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## Reformatting the Monograph: The Book Form as a Site of Plurality

### *Introduction*

Today, mass media is expanding worldwide with the prevalence of images in the areas of publishing, advertising, and accumulating information. The print culture of architecture, including magazines, books, and exhibition catalogues, contributes to the production of the architectural canon, expresses personal statements and design approaches, causing the public to encounter architectural culture. From a historical perspective, the mechanisation of the Industrial Revolution paved the way for new printing techniques and the production of new book genres, whereas the twentieth-century modernists embraced production and reproduction technology to convey their ideas.<sup>1</sup> Today, the monograph is an essential print form in the worldwide circulation of the products of architectural offices for self-promotion, self-display, criticism, and archiving. Accordingly, as this paper argues, in the production of monographs, architects intentionally embrace the tools of the culture industry. As display and design objects, monographs engage with production and marketing instruments to exist within the system of our image-driven society. Challenging its conventional understanding, this article aims to uncover the contemporary monograph as a site of plurality, heterogeneity, divergence, and fragmentation.

The paper forms a critical reading of two books in particular: *Content* (2004) by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), led by the Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas, and *Yes is More: An Archicomic on Architectural Evolution* (2009) by the Danish practice Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG).<sup>2</sup> *Content*, with its book/magazine hybrid format, was produced simultaneously with OMA's *Content* Exhibition in Berlin and was promoted as a sequel of the 1344 page seminal work, *S,M,L,XL* (1995) by OMA, Koolhaas, and the graphic designer Bruce Mau (Fig. 1).<sup>3</sup> *Content*'s book/magazine hybrid format makes it under-theorised and overlooked in comparison to the well-received and widely appreciated *S,M,L,XL*.<sup>4</sup> Yet five years after the publication of *Content*, Koolhaas's former employee Ingels utilised the comic book form for BIG's *Yes is More* Exhibition in Copenhagen and its supplementary catalogue/monograph, produced by the same

<sup>1</sup> André Tavares, *The Anatomy of the Architectural Book* (Baden: Lars Müller Publishers, 2016), 14–15.

<sup>2</sup> Bjarke Ingels, the founder of BIG worked at OMA in Rotterdam between 1998 and 2001. Afterwards, he established PLOT with Julien de Smedt, whom he met at OMA. In 2006, they split up to found their own offices.

<sup>3</sup> For research on OMA's exhibitions, see Christophe van Gerwey, "Outreach Extensions: OMA/Rem Koolhaas Exhibitions as Self-Critical Environments," *Architectural Theory Review* 23, no. 1 (2019): 90–113; Kayoko Ota, "Curating as Architectural Practice," *Log* 20 (2010): 141–49.

<sup>4</sup> For the comment, see Christophe van Gerwey, "Introduction: Suspended Meaning," in *OMA/Rem Koolhaas: A Critical Reader*, ed. Christophe van Gerwey (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2019), 16.

publisher (Fig. 2).<sup>5</sup> Both books were published after the exhibitions and achieved huge success independently, rather than remaining as appendages to, and archives of, the exhibitions. They exceed the genre of exhibition guide as the architects/editors did not produce them to accompany the exhibition visitors whilst orienting themselves among the bulk of models and cardboards. The printed pages of the books are edited as intricately as the curated spaces of the exhibitions.

### **Amalgamating “Millions of Traces”**

Etymologically, ‘monograph’ refers to “a treatise on a single subject,” stemming from the Ancient Greek words *mono* – meaning one, single – and *graph* – meaning something written.<sup>6</sup> In its current form, a monograph contains orthographic sets, sketches, and a number of large sized or full-page photographs and renders, which show the buildings as finished and high-end products. The dominance of images points to the emphasis of consuming the built environment primarily as a visual entity in our screen-saturated public sphere. Within this context, the task of the book user is to look at images rather than reading and interpreting texts.<sup>7</sup>

Pioneered by *S,M,L,XL*, *Content* and *Yes is More* contribute to rethinking the format of the architectural monograph. In accordance with their respective renowned publisher’s objective of producing art and design books loaded with high quality glossy images, they blend divergent media from their front covers to the back: cartoon figures, speech balloons, computer games graphics, banal images, advertisements, architectural drawings, renders, photographs, screen shots, satellite views, paintings, maps, diagrams, ideograms, magazine pages, newspaper headlines, catchphrases, official reports, cut out texts, short essays, and interviews (Fig. 1). The exploitation of graphic materials, however, stems from the cultural, artistic, and architectural climate of 1960s, which affected Koolhaas’s and subsequently Ingels’s printed works.

