

BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE, PARIS:  
THE INTERPRETATION OF ARCHITECTURAL SPACE  
AS VOID

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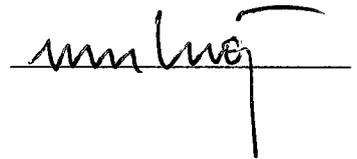
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## **ABSTRACT**

# **BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE, PARIS: THE INTERPRETATION OF ARCHITECTURAL SPACE AS VOID**

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This study is a critical inquiry into the reinterpretation of the architectural project, *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, designed by Rem Koolhaas, and submitted to the 1989 competition in Paris. Although, it only received an honorable mention and had never been built, the project inherits, by its nature, an architectural quality that enables an intellectual interpretation. It also has a significance of revealing Koolhaas' intellectual premise that tends to explore a "new freedom" for architecture.

In this study, the critical textual analysis of the work is taken as a rewriting activity that extends the work itself or "double" the work, beyond the simple linguistic analyses of the architectural object. Therefore, rather than a simple analysis, a "mere description" and explanation, this study develops a strategy of "doubling", explored within the frame of Manfredo Tafuri's act of criticism.

The theoretical foundation of this strategy lies in Tafuri's own critical approach, applied on two specific works. These works are Giovanni Battista Piranesi's etchings; *Carceri*, Plate no. IX. and *Prima Parte, Carcere Oscura*. They construct the unique

examples of this study, since they are both analyzed within Tafuri's particular frame of criticism and may reveal a complex list of terms. Through a comprehensive analysis of Tafuri's critical operation, this study unveils a Tafurian terminology, and uses it for its own activity of "doubling" *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*.

The comprehensive analysis reveals two major keywords: the "ecstatic transfiguration" and the "oval eye". Through a destructive process that suggests a decomposition of the object into pieces and a recomposition of these pieces in a different order, these two keywords provide the necessary tools of this study's critical strategy. First tool, "ecstatic transfiguration", contributes the strategy to decompose *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* into its major architectural elements: namely solid, void, interval, and enclosure. Later, by the second tool, the "oval eye", these elements are reframed and interpreted as autonomous elements. Finally, the strategy, with a recovering proposal, recomposes those liberated elements in a way that the hidden ideas in the suggested spaces of autonomous elements are reinvented.

Therefore, by drawing upon the process of "doubling", this study mediates between Koolhaas' own production process, and the Tafurian method of "critical act" wherein our proposal for the reassessment of the process of architectural production is embedded.

**Keywords:** Tafurian "critical act", "doubling", "ecstatic transfiguration", "oval eye", solid, void, interval and enclosure.

## ÖZ

# BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE, PARIS: MİMARİ MEKANIN BOŞLUK KAVRAMI İLE YENİDEN YORUMLANMASI

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Bu çalışma, 1989 yılında Paris'te düzenlenen bir yarışma için Rem Koolhaas tarafından tasarlanan mimari öneri, *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*'ın yeniden yorumlanması yönünde eleştirel bir yaklaşımı içermektedir. Mansiyon ödülü alan bu proje hiçbir zaman hayata geçirilememiştir, ancak, Koolhaas'ın mimarlığa "yeni bir özgürlük" getirmeyi amaçlayan entellektüel yaklaşımını sunması ve kendi doğasında varolan mimari özellikleri bu projeyi incelemeye değer kılmaktadır.

Bu çalışmada, yapıta dair geliştirilen eleştirel analiz, mimari nesnenin basit dilbilim çözümlerinin ötesinde, yapıtı daha kapsamlı kılan yeni bir metin üretmeyi; aynı zamanda da yapıtın metinsel kopyasını üretmeyi amaçlar. "Düz tanım" ve açıklama ile sonuçlanan basit bir çözümlenmeden öte, analiz Manfredo Tafuri'nin eleştiri metodunun ana hatlarından yararlanan bir stratejiyi esas alır.

Strateji, teorik temellini, Tafuri'nin Giovanni Battista Piranesi'ye ait iki yapıtı, *Carceri-Plate no. IX.* ve *Prima Parte-Carcere Oscura*, eleştirirken uyguladığı metodu

inceleyerek kurar. Tezin, bu yapıtları yeniden ele almasının nedeni, Tafuri'nin eleştiri metodunu kavrayarak bir terminoloji üretmek ve bu terminolojiyi daha sonra nesnesi olan *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*'ın metinsel kopyasını çıkarmak için kullanmaktır.

Stratejiyi geliştirmek için yapılan bu kapsamlı analiz sonucunda, iki önemli anahtar sözcük, “aktif dönüşüm” ve “oval mercek”, teze kendi nesnesi üzerinde eleştirel stratejisini pratiğe geçirmesinde aracı olur. Bu iki anahtar sözcüğün, mimari nesneyi öncelikle parçacıklarına ayıran ve bu parçacıkları sonradan farklı bir düzende biraraya getiren önermesi boyunca *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*'ın metinsel kopyasını üretirken çalışmanın araçlarını oluşturur. İlk sözcük, *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*'ı, doluluk, boşluk, aralık ve yüzey gibi, başlıca temel mimari elemanlara parçalanıp, nesneden kopuk özerk elemanlara dönüşmesine aracılık ederken; ikinci sözcük bütünden ayrıştırılan bu mimari elemanları, yeni bir çerçeve içerisinde alternatif bir eleştirel yaklaşımla bağımsız mimari oluşumlar olarak baştan yorumlanmasına aracı olur. Bu yıkıcı süreç sonunda, stratejinin ütopyik doğası gereği içerdiği iyileştirici önermesi sayesinde başardığı, bu özerk elemanları biraraya getirerek yapıtı daha kapsamlı kılan bir metin yazmaktır. Bu metin, gerçekte, her bir özerk elemanın kendi kurgusal mekanları içinde saklı olan gizil fikrin yeniden keşfedilmesidir.

Bu çalışma, *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*'ın metinsel kopyasını çıkarırken Koolhaas'ın kendine özgü üretim süreci ile Tafuri'nin “eleştiri metodu” arasında bir aracılık yaparak, içinde mimari üretim sürecinin yeniden değer bulmasına dair önermemizi barındırır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Tafuri'nin “eleştiri metodu”, “metinsel kopya üretme”, “aktif dönüşüm”, “oval mercek”, doluluk, boşluk, aralık ve yüzey.

*For Bo.S.S..*



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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

The ambition of this project is to rid architecture of responsibilities it can no longer sustain and explore this new freedom aggressively. It suggests that, liberated from its former obligations, architecture's last function will be the creation of symbolic spaces that accommodate the persistent desire for collectivity. (Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., 1995; p. 604)

The conventional architectural object has often been defined as building first, and transformed into text, later verbalizing any work related to architectural discipline. This study, similarly, tries to develop a critical textual analysis of an architectural project; and for this purpose, chooses *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, designed by Rem Koolhaas, as its subject. *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* (Très Grande Bibliothèque) was submitted as an architectural project to the 1989 competition in Paris and has never been built. It was designed to be a 35-meter high building with an area of 250.000 m<sup>2</sup>, primarily grounded on a 250 x 300-meter rectangular site. The site was surrounded by the residential districts of the Eastern part of the Paris, the *Future Park de Bercy* to be linked to the library site with a pedestrian bridge, and the Ministry of Finance.<sup>1</sup> [Figure 1.1]

Rem Koolhaas, who was originally a journalist and a screenwriter, had a brief biography as an architect. From 1968 to 1972, he studied architecture at the Architectural Association (AA) in London. A scholarship in United States gave him the opportunity to stay in New York, where he started to analyze the impact of metropolitan culture on architecture and published his well-known book, *Delirious New York: a retrospective manifesto for Manhattan*. During these years, he taught at Cornell University with

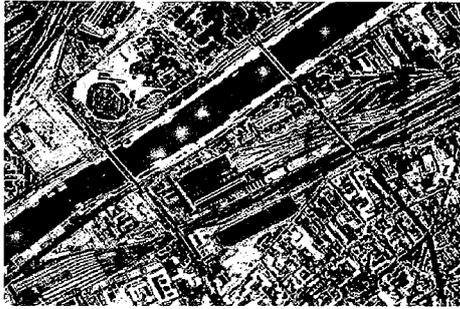


Figure 1.1 The site of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* in Paris.  
(Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., 1995. p. 606)

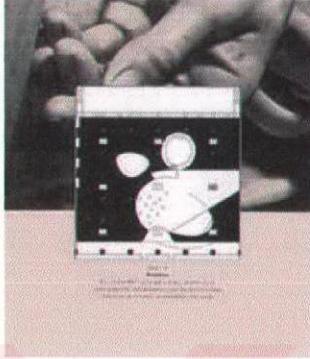
Oswald-Matthias Ungers, at Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies as a visiting fellow, with Frederic Jameson, at Colombia University and UCLA California. In 1976, he returned to Europe. In order to explore his theories in practise, he established the Office of Metropolitan Architecture—OMA in London, first, with Elia and Zoe Zenghelis. Their objective was the definition of new types of relationships—theoretical as well as practical—between architecture and the contemporary cultural situation. For this purpose, they have participated in urban design projects and entered several competitions and materialized important projects.<sup>2</sup> Some of these are the City Hall, The Hague, Holland (First Prize, 1986); Architectural Institute, Rotterdam, Holland (1988); Ferry Terminal, Zeeburge, Belgium (First Prize, 1989); Centre for Art & Media Technology, Karlsruhe, Germany (First Prize, 1989); Libraries for Jussieu University, Paris, France (First Prize, 1992); and in addition to these, *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* (*Très Grande Bibliothèque*), Paris, France (Honorable Mention, 1989), which is the subject-matter of this study.<sup>3</sup> The design team of the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* was as follows: Rem Koolhaas, Art Zaaijer, Xaveer de Geyter, Georges Heintz, Heike Lohmann, Ron Steiner, Christophe Cornubert, Ramon Klein, Yushi Uehara from OMA; besides, the engineers, Cecil Balmond (structural engineer), Mozhen Zikri (mechanical engineer), Ove Arup Partners; in addition to these, the company responsible from the competition model, Parthesius & de Rijk with OMA, plaster models: Parthesius & de Rijk.<sup>4</sup>

Before proceeding further, in need of developing a method for interpretation of the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, the conceptualization of the project by OMA is significant and should be made explicit. Their position was emanated clearly, by OMA, as “Bigness,” under which the key concept of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* had been developed. Koolhaas classifies the project under this key concept because he claims that it “acquires the properties of Bigness,” as it is “beyond a certain scale,” thus has ‘a

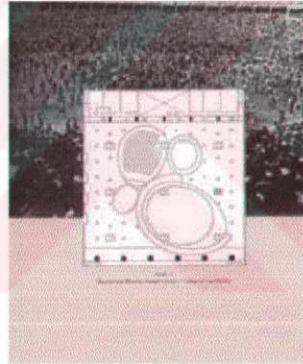
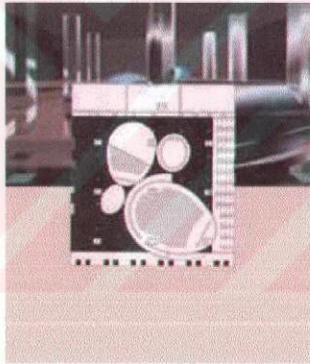
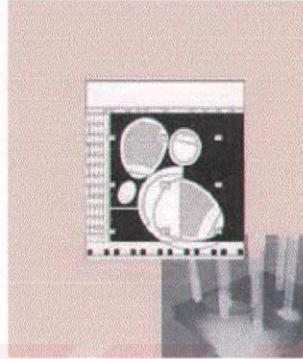
programmatic complexity' (Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., 1995. p. 495). Architects of OMA argue that it is impossible to process the required Bigness, only by a single architectural gesture, and that is why they define it as "an ultimate architecture" (Ibid., p. 495). As a matter of fact, this key concept has been developed as a critical formation against the programmatic complexity employed on *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*. Therefore, OMA claims an alternative architectural exposure, where "architecture intends to loose its power and tends to dissolve".<sup>5</sup>

The program of the library includes a combination of five different libraries to contain all the information found in all the libraries around the world: sound and moving image library, cinemathèque, recent acquisitions library, reference library, catalog library, scientific research library, and their storage. The storage, which takes the 75 percent of the program, appears as a solid mass of information, "a repository of all forms of memory: books, laser disks, microfiche, computers, databases" (Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., 1995. p. 616). The form attributed to such a big mass of information, including the whole memory of the world, is generated as a solid block. Koolhaas divides the program into two different parts with completely different contents. On one side, there is the storage, on the other, the public spaces. While one appears as a solid block of information, the other, appears "as the absence of the building, as a kind of refusal to build" (Ibid., p. 616). Therefore, all the storage space takes the form of a perfect cube, composed of "a series of regular and repetitive floors". On the contrary, the public spaces are detached from the main cube. As Rem Koolhaas explains, they appear as "voids" carved out of a solid mass, like "multiple embryos, each with its own technological placenta" (Ibid., p. 616). Since they are conceived as "voids", one can claim that it proposes a stand against the act of "building", thus for Koolhaas, the voids need not to be "built" (Ibid., p. 620). Koolhaas disintegrates the architectural program and lets the Bigness dissolve through a series of plays on form, on ground, on composition and on function. There, *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*'s architectural program has been exploited on two counter formations of architectural space: Solid versus, Void. With this project, the term Void has been reintroduced to current architectural discourse by Rem Koolhaas. The organization of these counter formations in terms of program is inherent in the two-dimensional abstractions of the project. These abstractions can be called as plans of *Bibliothèque*:

Level -4



Level -3

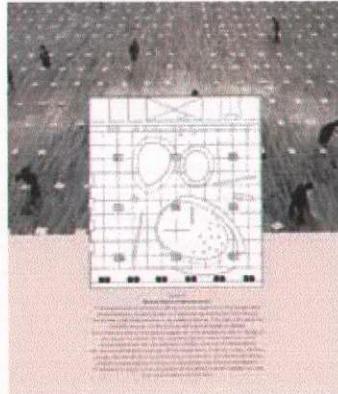


Level -2

Level -1

*Figure 1.2 Sound and Moving Image Library: Level-4to-1*  
In shape of pebbles inheriting: *Level -4* auditoriums, viewing booths, and acoustic cubicles for film video television and music embedded in the socle. *Level -3*: cinemas, conference rooms, and booths. *Level -2*: booths and cinemas, offices: entrance lobby. *Level -1*: "treasure exhibition." (Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., 1995. p. 605-611)

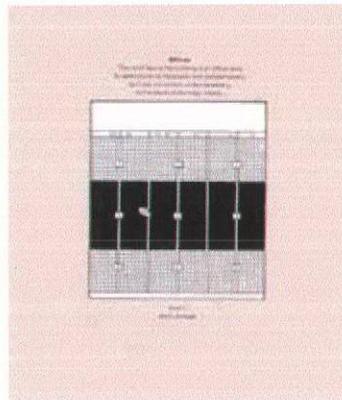
Level 0



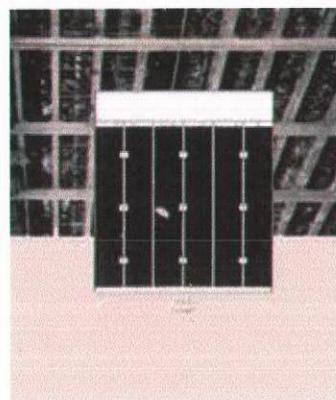
*Figure 1.3 Great Hall of Ascension: Level 0*

“The organization of the building is most explicit in the Great Hall of Ascension, a horizontal cut separating the lower four floors from the cube that hovers nine meters above. The hall can receive 10,000 people; its floor and ceiling are made of glass. It is intersected by the glass cages of nine elevators, each rising to its respective destination, traversing the other interiors with a discreet hiss. On the elevator shafts, electronic billboards announce different libraries. With fragments of text, titles, names, songs descending in a continuous movement, the entire building seems supported by signs in perpetual countdown to take off. The block is also cut by a system of escalators that snakes its way from the interior to the next.” (Ibid., p. 613)

Level 1



Level 2

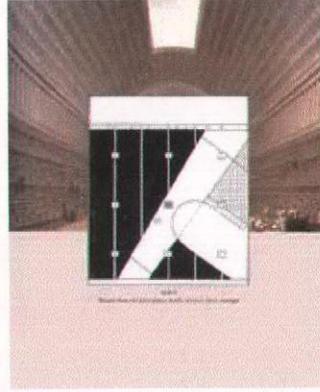


*Figure 1.4 Offices : Level 1-2*

“The north side of the building is an office zone for administrative, librarians’, and complementary services, connected, where necessary, to the stacks or the major rooms and the storage.” (Ibid., p. 615)



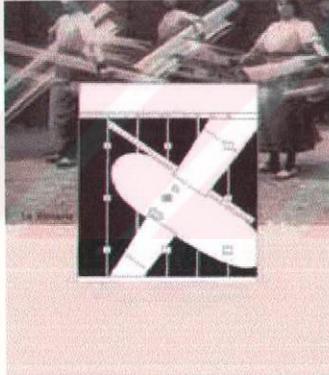
Level 3



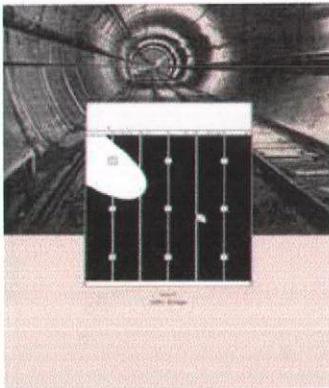
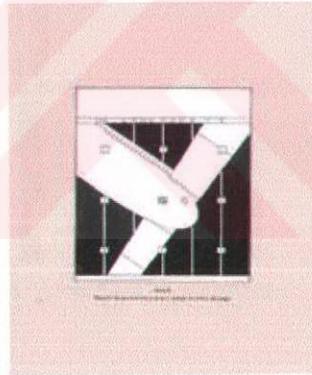
Level 4

Figure 1.5 *Recent Acquisitions Library: Levels 3–7*  
 “Two voids that cross a horizontal reading room and auditorium that slopes towards the river. The walls are lined with transparent viewing booths. Audiovisual, booths, plant, video, auditorium.” (Ibid., p. 621)

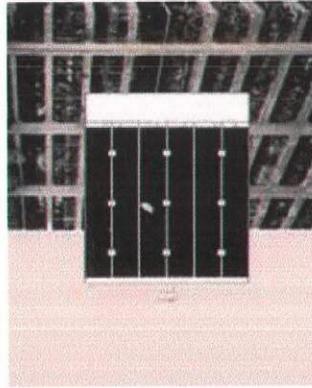
Level 5



Level 6

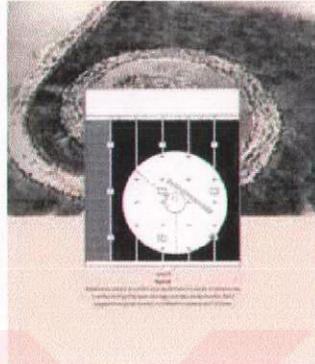


Level 7

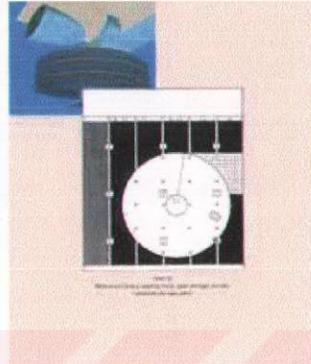


Level 8

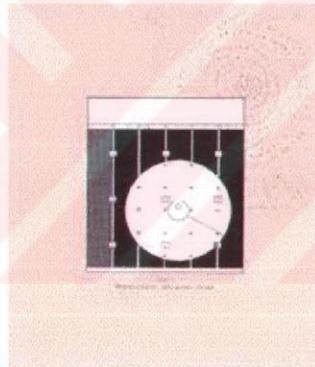
*Figure 1.6 Spiral Reference Library: Level 9-13*  
 “A continuous spiral that connects, in three turns, five floors of partly open storage, carrels, study booths. Each engagement gives access to different subjects and themes... Reading rooms, open and robotized storage, carrels, plant, conference room.” (Ibid., pp. 633-641)



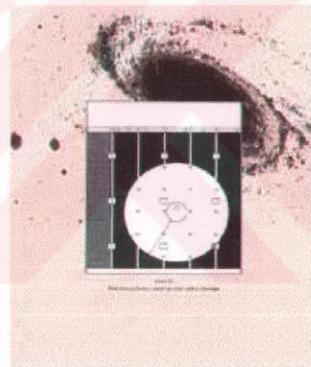
*Level 9*



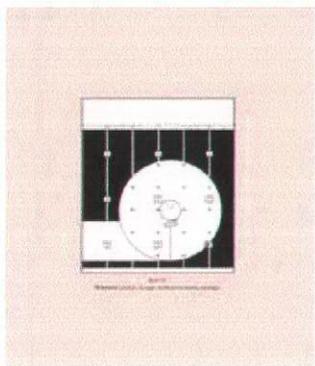
*Level 10*



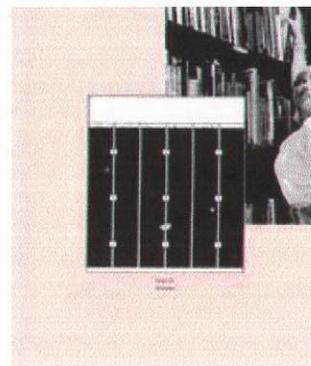
*Level 11*



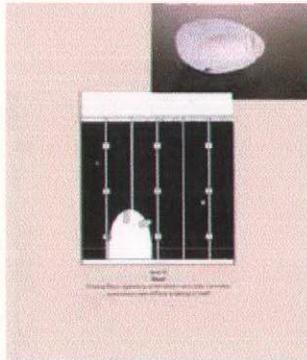
*Level 12*



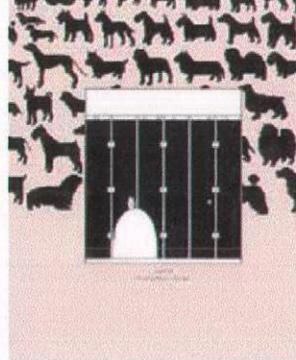
*Level 13*



*Level 14*

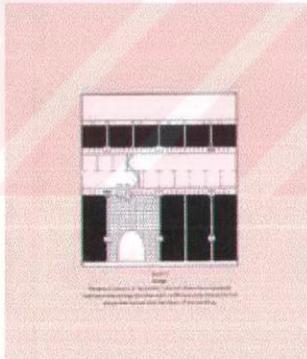


Level 15

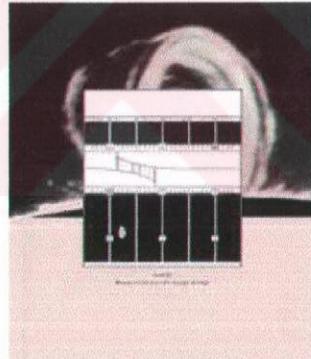


Level 16

Figure 1.7 *Shell, Catalog Room : Level 15 - 16*  
 “Appearing on the exterior as an eye it provides a panoramic view of Paris, a catalog in itself.” (Ibid, p. 645)



Level 17



Level 18

Figure 1.8 *Loop, Research Library: Level 17–20*  
 “A “scientific” interior where floor becomes wall becomes ceiling becomes wall—a Möbius strip that performs a loop—the-loop across the depth of the building... Reading room, café, lounge, and conference rooms, storage.” (Ibid., p. 651)

After representing the organization of spaces in terms of the inherited programmatic complexity, there arises a more significant problem than the extended demands of the program itself. This problem is related to the construction of the *Bibliothèque*. At the construction site, large spaces had to be excavated and the so-called large spaces' weight had to be supported. One solution OMA proposed was to use columns in a regular grid. The office renounced this claim, however, as soon as they realized that this solution was not very efficient. Next solution they thought of was to transfigure the floors into inhabited trusses, and made the necessary changes accordingly. However, all these attempts seemed to annihilate the chaotic formation of the whole configuration Koolhaas brought into play. Hence, as a solution, Koolhaas suggested using a very simple construction that would not annihilate the formation of the void spaces —which were, in his words, “the whole point of the building” (Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., 1995. p. 669). For such a simple solution that would not destroy the formation of void spaces, he divided the plan into parallel zones, 12,5 meters each, separated by concrete walls. The walls were 100 meters high and act as ‘deep beams’ of theoretically infinite strength. “Where the voids occur, they simply punch holes in the beams” (Ibid., p. 673).

