

In Koolhaas, the concept of 'America' has always loomed large. It has served not only enormous aesthetic ends, but has played a major role in generating both the novelty and the radicality in OMA's work (especially in the primarily European context with which they have dealt), and has provided a coherent theoretical framework through which the OMA office has come to understand, and harness, for speculative architectural and urbanistic ends, the volatile processes of late-capitalist modernization. For Koolhaas, America, although deeply studied and assimilated into his work, has always strategically been kept at a 'dangerous'—and therefore creative—distance: it has been constituted and skillfully maintained as the necessarily ragged, mythical gateway to the destabilizing, novelty-inducing outside. Koolhaas's America (Houston, Atlanta, Manhattan) would come to represent the whoosh of matter in free action, wellspring of the new, provenance of everything that has ever carried the wishful promise of 'the future'. America as a strange and extreme milieu—a domain of pure movement free of historical drag. Now it was this America, one might say, that actually invented the hyper-future, precisely because only America could invent the outside of the outside. Europe invented 'America' as their future and outside, but America invented the new frontiers—outer space and the insane warp speed that was meant to take them there—as theirs. Speed and space were the new materials of which the future would be made.

Among architects, then, Koolhaas might be said to be the true American, for he is the only one to have attempted to engage the absolute and pure future. And yet, from where does this strange idea of a pure future come? After the Second World War, America rode a manic wave of cocksureness, not so much for having 'won a war' as for having

realized the hubristic technological achievement that made such a claim possible in the first place: the Manhattan Project and its colossal, savage product, the Atom Bomb. The American air force played a crucial role in choreographing this complex, two-year long gesture, which was said to be capable of 'ending all wars'. Its pilots had also performed brilliantly in many critical battles in both the European and Asian theaters. Returning home after the war, the flying 'aces' were celebrated as godlike heroes, and the warmasters soon decided that the sci-fi, bigger-than-real post-war future would be ushered in on their shoulders (and at the risk of their necks). To maintain America's technological (geopolitical) edge, it was decided that two fundamental space-time 'barriers' would first have to be torn down: a manned aircraft would need to fly beyond the outer limit of the earth's atmosphere (280,000 ft.), and the so-called sonic wall (660-760 mph or Mach 1)—the speed beyond which, it was commonly believed, any aircraft would disintegrate—had somehow to be surpassed. These linked achievements laid the foundations for what the general public would soon—deliriously—come to know as 'the space race'.

There was one pilot whose wartime dogfighting skills and natural aircraft handling abilities were legendary, indeed considered by some to be supernatural. For these reasons Chuck Yeager was chosen after the war to spearhead the classified supersonic project, and by October 1947, he had broken the proverbial sound barrier, against the advice and wisdom of many physicists. But Yeager could know what no physicist ever could: he was a pure creature of movement and speed, among the most 'instinctive' pilots the air force has ever seen: "the only pilot I've ever flown with who gives the impression that he's part of the cockpit hardware, so in tune with the machine that instead of being flesh and blood, he could be an autopilot. He could make an airplane talk."¹¹ In the space-time world of a dogfight, where Yeager's instincts were trained, everything takes place right at the limit, perhaps even a little beyond. To survive "you've got to fly an airplane close to the ragged edge where you've got to keep it if you really want to make that machine talk." Knowing the critical tolerances of the aircraft in a variety of violent, dangerous maneuvers was everything. One had to know exactly "where the outside of the envelope was...[to] know about the part where you reached the outside and then stretched her a little ...without breaking

through."¹² Aerial dogfighting, more than anything else, is like space-time arbitrage: one must exploit discrepancies that appear between parallel flows (the twisting vectors of adversarial aircraft), but these flows are so far from equilibrium—so stretched—that the critical discrepancies must be snatched from any dimension that is not already totally strained to the max. No one knew this "fine feathered edge" better than Yeager.¹³