<sup>5</sup> S,M,L,XL was massively influential in terms of graphics for Ingels, equally Koolhaas, with his phrase “More is more” in his seminal essay “Junkspace”, had a key role in shaping Ingels’s perspective. See Bjarke Ingels, “Interview with Terri Peters: Unleashing New Universes,” *Mark* 36 (2012): 199; *Yes Is More: An Archicomic on Architectural Evolution* (Cologne: Taschen, 2009), 8–9.

<sup>6</sup> Ernest Klein, *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1966), 675, 997, 98.

<sup>7</sup> Deniz Balık Lökçe, “Contemporary Architecture Monographs as Design Objects,” *SDU Art-E* 12 no. 23 (2019): 93.

**Figure 1:**  
OMA &  
Rem Koolhaas,  
*Content: Triumph  
of Realization*  
(Cologne:  
Taschen, 2004).

<https://oma.eu/publications/content>

**Figure 2:**  
Bjarke Ingels,  
*Yes is More:  
An Archicomic on  
Architectural  
Evolution*  
(Cologne:  
Taschen, 2009).

<https://big.dk/#projects-yim>

The amalgamation of comic strips, poetic essays, and manifesto-like texts was widely adopted by Archigram, who illustrated the coalescence of Pop culture, everyday life, and science fiction in their cutting-edge projects.<sup>8</sup> Their adoption of the collage method, particularly seen in Archigram's magazine produced between 1961 and 1974, was at the service of narrating simultaneous events and expressing a play between flatness and depth that created illusions.<sup>9</sup> In one of the issues of the magazine, the Archigram member Warren Chalk underlined the juxtaposition of comic imagery, architectural concepts, and urban projections as an expression of the intersecting worlds of reality and fantasy, paying homage to the Pop Artist Roy Lichtenstein.<sup>10</sup> The communicable environment created by Archigram that presents architecture as a consumable product, rather than a representation of high culture, was in alignment with Lichtenstein's embrace of formalist aesthetics, through which low culture is raised and high culture is brought low.<sup>11</sup> Lichtenstein adapts printed subject matter, particularly cheap and stereotypical comics, into the canvas as a tool of visual communication within our everyday life.<sup>12</sup> As he speculates, the distinctive borders of composition and effect in a work of art, a comic, and an advertisement have become blurry.<sup>13</sup> Among many art critics of the period, Clement Greenberg in particular sees the comic format, along with advertisements, magazine covers, and Hollywood movies, as kitsch, a commercial cultural phenomenon born simultaneously with avant-garde art.<sup>14</sup> Yet Lichtenstein and Archigram's application of clichéd and banal graphic materials expresses a creative and productive attitude.

Koolhaas began developing his critical narrative in his early projects, owing to his education at the Architectural Association with an Archigram-based curriculum and from influential tutors such as Cedric Price and Charles Jencks. His publications emerged out of a combination of polemical terminology, metaphors, fiction, historical observation, and theoretical reflection, expressed by the amalgamation of divergent materials.<sup>15</sup> Ingels, akin to Archigram, finds inspiration from science fiction genre, since they are packed with potentials of technological, cultural, social, or political innovation, as well as the narrative and mixed media technique of graphic novels.<sup>16</sup> The montage-like layout of *S,M,L,XL* and *Content*, which combine different formats, stands in-between the cinematic character, as

<sup>8</sup> Bernd Evers and Christof Thoenes, *Architectural Theory from the Renaissance to the Present* (Cologne: Taschen, 2011), 770.

<sup>9</sup> Simon Sadler, *Archigram: Architecture without Architecture* (London: MIT Press, 2005), 148.

<sup>10</sup> Warren Chalk, "Zoom," *Archigram* 4 (1964), <http://archigram.westminster.ac.uk/magazine.php?id=99>.

