Composite Presence: The Architectural Photography of Bettina Pousttchi

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The art of Bettina Pousttchi takes many forms. She has covered buildings with massive installations of photographic prints, used centuries-old ceramic techniques to fire and glaze bricks, and appropriated bollards and crowd barriers that she artfully torques into sculptural homages. Yet a constant refrain throughout the work of this architecturally-focused artist has been the persistent mediating role of photography. For all the varieties of her artistic practice, Pousttchi claims "I'm a photographer first and foremost – I make 3-d photos."[1] This claim is central to her installation at The Arts Club, which not only playfully intertwines photography with – and within – architecture, but also persuasively argues for the medium's central role in reflecting and shaping our experience of modern architecture.

Bettina Pousttchi: Suspended Mies alludes to the long and complex relationship between photography and architecture, especially via the techniques of collage and montage, which have a markedly significant role within architectural practice.[2] Like the incorporation of mass production into modern architecture via the growth of prefabricated parts chosen from catalogues, collage and montage are techniques for construction that utilize preexisting, mass-produced parts (in this case, found images taken by others).[3] The synthetic quality of collage and montage is additionally significant for how it challenges the conventional interpretation of photography as a selective medium while simultaneously challenging the materiality and three-dimensionality of architectural practice. It does so by giving architects a representational tool for the creation of imagined environments. Architectural collages and montages therefore rarely produce wholly continuous or coherent spaces since they necessarily rely upon our ability to distinguish between the actual location and the proposal for a new building. After all, if not for the building's discontinuity from the setting, the proposal's visionary qualities would be invisible.

Yet, collage and montage are also distinct from one another. Collage draws its sources from heterogeneous fragments that reside outside the confines of artistic representation – it can include an actual child's flag as in Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's *Convention Hall Project*, 1952–54 (fig. 1).
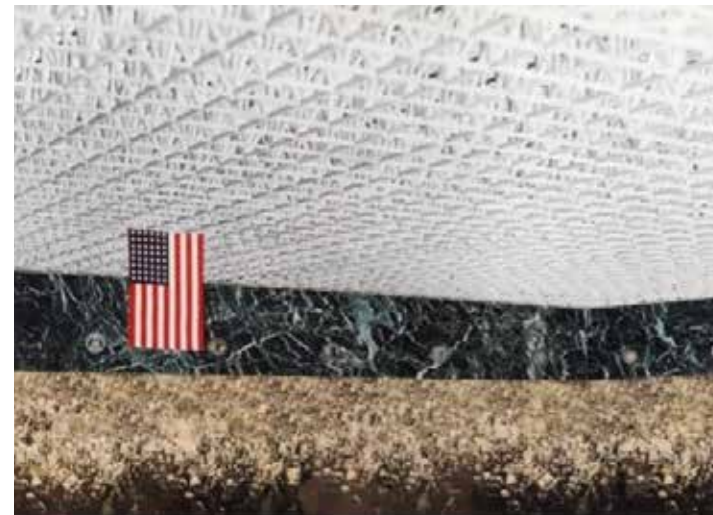

Fig.1 Ludwig Mies Van der Rohe, *Convention Hall Project*, 1952–54. Collage, © 2017 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn, Museum of Modern Art, 572.1963.

Fig.2 Paul Citroen, *Metropolis*, 1923/1969. Photomontage. © 2017 Alinari/ Art Resource, New York.

Montage is composed of other, typically photographic, representations that are further flattened through rephotography – as in Paul Citroen's famous *Metropolis*, 1923 (fig. 2). Because collages include "reality fragments," they are more prone to being perceived as three-dimensional and frequently tactile forms, whereas montages register as two-dimensional images, typically with an unbroken, flat surface.[4]

With their emphasis on the materiality of draped forms and their situatedness in space, Pousttchi's installations could therefore be understood as dramatically multi-dimensional architectural collages. While Mies hung a flag within a photomontage to create a collage, in a nearly precise reversal, Pousttchi installs photographic prints over, around, and inside actual buildings and spaces. Yet her projects also transform back into photomontages through the artist's rephotography of her installations, providing an important closure to the Mobius strip of her practice. On top of the historical references within her work, this spiraling circularity between collage and montage conjures a sense of composite presence, or a sense of temporal layering and discontinuity, which is itself a commentary on the conditions of modernity and the manner by which we treat or represent something as historical. Situating Pousttchi's work within this nexus of architecture and photography necessitates a slight detour through history, followed by an elaboration of the idea of collage as metaphor. This elaboration sets the stage for key examples from Pousttchi's remarkable body of work so far, culminating in a site-specific installation for The Arts Club, a key feature of which is Mies van der Rohe's iconic staircase.

