

# TO BEYOND OR NOT TO BE

## 建筑存在的理由



Q: *Outlook* A: Ole Bouman

### Only A Boundless Curiosity Can Save Architecture

#### Can you talk about the history of *Archis*? It was founded in 1929?

For 86 years now, *Volume* magazine and its predecessors have been investigating the reason for architecture - not just presenting what happened in the built environment, not just presenting how things were made, not just creating exposure to the people who did it. Rather than asking 'what', 'how' and 'by whom', The R.K. Bouwblad, Goed Wonen, Tijdschrift voor architectuur en beeldende kunsten, Wonen TAVBK and finally *Archis*, ask the ultimate question to the raison d'être of architecture as a medium of culture - *Why?* All these titles didn't satisfy themselves with updating their constituency with the latest professional news. Rather, they explored the cultural motives within the architectural dimension of society.

In the last ten years, under another title and completely internationalized, this tradition has been continued by *Volume*. In the wake of a massive disruption of architecture due to globalization, digitization, neo-liberalism and the introduction of technologies interfering with the essential features of the architectural discipline, *Volume* went beyond the question of 'why' per se, and began to explore how architecture could find new territories beyond itself. An agenda for a new self-confidence of the oldest human endeavor: to create a place on earth.

#### You'd been working as the editor-in-chief of *Archis* magazine for ten years (1996-2004) before the magazine was changed to *Volume*. Why it was changed? And why you took this name?

The change in 2005 has a long story, but the essence is that as editorial team we realized that our mission (and hence our unique market niche position) resided in the role of architecture explorer. Noticing undeniably market forces, in which architecture criticism became torn between a mainstream focusing on trade journalism and an avant-garde still fond of architecture as an intellectual pursuit, we radically chose for the latter. We lost readers expecting information from us, we gained readers in search of ideas. So we wanted to explicit make clear that this magazine was made for them. And to mark that clarity, we chose a new name *Volume*. New, but upholding a proud tradition of 75 years. *Volume*, because this name embodies what we saw as essence of architecture: to be a physical reality and to be a cultural energy at the same time.

To emphasize this vision, we coined a motto that has been upheld ever since: *To Beyond or Not to Be*. It's the wording of a quest for a raison d'être, that can be found on the spine of every issue of the magazine since its beginning. It was meant to convince people that ours was not just one of the many missions for architecture. It's the one that pre-empt's survival. Any architecture that cannot prove how

it makes sense or is relevant is a dying architecture; a narcissistic architecture that recycles its heroes, sticks to its routines, ignores the course of history, approaches the abyss of ridicule and eventually oblivion.

In 2005, we intuited this decay was about to manifest itself, but it lacked analysis. One of the biggest crises in the history of architecture was about to begin, but nobody seemed to care. The credit crunch. The ubiquity of the smart phone. The internet of things. 3D printing, you name it. We believed our magazine could offer a guide to help architecture to understand all these things and to provide a survival kit to cope with it. To beyond or not to be, is a about a hint of redemption and an imperative of perseverance at once. *Volume's* claim is that only a boundless curiosity can save architecture.

#### Volume is composed by three important organizations – Archis, AMO and C-Lab. What are the functions of the three?

As editor of *Archis*, facing existential questions and believing that curiosity could be our only way out, I turned to two people I consider as among the most explorative and inquisitive people in the last half a century of architecture: Rem Koolhaas and Mark Wigley. Koolhaas, whose hallmark sense of urgency had been institutionalized as AMO within the OMA portfolio for a few years, didn't hesitate at all to join in to a project carrying on the best of 75 years of architectural thinking. Wigley, about to begin his deanship at Columbia University's Graduate School of Design, Planning and Preservation, looking for a global platform to test and show ideas in an academic environment that he revamped as entirely global. What C-lab could do within the school, could Volume do outside. So, one could say, partnering with Rem and Mark was about creating a braintrust. But of course, they also represented institutions somewhere active in the chain of architecture. They complemented each other, the school preparing for architecture, the office producing architecture and the magazine disseminating architecture. We all believed that an editorial agenda across those components, could cater all three in developing content, education and design ideas.

#### Koolhaas is frequently mentioned when talking about *Volume*. Can you talk about how he is involved in the operation of the magazine?

