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تصميم و هندسة معمارية

2008 2008  
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SKY  
ARCHITECTURE

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MVRDV - Boeri Studio - Takaharu + Yui Tezuka - Ecosistema Urbano - Cino Zucchi - Klein Ditzers - Italo Rota - Massimiliano Fuksas

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001 SKY ARCHITECTURE

Dubai - United Arab Emirates Price: UAE 50 AED, Bahrain 5 BHD, KSA 50 SAR, Kuwait 4 K

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**Tadao Ando Architect & Associates**

**Author**  
Tadao Ando Architects & Associates  
Tadao Ando

**Work**  
Penthouse in Manhattan

**Location**  
NY City, USA

**Year**  
1996

**Image Credits**  
Tadao Ando

# penthouse in manhattan

Perhaps in 1983 Tadao Ando didn't imagine that a few years after he would have designed an attic in Manhattan. "I do not have much familiarity with American culture, I probably wouldn't be able to build a house here."

The 1996 project – which has never been carried out – features two units added–on to a skyscraper built in the Twenties. Its outcome, as the author says, is a microcosm reproducing New York and its spirit – inspired by the constant eternal struggle between what is old and what is new.

There are two materials – both of which stand for modernity – glass and cement. Ando acknowledges each one by quoting a great master and a work. A few years before drawing this attic he in fact visited Chicago and described the sheer beauty of the Farnsworth house by Mies, a "glass box". In the same period he was fascinated by his visit to the Ronchamp chapel by Le Corbusier, a "rough limestone construction of wonderful plasticity." Nature is an essential part of Ando's work. In the Manhattan attic there are two vital elements: water and the sky.

Water is not decorative, it plays a strategic role. Its reflection capability is a chance to draw nature into the project. This enormous flat surface absorbs the three-dimensional world and almost turns into a TV screen to be comfortably observed from an armchair. This work has been described as "an eagle's nest". If home is traditionally represented as a quiet shelter from the world, this glass house in Manhattan is also an observatory on the world.

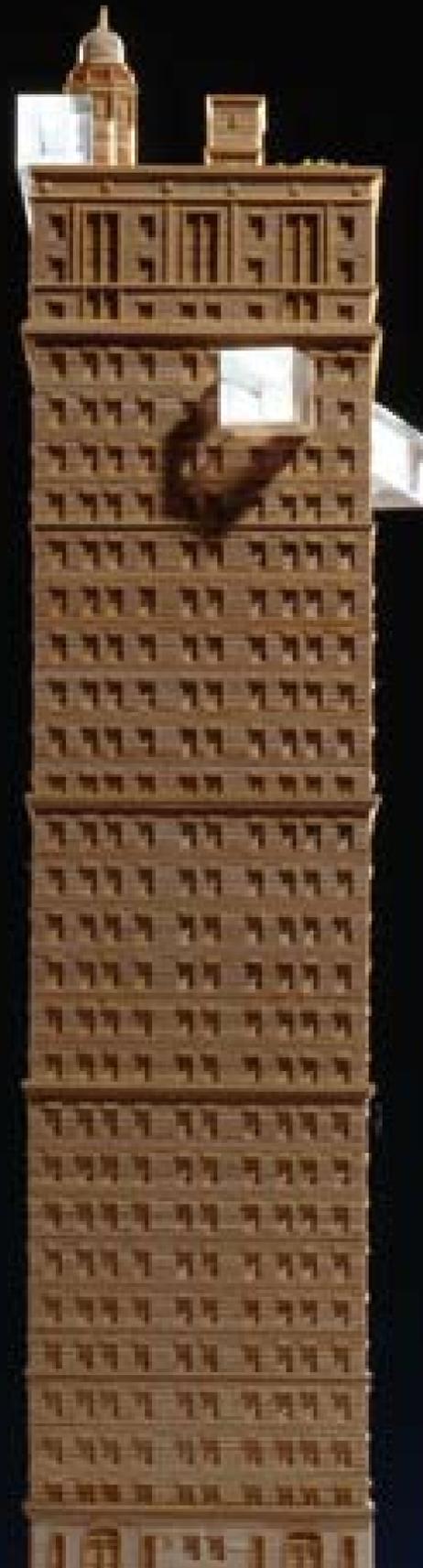
The sky is a metaphor for Ando's architecture, "complex spaces resulting from simple interventions". Seemingly extremely simple at first, it appears as a light blue mass blending into the sky. It becomes complex in expressing light and darkness, sun and rain, wind and stillness, day and night. The attic's elementary structure is complicated by the sky, and its phenomena, which "activates the space", bringing it to life and adding warmth.

