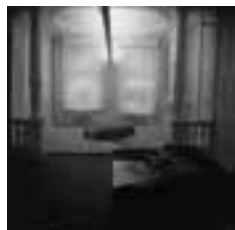




XI



51 'Luc Deleu says farewell to architecture' exhibition, Vacuum voor nieuwe dimensies, Antwerp, Belgium, 1970; Johan Pas, *Vacuum 1970–1971* (Antwerp: Kunstgalerie Rode Zeven, 2006), s.p.

an architect.⁵¹ Later, in 1972, these very same spaces came to house the studio and home of Deleu – T.O.P. office—again a claim put on the art institution, made official by Deleu's ceremonial installation of flags leading up to the building a year earlier.⁵² Then, after almost two decades of exhibitions in various art institutions across the globe, the titles of which Deleu describes as 'elements of a story,' T.O.P. office created its own exhibition apparatus in 1988.⁵³ Named after



52 *Flagging of the Cogels Osylei*, Antwerp, Belgium, 1971.

53 Lut Pil, 'Luc Deleu: Postfuturismus?', *Kultuurleven* no. 2 (1987).

the concept of *Urban Planning*, *ORBINO* (1988, 2002, 2004, 2007, 2009) is a viewpoint-cum-exhibition space made from three stacked and two cantilevered containers, equipped with a door, staircase, and two small windows on the back.⁵⁴

On the front, a wall-to-wall glass curtain window opens up onto a vast panorama of the surroundings. In this highly specific space, the artist-architect has regularly presented the products of his self-commissioned research project *The Unadapted City* (1995–2006). On the walls, shelves, and even



54 *ORBINO*, 1988.

on the ceiling, he staged his speculative models and drawings, using the world as a large visual backdrop.⁵⁵ With *ORBINO* Deleu thus hints at the beneficial dialectic offered to him by an exhibition space. A semi-secluded and pseudo-autonomous sphere, the museum is the primordial space which allows for architectural (self-)reflection, while concurrently linking those products of thought to the real world. T.O.P. office's very own



55 *ORBINO* with interior presentation of *The Unadapted City* (1995–2002) (1st realization), Nauerna, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, 2002.

'boîte-en-valise', *ORBINO* is a transportable and easy-to-build materialization of Deleu's institutional idiosyncrasy.⁵⁶

When it comes to museums, however, the most insistent of Deleu's claims lies within a sole image. In 1983, the artist-architect entered a polemical design for the competition for a museum of architecture in Ghent. A collage, depicting the globe as a worldwide *Museum of Architecture*, confirms the aforementioned operative status of the institutional sphere to Deleu. It follows up on Le Corbusier's statement

that 'the true museum is the one that contains everything,' yet transposes this argument onto an automatic process of over-all institutionalization. In this respect, Museum of Architecture strikes a chord with Deleu's earlier *Urban Planning Manifesto* (1980). Since architecture 'underwent an important change of

56 Only recently the artist-architect made a comment regarding Duchamp's *Boîte-en-Valise* (1935–41). Discussing his design for a travelling De Stijl exhibition—an expanding flightcase holding paintings, objects, and furniture of the movement—Deleu significantly claimed that 'T.O.P. office should do something similar as well.' Luc Deleu, interview with the author, 20 December, 2011.

57 Luc Deleu, 'Introduction', in: *Vrije Ruimte—Espace Libre—Open Space* (Antwerp: Internationaal Cultureel Centrum [I.C.C.]/Ministerie van Nationale Opvoeding en Nederlandse Cultuur, 1980) (exh. cat.), p. 3.

function and meaning' as did 'painting (...) after the invention of photography,' *Urban Planning* no longer condemns architecture to the strict domain many still consider it to be.⁵⁷ Instead, it institutes architecture's logic and conventions within a broad and interdisciplinary field. 'One could argue that theoretical architecture, which is not designed in direct relationship to an assignment, contractor, real situation or execution, is the ideal ivory tower for an autonomous architect to retreat to', writes Deleu. 'There the artist-architect (...) creates paper, conceptual, or written architecture for an ideal world and utopic society.'⁵⁸ *Urban Planning*, in other words, denotes the modus operandi resulting from architecture's institutionalization. It is the expanded and experimental way of working that ensues from museological interdisciplinarity, secluding architecture from the world while simultaneously reconnecting it to other domains of cultural production. In such a realm, architecture is both autonomous and socially embedded, both singular and multivalent. Within the age-old debate of art versus life, it chooses both sides, forging a work ethics out of their oxymoronic merger. If Rem Koolhaas successfully affixes Dali's irrationalism to Le Corbusier's rationalism, as Hal Foster has argued, Deleu mediates dialectically opposing

59 Hal Foster, 'Architecture and Empire', in: *Design and Crime (And Other Diatribes)* (London and New York, NY: Verso Books, 2002), pp. 43–64, esp. 60.

avant-gardes of his own.⁵⁹ Merging 1960s pluralism with 1980s autonomy in the 'Urban Space' of the museum, he there installs for architecture a conditional, experimental, and above all self-critical sphere.

