Chapter 10: Bernard Tschumi's politics of space
Architecture as instrument of sowcio-cultural change

This chapter examines the way in which Bernard Tschumi understood and discussed the concept of space during the 1970s, interpreting it in conjunction with his relationship with the so-called "London Conceptualists" whose concern was to embrace spatial experience. Tschumi's exchanges with the conceptual and performance art scene in London are pivotal for understanding his conception of space at the time. Special attention is hence paid to a number of exhibitions that epitomized the cross-fertilization between architecture and art, such as "Space: A Thousand Words" held at the Royal College of Art in 1975 and co-curated by Bernard Tschumi and RoseLee Goldberg. The importance of this exhibition for comprehending the role of space in Tschumi's thought lies in the fact that it aimed "[t]o reveal a change in attitudes towards the theories and the language of space", and thus to reinforce the contact of architecture with the very reality of spatial experience.

The chapter also explores the evolution of Tschumi's concerns about spatial praxis, addressing core issues of his 1970s pedagogical and design practice. Particular emphasis is placed upon his teaching strategies at the Architectural Association (AA) in London, and on an ensemble of projects on which he worked during his first forays in the United States of America such as "The Manhattan Transcripts", "The Screenplays" and "The 20th Century Follies"[1]. The chapter aims to render explicit how Tschumi's conception of urban experience as simultaneously space and event is closely related to his intention to challenge the cause-effect relationships dominating modernist views of the city. Of great significance for his understanding of urban conditions is Tschumi's claim that in architecture the materialization of concepts coincides with their simultaneous visual and social expression.

Bernard Tschumi, after studying at ETH Zurich with Bernhard Hoesli, had moved to Paris in 1967 to join the office of George Candilis, Alexis Josic

and Shadrach Woods, where he worked from September 1967 to May 1968 and met up with Fernando Montés, before returning back to Switzerland to finish his studies. Despite the fact that he had to return to ETH Zurich to graduate, during his Parisian sojourn Tschumi came into close contact with the student protests at the École de Beaux-Arts, and he was even once arrested as a result. In parallel, he was connected to the Unité Pédagogique d'Architecture n° 6, where Candilis taught at the time. He was also close to Christian de Portzamparc and Antoine Grumbach, whom he would invite some years later to participate in the exhibition on "A Space: A Thousand Words" at the Royal College of Art in London. Both de Portzamparc and Grumbach – along with Roland Castro, Dominique Montassut, Bernard Trilles and Hubert Tonka[2] – were involved in the journal *Melpomène* that was published by the students' association of the École de Beaux-Arts between 1958 and 1966.

Central for Tschumi's approach is the consideration that the historical moment at which he started his experimentations in the 1970s through teaching and drawing was characterized by a total split between social reality and utopian dreams. His stance could be interpreted as a reaction against the tendency of architects of the previous generation to focus upon the autonomy of architecture, rejecting the internalist approaches dominating the epistemological models in Modernist architecture. Relevant to grasping the shift that Tschumi's pedagogical and design practice triggered is his claim that "architecture's unique quality is that the means through which it materializes its concepts are also the means through which it expresses itself visually and socially"[3].

Pivotal to Tschumi's teaching and design in the period was his intention, on one hand, to transform the concept of program in architecture into a design strategy, and on the other, to take as a starting point of the design process the dynamic nature of urban conditions. Tschumi focused on the intellectual mutations that accompanied the shift from structuralism to post-structuralism, claiming that "[s]tructuralism referred to a totality"[4] and instead underlining the role that post-structuralism played in introducing the notion of the "decentered subject"[5] within architectural discourse and design practice. In his view, the most significant epistemological mutation to which his teaching and design practice aimed to contribute was thus a "rupture with the totalities"[6]. Particularly telling of his desire to challenge the cause-effect relationships and the totalities that made Modernist and internalist architectural discourse and practice dogmatic and non-relevant was the following statement – which would also be valuable for rethinking architectural design processes to-

day – in which he declared that "today there cannot be any opposition between drawings, words and architecture. They are simply different modes of interpretation"[7].

At the core of Tschumi's thought is the idea that "architectural narrative should never be addressed in a linear way"[8]. Instead, to place emphasis on the non-linearity of the architectural narrative, he employed the notion of an "aleatory narrative", drawing upon Roland Barthes' structural analysis of the components of literature. Tschumi's main intention was to shed light on the fact "that the components of a narration are interchangeable" and "not pre-determined", and that as such "[a]rchitecture never conveys a singular story"[9]. Tschumi was more interested in grasping "the character of a city at the very point where it contradicts itself"[10]. The point of departure of this reflection was his desire to explore the extent to which architectural narrative could exist and under what circumstances. Tschumi's definition of space was based on his very intention to conceive architecture independently from its historical determination and to invent devices that could distance it from the prevalence of the notions of form and typology, as were dominant in the epistemological debates of the preceding generation.

Tschumi's experimentation with the concepts of space, movement and use, and their continuous inter-exchanges, permitted him to go beyond an understanding of architecture limited by the boundaries of cultural and historical determination. His attraction to Cedric Price's incorporation of movements and events in the architectural design process, as presented in the case of the Fun Palace, was related to his conviction that architecture should aim to design "the conditions for architecture: instead of conditioning designs"[11]. Another significant point of reference of the early years of his teaching was Archizoom's No-Stop City. Tschumi shared with this group of Italian architects an ambition to "'verify where the system was going' by taking specific conceptual themes to an extreme"[12]. Despite his interest in Archizoom's theoretical approach, Tschumi however believed that their search for counter-design was nihilist and desperate, defining it as follows: "Being a devil's advocate, counter-design is aimed at creating an understanding in the people concerned by the implications of such developments on their everyday life, and at leading to their active rejection of such planning processes"[13]. For him, the weakness of Archizoom's position lay in the fact that it used as its means overtly architectural plans, which – according to his beliefs by the mid-1970s – were simply not effective given that "no built object could ever have an effect on the socio-economic structure of a reactionary society"[14].

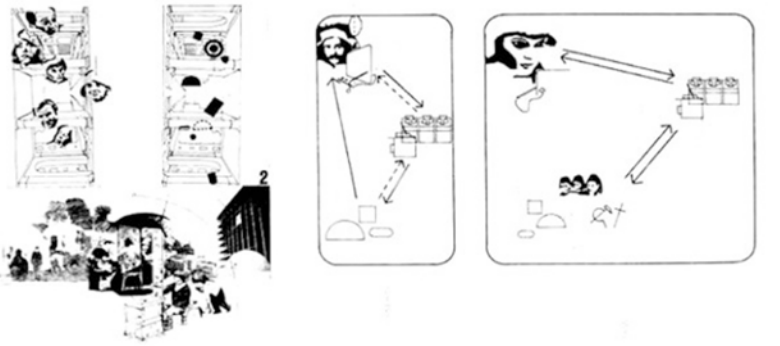
The importance that Bernard Tschumi attached instead to the kinesthetic experience of architecture was based on the assumption that within the same subject there are opposing tendencies and forces, and on his desire to employ design strategies capable of bringing architecture back to a consideration of real space and its experience. The exhibitions and teaching activities of Tschumi in London in the 1970s can thus be analyzed by shedding light on 'conjunctures' as a term. For him, conjunctures are created when certain interactions between events and circumstances trigger the emergence of a particular situation. Tschumi's intention to conceive architecture as simultaneously space and event becomes highly apparent in *The Manhattan Transcripts*, whose "explicit purpose is to transcribe things normally removed from conventional architectural representation, namely the complex relationship between spaces and their use; between the set and the script; between 'type' and 'program'; between objects and events"[15]. Marco De Michelis has highlighted that Tschumi's understanding of space, since his early career, has been complex in the sense that "it isn't space as a geometrical element but rather as it is connected with use, movement, and dynamics"[16].

10.1 Bernard Tschumi and May '68: Social concerns and teaching strategies

In 1970, Bernard Tschumi published along with Fernando Montès an article on "Do-It-Yourself-City" in *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*[17], and then, a year later, a joint piece with Martin Pawley on "The Beaux-Arts since '68" in *Architectural Design*[18]. The former essay started with the following phrases: "Situation. In the city cohabitate people, ideas and objects. Some have attracted the others, but their relations remain difficult and the profits of this cohabitation insufficient"[19]. Tschumi and Montès developed in their article a reflection on how urban conditions could be enhanced and on how the cohabitation of people, ideas and objects in the city can facilitate "urban success", thereby challenging the problem of "seclusion". They also claimed that "restricting the interaction [between people, ideas and objects] impoverishes"[20] the urban condition (Figure 10.1, Figure 10.2). A clear echo of the Situationists' writings and of the concept of "detournement" are present in this phrase used by Tschumi and Montès:

> I felt the need to see people talking and confronting experiences, expanding the field of knowledge, I was walking through the city through ancient objects that had come to a new existence[21].

Figure 10.1. Images from Fernando Montès, Bernard Tschumi, "Do-It-Yourself-City", L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui, 148 (1970): 98–105.

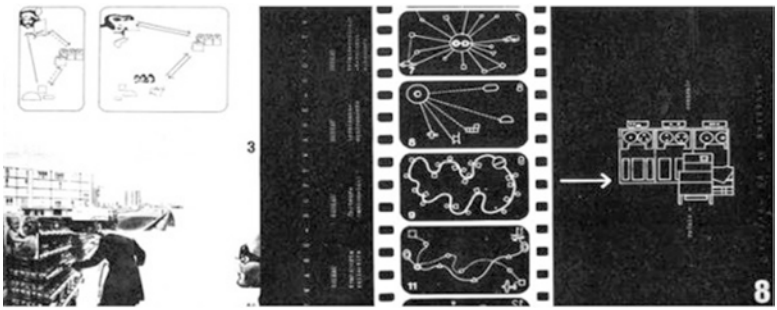


As Tahl Kaminer notes in *The Efficacy of Architecture: Political Contestation and Agency*, "the 'activities' outlined in Do-It-Yourself-City must be understood as an attempt to infuse the city – through architecture – with the social and cultural "content" that the barren, rigid, and repetitive modernist city did not offer, including the temporal and ephemeral"[22]. This tension between the Modernist city and that envisaged by the May '68 protestors in Paris lies at the core of Tschumi's conception of the role of space in architecture, and it is also pivotal for understanding the teaching strategies and social concerns he employed in his teaching at the Architectural Association.

