# The After-image of Erewhon:
# On Mirage City— Another Utopia

ISOZAKI Arata and ASADA Akira



Photo=OTAKA Takashi

## Towards a New Concept of "Planning"

**ASADA:** I've been involved in planning at ICC since the beginning and have given a lot of thought to how we might create a new kind of cultural center which transcends the framework of the traditional museum. In planning the opening we decided that since the permanent exhibition space would include an installation of ten teams of artists, the other space should open out onto many levels which would go beyond the idea of "art." And of course I thought the only person who would be capable of planning something like this would be ISOZAKI [laughs].

At that stage I was thinking in general terms about how architects might look at new information spaces. Specifically I was thinking of asking you to act as the "boss" to put together a group of young architects and designers working in close relation to media and have them create something like a "media labyrinth." As it happened you were working on a project which matched my idea perfectly. That was the Mirage City (Haishi) project.

**ISOZAKI:** That's right. When you fist came to me with this proposal I immediately realized that the style of exhibitions I had done in the past wouldn't work. And just as I was thinking about how to go about it there was this Mirage City project which I had just begun. I thought it would be a perfect vehicle to think about a number of new issues.

One of these issues was how to rethink the concept of "planning." I knew we couldn't expect anything new if we planned the city using the same old systems and processes of the past, so I thought I would take this project as an opportunity to rethink things completely from the ground up.

I also wanted to rethink the idea of "utopia." In some sense the idea already inheres in the concept of "planning" itself; all of modern design and planning has been organized around the search for a kind of utopia. So I wondered how we might take another look at this idea in the contemporary moment.

Then there is the question of media. At present many new media are coming into existence, each with its own politics, and I thought it ought to be possible to use these politicized media to develop a new

perspective on "planning."

As I was thinking about these ideas, I was coming up with a proposal for a project to build an artificial island-city called "Mirage City" off the coast of Zhuhai City next to Macao. Then I heard about this exhibition at ICC and thought it would be the perfect opportunity to bring all these problems together into some kind of concrete simulation.

If we were to carry out the planning according to the standard methods, the only way to do it would be for an architect to form a partnership with some local governing body, look for investors, and get a developer involved. But it was clear from the start that this way of doing things would be very constricting and would prevent us from grappling with any new problems. But if we restructured it as a kind of media-experiment it would be possible to have a number of architects involved, to have interventions from all kinds of people, to have different kinds of publicity, all possible in different phases. If all of this didn't come together into a concrete project that was fine. We would proceed separately and see what happened if we thought of the whole thing as a kind of performance centering around media. Eventually

## The Outline of Haishi Project



Position of Zhuhai within East Asia
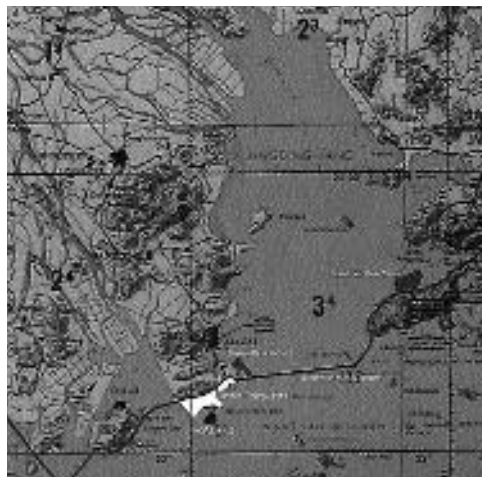


The area around "Haishi"

1) origin: When Macau returns to mainland China in 1999, Zhuhai City plans to establish a new zone for political and economic activities in combination with Hengqin Island.

The Project began when the munincipal government of Zhuhai City approached Arata Isozaki to expand on their idea of constructing an artificial island in the shallow sea south of Hengqin Island.

2) area: The area is known as the Zhu Jiang Kou Delta. Since ancient times the region has been the most active center of exchange in South China. It forms the core of three prefectures - Guangdong, Fujian, and Hainan - which recently have come to be called the Southern China Economic Bloc. In 1995, the population of the delta region was reported 40,000,000, and it is estimated that it will increase one and a half fold by the year 2010.

3) name: "Haishi" involves two meanings: first, the literal reading of the characters is "cities on the sea," and second, the implication in Chinese is "mirage." It is possible to conceptualize an alternative world on an island which is independent from conventional political and social institutions. Thus we can call this cities on the sea "Utopia."

4) development: The development includes high-tech industries, distribution bases, financial centers, government offices, cultural and entertainment facilities, resorts, and residences. At the same time, improvements to the infrastructure, including construction of highways and a railroad to Guangzhou and other environs, are being planned. The southern tip of Macau, has already become a resort with hotels, golf courses, and luxury condominiums.

the next phase would come together. I thought this would be a great opportunity to push this project into the next phase.

At the Anywise Conference held in Seoul in 1995 [1] ASADA and I presented a joint report on the Mirage City Project. This was the first official presentation about the project. After that I presented a slightly more detailed version at the International Architectural Exhibition [2] of the Venice Biennale in 1996 (This was separate from the exhibition on the Kobe Earthquake at the Japanese Pavilion for which I served as commissioner). That was the second presentation. And now we have changed phases once again for the exhibition at ICC. So this will be the third presentation. Just recently we have been asked to present the results at the section on "The City" at the Kwangju Biennale to be held in Korea this Fall. This is how things look at present. Proceeding in this way, we get a rich variety of input from all over the world.

