

Citation for published version:

Claire Jamieson, and Rebecca Roberts-Hughes, 'Two modes of a literary architecture: Bernard Tschumi and Nigel Coates', *arq: Architectural Research Quarterly*, Vol. 19 (2): 110-122, June 2015.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135515000366>

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Arq vol.3 issue 3 – Jamieson and Roberts-Hughes – Theory – FINAL 23 May

This paper chronicles and compares approaches to literary architecture by Bernard Tschumi and Nigel Coates, whose ideas evolved together, before markedly departing from each other.

Two Modes of a Literary Architecture: Bernard Tschumi and Nigel Coates

Claire Jamieson and Rebecca Roberts-Hughes

Political and literary inspiration

Nigel Coates began teaching with Bernard Tschumi after graduating from Tschumi's Unit 2 in 1974; together they developed a discourse that grew from literary and narrative concepts – that would eventually diverge in their individual work.

Grounded in the architects' shared teaching at the AA, the article discusses the early briefs and projects that shaped the directions they would each take. In this respect, the article locates the teaching 'unit' and the architectural brief, as a site for architectural enquiry – and contributes an understanding of how pedagogy shapes architectural concepts. This was a period of intense activity at the AA under the dynamic leadership of Alvin Boyarsky, who was elected to the school in 1971, and a moment when architects around the world were seeking alternatives to modernism. An edition of *Architectural Review* dedicated to the school published in 1983 describes the character of the AA during this decade as a reflection of the ideologies promulgated by its tutors:

It is possible to identify a certain congruence between the characteristics of the AA as an institution and the content of the teaching within it. The preoccupation of teachers like Bernard Tschumi, Elia Zenghelis, Dalibor Vesely and Peter Cook – with the rich potential of city life, with urbane and

exploratory conversation and catalytic encounter, with intensity and autonomy, experiment and invention – are reflected in the collective enterprise to which they contribute. One might even say that the school is a practical demonstration of their theories. It is this intensity, optimism and urbanity that is the antithesis of the defeatism, dull specialisation and narrow parochiality of other architectural schools. The AA is a pocket of resistance to the general suburbanisation of Britain.¹

It was within this context that Tschumi first set out a radical agenda for a unit in 1973. During this period he was writing polemical pieces for journals such as *Architectural Design*. These explored what he perceived to be a homogenisation of the city and drew on the writings of Guy Debord and the Situationist International to invoke strategies of resistance and subversion.² This began a continuing preoccupation with the potential for architecture to create social and political change. Following a year engaging with a critical analysis of the city – playing on ‘an opposition between political and theoretical concerns about the city,’³ Tschumi shifted emphasis in 1974-75 setting a new agenda to ‘deliberately concentrate on one constant, space.’⁴ These briefs - the ‘literary projects’ - interrogated the relationship between the structure of a space and its programme: between a space and its use.⁵ Significantly, this was the year that Coates began teaching alongside Tschumi, marking the start of their reciprocal relationship.

In these briefs, students read texts such as Franz Kafka’s unfinished short story ‘The Burrow’⁶ and Italo Calvino’s *Invisible Cities*,⁷ and were tasked with turning events or programmes from the novels into architectural designs. Around the same time, Tschumi was teaching at Princeton University – a brief from the Fall term of 1976-77 [1] details a project titled ‘The Masque of the Red Death’ based on Edgar Allan Poe’s short story of the same title (1964).⁸ Here, Tschumi explains that ‘Poe’s text is the brief,’ and while ‘it obviously cannot be literally translated,’ students should respond to the spatial elements of Poe’s text as detailed by Tschumi: ‘1

surrounding wall, 7 gates, 7 appliances of pleasure [...]’⁹ The interpretation of the text into a design proposal is thus left extremely open, with Tschumi hinting that ‘Poe’s decadent and morbid state of mind may seem remote from the precepts of 20th century architecture, yet it is the very combination between perverted images and the concise manipulation of language that fascinated the Surrealist contemporaries of the Modern Movement heroes.’¹⁰

In his essay ‘Space and Events’ (1983) Tschumi explains that during these projects the text provided a ‘framework for the analysis of the relations’ between the programme and the site, an idea he explored through his engagement with Poe amongst others.¹¹ Beyond being a source of inspiration, the novels he worked with revealed a fundamental relationship between literature and the design of buildings and spaces: ‘The unfolding of events in a literary context inevitably suggests parallels to the unfolding of events in architecture.’¹² He developed this relationship by discussing how architects could employ the devices writers use to manipulate form and structure, suggesting the artistic manipulation of plot, grammar and language are practices architects should consider employing:

To what extent could the literary narrative shed light on the organization of events in buildings, whether called ‘use,’ ‘functions,’ ‘activities,’ or ‘programs’? If writers could manipulate the structure of stories in the same way as they twist vocabulary and grammar, couldn’t architects do the same, organizing the program in a similarly objective, detached, or imaginative way? For if architects could self-consciously use such devices as repetition, distortion, or juxtaposition in the formal elaboration of walls, couldn’t they do the same thing in terms of the activities that occurred within those very walls? ¹³

Tschumi’s idea of the juxtaposition between form and activity – space and event – would become central to his thinking, and is explained here as derived from a comparison between literature and architecture.

