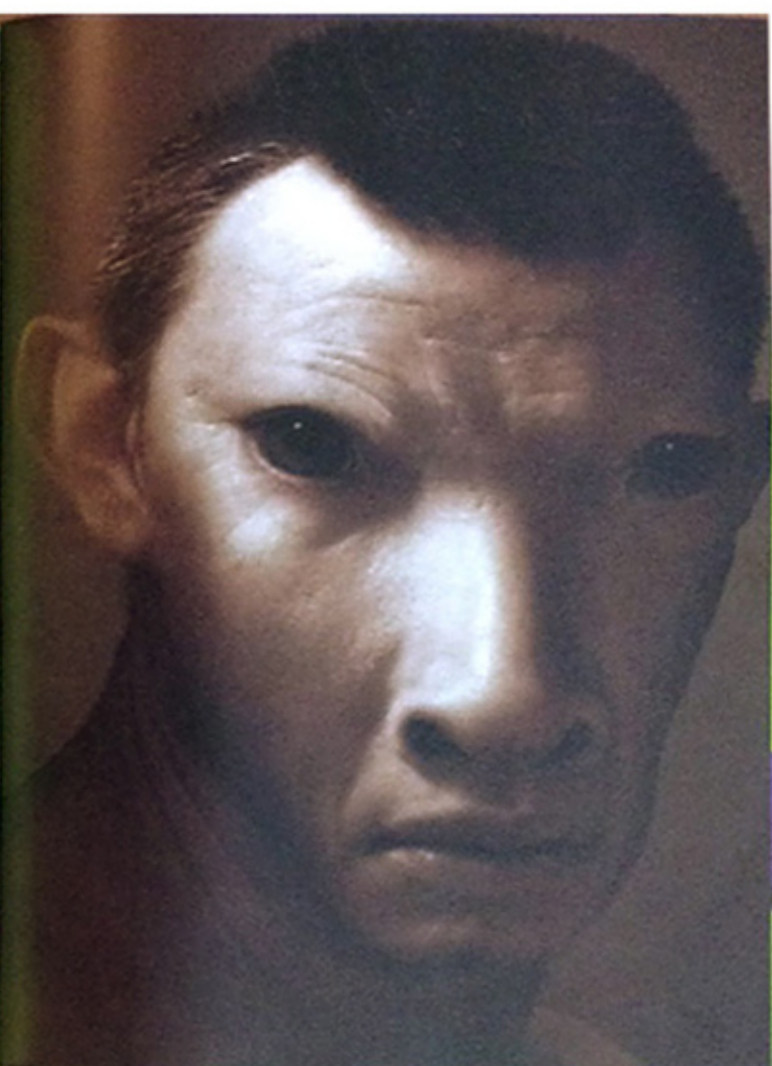




Hybridization

Architectural constructions that were pure fantasy a few years ago can now be built thanks to new design and construction techniques. Fluorescent, fluid structures that began life by weightlessly warping on computer screens are beginning to make the transition into a haptic, gravitational existence. Apart from their shiny artifice and wavy contours, these technological fantasies are also characterised by a sense of alienation. This specific type of alienation bears little relation to the anxiety and persecution accompanying early twentieth century urban disorientation, but pertains to a denationalised, genetically manipulated state of dis-authenticity. An intense fusion of construction, materials, circulation and programme spaces creates uncertainty as to the exact properties of the components from which these structures are assembled: they are hybrids which don't know their history. Architectural works like that result from a holistic merger of disparate elements, bringing about vagueness with respect to the scale and proportion of structures. The amalgamation generates a new notion of identity. The different features of the work are blurred and exist in layers which do not necessarily relate to

each other or to the scale and structure of the shapes and substances from which they originate. Hybrid structures have no authentic, recognisable scale, their organisation is geared towards allowing function-related expansion and shrinkage and this results in overlaps and non-determinate spaces that flow into each other. The two icons for the hybrid building are the Manimal and Frederick Kiesler. The Manimal is a computer-generated image of the hybridization of a lion, a snake and a human. The Manimal does not divulge any concrete information about its complex parentage. All traces of the previous identities have been seamlessly absorbed within the portrait; they exist simultaneously and integrally within one, cohesive organisation. While the Manimal projects its own strong identity, it is one of questions and indeterminacy, not of direct reference. The technique that generates the image is as interesting as its effect and more interesting than the imagination that has engendered it. As an effect, the image makes you wonder how something like this would translate spatially. As a technique, it excites because it has been produced in a manner radically different from all pictorial techniques that have been previously employed by artists. The three main aspects that make the hybridizing technique of the Manimal architecturally interesting concern the relation of technique to



author, the relation to time and the relation of component part to whole. The Manimal was produced by one artist, but looks like the product of a group, which in a way it is, since the anonymous software programmers who created Photoshop also have a large hand in the portrait. Architecture too must get used to ambiguous authorship issues, entering a dialogue within design processes that have many, sometimes invisible, participants, yet trying to retain the active position needed for the origination of new works.

The Manimal derives its effect from mutation over accelerated time. It is the product of animation, of which duration forms a central part; the morphed picture is just one still frame in a sequence that could, in principle, run indefinitely. This calls up questions that apply equally to architecture: when to stop, when is it finished? What is the 'right' solution? Capitalism and photography have conspired to make architects more

Thirdly, the fact that the unity of the image is not disrupted by the diversity of its ingredients is what distinguishes this hybridizing technique most from traditional collage. This is the most radical choice for architecture to face. The totalising, decontextualising, dehistoricising combination of discordant systems of information can be instrumentalised architecturally into one gesture. An extreme blurring of architectural properties into cohesive oneness implies an extension of the single surface organisation from a primarily horizontal structure to a three-dimensional organisation encompassing the vertical and the diagonal as well, allowing a totally column-free structure. Enriched by light, sound and movement, a situation emerges in which the unified organisation is permeated with changeable substances.

The convergence of sameness and difference into one coherent structure is already found in the works of



anxious than ever to freeze architecture in time and suppress the reality that 'all buildings are the mother of ruins', that only change exists.

Kiesler, the second icon of hybridization. Kiesler attributes the unified organisation with endlessness. This allows the structure to assume different identities.

Even more strongly than in his projects, Kiesler's capacity for endlessness is conveyed in the series of photographs of him: Kiesler as a Surrealist, as a minotaur, as Willem de Kooning, as a chess player, as Mies van der Rohe, are just some of his incarnations. The message that can be read in those photographs is: imagine, invent, expand and pretend. With this variety of poses, the contemporary reading of Kiesler is that multiplicity can constitute a cohesive identity. The whole Kiesler is found in this wide-ranging series of Kieslers. Kiesler-as-Kiesler is a manifold - generating, proliferating and projecting an infinite measure of possible identities.

The two icons of hybridization, Kiesler and the Manimal, demonstrate the proliferating forces of disauthentication and non-determination within a unified organisation. The architecture of hybridization, the fluent merging of constituent parts into an endlessly variable whole, amounts to the organisation of continuous difference, resulting in structures that are scale-less, subject to evolution, expansion, inversion and other contortions and manipulations. Free to assume different identities, architecture becomes endless.

