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PRESS RELEASE

BERNARD TSCHUMI

30 APRIL – 28 JULY 2014

GALERIE SUD, LEVEL 1

Following exhibitions devoted to the work of Jean Nouvel, Thom Mayne, Richard Rogers, and Dominique Perrault, the Centre Pompidou will host the first major European retrospective of the architect and theorist Bernard Tschumi. The exhibition, which opens to the public on April 30th and runs through July 28th, showcases some three hundred and fifty drawings, sketches, collages, and models, many of them never shown previously. The installation designed by the architect also features archival documents and films.

On view will be over thirty projects in Europe, the United States, China, and the Middle East, including the new Parc Zoologique de Paris, scheduled for inauguration shortly before the exhibition opens.

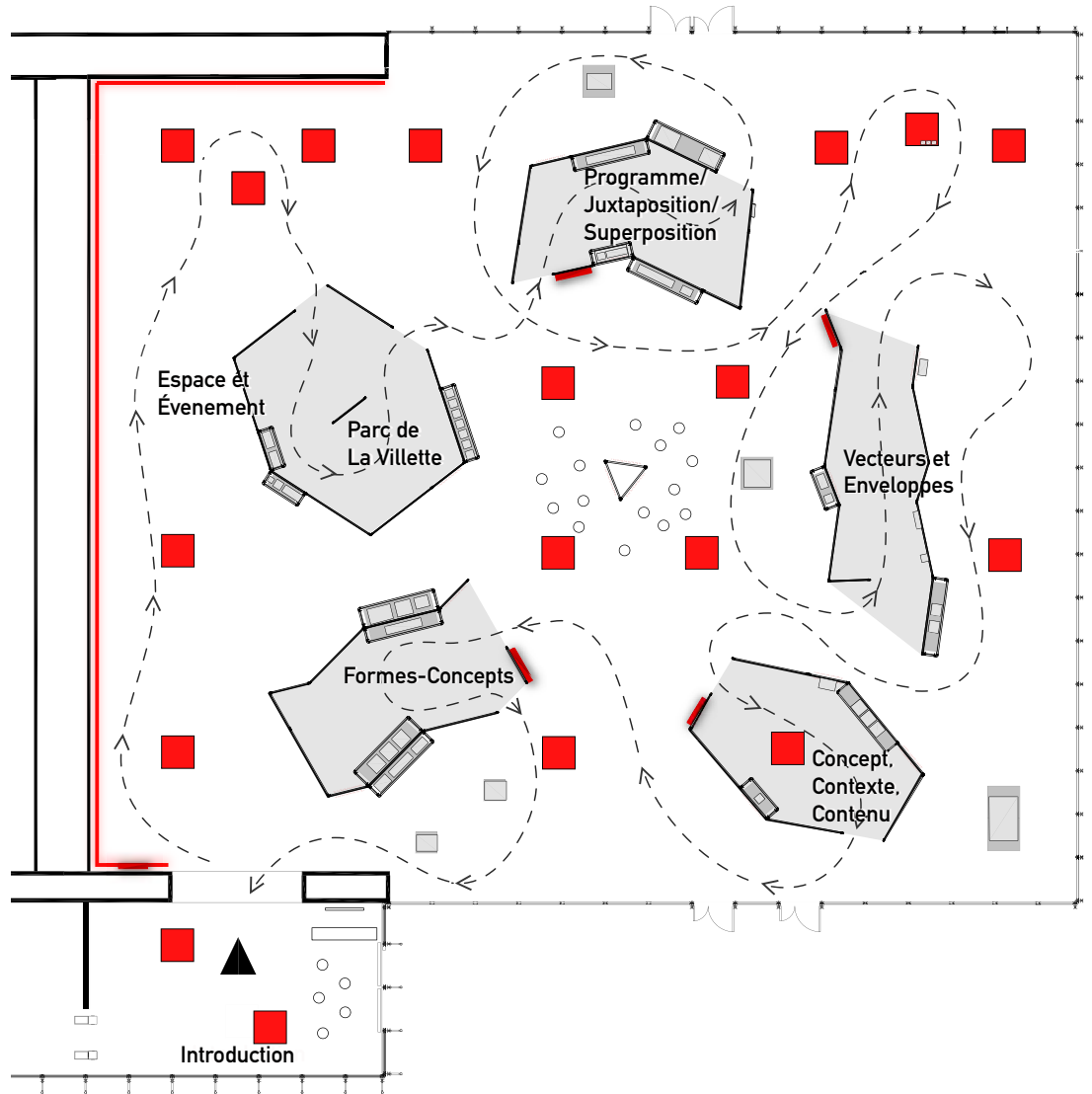
Exploring the process by which an idea or concept is transformed into an architectural project, the exhibition offers unique insight into Tschumi's approach as well into individual works. Since the late 1970s, Tschumi has been redefining architecture through a series of conceptual arguments rooted in film, literature, the visual arts, and philosophy, producing an expanded definition of the discipline that has radically renewed architectural design methods.