An important influence on both architects during this period was performance art. During the mid 1970s both architects spent time experimenting with the boundaries of architectural practice – in particular working with artists whose strategies of performance resonated with their own evolving notions of space. Tschumi's personal relationship with curator Roselee Goldberg, who was playing a key role in theorising the emerging field of performance art, established strong links between the architect and artists whose work dealt with ideas of space. Tschumi regularly invited Goldberg to give talks at the school, and she in turn invited diverse artists including John Stezaker, Victor Burgin, Vito Acconci, Marina Abramovic and Christo to the AA – a significant move considering the insularity of much architectural education at the time.¹⁴

Their reciprocal relationship was borne out in the exhibition *A Space: A Thousand Words*, co-curated by the pair at the Royal College of Art (RCA) in 1975.¹⁵ Featuring 28 architects and artists, Goldberg and Tschumi set out specific criteria for inclusion in the exhibition: an unpublished photograph or drawing combined with a text of up to 1,000 words. This format, which proposed the text as having equal importance to the visual, was significant in Tschumi's evolving conception of what should or could constitute architecture. In *A Space: A Thousand Words* many exhibitors, though not permitted to construct anything physical, produced works that either described or documented performances and installations. A number, including Dan Graham, created works that included instructions or procedures that could be installed or performed by others – in this way, describing a spatial arrangement through text and image in a manner that echoes the 'event scores' of music and performance art.¹⁶

Despite the perceived failure of the exhibition to its audience,¹⁷ Tschumi's idea that space was not objective but emerged through events, experiences and perceptions was key to escaping the more typical architectural notion of space as 'uniformly extended material to be modelled in various ways.'¹⁸ He began to speak not only of the relationship between spaces and events, but of their total

inseparability: 'distinction between the talk about space and the creation of space vanishes' and 'ultimately, the words of architecture become the work of architecture.'¹⁹

Architectural aberrations

Back at the AA in 1977 after a two academic-year hiatus, Tschumi and Coates began to develop Unit 10 together. In the 'River Notations' briefs of 1977-78 and the 'Soho Institutions' briefs of 1978-79 they began to focus increasingly on the 'event' of architecture through a reconsideration of the importance of programme – emphatically stating that 'there is no space without event, no architecture without programme.'²⁰ During these two academic cycles, Tschumi and Coates moved the unit away from the directly literary projects that had taken texts as a starting point, towards an engagement with the city that surrounded them. This move from the imaginative literary world to the real world was essential to the culturally rooted approach that Coates would later advocate.

In the 'Soho Institutions', students designed a series of institutions along a central strip of Soho in London [2, 3]. Each institution 'represented an extreme within its (functional) type, either because of what it instituted (crime, madness) or the aberration of its context (a stadium in Soho? a ballroom in a churchyard?).'²¹ Defined as 'aberrations', these institutions were departures from their physical and typological context. Tschumi wanted students to push this disjuncture to its limit, and to consider how spaces can accommodate events that are at odds with their design and structure. He illustrated this thinking with examples: 'Pole vaulting in the chapel [...] sky diving in the elevator shaft [...] Or vice versa: the most intricate and perverse organization of spaces could accommodate the everyday life on an average suburban family.'²²

By this time Tschumi's ideas about juxtaposition, inspired originally by literature, were central to this approach and would go on to form his concept of disjunction. In his introduction to essays collected and published in *Architecture and*

Disjunction in 1996, reflecting on the literary projects at the AA, Tschumi explains disjunction:

Over the next decade I kept exploring the implications of what had at first been intuitions: (a) that there is no cause-and-effect relationship between the concept of space and the experience of space, or between buildings and their uses, or space and the movement of bodies within in, and (b) that the meeting of these mutually exclusive terms could be intensely pleasurable or, indeed, so violent that it could dislocate the most conservative elements of society.²³

Architecture is disjoined and dissociated because at its heart there is a fundamental chasm between space and its use, or rather between the concept of a built environment and its design in an architect's studio on the one hand and, on the other, the experience of space by people once it is complete and in use. Architecture cannot, Tschumi argues, be separated from its use, yet it is designed and planned before it can be used. The space and the events happening within it are 'mutually exclusive' and have no causal relationship; however, they rely on one another for existence.²⁴

Thinking further about the 'dis-joined, dis-sociated' nature of architecture, Tschumi later claimed he found 'allies' in other fields such as literary theory and film criticism who helped to 'substantiate the evidence of architecture's dissociations.'²⁵ Tschumi believed architecture should 'borrow' from other fields of thought, that it must 'import and export' in theory and in practice.²⁶ For critics this has made him a poststructuralist, with Mary McLeod categorising his work as the 'superimposition of systems.'²⁷ Tschumi's interest in Jacques Derrida's deconstruction is also well documented,²⁸ but the focus in this article is on those ideas that related to his idea of disjunction, including the ideas of Michel Foucault and the Tel Quel group, in particular through their 'rediscovery of Bataille'.²⁹

Georges Bataille was an important thinker for Tschumi. The article 'Architecture and Transgression,' in which Tschumi discusses disjunction and its impact, opens with a quote from Bataille's work *Eroticism* stating that transgression needs a boundary in order to arise.³⁰ Tschumi elaborates a complex discussion on the relationship between eroticism, death and architecture, inspired by Bataille's thinking. The theoretical framework Tschumi uses to explore disjunction moves beyond literature to engage with Bataille's notion of transgression.