Bernard Tschumi's first teaching experience was at the Architectural Association in London, where he started his trajectory as an educator by leading Diploma Unit 2. The brief he set for this design unit was entitled "Theory, Language, Attitudes". In January 1971, Tschumi took his AA unit students to visit the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Slightly later, two publications – titled *A Chronicle in Urban Politics*[23] and *Chronicles of Space 1974–1975*[24] (Figure 10.3) – gathered the material produced by students in Diploma Unit 2 during the 1973–74 and 1974–75 academic years. As their titles reveal, there had been a reorientation of Tschumi's interests from urban politics to issues relating to

space. Tschumi, however, remained concerned with grasping the potential for urban insurgency. This shift from urban politics to spatial theories was based upon his conviction that the unit, instead of "analysing the variables of architectural activities", should "deliberately concentrate on one constant, space"[25]. This change of focus in Tschumi's teaching was linked to his collaboration with Nigel Coates. The latter had been a Diploma student of Tschumi's during the 1973–74 academic year – the first year of Alvin Boyarsky's reshaped unit system at the AA – and later started assisting Tschumi as co-tutor in a new unit at the end of the 70s, as discussed below. Coates has remarked recently regarding this collaboration with Tschumi: "year-by-year I learned to use drawing as a tool to capture experience, giving prominence to the effect rather than objectifying the idea"[26]. A clear meeting point in Tschumi's and Coates's approaches was their understanding of notational strategies as critical tools in addressing the complex, interactive web of events that characterize the contemporary metropolitan condition.

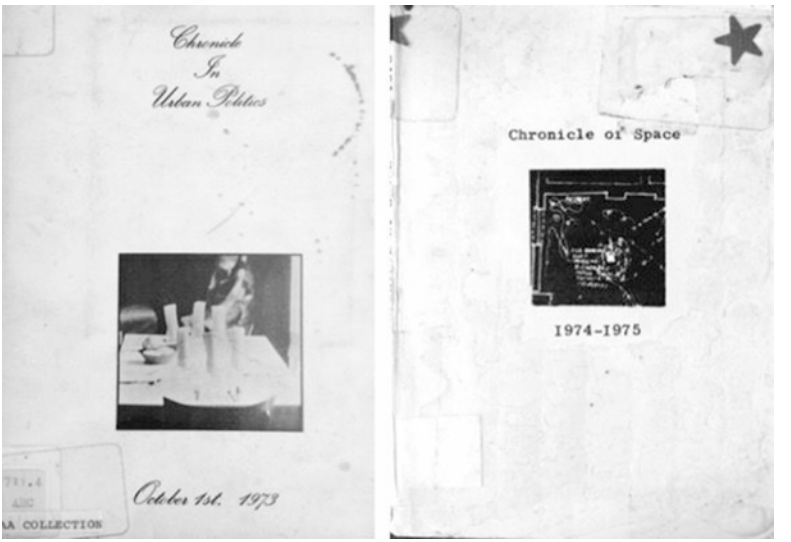
Figure 10.2. Images from Fernando Montès, Bernard Tschumi, "Do-It-Yourself-City", L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui, 148 (1970): 98–105.



In *A Chronicle in Urban Politics*, Tschumi declared that the Diploma Unit 2 was not focused on art, semiology or metaphysics but on politics. He suggests a distinction between politics in the institutional sense and politics in the ideological sense, highlighting that the scope of his design unit was to reinvent the definition of politics, taking distance from its institutional and ideological sense. He thus invited his students to understand "politics in a sense that has not been yet defined, and which perhaps must always remain undefined"[27].

Their work needed to be focused on the analysis of "the city in terms of social relationships and modes of production"[28], paying special attention to the relationship between revolutionary actions and everyday life. Among the best projects that the students submitted were "Marxist Playground" by Rosemary Ind, "Prison Park" by Nigel Coates, and "Five Spaces of a Day" by Jenny Lowe, all of them from 1973–74, as well as "Royal Mint Housing" in 1974–75 by Nigel Coates and Doug Branson.

Figure 10.3. Front cover of A Chronicle in Urban Politics recording the work of Tschumi's Diploma Unit 2 at the Architectural Association (left); Front cover of Chronicles of Space 1974–1975 (right).



The connection between the scope of Tschumi's Diploma Unit 2 and Henri Lefebvre's theoretical ideas is evident. Tschumi's pedagogical vision was focused on a critical analysis of the urban condition, inviting the students to reflect on points of convergence and divergence in understanding the dynamics of contemporary cities. Hence, during the early-1970s, Tschumi was captivated by Henri Lefebvre's distinction between the perceived, the conceived and the lived space as developed in *La Production de l'espace*[29]. This becomes evident

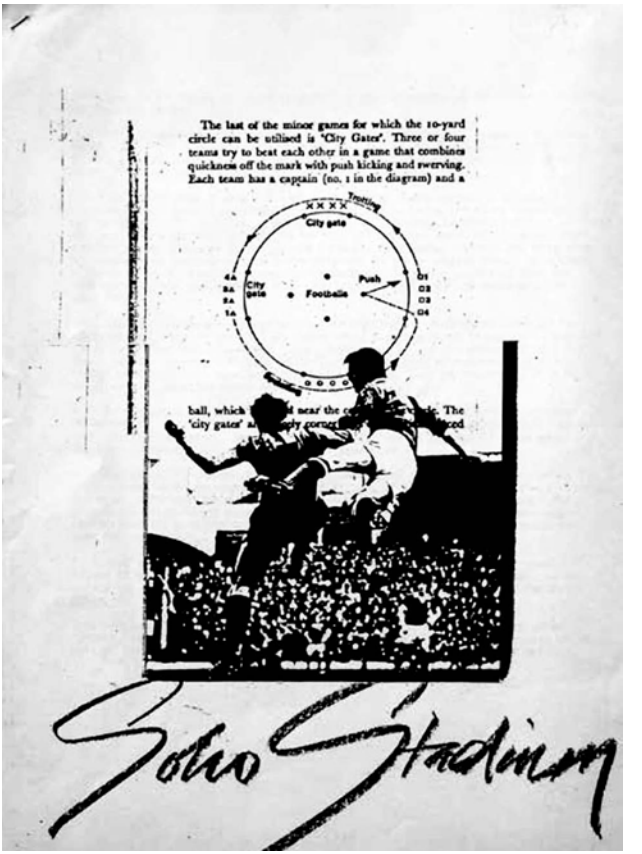
from the themes that he chose when teaching his unit at the AA. As Łukasz Stanek reminds us, Lefebvre's theory was based on the distinction between the physical field of nature and materiality, the mental field of logics and formal abstractions, and the social field – the latter being "the field of projects and projections, of symbols and utopias, of the imaginaire and . . . the désir"[30]. As additional key references for reflecting upon the city, he asked that students should also read Jean Baudrillard, Theodor Adorno, György Lukács and Walter Benjamin, among others. In parallel, Tschumi incorporated into the unit's concepts and tools a range of reflections drawn from various artistic disciplines such as photography, performance and conceptual art.

10.2 Diploma Unit 10 and the integration of space into pedagogy: Notation and events

Following the 1974–75 academic year, Bernard Tschumi took a two-year break from teaching to move to New York, as will be discussed below. By the late-1970s, however, he was again back running another AA design unit in London, this time assisted by Nigel Coates. The pedagogical vision for Diploma Unit 10 proved to be quite different from that of Diploma Unit 2 previously, given that, instead of using literary excerpts as the basis of the design programs, Tschumi and Coates put forward themes more related to the space and dynamics of the city. For their first year of teaching together, in 1977–78, their brief was titled "River Notations", whereas for the next academic year, in 1978–79, they named it "Soho Institutions" (Figure 10.4).

The 'River Notations' brief focused on the following six oppositions: programmatic content versus urban typology; urban typology versus spatial experience; spatial experience versus procedure; procedure versus building type; building type versus spatial sequence; and spatial sequence versus urban typology. The skepticism of Tschumi and Coates vis-à-vis the notion of typology should be highlighted. Despite the presence of the concept of typology as one of the above-mentioned tensions or conflicts being examined in the brief, Tschumi and Coates clearly noted that the concept of typology was employed "as a rational background for a series of intangible and disturbing factors which would ultimately alter the nature of the typologies"[31].

Figure 10.4. Bernard Tschumi and Nigel Coates, cover of the 'Soho Stadium' section of their 'Soho Institutions' brief for AA Diploma Unit 10 in 1978–79.

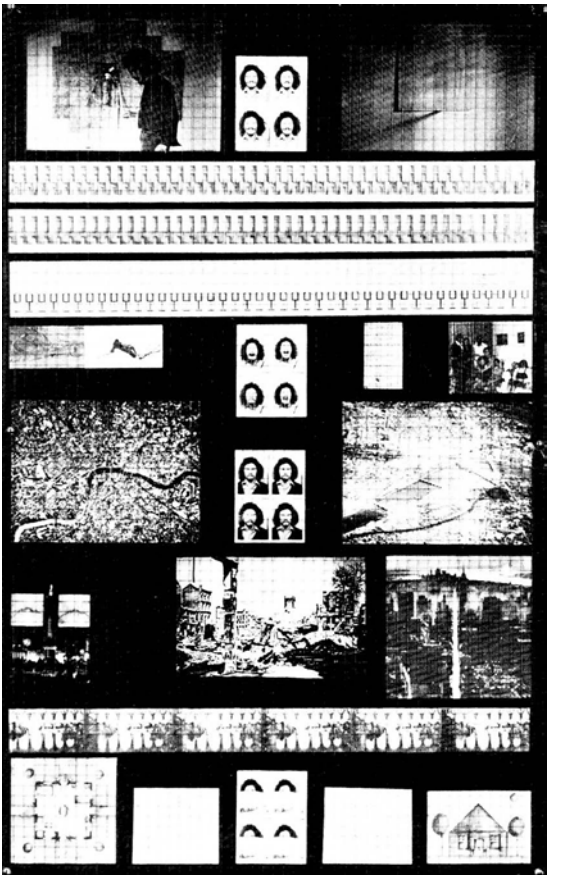


Credits: Courtesy of Bernard Tschumi Archives

Among the projects designed by their students in 1977–78 were John Ryba's "The Large Glass", which pointed out "the impossibility of providing a single reading of the city"[32] (Figure 10.5), and John Perver's "The Opera and its Double", which shed light on the fact that "[c]onventional architectural drawings often lead to a compartmentalised and broken series of visions" – with Perver suggesting the replacement of conventional architectural drawing by a nota-

tional system which, because of its syncretic nature, would be capable of imprinting "the voice of the architect"[33].