The exhibition casts a spotlight on Tschumi's influence and work as a theorist, a cultural presence, and a builder. The scope of his approach is developed through **five thematic and chronological sections** devoted to the concepts of space and event; program and superimposition; vectors and envelopes; context and content; and the "concept-form." These five themes are illustrated by the architect's most iconic projects, ranging from his early theoretical project titled The Manhattan Transcripts to the Acropolis Museum in Athens, the Parc de la Villette in Paris, the National Studio for Contemporary Art (Le Fresnoy) in Tourcoing, France; the Headquarters and Manufacturing Center for Vacheron Constantin in Geneva; and projects in the United States and the Dominican Republic.

An illustrated catalogue with over 600 color and black-and-white reproductions and essays by exhibition curators Frédéric Migayrou and Aurélien Lemonier accompanies the exhibition. The essays examine the development of Tschumi's work since the 1970s, the dialogue of his work with the history of architecture, and his influence on architecture and educational and cultural environments and institutions. The catalogue also contains an extensive interview with the architect.



2. PLAN OF THE EXHIBITION





3. ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

The exhibition at the Centre Pompidou — based on Tschumi's work as an architect, educator, and writer — explores the making of architecture as a series of arguments, ideas, influences, and responses to the contemporary definition of architecture today. The works are presented in a series of vertical panels arranged into thematic zones and a grid of tables covering the period from the 1975 to present. On view will be a number of original sketches and collages never exhibited before.

The entrance to the exhibition addresses the biography of Tschumi, who was born of French-Swiss parentage. Outlined are his childhood, divided between Paris and Lausanne; his education at the ETH in Zurich; and his early travels, in addition to a timeline of Tschumi's career to the present day. Visitors entering into the main gallery will see drawings from Tschumi's early theoretical projects — *the Screenplays, Advertisements for Architecture, and The Manhattan Transcripts*, including the 32-ft "The Street," which is read sequentially, as the viewer walks along its length.

Visitors are then presented with Tschumi's major architectural projects, organized around two primary ideas and five themes. These primary ideas are *concept* and *notation*: there is no architecture without an idea or concept, just as there is no architecture without a method of notation to express its content. Architecture is not a study of form, but rather a form of knowledge.

Presented as a sequence, the five themes in the exhibition each propose a fundamental area in the definition of architecture. The themes are:

- Space and Event;
- Program and Superposition;
- Vectors and Envelopes;
- Context and Content;
- and Concept-forms.

Tschumi illustrates these themes through a series of well-known and lesser-known projects, from the historic Parc de la Villette in Paris to later projects such as the Acropolis Museum in Athens, the Vacheron Constantin Headquarters in Geneva, as well as the new architecture for the redesign for the Paris Zoological Park, which will open to the public shortly before the exhibition. In total, the show includes 45 projects located in Europe, the United States, China and the Middle East.

Alongside the projects are a series of tables that extend and amplify the main narrative of the exhibition through topics related to architectural thought and production. The topics include: material strategies; rendering techniques before and after the digital age; planning "games"; iterations and repetition; books; and sources from other disciplines that influenced Tschumi's thought, such as cinema, literature, fine art, and philosophy.

The exhibition is the most complete display of Tschumi's work to date, 20 years after a show of his work at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York in 1994, and the first large exhibition of its kind organized in Europe. The exhibition is organized around his many public roles: Tschumi as a theorist, builder, and a cultural presence.



4. LIST OF PROJECTS SHOWN IN THE EXHIBITION

The Manhattan Transcripts

Theoretical Project
Client: N/A
Dates: 1976 – 1981

Screenplays

Theoretical Project
Client: N/A
Date: 1976

Advertisements for Architecture

Theoretical Project
Client: N/A
Dates: 1976 – 1977

Joyce's Garden

Theoretical Project
Client: N/A
Dates: 1976 – 1977

Sequential House

Location: Princeton, New Jersey, USA
Client: Undisclosed
Date: 1981

Sequential Tower

Location: Chicago, Illinois, USA
Client: Chicago Tribune Tower, "Late Entries"
Competition
Date: 1980

20th Century Follies

Location: New York, Kassel, Wave Hill (NY)
and Middelburg
Client: Various
Dates: 1979 – 1982

Parc de la Villette

Location: Paris, France
Client: French National Government
Dates: 1982 – 1998

Ponts-Villes

Location: Lausanne, Switzerland
Client: City of Lausanne
Date: 1988

National Theater and Opera House

Location: Tokyo, Japan
Client: Tokyo Opera
Date: 1986

ZKM Center for Art and Media Technology

Location: Karlsruhe, Germany
Client: Center for Art and Media Technology
Date: 1989

Kyoto Japan Rail Station

Location: Kyoto, Japan
Client: City of Kyoto
Date: 1990

Chartres Business Park

Location: Chartres, France
Client: City of Chartres
Date: 1991

Glass Video Gallery

Location: Groningen, The Netherlands
Client: City of Groningen
Date: 1990

Strasbourg County Hall

Location: Strasbourg, France
Client: City of Strasbourg
Date: 1986

Kansai International Airport

Location: Kansai, Japan
Client: City of Kansai Transportation Authority
Date: 1988