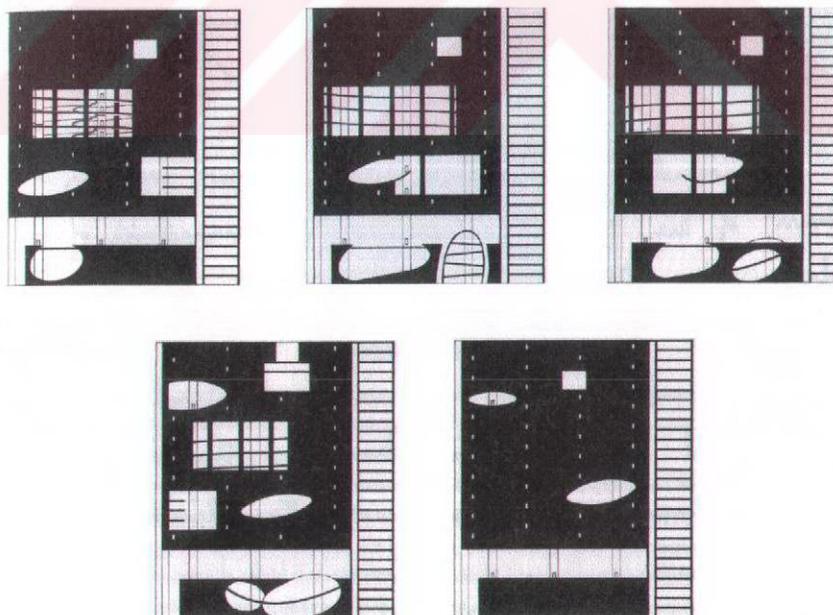


Figure 1.9 The sections of the *Très Grande Bibliothèque* (Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., 1995. p. 673).

With this structural solution, the library's structure became a three-dimensional grid, materialized by the intersection of five concrete planes in vertical and with twenty-one in horizontal. Rem Koolhaas, comparing and contrasting the plans and the sections, gives a brief description of *Bibliothèque*. In reference to this description, what Koolhaas proposes is that the plans and the sections are almost same in origin. In his words, when one "slice[s] horizontally through the block: each cut statistically mimics the program. The plan = The section" (Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., 1995. p. 622). In other words, the plan is the section and the section is the plan.

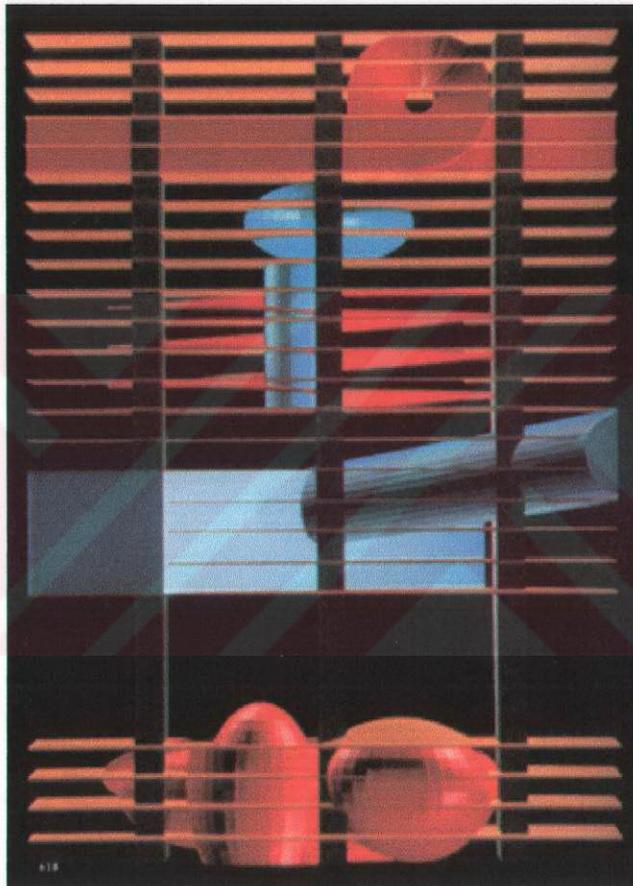
The purpose of indicating this "sameness" is the dissolution of the distinction between the plan and the section, in a sense, directly tracing an imperative breakdown of a tradition in terms of architectural representation. Here, the conventional act of "reading" the two-dimensional abstraction of a plan and a section to capture the whole configuration becomes impossible. The order of perception is distracted, first, by the two dimensional abstractions of plan on a horizontal plane, then the sections on a vertical plane, in conventional sense. While intending to capture the three-dimensional object, this impossibility transforms the act of interpretation into that of an ambiguous stage-play, which leaves the interpreter in a void. The stage of this play is the violated cube. The interpreter is a performer of that play. Yet, at this junction, the position of the vertical and the horizontal sections of the stage are almost the same and the progress of figuring out the stage is disabled. For such an intention, there arises the need of a shift to another dimension, other than those two-dimensional abstractions.

Therefore, this study suggests that perspective can be a tool for the interpretation of the project. In fact, it was Rem Koolhaas himself who introduced the three-dimensional abstraction of modeling of the whole configuration. [Figure 1.10] Thus, this study intends to develop a strategy, for the reinterpretation of this particular architectural project, *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*. This strategy suggests the deconstruction of the project into isolated pieces: solid, void, interval and surface. These pieces can be studied sometimes in opposition to one another, sometimes as an interval within each other, sometimes enclosing the others; but each having a different context in origin. The technique, in its broadest sense, is the assessment of all the elements that Koolhaas created and montaged in an ambiguous way, which constituted, at the end, a whole

chaotic construction [Figure 1.11]. The technique intends to transfigure those disintegrated elements into critical apparatuses, which pursue a route starting from the two-dimensional abstraction of plan and section, ending at the volumetric abstraction of space. This route, represented in the model, turns the process of interpretation also into an experiential “stage-play”. With this experiential stage-play, the spectator, at the middle of a void, could free him/herself, while transforming his/her role into that of a direct participator of the play performed.



*Figure 1.10* The model of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* (Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., 1995. p. 660-661).



*Figure 1.11* The whole chaotic configuration of  
*Bibliothèque Nationale de France*  
(Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., 1995. p. 618)

## 1.1 – PROPOSING A STRATEGY FOR THE REASSESSMENT OF THE PROCESS OF ARCHITECTURAL PRODUCTION

At the origin of a critical act, there lies a process of destroying, of dissolving, of disintegrating a given structure. Without such a disintegration of the object under analysis... no further rewriting of the object is possible. And it is self evident that no criticism exists that does not retrace the process that has given birth to the work and that does not redistribute the elements of the work into a different order, if so no other purpose than to construct typological methods. But here, criticism begins what might be called its “doubling” of the object under analysis (Tafuri, M., 1987. p. 272).

This study’s subject, *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, calls for a critical strategy for its interpretation. Here, the term interpretation is understood as a rewriting activity or “a critical act”. Such a critical act should involve, as the architectural historian and theorist, Manfredo Tafuri (1935-1994) explains, the “process of destroying, of dissolving, of disintegrating a given structure” (Ibid., p. 272), as “without such a disintegration of the object under analysis... no further rewriting of the object is possible” (Tafuri, M., 1987. p. 272). He proposes that this “disintegration of the object under analysis” ultimately requires the “doubling” of the object. Accordingly, “doubling” refers to the act of criticism itself, which re-creates the object. As for Tafuri, the process of “doubling” and the act of criticism start simultaneously.

In such a critical act, as in Tafuri’s words, “no criticism exists that does not retrace the process that has given birth to the work” (Ibid., p. 272). Then, in this study the process of the “doubling” will be applied on *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*. In the frame of Tafuri’s very act of criticism, such an application for “doubling” of the object should first retrace the process that has given birth to the design. This application, by its nature, would retrace the problematic concept: “Bigness”. Because, this very concept is

taken as the basic pretext to the examined formation. Bigness, as previously mentioned, introduces a “programmatic complexity”. Since *Bibliothèque* is a very big/Large building “beyond a certain scale”, it ultimately forces the limits of the conventional act of “building” in architecture. By dissolving the conventions, Bigness causes merely a shift in the description of such an “architecture” to the state of being an “ultimate architecture.” Such a shift in description, in a sense, generates various breakdowns in terms of form, function, façade, ground, and architectural composition. Therefore, it can be proposed that the project itself does already have in its origin, a kind of disintegration, or dissolution; consequent to Tafuri’s definition, a critical dimension.

Herein, the application of the very process for a Tafurian act of criticism can somehow be considered as a repetition of Koolhaas’ interpretation, which has already suggested a Tafurian reading of the particular project. Then, it is obvious that our intension of employing “a critical act” on the project necessitates a “reflection” on the object, liberated from the object itself, in other words requires a “doubling” of its own. What role this study’s own creation of “doubling” would perform is nothing different than a complex critique of what Koolhaas is trying to put on stage as a critical performance in terms of architectural displacement, decomposition and disintegration. In other words, the process for the creation of a ‘double’ aims to re-create the object according to Koolhaas’ own critical operation. Therefore, the goal of this study, in its broadest sense, is to develop a strategy to perform “a critical act.” A strategy that enables the process of “doubling” of the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*.

## 1.2 - THE STRATEGY THAT ENABLES THE PROCESS OF “DOUBLING”

In order to be able to comprehend the process of “doubling”, it is necessary to develop a Tafurian terminology. As specific cases may reveal the development of this complex list of terms, herein this study, Manfredo Tafuri’s own critical activity on specific works would be examined. Thus, among all these critical cases, this study focuses on a particular work, which Tafuri explores in his book, entitled “The Sphere and the Labyrinth”. In the first chapter of his book, Manfredo Tafuri develops a method to analyze or better to criticize Giovanni Battista Piranesi’s (1720-1778) artistic works. It is this very critical reading applied on the particular works of Piranesi that will unveil the Tafurian terminology.

Prior to an understanding developed on Tafuri’s critical activity, it is essential here to give a brief information about these particular works and their creator, Piranesi. As stated in detail in the second chapter of this study, Piranesi is a very well known etcher and engraver, who lived in the eighteenth century. He had produced various series of architectural art works and produced more than two thousand etchings, displaying his architectural genius. However, two particular plates in two particular series gain importance for our study. They become the tools or unique examples for an understanding of Tafuri’s previously declared act for criticism. These two particular plates under consideration are: Plate no. IX in the second edition of the series *Carceri d’Invenzione* and *Carcere Oscura* in the series of *Prima Parte di architetture e Prospettive* [Figure 2.7 – 2.9].

Yet here, before focusing on these plates, it is crucial to start with a brief description about the etching Plate no. IX. As it was stated, the very etching under consideration is the ninth plate of the series, *Carceri*. It should be declared that the series of *Carceri* were composed of various plates that each displays Piranesi’s alternative prisons in a single sequence. These series exist in two editions. However, it is known that among those etchings only a few sets exist today. Due to this lack of information, it is hard to make a satisfactory division between the first and the second edition of this particular series. In

other words, division of etchings in two separate groups is a complicated activity. According to P. M. Sekler, Arthur M. Hind was the one who made the most satisfactory authentication of *Carceri* in his book “Giovanni Battista Piranesi”, published in 1922. For Hind, the earliest edition is composed of fourteen unnumbered plates under the title ‘*Invenzione/ Capric di Carceri/ all’ acqua forte/ datte in luce/ da Giovanni/ Buzard in/ Roma Merchante/ al Corso*’. This edition was published sometime around 1745 by Giovanni Bouchard in Rome, when Piranesi was in his early twenties. Whereas, the second edition, is the one among which more numerous works exist today. It was unchanged except for the substitution of ‘*Bouchard*’ and ‘*Buzard*’. The second edition consists of the same fourteen plates, largely reworked with two new plates added, plates II and V. They all were given Roman Numerals and their title was altered to ‘*Carceri/ d’Invenzione/ di G. Battista/ Piranesi/ Archit./ Vene*’. This edition is issued sometime around 1760/1761.<sup>6</sup>

Among all the etchings in the *Carceri*, Plate no. IX in the second edition constructs the unique example of this study. Its uniqueness comes from the critical act Tafuri presents for an analyzing the etching. This very etching is considered by Tafuri as “the key to understand the entire series of the *Carceri*. In it, the two poles of Piranesi’s research — the evocation of a primordial structurality connected to the celebration of *Lex Romana*, of the idea of justice, and the disarticulation of the structure evoked — are shown without any didactic or narrative intent, reduced to the counter between two novel forms” (Tafuri, M., 1987. p. 26). Tafuri plays with the elements representing these two poles in the etching in a way that, after his reading, the etching shifts to a state beyond its original existence. In this state, the elements of the etching were redistributed in a different order. Tafuri’s play starts with his discovery of two different orders or “worlds” on a single plate. He first decomposes them to declare their autonomy and then recomposes them through an oval eye, a visual play, and this is the very act of criticism.

There, this visual play introduces a new term for our terminology: “an oval eye” [Figure 2.7]. The oval eye finds its existence as a tool for Tafuri’s analysis of the configuration composed of two different worlds. When examined carefully, one sees that these two different constructed worlds are opening to each other via that “oval eye”. When one looks through that oval eye, there he sees the disarticulation of the former

structure. However, when focused further in details, there one realizes a multiplied structure constructed by the overlap of a second oval eye. Through this second eye, the elements of those two different worlds Tafuri discovers vanish.

Tafuri claims that this very structure formed by the overlap of oval eyes in a series generates an immersion for the observer into the complex configuration (Tafuri, M., 1987. p. 26). Such an immersion forces the observer to participate in an interpretation process. The creation of such a compelling state makes criticism possible for any observer, just like Tafuri. The act of criticism as a consequence of this state, is the reason why the term oval eye is significant and involves a crucial role in this study's development.

Subsequent to Plate no. IX, the second etching under consideration is called as *Carcere Oscura*. This etching belongs to a historically earlier series of Piranesi, called *Prima Parte*. This series was published before *Carceri* sometime around 1743. However, *Carcere Oscura* has significance, as it is said to be the etching that represents the series of *Carceri*. Its significance is due to its subject matter. That very subject, unlike the other plates in that particular series, is a dark prison. However, what makes *Carcere Oscura* the unique example of our study is mainly the emphasis of a pragmatic act aiming at a critical analysis of this particular plate by Tafuri. This act is emphasized because it almost refers to his own critical operation. Just like Tafuri's critical activity, it also evokes a decomposition of the whole into its elements for a declaration of each element as autonomous. Nevertheless, the re juxtaposition of the autonomous elements in this particular etching is not an inherent quality of Tafuri's work. It is a quality discovered by the film director, Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948). Therefore, in Plate no. IX, the critical act generates naturally; in *Carcere Oscura* it is Eisenstein who triggers this activity. Eisenstein's interpretation involves the very application of his own cinematographic method of 'montage' on this particular etching.

Montage, also by its nature, involves an explosion of the whole composition into autonomous elements. This is the decomposition of the whole into autonomous particles. With this decomposition, each distressed element is detached from the whole configuration. Following that liberation of elements, Eisenstein gave each element a

number, and analyzed them separately. Later, he recomposed the analyzed elements in a different order. This reordering is the product of his own conscious activity. Eisenstein explains his conscious process, of decomposing Piranesi's architectural composition by attributing an 'explosion', with the term: "ecstatic transfiguration".

However, it was Tafuri who shifted the term Eisenstein discovered pragmatically to a more theoretical platform. For Tafuri, 'ecstatic transfiguration' is a particular technique of analysis that takes "the form of dissolution. This means that Eisenstein interprets the elements themselves as forms in potential movement, even though artificially frozen. The technique of 'ecstatic transfiguration' thus accelerates the potential movement, activates it, frees it from the resistance of form" (Tafuri, M., 1987. p. 57). Such a technique implicitly refers to Tafurian critical act. Because without such a freedom of the object, no further rewriting of it is possible. Eisenstein's redistribution of these freed elements of the work in a different order supports the existence of a criticism. With this reconfiguration, the ecstatic transfiguration becomes the critical act itself. It creates a doubling of the etchings. This mental reconfiguration of a "doubling" demonstrates why "the criticism of work becomes an operation on work" (Tafuri, M., 1987. p. 58).

Consequently, such an examination on two particular cases uses a Tafurian terminology to comprehend this study's process of "doubling". Yet, two major Tafurian keywords gain importance in our study, because they construct the basis of a particular technique of critical activity. These two major keywords are the 'oval eye' and the 'ecstatic transfiguration'. The "oval eye", as previously mentioned, is the term that represents Tafuri's own critical act. This act rests on a process of decomposing the elements of the whole, then recomposing them in a different order. Similarly, the "ecstatic transfiguration" is the term that represents a pragmatic activity triggered by Eisenstein, also based on that particular technique of critical analysis, succeeded in Tafuri's own critical act. Hence, this study's strategy for creating a "doubling" is derived from these keywords. In doing so, it tends to perform "a critical act" on Rem Koolhaas' architectural project, *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*. Under this scope, this study is mainly an intellectual approach that explores the "critical act" Tafuri performs.

At this point, the critical act of Tafuri on Plate no. IX and Eisenstein's attribution of an explosion on *Carcere Oscuro* implicitly exist in the project *Bibliothèque Nationale de*

*France*. Since such an activity has already been produced by Koolhaas, this study's doubling is a reframing of Koolhaas' critical elements. This reframing, as explained in details in the third chapter, requires the freezing of these elements and opens a frame for an alternative dimension of criticism. Therefore, this study's frame sets off an opening through which the interpreter can see beyond and enables to perceive a vertical perspective. The vertical perspective envisaged, follows a path of interpretation, starting from the two dimensional abstraction of plan and section, ending at the volumetric abstraction of space.

Hereafter, the intention is to develop an interpretation upon each frame that refers to an architectural element in vertical dimension, which are both frozen fragments. In this way, it produces its own 'doubling' in reference to Tafurian critical act. As mentioned before, the first tool for analysis is the 'oval eye' that zooms in each frame, the second tool is the 'ecstatic transfiguration' that enables an alternative explosion of the composition of the project. Following this explosion, the critical elements of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* is reframed as follows:

**SOLID** : It is the cube generated as a solid block of information. Regular and repetitive floors construct its formation and functions as the storage of the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* that takes 75 percent of the program. Koolhaas defines it as "a repository", full of books, laser disks, microfiche, computers, and databases (Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., 1995. p. 616). It shall be evaluated as the abstraction of a solid memory.

**VOID** : While storage appears as a solid block of information, the public spaces, generated as void, appear "as the absences of the building" (Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., 1995. p. 616), as a kind of refusal to build. Therefore, all the storage takes the form of a perfect cube, formed by "a series of regular and repetitive floors," but the public spaces are detached from the main cube. They appear as voids carved out of a solid mass, like "multiple embryos, each with its own technological placenta" as Koolhaas explains (Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., 1995. p. 616). Unlike solid, voids are the irregular spaces that Koolhaas defines as "the whole point of the building" (Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., 1995. p. 669).

*INTERVAL* : The only element suggesting a relation between solid and void. It defines an interval cutting through the construction. Constructs the controlled tracing of the subject in this stressed double configuration. Defines the human paths. But uses basically the elements of electronic media for this purpose like billboards directing towards different libraries. Appears as an in-between space.

*ENCLOSURE* : The independent element only wrapping the chaotic configuration and representing it to the city. A separate element, the façade.

Then, this reframing is based on a decomposition of the elements: solid, void, interval, and enclosure. By doing so, it liberates these elements and declares them autonomous and puts them in motion. Later, with the first tool, the 'oval eye', each frame develops an alternative "mental reconstruction" in the vertical dimension. Consequently, these reconfigured frames are recomposed. Such an activity triggers the liberation of the form from its resistance. After the liberations of form, even within the context of criticism: "one can detect a warning here: once form has been 'liberated', the geometric universe becomes the site of the most uncontrollable adventure" (Tafuri, M., 1987. p. 279).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Chronology of Koolhaas'* book Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., 1995. *Small, Medium, Large, Extra-Large: Office for Metropolitan Architecture, Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau*, Jennifer Sigler [Eds], Monacelli Press, New York, p. 1278.

<sup>2</sup> This biography is written by the help of a web page on Koolhaas, last updated on January 23, 1998 by Megan Fellmann, which is downloaded on 18.12.1999 from the URL address: <http://www.iit.edu/departments/pr/arch.comp/koolhaas.html>.

<sup>3</sup> The projects of Koolhaas are quoted from the web page downloaded on 18.12.1999 from the URL address: <http://www.iit.edu/departments/pr/arch.comp/koolhaas3.html>

<sup>4</sup> The detailed information about the competition and the project are taken from the *Chronology* in the book, Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., 1995. *Small, Medium, Large, Extra-Large: Office for Metropolitan Architecture, Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau*, Jennifer Sigler [Eds], Monacelli Press, New York, p. 1278.

<sup>5</sup> The interpretation developed here on the foundation of the concept 'Bigness,' which is supposed as the key concept of this study's case *Bibliothèque de Nationale*, is this study's own interpretation derived from a comparative analysis between Koolhaas's text on 'Bigness' and how this study reads the work over their interpretation of 'Bigness.'

<sup>6</sup> These information are taken from Sekler, P. M., 1962, 'Notes on old and modern drawings: Giovanni Battista Piranesi's Carceri etchings and related drawings', *Art Quarterly*, Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, XXV, pp. 331, 357-358. She states "Piranesi was born on October 4, 1720 in Mogliano near Mestre, the son of a stonemason, Angelo Piranesi, and Laura Luchesi. He is said to have studied with his uncle, Matteo Lucchesi, a maritime engineer, and his brother, a Carthusian monk. In 1740 he went to Rome as a draughtsman on the staff of Marco Foscarini, ambassador to Pope Benedict XIV, where in 1743 the *Prima Parte di Architetture e Prospettive* was published. He was back in Venice in 1744 and returned to Rome in 1745 where he remained for most of the rest of his life. He died on November 9, 1778. the main biographical sources include: Lodovico Giovanni Bianconi, *Elogio storico del Cavalier Giambattista Piranesi*, 1779; J. G. Legrand, *Notice historique sur la vie et les œuvres de G. B. Piranesi*, Manuscript 5968 ,in Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (compiled with the aid of Piranesi's sons)." This quotation is cited from the endnotes of the article on page 357.

