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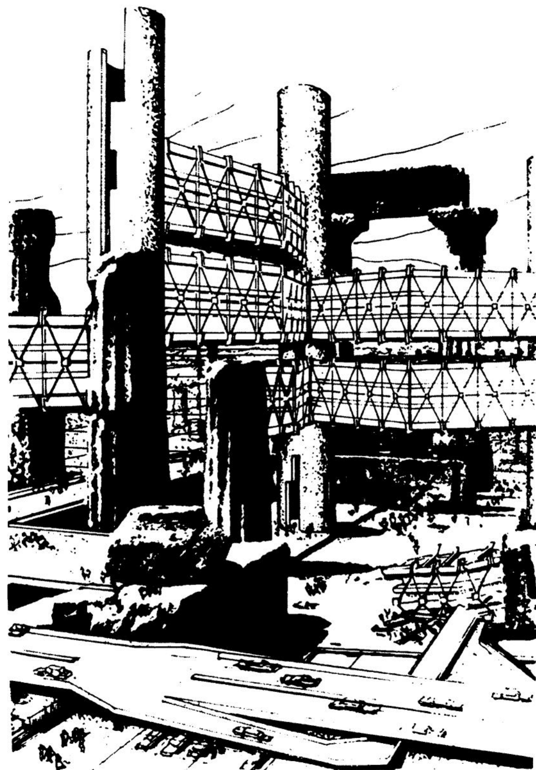
# Reanimation

1 Boris Karloff as the Frankenstein Monster, 1930s.



2 Arata Isozaki's montage Incubation Process, (Silk Screen), Shinjuku, Tokyo, Japan, 1960–61.



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# Incubation and Decay: Arata Isozaki's Architectural Poetics – Metabolism's Dialogical "Other"

Emmanuel Petit

> I paused, examining and analyzing all the minutiae of causation, as exemplified in the change from life to death, and death to life […]. I became myself capable of bestowing animation upon lifeless matter.
> —Victor Frankenstein[1] Fig. 1

> The Cube is an enemy.
> —Arata Isozaki[2]

### The Singular Image of Death

In 1961, Arata Isozaki creates a photomontage entitled Incubation Process, in which his earlier metropolitan vision called City in the Air, partly in decay, is grafted onto ruins of a giant columnar order.[3] Fig. 2 While this urban vision builds on certain theoretical assumptions and the biological analogies used by the Japanese Metabolist group, to which Isozaki never formally adheres, his image is to be seen as an early critical comment against their positivist, linear, and optimistic views.[4] In the montage, a fiction of the past and the imagination of the future are nurturing each other as a growing and evolving urban entity, while the text alongside the collage reads: "The ruin is the future of our city; the future city is the ruin itself."[5] In the aftermath of the World War, the contemporary city in Japan is represented in analogy to a vulnerable living body, which is not only constructed through the positive and aesthetic "will" of its planners, but also shows signs of its own decomposition. Against this background, Isozaki insists that the Metabolists' attention to the forms of life have to be in dialogue with life's dialectic "other," i.e., the traces of death, to eventually form an architecture that is poetic and paradoxical. Since death cannot be experienced firsthand though, only its mediation through the image of death can figure as a truthful site of the "poetic imagination" that Isozaki is after. He sees this poetic imaginary as the only way to reanimate architecture at a historical moment, when it suffers from the creative lethargy of late-modernism. A poetic reaction to the complex question of the Japanese city has to reflect the monstrosities of the disastrous war—monstrosities which, alas, define the human condition, and therefore ought to be integrated into the image of architecture.

While borrowing many of the Metabolists' biological metaphors, Isozaki attempts to distance himself from this group, which, in his view, concentrates too much on instrumental processes and general methodologies while omitting to theorize the singular character of every project. Isozaki's interest in the city parallels the Metabolists' as a kind of field of relationships that alters, adjusts, and grows, but he emphasizes the poetic force of their metaphors. Unlike them, he doesn't hope to find in the biological procedure an effective and immediate instrument of action. He therefore challenges their technical positivism with the advocacy of a poetic commentary, based on creative freedom rather than on methodical and "projective" procedure. One of his projects in the late seventies, the Tsukuba Civic Center, becomes Isozaki's demonstration object for an alternative approach to the Metabolists' illusion of immediate instrumentality: Isozaki here defines a more mediated approach to poetry through "architectural irony." His Tsukuba building complex recasts Doctor Frankenstein's ambition in architectural terms, i.e., to reanimate the body of the Japanese city by suturing a new architecture out of the lifeless members of architectural history.

### Ruined Body

Isozaki's mediated attitude is conditioned by the analogies he draws between architecture and the human body—both subject to a sense of finitude. On the one hand, he insists on the beholder's bodily immersion in the spaces of his architecture and the ephemerality of the affective experiences it generates, and on the other, he presents architecture itself as a kind of artificial body with an autonomous life. As a consequence, the themes of organic growth and decay appear frequently in his texts and projects. Already in the first building he designs and builds independently from his teacher Kenzo Tange, the Oita Prefecture Library from 1962–66, the biological metaphor is used to explain the complex assemblage of the building's diverse structural, technical, and spatial systems: "The original inspiration for the design was an analogy with the human body's skeletal system (concrete skeleton), circulatory system (ducts), and musculature (interior spatial composition) […]."[6]

Careful to avoid universalizing abstractions, Isozaki relates the features and processes of the "architectural body" to his own physical body. He does this, for example, when Tange invites him to contribute to the design of the Osaka Expo '70, in which he is asked to celebrate the achievements of a technological society that he is skeptical of. Haunted by guilt for collaborating with a paradigm he reproves, Isozaki feels physically exhausted to the point of collapse. He describes the situation as if his own body was rebelling against the cooperation with what in fact he could no longer defend, i.e., Tange's optimistic, abstract, and instrumentalist views of Modern architecture. After finishing the work for the Expo's Festival Plaza, Isozaki is overworked and finds himself in hospital; he describes the incident as follows:

> […] confronting hospital gloom, I resolved then to make darkness and ruin the basis of my theories of space and time.
>
> I had found myself in the embarrassing position of being a critic of Modernism who was taking a professional part in Expo '70, a national event in which the Modernist vocabulary was the only one permitted. This predicament created great nervous tension and ruined me physically. Under these circumstances, colors faded for me and I began to see only blanks. Substances lost mass and became only shadows. I felt as if twilight, known as the devil's hour, had settled on the whole world.[7]

In this moment of bodily ruination, Isozaki conceptualizes the principles of his architecture: His physical distress symptomizes the aporetic situation created by his desire to depart from the modernist abstractions in city planning and architecture, on the one hand, and the impossibility to do so, on the other. When he mentions twilight, darkness, ruins, and fragments as the persistent matter of his architecture, he capitalizes on the hallucinatory effect, which arises from an oneiric passage through darkness, in which objects appear as merely disconnected fragments. Out of this delirium, he develops a new aesthetic.

