscores the importance of dialogue and understanding in order to find a peaceful solution to the conflict.

MALDIVE ISLES

Maldives is an archipelago of 26 Atolls in the Indian Ocean, located between the equator and the Tropic of Cancer. It is the smallest nation in the world, with a population of about 350,000 people. The country is known for its pristine beaches, coral reefs, and vibrant marine life.

MOORE'S SAVINGS LOST

On the Dead at Asau

A total of 200 people, including children, were killed when a fireworks accident occurred during a festival. The incident took place in a rural area of the island, where the festival was being held. The official statement from the police stated that the cause of the tragedy was a malfunction of the fireworks, which led to an explosion.

ERUPTION IN KALDIDUN

An eruption in a volcano in the Kaldidun region caused significant damage to local infrastructure and crops. Emergency services were deployed to the area to provide assistance to the affected communities.

MOROCCO

In the aftermath of the conflict, Morocco has been working to stabilize the situation in the region. The government has announced several measures to support the affected communities, including the provision of emergency aid and the establishment of temporary shelters.
After the earthquake, Agadir was reconstructed in the 1960s as a typical New Town — mostly modern architecture by French architects in a kind of idyllic CIAM idiom, its post-Corbusian concrete cubes almost benign in the Moroccan sun. It is not grand; its only resemblance to a resort is the seemingly accidental fact that this small urban prototype confronts kilometers of impeccable tropical beach.

On the other side of town lives the Moroccan king, or at least a forbidden oasis there is the site of one of his five palaces. Comings and goings of helicopters are the only visible sign of his presence (or absence).

Between the invisible palace and the innocent town, a group of “friends of the king” is developing a “new” Agadir. A beaux-arts composition of boulevards, plazas, and axes defines individual plots the size of mini-palaces. Between this sector and the palace, a new 18-hole course ensures the king’s privacy.

For the launch of the new Agadir, the king and his party landed by Concorde at the otherwise unremarkable airport.
Two of the dominant axes of the new Agadir converge at a eucalyptus forest on the beach. This focal point is the obvious (too obvious?) site for the Palm Bay Seafront Hotel and Convention Center, which would remove definitively the stigma of sobriety that has clung to this city since the earthquake.

An international competition was held: from Japan, Kazuo Shinohara; from America, Antoine Predock (fresh from Euro Disney's Hotel Santa Fe); from France, Richard Soudan, architect of the Picasso Museum in Paris; from "Europe," OMA: Globalization reaches Agadir.

At first sight, the site of the program — its possible delusions of grandeur—seems overwhelmingly at odds with the fragrant, almost virginal beauty of the site. In a context of systematically compromised authenticity, it seemed cruel and unusual to destroy part of its remaining natural qualities. Were these boulevards and axes dreams of Africa? Should they be answered? What could be the status of projections in such a conceptual quicksand? Was there a way to escape the apparent necessity for a monument or a climax?
truth which the actual building expresses in material stuff.

**EUGENIC**

An agreeable group calling itself the Society for the BETTERMENT of the Human Race picked three men and three women who have, it announced, the "natural endowments" to be the ideal "eugenic parents." The perfect ancestors turned out to be cinema actors Clark Gable and Burt Lancaster; radio singer Jack Smith and Hollywood's Jane Russell; Betty Grable and Linda Darnell.

**EVERY**

Rachmaninoff created enduring music at the Steinway, as did Paderewski, Berlin, Gounod. Today virtually every great artist uses the Steinway: Brahmsky, Casadesus, Gershwin, Hofmann, Horowitz, Kapell, Liszt, Myrson, Menahin, Reiser, Rautenstrauch, Rodeinik, Serkin, Wallenstein, Whitemore & Lowe, Zaremba, and many more...

For the name of your nearest Steinway representative, consult your local classified telephone directory.

**EVERYONE**

Everyone changes in time.

**EX**

Look at it logically—a ex is usually an ex for good reason.