Figure 10.5. John Ryba's project for "The Large Glass" in response for the "River Notations" brief.



Tschumi and Coates paid a great deal of attention to architecture's social relevance and formal invention. At the center of their pedagogical agenda for AA Diploma Unit 10 was the thesis that "[t]he insertion of programmatic el-

ements, movements or events implied breaking down some of the traditional components of architecture"[34]. In "Spaces and Events", an essay first published in *The Discourse of Events: Theme III*, which documented the work of students in Diploma Unit 10, Tschumi observed: "Our work argued that architecture – its social relevance and formal invention – could not be dissociated from the events that 'happened' in it"[35]. The novelty of Tschumi and Coates's teaching approach lay in their endeavor to conceive, conjointly, both program and representation, and thereby to treat the disjunctive articulation of these two aspects as a critical tool that aimed to address and analyze "some of the most controversial positions of past and present architectural ideologies"[36]. Tschumi also mentioned that "[h]istory may one day look upon this period as the moment of the loss of innocence in twentieth-century architecture: the moment when it became clear that neither super-technology, expressionist functionalism nor neo-Corbusianism could solve society's ills, and that architecture was not ideologically neutral"[37]. Reading these words, we are confronted with an enlightening realization concerning an important epistemological shift that was taking place in the late-1970s. Tschumi was now maintaining that different architects responded in diverse ways to this shift depending upon their own political and ideological views, claiming that even if that the attitudes of architects varied to a great extent, they all shared the sense of a "general loss of innocence"[38].

10.3 The Insurgent Space Catalogue

Alvin Boyarsky was chairman of the AA from 1971 to 1990; prior to then he had taught its summer school and founded the International Institute of Design (IID) in 1970. As such, he contributed greatly to the enhancement of the role of the AA as a kind of laboratory for an international network of architects and theorists. The IID was particularly instrumental in "shaping institutional identities and goals"[39]. As can be read in the IID's press release for the 1972 summer session, its objective was "to provide a unique opportunity for cross-fertilization and interchange, employing the resources of London". Boyarsky hoped that this session of the IID would present "a synthesis … sparked off by the conflicting attitudes represented towards the environment". In the framework for this session of the IID, Tschumi taught a seminar titled "Urban Insurgency". This seminar was structured around three parts: a first part called "The Environmental Trigger", which then became the title of an article that Tschumi was to publish three years later in the volume on *A Continuing Experiment: Learning*

and Teaching at the Architectural Association[40]; a second part of the seminar for which he chose the title "The Insurgent Use of Space"; and a third entitled "Towards New Urban Organisation".

Tschumi's intention was to collect the materials arising from the second part of the seminar, on "The Insurgent Use of Space", to create "a catalogue of 'détournement' within the formal properties of the city"[41]. The actual poster for Tschumi's seminar however listed four slightly different topics: "The Environmental Trigger", which was to take place during the first week and include a lecture by Tschumi; "Urban Definitions of Conflicts", a seminar group led by Fernando Montès; "The insurgent Space Catalogue", involving a talk by Tschumi and then a workshop that would produce the catalogue on the topic; and finally – most provocatively – "The Right to the Ghetto", a seminar to be taught by Tschumi and Brian Anson in collaboration with "people from Derry". The latter referred to the city of Derry in Northern Ireland, then at the height of the so-called 'Troubles'; just a few months earlier, on 30th January 1972, British paratroopers had indiscriminately shot 26 unarmed citizens in Derry, killing 14 of them, in an incident infamously known as "Bloody Sunday".

Brian Anson was an outspokenly radical Figure who also happened to be teaching design at the AA from 1971 to 1979, and someone open to discussing the armed struggle then being pursued by the Irish Republican Army. While tutoring at the AA, Anson also founded the Architects Revolutionary Council in 1974. On the school's undergraduate program was Intermediate Unit 1, which Anson ran until 1974–75 and which dealt with derelict areas and their socially excluded inhabitants, such as places like Derry. In 1975–76 Anson's design unit was switched to the postgraduate program to become Diploma Unit 8; for the 1976–77 academic year it was moved back as Intermediate Unit 5; and then in 1977–78 and 1978–79 it once again became Diploma Unit 8. Anson's fiery political rhetoric seemed in tune with Bernard Tschumi's evolving theoretical agendas.

10.4 Questioning architecture's function as an instrument of socio-cultural change

A question that Tschumi posed in "The Environmental Trigger", published in 1975, was that of the possibility of space functioning as an "instrument of social transformation" and "a means to change the relationship between the individual and the society by generating a new life-style". In this text, which was

published during the two-year period when Tschumi had stopped teaching at the AA, prior to start teaching Diploma Unit 10, he defined architecture as "the adaptation of space to the existing social structures". It is made evident that at this time, Tschumi was convinced that "[n]o spatial organization ever changes the socio-economic structure". His disbelief in the potential of architecture to contribute to social transformation pushed him to proclaim that "[t]he only possible architectural action of a revolutionary nature is rhetorical"[42].

Thus, for Tschumi, in this period before he started working on The Manhattan Transcripts series and began teaching in AA Diploma Unit 10, any gesture to translate institutional trends into architectural terms/notations was incapable of transforming a given reality. The approaches that Tschumi developed in both Diploma Unit 2 and Diploma Unit 10, as demonstrated respectively by *A Chronicle in Urban Politics* and by *Chronicles of Spaces 1974–1975*, obviously differed. Their common parameter was his interest in the complexity of urban conditions that characterized the metropolis; however, they seem to correspond to two distinct phases of his career. A reorientation of his view took place because of his encounter with the New York art scene, and as such "The Manhattan Transcripts" should be interpreted as the outcome of this shift – being closer to the agenda of Diploma Unit 10 than the framework he had used earlier for Diploma Unit 2. Bernard Tschumi by the late-1970s was much closer to the artistic circles of the so-called "Pictures Generation", which as Douglas Eklund points out, were concerned with the question of "how pictures of all kinds not only depict but also shape reality"[43].

Three important essays – Bernard Huet's "Formalisme – Réalisme"[44], Rem Koolhaas' "'Life in the Metropolis' or 'Culture of Congestion"[45], and Bernard Tschumi's "The Pleasure of Architecture: Its Function as an Instrument of Socio-Culture Change"[46] – were all published the same year, in 1977. In his essay, Tschumi explores how architecture can act "as an instrument of socio-cultural change", as the subtitle indicates. His text should be interpreted as a "polemical position" against "the realpolitik of resource planning" and its "quantifiable benefits". The reflections that he developed in this essay were based upon his conviction that "representations inevitably separate the sensual experience of a real space from the appreciation of rational concepts". He argued that the very force of the task of architects is related to an intention to dislocate and distort the conventions characterizing their environment. What lies behind this position is not destructiveness, but, on the contrary, an interest in the notions of excess and difference. Tschumi was dead-set against the "exceeding functionalist dogmas, semiotic systems, historical precedents or formalised products

of past social or economic constructs"[47]. His aim was to dismantle the elements of architecture and to transgress the rules of architecture.

10.5 Bernard Tschumi and the politics of space

While in London during the 1970s, Tschumi collaborated closely with the Institute for Contemporary Arts (ICA). His collaborations with this institute included the coordination of the "Architecture and Urbanism" lecture series, titled as "The Politics of Space", forming part of the framework for the ICA's French Programme in March 1973. More specifically, Tschumi intended "The Politics of Space" lecture series to examine the effect of space and architecture on society – a subject that was also at the center of the reflections of two leading French intellectuals, Henri Lefebvre and Anatole Kopp. The latter was at the time director of the École Spéciale d'Architecture in Paris. Tschumi invited both Lefebvre and Kopp to contribute to the ICA's lecture series. Other alternative suggested speakers were Herbert Tonka of the *Utopie* group, Manuel Castells and Françoise Choay[48]. Interestingly, Choay would serve, some years later, as a member of the jury that evaluated the proposals for the competition for the Parc de la Villette in Paris, which Tschumi won with his famous project. Moreover, within the framework of "The Politics of Space" lecture series, Tschumi met Jacques Derrida for the first time, with whom he would later exchange ideas about the Parc de la Villette project. The list of the invited participants in the lecture series was undoubtedly impressive, including Roland Barthes, Marguerite Duras, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Jean Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Jacques Derrida, Raymond Aron, Tzvetan Todorov and Michael Foucault. In the event, Barthes, Lévi-Strauss, Sartre, de Beauvoir, Foucault and Lefebvre did not actually participate, whereas Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, as the poster of the event informs us, did not talk in the ICA lecture series but in a parallel program held at the French Institute in Queensbury Place, some 3 kilometers away.

Lefebvre and Tschumi therefore did not encounter each other through the ICA's lecture series, but, from a letter that Henri Lefebvre sent to Jonathan Benthall[49] it would appear that they had already met, sometime in December 1972 or early-January 1973. Tschumi translated for the "The Politics of Space" lecture series a text by Lefebvre's titled "L'espace", as included in the latter's book on *Le Droit à la ville (suivi de) Espace et politique*[50]. In "L'espace", according to Tschumi, Lefebvre examines "space as it relates to social practice", and also "the relation-

ship between mental space (as perceived, represented) and social space (as built and produced, mainly urban space)"[51]. What interested Tschumi most about Lefebvre's theories was his triad of perceived, conceived and lived space. In his lecture handout, Tschumi underscored that for Lefebvre "[s]pace is essentially linked with the reproduction of the (social) relations of production"[52]. And as Tschumi wrote in the press release for the ICA's 'The Politics of Space' series:

> Lefebvre's approach, which is developed in the yet untranslated "Droit a la Ville" or "La Revolution Urbaine" can be articulated around two main themes. On one hand, space is political. Space is a product of the socio-economic structure. Space is "produced" by specific groups that take over space in order to exploit it, to transform it with profit, to manage it. Such an exploitation has led to contradictions between the interests of a power structure and the everyday life of the city inhabitants. But on the other hand, and despite these contradictions, an urban specificity emerges. This specificity proceeds from the use of the city rather than from its exchange value. Such a use, or an urban praxis, could be understood as an agent of spontaneous transformation of everyday life, within a new type of civilization – the Urban Society – and within a space that has become the "reborn place of finally expressed desires"[53].

