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Spring 1972

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THE RADICAL ARCHITECTURE
OF LITTLE MAGAZINES
196X TO 197X

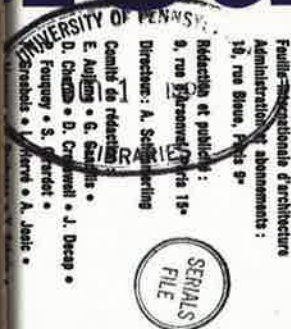
BEATRIZ COLOMINA AND CRAIG BUCKLEY, EDITORS
URTZI GRAU, IMAGE EDITOR

APOLOGY

Mr. Elia Zenghelis points out that line 21 of his letter (Ghost Dance Times, Nov. 1st, 1974) should have read 'the last of the surviving realists'. Not as printed.

Mr. Bernard Tschumi has calculated that it would require 883 years of teaching for any AA Unit Master to earn as much money as Mohamed Ali earned in twenty three minutes in Zaire.

who stole a Rapisograph from the office the other week. The probably not aware that the instrument is DANGEROUS has been known to produce WINGS. "The best advice I can give is to maintain a normal AA posture and DO ABSOLUTELY NOTHING until a Diploma arrives. Otherwise, a severe attack of architectural competence is likely".



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LONDO



Beatriz Colomina, Craig Buckley, Grahame Shane, Peter Murray, Robin Middleton, Michael Webb

ON



Michael Webb

**ROBIN MIDDLETON, PETER MURRAY,
GRAHAME SHANE, AND MICHAEL WEBB
DISCUSS ACTION COMMUNICATIONS CENTRE,
ARCHIGRAM, ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN,
CLIP-KIT: STUDIES IN ENVIRONMENTAL
DESIGN, MEGASCOPE, AND SYMBOLS.
STOREFRONT FOR ART AND ARCHITECTURE.
NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 28, 2006.**

Michael Webb (MWebb): I remember the Regent Street Polytechnic, which now is the University of Westminster; it was a good school that trained young students to make office fodder for the London offices. And we had, I'm glad to say, a rather reactionary faculty. For any revolution to get itself established you have to have a faculty of reactionaries. [Laughter] Isn't that true? That's the problem today because little magazines, little revolutions, can't happen; all the professors would say, "That's wonderful what you're doing." [Laughter] You need professors to say, "No, you're not allowed to do that, and if you do it, you will be out on your ear." When this little revolution started, John Hodgkinson, a young man in the year below me, started a magazine with the inevitable title *Polygon*. He published the projects of a few crazies in the school: John Davidson and myself among them, and I would say that that was the beginning. I think what

was interesting was that Reyner Banham saw this little magazine and then put a couple of illustrations in the *Architectural Review*, a very Establishment architectural magazine in London with slightly strange tendencies in that period. Wouldn't you say so, Robin?

Robin Middleton (RM): No. [Laughter]

MWebb: Anyway, it was interesting that Nikolaus Pevsner, whom Banham studied under, happened to be giving a series of radio lectures on the BBC about the state of current British architecture, and I naturally listened to them. I remember the last one having surveyed the whole London scene, which he found to be promising, of an overall high quality, but he said that there was a rather disturbing trend in some schools. He started talking about an architectural scheme that looked like a load of stomachs sitting on a plate connected together by bits of gristle, so that it looked like a lot of bowels. And I suddenly exclaimed, "He's talking about my project!" That was rather extraordinary. Hence the movement *bowellism* was born. *Bowellism*: the movement. Having been told about various architectural movements, and finding the whole thing rather a bit hopeless, we wanted to satirize the seriousness with which architects approached movements, historical trends, and so on, and rather to poke fun at it. In the early editions of *Archigram* there's some reference to *bowellism*. The funny thing is that years later an article I read referred to a particular building as being rather "bowellist." I was fascinated because this guy was taking seriously what had been a big joke, really. What's interesting is how it actually got into architectural history. I wish that author knew what fun it had all been. Probably that's enough for the time being. ... By the way, Grahame [Shane] was at the AA [Architectural Association] just after all this was happening, when *Archigram* got going. Graham suffered under Ron [Herron], Peter [Cook], and Warren [Chalk].

Grahame Shane (GS): Warren was a big deal to me. The education at the AA took place at the bar, which was in the members' room, up with the library, the front members' room with a [Robert] Adam's fireplace and a chandelier. Around the bar there would be people like Cedric Price, Warren Chalk from *Archigram*, and Thomas Steven, who was a friend of Colin Rowe's. I went to the AA when I was seventeen, and we were still admitted to the bar and

were expected to be able to drink. Which was pretty incredible. There were these amazing discussions in the bar. In fact, when I began teaching in the early 1970s Monica [Pidgeon] while in the bar first asked me to write for *AD* [*Architectural Design*]. This was a huge contact place and interconnection place for a whole kind of London scene. In 1963 I had first arrived at the school, which had a tradition of student magazines. In the 1930s there had been an AA modernist magazine called *Focus*, which fought against the Beaux-Arts. I had a teacher in the first year named Graham Gibberd, who was a big Corbusian, but he had sneaked *Le Carré Bleu* into the studio and unfolded it. There's one somewhere in the exhibition. This was terribly illicit because it was post-Le Corbusier. I can remember Peter coming around trying to sell *Archigram* 4 to us, and since it was that or beer, he didn't do too well. But we became friends, which was nice.