Collage and Montage as Building Tool

The medium of photography originates, of course, with images of architecture. Nicéphore Niépce's *View from the Window at Le Gras*, c. 1827, and William Henry Fox Talbot's *The Oriel Window, South Gallery, Lacock Abbey*, c. 1835, are both reputed to be among the earliest extant photographs. This relationship was at least partially pragmatic; in its stillness, architecture provided an ideal subject for the lengthy exposures required by the nascent medium. But throughout the 19th and 20th century, the practices of architecture and photography would find themselves intersecting in ways that pushed both disciplines toward a critical engagement with the simultaneous collapse and expansion of space and time that was central to the experience of modernity.[5]

Retouched photographs have a lengthy history within architectural practice. By the 1880s, for example, it was common for architects to make *machine retouche*, (*machinrenretouche*), photographs in which the background landscape or other buildings were painted out in order to isolate particular buildings and focus the viewers' attention on them as autonomous works of art. Another variant appears in a circle of German architects around Friedrich von Thiersch, who began adding drawings of their prospective buildings onto photographs of the proposed site, initiating this as a common feature of architectural competitions in the 1890s (fig. 3).[6] The mixture of media in Thiersch's images ensures that on close inspection the building and its site would remain distinguishable. Thiersch's practice of mixing drawn and photographed imagery would be maintained in subtle

Fig.3 Friedrich von Thiersch, *Photomontage of Castle Hohenaschau with Parish Church Addition*, 1899. Ink on photographic paper laminated on cardboard, 22.7 × 28.8 in. (57.6 × 73.2 cm). Collection Architectural Museum of the Technical University, Munich.

ways throughout the history of photographic collage and montage in architecture, hinting at the notion of composite presence, or the coexistence of the real and the imaginary.

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the subject of Pousttchi's Arts Club installation, was himself a highly proficient designer of collages and photomontages, with which he was familiar through his friendship with many of the Berlin Dadas. In fact, as curator Martin Stierli argues, while Mies is best known for his mastery of materials and use of space (both in evidence in the Arts Club staircase), he also experimented with the idea of architecture as representation through photocollages and photomontages that offered revolutionary proposals and reconceptualized space.[7] Acknowledging that he never used the cut in the same political manner as his Dada colleagues, Mies' montages are nonetheless notable for establishing a temporal rupture or discontinuity. Perhaps his most influential collages depict the never-completed glass skyscraper for the *Friedrichstrasse*, a project that Mies seemed to understand was outside the realm of possibility with current technologies, but whose visionary description was necessary to promote the idea of modern architecture (fig. 4). This stunning series of montages, photographs of models, and charcoal sketches drew equally from architectural photomontage techniques and the expressionism of early twentieth century German film. The montages in particular drew stark visual contrasts between the blurred motion of the street, the stately and comfortably bourgeois buildings of modern commercial life, and the hand-drawn, knife-like prow and stunningly flat surface of Mies' proposed glass skyscraper, dramatically emphasizing the co-presence of two distinct temporalities and modalities of architectural representation.

Collage as Metaphor

Because of their distinctive power of visualization, architectural montages like the *Friedrichstrasse* can have a powerful effect on our experience of actual cities. As the curator Andres Lepik has argued about Mies: "Even our view of the structures he actually built is influenced by these images, to the extent that we occasionally find a straightforward photograph of one so dramatic that we suspect it of being a montage." Lepik's comment is striking because it draws attention to the presumption that buildings by iconic architects like Mies must "stand out" from the quotidian urban fabric as an inherent quality of their canonical status, which is only further reinforced by their circulation as photographic representations.

Yet, in addition to setting our expectations for the photographic qualities of "signature buildings," collages and montages also function as metaphoric depictions of the palimpsest-like ruptures that were increasingly governing the actual, lived experience of urbanism. For example, in their radical 1978 treatise, *Collage City*, Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter described how the urban environment of modernity was increasingly functioning like a series of involuntary collages, citing the fragmentary quality of organic urban development in contrast to notable utopian failures like the iconic Pruitt-Igoe housing complex.[8] Under these circumstances, Rowe and Koetter argued that architects and planners ought to be looking at the heterogeneity and collage-like qualities of existing urban forms rather than projecting modernist fantasies of the homogenous *ville radieuse* or garden in a city.[9]

Arguing that collage was defined by the practice of "disparate objects held together by various means," Rowe and Koetter emphasized the importance of the *bricoleur* over the architect.[10] Collage was therefore not only a method of piecemeal construction, but a "method of paying attention to the left-overs of the world, of preserving their integrity and equipping them with dignity, of compounding matter of factness and cerebrality, as a convention and a breach of convention, [that] necessarily operates unexpectedly."[11] Pousttchi's juxtapositions of historically asynchronous buildings foregrounds both this sense of the unexpected and the bricoleur's combination of disparate objects.

