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L'ARCHITETTURA SECONDO PLAYBOY

Michele Lupi Quale altra rivista non specializzata ha avuto un ruolo pari a quello di "Playboy" nel diffondere architettura e design nel mondo? "Playboy" rappresenta un caso isolato o ci sono altre testate che permetterebbero una ricerca simile a quella che avete condotto con la rivista di Hugh Hefner?

Beatriz Colomina, Pep Avilés, Margo Handwerker

"Playboy" era unico e altamente innovativo. Negli anni successivi alla Seconda guerra mondiale, c'erano molte riviste che rivaleggiavano nel proporre una loro visione della modernità. Riviste per il grande pubblico come "Better Homes and Gardens", "McCalls", "Parents' Magazine", "Woman's Home Companion", "Country Gentleman" o "House Beautiful", solo per citarne alcune. Ma erano tutte intrise di un certo atteggiamento conservatore, per non dire addirittura paranoico. Basti pensare agli attacchi di Elizabeth Gordon contro Mies e altri architetti moderni da poco emigrati, visti come "minacce all'America che viene" nelle pagine di "House Beautiful" del 1953, l'anno in cui fu lanciato "Playboy". Allo stesso tempo, architetti come Philip Johnson, Edward Durrell Stone, Eero Saarinen o Minoru Yamasaki cominciavano ad apparire con maggiore frequenza in riviste come "Time" o "Life", dove se ne celebravano la personalità e il carisma. La strategia editoriale di "Playboy" consisteva però nel promuovere uno stile di vita urbano e insieme un modello culturale appropriato ai tempi moderni. Il successo della rivista si dovette alla sua generosa ed eclettica visione della modernità, in cui molte sensibilità si sentivano rappresentate.

La vostra ricerca sottolinea quanto l'architettura e il design negli anni '60 fossero elementi fondamentali per l'affermazione sociale dell'uomo urbano. Per l'uomo urbano contemporaneo, invece, l'architettura è ancora così importante? O è stata sostituita da altre discipline e/o altri simboli?

L'idea sostenuta da "Playboy", secondo cui il design contemporaneo costituisce un elemento essenziale

dell'uomo sofisticato, non ha più niente di radicale oggi. È divenuto semplicemente un pilastro della società consumista contemporanea, un'industria a se stante, con riviste, cataloghi e negozi. In maniera simile si suppone che l'uomo contemporaneo debba avere un gusto sofisticato negli abiti, l'arredamento, la musica, etc... La cosa affascinante è che negozi come *Design within Reach* utilizzano per pubblicizzarsi le fotografie di designer degli anni '50 assieme alle loro sedie, apparse su "Playboy" nel 1961. Perché non fanno delle nuove fotografie con designer contemporanei? Evidentemente preferiscono ancora vendere l'immaginario prodotto allora da "Playboy".

Guardando i progetti che pubblicava "Playboy", si nota quanto il gusto fosse proiettato in avanti. Non ci sono oggetti, mobili o forme legate al passato. La cosa interessante però è notare come, con tutta questa voglia di futuro, l'arte non fosse mai rappresentata. Nessuno si è mai posto il problema – non negli anni '60 e non oggi – di come sarebbe stata o di come sarà, l'arte del futuro. Se ci si pensa, neanche nei film di fantascienza si trova rappresentata l'arte del futuro. Perché, secondo lei, questa non è mai stata contemplata nei progetti di "Playboy", oggetto della vostra ricerca?

In realtà l'arte era spesso rappresentata in "Playboy". Hefner, che era un fumettista e per un breve periodo aveva frequentato l'Art Institute di Chicago, fa riferimento a Picasso già nella dichiarazione d'intenti sul primo numero della rivista. Un quadro di Franz Kline da lui posseduto appare in alcune pubblicità disegnate da "Playboy" e opere d'arte moderna fungono spesso da sfondo o persino da soggetto di numerose illustrazioni. Opere con lo stile di Ellsworth Kelly, Joan Miró, Hans Hofmann, Alexander Calder e Amedeo Modigliani, solo per citarne alcuni, sono ben visibili nelle pagine della rivista. A essere rappresentate sono anche opere di carattere più esplicitamente politico, in stile Dada →