Disjunction and transgression

Reflecting on his teaching, Tschumi explained that earlier projects at the AA posed the question, 'How could architecture and cities be a trigger for social and political change?'³¹ Considering ways in which architecture could avoid being a neutral backdrop to a social or political ideology or even reaffirming that ideology, he began to think about ways in which it could become a force for change or, if not causing the change directly, 'accelerating' it.³² Coming to the idea of exploiting internal contradictions within a social or political system to catalyse a revolution, Tschumi sought to understand what the internal contradictions in architecture might be. He came to the conclusion that the disjointed nature of architecture is its revolutionary potential. Uncertainty and the pleasure and violence of disjunction can be used to develop 'a new definition of architecture'³³ and this was, for him, transgression: 'Architecture [...] transcends its paradoxical nature by negating the form that society expects of it. In other words, it is not a matter of destruction or avant-garde subversion but of *transgression*.'³⁴ For Tschumi, 'the ruling status of social and conceptual mechanisms eroding urban life is [...] to be transgressed.'³⁵ In saying this he characterised transgression as a form of or trigger for revolution, as a stage in the development towards the next mechanisms that will supersede current ones. He concluded:

Whether through literal or phenomenal transgression, architecture is seen here as the momentary and sacrilegious convergence of real space and ideal space. Limits remain, for transgression does not mean the methodical destruction of any code or rule that concerns space or architecture. On the contrary, it introduces new articulations between inside and outside, between concept and experience. Very simply it means overcoming unacceptable prevalences.³⁶

Tschumi wanted transgressive architecture to be a new articulation of the relationship between concept and experience, which is brought about by the disjunction between the two. He wanted to use this relationship, and its transgressive role, to enable architecture to seek alternatives rather than merely expressing existing power structures.

Bataille did not himself equate transgression with revolution. In *Eroticism*, for example, Bataille explains that transgression is 'a movement which always exceeds the bounds, that can never be anything but partially reduced to order.'³⁷

Transgression is not part of the social order, by definition it exceeds it and its value of utility. But in thinking of transgression structurally, through 'bounds' and 'order', Bataille opens transgression up to architectural interpretations that often depart from, but are inspired by his ideas. Other architects have taken Tschumi's lead, with an issue of *Architectural Design* magazine entirely dedicated to a discussion of 'The Architecture of Transgression' in 2013. The guest editors offer the following definition of transgression:

To transgress is to go beyond the boundaries set by law, discipline or convention. It implies a naughtiness, or wayward behaviour, and acts as a challenge to the establishment [...] Transgressive acts of architecture might be seen to be pushing the boundaries of what architecture is, and what it could or even should be.³⁸

Most of the articles in the magazine conform to this definition and the theme of using transgression to drive change, either in architecture and the norms associated with its role and how it is practiced professionally, or else in culture, in the political and social systems over which architecture is believed to have influence. Nearly forty years after the original 'Architecture and Transgression' was published there is evidence that Tschumi continues to understand transgression in this way, in an interview with him published in the 2013 issue of *Architectural Design* once again entitled 'Architecture and Transgression':

Transgression is a fundamental concept, like the boundary between life and death. So it has always been there and it always will be. What changes is its type or nature. For example, let's take the concept of cross-programming or trans-programming, i.e. combining programmes that are usually kept separate. For a long time, a building was meant to be either a church, a town hall, a shop, or a school, each with its own typology. To suggest that one could combine and intersect different programmes was once very unusual and quite transgressive. Today trans-programming and cross-programming are our new norm. Now, with airports and museums becoming shopping malls, conference centres and tourist attractions, cross-programming has become acceptable. But there will always be new modes of transgression, small or large scale, social or philosophical.³⁹

Transgression is here a change to the way buildings function and the example Tschumi gives is about designing more than one function into a building, or enabling more than one type of event to take place within it. He believes a new form of architecture is 'acceptable' as a result.

