

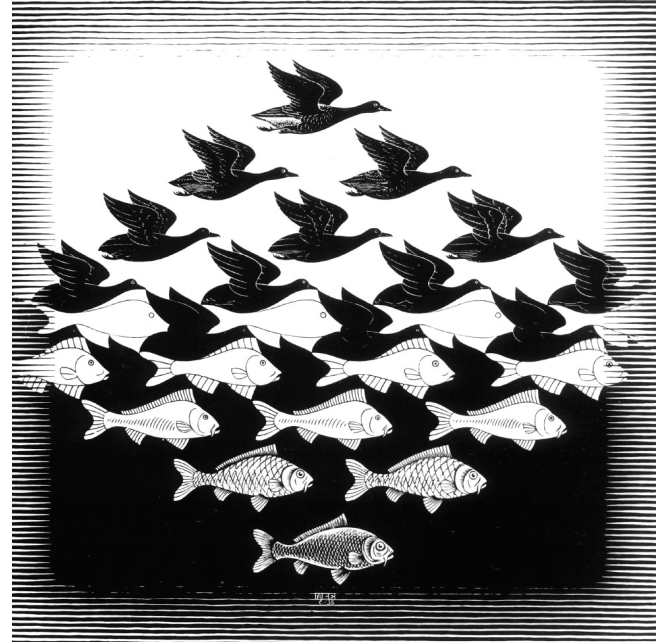
ADAPTIVE RE-MODULATION: MARCEL BREUER'S US EMBASSY IN THE HAGUE, NETHERLANDS

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The United States Embassy in The Hague, Netherlands, designed by Marcel Breuer and completed in 1959, is no longer viable post 9/11 for security reasons and thus has been decommissioned and is being renovated for contemporary use. *Innovation* and *renovation* share the suffix *-novation*, which means “to make new” or “to re-new,” so innovation and renovation are just ways to indicate a doubling of a revitalizing engagement. Proposing a 50% addition to the existing building, the studio will explore a radical renewal of this modernist building, proposing alternative uses for the Embassy that consider the multitude of issues and exchanges its political origins expose, pushing the boundaries of an adaptive re-use of the values that an architectural artifact always enacts. To engage these matters we will delve first into the Breuer archives, and then into the building itself when we visit The Hague, as well as Rotterdam, Delft, and Amsterdam, October 4-9.





LEFT: Marcel Breuer, Facade of US Embassy in The Hague (1959-61). RIGHT: M.C. Escher, Sky and Water II (1938). BELOW: Marcel Breuer, Interior Courtyard, US Embassy in The Hague (1959-61).

PROGRAM

In the Cold-War postwar period in which this American Embassy was built, along with many others by significant modern architects, there was a propagandistic initiative to temper the bureaucratic image with one of hospitality. Auditoriums, libraries and galleries were included in these buildings to entice local residents to visit the Embassy on a regular basis: to read and view and watch the very latest art, books and magazines, and movies from America. In various ways the actual current plans to reuse the building for a 50 room hotel and a new home for the museum of the Dutch artist M. C. Escher resonates with this mixture of a commercialized cultural hospitality, the circulations and mixings of local and non-local culture, residents and non-residents. If Escher's etchings intensify the unsettling of habitation through the relational interplay of architectural elements and spaces, new modes to operate on elements and spaces may be found to engage the temporal uncanny "residency" experienced as a non-resident in a hotel or a museum. We will be exploring this programmatic co-incidence of hotel and museum, and as an augmentation to these two programs, there is the option to consider other programs relevant to the local, national, and global questions of inhabitation in the Netherlands (the refugee situation, nationalism, sustainability, among others).