Il programma Media and Modernity (Princeton University) diretto da Beatriz Colomina promuove la ricerca interdisciplinare di fenomeni che hanno influenzato la cultura dell'ultimo secolo. Tra i temi di ricerca affrontati negli ultimi anni: "Architecture in Playboy/Playboy in Architecture: 1953-1979". L'ipotesi di questa ricerca è che la rivista "Playboy" abbia giocato un ruolo cruciale e non riconosciuto nella diffusione della cultura del design negli Stati Uniti. Questa ricerca ha preso oggi la forma di una mostra dal titolo "Playboy Architecture, 1953-1979" (al NAIM/Bureau-Europa a Maastricht, Paesi Bassi fino al 10 febbraio 2013). In una conversazione tra Michele Lupi, direttore di "Rolling Stone" (edizione italiana) e i curatori della mostra, scopriamo come una rivista di grande consumo sia stata di fatto uno degli agenti più sorprendenti nel costruire l'immaginario moderno per l'uomo urbano, e come rileggerne oggi le aspirazioni e la strategia editoriale se confrontati con altre pubblicazioni attuali.

Una playmate e la "Mies Chair" disegnata da Archizoom (1969, Poltronova), "Playboy", febbraio 1973.

A playmate and the Mies Chair designed by Archizoom (1969, Poltronova), "Playboy", February 1973.



men living
THE PLAYBOY BED

for the contemporary sophisticate, a sensuously electronic, subtly plastic, ingeniously equipped sleep center.

All these systems mentioned above are available in a single unit or in separate units. The unit which contains the electronic equipment is the Playboy Bed, which is a masterpiece of design and engineering. It is available in a variety of finishes and colors. The Playboy Bed is a masterpiece of design and engineering. It is available in a variety of finishes and colors. The Playboy Bed is a masterpiece of design and engineering. It is available in a variety of finishes and colors.



Below left: The clock radio is set for our ten o'clock morning and the TV plays headlines on radio for late-night listening. In the center, the bed is set for late-night listening. The Playboy Bed is a masterpiece of design and engineering. It is available in a variety of finishes and colors. The Playboy Bed is a masterpiece of design and engineering. It is available in a variety of finishes and colors.

Below: The Playboy Bed is shown in a double-height room. The bed is perfect for morning or night of reading or writing. The entire reading mechanism was designed especially for master bedrooms of the Playboy Mansion.

The Media and Modernity programme (Princeton University) directed by Beatriz Colomina promotes interdisciplinary research into phenomena that have influenced the culture of the last century. Among the themes tackled in recent years: "Architecture in Playboy/Playboy in Architecture: 1953-1979". The hypothesis of this research is that "Playboy" magazine played a crucial and unrecognised role in the promotion of the culture of design in the United States. This research has now taken the form of an exhibition entitled "Playboy Architecture, 1953-1979" (at the NAIJ/ Bureau Europa in Maastricht, the Netherlands until 10 February 2013). In a conversation between Michele Lupi, editor of "Rolling Stone" (Italian edition) and the curators of the exhibition, we discover how a mass-circulation magazine was in fact one of the most surprising agents in the creation of a modern imaginary for the urban man, and how its aspirations and editorial strategy ought to be viewed in comparison with publications of the present day.

o Pop Art. Alcune illustrazioni si rifanno al mito dell'artista bohémien, mentre altre fanno riferimento all'immaginario del loft d'artista in cui studio e camera da letto sono un unico spazio. L'arte risulta spesso integrata nelle immagini d'interni di "Playboy", giungendo a coprire intere pareti come nel caso dell'attico di "Playboy" del 1970. Si possono trovare anche numerosi articoli che hanno come soggetto l'arte: approfondimenti su Salvador Dalí, sulla strategia del collezionista J. Paul Getty, o sulla stessa collezione d'arte di "Playboy". Il nostro interesse era l'architettura, ma si potrebbe facilmente effettuare anche una ricerca sull'arte in "Playboy". È una questione molto interessante quella che sollevi. Negli interni di "Playboy", l'arte è solo un elemento di sfondo, e quanto più futuristico appare il design, tanto più l'arte sembra retrocedere, se non addirittura scomparire. Come nei film di science-fiction, è l'architettura a trasgredire.

Dalle pagine di "Playboy" s'intuisce che l'architettura viene usata come potente arma di seduzione. È noto che i grandi dell'architettura di allora fossero anche grandi seduttori: Louis Kahn, Oscar Niemeyer, etc. Gli architetti continuano anche oggi ad avere un potere seduttivo così spiccato? L'architettura è ancora una disciplina sexy, adatta alle pagine di un "Playboy" contemporaneo?