There was a double culture of the studio and the tradition of doing magazines. By the end of first year, we had founded ACC [*Action Communications Centre*], which was a little news-sheet that we mimeographed and that had all the listings of what was going on in all the different schools. Next we got more money from the student union to publish *Symbols* magazine, which has a great "Zen" cover. If I thought forty-four years ago that I'd be talking about it now, I would have been amazed; it was just something I did as a student with Justin De Syllas and Jasper Vaughan; we mimeographed some pages, some pages were printed, and then we had to staple them together inside a cover. I think I was more concerned about that than thinking about the future and the fact that this might have been starting the changing of the guard. But we were in a period when everything was being questioned, and Cedric Price and *Archigram* were part of our world. I'm quite happy when I look back at it; the content was kind of interesting. We were sort of on to structuralism, semiology, and symbolism. I think the thing I'm most proud about was that A.C.C. published this very weird publication under the influence of Jasper Vaughan about Dan-

iel Bernoulli, who was an early cybernetics genius and very influential with Cedric Price and Gordon Pask and Ranulph Glanville. It was all about feedback and storms and weather, and when you see what's happened now, that was amazingly ahead of its time. That was very influential for me. I admire what we did, and we got feedback from the official Establishment, which was modernist. They published a review of *Symbols* in the official magazine *AAQ* [Architectural Association Quarterly] by Rodney Mace, a guy who is still around. But at that time he was a Communist and modernist and thought we were hopelessly decadent and out to lunch. There was other feedback: Robin Evans did his *Signs of the Times*, the magazine right there, which was also published by A.C.C., and in that magazine they attacked Rodney. There was a dialogue set up inside the school that was part of the shift, from the student level, just as *Archigram* was changing the culture of the school in the main design studios. We did the ACC newsletter, and Alvin [Boyarsky] revived it as the weekly sheet of all the events that were happening in the school when he took over in 1972. Then he did the *Ghost Dance Times* in the 1970s when I was just beginning to teach there, which was also reminiscent of the ACC, but it was official. He had Martin Pawley run it, who was an absolutely brilliant editor in that situation, and Pawley was the one who named it *Ghost Dance Times*. The event sheet is still going as an online thing with Brett Steele, the head of the school, supporting it. If you try to count, the way that Charles Jencks does it, all the different movements in a fifteen- to twenty-year period, it's absolutely staggering. We were just a tiny little piece of that, and at the same time, we were able very cheaply to make this happen. I think the equivalent would be a blog or something online now. As everybody says, there are no magazines anymore in the United States. It's very nostalgic to look back and enjoy.

RM: I haven't written anything down and have just looked at this exhibition. I was immediately surprised by it because there's so much here that

I would count as mainstream magazines, publications like *Kenchiku Bunka* and *Casabella*, which have nothing to do with little magazines at all. I imagine the reason I'm here is because at a certain period in the history of *Architectural Design* it became a little magazine. Otherwise Kenneth Frampton would be here. Theo Crosby had been technical editor of *AD* [1952–63]; he, in effect, was the executive editor under Monica Pidgeon. Theo then gave up, and Ken moved in. After Ken left, I moved into *AD*, purely by chance.

Perhaps I should go back a little, because, in fact, the history involves an interaction between *AD*'s history and the history of *Archigram*. After earning a PhD at Cambridge, I traveled a little bit in the Middle East, lived in Paris, did one thing and another. People thought I was wasting my life. Peter Smithson was a friend of Theo Crosby's, and he phoned me and said, "Theo is forming a little design group to rebuild the center of London and create a new center of London, at Euston Station." That sounds unlikely now, but there was adventure in the world in those days. Smithson asked, "Why don't you come be an architect?" So I went to London and Theo gave me the job, and we started the design under the auspices of Taylor Woodrow, a massive construction company that was trying to move into the field of being a developer. Taylor Woodrow was going to rebuild the whole station in Euston and make a whole new center: new office blocks, three million square feet of offices, enormous hotels, an entertainment center, and all kinds of things. Everything started off very well, and Theo gradually built up the group. Peter Cook was there already, and Warren Chalk was about to arrive; so were Ron Herron and Dennis [Crompton]. Gradually everybody in *Archigram* was part of that group. Everybody. We all worked together.

We then moved up to Euston Station, but the whole thing fell apart, because the Labour government stopped the building of new offices in London. The millions of square feet of offices were going to pay for this enormous thing. But during the period of lull, as it were, when we were still employed but doing fuck all, *Archigram* produced their magazine because they were sitting around in the office, and we had time on our hands anyway. While I was still there, Theo said, "Now Ken Frampton is going to America, so can



Grahame Shane, Peter Murray, Beatriz Colomina, Michael Webb

you go over and help Monica in the afternoons.” Meanwhile, I was also starting to deal with the dissertations in the Architectural Association, where Alvin was actually fighting it out with Ken to become the new chairman. Ken was not made the new chairman, so he reinstated himself in America, and Alvin took over and actually made the AA an extraordinary place. I was working with Monica, and they were still publishing in a stereotyped, conventional way, but the undercurrent, particularly in the newsheets up front, was slightly shifting and slightly changing. As soon as I arrived at *AD*, I asked Peter Cook if they [Archigram] wanted to do an issue. I think *AD* wasn’t the first [magazine] to do an issue. Was it *Art Quarterly*? What was it? It was an American magazine.

Craig Buckley (CB): *Design Quarterly*.

