

Tracing Everyday Performances

An Anthropomorphic Adaptation of
Life, Transience and Death
of the Architectural Commodity

Tracing Everyday Performances

Architectural Theory Thesis
by Sebastian Bernardy
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Abstract

Key words:

anthropomorphization, everyday life,
pleasure, event, sensuality, transgression,
decay, death, nothingness

Architecture as a discipline of spatial production is responsible for the implementation of abstract ideas that form the concrete substance of everyday life, its theoretical and practical interference in the organic run of the world reflects on the sensual relation to society. The “pleasure of architecture” as an adaptation to Bernard Tschumi’s reference about defining space as a lively subject under consideration of Lefebvre’s critique of the capitalist “commodified culture” creates the hypothesis of anthropomorphizing architecture as the central position of this work. The structural composition traces the chronological development of human

life in the context of a theorization of space over time, a succession of (everyday) events caused by a variety of feelings as a consequence of experience and adaptation: lust, boredom, fetishism, anger.

In this logic, the thesis sets up the ephemerality of human nature and applies its attributes to architectural space. Tschumi's notion of decay and transgression as part of this personification function as the sensual and at the same time abstract models of transformation: from life to death, from ideal to real, from virtual to actual.

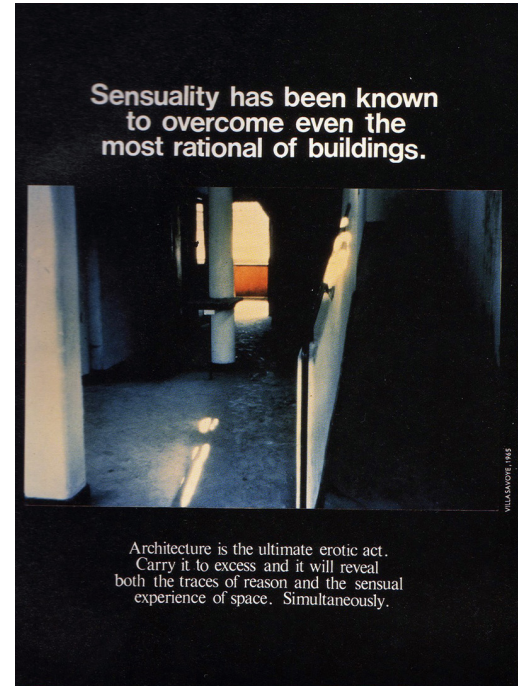
The text simulates decay as a natural process in contrast to structural

abandonments driven by economic, political or social forces. By doing so, the hypothesis claims the terminology of human disuse to be adaptable for architecture: sunset years vs. euthanasia, Heimlich maneuver vs. lethal injection, mid-life crisis vs. second spring. In essence, the thesis first tries to introduce the foundation of treating built space with human dignity supported by theoretical references and practical examples, in order to eventually argue about the absoluteness of reconsidering (disused) architecture as an unconditional site of demolition and restart.

Introduction

“Architecture is the ultimate erotic act. Carry it to excess and it will reveal both the traces of reason and the sensual experience of space. Simultaneously.”¹

1 Tschumi, Bernard, *Advertisement for Architecture* (1976)



Architecture as a profession is fundamentally in charge of the conceptualization, realization and production of space—functional, social, invisible, literary, illusionary, cultural. The embodiment of this manifesto can solely be described under consideration of the aspect of time, as every spatial act is part of a greater event over a given duration. The rather abstract correlation between these entities is displayed through the medium of the architectural object, being witness and enter- or container of human behaviour through the activation of a physically passive construct and vice versa. The consumption of the actual space—and the elements defining

it—traces evidence of the bodily and emotional exchange between architecture and its users in both ways, through experience and wearing.

Space in Time

The ultimate transgression, according to Bernard Tschumi's lecture on *Ruin & Decay*, becomes part of the defined time of space on its transient way from life to death, not only physical but also virtual. In *Architecture and Disjunction*, he claims that “death is tolerated only when the bones are white: if architects cannot succeed in their quest for healthy and virile, active and useful, ethical and happy

people and houses”².

The thesis adapts this notion towards a discussion on debating, perceiving and facing architecture as a lively matter. Taking Tschumi's confrontation with the transgression of the architectural state as a first notice for the subsequent argumentation, it aims to build up a narrative on a metaphorically personified definition of architecture in order to proof evidence of the emotional potential regarding its entity. The observation is initially responsible for the discussion on aging architecture, dealing with the question of how to treat the built object in its

decaying state.

The subject appears to be a literal application of the dependencies between time and space, as decay by definition depicts the co-occurrence of the two, and it is to transcend this superimposition from the perspective of the user. In this respect, space as an absolute institution succumbs the notion of events in an act of “seeing time in space”³, as Brian Massumi puts it. In order to establish a coherent understanding of space as an entity and decay as a consequence of an ongoing process, it's necessary to reinforce the notion that it's not only the space

2 Tschumi, Bernard, *Architecture And Disjunction* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994)

3 Massumi, Brian, *Strange Horizon* <<http://www.brianmassumi.com/textes/Strange%20Horizon.pdf>>

itself whose morphogenesis leads to a visible transformation, but especially the growth, decline and adaptation of its constituting elements. The line between tangible and intangible space (mass and void) will be identified more substantially through the classification of spatial theorizations with regard to the presented matter.

18 Referring to the eventual deterioration of the spatial product, Florence M. Hetzler's description of the ruin in relation to time adds another notion to its phenomenology: "A ruin is thus a combination of various factors: of the art, science and technology that produced the structure in the first place; of nature, including earth, rain, snow,

wind, frogs and lizards; and of time, which causes an edifice to become a ruin. Time is the intrinsic cause of a ruin as a ruin. One should also note that all the senses save taste are employed in the appreciation of a ruin."⁴ The ruin eventually presents an own typology related to the power of time, experience and the act of waiting. In this way, it defines the final condition of simulating time in space with an interminable patience and with no immediate material interference. The integral value of architecture is to be considered a self-evident consequence of occupation and what is done with it, rather than a static constitution

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of programmatically charged space. Nevertheless, ruins—or what is universally understood as ruins—are merely retained retroactively due to cultural or political reasons and scarcely as an intentional goal at its production, where the effect of time is consciously elided for the benefit of a freshly proposed moment; the phenomenon of declining substance is hardly considered a stylistic device in contemporary planning, yet.

Here is where the architectural practice comes into play, increasingly offering a remarkable flawlessness for its outcome through the making of renderings that feign a prospective (digital) reality and the deliberate

disclaiming of perpetual mutations. The thesis is not directly meant to be a critique of today's perception of making architecture as such, but tries to emphasize the relevance of looking at what actually happens to a building once it is occupied and not only at its seductively glossy inauguration. From this thought there is a number of questions to be asked regarding the inexorable erosion of architecture. What if the representation of an ideal within the real practice could foresee, anticipate or even control the inevitable morphogenetic nature of a building through everyday experience? How is it possible that the naïve image of advertising architec-

ture through the promising rendition of generic desires is not critically discussed? Architecture's consciousness about the gap between the actual reality and what is offered as an idealized reality allows to question the applicability of the everyday utopia offered in architectural presentations. The rise of computer-aided design and the ability to (visually) idealize the real and (technically) realize the ideal world—at least from a certain perspective—as a possible scenario resolves the line between the real and the ideal, the actual and the virtual, the true and the possible, which tremendously transforms the perception of the process of making architec-

ture. The abstraction of a conceptual setting is simulated through new technologies in a hyperrealistic way without having to identify real spatial qualities and leave no space for surprise, devotion or speculation. This evolution turns architecture into a domain of “commodified culture”⁵, a production of objects rather than spaces; as everything is possible, the possible can become real “through the process of realizing itself.”⁶

According to this assumption, it is to identify the very relation between architecture as a cultural product

5 Highmore, Ben, *Everyday Life And Cultural Theory* (London: Routledge, 2002)

6 Highmore, Ben, *Everyday Life And Cultural Theory* (London: Routledge, 2002)

and its users. As a wider debate, it is essential to explicitly define the conditions of what is described as the “end” of architecture when tracing its existence in such a fast-forward mode. The following illustration aims to depict the structure in a linear way, based on the belief that the metamorphosis of architecture as real space can be seen parallel to the procedure of human life. In this context, Henri Lefebvre's *Critique of Everyday Life* and its specific scrutinizing of the everyday as a time-based territory is used to understand the relation between the message of this text and what Tschumi calls the transgression of architecture as a perceivable event.