L'architettura non può essere separata dalla seduzione. L'architettura è una forma di seduzione. Ma ciò non significa che l'architetto sia sexy. Kahn ebbe numerose storie romantiche, ma è difficile immaginarlo come un uomo sexy. Era un uomo severo, che concepiva i suoi edifici in maniera severa. Niemeyer, d'altra parte, da giovane era molto *glamorous* e amava spiegare

tutte le sue opere in termini di corpi femminili. Ma nessuno dei due apparve mai sulla rivista. "Playboy" amava ritrarre gli architetti come uomini aggraziati, sofisticati ed eleganti. Ma il vero meccanismo di seduzione era la rivista stessa. La seduzione nei media durante il periodo postbellico divenne un meccanismo molto sofisticato, che operava tramite associazioni visive e testuali, una dinamica compresa estremamente bene da "Playboy". Ciò che dovremmo chiederci è se "Playboy", nel suo formato corrente, mantenga ancora la carica persuasiva posseduta negli anni '50, '60 e '70. Dobbiamo ricordarci che la presenza dell'architettura nei media è rimasta invariata, come possiamo notare in riviste internazionali di tendenza come "Wallpaper". La costruzione dell' "archistar" come figura pubblica è di fatto un fenomeno recente, un tributo ai media nella costruzione della nostra società. Possiamo forse affermare che l'immagine dell' "architetto come seduttore" non sia mai stata forte quanto ora, ma che "Playboy" non ne sia più uno dei principali vettori.

PLAYBOY ARCHITECTURE

Michele Lupi Has any other non-specialist magazine played as important a role as Playboy in spreading knowledge of architecture and design in the world? Is Playboy an isolated case or are there other publications that would allow you to conduct new research similar to that carried out for Hugh Hefner's magazine?

Beatriz Colomina, Pep Avilés, Margo Handwerker *Playboy* was unique and highly innovative. Many magazines were in competition and attempting to provide various visions of modernity after World War II. Examples included popular journals such as *Better Homes and Gardens*, *McCalls*, *Parents' Magazine*, *Woman's Home Companion*, *Country Gentleman*,



MASTER BEDROOM DINING AREA

Master Bedroom: the rotating bed, a refinement of the Playboy Bed (November 1959), has been electronically turned on its 360-degree base to take full advantage of a romantic fire. The drapes, glass door and skylight have been drawn back so that the star-flecked sky is almost our ceiling. The carousel-striped coverlet has been turned down. We've poured a brandy nightcap from the bar concealed in the rotating headboard, propped up our pillow, and push-buttoned several hours of bathery to add the proper final notes.

As we stand at the end of the dining-area bar we get an elbow-bender's view of almost the entire length of the house - past the pedestal dining group, past the image-reflecting pool, and on into most of the rec area, with the half-drawn drapes of the living room showing above it. The waffle-iron recessed lighting overhead in the living room showing above it. The waffle-iron recessed lighting overhead in the living room showing above it. The waffle-iron recessed lighting overhead in the living room showing above it.

or *House Beautiful*. But they all were attached to different forms of conservatism, if not paranoia. Think about Elizabeth Gordon's diatribes against Mies and other émigré modern architects, where she described them as a "threat to the next America" in the pages of *House Beautiful* in 1953, the year that *Playboy* was launched. At the same time, architects such as Philip Johnson, Edward Durrell Stone, Eero Saarinen or Minoru Yamasaki began to appear more frequently in magazines such as *Time* or *Life*, where their persona and charisma was celebrated. However *Playboy's* editorial perspective promoted an all-encompassing cultural and urban lifestyle that was a fit for modern times. The success of the magazine stemmed from its generous eclectic vision regarding modernity, where many different opinions and emotions could feel as if they were being represented.

Your research underlines how architecture and design in the 1960s were fundamental factors in the social success of urban man. But is architecture still so important

for contemporary urban man? Or has its place been taken by other disciplines and/or symbols? *Playboy's* idea that contemporary design is an essential prop of the sophisticated man is no longer radical. It has become a mainstay of contemporary consumer society, an industry unto itself with its own magazines, stores, and catalogues. Likewise, the contemporary male is supposed to have sophisticated tastes in clothes, furniture, music, etc. What is fascinating is that stores like *Design within Reach* use pictures of mid-century furniture designers with their chairs that appeared in *Playboy* in 1961 for advertising. Why don't they take their own photographs with contemporary designers? They are still selling the *Playboy* fantasy.