Three-Dimensional Photographs

Pousttchi's first large-scale photo installation, *Echo* (fig. 5), was conceived and executed in 2009–10 as an exploration of "history and memory, and the role of photography" at a specific site with a significant pattern of erasure and renewal.[12] For *Echo* she created a black-and-white photomontage of the Palast der Republik (built 1973–76, demolished 2006–09) that she then collaged onto the façade of the Temporäre Kunsthalle Berlin (TKH), whose very name codified its ephemerality and hinted at the shifting temporalities of this site. Originally, it had been the location of the Stadtschloss or Prussian Imperial Palace, which was partially damaged during World War II. Choosing not to restore the palace, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) demolished the historic building in 1950 and subsequently erected the Palast on the site as a Volkshaus (house of the people) including such popular amenities as theaters, art galleries, a discotheque and a bowling alley. The Stadtschloss' demolition therefore hinted at a partially ideological motivation, since the Palast contrasted with the Imperial Palace by functioning as an emblem of both communist optimism and ideology (it also housed the Socialist Unity Party Congresses). Following the end of the GDR in 1990, the Palast was significantly damaged during asbestos remediation and the government of the reunified Germany likewise chose not to restore the building. This led to the Palast's demolition and a plan to recreate the Stadtschloss as the Humboldt Forum by 2019 – a plan that contains its own hints of ideological motivation in the desire to erase communist history.[13]

Installed on the façade of the TKH, which existed on the site for two years between the demolition of the Palast and the reconstruction of the Stadtsschloss, *Echo* held all of these histories together by collaging a photomontage of the communist Palast back into place. Similar to Rowe and Koetter's description in *Collage City*, Pousttchi's monumental collage re-engaged this "leftover of the world," preserving the Palast's historical integrity and equipping it with renewed dignity as a cipher for what had become a discomforting chain of ideologically motivated demolitions in the minds of many Berliners. In addition to this longer history, Pousttchi's collage was also an intervention into the shorter but equally contentious history surrounding the TKH, which was inspired by the grass-roots, do-it-yourself occupation of the Palast by a group of artists led by painter Thomas Scheibitz for a final, improvisatory exhibition immediately prior to its demolition in 2005. Their adaptive reuse of the building – itself a form of collage – forced the city to recognize the need for a kunsthalle reflective of the city's contemporary art scene. The two-year history of the TKH was not without its own complexities, but it finally settled on a local artist advisory council, free admission and a focus on local artists and exhibitions anchored by Berlin's history and vibrant contemporary art scene.[14] Pousttchi's *Echo* was among the first projects under this reorganization and could therefore be seen not only as a reverberation of the Palast's communist past and the site's controversial history of demolitions, but also the persistence of the kinds of grass-roots organizing that originally inspired the TKH.

Fig.5 Bettina Pousttchi, *Echo*, 2009–2010. 970 paper posters on the façade of the Temporäre Kunsthalle, Berlin, 36 × 66 × 187 feet (11 × 20 × 57 m). Courtesy the artist and Buchmann Galerie.

The formal elements of *Echo* are integral to this interpretation since Pousttchi avoided a merely nostalgic recreation of the Palast. She spent months creating a photomontage out of disparate images of the Palast, resulting in an "afterimage" of the building that conveys a strong sense of composite presence even decades after its demolition.[15] For example, her elimination of the Palast's most recognizable feature – its bronze tinted mirror windows – through black and white photography immediately established a distance that was both knowable ("this is the past") and unbridgeable ("it cannot be recovered"). This transformation also clearly distinguished the reflective surface of the original building, which operated like a pair of mirrored sunglasses dynamically reflecting life in the plaza out front, from her photograph of the building in which those reflections are static. As mirrored sunglasses, the windows in the original Palast had a subtle panoptic function, implying that the communist state was watching over (or simply watching) its populace. Pousttchi's metaphoric conversion of the implicit looking of those surveilling lenses into a fixed black and white photomontage offers a subtle commentary on the passing of that communist era. Pousttchi also replaced the socialist heraldry of the GDR that adorned the original façade with a clock, drawing attention not just to the communist past but also to the site's persistent fluidity and schizophrenic relationship to history and memory. Surprisingly, this montage within the collage went unnoticed by many viewers who erroneously recalled a clock on the actual Palast.[16] Their false memories suggest how sites are reconstituted by more recent experience, like new elements in a perpetually evolving collage of history. Lastly, Pousttchi's rephotography of