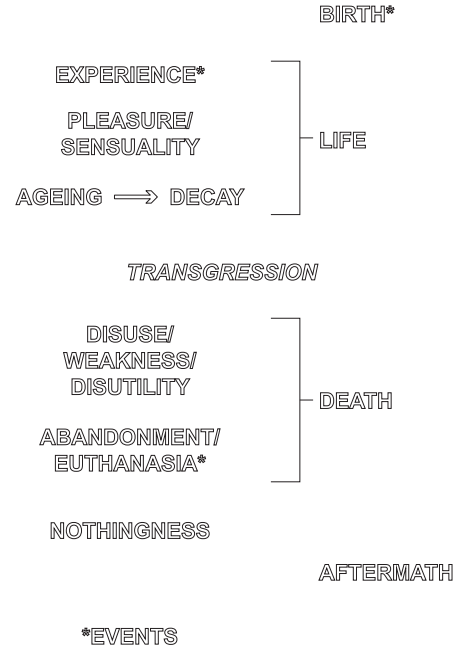
In this sense, Lefebvre's notion of the moment is an implicit event which both shapes the individual character and at the same time reveals the genericness of (modern) everyday. The connection between these situations, the “bureaucratic society of controlled consumption”⁷ and the “overcoming” (of a state) in analogy to transgression (of a commodity) aims to be elaborated throughout the thesis.

7 Lefebvre, Henri, *Critique Of Everyday Life* (London: Verso, 1991)

Illustrative Storyline

The architectural being is traced through continuous stages as an analogy to human existence, whereas the transgression from life to death describes the phenomenon of ephemeral space.

ANTHROPOMORPHIZATION OF ARCHITECTURAL SPACE



Sunset Years vs. Euthanasia

The idea of examining life and death of architecture is naturally adapted from the definition of organic cycles, setting the beginning and the end of an active phase; activity in terms of program, value, perception and appreciation. The main parallel between human and architectural vitality is its transience, in consequence of an inevitable substantial debilitation (over time).

Even if cities, buildings, streets and objects are active in a more figurative sense through its use, their lifespan is as limited and recordable as from birth to burial. Decay as a biological

act illustrates the progressive change of matter while simultaneously creating immeasurable features to it—memory, romanticism, emotion—and marks the development of a unique character.

The hypothetical humanization of architecture and its specific adaptability rises the questions of the anthropological nature of the built product. The analogy seems rather metaphoric than scientific, but primarily opens up an extensive potential for further argumentation availing itself of fundamental ethical codes. Once the anthropomorphization of space is identified, there is evidence to practice sensual behaviors in order to give

answers to questions about the tangible aging of architecture.

How can “the end of a space” be claimed, treated and contextualized within political and economic structures? When does architecture deserve a lifelong maintenance to preserve programmatic activity instead of falling prey to its inabilities?

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Death as a predictable and inevitable aftermath of everyday events implies a variety of scenarios, sudden or slow, visible or invisible, forced or soft, natural or man-made, and the thesis tries to formulate a coherent consent around this debate.

Aesthetics of Destruction

The text sets up a wider spectrum of reasoning and a further specification of the actual question about the sensible exposure (space) to substantial decay (experience) and its artificial antagonist demolition (event), whose interrelation is the desirable field of conflict. It aims to establish the border between the tide of events and the forceful acceleration of natural processes in relation to the theoretical framework in which the debate takes place.

The act of tearing down can be viewed as a spectacular, fascinating and satisfying show, when it reverses

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the original construction phase in a time lapse and irritates the rules of time and dissolving structural elements to its pure inanimateness. The punctual event—opposite to the enduring—heralds a promise for the new, the better, the exciting and the unexpected. So the vision of recommencement against old vice is a seductive scenario towards the unexpected and surprising future for both political and economic expectations.

Notwithstanding its notion of intended brutality, demolition as a man-made decision can be argued to be similarly natural and yet willful. Practically speaking, the epistemological approach of demolishing structures

cancels the constant alteration by pushing its fall and is necessarily part of a greater cycle, an abstract description of what is slightly more primitive in its real condition. So within the context of giving architecture attributes of the living body, it automatically implies weaknesses, susceptibilities and idiosyncracies which have to be taken care of. Referring back to the idea of the architectural medicide or ‘assisted suicide through a practitioner’, it has to be clarified if demolition is even an unnatural way of reacting to decay or rather an instrument to accelerate political and economic processes.

Strategy

The argumentation of this thesis underlies and is framed within a theoretical construct that both generates founded notions on the problématique and allows for secondary interrelations among its protagonists.

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As the ruin has been introduced to be the latest state of aging architecture—or generally the ultimate conjunction of space and time—again the connection to Tschumi becomes evident: referring to the French writer and surrealist Georges Bataille’s *Death and Sensuality*, he specifies the transgression of architecture as the “convergence of the real and the

ideal”⁸ that exceeds the world’s limits without destroying them. Following the logic of Tschumi’s and Bataille’s engagement with the sensualities of architecture’s transitoriness, the text opens up another layer of tension between space and its occupant.

In *Death Becomes Her*, Renata Hejduk recites Tschumi’s writings on transgression, decay and eroticism⁹, who in turn adopts Bataille’s concept of Eros and “its constituent elements of taboo, sacrifice, transgression death

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8 Bataille, Georges, *Death And Sensuality* (New York: Walker, 1962)

9 Hejduk, Renata, “*Death Becomes Her: Transgression, Decay, And Eroticism In Bernard Tschumi’s Early Writings And Projects*”, *The Journal of Architecture*, 12 (2007), 393–404
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13602360701614672>>

and pleasure”¹⁰. He applies these human attributes to the field of architecture, personifications similar to his essay on *The Pleasure of Architecture* where he disassembles and introduces eleven fragments, mediately based on Roland Barthes’ *The Pleasure of the Text*¹¹: a double pleasure, gardens of pleasure, pleasure and necessity, metaphor of order (bondage), rationality, eroticism, metaphor of seduction (the mask), excess, architecture of pleasure, advertisements for architecture, desire.¹² These arguments explicate specific relations between the human

10 Marcuse, Herbert, *Eros And Civilization* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966)

11 Barthes, Roland, Richard Miller, and Richard Howard, *The Pleasure Of The Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975)

12 Tschumi, Bernard, *The Pleasure of Architecture*

and the architectural body, both performing in a certain way and transforming each other through use and accommodation.