<sup>11</sup> Bradford R. Collins, *Pop Art: The Independent Group to Neo Pop, 1952-90* (London: Phaidon, 2012), 96, 106.

<sup>12</sup> Janis Hendrickson, *Roy Lichtenstein 1923-1997: The Irony of the Banal* (Cologne: Taschen, 2018), 18-38; Mark Francis and Hal Foster, *Pop* (London: Phaidon, 2005), 27; Nathan Dunne and Roy Lichtenstein, *Roy Lichtenstein* (London: Tate Publishing, 2012), 11-15.

<sup>13</sup> Francis and Foster, *Pop*, 25.

<sup>14</sup> Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 9.

<sup>15</sup> Nigel Coates, *Narrative Architecture* (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 41-42; Evers and Thoenes, *Architectural Theory from the Renaissance to the Present*, 814-15; Emmanuel Petit, *Irony, or, the Self-Critical Opacity of Postmodern Architecture* (London: Yale University Press, 2013), 181; Todd Gannon, "Return of the Living Dead: Archigram and Architecture's Monstrous Media," *Log* 13/14 (2008): 178; Julia Walker, "Islands-in-the-City: Berlin's Urban Fragments," *The Journal of Architecture* 20, no. 4 (2015): 705.

<sup>16</sup> Bjarke Ingels, "Unpacking My Library: Interview with Gianluigi Ricuperati," *Domus* 953 (2011), <https://www.domusweb.it/en/reviews/2011/12/16/unpacking-my-library-bjarke-ingels.html>; Ingels, "Interview with Terri Peters: Unleashing New Universes," 197-98.

the dominant media of the twentieth-century, and the newly-developing digital techniques of transforming specific media into one another in architecture culture. For Koolhaas, montage is the common ground of architecture, text, and film, as it allows different media to overlap whilst maintaining their individual representational features.<sup>17</sup> In a similar vein, Archigram expressed the need to establish a hybrid network of divergent media, such as film, colour, and text, in order to clearly illustrate current ideas and situations.<sup>18</sup>

In the 1930s Walter Benjamin argued that written forms were in transformation: as strict borders of genres disappeared, the relevance of specific categories had to be reassessed.<sup>19</sup> In the 1970s, Michel Foucault discussed the exclusion of anonymous texts and alternative genres from the conventional literary domain of an author. Consequently, unconventional materials, such as invoices, addresses, appointments, and notes of names were not counted in the body of mainstream literary and scholarly works: “How can one define a work amid the millions of traces left by someone?”<sup>20</sup> One can say that the mixed media techniques in *Content* and *Yes is More* indicate the dissolution and recreation of format, content, genre, and medium, already diagnosed by Benjamin, in contemporary architectural media. Expanding its framework, the architects introduce the monograph as a manifesto and an exhibition guide, as well as a design journal, which merges “millions of traces;” notes on building regulations, office dialogues, public comments, and clients’ photographs, documents which, as argued by Foucault, are commonly disregarded.

Along with combining genres, *Yes is More* provides multimedia features through its digital format, consisting of video broadcasts and interactive panoramas. Given that the printed format of a magazine or a newspaper is the archetype of the digital, the electronic media of magazines or books can be seen as an extension of the printed version.<sup>21</sup> At 1.6 GB in size, the e-book of *Yes is More* allows the book to develop after its publication, unlike its 400-page hard copy version. Indeed, three recent projects were added in the digital edition, which illustrate updated explanations of the 8-House and the Shanghai Expo Pavilion (Fig. 3). 360-degree high-resolution panoramic images allow the reader to embark on an interactive virtual tour and explore the atmosphere of the building site. The digital

<sup>17</sup> Koolhaas’ emphasis on the coalescence of film, text, and architecture, and his way of seeing architecture as a narrative, a scenario, a scripted experience, and a series of spatial episodes, derives from his earlier works as a journalist (for *De Haagse Post* on literature, cinema, art, architecture, and politics), a screenwriter and an actor before studying architecture. See Donald McNeill, “Content and the Architect’s Book,” in *The Global Architect: Firms, Fame and Urban Form* (London: Routledge, 2009), 99.

