

## THE TIME OF A FULFILLED FANTASY – FROM THE SAINT ELIA PROJECTS AND FRITZ LANG'S "METROPOLIS" TO CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURAL IMPLEMENTATION

From the beginning of the nineteenth century until the end of the twentieth century, the creation of real buildings was equally important to architects as the design of architectural fantasies, of a future architecture at least partially free from technical conditions. These creations, mostly in the form of drawings, covered various aspects from the utilitarian to a peculiar "programming of inhabitants' lives". Also, they often were the so-called 'speaking architecture' in which the function of the building is inscribed in its design and decoration. An example is the work of French revolutionary architects<sup>1</sup>. Around the mid-nineteenth century, modern construction solutions take on a historicist form and that primacy remains unchanged almost to the beginning of the next century. Most architectural fantasies combine technical innovations with various forms of decoration. Often in spite of modern construction solutions, the artistic layer refers to the historical styles<sup>2</sup>. This trend, with varying intensity and variable stylistic predilections, will endure until the 20-30s of the twentieth century. The revolutionary breakthrough has been repeated as a mantra to this day, is the

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<sup>1</sup> Compared Boullée and Ledoux's projects, among others. Newton's cenotaph, cemetery, bridge on the supports in the form of Roman nave. See Lipka K. 1994. *Visionaries in the service of propaganda, or architecture of revolutionary classicism*. [In:] *Classicism and classicisms*. Materials of the session of the Association of Art Historians, Warsaw November 1991, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa p. 131-144.

<sup>2</sup> An example of historicist "overlay" of Manhattan's new skeletal structure is, among others Harry M. Petitt's illustration of the "cosmopolis of the future" created around 1908: among the "raging heart of the future world, where the means of air and ground transport will multiply[...] buildings of three hundred meters will be raised. It will be necessary to create multi-level sidewalks, railways on pillars and other inventions that will support the underground and car transport, as well as bridges connecting buildings at high altitudes. Aircraft will open the city to the world", writes the journalist Moses King. In the illustration, Petitt's raised height of high-rise tenement houses, connected by bridges, is hidden behind historical forms. The buildings are crowned with Baroque domes modeled on the French Les Invalides, miniaturized porticoes and tympanums, the crowns of Prague's Charles Bridge, Gothic roofs, triumphal arches, sequences of semicircular windows. Narrow wall subdivisions of Sullivan's trusses also take on a historical layer. "Footbridge" connecting buildings across the street imitated Tower Bridge and Brooklyn Bridge. [In:] R. Koolhaas 2013, *Delirious New York*, Publishing House Karakter, pp. 95-96. The postmodern bridge – the triumphal arch with the "Pantheon" in the middle (Antigone in Montpellier) can be a specific comment.

opinion of Adolf Loos: "Ornament is crime," so devoted to the ideology of modernist architecture and international style. A special stamp of modernity in thinking about the future city were the drawings of Cite Industrielle by Tony Garnier<sup>3</sup>, and later the architectural visions of Sant'Elia<sup>4</sup>. I saw the reproductions of Garnier's and Sant'Elia's drawings as a teenager in the early eighties and they impressed me with the artistic form. Garnier's were spacious and technical as well as free, stylish and modern at the same time. The visions of Sant'Elia<sup>5</sup>, though clearly constructed, retained the designer's hand. They awakened my interest in the ways of imaging architecture. Today I often come back to this subject trying to describe the transformation of methods of presenting architectural objects; from sketching to modern visualization. This is also one of the topics of this text. Another group of projects appears in the first thirty years of the twentieth century. Here the gap between utopia, architectural fantasies and real buildings is much smaller; however, there appear new settings for project presentations. Architects' ideas are extensively applied by comic book authors and film directors, such as Fritz Lang<sup>6</sup> in