For the September 1972 issue of *Architectural Design*, Tschumi wrote a review of Henri Lefebvre's *Le Droit à la Ville*, which had been published in French in 1968[54]. In his review, Tschumi remarked:

> Lefebvre sees urban space as the place "where there is something always happening". Although the city became a product that can be bought and sold, an urban specificity emerges. This specificity proceeds from the use of the city rather than from the exchange and its property value. Such a use, or urban praxis, can be understood as an agent of transformation of everyday life within an urban space which is "a projection of Society on the ground[55].

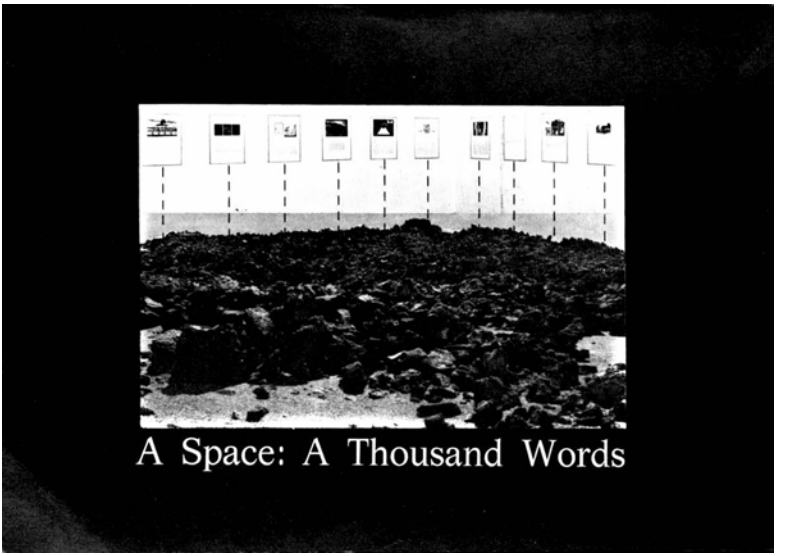
10.6 A Space: A Thousand Words

The first exhibition that Tschumi curated was 'A Space: A Thousand Words', as co-curated with RoseLee Goldberg. This exhibition was held in the gallery of the Royal College of Art in London from 7th February to 6th March 1975, a year

before he initiated "The Manhattan Transcripts" series. Goldberg and Tschumi had originally met in 1973 when the former was director of that gallery (Figure 10.6). Their 1975 show brought together 27 architects and artists such as Dan Graham, Daniel Buren, Fernando Montès, Leon van Schaik, Will Alsop, Peter Wilson, Zoe and Elia Zenghelis, Jeanne Sillett, Jenny Lowe, Roland Castro, Antoine Grumbach, Christian de Portzamparc, Gaetano Pesce, Gianni Pettena and Nigel Coates, among others. Each participant was invited to contribute to the display an unpublished photograph or drawing that depicted design(s), events(s), object(s) or painting(s), plus a text of no more than 1000 words. This complementarity between textual and visual means was aimed at rendering comprehensible the importance of the concept of space. Tschumi noted in his preface to *Questions of Space* that in the 1970s his thinking was dominated by "the relationship between politics and urban society", whereas by the early-1980s he had become more concerned about "the issues of disjunction and programme … [and] the concept of space". In that same text, he related this later intensification of his interest in space to its capacity to function as "the only common denominator within cities, architecture and social structures"[56].

This was certainly explicit in "A Space: A Thousand Words". As was mentioned in the initial announcement sent to the potential contributors on 15th August 1974, the exhibition's objective was "[t]o reveal a change in attitudes towards the theories and the language of space". Its starting point, therefore, was to pinpoint "emerging attitudes" concerning the links "between the theory and the language of space … and the everyday level of space". In parallel, the show aimed to shed light upon the relationship "between objective analysis and unconscious spheres", on the one hand, and "between socio-economic space and mental space"[57] on the other (Figure 10.7). Each contributor was asked to send one photographic reproduction — design(s), events(s), object(s) or painting(s) — and a written piece of no longer than 1000 words (Figure 10.8). The subsequent press release on 18th December 1974 declared: "the exhibition attempts to bring together those artists and architects whose concerns, directly or indirectly, are with developing a language and critique on the production of space"[58] (Figure 10.9). The heterogeneity of the participants was striking, although Rem Koolhaas figures on the exhibition invitation (Figure 10.10), he was not in the list of the contributors in the actual catalogue. Goldberg and Tschumi had intended for 28 contributions, but with Koolhaas' missing, it meant there were only 27 displays.

Figure 10.6. Catalogue cover for the exhibition on 'A Space: A Thousand Words' at the Royal College of Art in London from 7th February to 6th March 1975.

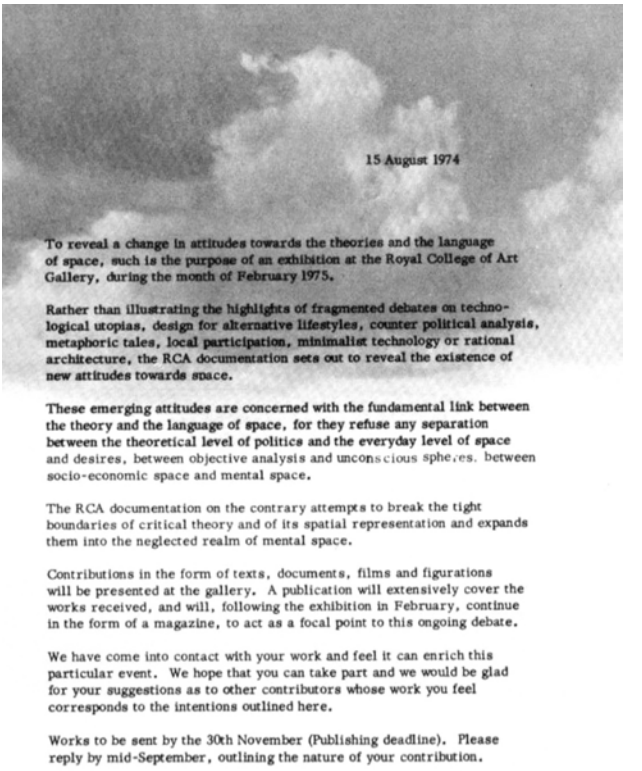


In his essay on "A Space is Worth a Thousand Words", published in the exhibition catalogue, Tschumi refers also to the concept of transparency – thereby echoing the interest of his former professor at ETH Zürich, Bernhard Hoesli, who had written on the topic along with Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky[59]. In particular, Tschumi's comments came in wake of the careful distinction that Rowe and Slutzky drew in their seminal essay about "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal"[60]. The term 'transparency' was indeed central in certain architectural debates at the time, as was evident from a letter from Slutzky to Hoesli on 12th March 1968: "Firstly, let me again thank you for your marvellous efforts re: Transparency. It is comforting to know that one can have a forum on the other side of the Atlantic, particularly when the 'literal' transparentists reign so supreme these days ..."[61].

Above all, however, the point of departure of "A Space: A Thousand Words" was the realization that the infusion of space with too many discourses was threatening space's capacity of resistance. Goldberg and Tschumi wished to reinforce the contact of architecture with the very reality of its spatial experience, as seen in the latter's statement that "the reduction of space to a mere reflec-

tion of other modes of thought was overlooking the fact that space was"[62]. The guiding principles for the exhibition were thus, on the one hand, the refusal of any separation between words and figurations, and on the other, an appreciation of the irreducible presence of space.

Figure 10.7. Announcement about the 'A Space: A Thousand Words' exhibition as was sent out to potential contributors on 15th August 1974.



15 August 1974

To reveal a change in attitudes towards the theories and the language of space, such is the purpose of an exhibition at the Royal College of Art Gallery, during the month of February 1975.

Rather than illustrating the highlights of fragmented debates on technological utopias, design for alternative lifestyles, counter political analysis, metaphoric tales, local participation, minimalist technology or rational architecture, the RCA documentation sets out to reveal the existence of new attitudes towards space.

These emerging attitudes are concerned with the fundamental link between the theory and the language of space, for they refuse any separation between the theoretical level of politics and the everyday level of space and desires, between objective analysis and unconscious spheres, between socio-economic space and mental space.

The RCA documentation on the contrary attempts to break the tight boundaries of critical theory and of its spatial representation and expands them into the neglected realm of mental space.

Contributions in the form of texts, documents, films and figurations will be presented at the gallery. A publication will extensively cover the works received, and will, following the exhibition in February, continue in the form of a magazine, to act as a focal point to this ongoing debate.

We have come into contact with your work and feel it can enrich this particular event. We hope that you can take part and we would be glad for your suggestions as to other contributors whose work you feel corresponds to the intentions outlined here.

Works to be sent by the 30th November (Publishing deadline). Please reply by mid-September, outlining the nature of your contribution.

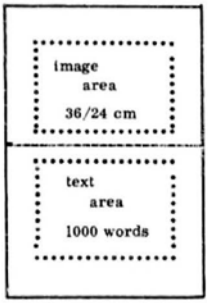
Credits: Courtesy of Bernard Tschumi Archives

Figure 10.8. Guidelines given to the contributors to the exhibition "A Space: A Thousand Words".

The direct relationship between the publication and the exhibition on the one hand, printing costs and restricted budget facilities on the other, have necessitated the following layout.

1. The publication will be of 72 pages (24 cm x 18cm or approx. 10" x 7") and will be a direct reduction of the exhibition panels. Each contribution will be displayed in a double spread.

2. Exhibition panels correspond to a double spread in the publication, twice the size. i.e. 48cm x 72cm (or approx 20" x 30"), laid vertically.



EACH CONTRIBUTOR SHOULD SEND ONLY:

(a) one photographic reproduction i.e. design(s), event(s), object(s), painting(s) etc., of any format but whose total surface is not larger than 36cm x 24cm. Several photographs which once added together come to 36 x 24 is of course possible. The material should not have been previously published.