Multi-Leveled Interactions

**ASADA:** When I first asked you to participate I assumed that you would act as a kind of general coordinator and that the actual work would be done by a team of young architects and designers working in the media field. But as it turned out you got very involved and came up with a major project in great detail. This came as a pleasant surprise, but at the same time I was a little taken aback [laughs]. As it turned out, however, although you came up with a concrete plan, you seemed more interested in conducting the whole thing as a kind of media performance in which outside interventions on various levels would gradually transform that plan. This fit very well with my original intention and I was quite relieved. It was your idea to take those interactions and develop them on a number of levels.

**ISOZAKI:** Yes it was. The term "intercommunication" was coined for ICC. Communication is already a mutual exchange of information by definition, but

adding "inter" to the term makes this even more explicit.

If we think in terms of this prefix "inter," we can use words like "interactivity"; for example "intercommunality," "intertextuality," "intersubjectivity," and "intercommunicativity," to rethink all of the notions which have served us as guiding principles in the


Zhuhai

past--including those of the community, the text, and the subject--in interactive terms. I think of the new media as a kind of technology which enables this kind of interactivity. I asked myself what would be the best concrete way to employ those media in order to arrive at a better understanding of things.

This led me to think of four different plans. The first was the "Prototype"--basically a re-elaboration of the plans I had made up until then. I intend to change this little by little in the exhibition space--to change its composition by infecting it with something like a computer virus. Here I am particularly interested in the problem of intertextuality. The whole thing is rooted in the concepts of feng-shui. I have taken several traditional Chinese building types and introduced changes to adapt them to this context. In a sense the idea is to put them in a dialogue with the heritage of the past.

Next is the "Signatures" project. This involves inviting several dozen architects and planners who have produced "signature" works in the past and having them come up with a variety of building designs which in some cases may change according to their mutual relations with the other structures. "Mirage City" is an island. As I said during our presentation at the "Anywise" Conference, I believe that the world is moving away from its current organization

according to nation-states to reorganize itself in the form of "archipelagos." I like to think of "Mirage City" as one unit in that new system. In Japanese we would call it a "shima." If we were to make this into a model of a station in a network of such islands, archi-

This island will be a gathering point for a wide variety of designs by people living in different places who have different ways of thinking. In order to make this happen it is first necessary to set up a "site" to which we can invite these people. In the eighteenth century
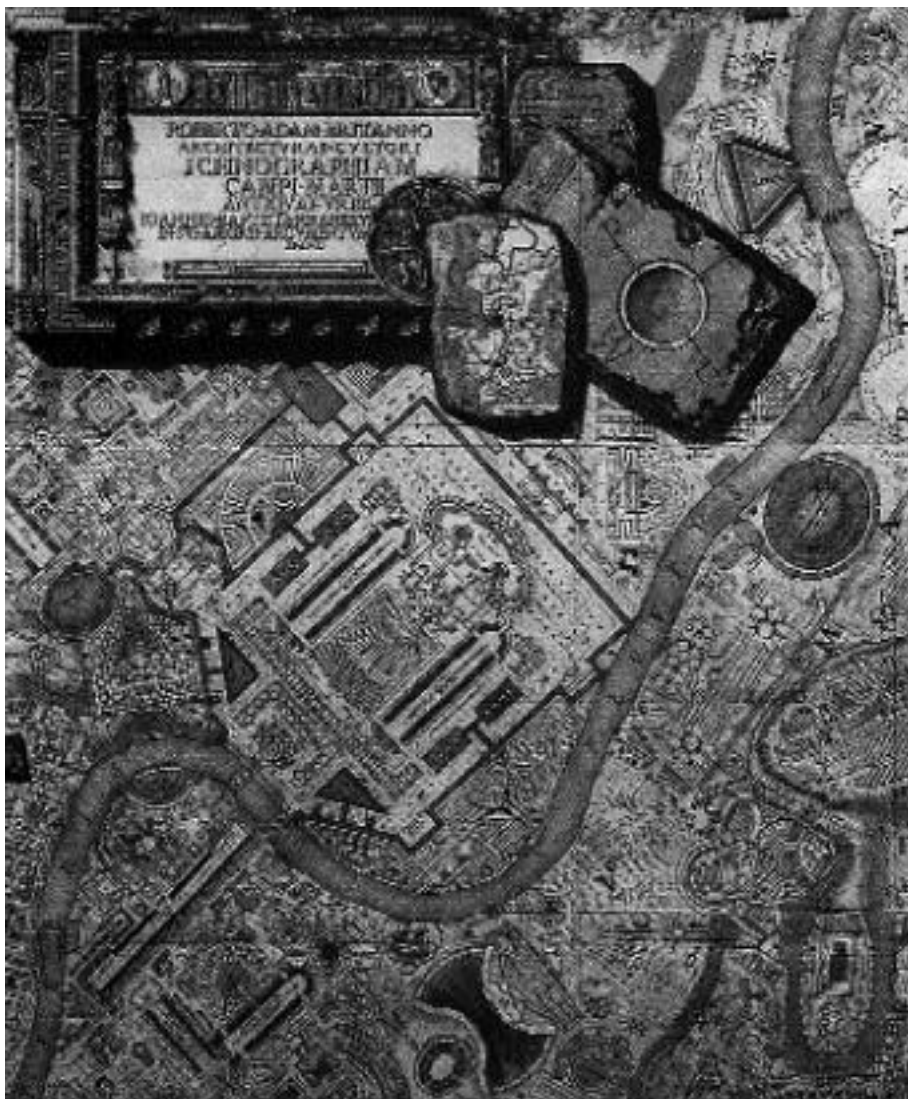