Le Fresnoy Art Center

Location: Tourcoing, France
Client: French Ministry of Culture and Region
Nord-Pas-de-Calais, France
Dates: 1991 – 1997

Très Grande Bibliothèque

Location: Paris, France
Client: French Ministry of Culture
Date: 1989

Pedestrian Bridge

Location: La Roche sur Yon, France
Client: City of La Roche-sur-Yon, SNCF
Dates: 2007–2010

Museum for African Art

Location: New York, New York, USA
Client: The Museum for African Art
Date: 2000

**K-Polis Department Store**

Location: Zurich, Switzerland
Client: K-Polis Department Store
Date: 1995

Electronic Media and Performing Arts Center (EMPAC)

Location: Troy, New York, USA
Client: Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Date: 2001

Vacheron Constantin Headquarters and Manufacturing Center, Phase 1

Location: Geneva, Switzerland
Client: Vacheron Constantin
Dates: 2001 – 2004

Vacheron Constantin Headquarters and Manufacturing Center, Phase 2

Location: Geneva, Switzerland
Client: Vacheron Constantin
Dates: 2012 – 2014

Rouen Concert Hall and Exhibition Complex

Location: Rouen, France
Client: District of Rouen, France
Date: 1998

Limoges Concert Hall

Location: Limoges, France
Client: Communauté d'Agglomération Limoges Métropole
Dates: 2003 – 2007

Urban Glass House

Location: New York, New York, USA
Client: Time Magazine
Date: 1999

École Cantonale d'Art Lausanne (ECAL) School of Art

Location: Lausanne-Renens, Switzerland
Client: IRIL/École Cantonale d'Art de Lausanne (ECAL)
Dates: 2005 – 2007

Carnegie Science Center

Location: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA
Client: Carnegie Science Center
Date: 2000

Museum of Contemporary Art

Location: Sao Paulo, Brazil
Client: Friends of the Museum for Contemporary Art
Date: 2001

BLUE Residential Tower

Location: New York, New York, USA
Client: Angelo Cosentini and John Carson On the Level Enterprises, Inc.
Dates: 2004 – 2007

New Hague Passage

Location: The Hague, The Netherlands
Client: Spuimarkt Beheer B.V. represented by Multi Vastgoed B.V.
Dates: 2005 – 2014

Factory 798

Location: Beijing, China
Client: Pro bono
Date: 2004

Acropolis Museum

Location: Athens, Greece
Client: Organization for the Construction of the New Acropolis Museum (OANMA)
Dates: 2001 – 2008

Alfred J. Lerner Hall Student Center

Location: New York, New York, USA
Client: Columbia University
Dates: 1994 – 1999

Florida International University, School of Architecture

Location: Miami, Florida, USA
Client: Florida International University
Dates: 1999 – 2003

Marne-la-Vallée, School of Architecture

Location: Paris, France
Client: University of Marne-la-Vallée
Dates: 1994 – 1999

ANIMA Cultural Center

Location: Grottammare, Italy
Client: Foundation Cassa di Risparmio di Ascoli Piceno
Dates: 2012 – 2015



Richard E. Lindner Athletics Center

Location: Cincinnati, Ohio
Client: University of Cincinnati
Dates: 2001 – 2006

Zoo de Vincennes

Location: Paris, France
Client: Chrysalis/Museum of Natural History
Dates: 2009 – 2014

**Elliptic City, Independent Financial Centre
of the Americas**

Location: Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
Client: IFCA Cefinte
Dates: 2005 – ongoing

Dubai Opera House

Location: Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Client: Dubai International Properties
or Culture Ministry, UAE
Date: 2005

Carnal Dome

Location: Rolle, Switzerland
Client: Le Rosey International School
Dates: 2009 – 2014

OCT-Loft Master Plan and Museum

Location: Shenzhen, China
Client: Overseas Chinese Town (OCT)
Date: 2011

Alésia Museum and Archaeological Park

Location: Alésia, France
Client: General Counsel of the Bourgogne
Region
Dates: 2003 – 2012

TABLE THEMES

Early Biography
1968 and the City
Little Books
Import-Export
Essays and Theory
Advertisements for Architecture
Cinema, Screenplays, Notations
The Manhattan Transcripts
The Sequential House
The 20th Century Follies
Photogram Technique
The Kuleshov Effect
Variations, Options, and Iterations
Games and Strategies
Eisenstein and the Acropolis
Concept and Materialisation
Paperless Studios
Books



5. AROUND THE EXHIBITION: BERNARD TSCHUMI TAKES THE FLOOR

Admission free within the limit of seats available

SPOTLIGHT ON ARCHITECTURE

BERNARD TSCHUMI

MONDAY 5 MAY, 7.00 p.m., GRANDE SALLE

This forum provides an occasion for the architect Bernard Tschumi to look back over the development of his work from the Seventies to the present day, focusing on his most iconic projects. These range from his first designs, The Manhattan Transcripts, to the Athens Acropolis Museum, the Parc de la Villette (Paris), the Fresnoy art school, projects for the manufacturing company Vacheron Constantin (Switzerland), and urban projects like those he developed in the US (New York, Cincinnati) and Santo Domingo – not forgetting the Paris Zoo in Vincennes, due to open shortly before this conference takes place.