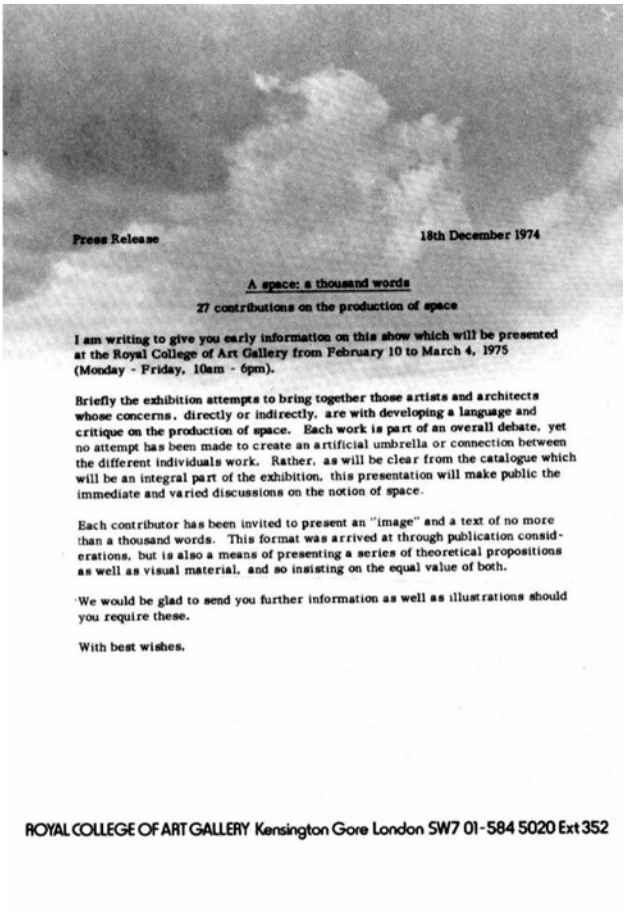
(b) a written piece, no longer than 1000 words (two typed A4 pages). Texts should be in English as translating facilities are not available. Typesetting of text will be taken care of by the organisers.

The submitted photographs and the typeset text will be mounted on respective panels by the exhibition organisers.

All contributions are to be received by the 30th November 1974 (Publishing deadline)

Credits: Courtesy of Bernard Tschumi Archives

Figure 10.9. Press release on 18th December 1974 for the exhibition "A Space: A Thousand Words".



Press Release 18th December 1974

A space: a thousand words

27 contributions on the production of space

I am writing to give you early information on this show which will be presented at the Royal College of Art Gallery from February 10 to March 4, 1975 (Monday - Friday, 10am - 6pm).

Briefly the exhibition attempts to bring together those artists and architects whose concerns, directly or indirectly, are with developing a language and critique on the production of space. Each work is part of an overall debate, yet no attempt has been made to create an artificial umbrella or connection between the different individuals work. Rather, as will be clear from the catalogue which will be an integral part of the exhibition, this presentation will make public the immediate and varied discussions on the notion of space.

Each contributor has been invited to present an "image" and a text of no more than a thousand words. This format was arrived at through publication considerations, but is also a means of presenting a series of theoretical propositions as well as visual material, and so insisting on the equal value of both.

We would be glad to send you further information as well as illustrations should you require these.

With best wishes.

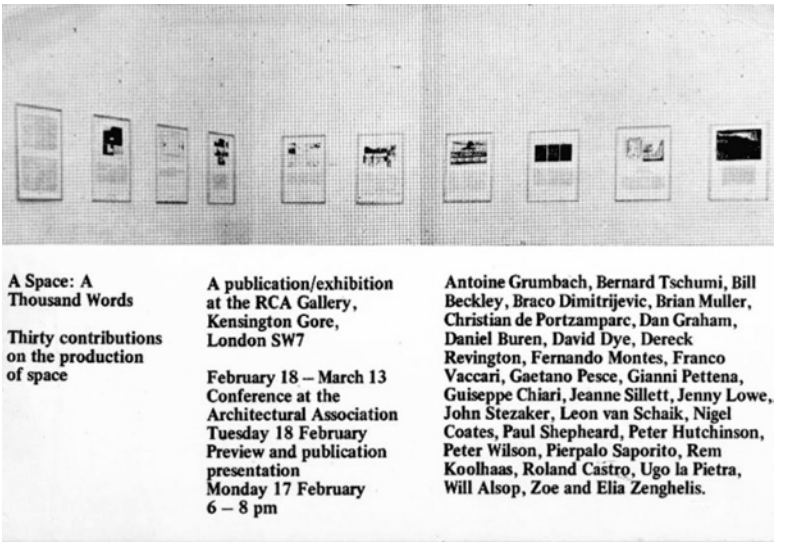
ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART GALLERY Kensington Gore London SW7 01-584 5020 Ext 352

Credits: Courtesy of Bernard Tschumi Archives

Tschumi acknowledges in "A Space is Worth a Thousand Words" the inseparability between signs and space, and between words and figurations, as part of the rediscoveries that accompanied the May'68 protests. What is particularly relevant for understanding how Tschumi conceived the relationship between writing and drawing is his argument that 'spatial concepts have been made by

the writings and drawings of space rather than by their built translations'. He also refers to the inseparability between '[t]he magic of space' and 'its theoretical discourse', claiming that "[a]ttitudes play with language, and theories play with attitudes". For Tschumi, "[t]he distinction between the talk about space and the creation of space vanishes"[63].

Figure 10.10. Invitation to "A Space: A Thousand Words" at the Royal College of Art Gallery.



Credits: Courtesy of Bernard Tschumi Archives

In a 1975 issue of *Studio International*, RoseLee Goldberg contributed an article titled "Space as Praxis"[64] while Tschumi wrote an essay titled "Questions of Space: The Pyramid and the Labyrinth (or the Architectural Paradox)"[65]. In this essay, Tschumi juxtaposed the information included in 24 numbered frames that included extracts and images from other authors to his own text: these included questions and references to projects such as Archizoom's No-Stop City and Aldo Rossi's Gallaratese housing block, and quotations such as from Manfredo Tafuri's "L'architecture dans le Boudoir", published in the third issue of *Oppositions* in 1974:

> The return to language is a proof of failure. It is necessary to examine to what degree such a failure is due to the intrinsic character of the architectural discipline and to what degree it is due to a still unresolved ambiguity[66].

Tschumi was thereby sharing with Tafuri the conviction that any reduction of architectural design to linguistic analogies was a negligence in terms of architecture's very logic.

10.7 The Manhattan Transcripts and the disjunction of the Metropolis

Key to understanding Tschumi's position at the time was his observation that "[a]bstracted from a use or a context, a building has no meaning". At the heart of this stance is the realization about a building that "as soon as it is used or contextualized – as soon as something happens in it – it acquires meaning"[67]. His conception of space was now clearly based on the idea that "space is transformed by events"[68], and that "architecture is the discourse of events, as much as the discourse of spaces"[69] . This means that the point of departure for "The Manhattan Transcripts" series was the observation that "architecture [is] … simultaneously space and event"[70] and that hence "[t]here is no architecture without action, no architecture without event, no architecture without program"[71]. In *Event-Cities: Praxis*, Tschumi reiterated his view that "there is no architecture without action or without program, and that architecture's importance resides in its ability to accelerate society's transformation through a careful agencing of spaces and events"[72].

Tschumi first moved to New York in 1975 to collaborate with the well-known Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies (IAUS), led by Peter Eisenman, which had invited him over. He started working on "The Manhattan Transcripts", and his research on Central Park during his time with the IAUS certainly fertilized, to a certain extent, the questions he was raising through this new project. Ideas from "The Manhattan Transcripts" were exhibited in four important solo exhibitions: at the Artists' Space Gallery in New York in 1978; at the AA in London in 1979; at the PS1 Gallery in New York in 1980; and then at the Max Protech Gallery in 1981, again in New York. The first of these shows, at the Artists' Space Gallery, which was titled 'Architectural Manifestoes' and was held from 8th to 29th April 1978, was in fact Tschumi's

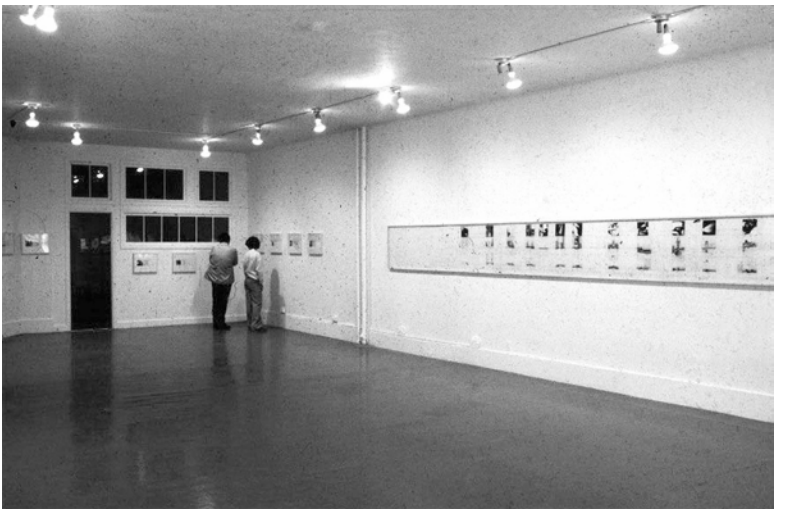
first solo exhibition of his work (Figure 10.11). On display were the following items from "The Manhattan Transcripts" series: "Manifesto 1: Fireworks" (1974); "Manifesto 2: Questions of Space, or The Box" (1975) (Figure 10.12); "Manifesto 3: Advertisements for Architecture" (1976); "Manifesto 4: Joyce's Garden" (1977); "Manifesto 5: Birth of an Angel" (1977); "Manifesto 6: The Park" (1977); "Manifesto 7: Border Crossing" (1978) (Figure 10.13); and "Manifesto 8: The Room" (1978). Of the last-mentioned, Tschumi wrote in the exhibition catalogue of its contrast to his other manifestoes: "While the others are plots or fantasies that desire a space to exist, here is a space that desires a plot"[73]. Tschumi went on to add that "[e]ach of the … works plays on the tension between ideas and real spaces, between abstract concepts and the sensuality of an implied spatial experience"[74]. Thus, the main argument of his 1978 exhibition was that architecture is "the tension between the concept and experience of space"[75].