<sup>18</sup> Archigram, “Introducing the Archigram Network,” *Archigram 7* (1966), <http://archigram.westminster.ac.uk/magazine.php?id=102>.

<sup>19</sup> Walter Benjamin, “Author as Producer,” in *Understanding Brecht* (London: Verso, 1998), 89.

<sup>20</sup> Michel Foucault, “What Is an Author?,” in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 118, 24.

<sup>21</sup> Alessandro Ludovico, *Post-Digital Print: The Mutation of Publishing since 1894* (Eindhoven: Onomatopée, 2012), 92.

edition also includes twenty-five high-resolution videos with subtitles and behind-the-scenes commentaries of specific projects. The reader can open the videos in a small window, watch them at full screen or navigate through pages using the small bar at the bottom of the screen. The multimedia features include zoom, pan, bookmark, list, and search options. Allowing dynamic, responsive, and simultaneous data accumulation by a seamless interface, the digital medium of *Yes is More* introduces the book as a generative format, which is unattainable through conventional printed media.

<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/yes-is-more-an-archicomic/id410789021#ls=1>

**Figure 3:**  
Bjarke Ingels, *Yes is More: An Archicomic on Architectural Evolution* (e-book app developed by Taschen, 2011).

The substances of *Content* and *Yes is More* are assembled according to a thematic narrative, rather than a chronological order. The fragmental but articulate structures of the monographs cause the page layouts to differ in each page. In *Content*, topics are assembled in a geographic sequence, moving from the west to the east.<sup>22</sup> The book does not only present OMA's architectural designs but also their global research and analysis. Like a magazine, it features a wide variety of authors, ranging from Michael Hardt to Martha Stewart. The foreword begins on page 16,

<sup>22</sup> Brendan McGetrick, "Editor's Letter," in Rem Koolhaas, *Content: Triumph of Realization* (Köln: Taschen, 2004), 16.

following several pages filled with advertisements. Throughout the book, pages are frequently designed as double page spreads, which can be skimmed in a short time period. The 540-page colourful book is printed on thin and cheap glossy paper to deliberately allude to its magazine format. Its production as a hybrid genre is in contrast with the dense, scholarly, and expensive features of *S,M,L,XL*, as *Content* is suitable for quick consumption of information in our spectacle-laden world-in-flux.<sup>23</sup> While *S,M,L,XL* is regarded as a significant contribution to architectural discourse and print culture, *Content* looks disposable and recyclable. Koolhaas considers it as a pamphlet, whereas it is also seen as a quickly consumed magazine, an advertisement catalogue that is already out-of-date, a flow of newly created terminology and an abundance of images and graphics.<sup>24</sup>

The accumulation and amalgamation of an abundance of visual and textual materials align with the concept of Junkspace, which Koolhaas introduced in a journal article with the same name, and later published in the *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping* in 2001 and republished in *Content*. He defines Junkspace in the statement, “[m]ore and more, more is more,” as a space that “replaces hierarchy with accumulation, composition with addition.”<sup>25</sup> It exists as profusion of information in a world of signs, neon lights, and emblems of franchises. *Content* becomes a product of Junkspace, a throwaway material occupied by brands, slogans, and iconic figures. With a proliferation of data and images, its content fuses articles on critical architectural and urban issues with polemical essays on popular culture, much like Junkspace, which “fuses high and low, public and private.”<sup>26</sup> For Koolhaas, every verb that starts with ‘re-’ turns into the domain of Junkspace, as the prefix stretches the original concepts of the terms; therefore, even the act of reformatting the monograph belongs to Junkspace.<sup>27</sup>

### ***The Monograph as a Tool of Branding for the Architect***

In the case of *Content* and *Yes is More*, the combination of the genres of monograph, manifesto, exhibition catalogue, and magazine sets them principally apart from conventional monographs and situates them in a heterogeneous public sphere. Ingels’s intention was to reach a wider audience and initiate a dialogue with them: “The aim of *Yes is More* is to communicate

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> “In Conversation with Beatriz Colomina,” *El Croquis* 134/135 (2007): 367.

