Fabrications: The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rfab20

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To cite this article: Mathew Aitchison (2012) Finding the Context in Mies, Fabrications: The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand, 22:2, 186-207, DOI: 10.1080/10331867.2012.734434

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10331867.2012.734434

Figure 1: Mies van der Rohe's Seagram Building (1958) reflecting McKim, Mead & White's Racquet and Tennis Club (1918).
Photograph by Mathew Aitchison.

Finding the Context in Mies

Mathew Aitchison

Abstract
Over the past two decades, the term "context" has lost theoretical currency in architectural culture, despite the persistence of its ideas in regulation, teaching and practice. Today, alternatives such as situation, circumstances, contingencies, the setting, surroundings and environment are more popular, and serve to distinguish those who employ them from the outmoded "context" or "contextualism".

In thinking of examples of prominent contextualist architecture from the twentieth century, works by Frank Lloyd Wright or Alvar Aalto, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's buildings are not widely regarded as part of the canon. Despite some obvious resistance, beginning in the 1980s, Mies' buildings were increasingly associated with "context", a term which became essential to the description of Mies' particular brand of urbanism. This article returns to the post-war period, the eclipse of modernism and Mies' evolving reception. On the one hand, this return provides an overview of the various interpretations of Mies' architecture and the patterns which have emerged in the revisionary thought concerning Mies. On the other hand, it provides an opportunity to examine the margins of context discourse, promising to reveal more about the value and logic of context than the study of those architects whose work has previously been held as the mainstream of contextualist debate.

In discussing Mies and the concept of context, the major question asked by this article is not whether Mies was a contextualist, but rather, how did Mies' work come to be interpreted in these terms, and more importantly, why?

Prologue

This article was originally conceived as a reaction to the mainstream architectural discourses at the beginning of the twenty-first century.[1] It focuses on the concept of "context", which, by the new millennium, had become a tired though ubiquitous fixture in the teaching and practice of architecture and urbanism. This was a period when the magnetism of Rem Koolhaas' ideas were at their height, where neomodernism was sweeping away a remnant postmodernism with the generic, bigness and "fuck context".[2] But despite such examples of its admonishment, context – as an idea – appeared to have persisted in the most unexpected of quarters. A decade later and context's concepts are still present, though perhaps with more subtlety than ever.

Over the past two decades, terms like context (and its cousin, "place") have lost currency in architectural culture, but their meaning still lingers in words such as situation, circumstances, contingencies, the setting, surroundings and environment. Partly, this shift in language serves to distinguish such ideas from the outmoded "context", or worse, contextualism. Recently, Charles Jencks has attempted to revive the conceptual and theoretical bases of contextualism.[3] Jencks

22:2 (December 2012): 186–207. ISSN 1033-1867
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10331867.2012.734434

points to contextualism as a major conceptual development within postmodernism and is strongly critical of its subsequent reception as a facile form of mimicry, or the enforced "conformity" of planning regulations.[4] With regard to postmodernism and contextualism Jencks stated "I will continue to argue … that both 'isms' have had a second wind since the year 2000, and are flourishing in a new guise in every way but by name. Call it PM2."[5]

Looking beyond the assertion that architectural culture is in the grip of postmodernism (mark II), arguably, contextualist ideas of specificity, in-keepingness, appropriateness, or simply an architecture based on inclusivity and external relationships have quietly persisted and found new impulses in the work of many contemporary architects. Take, for example, the designs and research of leading Japanese architects, practices such as SANAA and Atelier Bow-Wow, whose work can be interpreted as a further iteration of the context problem. Their projects reveal a nuanced, engaged and idiosyncratic approach to architectural and urban design problems and an attempt to relate buildings to their situations in novel and interesting ways.[6]

In thinking of examples of prominent contextualist architecture from the twentieth century, one is more likely to name works by Frank Lloyd Wright or Alvar Aalto than those by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. But despite some obvious resistance, beginning around the 1980s, Mies' buildings were increasingly associated with "context", a term further used to describe Mies' particular brand of urbanism. Returning to the post-war period, the eclipse of modernism and Mies' evolving reception provides an opportunity to examine the margins of context discourse, promising to reveal more about the value and logic of context than the study of those architects whose work has been held as the mainstream of contextualist debate. Demonstrating this point is Mohsen Mostafavi's 2011 comparison of SANAA's minimalism with Mies' "almost nothing" approach, which in turn builds on an earlier body of work stretching back to the 1980s and 1990s.[7] This article attempts to unravel this story, the various interpretations of Mies' architecture, and its relationship with the concept of context.

Rewriting Mies

From the 1980s onwards, a few clear patterns have emerged in the revisionary thought concerning Mies van der Rohe's architecture. In tracking these positions, this article takes its lead from Rem Koolhaas' essay "Miestakes", which appeared in the exhibition catalogue *Mies in America* (2001).[8] "Miestakes" is largely a discussion and defence of OMA's 1998 scheme for the additions to the Commons Building (1954) at the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) in Chicago.[9] Besides the usual humour and irony typical of his writing, Koolhaas emphatically seeks to draw our attention to some little known aspects of Mies' architecture – namely,

Mies' "quality" as an "urbanist", and his use of and dependence on "context" in his designs.[10]

At first glance this might seem confusing, especially if such statements are compared with the received opinion on both architects: here Koolhaas – champion of all that is global and anti-context in architecture – is recasting Mies – crown prince of the generic – as an urbanist whose quality lies precisely in his attention to the context. However, these claims are hardly as new or outrageous as Koolhaas would have us believe, considering the interpretations of Mies' architecture over the past two decades – particularly his urban buildings – have consistently invoked the idea of context. From the 1980s onwards, a range of commentators including Peter Carter, Fritz Neumeyer, James Ingo Freed, Mark Jarzombek, K. Michael Hays and Koolhaas have used ideas related to context to describe Mies' architecture. While a selection of these texts are discussed further below, Jarzombek's 1987 article, "Mies van der Rohe's New National Gallery and the Problem of Context", serves to illustrate the kinds of positions under discussion.[11]

Describing Mies' New National Gallery (1965–68) in Berlin, Jarzombek proposes a long historical argument for Mies' close attention to the history and ruinous situation of the gallery's site in post-war Berlin (*c.*1964), stating: "If the Gallery appears today, seventeen years after its construction, out of context, it is largely because part of the context has been altered."[12] Unlike Hans Scharouns' neighbouring buildings, which Jarzombek bemoans for their "rhetoric", he finds in Mies' approach a deeply thoughtful and reactive architecture:

