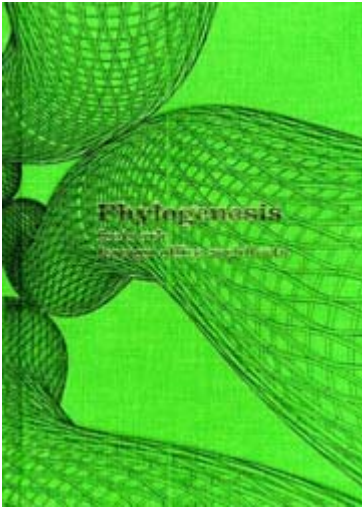


## Publications About

### **Phylogenesis: Foa's Ark / Foreign Office Architects**

by Sanford Kwinter, Mark Wigley, Detlef Mertins, Jeffrey Kipnis  
Actar, 2004



*Phylogenesis*—wait, we'll explain the title soon—is structured as a reflection on the work that Foreign Office Architects (FOA) has produced during its first 10 years of practice. With its genesis as a primarily speculative and academic endeavor, FOA has recently expended much energy in the development of a technical arsenal for implementing real projects. Such explorations have been undertaken through a series of competitions, speculative commissions, and lately some real projects, some of them already completed, others still under construction. The outcome of these years is seen not just as a series of experiments, defined by the specific conditions of a project, but as a consistent reservoir of architectural species to be proliferate, mutated, and evolved in the near future. With the spirit of a scientific classification, the genesis of the projects is here identified as the evolution of a series of "phylums," actualized--and simultaneously virtualized--in their application to the specific conditions where the projects take place. *Phylogenesis* also includes an FOA-curated compilation of previously published texts from several critics who analyze "external" topics that relate to different aspects of the firm's discourse.

Published in collaboration with the Institute of Contemporary Arts on the occasion of the exhibition "Foreign Office Architects: breeding architecture, London, 29 November 2003-29 February 2004

### **Contents**

*Phylogenesis: foa's ark*  
Alejandro Zaera-Polo, Farshid Moussavi

*Who's afraid of formalism?*  
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*Local knowledge*  
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*On the wild side*  
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**The Yokohama Projects / Foreign Office Architects**  
edited by Tomoko Sakamoto, Alberto Ferre, Michael Kubo  
and Alejandro Zaera-Polo  
Actar, Barcelona, Spain, 2002

An interesting building usually has an equally interesting tale to tell, an epic embedded in the organization of the massive, complex amount of matter used to create the structure. This book recounts the story of the Yokohama Project, an inventive, undulating, grass-covered ferry terminal that was never meant to be built. Asked to produce some material for an architectural journal, London-based architects Farshid Moussavi and Alejandro Zaera-Polo of FOA (Foreign Office Architects) set themselves a program of entering three competitions, through which to explore design ideas they had become interested in. When they actually won the second competition, for the Yokohama International Port Terminal, in Yokohama, Japan, their plans suddenly changed. The Yokohama Project presents a textual and visual replica of the way their winning building was developed, over eight years, by FOA and a huge team of engineers and researchers in Tokyo and Yokohama. Unlike the typical architectural book, this one offers no critical texts and no theoretical analyses of the structure; instead, it aims to rediscover the linearity of the building's creation. The reader is thus moved linearly through the following chapters: Design Evolution, Building Permits, Structure, Services, Finishes, Circulation, and Final Documents. Peppared throughout with detailed plans, elevations, diagrams, and sketches, as well as candid snapshots of the design team at work (sometimes asleep at and under their desks!), The Yokohama Project is not only an homage to a building but to the many people who worked on making it real.



Foreign Office Architects is a pioneering architectural practice founded in London in 1992. It has since expanded to include an office in Japan. The principal partners are Farshid Moussavi and Alejandro Zaera Polo, both of whom are graduates of Harvard University's Masters in Architecture program and former employees of Rem Koolhaas's OMA (Office for Metropolitan Architecture). Current projects include a publishing headquarters in Paju City, Korea, and a park and open-air auditorium in Barcelona, Spain. Completed projects include New Belgo restaurant and Bermondsey Antiques Market in London. This past year, FOA were among the short-listed winners for the competition to design Porto Antico in Genova, Italy.

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### **2G N.16**

#### **Foreign Office Architects**

text: Toyo Ito, Jeffrey Kipnis, Ciro Najle



Farshid Moussavi and Alejandro Zaera-Polo established in 1993 Foreign Office Architects(FOA) in Rotterdam. The same year they are invited to run a unit at the Architectural Association in London. They were awarded the first prize in the international competition for the Yokohama Port Terminal. This project was their first commission and has been published in various journals. Since then they have participated in many other competitions (Cathedral in Seoul, Waterfront in Tenerife, ...), in smaller constructions (restaurants in New York and London for Belgo, S.L.), and in projects with a strong theoretical approach (Cinema complex in Teheran, Virtual House).

This number presents the oeuvre of FOA in a publication with abundant graphic and photographic documentation of sixteen works and projects, including the winning competition entry for the Yokohama International Port Terminal, currently under construction, introduced by Toyo Ito. The Nexus section includes a text by the architects titled FOA Code Remix 2000.