There are many ways to inhabit space, and so, we will see, there are many ways to handle an airplane. In Koolhaas, I will want to claim, we bear witness not only to a remarkable architectural project traditionally defined but to the emergence of a new way of holding social and economic space altogether, for which, in architecture, there are almost no real precedents at all.¹⁴ Koolhaas's work, with its fierce, stark geometries and imperious logic, is in many senses an extreme architecture, and bears philosophical and ontological kinship with all extremity (even virtual or unrealized) in all domains of cultural activity. What these extreme states and activities have in common is sudden precipitation and total blending of diverse materialities, of wild fluxes, in an organic computational ensemble that defies both predetermination and 'hard', or rational, control ("if you have to think, you're dead," according to a common fighter pilot's slogan). In simpler terms, extreme activities involve the mobilization of every interacting part in a field, so that every movement of every part instantaneously changes the conditions of the unfolding of the whole. The edge of the envelope is where time (relations) gains the computational upper hand over space (things).

In Yeager's world, the sky is a totally kinetic domain. One could say that Koolhaas's work is to classical architecture exactly what the dogfight is to formation flying. In the air, formations establish rigid, homogeneous structures of movement and relationship, they inject a uniformity into space by fixing intervals and relative speeds, they arrest natural variation and all developmental routines. Even the earth, the sun, and the horizon are drawn into this meticulous stratification, for they are all interpreted as stable, on their own and in relation to one another:

the earth's varying features serve as guides on which to project fixed routes, the horizon equilibrates gravity like a regulating line, and the sun offers a fixed point to triangulate position and the progress of linear movement. In air-to-air combat this space becomes not only liquid but turbulent: the sun, the earth, and the horizon spin, volley and fly—in a word, they go ballistic. The pilot episodically uses these elements (and their ballistic pathways) to hide against, to blind the opponent, or to create vertiginous relationships of weaving, gyrating motion. The cardinal rule for survival in aerial combat: Never become predictable. Indeed, what better slogan for the creation of a truly modern—and wild—architecture? Imagine a fighter (History/Capital) on your tail. You are forced into evasive maneuvers to avoid getting 'locked' on the radar intercept screen. Do you now follow guidebook escape routes? Regularly shaped oscillating trajectories? Do you carve desultory, fluctuating lines across a single, even skewed plane? Certainly not. The true question is, how to avoid any regular repetitive behavioural pattern (how to depart the space you are in entirely)? The simple but not obvious answer is: Explode into all dimensions at once. Easier to say than to do? Perhaps, but far from impossible. The Koolhaas' projects—the multiple, focused confluences of communication, transport and capital flows of the Zeebrugge vortex; the plucked and twisted, then re-embedded, positive-negative and scoop-the-loop structures of the Bibliothèque de France; the psychoplastic amplifications of image and infrastructure in the Karlsruhe Art and Media Zentrum—represent exactly such controlled explosions of active materiality into invisible but adjacent co-dimensions. [End encounter number one: History/Capital disengages, peeling off into a long arc, circling back to re-engage later in a different tactical scenario.]

In November 1994, Yeager published a brief article on air-combat tactics. The article consisted of three short paragraphs, each outlining what might be referred to as three new 'dicta' on how to expand the elastic 'edge' of any 'envelope'.⁵⁾ Before examining these dicta, it is worth pointing out how the envelope concept is itself significant. The term's origin almost certainly derives from military ergonomic milieus, a context in which envelope always implies at least three things: the idea that a human-machine interface constitutes a next-order synthetic unity; the idea of a homeostatically contained group of forces in flux that form a temporary, fluid, but historical ensemble; the idea

that this unity or ensemble is an organic one, that it is defined performatively, and possesses its own global tolerances and parameters. The envelope, by definition, is a communicative, active apparatus. No wonder it has for years been a favorite term in Koolhaas's lexicon. A Koolhaas project, for better or worse, is never an eternal or stable solution to a 'classic' problem, nor does it pretend to be. Rather, it is a provisional, elastic resolution of a compound conjunctural situation. His solutions have half-lives, they are temporally and historically determined, they move with the stream of the world and so build in flexibility and allow for immense programmatic turnover. They are more fully products of their n-dimensional epoch than of their time-blind (world-blind!), literal site. The Koolhaas work, like the aerial encounter, is composed in a purely tactical arena, formed in an abstract envelope of concrete historical (cosmopolitan) fluids.