RM: *Design Quarterly*. They had done it before *AD* did it. Anyway, we gave Archigram twelve pages, I think, which was a massive amount, and Monica didn’t know if she could trust these people in one way or another. Finally I persuaded her, and that changed things a bit. It was wonderful

because we lost advertising regularly after that. The circulation went up; the circulation, in fact, increased above what the *Architectural Review* had ever achieved. They [*Architectural Review*] regularly got all the advertising. The subscribers of *AD* were all over the world, whereas most of the *Architectural Review* subscribers were in London or elsewhere in England, so the advertisers could market to them. Gradually we lost everybody, and it was a moment of liberation. We had to survive on what the subscriptions were, which weren’t a vast number. So we went for cheap publishing. It became a sort of underground, independent creature, which meant one could really do it the way one wanted. Except, of course, Monica was still there, and Monica was in control, effectively, although gradually we could undermine the operation, because we were such a small lot, with so much to do. We only worked in the afternoons. Then Peter [Murray] came in, and we became more and more surreptitious in our operation. Not really as a policy, but in knowing, in fact, what we liked and what we thought mattered because in a magazine, particularly a magazine like that, we couldn’t actually just produce each month what

we wanted. We had to pick up what was around, what people would send in, sort it out, and filter it. Sometimes we could cull from somebody or persuade people, and we did that. It became a nicer magazine to work on, anyway. We enjoyed it a great deal. I don't know whether you want to hear the history of *AD* or if you want sex and drugs in the sixties. [Laughter] I think I'll stop there and let Peter take over.

Peter Murray (PM): I think that we'd be absolutely horrified if we thought that so many years later [old issues of] these magazines still existed, were put in Perspex cases, and were revered in the way they are, because then we had thought everything was temporary. Things would be thrown away, and actually the whole idea of conservation was anathema to us. We hadn't expected such publications to be saved, and now I have to buy my copies of *Clip-Kit* on AbeBooks for a hundred dollars a piece. You know, we didn't expect it, and I didn't think we were in a part of a movement that had any sort of historical context because we were very much dealing with the present. My publishing started in Bristol, which was a school of architecture out in the sticks, very boring. The day that Cedric Price arrived and gave a lecture was a revelation to a whole number of us who later decamped up to London to the AA as a result of that talk. But before leaving for London, and as a result of Cedric Price's lecture, we invited Peter Cook down to Bristol. That was when we became aware of Archigram and what it was doing, and again that, too, changed what we were doing and made us resolve to try to revamp the courses we were taking at Bristol. We actually set up a group to try to change things but were told we would be sacked if we carried on, so we left, having published two copies of *Megascopie* by then. We were, I think, protesting about what we saw as the irrelevant teaching we were getting. One of the important aspects about the technology of the time was that we could print things cheaply using offset litho, because most magazines were published—and when I got to *AD*, everything was still published the same way—using hot metal printing and copper plates. It was a very complex way of putting magazines together. The advantage of litho was that you could cut things up, clip them out, stick them

down, photograph them, and print them. We did that with *Clip-Kit*: we had a plastic clip, which actually clipped the whole package together. It made the name and the process have rather more relevance. I don't think *AR* was at all quirky at the time, actually. There were two magazines: *AR* and *AD*. They were both grown-up magazines, and I for one perceived the *AR* as the stuffy one and *AD* as the lively one. I got offered a job as an associate editor of *Architectural Review*, and they said, "If you're offered the job, you will take it, won't you?" I said, "Yes, of course I will." Then that evening, Tim Street-Porter, now a very successful photographer in Los Angeles who was then a student at the Regent Street Polytechnic, rang me up and said, "Oh, there's a job going at *Architectural Design*. Why don't you go and speak to Robin." So I did, and I was offered the job as . . . I think it was technically the art editor. I then rang up the *Architectural Review*, and they were very annoyed that I had turned their offer down; the editor didn't speak to me for . . . well, he actually never spoke to me again.

Monica was a very frightening person to work for. Secretaries most days were in tears over some telling off they'd had. As Robin said, over a period, we did manage, you might say, to connive to subvert the direction of the magazine from being a purely Team 10 primer into something that had a rather different direction. When I read *AD* as a student, it was a grown-up magazine, but it became a small magazine, I think, for exactly those reasons that Robin was talking about: cost, but also the change in the topics we dealt with. They are topics that I think are very relevant now: issues about energy conservation, sustainability, and recycling—for example, the ability to drive your car on chicken shit. We had an article on that. A lot of that sort of stuff is well worth rereading.

Urtzi Grau (UG): Robin, you were saying that you were surprised at the fact that you found a lot of magazines here [in the exhibition] that were not really little magazines. And you were working for *AD*, which was not a little magazine.

RM: That's what I was saying. At a moment it became a little magazine, at a quite specific moment.

UG: But don't you think that other magazines like *Casabella* also became little magazines at a certain moment?

RM: *Casabella* never became a little magazine. It was a very important magazine, and even now it still is. *Casabella* in its curious way has had its ups and downs, but it's been very sustained. It's a straight commercial magazine. You can't call *Kenchiku Bunka* or *Japan Architect* little magazines. The question is, what sort of little magazines are we dealing with? For instance magazines like *Oz* had nothing to do with architecture. It was a lovely magazine. Lots of people read it at the time. But it's not part of this scene you're describing. Denise Scott Brown wrote an article ["Little Magazines in Architecture and Urbanism," 1968] on little magazines years and years ago, and she tried to define it. She said it fairly well, and I would stick to that definition. Or you can think of it as money. That's a useful standard to see if something should be regarded as a little magazine or not. If, in fact, it was a commercial magazine out to make money, it was not a little magazine. *AD* became a little magazine once the editorial policy changed it so that it couldn't actually survive commercially, as it were. It had to become a little magazine.

