

OPPOSITE: RUI VERNET.
PHOTO: LUC BOREGLY

HAUS MAN AFTER

EDOUARD FRANÇOIS HAS COPIED THE
FACADE OF A BLOCK OF HOUSES ON THE
CHAMPS-ÉLYSÉES, FLATTENED IT OUT,
DYED IT GREY AND REPRODUCED IT IN
CONCRETE AROUND THE CORNER.

TEXT: STEVEN WASSENAR
PHOTO: LUC BOREGLY

IT IS ONE OF THE ODDEST BUILDINGS IN Paris but it's only once you're right next to it that you notice that something's not right. The Haussmann-style facades are entirely made of rendered concrete. The windows and doors look flattened out. It's reminiscent of the Reichstag wrapped by Christo, it looks more like contemporary art than architecture. The only openings in this grey all-over surface look like glass aquariums forming a random pattern in the facade, deviating significantly from the formal idiom of the classical facade, based on symmetry and regularity. What goes on behind the facades is invisible from the street. The deep aquarium windows are framed in mirrors, so that during the day they only show the sky, while at night only glimpses of the carpeting in the interior are visible in the facade.



COLA



PASTI

It Edward François, in using this so oft-criticized neo-Haussmann style for this project - the Enjoué Barrière hotel on the exclusive Champs-Élysées - a bold architect, or just one more designer bowing to the heritage-obsessed French public with this historicizing style? His answer is a short "I'm doing something, has meaning, you should do it." This begs the question of what the meaning of this spectacular strategy, François has applied here - making a perfect copy of a section out of it - exactly is.



THE CORNER OF AVENUE
CHAMPS-ÉLYSÉES AND RUE VERNET

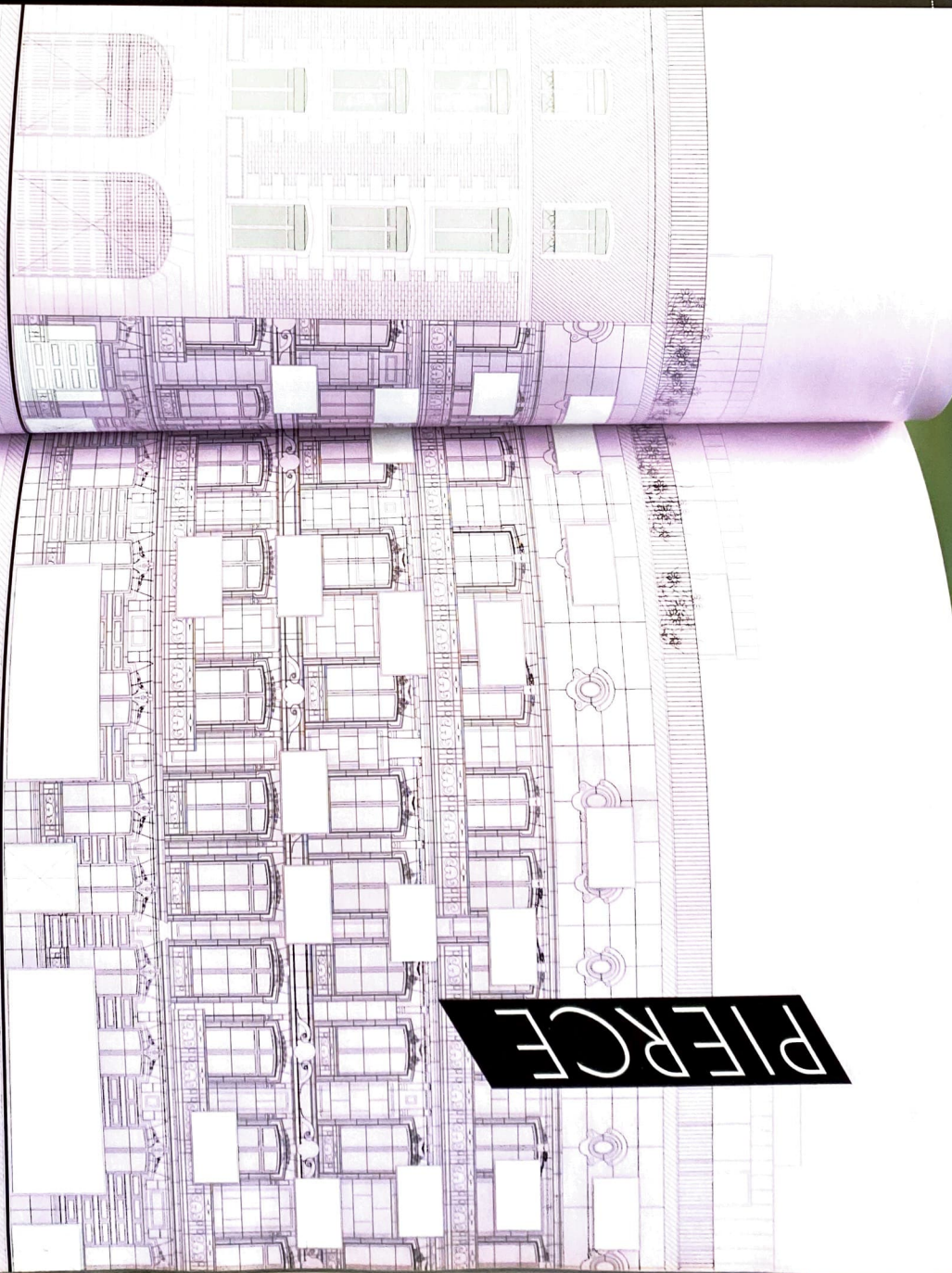
**IF YOU'RE GOING TO BUILD
IN THE DIGITAL AGE WITH
FORMS OUT OF THE PAST, YOU
HAVE TO USE A SCANNER AND
A CASTING MOULD**

