Fulcrum

THE AA'S WEEKLY FREE SHEET

24

NEW YORK.

TOKYO *en route to* ATHENS.

operations.

f.d.scott

Yesterday I picked up a copy of *The Occupied Wall Street Journal*, a deftly ironic appropriation of the American newspaper bearing most of that name, and published, of course, on the occasion of the Occupy Wall Street demonstrations in New York, the force of which is quickly multiplying via the Internet. From either side of the word "occupied" in its title, inserted in bright red sans-serif font, emanate graphic depictions of megaphones. They speak to the act of broadcasting, quite literally, the multitude of voices operating from within the movement and on behalf of 'the 99%'. In the urban spaces of New York these voices have not in fact been amplified by megaphones—use of which is banned by the city—but by the "Human Megaphones" formed through group amplification of voices against injustice and in turn by the equally low-tech newsprint handed out on the streets. Both voice and newsprint here operate in alliance within the complicated topology of the contemporary public sphere. In the case of Occupy Wall Street they serve to open up new trajectories within that public sphere, critical trajectories sponsoring new forms of political space.

Launched at a moment when print-based interfaces and their typical channels of circulation appear to many as peculiar archaisms, new print-based media formats are becoming increasingly interesting and strange phenomena, especially when used for ephemeral or timely tasks. To date I have only viewed *Fulcrum* — the AA's weekly "free sheet" you are now reading — online, where the issues are archived digitally in pdf form as a collection of broadsheet-like documents, and are available far beyond the confines of the AA. Whether you are reading this in print or as a pdf, you are encountering an in-herent & contemporary contradiction or splitting in a dissemination format that, I think, might harbour strategic potentials for the type of "space" opened up for contemporary architectural discourse and practice. The question of what you might do with such strategic contradictions, and of course how and to what ends, forms a significant aspect of the motivation for founding (and, in turn, of the many lines of interrogation and work undertaken within) the new program in Critical, Curatorial, and Conceptual Practices in Architecture (CCCP) at Columbia University. What I term the "operating platforms" that form the key sites of the program's focus and practice — exhibitions, publications, criticism, events, time-based media, institutional-, pedagogical-, and research-based paradigms, etc.— each, in different ways, are at once marked by contemporary forces and retain the prospect of being deployed, so to speak, self-consciously as archaisms with a contemporary function. Additionally, they each reflect and bear upon contemporary design practice in architecture while also opening onto and often eliciting other questions, other socioeconomic and political dimensions, other technologies, even other geographies. At stake is precisely learning to understand and mobilize their potentials for gaining sociopolitical traction, especially as those potentials operate within and have a bearing upon the spatial and aesthetic realms informing architecture.

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A timely moment to note that over the last fortnight the ratio of online downloads to print copies has tipped 14 : 12. We have achieved our digital fulcrum. Thank you readers, everywhere. Ed.

the whispering game.

i.angelidou

As part of my work for a forthcoming publication, I recently had an illuminating discussion with the architect and critic Hajime Yatsuka, a former student of Kenzo Tange and later a disciple and associate of Arata Isozaki. Yatsuka, like Isozaki, emerged from the Tange Lab at Tokyo University (To-Dai). A prolific contributor to Japanese architectural periodicals, Yatsuka also happens to be in charge of the curatorial team behind the *Metabolism: the City of the Future*, exhibition, which is currently on at the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo.

Inevitably, our discussion revolved around *architectural genealogy* and publications - in other words, mediation and media. These in-between spaces of diffusion are relevant to Japan's long tradition of professional hierarchy and apprenticeship; simultaneously, they reflect its contact with Occidental culture through modernity.

Tange's lab at To-Dai was both a hub of architectural pedagogy & an informal professional practice; Tange divided his students into two groups: one undertaking research, the other implementing that research into design. Par for the course, the tasks and projects of the two teams would often overlap, their members shifting positions accordingly. This operational model that rejects singular authorship bears a striking similarity to OMA*AMO, and perhaps explains Koolhaas' interest in Metabolism — culminating in the recently published *Project Japan*.

The other thing that must have fascinated Koolhaas is the sociopolitical penetrative ability that Tange & his brain-children attained through print media. Of course this vast press influence comes as little surprise; the majority of post-war Japanese architectural journals were edited by graduates from the Tange Lab research cluster.

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From the Metabolists to Isozaki, to the family-tree that branches from there, these Japanese architects developed into an alternative *architectural genealogy*, through a different platform. I am employing this particular paradigm, not for its encyclopaedic value *per se*, but because such mediated deviations form a sort of ambidexterity.

Architecture has always struggled with its schizophrenic nature: on the one hand an exchange between the need for engineered efficiency & the desire for artistic freedom, and on the other hand the temptation to enrich these often incompatible qualities with theoretical elaborations. In other words, architects have, naively perhaps, assigned themselves the task of bridging schisms by utilising the past to visualise imminent (albeit uncertain) futures, while engaging in discourse that relates to the immediate present. In that light, terms such as architectural *avant-garde* seem somewhat paradoxical, as the vanguard pushes the boundary of a discipline towards the future by defying the past, thus detaching itself from the present. Nonetheless, architecture can only be contemporary.