GS: Robin, what about later, when Andreas Papadakis took over in 1976?

RM: Well, then it wasn't a little magazine; there are none of those covers here [in the exhibition].

BC: Of course, there is a reason we chose each issue.

Olympia Kazi (OK): For example, we realized when we saw all the covers of *Oz* in Italy that *Oz* was something read by many of the architects who took part in the [milieu of the] little magazines of that period. There is a project by Superstudio that is exactly the same as a cover of *Oz*.

RM: Yes, it was part of sex and drugs in the sixties, and if you are going to cover that, that's a different thing. You've got a whole range of other magazines, *Gandalf's Garden* and things like that. There were hundreds of little magazines like *Oz*

around London in that day, and you're not looking for those, even if you know about them.

BC: But one thing that is important to clarify is the reasoning behind the choices. . . .

RM: I'm not trying to criticize.

BC: You are trying. But we can take it, we can defend our position. When we began working on the little magazines, in fact, one of the first texts was Denise Scott Brown on the little magazine.

RM: But *Architecture Mouvement Continuité* was not a little magazine because it is part of an architectural institution. *Kenchiku Bunka* didn't have an underground attitude. They were just recording the major modern buildings in Japan built at any one time.

BC: This is why we need to clarify what the criteria are for the magazines in the exhibition. Because while we started with the strict definition of a little magazine, we also became interested at a certain point in the way in which the little magazines influenced the big magazines. To study little magazines you need to study their effects.

UG: Are you saying that the little magazine is only a matter of economics?

RM: I'm sure you can find exceptions.

GS: You can analyze the migration of the ideas across the magazine spectrum. That's really what they've got, and I think that's really very interesting.

RM: That's not a little magazine then.

GS: But it starts with the little magazine.

UG: I am really curious about your definition, because actually I thought *AD* survived the period quite well. You survived; you didn't really have big problems. You changed the format, and you adapted to the new economic situation.

RM: You think we survived? Do you know what we were paid then? [Laughter]

UG: But *Casabella* closed for a year [1971] because they didn't have any money.

RM: Yes, because they were paying their people a living wage. They were paying retirement benefits and all that. When you worked for *AD*, however, you got no retirement [benefits]. You got absolutely nothing.

UG: I thought that was really interesting [about *AD*] not only because there was a migration of ideas but also because the magazine itself mutated completely, changed completely, in the means of production, in the topics, even in the material condition, as when the [quality of the] paper changed. But that happened also with other magazines like *Casabella*.



Michael Webb, Peter Murray, Grahame Shane, Robin Middleton

BC: Perhaps what people are not aware of is that, as Urtzi is saying, *Casabella*—and this is amazing because we consider *Casabella* to be such a stable monument of modern architecture—went completely under for over a year, and they couldn't survive. If we are talking about economics, definitely *Casabella* qualifies under those conditions, and also because of the content, which was trans-

formed radically. To think carefully about what little magazines mean you have to think about the *Casabella* of that time.

MWebb: I will endeavor to say something that Peter [Cook] might have said, but I'm saying this because in my own heart I believe it; we started *Archigram* because we felt at the time that very exciting things were happening, as indeed they were. America was going to the moon. We were looking westward, through western windows, we looked at [Buckminster] Fuller, and we looked at [Konrad] Wachsmann, who had gone to America. It seemed terribly exciting, and then we looked back at the architecture around us in London. Boring! It was so empty and lifeless, and we said that, well, this can't be. We're going to show British architecture, damn it, and look up a bit. It's going to respond, as Peter said, stand alongside, if I can quote it verbatim, "the capsules of the throwaway generation." From my own personal point of view—maybe some of the others in the group saw *Archigram* as a stepping-stone to fame and fortune and all the rest of it eventually—but I think there was a great need to put on paper all these thoughts we were having about what architecture should be in this new world. I think people in England genuinely wanted to know what the future was going to look like, and they were very excited about it.

RM: I certainly don't think anybody was concerned with fame and fortune.

MWebb: Even *Archigram*?

RM: Anywhere. In the sixties people didn't care a damn about fame or fortune.

MWebb: Yes, but Robin we were always at each other's throats. There were times when I hated Peter and Ron and Dennis, and I couldn't stand them at all. But now with the decline of the male hormone, we've fallen into the position of great love for each other. I'm thinking back to that time, you know, about how nasty we were to each other.

RM: Yes, that's because you cared about things, but not fame and fortune.

MWebb: Well, all right then—so Peter shared my own view then, and Ron, and so—all right, OK.

RM: I mean, it was an attitude of the sixties. Some people around were the people who wanted to make money, who wanted to be famous, but on the whole people didn't care. It's not the way you motivated your life, not the way you operated.

MWebb: Because if you just wanted to make money, you wouldn't edit a magazine like *Archigram* or any others.

CB: What about distribution? That seems to be another way in which little magazines differ from what we're calling mainstream magazines. How did the distribution work? You mentioned *Le Carré Bleu's* being smuggled in as a magazine that couldn't be seen in the light of day. How did that work among little magazines, and what kind of networks did these things pass through?