Looking at the projects that were published in Playboy, one notes just how forward-looking were the tastes that were depicted. There are no objects, pieces of furniture or forms linked to the past. But the interesting thing is to note how - with all this desire for the future -



SAARINEN CHAIR BY KNOLL, APPROX. \$145.

PLASTIC-BACK BAR STOOL BY LAVENE, \$340.

BEDROOM FIREPLACE BY UNI-BILT, \$119.

CONE CHAIR BY GEORGE TAKERS, \$199.

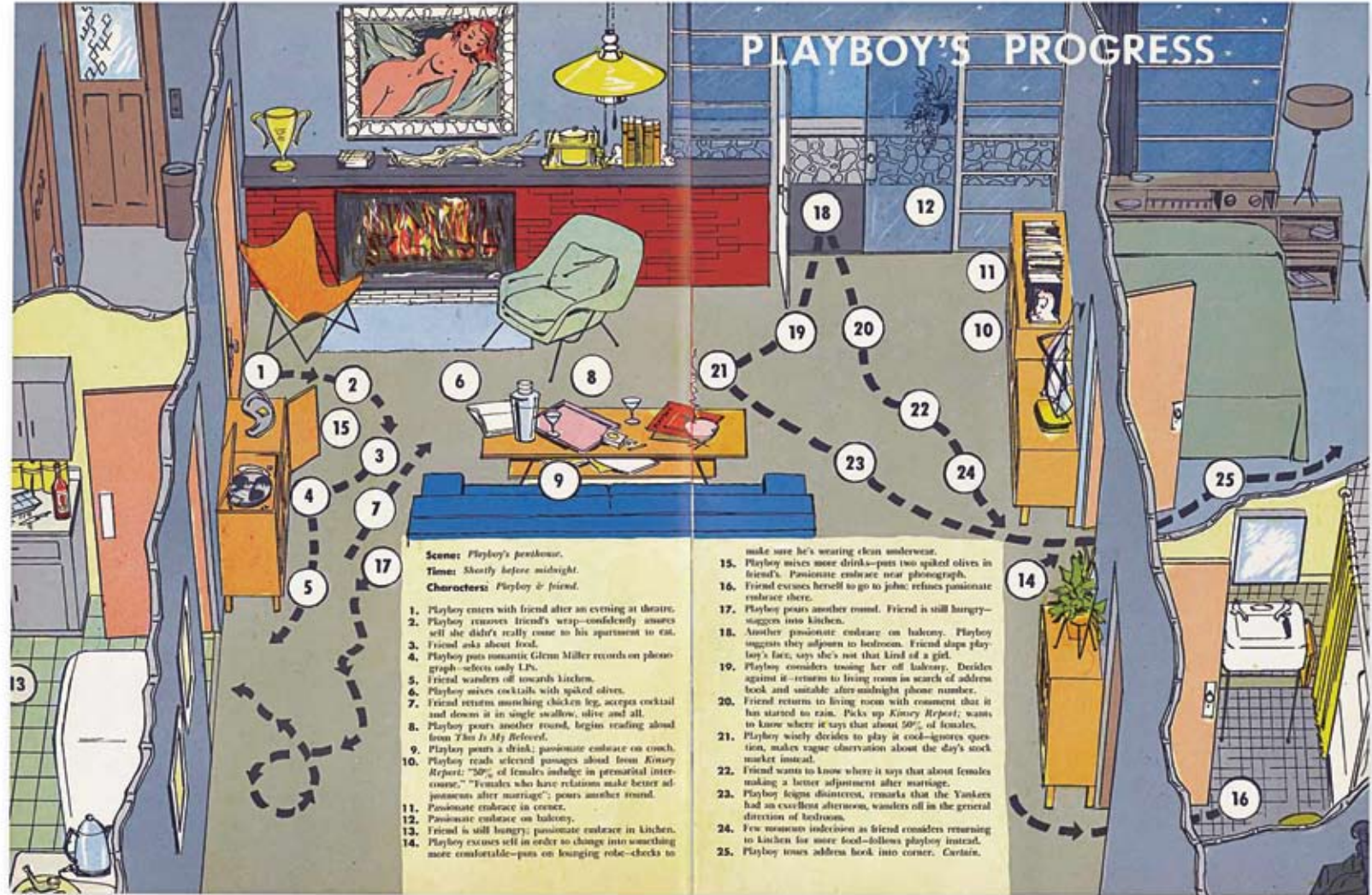
Sopra: The Playboy Town House (progetto di R. Donald Jaye, renderings di Humen Tan): la camera da letto principale e la sala da pranzo, "Playboy", marzo 1962. Nella pagina a fianco: The Playboy Bed, "Playboy", aprile 1965. Il fondatore e direttore di Playboy, Hugh Hefner, al lavoro nel suo letto.

