

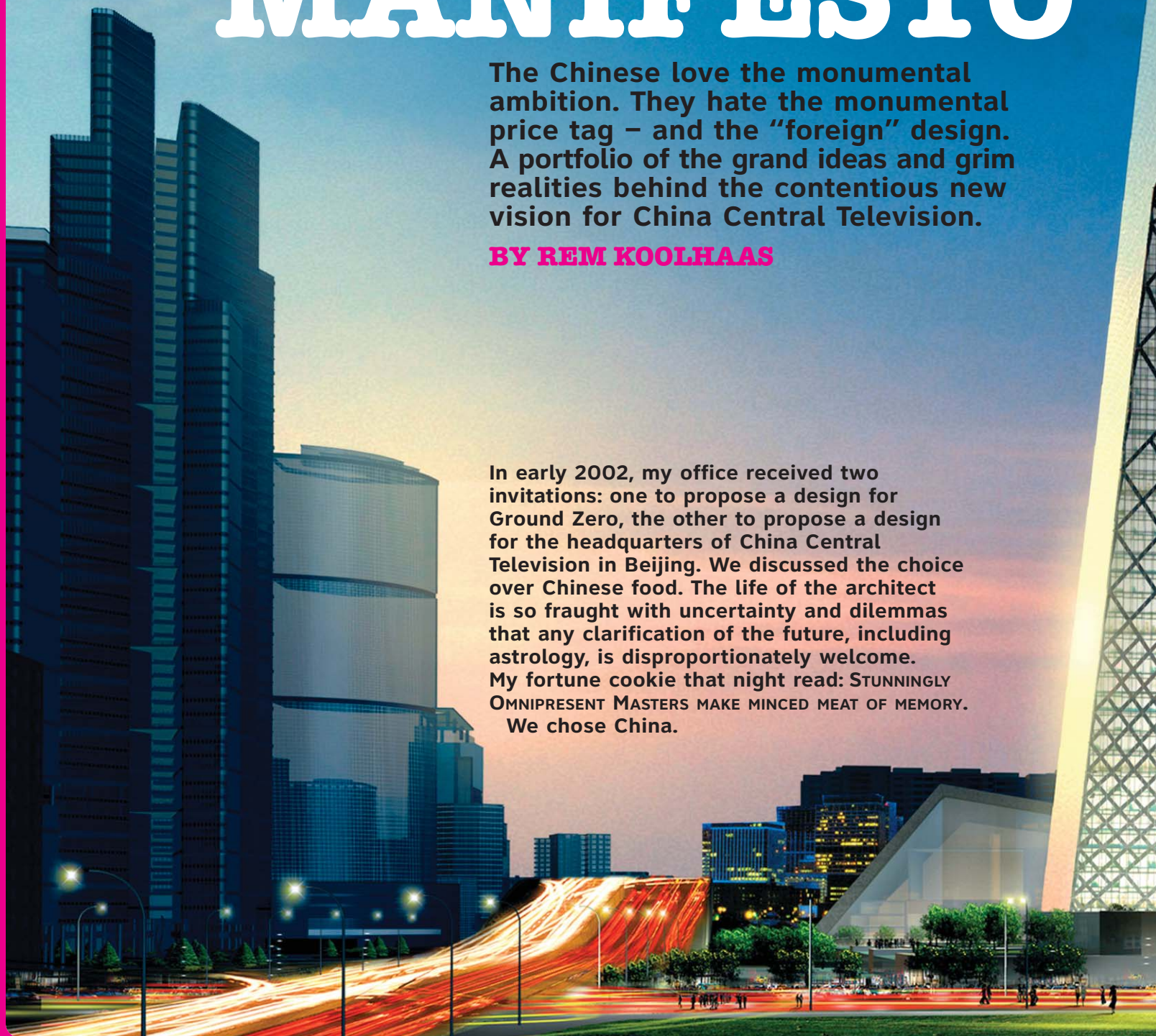


BEIJING MANIFESTO

The Chinese love the monumental ambition. They hate the monumental price tag – and the “foreign” design. A portfolio of the grand ideas and grim realities behind the contentious new vision for China Central Television.