SPOTLIGHT ON ARCHITECTURE

BERNARD TSCHUMI: NOTATION

THURSDAY 22 MAY, 7.00 p.m., PETITE SALLE

Bernard Tschumi realised early on that thinking about the meaning of architecture also implies thinking about its representation. He thus invented various notation procedures, including a structure composed of three squares, which he used in his first “manifestos” on architecture and the series of designs called The Manhattan Transcripts. He considers it important to add missing elements like movement and action to floor plans, sections, axonometrics and perspective views, to convey the dynamic energy of the main body in the static representation of the architecture.

Conversation between Bernard Tschumi and Frédéric Migayrou, Assistant Director of the musée national d’art moderne

SPOTLIGHT ON ARCHITECTURE

BERNARD TSCHUMI: ARCHITECTURE, LITERATURE AND THE CINEMA

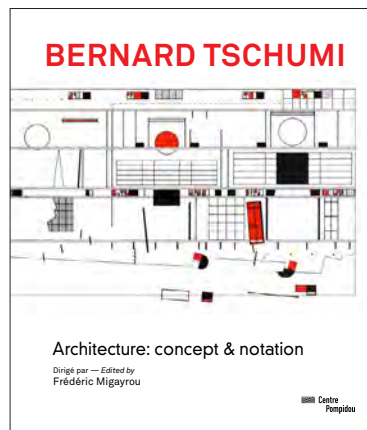
FRIDAY 23 MAY, 7.00 p.m., PETITE SALLE

Bernard Tschumi defines architecture not from a stylistic viewpoint, but through a series of conceptual arguments whose roots lie in the cinema, literature, the visual arts and philosophy. In a dialogue with influential figures who have nourished his thinking, Bernard Tschumi unveils their processes for transforming an idea into an architectural project.

With Bernard Tschumi, Literary Historians Antoine Compagnon and Denis Hollier, and Film Director Alain Fleischer



6. PUBLICATION AND EXCERPTS



BERNARD TSCHUMI ARCHITECTURE : CONCEPT & NOTATION

Edited by Frédéric Migayrou
20 x 24 cm, sewn, 600 colour ills, 256 pp
French and English
€29.90

The catalogue that accompanies the exhibition is one of the few French-language volumes on the work of Bernard Tschumi. The book includes essays by the architect, Frédéric Migayrou, Aurélien Lemonier, curators of the exhibition, as well as a conversation between Frédéric Migayrou and Bernard Tschumi. Over 40 projects are presented in detail, with interstitial discussions of architectural theory, all centered around the overall theme of concept and notation in five parts.

I. ESSAYS

Frédéric Migayrou– Vectors of a Pro-Programmed Event
Aurélien Lemonier– The Suspended City
Bernard Tschumi – Architecture and concepts
Bernard Tschumi in conversation with Frédéric Migayrou – Concept and notation

II. PROJETS IN EXPOSITION

III. REFERENCE TABLES

IV. PROJECT CHRONOLOGY

Appendices
Bibliography



EXCERPTS

II. PROJETS IN EXPOSITION

Manifestos: Space and Event

In his early work, Bernard Tschumi asked what architecture is—whether it is indeed “the masterly, correct and magnificent play of masses brought together in light,” as Le Corbusier famously said. Tschumi argued that the reality of architecture lies elsewhere, in aspects of the body and social activity that are conventionally removed from the definition of architecture. He insisted that there is no architecture without movement, without events, without the activities that take place inside buildings. Trying to free himself from the received ideas of the discipline, he examined other domains, including cinema, literature, and the visual arts. He soon realized that questioning architecture forced a parallel questioning of its modes of representation—plans, sections, axonometrics, and perspectives—to which he added the missing elements of movement and action so as to inscribe the body into the otherwise static representation of architecture. Tschumi invented innovative modes of notation, including a threesquare framework used in his early architectural “manifestos” and the drawing series titled *The Manhattan Transcripts*.

Program / Juxtaposition / Superimposition

The question of the relationship between space and event, or between an architectural “place” and what happens in it, became more urgent for Tschumi than the simple expression of architectural form. In a way far different from the prevalent historicism of the 1980s and early 1990s, he continued his investigations into the notion of use or program through several major competitions. Tschumi defined three possible relationships between a space and its use: reciprocity (when a space is made perfectly functional); conflict (when a space appears incompatible with its intended use); and indifference (when a given space is capable of accommodating a variety of different activities). Hence, instead of serving as a simple translator of a client’s needs, an architect can also propose unexpected uses for built structures. New architectural modes of notation (such as “games”) and representation (such as “photograms”) were explored, along with provocative examinations of the multiple and often conflictual nature of the contemporary city.

Vectors and Envelopes

The notion of the facade is one of the preconceived architectural ideas that underwent Tschumi’s questioning. This vertical planar surface is conventionally opposed to the horizontal roof, and carries a weighty tradition of formal, compositional inquiry throughout the ongoing history of architecture. Starting at the end of the 1980s, Tschumi proposed replacing the term “facade” by the term “envelope,” together with the term “vector,” so as to indicate two important architectural functions— shelter and the channeling of movement through space. From the concert halls at Rouen and Limoges to the Vacheron Constantin Headquarters outside of Geneva, projects of this period explore different envelope concepts and their expression through changing materials. (“Architecture is the materialization of concepts.”) The drawings for these projects are distinguished from earlier examples through the use of computer technology, sharply transforming the modes of notation.