He is not involved in the operation. That's always been done by *Archis*. But he has endorsed the *Volume* project from the beginning in its efforts to show how architecture can go beyond itself. First, by feeling responsible for a great tradition in peril. Then, by writing some essays. Then, by engaging AMO in some crucial special issues, like the two *AI Manakhs* on the urbanization of the Gulf. In a way, one can say, *Volume* benefited a few times from the adventure Rem Koolhaas makes of his life.

### Our Reader's Base is Usually Our Writer's Base

#### It is very interesting that each of your themes is trying to analyze architecture in terms of society and culture. How did you choose these themes?

I think basically, it's a matter of intuition. What is going on in society, immediate, or latent, and how does it affect architecture as a medium of culture, as an art, as a discipline, as a social service. Every single issue, this approach revealed a power of architecture that has hardly been celebrated before, but for us would indicate its quintessential potential.

Between 2001 and 2005 we transformed those topics even into personalities themselves, by stating "*Archis* is Paranoia", or "*Archis* is Africa", or "*Archis* is an Island". We covered issues like terrorism, power and debt crisis. We also covered an "ubiquitous China", presenting China no longer as an emerging country, but as a way of life, a global phenomenon. And of course, we always came back to the analysis of the architectural dimension of those issues.

#### What is going on after setting the theme? We can see many analytical charts and site photos when looking at the magazine.

The way of working has changed tremendously over the years. When I began there were not even desk top computers. Now we can create entire issues on WeChat and WhatsApp, by way of speaking. As a consequence, the core team has become smaller, but the contributing circle around it much bigger. One could say that since Volume started, the editorial board has become global.

Most themes are still set at the Amsterdam office, although regularly others submit ideas for it in the editorial spirit we like. Very often the themes are developed in association with other organizations, and they help to provide a writer's base for it, making sure we collect very diverse voices. In working with these authors, a strong emphasis is put on the quality of visuals, both info graphics and photography. Already in the 90s, *Archis* gave up on relying on official project documentation to make our case, as most of the time this is completely controlled by designers. To develop an independent critical mind, you cannot rely on traditional architecture photography as it tends to perpetuate the myth of the designer's hero that has turned out very detrimental to architecture. Instead, the photography in *Archis* and *Volume* has become much more "situational" and contextual.

A final observation to answer your question is about the role of our subscribers. As *Volume* became a magazine for free thinkers, for most of them it is not just a medium to be informed by. It also provides a platform to share things and to find like-minded people. As such, *Volume's* writer's base is not so different from its reader's base.

#### One of the targets of its research on cities and spaces is to offer suggestions to the governments and NGOs. Do you have any successful cases?

This is a tricky question. Yes, we do believe that *Archis*, *Volume* and even the NAI has provided concepts that helped solve big issues. For the NAI I would find it easier to claim so, as it was its deliberate policy to contribute to real solutions. It ran a program called "Architecture of Consequence" which explicitly aimed to rewrite the script of architecture and connect the discipline to the biggest issues of our time, such as climate, food quality, water management, health care and social harmony.

For Volume it would be harder to make this claim. Asking why in life does not always lead to better solutions. Asking why can be ignored, sidelined, even silenced. Asking why is revealing inconvenient truths. But I'm quite sure that 100 issues of *Archis* and *Volume* are full of ideas about a better society and sometimes even just in the waiting room for being discovered once again. There is guidance to be found,

but no guarantees.

#### There seems no advertisement in the magazine? Where does the money come from?

I will tell you a story about it. At the end of the year 2000, *Archis* was in deep trouble. The publisher decided to kick it out of its magazine portfolio as it never made more than 5% profit. The owner, the national institute of architecture (NAI), was about to decide to terminate the magazine as to avoid any economical risk. So as the editor I had to find new partners. For that, I decided to ask advise from McKinsey, who happened to run a pro bono program for cultural initiatives. Well, McKinsey applied all the analytical matrixes and parameters they could think of, to determine the actual product that we were offering the market. Were we a trade journal, offering professional information? Were we a special interest magazine to cater a specific group on a clearly delineated topic? Were we a niche title to identify with as an act of social distinction? Were we a human-interest magazine with lots of gossip and feature portraits? None of the above.