Isozaki never presents the metaphorical human body as a complete system closed on itself, but on the contrary, it is seen as an assembled organism of amalgamated fragments. The architect is not solely seen as the life-giver, able to create the permanent



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infrastructure of the city that sustains the growth of its organism. According to him, the architect also needs to foresee the state of decay of the body he has created: death should not be eradicated from the realm of aesthetics, because it enriches the dominant narratives with the poetry of paradox.

Sure enough, for the Metabolists, the short-lived, "soft" cells that constitute the city in the form of individual housing units and that are attached to a more permanent technical and structural infrastructure, are simply to be replaced when they turn obsolete. While this is the expression of efficiency, for Isozaki it nevertheless misses the opportunity to relate to the poetics of life, which is never disconnected from the finitude at the basis of each life-cycle: "Since change is half-destructive and half-constructive, it should be permissible for architecture to create the exact appearance of ruins."[8] Certainly, Isozaki's comment does not only apply to the city, but also to the status of human creativity at large—a view that has its conceptual antecedent in European Romantic thought, which Isozaki is well aware of.

"Architecture With or Without Irony"

The cycle of self-positing and self-annihilation paradigmatic of Romantic irony, and important to Isozaki, is theorized in the writings of the German Jena Romantic Friedrich Schlegel. The dilemma presented by Schlegel's irony arises from the impossibility to express the categorical and the ideal within any single aesthetic creation; any conception is but a fragmentary representation of the continuously evolving reflection of the creator. For that reason, Schlegel holds that it is impossible to reach the highest idea positively; instead, any creation has to forebode its own obliteration: "That, which doesn't annihilate itself, is worthless."[9] He identifies this "complete," i.e., double-edged, engagement with the historical process in his ideal of the art of ancient Greece: "The majesty of antiquity is felt to be indissolubly linked with the images of decline and ruin, for both arise from the same source—the dominion of instinct, and the spontaneous development of nature. [...] Grecian art itself, which rose to absolute perfection, ended also with itself, and it presents a remarkable instance of the perishable nature of merely instinctive greatness."[10] In other words, art can only allude to perfection by expressing its aesthetic absolute in a state of decay.

Much has been written specifically about irony in Isozaki's architecture, not least because he himself articulated an architectural manifesto in 1985, called "Architecture With or Without Irony,"[11] in which his Romantic disposition becomes most explicit.[12] The text argues for both an aesthetic and an ethics of excess, of fragmentation, and of recollection—all forwarded against the naïve utopianism of modernist precedents in city planning and in architecture. The manifesto is to be counted as an aesthetic object in its own right, and hence deserves a quotation in its entirety:

> For the first twenty years of my career as a professional
> architect, I believed that architecture could only be accomplished by irony.
> It was to make the very gap that would never be filled up,
> a springboard.
> It could combine even what was unreasonable.
> It could allude to treason.
> It made it possible to create architecture as criticism.
> It could admire the vulgar against the noble, the secular against
> the sacred, without shame.
> It could justify various vexations such as political estrangement,
> the handicaps of a foreigner coming from a remote region, minor culture,
> bad conditions of economy, poor devices, non-orthodoxy, etc.
>
> Ruins, doomsday, collapse, and death were woken in nostalgia.
> It was an unfulfilled wish, a mourning for what was lost - Hiroshima,
> holocaust.
> To bridge over the gap, a wit, a sense of humor and paradox were adopted.
> It was a limited measure to allow speech in an inorganic architectural
> language.
> It could also relieve an architect from falling into a trap which would
> make him anonymous.
> After twenty years of practical experience, I am now going to find
> a method to create architecture without irony.
> The architectural languages which I have adopted up to the present
> will be continuously used, and some new ones will be developed in
> addition to the old.
> However, ruins, regardless of the pathetic sentiment towards what was
> lost, will remain as they are, according to the law of nature.
> Doomsday, not as a fear for what is coming, will become the fact
> which can be actually seen.
> Death will also be loved just like life.
> A wit, to be as light as possible.
> A sense of humor evokes what would vanish.
> Paradox is used to make what is invisible, visible.
> But, not cynically, not desperately.
> To be dreaming of architecture as a pleasure machine.

In order to avoid the mere replication of the positivist methods of the CIAM modernists and the Metabolists, directed towards the production of a better future, Isozaki writes a retroactive manifesto, in which he claims to have finally overcome the ironic phase of his work. Echoing the aesthetic of ruins in his architectural projects, he annihilates his own ironic strategy at the very moment he announces it: his manifesto presents itself as an amalgamation of ideas that already belong to the past as soon as he formulates them. The determining aspect of Isozaki's irony is the sentiment—shared by both existentialist and Romantic thought—that an author can posit an alternative reality and equally, put an end to his own creations.

Cyclical time here replaces the forward-looking utopianism of modernist city planning—a view which Isozaki finds increasingly difficult to maintain in the postwar years: "Throughout my youth, until I began to study architecture, I was constantly confronted with the destruction and elimination of the physical

3 Still from Isozaki's slide projection "Electric Labyrinth" at the Milan Triennale in 1968.



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objects that surrounded me. Japanese cities went up in flames. Forms that had been there an instant earlier vanished in the next." [13] The impressions of war thus stayed with him, and largely determine his view on the ephemerality of anything physical.

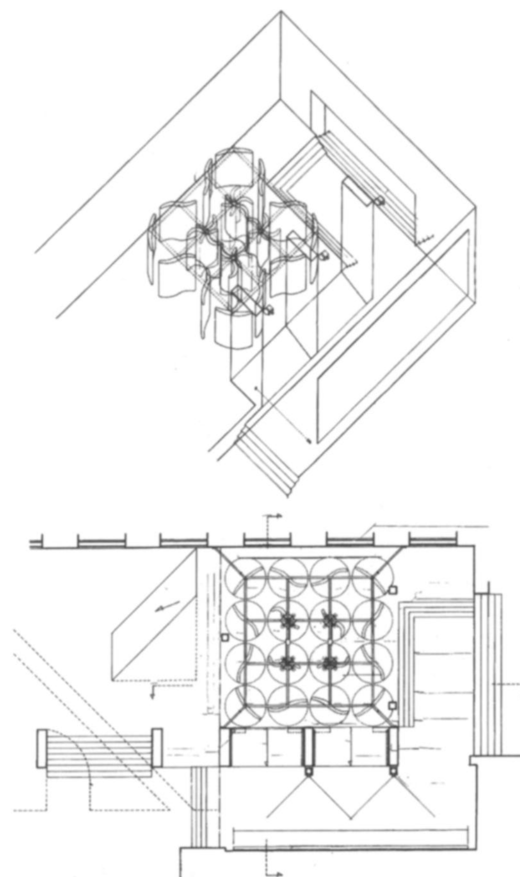
### The Fall of Ideas

In his exhibition contribution to the fourteenth Milan Triennale in 1968, the "Electric Labyrinth," Isozaki parallels the cyclicality of the biological human body with the one of architectural visions for the city. Each such vision is displayed as a temporary construction exposed to deletion. One part of the exhibition shows big photographs of the devastated cityscapes of bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, on top of which Isozaki projects slides of futurist designs by contemporary Japanese architects. Fig. 3 Every architectural creation appears as merely another one in a series of ephemeral utopias to be fatally overthrown. The "Electric Labyrinth" makes thematic the topic of the dramatic "Fall of Ideas": once the architect concretizes one moment out of a creative process that sees itself permanently in movement, the dynamic ideas degrade into inert objectivity. This constitutes the drama of human creativity and a true monstrosity of any creative act.