Giovanni Battista Piranesi
Campo Marzio of Ancient Rome (1762)

tects who would normally be residents of other islands could gather here as part of a global network in order to assemble people's memories, the traces of their own hands, to bring everything together once more. It would be like a collage created out of a network.

PIRANESI drew up a plan called the "Campo Marzio" as an imaginary reconstruction of the center of ancient Rome. Since the scale of the central part of these plans is very close to that of the "Mirage City," we came up with the idea of applying it directly as a

model to set out the hypothetical initial conditions of this project. We have asked people living in places scattered all over the world to come up with designs for buildings on the site of each piece of architecture depicted in these plans and to affix their own "signatures" to them. If conflicts arise among them, we plan to have them change their original designs, literally interactively. We want to show this process as it actually plays itself out. The modes of commu-

this context is to act as a kind of traffic cop if some major dispute arises [laughs]. Already starting in March we have had an exchange of ideas over the Internet based on the prototype. Every participant has a different approach and method which incorporates the work of the people who came before, making for a fascinating interactive process. We intend to make this into a concrete model and keep it up over the long term.
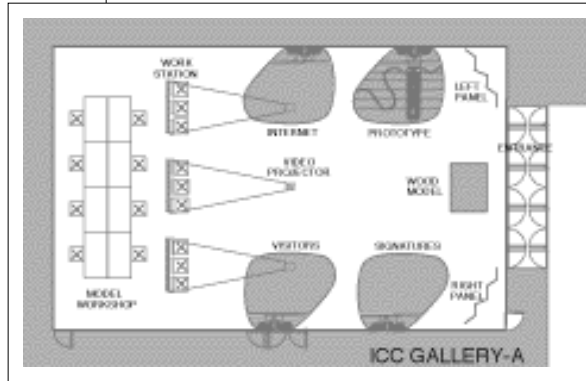


Gallery Installation

nication to be employed will of course include the fax and e-mail as always, and it is possible that some people will also intervene over the Internet. In the exhibition space the physical models will be changed accordingly.

The third plan is called "Visitors," and involves the transformation of the design through the participation of visitors to the exhibition space. The exhibition will span twelve weeks, during which twelve teams of media-age architects and artists known as "digital architects" will each be given one week in which to come up with their own plan, incorporating ideas garnered from conversations with visitors to the space. At the end of the week they will pass the baton to the next person. In a sense the plans will be put together along a kind of chain, after the fashion of Japanese linked poetry (renga). Whereas the former "Signatures" phase is distributed spatially, "Visitors" is meant as a temporal chain. This means that each participant will end up destroying, subverting, or otherwise transforming what his or her predecessor has done. But this way of proceeding is the most stimulating. The only thing that I can do in

The fourth plan is called "Internet" and centers around the question of whether or not it is possible to put together a plan solely by means of an information network. This makes all kinds of manipulations possible, but at the same time it is impossible to perform manipulations on a blank slate. You have to have at least something to grab hold of in the beginning. Without some kind of initial setting--a rough outline or a set of generative rules--you don't have anything to work from. Provisionally we decided to make use of the fact that Venice is about the same size as Mirage City and to set up points in the City corresponding to the layout of the hundreds of churches inside Venice. Using an algorithm of artificial life, each point is accorded a gravitational pull which works on the other points, initiating a shifting pattern of alignments and oppositions according to probability theory which will manifest a self-organizing form. This will form a provisional starting point from which the whole will be gradually supplemented by information contributed by people over the Internet.

In summary, these four phases of "Prototype," "Signatures," "Visitors," and "Internet" will introduce

steady transformations over twelve weeks--and the totality of this process will make up the exhibition.

**ASADA:** Urban planning has always been premised on the idea of a single agent who integrates the whole. In the Baroque style cities were planned along a number of axes. In Paris this has been realized in a process that began with HAUSSEMANN [3] and continued until MITTERAND. In the modern period grid systems become the norm, so that you have cities like Manhattan which are completely laid out along a massive grid. Moreover, because this kind of urban planning starts from a blank slate, you have modernist cities like Brasilia[4] and Chandigarh[5].

You spoke of deconstructing this kind of "planning" concept. That means avoiding having a single planner be responsible for the whole plan--in other words, avoiding planning in a closed fashion--and thinking of a more open way of planning that would allow for constant interventions from a wide variety of people and would accommodate conflict. Next you would abandon the idea of starting from a blank slate and introduce some kind of pretext, even if you have to fabricate one like Piranesi's plan or the layout of Venice, and proceed to write over it.

