



Osaka Expo

Fuoco Amico 12



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Osaka Expo
27 Pavilions
27 Terms for
Topography



DISPLAY

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The Masked Ball of the Exquisite Corpse

Alessandro Rocca

In 2001, Cino Zucchi, along with Eugenio Battisti and Roberto Ravegnani Morosini, curated the seminar *Skin & Bones. Tectonics and Texture in Contemporary Architecture*, held at the Faculty of Architecture of the Politecnico di Milano. The idea was to dismember the building into two components deemed crucial: the structure and the external envelope, considering that ultimately all the material between these two extremes is merely the least noble, most obvious part of the building.

The same title was given to the exhibition exploring whether it is fashion that draws off architecture or the other way round – architects who follow in the footsteps of fashion designers – is of little importance. *Skin and Bones*, the exhibition held at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles (2006-07) aims to underline is the close relationship between the



From the exhibition guidebook of *Skin + Bones, Parallel Practices in Fashion and Architecture*, Embankment Galleries at Somerset House, 2008.

two fields that has been created over the last 25 years¹. The exhibition compared the works of fashion designers and architects in rather bold juxtapositions, such as Martin Margiela with Bernard Tschumi, Yohji Yamamoto with Sanaa and Shigeru Ban, Alexander McQueen with OMA/Rem Koolhaas and Toyo Ito, Vivienne Westwood with Greg Lynn, and Comme des Garçons with Diller Scofidio + Renfro. The exhibition was then presented again in 2008 at the Embankment Galleries at Somerset House with a concise catalogue that highlights the relationship between fashion and architecture, starting with the designers' formal choices.

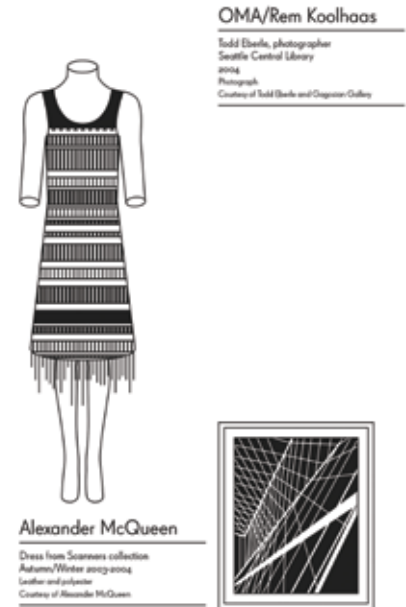
In 2012, Valerio Paolo Mosco published *Naked Architecture*, a study of stripped-down, exposed architecture, reduced to its essentials: "It all stems

1. <https://www.domusweb.it/en/architecture/2006/11/03/skin-and-bones.html>.

from a misunderstanding. We perceive a building as naked when we see the structure, therefore the bones, but bones do not correspond to nakedness; they correspond, if anything, to what lies beneath the skin and flesh. We also perceive a building stripped of its decorative apparatus as naked. Naked is a skeleton, and naked is a wall without decorations: both naked, and, although very different, both refer to the same adjective. The nude is mystery; its metaphorical force is so vast that it risks evaporating in its own vastness."²

These processes of reduction, which seek essentiality and rigor through stripping away, are typical of pavilion architecture. As Beatriz Colomina wrote about Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's legendary German Pavilion at the

2. Valerio Paolo Mosco, *Naked Architecture*, Skira, Milano 2012.



From the exhibition guidebook of *Skin + Bones, Parallel Practices in Fashion and Architecture*.



Kazuyo Sejima + Ryue
Nishizawa/SANAA

21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art,
Kanazawa, Japan
2004
Digital post

Architectural model, acrylic
Courtesy of SANAA, ©Shohei Shibusawa
(The Japan Architect Co., Ltd.)



Yohji Yamamoto

Whalebone Top and Skirt
from Wedding collection
Spring/Summer 1999
Rayon with plastic supports in the shape of
a whalebone
Courtesy of Yohji Yamamoto

From the exhibition guidebook of *Skin + Bones*,
Parallel Practices in Fashion and Architecture.

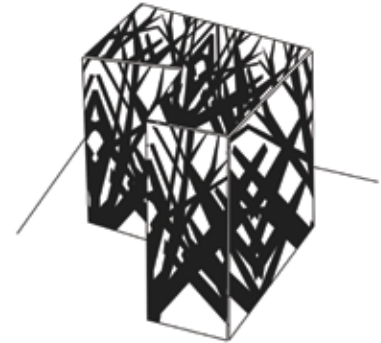
1929 Barcelona Exposition, the temporary pavilion is first and foremost a media device, a manifesto of architecture, a communication tool that conveys multiple messages and meanings at different levels, from the basic level of the general public to the political level of national representation to the specific level of the architectural cultural environment. The Osaka Exposition, like all the exhibitions that preceded it, is an exercise in architectural exhibitionism where the perversion of existing solely for show produces refined, seductive effects that merely wink gracefully at the much heavier and more complex bodies of real architecture. Thus, the pavilions present themselves as exercises in dematerialization, or rather, as compositions where the material is selected, laid bare, and simultaneously displayed as a precious asset. The same can be said of

the structures that, beneath the skin, support these lightweight apparitions, which aspire to a primarily visual beauty, achieved, as happens with top fashion and accessories models, through a paring down of the corporeal and the exaltation of features, transparencies, dematerialized form, and the care and elegance of detail.

In the story already told elsewhere by Stamatina Kousidi³, the dematerialization of the wall, of the separation between inside and outside, moves in the direction of an architecture ecology-friendly, energy-efficient and resilient, within which the dynamics between the built and the natural environments can unfold.

The Osaka pavilions are free from the goals of real sustainability and can promote an environmentalism that,

3. Stamatina Kousidi, *From wall to skin. Architecture and the poetics of breathing*, Gangemi, Roma 2020.



Toyo Ito and Associates,
Architects

TOD'S Omotesando, Tokyo
2008-2010
Architectural model: acrylic resin

Facade studies for
TOD'S Omotesando, Tokyo
2008-2010
Digital print

Courtesy of Toyo Ito and Associates, Architects

Hiroyo Suzuki, photographer
TOD'S Omotesando, Tokyo
Digital print
Courtesy of Hiroyo Suzuki

From the exhibition guidebook of *Skin + Bones, Parallel Practices in Fashion and Architecture*.

precisely, is exhibited, displayed, mimed, and represented through an architecture that at the Expo must be, by definition, fictitious, a simulacrum. Taken together, the pavilions are composed like the dislocated parts of an exquisite corpse, an exquisite body that reveals its full form only at the end of the game, after each has designed their contribution unaware of what the others were doing, participating in a blind date, a masked ball where each presumes to be something else, as testimonials of a deferred and imaginary reality, of an *Architettura analoga*⁴.

4. Aldo Rossi, *La città analoga*, in «Lotus», n. 13, 1976, pp. 4-7.