[illegible]

**EDOUARD FRANÇOIS AVOIDED
CRITICISM BY SHOWING
THAT HE DIDN'T CARE
ABOUT THE STYLE**

[illegible]

niled with bamboo (the flower tower in Montpellier, with strips of wood (the Closerie in Louvers) or covered in Hausmann-style concrete. In this threadbare cliché of French architecture, monotonous suburb after monotonous suburb is being built today, as a reference to a certain



THIS SPRING THE NEW FACADE ON THE CORNER OF RUE VERNET AND RUE QUEN TIN BAUCHART.

'idea of Paris, in an innovative way, as long as you do it honestly.'

The facade of Fouquet's Barrière has no colour, it is grey, and thus becomes, like black-and-white photography, an interpretation, a transposition, that creates distance only to arouse greater emotion – an atmosphere, if you will. The grey facade – an architect through a technique ('mould-fraud', or 'perced mould') for which the architect has obtained a patent, are not superficial allusions to the past. They are in fact a triple critique: of the shameless copying of heritage of the exterior and of an artificial conflict between modern and classical, which does a disservice to our two most significant architectural legacies. Bruno Zevi laid the foundation for this dialectic approach in *The Modern Language of Architecture* in 1973: you were either symmetrically classical or functionally modern, never both at once.

**THE GREY FACADES ARE
A TRIPLE CRITIQUE: OF
THE SHAMELESS COPYING
OF HERITAGE, OF THE
EXCESSIVELY STRICT
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR
AND OF AN ARTIFICIAL
CONFLICT BETWEEN
MODERN AND CLASSICAL**

Edouard François's building shows that Zevi's rigid constraint on distinction was limiting and artificial. It is in fact possible to give expression to modernist functions within a classical facade decorated with proportion and regularity, if the facade is no longer dependent on its openings. Outside and inside have been uncoupled, the facade does not hinder the interior, and the functional interior does not intrude excessively upon the city.

<http://doua.edfrancois.com>