## CHAPTER II

### TAFURI AND EISENSTEIN'S REINTERPRETATION OF PIRANESI'S ETCHINGS "PLATE NO. IX" AND "CARCERE OSCURA"



Why in the *Carceri* series would Piranesi have turned away deliberately from a method in which he had achieved great competence in favor of a new method which placed more emphasis on the graphic means, rather than the former subordination of the means to the illusion? ... Perhaps the answer lies partly in what is the beauty and accomplishment, and yet the inherent limitation, of the earlier style— its precision, its strict definition, its power to state unequivocally. For the *Carceri* reverse this earlier position. The tale is not told, but merely suggested. The viewer is not satisfied, and is often frustrated. Piranesi becomes the master not of the complete line but of the cue; and far more powerful an emotional stimulant than the suggestions of the diabolic in the prison furnishings in his displacement, and even destruction, of what the viewer is led to believe and anticipate (Sekler, M., 1962. pp. 334-335).

A great draughtsman and a great etcher, Giovanni Battista Piranesi was originally an Italian architect and engraver, lived in the eighteenth century. He was born on October 4, 1720 in Mogliano near Mestre at Venice. Till his early twenties, his uncle Lucchesi, who was a maritime engineer, is said to have given him lessons in drawing. In 1738, his father, a stonemason, sent him to Rome to study architecture under Valeriani and engraving under Vasi, where he remained for most of the rest of his life. There in 1740, he started working as a draughtsman with Marco Foscarini, who was an ambassador to Pope Benedict XIV. He returned back to Venice in 1744 and to Rome in 1745, where he mostly

stayed for the rest of his life. He died on November 9, 1778, when he was fifty-eight years old.<sup>1</sup> Within this period, although Piranesi is not eminent as an architect, since he did not have the chance to build much, he rather showed his architectural genius by creating imaginary structures, and “etched more than two thousand large plates, full of detail, vigor, and brilliancy”.<sup>2</sup> Among those two thousand etchings, he is now more famous for his particular series of *Carceri*. The theme of this series is “prisons” in origin and it is considered as the best group of illustrations displaying Piranesi’s architectural genius in representing imaginary structures.

Before proceeding further on the analysis of these etchings, however, it is necessary to state that Piranesi was upholding an avant-garde position for his period. He declined the conventional premises of design, and this declining shaped his architectural production. He rejected “the notion of a finite discipline of design, whether according to the principles of Vitruvius or Palladio, Laugier or Lodoli” (Wilton, E. J., 1988. p. 91). His aim, construed from his own writings, was to criticize, in a way, such a finite process, that is the strictly defined doctrines of architecture. He reinterpreted the architectural composition and searched for new ways of reassembling ‘architecture’. He rejected the conventions because he was defending an imaginative world, where his structures were to be constructed. His world “was far too rich to be restricted by narrow doctrines or immutable canons of taste” (Ibid., pp. 90-91).

Only in such an imaginative production, Piranesi intended to overcome restrictions or conventional patterns of architecture in the artistic world he created. Piranesi’s wish, in its broadest sense, was to develop a new language of architectural composition by performing “a critical act” having in origin the “process of destroying, of dissolving, of disintegrating” (Tafuri, M., 1987. p. 272).

The series of *Carceri*, published in 1750, were identified with the process of creation, “*invenzione*” devoted to explore “the phenomenon of imagination.” That is why these etchings provide the staggering evidence of violence on conventional canons and are direct illustrations of such a destructive process. Tafuri defines this as a process that lies at the origin of a “critical act”, applied on an architectural composition. For instance, E. J. Wilton states that, “the *Carceri* represents an experimental field of composition as

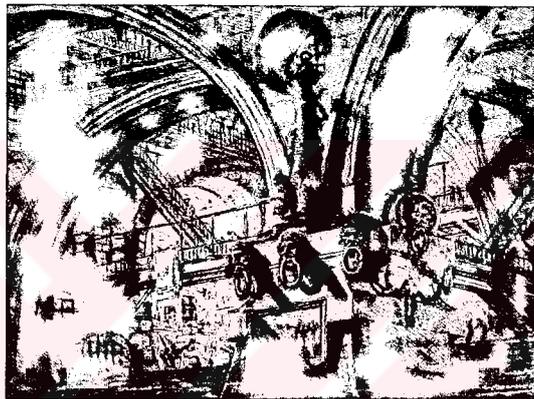
In reference to these accounts, the violated transfiguration and decomposition of the predetermined patterns search for “a new language of architectural composition”. They dissolve the coherent order and force the *Carceri* to go beyond its own point of departure. Beyond being variations of the theme, ‘prisons’, the etchings appear as experimental exercises of an alternative understanding of architectural configuration. Originally, the “critical act” performed by Piranesi reveals a hidden dimension for many critics to proceed to alternative reinterpretations of an architectural object; and this is to be considered as the birth of a tradition of critical understanding both in the domain of architecture and its related fields. Yet, it is that traditional act, which later enables the interpretations and explanations of Manfredo Tafuri. His theorization on the Sergei Eisenstein’s pragmatic method of interpretation has a similar process in origin by using rather a cinematographic method called “ecstatic transfiguration”.

Following that destructive process for a criticism, one can see that the keywords introduced in such an act via its interpretations — such as, the ‘oppression’, ‘confusion’, ‘incomprehension’, ‘panic’, ‘perplexity’, ‘dissolution’, ‘breaking up’, ‘dizziness’ and ‘distorting’ — completely refer to the contemporary architectural debate that shaped the current architectural production. That is why; the introduction of these keywords by such an act is crucial and has direct implications on this study’s objectives.

As stated before, this study’s scope is mainly to develop a similar “critical act” on a particular architect’s project, namely, *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*. The purpose of laying out these alternative languages of architectural composition experimented by Piranesi is to develop a strategy for architectural analysis. Such an analysis will benefit from the keywords that the critical act introduces to constitute the possible ways and their proper domains of our reinterpretation for *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*.



*Figure 2.1* Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Carceri D'invenzione*,  
Plate fourteen of the revised edition c.1761  
(Penny, N., 1978. Piranesi, Oresko Books, Britain, p. 57)



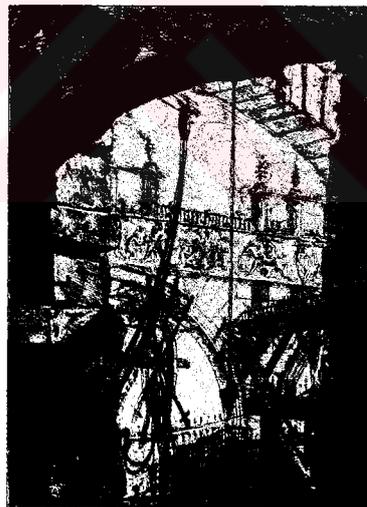
*Figure 2.2* Giovanni Battista Piranesi *Carceri D'invenzione* ,  
Plate fifteen of the revised edition, c.1761  
(Ibid., 1978. p. 57)



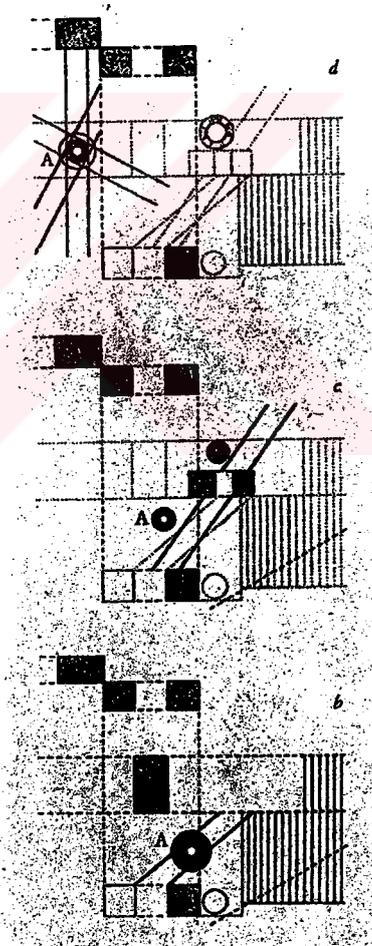
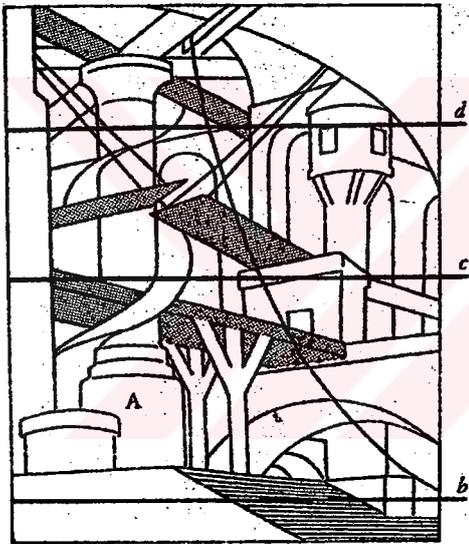
*Figure 2.3* Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Carceri D'invenzione*  
Plate sixteen of the revised edition c. 1761  
(Penny, N., 1978. Piranesi, Oresko Books, Britain, p. 57)



*Figure 2.4* Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Invenzioni capric di carceri*, title page (left), and *Carceri d'invenzione*, plate two of revised edition of c.1761 (right) (Penny, N., 1978. Piranesi, Oresko Books, Britain, pp. 53-54)



*Figure 2.5* Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Carceri d'invenzione*, plate three of revised edition (left), and plate two of revised edition of c.1761 (right). (ibid., 1978. p. 57).



*Figure 2.6* Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Carceri d'invenzione*, plate seven (first and second state above), and his perspective rendering of the plate, plans of levels b,c,d. (right)  
 (Tafari, M., N., 1987. "The Historical 'Project'", *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, Trans. P. d'Acerno and R. Connelly, MIT Press. Cambridge, pp..97)

## 2.1 - RECONFIGURATION- THE “OVAL EYE”

Piranesi's search for developing a new language for architectural composition can be clearly perceived in the series of *Carceri*. Each plate of the *Carceri* became the variations of solutions in a puzzle at the end; since, in each, Piranesi performs various experimental configurations of the disarticulated elements of architecture. Each element has a historical reference in origin to what is conventional. In order to illustrate these experimental configurations, among all the series, *Carcere Oscura* is selected. E. J. Wilton defines this specific etching as “a stage-like composition” (Wilton, E. J., 1988. p. 82). In this respect, the representations of the theme ‘prison,’ beyond being variations of such a single theme, can be considered as a stage where an endless play between the disintegrated elements of architectural composition is constantly being performed. Similarly, Wilton describes this “stage-like composition” of the disarticulated elements as:

“The *Carceri* compel the spectator to undergo an optical journey of frenetic motion by means of a succession of stairs, ramps, bridges, balconies, catwalks, galleries: a nervous continuum with no point of stability or rest throughout” (Wilton, E. J., 1988. p. 83).

Wilton continues to say that this nervous performance caused by the predefined endless motion, leaves the viewer in an anxious state, as what s/he perceives at first glance, is not the same as s/he sees further in details. Just then, s/he realizes that Piranesi employs a destructive attempt on each element, which leads the distortion of form, size, center, proportion or function. These are the restricted canons that provide the notion of rational and ‘ideal’ order and have to be obeyed for a coherent ‘architecture’ in the canonical sense. These destroyed canons characterize the ‘architectural *ordo*,’ as Tafuri calls it, or the totality of form. In other words, by applying such a destructive attempt on the elements that formulates such an ordinance, Piranesi leads “the hermetic fragmentation of architectural *ordo*” (Tafuri, M., 1987. p. 27). In such a chaotic stage-like composition, according to May Sekler, the state of the viewer of the plates is transformed from being a spectator, into that of a participator. It is that viewer who has to solve the puzzle of disarticulated elements, formed by “the hermetic fragmentation of architectural *ordo*”, and reconstruct them.<sup>5</sup> As May Sekler affirms:

“He achieves the illusion of rational space by massing his lights and darks in a manner which suggests logical structural composition and then, with tricks of detail, distortions of size, and surprise elements in the structure, he destroys the original impression of the order and leaves the viewer enmeshed in spatial relationships. What is perceived as coherent on first glance, disintegrates as the eye probes further, and the mind is finally defeated in attempting to rationalize the irrational. What becomes important is not the perception of the total, but the perception of the individual hints that send one searching for an order which is not present. The essential element in this process is that the hints must be present in sufficient quantity and character to make the viewer assume the existence of a pervading logic ruling the total scheme. He is sent confidently on his way piecing together, the fragments of an insolvable puzzle. Once he dares question the validity of his first assumption of order he is caught in a web of confusion, tempted by the tantalizing illusion of coherence. Herein lies much of the frustration and the fascination of the designs” (Sekler, M., 1962. p. 335).

In his essay *“The Wicked Architect,”* Manfredo Tafuri concentrates further on Piranesi’s Plate no. IX. Beyond the disarticulation of the architectural elements for the liberation of form, or the distressing of the composition for the liberation of form from order, Tafuri emphasizes that this etching also includes a supplementary ornament: “An oval eye.” Tafuri describes this ornament as; “an enormous oval eye, cut by the upper margins of the page, reveals to the observer the usual repertory of catwalks and hermetic torture devices, [and] the artificiality of the organism is further accentuated by the placement of this perspective eye on top of an ambiguous wall structure, in which a central slanting portal is flanked on both sides by arches, through which can be seen a staircase and a low structure, apparently attached to the central porter” (Tafuri, M., 1987. p. 25).

As stated before, Tafuri focuses on this particular plate because of the coexistence of two juxtaposed spaces. This plate has two images overlapped. Tafuri defines one as the known, the other as the unknown world. What the spectator sees with a naked eye is a conventional representation of a known world. However, says Tafuri, if one can see through Piranesi’s eyes, he discovers the representation of the unknown world. So, what Tafuri calls “oval eye” is the tool for this seeing. Therefore, what is displayed behind it, is nothing more than the representation of a nonrepresentational. It might be considered as a lens, an opening you see through, displaying what Piranesi rejects. Tafuri interprets this oval eye as a crucial element for this seeing and considers it as an apparatus or a machine through which vanishing occurs from ‘one’ world of Piranesi to the ‘other’. It can also be

interpreted as an opening, which functions as a lens through 'one' world to the 'other'. In this respect, the former world is where the conventional forms of architecture are used. However, here they are distressed in details and dependent on the order defining the proper. The latter, unlike the former, is the representation of the negative against the proper. Tafuri defines this negative representation of proper as the "mechanical universe".<sup>6</sup> Piranesi uses the violated elements of the "mechanical universe" for such a negative representation. Thus, he acknowledges that the elements representing both worlds are conscious selections of Piranesi. This apparatus limits the distressed imaginary world of Piranesi with the plays of shadow, and defines a passage that in the end opens up to a new world in which the metaphorical elements of 'mechanical universe' is suspending, even "vanishing...into spirals of smoke and depths of space" (Ibid., 1987. p.26). Manfredo Tafuri develops the implications of metaphors, imposed on each element even further. He declares that once the viewer concentrates on the plate:

"[S/he] can realize that the network of beams, stairs and walkways suspended in the air not only projects beyond the foreground of the large eye, but passes through second oval structure, which emerges from the customary vanishing [sfumarsi] of the image into spirals of smoke and depths of space. The shadow cutting diagonally across the structure that serves as the base and the presence of the gallows in the left foreground —absent in the first state of engraving— reveal that what seem to be 'exterior' is in reality an 'interior': we now realize that the observer himself is immersed in the structure formed by the large ovals arranged in the series" (Ibid., 1987. p. 26).

In this respect, plate no. IX is significant for our study because, there, Piranesi develops a new language of architectural composition. He created a simultaneous play between the elements belonging to different imaginary worlds in opposition. He composes and reconfigures the elements of opposed states in conflict, and he distresses the world of 'known'. Via this distressing, he shifts the viewer to that world of the 'unknown'. In reference to Tafuri's reading, he destroys the opposition between the "interior" and the "exterior". As the result of all these destructive attempts, what he dissolves, in fact, is 'the notion of finite discipline of design defined by the principles of Vitruvius. Such a destructive act transforms his imaginary composition into a terrorized configuration, where he later reformulates what he dissolves in his 'infinite imaginary world'.

Thus, togetherness of the oppositions, known and unknown, finite and infinite, homely and unhomely, secure spaces and terrorized spaces, designates the togetherness of,

according to Tafuri, one element with its own representation of the “negative”. What Tafuri emphasizes is that all these opposing states are not chosen accidentally; on the contrary, they are conscious selections. For an illustration, Piranesi’s use of the “mechanical universe”, in which the totality of form or the ‘*ordo*’ dissolves, is also a conscious selection (Tafuri, M., 1987. p. 37). For Tafuri, Piranesi “sees that mechanical universe, kingdom *par excellence* of the artificial, as the place where there occurs the definitive loss of primordial organicity, of the union between the world of nature and the universe of human institutions” (Tafuri, M., 1987. p. 32). Tafuri grounds the theme of the etching on a “mechanical universe” and identifies it as “naturalness of the majestic that signifies naturalness of state power and the alienation of the subject with regard to this power” (Tafuri, M., 1987. p. 33). Thus, these illustrations can be extended further. Tafuri argues that the use of the dissolved forms of mechanical universe against the formal elements of architecture can be determined as ‘the representation of the negative,’ and defines this condition as a “negative utopia”.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, he adds that Piranesi’s particular imposition of “the dissolution of form and the void of the signified” are also a representation of that “negative utopia” (Tafuri, M., 1987. p. 54). Following these definitions, Tafuri proposes that the use of formal elements of architecture that Piranesi tends to criticize involves a hidden methodology. Because, for him, “the construction of the utopia of dissolved form—what has been naïvely called Piranesian eclecticism—constitutes the recuperation of negative, the attempt to utilize it” (Tafuri, M., 1987. p.54).

This double formation of one world against its recuperative negative leaves the spectator in a void. Such a void that all the dissolved elements in opposition to the other constitute a puzzle for the spectator. There, the viewer is entrapped in an unconscious performance, by which he can recompose these disintegrated two-invert situations, in order to reconstruct a whole again and cast an order. His intention to solve this puzzle directly puts him into the process of the “mental reconstruction” of that whole. Tafuri explains the experience of the spectator, piecing together the fragments of puzzle, tending to construct an order, as ‘an adventurous voyage of imagination.’ Along with Tafuri, also for May Sekler, “identifying in it a constant disintegration of the coherence of structure that, nonetheless has a precise function. It’s in fact just this disintegration that induces the spectator to recompose laboriously the spatial distortions, to reconnect the fragments of a puzzle that proves to be, in the end unsolvable. But it can be said that the spectator of the

*Carceri* is obliged, rather than invited to participate in the mental reconstruction proposed by Piranesi” (Sekler, M., 1962., cited in Tafuri, M., 1987. p. 26). This attempt of reconstructing the disintegrated fragments in opposition shifts the state of a single spectator to that of a participator of the process of reconfiguration. In short, at the end with each reinterpretation of the work created by the observers, as the participators of the ‘mental reconstruction’, transfigures the work to a state that goes beyond the etchings and its implicit meanings. In the words of Wilton;

“In the *Carceri* we have reached a situation where each plate no longer simply represents but is an architectural experience in itself. Through the most complex system of decoding, where the conventional perspective sets up expectations only to deny them by introducing fresh patterns, the spectator becomes inescapably involved in the creative process. Each plate embodies a set of endless possibilities” (Wilton, E. J., 1988. p. 85).

The larger purpose for laying out this scheme is, to an extent, to superimpose what Tafuri has discovered in Piranesi’s *Carceri* for the reinterpretation of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*. These discoveries are; on one side, the terrorized interpretation and the ecstatic transfiguration of the elements Piranesi uses to represent his negative utopia in need of recuperation what he has been rejecting and the “oval eye” as the tool for the representation of such an utopia. Whereas, on the other hand, his way of producing a series, by decomposing each sequence, makes the observer a part of the process of mental reconfiguration to recompose. In short, these two particular concerns are crucial for this study’s own “critical act” on *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, since, in its broadest sense, they can give clues for developing an alternative strategy for our reinterpretation in search for a “double”, for the criticism to begin.



*Figure 2.7* Giovanni Battista Piranesi,  
*Carceri (Prisons)*; Plate no. IX (second state), etching.  
In G. Piranesi, *Carceri d'invenzione*, Rome, 1761.  
(Tafuri, M. 1987. "The Historical 'Project,'" *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*,  
Trans. P. d'Acerno and R. Connelly, MIT Press. Cambridge, p. 91).

## 2.2 - RECONSTRUCTION - MONTAGE

What lies “at the origin of a critical act,” as defined by Manfredo Tafuri, is “the process of destroying, of dissolving, of disintegrating” the object under consideration. The Soviet film director, Sergei Eisenstein uses a related process for his analysis of Piranesi’s etchings. Especially his pragmatic application of “ecstatic transfiguration” to *Carcere Oscura* can be identified as Eisenstein’s attempt for such a “critical act”. His particular attempt offers a simple method for a process to refigure out “a critical act” which starts from Piranesi, develops in Eisenstein, and reaches its climax in Tafuri.

The very well known film producer, Eisenstein became famous with his artistic method, called as “montage”. Montage is by definition refers to a process of cut and paste. However, this act of cutting and pasting has a different significance for this study. Montage is briefly the superimposition of single frames, which are called “shots”. It can be identified as the intellectual gathering of shots. In Eisenstein’s words, “[t]he shot is an element of montage. Montage is an assembly of these elements” (Eisenstein, S., 1977. p. 37). But, each shot that montage is composed of, for Eisenstein, is a term or concept, which requires a further study if one wants to represent what is not there. He considers shots as unecstatic frames, originally representing what is there. However, for him, these unecstatic frames need a reformulation. In order to represent what is not there, which is simply the product of his imagination, he searches for an ecstatic effect in the unecstatic frames. For this purpose, Eisenstein attributes an “ecstatic transfiguration” or “explosion” on these shots. In short, “ecstatic transfiguration” is an attempt to reformulate what is ‘unecstatic’ in a violated manner and give it a kinetic reformulation. Because, after this explosion, each element, the shot is composed of, is disintegrated and put into motion. Such a kinetic reformulation makes the ‘unecstatic’ transform and become ‘ecstatic’. This method of “ecstatic transfiguration” originally puts the static fragments of the series in motion. By doing so, he believes that what is non-representational can be displayed in a single sequence. However, he considers the form of montage as the structure of that image, and montage itself as “the law of the structure of the object” it represents. In his book “*Film Form*”, Eisenstein wrote:

The shot by no means an element of montage.

The shot is a montage cell.

Just as in their division from a phenomenon of another order, the organism or embryo, so, on the other side of the dialectical leap from the shot, there is montage.

By what, then, is montage characterised and, consequently, its cell- the shot?