Whilst Tschumi is undoubtedly interested in the role of people as they interact with architecture – or rather, as they enable events which, combined with space, create architecture and its disjointed state – he is focused on a notion of

revolution that necessarily shifts us from the street to the theoretical examination of the role of architecture in social and political structures. This focus is clear in his earlier examples of transgression too, one of which is the sensual rot in the derelict Villa Savoye in 1965 [4, 5]. Le Corbusier's building was left to such ruin that its 'squalid' state resulted in a 'campaign to save the threatened purity' of the building.⁴⁰ Tschumi instead suggests that 'the Villa Savoye was never so moving as when plaster fell off its concrete blocks'⁴¹ and his *Advertisements for Architecture* posters (1975) explore eroticism in the building by charting its decay and 'sensuality.'⁴²

The Villa Savoye was designed to be a functioning home and this programme seems to have been at one with its spatial form, but the rot changes that. It was not designed to rot, but the rot destabilises the building and its structure, also making it unusable – useless, in opposition to the value of utility. The rot is transgressive because it challenges the efficacy of the architectural order or structure. In thinking of transgression as a trigger for revolution, Tschumi suggests that by challenging an architectural structure, transgressive rot also challenges the systems an architectural structure stands for, politically and culturally – to the extent that it confronts those very systems.

Other examples Tschumi offers of transgression and its revolutionary potential ('Pole vaulting in the chapel'⁴³) give greater emphasis to personal interactions between an individual and the space in which they act. Yet his focus is arguably at the macro scale rather than the personal: he is fundamentally interested in how local events call the status of architecture into question, to change it and its role in society, and ultimately the society itself.

Architecture in use – departing from Tschumi

In contrast to Tschumi's notion of transgressive architecture, the 'Soho Institutions' brief of 1978-79 began Coates on a trajectory towards a concept of narrative architecture that although departed from Tschumi in many ways, continued the

preoccupation with programmatic content. For Coates, the aberration of space and programme had the effect of amplifying situations and actions, overlaying the meaning and content of the existing architecture with the signs and patterns of the new use. This represented an important shift from the 'sphere of the author to architecture in use', in that architecture only became truly realised once it was inhabited. Coates began to be increasingly interested not only in the programme, but also in the people who inhabited these spaces, their lifestyles, actions and emotions.⁴⁴ If for Tschumi the consideration of programme in opposition to formal space was a strategy to create transgression and revolution, for Coates, the event or programme contained by architecture was a way to understand architecture in relation to experience. As Coates describes:

In 1975, Tschumi asked, 'if space is neither an external object nor an internal experience (made of impressions, sensations and feelings) are man and space inseparable?' We decided to single out the contents of the brackets; it was the effect that needed to be worked on.⁴⁵

It is at this point that Coates's divergence from Tschumi's more conceptual ideas is encountered, and the influence of Coates's installation and performance works conducted with Antonio Lagarto and Jenny Lowe are reflected in his evolving notion of dramatized space.⁴⁶ For Coates, space had the potential to create or enhance the 'impressions, sensations and feelings' felt by the body. He conceived of this as an active process through which meaning is created – with the body and the mind bringing memories, experiences, knowledge and personal nuance to produce unique spatial experiences.⁴⁷ Essential to Coates's departure from Tschumi was this conception of an active process creating architecture, so that architecture becomes part of the experience – an idea that was explored by Tschumi but with a focus on the revolutionary potential of architecture on a macro, political scale.

For Coates it was integral that the unit begin enacting space with their bodies, rather than merely discussing it or imagining it – reflecting the influence of performance art on his thinking. Ideas of ‘staging’ and ‘mise-en-scene’ were added to the unit’s growing vocabulary – with strategies focused on producing effect rather than ‘logical constructs.’⁴⁸ In a brief from 1980-81 titled ‘Modern Life’ [6], the first year that Coates ran the unit without Tschumi, he explains this evolving approach as a conscious rejection of prevailing postmodernist architecture, instead proposing architecture that embraced the cultural fragmentation of the new decade:

Post-modernism attempted to institutionalise this shift towards fragmentation, using cross-reference as its technique and old concepts of historical space as its model. It resulted, however in the old uniformity, the old morals, the old formality. PM turned creative procedure into intellectualised recuperation, allowing the memory to rule and the primacy of the senses to be lost [...] architecture seems totally to have lost touch with a contemporary existential desire to link personal experience with the world outside.⁴⁹

Crucially, during this period, Coates’ approach became increasingly rooted in the contextual changes that were shaping the 1980s – including the economic and political turbulence of the late 1970s that led to the implementation of Margaret Thatcher’s monetarist policies, the ensuing deindustrialisation of large parts of the country including east London, mass unemployment, and the birth of new technologies such as the personal computer, the Walkman, the mobile phone and the VCR. As he would later say, his was a ‘cultural stock-taking stance’, seeking to reflect the post-punk music and style subcultures seen in the pages of *i-D* (1980-) and *The Face* (1980-2004) that were emerging as a sensual form of resistance to the destabilising state of the nation.⁵⁰ He increasingly felt that Tschumi’s discussion of the ‘event’ of architecture described action that was too predetermined or planned,

and strove to move the unit's discourse further towards notions of action and reaction, perception and experience. He described how architecture should be, 'forthright and expressive, for the distortions of the mind to be thrown onto the building so that once built, they would throw some of the same feeling back.'⁵¹