It seems to me that time is the architectural platform with the most potential. Time is a mediator and an enabler, depending on the speed with which one is prepared to approach and utilise it. Numerous fast experiments result in provocative products, radical perhaps, but of questionable relevance. The trial-and-error method is slower, as the process of digesting one's work is both time-consuming and relentless; reshuffling priorities in synch with precedence does not necessarily result in originality, but at least unveils potentiality.

Architecture, like history, tends to repeat itself through evolution, and evolve through repetition (because "the architect is a team"). As with any collective effort, its relationship with time is subject to cumulative error, productive inaccuracies and surprising transformations. It is a game of whispers.

Ioanna Angelidou is an architect and writer playing the whispering game between Europe and Japan.

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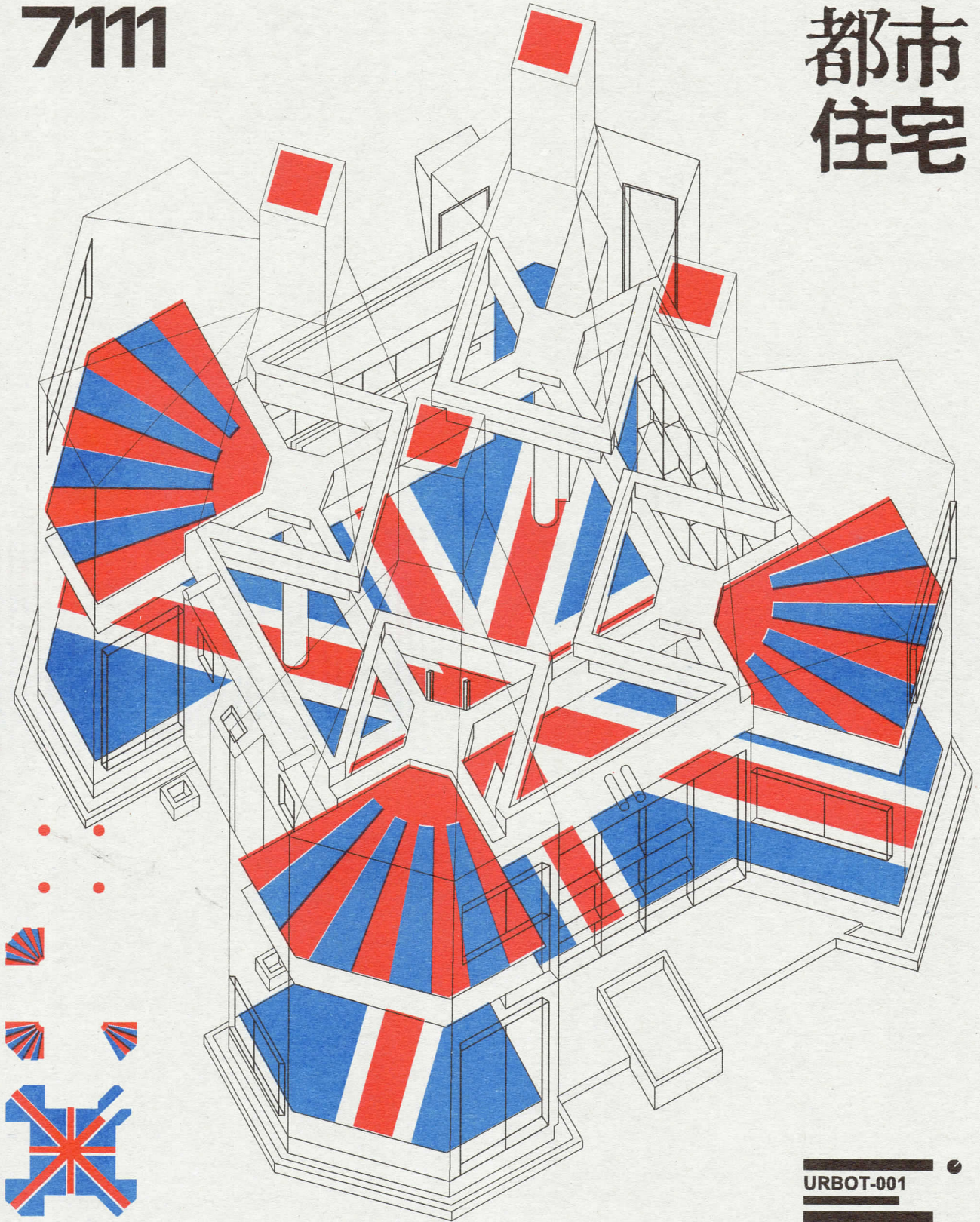
URBOT-001

Urbot 001 (Aluminium House) by Toyo Ito, which I have lovingly re-traced from the 1970 cover of avant-garde magazine Toshi-Jutaku. The image is an interesting example of the architectural whispering game mentioned overleaf. Ito himself states Urbot 001 was a reaction to Kurokawa's Metabolist Nakagin Capsule Tower, although through an anochronistic twist Ito's work was completed one year beforehand. In real terms, the reaction precedes the stimulus, and the precedent follows the derivation, muddying the architectural geneology. J. Self.

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