Fig.6 Bettina Pousttchi, *The City*, 2014. Photo installation on the façade of Wolfsburg Castle, 115 × 254 feet (35 × 77.5 m). Courtesy the artist and Buchmann Galerie.

the site brings all of these elements full circle. The shimmering reflections captured in the windows of the installed photograph occasionally match up with the lighting effects of certain days during which Pousttchi rephotographed the project. Yet on other days they did not match up, further establishing a sense of dissonance between this image-as-object and the richly-layered site on which it sat.

Pousttchi's 2014 project *The City* extended her investigation of cities as images – exaggerating both the scale and the global, historical reach of her analysis of history, memory and photography (fig. 6). For this project, she created a photomontage of ten skyscrapers, each of which held the record for the world's tallest structure at some point in its history. Draped over the exterior of Wolfsburg Castle in the city of Wolfsburg, Germany, these status symbols of the 20th and 21st centuries came into direct contact with the castle, itself a status symbol since the early 14th century. The central and oldest feature of the castle is its *bergfried*, a tall tower that formerly stood alone as the last refuge within a series of concentric circles of outer defenses. Now encased by the subsequent additions that transformed the castle into a Weser Renaissance palace with gardens and parks over the course of several centuries, the original defensive tower finds its echo in the skyscrapers that Pousttchi has added as yet another, albeit temporary, addition to the exterior of this historic structure.[17]

This history of the site's additive, collage-like development is further mirrored by the history of the nearby city of Wolfsburg, which commissioned Pousttchi's project and whose own development is further emblematic of modern mass production's relationship to architecture. The original village of Fallersleben, for example, was transformed into the *Stadt des Kraft durch Freude* (KdF, or Strength Through Joy City) by the National Socialist Party to house workers

for the new Volkswagen factory that was central to their plan to bring affordable cars to the masses in the hopes of reigniting the post-Weimar economy and solidifying their authority. Planned as a garden city by architect Peter Koller in 1938, the Stadt des KdF was intended as a model German worker's city and a demonstration of precisely ordered urban and residential development.[18] Despite this goal, most of Koller's plans remained unfinished as the wartime effort siphoned off German workers who were replaced by imported Italian laborers assigned to the military version of the Beetle. In 1945 the liberated town was renamed Wolfsburg after the nearby castle. It continued to evolve, serving under English occupation as a depot for post-war refugees from across Europe, and a place from which Volkswagen would contribute to the *Wirstshaftswunder* (economic miracle) of Germany's post-war resurgence, with the humble Beetle becoming a global icon of automobile ownership.[19] Volkswagen's emergence as the primary concentration of power in the city effectively superseded the landholders who used to occupy the castle/palace, pointing to the rise of multinational global capitalism and mass production.[20] Pousttchi's collage of global towers alludes to this new power dynamic as well as the role of global information networks in late modernity.[21] Although the ten skyscrapers were selected because each of them once held the record of "world's tallest building," it is also worth noting that the construction of the Burj Khalifa (included as the most recent title holder) was the subject of investigations into forced labor similar to the wartime history of Volkswagen.[22] Not unlike *Echo*, then, Pousttchi's monumental collage of skyscrapers hints at the potential discomfort beneath the surface of Wolfsburg's complex and multilayered history. Her photomontage therefore draws attention to the composite presence within Wolfsburg of a castle, a palace, a corporation – all of which Pousttchi amplifies by her startling juxtapositions of modern skyscrapers with a traditional castle, and global capitalism with nationalist history.