MWebb: Don't look at me because *Archigram* magazine is Peter basically. Without Peter, no *Archigram*.

BC: Okay, how about *Clip-Kit*? How did it get to people? How did you distribute it?

PM: I think our great advantage, both with *Megascopie* and *Clip-Kit*, was that I had spent some time as secretary of the British Architectural Students Association, called BASA, which was then quite an active body. It had links and contacts throughout all the schools of architecture in the country, so that we could distribute magazines to people quite easily. *Clip-Kit* was slightly more complex in that we had a cover with a clip, and we sent out the first six pages and then once a month, for the next six months, we sent out the rest of the pages, so that you made a complete file of information. We had salesmen in the schools. It sold for six shillings, and they got one shilling a copy as a commission to sell it. That proved quite successful. It was virtually impossible then to distribute magazines through any sort of shop in any numbers. There were a couple of bookshops in the Charing Cross Road that would take a few copies but not enough even to pay for the printing of the copies that sold. As Grahame was saying, there were a lot of other magazines like this around in London on different subjects, and the shops that took our magazines would also take hundreds of others at the same time, all on sale or return. So if you didn't

sell them, you didn't get any money. But distribution for all magazines is sort of make-or-break.

Irene Sunwoo (IS): At the AA, I know that there was a little bookshop where they actually sold little magazines.

RM: Well, *Clip-Kit* had the address of the AA.

IS: But was the AA actually selling little magazines?

GS: In the back block they had a supply shop that sold you your pens and pencils. That guy actually printed the Roneo part of our magazine, and then he sold it over the counter. But we also had a student network inside London and sold some through that, and we had friends in the other schools, from the ACC organization, so we had our little network in London. I don't think we printed two hundred copies. That was it. It was very small.

BC: How many copies for *Clip-Kit*?

PM: We did five hundred copies. I think we managed to get rid of all of them. I'm not saying we sold all of them, but we didn't have many left in the end. Our salesmen around the country took copies but never sold them and never actually sent us the money for them. They probably threw them away.

OK: How about what was going on in the rest of Europe, in Austria, France, Italy?

RM: *AD* actually was very open to ideas from anywhere. We were in contact with Hans Hollein, with Haus-Rucker-Co, with *Utopie*, and we were publishing bits and pieces from Ant Farm. So *AD* was very open. *AD* was probably the most international magazine at that time as a network for underground, or half-underground ideas.

OK: How would this exchange take form? Did you have any meetings?

RM: No, people would just arrive in the office, and we dealt with them very quickly because we didn't have much time.

BC: Are you saying that you didn't go after any material? That everything came to the office?

RM: Well, occasionally we would ask somebody to do an issue. We would ask Archigram to do a thing. But on the whole, most of the stuff just came through the letter box.

BC: How about the articles about the United States?

RM: Well, the Eameses issue was Geoffrey Holroyd. Geoffrey and the Smithsons were interested in the Eameses because Peter Smithson said nobody in Europe seemed to know about Charles [and Ray] Eames. Which was amazing, because they did. It's just that Peter didn't think they did. Bucky Fuller was already tied up with *AD*, and Bucky used to send us stuff and people regularly. That was basically on the whole through John McHale, who was Bucky's point of contact in London. Bucky wouldn't see anybody unless John McHale had said he could. That's how Bucky Fuller came to meet Banham. With Banham's *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* [1960], he [Bucky] came into the last chapter, because John McHale said it had to be there. It wasn't in the dissertation. So that's how Bucky came about.

GS: What about the Venturis [Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown]?

RM: I think the Venturis were only published once in *AD*.

BC: This is an interesting question because the other day Rem Koolhaas came through the gallery, and one of the things that surprised him was the absence of Venturi and Scott Brown. They are in some magazines over there, but not as much as you would have expected from his point of view.

RM: Well, the Venturis weren't doing work that was interesting.

BC: *So Learning from Las Vegas* [1972] didn't mean anything to you?

RM: Banham had done that, in a way. They had a big book. You couldn't compete with that book, even if you wanted to.

BC: But you could review the book, write an article.

RM: It was reviewed, a book review.

BC: Peter, could you say something about your travels through the United States in search of material for *AD*?

PM: Yes, I went to the West Coast, probably after Robin had left. So I did a bit of digging around for information there. I went to Pacific High School and linked up with Lloyd Kahn and the *Whole Earth Catalog* people. So that was the alternative dome lifestyle

RM: Were Stewart Brand and Lloyd Kahn in *AD* before you left?

PM: They were, yes.

RM: Stewart Brand would send us the stuff; he used to telephone. We had connections. The telephone used to work wonders.

PM: And the AA members' room was great.

OK: A personal question: who were you hoping was reading you?

RM: I don't think we thought about that. We were just enjoying what we were doing, and putting it together.

OK: Would you consider that characteristic maybe of what we were trying to define as littleness?

RM: Yes, could be.

GS: If you just talked in the bar, sooner or later somebody would come and say to you, "Well, do you want to write about this show in Paris that you are talking about?" There was a place where the things could go around and be picked up. And, for me, there was the network. I think that Alvin Boyarsky crystallized the network later in terms of the summer school, and then the AA, when it went independent, relied very heavily on the *AD* network to bring students in and to survive Maggie Thatcher's attacks.

RM: *AD* actually used a lot of students.