Romantic irony is dependent on such a moment of the Fall, which conveys the idea that subjective imagination is always "other" than, and exceeds, any particular one of its concrete creations; no doubt, the strictly singular character of any "fallen idea" appeals to Isozaki. In the Irony manifesto, it is easy to discern the theme of the Fall, which, in all of his architectural representations, translates into motives of ruins, destruction and spatial destabilization.

Another part of the "Electric Labyrinth" installation consists of a maze of sixteen revolving and mirroring panels that visitors activate when passing in between them. Fig. 4 The panels have imprinted images of death, torture, and horror—among them demons of Japanese iconography, ghost figures from the Edo period of Japanese history (1600–1867), and photographs of real nuclear bomb victims. Fig. 5 Again, Isozaki uses the motive of the human body to communicate parallels between the finitude of human life with the precariousness of architectural fantasies. Through the combined effects of distorting and moving mirrors, sound, light and images, Isozaki creates an affective and bodily experience that turns the mirror-image of the exhibition visitor into a monster among monsters—and uses the exhibition as a statement against any abstract and sterile approach to architecture. The "Electric Labyrinth" allows Isozaki to both test strategies of spatial destabilization and to juxtapose unusual combinations of elements taken from different cultural contexts. The revolving panels produce a kaleidoscopic visual illusion, in which the reflections of the real bodies of the visitors and the mounted images overlap and blend. The bodies of the visitors thus "preview" with the help of their own bodies Isozaki's architectural "project."

In the quest to construct an alternative architectural world of boundless thinking, always exceeding the immediate actuality of socio-political concerns, the concept of Bildung becomes a visible commentary in Isozaki's oeuvre and, consequently, the notion of the past as a resource for inspiration is made thematic. For example, Isozaki's explicit reference to a Greek ideal past is illustrated in his unbuilt competition entry for the Tegel Harbor Complex in Berlin in 1980, the perspective view of which is a free adaptation of Schinkel's Building Academy from his Collection of Architectural Drawings. [14] In this project, Isozaki recalls the former presence of the Building Academy by



4 Plan of the maze of mirrors in Isozaki's "Electric Labyrinth"; reconstruction in the Castello di Rivoli in 2002.

5 Iconography of death on the rotating mirrors of Isozaki's "Electric Labyrinth"; reconstruction in the Castello di Rivoli in 2002.



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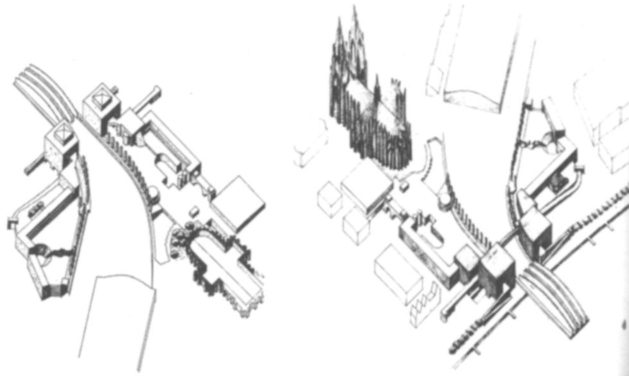

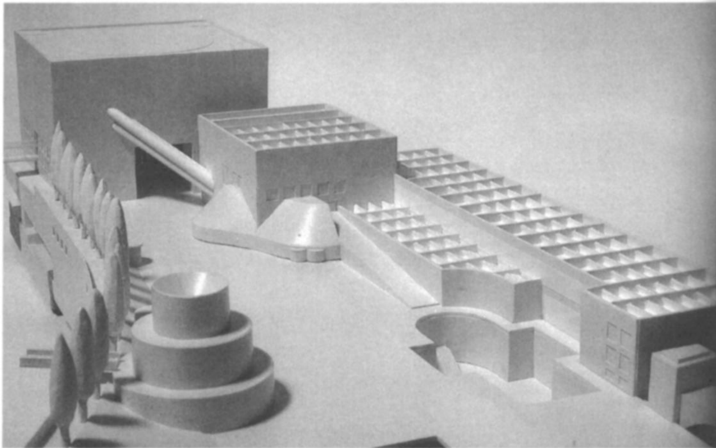

6 James Stirling's competition project for the Wallraf-Richartz Museum in Cologne.

transforming the footprint of Schinkel's edifice into the shape of an open plaza. The inversion of the building mass into the void of Isozaki's plaza demonstrates simultaneously an association with, and a detachment from, the historical antecedent. This kind of spatial inversion—the transformation of solid into void—is a technique Isozaki frequently uses to put his architecture under erasure.

It should be mentioned that the doubled relationship to the past, as well as the related aesthetic of fragmentation, comes to use in a multitude of projects by Isozaki's contemporaries, like prominently with the British architect James Stirling. In Stirling's Cologne project of the Wallraf Richartz Museum from 1975, the footprint of the historic church is carved into the ground as a sort of negative reference;[Fig. 6] also, while Stirling conserves the facade of the old library on the southwest corner of his Düsseldorf Northrine-Westfalia museum project, he preserves it in a state of ruin. Similarly, in his Neue Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart, Stirling inverts Schinkel's domed central hall from the Altes Museum in Berlin (1822–30) into a cylindrical, central and outside void. And finally, at one point of the building's plinth, the façade alludes to a state of decay by simulating that some stones have tumbled out of the wall, providing an opening into the museum's parking garage. Stirling explains that "the casually monumental is diminished by the deliberately informal,"[15] and thus the abstract idea of monumentality of a museum can be combined with the local and immediate conditions of the town of Stuttgart.

Like Stirling, Isozaki uses the paradoxical reference to the past as a way to expose his critical "knowingness" about the nature of human creativity. The witty and ironic transformation of the past is used to demonstrate the particular agility of the creative architect's mind; both wit and irony loosen the architect's bond with the impositions from the outside of his mind, and grant him a great degree of creative autonomy. The gained capability to combine even what is "unreasonable" and to evade what reality dictates as pressing and compulsory "facts," allows the architect to stay creative in the face of the modern spirit of mass production, always aiming at equalizing all of its productions. Isozaki's irony thus profits a strategic undoing and dismantling of accepted relationships of Modern architecture and CIAM urbanism with the intention to recuperate the possibility of a singular, subjective and poetic statement in architecture. In his own words, "[i]f the architect wants to evade a net of mass consumption cast by the technocrat and not abandon design, he has to keep an ambivalent relationship with reality, which then will be often ironical and paradoxical."[16]

In his philosophical Fragments, Schlegel theorizes the ambivalent attitude of the creative mind towards the world, describing how it negotiates for itself an in-between and "suspended" position between rational systems and imaginative leaps: "It is equally deadly for the mind to have a system, and not to have one. It will just have to decide to combine both."[17] Isozaki links the two strategies evoked by Schlegel and justifies the resulting personal aesthetic by referring to the Japanese tea culture and to the spatial arrangement of the objects in a tea ceremony, which follows only the aesthetic preference of its host. The spatial relationship between the elements of the tea ceremony therefore cannot be made into a systematic theory, but is contingent on the subjective interpretation of the guests at the ceremony. All the elements of the composition appear as fragments that exist in a paradoxical net of denotative associations.