Another link to Bataille is the idea of emotionalizing architecture; his juxtaposition of the labyrinth and the pyramid as Tschumi declares in *The Architectural Paradox*: “trends that consider architecture as a thing of the mind, as a dematerialized or conceptual discipline, with its linguistic or morphological variations (the pyramid); empirical research that concentrates on the senses, on the experience of space as well as on the relationship between space and praxis (the labyrinth); the contradictory nature of

these two terms and the difference between the means of escaping the paradox by shifting the actual nature of the debate, as for example, through politics, and the means that alter the paradox altogether (the pyramid and the labyrinth).¹³ The correlation of emotional and physical events and their inevitable reflexivity is the core of the framework used for this analysis—desire for activating space, pleasure of its sharing, seduction of (de-)materialization.

The deductive hypothesis turns out to assume that the cultural production of architecture in all its facets fabricates

13 Tschumi, Bernard, *The Architectural Paradox*, edited by Michael Hays in Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996)

patterns of behaviour and manners for society, which vice versa transforms the condition of architecture on its path from life (embodiment) to death (?). The romanticized relation between user and object implies an emotional level, dissolving the impact of human (post-)occupancy related to its absolute degeneration. Using the act of demolition as a radical counterpart to this principle, the theoretical framework aims at finding mindsets to underpin this supposition. The structural organization of the text is based on the idea of identifying the fascination for the playful theorization of architecture, the virtual glorification of demolition as a spatio-

temporal instrument, the presentation of case studies exposed to the rules of time, the attempt of decrypting space within the debate and the eventual request for surrender.

The
Pleasure
of
Architecture

The first chapter of the thesis aims to share and demonstrate the intention of seeing the architectural profession not purely as a physical mission but furthermore as a creator of certain feelings related to its output. It assumes that joy as an affective mean contributes to an alternative evaluation of space and is about to build up the progressive hypothesis to account architecture an organic feature of modern civilization, followed by the interpretation of space as an ephemeral product. In this debate, pleasure is characterized as a concept of the emotional, romantic and virtual adaptability of the architectural being towards the behavior of society.

Referring to the French philosopher and theorist Roland Barthes' *Le Plaisir du Texte* and Bernard Tschumi's projection on architecture, the transgression generates a strange dependency to the people¹⁴; when architecture yields to the power of nature and the world, it enables a potential for emotions. Comparable to the establishment of human peculiarities during life, the "new" arrives neutral and firstly faceless just after its birth, not capable of reacting to any sentimentalities. This changes through permanent experience: by making mistakes, being used, exchanging

14 Solà-Morales Rubió, Ignasi *Terrain Vague* in Anyplace (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995, p. 118-123)

with others, adapting behaviors to apply for its own character.

The analogy of building and living to acting and learning defines the framework for the adaptation of pleasure as an intimate event of everyday life.

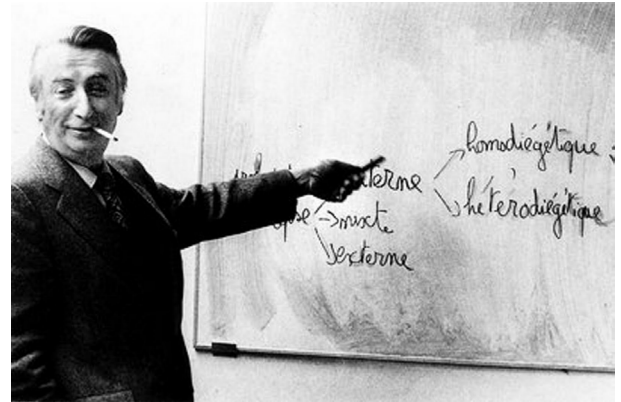
Pleasures of Making and Experience

the author's chapters which are more or less immediately transferable to the consumption of architecture: boredom, fetish, madness and pleasure.

- ⁴⁶ Barthes' catalogue includes an alphabetically ordered compilation of (French) key words on the literary definition of the bliss (*jouissance*) and pleasure (*plaisir*) of reading. The analogy of writing and building as a materialization of thoughts and reading and using as an experience of production deserves to study a selection of

Roland Barthes

“L’ennui (boredom) n’est pas loin de la jouissance (bliss): il est la jouissance vue des rives du plaisir.”
(1975)



“It can’t be helped: boredom is not simple. We do not escape boredom (with a work, a text) with a gesture of impatience or rejection. Just as the pleasure of the text supposes a whole indirect production, so boredom cannot presume it is entitled to any spontaneity.” The assumption that the state of being bored is not only part of a list related to pleasure (of reading) but also considered a conscious act within this argumentation reveals its relevance towards the perception of architecture. As far as it has been cited in today’s design practice, boredom is hardly applied as a valuable feature but can equally contribute to specific reactions, feelings and the

manifestation of memory. Impatience, as stated by Barthes, can even be used as a stylistic device purposely instead of trying to avoid boredom as a negatively associated form of experience. Boredom is a result of the gap between expectation and disappointment, impatience the urge to hope for something else in the meantime; Barthes’ connection of these two states is similarly applicable to the production of architectural space for both producer and addressee.

The standardization of time through the globalized synchronization of the clock—which started in the 14th century but found its absolute homogeneity with the advent of the indus-

trialization and the rise of assembly line work in machine-driven factories—transformed the everyday into an “iron cage” of modernity that is “governed by asceticism”.¹⁵ In his text on “Everyday Life and Cultural Theory”, Ben Highmore names the “repetition-of-the-same [...] an everyday temporality experienced as a debilitating boredom,” an oversaturated routine of the ordinary content, rhythms and systems of everyday life. Again, boredom as a state of mind is negated for the notion of “the emptying of time”¹⁶ and regarded an unsatisfactory

15 Weber, Max, *The Protestant Ethic And The Spirit Of Capitalism* (New York: Scribner, 1958)

16 Highmore, Ben, *Everyday Life And Cultural Theory* (London: Routledge, 2002)

result of familiar experience.

Why don't architects instrumentalize the conception of boredom as an implicit tool against the increasingly fast-paced moments of everyday life? The American writer Patricia Mayer Spacks mentions boredom as a “subtle tool for forms of cultural discrimination aimed at differentiating everydayness”, claiming that “although the spread of boredom has coincided with and reflected an increasing stress on subjectivity and individualism, the state of mind carries social as well as personal meanings”. Her conclusion that “the old think the young are

bored”¹⁷ underlines the universal pre-conception on boredom as an undesired sensation of experience, which is to be actively introduced as mean for the reflective deceleration of the everyday.

“The text is a fetish, and this fetish desires me.” The analogy of fetishism here is indispensably related to Walter Benjamin’s definition of “an object created by human beings and regarded as the locus of magical powers or powerful spirits and thus it belongs to a sacred configuration”¹⁸, as Christine Blaettler describes it in context

17 Spacks, Patricia Meyer, *Boredom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995)

18 Blaettler, Christine, *Phantasmagoria: A Profane Phenomenon as a Critical Alternative to the Fetish* (Image & Narrative, Vol 13, No 1, 2012)

of the Marxist view of commodity fetishism, with commodity being the architectural outcome to build up and fulfill desires towards society. Fetishism can be located within the domains of spatial production and perception, a spirit driven by the formal realization of abstract ideas through the architect and the almost perverse act of making and consuming something. In other words, fetishism in the sense of Benjamin or Marx is created by the planner’s ultimate visionary power and thus rubs off on its consciousness, whereas the interpretation of architecture as a commodity allows for this fetishism from both angles: the lust of creation as well as the attraction

of an embodied eagerness. The criticism on (commodity) fetishism as a capitalist paradigm is related to both the process of spatial production and perception, a devotion in a (sexual) sense of physical and mental worship towards a certain valuable object. So the pleasures of production and consumption are shared by the attraction of passive and active experience, where the architect plays the role of a voyeur whose satisfaction lies in the sensual affiliation of the people with the space.