GS: Oh, yes. Well, it went both ways.

RM: There was a tremendous interaction between the AA and *AD*.

PM: Each of the magazines I directed I saw as a part of, as you said, a network. Actually if you looked at these smaller magazines, they were linking up with people around either the country or the world, [people] who had similar views and ideas. *Megascope* for me started it. I was reading it the other day. That was one of the nice things about *AD*, there were all sorts of people out in the middle of the Nevada desert who would be sending us stuff that they were doing. We did feel that we were a hub for a whole series of ideas.

MWebb: Hence the "gram" in *Archigram*—the idea of mailing something to someone and getting a response.

BC: How about the little magazines of the historical avant-garde—were you thinking about them or had they no relevance?

PM: I wasn't, but I expect Robin was.

RM: No, not at all.

GS: I was. I knew about the AA magazines. They had had these incredible debates, and the AA had been the first school that became a modern school. Corb would come there and had published stuff. They had the student revolt against the leaders of the AA who were Beaux-Arts; I knew about that tradition. Leo De Syllas, the father of Justin De Syllas, who was my coeditor, was one of that group. So we had a direct contact with someone from the 1930s who had written for *Focus*, the radical AA student magazine of that period, and we could see this magazine in the library files.

RM: One knew about *L'Esprit Nouveau* and things like that, but they were no influence at all. Irrelevant.

BC: But there were clearly influences of other magazines. For example, Peter Cook says he was looking at *Frühlicht*; *Oppositions* was looking at avant-garde journals, even republishing them, archiving them; and *AD* looked at Constructivism.



William Menking, Peter Murray

RM: We got all the magazines from Russia; we had an exchange. *AD* had an exchange with just about every other architectural magazine in the world. So we got everything, however boring: Turkey, Japan, Russia, everything. Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Romania, we got all of it. Most of the Russian stuff you would flip through and just chuck it in the bin. There was nothing in it.

GS: But you published Camilla Grey, right?

RM: Yes, right. O. A. Shvidkovsky did an issue, too. Shvidkovsky actually brought out new stuff from Russia with us. It was all so badly written we could barely publish it. But it had some pictures. At least that was new information that came directly from Russia. He was in charge of some magazine in Russia.

MWebb: Sometimes the conversation starts to sound like a seminar on starting your own magazine, and I wanted to ask a question of the audience. Having come here, do you feel inspired to formulate a new magazine? And if so, what reason do you have for doing it? Does this evening, in fact, put you off? Were you intending to do something, and now thank you very much? Is there anyone?

Jessica Russell (JR): Coming from an outside perspective, and not being involved and not knowing much about this topic, [for me] this is like a window on a period in time. You've talked about little revolutions taking place and studying under teachers who were reactionary. Do you think at that defining point at the end of this time line, we might find a lack of that going on in student bodies?

GS: Well, what do you think?

JR: I don't know, I was in utero at that point. But I guess a lot of the points you've talked about are of interest for everyone today. If small magazines reflect such big ideas, what happened to the small magazines after that point?

RM: I think partly the problem is that you can't imagine how circumscribed architecture was at that time. The possibility of doing much in architecture was minimal—certainly in Europe, less

so in America. But even here, cost was immensely important. You had regulations and minimum standards for everything. All the public housing, and that's what a lot of the building in Europe was, even up to that period. It was still the post-World War II period, and there was no room for expansion, for new ideas. There just weren't the clients. I know there were grand houses going up in America or in France, but generally architecture was a miserable profession to be in.

JR: But it's interesting that the finiteness of the profession gave birth to a whole set of ideas.

BC: Exactly.

RM: And when the world got richer, that changed a whole ethos. You know there was a lot of exuberance in the sixties, as I said. We didn't care about fame and money, but one opened up and enjoyed oneself, and the whole world did change: not architecture much, but the way of living and people's expectations of what they could do and what they could become, how they could use themselves, how they could discover themselves. There wasn't as much class rigidity as one would imagine. Pop music, of course, was what actually did that.

Audience member: And the birth of pop music informs some of the ideas that came out of *AD*?

RM: Yes, somebody was doing some work on *AD* the other day. He came to me, and he said that it was amazing reading *AD*, how many references there were to music. He said, "All the Velvet Underground, the Beatles, and everything, it's there." I never thought of it, but I can see it germinated much of our thinking and what we wanted to do.

GS: A lot of the [music] groups came out of art schools and architecture schools like Pete Mason, who was from the Poly. And The Who. Pink Floyd.

Daniel Lopez-Perez (DLP): One of the differences that we were encountering between Europe and the East Coast particularly in the States is that during a recession was actually when architects and

magazines were being most speculative because, in fact, building industries and practice weren't taking people's time. Did you sense this difference? How would you reconcile the fact that during recessions, particularly in New York, there was [such] a proliferation of this speculative activity?

RM: Well, obviously during the period of recession you've got more time to play.

PM: One of the other aspects is that we were looking at different ways of doing things that might actually solve the problems that were not being solved. Particularly in *Clip-Kit*—and I think that's part of *Archigram*'s view—we'd look at technology transfer as a way of solving construction problems, a way of building things to a higher quality, a way to produce shapes and forms that weren't being done at the time. It's very interesting to look at how bits that we found from the front pages of *Time* magazine or whatever turned up three or four years later in the Centre Pompidou. There was a whole network searching for different ways of building things and finding alternative ways of doing it.