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<sup>3</sup> Dated 1901-1904. The Garnier project is one of the first attempts at planning a modern city, based on critique of ancient architecture and incorporating a new approach to beauty and truth in architecture as a resultant calculation of utility, and specificity of materials used. As Pevsner writes, "Garnier was the spokesperson for a sensible grouping of industrial, administrative and residential buildings, as well as for sufficient space." There are "[...] buildings in the Cite Industrielle that are fully owned by the present day. [...] flat roofs of the administrative building, lack of profiled details, a long portico with few supports and boldly applied pillars [...]. The open-air tower of the railway station with concrete and a uniform grid of the front elevation, the ceiling supported on thin pillars, are features of 20th-century architecture, as are the cubic [...] cottages embedded in freely scattered groups of greenery;

<sup>4</sup> The sketches and architectural structures of Sant'Elia from 1912 to 1914 [...] are drawings that depict factories, gyms, train stations, skyscrapers located along multilevel arteries. It is characterized by [...] the romantic admiration of the momentum and rumble of machines, the qualities referred to by the Italian Futurists, and Sant'Elia was their architectural precursor. N. Pevsner, 1978. *Pioneers of the Contemporary*, Wydawnictwo Artystyczne i Filmowe Warsaw, p. 210-211.

<sup>5</sup> Pevsner describes it thus: "The trace of the pen of the architect, the quick line to mark the verticals, or a concise group of rounded towers, everything is highly original, extremely ingenious, saturated with the passion of the city and its urban rush ... [In:] *Pionierzy współczesności* 1978, Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, Warszawa, p. 210-211. Personally, to this analysis of the drawing I would add such features as: the outline of the structure lines define the structural skeleton of the perspective chart, a predilection for perspective use with two lateral points of confluence, and the frog perspective, the ability to manipulate the white plane. All these qualities have given architects a specific vision, a monumentalism full of energy.

<sup>6</sup> Fritz Lang's "Metropolis", a film made in 1927, shows a dreadful industrial utopia. Analyzing the visual layer of the work, we can see the penetration of at least three fundamental sources of styling – the deepest is hidden German expressionism (Lang's refraining from the use of typical exaggeration of perspective); the projects, sketches and paintings of Manhattan, known as the City of the Future, are rooted in the drawings of Hugh Ferriss, courtier draftsman of New York architects in the 1920s and 1930s; and , finally, typical American Art Deco architecture.

"Metropolis". Cities of the future are built in cartoons and movies. The "visualizations" link features of fantastic projects with elements of real, modernist<sup>7</sup> architecture. And again, the most typical example here is the image of Batman's Gotham (in comic books and later in film). There, in the panorama, we find elements of New York architecture, while the atmosphere of horror is intensified by the almost Neo-Gothic decorum, later dominated by Art Deco. An important role in shaping this dark Dorésque, though modernized vision of a metropolis, is played by the conceptual drawings and publications by Hugh Ferriss. His particular style, namely combining architectural sketches with the softness of charcole drawing, deep contrasts of light and darkness, as well as monumentality of a more or less simplified shapes of buildings, enhanced the size of the projects by a frog perspective<sup>8</sup>. The second half of the twentieth century revolved around creating an image of the city after the year 2000. The same elements of overhead roads, steel and glass

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R. Koolhaas, 2013. *Delirious New York*. Karakter publishing Cracow, p. 122, 125-130, 325

<sup>7</sup> The term modernism here does not refer to the modernist architectural style *sensu stricto* – the international style and its variants, but rather denotes the conglomerate of modernity and Art Deco in the architecture of New York.