Back in 1978, then, *Museum for Broken Art* marked the moment when Deleu contemplated the direction his practice was heading. After nearly a decade of architectural practice and with his first gallery exhibition (Spectrum Gallery, Antwerp, Spring 1978) just behind him, it had become clear that the art institution could be of the utmost convenience to him. In the sphere of the arts, Deleu not only could present works as diverse as the *Lego Constructions* (1977–83) or *The Unadapted City* (1995–2006), but he could strengthen his 'objective attitude towards architecture' as well.⁶⁰ The 1977

60 Deleu, *The Ethics of Architecture*, p. 6.

confrontation with Matta-Clark contributed to this 'objective attitude', be it via the causality of historical trajectories or through a more Jungian zeitgeist. As opposed to the antagonist position taken up by the American artist—once portrayed as 'the outlaw artist against good taste and Mr. Right Architect'—Deleu never wanted to choose sides. In and through the Turnhout project, he considered the conventions and limits of his working terrain afresh, negotiating the link between architecture and sculpture for the era to come. As such, if the modern art institution was proclaimed extinct

58 'Men zou kunnen stellen dat de theoretische architectuur, die niet ontworpen is in een direct relatie met een opdracht, opdrachtgever, reële situatie of uitvoering, de ideale ivoren toren is om zich als een autonoom architect in terug te trekken. Daar kan de architect-kunstenaar zich vrijblijvend bezighouden met het ontwerpen van theoretisch en ideale modellen. Hij maakt papieren, conceptuele of geschreven architectuur voor een ideale wereld en een utopische maatschappij.' Deleu, 'Over de belangrijkheid en onbelangrijkheid van de architectuur', p. 8 (author's translation).

JOURNEY AROUND
THE WORLD
IN
72 DAYS

via the Antipodes
of MADRID: WEBER

3 APRIL — 14 JUNE

1999.

From Le Havre to Panama (Gatun Locks)





Felicity D. Scott

Turn on Planning Dreams of a New Mobility



'You are confronted with architecture,
whether you like it or not.'

*Luc Deleu*¹

Spaceship Earth

In a short reflection entitled *Spaceship Earth* of 1997, Luc Deleu returned to a theme dating back many decades, a theme appearing in his earliest speculations as T.O.P. office: the rapid reduction of space—both 'untouched' and urban 'open space'—available per inhabitant on planet Earth. Supporting his point

with statistics on the ongoing decrease of hectares per earthling as calculated within a global framework (total surface area of earth/world population), he read the rapid erosion of open or undeveloped land as both a product of population growth, urbanization, and what he called 'an historically unprecedented pathological mania for building' during the 20th century.² In 1970, the year T.O.P. office was founded in Antwerp, questions of population growth, environmental destruction, and the foreclosure of the last remnants of a global commons—such as the sea, desert, jungles, and mountain ranges to which he pointed in this text—were at the forefront of public debate. Widespread discussions about (and fear of) population growth and environmental catastrophe had been fueled, for instance within the United States, by charismatic figures like R. Buckminster Fuller, who in 1969 published two key texts on the subject—*Utopia or Oblivion: The Prospects for Humanity* and *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth*. The Belgian architect's response to such discourses, which extends far beyond the citation of Fuller's rhetoric in his title, situates his practice as a cogent engagement with environmental debates as they struggled to come to terms with the impact of a transforming modernity, for which the US remained a driving force.