As with *Echo*, the act of rephotography introduces additional elements into *The City*, transforming the collage into a virtual montage. In an ironic nod to Wolfsburg's history as a planned garden city, one cannot help but notice how the photographs literally transpose the city into the palace's gardens. The outrageousness of the former Sears Tower, World Trade Center, Burj Khalifa, and other massively scaled structures towering over a garden is both a playful visual juxtaposition yet also an implicit commentary about the hubris and absurdity of the ville radieuse and other utopian urban planning schemes, including the Stadt des KdF. At the same time, the discontinuity of skyscrapers erupting from a garden – a disruption made manifest by the contrast between black and white buildings and color landscape – is also akin to the dramatic presence of the glass skyscraper above the ordinary streetscape in Mies' *Friedrichstrasse*. By demonstrating a similar discontinuity in actual, three-dimensional space, Pousttchi takes the collage one step further. Closing the loop on Lepik's observation that our experience of the real is altered by our expectation that it should look similar to a photomontage, *The City* materially enacts this montage-like discontinuity through the presence of montaged buildings within an actual landscape.
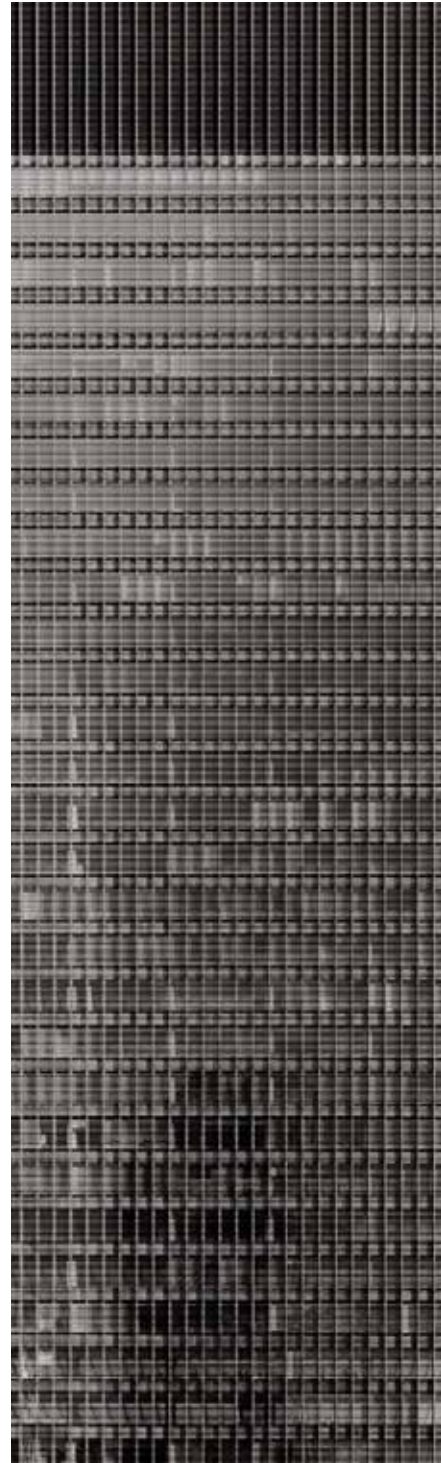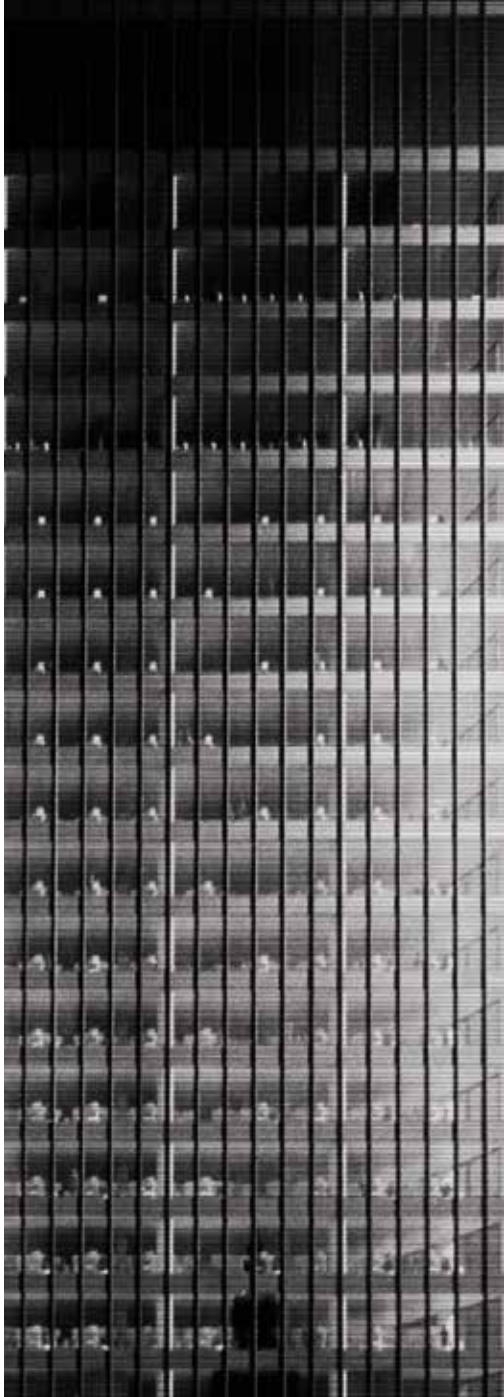
The Arts Club and/as Collage