Above: The Playboy Town House (designed by R. Donald Jaye, renderings by Humen Tan): master bedroom and the dining area, "Playboy", March 1962. Opposite page: The Playboy Bed, "Playboy", April 1965. The founder and editor of "Playboy", Hugh Hefner, at work in his bed.



Preceding page: "Arteluce" lamp of Perspex and chrome, from John Strauss, \$250. Below, left to right: Plexiglas floor lamp with an opaque base and translucent top, by Neal Small Designs, \$100. Vittoriana Vigano-designed metal floor lamp with a side light and a reflector light in top, by Georg Jensen, \$242. Plexiglas-and-chrome cylinder lamp, by Robert Sonneman, \$100. "Nesso" mushroom-shaped fibreglass table lamp, by Marsotti, \$89. Table light with Dunstest globe bulb, by Tyndale, \$18. Plexiglas-and-chrome globe area lamp, by Neal Small Designs, \$65, is in front of an Orbiter desk/floor/wall lamp, by Robert Sonneman, \$80 with floor stand as shown; desk clamp, \$25. Brass-and-stainless-steel floor lamp, by Cedric Hartman, \$185, stands behind a chrome-

ball table lamp with a curved Lucite base, by Robert Sonneman, \$65. Koch-and-Lowy-designed glass-cluster table lamp, from Directional, \$175, is atop a "Lumio" light box that features shifting colored images, by LightHalter, \$39.95. Italian plastic-and-iron dome table lamp, from Raymor, \$39.50. Sorfami-designed "Lunar" floor/table lamp with curved arm, by Georg Jensen, \$234. Behind it is a stainless-steel-and-chrome floor lamp, by Cedric Hartman, \$202.50. Koch-and-Lowy-designed floor lamp with a smoked-glass globe, from Directional, \$131.50. "Sesoy" table lamp of marble and metal, from John Strauss, \$190. Ceramic ball "Luna Lamp" from Beyelerian, \$100. Our turned-on twosome stands beside a chrome-and-plastic balloon lamp, by Robert Sonneman, \$69.



Scenes: *Playboy's penthouse.*
Time: *Shortly before midnight.*
Characters: *Playboy & friend.*

1. Playboy enters with friend after an evening at theatre.
2. Playboy rumors friend's wrap-and-undress scenes sell the didd's really come to his apartment to eat.
3. Friend asks about food.
4. Playboy puts romantic Glenn Miller records on phonograph—checks only LPs.
5. Friend wanders off towards kitchen.
6. Playboy mixes cocktails with spiked olives.
7. Friend returns munching chicken leg, accepts cocktail and downs it in single swallow, olive and all.
8. Playboy pours another round, begins reading aloud from *The Is My Beloved*.
9. Playboy pours a drink; passionate embrace on couch.
10. Playboy reads selected passages aloud from *Kinsey Report*: "50% of females indulge in premarital intercourse." "Females who have relations make better adjustments after marriage"; pours another round.
11. Passionate embrace in corner.
12. Passionate embrace on balcony.
13. Friend is still hungry; passionate embrace in kitchen.
14. Playboy excuses self in order to change into something more comfortable—puts on lounge robe—checks to
15. make sure he's wearing clean underwear.
15. Playboy mixes more drinks—puts two spiked olives in friend's. Passionate embrace near photograph.
16. Friend excuses herself to go to job; refines passionate embrace there.
17. Playboy pours another round. Friend is still hungry—suggers into kitchen.
18. Another passionate embrace on balcony. Playboy suggests they adjourn to bedroom. Friend slips playboy's lure, says she's not that kind of a girl.
19. Playboy considers teasing her off balcony. Decides against it—returns to living room in search of address book and suitable after midnight phone number.
20. Friend returns to living room with comment that it has started to rain. Picks up *Kinsey Report*; wants to know where it says that about 50% of females.
21. Playboy wisely decides to play it cool—ignores question, makes vague observation about the day's stock market instead.
22. Friend wants to know where it says that about females making a better adjustment after marriage.
23. Playboy feigns disinterest, remarks that the Yankees had an excellent afternoon, wanders off in the general direction of bedroom.
24. Few moments indecision as friend considers returning to kitchen for more food—bills playboy instead.
25. Playboy tosses address book into corner. Curtain.