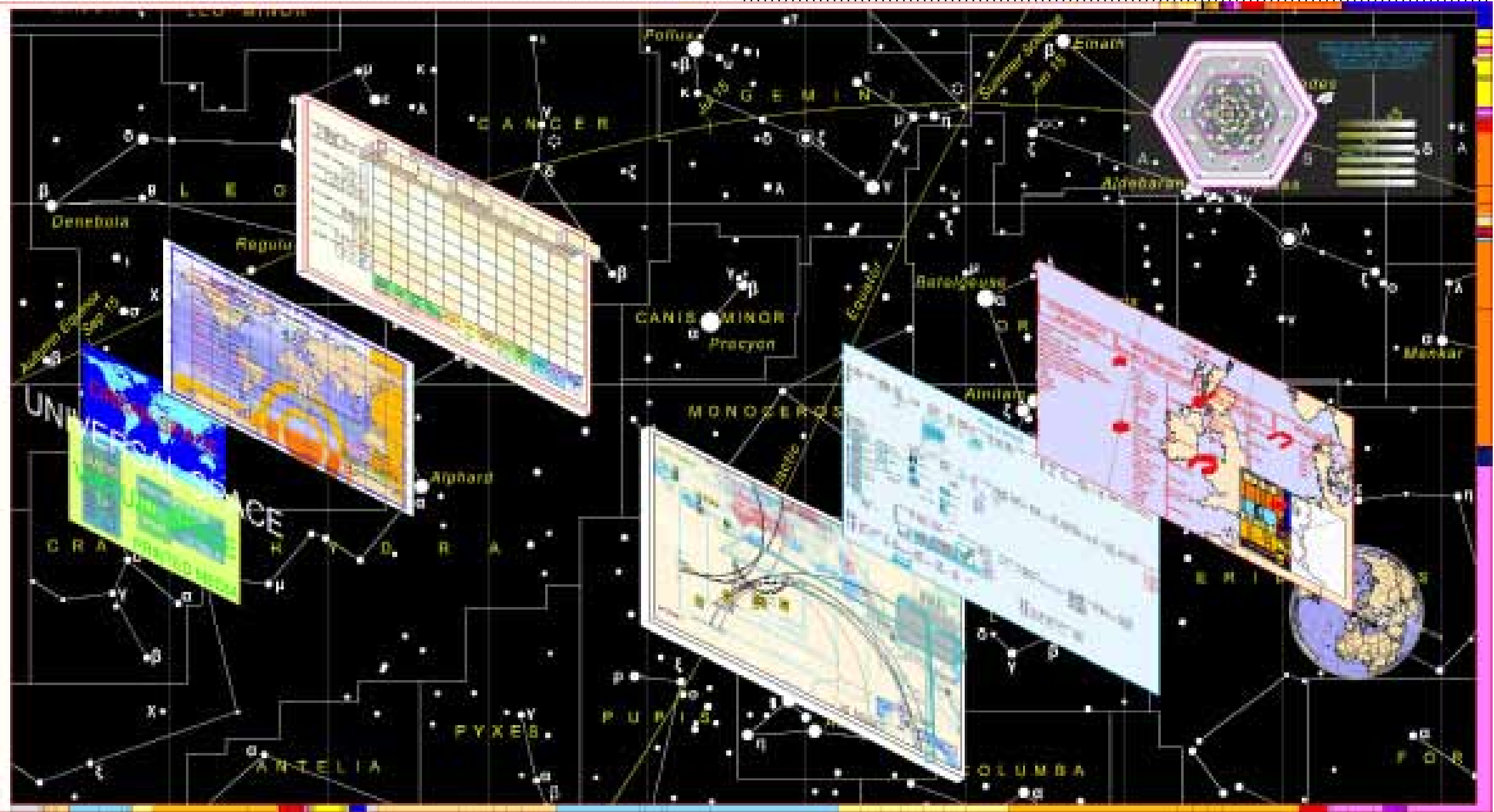
In 1968, the year before Fuller's much-celebrated books appeared, Stanford University Biology professor Paul Ehrlich had published *The Population Bomb*, which had also quickly