BY REM KOOLHAAS

In early 2002, my office received two invitations: one to propose a design for Ground Zero, the other to propose a design for the headquarters of China Central Television in Beijing. We discussed the choice over Chinese food. The life of the architect is so fraught with uncertainty and dilemmas that any clarification of the future, including astrology, is disproportionately welcome. My fortune cookie that night read: STUNNINGLY OMNIPRESENT MASTERS MAKE MINCED MEAT OF MEMORY. We chose China.





Rem Koolhaas is founder of OMA-AMO, the architecture firm and research group. This piece is adapted from his new book, *Content* (Taschen), produced with Simon Brown, Jon Link, and Brendan McGetrick.

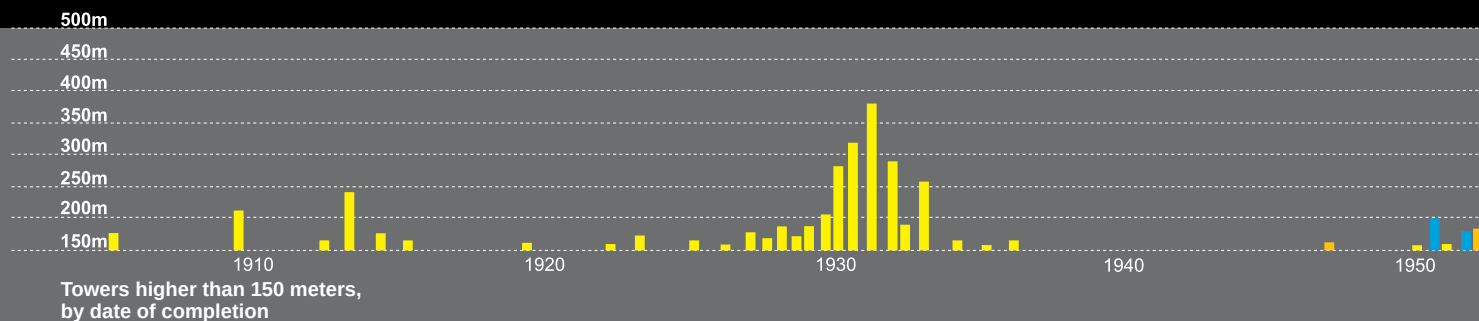