McKinsey advised us to choose one of these formulas to have a chance to survive. So, in the spirit of timeless architecture, we picked another alternative: to make a magazine asking the question "why". Suggesting that people leave their secure market position to enter uncharted territories is not exactly the soundest of business models. However, by addressing the global community of architecture free thinkers (or the institutions and libraries which believe they should serve them), all together there has been just enough critical mass for the magazine to continue. For sure they can be called ambassadors of the idea that architecture can still create value, rather than just add some to the standardized building process.

#### We heard about that you and your family plan to move to Shenzhen for a while, and you've also started learning Chinese. We wonder about what led you to take part in the development of Chinese architecture and cities? And how you would expect to participate in the environment of China, a country that is so different from the West?

This year I began my job as founding director of a new Design Museum in Shenzhen. Its mandate goes beyond architecture only. It encompasses the entire field of design, including design thinking. One key objective of this project is to explore, show and discuss how design creativity can be stimulated across culture and economy and which conditions need to be set to facilitate this. For a job like that, building an institution, frequent visits are not enough. I need to live in Shenzhen to do my work properly. But also to understand better the drive behind this - the drive to materialize a grand social purpose of social renewal on a magnitude scale.

Of course there are lots of differences between China and the West, but as a cultural historian, I can say that this drive can be found anywhere in some historical episodes. It's the drive that defines ages of prosperity, as the lack of this drive defines eras of decay. For me it's a big step of course, but in some way it's a sort of home coming. To contribute to an effort to galvanize the will for quality in life.



01. Ole Bouman published *The Invisible in Architecture* in 1994 with the purpose to change the way people look at architecture. His later practices in various ares are greatly influenced by this way of thinking, from editor-in-chief of *Volume* to director of Netherlands Architecture Institute, to creative director of Urbanism/Architecture Bi-City Biennale of Shenzhen and Hong Kong. 02. The new Design Museum in Shenzhen where Ole Bouman is appointed as director. To be open in 2017.



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## 建筑存在的理由



Q：《新视线》 A：Ole Bouman

### 只有好奇心才能拯救建筑

先讲下《Volume》杂志的历史吧，维基百科说它的前身可追溯到1929年？

是的，86年来，《Volume》杂志和它的前辈们一直在研究建筑存在的理由——不仅仅报道建筑界发生的事件或是事件发生的过程、参与者。它们不去提问what（发生了什么）、how（怎么发生的）或者by whom（谁参与）这样的问题，而是关注建筑作为一种文化媒介而存在的理由——Why（为什么）。从《R.K. Bouwblad》《Goed Wonen》《Tijdschrift voor architectuur en beeldende kunsten》《Wonen TA/ BK》，再到《Archis》（都是《Volume》杂志各个历史阶段的前身），它们从不满足于追赶业内新闻，而是试图从建筑的角度去探索社会发展的文化动机。

在过去的10年中，易名后的《Volume》实现了完全的国际化。随着全球化、数字化、新自由主义对建筑的瓦解以及新技术对建筑学基本特征的影响，《Volume》逐渐超越了“为什么”这个问题本身，开始探索建筑如何能够找到自身之外的新领域。

改版做《Volume》时，你已经做了近10年（1996-2004）《Archis》杂志的编辑，是什么原因促使改版？杂志的名字有什么来头吗？  
2005年的改版说来话长，关键就是我们的编辑团队意识到我们的使命（以及我们独特的市场定位）让我们慢慢成为建筑探索者的角色。市场的力量不可小视，建筑批评也在市场的作用下分裂为两股流派，一种关注商业新闻的主流内容，另一种则坚守建筑的学术追求，保持前卫的视角。我们完全选择了后者。于是，我们失去了那些想看信息的读者，而收获了要读思想的读者。所以我们希望能向后一种读者重申，这本杂志就是为他们而做的。而且，为了将这个想法表达清楚，我们选择了一个新的名字——“Volume”。这个名字体现了我们对建筑本质的理解：建筑是客观存在的现实，同时也是一种文化能量。

为了强调这一愿景，我们还立下了一句座右铭：超越，或者毁灭（To Beyond or Not to Be）。这是寻求存在之意义的另一种说法，你可以在每一期杂志的书脊上找到这句话。这是为了让人们相信，我们的使命不仅仅局限于建筑本身，而是为建筑抢占生存的先机。**一座建筑，如果**