<sup>8</sup> A good analysis of the stylist Hugh Ferriss was formulated by Rem Koolhaas: "[...] As a conceptual artist, he is a blind instrument of an eclectic style, and the better he is, the more he contributes to realizing a vision he does not share. But he manages to find a way out of the situation – he starts using a technique that allows him to separate his beliefs from the wishes of customers. He draws with charcoal – an imprecise tool for creating impressionistic sketches based on suggestive relationships between designs, cast with a series of streaks. [...] in his drawings he shows as much as he hides. [...] Manhattan-based architects commonly used Ferriss' services, so their revised projects are beginning to build a coherent vision for the future of Manhattan. [...] Ferriss' conceptual sketches have begun to function as illustrations of Manhattan architecture in isolation from the architect who designed the building. [...] Each Ferriss sketch reveals one of an infinite number of formal and psychological possibilities that allows the shape of a protective zone. Forming together with other architects the visions of the Mega-Village [...] is a city built of virgin forms [...] in the imagination, images of buildings of a new type appear – it is no longer the composition of elements maintained in famous styles, but crude bodies undergoing subtle treatment (p.130). In Ferriss' 1929 book „The Metropolis Tomorrow“, the fifty sketches show no details. The construction of the whole was subordinated to the vision of a gradually thickening fog ... to finally show the bright future of the imagined metropolis ...; Wide plains, abounding in vegetation, from which grow towers at large distances like mountain peaks. "

The vision of Ferriss absorbs [...] external currents effortlessly: expressionism, futurism, constructivism and even functionalism. His metropolis vision remained current even after World War II, when he interpreted the drafts of Le Corbusier; [...] I would like his Emptiness to absorb even modern urban planning. I'm sketching the design of Le Corbusier in the darkness of an eternal American night, giving the enigmatic character of concrete – the buildings float above the ground. "

Ferriss' drawings, in comparison with Saint-Elia's architectural fantasies, seem more diverse, moody, monumental, and more artistic. They are happy to use the dark-and-light of illusion of a solid, smooth transition from architectural abstract to concrete. I sense a kinship with contemporary projects generated by contemporary means – similarly suspended between (here) photographic touchability, geometrical objectivism, forms only outlined. (E.U).

buildings, alternately in geometric and constructivist forms, as well as cosmic and organic forms, are found in children's drawings, comic books, and Sci-Fi<sup>9</sup> films. Regardless of their age and education, in their "vision of the world in A.D. 2000" the authors included all the dreams, utopias and phobias that took hold of us when the 21st century became more tangible and measurable by the scale of a human life span. To the instrumentation of forms inherited from predecessors they added the interpretations of modern techniques and technology (especially those related to space conquest). This does not mean, however, that the typology of the portrayed worlds radically changed. The technological leap mostly influenced the field of special effects. Regardless of the decade, in cinematic productions, the city of the future has the same motifs: the "Manhattan world" with the dominant skyscrapers and the decorations typical of the different phases in Manhattan's<sup>10</sup> development; hybrids of futuristic cities of the future and ancient architecture of various origin (for example, African and Asian); artificially generated architecture, raw and geometric in its forms resulting from modernist and functionalist architectural utopias. The latter type particularly resembles contemporary visualizations. The realness of architectural fantasies results from the ratio between the image on a three-dimensional grid and the epidermis, the thickness of the textural "meat" imposed on the geometric skeleton. There is no direct correspondence of the medium used (model, animation, computer visualization) into the tactile, hyper-realistic, mimetic form. The specific distortion of sensing what is real and what is artificial occurs when the background consists of modern architecture, based on glass and metal, geometric shapes, and the renunciation of decoration.

In the architectural theory, practice and utopia, the mid-1970s seems to have marked the transition from modernism to postmodernism in the West<sup>11</sup>. At that time in their publications, architects such as Venturi and his collaborators,

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<sup>9</sup> Of course, each of these "media" operates with its own formal language. In relation to children's art, it is a combination of one's own imagination with more or less conscious quotes from well-known illustrations. The Comics genre has its specific lines, and flat coloured fields, shadowing etc. In films there has been a development from more and more complicated ways to create three-dimensional film sets out of scale models, to modern CGI.