Concept, Context, Content

In opposition to “contextualism,” by which architects imitate the appearance of the immediate surroundings of their buildings, Tschumi insisted that no architecture exists without the context it accompanies or generates. As Marcel Duchamp demonstrated a century ago, in 1914, a bottle rack placed in a museum immediately modifies the status of the object, transforming it into art. Hence, in architecture, a concept can be “contextualized”—or, inversely, a context can be “conceptualized,” which is what Tschumi did at the Acropolis Museum, 2009. Alternatively, two buildings with identical programs and concepts are not the same when designed or adapted for the contexts and climates of Marne-la-Vallée, France (1994) and Miami, Florida (1998). The context of a building informs the expression of a concept, much as the building redefines or alters its context. The notations for projects explore systematic comparisons between different alternatives or variants based on the relationships between context and concept.



Concept-Forms

Tschumi rarely uses the word “form,” viewing a form as the result of conceptualization rather than its starting point. However, he makes one exception—when the complexity of a program or the particularities of a context may require selecting a geometrical abstraction as the starting point of a concept. This is the case, historically, with the concepts of linear, concentric, or grid cities. Tschumi calls these examples of “conceptforms,” denoting forms that generate concepts or concepts that generate forms, such that one reinforces the other. Several urban projects, from the Parc de la Villette to Elliptic City in the Dominican Republic, as well as architectural projects ranging from the Alésia MuséoParc to Carnal Hall proceed from abstract geometries that can be adapted to the geographical or cultural particularities of the sites in which they are located.

CONCEPT ET NOTATION

Bernard Tschumi in conversation with Frédéric Migayrou

How do you see an exhibition that raises the question of a retrospective view of your work?

How do you view the question of time?

The exhibition retraces an interrogation of what time is in architecture, but also of what architecture is itself. Having to bring back to mind a particular way of working made clear the coherence, the continuity between my early work and my work today. If at the beginning it was essentially a question of finding a mode of notation expressive of movement and action in space, today the issue is that of the materialisation of concepts, some of them already roughly developed back then. To put it simply, we could say that I moved from the abstract to the concrete.

How would you define the early period of your work, characterized by a critical negativity and a concern with non-architecture?

These were the years immediately following '68, a period of intense critique. At the time, architecture had a bad reputation, being seen as a tool of authority or of big business. The city, on the other hand, was something fascinating. As complex and multiple, the city was a source of revitalization, offering a way of thinking about architecture that would no longer see it, as Le Corbusier put it, as “the subtle, rigorous and magnificent interplay of forms under light”, but as something very different, involving event, action, movement, programme. This opened new doors.

[...]

That's when notation emerged as a problematic in your architectural researches. It's also when you gave your students at the Architectural Association literary texts by Jorge Luis Borges and James Joyce in order to inform an architectural project in a new way, to change the whole idea of a programme and its temporality.

How did the Joyce's Garden project come about?

There were two different things in the idea of notation. The first was a question of language: if you want to change something, you sometimes have to change the way you talk about it. If Wittgenstein and Jameson speak of the “prison-house of language”, it's because if you use axonometric projections in architecture, then inevitably you're going to end up with work based on axonometrics. So you have to consider what language the architect is going to use. That's the first question, and one still valid today, when we're using digital techniques. Is digital going to enable us to change architecture, or are we going to carry on doing the same old thing with the addition of double-curved surfaces?

The notation was also intended to document those aspects that had until then not been foregrounded in architecture, that is, the movement of the bodies in space, action, conflict. When you're an architect, you're presented with programmes specifying so many hundred square metres of this, so many of that. These quantifications are often reflections of cultural facts. Literature forms an integral part of the culture that in turn influences us. So I said to myself, rather than giving my students square-metrages, I'll give them extracts from literary texts. A story, a fiction by Edgar Allan Poe or Italo Calvino raises new questions. You have to reformulate the idea of architecture, or the way you interpret some cultural phenomenon. Having done this three or four times, I asked myself, 'And James Joyce?'. What would a column be that



was at the same time a door? A column that is a door, a door that is a column. How do you draw that? How do you think it? The Joyce's Garden project was stimulating because you had to find new tools. It represented the first faltering steps, as I tried out at least half-a-dozen ways of doing things, using sequences, or collisions, or a point grid. The project is very incomplete, but interesting for that very reason, because you can see a great number of things that haven't been carried through, which would only be realized, and sometimes even built, some years later.

Researches on notation as replacement for representation can be found in theatre, dance and literature. Yet you are perhaps unique in architecture in having such a concern. How did the first notations come about? We know of your interest in Sergei Eisenstein, in the idea of a cinematic notation combining the dynamics of bodies, sound and camera. But how did the idea of notation as a distinct language come to gel in your work up to Screenplays ?