The Full Metal Jacket

See more than your opponent sees; Yeager dictum number one. For the flyer this can mean only one thing: free the eyes of objects and the habits that follow from object-oriented vision. Yeager shows how to retrain one's focus to take in all of space, to see everything. (When asked what made him such an exceptional flyer, Yeager used to answer, "I had the best eyes.") For the architect, this means take your focus to infinity, do not linger on objects but rather enter the space tactilely and prospect the space in search of breaking developments. Scan for changes and fluctuations, then respond as if part of a cycle, as if you had always been a causal part of those flows. This dictum works well with the more classic exhortation to "spot the enemy first." Arbitrage, here as everywhere, is the process that makes the emerging difference critical, it is the symmetry-break that 'seeds' space, allowing form to rush in. For Yeager, as for Koolhaas, history, even material history, is all about thresholds. This is because in free matter, energy and information become perfectly co-extensive fluxes, the translation of one into the other is simultaneous, and events are 'computed' instantly. Matter, like history, is an aggregate, partly fluid and partly solid, a

'colloid' or liquid crystal that shifts its pattern rhythmically in relation to the flow of inputs and outputs that traverse it. The shifts are distributed like stages with triggers that are tripped when variables extend beyond their local 'equilibria,' or envelopes. The pilot must learn to enter this domain as free matter, to become computationally co-extensive with the aggregate's unfolding, so that all reaction is instantaneous ("if you have to think, you're dead"). Koolhaas's technique is to ride these thresholds as well. After all, 'threshold' is just another name for that privileged event-filled place at the edge of the envelope.⁶⁾ He defines at least six thresholds or emergences, potential or already realized: 1. congestion (short of which the 'metropolitan' effect would not exist); 2. a new concept of Europe, its new modalities of collecting, storing and deploying energy based on a sudden 'explosion of scale', and the multiple reorganizations that take place around it; 3. bigness, the umbrella theme that typifies all 'quantum' phenomena in the late-modern landscape, where changes in scale and size produce not only changes in degree but changes in kind (new qualities); 4. dissociation of interior and exterior, which become not only autonomous programs to be developed freely, but free-floating values (exteriority folded within buildings; interiorities, as in a Riemannian manifold, locally and promiscuously defined); 5. sheer mass as affect or trait, a density-volume relationship, like Jorge Silveti's 'Colossal',⁷⁾ that speaks a forgotten language, like a lost tribe of the Beautiful suddenly come home; 6. rootlessness, the severing of relations with slow and deep unfoldings (the old-world swells of 'ground' and 'place') and the reterritorialization—inevitable if regrettable—onto the 'fast, cheap and out of control' ethos of late-modern capital, demographics, and globalization.⁸⁾

Yeager's third dictum (allow me to save the second for last): Use all four dimensions. A poor pilot (and a mediocre architect), one

might say, thinks of space as a discrete manifold of two-dimensional sheets in a variety of different axes and orientations. An average pilot (and better architect) thinks in terms of three dimensions in continuum. In a dogfight, however (or in the space of the late twentieth century), a precise and especially a plastic sense of time is critical. What most pilots don't understand, Yeager tells us, is that "by controlling the throttle, they're controlling time".⁹ Now time, of course, is not simply one dimension among others, it is the dimension out of which all other dimensions unfold. It is adjacent to everything, it presses at every edge, assigns every threshold, opens onto every becoming. How long does it take to get from point A to point B? That question is at the basis of modern material space, although not in the sense of a simple translatory trajectory. In a four-dimensional manifold, space, quite simply, is alive. Points A and B are no longer simple coordinates in a Newtonian lattice ('simple location', in Whitehead's terminology), but vectors in a Lagrangian mesh (Whitehead's proto-'organism'). What this means is that every movement drags local space along with it—local conditions with a high degree of correlation with their surroundings—so that every displacement of location is simultaneously a transformation of kind. In the dogfight—an extreme activity par excellence, because time becomes so material you can taste it—the variables become so multiplied, that the very concept of aerial tactics essentially evaporates.¹⁰ All that is left is a very rapid game of "relative motion and time-distance problems." This new Lagrangian space is one of compound correlations or, in aerial combat, of "multiple tactics." For example, with several enemy and friendly aircraft in play, you must, in a given situation, determine whether you can take an enemy off your wingman's tail even while another is already coming, and gunning at you. You must compute the 'energy' differential in each 'frame': can your relative motion get you into range to take you? In such a situation, it must be remembered, speed determines every coordinate (not 'simple location'), yet velocity remains only a relative value. The game is to exploit differentials, and to produce them when needed, continually, and indeed literally, out of thin air. For example, forcing an opponent to overspeed is even more effective than flying pirouettes around him. This logic explains why the slower Russian and Chinese MiGs had tighter turning radiuses, why they enveloped a different spectrum of traits or 'materiality,' and why this made them lethal to many much faster aircraft. In encounters such as high-speed turns, for example, the appearance of significant G forces introduced a new internal envelope, with new tolerances that offered a new material dimension that could be exploited, a new envelope to be feathered or stretched. The envelope of fluids