<sup>25</sup> “Junkspace,” *October* 100 (2002): 176.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 183.



outside the profession, to engage people who would traditionally not be interested in architecture.”<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, Koolhaas claimed that *S,M,L,XL* was sold 140,000 copies because it had granted an access to the world beyond architecture, merging the genres of diary, novel, dictionary, monograph, and historical record.<sup>29</sup> It placed architecture as a true cultural discipline as it was covered on divergent magazines, newspapers, and journals, be it popular or academic.<sup>30</sup> Due to its exploitation of abbreviations, keywords, references, and summaries, it can also be compared to the recent technique of hypertext, which has made a significant impact on the transformation of digital media.<sup>31</sup> Being an enabling device in this sense, both *Content* and *Yes is More* eliminate architectural drawings of orthographic sets and revolve around visual materials, making the architectural monograph accessible to the public.

The layouts and distinctive typographies of *Content* and *Yes is More* derive from the architects’ intention to critically challenge established codes and phrases in the architectural domain, as well as their search for a new form of artistic expression. In the case of *Content*, Koolhaas’s discussion of various subjects and manipulation of mixed media reflect his definition of architecture as “a way of thinking about anything,” or as an ambiguous amalgamation.<sup>32</sup> In *Yes is More*, Ingels’s design approach is dominated by an extensive use of caricature, sarcasm, irony, and parody, beginning with his design vocabulary: ‘kissing a lot of frogs,’ ‘random opportunities,’ ‘architectural schizophrenia,’ ‘karma,’ ‘luck,’ ‘chance,’ ‘surprise,’ and ‘fun.’<sup>33</sup> Similarly, Koolhaas argues that languages evolve and grow like all complex systems.<sup>34</sup> Dictionaries were thus destined to become insufficient to capture current ideas and terminologies, prompting him to propose an ‘antiglossary’ in *Content*.<sup>35</sup>

As the art critic Hal Foster argues, a critical term for the media, which is relevant today, can become a catch phrase tomorrow, and a cliché or a brand the next day.<sup>36</sup> Koolhaas has indeed copyrighted various words and catchphrases in the Harvard Design School’s *Great Leap Forward* and in his article “Junkspace,” with an intention to make connections with commercial concepts, which are devoid of meaning now, but have once belonged to the domain of criticism. Maintaining this approach, Koolhaas uses *Content* also to publicise his new terminology, concepts, and evaluations. By

<sup>28</sup> Bjarke Ingels, “Responses,” *Clog 1* (2011): 105.

<sup>29</sup> Koolhaas, “In Conversation with Beatriz Colomina,” 364, 67.

<sup>30</sup> van Gerrewey, “S,M,L,XL & ‘Generic City’ (1994-1998): No End to Revision,” in van Gerrewey, “Outreach Extensions: OMA/Rem Koolhaas Exhibitions as Self-Critical Environments,” 333.

<sup>31</sup> Christoph Lueder, “Proximity: The Unfolding of a Koolhaasian Hypothesis in Book Space and Architectural Space,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 69, no. 20 (2015): 188.

<sup>32</sup> Koolhaas, *Content*, 20.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 339–41.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 89–91.

<sup>36</sup> Hal Foster, “Design and Crime,” in *Design and Crime: and other Diatribes*, ed. Hal Foster (London: Verso, 2002), 24.

<sup>37</sup> McNeill, "Content and the Architect's Book," 103.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>39</sup> For a critical examination of BIG's *Yes is More* and Ingels's ironic approach, see Deniz Balık and Açılya Allmer, "A 'Big' Yes to Superficiality: Arlanda Hotel by Bjarke Ingels Group," *METU JFA* 32, no. 1 (2015): 185–202.

<sup>40</sup> In the first pages of the book, Ingels unveils that his expression "Yes is more" is developed through an evolution of prominent statements of various figures from Mies van der Rohe's dictum "Less is more" to Barack Obama's motto "Yes we can!" Ingels's approach embraces the coalescence of social, economic, and environmental aspects in an affirmative manner, handling diversities with the keywords "both – and."

<sup>41</sup> Similarly, as van Gerrewey shows, OMA's *S, M, L, XL* and its accompanying exhibition were promoted by photographs of OMA's works as much as slogans including "OMA at MoMA," "generic city," and "beautiful architecture" on billboards and posters in the streets and subway stations. See van Gerrewey, "Outreach Extensions: OMA/Rem Koolhaas Exhibitions as Self-Critical Environments," 105.