The representational strategies employed in "The Manhattan Transcripts", such as the combination of different perspectival views of the photographs and drawings included in the strips, require the observer to constantly change their point of view. Observers of these drawings when confronted with the "changing perspectives and angles [are forced to trace in their mind] … the effect of moving through space"[76]. Tschumi's notational strategies hence invite viewers to reconstruct in their mind an "embodied interaction"[77]. Another representational tactic in "The Manhattan Transcripts" is the vastly varying scales of the city, the buildings and their details. Through the simultaneous presentation and juxtaposition of scales, Tschumi was inviting observers to adjust their reading of these images so as to conceive them as part of the same semiotic assemblage – also contributing to the activation of a sense of motion whilst looking at the images.

Tschumi claims that the starting point for "The Manhattan Transcripts" was the "inevitable disjunction between use, form and social values", which in turn implied "a dynamic conception posed against a static definition of architecture"[78]. In the introduction to his book about the project, published in 1981, Tschumi explicitly juxtaposed the world of movements, the world of objects, and the world of events. In this sense, "The Manhattan Transcripts" stemmed from his realization that "architecture's sophisticated means of notation – elevations, axonometric, perspective views, and so on – … don't tell you anything about sound, touch, or the movement of bodies through spaces"[79]. Therefore, the project's objective was to go "beyond the conventional definition of use … [and] to explore unlikely confrontations"[80], and thereby to reorganize the connections between space, event and movement. Through

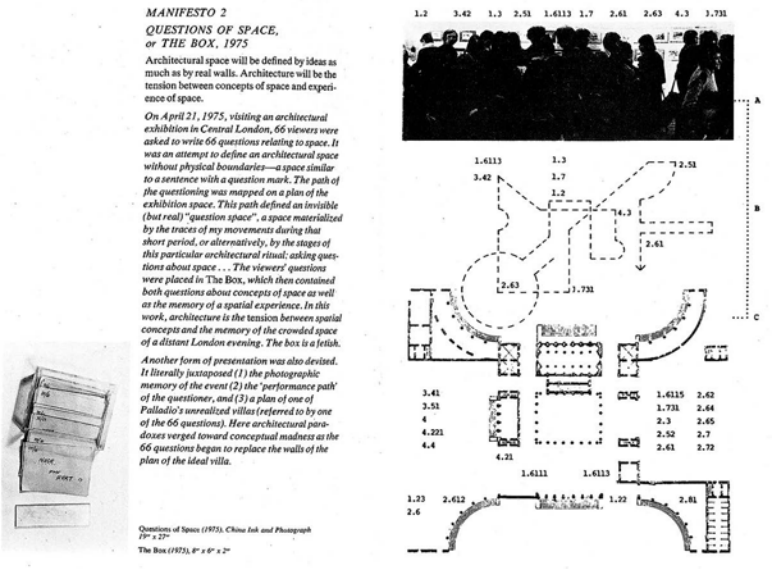
this series of 'theoretical' projects, on which he worked from 1976 through until 1981, his aim was nothing less than to reinvent architecture's modes of notation (Figure 10.14). For "The Manhattan Transcripts" series, Tschumi instead employed three autonomous systems that were intended to address the conflict between events, spaces and movements. In doing so, "The Manhattan Transcripts" were linked to his first encounter with the art scene in 1970s New York, and thus were "aimed at grasping domains, which, though normally excluded from most architectural theory, are indispensable to work at the margins, or limits, or architecture"[81].

Figure 10.11. Bernard Tschumi's solo exhibition on "Architectural Manifestoes" at the Artists Space Gallery in New York (April 1978).



Credits: Courtesy of Bernard Tschumi Archives

Figure 10.12. Bernard Tschumi, "Manifesto 2: Questions of Space, or The Box" (1975), in Bernard Tschumi, Architectural Manifestoes (exhibition catalogue) (New York: Artists Space, 1978).



MANIFESTO 2

QUESTIONS OF SPACE, or THE BOX, 1975

Architectural space will be defined by ideas as much as by real walls. Architecture will be the tension between concepts of space and experience of space.

On April 21, 1975, visiting an architectural exhibition in Central London, 66 viewers were asked to write 66 questions relating to space. It was an attempt to define an architectural space without physical boundaries—a space similar to a sentence with a question mark. The path of the questioning was mapped on a plan of the exhibition space. This path defined an invisible (but real) "question space", a space materialized by the traces of my movements during that short period, or alternatively, by the stages of this particular architectural ritual: asking questions about space . . . The viewers' questions were placed in The Box, *which then contained both questions about concepts of space as well as the memory of a spatial experience. In this work, architecture is the* tension between spatial concepts and the memory of the crowded space of a distant London evening. *The box is a fetish.*

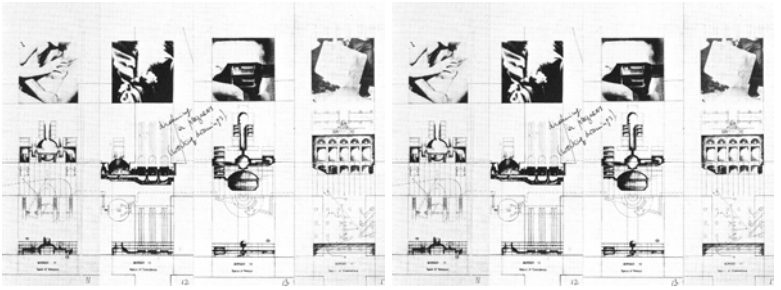
Another form of presentation was also devised. It literally juxtaposed (1) the photographic memory of the event (2) the 'performance path' of the questioner, and (3) a plan of one of Palladio's unrealized villas (referred to by one of the 66 questions). Here architectural paradoxes verged toward conceptual madness as the 66 questions began to replace the walls of the plan of the ideal villa.

Questions of Space (1975), China Ink and Photograph 19" x 27"

The Box (1975), 8" x 6" x 2"

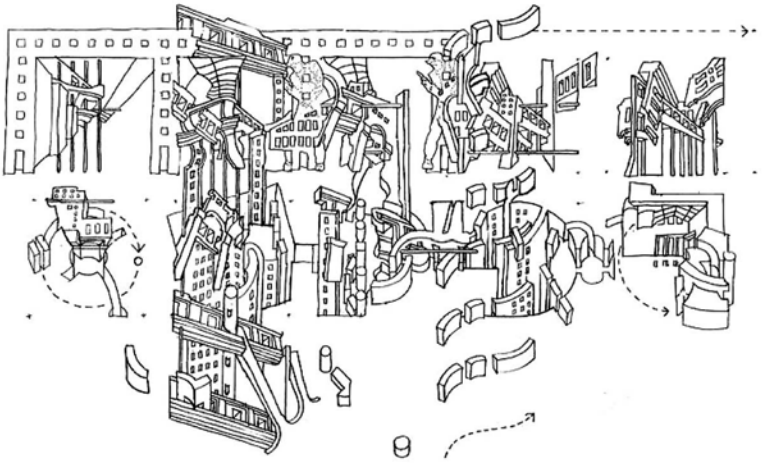
Credits: Courtesy of Bernard Tschumi Archives

Figure 10.13. Bernard Tschumi, "Border Crossing" (1978), in Bernard Tschumi, Architectural Manifestoes (exhibition catalogue) (New York: Artists Space, 1978).



Credits: Courtesy of Bernard Tschumi Archives

Figure 10.14. Bernard Tschumi, sketch for The Manhattan Transcripts (1977).



Credits: Courtesy of Bernard Tschumi Archives

Tschumi has since described "The Manhattan Transcripts" series as theoretical propositions executed through drawing. The project consists of four episodes which transcribe imagined events within real locales in Manhattan: "The Park" uncovers a murder in Central Park; "The Street (Border Crossing)" chronicles the movement of a person drifting through violent and sexual events on 42nd Street; "The Tower (The Fall)" depicts a vertiginous fall from a skyscraper; and 'The Block' illustrates five unlikely events occurring in separate courtyards within one city block. This last-mentioned item – the fourth and last episode of "The Manhattan Transcripts" series – was first exhibited at Max Protetch gallery in 1981, accompanied by the publication of the homonymous book. "The Block" was organized into five horizontal and three vertical sequences. The vertical ones correspond to object, movement and event respectively.

Tschumi states that, in the case of "The Manhattan Transcripts", "[t]he relationship of one frame to the next is indispensable insofar as no analysis of any one frame can accurately reveal how the space was handled altogether"[82]. In his view, the project's meaning is produced in a cumulative way, given that it "does not depend merely on a single frame (such as a façade), but on a succes-

sion of frames or spaces"[83]. Tschumi's interest in inventing cumulative ways of acquiring meaning through visual representation led him to draw a distinction between five kinds of sequences: the repetitive, the disjunctive, the distorted, the fade-in, and the insertive sequence. To grasp the relationship between "The Manhattan Transcripts" and the actuality of life in New York, we should bear in mind that, despite the fact that their strategies are based on the elaboration of "fragments of a given reality", their capacity to challenge conventional architectural signs was deliberately based on the use of "abstract concepts"[84].

The notion of montage is crucial in understanding the intentions behind the visual strategies used in *The Manhattan Transcripts*. Montage is the technique of selecting, editing and piecing together separate sections or fragments. The way that Tschumi conceived montage in this project departed from certain core ideas of Sergei Eisenstein, the celebrated 1920s Soviet film director. The distinction between and emotionally exciting and moving story and the logical exposition of facts, as outlined by Eisenstein in *The Film Sense*[85], was pivotal for Tschumi's endeavors in "The Manhattan Transcripts". Tschumi's incorporation of montage served to deconstruct any logic of understanding architectural design based on dichotomies between parts and whole. As he argues, "The Manhattan Transcripts" did "not attempt to transcend the contradictions between object, man, and event in order to bring them in a new synthesis"; instead, the objective was "to maintain these contradictions in a dynamic manner, in a new relationship of indifference, reciprocity, or conflict"[86].