New York then was still very much engaged by the critique articulated in Conceptual Art, which percolated into other fields, especially in terms of the use of the body in artistic practice. And this immediately raised the question of notation: how do you communicate to others this movement of bodies in space? At first, artists didn't do their performances in white spaces dedicated to art. They would do them, for example, on the New York rooftops, like Trisha Brown. They would thus establish a choreography in which objects in the surrounding space act as protagonists in the dance. You deal with movements of the body, the notation of these movements and of the context, and you very quickly arrive at the crucial concern of architecture. There was film too: cinema is the movement of the body in space, the latter becoming just as much a protagonist as the actors. Whole nights long I'd be watching the films of Orson Welles or other directors, which use action to advance the story. One day I came across two little books, Eisenstein's *Film Form* and *The Film Sense*. For Alexander Nevsky he came up with a mode of notation that simultaneously included the framings, the camera movements in their own proper temporality, the musical score, and the movement of the actors. A bit like a musical score. This was a revelation, because it offered a very organised way of talking about architecture, not just as space in plan but also in terms of the movement of bodies in this space. That's to say that by adding a dimension that takes account of the complex reality of architecture – you never enter a cathedral without immediately becoming aware of a certain atmosphere... You suddenly realised that all the resources necessary to develop this new kind of notation were there; all that was needed was to use them.

That takes us on to something distinctive about you, your relationship to Conceptual Art. After your exhibition "A Space: A Thousand Words" in London, you re-encountered the idea of a conceptual art in New York. There, there had been a move from a first conceptualism, the conceptualism of Joseph Kosuth and Bruce Nauman, to a second, critical conceptualism. And you met the artists of this second period of New York conceptualism, like Robert Longo, David Salle, and Sarah Charlesworth, who all shared the idea of the schizophrenic body, caught in the tension of the city's movement. How would you describe this affirmation of a body that is not any longer an abstract norm, as it had been from Vitruvius to Le Corbusier, but is projected into space-time?

The reality of the concept is intertwined in the reality of experience. It was in 1975, precisely at the time of that exhibition, "A Space: A Thousand Words", that I wrote an article for the British magazine, *Studio International*. Inspired by Bataille's work, it was entitled "The Pyramid and the Labyrinth," and it was subtitled "The Paradox of Architecture". The paradox of architecture is that it is at the same time concept and experience. Here I'd quote a remark often attributed to Spinoza: "The concept of a dog doesn't bark." But there is a dog, and the dog barks! It's the same in architecture. Apollo and Dionysus are always intertwined, the one in the other, with all the conflicts and all the contradictions that ensue. The generation of artists who arrived in New York at the same time as me, in around 1975-76, shared the same fascination with film. That's to say that we found in certain scenes this sense of the relationship of the body to space. Longo isolated bodies, like Wim Wenders in *The Wings of Desire*. He asked me to be one of his 'actors' and I posed for him. It's the same in the almost contemporary work of Sarah Charlesworth, in which you see bodies isolated in space. Translated into architecture, this dissociation of the body from space takes you away from the positivist understanding of programme to a notion of programme as a matter of rewriting what happens in architectural or urban space.



It was then that you realized your first architectural project, a Folly like a 3D still inspired by Howard Hawks's Scarface, with this figure, this freeze-framed body. At the same time, it was called a 'folly,' implying an opposition to rationality. One might think of Foucault. There is something there that escapes representation, escapes the rationalist system. It's a landmark work, but not among the better known of your projects. How would you situate this first work?

While my drawings were being shown in art galleries, essentially Artists Space and then PS1, someone suggested that I do what was called in those days a 'site specific sculpture,' a work designed specifically for a site where it would be installed for a few months. There were the problematics of movement (hence the staircase), of the figure, and of cinema (hence Scarface). It wasn't a sculpture; it was rather an experimental vehicle that would allow me to consider the transposition of certain concepts that had been drawn after first having been written. I then embarked on a series of these Follies. I called them that ironically; I didn't want to call them 'sculptures' – I'm not a sculptor. In identifying them as 20th-Century Follies, there's a nod to Foucault's *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* [translated as *Madness and Civilisation*], but also to Artaud and a number of others who influenced my thinking on architecture. So I started on these 20th-Century Follies, people liked them, commissions arrived. I did three in New York, and I designed a series of ten others, including one for the Kassel Documenta and one in London. But they were above all a way of exploring questions complementary to my work.

When you entered the competition for La Villette, you proposed folies, a different take on the Follies. How did that change come about, in someone who hadn't yet built anything, someone who had a conceptual vision of architecture and who had just won the competition for one of the Grands Travaux, one of those that had the greatest impact on Paris and on Eighties France as a whole?

In 1982, the Transcripts had been finished. It was time to move on to another reality than the one I had invented, in the drawings. I wanted to see what I could do with a real programme, like moving from pure mathematics to applied. I began on this first competition of the Grands Travaux series by applying certain discoveries of the previous years: the modes of notation, the notion of the concept, the dissociation of action, movement and space – which would become point, line and surface – the issue of meaning, even if in the negative, as in the Follies. And suddenly it was possible to bring together in a single project nearly all the questions that had been raised earlier. The 20th-Century Follies became the 21st-Century Park. The points, lines and surfaces, the movements of vectors in space became the project for the Park.