In order to generate such an expressive architecture, Portuguese theatre director and filmmaker Ricardo Pais was invited to conduct a workshop for the unit in 1980, with the aim of discovering the potential of a simple studio room at the AA – using movement and the body to explore the space [7, 8]. In a brief for one of these workshops, 'Drama/Situation/Scene' [9], Pais explains how 'the room becomes the commonplace of imagination' and that the students should 'organize that imagination into body/room relationships, inventing actions that articulate four metaphoric phases of the night...expectation, excitement, deception, tedium.'⁵² Physically acting out situations uncovered the spatial significance of actions that could not be discovered through drawing alone. The workshops were part of a method to design space that evoked the 'perceptual richness that has something to do with the circumstances of being in it,' with Coates believing that though buildings and spaces do not themselves move, they can be the 'instigators of movement.'⁵³

In 1981-82, Coates took the next step from Pais' theatre workshops and introduced video to the unit, utilising the AA's recently established editing suite. Video enabled a more expressive medium than performance alone, with the possibility for camera angles and editing facilitating a more sophisticated recording of the experience of space. The year's project, entitled 'Giant Sized Baby Town' after a song by pop band Bow Wow Wow,⁵⁴ took over a large chunk of the derelict Isle of Dogs to explore the connected themes of home and work – in particular, imagining a future for the now defunct factories and docks that littered the area. Coates and the students developed a methodology whereby short videos made by small groups explored confrontations between the factory and the home. One such film, *Ou Abandon du Habitues Quotidiens* (roughly translated as 'Or Abandonment of Daily

Habits', though the French is distinctly slapdash and grammatically incorrect) produced by Mark Prizeman, Melanie Sainsbury, Thomas Schregenberger, Nick Turvey and Carlos Villanueva Brandt, combines a domestic scene with shots of a textile factory viewed on a television screen within the scene [10-12]. The film is provocative and expressive – involving bizarre juxtapositions and seemingly random associations of people and objects helping to create a mood or atmosphere, rather than advancing a linear narrative.

After completion, the videos were deconstructed into a storyboard format, redrawing the action in a form of reversed notation, focusing on depicting narrative relations, and representing qualities of the video's form, space and effect. The focus then moved to the geographical site, where the map was divided into parts and each student selected a linear strip of land to photograph and explore on foot. Back in the studio, each element was combined – the storyboard, the photographs of the site, and the experiences they had encountered while there – in a complex and subjective process of layering, juxtaposing and overlapping [13]. The technique specifically involved overlaying the linear storyboard with the path through the site to create new associations and correspondences between the two. As Coates wrote in a brief from 1981: 'Make a drawing which takes the video apart, adapting it into a workable set of visual congruencies...a loosening of the storyboard which suggests transition, the kinetic, the distorted emerging out of the ordered and the precise.'⁵⁵

The resulting combination and collision of each student's programme sought to create a dynamic spatial condition rich in correspondences and complexity, and a sense of disorder that dispensed with traditional notions of planning to instead evoke the natural evolution of the city fabric. The images that represented these messy and chaotic propositions were loose, frenetic drawings, often focussing on small vignettes of action and using perspective to depict inhabitation and varying scales [14,15]. Though the process suggests a structural approach to narrative that echoes Tschumi's, the drawings that resulted focused far more on affect, experience and subjective relations than a reading of the brief alone might suggest. This hints at

the complex relationship between a brief and a student's interpretation of it, and that an analysis that brings both elements together must necessarily interpret this disjunction. Coates himself has also explained that his own ideas developed through the writing and subsequent playing-out of the briefs – which he frequently took part in himself – with the students shaping and influencing the Unit's direction as it developed.⁵⁶

Crucially, the unit (and subsequently NATØ,⁵⁷ the group that emerged from Unit 10 led by Coates) were building towards the articulation of narrative architecture. Explaining the purpose of the video process, Coates describes a 'scratching away' at the surface of a place to expose its archaeology and mythology – finding content for architecture which referred to human events and human responses.⁵⁸ For Coates, narrative did not refer to the strictures of story in a structuralist sense,⁵⁹ but was about the evocation of sensation and effect where every element is maximised – moving architecture away from being merely the 'backdrop for actions, becoming the action itself.'⁶⁰ Critically, narrative for Coates and for Unit 10 was at its core about evoking *narrativity* as opposed to a single narrative or storyline – they did not aim to tell stories but to stimulate what narratologist Marie-Laure Ryan would call 'cognitive constructs or mental images' through a rich illustration of the accretions, memories and traces of a place.⁶¹

An important part of this expressive turn was an engagement with a broader spectrum of emergent popular cultural modes than the purely architectural: the fanzine and the lifestyle magazine, club culture, street style, the pop video, film, fashion design and product design – identifying with a particular stream of post-punk expression: a celebration of the abject, an aesthetic of entropy, and a do-it-yourself (DIY) provisionality. In their exaggerated, often extreme aesthetic that folded diverse references and symbols into new contexts, these subcultural forms had the effect of contemporaneity, or what Sylvia Lavin has called 'todayness.'⁶² Lavin evokes Charles Baudelaire's conceptualisation of presentness he observed in the mannerisms of the everyday and fashion to explain how architecture could

produce the same 'enticingly contemporary duration' and 'flicker of provisionality' through the creation of moods and atmospherics.⁶³ In a similar way, Coates (and later NATØ) sought to 'pinch the urban nerve that was most sensitive at the time' and to stress 'the sense of what's going on now,' rather than to project a new vision of the present or the future.⁶⁴