Also influential was Eisenstein's use of montage to induce a shift in the spectator's perception from a passive stance to an active one. In "The Manhattan Transcripts", Tschumi sought to challenge the way architectural drawings are interpreted by pushing the observers/interpreters of the drawings to adopt a viewpoint based on the proposition that "there is no architecture without … movement"[87]. Similarly, Tschumi wrote in his introduction to *Architecture and Disjunction* that "there is no social or political change without the movements and programs that transgress supposedly stable institutionality, architectural or otherwise; that there is no architecture without everyday life, movement, and action" – and that it is the most dynamic aspects of their disjunctions that suggest "a new definition of architecture"[88]. His aim was thus to invent modes of architectural notation that would be able to activate a sensation of movement and action in the viewer's mind.

Eisenstein and Tschumi also shared an interest in "signifying incompletion", thereby implicitly inviting the spectator, as Jonathan Hill has noted, "to

attempt to complete the montage"[89]. This brings to mind Tschumi's remark that "looking at the Transcripts also means constructing them"[90]. Eisenstein believed that montage's strength "lies in the fact that it involves the spectator's emotions and reason"[91], which meant that his main intention was to force the spectator "to follow the same creative path that the authors followed when creating the image"[92]. The point of this tactic for Eisenstein was to shift the way in which the spectator is understood and treated. More specifically, he rejected any conception of the viewer that reduced their activity of observing to a simple practice of just seeing the depicted elements which constituted the visual assemblage on show. On the contrary, Eisenstein's objective was to shape tools that could support his conviction that the spectator when confronted with visual images should experience "the dynamic process of the emergence and formation of the image"[93].

The notational strategies that Tschumi employed in "The Manhattan Transcripts" thus aimed to "trigger desire for architecture", replacing function with fiction. He even used the motto "Form follows Fiction" to highlight his desire to challenge conventional "functional and moral standards"[94]. His preference for the term "action" over that of "function" led to his desire to convert both action and program into integral parts of architecture. For this reason, he replaced conventional plans with new types of architectural notation.

There were of course other projects by Bernard Tschumi around the time that reinforced or supplemented his thinking for "The Manhattan Transcripts". The latter clearly shared an aim with "The Screenplays", which sought to "explore the relation between events ("the program") and architectural spaces, on one hand, and transformational devices of a sequential nature, on the other"[95]. For example, "Domino Distortion", which was a part of this other series, comprises three parallel distorted strips that expressed Tschumi's opposition to the emblematic, yet entirely static, Domino diagram as drawn by Le Corbusier back in 1914–15. From 1979 Tschumi was also working on "The 20th Century Follies" series. It consisted of works for New York, London, Toronto, Middleburg in Holland, and Kassel in Germany. The fifth part of this series, titled "The Broadway Follies", was exhibited in "Follies: Architecture for the Late-Twentieth-Century Landscape", a show held at Leo Castelli Gallery in New York and then the James Corcoran Gallery in Los Angeles in 1983. Tschumi situated his "follies" along Broadway in New York, beginning at the Customs House and ending in the Bronx. The elaboration of filmic metaphors – such as repetition, distortion, superimposition and fading – was again central to this project, which displayed elevations of the follies mounted onto black

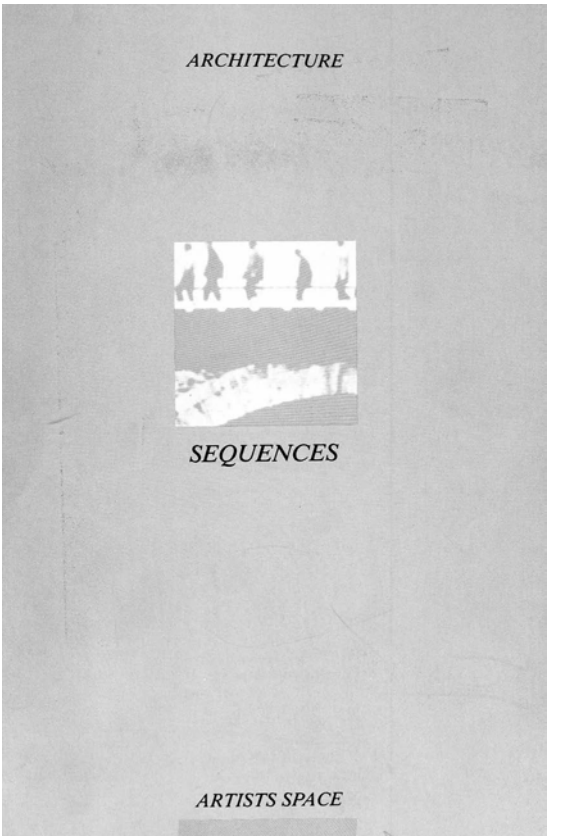
mats and held in black frames. The analogy between the way in which they were mounted and the sequence of a filmstrip was striking. Apart from these drawings, Tschumi also exhibited six models in "Follies: Architecture for the Late-Twentieth-Century Landscape". Here his purpose was to distinguish five strategies to relate the "follies" to the wider city: in other words, "single object, pair of objects, linear sequence of objects, randomly scattered objects and objects on a point grid". As such, "The Broadway Follies" was based on the strategy of "linear sequence of objects", while the last category was identified by his entry for the 1982 competition to design the Parc de La Villette in Paris. In his text for the exhibition catalogue, Tschumi wrote that his aim with "The Broadway Follies" was again to couple a transformational and spatial sequence[96].

Following his co-curation with RoseLee Goldberg of "A Space: A Thousand Words" in London in 1975, Tschumi then curated another exhibition six years later titled "Architecture: Sequences" (Figure 10.15). This time, Tschumi brought together drawings, etchings, photographs, models and little books that focused on the theme of "sequence" and were created by Philippe Guerrier, Jenny Lowe, Lorna McNeur, Deborah Oliver and Peter Wilson. The exhibition was held at Artists' Space Gallery in New York from 17th January to 28th February 1981. Tschumi observed in his preface to exhibition catalogue:

> Instead of trying to herald some new movement and because of the respective concerns often differ, I have emphasized a further common ground in this work, namely the idea of "sequence". Always present in architecture, regardless of generation or ideological allegiance, the architectural sequence is of considerable interest insofar as it allies notions of route as well as ritual, movement as well as method, program as well as narrative[97].

For this catalogue, Tschumi authored essay titled "Sequences" in which he defined three kinds of sequences that were present in every architectural work: transformational, spatial and programmatic sequence. He underscored the fact that in the first case "the sequential transformation … becomes its own theoretical object, insofar as the process becomes the result, while the sum of transformations is all that counts, rather than the outcome of the final transformation"[98]. This statement represents the culmination of his line of thought going back to the early-1970s, expressed now however through very different words and projects.

Figure 10.15. Catalogue cover for Tschumi's exhibition on "Architecture: Sequences" at the Artists Space Gallery in New York (1981).



Credits: Courtesy of Bernard Tschumi Archives

10.8 Conclusion: Around the relevance of Bernard Tschumi's thought for current debates

Bernard Tschumi wished to transform the architectural program into a compositional device, using urban conditions as a starting point for the design process. The way in which he reinvented the notion of the user of architecture

needs to be comprehended in relation to his affirmative attitude towards the disjunction between predetermined uses for buildings and urban spaces, and the actual uses invented by users. Tschumi's concern with uncovering the potentialities hidden in the architectural program is closely related to his conception of the role of space within architectural epistemology. In his opinion, program – in contrast to function – is defined by activities and actions and not by conventions. In other words, program permits the architect to challenge the conventional correlations between function and form.

The point of departure for Tschumi's approach is the conviction that there is no obligatory relationship between the architectural signifier and the programmatic signified. Instead, he argues in *Event-Cities: Praxis* that "all architecture is inextricably linked to our urban condition and that each of the projects featured [in this volume] is first and foremost a constituent element of our global system of cities"[99]. He maintains that "[w]hat distinguishes these projects … is the manner in which their programmatic dimension becomes as much a part of their architecture as of their use', thus highlighting the necessity to replace 'the static notions of form and function … by attention to the actions that occur inside and around buildings – to the movement of bodies, to activities to aspirations"[100].

In this sense, Tschumi's approach is characterized by a desire to convert the experiences of the city into instruments capable of redefining actual urban conditions. In *Event-Cities: 2*, he remarks regarding his approach:

> The projects always begin from an urban condition and a program. They then try to uncover potentialities hidden in the program, site, or circumstances, whether economic, social, or cultural. Dynamic forces and/or intensely public spaces are encouraged; a concept is identified; and, eventually, a form arrived at, so as to reinforce or qualify the concept[101].

The value today of reconsidering Tschumi's ideas from the 1970s and early-80s lies in his interest in the dialectic between social praxis and spatial forms, and in his questioning of whether it is language that precedes socio-economic context or the opposite. To grasp the relevance of his thought for the contemporary context it is important to remember that his experimentation with modes of representation helped to make us realize that architecture should always try to reinvent its own tools. The fact that the current context is characterized by the questioning of fundamentals about how we inhabit architectural space makes Tschumi's interrogations into the experience of spatial conditions even more relevant.

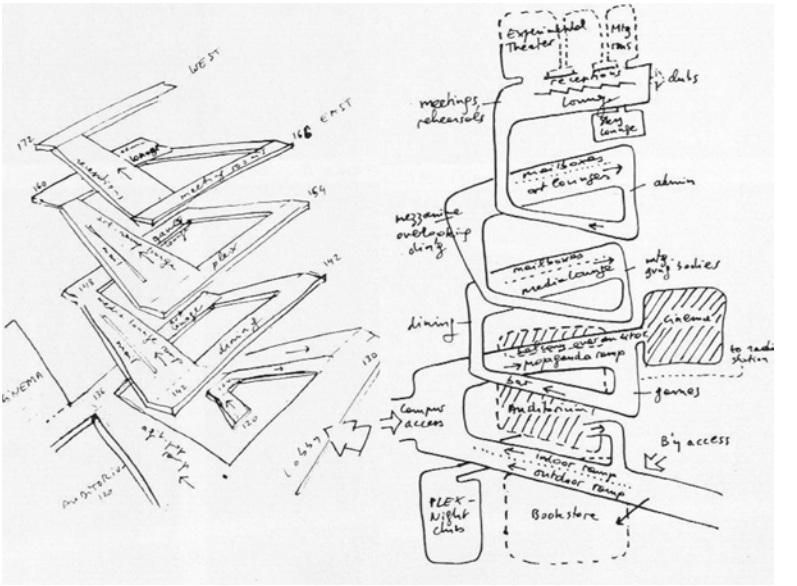
Now that the public sphere of urban conditions is under threat worldwide due to the Covid-19 virus outbreak in early-2020, it is even clearer that the reinvention of the ways in which the city is lived in needs to be part of the scope of architects. Within such a context, the theoretical perspective developed by Bernard Tschumi during the 1970s through his writing, teaching and design practice, is useful in reflecting upon what is happening in our cities today, nearly fifty years later. Within the current conditions caused by the pandemic, citizens are being called upon to reimagine how they experience threshold spaces like the balcony, on the one hand, and public space generally on the other. The ideas presented by Tschumi and Montès in "Do-It-Yourself-City" as to how people, ideas and objects might co-habit in the city to facilitate "urban success" and challenge "social seclusion" appear to be very timely[102].