> Mies, abnegating the architect's right to create pathos, offers instead an architectural experience of a more phenomenological nature. The empty expanse of the platform, preserving the emptiness of the site itself, forces museum goers to muse on Berlin's history.[13]

Closing his argument, Jarzombek puts forward a position similar to that advanced by Koolhaas fourteen years later in his "Miestakes" essay: "With masterly deftness [Mies] has had the courage to preserve in the site an incompleteness, throwing himself open to the dangers inherent in such a choice: by capturing the context, he became its victim."[14]

Nevertheless, Koolhaas' claims to Mies' contextualism still contain an element of anachronism. In the 1980s, when Mies' urbanism was "discovered" by the likes of Jarzombek and Koolhaas, it was difficult for them to talk about it without invoking the experiences of contextualism; this version of Mies reception might be referred to as "urbanist-Mies". In the 1980s and 90s, it seemed that Mies' particular brand of contextualism was routinely explained by a second group of authors, including Detlef Mertins, Sarah Whiting, and K. Michael Hays with reference to minimalism in the arts; this latter reception, for clarity, could be

termed the "minimalist-Mies". In discussing these two interpretations, the major question asked by this article is not whether Mies was a proto-contextualist, but rather, how did Mies' work come to be interpreted in these terms, and more importantly, why?

Contextualism, Modernism and Supermodernism

Contextualism was formulated in the 1960s and is generally attributed to Colin Rowe. The idea emerged from workshops run by Rowe in his time as professor at Cornell University (1962–90) and had an explicit interest in existing "contexts".[15] It was briefly referred to as "Contexturalism" by one of Rowe's students because of the concern for texture and urban "fabric" which is perhaps closer to the word's latin roots: *texere*, meaning to weave; *contexere*, meaning to weave together.[16] Contextualism became widely recognised as a design methodology and almost achieved the status of dogma in the 1970s and 80s.[17] Since then, it has become common to refer to a design's relationship to its situation as "contextual".

Invariably, contextualism and context are terms associated with the critique of modernist urban planning. Their use by a range of designers, writers and scholars in the post-war period inevitably evokes a nostalgia for the traditional and pre-industrial European city, which, it was felt, had been slowly eroding since the industrial revolution. This perception was perhaps most apparent in the post-war reconstruction of European cities and expansion of North American cities, where context achieved its greatest currency.[18]

Thought on context and contextualism was widely divergent, but for the purposes of an overview can be distilled into three major schools: an Anglo-American school led by Colin Rowe and his many collaborators and followers, part neotraditionalist, part modernist; the European neorationalists, including architects like Aldo Rossi, Vitorio Gregotti and Leon and Rob Krier; and a more ironic American postmodernist strand, led by Robert Venturi and Denise Scott-Brown's polemic and typified by the architecture of Charles Moore among many others. Although these respective groups' formulation of the problem may have varied, all shared a few common positions: they were critical of modernism, which they saw as overly functional, utopian, fragmented, alienating, silent and detrimental to the experience of the "traditional" city;[19] they had an interest in the city as a site of analysis (the first two groups were particularly interested in the pre-industrial cities of Europe), a development Anthony Vidler termed the "third typology;"[20] they displayed an interest in architectural type and its relationship to context;[21] and, at a general level, they were interested in providing continuity of history and a reconciliation with, or repair of, the modernist rupture. For Rowe this included his discovery of the underlying geometries and certain classical tendencies in modern architecture;[22] for Rossi an explicit interest in historical architectural types, which, emptied of content, could be used as hosts for modern

purposes;[23] and Venturi's evaluation of modern architecture showed a poverty in communicative capability.[24]

Of the three groups, it was Rowe who went on to spell out what contextualism might mean in terms of urban design. Rowe's formulation of the context problem marked the return of an aesthetic and formalist approach to urban design, the principles of which were most clearly outlined in the late nineteenth century in Camillo Sitte's *Stadtbaukunst* (The Art of City Building) and the mid-twentieth-century British Townscape movement. Although Townscape and Sitte hardly figured in Rowe's books and essays, they bore marked similarities, Townscape later becoming Rowe's *bête noire*.[25] As early as 1957, Rowe had bemoaned his British colleagues at the *Architectural Review* for their attempts at reforming modernist planning, which he referred to as "the insufferable tedium of townscape."[26] By 1968, in his seminal essay on the architectural polemics of post-war England, "Revenge of the Picturesque", Peter Reyner Banham rebuffed Rowe's attempts to distance himself and contextualism from Townscape.[27] Banham reiterated his case against Rowe more forcefully (and humorously) in his critique of "Collage City" when it first appeared as an essay (1975) and then book (1978), proposing Ivor de Wolfe, the pseudonymous author of Townscape, as the true author of Rowe's ideas.[28]

Rowe and Koetter's book, *Collage City* (1978) can be seen as an attempt to mediate the two dominant images of the city at the time: the "traditional" closed city with its open spaces carved out of a continuous fabric, and the modernist city in the park, with its continuous open spaces and intermittent objects. Le Corbusier's *Ville Radieuse* was the strawman of this modernist planning paradigm and Rowe's attempt at correction can be characterised as Sitte *plus* modern painting: Sitte for his insistence on continuous urban fabric to repair the bounded figural spaces of European cities; and modern painting for the compositional techniques that Rowe employed to forge a new synthesis between object and context, foreground and background.[29]

With few exceptions, the mainstream of contextualist thought was neither against architectural modernism, nor stand-alone buildings in cities *per se*. Rather, contextualists thought that modernist planning had pushed the balance between object and field to an untenable extreme. Rowe and others held that there was clearly a tradition of free-standing urban buildings – from the Roman Colosseum to the Tempietto – but that these were "set-pieces" within a field of imperfect formless fabric. In explaining the genius of Rome's plan, Rowe described "an anthology of closed compositions and *ad hoc* stuff in between … a dialectic of ideal types with empirical context".[30] Contextualism's desired reform of modernism acknowledged that buildings relied on the contingencies of the surrounding context for their value and meaning as well as their individual properties.