Production of Space

“I write not to be mad,” Bataille said—which meant that he wrote madness; but which could mean: I wrote not to be afraid?” Madness, rather than fear, obviously functions as an attribute of emotional connection between architecture and its users. In contrast to reading (or writing), using (or building) inhabits a less mediate expression of madness, which is mainly caused by the different scales of “abstract and concrete”.¹⁹

The classification of the universal under consideration of the Hegelian

¹⁹ Seabaugh, Tom, *Distilling the Abstract and Concrete in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: The Nature of Hegel's Idealism*

Logic of contradicting dialectics, here the above mentioned, is a fundamental observation to be discussed furthermore, especially through Hegel's "Phenomenology"²⁰ of the concrete and the abstract. His notion of seeing abstraction as an empty concept of the concrete—for the abstract can not be understood independently from the imagination of the concrete—stands in line with other dialectical pairs such as being and nothing, positive and negative, relationships whose counterparts couldn't be more opposite but still are not able to exist without the other. The same counts for the

20 Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich and J. B Baillie, *The Phenomenology Of Mind* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967)

relation between the abstract and the concrete when talking about the pleasure of architecture in reference to the different scales of imaginary potential in text (Barthes) and goods (Hegel). A text is read with a preliminary definition of the abstract and the awareness that what can be seen is the product consisting of an endless variety of letters that eventually become concrete in the act of writing. The present text, though, implies a concrete narrative that offers space for an abstraction regarding its content, and perception can alter depending on the user; from abstract to concrete: "The most favorable conditions for an insurrection exist, obviously, when the max-

imum shift in our favor has occurred in the relationship of forces. We are of course referring to the relationship of forces in the domain of consciousness, i.e. in the domain of the political superstructure, and not in the domain of economic foundation, which may be assumed to remain more or less unchanged throughout the revolutionary epoch. On one and the same economic foundation, with one and the same class division of society, the relationship of forces changes.”²¹

In this logic, architecture as an embodiment of an ideal simulates the concrete as one of many scenarios

21 Trotsky, Leon and John G Wright, *Lessons Of October* (1924), (London: New Park Publications, 1971)

grown from the abstract, whereas the experience of the identical product again creates various versions of abstractions; from concrete to abstract: “Thought proceeding from the concrete to the abstract... does not get away from the truth but comes closer to it. The abstraction of matter, of a law of nature, the abstraction of value, etc., in short all scientific abstractions reflect nature more deeply, truly, and completely. From living perception to abstract thought, and from this to practice, such is the dialectical path of the cognition of truth, of the cognition of objective reality.”²² Hegel’s

22 Lenin, Vladimir Il’ich and James E Connor, *Lenin On Politics And Revolution* (New York: Pegasus, 1968), p.171

juxtaposition can be seen as a criticism of Kant's division between appearance and essence in this context, acknowledging the fact that things appear different from what they are is the foundation of all need for science as such. This premise rises the question about the abstraction becoming true in actual practice apart from dialectical thinking. Lefebvre's translation of Marx's definition of concrete abstraction as an "abstraction which became true in practice" refers to the abstract space of capitalism which has become true in political and economic reality. The Production of Space divides Lefebvre's notion of space in three fields: physical, mental and

social.²³ By citing Hegel's category of the concrete universal, he distinguishes between the abstract and the concrete as clearly identifiable concepts of spatial production. Yet, when it comes to concretizing the abstract in everyday practice, the transition from abstract to concrete underlies a similar act of transgression as in the logic of Tschumi due to its conversion from being imagined to becoming implemented. In a practical sense, the projection (and eventual transformation) of the abstract into a concrete context is the everyday endeavor of architecture.

23 Lefebvre, Henri, *The Production Of Space* (Oxford, OX, UK: Blackwell, 1991)

Everyday Events

“The pleasure of the text can be defined by praxis (without any danger of repression): the time and place of reading: house, countryside, near timeline, the lamp, family where it should be. The texts of pleasure are perverse in that they are outside any imaginable finality-even that of pleasure.” The chapter referring to the central matter of the book leads to another hypothesis based on the architectural competition for the reinterpretation of the Parc de la Villette in Paris 1982. Even if the project in its eventually embodied character is not directly linked to the main concern of

lively and mortal space, the conceptual engagement with everyday experience as a design instrument for the protagonists shows the urgency of this case.

Alex Wall
(Office for Metropolitan Architecture)

The Architecture of Pleasure (1983)



Rem Koolhaas' proposal for a new concept of the park described the metropolis around it as "by definition, the victor; in its pervasive architecture is reduced to the status of plaything, tolerated as décor for the illusions of history and memory."²⁴ The idea was to release the final layout and programming of the place more or less fully to the behaviour of its end users, so the intervention by his Office for Metropolitan Architecture decided to explicitly add several layers of point grids, strips and circulation to generate the highest potential for a public-driven design process. A famous

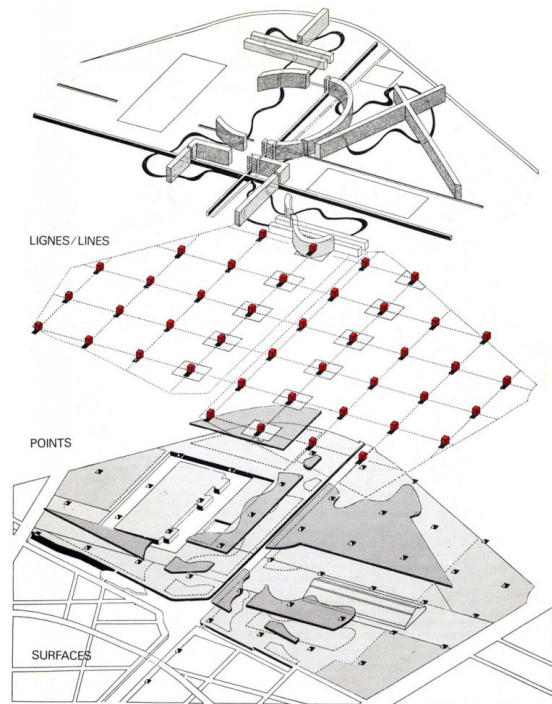
24 Office for Metropolitan Architecture, *Parc de la Villette*, <<http://oma.eu/projects/parc-de-la-villette>>

drawing submitted for the entry by Alex Wall named "The Architecture of Pleasure" illustrates the fun part of making and comparably seeing architecture, a forest of unpredictable situations within this flexible strategy. As a clear statement, the desired spatial configuration is not meant to be the lonely mastery of the architect but a visible result of its joyful and unpredictable occupancy.

Opposite to this vision, Tschumi's finally realized la Villette underlies a rigid system of levels based on geometrical forms that represent architectural bodies: points and objects, lines and movements, surfaces and events.