<sup>10</sup> As an example, one can mention Luc Besson's film „The Fifth Element“, where the entourage of modern New York is clearly visible. Likewise, later Batman adventures, from the 1980s to contemporary films, remain faithful to Art Deco styling, and include the clear Manhattan architectural signs of the 1920s and 1930s. George Lucas' „Star Wars“ saga , employing the developing technological possibilities, invariably combines the vision of the City of tower blocks with elements of "exotic", non-European architecture, with strong Chinese, Hindu, and Indonesian traits, but also Arabian style elements.

<sup>11</sup> The basic architectural discourse of the seventies, for the West, is already postmodern and undermines the so-called unchanging, first-formed architectural and urban theories that were first developed in CIAM circles. It is worth noting the shallow and dated perception of postmodernism in Poland. It seems that the fully-fledged concept reaches us at the beginning of the systemic transformation (with nearly twenty years' delay), possibly half a decade ago.

and Koolhaas<sup>12</sup> reassess the theories and axioms of modernism and internationalism. The views of Walter Gropius, relevant in an earlier decade and his positive, if not to say positivist interpretation of the architect's role in shaping the human environment<sup>13</sup> is criticized.

Venturi drew attention to the orthodoxy, the strictness of modernist architecture "... it is progressive, if not revolutionary, utopian and puristic; it is dissatisfied with existing conditions"<sup>14</sup>. He also undermined the aesthetic axiom of modernism and functionalism - **the recognition of space as the fundamental defining element of architecture**<sup>15</sup>. While comparing the urbanist architectural theory with reality, he found that defining architecture as space and form which serve a functional program was insufficient. The modern city does not fit into modernist urban theories and utopias, whether it is a typical CIAM grid or a mirage of an illuminated modern metropolis of pure space and lined with buildings. He sees that the architecture of the second half of the twentieth century will find other forms than the interwar conception of Le Corbusier (the Voisin project and the Radiant City)<sup>16</sup>. Probably postulated, though not specified in "Learn from Las Vegas," "new theories more fitting for the realities of the twentieth century, based on the meaning of the city as it is"<sup>17</sup> would exclude

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<sup>12</sup> B. Cf. Venturi, D. Scott Brown, S. Izenour, 2012. (Polish version). *Uczyć się od Las Vegas*. Karakter Publishing Cracow.

R. Koolhaas, 2013. *Delirious New York*. Karakter Publishing Cracow.

<sup>13</sup> W. Gropius, 2004. *Pełnia Architektury*. Wydawnictwo Karakter Kraków.

Gropius's main thesis:

"... the external forms of architecture are not the whim of a handful of architects but the inevitable result of the intellectual, social and technical conditions of our time.

We can describe a new vision of architecture that corresponds to the civilization of technology in which we live; the morphology of dead styles has been destroyed and we are returning to a sincerity of thought and feeling ...

We need a new visual value code. The longer we get tangled up in an immense bunch of borrowed means of artistic expression, the less likely we are to give our culture form and substance. The development plan [...] represents a new joint action aimed at organic improvement of the entire community together with its administration. [...] It will do more to create a monumental expression of our times and, moreover, arouse a stronger sense of pride and loyalty among the people.

...recovering what is "monumental" will only be possible if today's "time is money" philosophy is going to be surpassed from the civilized human being's point of view. Things will not, however, return to the "frozen music" of static symbols; it will be rather an inherent attribute of the entire human-created environment.

<sup>14</sup> B. Venturi, D. Scott Brown, S. Izenour 2012. (Polish Version). *Uczyć się od Las Vegas*. Karakter Publishing Cracow.

<sup>15</sup> "In a time span of forty years, theorists of modernism paid full attention to space as a fundamental element in distinguishing architecture from painting, sculpture, and literature. Their definitions boast of the uniqueness of the medium [...] sculptural or figurative architecture is unacceptable, because space is sacred."

<sup>16</sup> A critical analysis of both these projects was conducted by R. Koolhaas in „*Delirious New York*” p. 278-293 and 300-307.