In order to "theorize" this non-systematic approach to the arrangement of space, Isozaki announces his interest in the notion of "darkness," where darkness is seen as an irrational and immersive connective tissue between spatial relationships. In a 1962 text titled "The Space of Darkness," Isozaki discusses two related and opposed spatial concepts of void and darkness. On the one hand, the void stands for spaces that are overcharged



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with imagistic excess and flows of signs without any pressing meaning, as can be found in the swiftly growing Japanese cities. Spaces of darkness, on the other hand, remain unnamable in that they repress most of the information that would make them intelligible. The latter represents a kind of sublime silence that forces the subject's mind to constantly invest an effort of interpretation and intellectual "rearrangement." In darkness, objects in space appear as discrete fragments; as a consequence of this lack of spatial information, the subject's imagination has to actively create the associations between the objects in space:

> Darkness is physically stimulating because, by enveloping things, it has the power to stir up profound recollections and drag everyday perceptions into the world of illusion. When I come into contact with the deep-level recollections darkness arouses, I am recalled to the state [...] in which undifferentiated images flicker in my mind. My task is to give form to the spaces that arise from those images. This should make it possible to illuminate architecture in a wider field of vision. [...]
>
> The prototype of darkness serves as a connective on the levels of historical, anthropological, and ethnological thought. In other words, darkness acts as a working hypothesis for semiological operations.[18]

Subjective imagination is made the primordial ingredient of the organization of space and the arrangement of objects within it. What is more, this imaginary is always a temporary construction, and partly incomprehensible even to the interpreting subject. Schlegel already argues for the importance of "incomprehensibility" for any authentic act of theorizing, and maintains that certain aspects of cognition need to stay in the dark as the very precondition of a poetic approach to life:

> An incredible small portion (of non-understanding) suffices, provided it is preserved with unbreakable trust and purity, and no restless intelligence dares to come close to its holy borderline. Yes, even the most precious possession of mankind, inner satisfaction, is suspended, as we all know, on some such point; it would lose its stability at once if this power were to be dissolved by means of understanding. Truly, you would be quite horrified if your request were answered, and the world would all of a sudden become, in all seriousness, comprehensible. Is not the entire infinite world built out of nonunderstanding, out of chaos, by means of understanding?[19]

A series of exhibitions, including "Electric Labyrinth," serve Isozaki as a laboratory to test his inversions and subversions of modern architecture. His irony herein allows him to make use of traditional concepts of architecture while critiquing them at the same time. Importantly, the exhibition projects try to achieve the equivalence between the idea of destabilization and the bodily experience of imbalance, between the conceptual and affective dimensions of the project—a kind of Romantic synthesis between thinking and feeling.

### Design a Being

In 1976, Hans Hollein curates the opening show of the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York, entitled "MAN transFORMS," and invites Isozaki to participate.[20] The overall concept for the exhibit is that man's creations are always a re-combination of pre-existing elements, and Hollein endorses Isozaki's aptitude to unite such heterogeneous fragments into new ensembles. In particular, Hollein points out the difficulty to invent a creature not seen before, e.g., a Martian, and illustrates how fantasies of such unprecedented beings are mostly derived from fragments of human or animal parts. Throughout human mythology, many of the fable creatures have been imagined as such heterogeneous composites, including the Sphinx, the Minotaur, the Centaur, the Unicorn, the Cyclops, and the Mermaid. Fig. 7 What is more, Hollein exhibits a "Design-a-being" set that allows the visitors to assemble their own imaginary living creature from body parts of humans and animals. Fig. 8

Isozaki has always maneuvered within such a combinatory game, and Hollein therefore attributes to Isozaki the capacity to operate in between poles of clarity, and outside of the simple dialectics of positive and negative. Hollein explains with the metaphor of a chess game:

> Back to our chess game, and be it only because of the associative line Chess-Duchamp-Isozaki, what is Isozaki's color? Black or white? Of course black and white. But here I would add another dimension—mixture. [...] With a more poetic metaphor, Isozaki would call this 'twilight.' Twilight equalizes, and this equalizing of heterogeneous elements—[...] is one of the fundamental phenomena of Isozaki's architecture.[21]

In the context of the Cooper-Hewitt show, Hollein portrays Isozaki as an anatomical body, which is composed of a mixture of body parts stemming from different architects, both dead and alive at the time. Fig. 9 He describes Isozaki's subject as an assemblage from heterogeneous parts. In this conceptual montage, the head is borrowed from Marcel Duchamp, the ears from Robert Venturi, the neck from Philip Johnson, the chest from James Stirling, the heart from Michelangelo or Giulio Romano, the left hand from Archigram, the right hand from Hans Hollein, the stomach from Carlo Scarpa, the buttocks from Marilyn Monroe, the genitals from Kenzo Tange, the left leg from Morris Lapidus, and the right leg from Adolfo Natalini.[22] Hollein's "improbable" anatomical combination of disparate parts is analogous to the re-arrangement of architectural fragments taken from different times, places, and authors in Isozaki's project for the Tsukuba Civic Center—which I argue is the building in which Isozaki's irony becomes most visible.

### Tsukuba's Schizophrenic Eclecticism and Frankenstein

In 1979, Isozaki wins the competition for a Civic Center in Tsukuba New Town in Japan. Tsukuba had failed to attract the 120,000 inhabitants aimed for when the town was founded at the end of the 1960s. The creation of a Civic Center was to become a magnet to draw a larger number of residents—a number that does not even exceed 30,000 by the end of the '70s! From the very beginning of the competition, Isozaki conceptualizes his intervention as an attempt to reanimate a city that is lifeless, sterile and faceless as a consequence of abstract modernist planning, based on principles elaborated by the CIAM. The Civic Center was to become a new "heart" for the metropolitan body, able to invigorate its urban life.