Bernard Tschumi

Li(g)nes, Points, Surfaces
(1982)



THE SUPERIMPOSITION OF THE THREE SYSTEMS (POINTS, LINES, SURFACES) CREATES THE PARK AS IT GENERATES A SERIES OF CALCULATED TENSIONS WHICH REINFORCE THE DYNAMISM OF THE PLACE. EACH OF THE THREE SYSTEMS DISPLAYS ITS OWN LOGIC AND INDEPENDENCE

The crucial aspect of the winning entry by Tschumi is his notion on the event as an architectural theme, conceptual as well as theoretical. His proposal works as a curation of these events happening inside the static structure of the set objects, freely and still framed, and steadily shaping the characteristics of the park. The programmatic flexibility of the space underlines Tschumi's position, stating "that there is no architecture without events, without actions or activity."²⁵ What has been agreed to be society's task in the making of architectural habits—by activating space the archi-

25 Bernard Tschumi Architects, *Parc de la Villette*, <<http://www.tschumi.com/history/>>

tect has imagined in abstraction—in the end brings these two approaches together, when Koolhaas' study on the actual life of his buildings²⁶ presents the real condition of its matter. The boredom of everyday life, surprising sensations and personal identification function as spatial events according to Tschumi's dogma and describe the relevance of considering the life (and eventual death) of architecture in current design practice.

26 Koolhaas, Rem; Ota, Kayoko, *Post-Occupancy* (domus, 2006)

Superimposed Activities:
Pleasure and Boredom

Parc de la Villette (1982–1998)



The significance of producing space for the habitual everyday becomes even more clear when talking about the exact opposite: events. It's the ironic nature of the event to create triviality through repetition and at the same time representing the unfamiliar happening within the everyday. In Highmore's reflection on Lefebvre's notion of the everyday, the French writer and film theorist Robert Stam captures the idea of "carnival" as an overcoming of socio-cultural differences:

"Carnival, in our sense, is more than a party or a festival; it is the oppositional culture of the oppressed, a counter model of cultural production

and desire. It offers a view of the official world as seen from below – not the mere disruption of etiquette but a symbolic, anticipatory overthrow of oppressive social structures. On the positive side, it is ecstatic collectivity, the joyful affirmation of change. On the negative, critical side, it is a demystificatory instrument for everything in the social formation which renders collectivity impossible: class hierarchy, sexual repression, patriarchy, dogmatism, and paranoia."²⁷

Lefebvre's critique of capitalist modernity is characterized by this dilemma of the everyday and its implicit

27 Stam, Robert, *Subversive Pleasure: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989)

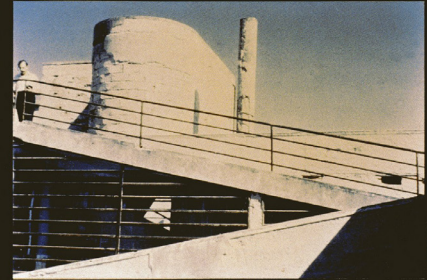
events, the adjustment of daily routines due to globalized dependencies on the one hand and the intensification of social hierarchies on the other. In Stam's view, "la fête" is the motor of transgressing these inequalities in a way that the everyday order of social classes becomes temporarily obsolete in the sensation of "a dress rehearsal for utopia."²⁸

28 Stam, Robert, *Subversive Pleasure: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989)

Cultural,
Economic
and
Political
Abandonment

“Architecture only survives where it negates the form that society expects of it. Where it negates itself by transgressing the limits that history has set for it.”²⁹

The most architectural thing
about this building is
the state of decay in which it is.



Architecture only survives
where it negates the form that
society expects of it.
Where it negates itself by
transgressing the limits that
history has set for it.

The engagement with the phenomenology of the everyday occasion in this theoretical scheme is similarly located within Tschumi's position of sensualizing space. Since decay—physical, virtual, political—is a result of ongoing experience and the nature of time, it's about to decrypt the relevance of a conscious perception of decay as a spatial quality and a chance to preserve identities. The section takes this attitude for granted and indicates the qualities of decline as a mean of cultural value.

The concept of decay is not only related to the status of architecture itself, some buildings are designed with the intention of trapping people in

surrealistic environments that drift far from the cultural identity of specific places. Large-scale infrastructures such as airports or shopping malls represent a programmatic entropy of society that, according to Koolhaas, offer a “seamless patchwork of the permanently disjointed built.”³⁰ Today, these phenomena are fully integrated in our built environment and cannot be avoided and reinforce the hypothesis that the ‘architecture of consumption’ in terms of demolition (or alternatively reconstruction) doesn't automatically lead to a programmatic evolution. It's architec-

30 Koolhaas, Rem, *Junkspace*, October, 100 (2002), 175-190
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1162/016228702320218457>>

ture's task to generate spaces and let activities occur, which are responding to specific needs, so interpreting ruins and abandoned buildings as potential shelters for occupation can support the idea of preserving a certain socio-cultural condition. In the following abstract, it is argued to feed these declarations with practical scenarios to prove the urgency of the topic.

Villa Savoye: Transgressing Modernism

“By decaying, the Villa Savoye made
the passage of time visible and thus
transgressed the taboo
of modernism.”³¹

Kari Jormakka
The Most Architectural Thing (2005)

31 Jormakka, Kari, *The Most Architectural Thing*, 2005 in Mical, Thomas, *Surrealism And Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2005)



The very first of Tschumi's posters for the 'Advertisements for Architecture' is dedicated to the decline of Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye, proclaiming the decaying state of architecture as a valuable and sensual feature. He describes the transgression of architecture during this process as an "exquisitely perverse act that never lasts"³², a transformation visible from the voyeur's point of view.

The trigger of making this paradigm of modern architecture subject of his series was his personal experience and the surprising reaction on the condition of what he saw.

"When I visited it, something in-

credible happened; the building was amazing, it was quite astonishing in its state of decay—in its state of complete dereliction from many years of neglect. It occurred to me then that perhaps architecture is not only about perfection and the realization of an abstract concept; it is also about the sensations of the occupant, including making room for interaction between building and feelings/body."³³

The abandonment of the building led to an enormous transformation of materials, sensual and spatial perceptions. Following the logic of seeing a structure on the edge of an ultimate collapse, Tschumi developed

a way of identifying this “event” as the transgression of architecture. His observation of the “overcoming” of a constructed state into another one draws the line of argumentation for the discussion.

Finnish architecture theorist Kari Jormakka’s work is closely related to the terminology of Tschumi’s language and makes use of similar metaphorical situations. In a text for Surrealism and Architecture, Jormakka dismantles Tschumi’s placards to their inductive messages by structuring key topics according to their chronological appearance: time, transgression, sensuality, absence, masks, situationism, spectacle, alienation, simulation,

advertising, seduction.³⁴

In relation to transgression, Bataille emphasizes the atemporality of architecture whose embodiment cancels the time “by its very nature”³⁵ in contrast to the run of events itself. This idea of ephemeral timelessness becomes even more obvious in the case of modernist buildings such as the Villa Savoye, a pure and geometrical manifestation of early 20th century paradigms that turns into an almost artistic playground for spatial adaptation. Le Corbusier’s manifesto

34 Jormakka, Kari, *The Most Architectural Thing*, 2005 in Mical, Thomas, *Surrealism And Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2005)

35 Jormakka, Kari, *The Most Architectural Thing*, 2005 in Mical, Thomas, *Surrealism And Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2005)

Towards a New Architecture similarly includes a subchapter about the phenomenon of transgression, albeit “denouncing the violation of the rules of proper planning by an error or an inclination towards vanities.”³⁶ His refusal of transience within the timeless character of modernism constitutes the affectation towards the essence of architecture, an isolated state of completeness and integrity which doesn’t allow for intensive transformation; the event of everyday occupation, experience and adaptation is neglected in favor of a dogmatic actualization.