that presents itself to the fighter pilot is not simply one of multiple mobile elements—the diverse aptitudes of his own airplane, the positions and energy levels of terrain, horizon, sky, sun, enemy, co-wingmen, etc.—whose coordination must be precisely tracked; it is one of compound relationships all woven together in hyper-time. The architect who grasps this grasps the bizarre truth of both the dogfight and of late capitalism all at once: the agent who triumphs is the one who makes best use of his aircraft and weapons within the constraints of its performance envelope. One must fly one's airplane closer to the edge of the envelope (without exceeding it) than the opponent—History/Capital—flies his/its. One materiality against another, in the same world, with freedom hovering alongside disaster, just at the edge. Optimism and danger: two heads on the shoulders of a single beast.

This then brings us to the final problem of integrating gunnery into the flight system, and with it Yeager's final, most mystical, dictum: Fly the bullet. Learning to see and learning to shoot, it turns out, are extremely similar problems, the latter at an order of magnitude and complexity a full step above the former. Yet as we move up the ladder of complexity, we also move up the ladder of integration: more elements in interaction but with a smoother overall shape. This smoothness actually derives from the intense directedness that is built into material systems. One could again invoke the theoretical intricacies of the Lagrangian mesh, but for such a complex problem it is a duty to develop a much simpler model. We are again dealing with relative motion and time/distance computation: how to make the bullet find the enemy aircraft, or rather, how to make the bullet meet its target, in time and not only in space...when that rendezvous must clearly take place in the unknowable future! This was the same problem, at another level, on which Norbert Wiener had worked during the Second World War and which led to the science of cybernetics. But long before the science of cybernetics there was the art of cybernetics. Now that art remains superior to the science in most extreme (hypertemporal) situations and milieus, and so it is the art that both the pilot, and the visionary architect, pursue. How, then, to fly the bullet? Well, Yeager was probably a natural: "In the midst of a wild sky, I knew that dogfighting was what I was born to do. It's almost impossible to explain the feeling: it's as if you were one with that mus-

tang, an extension of that damned throttle ...You were so wired into that airplane that you flew it to the limit of its specs...You felt that engine in your bones, felt it nibbling toward a stall, getting maximum maneuvering performance... achieved mostly by instinctive flying: you knew your horse."¹¹

No, this is not mysticism, it is computational metallurgy. We all know that metals are liquids whose flow has been arrested. Precisely where and by what sequence of operations we arrest them determines how these metals will behave, what they look like, and what qualities they possess. The closer we bring them to extreme states—that is, liquid, compressed, or hot—the more qualities or properties they 'speak.' Arresting their various flows is a process achieved through painstaking operations, separating this one off, letting these others continue on for one or two more measures. Artisans in all materials follow and exploit the found material pattern and structure that presents itself as 'potential'—the work for free spoken of above. Even fish tap the vortexes in their aquatic environment in a similar way to achieve greater than 100% locomotor efficiency. Mostly, though, this work emerges at confluences, where communication and information exchange between systems is at its most intense.