<sup>17</sup> B. Venturi, D. Scott Brown, S. Izenour 2012. (Polish version). *Uczyć się od Las Vegas*. Karakter Publishing Cracow.

such visions as the 1966 Linear Continuous Array of Oscar Hansen<sup>18</sup>. The architect's project which ploughed Poland in zigzagging strips of buildings separated by green areas and old cities, which were like beads strung on the cords of new buildings. Both projects, Le Corbusier's and Hansen's, accommodated the tendencies of many architects to modernize and steer the lives of individuals, as well as societies through urban planning, industrial vernacularism, constructivistic proto-megastructures, spatial trusses<sup>19</sup>.

For a post-Impressionist rebellion the city was a living, sprawling, amorphous place – its symbol became a city – a strip: Las Vegas. Not codified by an international style, it also defies the multitude of "styles" of the sixties architecture, inspired by "technical constructions, of the latest hi-tech trend". The issues signaled by Venturi and his colleagues determine the direction of change in the postmodern vision of architecture and urbanism, where fantasy mingles with practice, where ornamentation and historicism, borrowed and bracketed together, no longer offend, and the only boundaries for architectural forms are the imagination of the creators, and the technical possibilities. It seems that rational urbanism will have to give way to partially spontaneous constructions, more subordinated to the economy, the investors' and developers' interests, but also corresponding to "symbolic" values – where architectural objects originate in a single, original vision<sup>20</sup>.

These expectations are reflected in both real architecture and in architectural fantasies, "living" no longer in sketches and drawings, but in three-dimensional computer-generated visualizations. It seems that in most of the realizations and concepts of the archetypal metropolis – Global Manhattan, as described by Remo Koolhaas – has overcome the futuristic-functional visions such as the Radiant City and their less ideal but real counterparts – new, "raw stone" metropolitan government and office districts that scare us today like the barren designs of Le Corbusier's Changin'garh did. I think in this light, the Parisian district of La Defense, designed in the late 1960s (?), and extended to this day, is of particular importance.

Originally, it was the embodiment of a vision as modernist as it was futuristic. Its early architecture created geometric forms, a reference to the simple but symbolic traits of the sphere, the cuboid, the arc. At the same time La Defense was testament to the latest developments in construction technology (notably CNT). Gradually, the district changed; each year saw new buildings added, and with these came new stylistics. The timeliness of the earliest structures has become subdued by lighter, more "linear" objects, transposed as if directly from design and elegant visualization. The sterility typical for La Defense penetrates all stages of its formation. Though used as a film backdrop, a brilliant illustration of the appearance of early La Defense, or rather of its ideology, constitutes the city and interiors shown in Jaques Tati's film series about Mr. Hulot<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> F. Springer, Leaven, 2013. About Zofia and Oskar Hansen Karakter. Publishing House Kraków/Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, Kraków – Warsaw, p. 151-156

<sup>19</sup> B. Venturi, D. Scott Brown, S. Izenour, 2012. (polish version).Uczyć się od Las Vegas. Karakter Publishing Cracow.

<sup>20</sup> Whether this be the vision of a wealthy state, a city, a leader, or just an investor.

<sup>21</sup> It should be noted that the architecture, the interiors of homes, hotels, and offices, were designed through films and photography, often in a miniaturized scale (skyscrapers), and yet they gave excellent visions of the modern, thoroughly designed cities of the 1970s.

Postmodernism is markedly present in the Parisian district of offices and institutions, the "serious" city, and also, through a peculiar blending of two architectural realities, in the city of amusement and learning that was created much later at the Park La Villette on the outskirts. It is easy to see the interest in similar shapes: in both places we find great spheres, rectangular and curved buildings, architectural curiosities (modern sculptures in La Defense and actual buildings in La Villette.) But where the office district is spectacularly monumental, the amusement park does not evoke a visual 'wow'. This contrast is exemplified by the uniform surface of the ball that forms part of one of the buildings, and the changing appearance of the mirror sphere of La Géode.