The architect decides to collect a multitude of diverse fragments from the history of architecture, hoping that the witty compilation of architectural déjà-vus can create new life out of past memories. Fig. 10 Not unlike Hollein's portrayal of the composite nature of Isozaki's "biological body," the Tsukuba Center turns into an assemblage of pieces that are cut out from diverse historical contexts and stitched together at Tsukuba. Consequently, the building is thought of as a composite anatomy of recognizable architectural fragments—a "group portrait," in Isozaki's words—comprising materials taken from such diverse



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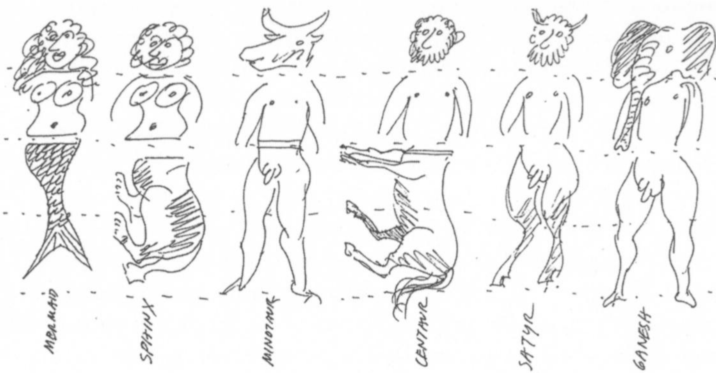
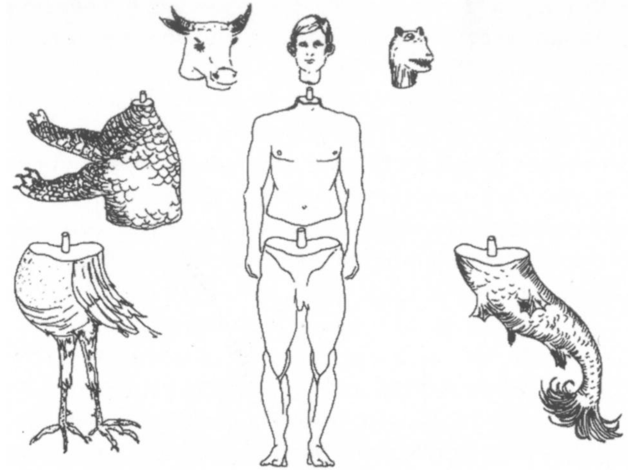
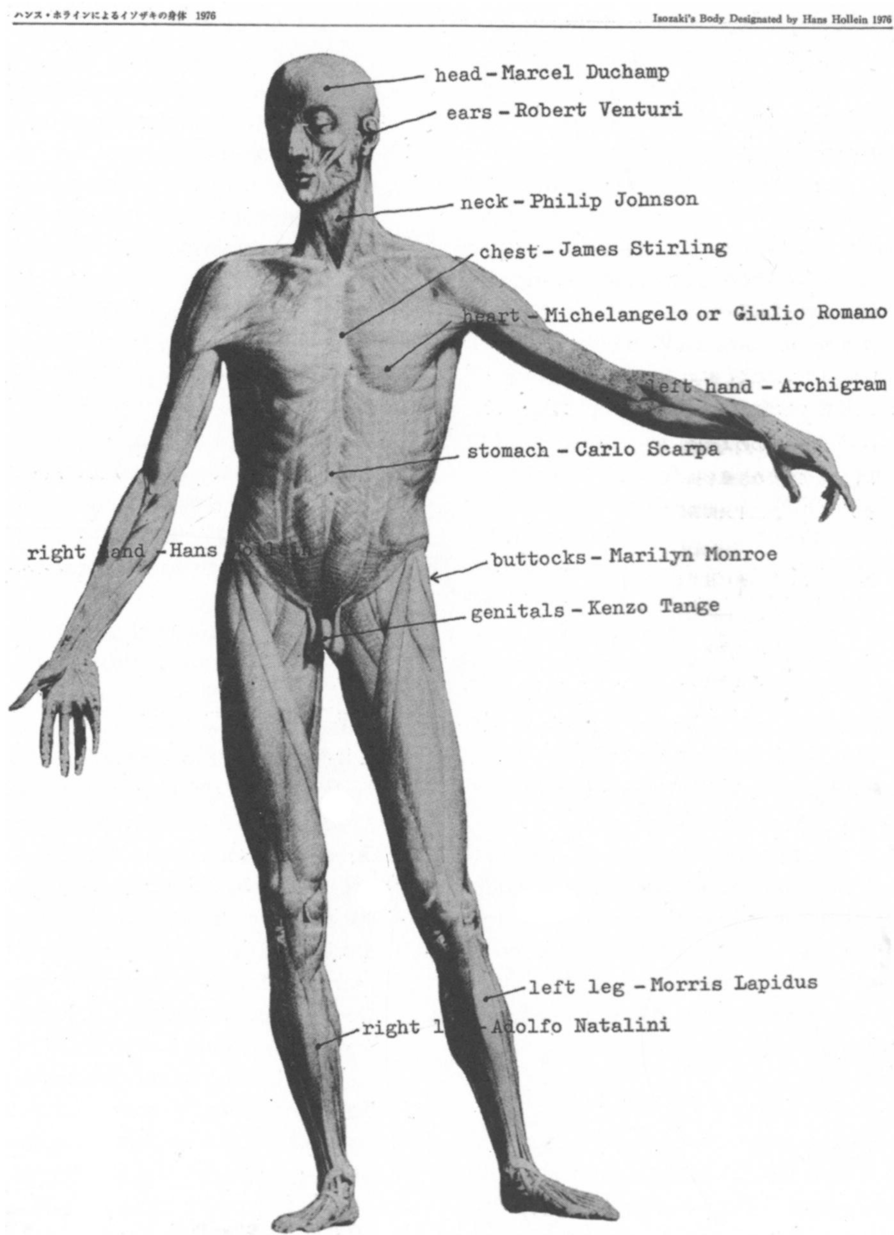



7 Hans Hollein's sketch of <u>Composite Fable Creatures</u> for the show "MAN transFORMS".



8 Hans Hollein's <u>Design-a-being set</u> for the show "MAN transFORMS".




9 Hans Hollein's collage <u>Isozaki's Body</u> from 1976.



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sources as Michelangelo, Ledoux, Giulio Romano, Otto Wagner, Michael Graves, Richard Meier, Charles Moore, Aldo Rossi, Hans Hollein, Peter Cook, Adalberto Libera, Philip Johnson, Leon Krier, Lawrence Halprin, Ettore Sottsass, among others.[23] Pushing the biological metaphor even further, Isozaki implies that the formal assortment of the building complex imparts on his architecture a troubled soul—a real monster, which he diagnoses as suffering from "schizophrenic eclecticism."[24] In fact, the architecture embodies its creator's state of mind: while his morale can no longer be synthesized in a coherent (modernist) narrative, its delusional schism vividly generates a sparkle of life in an otherwise dreary environment.

Akira Asada—curator, editor, and Isozaki's "house philosopher"—attributes to Isozaki's attitude the qualities of a "sophisticated ironist,"[25] who doesn't have "the slightest belief in any of the various styles" that he uses. What is more, Isozaki is portrayed as a mad doctor, "gazing at [these styles] from behind the glass with the cold enthusiasm of a dissector and, by skillful manipulation of the magic hand, can even come up with a collage which might, to borrow an expression from the Surrealists, be called un cadavre exquis."[26] The assemblage of disparate and heterogeneous materials in this architecture is meant to cover up the fatal lack of present urban life in Tsukuba. Says Isozaki: "If I were to say that this building is the expression of the absence of something, I might not be taken seriously."[27] The absence of life calls for the impossible ambition of Isozaki's to infuse life into the inanimate body of modernist town planning. The architect-creator herein defines himself as a life-giver.