**ISOZAKI:** Exactly. Also, in the "Prototype," feng-shui provides the model, and in "Visitors" you have the metaphor of linked verse (renga). Each phase has some kind of pretext.

**ASADA:** That's why it is literally an interactive way of planning, or even a plan that lacks planning. In one way you've placed yourself in a very convenient position [laughs]. If everything turns out well you can take the credit, but if it doesn't you shove the responsibility off on someone else.

**ISOZAKI:** Precisely! [laughs]

**ASADA:** But nonetheless, for better or for worse this is a kind of metaproject--one in which the conditions have been set from above that make it possible for all sorts of people to throw in their own projects and for a pattern to organize itself spontaneously as they all bounce off each other like balls. As such it does transcend the concept of "planning" in which a single planning agent merely creates an integrated plan on a single level. This project promises to develop on a much higher plane. It's a fascinating experiment.

**ISOZAKI:** Well, we hope it will be.

## Looking Back at "Metabolism"

**ASADA:** I'm thinking of the time when you came in sort of at the tail end of metabolism[6]. At least on the level of matter and energy, metabolism was concerned with conceiving of architecture and cities not as closed systems but as open and organic systems constantly involved in a process of regeneration and change. It produced precedents to the Mirage City project such as the Tange Associates' conception of the City on Tokyo Bay ("Tokyo Plan 1960" 1961), and in the 1980s KUROKAWA Kisho came up with a similar plan. What do you think now of these visions in metabolism?

**ISOZAKI:** The problem of metabolism is almost entirely summed up in the debate over what Christopher ALEXANDER calls the "tree" and the "semi-lattice" structures. In the tree model, you literally have a trunk, branches, and leaves. It's a binary, or perhaps a more complex system, which simply develops along a monotonous trajectory. In a semi-lattice, on the other hand, branching points can merge with their neighbors so that you end up with a net-like structure. Some people say it is like the rhizome of DELEUZE and GUATTARI.

The limit of the 1960s was in the paradox that every effort at planning ended up becoming a tree structure. In an ironic essay called, "Cities aren't Trees" ALEXANDER demonstrated mathematically that despite the fact that living cities are not trees, urban planners from Le CORBUSIER to TANGE Kenzo had only been capable of coming up with trees. The problem with the "tree" is one of a kind of self-referentiality. If you cannot step outside the

framework of a single creative agent, all you can come up with is a single tree. The result might be "architecture," but I don't think it could be called a "city." ALEXANDER went on to argue that architecture itself should be created like a city. To put it in contemporary terms, he began to argue that the process should involve others, so that diverse elements might be compiled into a composite structure.

I don't think that metabolism was capable of solving this problem. It was always about individual famous architects coming up with their own designs in the mode of the same old autonomous subject. Their work was nothing but their own signatures. Without subverting this way of working it is impossible to attain a semi-lattice structure. In fact, ALEXANDER came up with a method called "pattern language" in which he used something like group theory to subvert the tree and come up with a semi-lattice. But when it came to putting together an actual project in his studio he always ended up making the same mistakes as everyone else [laughs]. He was always running aground.

It was in this context that new media began to make connections where none had existed before-- to put it differently, new media began to provide the concrete means to acknowledge every conceivable other. These days I have come to believe that these new methods ought to be able to help us to overcome the limits of our thinking up until now.

At that metabolism exhibition I conducted an experiment. At the time I had come up with something I called a "joint core," in which rather than putting the infrastructure underground, you raise it vertically in the air and surround it with connecting offices and residential structures. The image was not of a single tree, but of many which would form a forest with connecting leaves from which I wanted to create a kind of labyrinth in the air. I got the idea from POLLACK's work. In his drippings, lines in various colors fall at random on a surface and gradually determine the nature of the space. With this in the back of my mind I came up with a system, but I found that as along as I was the one doing it I would make it into some-

thing that I thought was nice [laughs]. So I realized I needed another system. In the exhibition space I prepared several types of long nails and colored wires and attached an aerial photograph of a part of Tokyo onto a large platform. I asked the people who came to hammer the nails wherever they liked as "joint cores" and to connect them with the wires. I just set this system up and left the exhibition space. When I went to see it on the last day it was like an incredible spider web. People were only supposed to work on the platform itself, but they had connected even the walls and the ceiling of the space [laughs]! So I cleaned it up a little bit, and, since I was always going on at the time about the city going to ruin, I thought I would make a ruin out of this as well and prepared several buckets of plaster and made a dripping on top of it. I covered the whole thing in plaster-- I guess you could say I buried the city in ashes.

**ASADA:** You might say that was the end of metabolism and the beginning of this current exhibition.

**ISOZAKI:** That's right. Thirty-five years have passed since then. And the greatest change over those years has taken place in the media network. The basic image hasn't changed that much, but the advent of the new media has made things utterly different.