Postmodern architecture has blurred the boundaries between reality and fantasy, adding its vision onto utilitarian and functional phenomena. To the questions surrounding the reason behind designing buildings in strange forms, behind denying the mighty canons, behind competing through daring designs and heights of buildings, behind creating utopian cities amid the desert, the one answer goes: because it is technologically feasible. The visual architecture of Dubai and Abu Dhabi can be described from this perspective as the development of the concept of a "city in the desert", which was pioneered by Venturi in the Las Vegas casinos, hotels and motels<sup>22</sup>.

At the end of the twentieth century, some of these ideas are no more than architectural utopias. In European and American cities, in the Middle East and Far East, buildings are made not only of glass and steel, but of forms that have little to do with conventional utility architecture. Organic blobs arise, buildings twisted around their own axis, structures bearing a visual similarity to spilled drops of water and mercury, winged museums – describing and classifying them into suitable styles could take forever. These are often public buildings – hotels, banks, office buildings, and cultural objects: museums, libraries, concert halls, operas and theaters, and, finally, stadiums. They are created by what could be called "international architects", which is especially visible when we review lists of participants in architectural competitions. It is easy to see the style of the individual creators and their architectural idioms; the place of the object in a particular geographical reality becomes a secondary factor<sup>23</sup>.

Not easily overstated is the role of the founders, or more precisely, the investors and developers – international corporations, wealthy Arabs and Asians "players" to use a term in line with a modern-day Louis XIV. However, the monumental scale, the *splendor architecturae* ordered by them, corresponds with more mundane factors – the size of a building or group of buildings, its modern complexity, the use of unusual shapes, materials, etc.

Appearing at the intersection of these expectations and possibilities, of the embodiment of this architectural fantasy, sometimes anti-utopian forms result. It is an industrial vision, based on two elements: the concept of the destroyed urban environment with only a preserved city structure, or the peculiar

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<sup>22</sup> "Las Vegas is the apotheosis of a desert city ... [...] Artificially illuminated and air-conditioned interiors complement the dazzling glow and heat of an agoraphobic desert on a car scale. Yet the patio inside the motel behind the casino is literally an oasis in an unfriendly environment." p. 72

<sup>23</sup> Such an approach to competition projects can be observed, among others, with Zahy Hadid, even in late museum projects for Vilnius and Warsaw.; cf. G. Piątek, J. Trybuś, 2012. *Sugar coating and meet*. The Association of 40 000 Painters.

Manhattanization of the world, in which the cityscape is dominated by a "mountain range" of skyscrapers – a metropolis combining Gotham City and La Defense into one image. The image of a world corroded by civilizational destruction is met by architects through futuristic skyscrapers, shining and sterile, with an inability to penetrate the spaces of people's everyday lives. Glittering buildings are mere "dwellings for a while": large hotels, convention centers, administrative buildings. Architectural symbols scattered in the cityscape, erected according to the Olympic principle of "higher, farther, harder" and, also, *faster* – the project-technological agon of architects and construction companies. *Citius-Altius-Fortius*' motto is governed by this architectural effect – the customer's awe induced by constructional innovations, record building size, height being the first here. In the urban space, 'starchitects' and architect teams are competing, while they hesitate about envisioning a joint and coherent architectural style, instead favouring the simple, not to say without thought, proliferation of competitions through individual buildings. Understood thus, the metropolis becomes merely the sum of the its buildings, and not a whole ...

For twenty years, we have been fascinated by another urban utopia: the tradition of the garden city, an ecological and scenic vision, reminiscent of a jungle city, a city-orangery<sup>24</sup>.