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Municipal Police Headquarters, Villajoyosa. 2000  
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Bluemoon, Groningen. 2000  
Future Homes Exhibition, Malmö. 1999-2001

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FOA Code Remix 2000.

*Text by FOA*

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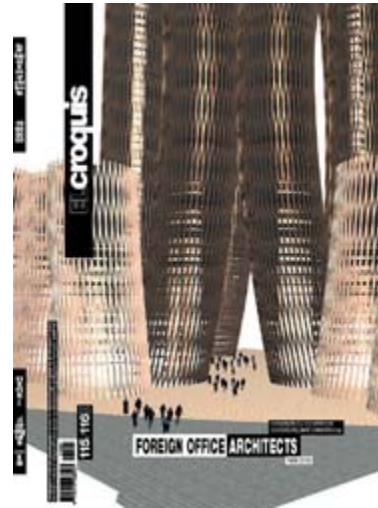
## **El Croquis 115-117**

### **Foreign Office Architects 1996-2003**

editors: Fernando Márquez Cecilla and Richard Levene

El Croquis Editorial, Madrid, Spain, 2003

For almost a decade, the work of Foreign Office Architects has been constantly in the minds and discussions of their colleagues. Without their winning proposal for the Yokohama Boat Station and everything it has meant —the possibility of taking on this type of commission at such an early age, the expectation of being able to remove the dichotomy between theoretical models and the constructed reality, and the appearance of a generation that tackled problems simply in a different way, the landscape of our discipline would have been much less rich and diverse.



From the outside, adopting a distanced, critical posture, the ambitiousness and challenge to convention implied in the Yokohama proposal aroused equally balanced attitudes of optimism and doubts about whether its development would really be able to preserve the qualities and consistency of the initial project; even about the ability of the office to impel the whole process and convert it into totally different productive culture. The lack of comparable projects in ambition and interest produced by FOA in the last few years and the almost unrepeatable singularity of its spatial organisation led some to suggest that Alejandro Zaera and Farshid Moussavi might be part of the line of architects, so special and identifiable in the history of our discipline, who produce exceptional one-off projects. But also seen from the outside, after years of waiting, this whole cloud of expectations and unknowns has been cleared by the breathtaking process of the building's design and construction process. The perception of FOA as an efficient, pragmatic office that is capable of undertaking immensely complex projects and avoiding any possible contingency, has gained strength against the initial impressions.

Our long, intense interview with the FOA founders, an almost instantaneous plunge into their London office, sufficed to discover that all of the above had been fragmentary, blurred interpretations of their work. The office has scarcely changed either physically or in its operative processes, despite the fact that they have been under the pressure of a similar project and a subsequent leap in projection that has meant wild agendas, invitations to restricted competitions, measures of their strength against studios with totally different orientations and scales, and numerous academic offers and responsibilities. Even since the Japanese adventure, FOA is still located in a two-storey building in the London suburb of Pimlico where Farshid and Alejandro began to work after returning from Rotterdam. Any of their aides can answer the phone (there are no secretaries in the office) and their success is based on total involvement: the inexhaustible energy and working capacity of their aides. Almost in response to the provocation of their web site, which advertises its need for slaves to work at FOA in a tone half-way between sarcasm and dissuasion, their aides refer scornfully to the lack of rest, weekends or holidays while at the same time reaffirming their commitment to the office. In other words, FOA uses different means to reproduce the values of a small-scale, virtually craftsman's studio, based on the technological and cultural preparation of its members, and the rigour or economy of means, transplanted to an ambitious professional practice that can operate anywhere in the world.

The answers by both members of the team, who went to great lengths to understand and respond fully to each question, seemed to reveal that FOA is driven by two powerful forces. One is a massive ambition with a deep commitment and ethical content (certainly not either trivial or opportunistic). The other is their exoticism— their ability to adopt, without the slightest divergence from their professional commitment, a posture of intrusion into any of the environments where they happen to work. They are exotic when they carry out incursions into the field of theory or lecturing, exotic when they tackle commissions with an exclusively professional bias, and also exotic in the field of experimentation. The founders of FOA turn their limitations and abilities, what they really know how to do, into a vehicle for the definition of the scope of their work in each of these fields.

During the interview, their arguments sometimes became complicated when they tried to formulate answers while thinking at the same time, and they continuously returned to their experience at AA, their delight at being regarded as idealists and their work with the tools of our discipline. They constantly projected the image of people with a desire to exploit every possible field of operation, striving to use every possible medium or register. The work of FOA over the years has consisted of a disproportionate struggle with reality, an attempt to return to our discipline everything that has been robbed by the devastating power of the global market and the necessary adaptation of our profession to an increasingly hostile environment. In other words, a serious, deliberate effort to make our discipline mutate into a practice which, on the basis of a modern, un-nostalgic recovery of its most powerful tools including work with geometry and form, technique and precision, is capable of resituating the architect and his work in the central role of defining our artificial environment.

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## **WORKS AND PROJECTS**

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Virtual House

Yokohama International Port Terminal

Municipal Police Headquarters, Villajoyosa

Southeast Coastal Park and Auditoriums, Barcelona

Zona Franca Office Park, Barcelona

The Bundle Tower [First Proposal for the WTC]

BBC White City [Music Centre and Offices]