**EXaggeration**

In a certain kingdom once lived a poor miller who had a very beautiful daughter. She was moreover exceedingly shrewd and clever, and the miller was so vain and proud of her, that he one day told the king of the land that his daughter could spin gold out of straw.

**EXTENSIONS**

"I have also thought of a model city from which I deduct all the others," Marco answered. "It is a city made only of exceptions, exclusions, incongruities, contradictions. If such a city is the most improbable, by reducing the number of elements, we increase the probability that the city really exists. So I have only to subtract exceptions from my model, and in whatever direction I proceed, I will arrive at one of the cities which, always as an exception, exists. But I cannot force my operation beyond a certain limit: I would achieve cities too probable to be real."
The building is a single block sliced horizontally in two parts. The irregular plane of the cut is exposed by separating the two halves, creating an enormous covered plaza on the beach. Rather than becoming a pretext for a beaux-arts culmination, the two axes run through this space without leaving formal traces.

The upper part of the block is a hotel, an orthogonal grid of walls that supports a tapestry, not of rooms but of individual apartments, each with its own exterior space. Small towers in each patio guarantee views of the ocean. In the lower part, the heterogeneous elements of the convention center—auditoriums, conference rooms, foyers—form artificial dunes, a seamless continuation of the surroundings.

As a mirror image of this landscape, a similar relief floats on the ceiling of the portico, where a royal chamber and other special facilities—a long pool and a nightclub—are suspended below the hotel, a kind of upside-down Alhambra. The main axis of the new Agadir disappears into the garage that surrounds the conference center and reemerges on the covered plaza to serve the royal rooms.

The void between socle and roof with its concave and convex domes...the floating upper half that seems a mirage of the socle...the irregular forests of columns...the blue light that filters through the glass floor of the pool...the polished concrete, mosaic tiles, gold leaf: Islamic space turned inside out, Islam after Einstein.

The mood of Morocco—somnolence sharpened by the threat of explosion—is highly political. At one point, our chance to win the competition seemed good, almost regardless of the design. During the long period of judgment—it is still not over—relations between Morocco and France soured; then those with the US deteriorated beyond the point where it seemed wise to let one of its nationals construct the conceptual cornerstone of a new display of affluence. The king was going to choose. That was years ago. No one answers the phone at the Palm Bay Company anymore.
EXCHANGE
Although I prepared my views well
until my brain ceased, his opinion
always defeated mine in the end.
When I came up with yet another
idea, he would merely say: "uninter-
esting" or "too long." I found this
rather irritating and I'd think to my-
self: "I only get half as much sleep as
you do, so I spend much more time
thinking about these things." When
I refused to give in and said: "I still
prefer my idea," he would sit down
at the desk without answering me.
The result was always shorter and
more interesting than my scribblings.

EXCLUSION
In a society such as our own we all
know the rules of exclusion. The
most obvious and familiar of these
corns is what is prohibited.

EXPERIMENTAL
The really experimental direction
of situational activity consists in
setting up, on the basis of more or
less clearly recognized desires, a
temporary field of activity favorable
to these desires.

EXPERIMENTS
And this seems like sheer nonsense.
And yet Einstein's statements have
proved to be true by experiments!

EXPLANATIONS
"There are no explanations," he said,
"just as there should be no vows and
promises. To explain one thing is to make another thing—which only
limits the world the more.”

EXPLOITATION
Woman: she's present in practically
every music video. As prop. As
reposer. As encomium. As decor.
As the ultimate lubricant... And yet,
she's not simply belied, dominated
or humiliated. Her genius resides
in the fact that exploitation, and,
indeed, everything which is pemi-
cious from the point of view of free-
dom, equality, of a person in her own
right, is a matter of utter indifference
to her. She exploits her own exploit-
ation. This is what makes the music
videos not sexist, but ultra-sexist.
It's in this ultra-sexism that woman's
real freedom can be found, her
absolute superiority. Who else can
make such total fools of men?

EXPLOSION
The tension broke, violently, like an
explosion. We were all standing up.
Mr. Abasolo's mouth was open.