Yeager has taught generations of pilots how to fly and be effective in the air. There is no doubt that these techniques, these modes of extracting effects from unfolding configurations, are transmissible. Fly the bullet: "In order to lead the [enemy] plane [on its time path so your bullets will meet it], you have to be able to make the aircraft an extension of your body."¹² Now the submerged art of cybernetics has always said: Your airplane is metal. Your flight path is metal. (Our cities, no doubt, are metal!) Of course the airplane is very complex metal, exceptionally highly organized and, of course, full of life. Now that it is 'hot' enough—that is, far enough from equilibrium and therefore close to the envelope's edge—hadn't we really ought to let its own metallic nature speak? The entire encounter now, including your nervous system, is a metallic one (action potential cycles of Na⁺, K⁺ and Cl⁻), and we must let its metal speak as well. All that remains is to enter the imbroglia and follow the flow. But to do this we must first forget the airplane.¹³ As your focus opens, the airplane is drawn inside you (the universe is metal!)¹⁴ Yeager: "Don't even think about turning. Just turn your head or your body and let the plane come along for the ride. When you take aim, fly the bullet into position."¹⁵

That's it. Ignore the plane, just fly the bullet into position. The sweep of your head and the arc along which your buttocks swing on the cockpit seat form a single computational matrix with the tangent from

your guns. Total continuity, total extension into time. There is no room here for number crunching, no room for computers, no room for auto-override. "Forget planning," Koolhaas tells us; "Forget the plane," says Yeager. And we know they are right, because the essence of successful dogfighting, despite radical technological developments, has not changed since the World War I.¹⁶ When Koolhaas cautiously promotes "a forward-looking extrapolation" as an alternative to fixing rules, you know he is looking for just this extension into the future and into time. Koolhaas's city is the metallic city (Karlsruhe—the tungsten and phosphorus of the cathode ray tube; Paris—silver bromide and Technicolor chemistry of optical image processing; Zeebrugge—the sheet metal of train, boat and automobile), it is the cybernetropolis of 'the open' and of the ragged edge. To fly the bullet is to prime matter with action potential (ionic differentials allowing signals to propagate long distances through the nervous system by exploiting local interactions), with continuums of influence transmitted ahead of them like shock waves into time.¹⁷ When Koolhaas talks of the possibility of generating virtual congestion by eschewing the usual radial connections in favor of circulation and of serial—or massively parallel—links in a megalopolis condition (what he calls "bridge connections"), it is just this 'action potential' in the urban axons that he is exploiting. To fly the bullet is to endow the material field with directedness—all that, and yet nothing mystical, nothing more.

Koolhaas commits to the bullet and its mysteriously correlated trajectory when he commits to the 'vitality,' however strange, of what is. Vitality is materiality, and materiality, like Nietzsche's Will to Power, must always engage other units of itself. Oswald Boelcke makes an important point about Nature as well as dogfighting when, in dictum no. 6 he says, "If your opponent dives on you, do not try to evade his onslaught, but fly to meet it." Koolhaas, to the horror of many bystanders in the so-called 'Resistance,' has largely adopted this activist creed.

Vitality, then, is a field property, a quality of active ensembles (of 'excitable media' in the biological sense, the 'wild sky' in Yeager), and is not reduceable or locatable in the living system, be it that of the city, the organism, or the hyper-field of the dogfight. Life may be defined as a pattern sustaining itself over time, a control system that regulates a sequence of processes that follow mysteriously from one another. In this organismal view of things that, I would claim, we see in both Yeager and Koolhaas, and indeed at every ragged edge through

which the future intrudes, there can be no horror vacui. The void, as Koolhaas recognizes, is the very source of novelty, of creative potential, because it is both indeterminate and correlated (directed but not predetermined). To fly the bullet is to allow the vector, once released, to inhabit itself; it is the interval in the throes of becoming substance. In the organismal view of the world, interval is substance, an active plastic medium projected ahead of the present, and which in turn receives it. We do not know in advance what it will be, because it is pure formation (potential) without form.

Only when architecture fully grasps the intuition of continuity and of relation as a pragmatics and as a physics will it have become extreme. At that moment, however distant, we may well find that, in architecture, the future did in fact begin with Koolhaas.

