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Synopsis

This book takes place at the cusp of the 20th and 21st centuries, in the pre and post-September 11th world. It is a singular product of its time, packed full of words and images portraying the architectural projects and metaphysical mechanics that have defined Rem Koolhaas's OMA-AMO firm over the past seven years. In the format of a small, thick magazine, this "book" is more of an anti-book, an informal tribute to the ephemeral world we inhabit. Focusing on the theme "Go East," this visual journey follows OMA-AMO from San Francisco to Tokyo, traversing our massive and turbulent planet in search of "an opportunity to realize the visions that make remaining at home torturous."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It's shaped like a trade paperback book, but its hellzapoppin pages look like a glossy, madcap magazine. Really, Content is more like an explosion in an idea factory, or a wild party thrown by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Rem Koolhaas in a mood considerably more delirious than his classic 1978 manifesto *Delirious New York*. It has 70 or 80 sections that look like magazine articles, and they're loosely organized in geographical order, from west to east. Pieces on Koolhaas's projects for Prada and MCA/Universal in LA and the acclaimed Seattle Public Library lead to syncopated meditations on Guggenheim Las Vegas, Chicago's van der Rohe "Mistakes," a modest plan to save Cambridge from Harvard by rechanneling the Charles River, Lagos' future as Earth's third-biggest town, the Hermitage's strange Russian past, Shanghai's Expo 2010, and Asia's

skyscrapers, which now outnumber those of the West. When Koolhaas interviews Martha Stewart and gets a Las Vegas update from Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, it's straightforward, but many pages are as mystifying as hallucinations--apropos of nothing, a woman is depicted leaving her infrared heat signature on a tombstone, and Vermeer paintings are paired with scenes from TV's Big Brother. You don't read Content in linear fashion, you page through it amazed, gradually acquiring Koolhaas' ultracultivated taste for the bizarre. --Tim Appelo

""Content is a follow-up to SMLXL, an inventory of seven years of OMA's tireless labor. In many ways it is structured according to what its predecessor is not--dense, cheap, disposable....""

Rem does it again with the sequel to S, M, L, XL. Although it is not as massive in literal sense, its content is still massive. It is S, M, L, XL presented in comical way.

The latest Koolhaas and the gang book (actually a paperback) is summed up in the Editor's letter on page sixteen, part of which reads "Content is a follow-up to 'SMLXL', an inventory of seven years of OMA's tireless labor. In many ways it is structured according to what its predecessor is not-dense, cheap, disposable". The 546 pages are a textual and visual pot-pourri of articles, mostly architecturally related with several general interest items thrown in, like the one about Martha Stewart and her views on eastern lifestyles, or 'Red Radio', the story of the Cold War fight for Africa's airwaves (no, really) and if you get frustrated trying to read some of the tiny type that inevitably gets used in this type of book you can look at a few ads that are scattered throughout the pages. I bought the book for its strong visual interest (it is mostly visual) and the seventy-six articles are presented in all sorts of graphic ways, from the nearly unreadable 'Junk Space' which stretches over ten pages of text in one continuous paragraph to the rather fascinating 'Yes/No' using a clever collage technique to explain the rise and fall of the global economy. The pace is unrelenting with colorful whiz-bang graphics and photos from pages one to 546. Perhaps the most interesting chapter is the penultimate one devoted to the work of OMA-AMO since the publication of 'SMLXL', unfortunately the huge amount of information is presented in nearly unreadable paragraphs over twenty-seven pages. To quote the Editor's Letter again "Content is, beyond all, a tribute to what are perhaps OMA-AMO's greatest virtues - its courage, its dogged, almost existential pursuit of discomfort, its commitment to engage the world by inviting itself to places where it has no authority, places where it doesn't 'belong'". I'll certainly drink to that!

For those used to Koolhaas' fun and games, you will enjoy pouring over his latest catalog of ideas. It has the look and feel of a thick magazine more so than a book, packed with an astonishing range of project, op-ed pieces and cuttings from the chaotic world we live in. But, for those new to Koolhaas, you may want to check out *Delirious New York* or *S,M,L,XL* first. This book has a sharper political content to it but the cover is little more than a hook. There are some good articles to pour over such as "Re-Learning from Las Vegas," in which Koolhaas interviews Robert Venturi and Denise Scott-Brown. The cover story seems to be "Violence against Architecture," in which Bill Millard offers "tales from the front lines of the war on the city." Koolhaas can't resist promoting himself, noting his Projects on the City, and re-exploring Lagos and Beijing. He also showcases the Seattle Public Library and some of the newest projects he has on the boards. There are his usual witty allusions such as "Mistakes" and "Big Vermeer," but for the most part this book seems to be a celebration of the urban chaos that has resulted in recent years, thanks in large part to globalization. Unfortunately, there isn't a very sharp focus. Most of the images are just eye candy and the articles don't have much weight to them. Still, you can't beat the price and there is plenty to look at.

A rollercoaster review of past, present and future of OMA / Rem Koolhaas, dazzling, inspiring, breathtaking, irritating and presumptuous, like his best work. A remorseless insight into the man, his method and his madness.

First of all, it is very disappointed. This book is basically just hard to read. It may seem interesting at first opening it because of the layout and how pictures are organized. Although some ideas are presented in a very creative way, but really, the ideas are presented without telling the reader where the idea going to expand or how can it go further. Basically got nothing out of it after reading this book. Maybe when he made fun of Martha Stewart, it was quite interesting.. but so what... what does she have to do with architecture...err yea..

That this is only "inventory of seven years of OMA's tireless labor" becomes obvious when you realize that what is presented actually obfuscates OMA's work. If you want book that would clarify their buildings and give you idea why they are one of the leading architectural studios, look elsewhere.

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