RM: There was certainly a tremendous belief at the time in the possibilities of technology. You could solve problems in the world not by building things but solving the problems of life. You'd take the generator to the woods and . . .

DLP: This also goes back to one of the arguments that we encountered time and time again. Some say that what they were publishing or drawing was never really meant to be built, and others would say, as you're describing now, that their intention was precisely that. Was their intention even discussed?

RM: Ron Herron would never have expected his moving cities to be built. It was just an idea. It was a game of liberating yourself to thinking in a different way about architecture.

PM: That was one of the things that slightly disenchanted me about *Archigram*. It was the fact that a lot of it was pure idea, not something to be built. Although Cedric Price's own ability to get buildings built was limited, he did actually in the end manage to build his *Fun Palace* [1961-64] through

the hands and eyes of Richard Rogers and his team. We didn't publish all this stuff thinking that they were just fun ideas. We actually did think that they would lead to a better world in some way. I guess I've always seen myself as a reporter and a writer. *Archigram* were actually designers and architects working through ideas, whereas I was finding things from other people and really reporting on them and circulating this network, which is something I still do.

GS: I think that the "paper architecture" discussion comes a lot later with postmodernism and has to do with the whole idea of luxury, wealth, and decadence, which wasn't present in the 1960s. There was an excitement and energy and a directness about what we were trying to do that had little to do with the kind of self-reflection that comes later.

MWebb: If you look at how Peter Cook's mind works, the brilliant mind he has, you'd see that he would get an idea and hardly had the patience to see it through. He'd be full of that idea for about three days, and then he'd be off on to something else. That sort of mind enabled him to produce *Archigram*. No one would wish that *Archigram* hadn't existed, because I do believe it gave the world a lot. His is not the sort of mind that has the patience really to see a building through and suffer with it and get it done the way he wanted it to be. So when Peter did the *Kunsthaus Graz*, he did it in conjunction with another architect, Colin Fournier, who day to day suffered mightily, making sure the building actually happened. Peter would never have had the patience for that. But if he had, he wouldn't be Peter, and *Archigram* wouldn't have happened. I really think that's important to say.

PM: That's a revelation, because Peter Cook was my fifth-year tutor at the AA, and he wrote my final report, in which he said something like "I'm very relieved that Peter Murray is moving into the world of architectural communications because it's clear he doesn't have the patience to carry out long-term projects." I'm very glad to hear that now, although I took it rather hard at the time.

Mark Wigley (MWigley): So finally the little magazine theory has to do with attention deficit disorders? [Laughter] I'm struck by the fact that Spider

[Michael Webb] is sitting next to the *Archigram* bubble and Peter is guarding his bubble. [Laughter] Guarding also the reputation of their magazines. I think the fragility of these things is somehow also important, the fragility of the actual material and the fragility of the ideas, which is key to the intention of little magazines. Because on the one hand, as you've said, the schools are not academic enough today to sponsor a rebellious generation, but I think it's also true to say that this kind of fragility is quite hard to achieve now. One of the paradoxes of the so-called digital age is that everything is somehow permanent, everything is auto-archiving, everything becomes an instant monument. At the beginning of the discussion, there was almost embarrassment about the fact that these damn things have survived, and you find yourself here talking about them. I remember when the *Archigram* show was put up in a Soho gallery not so many years ago, and Michael was very angry that they put things in frames. You insisted that these drawings were never meant to be in frames because they were never meant to be on walls; they were meant for the moment or they were meant for the magazine.

MWebb: Reyner Banham wrote an article about that, saying that he loves *Archigram* drawings, but as soon as they no longer smell of fresh Zip-A-Tone, which was used for color overlay—it's like fresh bread that's been baked in the oven—as soon as the smell is gone, somehow the drawing is finished, that it should be discarded.

MWigley: With *Archigram*, in the moment of baking the thing, like the first issue that had the potato stamp on it, it's already fragile, even from the very first moment. And *Clip-Kit* falls apart. The name of the magazine is the name of the device that was used to try to hold it together, because it so easily falls apart. Was that in the head while making these things? That it was like making almost nothing?

RM: Discarding things was part of the process of living at that time. You never kept anything. You never saved anything. Ron Herron used to tear the pages out of the magazines he wanted. He'd chuck the rest of it away. He had a marginal number of books. It wasn't that he wasn't interested, but he didn't want to collect books. He just kept the bits he wanted to refer to, and that was

all. All of us just lived. We didn't hoard things, keep things. People would wear a shirt once and chuck it away. It really was a period where you didn't build a life of objects around you, ever.

MWigley: So the person making a little magazine, like the magazine itself, is not going to be a monument?

RM: It's the same thing. It was a pattern of life at the time.

MWigley: Perhaps that kind of antimonumentality is more difficult today, because the mechanisms, the industry of monuments, are just ruthlessly efficient with everything, absolutely everything. Even if we were to make a little magazine today, it would be monumentalized. You'd be self-branded as a little magazine maker, so it would instantly not be little. It again raises a question: was *Archigram* even conceived of as a little magazine?

MWebb: It started off as a broadsheet, just like a newspaper. You bung out a newspaper as soon as you've read it.

MWigley: So a really little magazine is not even little?

RM: It wasn't a magazine format, was it? If you look at the first one . . .

MWebb: The only requirement for being included in early *Archigram* was not a shared view of technology or society, but that you were weird and you were doing odd things. If you look at the first issue of *Archigram*, you find the Christian Weirdies. It was sort of an illuminated manuscript of a cow barn or something. It was in there because it was weird. No other reason.