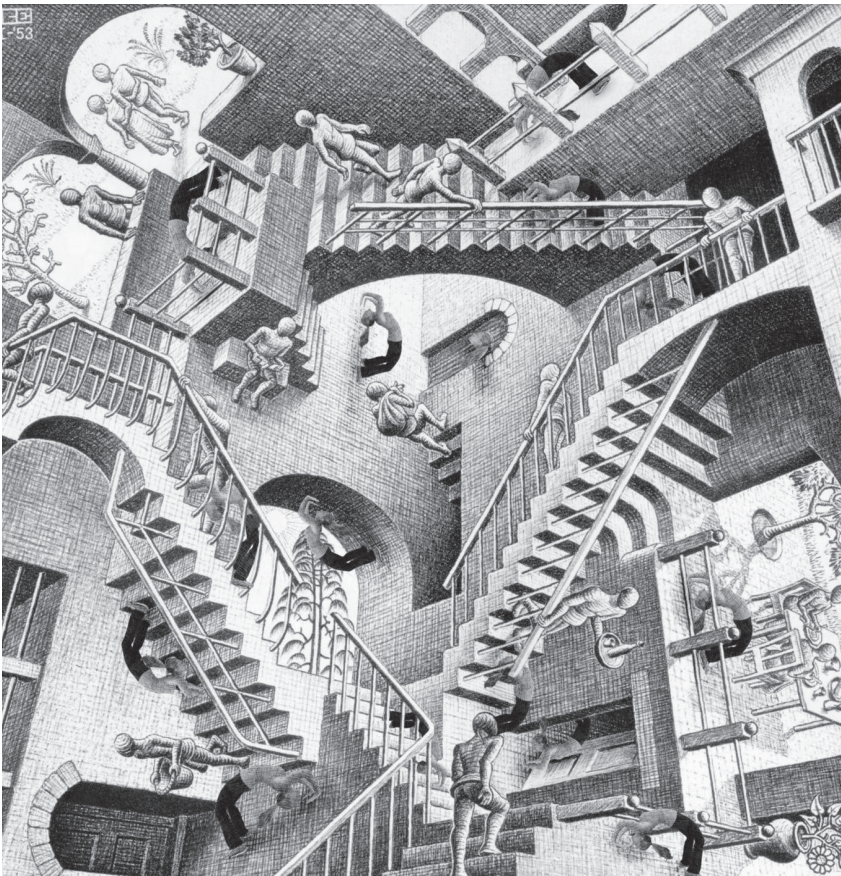


LEFT: Marcel Breuer, Library in US Embassy in The Hague (1959-61). RIGHT: Marcel Breuer, Auditorium in US Embassy in The Hague (1959-61).



LEFT: M.C. Escher, *Relativity* (1953). RIGHT: Marcel Breuer, *St. Francis de Sales*, Muskegon, MI (1967). BELOW LEFT: Marcel Breuer, *Whitney Museum of American Art*, New York, NY (1963). BELOW RIGHT: Marcel Breuer, *Central Atlanta Library*, Atlanta, GA (1977-80).

Breuer and Escher, both political refugees during the war, might seem an unlikely pairing, but the coincidences between them may be illuminated. Both developed techniques of iterative, recursive, and transformative plays of identity through modular geometries, dynamical reciprocal formations of mass and suspension, spatial re-orientations of vertical and horizontal structure, and 2-D inscribed surfaces inflecting into 3-D volumes. The studio will explore how performative play between 2-D and 3-D surface-volumes might be developed both internally and externally to engage the private and public inhabitation of both the hotel and the museum.



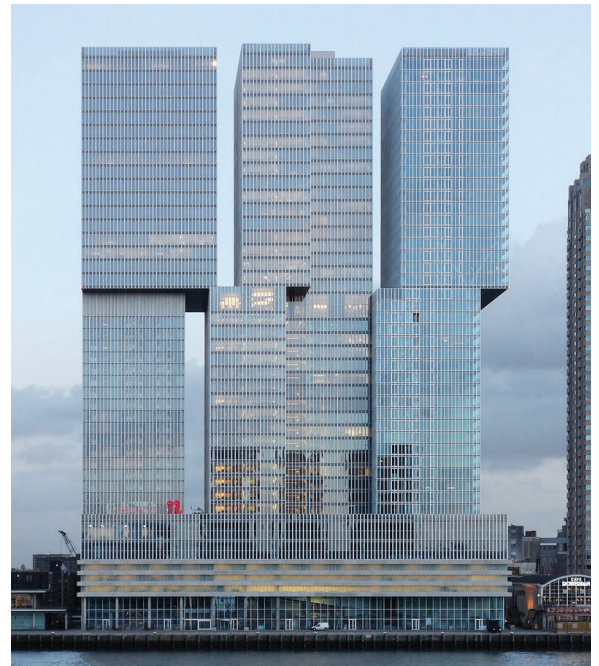


ABOVE LEFT: Marcel Breuer, Becton Engineering and Applied Science Center at Yale (1970). ABOVE RIGHT: Marcel Breuer, Facade of IBM Building , Boca Raton, Florida (1968-1972). BELOW: Marcel Breuer, Pirelli Tire Building (1970).

