

OMA / Progress

6 October 2011 – 19 February 2012

Media View, 10am – 1pm, Wednesday 5 October

Barbican Art Gallery, London

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***'Every architect carries the utopian gene.'* Rem Koolhaas, Founding Partner of OMA**

This autumn Barbican Art Gallery will be transformed by a major exhibition on OMA, one of the most influential architectural practices working today. Known for their daring ideas, extraordinary buildings and obsession with the rapid pulse of modern life, OMA play an active role in the architectural, engineering and cultural ideas that are shaping our world. Founded in 1975, OMA currently comprises seven partners, headed by polymath Rem Koolhaas, and a staff of around 280 architects, designers and researchers working in offices in Rotterdam, New York, Beijing and Hong Kong. **OMA / Progress** is the first major presentation of OMA's work in the UK and coincides with the opening of their first buildings here, Rothschild Bank HQ in the City of London and a Maggie's Centre in Gartnavel, Glasgow.

OMA / Progress is guest curated by the Brussels-based collective Rotor, who were behind the much praised Belgian Pavilion at the 2010 Venice Architecture Biennale. With unprecedented access to OMA's archives and daily practice, Rotor has selected and arranged a wide range of materials, relics, documentation, imagery and models yielding fresh perspectives on OMA's built and unbuilt projects and conceptual work. Rotor comments: *'Our ambition is to make a portrait of OMA without expecting consistency. What we try to do is reach beyond polemics to create a space where nuance is possible'*.

OMA / Progress delves into the inner workings of OMA's intense productivity, providing up-to-the minute detailed insight into OMA operations across Europe, Africa, Asia and America. It features projects currently in development including the Prada Foundation, Milan; those under construction such as Cornell University's Milstein Hall, New York; and the CCTV headquarters in Beijing; recent competition entries like the Broad Art Museum in Los Angeles; and those that are on-hold indefinitely, like the Dubai Renaissance hotel and the White City masterplan in London. Recent projects by OMA's research unit, AMO, are also on show, including its plans for a European renewable energy grid, a curatorial masterplan for the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg, and the work of Strelka, a new postgraduate school that AMO helped set up in Moscow.

Triggered by OMA's preoccupation with architectural preservation, the west entrance of Barbican Art Gallery is opened up for the first time in the building's history, making the exhibition spaces directly accessible from the high walks of the surrounding Barbican Estate. With the existing entrance also in use, visitors are able to freely walk through and occupy the space in the way originally intended by Barbican architects, Chamberlin, Powell & Bonn.

Upon entering the gallery visitors are immersed in an abundance of photographic, filmic and written material generated by OMA, from the 1970s to now. Privileged access to OMA's digital files allow a rich selection of never-before-seen images to be printed-on-demand in large format. For example, colour photographs of Villa d'Alva (1991), while still under construction; gold-tinted renderings of unrealised projects in the Gulf; and photos inside the

little-known but massive project in Lille, Congrexpo. An OMA-curated shop features a wide range of products, including OMA's seminal books from *Delirious New York* (1978), *S, M, L, XL* (1995) to *Al Manakh* (2007 & 2010) and the brand new *Project Japan: Metabolism Talks*, together with a selection of publications that inform and inspire their buildings and ideas.

The carefully orchestrated upper galleries feature a diverse and unexpected range of objects, photographs and films selected by Rotor from OMA's archives and offices worldwide. Highlights include Koolhaas's hand-written faxes; colour prints by German photographer Candida Hofer of the Dutch Embassy in Berlin; a drawing of how to cut the form of CCTV from a block of foam in four easy steps; samples of the skin of the Prada Transformer Pavilion (Seoul 2009). Displayed on their own or in juxtaposition the exhibits tell revealing and often surprising stories about OMA's unprecedented and intuitive ways of working.

Installed on the Barbican's sculpture court the exhibition also includes a 1:1 footprint of OMA's design for the next Maggie's Centre in Glasgow, allowing visitors the opportunity to walk over, through and around the plan to investigate and playfully imagine the building themselves.

A programme of live events will tackle the question of progress in architecture and society and illuminate the work of OMA. The headline event, *OMA: Show & Tell* on Tuesday 25 October in Barbican Theatre brings together all seven partners from OMA for the first time in public, to examine and debate the nature of society, progress and the built environment across the world today.

NOTES TO EDITORS

OMA

OMA is a leading international partnership practicing architecture, urbanism, and cultural analysis. Through AMO, its research and design studio, the practice works in areas beyond architecture that today have an increasing influence on architecture itself: media, politics, renewable energy, technology, publishing and fashion. OMA is led by seven partners – Rem Koolhaas, Ellen van Loon, Reinier de Graaf, Shohei Shigematsu, Iyad Alsaka, David Gianotten and Managing Partner, Victor van der Chijs. The work of OMA's partners and Rem Koolhaas has received several awards, including the Pritzker Prize for architecture in 2000 and the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at 2010 Venice Architecture Biennale. This is the first major exhibition on OMA following *Content* at the Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin in 2003.

www.oma.com

ROTOR

Curators of the acclaimed Belgian Pavilion at the 2010 Venice Architecture Biennale, Rotor is a collective based in Brussels. Founded in 2005, Rotor share a common interest in the material flows in industry and construction. On a practical level, Rotor handles the conception and realisation of design and architectural projects. On a theoretical level, Rotor develops critical positions on material resources and usages through research, publications, writings and conferences.

www.rotordb.org

BARBICAN ART GALLERY

One of the leading art spaces in the UK, Barbican Art Gallery presents the best of international visual art with a dynamic mix of art, architecture, design, fashion and photography. From acclaimed architects to Turner prize-winning artists, the Gallery exhibits

innovators of the 20th and 21st centuries: key players who have shaped developments and stimulated change. Based within an iconic London landmark of considerable architectural interest and importance, Barbican Art Gallery has an international reputation for delivering agenda-setting architectural exhibitions designed to challenge assumptions and encourage debate. Previous architectural exhibitions include *Future City: Experiment and Utopia in Architecture 1956 – 2006* (2006); *Alvar Aalto: Through the Eyes of Shigeru Ban*, (2007) and *Le Corbusier – The Art of Architecture* (2009). *Architecture as Air*, a new installation by Japanese architect Junya Ishigami is on show in The Curve until 16 October 2011.

PUBLIC INFORMATION

Open daily 11am–8pm, except Wed until 6pm; Late night every Thursday until 10pm
Tickets online from £8, on the door £10. Tel: 0845 120 7550

A lively programme of talks, workshops and evening events accompanies the exhibition.
For more details visit www.barbican.org.uk

PRESS INFORMATION

For further information, images or to arrange interviews please contact:

Rotor press officer

Lionel Billiet, press.rotor@gmail.com, +32 494 17 68 77

Barbican Art Gallery Media Relations

Ann Berni, ann.berni@barbican.org.uk, +44 207 382 7169 or

Jess Hookway, jess.hookway@barbican.org.uk; +44 207 382 6162

OMA

Eveline van Engelen, pr@oma.com, +31 10 24 38 200