By collision. By the conflict of two pieces in opposition to each other. By conflict. By collision. (Eisenstein, S., 1977. p. 37). [Figure 2.8]

Therefore, in Eisenstein's words, the "montage is conflict" (Eisenstein, S., 1977. p. 38). If the montage is the law of the structure of the object that is represented, then according to his accounts, it can be claimed that the structure of the object is also characterized by that "cinematographic conflicts within the frame". These conflicts are listed by Eisenstein, as:

Conflict of graphic directions.

(Lines- either static or dynamic)

Conflict of scales.

Conflict of volumes.

Conflict of masses.

(Volumes filled with various intensities of light)

Conflict of depths.

And the following conflicts, requiring only one further impulse of intensification before flying into antagonistic pairs of pieces:

Close shots and long shots.

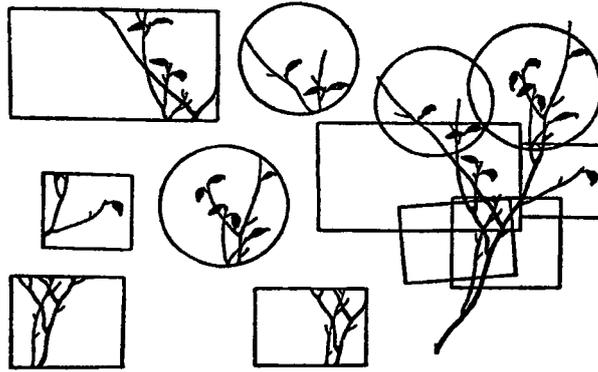
Pieces of graphically varied directions. Pieces resolved in volume, with pieces resolved in area.

Pieces of darkness and pieces of lightness.

And, lastly, there are such unexpected conflicts as:

Conflicts between an object and its dimension- and conflicts between an event and its duration (Eisenstein, S., 1977. p. 39). [Figure 2.9]

For his work, these conflicts occur within a single frame. Thus, he continuously expresses different cinematographic conflicts within a frame. Hence, Piranesi's etchings, for Eisenstein, are tools to analyze these "cinematographic conflicts", since he discovers such an inherited ambiguity in those etchings. Tafuri explains Eisenstein's conscious selection of Piranesi and his work *Carcere Oscuro* as: "Eisenstein sees in the entire series of *Carceri* a totality composed of disconnected fragments belonging to a single sequence" which is derived from the technique of "intellectual montage" (Tafuri, M., 1987. p.56). The requirement of such a process, or in other words, the requirement of the "intellectual montage", for Tafuri, is to "attract the spectator, in order to make the spectator participate in the dynamic process of constructing the image" (Tafuri, M., 1987. p. 61).



*Figure 2.8* Sergei Eisenstein's imagery of the cinematographic method "which is used in teaching drawing in Japanese schools." (Eisenstein, S., 1949. p. 40-41)



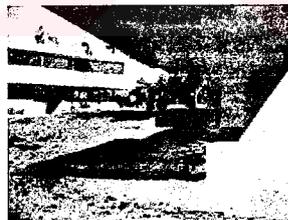
1. GRAPHIC CONFLICT



2. CONFLICT OF PLANES



3. CONFLICT OF VOLUMES



4. SPATIAL CONFLICT

*Figure 2.9* Cinematographic Conflicts within a frame... (Eisenstein, S., 1949. p. 53)

He selects *Carcere Oscura* as the frame, “as a whole...with all its elements” to apply his methodology of montage (Eisenstein, S., 1987. p. 67). Yet, a reverse application. [Figure 2.10] In other words, Eisenstein uses the methodology of montage, not as the gathering of shots to form a unique, complete, coherent, stable whole, as it has been practiced. On the contrary, he reverses this process and explodes what seems to be coherent, into fragments by a “dizzy manner”. He explains this manner as follows:

“The dizziness is the result of constant sliding from the prototype-face into its system of fragmented details that lose their human features, and back again into a face, in an anguished attempt to reproduce the process through which one becomes the other, the initial one becomes the monstrous result and the monstrous result again —“in reverse”— becomes the initial one (without which it is impossible to “read” it, to understand, perceive, and include it in the system of representations peculiar to us),  
And . . . dizziness is not simply a turn of speech — it is what actually occurs” (Eisenstein, S., 1990. p.81).

As Tafuri characterizes, what lies at the origin of such an “intellectual montage” is basically the process of exploding the conflicting objects within the frame. This process emanates from Eisenstein’s concept of montage. Montage, explains Tafuri, is “a particular technique of critical analysis” founded on what Eisenstein calls “explosion” or “ecstatic transfiguration” (Tafuri, M., 1987. p.56). As for Eisenstein, “when the tension between the shots reach to its peak and can mouth no further, then the shot explodes, splitting into two separate pieces of montage.” (Eisenstein, S., 1962. p. 124, quoted from Tafuri, M., 1987. p. 56). In doing so; this explosion destroys the elements forming the composition and forces them to be detached from their context dedicated to what is conventional. By this explosion, Piranesi’s *Carcere Oscura* and its basic elements schematized by Eisenstein, in Tafuri’s words, “are “put into motion”: they are made to react dynamically, the result of an ideal *explosion* of formal tensions within them” (Tafuri, M., 1987. p. 56).

To explain his method, Eisenstein draws a diagram of the *Carcera Oscura* [Figure 2.11] showing his method of producing “an ecstatic effect”. In order to transform the etching ‘ecstatically,’ he draws a chart and numerates the basic elements of the etching “step by step, element by element—explode them one after another” (Eisenstein, S., 1987. p. 67). From here onwards;

The object—"the pretext"— has now disappeared.  
It has already dissolved and disappeared.  
It exploded into lines and elements, which by fragments and "stage wings" (the legacy of Piranesi) construct a world of new spaces, volumes and interrelationships.  
Leftist of the arts . . . ecstasy. (Eisenstein, S., 1987. p. 76).

The analysis of Eisenstein is significant for this study, because, in Tafuri's words, he forces the works "to lose their natural autonomy, to come out of their isolation, in order to become a part of an ideal series: to become in other words simple frames in a cinematic phrase" (Tafuri, M., 1987. p. 56). As a result of the 'explosion' that Eisenstein superimposed on the whole composition, the whole is disintegrated and turn into a stage composed of dissolved fragments. The stressed force, generated from the interreaction between the image as a whole and its critical contemplation as dissolved fragments, in Tafuri's words, "upsets all the pieces of Piranesi's *Carceri*, setting them in motion, agitating them convulsively, reducing them to fragments awaiting an entirely new composition" (Ibid., p. 56). Tafuri formulates this 'explosion', which is for him "a particular technique of analysis", as a violent intervention to the elements of the composition. He argues that such a violent intervention destroys the relationship that bounds the elements of composition to the whole and via that destruction liberates them. Moreover, Tafuri claims that "this destruction causes a semantic distortion in meaning: destroys 'the things' and 'the order' because he cannot destroy 'the order of things' directly" (Ibid., p. 62). This violent mental destruction, formulated by Tafuri, "makes the etching speak, beyond the usual meanings attributed to it" (Ibid., p. 57).

While those usual meanings occurred within the order of things directly, the event takes the form of 'dissolution,' rather than explosion; "not only of individual forms, but their objectuality". For Eisenstein "the objects are dissolved as physical elements of representation" (Eisenstein, S., 1990. p. 67). In other words: the dissolution "not of forms, but only of the system of the expressive means," in reference to what Piranesi achieved (Ibid., p. 67).

"The explosion of the elements of the *Carcere Oscuro* takes, the form of dissolution. This means that Eisenstein interprets the elements themselves as forms in potential movement, even though artificially frozen. The technique of "*ecstatic transfiguration*" thus accelerates the potential movement, activates it, frees it from the resistance of form." (Tafuri, M., 1987. p. 57)

In this case, the achievement of the “rebellion of forms” by means of disintegrated elements is construed through the disappearance of the pretext. Although such a pretext was once pointing out the relative structure of organism, after its dissolution it addresses the displacement of meaning. In Tafuri’s words, “where this pretext disappears, only leaves its constraints”, for him, this generates ‘a static ambiguity’, thus adds that it is this ‘static ambiguity’, which constitutes *Carcere Oscuro*’s “inoffensiveness” (Tafuri, M., 1987. p. 58). Because of this ‘inoffensiveness’, Tafuri proposes that the form of the criticism attributed to that kind of an ambiguous dynamism, “must take the form of the act of violence to expose the dynamic fascination in it. Piranesi’s way of dealing with the opposites: “the extreme aggravation of each of the juxtaposed terms, forced to ‘impale each other’ and carry to an extreme their destructive dynamism” (Tafuri, M., 1987. p. 62).

“And the dynamics of these elements of construction overflowing into each other arouse that feeling of emotional captivity, that “non-concrete,” “non-representational” whole, that a truly harmonious building would represent for us” (Eisenstein, S., 1987.p. 78).

In the analysis of *Carceri*, the conflict between the opposite poles and the violation affect the representation of these chaotic configurations for both the artist, and the spectator. While the artist finds himself in an impossible position to overcome a puzzle, the spectator shifts his position to solve the dissolved fragments of the same puzzle. However, in his way to reconstruct the configuration, this process turns into an adventurous voyage for the spectator. The spectator tries to “bring together the residues and the fragments freed by his imaginary explosion” takes the role of the participator of the “mental reconstruction.” As Tafuri states, “the criticism of the work thus becomes an operation on the work” (Tafuri, M., 1987. p. 58).<sup>8</sup>

What emerges from this destructive dynamism is a violent formulation in terms of architectural representation and the perception of the architectural space. Like, the very similar architectural space illustrated in Piranesi’s fictional spaces. Such a violent performance could figure out a critical activity. For “the representation of the non-representational”, the “critical act” leads to a dissolution of the coherent formation. By this dissolution, the coherent formation is disintegrated into the dissolved fragments of that formation. These dissolved fragments suggest a recuperation of what has been

criticized in the whole formation. To conclude, the “criticism begins,” while the artist is identifying the fragments of the conventional act of architecture, and the spectators necessarily reconstruct the fragments themselves. “They both appear as the participants of the mental process of reconstructing; and the codes, which they decode and reconstruct, take the forms of an apparatus, or machines which contains within them the ghost of architecture” (Bloomer, J., 1993. p. 142).





Figure 2.10 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Carcere Oscuro* (Dark Prison)  
 Etching: 36x24 cm. c.1743.  
 (Penny, N., 1978. *Piranesi*, Oresko Books, London, p. 27).

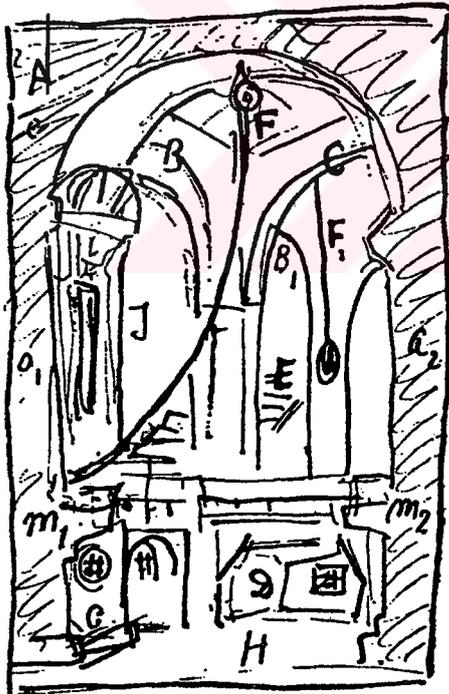
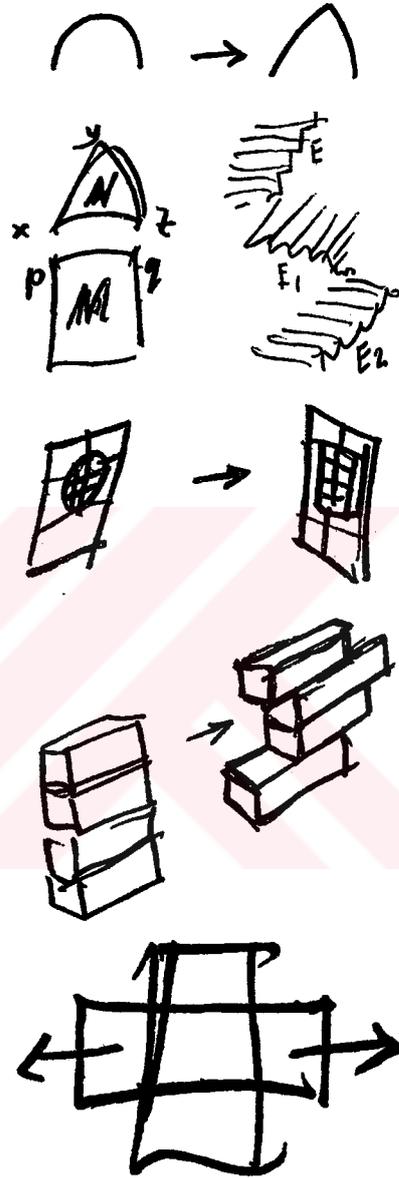


Figure 2.11 Eisenstein's schematic sketch of his application for analyzing the methods of producing an "ecstatic effect" on *Carcere Oscuro*. (Tafuri, M., 1987. *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, MIT Press. Cambridge, p.141).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> An Italian etcher and engraver, b. at Venice, 1720; d. in Rome, 9 Nov., 1778. More information are stated clearly in the essay “Notes on Old and Modern Drawings: Giovanni Battista Piranesi’s *Carceri* Etchings and Related Drawing”, written by Patricia May Sekler, which was published in the periodical, *Art Quarterly*, in 1962. There, she further adds the basic biographical sources of Piranesi’s biography. She states, “the main biographical sources include: Lodovico Giovanni Bianconi, *Elogio storico del Cavalier Giambattista Piranesi, 1779*; J. G. Legrand, *Notice historique sur la vie et less œuvres de G. B. Piranesi*, Manuscript 5968 in Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris” (Sekler May, 1962. p. 357).

<sup>2</sup> This biography, titled as *Giovanni Battista Piranesi*, is written by Leigh Hunt in the Online Edition of *The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume XII*, 1999. It is downloaded from a web page on 12. 04. 2001 from the URL address: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12107b.htm>. Biographical sources include: Delaborde, *La Gravure* (tr. London, 1886); Hind, *A Short History of Engraving and Etching* (London, 1908); Huneker, *Promenades of an Impressionist* (New York, 1910).

<sup>3</sup> For more explanation, see Wilton, E. J., 1988. “The Fever of the Imagination,” *The Mind and Art of Giovanni Battista Piranesi*, London: Thames and Hudson, pp. 81-91.

<sup>4</sup> This term is used here to develop a parallelism with Anthony Vidler’s book, *Architectural Uncanny*, in which he takes the Bibliothèque Nationale de France as a case, and talks about its “paranoid space”. For more, see Vidler, A., 1992. *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

<sup>5</sup> The puzzle of disarticulated elements, formed by “the hermetic fragmentation of the architectural *ordo*” is what May Sekler indicates while she was defining the insolvable puzzle that the viewer of Piranesi’s etchings is forced to piece together its disarticulated fragments. Here, it is supposed that “the hermetic fragmentation of architectural *ordo*” causes this disarticulation. Tafuri claims, according to Sekler, the observer of *Carceri* is left unsatisfied and often frustrated: “In the description of a prison, a stimulation much more effective than allusions to the diabolical aspect is the substitution and, even, destruction of what the observer is led to believe and suppose” See May Sekler, “Giovanni Battista Piranesi’s *Carceri*”, p.335. Tafuri recommends Sekler’s text to the reader, as she correctly identifies “the isolation of the elements and their sudden breaking off, just where they should confirm the organic connection to the whole” (Tafuri, M. 1987. p. 27). He further, puts his principal interest as to “reexamine this hermetic fragmentation of the architectural *ordo*, to test its theoretical premises and to reexamine the perspectives it puts on mid-eighteenth-century European Culture” (Ibid., p.27). All these breaking up, distorting multiplying, and disarranging clearly, identified by Sekler in Piranesi’s work, is “a systematic criticism of the concept of place, carried out by using the instruments of visual communication” (Tafuri, M. 1987. p. 27).

<sup>6</sup> Tafuri claims: “the universe of pure power, of the absolute alienation of the subject, is not by chance a “Mechanical” universe. A judgment on the part of Piranesi is implicit here. He sees the mechanical universe as the kingdom *par excellence* of the artificial, as the place where there occurs the definitive loss of primordial organicity, of the union between the world of nature and the universe of human institutions. And yet, this very organicity is the subject of the *Magnificenza ed architettura de’ Romani* (Magnificence and Architecture of the Romans)” (Tafuri, M. 1987. p. 32). For further understanding on Piranesi’s ‘mechanical universe’ see, G.B. Piranesi, *Della Magnificenza ed architettura de’ Romani* (Rome, 1761), chap. 35, p. iii.

<sup>7</sup> For the explanation of the concept “negative utopia”, see Tafuri, M., 1987. “The Historicity of the Avantgarde: Piranesi and Eisenstein,” *The Sphere and the Labyrinth: Avant Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s*, Trans. P. d’Acerno and R. Connelly, MIT Press. Cambridge, p.63.

## CHAPTER III

### RECONSIDERING THE BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE, PARIS

At the moment when the electronics revolution seems about to melt all that is solid — to eliminate all necessity for concentration and physical embodiment— it seems absurd to imagine the ultimate library (Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., 1995; p. 606)

*Bibliothèque Nationale de France* is the architectural project submitted to the 1989 competition in Paris, on which this study constructs its own “critical act” via “a process of destroying, of dissolving, of disintegrating [*Bibliothèque*’s] structure”. Yet, if Tafuri’ s claim is taken for granted that “no criticism exist that does not trace the process that has given birth to the work,” we should essentially begin with tracing back the process that originates the initial ideas of this project to develop a critical act. Only by tracing back this process, clear answers to the questions, like, how *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* is configured, constructed, represented, experienced and displayed, can be given. From here onwards, one might develop a clear definition about the pretexts where this particular project’s formation stands. At the same time, the basis of its formation can be brought into light by an analysis in need to create a “doubling” of the object under consideration.

Yet, to retrace the process that has given birth to this work, it is essential to recall the category within which Koolhaas classifies this particular competition project. *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* is categorized among the projects that Bigness governs, and it is this key concept that constructs the basis of its formation. The

projects, conceptualized by Bigness, display an independent performance that do not belong to any “*urban tissue*,” but rather, do perform a position that “competes with city” (Koolhaas, R., 1995. p. 515). Yet, Koolhaas strictly defines that the existence of “Bigness” cannot be neglected “... because it is there” (Ibid., p. 495), it appears totally as an autonomous object placed in the city, but no longer fed by it. As a result of this boundless appearance, where the building is placed in city, accredits no importance. He defines this condition explicitly, in his words, as:

“Bigness no longer needs the city; it competes with city; it represents the city; it preempts the city; or better still, it *is* the city. If urbanism generates potential and architectural exploits it, bigness enlists the generosity of urbanism against the meanness of architecture.  
Bigness = urbanism vs. architecture” (Koolhaas, R., 1995. p. 515).

Whenever, Bigness is concretized in a single building, it no more needs the city, since it acts as a city in itself. It requires a different category among those that has been in force throughout its introduction as a problematic case to the current debate. On the one hand, the concept of “Bigness”, for Koolhaas, is an alternative; an alternative category beyond the ones that can only be dominated by ‘architecture’. On the other hand, such conceptualization discredits Bigness as a concept, which cannot be categorized. In Koolhaas’ words, “of all possible categories”, it does not “deserve a manifesto; discredited as an intellectual problem” (Koolhaas, R., 1995. p.496). He explains his conceptualization, in fact, by using the metaphor of a ‘dinosaur’. He underlines that “it is apparently on its way to extinction through clumsiness, slowness, inflexibility, difficulty” (Ibid., p.497). Here, what Bigness explores as a fact is “the *regime of complexity* that mobilizes the full intelligence of architecture and its related fields” (Ibid., p.497). In addition, one might claim that what characterizes the formation of Bigness is that of the programmatic chaos it implies. This chaotic formation emerges as a derivative construction upon the expanded programmatic needs, which no longer represents a part of urban, but rather presents itself as urban. In other words, for Koolhaas, it just represents an apparent stability to a city, as it is beyond a certain scale.

From this perspective, Koolhaas introduces a “Bigness” that cannot obey any rules belonging to conventional means of architectural design. Such as, rules of scale, of

proportion, of architectural composition and of tradition. All these breakdowns in 'Bigness' formation lead the dissolution of 'architecture'; in a way, "the 'art' of architecture is useless in Bigness" (Koolhaas, R., 1995. p. 500). Moreover, Koolhaas states that the reason of this "dissolution and disappearance" of such a 'building' practice is the extended programmatic needs of "Bigness". But, even if it leads to such a dissolution of conventional means, Koolhaas defines "Bigness" also as "a new beginning". Because, he supposes that Bigness, as an alternative category, has in its own body, the power to recuperate "what it breaks" (Koolhaas, R., 1995. p. 511). At that point, one can estimate that the concept of "Bigness" proposes a new model, which is deduced from various programmatic needs of such a scale, for the resurrection of all the breakdowns.

In reference to these accounts, Koolhaas acclaims that "through size alone, it [the proposed new model] requires a new domain whose impact is independent of quality" (Koolhaas, R., 1995. p. 502). That 'new domain' characterizes the formation of the architectural object in which the commonly accepted notions of architectural production no more exists and makes it dissolve. Thus, this new domain, for Koolhaas, also brings together all the breaks "with scale, with architectural composition, with tradition, with transparency, with ethics" (Ibid., p.502). But in addition to all those breaks, it is important to reemphasize that it implies a more significant break, which is defined by Koolhaas, as "the final, most radical break: Bigness is no longer is a part of any urban tissue. It exists; at most, it coexists. Its subtext is *fuck context*" (Ibid., p.502). In this respect, such breakdowns originate this new domain of architectural production. However, if Koolhaas classifies *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* within that predefined domain, then it can be proposed that the *Bibliothèque* originates such a power to recuperate what it breaks. Actually, it has already triggered the concepts that have already been accepted and being practiced until now. Therefore, the domain this competition project belongs to, reveals a series of alternative ways and a new way of architectural composition.

Moreover, Koolhaas states that the concept of Bigness "seemed a phenomenon of and for (the) New World(s)" in 1978 (Ibid., p.502). However, he emphasizes that from the second half of the eighties, it has been considered as "a new wave of modernization

that would engulf—in more or less camouflaged form— the Old World, provoking episodes of a new beginning even on the ‘finished’ continent” (Koolhaas, R., 1995. p. 503). Upon these regards, Bigness refers to a critical situation. Furthermore, for Koolhaas, “only through Bigness can architecture associate itself from the exhausted artistic/ideological movements of modernism and formalism to regain its instrumentality as vehicle of modernization” (Ibid., p. 510). Moreover, Koolhaas explores;

“Through contamination rather than purity and quantity rather than quality, only Bigness can support genuinely new relationships between functional entities that expand rather than limit their identities. The artificiality and complexity of Bigness release function from its defensive armor to allow a kind of liquefaction; programmatic elements react with each other to create new events — Bigness returns to a model of programmatic alchemy” (Koolhaas, R., 1995. pp. 511-512).