Thus the literariness in Coates' early briefs at the AA lies in their desire to evoke narrativity through the embedding of architecture with content, and the experiences, emotions and actions provoked by this content. Coates has described narrative architecture as a 'crucible', an evocative word that conjures up the image of a melting pot – where the contents are heated until they change or morph.⁶⁵ The heat of the crucible can thus be likened to the layers of information and association colliding to create hot narrative sensation. Coates's narrative architecture involved both a temporal and a mental dimension, and contained within it a plethora of layered content which would 'drench'⁶⁶ the visitor – transferring authorial control away from the architect to the consumer of architecture – a change akin to Roland Barthes' shift from the readerly to the writerly.⁶⁷ As John Thackara would later say of NATØ's work, 'NATO does not create the creativity but, like the Cages and Enos in music, set out to create the conditions and preconditions by which everyone may participate.'⁶⁸

Conclusion

Both Tschumi and Coates asserted that space does not become architecture until there is some element of use, occupation, inhabitation, or action – and placed primary importance on the meeting of the two. Much of the difference in their subsequent approaches can be traced back to the literary text and their distinct relations to it. Tschumi saw the literary text as a resource from which to select narrative sequences that could be projected onto a physical site as the basis for the design of architectural space. The very nature of the process was of an imposition carried out by the architect, manipulated in a similar way to the manipulation of

words in a text – his approach deliberate and precise. By contrast, Coates saw the effect created by the literary text – sensation, immersion, narrativity – as qualities to be produced by architecture. Whilst Tschumi sought to use the disjunction between space and experience to create new forms of architecture, Coates sought to create new narratives constructed through experience. The role of architecture for Coates was thus to ‘aggregate and disintegrate the experiences it contained.’⁶⁹ But while the literary context of events was the starting point for Tschumi’s thinking, Coates aimed to bring architecture closer to fiction by exploring its role in unfolding narrative.

Though Tschumi and Coates were both concerned with the content and programme of architecture and its inseparability from the building itself, Coates took this idea in a direction that prioritised the anthropomorphic or bodily aspects of space. He took inspiration from new lifestyles, which had formed from the collision of unemployment, the decaying city, advancing technology and the mediatisation of culture. Tschumi wanted to instigate social or political change, but Coates’s aim was to reflect and absorb the cultural condition – to produce an architecture of presentness. Tschumi was inspired by literature and theory to produce architecture that could change society and culture whereas Coates was inspired by culture to produce architecture that created narrative events. But both remain modes of a literary architecture, or rather, modes of architecture with their roots in literary explorations.

Notes

1 Colin Davis, 'Place and Purpose: The AA as an Urban and Educational Institution', *Architectural Review*, Vol. CXXIV (1983), pp.24–26.

2 Bernard Tschumi and Martin Pawley, 'The Beaux-Arts Since 1968', *Architectural Design*, 41 (1971), 536–66; Bernard Tschumi, 'Sanctuaries', *Architectural Design*, 43

(1973), 75–90; Bernard Tschumi, 'La Strategie De L'autruche', *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, 176 (1974), pp.71–72.

3 Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction* (London: MIT Press, 1996), p.142.

Tschumi designed a programme for the students entitled 'Theory, Language, Attitudes' which examined consumerism, artificiality, and representationalism, informed by Jean Baudrillard, Henri Lefebvre, Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin, as documented in a book produced by the unit: Architectural Association (Great Britain), *A Chronicle in Urban Politics* (London Architectural Association 1973).

4 Nigel Coates and Bernard Tschumi, *The Discourse of Events* (Architectural Association, 1983), p.28.

5 Bernard Tschumi, 'Space and Events', in *Architecture and Disjunction*, pp.141-152.

6 Franz Kafka, 'The Burrow', published posthumously in *Beim Bau der Chinesischen Mauer* (Berlin: 1931). The first English translation, by Willa and Edwin Muir, was published by Martin Secker in London in 1933.

7 Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, (Italy: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1972). The first English translation, by William Weaver, was published in New York and London by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich in 1974.

8 Bernard Tschumi (Fall, 1976-77). *Project II. 'The Masque of the Red Death'*. [project brief]. Copy in possession of Mark Prizeman.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 'Space and Events', *Architecture and Disjunction*, p.146.