**ASADA:** If we think about this from a different angle you might say there are basically three models: that of the machine, the living organism, and information. Metabolism is about rejecting the machine model in favor of the living organism. But because they wanted to make architecture and cities into discrete organisms with a discrete purpose, they always ended up with tree-like structures with trunks, branches and leaves, a spinal chord and organs. But if you bring this to a more information-based dimension, you get something close to a semi-lattice, something that moves more dynamically like a rhizome. I think we are now standing at a critical point where, for better or worse, we have to make this move. As long as we rely on the organism model we will be trapped into think-

ing of the city as a single system which demands the fulfillment of this and that condition in order to survive--and inevitably the so-called infrastructure will be formulated as a kind of trunk or spinal chord onto which offices and residence are attached like interchangeable leaves or organs. But in fact this is not a city. It is an organism.

**ISOZAKI:** Exactly. Put differently it's a piece of architecture. The distinction between architecture and urbanism is that architecture is about creating a single system, whereas the city is about the intervention of a multiplicity of others.

**ASADA:** There's also the fact that if you work on the organism model you end up thinking only about growth from the present into the future. Of course, as the name "metabolism" implies, there are metabolic processes involved, but waste and death are seen only as leading to new growth. Combined in practice with the logic of capital, you get unbridled growth on the concept of scrap-and-build. For this reason, metabolism may have had some interesting theoretical aspects, but in effect it colluded perfectly with the boom brought about by the "Restructuring of the Japanese Archipelago"[7] and ended up bringing the cycle of mass production, mass consumption, and mass disposal to the level of entire buildings and cities. And people are still doing it [laughs]. But what was different about your work from the beginning was the fact that your thinking was informed less by a model of linear growth over time than one of warped time and a multiplicity of levels according to which at the end of any trajectory towards the future you only have the same ruins that you started with.

In this current plan as well you have chosen completely irrelevant things like PIRANESI's plans or the layout of Venice as what might be called artificial ruins and used them as provisional pretexts on top of which various things are inscribed to create a palimpsest which might well end up as just one more ruin. In this sense what you are doing is totally different from metabolism.

As you said earlier, the city is a place where a multiplicity of others live together in the midst of contradiction--but looking at it from another angle we might say

that it is a place where multileveled memories of the past are provided as a pretext and where death peers through the cracks. This also seems very important.

For this reason deconstructing the kind of unity of the organism that inhered in metabolism and dismantling the kind of temporal linearity which strives exclusively toward the future are essential steps in coming to terms with the city.

**ISOZAKI:** Well, it may just be that that's all I've had to say about time [laughs], but this is where you have to think of whether it will be linear or non-linear. When I was talking about theme parks I did comment that it should be possible to come up with a non-linear form of planning. In some sense, the "Mirage City" project is a continuation of that effort.

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The Freeze Problem

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**ASADA:** On the other hand, for young architects and designers working in a purely digital environment, because almost any form is possible inside the computer display and unlimited revisions are possible, you have the problem of not knowing where to start and where to stop.

**ISOZAKI:** That is very true. I ran into the same problem in my metabolism period. For example, it's fine to take a piece of architecture and make it grow and change just like an organism. But it will never become a concrete building. With architecture you have to stop this process of change at some point if you ever want to get on with the design and construction. So where do you stop it? At some point you have to freeze the movement on the computer screen. But what does this freezing mean? This is probably the most crucial problem.

**ASADA:** I would think it's usually a matter of politics.

**ISOZAKI:** Yes it is. When I was grappling with this in the sixties I thought of it as a kind of "sectioning."

Basically the architect intervenes and comes up with a "section." Most of my buildings are like this--I have always thought of these sections as design, as elevations, as facades.

Even at the time, this kind of "sectioning" was extremely primitive. You just stopped in the middle of the architectural simulation on paper. But how do you do this on the computer? This is the next problem. I wonder what kind of methods digital architects will come up with to handle this problem. I'm looking forward to finding out.

**ASADA:** There's always the danger that digital architects can avoid dealing with this problem of sectioning and the political issues involved and just keep playing on their computer screens forever, and quite literally never come to anything. On the display there is the fun of constant generation and change but the minute you freeze things to make a model it becomes boring. Not to speak of the fact that if you actually built it you might not be able to bear looking at. This "freeze problem" is a major issue today.

**ISOZAKI:** Looking at various projects these days it seems that everyone has run up against this.

**ASADA:** The term "virtuality" is in vogue these days, but the idea that any kind of form and unlimited changes are possible on the screen is only a question of possibility. It is a kind of fantasy of possible worlds. In this world we have gravity, but in a world without gravity this form would be possible. In this world there are all kind of architectural regulations, but in a world without those regulations we could build something like this. This tendency of playing with unlimited possibilities of transformation in possible worlds is very widespread among computer graphic architects with a science-fiction mentality. But the reality is that you have to stop this fantasy at some point. And you can't just choose what you think would be the best stopping point. There is the natural environment, technical and economic limits, the requests of the client, and social regulations to consider. To look at it differently, the real challenge lies in putting something at

rest back into motion, adding a different virtual image to something which is already determined. I think this is the true meaning of virtuality.

**ISOZAKI:** I agree. You do have to freeze things at some point. The question is whether you are able to determine when to do it yourself or whether it is determined by some external force. I think it is probably impossible to incorporate this logic into a program. You have to bring it in from the outside. And that's where the political enters in.