IS: I also thought it was interesting that throughout the show one could see how all the different magazines have very specific formats, which are very unconventional. In that sense, even if you were looking at projects that were conventional in an architectural sense, you were also trying to go a little bit forward in terms of actual publishing, with envelopes or folded objects and things like that. Was that a very specific reaction as well in your criticisms of architectural publishing, that it wasn't formally very interesting?



Beatriz Colomina, Craig Buckley, Grahame Shane, Peter Murray, Robin Middleton, Michael Webb

PM: We certainly wanted to try and do something that was different in terms of format, to reinvent the format. But *AD* was printed very conventionally in the cheapest way of stapling we could do, as was *Megascope*.

GS: But who did the design for the covers?

PM: Of *AD*? Well, Adrian George designed the logo.

RM: He also did a lot of the covers. He did the Japanese robots fucking. He did the Christmas one. Philip Castle did some. They were art students.

IS: But was it a very conscious decision to move away from architectural photography and to bring in other modes?

RM: At that stage we weren't publishing many buildings, and we didn't want to show off the buildings we were publishing because we were publishing them as a part of a residue.

GS: You did develop some very, very beautiful covers. They were created by art students, and then there was a whole crossover to the art side, which I guess the AA was involved in as well.

RM: No, if anything, most of the covers came from the Royal College [of Art].

GS: I have a story for you, to answer Irene's question. Dennis Crompton once told me a wonderful story about the cutout, you know the *Archigram* fold-up issue of the city [1964]. It took them three weekends of sitting in Peter Cook's kitchen—all of them, Warren Chalk included, not Mike, he was out the country. Every *Archigrammer* had a quota of pages to cut out so that they could be folded up. Then the printer put them in. But they had to actually do it by hand.

RM: They did them up in the Taylor Woodrow office.

GS: So it was actually a handicraft. Some of the stuff, the most famous stuff, was actually done by hand.

DLP: How would you describe this disappearance of the traditional project—the idea that the architect could actually be a kind of broader cultural agent?

RM: Basically because we didn't like most of the architecture being built. It's as simple as that.

DLP: You suddenly started to substitute architecture with everything else, everything that mattered to you?

MWebb: I think there was a hidden agenda, too. Architecture such as was being dreamed of in our magazines was unattainable, unachievable by the standard client-professional architect setup. You needed governments to do it. You needed huge resources. Look at *Plug-in City*; that would take the resources of a whole country. There was the implied suggestion that it was a different world.

RM: The only architect in England at that time who seriously thought to build something of inter-

est was Cedric Price. There was nobody else with any ideas at all, and Cedric wanted to build, he really wanted to build, not just produce an idea. So Cedric never had a little magazine.

PM: We were his little magazines, weren't we?

RM: Yes, we were in a way. But he could say that was irrelevant to him. He actually wanted to build.

PM: That's true, although what we did was very important for him. I did a whole series in *AD*, I can't remember exactly how many, about twelve issues, with Cedric Price supplements. He did see that as a very important part of what he was doing. He actually wasn't very geared up to get buildings done at all.

RM: Not all his things were to be built. A lot of them were ideas, arrangements, concepts, and things like that, ways of changing lifestyles.

BC: It seems as though Cedric Price was the hero for all of you. You were all interested in *Archigram*, but then Peter Murray says that ultimately he was disappointed because they were not actually interested in building. You look at students' journals, and everybody, all the heroes of that period, seem to be up for criticism as far as they are concerned (Peter Cook, the Smithsons, . . .), but when you get to Cedric Price, he was untouchable then and is still untouchable now. Is he the hero for all of this generation?

PM: I think he changed fundamentally the way that we saw, and the way buildings were put together, what their purpose was, and their longevity as well.

RM: And whether buildings were necessary.

GS: The beautiful thing about Cedric is that he was about time. It was very hard to get hold of his ideas initially because he was a socialist and was so critical of the welfare state, owing to its poor delivery. At first, you'd think he was a reactionary, and then you realized, well, actually, he thinks it could be done so much better if there were better information systems, more flexible systems,

that could accommodate time. It was not just throwaway, it was the whole thing about time that was really, really important. I guess *Archigram* was in that same time frame.

PM: To go back to Bucky Fuller; one of the things that really disappeared off the scene was the World Design Science Decade, which in terms of the stuff we were publishing later about energy consumption, was a very important initiative that just all fell apart when nobody started worrying about oil for the next twenty years or so.

RM: I think that the problem was partly communication, too. Most of those [Fuller] books were unreadable, although Bucky could talk for four hours at a stretch.

GS: He came to our first student group and spoke for twenty-four hours.

RM: He could not stop. Most of what was written, he didn't write it all. Most of the stuff at World Science, were things you couldn't and didn't read. Although you believed they were like getting an installment of the Bible, you didn't read [any of] it.

PM: I think Cedric was also his own worst enemy in terms of communication.

RM: Yes, but he wasn't so long-winded.

GS: He was a lot wittier.

PM: Yes, but like Bucky, he made up words, which people couldn't understand, and he actually thought you needed to find things really difficult to make them worth while. I saw part of my role as at least trying to interpret what he was saying for a wider audience.

RM: He used a minimalist approach to language, but somehow the keywords were gone. You had to interpolate.

BC: Thank you so much for this evening of interpolation.