In projects, we see green enclaves and islands, places of escape incorporated into nature and organic forms of construction. A constant motive is the creation of an ecosphere and of ecosystems, where modern bubbles and domes form a hermetic, isolated world. It is worth recalling that the construction of spherical shields against a contaminated nature has often appeared in children's as well as in mature paintings of the "World after 2000". Another element of the green vision is the appropriation of vegetation within the architecture of modern city centers of cities and office districts. This process is described in architectural fantasies from several perspectives: the post-industrial retaliation of nature on man, the shaping of artificial nature, overgrowing modernist and postmodern architecture with greenery. An example of this may be the combination of real-world changes and visualizations of La Defense, where the tangible sterility of a giant office building from the turn of the millennium has been softened by details in a different scale: office flowers were transformed into potted plants – big bonsai trees, while modern sculptures slowly disappeared. The wide, gray tracts of inner passageways and squares are now overgrown with less ordered vegetation, accompanied by a slightly surrealistic use of water<sup>25</sup>.

Concrete, glass, and cool metals in the shape of buildings are broken by cascades and green walls. The old, descriptive and linear "aftertaste" gives way to more relaxed forms. I would venture to say that in modern architectural and urban forms the evolution from the Louvre to Versailles (or rather the "construction" of the idea of Versailles) is repeated when architecture, its

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<sup>24</sup> Referring to two concepts of this kind of city - the former, showing the settlements as ensembles of houses hidden in greenery (cf. Cite Industrielle Garnier) and later Le Corbusier, in his Radiant City plan, where singular skyscrapers are located in a green area exceeding human scale. Interestingly, the man to whom this vegetation is to give respite is as small compared to the architecture as he is to nature.

<sup>25</sup> Before the big arc of La Defense there appeared small cascades and shallow pools lined with mosaics and cascades.

subordinated perspective, its monumentalism, slowly penetrates the garden and then the natural greenery around. In the 21st century the process looks different – the French sense of monumentalism is weakened, the complicated order of the district disturbed by new buildings, and the symbiosis of what is geometric and biological differs.

The undeniable impact on the perception of architecture is the way we look at it – directly or through photographs, designs and visualizations. Today, the problem is more complex than in the twentieth century when the separation of imagination and reality was easier, the differences between the drawing, the model, and the picture of true architecture more pronounced. The place of the old design conventions – the painting and graphics of the projects, the ways of describing the perspective of the shapes, the abandonment of three-dimensional representations of the flat view, on design plans, give way to the illusion of a permanently rendered visualization<sup>26</sup>. They cut the boundaries between what is real and imagined. They appeal to our passion for what is real – true – and mimetic. The penetration of two areas: improved graphics programs (to enhance the photography), and visualization programs, enable representations that are detailed and concrete, and limit the distinction between the real city panorama and architectural fantasy. Most of the modern buildings, "icons" of urbanism and architecture are perceived by this stenciled frame – panoramas, forest towers, recognizable places.

If the basic stylistic figure of "Manhattanism" captured in the projects and drawings were a view from above, and a panorama emphasizing the extent and height of the metropolis, then for a modern visualization it is equally important to imbue the monumental in objects through views from the frog perspective. At the same time, their creators put on the mimetic touchability of not only objects, but of the accompanying atmosphere as well. They use such means as colors, or slightly faint, airy forms depicting nature.

Finally, it is worth asking ourselves a few questions: which concept – rational urban planning, or spontaneous city development, has won in the postmodern transformation of architectural utopia into reality? Artificiality, generated in projects and in the visualizations of plans, or the brutal development of old and new metropolises? Humility in the face of the past or the arrogance of the 'starchitects' imposing their buildings as their signatures on the existing city fabric? Insofar as most of these issues are rhetorical questions, the reflection on the different aesthetics of postmodern architecture is possible. The essence of this transformation lies in the recognition of the variety and amount of constructive and stylish solutions, in the different treatment of geometry in shaping blocks and in the concept of the biological (organic) in architecture: in choosing (even there where geometry "governs") not straight lines and regular bends but slanting and variable curves, irregular ovals etc. And it lies in superimposing, over cubes and polyhedrons, often slightly twisted, peculiarly-shaped buildings through slanting – like huge Lego bricks. This strategy seems borrowed from Sci-Fi movies