The roof garden becomes a place for synthesis, where water and sky meet in a continuum. Here one seems to perceive a certain cunning on the author's part, in his appreciation of the mediatic impact of such an icon. An image so evocative it might have inspired the Italian scenographer of the movie "Devil's Advocate" – with Al Pacino – which was shot the same year. Ando – in turn – admits his roof garden is the mis-en-scène of a "borrowed scenery".

Kenneth Frampton has alighted on one of the most intimate aspects of Ando's work – his poetic of opposites. Japanese traditional architecture is horizontal. Manhattan, on the contrary, is emblematic of an extreme verticality. This mixture engenders an integration of spaces between East and West, horizon and zenith. The attic enacts this synthesis. Furthermore Ando interprets Plato's dialectics through geometry – he obliquely sticks a glass box through a symmetrical construction. An immaterial transparent image (of light) in opposition to a solid sombre one (darkness).

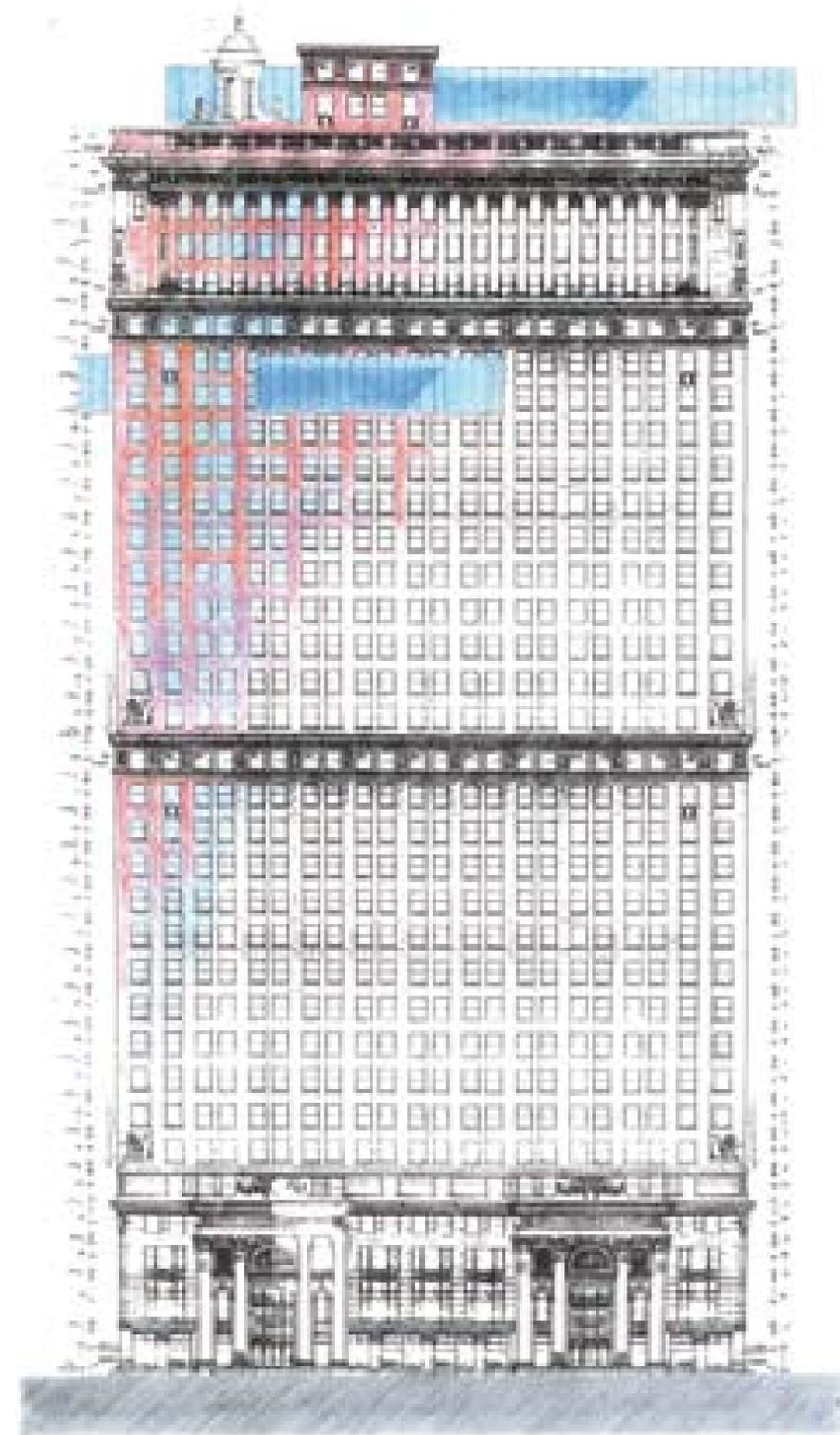
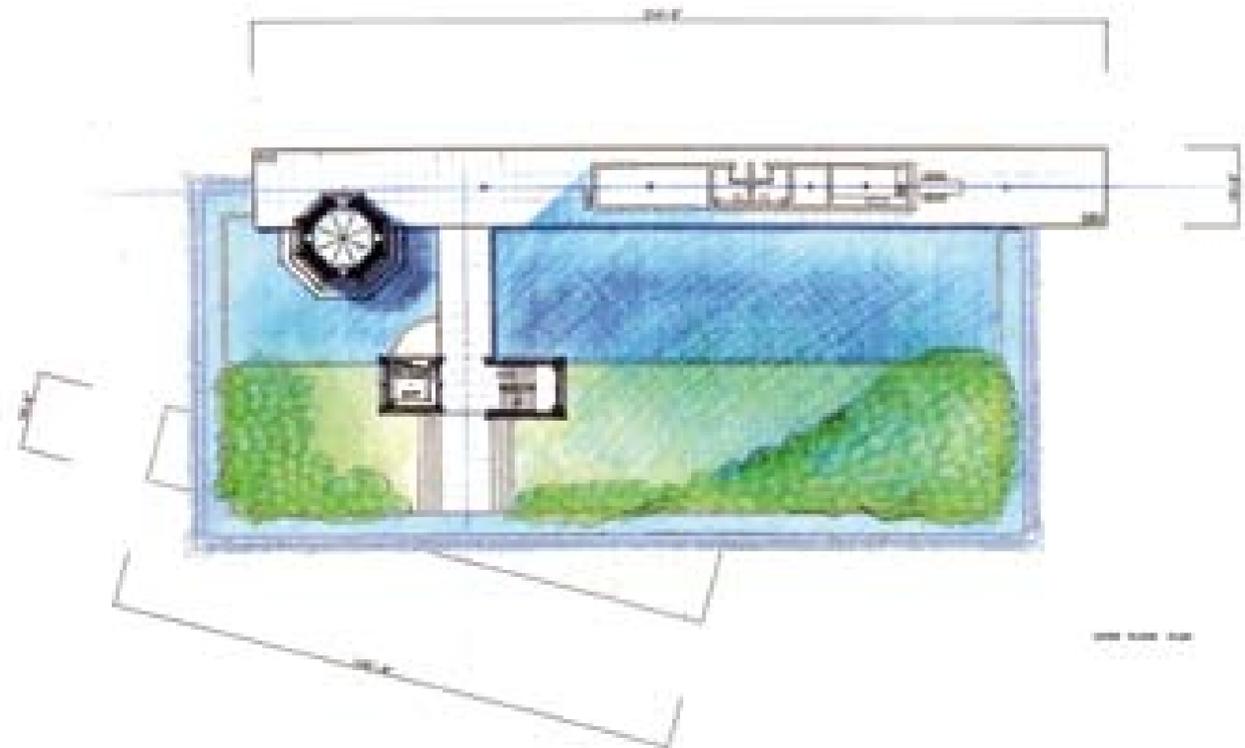
Salvator John Liotta recently wrote that "Japan is a nation somewhat embarrassed at starting with a blank sheet". Tadao Ando knows how to carefully smear that blank sheet before even using it. His skilful foreplay reveals those precious traces embedded in every site, and then weaves each one into a pattern that will become architecture. The Manhattan skyscraper is pre-existent, so it resembles a sheet that has already been sketched. It is also these traces Ando starts from to draw and come to a solution of great quality. It is a shame this quality should stay only graphic – a project – due to its never having actually been built.

Four years before – in 1992 – Ando has described the "power of unreal or not yet made real things" which do not disappear but become food and energy for future plans. Time will pass but in the 4x4 Kobe houses of 2003, his way of dealing with matter and the relation between water and the sky will return to be prominent.



**Above**  
night view from the apartment interiors

**Left**  
View of the model



Main prospect of the building with two additions