12 Ibid., p.146

13 Ibid., p.146.

14 Elena Cripa, Tom Vandeputte, 'Space as Praxis', *Log*, 21 (2011), pp.33–37.

15 *A Space: A Thousand Words*, (London: Dieci Libri, 1975). [exhibition catalogue]

- 16 The notation of performance art and experimental music since the 1950s is discussed in-depth in John Lely, *Word Events* (London ; New York: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2001).
- 17 Sandra Kaji-O'grady reports that the reviews of the exhibition were not positive, and there was a sense that critics from *The Architects' Journal*, *Art News*, and *Art International* failed to fully understand the proposition made by the show, indeed Kaji-O'grady describes the exhibition as 'fragmentary and enigmatic', lacking in 'an explicit or coherent ambition'. Sandra Kaji-O'grady, 'The London Conceptualists', *Journal of Architectural Education*, 61 (2008), pp.43-51. (p.48).
- 18 Bernard Tschumi, 'Questions of Space: The Pyramid and the Labyrinth (or the Architectural Paradox)', *Studio international*, 190 (1975), 136–142.
- 19 Bernard Tschumi, 'A Space is Worth a Thousand Words', in Bernard Tschumi, RoseLee Goldberg and
- 20 Royal College of Art (Great Britain), *A Space, a Thousand Words* (Dieci Libri, 1975), p.2.
- 21 Bernard Tschumi, 'Spaces and Events' in Nigel Coates and Bernard Tschumi, *The Discourse of Events* (Architectural Association, 1983), p.6. *The Discourse of Events* is an exhibition and catalogue derived from work by students of Unit 10, this essay is an earlier text with the same title as Tschumi's later essay in *Architecture and Disjunction* (1996) .
- 22 *The Discourse of Events*, p.52.
- 23 'Introduction', *Architecture and Disjunction*, p.16.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p.16.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p.17.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p.17.
- 27 Mary McLeod, 'Architecture and Politics in the Reagan Era: From Postmodernism to Deconstruction', in *Architecture Theory Since 1968*, ed. by K. Michael Hays (London: The MIT Press, 2000) pp. 680-702 (p. 692). First published in *Assemblage* 8, 1989

28 Tschumi worked with Derrida on Parc de la Villette. See 'Abstract Meditation and Strategy' in *Architecture and Disjunction*, pp. 191-205. See also Jeffrey Kipnis, 'Twisting the Separatrix', in *Architecture Theory Since 1968*, pp. 710-742.

29 Ibid., p.17. *Tel Quel* was a French literary review published from 1960 to 1982. See *The Tel Quel Reader*, edited by Patrick French and Roland-François Lack (London and New York: Routledge, 1998).

30 Tschumi, 'Architecture and Transgression', *Architecture and Disjunction*, pp.65-78. (p65) and Georges Bataille, *Eroticism*, trans. by Mary Dalwood (London: Penguin, 2001), p.67. 'Transgression opens the door into what lies beyond the limits usually observed, but it maintains these limits just the same. Transgression is complementary to the profane world, exceeding its limits but not destroying it.' Tschumi may use Bataille's ideas but he also departs from Bataille's thinking in many respects. Bataille wrote about architecture himself, and suggested that in expressing society it also defines society and controls it – because it only expresses one element of society and excludes its 'unquiet elements' – like excess, waste and eroticism. See Bataille's Critical Dictionary entry 'Architecture' in Georges Bataille et al *Encyclopaedia Acephalica*, (London: Atlas Press, 1995), p.35.

31 'Introduction', *Architecture and Disjunction*, p.6.

32 Ibid., p.15.

33 Ibid., p.23.

34 'Architecture and Transgression', *Architecture and Disjunction*, p.78.

35 Ibid., p.78.

36 Ibid., p.78.

37 *Eroticism*, p.40.

38 Jonathan Mosley and Rachel Sara, 'The Architecture of Transgression: Towards a destabilising architecture' *Architectural Design*, November/December 2013, pp. 14-19 (p. 15).

- 39 'Architecture and Transgression: An Interview with Bernard Tschumi' in *Architectural Design*, November/December 2013, pp. 32-37 (pp. 36-37).
- 40 *Architecture and Disjunction*, p. 72-73.
- 41 Ibid., p.75.
- 42 See the Advertisements in *Architecture and Disjunction*, p. 75 and p. 64.
- 43 'Space and Events', *Architecture and Disjunction*, pp.146-147.
- 44 Nigel Coates, 'Narrative Break-up' in Nigel Coates and Bernard Tschumi, *The Discourse of Events* (Architectural Association, 1983), p.153.
- 45 'Narrative Break-up', p.15.
- 46 For a fuller survey of The London Conceptualists and a number of individual works, see Sandra Kaji-O'grady, 'The London Conceptualists', *Journal of Architectural Education*, 61 (2008), pp.43–51. Coates' collaborative works with Lagarto and Lowe are discussed in Claire Jamieson, 'WAKE UP AND DREAM FOR THE 80S': Nigel Coates 1975-82', *The Journal of Architecture*, 20:1, (2015) pp.122-151.
- 47 'Narrative Break-up', p.15.
- 48 Nigel Coates and Bernard Tschumi, 'Mayfair Squares' in *The Discourse of Events* (Architectural Association, 1983), p.62.
- 49 Nigel Coates (1980). 'Modern Life'. [project brief]. In the possession of Mark Prizeman.
- 50 Nigel Coates, 'Street Signs' in *Design After Modernism: Beyond the Object* (Thames and Hudson, 1988), p.100.
- 51 'Narrative Break-up' in *The Discourse of Events*, p.15.
- 52 Ricardo Pais (1980), 'Drama/Situation/Scene'. [project brief]. In the possession of Mark Prizeman.
- 53 Nigel Coates, 'Modern Life' in *The Discourse of Events*, p.71.
- 54 Bow Wow Wow, 'Giant Sized Baby Thing', 1980.