With this project, Isozaki recasts the Romantic ambition to fuse the subject and his environment in a vital and "organic" whole. Not least Mary Shelley's Romantic novel Frankenstein narrates and ironicizes the grand ambition of a young scientist, the infamous Doctor Victor Frankenstein, to use his knowledge to get behind the mystery of nature, and become able to reproduce life out of dead material. Isozaki's concern for the cycle of life and death is analogous to Shelley's Romanticism, as is illustrated by the following quote from her novel, in which the young Frankenstein explains the motivations to undertake his experimentation on decayed corpses:

> To examine the causes of life, we must first have recourse to death. I became acquainted with the science of anatomy: but this was not sufficient; I must also observe the natural decay and corruption of the human body. […] Now I was led to examine the cause and progress of this decay, and forced to spend days and nights in vaults and charnel-houses. My attention was fixed upon every object the most insupportable to the delicacy of the human feelings. I saw the fine form of man was degraded and wasted; I beheld the corruption of death succeeded to the blooming cheek of life; I saw how the worm inherited the wonders of the eye and brain. I paused, examining and analyzing all the minutiae of causation, as exemplified in the change from life to death, and death to life […]. I became myself capable of bestowing animation upon lifeless matter. [...]
>
> Pursuing these reflections, I thought, that if I could bestow animation upon lifeless matter, I might in process of time (although I found it impossible) renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption.[28]

Both Shelley's tragic hero and Isozaki use the trope of the recycling of lifeless material as a way to stress the importance of memory for cultural creation. To bring life back to a corpse composed of merely recycled material seems an equally desperate endeavor for Victor Frankenstein as it is for Isozaki; yet, both Shelley and Isozaki are, of course, ironic about the grand adventure that they are describing.

For Isozaki, no doubt, history has to be exhumed after the avant-garde aspiration of architectural modernism had buried it. He considers the geometric figure of the cube to stand for the lifeless, abstract, and a-historical ambitions of Modern architecture. And because he sees the paradigm of the cube as inanimate and soulless, Isozaki states that "[t]he Cube is an enemy."[29] Nevertheless, unable to simply leave behind the geometric possibilities of the cube for his architecture, he invents techniques to simulate that the cube comes to "life": on the building plaza of his Civic Center, the free-standing, cubic hotel ballroom appears as the only object in the building's plan, which is rotated out of the overall orthogonal system, as if it attempted to escape the dictates of the grid. Fig. 11 Only the buttock-like "Marilyn curve," which Isozaki affectionately names after Marilyn Monroe, seems to keep the cube from drifting further away from the building, and acts as an umbilical connector to everyday life.[30] Furthermore, at the inside of the concert hall, the grid-pattern on the wall represents the collision of the outward projection of several cubes, which appear to be free-floating in space, and which break out of the orthogonal geometry of the building grid. Fig. 12 Once these imaginary floating cubes have left the traces of their outward projection, they themselves are removed from the wall pattern. The resulting line ornament is a dynamic, cage-like lattice as the remnant of a former presence. This, too, is to be understood as a critique of the lifeless grids of modernist town planning, turned into interior decoration. Instead of avoiding the use of the geometric cube, he keeps it at the center of his architecture, only to crack it, distort it, rotate it, fragment it, shift it, and show it in ruins. Rather than merely leaving what he sees as a closed order, he prefers to show his struggle with it.

If the cube is the icon for Modern architecture's abstract thought, Michelangelo's oval-shaped Campidoglio piazza pattern is used as the symbol of historical references in the Tsukuba Center.[31] In reaction to the call to create the heart of a new town in need of resurrection, Isozaki transplants this icon of Roman civic life to the center of his complex. Yet, to symbolize his political protest against the centralized power of control that the Roman Campidoglio stands for, he uses the pattern as "a reverse quotation,"[32] by sinking it into the ground. Michelangelo's figural oval on top of the Roman hill is now inversely cut into the Civic Center plaza, defeating its original political symbolism. As one critic points out, "Isozaki has incorporated a large number of motifs in order that we may understand, but he has eliminated the heart of the work, which was what the motifs were there to lead us to. The spectator is plunged into a perceptual motion of spaces that have no value and no location."[33] The "absent presence" of the Campidoglio conveys the architect's conflicted view about referentiality in architecture. Isozaki explains that "if one were to give a metaphor for the void center, it might be that everything—line of vision, water, meaning, representation—is devoured by the earth itself as a result of its own form."[34] Therefore, in his series of competition drawings, he depicts the project in a state of ruin, Fig. 13 as if to restate what he explained in "The Space of Darkness," that "the superficial mode of semiotic destruction and real destruction make the former obsolete."

Isozaki's double operation of positing a form and reminding its relative validity at the same time, is what Schlegel calls "irony as permanent parabasis."[35] The "scar" in Isozaki's Campidoglio is analogous to the rhetorical parabasis, which



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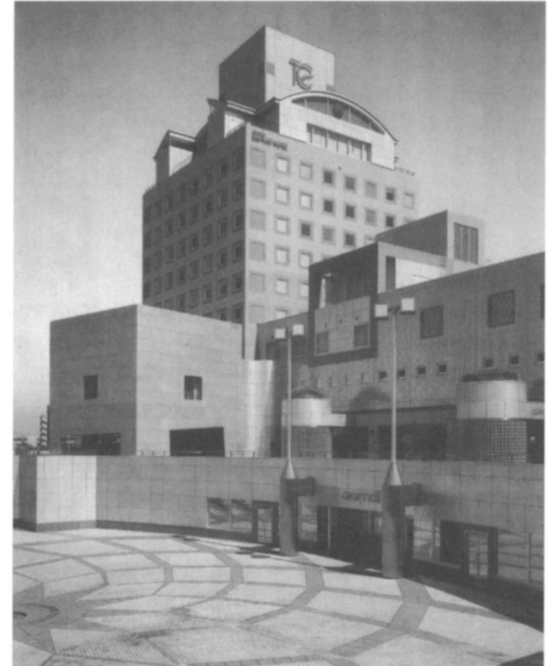
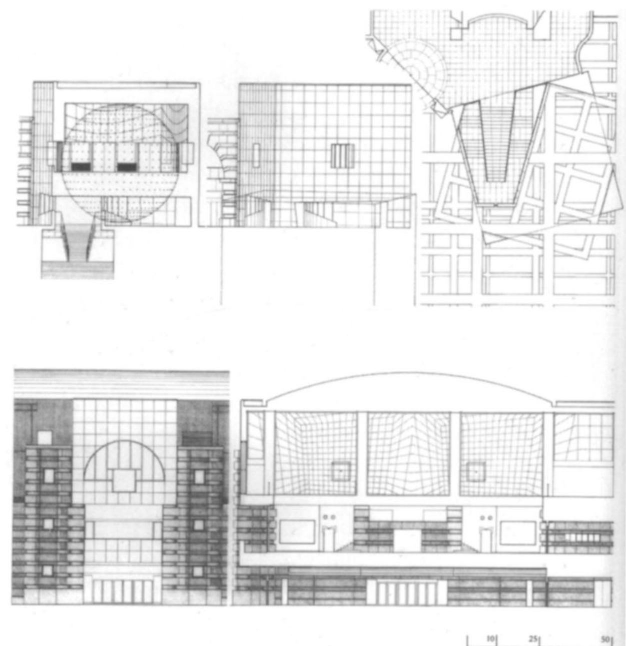
Schlegel defines as "the interruption of a discourse by a shift in the rhetorical register."[36] In ancient Greek comedy, the parabasis was a choral ode delivered by the chorus at an intermission, and offering the audience information that the hero of the story would not have. At Tsukuba, the architect uses his art to reveal his full awareness of the relative and ephemeral nature of his creation: the architect embodies both creator and critic, and creates a poetic artifice filled with contradictions.