36 Jormakka, Kari, *The Most Architectural Thing*, 2005 in Mical, Thomas, *Surrealism And Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2005)

Tempelhofer Feld and Spreepark: Mortal Bliss

“A hole in the city”

Tempelhofer Feld Berlin, 2008



The fate of the former city airport of Berlin functions as another suitable example of (functional) disuse regarding its programmatic configuration. The large-scale ground of the Tempelhofer Feld has been given over to the citizens and automatically called for associations with numerous cultural activities—from airport to informal recreation park, from junkspace to public infrastructure. The immediate adoption of the place gives a hint at the importance and contemporariness of the role of transformation within the discourse on building preservation, a metamorphosis that can be used without turning into a victim of capitalist rigor. In certain composi-

tions, activities—events produced in architectural space—are the main subject to be protected.

The context of Berlin as a place of rich historical and political transformations additionally enables occupations in such form. The phenomenon of vacancy within the urban context has been among the most identifiable effects after the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 and the eventual reunification between East and West Berlin in the following year. The excessive crossings towards the West of the city created an all-encompassing emptiness in the East, a large number of housing properties have been abandoned for the sake of a better life in the new

land, which led to a massive (informal and illegal) occupation of houses, in few cases still ongoing today.

So the culture of adaptation is especially familiar for the context of this model, and it reveals the potential of society's power to inhabit spatial and substantial decay to fight for a sensible appropriation of what is already there.

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Another story about cultural abandonment has to be told briefly: the first and only amusement park of the former GDR known as Spreepark Berlin has been a public space of joy, leisure, adrenaline and consumption for over 20 years. The German reunification adapted the park to the standards of

Western capitalism which heralded the start of the end and its eventual insolvency in 2001. Besides a lot of dubious businesses around the owners of the park, its mystical decline took place over the “dead” attractions. The overgrown entertainment turned the park into a haunted place as the ideal and perverse scenery for the emergence of new activities: festivals, exhibitions, funfairs—a paradoxical co-occurrence of pleasure and decay which Berliners baptized as a form of “popcultural mystification.”

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“Popcultural Mystification”

Spreepark Berlin (1969–today)



Zeche Zollverein: Productive Ruin

104 As a showcase example for a logically forced vacancy and subsequent decay—in this case especially in terms of economic interests—serves the destiny of the formerly most powerful arrangement in the Western German Ruhrgebiet. The coal mining complex of the Zollverein in Essen is a remarkable material evidence of the evolution and decline of the main heavy industry over the past 150 years. The area is a significant testimony of the distinct political and economic upheaval in Germany between the 19th and 20th century. Beside this, the

project embodies the first dynamics of an economy facing the globalization and worldwide aspirations for interdependence between the two world wars. In this specific historical period, architects have been struggling between the booming of the great industrial economy and the tense turning point in architecture from expressionism to modernist functionalism. The Zollverein is one of the most representative examples of the Bauhaus movement, where the architects Fritz Schupp and Martin Kemmer succeeded in developing a group of buildings that combined form and function in a masterly way.

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Leisure as an Event of Adaptation

Zeche Zollverein (after 1987)



It was for these peculiar aesthetic, economic and social values of the industrial history that most of the parts have been preserved and saved from demolition after its eventual closure in 1987.

Since then, a series of restructuring phases have started and slowly revitalized the place with different activities such as design centers, restaurant, ateliers and stages for performance. The proclamation of the site to be part of the International Building Exhibition and the UNESCO Cultural Heritage, a comprehensive redevelopment program has been triggered. The initial masterplan by OMA managed to fuse the foundations of both an inte-

grated cultural and business location, whereas the museum inside one of the industrial blocks of the coal washing plant and the Design faculty of the Folkwang University of the Arts designed by SANAA contributed to the architectural heritage and formed a strategic implementation to the touristic affluence of the site.

The adaptability of this case study underlines the significance of rehabilitation as an alternative to extinction due to substantial and economic decay. Preservation through active conversion works as a favorable exercise for architects and urban planners to make aware how buildings in a certain context—even if obviously rigid, static

and disused—have the potential to turn into a different reality. As a counter strategy to the power of demolition, the interaction between the old and the new reveals new challenges to architecture towards a sensuality of contrast as the most durable gesture. The dichotomy between function and form finds a striking twist: a specific and overly rigid architectural form (in reference to the entire interaction between buildings) becomes a container for functions that require a specific shape. In the case of Zeche Zollverein, the fascination of the ruin shifts to the ideological dogmatism of a specific intervention, in which every single architectural gesture is part of a more

complex hierarchy and adds up to the value of the existing, transforming the latter into an infrastructure for the post-modern.

Innovation

vs.

Nostalgic

Identity

Glancing back again to the introductory manifesto inspired by Tschumi's principle of spatial sensuality: why is it important to speak about the pleasurable effect of architecture when debating the (after-)life of our profession anyway? The answer is as simple as practical: based on the assumption that the subject of aging, decay and death is following a specific occupation of the product without which it cannot die with dignity, and this must be the core of this concern. When it comes to observing and evaluating architecture from this perspective, it is to introduce efforts to accompany, accept or accelerate architectural death. The decision to demolish, beside the

attraction of the act itself, is most likely a consequence of historical events, socio-political evolutions, broken functionalities or simply the frenetic desire for innovation in particular and change in general. The glory of modernization as a real opportunity is challenging architecture, exposing buildings and cities to a constant progressive eradication. As stated in the introduction, the transformation as well as the freeze frame during the act of demolition is an intriguing theme with fascinating images. The perversion here lies in the analogy to Tschumi, with the more impulsive decision to undo a certain work rather than the permanent fading.

“This diversity of times becomes absolutely central in what I have chosen to call weak architecture... These architectures transform the aesthetic experience into ‘event’...”³⁷

Ignasi de Solà-Morales
Weak Architecture (1987)

37 Solà-Morales Rubió, Ignasi and Sarah Whiting, *Differences* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997)

Based on the storyline introduced as a point of departure, the phenomenon of transgression inhabits the process of regression and an indication for weakness. Solà-Morales’ text on Weak Architecture is a spatial appropriation of the Italian concept of Weak Thought that has been developed by Gianni Vattimo and Pier Aldo Rovatti, whose philosophical concern is articulated as the “ontology of decline”³⁸ with regard to Heidegger’s “Abendland” (land of sunset). In both deliberations, the notion of weakness refers to the metaphysical degeneration of structures and the eventual

38 Vattimo, Gianni, Pier Aldo Rovatti, and Peter Carravetta, *Weak Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012)

downfall in accordance to Nietzsche's
“negative thought”, an attempt to find
a solution for the “crisis of reason”³⁹
during the 1960s in Europe, where
weakness functioned as a counterpro-
posal to post-structuralist thinking.
In this chapter, three historical and
present case studies are analyzed
towards their political, socio-cultural
and architectural ambitions as well
as the eventual consequences of their
destinies in order to found the theo-
retical argumentation with practical
scenarios.