EXPOSED
She was wearing a white shirt. The
buttons at the neck were open, expos-
ing a triangle of skin above her
breasts. Her skin was still ivory. One
didn't need to touch it to know that
it was warm and smooth... I gave
it a little smile.

EXPRESSION
I have seen how always, in every
shape, a certain form, a certain line,
repeats itself: how a forehead seems
toval with a knee, a hip with a
shoulder; and how the essence of all
this is the very being and temper
of the person, who alone could have
such a knee, or shoulder, or forehead.
And this ton, I have noted, which I
saw one night, as I helped
a woman bear her child: that the
sharpest pain and sweetest pleasure
seem to have almost one expression.

EXPRESSION
O Public Road...
You express me better than I can
express myself.
You shall be more to me than my poem.

EXTERIOR
How can you be enclosed within
emptiness, how can you visit a line?
Yet incessantly the [Eiffel] Tower is
visited: we linger within it, before
using it as an observatory. What
is happening? What becomes of the
great exploratory function of the
hotel (+20 meters)
1. lounge
2. elevator
3. void to veranda
4. alley
5. swimming pool
6. dressing rooms
7. gymnasium
8. hotel suite type 1
9. hotel suite type 2
10. royal chamber
11. service and technical rooms
inside when it is applied to this empty and depthless monument which might be said to consist entirely of an exterior substance?

EYES
Our epoch is fixing its own style day by day. It is there under our eyes. Eyes which do not see.

EYES
The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.

EYES
The eye sprung out of his face like a yolk from a broken egg and rolled down the miller’s hand onto the floor. The plowboy howled and shrieked, but the miller’s hold kept him pinned against the wall. Then the blood-covered spoon plunged into the other eye, which sprang out even faster. For a moment the eye rested on the boy’s cheek as if uncertain what to do next; then it finally tumbled down his shirt onto the floor.

FACADE
To the outside world the architect still seems to live glamorous and to hold a position in which great

Rotterdam is a city that makes no demands.

It is the average destroyed and reconstructed post-World War II European city, its attractions emptiness, neutrality, a work ethic, and the absence of history, pretension, “interest,” temptation.

OMA opened its office in 1981, a moment when the first momentum of a kind of thoughtless making of the city had been exhausted; the harbor—its most obvious raison d’être—was moving toward the sea, leaving fresh voids in the newly reconstructed city; self-consciousness was emerging; the role of culture was considered for the first time, partly as a form of replacement therapy.

Exploiting its combined reputation for naiveté and possibility, the city established—in a successful image war—a dialectical relationship with Amsterdam as new vs. old and claimed cultural institutions from the central government as a reward for its sheer energy.

By the mid-1980s, these new ambitions focused on the Museum Park. A dilapidated terrain vague (one of the few remaining possibilities for furtive encounters in the city center) would be converted to a “park” that would contain the new Architecture Museum, the existing Boymans–van Beuningen Museum, and a new exhibition building—the Kunsthall.

As compensation for a series of unprofitable involvements in inventing the “new” Rotterdam, OMA was appointed architect for the park and the Kunsthall. The Architecture Museum would be the subject of a competition involving six architects, among them OMA.
The “park” in Museum Park is misleading; the site is a leftover rectangle—440 meters long, 130 meters wide—between four different conditions: the north is defined by a mini-Siedlung of prewar white villas facing the brick and copper of the Boymans Museum (an embalmed frontline in the eternal conflict between modernity and tradition); the western horizon by a 1960s hospital tower, its white-enamed skin one of the last works of Jean Prouvé; the east by the Boymans rose garden; the south by an urban motorway elevated on a six-meter dike.

The two new institutions face each other across the park: the Architecture Museum at the north end confronting a schizophrenic condition of the city (streets vs. objects); the Kunsthall at the south end exploiting the juxtaposition of highway and idyll as it connects the polder to the dike.