A new version of the notation developed, much more complex, which would intersect with the thinking of Jacques Derrida. There emerged another idea of the negative in which architecture deconstructs, de-structures itself. With the idea of the gramme, which comes from Derrida, and that of the point, the red point, it's a matter of understanding how meaning happens, what is the meaning of architecture. La Villette made it possible to move to another idea of the notation of architectural écriture, and to what would be called deconstruction in architecture. How did this basis for architecture as deconstruction come together?

It wasn't deconstructivist at all. Derrida's role I would approach through a word you used, the negative. I'm a bit suspicious of the negative. I would rather use the notion of interrogation, Derrida's perpetual questioning of the dualisms that are the clichés of our thinking. Architecture is full of them: solid and void, interior and exterior and so on. In the case of La Villette, for example, a lot of people at the time really only saw the points. But the points couldn't exist without the voids. It was the dialogue between points and voids, the tension between points and lines that you were meant to pick up on. What constituted the park was the simultaneous and independent existence of points, lines of movement, and surfaces, that is, of different kinds of activities with their respective supports. It was in that sense that Derrida's writings were important, because they put such dualisms into question. When I asked to meet Derrida and explained to him our interest in his work, he expressed his amazement, wondering why architects would be interested in deconstruction when it was anti-form, anti-hierarchy and anti-structure. I told him that that was exactly why. Derrida, with his unfailing generosity, agreed to design a garden with Peter Eisenman, to whom I had suggested teaming up with him. There followed a series of debates that enriched the discussion around the park. It wasn't at all a deconstruction, though, but an interrogation.

[...]



This period between 1985 and 1995, in which you took part in some twenty international competitions, saw the return of the question of the urban. Was it in fact with the Chartres project that the question of the city – of the urban, of territorial context – cropped up again?

The question of the urban was always there. The programmes of such projects as the French National Library or the Tokyo Opera conceived of them as parts of the city. In the case of the New National Theatre in Tokyo, there was a publicly accessible, covered pedestrian avenue that linked the different spaces of the complex. Chartres was on another scale, a hundred hectares or so. It was a matter of going beyond La Villette. It was necessary to identify a certain number of concepts and strategies that would allow the project to develop in space and in time. For Chartres, I was looking for a system that would offer more flexibility, a strategy in terms of which we could offer the client a tool, a kind of checker-board, with pieces and rules, introducing them to a game that would be played out across ten or twenty years, during which the project could develop coherently. Just as a slide puzzle and a game of draughts each have their own different rules, each assuring a maximal coherence.

[...]

We've talked about the idea of envelope, which leads on to two things. First of all, the return of a form, but also the possibility of interaction with context. Oddly, especially coming from a totally conceptual architect, you reintroduced this idea of form, to put it into dialogue with the concept.

The concept-form is not quite that. For a very long time, until 2005, I never used the word "form" as an operational term in my architecture. On the contrary, I sought to exclude it from the discourse of architecture; too many people were using it, often very badly. But in working on a project on the outskirts of Santo Domingo, I came to realize that certain problems could not be solved in a rational, objective or functional manner. There's a moment when you're obliged to posit an axiom that isn't necessarily tied to the constraints of site or programme, simply because you have to start somewhere. Not all concentric towns have been built to protect people from their enemies, and not all city grids derive from the military or agricultural planning of the Ancient Greeks. These are also abstract and objective diagrams that have little to do with any functional necessity. I wondered then whether there were specific situations in architecture where one was obliged to begin by positing such an axiom or theorem. A posteriori, it was a matter of proving that one's hypothesis was right. It was a conceptual, not a formal decision. That's what I called a form-concept, because in architecture there is a moment when configuration imposes itself. Certain projects start from that degree zero: the ellipses of Santo Domingo, the panoramic circular layout of the Alésia interpretation centre.

Many of your recent projects raise in acute form the question of origin, but once again suggest the idea of inscription, the critique of which is seminal to your work. How do you deal with this apparent contradiction?

In Athens, the ensemble of constraints was such that the concept emerged fairly quickly. Three separate levels are stacked one above the other: the first protects the archaeological remains; another is characterized by regularly repeated columns; the third is this glass rectangle turned towards the Parthenon, inside which you find the famous Parthenon frieze, which made me think of the long sequence in *The Manhattan Transcripts*. Two-thousand-five-hundred years earlier, Phidias and the Ancient Greeks had devised a very similar narrative. I discovered at the same time that thanks to Eisenstein this Ancient Greek cavalcade had been translated into film! It's not that the circle is closed, but that the spiral turns on. The Acropolis Museum is a building that has to be experienced. No photo, no plan can communicate its dynamism. This museum is in some ways the synthesis of many themes already explored earlier. Alésia was quite the opposite. Everything was possible. The programme called for a museum and an interpretation centre. We therefore posited as an axiom the form-concept of the circle, which was doubled to answer to the two programmes: that of the interpretation centre on the plain and that of the museum backed onto the hill-top oppidum above. I wanted this duality, because it was important not to underplay the confrontation between Romans and Gauls under cover of republican ecumenism. So there are these two circular buildings, one of which stands entirely above the ground, girdled by a trellis of timbers that break the fall of light within: a material, an interpretation, a materialisation of the concept. For the museum, half-buried in the hill of the oppidum, the material is the same stone as one finds in the ancient foundations. So we have two takes on the concept, which offers an abstraction to be rendered in reality. This time we began with a concept to be contextualised. At Alésia, the materials are part of the contextualisation of the concept.