As antimodernist sentiment reached it peak with books like Tom Wolfe's *From Bauhaus to Our House* (1981), Mies' object-architecture (referred to by Wolfe as a "glass box" or "factory" architecture) clearly placed him on the contextualists' black list.[31] But even then, a line of thought had begun which saw Mies' architecture recast in an urbanist light, and his buildings and urban complexes examined in terms of their relationship to "context". As far back as the 1960s, Peter Carter and Alison and Peter Smithson gave extensive treatment to the appropriateness of Mies' buildings and urban designs to their sites.[32] By the 1980s, Koolhaas, Neumeyer, Freed and Jarzombek had joined the treasure hunt. As discussed above, Jarzombek's article on Mies' New National Gallery was a particularly operative example.[33] Together, these accounts constitute what this article refers to as "urbanist-Mies".

Koolhaas' 1984 article, "A Foundation of Amnesia" is an early consideration of the relationship between modernism, "context" and Mies.[34] Of modernism, he wrote, "Modern architecture does not emerge from emptiness. Good modern architects carefully consider a city's existing needs and historical context."[35] Pre-empting his future position in the 2001 essay, "Miestakes", Koolhaas goes on to describe Mies' approach to urban architecture with reference to one of two tower projects Mies designed in 1920s Berlin:

> Mies proposed the triangular glass tower for a [triangular] site on the Spree River. Even in his drawing, where he includes the surrounding architecture, Mies shows a concern for context, and he carefully places his building to derive the maximum benefit from its contrast with the immediate environment. The building is clearly not a *non sequitur*, brutally inserted into the city.[36]

Later, Neumeyer would go on to explain Mies' regard for his buildings' "surroundings" by way of a discussion of Karl Friedrich Schinkel's reliance on and development of "context".[37] At the end of the 1980s, Freed, a former colleague and Mies employee, pointed out in an interview with Mies' biographer, Franz Schultze, that "Mies could be and was at times flexible, resourceful, and, in a limited way, responsive to the city frame and fabric. He was not as totally indifferent to context as the current view makes him out to have been."[38]

Without the experiences of contextualism in the 1960s and 70s it would have been difficult for these commentators to talk of Mies' urbanism: firstly, the terms they used did not exist until the 1960s; and secondly, earlier theories of the site, situation, character, propriety, *genius loci*, in-keepingness, or the "fit" of architecture to a particular site were hardly explicit in modernism and least of all in Mies' work.

Mies' reinterpretation was not a unique occurrence, but part of a wider change in architectural culture from the 1960s onwards. Retrospectively, these developments can be grouped together with the rise to prominence of

architectural urbanism, which saw architects claiming the high ground of "urban" debates, though without a clear mandate or capacity to actually confront the problems of urban planning – what John Macarthur has referred to as "urbanist rhetoric".[39] In contrast to modernism, one of the central ideas of this "urbanism" was its attendance to ideas of site, situation and context. By the 1980s, to be an urbanist required a nod to the context.

The interpretations of Mies' relationship with context can best be explained by the rise and decline of modernism's currency and a certain disillusionment that occurred with the concept of context. As the use of vague concepts like *Zeitgeist* had previously made modernists liable to all kinds of speculation on the basis of their architecture, the equally vague "context" was doomed to a similar fate. Nowadays, it is unclear what is being referred to when one speaks of context. Context might refer to the site, the surroundings, the environment, a place, or a situation both physical and/or temporal. Context could refer to a building's location in the world, a country, a city or in a street. Reference to context often rolls many features and characteristics of a specific situation into one, such as visual, symbolical, physical, cultural, historical, social, theoretical or economic contexts.[40]

Similarly, it has become difficult to know what it means to call a building "contextual". Various architects have sought to evoke ideas of context for reasons seemingly opposed to one another; from nostalgia to futurism, from localism to globalism. A building might be seen to be contextual if it assumes the formal qualities of the adjacent buildings, but it can also be contextual if it rejects them as in Koolhaas' identification of Mies' "contrast". More recently, and in its most banal form, contextual buildings offer the simple matching of material and morphological qualities present on any given site.

Throughout the 1980s – and simultaneous to Mies' reinterpretation – the subject of context and contextualism became diffuse and confused. Indeed, it became increasingly difficult not to see everything as being in some way contextual. By the 1990s, the Italian journal *Lotus* published a special edition titled "Contextualism?" *Lotus*' editors were beginning to ask serious questions:

> ... contextualism has become such a widespread attitude as to have a practical effect on the greater part of contemporary architecture ... we are faced with a vast range of propositions that are greatly different from one another, if not totally contradictory, so that we are beginning to wonder whether the word context does not serve mainly as a convention to bring about the peaceful coexistence of different options within the disenchantment of current pluralism.[41]

Indeed, reference to context had become simply an issue of convention, a label alluding to the soundness of a building's design, much in the manner of today's "sustainable" tag.

Despite *Lotus*' misgivings, the story of context continued. In 1998, Hans Ibelings alerted the architectural world to a new regime he called "Supermodernism".[42] Although Ibelings' ideas were a very literal extrapolation of some of Koolhaas' more hyperbolic writings on the city – something to which the Dutch were particularly vulnerable in the 1990s – the book's jacket text provides a good summary of the mood of Supermodernism at the turn of the millennium:

> This trend in architecture, which can be seen in the work of architectural firms like OMA, Jean Nouvel, Dominique Perrault, Herzog & De Meuron and Toyo Ito, can be connected with one of the dominant forces of the present time: the globalisation that is taking place in virtually every field. One of the consequences for architecture is the erosion of the postmodern (and deconstructivist) axiom of uniqueness of the site. The context, let alone contextualism, no longer seems to play an important role in an increasing number of designs and buildings.

If, by the early 1990s, the logical and practical foundations of context had been eroded by contradictory and diffuse ideas, by the end of the decade the spectre of globalisation seemed to threaten even the idea of spatial uniqueness, which had previously been so crucial to contextualism.

Minimalism

At the same time as architectural urbanism was becoming contextual, the arts were moving towards site specificity. This was perhaps most noticeable in minimalist painting, sculpture and land art, and – most importantly for this article – their interpretation and analysis. Whether in the gallery, the city or the countryside, from the 1960s onward there was a new interest in the contingencies of site, situation and setting; indeed, what the architectural world was concurrently referring to as "context".