What “Bigness” reveals is a critical operation employed on the ‘Old World’ as its subject matter. It turns out to that of an apparatus or a machine for the criticism of *architecture*’s conventional standing. In this perspective, what becomes explicit in the work of Koolhaas is how such an apparatus operates. In his words:

“Bigness became a double polemic, confronting earlier attempts at integration and concentration and contemporary doctrines that question the possibility of the Whole and the Real as viable categories and resign themselves to architecture’s supposedly inevitable disassembly and dissolution” (Koolhaas, R., 1995, pp.503-504).

Against this ‘dissolution’ and ‘disassembly’ of architecture, what Koolhaas does, in his words, is to “mark two critical defense lines: dismantlement and disappearance” (Koolhaas, R., 1995. pp. 505). His definition of these defense lines is as follows:

“In the first, the world is decomposed into compatible fractals of uniqueness, each a pretext for further disintegration of the whole: a paroxysm of fragmentation that turns the particular into a *system*. Behind this breakdown of program according to the smallest functional particles looms the perversely unconscious revenge of the old form-follows-function doctrine that drives the content of the project—behind fireworks of intellectual and formal sophistication— relentlessly toward the anti climax of diagram, doubly disappointing since its aesthetic suggests the rich orchestration of chaos. In this landscape of dismemberment and phony disorder, each activity is *put in its place*.

The programmatic hybridizations / proximities / frictions / overlaps / superimpositions that are possible in Bigness—in fact, the entire apparatus of *montage* invented at the beginning of the century to organize the relationship between independent parts—are being undone by one section of the present avant-garde in compositions of almost laughable pedantry and rigidity, behind apparent wildness.

The second strategy, disappearance transcends the question of Bigness—of massive presence—through an extended engagement with simulation, virtuality and nonexistence” (Koolhaas, R., 1995. pp. 506-507).

These two critical defense lines, dismantlement and disappearance, find their existence, one to one, in the project *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*. Koolhaas’ materialization of this particular project is a direct illustration of his operational criticism. His emphasis on the “breakdown of the program” explicitly appears in this particular project by the attribution of an explosion on the program. What this explosion on the extended program causes is the appearance of the very large spaces, as separate spaces having opposite formations in origin: Solid and Void.

These opposite formations of space actually generate a “system” and construct the final configuration of design. The explosion inherits exactly the process of destroying, dissolving, and disintegrating the whole into autonomous fragments. The final product, after such an explosion, can well be considered as what Koolhaas defines “compatible fractals of uniqueness, each a pretext for further disintegration of the whole: a paroxysm of fragmentation that turns the particular into a *system*.” Following such a shift of each particle with the violated attempt on its origin into a “system,” I could claim that such a destructive process mainly results in the liberation of each particle and makes them loose their autonomy.

Therefore, the process of design turns into a free play, trying to put each particle in its place. This free play can be defined as a puzzle-like act for the designer. There, one can understand this process as a free play of “compatible fractals of uniqueness” performed by the designer, or it may be called an “intellectual montage”. That montage simply provides a subjective solution for the puzzle. Reminding that, as Koolhaas explicitly emphasizes, those “programmatic hybridizations / proximities / frictions / overlaps / superimpositions that are possible in Bigness” have direct traces with “the entire apparatus of montage”. By using such an “entire apparatus”, Koolhaas made all

the problems, the structure of Bigness inherits, dissolve and disappear in the whole configuration. Here, remembering the later commentaries and very interpretations of Piranesi and Eisenstein, as elaborated throughout the second chapter, the act of ‘breaking up’, ‘distorting’, ‘multiplying’ and ‘disarranging’ lie at the origin of “a critical act”.

However, *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* is originally configured by a resembling process of destroying, dissolving, and disintegrating the building’s structure, in terms of program, of form, of tradition. It accredits a solution to “the question of Bigness —of massive presence— through an extended engagement with simulation, virtuality and nonexistence” (Koolhaas, R., 1995. p. 507). Therefore, I claim that *Bibliothèque* already inherits in its origin the process of Tafurian “critical act”. This process is the one that gives *Bibliothèque* such a critical identity. That critical identity carries in itself the power of recuperation of the criticized formation.

Consequently, at the patchwork of these arguments where architecture’s actual disappearance is obvious, Koolhaas displays the dissolution of the conventional ‘building’ process of ‘architecture’, by the project, *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*. What *Bibliothèque* reveals explicitly, is simply what Piranesi’s series of *Carceri* intends implicitly. Upon all these accounts, one might claim that the Bigness is an operation to criticize all the predetermined breakdowns of conventional canons, in other words, the conventional act of architecture.

Actually, *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* is designed, as a project originating Koolhaas’ performance of his “critical act” against all the problems Bigness requires. For this requirement, Koolhaas explores a methodology from “the entire apparatus of montage”. Herein what Koolhaas’ critical defense lines reveal in *Bibliothèque* seems to resemble the process of Tafurian “critical act”. In other words, it is this act that is performed on the formation of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*. There, one can develop also the validity of a parallel reading between Koolhaas’ operational criticism and Piranesi’s critical performance, originating the process of destroying, dissolving, and disintegrating the conventional norms of architecture. At the same time, to rewrite Koolhaas’ critical performance, Eisenstein’s pragmatic approach to reread Piranesi’s critical act via his own method of montage, can function as an apparatus.

In short, a traditional act of criticism; as invented by Eisenstein pragmatically, and later theorized by Tafuri, and as materialized by Koolhaas via his marked critical defense lines against Bigness, here as realized throughout this study. As it had been repeatedly stated, the process, which lies at the origin of this study's "critical act", is nothing more than a similar act of dissolving, disintegrating and destroying the criticized structure. To this end, the "ecstatic transfiguration" or the "explosion" would be juxtaposed pragmatically on Koolhaas' competition project *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*. However, this time, the transfiguration contends a reverse application on the already exploded fragments of Koolhaas' performing configuration and is already in motion. Finally, our goal is to experiment an alternative strategy for a reinterpretation of Koolhaas' competition project *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, anchoring its own point of extraction on such a tradition.



### 3.1 – MAPPING – AN APPLICATION OF THE ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY

The goal of performing “a critical act” on Koolhaas’ competition project, *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, submitted to the 1989 competition in Paris, ensures us to develop an alternative strategy for the interpretation of this particular case. Actually, it has been repeatedly expressed through various illustrations of this performance, by exploring the overall process of how “a critical act” occurs, invented by Tafuri. However, one can evaluate such “a critical act”, as it is already a tradition of criticism referring to those illustrative works, theorized by Tafuri. This study’s intention of developing an interpretation is similarly structured upon the interpretations of Tafuri on those particular cases in terms of the “critical act” they perform.

A destructive process lies at the origin of Tafurian “critical act”. What has to be stressed here is essentially how this reading enables us to structure our work’s process for such a critical performance on *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*. For this purpose, this study’s strategy takes its background knowledge from Piranesi and his application of a critical position to his etchings.

Our application of Eisenstein’s pragmatic method for an understanding of Koolhaas’ distressed composition is the “ecstatic transfiguration” that requires an “explosion”. “Ecstatic transfiguration” or “explosion” was the method Eisenstein employed on the particular etching, *Carcere Oscuro*. This application puts the etching in motion. The etching that is in an endless motion, deduces a mesh of confusion for the viewer. What this mesh of confusion causes is a shift in spectator’s position. Once, he was only a viewer, after such an explosion on the configuration, he becomes the direct participator of the reconfiguration. He is now, a participator, who tries to reorder the disintegrated fragments in motion.

Here, it is crucial to remind, one more time, that the methodologies, which Piranesi and Eisenstein succeed for their critical analysis, were both had in their origin a process of destroying, dissolving and disintegrating a given structure. Koolhaas’ critical operation resembles such a process, based on what Tafuri calls “explosion” or

“ecstatic transfiguration”. That is why; they are linked, here in this study, by that particular technique of critical analysis. Tafuri’s theorization of both Eisenstein’s pragmatic attempt, ecstatic transfiguration, and its end product, the stage play that shifts the spectator into that of a participator, is somehow what *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* has in origin. The project has already have this kinetic configuration with “the programmatic hybridizations / proximities / frictions / overlaps / superimpositions”. With these hybridizations, proximities, frictions, overlaps and superimpositions Koolhaas generates a motion resemblances with, in his words, “the entire apparatus of montage”. The apparatus, Eisenstein uses for exploring an “ecstatic transfiguration” on *Carcere Oscura*. However, this study proposes an alternative dimension, here, other than Koolhaas succeeds.

Hereafter, what this study has to perform is, initially, to superimpose and overlap both methodologies, or the critical apparatuses of Piranesi and Eisenstein, theorized by Tafuri. This process implies firstly the superimposition of the keywords, derived from these previously interpreted methodologies, on the formation of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*. As it is known, the project has in origin, yet very different, but a similar destructive critical operation to what Piranesi succeeded. It is a similar critical operation because it has in its origin a violated formulation of program, of form, and of composition, which is generated from the problematic of Bigness.

The process, which this study pursues, is almost the reverse application of what Koolhaas achieved during the design of such a configuration in motion, in pragmatic sense, on the materials of the project’s representation. Here, this study must create its own doubling of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*. For that particular reason, a photograph of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*’s construction model is selected as the object of analysis [Figure 3.1]. There are also its plans, sections, and other model photographs, which are all representations of the same project. However, this particular photograph illustrates all the performing elements of Koolhaas’ chaotic composition. The second step will be to distort, multiply and disintegrate this photograph and the elements it represents.

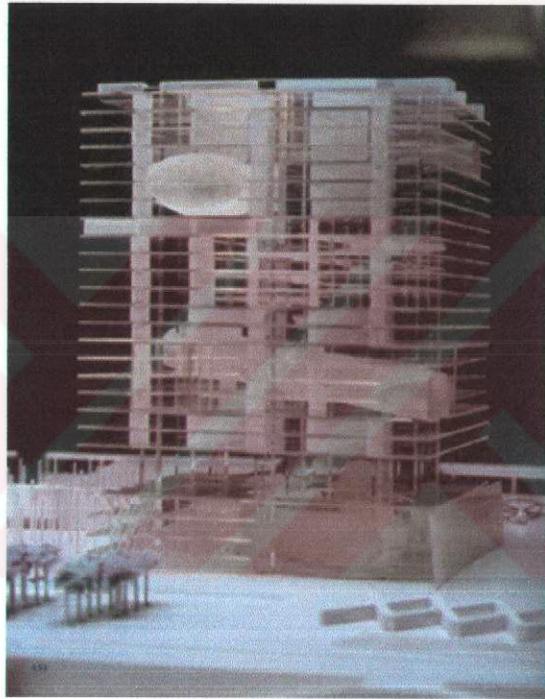
The “doubling” of the object under analysis starts. The purpose, in its broadest sense, is to create *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*’s “doubling” by the process of

destroying, dissolving and disintegrating the given structure, as for the criticism to begin. Then, the keywords, deduced from the previous readings, are superimposed and overlapped on this basic distorted representation. This superimposition and overlapping made the keywords juxtapose the free fragments of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*. At the point of juxtaposition where the keywords refer to Koolhaas' free fractals in motion on the particular frame, the study attributes a destructive attempt. What is done, in other words, is mainly exploding Koolhaas' independent fractals into shots. That explosion, attributed at the junction where the text overlaps the fractals, detaches each junction in shape of a shot from the whole frame. Then, each shot is enumerated: Shot [A<sub>1</sub>, A<sub>2</sub>], Shot [B], Shot [C<sub>1</sub>, C<sub>2</sub>] and Shot [D]. Subsequently, these shots are taken as independent cases to be reinterpreted.

At this junction, it is significant to state that this explosion, the process of dividing into shots, firstly involves the freezing of the revealed fractals in motion in the chaotic configuration of Koolhaas. Those frozen shots allow removing the elements off the whole configuration and enables to make a reinterpretation following a different strategy beyond its own critical formation.

This alternative strategy, proposed in this study, is surpassed via a Piranesian tool: "An oval eye". However, this "oval eye" provides in our case the change of the dimension of the "critical act" into the depths of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*'s representation. This change in the route signifies an alternative dimension pursuing its rotation according to the subjective formulation of this study, other than Koolhaas' own critical operation over the formation of the project. After that point, what is seen when one look through "the oval eye" is originally a new configuration proposed by this study to the independent critical elements of Koolhaas.

Therefore, this study takes one of the representations of the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* as a frame and divides it into shots: Shot [A] Solid, Shot [B] Void, Shot [C] Interval, Shot [D] Enclosure. Thus, from now on, each shot refers to an architectural element, and also to a, fragment belonging to the whole composition. In short, Figure 3.2 illustrates the "doubling", that is, the process of criticism in this study. This is our own application of the 'explosion' on *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*.



*Figure 3.1* The construction model of  
*Bibliothèque Nationale de France*  
(Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., 1995. p. 652).



Figure 3.2 The 'doubling' of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*. The chart for the reinterpretation, inspired with the concept of 'montage'.

### 3.1.1 – Shot [A<sub>1</sub>, A<sub>2</sub>]: SOLID

Shot [A], the first shot that will be brought into discussion in our process of application is a reframing of SOLID. Although, solid is reframed only as a fragment of the whole chaotic configuration *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* displays, it is actually the most important element in this configuration. It functions as the storage of the building. In terms of the area it requires, it occupies almost 75 percent of the program of library. That is why; it originates the design of the final form of the building. Therefore, it is the element that gives the library its form. This form attributed to such a big function is a perfect cube. Such a perfect cube is organized by Koolhaas as “a series of regular and repetitive floors” (Ibid. p. 616), which at the end constructs a solid block [Figure 3.3]. This solid block is supposed to contain a big mass of information, formed by almost the whole memory of the world. It appears as Koolhaas’ repository of memory.

Before proceeding with further interpretation on *Shot [A]*, a quick glance on how the library’s complex program was configured would be essential. In fact, the library has a “chaotic” formulation. It is composed of disintegrated elements. The main reason for this fragmentation is the extended functional demands of such a big library. Koolhaas’ wish to solve these demands clarifies the creation of the play-like configuration. The play-like configuration of the design, in its origin, does have a montage of these disintegrated elements. The final form that appears as a perfect cube is composed of the three-dimensional pieces, like a puzzle filled in a box. That is why, this study’s application of montage for the interpretation of its configuration can be considered as a replay of Koolhaas’ own process of design.

Koolhaas’ own process of design intends to resolve such a complexity. For this purpose, he comprehends a destructive method. He applies this destructive method on the program, by doing so, he leads an explosion of the program. As a result of that explosion, the architectural spaces and their formulation are divided into two completely different contents, opposite in origin. On one side, there is the storage, on

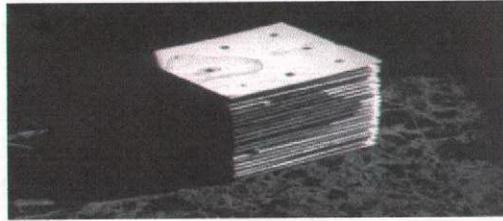


Figure 3.3 Regular and repetitive floors...  
(Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., 1995. p. 628)

the other, the public spaces. While one appears as a solid block of information, the other appears “as the absence of the building, as a kind of refusal to build” (Koolhaas, R., 1995. p. 616). While the former, yet constructed by repetitive floors defining an order, is actually abstracted to a solid storage of memory, the latter appears as absences. Rem Koolhaas explains these absences as voids carved out of that solid. Koolhaas concretizes these voids as “multiple embryos”, each having a differentiated “technological placenta” (Ibid. p. 616).

By this explosion, Koolhaas already puts the fragments in motion, as isolated pieces. What structures the construction of the whole library, is actually the “montage” of these two reciprocal, but isolated pieces. In other words, the montage of solid and void. It is this formation that produces the structure of the construction. Here, Koolhaas’ construction actually appears as a play between counter fragments. Solid and void appear as critical formations related to each other, yet this is a depressing interrelation. Accordingly, it is this double-grounded play of counter formations in motion that shapes the ambivalent configuration of the library. This double-grounded play is the very act of criticism; the ambivalent configuration Koolhaas brings into play is the end product of that criticism.

Limiting the interpretation on solid, on a single shot, is hard to execute at first, since *solid* is one of Koolhaas’ critical formations. It is the direct performer of Koolhaas’ critical activity and has a leading role in that activity. However, by contrast, without its counter formation, void, solid may represent an inadequate critical identity. Because, in this activity it has direct connection with the other shots in a continuous performance, especially void. On the other hand, to generate an alternative ‘critical act’ on Koolhaas’

each critical element requires a ‘doubling’ of the project. To do so, this study freezes solid’s simultaneous performance with *Shot [A]*. It reframes and separates this fragment, solid, from the whole composition. Freezing that shot for a moment is to open an eye, just like Tafuri’s theorization of the oval eye for Piranesi’s etching, to zoom in details of that element and to give a start to an intellectual voyage into the depths of its representational means. In our case, the tools for representation are the plans, the sections, the models, and the photographs of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*. So that it becomes possible to bring *Shot [A]* alone in play separated from the whole configuration, with a controlled motion of this study.

In this perspective, one can define this reframing as a destructive attempt against the totality of the whole. Such a destructive attempt can only cause a detachment of the frame from that whole in a literal sense, so did Koolhaas do during the design process. The ‘oval eye’ originally shows what is unknown beyond the lens at the coordinate it is zoomed, just like concentrating into the depth of the design through Koolhaas’ eyes. Thus, when it comes the zooming into that particular frame, the movement of the oval eye, even though with a conscious rotation of this study, enables the translation of visual representation into verbal representation. By using the oval eye as a working mechanism, one can define it as an interpretive- tool; and what remains is to draw a possible path of rotation for that tool. Zooming into the plans first, one can see clearly that the previously underlined double formation of architectural space, forming the whole configuration, is directly represented and emphasized.

By focusing, one can clearly distinguish solid from void in the plans. With the method of using contrast colors —black and white—hatching the spaces, Koolhaas used to emphasize the difference, although those spaces were not strictly enclosed. While *solid* is the area that Koolhaas blackened, it is obvious that the *voids* are perceived all at once, since they are left as white pockets in those solids. [Figure 3.4] This method of blackening for the reading of the plan in a proper sense is nothing other than the traditional method of blackening used in the convention of architectural drawing, and can trace its roots to this conventional method, called as *poché* in phenomenal and literal sense. [Figure 3.5]

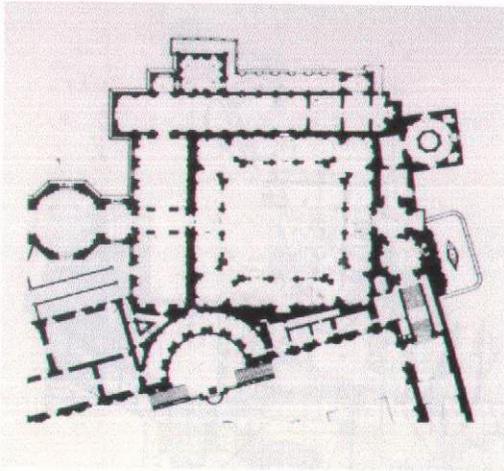


Figure 3.4 Poché

(Slutzky, R., Rowe, C., 1997. *Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal*, Birkhäuser, gta., Basel, Boston, Berlin, p. 118).

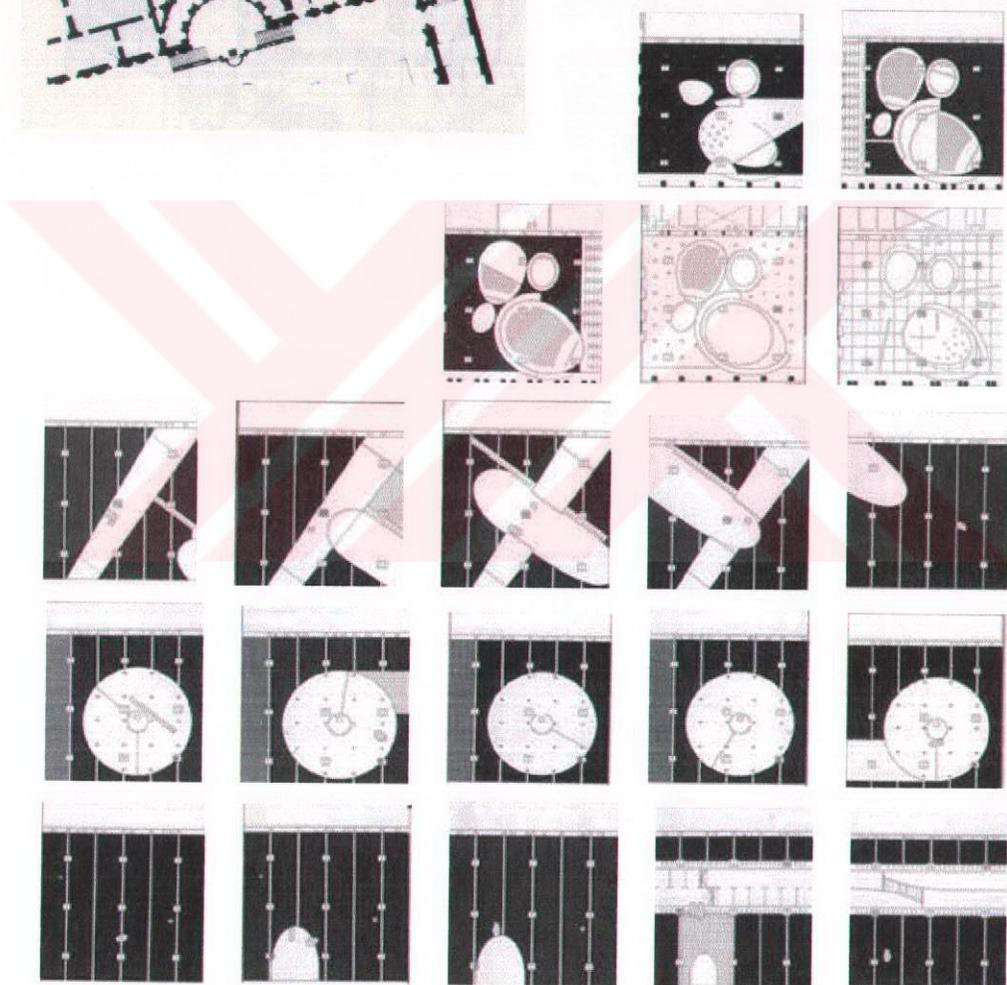


Figure 3.5 The plans of Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

On one hand, in phenomenal sense, what *poché* distresses by blackening and whitening of the figures is clearly outlined by Jennifer Bloomer in her book, *“Architecture and the Text: The (S)cripts of Joyce and Piranesi”*.<sup>1</sup> In Bloomer’s words, “in convention of architectural drawing, *poché* is affected by hatch marks, a kind of chicken scratch, made with a drawing instrument across the paper [HATCHERY, HEN]. *Poché* offers blackness, obscurity, dark pockets in a properly ordered world [THE PROPER], safe and comforting places, places where things people are afraid to voice openly can be hidden. Place of umbrage” (Bloomer, J., 1993. p. 173) that implicitly refers to the idea of storage Koolhaas abstracts. In such a storage, nearly the whole memory of the world, books, microfiches, database are contained in and preserved.