Between the Parc de la Villette, a conceptual park, an anti-park from which nature was at first almost entirely absent, and the Paris Zoological Park, with its reconstructed nature, its freed animals – it being a cageless park – two antithetical concepts now seem to enter into dialogue. And you have started to talk about the formless. The concept and the formless. How does that work, for you?

At the time I was developing the idea of the formconcept, I had said to myself that I would have to think about the formless as well. In the case of the zoo, it was a matter of responding to extremely unusual economic and programmatic constraints. How could one create an environment that integrated these budgetary and functional constraints and also represent the next step in the development of an architectural vocabulary? One of the concepts was that the architecture would be the same for the humans as for the animals. The envelopes, then, would be the same for the animals as for the humans. There are envelopes of glass, of metal grille, of timber. Sometimes these envelopes are dissociated from their real function, the Giraffe House being as much a technical services building as it is a shelter for animals, with a double envelope of metal and timber that isn't derived from any formal system. That's the formless. The principle was adapted to most of the zoo installations, in a constant interplay with Charles Letrosne's extraordinary rock-formations. Despite the obvious differences, there is a dialogue established with the Parc de la Villette.

Translated from French by Dafydd Roberts.



7. BIOGRAPHY

Bernard Tschumi is widely recognized as one of today's foremost architects. First known as a theorist, he drew attention to his innovative architectural practice in 1983 when he won the prestigious competition for the Parc de La Villette, a 125-acre cultural park based on activities as much as nature. The intertwining concepts of "event" and "movement" in architecture are supported by Tschumi's belief that architecture is the most important innovation of our time. Tschumi often references other disciplines in his work, such as literature and film, proving that architecture must participate in culture's polemics and question its foundations.

Since then, he has made a reputation for groundbreaking designs that include the new Acropolis Museum; Le Fresnoy National Studio for the Contemporary Arts; the Vacheron-Constantin Headquarters; The Richard E. Lindner Athletics Center at the University of Cincinnati; two concert halls in Rouen and Limoges, and architecture schools in Marne-la-Vallée, France and Miami, Florida, as well as the Alésia Archaeological Center and Museum among other projects. The office's versatility extends to infrastructure projects and master plans. Major urban design projects recently executed or in implementation under Tschumi's leadership include master plans in Beijing, Shenzhen, New York, Montreal, Chartres, Lausanne, and Santo Domingo, with a new city for 40,000 residents. Currently under construction are the Hague Passage and Hotel in the Netherlands, a Philharmonic Hall for Le Rosey, near Geneva, an expansion of the headquarters for Vacheron Constantin, and a major renovation and redesign of the Paris Zoo.

Tschumi was awarded France's Grand Prix National d'Architecture in 1996 as well as numerous awards from the American Institute of Architects and the National Endowment for the Arts. He is a member of the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Architects. He is also an international fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects in England and a member of the Collège International de Philosophie and the Académie d'Architecture in France, where he has been the recipient of distinguished honors that include the rank of Officer in both the Légion d'Honneur and the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. Tschumi's Acropolis Museum was honored as a finalist for European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture in 2011, and an Honor Award from the AIA the same year.

The many books devoted to Tschumi's writings and architectural practice include a comprehensive monograph, titled *Architecture Concepts: Red is Not a Color* (Rizzoli 2012), which narrates Tschumi's career in work and ideas since the 1970s, the four-part *Event-Cities series* (MIT Press, 1994, 2000, 2005, and 2010); *The Manhattan Transcripts* (Academy Editions and St. Martin's Press, 1981 and 1994); *Architecture and Disjunction* (MIT Press, 1994); and the monograph *Tschumi* (Universe/Thames and Hudson, English version, and Skira, Italian version, 2003). A series of conversations with the architect has been published by The Monacelli Press under the title *Tschumi on Architecture* (2006). Other recent publications include a French and English language biography on Tschumi by Gilles de Bure and *The New Acropolis Museum*, published by Skira / Rizzoli.

Tschumi studied in Paris and at the Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zurich, Switzerland, where he received his degree in 1969. He has taught at the Architectural Association in London (1970-79), the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in New York (1976), Princeton University (1976 and 1980), as well as the Cooper Union (1981-3). He was dean of the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation at Columbia University in New York from 1988 to 2003, and is currently a tenured professor of architecture. Tschumi holds both French and Swiss nationalities and lives in New York and Paris.

Tschumi's work has been widely exhibited, including at The Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Venice Biennale, the Netherlands Architecture Institute in Rotterdam, the Pompidou Center in Paris, as well as art galleries in the United States and Europe.



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