

Content

A sort of sequel to *SMLXL*, *Content* is bursting with OMA's architectural projects, social commentary, research and political satire. Rem Koolhaas/AMOMA &&& have produced a 540 page bookazine – thin glossy paper, with articles rather than chapters, cheap (10€ in Europe at least), current – but ultimately dense and completely fascinating.

Also acting as catalogue for a recent exhibition in Berlin, the book is dated this year, before we are even used to the idea it is 2004. The book documents a broader and more globalised practice of Koolhaas since *SMLXL* – particularly the formation and output of AMO – the pure research sister office of OMA (together as the eastern sounding *AMOMA*). AMO comes out of the experience of one featured project where ultimately architecture, or a building, was not the ideal outcome. The book reflects this broadening; many pieces are just research – mapping globalisation, urbanity, recent history, migration, politics, language. This is perhaps an attempt to document the world as a complex singularity.

The articles (authored by Koolhaas and a variety of others) and architectural projects (since *SMLXL*) are organised not through size as they were in the 1995 “bible”, but through longitude. The book is a move from west to east, really from the US to China. The book's subtitle is *GO EAST*, and this appears on most pages. The not so subtle suggestion that things are over in west and happening in east permeates all parts of the book. The story is straightforward – some of the US projects have not gone ahead, the skyscraper is finished, Concorde doesn't fly there anymore and the county has questionable leadership that has little regard for Europe.

Koolhaas's affection for charting statistics continues – and the move east is mapped clearly – the amount of building work, air flight, cities – all tell us broadly that the frontier is the east. This is hardly new news – and is perhaps a European realisation. The book does go a lot deeper than its simple conclusion, and it is this detail that it is strongest. In the middle, there are investigations into the changing structure of Europe and its identity (Koolhaas received the commission for the new European flag).

Back west, Koolhaas ends the delirium of New York – his Whitney extension killed by the city's conservatism and the Ground Zero redevelopment “a monument at a scale that monuments have never existed (except under Stalin)”. Indeed, there is an undercurrent that much of book deals with the post September 11 world – at both a political and architectural level. The destruction of the towers also the end of the skyscraper as a type – and it is within this context that Koolhaas is trying to direct new development in the east. Koolhaas is critical of the desire to follow the western skyscraper type in the east, and those westerners promoting this model (unnamed Australian architects come in for a hit). The CCTV project in Beijing is the final, most easterly, and biggest project in this book. This is Koolhaas's new type – an iconic looping skyscraper, both diagrammatic and contemporary. This building and features on the fantastic cover – the opposite of the more sincere neutral face of *SMLXL*.

The audience for this publication is broad – I sense the ideal context is the magazine pocket of an international flight seat – a cross between news, engineering, building, design, reporting and promotion.

Stuart Harrison