For the Arts Club of Chicago, Pousttchi has proposed the large-scale, site-specific installation *Suspended Mies* that borrows from elements of *Echo* and *The City* while bringing them inside. The project proposes another iterative meditation on history, memory and photography, focusing on three projects by Mies van der Rohe: his Seagram Building (New York, 1958), the Mansion House Square Project (proposed 1962, conclusively halted 1985), and his staircase for The Arts Club of Chicago (originally 1951 at 109 East Ontario, reinstalled at 201 East Ontario in 1997). Pousttchi has stated that her selection was intended to span the built, the unbuilt, and the rebuilt.[23] Additionally, each of these structures engages with their actual or proposed spaces through the process of collage. Pousttchi further distinguishes between the three structures by her distinct methods of collaging them within the space of her installation. For the Seagram Building she traveled to New York and photographed the building herself in a gesture that recognizes its iconic status as a destination for architectural enthusiasts and that calls attention to its fixity. For the Mansion House Square Project, which was never completed, she had to rely upon extant photomontages that were themselves composites of photographs of architectural models and actual streetscapes.[24] For the staircase she need only acknowledge its presence as part of her installation within the current Arts Club of Chicago location, a possibility that was available to her as a result of its "cutting and pasting" from the original location in 1997. The resulting installation places two fabric panels depicting the exteriors of enormous, modernist skyscrapers within an interior space that is both modernist artifact (the staircase) and a more contemporary interpretation of historic modernist style (the 1997 Arts Club building), juxtaposing the past with the present, interior with exterior, space with surface, and reality with its representation.

For the panels, Pousttchi created elevations of both the Seagram Building and the Mansion House Square Project, titled *Suspended Seagram* and *Suspended Mansion*, respectively (fig. 7). The flattening of each building into its façade reduces her images to a type of architectural elevation, concentrating our looking onto the subtleties of Mies' surfaces, such as his different handling of vertical and horizontal banding in the two buildings. Pousttchi's cropping out of actual or montaged streetscapes also implicitly referenced the historical *machine retouches* that played a central role in the promotion of early modern architecture. This transformation of real structures and photographs of models back into elevations therefore inverts the history of photomontage, which had developed precisely to add a sense of implied site-specificity to the abstraction of plans, elevations, and axonometric drawings. Pousttchi's inversion draws attention to the tradition of making, perceiving and translating two-dimensional representations into ideas of three-dimensional structures, which is central to the discipline of architecture, and the role of photography in effectively reversing that process for the purpose of communicating built space on the printed page.

Fig.8 Madelon Vriesendorp, *Flagrant Délit*, 1978. Watercolor and gouache, originally printed on cover of Rem Koolhaas' *Delirious New York*.

If their style relates them to the history of architectural rendering, the scale and materiality of Pousttchi's images establishes their difference from them. Because of the fact that Pousttchi's images "fill the space," we are much more cognizant of our negotiation of her montages as objects in space, which makes them more like the buildings they represent than typical architectural renderings. This in-between status makes them like sculptures and it amplifies the fact that every representation, no matter how it is scaled to its referent, is a material object. Pousttchi's images are printed on a kind of fabric which allows her to lay them across the floor of the space, arcing up towards the ceiling on one side. This suspended posture recalls the typical orientation of architectural elevations laying flat on a draftsman's table while at the same time alluding to the actual structures rising vertically into the sky. The languorous pose also cannot help but recall the anthropomorphized skyscrapers so famously painted by Madelon Vriesendorp for the cover of *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan* (1978) by Rem Koolhaas (fig. 8). Such references place Pousttchi's images in conversation with the significant, recent history of montage as critically self-aware practice. Another point of reference for Pousttchi's leaning skyscrapers is Stanley Tigerman's *Titanic* (1978), in which Mies' Crown Hall from IIT is in the process of sinking into Lake Michigan (fig. 9). Such montages only work if we accept that buildings function not only metaphorically but also metonymically as stand-ins for particular architects or ideologies. In Tigerman's example, the composite presence of collage is not merely about one fragment's discontinuity with its surrounding but it is also about the fragment's ability to represent, simultaneously, an actual building and other, broader references. Although Pousttchi is not taking the same position as Tigerman in the heated debates about modernism *versus* postmodernism, there is no doubt that collaging the Seagram Building and Mansion House Square Project into the space of the Art Club also channels the presence of Mies and modernism, provoking questions about photomontage's central role in the promotion and critique of the International Style as well as