In their overview of twentieth-century art theory, Charles Harrison and Paul Wood characterised these changes in 1960s art practice and criticism as "part of a tendency towards specificity", which focused "concern on context."[43] Echoing the criticism of architectural culture in the same period, Harrison and Wood went on to write:

> Whereas Modernism had been indifferent to context, and whereas the "specific object" for the most part unproblematically occupied a traditional gallery space, the concern with materials – particularly relatively formless materials – had the effect of inducing reflection upon the "containers" which conferred form upon them. Principal among these was the gallery space itself .... the possibility arose of making art which further problematized the conventions of spectatorship.
>
> ... by siting the work outside the gallery .... Land Art and site-specific sculpture generated a phenomenologically informed focus upon the conditions of encounters with artworks: that is to say, the embodied perception of physical objects and events in time and space .[44]

Figure 2: Richard Serra's Clara-Clara, created in 1983 and subsequently moved to its present location in the Tuileries garden in Paris.
Photograph by Mathew Aitchison.

Although the respective motivations for this concurrence may have differed, both architecture and the arts were reacting to a modernism seen as idealised, autonomous and based on exclusion. Where contextualism had criticised the modernist building-object as ideal or inhuman, in minimalism (and its attendant art criticism) it became possible for art-objects to enter into a meaningful relationship with their viewers *and* their setting; in minimalism, objects could be contextual too.

A prime example of this new strain of art criticism comes in Rosalind Krauss' analysis of the "contingent particularities" of Agnes Martin's minimal paintings and their complex dependence on the space of the museum and the movement and attention of the viewer.[45] Later, Yve-Alain Bois (1983) and Douglas Crimp (1986) pursued this line of thinking in the discussion of Richard Serra's sculpture and its dependence on and development from the specificities of their sites and the way people view and move through them.[46] Similar ideas are also found in the work of Robert Smithson and his concepts of the site and non-site and the series of projects he developed using these terms.[47] Indeed Smithson is the most likely target for Harrison and Wood's allusion to "formless material" of 1960s art, an approach culminating in such projects as Spiral Jetty (1970).

Krauss' interpretation of minimalism, partly informed by a new reading of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), became the touchstone of minimalist art criticism in the late 1970s and early 1980s.[48] Responding to the uptake of her own ideas within the interpretation of Mies' architecture in the 1980s and 1990s, Krauss pointed out:

> ... it seems that a certain reading of Minimalism – let us call it phenomenological – had been imported into the field of architectural criticism to attack received opinion about Mies's purported classicism, his formalism, his aloofness. If minimalist sculpture was initially understood ... as projecting timeless, unchanging geometries, what we might refer to in shorthand as Platonic solids, this reading was challenged (by myself and others) as entirely inappropriate to work that immersed itself in the actual, contingent particularities of its moment of being experienced, insisting that its very point was to focus its viewer's attention on how it changed from moment to moment of its perception in real time. What this second reading underscored was the way geometric shape was shown to be entirely context dependent...[49]

The experiences of minimalist art and its criticism from the 1970s onwards provided another direction through which Mies' architecture and urbanism could be interpreted as contextual. In terms of Mies commentary, this moment represents not only a sharp rise in volume, but also the transition from "urbanist-Mies" to "minimalist-Mies". By the 1990s at least some reference to minimalism or the authority of its sophisticated art readings seemed necessary to explain Mies' architecture and its particular brand of contextualism. Some early examples include Caroline Constant's detection of the picturesque in Mies' Barcelona Pavilion,[50] or, Robin Evans' discovery of Mies as a proto-minimalist and the "paradoxical symmetries" of the same building.[51] The year 1994 saw a conference of leading Mies scholars and the eventual publication of its proceedings as *The Presence of Mies*.[52] This enthusiasm for Mies commentary found its natural exhaustion seven years later in the two vast catalogues accompanying the retrospective exhibitions, "Mies in Berlin" and "Mies in America".[53] Together these three volumes present a rich anthology of thought on Mies, and his reinterpretation along minimalist and urbanist lines.[54]

Perhaps the most prolific and persistent Mies commentator is K. Michael Hays. In 1984, Hays' description of Mies' architecture was already heavily indebted to Krauss' minimalist art readings. His description of Mies' architecture marks an important shift in thought towards Krauss and minimalism:

> [Mies] invested meaning in the sense of surface and volume that the building assumes in a particular time and place, in a contextually qualified moment.
>
> Mies insists that an order is immanent in the surface itself and that the order is continuous with and dependent upon the world in which the viewer actually moves. This sense of surface and volume, severed from the knowledge of an

Figure 3: Mies van der Rohe's New National Gallery (1968) and Richard Serra's Berlin Block for Charlie Chaplin (1978) against the background of Hans Kollhoff's (centre) eponymous Tower (2000). Photograph by Mathew Aitchison.

> internal order or a unifying logic, is enough to wrench the building from the atemporal, idealized realm of autonomous form and install it in a specific situation in the real world of experienced time, open to the chance and uncertainty of life in the metropolis.[55]

A decade later – and again following Krauss' lead – Hays wrote that Mies' buildings display a "contradictory particularity" with regards to their sites.[56] By 2001, and in relation to Mies' IIT campus and buildings, Hays had reduced the relationship of Mies' architecture with its context to its essence: "the greatest difficulty of Mies's work [is] the simultaneity of representation and resistance, a perceptual engagement with the context and a conceptual transfiguration of it."[57] Hays explains Mies' contextualism in the now familiar – though heady – terms of Krauss and phenomenological minimalist art criticism:

> Miesian space is not a windless plenum. It is more viscous than the received view has lead us to believe, and, when actually experienced, blurs the calibrated, harmonic withdrawal of architecture from its context into a very different phenomenon, perhaps best described as the *transubstantiation* of the reality of its site into an appearance (*Schein*) as such.[58]

Koolhaas and the Generic

The reintroduction of Mies' IIT campus returns the discussion to the *leitmotif* of this essay – Koolhaas' reverance of Mies' contextualism in his "Miestakes" essay. As noted, Koolhaas is clearly not the only commentator to find a trace element of context in Mies, but his views are of interest because they insist on both an urbanist- *and* minimalist-Mies and span the full period of Mies commentary under discussion.[59] Behind its heavy irony, "Miestakes" is a fusion of contextualist rhetoric *and* sophisticated minimalist art readings. Take, for example, Koolhaas' analysis of the IIT campus, reminiscent of Crimp or Bois' reading of Serra's sculpture or Krauss' analysis of Martin's paintings:

> It is the beautiful ambiguity of the IIT campus that the status of its built substance oscillates between object and tissue, that its modules imply potential extension yet end emphatically, that its structures hover between recessive foreground and prominent background.[60]