**不能证明自己的意义或者与周围环境的关联，那它就是一座垂死的建筑，一座自恋的建筑，一座沉迷于过去、例行公事、忽视历史发展规律的建筑，一座荒谬并最终将被遗忘的建筑。**

同时在2005年，直觉告诉我们这种衰变将现端倪，但缺乏分析和证据。建筑史上最大的危机即将到来，但似乎没有人在意。信贷紧缩、智能手机的普及、互联网、3D打印，凡是你能说的出的都在对建筑造成影响。我们相信这本杂志可以为建筑的发展提供一个指南，让人们了解这些事物并学会如何应对。要超越，还是毁灭，这是一种等待拯救的暗示，也是为了号召人们从即刻开始用坚持不懈的精神面对危机。《Volume》相信，只有无限的好奇心才能够拯救建筑。

《Volume》由三个很重要的机构——Archis基金会，AMO（库哈斯创立的建筑研究机构），C-Lab（哥伦比亚大学建筑传播实验室）共同创建，三个机构分别是如何发挥作用的？  
作为《Archis》的编辑，在面对有关存在的问题、并相信好奇心可能是唯一的出路时，我转向了在我看来过去50年中建筑界最具探险精神和好奇心的两个人：雷姆·库哈斯（Rem Koolhaas）和马克·威格利（Mark Wigley）。多年以来，库哈斯的忧患意识已经成为其研究机构AMO的精神，所以他毫不犹豫地加入到这个项目中来；威格利当时正要去哥伦比亚大学建筑规划和保护研究生院担任院长的职务，他同时也在寻找一个全球性的平台来测试和展示学术性的建筑思想，所以C-Lab可以在学校里做事，《Volume》在校外做，双管齐下。因而可以说，与库哈斯和威格利合作就是要建立一个智囊团。这是一种相辅相成的关系，学校为建筑提供人才和理论储备，事务所打造建筑，而杂志则负责传播建筑。我们都认为将学校、事务所和杂志通过编辑的力量串联起来，能够满足这三者开发内容、发展教育和设计思想的需要。

人们提到《Volume》常常提到库哈斯，可否谈下他是如何参与杂志运作的？  
他不参与杂志的运营。运营的工作一直都由Archis基金会完成。但他从一开始就认可《Volume》在展示建筑可以超越自身的这一理念中所做出的努力。首先，他对这本危机中的老牌杂志体现出了自己的责任心；其次，他为《Volume》写过一些文章；再次，他带领的AMO参与了几期重要的特刊，比如有两期主题为“AI Manakh”的专题，讲的是海湾地区的城市化。总之，可以说库哈斯对《Volume》的帮助很大。

### 我们的读者常成为我们的作者

我觉得最有特色的是你们每期的选题，这些选题是怎么确定的？  
我觉得基本上是凭借直觉。社会上都有什么事发生？有些是即将发生的，有些是可能要发生的。对于作为文化媒介、艺术、学科和社会服务的建筑来说，这些正在或即将发生的事情又会对它产生什么样的影响？通过这样的视角，每一期《Volume》都希望揭示建筑某种鲜有人知的力量，但对我们来说，这正表明它有着非常大的潜力。

2001年至2005年间，我们用了一些更具有人格色彩的话题，比如“Archis是偏执狂”，或者“Archis是非洲”，又或者“Archis是一个岛”。内容涵盖恐怖主义、能源和债务危机等问题。有一期我们的选题是“条条大路通中国”，不再将中国作为一个新兴的国家，而是作为一种生活方式、一个全球性的现象来解读。当然，最终我们还是会从建筑的纬度去分析这些问题。

选题确定之后如何展开工作？翻开杂志可以看到很多信息图表、实地考察的图片，很精彩。  
这些年杂志的工作方式发生了很大的改变。我刚干编辑时甚至还没有台式电脑。而现在，我们可以通过微信或WhatsApp就做出整本杂志。结果就是，核心团队变得越来越小，而我们的作者范围却越来越大。可以说自改版为《Volume》后，我们的编辑部越来越国际化。