the subtle radicalism of Mies' disruptions within existing streetscapes. Mansion House Square was never completed because by the time the landowner, Lord Peter Palumbo, had secured the rights to the land in the mid-1980s, Mies' original 1962 plans calling for a Seagram-like set-back modernist high-rise had fallen dramatically out of favor.[25] By 1984, the photomontages meant to promote the project served as fodder for Prince Charles' declaration before the Royal Institute of British Architects that the building's juxtaposition with the London streetscape resembled "a giant glass stump, better suited to downtown Chicago than the City of London."[26] The judgment of the Prince's comment notwithstanding, he was indeed accurate that Mies' project was much more radically disruptive than the eventual successor to the site. For, whereas Mies' plan included not only private office space, it also replicated the open, public space of the plaza in front of the Seagram's building, thus offering a radically composite presence of private and public in addition to its stylistic juxtaposition to the neighboring buildings. In the increasingly conservative England of the 1980s, the freedom of political assembly alluded to by such plazas was a troubling source of anxiety that further contributed to the demise of Mies' project.[27] The sculptural qualities of *Suspended Mansion* hints at this issue and draws attention to the subtly unrestricted qualities of Mies' plan by offering viewers the freedom to circumnavigate and even walk beneath the image, itself an act that disrupts the conventional display of images much like Mies unconventionally inserted his structure into the neoclassical streetscape. The current building at Mansion House Square, a striped postmodern confection by James Stirling from 1985 does indeed nod to the collage aesthetic by cutting-and-pasting abstracted references to the surrounding neoclassical buildings. But Sterling's building is ultimately undisruptive in the manner argued by Rowe and Koetter since it blends into its setting and, significantly, privileges private over public space by eliminating

a plaza and filling the entire site with a fortress-like structure. By asking us to see this site through the lens of Mies' original proposal, Pousttchi's *Suspended Mansion* performs an important act of historical intervention and raises critical questions about the true nature of collage as radical practice.

Central to *Suspended Mies* is the fact that the staircase itself is a collaged element taken from its original site and placed here, in a 1997 building that is itself an amalgam of mid-century modernism in its attention to materials and open space. The staircase had originally been built by Mies in 1951 for the interior of the Arts Club's leased space at 109 East Ontario, a few blocks west of the current location at 201 East Ontario. The staircase has been described as "spiritually elegant, exquisitely detailed, and superbly crafted," with particular attention paid to Mies' use of steel as both form and the support by which it is seemingly suspended in air.[28] Originally installed at the entrance to The Arts Club, it was visible through the glass storefront façade of 109 East Ontario, where it functioned as an emblem of The Arts Clubs' dedication to modernist expression. Faced with a forced move but also with the opportunity to build a more permanent home, The Arts Club selected architect John Vinci, whom James Woods, chairman of the selection committee and President of the Art Institute of Chicago described as "a committed modernist, who also has profound knowledge and respect for the past."[29] Vinci's reputation as a preservationist – he negotiated the relocation of the Chicago Stock Exchange Trading Room to the Art Institute of Chicago in 1976–77 – further suited him to The Arts Club's commission.[30] Yet it is worth noting that in the move, Vinci was able not only to preserve but also to "improve" upon the staircase's situatedness by designing a travertine and glass enclosure with doors that more perfectly matched the proportions of Mies' original blueprints, which had been partially unfulfilled in the original installation.[31] At the same time, the staircase's relocation in the center of Vinci's building removed it from its original site at the front of the Club, rendering it distinct from its former function as both a signpost and entrance to the Club and making it more of an obvious artifact of the club's history.[32] Given the staircase's iconic status in the history of The Arts Club, it is therefore a given that visitors experience it as a composite presence of its past and present locations.

Pousttchi's appropriation of the staircase as a central motif in the exhibition *Suspended Mies* thus begs the kinds of questions usually asked of a collage. Describing Picasso's *Still Life with Chair Caning* (1912), for example, Rowe and Koetter wrote that it raised existential questions: "What is false, and what is true, what is antique and what is 'of today;' and it is because of an inability to make a halfway adequate reply to this pleasing difficulty that one, finally, is obliged to identify the problem of composite presence in terms of *collage*."[33] If Mies' staircase represents a "pleasing difficulty" in its improvement upon, yet obvious difference from its original location it is also worth noting that this conundrum situates a composite presence – an open-ended proposition – at the center of The Arts Club, solidifying the staircase's role as an artifact before which "art lovers and art workers," can acquaint themselves with one another amidst dialogues about the nature of art and history.[34] *Suspended Mies* asks us to accept the status of suspension – of recognizing something as neither the one nor the other – as a fundamental conceit of collage, which is itself a metaphor and a strategy for being in the modern world.