- 1) Major Gen. Fred J. Ascani, in Chuck Yeager, *Yeager*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1985).
- 2) Yeager; Tom Wolfe, *The Right Stuff*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1979).
- 3) Yeager, who flew only winged aircraft (even the F-104 had seven-foot-long razor wings) or ones that took off under their own power (not including the X-10 experiments of the 1940s), never actually flew beyond the absolute atmospheric boundary (280,000 feet), but he unquestionably prepared the way. He was the first American to probe the extreme edge of the NF-104's envelope (a conventional atmosphere-dependent aircraft) by flying it above 100,000 feet, a test flight that all but cost him his life. Nonetheless, Yeager routinely took his students up beyond the first atmospheric boundary (70,000 feet) where the sky goes black and silent but the air's molecular structure still sustains aerodynamic buoyancy—to give them a taste of the 'outside' that is, of space.
- 4) Sant'Elia, Hilberseimer and certain early Soviet revolutionaries are the only who come to mind.
- 5) General Chuck Yeager, "How to Win a Dogfight," *Men's Health*, November 1994. My thanks to Brian Boigon for alerting me to this article.
- 6) 'Class four behaviour' in Stephen Wolfram; 'edge of chaos' in Chris Langton and Stuart Kaufmann; 'separatrices' and the 'catastrophe sets' in Ralph Abraham and René Thom; 'bifurcation regimes', and 'far from equilibrium states' of chaosologists and thermodynamicists; 'singularities' in Deleuze and Guattari; 'flow' in Csikszentmihalyi and optimal experience theorists; 'one-over-f'

systems in signal theory; the state of 'highest or fulfilled tension' in Zen Buddhist disciplines...the list is beautiful, and long.

- 7) Jorge Silveti, "The Seven Wonders of the World," a lecture delivered at the Rhode Island School of Design, 1982.
- 8) Koolhaas's own mot d'ordre here is 'fuck context.' Cf. 'Bigness' in Rem Koolhaas, S,M,L,XL (New York: Monacelli Press, 1996).
- 9) "How to Win a Dogfight", *ibid.* Emphasis supplied.
- 10) Peter Kilduff with Lieutenants Randall H. Cunningham and William P. Driscoll, "McDonnell F-4 Phantom", in *In the Cockpit*, ed. Anthony Robinson (London: Orbis, 1979). My thanks to Jesse Reiser for bringing this text to my attention.
- 11) Yeager, *ibid.*
- 12) "How to Win a Dogfight", *ibid.*
- 13) Similarly, in the art of juggling, the flexible control of multiple non-linear variables (hands, balls and their trajectories) to maintain a solid pattern is properly achieved only by keeping the eye off the ball, that is, by letting touch, memory, and more importantly, natural rhythmic attractors (coupled oscillator phenomena) deep in the body's bio-schema take over regulating the movements. There is a musical materiality that juggling calls out of the body. The structure of these pattern relationships is just beginning to undergo experimental notation in what is known as 'site swap theory.' See Peter J. Beek and Arthur Lewbel, "The Science of Juggling," *Scientific American*, November 1995.
- 14) "Not everything is metal, but metal is everywhere. Metal is the conductor of all matter... Nonorganic Life was the invention, the intuition of metallurgy." Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). The entire discussion of materiality here is indebted to this work, especially the chapters 'On Nomadology' and 'The Geology of Morals.'
- 15) "How to Win a Dogfight", *ibid.*
- 16) The RIO (radio intercept officer), who sits directly behind the pilot in most advanced fighters today and who is responsible for managing the weapons systems, has an entirely computerized cockpit. In front, however, computers are often little more than a liability; in aerial combat there never has been such a thing as a pushbutton war. Even today, bomber pilots seek maximum override capability against automated pilot functions, giving the pilot maximum control over critical 'edge' maneuvers. The role of computers, more often than not, is to filter and minimize the flow of numerical data to the pilot's nervous system.
- 17) Kinematic wave theory, applied to traffic flow studies, has shown that pulses, or traffic shock waves, form on highway traffic clusters. These waves travel backward or forward along the flow entirely independent of, and at a speed greater than, that of any individual automobile or the velocity of the group flow.

