

REM KOOLHAAS 2002 ESSAY JUNKSPACE

Page 1. *Junkspace*. Rem Koolhaas. October, Vol. , *Obsolescence*. (Spring,), pp. Stable URL.

This will be the topic of the next post. Each element performs its task in negotiated isolation. Of course, it depends a bit on how theory is understood. Sections undergo an Alzheimer's-like deterioration as others are upgraded. Somewhere, workers sink on their knees to repair faded sections, as if in a prayer, or half-disappear in ceiling voids to negotiate elusive malfunctions, as if in confession. Its financing is a deliberate haze, clouding opaque deals, dubious tax breaks, unusual incentives, exemptions, tenuous legalities, transferred air rights, joined properties, special zoning districts, public-private complicities. Outside, in the real world, the "art planner" spreads Junkspace's fundamental incoherence by assigning defunct Junkspace mythologies to residual surfaces and plotting three-dimensional works in leftover emptiness. The absolute horizontal has been abandoned. Junkspace seems an aberration, but it is the essence, the main thing I wish I was as entertaining as Rem. In this war, graphic designers are the great turncoats: Where once signage promised to deliver you to where you wanted to be, it now obfuscates and entangles you in a thicket of cuteness that forces you past unwanted detours, turns you back when you're lost. A single shopping center is now the work of generations of space planners, repairmen, and fixers, like in the Middle Ages; air-conditioning sustains our cathedrals. It does not signify beauty, but guilt. It is flamboyant yet unmemorable, like a screen saver; Seemingly at the opposite end of Junkspace, the golf course is, in fact, its conceptual double: empty, serene, free of commercial debris. Scouting for authenticity, his or her touch seals the fate of what was real, taps it for incorporation in Junkspace. Valley cultures were thought to be the most resistant to Junkspace: at GVZ you can still see a universe of rules, order, hierarchy, neatness, coordination, poised moments before its implosion, but at ZHR huge "timepieces" hover in front of interior waterfalls as in his essay *Regional Junk*. But model itself is a proliferating concept. Regurgitation is the new creativity; instead of creation, we honor, cherish, and embrace manipulation. Anything stretched-limousines, body parts, planes turns into Junkspace, its original concept abused. Neon signifies both the old and the new; interiors refer to the Stone and Space Age at the same time. Junkspace is best enjoyed in a state of post-revolutionary gawking. Impure, tortured, and complex, they exist only because they were never consciously plotted. Masterpiece is no longer an inexplicable fluke, a roll of the dice, but a consistent typology: its mission to intimidate, most of its exterior surfaces bent, huge percentages of its square footage dysfunctional, its centrifugal components barely held together by the pull of the atrium, dreading the imminent arrival of forensic accounting. Laughable emptiness infuses the respectful distance or tentative embrace that architects maintain in the presence of the past, authentic or not. Actually, there is none, even not in his own writings. Themes cast a pall of arrested development over interiors as big as the Pantheon, spawning stillbirths in every corner. The subject is stripped of privacy in return for access to a credit nirvana. Just as Junkspace is unstable, its actual ownership is forever being passed on in parallel disloyalty. DFW is composed of three elements only, repeated ad infinitum, nothing else: one kind of beam, one kind of brick, one kind of tile, all coated in the same color—is it teal? The rest of his articles is providing examples over examples, consequences, historical traces that could be read as precursors. We do not leave pyramids. So far, I did not see any theory in architecture. But formlessness is still form, the formless also a typology.