However, on the other hand, in literal sense, *poché* has a very pragmatic definition in the field of architecture throughout centuries. *Poché*, literally, in Hoesli’s words, is “blackened parts of plan or section with black to indicate the parts of structure that are cut, as could be done by stippling. We may get closer to the usefulness of that resurrected term if we think of “l’oeuf poché”, the poached egg. For if we connect the verb “pocher” with “la poche”, the pocket, then “pocher” can become “mettre en poche” and the past participle “poché” could be said to signify pocketed or “bagged”, put into a bag. German: eingesackt. So, then “poché” would be an ideal shape put into a bag, surrounded with tissue” (Hoesli, B., 1997. p.118). In a similar vein, Michael Dennis, in his book *“Courts and Gardens,”* uses *poché* as a pure concept and discerns the nineteenth century hotel formation in France around this concept. Yet, he develops the term to define a traditional system of representation used in the nineteenth century. According to Dennis, this tradition of representation tends to emphasize the solid parts that are cut through by obscurity, so as to develop the volumetric aspects of architectural space it encloses, even from the two-dimensional abstraction of plan. Dennis develops this concept is as follows:

*“Poché* is doubly difficult as it’s a nineteen century term (a product of the Beaux-Arts) that feel out of favor with the advent of modernism. Technically in French it is a word of *pocher*; meaning to poach (an egg), to black (an eye), or to sketch rapidly. In architecture it means the blacking in of residual areas, such as the thick structural solids of a plan. At Beaux-Arts, the precise profile of the plan was inked by the designer, while the rougher work of filling in the outlined area could be done by beginning students. The word

also came to be used as a noun at the Beaux-Arts, where either *poché pure* (black) or *poché dilué* (gray) could be required. Since the architectural system used by Beaux-Arts was load-bearing masonry, *poché* aided the “reading” of the plan by its direct proportional relationship to the white area of the rooms it bounded; that is, a large space could be assumed to have a higher ceiling, and its wider span (and greater load) could require larger supports. Thus the volumetric aspects of the design could be read from the two dimensional abstraction of the plan” (Dennis, M., 1986. pp. 4-5).

In this respect, *poché*, with which Koolhaas uses to emphasize solid, forces the eye to transform the two-dimensional representation of space into a three-dimensional format. In a sense, it transfigures the paper space to a solid mass. But beyond this volumetric aspect, caused by black and white pockets, solid space encloses void space. *Poché*, which is defined by Hoesli as “an ideal shape put into a bag, surrounded with tissue” is more inspiring and crucial to understand Rem Koolhaas’ project (Hoesli, B., 1997. p. 118). For Hoesli, in his words, “one may say that the procedure here presupposes apparently a primary interest in the object-figure and that one is intent on preserving its ideal form. One can then experience each individual space one at the time and one after the other. *Poché* is like the mortar joints between the individual stones and blocks of a rubble-wall. Attention is preserved for the part and there is, perhaps, less a comprehensive feel for the whole” (Ibid.. p. 118).

Thus, it is nothing other than a destructive attempt to dissolve that coherent wholeness. By this dissolution, the parts that had been exploded from the whole configuration by Koolhaas, find their being even in the two-dimensional abstraction of the plan. What is imperative here is the representation of the dissolution of the forms and their disintegration, even on plan. By focusing on the blackened part, that partition simultaneously transfigures to a state of being the object – matter within the whole. In a sense, the whole is destroyed, thus the part, liberated from that whole, can no longer be defined as a space. In Tafuri’s words, “the destroyed space makes room for ‘the things’. And these are no longer, as in Leibniz’s theorization, conditions of space, but rather appeal in all the hermeticism of their object-void” (Tafuri, M., 1987. p. 52). He adds, “the hermetic muteness of ‘things in themselves’ can also be expressed by freezing of their geometric structures” (Tafuri, M., 1987. p. 53). “The dissolution of form and the void of the signifieds” are the representation of the predefined negative dialectics between the counter parts, solid and void (Ibid., p. 54).

This negative dialectics left the interpreter in a void too, as s/he continuously tries to construct the whole, to reconstruct the objects in that whole. But unfortunately after this violation, according to Hoesli's argument, "the whole very often remains, but the sum of its parts or at least attention to the individual part enjoys supremacy over attention to the whole which is rather object than the field. On one hand a consciousness of parts, on the other an institution of the whole. *Poché* as 'joint' or transition taken as figure, obviously refers to as an 'inbetween' to the adjoining spaces that act against it — just as a locus in space in a transparent position that can be referred two or several systems. Aside from possible differences in scale one is acting in terms of mass, the other in terms of space; we recognize the joint as mass or as space, as solid or as void" (Hoesli, B., 1997. p. 119).

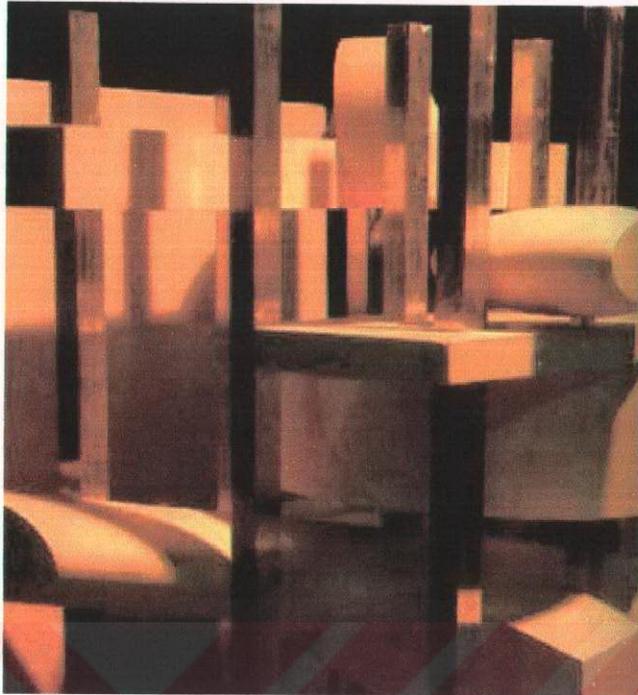
In reference to these readings, Hoesli proposes that the concepts of transparency and *poché* "are related by inversion: in a transparent form-organization there are spaces that refer to two or several systems just as *poché* does as "solid" mass in a complex whole consisting of several discrete spaces. In terms of the whole their roles are equivalent, just as solid and void are in terms of continuous space. *Poché* is present as material, transparency as space- both are, though inverted and opposing as existence, equal as performance" (Ibid., p. 119).

This inversion is significant at this point because it directly refers to a shift of architectural representation from two-dimensional paper space to a three-dimensional representation of that space. At this junction, the focus of the oval eye is rotated to the models of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*. [Figure 3.6] Yet, for Hoesli, one can directly refer to the distinction between the representation of solid in plans, with its complete emphasis, and the same solid's reverse representation by models of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*. What Koolhaas did in models was to reverse the emphasis given to solid in plans. This change in terms of emphasis that is revealed as a critique is certainly distressing. Because, the solid that was once represented as a mass of storage, here in the model, reversed in terms of its existence. Solid as a concrete mass transfigured into a transparent box, which does not show any existence as a concrete mass or storage anymore. Yet, one can follow the changing use of the concepts of *poché* and transparency in the shift from the two-dimensional abstraction of plan to the three-dimensional abstraction of model. Moreover, Koolhaas reverses

this process, by using “the cube of glass with its internal organs displayed, so to speak, like some anatomical model”, which is later interpreted by Vidler as “a confirmation of transparency and its complex critique” (Vidler, A., 1992. p. 220). As for Koolhaas, “what is solid has melted, what is void floats as object in nothingness” (Koolhaas, R. 1992. p. 648). According to Vidler’s theorization, for the design of library, the transparency is, in his words:

“... the transparency is conceived of as solid, not as void, with the interior volumes carved out of a crystalline block, so as to float within it, in amoebic suspension. These are then represented on the surface of the cube as shadowy presences, their three-dimensionality displayed ambiguously and flattened, superimposed on one another, in a play of amorphous densities. Transparency is thus converted into translucency, and this into darkness and obscurity. The inherent quality of absolute transparency to turn into its opposite, reflectivity, is thrown into doubt; the subject can no longer lose itself in *l’espace indicible* of infinite reason or find itself in the narcissism of its own reflection. Rather, it is suspended in a difficult moment between knowledge and blockage, thrust into an experience of density and amorphism, even as it is left before an external surface that is, to all intents and purposes, nothing more than a two-dimensional simulacrum of interior space” (Vidler, A., 1992. pp. 220-221). [Figure 3.7]

Consequently, solid loses its identity as a mass and melts in the whole configuration. That transparency, which is the only material that proves solid’s existence transfigures into translucency. Further that this translucency is transfigured into darkness and obscurity. To make all these transformations possible, Solid’s counter formation Void rises as a crucial element. Because, at the moment they interfere, void defines solid to give it a permanent character by superimposition or intersection. To understand this superimposition, the oval eye’s route rotates to Shot [B], namely to void.



*Figure 3.6* The model of voids instead of solid, a reverse model where the voids are represented as solids, as a matter of fact, solid was melted in all its existence...  
(Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., 1995. p. 648)



*Figure 3.7* The reverse model of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, Solid represented in all its transparency...  
(Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., 1995. p. 638)

### 3.1.2 – SHOT [B]: VOID

“In architectural drawings (sections and plans), *poché* is the representation of solid material that has been cut through—walls, columns, and beams, for example. In the representation the space within the outline of the element being sectioned is blackened. Occasionally, an element that may appear in a “real” building to be solid actually contains a pocket within it; sometimes, this *poché*, an [INTERVAL], constitutes a hidden, secret room represented as a white void within the *poché* of the drawing of the building” (Bloomer, J., 1993. p. 172).

Shot [B] reframes the VOID, which basically function as the public spaces. The program of these public spaces includes a combination of five different libraries to contain all the information found in all the libraries around the world. In Koolhaas’ words, “along with conference centers, restaurants, offices, etc., it would consolidate five separate and autonomous institutions in which the complete production of words and images since 1945— the Bibliothèque is as much cinema as library— would be contained: a cinemathèque, a library for recent acquisitions (magazines, books, videos), a reference library, a library of catalogs, and a scientific research library” (Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., 1995. p. 610). Koolhaas defines the configuration of the building with its big and complex program as such: “Imagine a building consisting of regular and irregular spaces, where the most important parts of the building consist of an absence of building. The regular here is the storage; the irregular, reading rooms, not designed, simply carved out” (Ibid., p. 626).

In its broadest sense, the principle that characterizes the whole configuration, for Koolhaas, was to create a difference between those particular functions, in terms of regular and irregular spaces, also in terms of form. As solid is the regular space for Koolhaas, voids constitute the irregular. The forms of these two spaces take shape in respect to this regularity and irregularity. There, while solid is a perfect cube, its

counter formation void, “are defined as absences of building, voids carved out of the information solid” (Ibid., p. 616). In a sense, these two formations take reciprocal forms. Koolhaas further adds, “since they are voids —they do not have to be ‘built’— individual libraries can be shaped strictly according to their own logic, independent of each other, of external envelope, of usual difficulties of architecture, even gravity” (Ibid., p. 620). In his words, “the creation of difference, the unbearable task, becomes pleasure. Easy, too. Forms only have to be ‘left-out’, not constructed” (Ibid., p. 632). If Koolhaas’ exploitation of the opposite principles of differentiations were the means of the whole configuration, then it must be emphasized that void spaces were the ones that consciously left out to be inbuilt. In other words, void spaces are the most compelling images in *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, apparently solid, freestanding by the irregular closure of the solid mass.

Here, by using the oval eye, this study reframes Koolhaas’ void spaces for an analysis, benefiting from the representational tools of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*. The first tool for drawing a possible path in behalf of this analysis is the two-dimensional abstraction of plan. Zooming into the plans, what is grasped, at first sight, is “a hidden, secret room represented as a white void within the *poché* of the drawing of the building” (Ibid., p. 172) [Figure 3.3]. This white room is Koolhaas’ void. Koolhaas explains how he represented this white void in the plan as: “if the storage pattern is wallpaper, planning of the [VOID] is like tearing that wallpaper off the wall” (Koolhaas, R., 1995. p. 642) [Figure 3.3]. In the plan, void is surrounded with a blackness, as it used to be explained by the term, *poché*. Within this blackness, void suggests an absence in the whole configuration. Represented by a whiteness, void, causes a shift in the two-dimensional representation of solid in a plan and transfigures it into a three-dimensional space. In other words, solid turns into a volume, a solid mass, as void disappears at the background, in darkness created by the *poché*.

In the perspective of such an invisibility at the background and the overlap of void and solid on the two-dimensional abstraction of the plan, the oval eye helps the perception of void as a counter formation of solid. It is possible to increase the number of the coexisting opposite formations in this project. Thus, it is possible to claim that the overlap of counter formations and their interaction explore and formulate the chaotic configuration of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*.

Here, it is crucial to underline the original idea behind the counter formations within the whole. As it has been repeatedly emphasized that, the overlap of one element with its negative, in Tafuri's words, "the representation of elements, reverse to their representation of negative," emerges as a "negative utopia". In this vein, it can be claimed that Koolhaas' use of formal elements, which define an order and structure the solid, together with its negative, void resembles the features of Tafuri's 'negative utopia'. Void, in this perspective appears as the '*dissolved form*' of the former in Tafurian terminology. However, such a dissolution is a consequence of the breakdowns Bigness requires within the whole configuration of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*. Here, it is significant to recall that the togetherness of one with its negative involves a hidden methodology, as in Tafuri's words, "the construction of the *utopia of dissolved form* . . . constitutes the recuperation of the negative, the attempt to utilize it" (Tafuri, M., 1987. p. 54). In this frame, it can be claimed that Koolhaas' counter formations involve, by its nature, such a hidden methodology. So, these counter formations, as the outcome of Koolhaas' "utopia of dissolved form", have the power to recuperate the object of criticism, which can be called a "critical operation" via Tafuri.

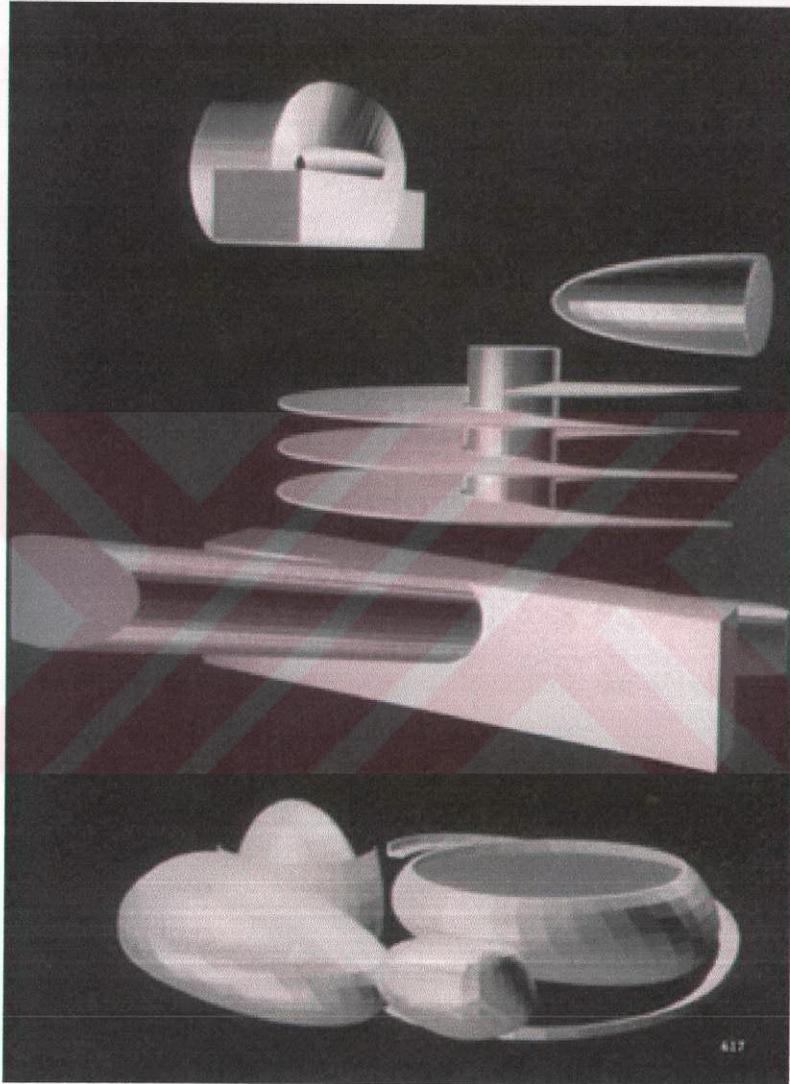
Actually, in scenery of such a chaotic formulation, it can be proposed that the project inherits in its origin many conflicts in terms of the disintegration of the architectural composition, form and function. These conflicts increase a collision, and this collision allows for the designer to perform an "intellectual montage". Koolhaas' 'montage' of counter formations informs Koolhaas' critical activity. As it has been stressed, at the origin of a critical act, by definition, there lies the process of destroying, of dissolving, of disintegrating a given structure. Therefore, Koolhaas' activity with the coexistence of counter formations is nothing more than a similar act of criticism that Tafuri defines.

Here, the aim should be the exploration of this critical counter formation of spaces' structure and materialization in the whole configuration of the library. For such a purpose, the oval eye's route is rotated from the two-dimensional abstractions of plan and section, distressed by *poché*, to the models of the project. Ensuing such a concentration on models, one can easily perceive Koolhaas' formulation for such an elucidation. There he realizes the separation of the different functions from each other.

This division emerges from Koolhaas' application of an explosion on the configuration of spaces. It is this explosion that creates the solid, representing the storage and void, representing the public spaces. There, it is also perceived that even these divided public spaces are exploded into five different fragments according to changing functional requirements of the five different libraries. Such an explosion on the composition establishes a scenery of "dismantlement and phony disorder, [to] put each activity in its place", and verifies a programmatic hybridization as a consequence of Bigness.

Certainly here, in terms of architectural construction, one can state that destructive functional partition is reflected equally to the structure of Void's formation. This reflection is explicitly represented in models. It is transpired in Koolhaas' destructive transfiguration superimposed on the boundaries, constructing the periphery of void spaces [Figure 3.8]. When the formation of spaces is examined carefully, it can be proposed that solid creates an architectural '*ordo*' and is a conventional pretext that only intends to be "built". However, void, unlike the former, emerges as a refusal to "built". To accomplish such a refusal to be "built", a violent intervention has been employed to the elements, constructing void. Indeed, it is originally a violent intervention to the formal elements of solid. This violent intervention makes these elements dissolve and distracts their formal identity into informal.

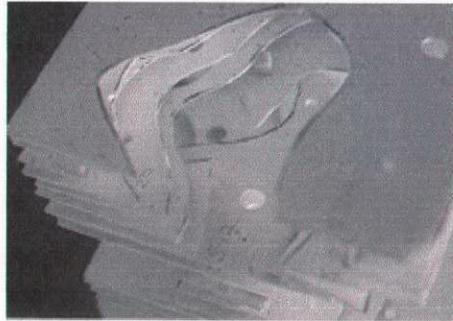
The goal of such a violent intervention is simply to break-up each element, constructing void, from its natural ground. It is because only this breaking-up from the ground can liberate the elements from their basic intention of "building". With such a liberation from the basic intention, each broken-up element that would surround void spaces is declared as autonomous fragments. These autonomous elements construct the void spaces and give them their form. Consequently, the void spaces appear as dissolved spaces "shaped strictly according to their own logic". With their inner logic, their appearance also differs. Sometimes in a position juxtaposed to the other, carrying the other to an extreme destructive dynamism. Sometimes reveals itself through a window opening to Paris. Sometimes located in the dark, in the shape of a pebble-like structure that does not allow any other interruption.



*Figure 3.8 Voids, “multiple embryos, each with its own technological placenta.”*  
(Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., 1995. p. 617)

Here, one can claim that this violated process employed on the formal elements of solid is nothing other than the process of destroying, dissolving and disintegrating these formal elements, defining an order. This process originates Koolhaas' critical act, trying "to rid architecture of responsibilities it can no longer sustain and to explore this new freedom aggressively" (Koolhaas, R., 1995. p. 660). Now, to build up a theoretical stance on what such a destructive process implies, first the solid cube and the formal elements it is construed must be defined. In *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, solid block represents all the responsibilities Koolhaas rejects. In other words, solid represents the "controlled totality" of form. Such a totality of form demonstrates the coherence of structure, that is nothing other than the "architectural *ordo*". This coherence is adjusted through the hierarchical arrangement of structure, enclosure, surface, supported by the cause-effect relationship between form and function. The hierarchical arrangement of the architectural elements derives from the notion of rational and 'ideal' order, and results in the conventional pretext. Besides, the architectural elements, such as walls, floors, surface, constructing that coherent totality are also characterised according to that pretext. So, the finite relationship between the architectural element and the context it represents—the idea of 'building'—formulates a defined analogy. It is this analogy, which originates the precise formation of the totality of form. But, the frozen shot [B], the void space has a completely opposing pretext that refuses to be 'built'. In Koolhaas' words, "since they are voids—they do not have to be *built*" (Koolhaas, R., 1995. p. 620) [Figure 3.9]. Therefore, it initially refuses to be built and represents a negative intention against the conventional pretext. In this sense, Koolhaas' void's formation in a different character is almost adequate as it stands against that conventional analogy. Here, it can be proposed that Rem Koolhaas' void supplies the power of destruction to disintegrate the coherent composition of the solid cube, and by doing so, explores a new freedom aggressively.