RE: MODULATION

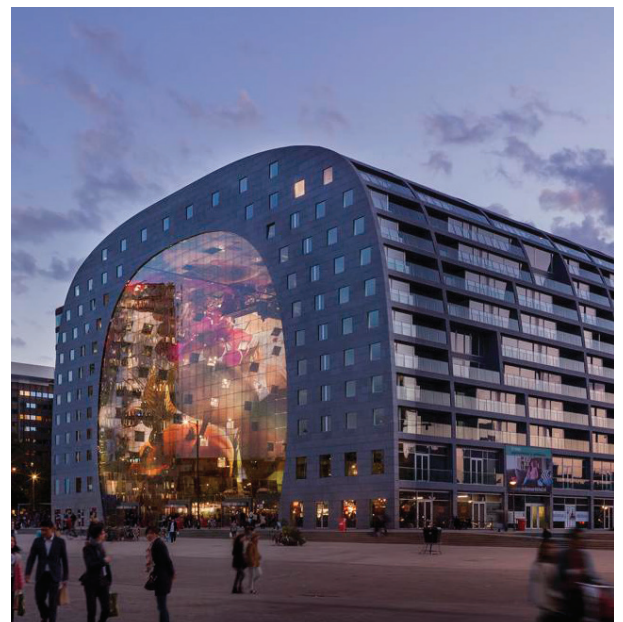
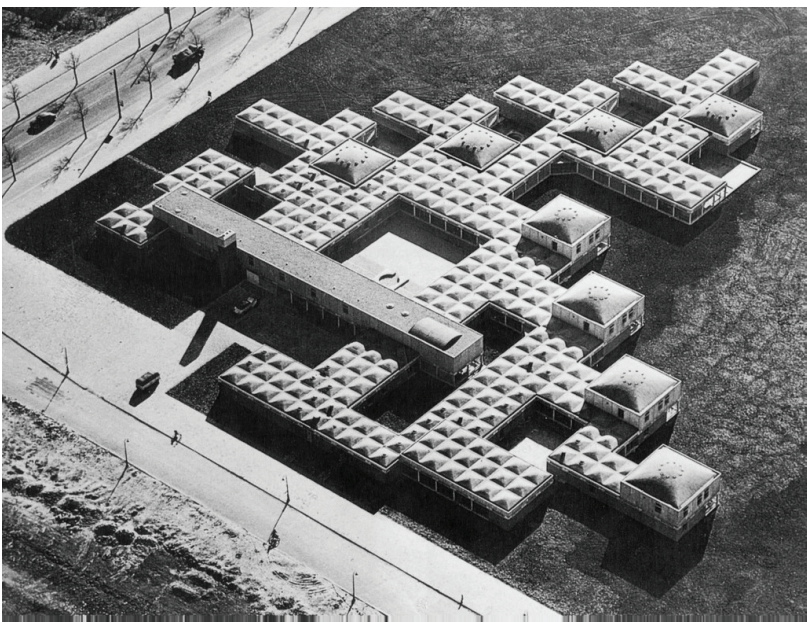
The latter effect has been characterized by the architectural historian Barry Bergdoll as Breuer’s “Heavy Lightness.” In contradistinction to modernist glass building of that time, Breuer experimented with innovative concrete and masonry forms of construction, engaging iterative forms of modular geometric patterning in low and high relief. Considering the renewed interest in innovative adaptive use of modules in architecture today, this studio will explore the dynamic and iterative modulation not only of tectonic modules and structural modules, but the underlying assumptions regarding the modularity of rooms, of programs, of civic identities and urban formations. In other words, we will be rethinking and reworking the underlying assumptions of the politics of the module today and how it may evolve.





STUDIO TRAVEL

Following a series of background lectures and transformative exercises regarding the formal and political context of the building, we will travel to the Netherlands in October to tour the building along with a number of other crucial Dutch projects from Hendrik Berlage, Rem Koolhaas/OMA, MVRDV, Ben Van Berkel & Caroline Bos/UNStudio, Aldo Van Eyck and others in Amsterdam, The Hague, Delft, and Rotterdam.



ABOVE LEFT: OMA, Kunsthall, Rotterdam (1987-92). ABOVE RIGHT: OMA, De Rotterdam, Rotterdam (1997-2013). BOTTOM LEFT: Aldo van Eyck, Children's Orphanage, Amsterdam (1957-60). BOTTOM RIGHT: MVRDV, Markthal, Rotterdam (2014).

SCHEDULE FALL 2019

Week 1

Wednesday, Sept. 4 Lottery Selection
Thursday, Sept. 5 First Studio Session / The Hague Introduction

Week 2

Monday, Sept. 9 Design Desk Crits
Thursday, Sept. 12 Talk: Bergdoll / Design Desk Crits

Week 3

Monday, Sept. 16 Design Desk Crits
Thursday, Sept. 19 Breuer building visit(s)

Week 4

Monday, Sept. 23 Design Desk Crits
Thursday, Sept. 26 Final Travel Preparations / Pre-Travel Pin-Up

Week 5

Monday, Sept. 30 Design Desk Crits
Thursday, Oct. 3 Travel to Amsterdam

Week 6

Monday, Oct. 7 Studio Travel / In Delft
Thursday, Oct. 10 No Class

Week 7

Monday, Oct. 14 Design Desk Crits
Thursday, Oct. 17 Midterm Review Rehearsal Pin-Up

Week 8

Monday, Oct. 21 Design Desk Crits
Thursday, Oct. 24 Midterm Review

Week 9

Monday, Oct. 28 Design Desk Crits
Thursday, Oct. 31 Design Desk Crits

Week 10

Monday, Nov. 4 No Class - Election Day Holiday
Thursday, Nov. 7 Design Desk Crits

Week 11

Monday, Nov. 11 Design Desk Crits
Thursday, Nov. 14 Design Desk Crits

Week 12

Monday, Nov. 18 Design Desk Crits
Thursday, Nov. 21 Design Desk Crits

Week 13

Monday, Nov. 25 Design Desk Crits
Thursday, Nov. 28 No Class - Thanksgiving

Week 14

Monday, Dec. 2 Final Review Rehearsal Pin-Up
Thursday, Dec. 5 Design Desk Crits

Week 15

Monday, Dec. 9 Design Desk Crits
Wednesday, Dec. 11 Final Review