

**VISIONARY DRAWINGS THAT RECORD A PIVOTAL MOMENT IN ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY TO BE EXHIBITED TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME AT MoMA QNS***The Changing of the Avant-Garde: Visionary Architectural Drawings from the Howard Gilman Collection**October 24, 2002 to January 6, 2003*

**NEW YORK, October 2002**—One of the foremost collections of utopian architectural drawings in the world will go on view October 24, 2002 in *The Changing of the Avant-Garde: Visionary Architectural Drawings from the Howard Gilman Collection*. In celebration of The Howard Gilman Foundation's generous gift of some 200 visionary drawings to the Museum, 173 of which will be displayed, the exhibition highlights one of the greatest bursts of creative energy in architecture ever recorded on paper, ranging from fantastic imaginary schemes for entire cities and new ways of living, to poetic and dreamlike designs for individual homes. Furthermore, *The Changing of the Avant-Garde* traces a shift in thinking that took place in the 1970s, when architects began to turn from political utopias to more personal expressions. The exhibition represents a remarkably complete cross section of that period's rapidly changing currents in the world of architecture. Included in *The Changing of the Avant-Garde* are some of the most famous drawings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as Ron Herron's spectacular *Cities-Moving* (1964) and Aldo Rossi's overhead view of the *Cemetery of San Cataldo* (1971). Other architects whose work is featured include Raimund Abraham, Archigram, Peter Eisenman, John Hejduk, Arata Isozaki, Rem Koolhaas, Léon Krier, Cedric Price, and Ettore Sottsass. The exhibition is organized by Terence Riley, Chief Curator, Department of Architecture and Design, with the assistance of Bevin Cline, Assistant Curator, Research and Collections, and Tina di Carlo, Curatorial Assistant, Research and Collections.

Mr. Riley states, "The shift in architectural thinking in the 1970s, which is so well documented in the Gilman Collection, reined in the singularly focused ambitions of the heroic modern period, allowing the emergence of various vectors of architectural development, from historicism to deconstruction to digital architecture."

In the 1960s, dissatisfied with the meager visions of postwar modernism, a younger generation of architects proposed to build vast new structures to replace existing cities. The exhibition includes key examples of such "megastructures", as the Japanese architect Fumihiko Maki first described them, which were largely influenced by pop culture, the first stirrings of the information age, and radical politics. Maki's work and that of his colleagues around the world—Arata Isozaki in Japan, Archigram and Cedric Price in Britain, Yona Friedman in France, Hans Hollein and Friedrich St. Florian in Austria, and Archizoom, Ettore Sottsass, and Superstudio in Italy—were popularized by the

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influential critic and theorist Reyner Banham in the mid-1970s as a new vision of modernity that would transform contemporary culture.

Peter Cook's *Plug-In City* (1962–64), for example, one of the visionary creations to come out of the radical British collaborative Archigram, depicts a monumental urban structure incorporating residences, access routes, and essential services for its inhabitants. Intended to accommodate inhabitants' changing needs, the building nodes (houses, offices, supermarkets, universities), each with a different life span, would plug into a main structure, itself designed to last only 40 years. Outside Britain, architects like Friedman in France and Isozaki in Japan were devising cities that would float above preexisting ones, able to expand infinitely in any direction.

Superstudio—founded in 1966 by Cristiano Toraldo di Francia, Gian Piero Frassinelli, Alessandro Magris, Roberto Magris, and Adolfo Natalini—is often seen to be the most poetic and insightful group to come out of Italy during this period. Their purely theoretical drawings from *The Continuous Monument* series illustrate their conviction that they could achieve cosmic order by extending a single piece of architecture—in many cases a white grid structure—over the entire world.

With the escalation of the Vietnam War and the political uprisings of the late 1960s, the optimism of the megastructure movement diminished as it was criticized by for producing visions of new societies without having actually built anything more substantial than paper architecture. No longer seeming relevant, the megastructure was abandoned by a new generation of architects who turned away from its heroic scale and all-transforming scope and began to experiment with more personal and historic references, giving way to a new avant-garde: *postmodernism*.

The pivotal figure in the change from the megastructure to the postmodern is the Italian architect Aldo Rossi. His project for the *Cemetery of San Cataldo* (1971–84), designed for a 1971 competition, is replete with historical references and urban rationalism, yet makes a powerful emotional and cultural statement. A walled structure located on the outskirts of town, this large communal structure recalls the basic elements of a house, and yet has been designed for those who no longer need shelter.

While the megastructuralists sought to create new cities and invent new social structures, the later generation—including Rem Koolhaas, Elia Zenghelis, Zoe Zenghelis, and Gaetano Pesce—seized upon urban invention as a means to transform urban dwellers' states of mind. Pesce's *Church of Solitude* (1974–77) was conceived in reaction to his experience of New York in the late 1970s, where he saw people living together helter-skelter in crowds. He buried his church beneath a vacant lot amid the towers of the city to provide a serene place for introspection and contemplation. The silent sanctuary's small individual cells allowed for further retreat from the city's culture. Koolhaas and Zoe Zenghelis's *The City of the Captive Globe* project (1972) focuses on New York City's urban fabric, rendering each street block as a fantastic, self-contained city in itself.

Léon Krier, Massimo Scolari, and Raimund Abraham produced increasingly personal and poetic works, often focusing on individual houses. Scolari sought poetic expression and inspiration in the past and in personal

memory. Deciding early in his career not to build, Scolari's drawings are pure fantasy and often defy explanation, as in his delicate watercolor drawing *Addio Melampo* (1975). Krier's projects, on the other hand, are triggered by vernacular architecture and inspired by dream states. Situated in such remote locations as mountain sites, deserts, and Mediterranean islands, they were conceived as intimate retreats for friends—as in *House for Rita* (1969–74)—or people whom Krier admired from a distance.

### **About the Howard Gilman Collection**

The collection was assembled between 1976 and 1980 by the late art patron and collector Howard Gilman and the collection's farsighted curator, Pierre Apraxine. The acquisition of this collection prompted the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design to create the Howard Gilman Archive of Visionary Architectural Drawings. The archive, which includes key drawings from the Museum's holdings that complement the Gilman collection, is a unique resource for understanding the genesis of these forces and the vectors of invention they launched. The archive not only provides us with a comprehensive view of a significant moment in history but also with fundamental documentation of the root sources of our architecture today. The archive is open to students and scholars by appointment.

Donna Carlson, Director of Administration, and Astrid Sanai, Research Assistant, at the Art Dealer's Association of America, undertook important research on the collection for The Howard Gilman Foundation.

### **Publication**

*The Changing of the Avant-Garde: Visionary Architectural Drawings from the Howard Gilman Collection* is accompanied by an illustrated catalogue of the entire Howard Gilman Collection featuring an introduction to the archive by Terence Riley, essays by Sarah Deyong and Marco de Michelis, and an interview with Pierre Apraxine by Paola Antonelli. The book has 192 pages and 205 color illustrations. It is published by The Museum of Modern Art and is distributed by D.A.P. (Distributed Art Publishers.) Price: hardcover \$45; paperback \$30.

### **Sponsorship**

The educational programs that accompany the exhibition are made possible by BNP Paribas.

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