How does one treat a text that shadows its object, the Generic City, so closely that it has no object of its own? Even on reading it a second time, one can find hardly any means of orientation - apart from the numbered themes - for finding one's way around in this text or for dealing with it analytically. Furthermore, too evidently it stages itself, it puts a higher value on speed than on reflection or argumentation. The statements follow one after another, seamlessly, without any paragraphs, like a breathless entreaty which does not want to let the reader out of its talons, and certainly not to give him time to reflect, to question, to take a single step to the side. All one can do is take a step to the side on one's own initiative and let it run by as performance.

1. As far as style and tone are concerned, we are dealing here with the literary genre of the manifesto. This is where the deliberately literary, the montage, the lightning transition from exact observation to pseudo-metaphorical, the fragmentary, the breathless, the renunciation of any clarification or explanation originate from. To that extent, what is at issue is the nth futuristic manifesto.

This newest Koolhaasian manifesto demands once again the abandonment of any intellectual commitment to objectivity or concreteness, place, identity, knowability, resistance, difference, rupture; instead, it de-

mands yet again more speed, more forgetting, more arbitrariness, more derailment. This much one knows if one has read anything by Koolhaas before or heard anything about his work. But the tone that is set here is something else again. The manifesto self-destructs in the same measure that it unfolds over the course of a given number of pages. In light of the feigned rational order of the chapters and theses numbered progressively, it disintegrates into unalloyed, consciously brutal caprices merely pasted together - or rather, caprices in the sense that Goya employed them, intellectual phantoms which look so much like the world that we know - that the manifesto, i.e., the advance notice of the future and Koolhaas' own role as successor to Marinetti, Breton, Duchamp, Scheerbarth and so on, championing the civilization of the new order, renders itself basically superfluous.

It is not that the manifesto does not take itself seriously. But it does not master its literary technique. It alternates so wildly between satire and proclamation, between cynicism and euphoria, that one notices that it is out of control. It is not so much that the text shifts deliberately; rather it is grimacing involuntarily because it is collapsing under the weight of that which it has taken upon itself. For, when it comes to the point, what exactly is Koolhaas manifesting? The meanness and malevolence of the cities that await us, or the beauty of indifference, of Generic Cities, in which any variety of baseness, social, economic or aesthetic, can be cultivated at will, unhindered in its inventiveness by any kind of intellectual scruples, architectural bonds, typologies or genres, social planning, building codes, lamentation about the public sphere and so on and so forth.

Grimace means: the genre of the manifesto and the author's intention are at odds with one another. By no longer being able to distinguish between them - and he does not want to, either - Koolhaas destroys the demonstrative sense of the manifesto genre, which says that the present is bad and the future has to be quite different; therefore, let us demolish the present. If, however, the future is already that which constitutes the present, then the only use for the persuasive power inherent in the genre can be to direct that banal sandwiching together of present and future, i.e. the impossibility of change, hope and so on, against those who have not yet understood, who do not want to understand that there is nothing more to change. If the present day is right, the entire emphasis of the text thus turns, in complete identification with the aggressor, against those intellectuals who have not yet progressed that far - a manifesto in the service of the status quo, against the retrograde, wrongheaded people who still speak of a city that has long been inexistent, both in Japan and in Singapore, but in Europe and the United States too.

2. It seems to me that the reason for the Koolhaasian speed is to be discerned more clearly in this distorted, satirically derailed text than in any other that I have read to date. Because it has reached such lightning speed here, accelerating from zero to one hundred and immediately running up against the outermost wall that a European can run up against, that of voluntary loss of identity, something of his motivation is revealed, both in the midst of it and beyond it.

From a town planning perspective, it is a manifesto of a receptive and architectural media culture utopia - but if it is a utopia, then it is one in a thoroughly modern sense, that of a future obviously already burnt-out. Hope feeds on despair. The hope is to be rid at last of this damned European fixation on loss and mourning for destroyed identity and to become one with that which is global and up-to-date: to be able to say 'yes'. To this extent, the utopia of being generic is a globalized new edition of Venturi's Learning of Las Vegas with far eastern colours - whereby Venturi is particularly interesting as a comparison because as an architect, he has refused the consequences of his intellectual position and cannot endure Las Vegas and Levittown, either as an architect or as a consumer.