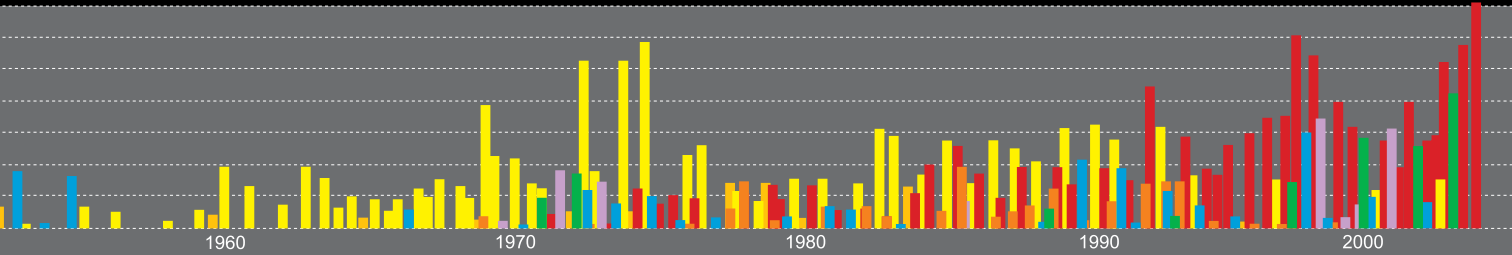
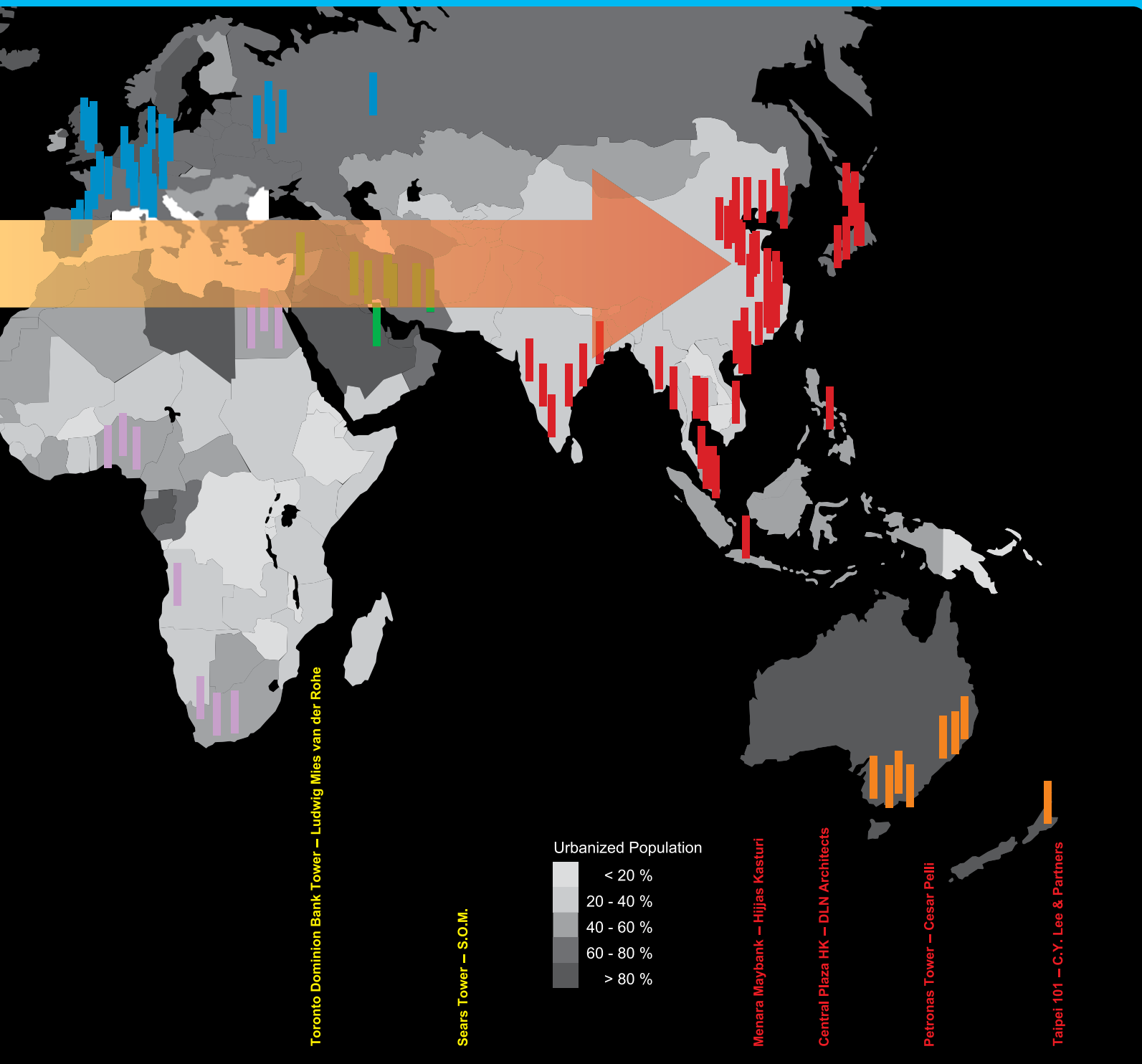
THE SKYLINE RISES IN THE EAST

For more than a decade, the number of high-rise buildings in Asia has surpassed that in North America. On October 17, 2003, the final spire on the Taipei 101 building was raised into place, making it the world's tallest building by more than 50 meters over the former number one, the Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. In the West, pundits continue to debate the viability of the skyscraper post-9/11, apparently unaware that in most of the world the high-rise has become a prerequisite.

Woolworth Building – Cass Gilbert

Chrysler Building – William van Alen
Empire State Building – Shreve, Lamb & Harmon Associates