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<sup>26</sup> The issue of the illusion of architecture created by project visualizations and their equality with buildings was emphasized by, among others, by Grzegorz Piątek and Jarosław Trybuś, cf. G. Piątek, J. Trybuś, 2012. Sugar coating and meet. The Association of 40 000 Painters

about cosmic beings, where cubic forms overgrow into organic blobs<sup>27</sup>. Even forms constructed from polygonal glass beads are taking on biological traits as new buildings, referring to the symbol of *axis mundi*, evolve, such as in Foster's twisted round missiles. On global and local metropolises, architects impose their individual styles: the spilling and stretching forms of Zahy Hadid, the aggressive spikes at the Berlin Liebeskind Museum, Jean Nouvel's juggling of constructions as a stylistic poet, and Rem Koolhaas<sup>28</sup>. Then there are the more "predictable" and typical forms of Asian skyscrapers in Singapore, Hong Kong, Seoul and many other cities. The question of the aesthetics and the usability of all of these buildings remains an unanswered one ...

Has design and technological freedom created architectural wonders, or architectural nightmares, time will tell. If only, in our accelerated pace of life, the buildings of the beginning of the 21st century will not be demolished before they get old ...

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<sup>27</sup> Examples include the American Museum of Salvador Dali in St. Petersburg or the bridge in Metz.

<sup>28</sup> I would love to call the architecture of Rem Koolhaas delirious (though great) – his "Delirious New York City" has had a bigger influence on this article than I would like to admit. It is made up of many different accomplishments – the Escheresque-Rietveldesque form of Beijing's television edifice, the expansion as a spatial slice of the perpendiculars in a hotel block in Singapore, but also the "Death Stars" or the crystalline form of a Seattle building ...

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## THE TIME OF FULFILLED FANTASY – FROM SANT'ELIA'S PROJECTS AND FRITZ LANG'S „METROPOLIS” TO CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE

**SUMMARY.** From the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the creation of real buildings and designing architectural fantasies - „the architecture of the future” - seemed to be of equal importance. These were very often expressed through drawings and illustrated a variety of aspects from utilitarian ideas to certain ways of „programming the life of the inhabitants”. It was also very common for these projects to function as so called „speaking architecture” which had the function embedded in the construction and decoration of the building. French revolutionary architects are of course a good example of this phenomenon. Around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the modern character of construction solutions was accompanied by a form inspired by historic styles. The next group of designs appears at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These were the times when the dissonance between the architectural utopias, fantasies and actual buildings was much smaller. Moreover, new media enable exhibiting the projects in different ways and different “places”. Comic book authors and film makers like Fritz Lang – the author of „Metropolis” - draw their inspiration from the visions of architects. They create illusions of future cities in films and drawings. Their “visualizations” combine the fantastic projects with elements of actual modernist architecture. Once again the most threadbare example which comes to mind is Batman’s Gotham City, known from both the comic book version and its film adaptation, where one can find elements of New York architecture and a gloomy atmosphere provided by Neo-Gothic decoration. Nearly the whole 20<sup>th</sup> century was devoted to envisioning the urban spaces of the next millenium. The same elements of airways, steel and glass buildings of geometric, constructivist, cosmic or organic forms can be found in childrens’ drawings, comics and science-fiction films. However, suddenly some of these ideas cease to be just fantasies and architectural utopias. Buildings not only made of steel and glass, but also different from conventional, functional architecture appear in European and American cities, in the Near and Far East. Organic blobs, buildings constructed around their own axes, constructions akin to drops of water or mercury, winged museums – these forms may as well be enumerated and categorized *ad infinitum*. What seems important here is the matter of the aesthetics and functionality of these projects. Are we witnessing the inception (or birth) of architectural marvels or nightmares?

**Key words:** modernism, postmodernism, visualization, architectural utopia, starchitects