Le luci scelte da "Playboy" per creare l'atmosfera adatta a sedurre, "Playboy", aprile 1969. Si notino alcuni classici del design italiano, prodotti da Arteluce, Flos, Artemide. Nella pagina a fianco: "Playboy's Progress". Come un playboy, in un'appartamento pieno di moderno comfort, può condurre la sua compagna dalla porta al letto in soli 25 passi, "Playboy", maggio 1954.

The lights chosen by "Playboy" to create the right atmosphere for seduction, "Playboy", April 1969. Some famous pieces of the Italian design industry produced by Arteluce, Flos and Artemide are in the selection. On the opposite page: "Playboy's Progress". How a playboy in an apartment with modern comfort can maneuver his lady friend from the door into the bed in 25 steps, "Playboy", May 1954.

art was never represented. If we think about this a little more, the art of the future is not even represented in science-fiction films. Why, in your opinion, art was never considered in the Playboy projects covered in your study? Or did art and artists also play a role in the pages of Playboy but with a different scope?
 Actually, art *was* often represented in *Playboy*. Hefner, who briefly attended the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and was a cartoonist, refers to Picasso in the mission statement of the first issue. Hefner's own Franz Kline painting appears in *Playboy*-generated advertisements, and modern art frequently serves as the background and even the subject of many cartoons. Works in the style of Ellsworth Kelly, Joan Miró, Hans Hofmann, Alexander Calder, Amedeo Modigliani, for example appear throughout. More overtly politicized works such as Dada and Pop art are also represented. Some cartoons address the myth of the bohemian artist, while others focus on the fantasy space of the artist's loft studio—the bedroom and office as one. Art is often integrated into *Playboy* interiors, sometimes taking over entire walls as in the

Playboy Duplex Penthouse of 1970. There are also numerous articles on visual art: features on Salvador Dalí, J. Paul Getty's art collecting strategy, and *Playboy's* own art collection. Our focus was on architecture, but one could easily explore art in *Playboy* as well. But you do touch on something that is interesting. In the *Playboy* interior art is just a background element and the more futuristic the design the more art recedes or disappears entirely. As in science fiction films, it is the architecture which is doing the transgressing.

It appears from the pages of Playboy that architecture was used as a powerful means of seduction. We know that the great architects of that time were also great seducers: Louis Kahn, Oscar Niemeyer, etc. Do architects today still have such a marked seductive power? Is architecture still a sexy discipline, suited to the pages of a contemporary Playboy?
 Architecture can never be separated from seduction. It *is* a form of seduction. But that doesn't mean that

the architect is sexy. Kahn had several affairs but it is hard to see him as sexy. He was tough and saw his buildings as tough. Niemeyer, on the other hand, was very glamorous when young and explained all of his work in terms of women's bodies. But neither was in *Playboy*. *Playboy* liked to portray architects as suave, sophisticated, and elegant men of the world. But the real mechanism of seduction is the magazine itself. Seduction in the media during this post war period developed into a very sophisticated mechanism that operated through visual and textual associations, a task *Playboy* understood extremely well. What we probably need to ask ourselves is if *Playboy*, in its current format, is as persuasive as it was during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. We need to remember that architecture's presence in popular media remains intact, as we can see in fashion magazines circulating around the world such as *Wallpaper*. The construction of the "archi-star" as a public figure remains a fairly recent phenomena, a tribute to popular media in the construction of society. Perhaps we could argue that the "architect as seducer" image has never been bigger but that *Playboy* is no longer one of its main agents.

Mostra / Exhibition
 "Playboy Architecture, 1953-1979"
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Sede / Exhibition Venue
 NAI/Bureau Europa, Maastricht
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Allestimento / Exhibition Design
 EventArchitectuur
Grafica / Exhibition Graphic Design
 Experimental Jetset