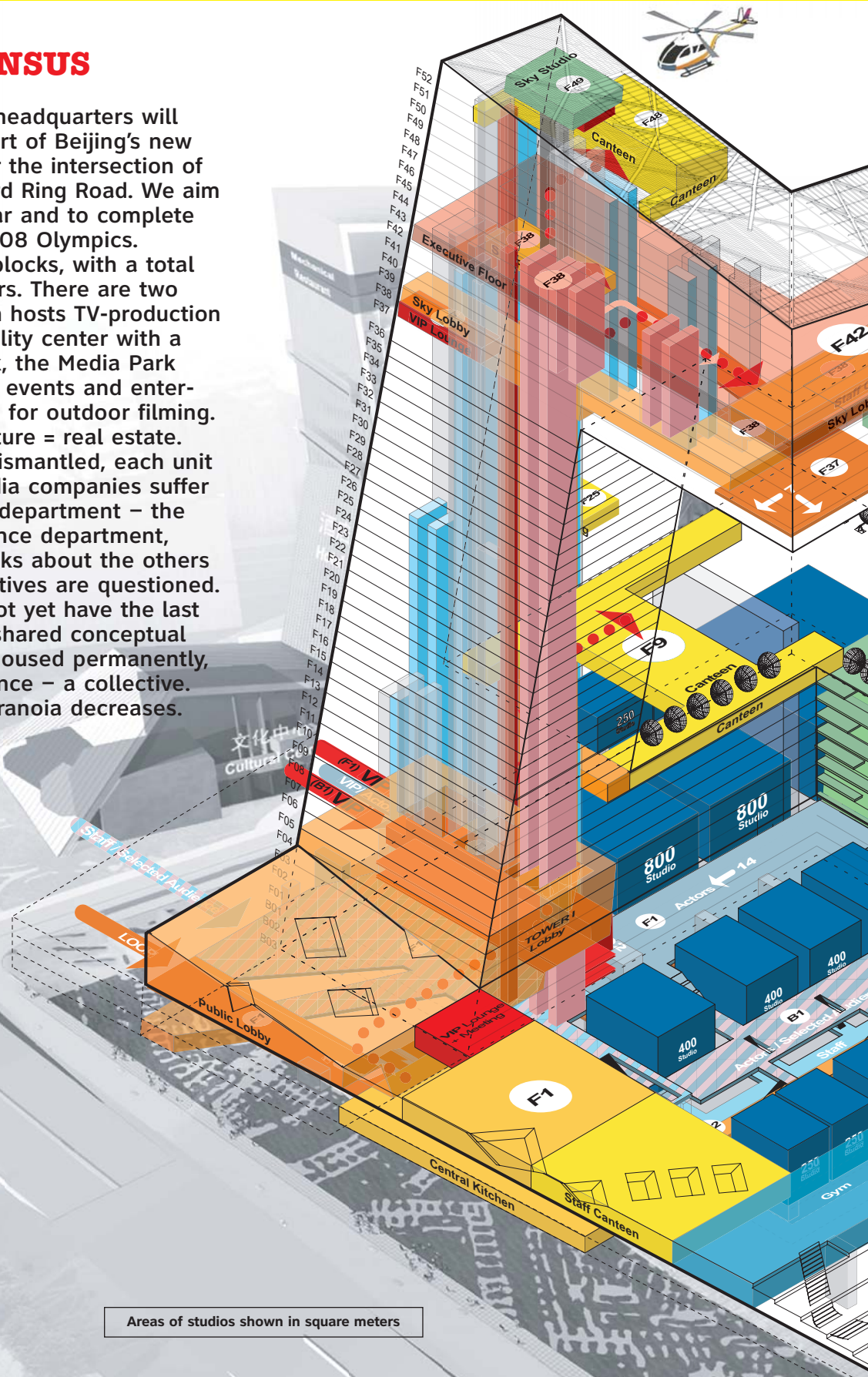
BUILDING CONSENSUS

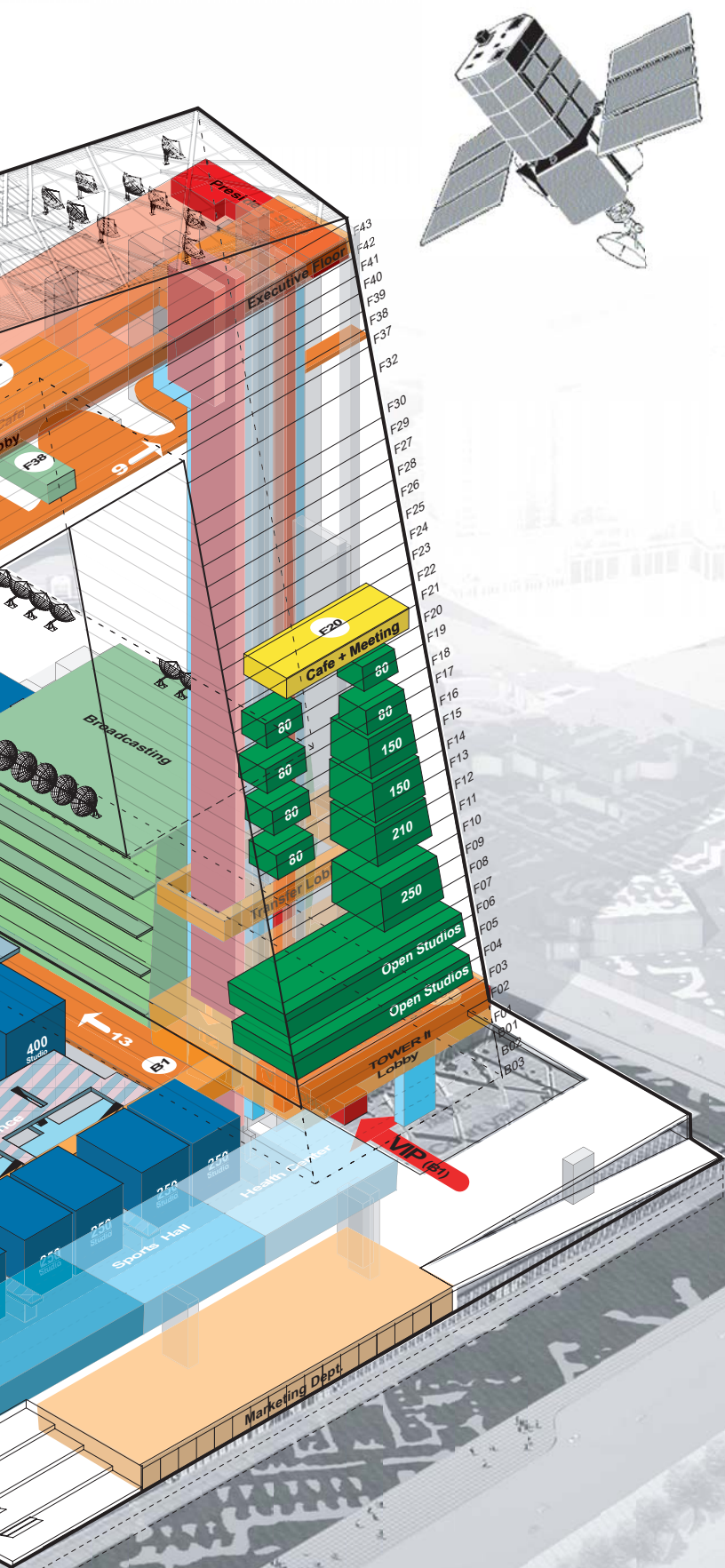
The China Central Television headquarters will be located in the northern part of Beijing's new Central Business District, near the intersection of Chang'an Avenue and the Third Ring Road. We aim to break ground later this year and to complete the project in time for the 2008 Olympics.

The site covers about four blocks, with a total area of 180,000 square meters. There are two major buildings – CCTV, which hosts TV-production facilities, and TVCC, a hospitality center with a hotel. On the southeast block, the Media Park will be open to the public for events and entertainment, as well as available for outdoor filming.

In the free market, architecture = real estate. Any complex corporation is dismantled, each unit sequestered in place. All media companies suffer a subsequent paranoia: Each department – the creative department, the finance department, administration, et cetera – talks about the others as "them"; distrust is rife, motives are questioned.

But in China, money does not yet have the last word. CCTV is envisioned as shared conceptual space in which all parts are housed permanently, aware of one another's presence – a collective. Communication increases; paranoia decreases.





After our design was accepted, it created two kinds of apprehension, if not disappointment. First, was it merely a landmark, one more alien proposal of meaningless boldness? Was its structural complexity simply irresponsible? On August 5, 2003, an afternoon event at Tsinghua University allowed all parties to vent criticism. It was not easy, I realized, for the assembled intelligentsia to see the difference between CCTV and any of the other foreign extravaganzas still in the pipeline. There was surprise at my description of the building as a collective, a word with complex associations. There was relief when the building, which had been considered in isolation, was presented in conjunction with our larger proposals for historical preservation in Beijing and a low-rise business district, revealing an interlocking hypothesis for Beijing's future land use ... the beginnings of a Beijing Manifesto.

