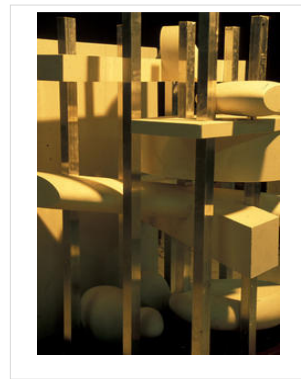
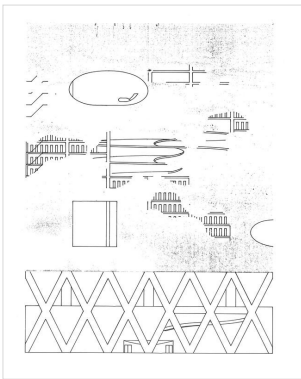


Communiqué / press release

For immediate distribution

THE CCA EXHIBITION, *TRÈS GRANDE BIBLIOTHÈQUE (VERY BIG LIBRARY)*, REVEALS THE MATERIALS PRODUCED BY OMA IN RESPONSE TO AN INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTURE COMPETITION TO DESIGN THE BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE

On view from 15 May until 9 September 2012, the exhibition presents a major project by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture, (OMA).



OMA. Conceptual drawing of the façade of the Very Big Library.
1989 © Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA).

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Montréal, 15 May 2012 — The Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) presents ***Très Grande Bibliothèque (Very Big Library)***, on view in the museum's Octagonal Gallery **from 15 May until 9 September 2012**, the exhibition, curated by Rem Koolhaas, and Clément Blanchet of OMA, presents materials produced by OMA, in response to an international competition launched by France's then president, François Mitterrand, in 1989 to design the new Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Conceived as a super-library that would combine national collections in one building, Paris's Bibliothèque nationale de France was the last of the "Grands travaux" of the architectural program initiated by Mitterrand in 1981. The project sought to bring together the production of sound, image, and printed archives dating back to 1945. This vast project included five entities: a public consultation space for audio and video archives, a space for recent acquisitions, a study library, a catalogue library; and a scientific research library that would also integrate information systems for consulting remote documents. The building is located on the east side of Paris, in an abandoned industrial zone along the banks of the Seine and across from the Ministry of Finance and the Palais Omnisports de Paris-Bercy.

The proposal from OMA—the Rotterdam based architectural firm founded and led by the Dutch architect and Pritzker Prize winner, Rem Koolhaas—proposed a 100m tall cube to be imposed on the banks of the Seine.

The concept of the OMA proposal resided in the notion of the library spaces being excavated as voids from a 'solid cube' containing the archives. This concept offered great architectural freedom, with the public spaces (or voids) being liberated from the constraints of a predetermined form or structure.

The OMA's team that included Rem Koolhaas, Art Zaayer, Xaveer de Geyter, Georges Heintz, Heike Lohmann, Alex Wall, Christopher Cornubert and Yushi Uehara, Petra Blaisse, Marja van der Burgh, in collaboration with the landscape architect Yves Brunier, Cecil Balmond from Ove Arup & Partners and the modelmakers Frans Parthesius, Vincent de Rijk and Bart Guldemond.

The architectural competition launched by Mitterrand captured the diversity of architectural practices in 1989. This included a finalist proposal by British Architect and fellow Pritzker Prize winner James Stirling, and the subject of the CCA's 2012 Main Galleries exhibition, *Notes from the Archive: James Frazer Stirling*.

CONTEXT OF THE COMPETITION

The international competition began with a first call for bidders, entered by 240 teams. The jury, led by the architect I. M. Pei, author of the Louvre Pyramid selected 20 teams to develop detailed proposals a project within a few months. Of the shortlisted teams, four proposals were presented to François Mitterrand, who ultimately selected Dominique Perrault's project as the winner.

The jury did not select the project by OMA, finding it too abstract and decontextualized. The OMA proposal received an honourable mention from the jury, opening it up for public consideration. A few years later, the proposal garners more sustained attention with its inclusion in the OMA publication, *S,M,L,XL* in 1995. The scheme was also key to Koolhaas' essay on "bigness", which analyzes how the gigantic scale of certain contemporary buildings disrupts relationships between program, façade and context, countering the unity of form and function sought by modernist architecture.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

This exhibition presents material from the competition entry by OMA led by Rem Koolhaas. Drawings, diagrams and conceptual sketches reveal a design process. Through the use of early 3D software, digital renderings explored the manipulation of the five interior volumes.

Two plaster models, created several years later, render the Very Big Library in positive and negative. While the first model shows the mass of the building and façades, the second materializes the interior voids, revealing its spatial complexity.

EXHIBITION DESIGN

The CCA curatorial team developed the design of the exhibition. Graphic design was created by Montréal designer Tamzyn Berman of Atelier Pastille Rose.

ABOUT THE CURATORS

Rem Koolhaas founded OMA in 1975 together with Elia and Zoe Zenghelis and Madelon Vriesendorp. He graduated from the Architectural Association in London and in 1978 published *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*. In 1995, his book *S,M,L,XL* summarized the work of OMA in "a novel about architecture." He heads the work of both OMA and AMO, the research branch of OMA, operating in areas beyond the realm of architecture such as media, politics, renewable energy and fashion. Koolhaas has won several international awards including the Pritzker Architecture Prize in 2000 and the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the 2010 Venice Biennale. Koolhaas is a professor at Harvard University where he conducts the Project on the City.

Clément Blanchet is a French architect, teacher and critic, actively practicing in the fields of architectural theory, urbanism, and cultural investigations. In 2011, he was appointed Director of OMA AMO France. He has co-authored "Memorandum La Defense", with Rem Koolhaas, a manifesto about OMA's French projects so far. Clément is a of the Architectural school of Versailles. He currently teaches at the University of Copenhagen.

THE CCA

The CCA is an international research centre and museum founded in 1979 on the conviction that architecture is a public concern. Based on its extensive Collection, the CCA is a leading voice in advancing knowledge, promoting public understanding, and widening thought and debate on architecture, its history, theory, practice, and role in society. Visit cca.qc.ca for more information.



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