**ASADA:** In order to incorporate the stopping into the program you would have to decide to stop whenever you reach an equilibrium, or whenever there is no more room for interaction. But typically this produces very contrived results. But the truly provocative designs are more likely to come about when there is a sudden outside intervention which forces a break, or when it is possible to make it look like things are still moving when they have actually come to a stop.

**ISOZAKI:** In that case running out of time becomes the most decisive factor [laughs].

**ASADA:** Yes. That's always the problem!

**ISOZAKI:** There used to be a custom in the Japanese court called kyokusui no en in which you would stand by a stream and wait for a poem sent by a person upstream on a little boat to float toward you. When you saw the poem you had to come up with your own poem immediately. It's really quite stressful. This kind of stress, the tension of an imminent deadline, is one way to be decisive.

**ASADA:** On the other hand, possible worlds are like worlds on multiple time zones in which you can replay things as much as you like, and in which there are no deadlines. But in reality there are always deadlines. Within the irreversible flow of time you have to stop at some point and yet the actual image which results when you stop things looks very different than it would in a virtual

context. This is the most serious problem we face now. What people tend to refer to as "virtuality" is often nothing more than a possible world for escaping that kind of reality.

**ISOZAKI:** That's why it turns into a mere fantasy. There's nothing necessarily wrong with that, but in order to connect it to real cities and real architecture you have to freeze the moment.

**ASADA:** And that is why in this exhibition, although we created an artificial island as a kind of fictional playing space, sectioned it off according to fictions like PIRANESI's plan or the layout of Venice, and made it possible for all kinds of people to intervene and effect changes, we haven't forgotten the more prosaic task of building models. Actually I think this is one of the most interesting aspects of the project. If everything went on inside the computer there would be all kinds of movement but the impact would be much less powerful. It's in the process of clattering about to make these ideas into things that you get resistance and that you create an impact. You also need no small amount of courage to destroy what your predecessor has made [laughs]. This kind of tension is necessary.

**ISOZAKI:** That's right. Secretly I have thought that my role ought to be to go into the "Visitor's" space as the twelve participants are taking their turns and intervene from the outside in some way that isn't written in the script--like indiscriminately causing an earthquake or sending in a tornado [laughs].

**ASADA:** That would make you like the angry god Demiurgos.

**ISOZAKI:** Maybe so.

From "Mirage City" to the Archipelago

**ASADA:** To shift the topic to a more concrete questions of politics and economics, I think the model of the archi-

pelago has acquired become quite plausible. If world capitalism is like an ocean, the great nation states have been floating in it up until now like continents. But now that the Cold War has ended and the electronic network has developed, it looks like world capitalism has finally come to cover the entire surface of the earth. If this is in fact the case, small islands acting like special economic zones and clusters of such zones forming archipelagos ought to be the most active. Particularly in Asia, the area around Macao where the Mirage City is being planned towards Indochina, or even the area from around Okinawa up to the Sakhalin Islands are full of potential if they are able to form themselves into chains of archipelagos.

**ISOZAKI:** These days the nineteenth-century framework of the nation state is increasingly seen as problematic. At this point no one has a clear idea of whether the nation state will collapse or not and what will take its place if it does. But there is no doubt that it has reached its limit. So the question now is how to think about what will come next.

In the case of the nation state the idea was to occupy as much territory as possible and the world system was determined according to spheres of influence. There was the idea of the frontier as something that was constantly expanding, and there were boundaries to each sphere of interest.

But the idea of the archipelago differs in that it is slightly smaller--the image is more like that of cells floating in a living organism which look like they are touching but which are actually just moving in a reciprocal relation to one another. I have the impression that an expanded version of this might serve as a model for the next world system.

**ASADA:** Even in Europe the process of unification is actually likely to bring about the splintering of nation states into smaller units. First of all it will be easier for small states to take the initiative so that places like Holland and Belgium will become like New York or Washington in the United States. Or in the case of Spain places like the Basque region and Catalonia might well start acting on their own. Moreover, as cities start networking places

like Strasbourg where the EC holds its meetings will increase in importance. Already we're seeing an increase in this kind of activity as these cells are starting to spring into action.

But nonetheless Europe is still a continent. Asia on the other hand is almost all ocean, and promises to be a world center of archipelago activity over the first half of the next century. Of course you can't just look at the bright side and you have to think about what will happen with massive continental states like China. But I think that's all the more reason why archipelago networks are so important.

**ISOZAKI:** I agree. The Mirage City is planned for the waters off of Macao, but the whole of Southeast Asia, no matter how much it might look like solid ground, is mostly soaked in water. Even in China places like Shanghai and Suzhou are all cities of canals. They are practically floating in water. In this sense you really get of literal impression of "archipelagos."

**ASADA:** If you think about it ancient Greece was also an archipelago. Among the islands stretching from Asia Minor to what was called Magna Grecia around Sicily there was all kinds of interchange and it was in this context that civilization arose. Continental culture elaborated it into a great system, but it was inevitably closed off on itself. This would suggest that when the continental--for example an empire or a nation state--collapses, there is a return to the archipelago out of which something new is created through rhizome-like interchange.

**ISOZAKI:** As it is often said, in the middle ages the seas were the units of civilization. In the case of the Japan Sea, the areas surrounding it formed a civilization, just as the Yellow Sea and the South China Sea worked to form civilizations of their own. But once you enter the modern age the focus shifts to the parceling out of land. In the coming century it does seem that the next step will be to move into another archipelago stage.

