



The Live Centre of Information

From Pompidou to Beaubourg



The first chronological and documentary reconstruction of the genesis of the Centre Pompidou.

The book features a preface by Laurent Le Bon, president of the Centre national d'art et de culture Georges Pompidou, an introduction by Roberto Gargiani, Professor Emeritus at the École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne-EPFL, and a previously unpublished interview by Boris Hamzeian with Renzo Piano.

The book features too a folding poster (designed with the agreement of Renzo Piano) with the original drawing of the Centre's main facade.

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When, on July 19, 1971, Jean Prouvé and Robert Bordaz unveiled the competition-winning design for the Centre Beaubourg in Paris, now known as the Centre national d'art et de culture Georges Pompidou, press and public reaction was harsh. The project architects, Renzo Piano, Richard Rogers, and Gianfranco Franchini, were considered “unknowns”; its promoters, the engineers of the firm Ove Arup & Partners, were simply forgotten; the original idea of a “Live Centre of Information,” with its sequences of flexible platforms suspended over an open-air piazza for the crowd, was misrepresented and reduced to the image of a “metallic dam” dropped in the heart of Paris; the jury, which featured figures of the caliber of Prouvé, Oscar Niemeyer, and Willem Sandberg, was believed to have been dominated by the charismatic Philip Johnson; the man who initiated the competition, President Georges Pompidou of France, was believed to be unaware of the jury's methods and forced unwillingly to accept a winner he didn't support.

Fifty years after those events it is time to analyze these false certainties and trace the genealogy of this famous and still controversial work: from President Pompidou's original idea of a monument to reinvigorate French architecture in the international debate to the complex origins of a project in which the aspirations and avant-garde impulses of architects and engineers delicately coexisted, to the reconstruction of the complex political plots and ideological visions that lurked behind the jury's deliberations.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Boris Hamzeian is an architect and postdoctoral fellow in History of Architecture. He works as researcher at the Centre national d'art et de culture Georges Pompidou in Paris and he is visiting scholar of the Swiss National Science Foundation. As part of his research into the post-war avant-garde and technomorphic architecture, he published books on the history of the Centre Pompidou (subject of his PhD thesis, 2021) and the UFO group, and articles on the works by OMA and Aldo Rossi. He currently works on the origins of Archigram group, the modification and restorations of the Centre Pompidou (1977-2022) and the role played by technologies and symbols in our domestic environment. He is member of the scientific committee of the Archphoto 2.0 magazine and of the Construction History Society. He is the co-founder of False Mirror Office.



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