The superimposition of a destructive transfiguration on the elements, forming the boundaries of void, aims to rescue them from the rigid obligations of 'building'. This superimposition varies in different shapes. Such variations are explicitly illustrated with each void space's unique character, differing from the other. In order to illustrate this changing characterization of void spaces, the oval eye takes 'the periphery' as an example, which encloses the void spaces. Here, the aim is to search for the articulation



*Figure 3.9 Void Spaces,*  
“The creation of the difference, the unbearable task becomes pleasure. Forms only have to be ‘left out’, not constructed.”  
(Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., 1995. p. 632)

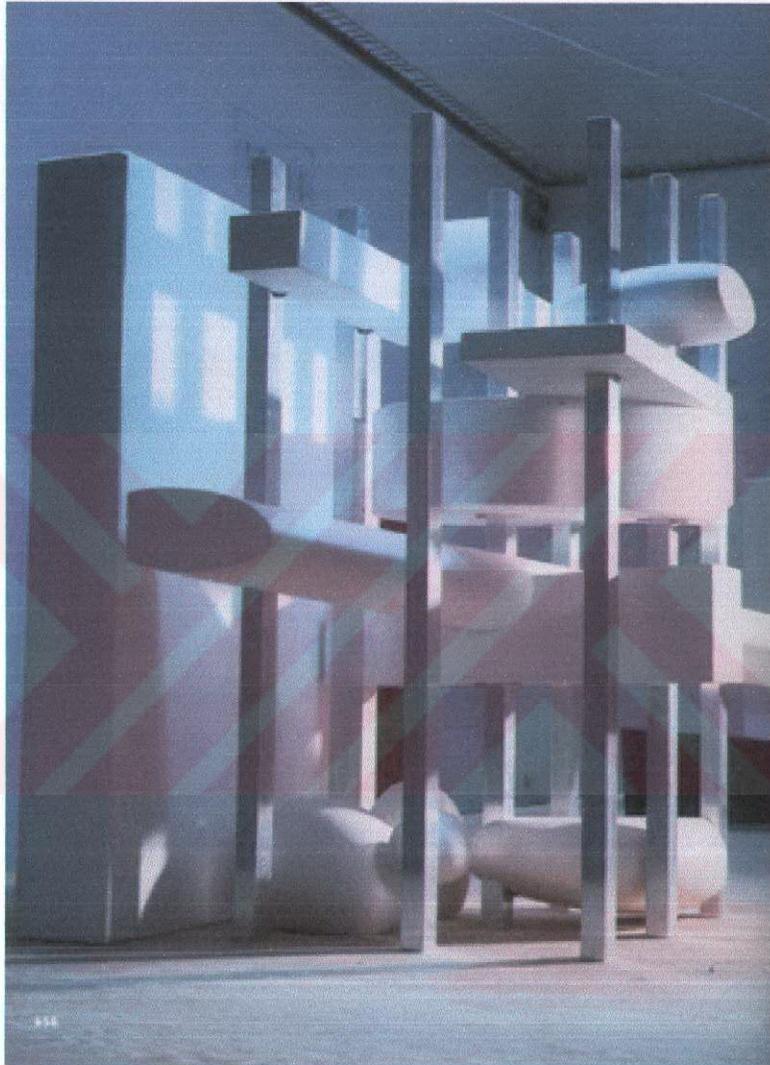
of this element before and after such a destructive transfiguration. Before this transfiguration on the periphery, the walls were conventionally enclosing an architectural space. They had found their physical existence as thick and load-bearing solid borders. Such an existence was guided by the conventional analogy, derived from the strict linkage between form and function, so as to represent the conventional context of ‘building’. However, with the application of explosive effects that detaches the element from its origin, it is realized that this conventional existence completely changes status while articulating VOID as a space that refuses to be ‘built’. The peripheries of void spaces no longer find their existence as former. On the contrary, their form transform from being a thick and load-bearing solid border characterizing the stable nature of the solid cube, to that of a skinny, suspending, translucent wrappings, having an unstable character.

They are these informal wrappings that characterize the changing nature of the void spaces. Each takes a different form, according to the differing impacts, emerged from the explosion on its formation. Their changing nature can be perceived from the models of the project. When examined carefully, one sees “a room where floor becomes wall becomes ceiling becomes wall, and a floor again. Room loops the loop” (Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., 1995. p. 634). This free play of architectural elements liberates them from the conventional analogy. Only such a liberation allows the reinterpretation of each element for renewing and reconfiguring them. This new reinterpretation of each enables

a reconstruction for each, independent from the ground, by completely ignoring the pretexts they derive from. This act of ignorance in the construction process of the void signifies the dissolution of *'the totality of form'*, which is criticized by Koolhaas.

At the end of our detourment with the oval eye, we see that the void spaces take the shape of independent particles suspended in the solid mass. They are constructed by the dissolved elements, which are rescued from the ground that have been dominated. Here, I claim that they, in a way, explore a new freedom by refusing the conventional obligations of form, even of 'building' [Figure 3.10]. Since, void spaces use the building's components, and dissolve them to criticize, it can be said that this new exploration does not mainly negate *'the totality of form'*, but criticizes it. Therefore, it can be said that void acts as a tool for criticizing the conventional pretexts in the dissolved totality that metaphorically materializes the dissolved mass of information. Being an apparatus in a dissolved totality, fulfilled with the destroyed codes of memory, makes it reveal a dynamics within the ambiguous configuration. That is why, these tools are considered to trace independently to any dissolved fragment out of its formation. This independent tracing of voids would put the fragments in different characters in motion, "independent of each other, of the external envelope, of the usual difficulties of architecture, even gravity" (Koolhaas, R., 1995. p. 620). It leads them float in the solid mass of information —"floating in memory." (Ibid. p. 616).

Consequently, it can be claimed that with this changing character of void at each level, the configuration of the solid cube transforms into a multi-layered object. It supplies its inner power from the space acting like an apparatus that finds its existence as [VOID]. Void as such tends to be a moderator while criticizing the *'the totality of form,'* represented at Shot [A], Solid. Although, the multilayered object is formed within the togetherness of Shot [A] Solid and Shot [B] Void, both appear in complete detachment from each other's formation. Therefore, in this multilayered configuration Shot [C] appears as the only element that connects these separated fragments. At this point, the oval eye is focused on this element frozen in Shot [C], namely Interval.



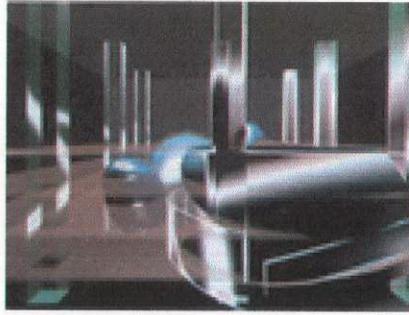
*Figure 3.10* The plaster model of 'voids' and services  
(Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., 1995. p. 658)

### 3.1.3 –Shot [C<sub>1</sub>, C<sub>2</sub>]: INTERVAL

“The elevator —with its potential to establish mechanical rather than architectural connections— and its family of related inventions render null and void the classical repertoire of architecture. Issues of composition, scale, proportion, detail are now moot. The “art” of architecture is useless in Bigness” (Koolhaas, R., 1995. p.500).

Shot [C<sub>1</sub>, C<sub>2</sub>] INTERVAL reframes the vertical elements in the building. Actually, nine shafts of vertical movement, piercing the cube are reframed by this shot. These nine shafts, which are, in real sense, in motion are the elevators that is said to have a potential to establish mechanical, rather than architectural connections. However, in the chaotic configuration of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, they do establish the architectural connection of void spaces with the ground level of the building. The elevators provide the accessibility of voids for the visitor in the building. In fact, they are the only elements that make the entrance of the visitor possible in voids. In Koolhaas' words, “[a]s long as void surrounds one of the elevator squares, it is accessible” (Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., 1995. p. 630). Because of establishing such a crucial architectural connection, they have a significance in this building. Therefore, shot [C<sub>1</sub>, C<sub>2</sub>] reframes originally the vertical shafts and freezes them for a moment to analyze these significant elements. So that, through this frame, the oval eye, the tool for our analysis, can dive into the depths of the representations of the project. Hereafter, the study can draw its own route and discover further significance of this particular element in motion.

Then, for designate the location of these elements in the whole configuration, the oval eye is first zoomed in the plans of the project. There, what is perceived is that they are cubic formations situated in a regular grid in the perfect cube. The cubic formations as such appear as vertical shafts that intersect each level of the building,



*Figure 3.11 Interval,*  
Architectural elements in vertical..  
(Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., 1995. p. 611)

each having a different planning. It is sometimes surrounded by the *poché* of solid, sometimes with a white void. Although the contours of *poché* and the white voids change in each level plan and represent a varying disclosure, these elevator squares are the only stable element in these changing formation of spaces, which are metaphorically in motion. Because of this stable location in the changing formation, they appear as the elements of interface that connects all varying levels of the plan to each other.

For a further examination of these stable elements, here the oval eye turns to the three-dimensional models of the project. There, one sees that these cubic formations, drawn in plan, appear, in real sense, as “the glass cages of nine elevators, each rising to its respective destination, traversing the other interiors with a discreet hiss” (Koolhaas, R., 1995. p. 613). Actually, because of their transparent appearance, the elements disappear at the background of the autonomous elements of the building. However, at the moment they intersect the independent fragments of Koolhaas, these elements suddenly appear at the foreground of these autonomous elements. In other words, they appear as transparent cores that slice through the whole configuration vertically. They initially connect the disintegrated elements, solid and void, to the ground level of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*.

Actually, these vertical elements intersect each fragment of Koolhaas' chaotic configuration. An intersection, as such, enables the transparent cores delineate the cross sections of the whole configuration at the coordinate they are situated. When this cross section intersects the periphery of void, there occurs a hole in the periphery. Through that hole, the void becomes accessible.

The process of intersection is nothing different than an "interval" that Bloomer conceptualizes. In her words, "an interval is a connection, an intervention, a hole in the wall, a space of incision, a place of alluvial soil. It's the space between the walls proper, the space of the joint" (Bloomer, J., 1993. p.161). Therefore, I claim, Koolhaas' transparent cores trigger such an interval in the whole configuration. When each interval intersects the periphery of void, an opening appears enabling a penetration into void's inaccessible formation. Bloomer explains such a point of intersection as:

"The perspectival vanishing point (the point of intersection) is a door in which the artist may stand and see the world beyond, that world of four dimensions to which the three-dimensional world bears a shadowlike or orthogonal drawing—like resemblance. To traverse the passage between worlds is to come to an end that is as well a beginning. It is a void, which cannot be represented—the place where emptiness and intricacy are the same, the place of perplexing ("thoroughly woven") emptiness. The section (which is an intersection) delineates the here and makes an intersection of theres. It is neither this nor that and it is both this and that" (Bloomer, J., 1993. p. 116).

Consequently, at the background, the vertical elements have such a metaphorical identity. However, they have, as well, a literal identity. As it has been said, *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* is a very big library, and represents a Bigness. As Rem Koolhaas says, "Bigness no longer needs the city; it competes with city; it represents the city; it preempts the city; or better still, it *is* the city" (Koolhaas, R., Mau, B., 1995. p. 515). Similarly, *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*'s configuration includes a combination of complex functions. For Koolhaas, the library itself, nearly, inherits the complexity of a city in a single building. Thus, he represents the complexity of city via the anxious performance of Koolhaas' disintegrated fragments in the building.

However, when the inhabitant of the city enters into the ground level of the building, there s/he finds herself/himself in a Great Hall where no clues are given about this performance. There what s/he sees is only the nine elevators, situated in a regular grid. Except these, there is no other element in that hall that the inhabitant encounters. It is clear that these elements enable her/his entry into Koolhaas' chaotic configuration performing an anxious play above. There, these elements propose a mechanical path in vertical dimension, rising to certain destinations. This mechanical path also has references to the paths in the city. Just as the networks, oriented by the electronic billboards, these paths in Koolhaas' library that is acting as a small city are similarly announced by electronic billboards and directed to certain coordinates. In Koolhaas' words, "on the elevator shafts, electronic billboards announce different libraries. With fragments of text, titles, names, songs descending in a continuous movement, the entire building seems supported by signs in perpetual countdown to take off" (Koolhaas, R., 1995. p. 613). If Bigness acts as a city in the city, then the elevators becomes the stimuli that carry out the references of the city, just as the electronic billboards, to the building. In this way, what Bigness requires, is somehow determined by these elements.

Therefore, these elements have a critical identity that represents the paths of the city in the complex configuration of the building. Such a system snakes its way from one fragment (shot) to the next, in other words, between Koolhaas' critical formations of solid and void. They appear as a network, defining the routes of inhabitant inside the performing configuration of the building, which imitates the complex structure of a city. At the moment, when the inhabitant enters the building, the city turns into a Bigness, which is itself a simulation of that city. At the same time, the fragment of Koolhaas becomes a direct performer, of what is proper, solid, and its counter, void, of that chaotic configuration. Here, the chaotic configuration becomes the explicit illustration of what we call stage like composition.

Here, if Bigness is considered as the city, *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, entailing such a Bigness, appears as the simulation of that city. In other words, the building represents city's complex structure in its chaotic configuration. This complex structure finds existence in shape of a chaotic stage-play. A stage-play, as such, turns into a performance. The stage-play takes the form of adding and subtracting of spaces

to configure the library's structure. As an illustration, while one appears as solid mass, the other disappears in these solids and generates a void. One has a mass; the other is carved out of that mass. This addition and subtraction of spaces separates them from each other and declare them autonomous. At this moment, the interval, in other words the vertical elements, enables the connection of both these elements of the interior project with each other and their connection with the outside, the real city. Such a configuration generates two different projects within a building. The first one is the interior project, involving the stage-play being performed in the building that simulates the city. The second one is the exterior project that encloses this stage-play and displays it to the real city. It is the simulation's enclosure, in other words the façade that wraps the interior project. While, the former represents the complex structure of city causing anxiousness as an interior project in a distressed manner, the latter displays this anxiousness to outside like a screen.

In short, subject's anxious experience in the complex structure of the city, here in the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, occurs as a similar experience because of the chaotic play of architectural elements. In a sense, the anxious state performed by the two different projects within the building persuades the inhabitant of the city to inhabit this building, at the same time, shifts his position to be a direct participator of this building and the city.

This study, so far, reframes Koolhaas' critical fragments constituting the inner project of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*. From here onwards, another element emerges that encloses and wraps Koolhaas' play with all the fragments that constructs the interior project. The oval eye, henceforth, should focus on this element, reframed in Shot [D]. Since it does not have a role in the anxious performance of elements, consequently does not have any relation with the interior; this independence enables the shot to perform a separate exterior project. Instead of participating the process, it rather displays this play to the city. Here, the oval eye zooms in Shot [D] for a further examination on this exterior project.

### 3.1.4 –Shot [D]: ENCLOSURE

Shot [D] ENCLOSURE is the latest shot that will be focused on through the oval eye. It mainly reframes the façade of the building, enclosing its configuration. Façade has been considered, in this study, as an independent element, detached from the whole chaotic configuration of such a Bigness. In other words, it is a plane, independent from the whole, but entrapping that whole. Here, facade is considered as a metaphor, so as to construe the display of the disintegrated elements to the street; in other words, to the city, consequently to the inhabitant. In this sense, it will be interpreted as the “face” enfolding the building and representing it; or in Vidler’s words, “two-dimensional simulacrum of interior space” (Vidler, A., 1992. p. 221). This “face”, however, will not be contemplated in the status of being an agent of information about the building in terms of the architectural program. Such a contemplation had been appropriated throughout centuries, but the “face” of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, puts a break to the motto of interior representation in terms of function—façade’s accepted basic utility. Rather, it is generated as the “two-dimensional simulacrum” of the ambiguous stage-play being performed between the disintegrated elements.

Such a break occurs, because the façade no longer utilizes such a conventional character. Instead, Koolhaas sees the façade of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, as a plane “simulating the impossible” (Koolhaas, R., 1995. p. 654). Impossible, as for it does not have the ability to communicate the function and the significance of the building any more in conventional sense. Because the building is beyond a certain scale, Big, and therefore the dimension between the core and the enclosure is exaggerated. Koolhaas proposes that “the size of building alone embodies an ideological problem”, that is independent of architect’s will (Ibid., p.496).

Moreover, Koolhaas gives a clear explanation of Bigness and the ideological problem it embodies as: in his words, “beyond a certain critical mass, a building becomes a Big Building. Such a mass can no longer be controlled by a single architectural gesture, or even by any combination of architectural gestures. This

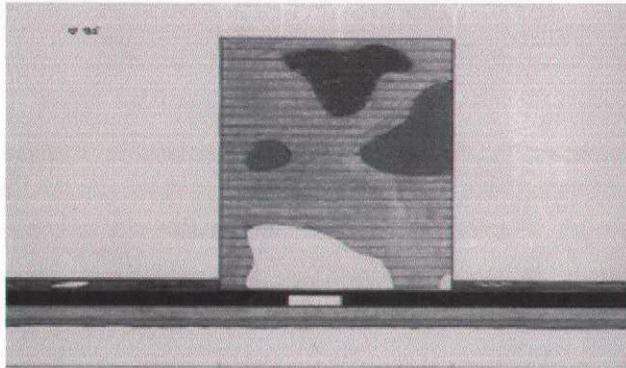
impossibility triggers the autonomy of its parts, but that is not the same as fragmentation: the parts remain committed to the whole” (Koolhaas, R., 1995. pp. 499-500). This kind of a fragmentation occurs, because, according to his theorization:

“In Bigness, the distance between core and envelope increases to the point where the facade can no longer reveal what happens inside. The humanist expectation of ‘honesty’ is doomed: interior and exterior architectures become separate projects, one dealing with the instability of programmatic and iconographic needs, the other—agent of disinformation— offering the city the apparent stability of an object.

Where architecture reveals, Bigness perplexes; Bigness transforms the city from a summation of certainties into an accumulation of mysteries. What you see is no longer what you get” (Ibid., pp. 500-501).

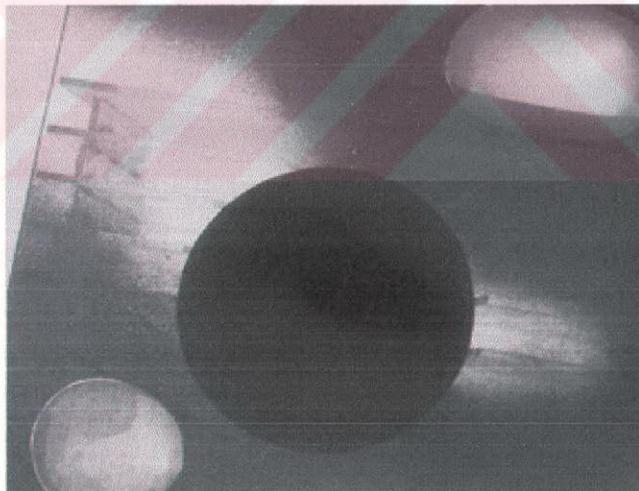
At that moment, when it becomes impossible to control the representation of the interior to the exterior by any ‘architectural gesture’, it can be claimed that the autonomy of the facade begins to be threatened. In a way, the façade, which is a part committed to the whole, is assaulted by an explosion in a destructive manner. This ecstatic manner, which transfigures it into an independent fragment, forces the facade to be defined as a separate project. A separate project for wrapping, which operates alone, isolated from the whole composition, but at the same time committed to that whole. At that junction, it becomes an autonomous element; weaved around a basis with a self-determining configuration totally apart from any enduring architectural gestures. Its role is only ‘to offer city an apparent stability.’

Therefore, the façade’s formation, originating such a boundless role, derives from its self-ruling character, without any presupposition. This self-determining character is only affected by external, when it is interfered by Voids. Consequently, the façade takes its shape almost naturally without any strict intervention, except where these reactions occurred. To understand how façade takes its shape according to these reactions, the oval eye looks to the models of the building. There, what is perceived is “a plane, sometimes transparent, sometimes translucent, sometimes opaque; mysteries, revealing, or mute” (Ibid., p. 654) [Figure 3.12]. In Koolhaas’ words, it is “almost natural- like a cloudy sky at night, like an eclipse” (Ibid., p.654) [Figure 3.13].



*Figure 3.12* First formal drawing of facade  
(Georges Heintz)

Koolhaas, R., 1995. *Small, Medium, Large, Extra-Large: Office for Metropolitan Architecture, Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau*, Jennifer Sigler (eds) Monacelli Press, New York, NY, p. 644.



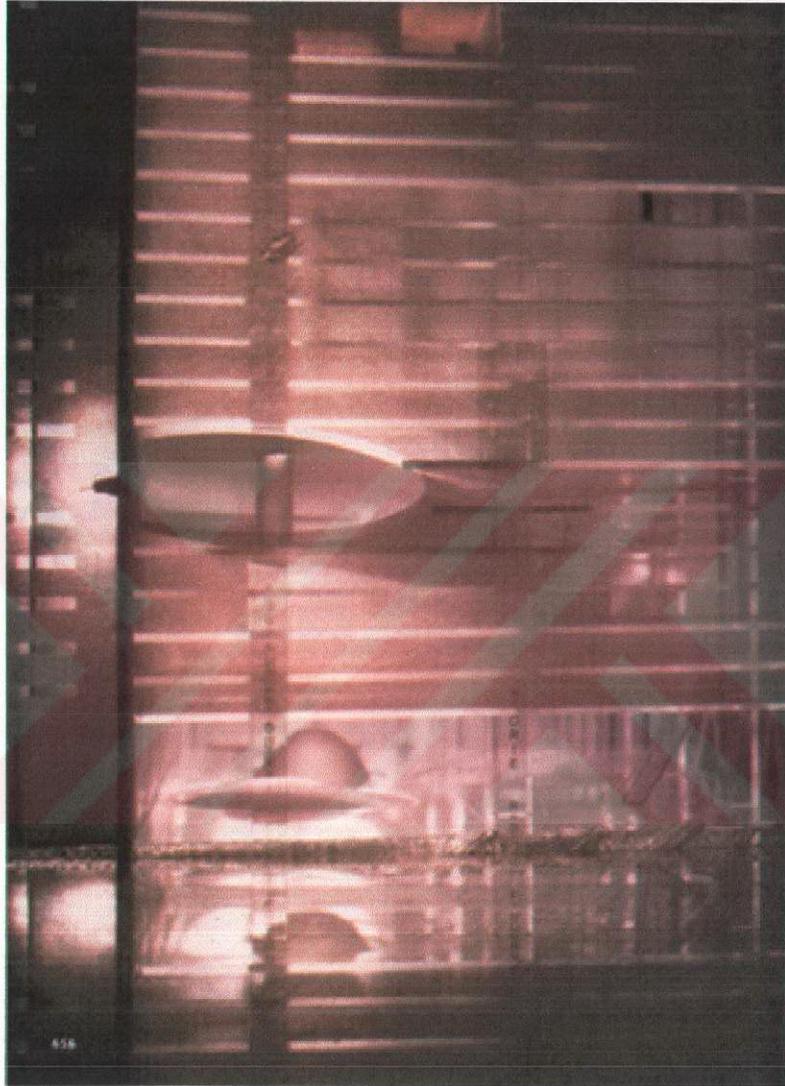
*Figure 3.13* "First test for façade...  
... simulating the impossible"

Koolhaas, R., 1995. *Small, Medium, Large, Extra-Large: Office for Metropolitan Architecture, Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau*, Jennifer Sigler (eds) Monacelli Press, New York, NY, p. 654.

However, the façade's changing formation according to the chaotic stage-play that is performed in the building, neither reveals any clues about the building, nor is understandable or domestic for the inhabitant. So, the façade that can be considered as a screen of the stage-play materialized in a hysteric manner. Koolhaas' play with the materials, which the facade is construed of, is an explicit illustration of such a manner. For example, as it can be perceived from the model, *glass* "once perfectly transparent, is now revealed in all its opacity" (Vidler, A., 1992. p. 220) [Figure 3.14]. Such an arbitrary, mysterious, unexpected, hysterical formation prevents the inhabitant in an indecisive position, whether to go through it or not.