This sort of crack is a common ironic device of both Romantic art and also of the architecture at the time of the Tsukuba Center. One finds it in one of Schinkel's lithographs called A Gothic Church Behind Trees, Fig. 14 in which only glimpses of the form of the church are being revealed, since nature, i.e., a huge tree, cuts through the image of the man-made form: nature and the artifice of architecture appear in permanent struggle, yet in balance. A century-and-a-half later, among Isozaki's contemporaries, Stanley Tigerman's 1981 project for a Symbolic Museum for a Painting that Will Never Go There for Guernica, Spain, is based on five primary geometric forms that are cracked. The very title of Tigerman's project conveys the frustration and disillusionment with a museum project that will never house Picasso's painting. Another example is Hans Hollein's Schullin jewelry shop in Vienna, from 1975, of which Charles Jencks says that the "skin-like marble and glistening gold lips folding over each other, is explicitly ironic and sexual."[37] Also, Charles Moore's Piazza d'Italia in New Orleans from 1976– 79 ambivalently cracks the radial pattern of his community plaza to reveal the outline of "bootshaped" Italy as if commenting on the ambivalent identity of the Italian community in America.

In each one of these projects, the crack reveals a crisis over the identity and significance of the forms that come to use in the production of architecture; incapable of reproducing the positivist and instrumentalist approach of previous generations, the architects here render visible their struggle with the alleged meaning of the forms they use. Their irony addresses their awareness of the insufficiency of available means of expression to talk to the sheer boundlessness of subjective imagination. The limits of reality meet the vast imagination of the creating subject. In the dialogue with CIAM modernism and the Metabolists, Isozaki makes himself the reminder of the "other" face of architecture and city planning, bearing the traits of a very personal poetics of space.



10 Arata Isozaki, Tsukuba Center, Tsukuba Science City, Ibaraki, Japan 1979-83.



11 Arata Isozaki, Tsukuba Center, interior wall pattern and plaza pattern.



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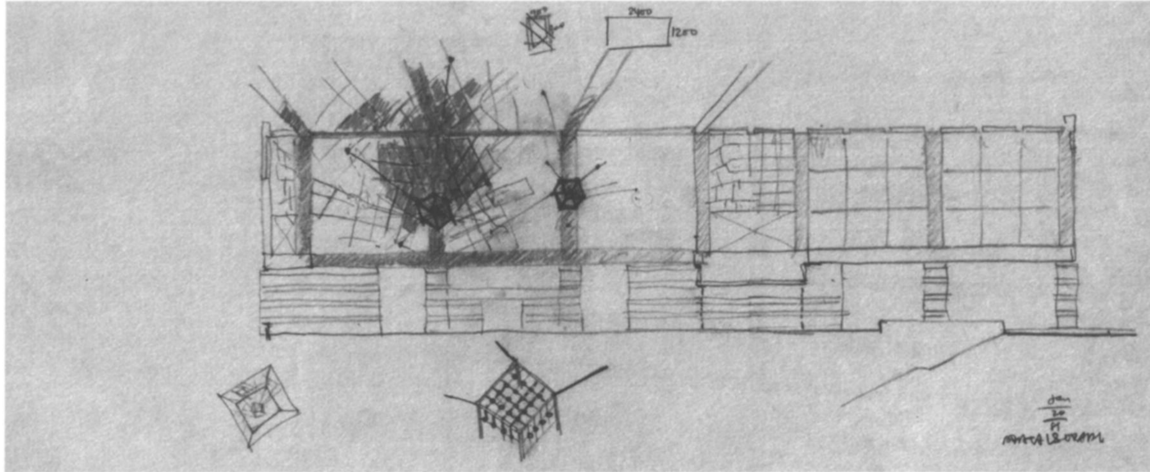
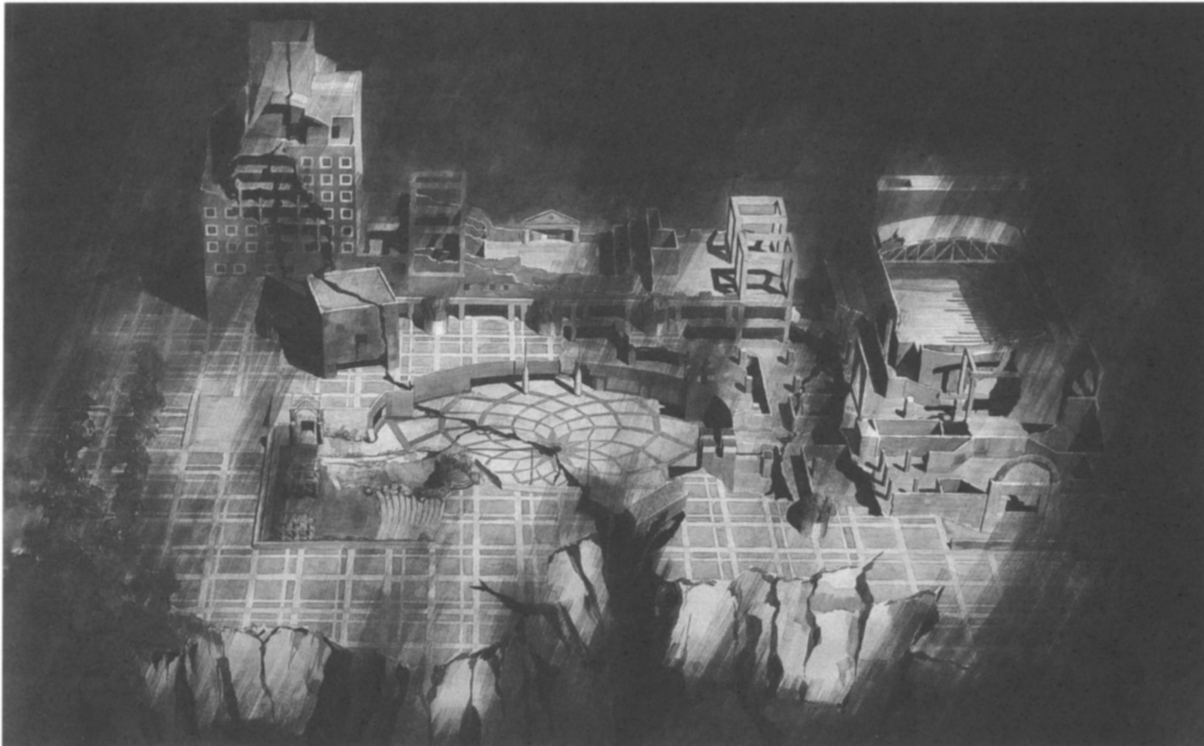


12 **Arata Isozaki, Tsukuba Center, sketch of interior wall pattern.**



13 **Arata Isozaki, Tskukuba Center in Ruins, 1979-83.**



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1 Mary Shelley, Frankenstein (Penguin Classics, 1992, [1818]), 50.