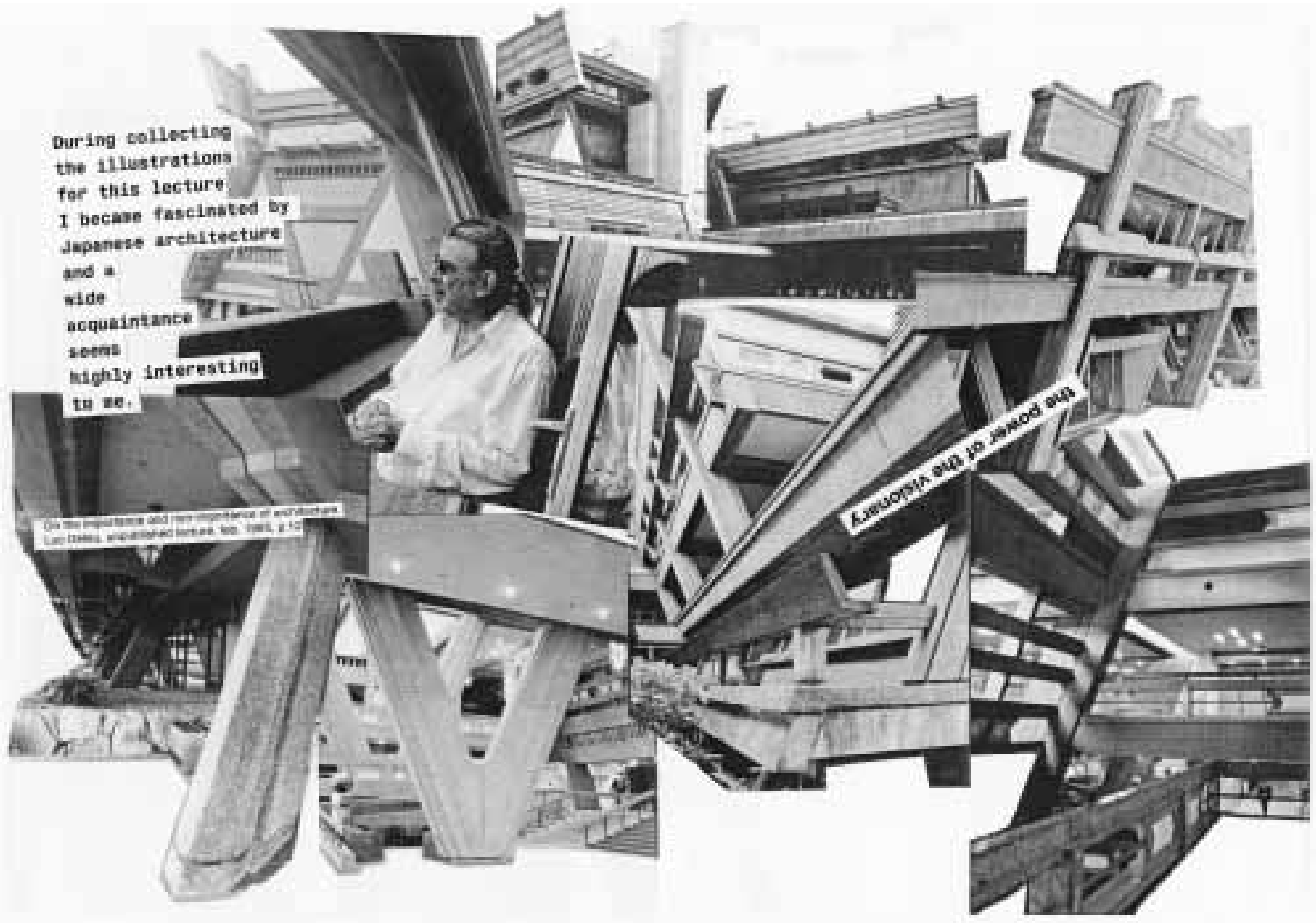


¹ Luc Deleu, *The Ethics of Architecture*, April 1988 (unpublished), T.O.P. office archives, s.p.



² Luc Deleu, *Spaceship Earth*, 18 July, 1997 (unpublished) T.O.P. office archives, s.p. As Deleu explained, 'In 1970 (when T.O.P. office was set up) there were on earth still 4.1 ha of land, or 5.6 football pitches, per inhabitant. Now, 27 years later, the population has grown from 2,000,000,000 to about 5,600,000,000 and only 2.66 ha. per inhabitant remain, or 3.6 football pitches.'





During collecting
the illustrations
for this lecture,
I became fascinated by
Japanese architecture
and a
wide
acquaintance
seems
highly interesting
to me.

On the importance and responsibility of architecture
see: *Urban Architecture*, No. 198, p. 10

the power of the victory

'Horta and After: 25 Masters of Modern Architecture in Belgium', National Gallery, Prague, Czech Republic
 'Mo(u)vements', NICC/Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp, Belgium
 'Recycling = another chance', Sint-Lukasarchief, Brussels, Belgium

2000–2001
 Luc Deleu, *Theorie van de Architectuur*, Hogeschool voor wetenschap en kunst, Departement Architectuur Sint-Lucas Brussel-Ghent

2001

Kennedy Belvédère
 Public art proposal for the remodeling and refurbishment of the Kennedy Belvédère viaduct, Nancy, France
 Drawings, photomontages and model

2001/2004
Old Harbor of Antwerp
 Proposal for the reshuffling of the Old Harbor of Antwerp, Antwerp, Belgium
 Photomontage and print on dibond (2004)