For an urbanist leaning, on the other hand, take Koolhaas' inversion of Rowe's "set-piece" logic in *Collage City*:

> In the preliminary master plan [for the IIT campus], Mies used a wall of linear, generic buildings to frame a courtyard that receives two Crown Hall prototypes. The generic is used as setting for set pieces.
>
> In the definitive plan, the background buildings become foreground – setting *as* set piece .[61]

The reader should be wary of Koolhaas' motives in "Miestakes"; he is, after all, using the essay to settle a score with preservationists who criticised his extension and interventions to Mies' Commons building. But Koolhaas' insistence on Mies' contextualism seems to go beyond this immediate end:

> It is a mistake to read Mies as a master of the freestanding, or the autonomous. Mies without context is like a fish out of water.
>
> The iconography of Le Corbusier could dispense with neighbours or even the city; Mies would be unimaginable without them. In his collages and models, context is annexed to support his campaigns.[62]

Comments like these show context in a positive manner but seem untimely and unlikely if we compare them to ideas like "Supermodernism", to which Koolhaas is the obvious progenitor. When Koolhaas refers to the "quality" of Mies' urbanism and his reliance on context, what does he mean? At a superficial level, one could deduce that Koolhaas is finding material with which to defend his additions to the IIT campus, while providing a rationalisation and legitimisation of his own tastes and concerns (*c*.2001) for the "generic". At another level, Koolhaas' argument can be interpreted as a critique and revisionist account of contextualism.

Contextualism was the dominant ideology when Koolhaas was a student, at a time when it was inseparable from an incipient historicism. As essays such as

Figure 4: Rem Koolhaas' (OMA's) 2003 McCormick Tribune Campus Center addition and extension of Mies van der Rohe's The Commons Building (1954) at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago. Photograph by Mathew Aitchison.

"A Foundation of Amensia" (1984) and "How Modern is Dutch Architecture?" (1990) show, Koolhaas clearly felt a strong allegiance to modernism, and these texts both offer a vehement defence of modernism at a time when it was largely unpopular.[63] Finally, there is clearly an argument that Koolhaas' treatment of Mies is quite simply a retroactive theorisation aimed at giving a contemporary view of an architect whose work he greatly admires.

Koolhaas' sources and early influences in architecture are not well-known, and the extent to which his work and outlook have been influenced by Mies is not well-documented. The love affair probably started when the young Koolhaas, who had just decided to become an architect, travelled to Berlin in the late 1960s for the raising of the New National Gallery roof, Mies' last building in Europe. While watching the roof being raised, Koolhaas is reported to have noticed the presence of a black Mercedes parked behind him with dark tinted windows which were slightly open and from where thick whiffs of cigar smoke were seen escaping.[64] In "Miestakes", Koolhaas reveals all:

> I do not respect Mies, I love Mies.
> I have studied Mies, excavated Mies, reassembled Mies. I have even cleaned Mies.[65]

By 2001, Koolhaas had joined Mies as a star in his own right, with his own brand of infamy. Perhaps echoing Mies' treatment within the more alarmist period of antimodernism, Peter Smithson labelled Koolhaas "the enemy of architecture".[66] Smithson's low opinion of Koolhaas is most likely due to the invective published in *S, M, L, XL* (1995) in essays such as "Bigness" and "The Generic City".[67] The latter is a reflection on the status of cities, the culture of urbanism and the inability of the architecture profession to deal with emergent problems. At a smaller scale, it is also a dialogue with aspects of Mies' work:

> There are interesting and boring buildings in the Generic City, as in all cities. Both trace their ancestry back to Mies van der Rohe: the first category to his irregular Friedrichstadt Tower (1921), the second to the boxes he conceived not long afterward.[68]

Reading the arguments in "The Generic City" together with those of "Miestakes", Koolhaas' message should not be misunderstood as an incitement to design more generic buildings, but rather to examine the possibility of an architecture that operates in "real world" conditions. In his "Bigness" essay, foreshadowing the Supermodernism introduced above, Koolhaas had written:

> Bigness is no longer part of any urban tissue. It exists; at most, it coexists. Its subtext is *fuck* context . . . . Bigness, through its very independence of context, is the one architecture that can survive, even exploit, the now-global condition of *tabula rasa* . . .[69]

Behind the hyperbole and irony, Koolhaas's intent might be interpreted as a search for an architecture which could still offer up some critical opportunities for society and the possibility (or impossibility) of context.

If Rowe and others had used context in the 1970s to invoke the authority of tradition or the aspiration for a more humanist city, the "context" of Mies' IIT on Chicago's south side at the end of the 1990s suggested neither. Attached to Koolhaas' implied critique of contextualism in "Miestakes" is a description of the contemporary context of IIT. Koolhaas once described OMA's design approach as a kind of "democratic King Midas", who might "turn all that garbage of the present system to our advantage."[70] Elsewhere, Bart Lootsma labelled this approach "dirty realism", and it has been to the "garbage" and "junkspace" of contemporary cities and building culture that Koolhaas has directed much of his attention in recent times. In many ways, the IIT commission provided Koolhaas with a perfect example of a very imperfect context:

> The Commons building is lost in a no-man's-land, a building in a void, doubly marooned with the larger space-wreck of the IIT campus.
>
> The Commons was intended as an object in a designed context. Since its construction, the strip that faced Mies's campus . . . has become derelict and is now completely abandoned to parking.

Figure 5: Aerial view of the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago's Near South Side (2003). Photograph by Mathew Aitchison.

> The encounter between the lone Mies box and the rocket of the passing El train is as absurd as Lautréamont's encounter between the umbrella and the sewing machine: a surrealist pastische. Without context, the Commons has become a non-event.[71]

Koolhaas's efforts can be interpreted as a corrector to one of the central paradoxes of contextualism in the 1970s and 80s; how to explain that the period which saw the greatest interest in "context" was also the period with the least interest in actual empirical contexts? Context, especially in the hands of Rowe and the historicist elements of neorationalism, became a front for the reintroduction to historical concepts and traditional urban form and not, with notable exceptions,[72] an approach to working with the post-war environment of parking lots, high-speed trains and service stations. In "Miestakes", Koolhaas returns with fresh eyes to a context formerly discounted by the mainstream of contextualist thought.

Silence!