Still, the younger audience members questioned allocating resources to "prestige," even while western China is ravaged by poverty; and the older generation of engineers was shocked to see the objective purity of their profession at the service of the unusual. A pact between the two sides – a coalition of the unwilling – could easily close a possibility that had just been opened. A refusal of the Promethean in the name of correctness and good sense could foreclose China's architectural potential.



"A structure that violates some of the most



UNIVERSAL MODERNIZATION PATENT [14]

TALL & SLENDER (1996)

Patent Number: 9,346,587

never achieve those heights; coupling them at regular intervals creates stability without fatness.

(21) Patent for "Tall & Slender"

(29) ARRANGEMENT OF MUTUALLY SUPPORTIVE TOWERS TO REACH NEW HEIGHTS WITHOUT WIDE BASE.

(36) Inventor(s): Rem Koolhaas, Yo Yamagata

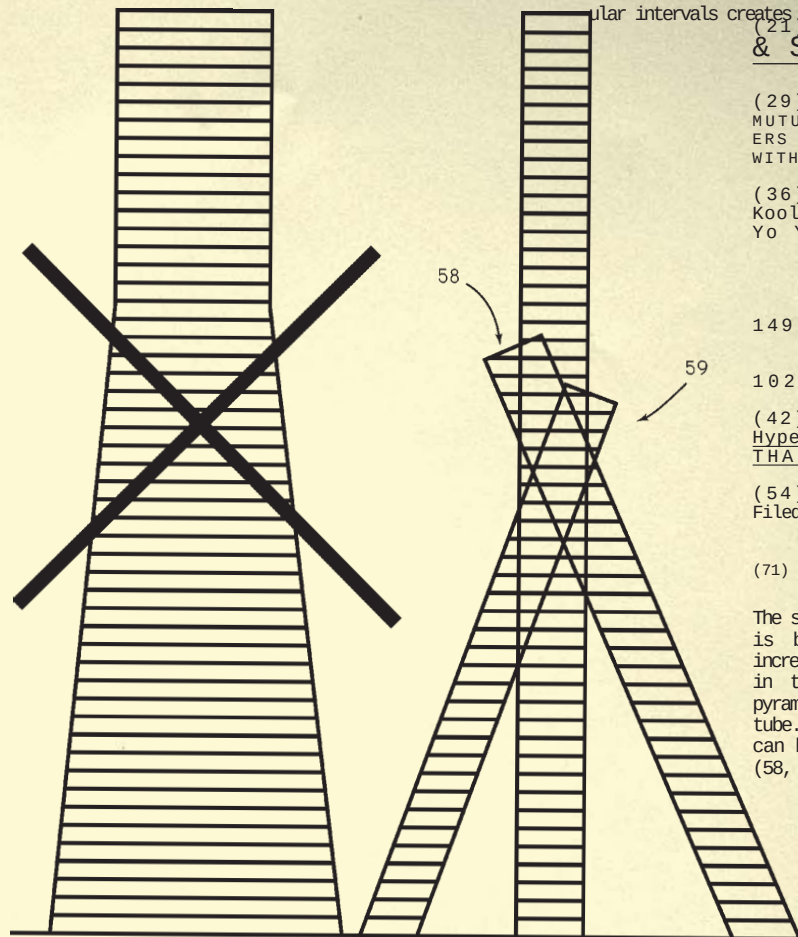
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102438200

(42) Initial Application:
Hyperbuilding, Bangkok,
THAILAND

(54) Filed:.....1996

(71) ABSTRACT

The stability of ever-taller towers is bought at the expense of increasing their footprints, either in the traditional form of the pyramid, or as a larger and larger tube. But a composite stability can be established with members (58, 59) that, on their own could



100 M

sincerely held convictions about logic and beauty.”