Koolhaas performs his European mourning for the loss of identity of the cities much more cleverly and ruthlessly. He knows, in view of the example of Venturi, that one cannot separate intellectual position from architecture if one wants to be quit of the suffering that he is combating. But of course he is suffering too. Only someone who is suffering from it can describe so cuttingly the loss of identity of the old city centres and celebrate the non-identity of the periphery. It is for this reason alone that he fails so flagrantly in his attempt to make the global city convincing for himself as the beautiful city, the interesting, creative, rich city, which produces above all architecture.

It is precisely for this reason that, continually accelerating he plays the role of the champion of civilization of a new age of non-identity, when homesickness has been overcome. What is sad about the present text is that Koolhaas runs away and ahead so quickly that he has already arrived; he cannot offer us anything that he has withheld any more, no scraps of utopia are left, no scraps of possible future fulfilment, nothing but the present itself. Why should we make any effort then? It is sufficient to let everything go on as it is. What is left then has

nothing to do with the city, it is the salvaging of architecture as a field of aesthetic activity, as bill board (I have already said what I have to say on this subject elsewhere, in the *Centrum-Jahrbuch* 1995).

3. Can one seriously speak of cities like this? Many of Koolhaas' metaphors are apt, but somehow he loses sight of the main issue. In the satirical universe of the city caprice that Koolhaas designs point by point, neither real cities nor real people appear. As far as the built aspect is concerned, it is only partial domains, fragments of cities, and as regards those who live there and use the city, the lived city, we are dealing basically with city idiots, with celluloid people, with city dwellers who, as cockroaches or mice, sweat panic, chaos, blood and sperm on elaborate film sets. There is no such city, either in Europe or anywhere in the developing countries. Bombay and Calcutta are not absurd. They are like the other gigantic cities in south-east Asia, Africa, Central or South America, cities of tremendous social strength, in which masses of humanity - for whom there is no basis of existence anywhere else any more - survive, economically and socially, under an incredible pressure of poverty.

The European cities bear no resemblance whatsoever to these tropes. We have the absurdity of the hollow touristic centres and those of the airport settlements; in the larger centres, we have the short-circuiting of centre and periphery upon which Koolhaas' whole videoclip is based. But it is only by filmic means, through continual cutting and isolating and concentrating, that the spectacle of the city that is pending has been evoked. The real city areas, selfishly over-taxed, but also defended, lie between centre and periphery. There, city for city, millions of people transform the programme of globality and locality, of difference and simultaneity into everyday lives which have many flaws, but with nothing absurd about them.

But Koolhaas does not live in these cities. He lives and works in the centre and the periphery, at megamalls. As a person, he inhabits airports. Fine. It is his choice. But why does he revile the real cities, then? Why does he despise the stupidity of urban political decisions, the stupidity of tourists? If he is the only one to whom the new global city is present, and who is really up-to-date as a planner, why does he still have the problem that it would be more reasonable to plan everything as the professional, Rem Koolhaas, proposes year by year? Basically, then, Koolhaas is not polemicizing at all against the rest of us who have not yet got so far, but against himself. Doing violence to himself in the process, he has ruthlessly identified with the new instant city, and yet he cannot come to terms with the fact that these Asian global cities just grow like wildfire, and not in the style of the functionally and aesthetically organized space of Piranesi that Koolhaas projects onto the real globalized cities. He too is frustrated, he too is not on contract to all the world city councils, he too is not listened to, he too is fighting on the losing side of reason. Why is he straining to be the forerunner? Come back, sit down with us on the benches in the waiting rooms of political and administrative ignorance, and let us reflect upon the reason for these stupid benches.

4. In conclusion, a judgment of taste. The person who leans so far out of the window obviously wants to be seen in erotic under-

wear, or at the very least, reviewed in the feuilleton style. Koolhaas' project of making his dilemma of the overtaking of the global plausible through aesthetic acceleration has failed - at least as text: exaggerated speed, the commercial art of the filmmaker - he should relinquish his dream of writing screenplays.

Translated by Fiona Greenwood