2 Arata Isozaki, quoted in: Hajime Yatsuka, "Textual Strategy and Post-Modernism," SD Space Design, Arata Isozaki 1976-1984 (January 1984): 184.

3 Arata Isozaki's City in The Air project from 1960-61 was a counterproposal to the skyscraper planning in Shinjuku, Tokyo, in which uninventive vertical buildings were to be replaced by a new type of the urban high-rise, composed by cylindrical shafts and long-span horizontal inhabited trusses. The same system was used in "Tokyo Project 1960" prepared by the Tange studio, in the design of the central business district, which Isozaki headed.

4 The first Metabolist declaration was at the World Design Conference in Japan in 1960, entitled Metabolism 1960 - a Proposal or a New Urbanism. The members of the group included Kikutake, Maki, Otaka, Kurokawa, Kawazoe (critic), Ekuan (industrial designer), later joined by Ekuan (President Industrial Design Institute), Asada Secretary General of Tokyo World Design Conference 1960), Awazu (graphic designer), Manabe (painter), and Tomatsu (photographer).

5 Akira Asada and Arata Isozaki, "From Molar Metabolism to Molecular Metabolism," Anyhow (Cambridgde, MA: ANY Corporation and MIT Press, 1998), 66.

6 Arata Isozaki, Four Decades of Architecture (New York: Universe Publishing, Rizzoli), 39.

7 Ibid., 72.

8 Ibid., 35.

9 Martin Götze, Ironie und absolute Darstellung: Philosophie und Poetik in der Frühromantik (Paderborn: Schöningh Verlag, 2001), 218. "Was sich nicht selbst annihiliert ist nichts wert." Translation by Emmanuel Petit.

10 Karl Wilhelm Friedrich von Schlegel, "The Limits of the Beautiful" (1794), in The Aesthetic and Miscellaneous Works of Friedrich von Schlegel trans., E.J. Millington (London: George Bell and sons, 1875), 415.

11 Arata Isozaki, "Architecture With or Without Irony" (1985), in Terrazzo, Architecture & Design 7,(1992).

12 For texts on Isozaki's irony, refer for instance to David B.Stewart, "Irony and Its Fulfillment," Four Decades of Architecture (New York: Universe Publishing; Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1998); and David B.Stewart, "Gods and Men," in Arata Isozaki: Architecture, 1960-1990 (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art; New York: Rizzoli, 1991), 9-17; and Asada Akira, "Beginning From an Ending," and Ignasi de Solà-Morales, "Between Enigma and Irony: The Recent Architecture of Arata Isozaki," in Arata Isozaki Works 30: Architectural Models, Prints, Drawings (Tokyo: Rikuyu-sha, c.1992).

13 Isozaki, Four Decades of Architecture, op. cit., 31.

14 See Plate 115 in Karl Friedrich Schinkel's "Collection of Architectural Designs." About the connection between Schinkel's Bauakademie and Isozaki's Tegel project, refer to David B. Stewart, "Irony and Its Fulfillment," in Four Decades of Architecture (New York: Universe Publishing; Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1998).

15 James Stirling, "The Monumentally Informal," James Stirling: Writings on Architecture, ed., Robert Maxwell (Milan: Skira, 1998), 156. The competition for the Stuttgart Staatsgalerie took place in 1974. A second run made Stirling come forth as the winner in 1978.

16 Arata Isozaki, "Absence-or in place of postscript" in Bijutsu Shuppansha, Kenchiku no katai ("The Dismantling of Architecture"), (Tokyo: 1997), 397-98; and in: Iwona Blazwick, Century City: Art and Culture in the Modern Metropolis (London: Tate Modern Exhibition, 2001), 205.

17 Karl Wilhelm Friedrich von Schlegel, "Athenäums-Fragment 41," Kritische und theoretische Schriften (Stuttgart: Philip Reclam, 1978), 82. "Es ist gleich tödlich für den Geist, ein System zu haben, und keins zu haben. Er wird sich also wohl entschliessen müssen, beides zu verbinden." Translation by Emmanuel Petit.

18 Arata Isozaki, "A Rethinking of Spaces of Darkness," Japan Architect 56, no. 287 (1981): 11.

19 Karl Wilhelm Friedrich von Schlegel, "Über die Unverständlichkeit," Theorie der Romantik, 191. Translation taken from Paul de Man's "The Concept of Irony," Aesthetic Ideology (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

20 Besides the curated exhibition by Hans Hollein, a few supplementary contributors were invited to do installations. This group of people included Peter M.Bode, Oswald M.Ungers, Richard Meier, Arata Isozaki, Ettore Sottsass, Nader Ardalan & Karl Schlamminger, and Richard Buckminster Fuller.

21 Hans Hollein, "Position and Move" (1976), in Isozaki Arata, (hensha SD Hensh¯ubu) (Tokyo: Kajima Shuppankai, Showa 52 (1977), Gendai no kenchikuka), 6.

22 see Hollein's drawing in: ibid., 10.

23 Arata Isozaki calls his project for the Tsukuba Center a "group portrait." See "Arata Isozaki 1976-1984," SD Space Design (1984): 99.

24 Isozaki, Four Decades of Architecture, op. cit., 114.

25 Akira Asada, "Beginning From an Ending," Arata Isozaki Works 30, 12.

26 Ibid., 12.

27 Isozaki, SD Space Design, Arata Isozaki 1976-1984, op. cit., 97.

28 Shelley, op. cit., 50-3.

29 Arata Isozaki, quoted in: Hajime Yatsuka, "Textual Strategy and Post-Modernism," SD Space Design, Arata Isozaki 1976-1984 (January 1984): 184.

30 Also compare Isozaki's use of the Marilyn Monroe curve with a similar curve in Stirling's Düsseldorf museum. In Stirling's museum too, the cubical "garden pavilion" is connected to the round courtyard by a curve, as if to show that the relationship between the main components is undetermined, or "in the dark."

31 To further understand the memory function of the Campidoglio, see Robert Venturi's study of the Campidoglio in: Venturi, "The Campidoglio: A Case Study," The Architectural Review (1953): 333-334; and Robert Venturi, A View From the Campidoglio: Selected Essays 1953-1984 (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 11-2.

32 Isozaki, Four Decades of Architecture, op. cit., 116.

33 Hiroyuki Suzuki on Isozaki's Tsukuba Center: cf. Fumihiko Maki, An Aesthetic of Fragmentation (New York: Rizzoli, 1988), 21.

34 Isozaki, SD Space Design, Arata Isozaki 1976-1984, op. cit., 99.

35 Götze, op. cit., 228.

36 See de Man, "The Concept of Irony," Aesthetic Ideology, 178-9.

37 Charles Jencks, The New Paradigm in Architecture: Multiple Coding (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2002), 23.



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14 Karl Friedrich Schinkel, A Gothic Church Behind Trees, Lithograph, Nationalgalerie, Berlin.



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