Although often overlooked, it is interesting to read what Mies himself thought about these problems. As Koolhaas points out in "Miestakes", the fact that Mies never explained himself has engendered some wild speculation on his

architecture. Mies' silence has seen him become something of a billboard or lightening rod of architectural culture. As Krauss had mentioned, Mies' interpretation in the mid-1990s was wide-ranging, from a "politically correct Mies, the poststructuralist Mies, almost, we could say, the postmodernist Mies."[73] If all this can be admitted, surely Mies' modernism can also be contextual?

In considering these questions it is worth briefly revisiting the grounds for calling Mies contextual. According to his commentators, Mies' buildings engage the context by framing it; they take existing types from the city (seen as a critical act in itself); their materials offer a nuanced critique of the industrial world; and, through their transparency or opaqueness, they form a connection or disconnection with the street or setting. The surfaces of Mies' buildings control the way we view them through varying levels of resolution, they are economical and market driven, their colour reflects their setting, abstract compositional elements serve to confuse or allure our attention depending on the situation. While these descriptions surely have a basis in reality, there is hardly any building, modern or otherwise, which does not employ these effects. Still the question remains: why the need to label these buildings contextual? Surely because Mies' commentators detect a level of intention? In an interview, Graeme Shankland asked Mies about the white colour of the Farnsworth House. He replied:

> Yes, that was the right colour in the country, you know, against the green. And I like black too, particularly for cities. Even in our tall glass buildings, when you are in an apartment, you see the sky, and even the city, changing every hour. I think that is really new in our concept.[74]

Asked about his design of the Seagram Building by Peter Carter (a building which has stimulated much urbanist- *and* minimalist-Mies opinion), Mies replied:

> My approach to the Seagram Building was no different from that of any other building that I might build. . . . My idea, or better "direction", in which I go is toward a clear structure and construction – this applies not to any one problem but to all architectural problems which I approach. I am, in fact, completely opposed to the idea that a specific building should have an individual character. Rather, I believe that it should express a universal character which has been determined by the total problem which architecture must strive to solve.[75]

With regards to his attention to the sites for his buildings, Mies' maxim, "First we make a good building then we consider the site", is likely to come as a disappointment to Hays and other context enthusiasts.[76] When Mies was asked if one design could be used on another site, "Of course. I don't feel site is that important. I am first interested in a good building; then I place it in the best possible spot."[77] On the subject of architectural education, Mies spoke about the problem of individual expression:

> To try to express individuality in architecture is a complete misunderstanding of the problem, and today most of our schools either intentionally or unintentionally let their students leave with the idea that to do a good building means a different building; and they are not different – they are just bad .... It takes discipline to restrain oneself. I have many times thought this or that would be a wonderful idea. Only to overrule this impulse by a method of working and thinking.[78]

And finally, when asked what effect living in Chicago and the Chicago school had had on his work, Mies answered,

> I really don't know the Chicago school. You see, I never walk; I always take taxis back and forth to work. I rarely see the city .... As to your question, no; living in Chicago has had no effect on me. When I first arrived, I immediately went to the campus of the then Armour Institute (now the IIT). I felt I ought to turn around and go home.[79]

Despite the enthusiasm for this contextualist-Mies, in Mies' own terms there is not only little reference to an idea of context, there is a complete denial of it.

***

Mies' legacy is thus inextricably linked to the history of modernism and its rise and fall in popularity. In the beginning, modernism was radical and evangelical (as Rowe put it). Modernist buildings were set at an intentional distance to contemporaneous developments, visually, physically and ideologically. In the post-war period modernism became widespread, popular and diluted, eventually surpassed by postmodernism and ideas like context. After the "excesses" of historicism in postmodernism, Mies was beginning to seem interesting again. By the 1990s, modernism and 1950s minimalism was again in fashion, but only if the work could be given sensitive humanist overtones, which a concept like context still seemed to offer, despite the departure of its founding ethos – contextualism. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, architects were getting a taste for the generic as a remedy for the ills of a globalised world and modernist rhetoric was being dusted off. Mies was back; now not only a great architect (again), but a quality urbanist.

It should be evident that it is not of great consequence to ask whether Mies was or was not a contextualist – the case may be proved or disproved, the terms of the question preclude any conclusive result. This article has argued that of greater interest is rather how Mies came to be referred to as a contextualist, and most importantly why? Here, I agree with Koolhaas' assessment that Mies' approach to architecture (and here we might include issues of a perceived inclination toward the "context") is something like alchemy, "a science purely based on belief."[80] As Jencks' recent frenzy on contextualism has illustrated, with or without Mies, aspects of context and contextualist thought have persisted in contemporary architectural discourse and practice – though now we are in a better position to assess what is at stake in finding the context in Mies.

NOTES

1. This material was first presented at a colloquium at the TU Berlin in July 2002 and then as a conference paper at the University of Queensland in May 2003.

2. The quote comes from the essay "Bigness, or the Problem of Large" in Rem Koolhaas, *S, M, L, XL* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1995), 495–516.

3. See Charles Jencks, "Contextual Counterpoint," *Architectural Design* 81, no. 5 (2011): 62–67; and "Contextual Counterpoint in Architecture," *Log* 24 (2012): 71–80.

4. Jencks, "Contextual Counterpoint," 62.

5. Jencks, "Contextual Counterpoint," 72.

6. For Atelier Bow-Wow's fine-grained analyses of the minutiae of urban existence, see Momoyo Kaijima, Junzo Kuroda and Yoshiharu Tsukamoto, *Made in Tokyo* (Tokyo: Kajima Shuppankai, 2001); Tokyo Institute of Technology Tsukamoto Architectural Laboratory and Atelier Bow-Wow, *Pet Architecture Guidebook* (Tokyo: World Photo Press, 2002), vol. 2; and Atelier Bow-Wow, *Bow-Wow from Post Bubble City* (Tokyo: Inax Publishing, 2006). For a sample of SANAA's use of and references to context, see the project descriptions and the essay by Mohsen Mostafavi in "Inorganic Architecture," *El Croquis* 155 (2011): 244–51.

7. Mohsen Mostafavi compares SANAA's minimalism to that of Mies' "almost nothing" approach. Mostafavi, "Inorganic Architecture," 249.

8. Rem Koolhaas, "Miestakes," in Phyllis Lambert and Werner Oechslin, eds., *Mies in America* (New York: H. N. Abrams, 2001), 716–43.

9. This new building is the McCormick Tribune Campus Center. IIT's campus and buildings were among the first of Mies' commissions after emigrating to the United States, and occupied Mies' practice from 1939 to 1958.