In parallel, the reflections of Tschumi in "The Environmental Trigger" about "the adaptation of space to the existing social structures [and the role of planners as] translators of the formal structures of society [who intend to] … turn urban conflicts into new urban structures"[103] likewise seems highly relevant to the current debates around social inequalities in our cities. Tschumi's endeavor in that essay to draw attention to environmental issues is also useful in problematizing contemporary conditions. More specifically, his position in regard to the impact of environmental actions on the transformation of social structures can enrich current debates about the interchange between environmental and social issues: "If building or architecture, or planning … is never going to have any effect on the structure of society, revolutionary actions of environmental nature are part of a process that will"[104].

Despite this relevance of Tschumi's discourse from his early career to contemporary concerns, our understanding of his thinking during those years needs to be fully contextualized. To do so, it is useful to situate Tschumi's thought within a process of epistemological shifts that can relate it to his intention not only to oppose the Modernist tradition but also the debates about the appraisal of typologies that were in fashion during the 1970s. Tschumi, referring to his interest in epistemological shifts, used the expression "Architecture against itself"[105] to describe the process whereby new concepts emerged through ruptures. Tschumi's rejection of Modernist and Rationalist approaches became overtly evident in his description of his competition entry for the Parc de La Villette, noting that his aim was "neither to change styles while retaining a traditional content, nor to fit the proposed program into a conventional mould, whether neo-classical, neo-romantic or neo-modernist"[106]. On the contrary, he wanted to invent "new programmatic

developments … [and to] create a new model in which program form, and ideology all play integral roles"[107].

Figure 10.16. Bernard Tschumi, circulation diagrams for the Lerner Hall Student Center, Columbia University, New York.



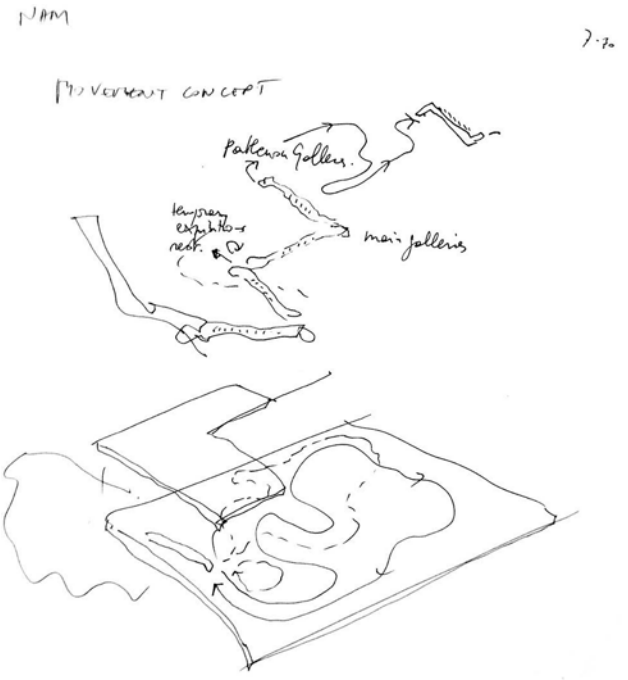
Credits: Courtesy of Bernard Tschumi Archives

Despite his disapproval of the rigidness of Modernism in the 1970s and early-80s, we can see in retrospect that Tschumi incorporated into his thinking some aspects of modernist architecture that were compatible with his wish to embrace unpredictability in the experience of space. In an article entitled "Through a Broken Lens", published in the framework of the *ANY* series, Tschumi defined program as "the repetition of activities located in spaces and intersected by movement"[108]. He stressed that "program-spaces belong to a single homogeneous and predictable space", whereas "the movement within them is generally heterogeneous and often unpredictable"[109]. Tschumi related the unpredictability of the movement within spaces to Gilles Deleuze's concep-

tion of movement-image – as explained in *Cinema 1: The Movement Image*[110] – and associated the distinction between homogeneous and heterogeneous movement within space to the distinction between "dialectical" and "organic" architecture, reminding us that, in the framework of his architectural education at ETH Zürich, where his mentor had been Bernhard Hoesli, "organic" architecture was typically linked to Frank Lloyd Wright's work whereas "dialectical" architecture was associated with Le Corbusier. Tschumi also remarked that the distinction between "organic" and "dialectical" architecture was not based upon any kind of value judgement, but referred to two divergent attitudes towards the process of making: "[t]he organic was about continuity, a so-called organic spatial continuum … [while] the dialectical was about opposition"[111].

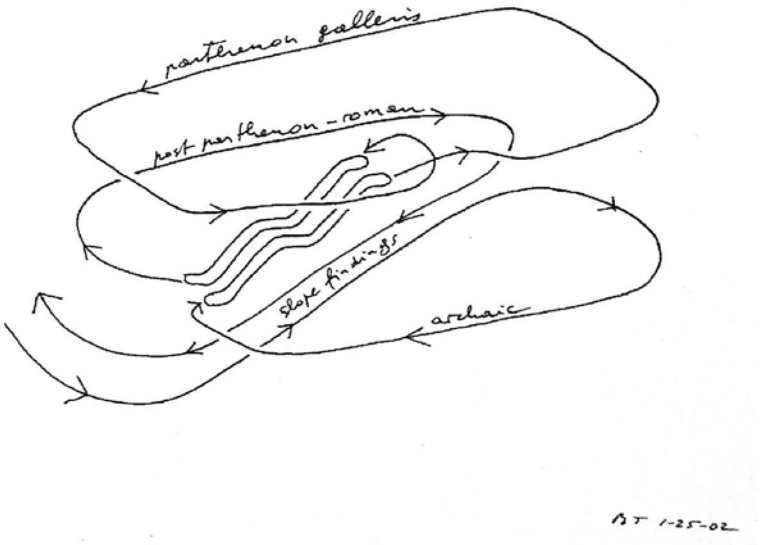
In contrast to "dialectical" architecture, which was judged mainly on formal criteria, Tschumi's own understanding of architecture came to be based on the potentialities that are activated whenever "two systems – a static spatial structure and a dynamic movement vectorization (ramps, stairs, catwalks, etc.) – … intersect and make an event out of their planned or chance encounter"[112]. This design approach is evident in many of Tschumi's projects, which are based on the idea that "programmed activities, when strategically located, can change an unprogrammed space (the in-between)"[113]. In his more recent designs, Tschumi's interest in architecture's bodily experience and in the continuity that characterizes "organic' architecture, as described above, is expressed in the numerous free-hand circulation diagrams he produces for schemes such as the Lerner Hall Student Center at Columbia University in New York (1994–99) (Figure 10.16) and the Acropolis Museum in Athens (2001–09) (Figure 10.17, Figure 10.18).

Figure 10.17. Bernard Tschumi, concept circulation diagrams for the Acropolis Museum in Athens, Greece.



Credits: Courtesy of Bernard Tschumi Archives

Figure 10.18. Bernard Tschumi, circulation diagram for the Acropolis Museum as drawn on 25 January 2002.



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Tschumi's disapproval of any typologically oriented architectural discourse in the 1970s was rooted in his belief that any interpretation of architecture that prioritizes historical processes over mental processes of formation of space gets trapped in a specific political *status quo*. This explains why he was so much in favor of instability and indeterminacy in design, and of the dynamic aspect of architecture generally. His thinking and practice aimed at reawakening the importance of the building's user, but in a new form based upon the idea that the disjunction between predetermined uses and those uses invented by the users was to be desired – and thus not something that must be controlled or avoided. Tschumi was especially interested in the dialectic between social praxis and spatial forms, raising the question as to whether such a dialectic is possible. He understood real space as the product of social praxis and ideal space as the product of mental processes, thereby asking whether language precedes our socio-economic conditions, or not. Another aspect of his theoretical position that is also thought-provoking in relation to current debates, was

his insistence on the fact that "[a]ny attempt to isolate a cultural attack from a political context is doomed to failure"[114]. In contrast to the majority of the environmentally oriented discourses then and now, Tschumi's aim was always to illuminate the interrelation between environmental consciousness and social change, both of which are urgently needed today.

Notes

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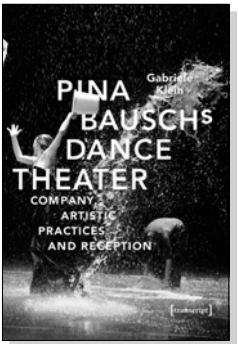

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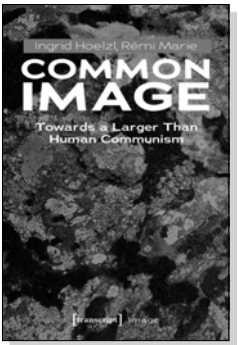

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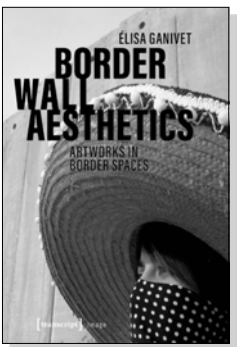

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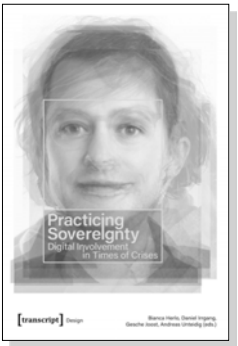

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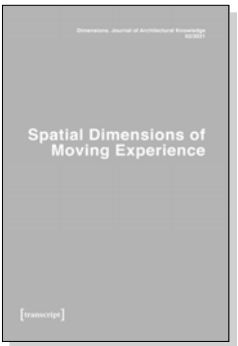

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