Anthony Vidler, in his book, entitled "The Architectural Uncanny", theorizes what this hysteric formation of *Bibliothèque's* façade reveals and gives a historical account on the transformation of glass from being transparent to opaque. Vidler has underlined that, such a use of opacity was once considered as a sign under which "the universalism of the modernism, constructed on the myth of the universal subject, came under attack in the past twenty-five years. Beginning with Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky's sly undermining of modernist simplicities in their 'Transparency, Literal and Phenomenal', transparency was gradually discredited by the critique of the universal subject in politics and psychoanalysis. In its place, opacity, both literal and phenomenal, became the watchword of the postmodern appeal to roots, to tradition, to local and religion specificity, to a renewed search for domestic security" (Ibid. pp. 218-219). This is a break with transparency. Consequently, such a break with transparency directly signifies a break with the task of constructing a universal subject. With the occurrence of these breaks in façade's formation, its self-ruling character generates a collisionary state for the inhabitant, who is completely arrested in a state of anxiety. This is the very hysteric formation that façade engenders.

Yet, Vidler defines this opaque façade as a "refusal of mirroring" because of its origin that absorbs both "interior representation and external reflection" (Ibid. p. 223).<sup>2</sup> He explains such a reactionary condition as the state of "erupting suddenly out of an apparently simple play of transparencies". Moreover, he argues that, this condition, distinguishes this particular façade's quality from "the qualities of reflectivity found in



*Figure 3.14 Façade.*

Koolhaas, R., 1995. *Small, Medium, Large, Extra-Large: Office for Metropolitan Architecture*, Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, Jennifer Sigler (eds) Monacelli Press, New York, NY, p. 656.

modernism, as well as from any 'postmodern' surface play of simultaneity and seduction. The architect allows us neither to stop at the surface nor to penetrate it, arresting us in a state of anxiety" (Ibid., p. 223).

In this anxious landscape, the inhabitant hesitates and is entrapped in a paranoid position. What occurs as a result of the subject's paranoid experience in-between his will to penetrate and the anxiety he is arrested in is a tension. All these happen because the layer beyond the face is unknown, as it does not reflect any clues because of its self-ruling character. This situation is clearly identified by Vidler in psychoanalytic terminology. In reference to Lacan, Vidler detects what happens is a shift of the viewer to a state of a social subject who could participate mentally in the process. With such a shift, he starts to reconstruct façade, according to his social relations. This reconstruction of the facade by the viewer transforms two-dimensional representation of "face" into that of a stage where the subject can reform his anxious state into a domestic one. In other words, actually what is seen as two-dimensional transforms into a three-dimensional space in which such an act can be performed.

Here, as Vidler states, "two dimensional physiognomy, the representation of the 'face', is transformed into three dimensional space of subjectivity, place for the staging of social activity. That is the plane of the mirror becomes the space of the theater" (Vidler, A., 1992, p. 223). In this perspective, the hysteric formation of the face becomes the stage for the subject's anxious act. This stage act, according to Vidler, designates the formation of a "paranoiac space." He relates this paranoid space to the façade of Koolhaas' library project. To figure out what Koolhaas' paranoid space generates, he states that:

"The anxiety of the subject confronted in the "soft space" of Koolhaas' surfaces is then the manifestation of an uncanny based on the newly formulated conditions of interiority and exteriority, where the "ghosting" of the functionalist "interior" on the exterior mirrors not the outward appearance of the subject but its own, now transparent biological interior. Paranoiac space is transformed then into panic space, where all limits become blurred in a thick, almost palpable substance that has substituted itself, almost imperceptibly, for traditional architecture" (Vidler, A., 1992. p. 225).

From these readings, the facade of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* obtains a critical identity, as an agent for a watchword to roots, and to tradition of architectural production. Through its critical identity, the façade's conventional function of revealing inside to outside is somehow disappeared. Rather, what is revealed is only the play performed between the elements of the whole composition. This disappearance of façade's conventional function inaugurates its dissolution. Yet, this dissolution occurs upon its origin. Once it was totally committed to the whole configuration with a conventional pretext, now, with such a dissolution it is transformed into a separate project detached from the whole. The separation of the element from the whole, consequently from its conventional pretext, generates an 'ecstatic state'. This ecstatic state snaps the façade as a separate element from the interior project.



### 3.2 – MONTAGE OF THE SHOTS [A<sub>1</sub>, A<sub>2</sub>], [B<sub>1</sub>], [C<sub>1</sub>, C<sub>2</sub>], [D<sub>1</sub>]

The shots reframed the disintegrated fragments of the chaotic configuration. These disintegrated fragments appear as the consequences of Koolhaas' critical operation against Bigness. It is evident that we are dealing with the performers of Koolhaas' critical act. They have already been decomposed and transfigured, with the Tafurian process that originates his criticism. However, they were recomposed and represented to us in the shape of a stage-play. Our aim of reframing them is actually to underline or highlight their critical identity. In other words, we intend to reveal explicitly Koolhaas' implicit ideas, hidden in the details of the project's representations. Therefore, each shot requires a further study, as what is not there explicitly is intended to be represented. That is why, the study reformulated each shot to reveal the hidden dynamics generated from the conflicts in the project. Koolhaas represents these conflicts in shape of various breakdowns in the conventional act of building in architecture. These conflicts that are generated from the breakdowns, increase a collision and allow this study to perform an "intellectual montage". In other words, the reinterpretation of these shots with the conscious detourment of the oval eye is the "intellectual montage" of this study, intending to reveal Koolhaas' critical tendency. The aim, in its broadest sense, is to reconstruct the conflicts hidden in details and cast a comprehensive interpretation of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France's* critical condition. However, this condition is the production of our mental reconstruction.

Subsequently, if a recomposition of what we had decomposed by shots is required, it is important to start with underlining that this is a rereading "of cue, not of complete line". We are dealing with the suggested spaces, not with what we see. It is because what is seen at first sight is not the same when it is concentrated in details. The attempt to reread the clues is, in a way, due to our aim to highlight the hidden meanings. Thereby, the ongoing accounts are the inventions of this study from the representations of the project, with the guidance of particular references.

Benefiting from the previous examination, one can easily perceive that void and solid represent counter formations of architectural space. These formations have the implications of the conflict that Koolhaas creates between the act of building and not building. Actually, it is well known that, solid, by its nature, is a concept that traces its roots to the conventional act of building. Thus, due to this tracing, its formation and construction is originated by the intention to be “built”. It represents a ‘totality of form’. The regularity of its formation gives it a character of a cube. Solid’s regular and repetitive character casts an order for the structure of the cube. Such an order of the form that Koolhaas organizes generates a totality of whose extension by any additional intrusion is impossible. However, Koolhaas, instead of adding a different form to the cube’s totality, preferred to subtract the spaces from that solid mass. Later on, Koolhaas identifies these subtractions as void spaces. These voids, factually, represent the negative of what solid embodies with all its hidden meanings. Therefore, unlike solid’s intention to be built, voids, by their nature, cannot be built.

Koolhaas’ characterization of solid as a regular construction and of void in all its irregularity generate a conflict in the design. This conflict, generated with void’s appearance in the configuration, leads the dissolution of the ‘totality of form’. It can be claimed that with the creation of void, by its nature that cannot be built, Koolhaas dissolves the conventional pretexts belonging to the act of building. Therefore, voids appear as the critical contemplations of solid. Koolhaas’ critical act, against those conventional pretexts, is materialized by the elimination of the conventional functions of the architectural elements.

In fact, these two terms has been used throughout the centuries to define the figure-ground relationship in architecture. However, Koolhaas displaces these terms from representing a figure-ground relationship by giving each an alternative hidden critical identity. Such a displacement of concepts was underlined in Shot [A], while examining Koolhaas’ use of *poché*. The use of *poché*, in fact, can be considered as a hidden implication that traces back a tradition, belonging to nineteenth century. It was actually a method of blackening and whitening in the convention of architectural drawing, so as to emphasize the conflicting spaces, even on the two dimensional abstractions of plan. However, when Koolhaas’ attribution of *poché* is examined further, we see that beyond

having such an implication, it entails the clues of Koolhaas' critical approach on the counter formations of space. Because, they represent the collision, which is generated from the togetherness of these formations, even on the plans of the project. There, what is first perceived is that, while solid is hatched with black, voids remain in the blackness as white pockets. While, solid is darkened, voids are high lightened or better illuminated. As a consequence of such a hatching, solid is converted into dark space even on the two dimensional abstractions of the project. The voids, however, appear in the gaps of space that are subtracted from that darkness. This darkness embodied in solid ultimately dissolves its formation.

Koolhaas represents this dissolution of solid in the models of *Bibliothèque*. There, one can see that "all that is solid has melted" and converted into a transparent character [Figure 3.6-3.7]. On the contrary, voids are solidified as if they are the most important elements in the whole configuration. Here, I claim that, by this conversion, Koolhaas reverses and transfigures the nature of solid and void. His actual play with the concepts by reversing their nature in order to dissolve the implicit meanings they inherit is his performance of criticism. At the end, what he succeeds is the disappearance of solid. As it was stated before, the disappearance of architecture's conventional standing was one of Koolhaas' critical defense lines against the requirements of Bigness. However, void with all its irregularity, at the end, remains as the only element, that is solid, with its negative nature of what solid represents with all its subtiles. In fact, voids are the products of Koolhaas' other critical defense line, "dismemberment", to dissolve the conventional standing of architecture. Here, with the creation of void, he makes that dissolved act resign by a new freedom in the Bigness. Because of this "double polemic", Koolhaas identifies Bigness as a formation that confronts "the earlier attempts at integration and concentration", along with the contemporary doctrines "that question the possibility of the Whole and the Real as viable categories and resign themselves to architecture's supposedly inevitable disassembly and dissolution" (Koolhaas, R., 1995, pp.503-504).

If an interpretation is made benefiting from Tafurian terminology, the collision, which is arisen from the "double polemic" generated because of the togetherness of counter formations in a single building, initiates our "intellectual montage". In fact,

this collision Koolhaas created is the production of his “negative utopia”. This negative utopia inherits the power to dissolve the solid and generates “the dissolution of form and the void of the signified” with the requirements of Koolhaas. In other words, it is the critical activity of Koolhaas, with the process originating from the Tafurian strategy for the dissolution of the solid. By such a critical standing, Koolhaas desires to act in a new freedom, liberated from the norms and the canons of the conventional act of building. Actually, *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*’s design in such a critical perspective can be perceived in all its architectural representations.

We claim that this togetherness of opposites and their nervous interrelation in the configuration refers to the “stage play” Tafuri identified. However, in Koolhaas’ case, the stage play, in fact, represents the Bigness that imitates the chaotic structure of the city in a single building. Therefore, it can be said that *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* represents and simulates the city, or better it is a simulation of the city. In a way, the complex structure of the city is inherent in its nature, engendered by its extended program. Therefore, each fragment of the configuration can be considered as a critical simulation of any element in the complex structure of the city.

Here, the vertical elements that Shot [C<sub>1</sub>, C<sub>2</sub>] reframes appear as the best illustrations of this inherence. These elements are named as the interval in this study, due to their role of connecting the *Bibliothèque* with what it simulates, the real city. In other words, it defines a connection in-between the city and its simulation. The study considers these elements, having such a role of being a connection, as the critical extensions of the networks of the city in the building. The subtlety of such a duplication of the paths that are directed by the electronic billboards in the building implies the ironic criticism of Koolhaas.

Therefore, the totality of elements has critical identities, which carries their recomposition beyond the conventions of a building in the city. However, when it comes to represent this totality to the city, the wrapping constructed *Bibliothèque*’s façade appears as a violated element. There, you see that it acts as a screen, which explicates what happens inside in a hysteric manner. The hysteric character of façade appears as Koolhaas’ complex criticism of the transparency. For such a critique, he

converts transparency into translucency. By this transformation, what you see is not what you have anymore, due to Bigness. This conversion that represents a break with transparency forces the façade lose its conventional autonomous character. Since, the “face” no longer needs to absorb anything from the outside in such a Bigness. In fact, where Bigness is located has no importance, as such, if it is a city in the city. In Koolhaas’ words, “[t]he exterior of the city is no longer a collective theater where ‘it’ happens; there is no collective it left. The street has become residue, organizational device, mere segment of continuous metropolitan plane where the remnants of the past face the equipments of the new in an uneasy standoff. Bigness can exist *anywhere* on that plane” (Koolhaas, R., 1992. p. 514).

With all these critical tendencies, Bigness becomes an operation to criticize all the predetermined canons. Consequently, all the elements become the critical contemplations of the Bigness’ condition that can exist anywhere on the “metropolitan” plane.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For more information, see Bloomer, J., 1993. *Architecture and the Text: The (S)cripts of Joyce and Piranesi*, Yale University Press, New Heaven and London.

<sup>2</sup> Lacan's famous analyses of mirror stage, which is about the formation of I, derives from experience of the reflection of a self, produces "a secondary, ... an imitation, a translation of an already constituted original self. But Lacan posits that the mirror *constructs* the self, that the self as organized entity is actually an imitation of cohesiveness of the mirror image" and defined by Jane Gallop the stage is a turning point. "After it, the subjects relation to himself is always mediated through a totalizing image that has come from the outside." See for further, Quoted by Beatriz Colomina in her essay "Introduction: On Architecture, Production and Reproduction," in the book *Architecturalproduction*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York, N.Y., p. 16., from the book of Jane Gallop, 1985. *Reading Lacan*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, pp. 78-79. As additional information, it is significant to state where *mirror stage* is staged, in Lacan's words, "The formation of the *I* is symbolized oneirically by a fortified camp, a stadium indeed- establishing, from the interior arena to its outer enclosure, its periphery of rubbish and marshes, two opposed fields of struggle where the subject is caught up in the quest for the lofty and distant chateau, whose form (sometimes juxtaposed in the same scenario) symbolizes the id in a striking fashion. And in the same way we find realized, here on the mental level, those structures of the fortified work for the metaphor of which rises up spontaneously, and as a result of the very symptoms of the subject, to designate the mechanism of inversion, of isolation, of reduplication, of annulations, of displacement, of obsessional neurosis" (Vidler's translation of Jacques Lacan, "Le Stade du Miroir," in *Ecrits*, 2 vols. (Paris: Seuil, 1966), 1:94, in Vidler, A., 1992. pp. 223-224). Vidler states that in such an "image of the self fortified and surrounded by garbage dumps, staged in an arena, is established the parameters of what Victor Burgin in a recent article following Lacan, has termed *paranoiac space*" (Vidler, A., 1992. *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts).

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION: A FOLDED STRATEGY

*Bibliothèque Nationale de France* searches for a “new freedom”. A new freedom in which architecture is liberated from the “responsibilities it can no longer sustain”. Koolhaas defines the ambition of this project in this perspective. Here, I claim the new freedom can be rediscovered after the critical textual analysis of the work. The ‘doubling’ of the object through benefiting from Tafuri’s terminology is the comprehensive textual analysis of this work to explore this new freedom. In fact, the originating activity of such a textual analysis is this study’s critical act, at the origin of which lies the process of disintegration, destruction and dissolution of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*.

A critical act, as such, is engendered by a Tafurian model developed for criticism. This model calls for a critical strategy, other than “typological methods of interpretation” (Tafuri, M. 1987. p. 272). Since, these typological methods are nothing more than simple linguistic analyses of the architectural object, the Tafurian strategy refuses such a simple analysis that results in ‘mere description’ and explanation. This refusal is because such a descriptive process would not be able to extend the work itself. It would be only to go over the already produced text of the object that produces itself again. Thereby, this is almost repeating the laws of the object’s own production process.

However, our critical act aims to rewrite the object, *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, going beyond this ‘simple linguistic analysis of architecture’. Such a rewriting, in Tafurian strategy, is something other than describing this object’s status as language laid bare and is only possible by employing a destructive process. In this study, *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* is disintegrated into fragments and then these fragments were

recomposed in a different order. By this disintegration and recombination, the object is recreated, or better doubled. This doubling enables an interpretation that is liberated from the resistance generated by Koolhaas' own production process. Therefore, the doubling of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, in a way, enables an alternative reformulation of the object with a destructive analysis that dissolves its unique formation. Here, "Doubling" refers to the very act of criticism itself in the Tafurian strategy.

The study uses the process of doubling through a comprehensive operation applied on two specific works. These two works are Piranesi's two etchings, *Carceri* Plate no. IX and *Carcere Oscuro*. They construct the unique examples of this study, since they are both analyzed within Tafuri's particular frame of criticism and may reveal a complex list of terms. Thus, from that understanding of Tafuri's critical act, it unveils a Tafurian terminology, to use it later at its own activity for "doubling" *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*.

In the first etching, Plate no. IX, Tafuri decomposes the elements of a single plate to declare them autonomous, and then recomposes them by a structure formed by the juxtaposition of two oval eyes. While the decomposition of elements takes the form of dissolution, these oval eyes act as Tafuri's critical tools to recompose the autonomous elements in a different order. This structure functions as lenses in a series that show what is behind continuously, at the end leading the image vanish. This structure actually opens up a perspective into the depths of the etching. With this perspective and the seductive role of the structure, the viewer is immersed into the representation. Such an immersion, at the end, results in the mental participation of the viewer to the very process of critical act. Such a process involving the decomposition and then recombination of the elements in the plate refers to the very act of criticism itself Tafuri defines.

Similarly, in the second etching, *Carcere Oscuro*, Eisenstein implements a pragmatic act of this very process of critical analysis by his cinematographic method of 'montage'. In this case, he names his technique as "ecstatic transfiguration". The technique involves the 'explosion' of the whole composition into autonomous pieces. This explosion reduces the elements of composition to autonomous fragments until a new composition is suggested. The destructive attempt, in fact, takes 'the form of dissolution'. In Tafuri's words, "the technique of 'ecstatic transfiguration' thus accelerates the potential

movement, activates it, frees it from the resistance of form.” (Tafuri, M., 1987. p. 57). In these both cases, Tafuri proposes that the form of the criticism generated by that kind of an ambiguous dynamism, “must take the form of the act of violence to expose the dynamic fascination in it” (Tafuri, M., 1987. p. 62). The critical activity that these two cases imply reveals two major keywords: the “ecstatic transfiguration” and the “oval eye”. These unveiled keywords are actually the tools of our own interpretation. In other words, the juxtaposition of these tools in the analysis of *Bibliothèque* outlines our ‘doubling’ activity.

Consequently, we first applied Eisenstein’s pragmatic act of critical analysis, “ecstatic transfiguration” on *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*’s formation to decompose it into fragments and to declare them autonomous. Later, it analyzes each disintegrated fragment by Tafuri’s critical tool, the “oval eye”. Ensuing such an activity, the study can free *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* from its resistance and double it. In other words, this activity of doubling recreates the object. With only such a recreation, the interpretation can “go beyond the mere construction of an analysis” that floats above the original text (Tafuri, M. 1987. p.272).

Yet, while rewriting *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* in this perspective, it has been recognized that *Bibliothèque* has already inherits in its origin the process of a Tafurian critical act. When the cause of this critical act is examined, the process retraces the pretext that gives birth to the work. The formation of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* bases on a problematic pretext: Bigness. Actually, as *Bibliothèque* is a big building ‘beyond a certain scale’, Koolhaas argues that it cannot be built by any conventional construction techniques. It is because the extended requirements of Bigness lead the dissolution of these conventional acts of building in architecture, consequently its requirements in terms of form, function, ground, scale, and proportion. Therefore, Koolhaas critically activates this problematic pretext by ‘architectural disassembly’, ‘displacement’, ‘disintegration’ and ‘decomposition’.

Hence, Koolhaas, at the point where architecture’s actual disappearance is obvious, designs *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* as the unique illustration of his critical performance against the requirements of Bigness. The architectural disintegration takes the shape of an explosion attributed on the program. By this disintegration, the program is

decomposed into pieces, each having a different form under opposing concepts, just like solid and void. With such an architectural decomposition, he declares each fragment's autonomy, as if exploring a "new freedom" liberated from the 'responsibilities' of architecture in a conventional sense. This liberation is achieved due to the destruction of the pretexts and the norms they are grounded on.

So as to construct a space free from conventional obligations, he uses the architectural elements, having been detached from their origin, in order to interrogate them without any restriction and to modify a new reconstruction. Following that modification, they are put together again with a new constructed text to form a new composition for the creation of the architectural space, liberated from all the neglected norms. At the end, these autonomous elements, which are formed as the consequences of Koolhaas' critical activity, are gathered to construct the system of library's configuration. Within such a 'system', the process of putting each activity in its place turns into, what I call, a play with Koolhaas' critical operation of architectural displacement. Therefore, it is obvious that *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*'s design process has already been originated by the process of disintegration, implying the Tafurian strategy for criticism in its origin. Therefore, our "doubling" of this project, which has already the same process in its origin, actually initiates a reframing of Koolhaas' critical performance against the requirements of Bigness that he did not tell explicitly. In other words, it proposes an alternative critical dimension to it, by revealing the hidden ideas in the suggested spaces of Koolhaas.

Therefore, our doubling requires a new perspective to each critical fragment in the project. Such a premise of a new perspective is achieved through the critical tools of interpretation, which are borrowed from Tafuri and Eisenstein. The technique of "ecstatic transfiguration" enables to reframe the fragments of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*. By the technique of "ecstatic transfiguration", each frame 'loses its autonomy and comes out of its isolation'. At the end, the interpretation of each autonomous frame turns into a play in which each is 'upset' in an alternative motion, suggesting a new space. The technique actually is an explosion that decomposes the suggested spaces from the whole composition and distresses them. This destructive attempt, by its nature, liberates them as a consequence of that decomposition. Later, they are reconstructed by the "oval eye". The seductive character of the "oval eye" achieves a new perspective through those liberated

fragments. This new perspective is achieved by the zooming of the oval eye into the depths of formation and follows a path starting from two-dimensional representations, ending at their three-dimensionality.

Therefore, while constructing frames, each zooming of the oval eye suggests an alternative critical dimension. Consequently, each disintegrated element that is redefined as frames are reinterpreted and reconfigured. In this way, the mental reconfiguration competes with the original project. Yet, it is an alternative rewriting so that it can be both extended by any additional interpretation and also ready to be decomposed again with any additional disintegration. The process at the end becomes the “intellectual montage” of this study. Hence, it can be reformulated and extended by any interpreter, participating the mental process. The extendable character of the doubling obliges, rather than invites, to participate in the mental process of reconstruction that has been employed and added something to this construction. This formulation of critical activity, which can be extended by each participator’s reconstruction leading the endless formation, thus converting each fragment into a tool of criticism, makes the design to go beyond its genesis confined by Koolhaas. This endless formation makes possible, the designing process continue to renew itself by each interpretation.

Consequently, each perspective achieved from our reframing is a rewriting of the project, shaped according to Koolhaas’ critical approach on what it frames. It is the highlighting of what is hidden in the details of the project’s representation. Koolhaas models this new composition attributed to the architectural space with the creation of *void*. This liberated formation, designed by the architect, makes *void* become a space that refuses the obligations of ‘building’ and criticizes these obligations as its endowment basically lies on a refusal to ‘built’. Actually, on the one hand, *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, apart from being a building, becomes, what I call, a stage on which Koolhaas’ critical architecture has being performed. On the other, beyond the entire complex program it inherits, its solutions, Koolhaas’ critical defense lines of dismemberment and disorder suggest its disappearance in the city, the displacement of the building. Therefore, our critical textual analysis of the work becomes the explicit illustration of Koolhaas’ implicit ideas. Here, I claim that *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* cannot be built, as it is not designed to be a ‘building’. It rather designs the conditions that will make Bigness possible to be built.

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