<sup>42</sup> Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectics of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002 [1947]), 131–33.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 131–32.

<sup>44</sup> The relationship of the architecture book and the advertisement is not a new issue, as Colomina points to Le Corbusier's use of illustrations of commercial products as advertisements in his publication *L'Esprit Nouveau*. See Beatriz Colomina, "L'esprit Nouveau: Architecture and Publicité," in *Architectureproduction*, ed. Beatriz Colomina and Joan Ockman (New York:

doing so, the book becomes a provocation on visual, textual, and verbal communication.<sup>37</sup>

The inventive vocabulary leads to the impression that neither *Content* nor *Yes is More* is merely the medium of publicising projects and marketing for the architects. As reflected in the titles of these monographs, vocabulary primarily becomes an instrument used to attract attention in order to present evaluations and statements that would contribute to current debates in architecture. The term 'content,' in this case, relates to being a container, close to nothing, defined by its empty capacity like an impressive atrium.<sup>38</sup> The expression 'yes is more,' on the other hand, is designated as an appealing and memorable title, and a similar play on words as BIG, the abbreviated version of Bjarke Ingels Group.<sup>39</sup> Ingels's frequent use of the motto 'yes is more' can be seen as his endeavour of situating himself in the architectural canon, or his attempt to establish a slogan for his brand.<sup>40</sup>

The ubiquity of OMA's and BIG's book covers on websites and exhibition posters in the streets recalls the argument against advertising in the culture industry, articulated by the Frankfurt School theoreticians Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer.<sup>41</sup> Like political slogans or advertisements, they argue, the culture industry continuously reproduces very similar images on different surfaces and repeats the same words in every speech.<sup>42</sup> From Ingels' recurring motto 'yes is more' and appropriation of comic book form to Koolhaas' fusion of urban issues and popular culture, the architects have embraced the tools of the culture industry in the representation and dissemination of their works. Referring to two American magazines, in which at first glance, the editorial and advertising pages are hardly distinguishable from one another, Adorno and Horkheimer argue that the system of the culture industry merges culture with the technique of advertisement.<sup>43</sup> In the case of *Content*, architectural evaluations, conceptual analysis, and urban issues are placed in-between advertisements, thus creating the impression that advertisements are supplementary to articles and images, pointing to Adorno and Horkheimer's criticism of commercials and magazines.<sup>44</sup> Resonating with their critique, it is indeed difficult to differentiate advertisement pages from article pages in *Content* since both refer to the same presentation formats, slogans, clichéd words, popular terms, and large

images. Intensifying this aspect, *Content* is promoted as “a product of the moment ... It is not timeless; it’s almost out of date already,” thus resonating with the definition of Junkspace.<sup>45</sup>

Architectural media becomes a tool of branding the architect, whose image acquires as important a role as the physical building. As Foster critically puts forward, “design is all about desire,” which has no argument or message but only a strong impulse towards possessing images.<sup>46</sup> Bruce Mau speculates that, in the context of the monograph, what is actually sold is culture and intelligence, rather than the book itself.<sup>47</sup> As a design object, the monograph thus has entered the domain of image as commodity, as it promises intellectual awareness, style, inspiration, and fantasy. By advertising the books through exhibitions, interviews, web sites, and billboards, architects are able to produce and sell their visions. The audience, who interacts with these divergent architectural media in their daily lives, directly takes part in the processes of the culture industry.<sup>48</sup> Integrating daily language and popular images with media terminology, Koolhaas and Ingels appropriate the effect of everyday culture to the present as a familiar urban experience.