10. Koolhaas, "Miestakes," 722, 721.

11. Mark Jarzombek, "Mies van der Rohe's New National Gallery and the Problem of Context," *Assemblage* 2 (February 1987): 32–43.

12. Jarzombek, "Mies van der Rohe's New National Gallery," 36.

13. Jarzombek, "Mies van der Rohe's New National Gallery," 39–40

14. Jarzombek, "Mies van der Rohe's New National Gallery," 43.

15. For a selection of contextualist literature, see Thomas Schumacher, "Contextualism: Urban Ideals and Deformations," *Casabella* 359/360 (1971): 79–86; Stuart Cohen, "Physical Context/Cultural Context: Including It All," *Oppositions* 2 (1974): 1–39; Grahame Shane, "Contextualism," *Architectural Design* (1976): 676–79; and Steven Hurtt, "Conjectures on Urban Form: The Cornell Urban Design Studio 1963–1982," *Cornell Journal of Architecture* 2 (1983): 54–78. For an early use of the term "context", see Robert Venturi's Masters thesis of 1950, reproduced in Robert Venturi, *Iconography and Electronics Upon a Generic Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996).

16. William Ellis tells us it was Rowe's student at Cornell, Stuart Cohen, who referred to "contexturalism". See William Ellis, "Type and Context in Urbanism: Colin Rowe's Contextualism," *Oppositions* 18 (1979): 27n5.

17. Kate Nesbitt's architectural theory reader, *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture*, proposes contextualism as one of the mainlines of architectural theory in the latter third of the twentieth century. See Chapter 6, "Urban Theory after Modernism: Contexutalism, Main Street and Beyond," in Kate Nesbitt, ed., *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture: An Anthology of Architectural Theory 1965–1995* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), 266–337.

18. Nan Ellin puts a similar emphasis on contextualism, in particular the "Anglo-American Axis" of Rowe, Venturi and others, in her analysis of postmodern urbanism, see Nan Ellin, *Postmodern Urbanism* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999 [1996]), 74–80.

19. See, for example, Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, *Collage City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1978); and Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966).

20. See Anthony Vidler, "The Third Typology," *Oppositions* 7 (Winter 1976/1977): 1–4.

21. For examples of this return to "the city" and its pairing with questions of typology in architecture and urban design, see Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982); and Rob Krier, *Urban Space* (London: Academy Editions, 1979).

22. See, for example, Colin Rowe's essays, "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa: Palladio and Le Corbusier Compared," *Architectural Review* 101, no. 603 (1947): 101–104; and "Mannerism and Modern Architecture," *Architectural Review* 107, no. 641 (1950): 289–99.

23. Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*.

24. Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction*.

25. For a discussion of the Townscape movement and its relationship with Rowe, see Mathew Aitchison, "Who's Afraid of Ivor De Wolfe," *AA Files* 62 (2011): 34–39. For a translation and analysis of Sitte's book, see George R. Collins and Christiane Crasemann Collins, *Camillo Sitte: The Birth of Modern City Planning, with a Translation of the 1889 Austrian Edition of His City Planning According to Artistic Principles* (New York: Rizzoli, 1986).

26. Colin Rowe, "Connell, Ward and Lucas [Letter to the Editor]," *Architectural Association Journal* 73, no. 808 (1957): 163.

27. Reyner Banham, "Revenge of the Picturesque: English Architectural Polemics, 1945–1965," in John Summerson, ed., *Concerning Architecture: Essays on Architectural Writers and Writing Presented to Nikolaus Pevsner* (London: Allen Lane, 1968), 265–73.

28. Peter Reyner Banham, "De Wolfe the Author?" letter to the Editor, *Architectural Review* 158, no. 945 (1975): 322; and Peter Reyner Banham, "Guess Whose Utopia," review of *Collage City* by Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, *Architectural Review* 167, no. 997 (1980): 192.

29. These are not Ellis' terms but are derived from his analysis. Ellis, "Type and Context," 4–7.

30. Rowe and Koetter, *Collage City*, 106.

31. Tom Wolfe, *From Bauhaus to Our House* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1989 [1981]), 72–73, 110.

32. See Peter Carter, "Mies van der Rohe: An Appreciation on the Occasion, this Month, of his 75th Birthday," *Architectural Design* 31 (1961): 95–121; and Alison Smithson and Peter Smithson, "Mies van der Rohe," *Architectural Design*, no. 7 (1969): 363–66.

33. Jarzombek, "Mies Van Der Rohe's New National Gallery," 32–43.

34. See Rem Koolhaas, "A Foundation of Amnesia," *Design Quarterly* 125 (1984): 5–11. See also Koolhaas' explanation of his Friedrichstadt competition, based on Mies' location of a triangular entrance gate to Berlin, in sympathy with the other geometrical city gates (octagon, square and circle). Patrice Goulet and N. Kuhnert, "Die Erschreckende Schönheit Des 20. Jahrhunderts: Rem Koolhaas Im Gespräch mit Patrice Goulet, N. Kuhnert," *Arch Plus* 86 (1986): 36.

35. Koolhaas, "A Foundation of Amnesia," 5.

36. Koolhaas, "A Foundation of Amnesia," 6.

37. Fritz Neumeyer, "Space for Reflection: Block Versus Pavilion," in Franz Schulze, ed., *Mies van der Rohe: Critical Essays* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1989), 148–71. Pagination for the two quotations is pages 169 and 160 respectively.

38. Franz Schulze, *Mies van der Rohe: Critical Essays* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1989), 175–76.

39. Here the author is following the earlier work of John Macarthur, "Seven Doubts About Urbanism," *Transition: Discourse on Architecture* 34 (1991): 82–94; and "Urbanist Rhetoric: Problems and Origins in Architectural Theory," *Architecture Research Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (1996): 8–13.

40. For a broader study of the history of context, see Peter Burke, "Context in Context," *Common Knowledge* 8, no. 1 (2002): 152–77.

41. The quotation continues: "We are in a position to briefly summarize this phenomenon since many architects have made the way in which they profess themselves to be contextual quite clear: either in the tradition of [Ernesto] Rogers' theory of environmental preexistences ... or in the version of a more or less critical regionalism; or again in the sense of a Postmodern presence of the past; or in the acceptation of a theory of modification; or in the tendency to base the project on the relationship between old and new; or in the relativization of the 'strong' language of the modern movement; or in the varying of a unique architectural substance by means of different 'accidents'; or in the interaction between place and model; or in the situationism of those who are ready to listen to the many voices of the place; or in the aforementioned deconstructive attitude." Pierluigi Nicolin, "Contextualism?," *Lotus International* 74 (1992): 109.