The competition for the Architecture Museum represented an initial moment of megalomaniacal euphoria with OMA potentially in charge of a zone in which we could conceive two museums and the field between them as a single complex. For the first time we were obliged to define a contemporary idea of urban composition, to deal overtly with coherence, in spite of our advertised skepticism about its possibility.

The Architecture Museum and the Kunsthall were conceived as opposites, with the park as a terrain where the tensions between them could be both resolved and intensified.

Is there any life left in the box? Both the museum and the Kunsthall were simple volumes, interrogated to see whether “the box” could play a contextual role, whether apparently dumb forms could accommodate complex programs and generate unforeseeable interest.

1. Architecture Museum
2. villas
3. Museum Park
4. Boymans-van Beuningen Museum
5. Kunsthall
6. hospital
7. Nature Museum
Architecture Museum

The site is triangular; so is the building: a transparent/translucent box that represents museum.

A solid socle is placed inside the otherwise undifferentiated triangle in such a way that programmatic specificity is generated around it: entry, library, permanent and temporary exhibition spaces.

Inside the socle are drawing cabinets and offices. Excavated from the socle is the auditorium, which, when necessary, is further defined by a silk curtain that hangs from the roof. On top of the socle are a restaurant and a library.

For the offices, a patio — "negative" tower — injects daylight into the heart of the socle. All archives are stored in a "positive" tower that tilts toward the park, destabilizing the gold-pebbled roof.

The socle is of pale travertine, the tower of solid black concrete, the underside of the roof of white and black concrete, marbled like a mix of chocolate and vanilla.

The roof rests on a six-meter grid of circular steel columns, whose diameters — 18, 22, and 26 centimeters — increase with their heights. (Columns — an old Moorish device that makes architecture out of a box.)

To filter the urban presence, the north wall is made of corrugated polyester; the glass facade of the library is open to the park. An external chain-link curtain casts a shadow when necessary.

The short base of the triangle — a temple to asymmetry? — forms the entrance. The regularity of the grid and the socle, confronted with the irregularity of the site and the section, randomly creates "events" and "incidents."
second floor
1. office
2. meeting room
3. patio
4. editorial office
5. director's office
6. auditorium
7. computer room
8. projection studio
9. restrooms
10. kitchenette
11. canteen

third floor
1. café
2. void to patio
3. restrooms
4. bar
5. kitchen
6. archive and study
7. void to auditorium
8. archive director
9. research room
10. void to exhibition area
Museum Park

The Museum Park is exposed to conflicting demands: serenity and sensation, movement and stillness, buffer zone and connector.

The entire zone from the Architecture Museum to the Kunsthall is interpreted as a sequence of five equivalent situations, with two enclosed extremities (buildings) and three open-air sections in between.

1. Next to the Boymans Museum and facing the Architecture Museum, an orchard of apple trees is planted on a diagonal grid in a field of white gravel. Their trunks are whitewashed. Compared to the brick gloom of the Boymans Museum this white "vestibule" seems overexposed in its lightness, an effect reinforced by the mirror wall of the podium.

2. The podium is a raised repository of polluted earth next to the Boymans rose garden; its black tarmac surface is an abstracted fragment of the city. To receive traveling shows, circuses, and other performances, it is equipped with an electrical grid and other services. Small patios assert the "park" condition: black bamboo, the fluorescent yellow of the Salix viminalis willow, a curtain of monumental and weeping sequoias. A ramp leads from the podium to the park.

3. The old and beautiful trees of the abandoned park are kept. A river of colossal white pebbles and blue-glass rocks flows into an existing pond. The ground around the trees has been scraped and turned into a field of ornamental shrubs and flowers including bulbs, perennials, and annuals. The trunks of certain trees will be covered with flowering creepers (Hydrangea petiolaris and Clematis montana), blurring the distinction between the original trees and the new interventions. A black concrete bridge leaps over the seasonal waves of color and texture; pedestrians can look but do not have to trample the beauty below.
Kunsthal I

The Architecture Museum is a study in weight and heaviness; Kunsthal I floats above the park at the level of the dike. The core of the Architecture Museum is solid; the center of Kunsthal I is a void, a machine or robot that enables, like a stage tower, an endless series of permutations: walls, floors, slopes, sets, presence, absence, dry, wet—each condition contaminating the perimeter of the hall.