1 Chris Dercon in conversation with Bettina Pousttchi, "Photography as Monument," Susanne Pfleger and Jeremy Strick, eds., *Bettina Pousttchi The City* (Wolfsburg, Germany: Städtische Galerie Wolfsburg/ Nasher Sculpture Center Dallas, 2015), 139.

2 Interestingly, despite its centrality to architectural practice, the use of collage and montage by architects has only recently received significant scholarly attention. See Martin Stierli, "Photomontage in/as Spatial Representation," *PhotoReasearcher* no. 18 (2012), 32–43.

3 Lewis Mumford, "Mass Production and the Modern House," *Architectural Record*, LXVII (January 1930), 13–20; (February 1930), 110–16.

4 Martin Stierli, "Mies Montage," *AA files* (London: Architectural Association, 2010), 64.

5 On space-time compression, see David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990).

6 Andres Lepik, "Mies and Photomontage," Barry Bergdoll and Terence Riley, eds., *Mies in Berlin* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2001), 324

7 Stierli, 2010, 64.

8 Colin Rowe and Richard Koetter, *Collage City* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1978), 7. Prominently illustrated in the introduction to Rowe and Koetter's book, Pruitt-Igoe is a much contested cipher for the idea of failure within urban planning. Charles Jencks famously decried it as a failure of architecture in *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1977), whereas the recent film *The Myth of Pruitt-Igoe* (director Chad Freidrichs, 2011) argues it was less about architecture and more about a complex nexus of social political, economic and planning failures.

9 ibid., 4–8, 30–33, and 145–47.

10 ibid., 102, 140.

11 ibid., 142.

12 Bettina Pousttchi quoted in Thomas Köhler, "*The City* by Bettina Pousttchi," in *Bettina Pousttchi The City*, 33.

13 Wolf Burchard, "What's the point of rebuilding Germany's Palaces," *Apollo Magazine* (March 10, 2016), accessed February 28, 2017 at https://www.apollo-magazine.com/whats-the-point-of-rebuilding-germanys-palaces/

14 Katherine Koster, "TKH: white cube or white elephant?," *ExBerliner* (September 1, 2010), accessed March 3, 2017 at http://www.exberliner.com/culture/art/tkh-white-cube-or-white-elephant/

15 Conversation with the artist, February 9, 2017.

16 Conversation with the artist, February 9, 2017.

17 Ortwin Reichold, *Schloss Wolfsburg: Geschichte und Kultur* (Stadt Wolfsburg: Institut für Museen und Stadtgeschichte, 2002).

18 Gabriel David Rosenfeld and Paul B. Jaskot, *Beyond Berlin: Twelve German Cities Confront the Nazi Past* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 91.

19 Richard J. Evans, "Think Again," *World War II* (May/June 2015), 70–71.

20 Köhler, 36.

21 Conversation with the artist, February 9, 2017.

22 Historian Hans Mommsen's famous 1996 study articulated Volkswagen's use of slave labor. Alan Cowell, "Volkswagen's History: The Darker Side is Revisited," *New York Times* (November 7, 1996), accessed March 3, 2017 at http://www.nytimes.com/1996/11/07/world/volkswagen-s-history-the-darker-side-is-revisited.html.

23 Conversation with the artist, February 9, 2017.

24 "Real Review interviews Lord Palumbo," *Real Review* (Summer 2016), 6–13.

25 ibid., 10–11.

26 Robert Dex, "'Giant Glass Stump' shamed by Prince to go in exhibition," *London Evening Standard* (December 12, 2016), 28. Accessed March 2017 via Business Insights: Essentials (A473651132).

27 Jack Self, "Mies' Mansion Square House: The best building London never had?" *The Guardian* (February 11, 2017), accessed February 15 at https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/feb/11/mies-van-der-rohe-mansion-house-square-best-building-london-never-had.

28 Bruno Ast, "Boxing the Stair: the new Arts Club," *New Art Examiner*, vol. 24. (July/August 1997), 10–14. Accessed March 2017 via Art and Architecture Source (08868115).

29 ibid.

30 ibid.

31 Conversation with Janine Mileaf, February 2017.

32 In fact, Bruno Ast has described the architect's job for the Arts Club commission as one of "boxing" the staircase. *op. cit.*

33 Rowe and Koetter, 139

34 Mission Statement, 1916, Arts Club of Chicago. Arts Club Papers, Newberry Library.