42. Hans Ibelings, *Supermodernism: Architecture in the Age of Globalization* (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 1998).

43. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, eds., *Art in Theory: 1900–1990, an Anthology of Changing Ideas* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 798–99.

44. Harrison and Woods, *Art in Theory*, 799.

45. See Rosalind Krauss, "The Grid, the /Cloud/, and the Detail," in Detlef Mertins, ed., *The Presence of Mies* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994), 133–47. This account was based on Krauss' earlier analyses, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977); and *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985).

46. Yve-Alain Bois, "A Picturesque Stroll around *Clara-Clara*," in Hal Foster and Gordon Hughes, eds., *Richard Serra* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 58–96; and Douglas Crimp, "Redefining Site Specificity," in Hal Foster and Gordon Hughes, eds., *Richard Serra* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 146–73.

47. See Robert Smithson and Nancy Holt, *The Writings of Robert Smithson: Essays with Illustrations* (New York: New York University Press, 1979). See also Mark Linder, "Sitely Windows: Robert Smithson's Architectural Criticism," *Assemblage*, no. 39 (1999): 6–35.

48. The first English translation of Merleau-Ponty's book, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (New York: Humanities Press, 1962).

49. Krauss, "The Grid, the /Cloud/, and the Detail," 133.

50. Caroline Constant, "The Barcelona Pavilion as Landscape Garden: Modernity and the Picturesque," *AA Files* 20 (1990): 46–54.

51. Robin Evans, "Mies Van Der Rohe's Paradoxical Symmetries," *AA Files* 19 (1990): 56–68.

52. Mertins, *The Presence of Mies*.

53. Lambert and Oechslin, *Mies in America*; and Barry Bergdoll, Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, Terence Riley, *Mies in Berlin* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2002).

54. A detailed discussion of the voluminous scholarship on Mies exceeds the scope of the present essay, but two articles of particular relevance to the "urbanist-minimalist-Mies" might include Detlef Mertins, "New Mies," in Detlef Mertins, ed., *The Presence of Mies* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994), 23–28; and Sarah Whiting, "Bas-Relief Urbanism: Chicago's Figured Field," in Lambert and Oechslin, *Mies in America*, 640–91. For a more recent return to commentary on Mies and the significance of the Seagram Building in New York, see Felicity Scott, "An Army of Soldiers or a Meadow: The Seagram Building and the 'Art of Modern Architecture'," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 70, no. 3 (2011): 330–53.

55. K. Michael Hays, "Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form," *Perspecta* 21 (1984): 20. See Note 7 for his citation of Krauss. Hays' position is reiterated in *Modernism and the Posthumanist Subject: The Architecture of Hannes Meyer and Ludwig Hilberseimer* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 189–90.

56. Hays continues, "Mies's glass curtain wall, alternatively transparent, reflective, or refractive – depending on light conditions and viewing positions – absorbs, mirrors, or distorts the immediate, constantly changing images of the city life. The very body of the building contorts to assume the form demanded by the contingent configuration of the site and to register the circumstantial images of the context. But countering expression's subjectifying tendencies, the reiterative steel structure mimics the anonymous repetition of the assembly line and poses mechanization as another sort of contextual determinant." K. Michael Hays, "Odysseus and the Oarsmen, or, Mies's Abstraction Once Again," in Detlef Mertins, ed., *The Presence of Mies* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994), 235–36.

57. K. Michael Hays, "The Mies Effect," in Lambert and Oechslin, *Mies in America*, 694.

58. Hays, "The Mies Effect," 696.

59. This writing starts in 1984 with "A Foundation of Amnesia" and concludes with "Miestakes" in 2001.

60. Koolhaas, "Miestakes," 722.

61. Koolhaas, "Miestakes," 723.

62. Koolhaas, "Miestakes," 721.

63. See Rem Koolhaas, "A Foundation of Amnesia;" Goulet et. al., "Die Erschreckende Schönheit;" and a lecture originally delivered in 1990 and published as Rem Koolhaas, "How Modern Is Dutch Architecture?" in Crimson, Michael Speaks and Gerald Hadders, eds., *Mart Stam's Trousers* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1999), 158–67.

64. See, Peter Smithson and Wouter Vanstiphout, "Mart Stam's Trousers: A Conversation between Peter Smithson and Wouter Vanstiphout," in Crimson, Speaks and Hadders, *Mart Stam's Trousers*, 136.

65. Koolhaas, "Miestakes," 720.

66. Smithson, "Mart Stam's Trousers," 135–36.

67. Koolhaas, *S, M, L, XL*.

68. Koolhaas, *S, M, L, XL*, 1260.

69. Koolhaas, *S, M, L, XL*, 495–516.

70. Full quote: "Our intention could be synthesized in how to turn all that garbage of the present system to our advantage. A kind of democratic King Midas: try to find the concept through which the worthless turns into something, where even the sublime is not unthinkable." Interview with Rem Koolhaas, *El Croquis* 53 (1993): 19.

71. Koolhaas, "Miestakes," 725.

72. Famously, these were problems taken up within architectural culture by Venturi, Denise Scott-Brown and Steven Izenour, along with Charles Moore, or the work of SITE from the 1970s and 1980s.

73. Krauss goes on to talk about Mies' purported "classicism" and his "formalism". See Krauss, "The Grid, the /Cloud/, and the Detail," 133.

74. Peter Carter and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, *Mies van der Rohe at Work* (London: Phaidon, 1999), 181.

75. The quotation continues: "On the Seagram building, since it was to be built in New York and since it was to be the first major office building which I was to build, I asked for two types of advice for the development of the plans. One, the best real estate advice as to the types of desirable rentable space and, two, professional advice regarding the New York Building Code. With my direction established and with these advisers, it was then only a matter of hard work." Carter, *Mies van der Rohe at Work*, 61–62.

76. This quotation was reported by Phylis Lambert. Unfortunately I am no longer able to locate its source.

77. Katherine Kuh, *The Open Eye: In Pursuit of Art* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971): 35.

78. Carter, "Mies Van Der Rohe," 104.

79. Kuh, *The Open Eye*, 38.

80. Koolhaas, "Miestakes," 734.