This 60x60-meter glass box is carried by vierendeel beams whose structural depth coincides with the usable depth of the building. The vierendeels form a catalog: each one is different, from the regular and closely spaced to a logarithmic sequence of ever-increasing intervals and structural dimensions.

Since the horizontal sections of the vierendeels are accommodated in the floor and ceiling, the beams read as columns.

If in the Architecture Museum the regular grid of columns stabilizes an irregular form, in Kunsthal I the apparently chaotic aspect of the compressed perspective of the beams—a random anti-grid—destabilizes the regular form; its logic becomes apparent only in passing through the different planes of the structure.

Jo Coenen won the competition for the Architecture Museum and built it.

With the demise of our museum, Kunsthal I became a pathetic remnant.

But the future director’s dislike for the design offered us a pretext to start all over again...
We would keep the same square as a general envelope.
The square would be crossed by two routes: one, the existing road running east-west; the other, a public ramp running north-south, the entrance to both the park and the Kunsthall.
These crossings would divide the square into four parts.
The question then became:
*How to imagine a spiral in four separate squares?*
I'm not a historian.

Approach the building from the boulevard.
happy... do we do now that we're happy... go on waiting... waiting... let me think... it's coming... go on waiting... now that we're happy... let me see... isn't it... tree?
I see not.

It occurs in the opposite direction.

A certain a"e"c"e"x.
But yesterday evening it was all here and
expectations are justified. But this is just appearance. In fact, architects are like kidnap victims who have to phone home to say that they are alright, even when the gun is being held to their head. Hardly any architect dares to point out the dangers, humiliations and absurdities of the building process or to explain who has the power in the daily struggle that has to be endured. As long as this does not happen, nobody, no matter how involved he may be, can see through the heroic facade of the architect.

FACE-DIFFERENT
At the exit, along with postcards and illustrated history books, they sell reproductions of historical documents, from the bill of sale of Manhattan to the Declaration of Independence. These are described as "looking and feeling old," because in addition to the tactile illusion, the facsimile is also-scented with old spice. Almost real. Unfortunately the Manhattan purchase contract, penned in pseudo-unique characters, is in English, whereas the original was in Dutch. And so it isn't a facsimile, but—excuse the neologism—a fac-different. As in some story by Heinlein or Asimov, you have the impression of entering and leaving time in a spatial-temporal haze where the centuries are confused.

FACELIFT
Through these incisions, undermining of the skin of the face and neck is initiated in the superficial subcutaneous plane. The undermining is carried forward in the neck near, or to, the midline, and in the cheek approaches the area of the nasolabial fold. After undermining, the redundant skin is lifted superiorly and the overlapping skin is trimmed, and the incisions sutured under moderate tension.

FACELIFTS
The most unique, most monumental parts of the strip, the signs and casino facades, are also the most changeable; it is the neutral, systems-motif structures behind that survive a succession of facelifts and a series of themes up front. The Aladdin Hotel and Casino is Moorish in front and Tudor behind.

FACT
The weather has re-established itself.
I tell you we weren't here yesterday. Another of your nightmares.

It is dark, with a forest of fine columns.
And where were we yesterday evening according to you?

How would I know? In another compartment. There's no lack of void.
Good.
We weren’t here yesterday evening.
Now what did we do yesterday evening?

Do?

A glass wall separates the people outside.
Do... I suppose we blathered.
Oh, yes and that suppose, particularly: Yes, now I remember, yesterday evening we spent bickering about nothing in particular. About what?
You don't remember any fact, any circumstance?

Don't torment me, Didi.
The sun.
The moon.
Do you not remember?

They must have been there, as usual.
Alas!
Spiral back down to the beginning.

Out of the ordinary?
At the very beginning of WHAT?