2001–02
The Unadapted City: Vipcity House of Prayer
 Architectural design
 Drawings and models

2001–02
The Unadapted City: Vipcity Necropolis
 Architectural design
 Drawings and models



2001–03
The Unadapted City: Vipcity
 Urban design
 Drawings and models



2001–03
Elysium
 Executive architect of the construction of an apartment building by the late Alfons Hoppenbrouwers
 Genk, Belgium

2001–03
Millenium
 Executive architect of the construction of an apartment building by the late Alfons Hoppenbrouwers
 Genk, Belgium



2001–05
Vertigo at the Scheldt
 Architectural remodeling of a private dwelling
 Drawings, model and realization
 Ter Platen, Ghent, Belgium

Competition for an artistic intervention for the House of the Flemish Parliament, Brussels, Belgium
 Drawing

Brugge Vismijn Boogaard
 Proposal to plant fruit trees at the site of the fish market in Bruges, Belgium
 Drawing

Architecture competition design for an office building, Rijswijk, the Netherlands
 Drawings

'The Unadapted City', Galerie Zwart Huis, Knokke, Belgium (solo)
 'L'oeuvre collective', Centre d'art contemporain Chapelle Saint-Jacques, Saint-Gaudens, France (solo)
 'La ville inadaptée', Centre d'art contemporain de Brétigny, Brétigny-sur-Orge, France (solo)

'Horta and After: 25 Masters of Modern Architecture in Belgium', Ruimte voor Actuele Kunst, Mechelen, Belgium
 Galerie Média, Neuchâtel, Switzerland

2002

Sundial
 Public art proposal for a sundial, Breda, the Netherlands
 Photomontage

Gielen-Briers House
 Architectural remodeling of a private dwelling
 Drawings and realization
 Genk, Belgium

Masson House
 Self-realized architectural remodeling of private dwelling after drawing by Luc Deleu on photograph
 Drawing on photograph and realization
 Antwerp, Belgium



ORBINO
 Installation with containers; with interior presentation of The Unadapted City (1995–2002) (1st realization)
 Drawings and realization
 Nauerna, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

2002–03
Journey Around the World (Academical Upgrade 2&3 Setenil over Auckland)
 5,6 km north-west of SETENIL, SPAIN, N 36° 52. 683' W 5° 14. 126' 2003 June 19, 18H 47' 54" to 18H 50' 16" UNIVERSAL TIME OVER MOUNT EDEN, AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND, S 36° 52. 683' E 174° 45. 874' 2002 DECEMBER 20, 6H 47' 54" to 6H 50' 16" UNIVERSAL TIME
 Doubled photo

'VIPCITY en De Onaangepaste Stad', Galerie Mercator, Antwerp, Belgium (solo)

'Antwerp & the world, Antwerp & the planet', MuHKA, Antwerp, Belgium
 'Luc Deleu & Niels Donckers', Cultureel Centrum, Strombeek, Belgium
 'Van IJ tot Zee—Van Halfweg tot Nauerna', Stichting Kunst en Cultuur Noord-Holland, Noorzeekanaalregio, the Netherlands
 'Le Petit Cabinet d'un Amateur de Ruines', Orion Art Gallery, Oostend, Belgium
 ABC, Haarlem, the Netherlands

Luc Deleu and Hans Theys, *Urbi et Orbi: De Onaangepaste Stad*, Ghent: Ludion, 2002
 Luc Deleu, *EU*, 6 August, 2002 (global urban concept for the European Quarter in Brussels, motivation of candidacy; unpublished)

2003



Container Triangles
 Installation with containers
 Middelburg, the Netherlands

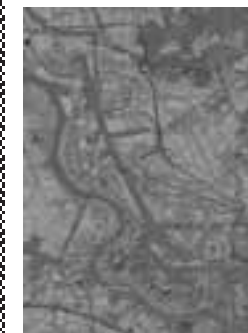


Urbi et Orbi
 Poster for Utopia Station, 50th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy
 Poster



Museum of Fine Arts (KMSK)
 Architecture competition design for a master plan for the Royal Museum of Fine Arts (KMSK), Antwerp, Belgium
 Drawings

Montyplan
 Cover images for the monthly agenda and newsletter of the Monty Theater, Antwerp, Belgium
 Photomontages and print



2003/2004
Untitled (windmill-grid-park)
 Proposal for a windmill-grid-park for the Antwerp Harbor, Belgium
 Drawing and print on dibond (2004)



Speybank
 Installation with containers (exhibition ensemble of 5 container installations)
 Middelheim Open Air Museum, Antwerp, Belgium

