

The Museum of Modern Art

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GAETANO PESCE: PROJECT FOR A SKYSCRAPER

"We are no longer satisfied by this space. The system devised by last century's construction engineers is no longer able to stimulate our creativity. Almost every architect has savagely obeyed the system. Today however it has nothing left to offer us."--Gaetano Pesce

An "imaginary project for a skyscraper" by the noted Italian architect-designer and theoretician Gaetano Pesce is now on view in the second-floor Goodwin Galleries of the Museum of Modern Art through April 10.

Pesce, believing that it is now necessary for architects to move beyond traditional construction methods and the architectural theory and practice they have engendered in the past half-century or so, employs polyurethane foam for the five hanging panels in the exhibition which he uses to propose the possibility of a polyurethane "skyscraper to put in place of the Seagram building A macrostructure, but one considered as a vehicle of diversity and incoherence. A skyscraper formed by overlapping organic masses, to contrast with its surroundings (life is contrast, opposed views, difference; where there is uniformity of views, death rules)." Pesce adjures us to imagine "a foam that can have great volume"

as he suggests that "spaces can be carved out of the inside of the foam mass for a period of 4-5 days, then it hardens so that other volumes of foam can be added. These in turn can be carved out for the same period of time and then the foam hardens so that more can be added . . . etc." Pesce's effort is at once theoretical and polemical. His aim is not so much to articulate a new architectural language, a new "party line" as it were, but rather to look for an idiosyncratic mode of expression and practice that would join the multiplicity of languages and codes that comprise a social/aesthetic plurality. In this sense, Pesce's work now on view at the Museum exists as a manifesto against what he believes to be the hegemony of the International Style.

"It is a fact," Pesce observes, "that we can no longer work within the space we have used up to now. With it our only relationship is one of violence, as is characteristic of things pushed to their limits. The system proposed for us by the engineers of the last century no longer affords us the idea of need and freedom that we have today. It cannot answer the need for identity that every country declares today, nor the desire to participate that everyone has."

"Architecture is the expression of a detailed reality. A means of achieving diversity. In this way it is still of help to us. In another way it is construction. Architecture today means to express oneself--incoherently, to be contradictory, respond to a plurality of characteristics, contrasting, opposed . . . diverse . . ."

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Gaetano Pesce was born in 1939 and studied at Venice's School of Architecture Institute of Industrial Design. He was a founder of Gruppo N in 1959. Pesce's work evidences his interest in the connections between architecture and the other arts--music, theatre, and film. Since 1965 he has been particularly concerned with issues of cultural, political, and geographical difference and autonomy. His work has been seen in many countries including the United States, France (at the Musee des Arts Decoratifs and the Centre Georges Pompidou), England (at the Victoria and Albert Museum), Japan, and Germany. Pesce's furniture is in the Design Collection of The Museum of Modern Art. Since 1975 he has conducted an atelier at the Institute of Architecture and Urban Studies of Strasbourg.

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