**ASADA:** To put it like Carl SCHMITT[8] , there is a

struggle between Behemoth and Leviathan, between the land and the sea. Capitalism moves incessantly towards the sea. If you think about it, it started around Venice, moved on to Holland and England, then to America, and finally to Japan. As DELEUZE and GUATTARI would say, this kind of de-territorializing movement destroys continental power and for better or for worse envelops the whole world into a single market. The archipelago model in the century of the seas is a kind of historical inevitability. It's almost too Hegelian.

To be more specific, it seems to me that an expression as banal as "The Venice of the East" might be surprisingly effective in summing up this project. In my presentation at the Anywise conference I quoted John CAGE as saying, "Venice is the most advanced city in the world because they've already thrown away their cars" [laughs]. I think he hit the nail on the head. You have a very small place packed with culture through which you walk or take a boat. I think this is actually the future itself. If the modern North American model was about covering a vast continent with freeways so you could go anywhere, Venice has already transcended it. To bring something like that to Asia at this moment in time is a fascinating proposition.

In relation to this there has been a lot of talk based on an image of the future in which the electronic information network creates a global village so that as long as you are connected to the net you can be in touch even in the most remote place. But I think this is also premised on the North American model. People scattered across a vast space are connected via the net. In fact this is precisely what Marshall McLUHAN was thinking about in Canada, and his contemporary Glen GOULD was playing the piano on a lake shore in Canada--from which he no doubt wished he could make his recordings and send them out directly all over the world. Then there was Arthur C. CLARKE, who wrote everything from 2001: A Space Odyssey to his most recent 3001: The Final Odyssey from his study in Sri Lanka and whose contact with the outside world has been exclusively via electronic communication. This is a new model for now, but as long as it is premised on the idea of vast spaces and a relatively small population it still seems too extensive. If we're talking about a global village, there must be a more intensive,

Asian model. It would be extremely dense--too dense to travel by car--but cars would no longer be necessary since everyone would go by bicycle or by boat, carry mobile terminals with which they could communicate from anywhere over the net and be active on a global scale. It would look like a so-called Asian throng but it would be globally mobile. This strikes me as an interesting model.

Mirages Emerging on the Millennial Horizon

**ISOZAKI:** That perspective is related to whether or not it is possible to rethink the question of utopia. Utopia is a worn out term. Around 1968 people were saying that if modernity was about the search for utopia, it had already found it, so that utopia was dead. This means that if you talk about resuscitating it once more, common sense would tell you you are risking creating a zombie of utopia.

But what we are trying to think about is putting together a situation in a virtual world which might or could arise in reality. This is one aspect of the meaning of "Haishi--Mirage City." It won't be a utopia in the usual sense. But if you really think about it, the etymology of utopia is "nowhere,"--and it seems to me that "nowhere" is precisely what "Mirage City" as a virtual city is all about. This is why I thought it would somehow make sense to go ahead and call it "Another Utopia."

As for the name, I found that whenever I asked people in relation to this project what utopia meant for them they all got flustered and couldn't come up with an answer. For me this was fascinating as a kind of paradox.

**ASADA:** Now that what we used to call "topos" has been nullified by the advent of all these new media we find ourselves in a situation of "atopos"--a lack of place--or "atopy" if you like. Geographical distance ceases to have any meaning on the net. You don't know who is doing what where. But as a result you start getting allergic reactions to places you never thought you had anything to do with--like when a computer virus destroys your data. So the situation we have today is less like a splendid utopia than a kind of atopia or atopy accompanying the disappearance of place. Moreover, the room where your terminal sits is likely to be situated in a corner of a city laid to waste--a kind of dystopia. I think this kind of fusion of atopia and dystopia is part of today's reality.

So when we think about how to imagine a utopia as an alternative to this we shouldn't just indulge ourselves in the fantasy of a place apart from these restraints, an optimal possible world which exists nowhere. On the contrary, Samuel BUTLER [9] has written about inverting "nowhere" to yield "Erewhon"--but for DELEUZE it should be read as "now here"--as a virtual image that accompanies an actual one. So we shouldn't just be coming up with fantastic fictional cities inside the computer, but rather with something that has a measure of reality--or, put negatively, something which reeks of the actual--but which, when turned inside out, yields a virtual image which might be completely different. If this then overlaps with the actual image the results will be all the more interesting. This is nothing like the simple contrived visions of utopias of the past. It's a vision which comes out of asking how we might go about amplifying actual images with virtual ones. This is precisely what ought to emerge, like the "mirage" in "Mirage City" on the horizon of the century's, or the millennium's, end.

**ISOZAKI:** In relation to utopia, Japanese have always been fascinated by the idea of the Pure Land. In general terms, the Buddhist Pure Land or the Christian Paradise has tended to be understood in conjunction with the modern notion of utopia. But the utopia we're talking about now is completely different from the concept of a promised land. Rather its logic is better described as virtual.

But you still have the problem of whether or not it will be realized in actual material terms. It is the fate of architecture to become old the moment it is completed.