我们的大部分选题都是在阿姆斯特丹的办公室决策的。之后，我们经常就某一选题跟某个机构展开合作，他们会举荐优秀的撰稿人，这也让我们能接触到更多不同的声音。作者定下之后，我们开始商定视觉的呈现，这也是我们的重点，包括摄影及信息图表。早在1990年代，《Archis》就放弃了在报道中使用建筑方提供的资料，因为这种东西完全是被建筑设计师主导的，比如那种传统的建筑摄影，它强调的是建筑师的个人英雄主义，这对建筑而言没什么好处，相反，我们的照片往往要关照建筑的环境和社会属性。

还得提下我们的作者，因为我们的读者定位是建筑的思考者，所以大部分我们的读者并不是为了获取建筑新闻而看这本杂志的。《Volume》成为他们交流思想的平台，所以我们的读者常常成为我们的作者，同时更多的同类被吸引过来。

《Volume》研究城市和空间问题的目的之一是给政府和NGO一些建议。你们有这样成功的案例吗？  
这个问题很好。对于《Archis》《Volume》和荷兰建筑协会（NAi），它们的目标都是解决问题。尤其是NAi，这么说绝对没问题，因为它会制定一些政策去帮助解决实际的问题。比如它运营了一个项目叫“建筑的意义”，重新讨论建筑的概念并且试图联合不同学科来应对当今世界的重大问题，比如气候变化、食品安全、水资源管理以及社会和谐。

但对于《Volume》，很难说它切实解决了社会问题。反思与提问不能保证带来好的结果，甚至常常被忽视甚至无视。但问“为什么”常常揭露的是不易被触及的真相。我敢保证100期的《Archis》和《Volume》

全部都是关于如何让社会变得更好的想法，很多期好内容没有被注意到，它们值得被再次挖掘，拿到今天看仍有重要意义。

杂志好像没什么广告。运作资金从哪里来？  
我要讲一个故事。2000年底，《Archis》遇到了很大的危机。因为这本杂志的利润率从未超过5%，出版社决定不再与我们合作。而我们的老板——NAi也决定停刊以避免经济损失。作为主编，我不得不想办法让杂志生存下去。当时麦肯锡为文化机构做免费咨询，于是我找到他们。麦肯锡从专业的角度帮我们分析了作为一本建筑杂志的生存方式：我们是一本提供建筑新闻的商业杂志吗？还是可以为某个群体的利益来服务？或者我们充满了大众感兴趣的八卦或明星？以上都不是。

麦肯锡建议我们必选其一。然而，基于我们的建筑理想，我们做了另外一种选择——完全做一本专注于“为什么”的建筑杂志，鼓励读者走出现状而把他们带到未知的领域。当时冒着很大的商业风险，也不知是否有足够的读者群。然而，通过定位于全世界的建筑的思考者（以及相关的机构如图书馆等），这些读者的数量刚好超过了维持杂志运转的临界点。虽然人数不多，但这些人影响力很大，他们不仅是读者，更是这个领域标新立异的思考者和理念传播者。

听说你最近计划举家前往深圳居住，并已经开始学习中文，所以，想了解是什么让你开始参与到中国的建筑和城市事件中来的，而你个人又希望以一种怎样的方式来参与到中国这样一个与西方差异巨大的环境中去？  
今年我已经开始了深圳蛇口博物馆馆长的工作。这项工作不仅只关乎建筑，而是包含设计的各个领域。我们的目标之一是探索、讨论并展示创意的力量，它对文化和经济领域能产生怎样的影响，以及哪些外在的条件可以进一步扩大这种影响力。我们努力让设计直面社会。运营这样一个机构，来回飞肯定不太现实，只有住在深圳才能更好地完成我的工作。不过更重要的原因是内心的某种愿景——想要实现更大的社会目标。

当然，中国与西方的情况有很大不同，但作为一个文化历史学家，我认为愿景比环境更重要。正是这种强烈的愿望塑造了繁荣的时代，而缺乏这种愿景导致时代的堕落。对我来说，来到深圳是迈出了一大步，但也可以说是一种回归——继续通过实践提高人们生活的品质。



01. Ole Bouman在1994年出版了著作《看不见的建筑》（The Invisible in Architecture），意图打破人们只是从技术或设计来看待建筑的简单维度。这种思考方式贯穿他日后各个领域的实践，从《Volume》杂志主编到荷兰建筑协会主席，再到他策展的深港城市建筑双城双年展 02. 深圳蛇口博物馆效果图，该馆将于2017年开放，Ole Bouman担任馆长