UNIVERSAL MODERNIZATION PATENT ^[14] SKYSCRAPER LOOP(2002)

Patent Number: 2,565,267

FIG. 1

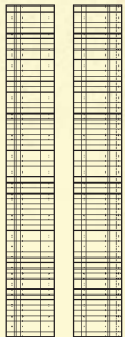
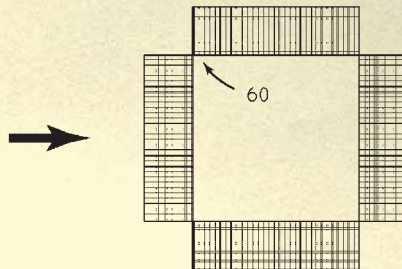


FIG. 2



(54) Patent for "Bent Skyscraper"

(54) METHOD OF AVOIDING THE ISOLATION OF THE TRADITIONAL HIGH RISE BY TURNING FOUR SEGMENTS INTO A LOOP

(76) Inventors: Rem Koolhaas, Ole Scheeren, Shohei Shigematsu, Fernando Donis, Alain Fouraux

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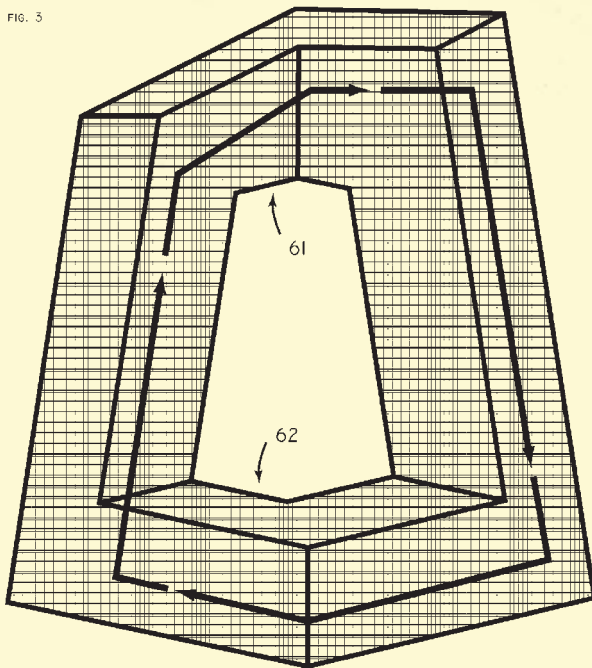
(21) Initial Application: CCTV, Beijing, CHINA

(22) Filed:.....2002

(23) ABSTRACT

By breaking (60) the traditional tower that merely goes up and down at four points, a loop of building can be generated that unites and confronts (61, 62) its

FIG. 3



100 M



January 27, 2003

CCTV – OMA/AMO: Forward Compatibility

Seminar

Based on a request by CCTV, OMA and AMO are organizing a seminar to discuss current technical developments in media and their implications on CCTV.

Hypothesis

The main obstacle to harnessing the benefits of television's coming digital revolution is posed by the rigidity of the television industry, which imposes artificial standards and demands the use of proprietary software.

- There are no less than 13 different high-definition production standards being promoted by various nations and manufacturers, with an additional three distribution formats for antenna, satellite and cable.
- Although manufacturers of broadcast technology and consumer electronics like Sony, Thompson, or Panasonic claim to be ready to discuss open standards for many of their products, at least 75% of their equipment is still not compatible.

We would like to highlight the opportunities for a different approach on two levels - for CCTV as the dominant TV station in China and for China as the biggest emerging market for TV and other digital services in the world.

A) CCTV

With the introduction of digital TV, the concept of video or audio footage will become obsolete, replaced by the generic nature of digital files. The following are potential consequences:

- Files will be stored and retrieved easily and, furnished with 'metadata', also searched more effectively. The TV station will be a searchable data archive, much like a library.
- Video on demand and bandwidth on demand will create a new balance between what a TV station wants its viewers to look at and what the consumer wants to watch. The TV station will be a content provider rather than a broadcaster only.
- Interactivity will allow a TV station to communicate directly with its viewers, with profound implications for the kind of programs that will be produced. The TV station will be not only the mouth, but also the ears of the nation.
- With the advent of digital cinema, TV and movies will simply be different resolutions of the same material, with profound implications for production, storage and distribution. From being a specialized "manufacturer" of TV content, the digital TV station will become the central hub in a network for the production and distribution of moving images, and could take on a much more widely defined cultural role.

B) China

China is characterized by the need to spread opportunity and information rather than protect manufacturers and other established interests. It could use its dominant position, the force of its numbers, its economic power, and its central government to lead the world into a digital future.

While China might choose to exert some control over content for its internal political stability, it can be the first nation to create truly open standards for its technological infrastructure spreading connectivity and opportunity.