**ASADA:** Utopias in particular have a tendency to turn immediately into dystopias [laughs].

**ISOZAKI:** That's the destiny of all utopias. That's why I believe that rather than striving for perfection in the form of a Pure Land or a Paradise, we ought to be thinking about "another utopia" which might help to confront reality in a different way.

**ASADA:** But the image of the Pure Land is really powerful. It makes you think of all those people who tried to get to Potalaka [10] [laughs].

**ISOZAKI:** That's a very important concept historically. All Japanese rock gardens are modeled after the three islands of Potalaka. It's a utopia of islands floating in the sea. So of course I have no problem with a link between "Mirage City" and Potalaka [laughs]!

**ASADA:** I look forward to that and all the other stimulating developments that "Mirage City" holds in store for us as it flickers from one image to another.

March 31, 1997
At Arata Isozaki and Associates in Tokyo

**ISOZAKI Arata:** Born in 1931. Architect. Since the founding of Arata Isozaki and Associates in 1963 he has produced many works abroad, including the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), and the Sports Hall for the Barcelona Olympics. He has written a number of books, including The work of ISOZAKI Arata [ISOZAKI Arata no shigoto] (Shokokusha Publishers).

**ASADA Akira:** Born in 1957. Associate professor at Kyoto University. He specializes in economics and the history of social thought. His writings include Structure and Power [Kozo to chikara] (Keisoshobo Publishers) and 'The End of History' and the World at Century's End ['Rekishi no owari' to seikimatsu no sekai] (Shogakkan Publishers).

"The Mirage City: Another Utopia" was held in Gallery A at ICC from April 19 to July 13, 1997.

[1] The fifth of the "Any" Conferences, a series of international symposia on architectural themes which began with the 1991 Anyone Conference sponsored by the J. Paul Getty Foundation in Los Angeles and will be held every year in a different city until 2001.
[2] This was the sixth such exhibition, held from September 15 to November 17, 1996 in the Central Pavilion under the theme of "Sensing the Future--The Architect as Seismograph." Thirty-nine leading architects participated including the Japanese architects ANDO Tadao, ISOZAKI Arata, and ITO Toyo.
[3] Georges-Eugène HAUSSEMANN (1809-91). French politician who worked under NAPOLEON III to implement a large scale modernization of Paris, including repairs to the street network, construction of churches, theaters, parks, bridges, and railroad stations, expansion of sewage and water systems, gas lighting, and an extension of the city limits through mergers with surrounding suburbs. His highhanded tactics, however, earned him a great deal of criticism. The appearance of Paris today is largely a result of his efforts.
[4] The capital of Brazil. An artificial city on a mountain plateau. The capital was moved here from Rio de Janeiro in an attempt to develop the interior. The design was based on L. COSTA's winning entry to a competition in 1952. The city is laid out in the shape of an airplane, with the political, economic, and cultural center forming the fuselage and the residential areas filling in the wings. The capital was moved in 1960.
[5] The capital of the Indian State of Punjab. The basic plan was formulated by Le CORBUSIER in 1951 at the request of then Prime Minister NEHRU. The city is characterized by its road network functionally divided into seven stages along a grid pattern that is said to resemble the human body. The units of the grid are called centers, from which through traffic is excluded in order to create a livable environment.
[6] Metabolism was an architectural movement which emerged beginning with the World Design Conference held in Tokyo in 1960. It involved figures such as OTAKA Masato, KIKUTAKE Kiyonori, KUROKAWA Kisho, and MAKI Fumihiko. The movement represented an attempt to use biological analogies to conceive of the dynamic processes which transform cities and architecture.
 "Life in the City of the Future," a group exhibition held by the Metabolists in the Fall of 1962 at the Seibu Department Store in Ikebukuro, Tokyo. In addition to the members of metabolism, TAKAYAMA Eika, TANGE Kenzo, OTANI Yukio, and ISOZAKI Arata also took part.
[7] This phrase is taken from title of a book by former Prime Minister TANAKA Kakuei which provided the impetus for a major development boom all over Japan. It proposed a new centralized administration and a greater utilization of private developers for redevelopment projects in major urban centers. Ultimately, however, combined with the first oil shock of 1973, it brought about an era of skyrocketing inflation.
[8] Carl SCHMITT (1888-1995). German politician and legal scholar. His concept of allies and enemies was part of a theory of the absolutist state which provided the Nazis with a theoretical groundwork, but contains insights important even today. In his work Land and Sea, he wrote that "World history is the history of a struggle between the nations of land and sea,"--"The history of a struggle between the sea monster Leviathan and Behemoth, the wild beast of the land."
[9] Samuel BUTLER (1835-1902). British writer and philosopher. He studied at Cambridge but, reluctant to join the clergy, emigrated to New Zealand and became a successful stock farmer. In 1864 he returned to England and wrote the satirical novel Erewhon (1872) while he studied painting. "Erewhon" was the name of a fictional country based on an anagram of "nowhere," the manners, customs, and systems of which Butler used to carry out a trenchant satirization of Victorian society.
[10] The mountain on the southern coast of India where the Amida Boddhisatva was said to reside. In the middle ages many people tried to reach Potalaka alone in small boats from the waters off of Kumano and Ashizuri Cape.