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39 Burrow, J. W, *The Crisis Of Reason* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000)

Pruitt-Igoe: Mystical Myth

Leinweber, Yamasaki & Hellmuth

Detonation of the Pruitt-Igoe
neighborhood (1954–1972)



The complex of Pruitt-Igoe was built and completed in 1954 under the United States Housing Act of 1949, with funds allocated to the replacement of existing slums by public housing high-rise buildings. The 33 buildings were designed by Leinweber, Yamasaki & Hellmuth, Yamasaki later gaining the most celebration for his design of the twin towers of the World Trade Center. Executed with a tight budget and high demand for living space, the complex soon faced material and occupancy degradation, and after an unsuccessful attempt of revitalization through federal grants in 1965, the first three buildings were demolished in 1972, the remaining

structures met the same fate four years later. Notably denounced as high modernism's failure to address social housing, Pruitt-Igoe's explosion was most notably called "the death of modern architecture"⁴⁰ by architectural historian Charles Jencks and subsequently added to what Katharine Bristol calls "The Pruitt-Igoe Myth"⁴¹. Bristol urges to not solely rely on the design's failure when assessing the estate but to factor in the shortcomings of policy, budgeting and racial segregation in place. The city of St. Louis had a straight-forward directory to clear existing slums but further

40 Jencks, Charles, *The Language Of Post-Modern Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1977)

41 Bristol, Katharine G, *Beyond The Pruitt-Igoe Myth* (1991)

funding for the replacement structures was under-budgeted and displaced, with private developments marginalizing the less financially potent social housing efforts to unwanted sites within the city. The federal Public Housing Administration further intervened on the development by overly limiting the construction costs while raising the expected housing units. Reportedly, as a consequence, a number of fixtures broke on the first day of use and kitchen cabinets were made out of the thinnest plywood available. Social segregation was exacerbated when those who could afford it, preferred low-cost private settlements, lowering the occupancy

rate of Pruitt-Igoe and a neglect of the remaining tenants. Violence and vandalism eventually took hold, turning the neighborly galleries into hangout places for gangs.

Today, St. Louis has long since moved on, to alternative modes and typologies of public housing. Only the discourse of architecture still seems to be caught up in reading the failure of a project set up for failure as the obituary of a style.

Les Halles: Urban Organs

Les Halles was a traditional market in the center of Paris, nicknamed “the belly of Paris,”⁴² most notably by Émile Zola in his novel *Le Ventre de Paris*, which was set in the market place. A famous glass and iron construction composed of several pavilions was finished in 1850 by Victor Baltard, and contributed to Paris’ row of iconic buildings. The original construction lasted until the 1970s, when the building was considered unfit for a changing market and Paris needed a central transfer station for the new

42 Zola, Émile and Brian Nelson, *The Belly Of Paris* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007)

RER underground lines. When the plans for destruction were laid open, the Parisian leftist scene launched large protests against the proposal. George Pompidou, President of the French Republic at the time, was accused of exiling families to the banlieues while keeping a formerly public place for a maximizing of corporate profits with the newly planned shopping mall. In 1971, 3,000 protesters gathered around the pavilions, creating a barrier of people to save the building, evoking an image of a re-run of 1968s demonstrations⁴³. Es-

43 Kasten, Scott A., *Destroying the Mystique of Paris: How the Destruction of Les Halles Served as a Symbol for Gaullist Power and Modernization in 1960s and 1970s Paris* (Georgia State University, 2013)

pecially the resettlement of allegedly 600 families reminded the leftists of the callous displacement Paris had experienced a century prior through the megalomaniac renovations by Baron Haussmann. Pompidou did not give in to the protests and waited for the August holiday season to begin the destruction. Baltard's building was dismantled and demolished to make place for a new integrated complex that combines a shopping mall and the travel hub for the Parisian RER and Métro Underground. Two of Baltard's pavilions were reconstructed, one serves as a concert hall, Pavillon Baltard, in Nogent-Sur-Marne, the other was reconstructed in Yokoha-

ma in Harbor View Park on a square named Rue Baltard.

“The most violent act ever committed
against the heritage of Paris.”

Donato Severo
Destruction of Les Halles (1972)



The actual site of demolition, however, remained empty and a daunting sight for Parisians, many of whom had not only disagreed with the destruction of their old landmark, but are also facing a hole beyond human proportions in their midst. To make use of the absurdity of the urban void, Italian filmmaker Marco Ferreri saw an opportunity in this state when he filmed an absurdist Western farce titled *Don't Touch the White Woman*⁴⁴ with Marcello Mastroianni and Catherine Deneuve, in which the hole lends site to the Battle of the Big Horn, in which the Native American

44 Ferreri, Marco, *Don't Touch the White Woman* <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0072305/>>

tribes famously defeated American troops. Ferreri made use of an urban anomaly and gave the disagreeing Parisians at least a comic relief of the absurd situation. The new RER and Métro station Châtelet-Les-Halles opened in 1977, the mall Forum Les Halles in 1979, but the transformations of this bustling area of Paris are not finished. Anne Hidalgo, today's mayor of Paris, believes the soon opening new center can become the city's new "beating heart"⁴⁵, which strikes a chord with earlier comparison of Zola's "belly". These human-

45 Chrisafis, Angelique, *Paris hopes €1bn revamp of Les Halles can become city's 'beating heart'* <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/01/paris-hopes-1bn-revamp-of-les-halles-can-become-citys-beating-heart>>

oid metaphors are a central example of our emphatic affiliations with our surroundings, we engage with, and are enraged by, what we are facing daily. The places have long become more than empty vessels of our actions, they are agents now, who we interact with, and we do not take it lightly, when someone close to us,
¹³⁴ is dismantled, scrapped and shipped elsewhere. It is therefore questionable, whether Hidalgo's "beating heart" analogy holds true for many, or the new Les Halles is in fact not more than an unwanted neoliberal replacement of a long lost spatial companion.

Netherlands Dance Theatre: Postmortem Preservation

136 The ongoing destruction of the Netherlands Dance Theatre in Den Haag is a contemporary example of processing cultural heritage within a city. Built in 1987, the project by OMA acted as a public catalyst for the urban fabric that was struggling to find an identity at that time. The building was a successful challenge for both its squeezed position between the existing and the relatively low budget. The final proposal was a seminal compromise of size and functionality; the NDT was performing perfectly with its 1001 seats.

After a decade of being threatened with razing⁴⁶, the building was eventually commissioned to be completely torn down, still remembering a model to follow for the cultural centre that will replace it later on. The example gives a strong statement against the slow decay of architecture and its impact towards modern urban ambitions, even if it's obvious that not every (public) building can be restored and maintained like a world heritage. The facing of an inevitable change to come is calling for innovation related to matter first, and then for a sensible exposure to its original programmatic value.

46 Kats, Anna, *Postmortem Preservation* <<http://www.metropolismag.com/April-2016/Postmortem-Preservation/>>

Hans Werlemann

Demolition site of the
National Dance Theatre
(2015)



“The hegemonic paradigm is that architecture is about new construction.”⁴⁷ In another “retroactive manifesto” by Koolhaas and associate professor Jorge Otero-Pailos, the authors reflect on a collection of preservationist research and lectures at the Columbia University’s Graduate School of Architecture. In his discourse, Koolhaas claims that “new forms were not necessarily more relevant than what had already been built” and that “preservation could be architecture’s salvation as an alternative to expressive form-making.”⁴⁸

47 Koolhaas, Rem, Mark Wigley, Jordan Carver, Rem Koolhaas, and Jorge Otero-Pailos, *Preservation Is Overtaking Us*

48 Kats, Anna, *Postmortem Preservation* <<http://www.metropolismag.com/April-2016/Postmortem-Preservation/>>

In the case of the NDT, it’s especially the public indifference towards the demolition of the building that surprised not only its architect. Apart from a small number of related groups rebelling against its destiny, the common reaction about the replacement of the identity-establishing project reached from an emotional ignorance to pleasant anticipation for “something new”.

Afterlife

“To live is to leave traces.”