- Both CCTV and the Chinese government have a strong central authority able to impose rules and standards.
- Large players and rigid standards are not yet established.
- Digital culture is quickly absorbed in China. In many areas, China has the most sophisticated users, and sophisticated developers are emerging quickly.
- TV is the main tool for communication and plays a potentially political role.
- China's vast countryside, currently being put in focus by Hu Jintao, makes it attractive for China to choose satellites, wireless technologies and digital cinemas, rather than the traditional microwave technologies and cable.

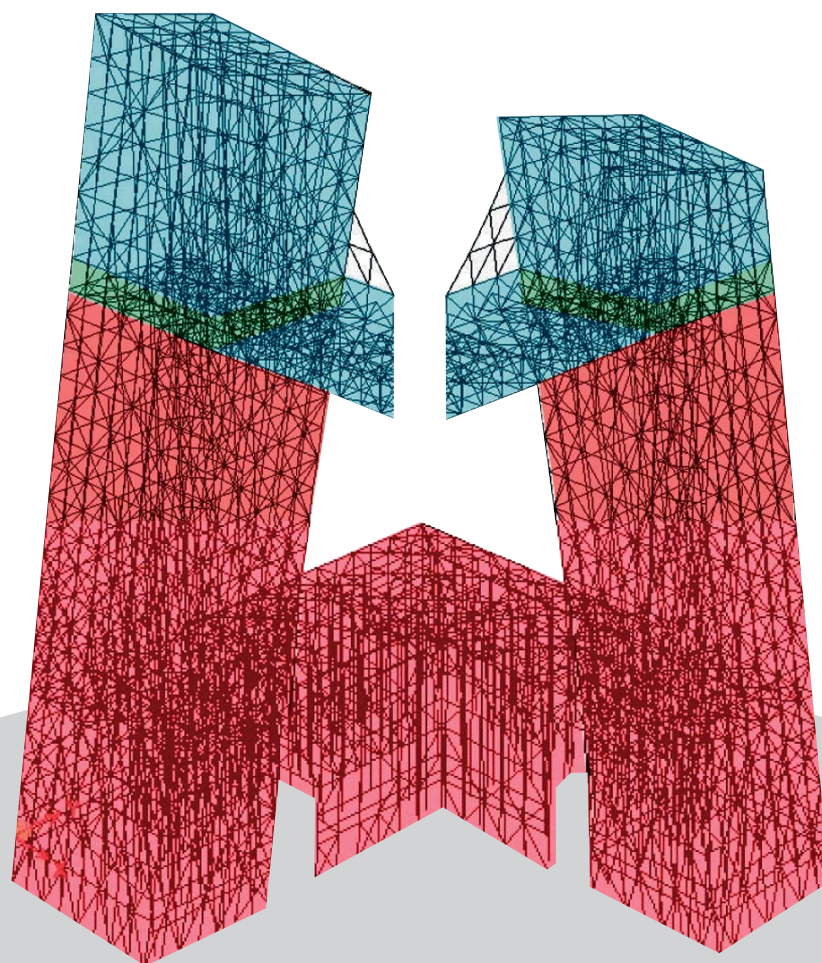


1100 BC

Samson tears down the house of the Philistines.



11/Sept/2001



AD 2008

TOWARD A NEW STABILITY

CCTV headquarters is an ambitious building. It was conceived at the same time that the design competition for Ground Zero took place – not in the backward-looking US, but in the parallel universe of China.

In communism, engineering has a high status, its laws resonating with Marxian wheels of history. To prove the stability of a structure that violates some of the most sincerely held convictions about logic and beauty, the engineering firm Arup had to dissect every detail of our design. The effort to reassure only reveals the scary aliveness of every structure – elasticity, creep, shrinkage, sagging, bending, buckling. Serving as a

hypnotic window, the computer analyzes and exposes the shocking vividness of the mineral world with the tenacity of a pervert.

I heard one of Cecil Balmond's engineers at Arup describe, without irony or noticeable wavering, how two sloping steel structures in our design could be connected only at dawn. They would be exposed to different solar heat gain due to their relative positions on the ground and would be most likely to share the same temperature after cooling off overnight. I was elated and horrified by the sheer outrageousness of the problem we had set before them. Why do they never say no? ■ ■ ■