The emphasis placed on temporality and visuality assigns OMA’s and BIG’s monographs a commodity value and engages them in consumer capitalism. They are a part of image construction at the service of our spectacle-laden public sphere, which constantly demands stimulation, pushing the architectural domain to engage a diversity of novel tactics, strategies, and media. Koolhaas, for example, argues that architectural debates revolve around events that have already been reduced to cliché, and suggests, by means of alternatives, new forms of debate organised as flash mobs, jam sessions, free running, talk shows, or happenings.<sup>49</sup> In accordance with the ideology of consumerism, the architects’ close contact with the media shows their endeavour to achieve worldwide recognition and enter the system of the ‘starchitect.’<sup>50</sup> As a study by Leslie Sklair and Laura Gherardi suggests, the concept of the starchitect is defined in terms of the significance of architectural works, geographical reach, and fame.<sup>51</sup> A staple criterion to understand if an architect is a global starchitect is the international media coverage of their work.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, the economy of the monograph becomes a

Princeton Architectural Press, 1988), 56–99.

<sup>45</sup> McGetrick, “Editor’s Letter,” 16.

<sup>46</sup> Foster, “Design and Crime,” 19–21, 25.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>48</sup> A partner of OMA notes that the Content Exhibition derived from the image of a flea market, encouraging the team to search for everyday objects such as metal fences, fluorescent lightings, and signboards in the streets to be included in the exhibition, as if they are making an effort to create Junkspace. See Ota, “Curating as Architectural Practice,” 143–44.

<sup>49</sup> Koolhaas, *Content*, 30–35.

<sup>50</sup> For example, elsewhere, it is argued that Koolhaas’s close contact with the technology-focused American magazine *Wired*, particularly his guest editorial in June 2003 issue, OMA’s contribution in November 2001 issue, and an interview with Koolhaas in July 1996 issue, is a proof of his recognition in the industries of new economy, such as fashion, entertainment, technology, and culture. See McNeill, “Content and the Architect’s Book,” 102.

<sup>51</sup> Leslie Sklair and Laura Gherardi, “Iconic Architecture as a Hegemonic Project of the Transnational Capitalist Class” *City* 16, no. 1–2 (2012): 67.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

significant issue. In the case of *Yes is More*, pages at the back of the publication provide a list of companies who donated funds to support the exhibition and the monograph. In *Content*, luxury brand advertisements cover the production costs. Powered by mass media, these monographs situate the architectural office in a disciplinary spotlight on a global scale. They act as agencies that circulate iconic works and the architect's name. As Koolhaas also claims, the architect stands still by means of his name as a brand among today's swiftly changing trends.<sup>53</sup> The monographs thus are instrumental in marketing and branding of the architects, who need publicity to take part in today's visual culture.

### **Conclusion**

The architectural monograph as a powerful tool of representing a distinctive graphical style, textual narrative, and design approach, embodies the architect as a contributor to the construction, dissemination, and operation of knowledge and discourse. Contemporary monographs such as *Content* and *Yes is More* are not merely seen as analytic archives of the practice, but more as plural forms that elaborate architectural works in public sphere. They perform as social and cultural catalysts, which initiate novel approaches to interact with the urban fabric, generate new architectural terminologies, and reformat the monograph.

By blurring the boundaries of the genre of monograph, *Content* and *Yes is More* are situated in a heterogeneous context in terms of layout, subject matters, and readership. *Content* reflects divergent voices by presenting an abundance of research on globalisation, migration, war, politics, economy, fashion, and other current issues. To do so, the book overlaps various media and encourages its readers to dwell on and discuss architecture culture. *Yes is More* is an amalgamation of sequential diagrams and graphics, which illustrate design processes of buildings to communicate easily with the readers.

Monographs embrace the tools of the culture industry, as they become designerly instruments of public attention. While simplicity and clarity are considered as the dominant notions of the twentieth-century modernism and architectural book making, image-flow and data accumulation can be seen as

<sup>53</sup> Koolhaas, "Junkspace," 184.

valid paradigms of our time, which are transmitted by books like *Content* and *Yes is More*. They embody architecture as a popular production, an exhibition guide, a discursive manifesto, a research platform, an analytical mechanism, an experimental object, and a narrative device. As display objects, they also contribute to the starchitect system by promoting the architects as brands. Various modes of architectural media publicise the monographs in order to maximise sales; by branding the architect, *Content* and *Yes is More* are conducive to image-making, marketing, and commercial success. Monographs are produced as design objects of consumption, astonishment, and attention, as much as they become critical sites of rethinking established canons, activating emergent discourses, projecting perspectives, and experimenting with the print culture of architecture.

## R E F E R E N C E S

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