Walter Benjamin
Reflections (1968)

The final section of the thesis in relation to architecture as a space for pleasure, sins, eroticism and devotion relates to the recognition and identification of those traces within the theoretical aspect. Benjamin's above mentioned notion of fetishism is introduced to the domain of irreversible decline by analyzing the phenomenon of nothingness as a concept (or state) of post-destruction in the context of the legacy of human life. The following paragraph delineates the hypothetical phenomenon of denying from a straight-forward thought on accepting the void, rather than in a passive way of lethargy and ignorance.

Lacaton & Vassal

Place Léon Aucoc, Bordeaux (1996)



Nothingness

Thinking about the “new” as a desire for a better condition and embellishment of something is not the only valid attitude towards the planning and evaluation of a specific place. Whether there is potential for improvement or not, some places have already¹⁴⁸ found their identity that, despite decay and aging, don’t necessarily ask for interventions solving problems. Nothingness in terms of denial, abstinence and apathy can be an honest and realistic form of enhancement. Paris based Lacaton Vassal’s proposal for the Place Léon Aucoc in the city of Bordeaux shows how “doing

nothing” can be a convincingly strong stand for the preservation of elements. The project won the design competition by refusing a reinterpretation and was considered a smart gesture of respect towards the values of the authentic place. Seen with the eyes of the architects, the sober but well-designed facade shapes were an excellent example of estate architecture and collective public housing, simply beautiful due to its originality and lack of pretentiousness. The city embodies buildings, activities and public spaces and the natural evolution is more and more part of its reality. Participation in the tectonic history of a place should firstly be intelligible and

secondly perceived as relevant material conditions of everyday life.

Ruins

150 “A ruin is defined as the disjunctive product of the intrusion of nature upon an edifice without loss of the unity produced by the human builders. Ruin time, proposed as the principal cause of ruin, serves also to unify the ruin. In a ruin the edifice, the human-made part, and nature are one and inseparable; an edifice separated from its natural setting is no longer part of a ruin since it has lost its time, space and place.”⁴⁹

49 Hetzler, Florence M, *Causality*, 1988

Hetzler’s vision of the ruin as a symbiotic product of man and nature distinctly connects to the ambition of contextualizing the traces of life in architecture and society at the same time in the language of the thesis and is thus taken to transfer the typology towards a spatial theorization.

Japanese architect Arata Isozaki’s essay on ruins as a “psychologically traumatic effect” that derived from his childhood describes the atmosphere of his memory in accordance with Sartre’s phenomenological ontology on Being and Nothingness:⁵⁰ “from the moment the constructions are

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50 Sartre, Jean-Paul, *Being And Nothingness* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956)

completed they begin their journey on the road to ruin, just as living things move on to their death. Indeed from the moment a building is conceived in thought, or itself it already includes its own decay.”⁵¹ For Isozaki, the future of the city can only lie in the active consideration of ruins, negating the belief in a brilliant “new” future of utopian schemes in favor of an emotional and substantial dedication to the ephemerality of specific cultural values. In a review on Tschumi’s theoretical work, the ruin as an intentionally preserved architecture is again closely engaged with the es-

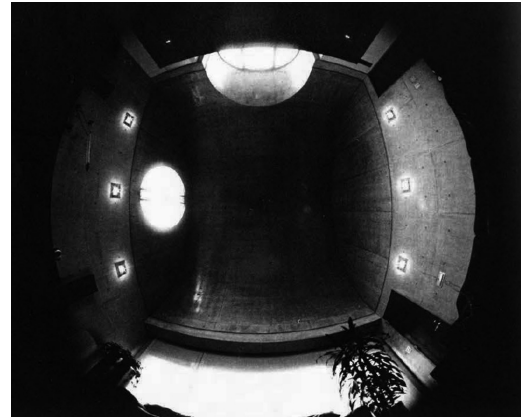
51 Isozaki, Arata, *Ruins* <<http://studionexos.blogspot.nl/2013/05/ruins-arata-isozaki-essay.html>>

sence of absolute time and what narrator Vladimir Nabokov delineates as follows: “The future is but the obsolete in reverse.”⁵²

52 Nabokov, Vladimir, *Lance* <<https://briangdillon.wordpress.com/2012/06/18/present-future/>>, 1952

Otilia Pupezeanu

The Potency of Negation and Decay
in Arata Isozaki's Work⁵³



53 Otilia Pupezeanu, *Architecture and Nothingness* <<http://architecture.yale.edu/gallery/architecture-and-nothingness>>

Pyramid and Labyrinth

The dualisms of spatiotemporal concepts—such as pleasure and event, nothingness and ruin, demolition and decay, production and consumption—that have been discussed within the theoretical framework so far lead over to the initial reason of a spatial analysis between perception and concep-
156 tion.

As indicated in the beginning of the text, Tschumi refers to Bataille's duality of conceptual architecture (Pyramid) and real space (Labyrinth) in *The Architectural Paradox*. For both writers, the paradox is founded in the relation between the limits of human

perception and the imagined abstraction, a dual condition which Lefebvre theorized as the division between experienced space (mind) and perceived space (senses).

The hypothesis of this argumentation is based on the conviction that the proclaimed duality and hence bipolarity of spatial theory is gradual in relation to time, in which the transformation from an abstract model into a
157 real place implies an overcoming of rational to emotional thinking.

Conclusion

The final statement of this contention aims to coherently summarize, categorize and evaluate the proposed position in order to successively hypothesize conclusions for both the theoretical discussion and its appropriation in actual practice.

160 *Events of everyday life are the most pleasurable feature of architectural space.*

From the initial point of departure on the given concern about architectural transgression on its ephemeral path from life to death, it is inevitable to identify and accordingly emphasize the very momentum of this phenom-

enon. In the theories of Lefebvre and Tschumi, the conjunction of space and time finds its concrete translation within the events of the everyday as the true abstraction of life. This supposition leads to the conviction that it's precisely these moments that contemporary architecture has to strive to create for instead of proposing speculative paradigms. The curation of (public) activities is to be considered the main concern of spatial production in the context of seeing architecture as an anthropomorphic being to generate an ultimately sensual connection between product and user. The deductive adaptation of experience can become subject to advertise-

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ment: architecture has (the chance) to grasp, use and benefit from the unpreventable decay of space, whose momentum of transgressing deserves to be turned into a new quality more than the economy-driven longing for radical change. Being aware that this dogmatic attitude can not be universally applied to any situation in any context, it is meant to ask for a reconsideration of space as a creator of pleasurable events with a unique nature in everyday practice.

*“Weakness” can empower creativity
in the debate on local identities,
not only for architects but also for
society.*

The ongoing occupation of vacant spaces gives proof that misused projects have the potential to live on under an alternative programming. As Solà-Morales states that the weakening of structures implies just this strength of being able to be reborn to shine in new splendor, the thesis proposes to take deterioration for granted as a starting point for new spatial and physical concepts.

The inseparable agents of spatial production and perception have to form a

synthesis in favor of rethinking architectural representation, and the promoted utopia of everyday bliss has to make way for an actual involvement with real situations revealing human weaknesses such as boredom, failure, antipathy, aging and fatigue.

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The turning points of architecture (birth, adaptation, occupancy, transgression, death) have to be identified for a flexible re-appropriation of the built environment.

Architecture is in charge of envisioning the post-production of spaces for society that eventually decides its fate, so the determinable moment of

potential interaction is defined according to what society does with a certain space and vice versa. In this logic, each realization and subsequent supervision of occupancy can contribute to the recognition of these particular points, be it the traceable event of substantial decay or a rather inconspicuous death due to socio-political malfunctions.

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In any case, this text is supposed to make the domain of architecture realize the ephemerality of its production in order to establish a reconsideration of our profession as an endeavor to emotionalize society with space.

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