

STOP FRAME

Rem Koolhaas' wife, Madelon Vriesendorp, used to be the famous one. An overdue retrospective sheds new light on her quirky architectural vision.

In the 1970s, when Rem Koolhaas was just a struggling co-founder of a new firm called the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), his artist wife, Madelon Vriesendorp, was more famous than the future starchitect. In her surrealist-influenced paintings, skyscrapers bent in half, intertwined, or sprung from the Statue of Liberty's belly. Vriesendorp's best-known work, *Flagrant Délit*, a 1975 watercolor of a Rockefeller Center spire discovering the Chrysler and Empire State buildings in bed together, appeared on the cover of Koolhaas' 1978 breakthrough paean to urban chaos, *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*. Her works started selling for \$10,000 apiece, and when the Guggenheim Museum included them in a 1978 OMA show, Paul Goldberger's review in the *Times* called them "the wittiest and perhaps the finest things in the entire exhibition" as well as "some of the best explorations of the unconscious."

By the 1980s, however, "Maddie went 'off radar,'" writes Shumon Basar, the director of cultural projects at the Architectural Association (AA) in London, in a new monograph about Vriesendorp's work. The AA has published the volume in conjunction with a traveling retrospective, "*The World of Madelon Vriesendorp*," which Basar curated with Karlsruhe, Germany-based architecture professor Stephan Trüby. (It appeared early this year at the AA and then at Berlin's Aedes Gallery, and negotiations with U.S. venues are under way.) The artist left the limelight, Basar explains, to focus on teaching at the AA and other U.K. schools and raising her and ...

*[The clipping ends mid-sentence here.] Illustration caption: Storyboards from *Flagrant Délit* or *Dream of Liberty* by Madelon Vriesendorp and Teri Wehn-Damisch (co-writer and producer), 1979.*