- 55 Nigel Coates (1981). 'WORK (s)'. [project brief]. In the possession of Mark Prizeman.
- 56 Nigel Coates, interview with Claire Jamieson, September 2012.
- 57 NATØ – 'Narrative Architecture Today' – were an architectural group formed by Coates with Unit 10 students Martin Benson, Peter Fleissig, Christina Norton, Mark Prizeman, Melanie Sainsbury, Carlos Villanueva, Catrina Beevor and Robert Mull in 1983. They produced exhibitions and magazines between 1983-87.
- 58 Nigel Coates, interview with Claire Jamieson, September 2012.
- 59 Structuralist narratologists such as Claude Bremond, Gérard Genette, A.J. Greimas, Tzvetan Todorov and Roland Barthes abstracted narrative into its constituent parts, levels and functions towards a universal model, drawing on Saussurian linguistics (after Ferdinand de Saussure) and Russian Formalism.
- 60 'Spaces and Events', *The Discourse of Events*, p.11.
- 61 Marie-Laure Ryan, *Narrative across media : the languages of storytelling* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), p.8.
- 62 Sylvia Lavin, 'What Color Is It Now?', *Perspecta*, 35 (2004), pp.98–111.
- 63 Ibid., p.100.
- 64 Nigel Coates, 'Ghetto & Globe', *NATØ*, 1 (1984), pp.8-11 (p.9).
- 65 Nigel Coates quoted in Andreas Papadakis, *Theory + Experimentation: An Intellectual Extravaganza* (London: Academy Editions, 1993), p.36.
- 66 Nigel Coates, *Narrative Architecture* (London: Wiley-Academy, 2012), p.15.
- 67 Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975).
- 68 John Thackara, 'Mad Methods' in *NATØ*, 3, (1985). pp.14-15. (p.14)
- 69 'Narrative Break-up', p15

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In alphabetical order by surname of individual or institution name

Architectural Association 3
Nigel Coates 7, 8
Mark Prizeman 1, 2, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14
Bernard Tschumi 4, 5
Carlos Villanueva-Brandt 15

Biography (or biographies)

Claire Jamieson studied architecture at the University of Cambridge (MA) and the Royal College of Art (MA), and was awarded her Ph.D in Critical and Historical Studies at the Royal College of Art in 2015, funded by an AHRC Studentship. Her research explored narrativity in architectural production through an archival study of 1980s radical group NATØ (Narrative Architecture Today).

Rebecca Roberts-Hughes completed her BA and MA, both in Philosophy and Literature, at Warwick University. She is finalising her Ph.D at King's College, London, alongside her full time career in public policy. She is researching discourses of eroticism, literature and architecture in the twentieth century through a nexus of thinkers focusing on Georges Bataille (1897-1962).

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CAPTIONS:

Figure 1: 'Mask of the Red Death', project brief written by Bernard Tschumi for Princeton University School of Architecture, 1976.

Figure 2: Cover of the 'Soho Stadium' brief, part of the 'Soho Institutions', produced by Bernard Tschumi and Nigel Coates for Unit 10 at the Architectural Association, 1978-79.

Figure 3: Ron Arad, drawing for 'Soho Stadium' project completed at the AA, 1978-79.

Figures 4 and 5: Bernard Tschumi, images of Le Corbusier's decaying Villa Savoye from 'Advertisements for Architecture' series, 1975.

Figure 6: First page of a brief for the 'Modern Life' project, written by Coates for Unit 10 at the AA, 1980.

Figures 7 and 8: Photographs of a workshop for the 'Mayfair Squares' project run by Ricardo Pais for Nigel Coates's Unit 10, 1980.

Figure 9: Brief for 'Drama/Situation/Scene' written by Ricardo Pais for Coates's 'Modern Life' year, 1980.

Figures 10-12: Stills from short film 'Ou Abandon du Habitudes Quotidien', produced by Unit 10 students Mark Prizeman, Melanie Sainsbury, Thomas Schregenberger, Nick Turvey and Carlos Villanueva Brandt, 1981-82.

Figure 13: Working drawing showing deconstructed storyboard technique used to combine the video with the site, by Mark Prizeman, 1981-82.

Figure 14: Mark Prizeman, drawings for 'Chemical Works', part of the 'Giant Sized Baby Town' project brief, 1981-82.

Figure 15: Carlos Villanueva-Brandt, drawing for 'Timber Fibre Factory', part of the 'Giant Sized Baby Town' project brief, 1982.

WEBSITE ABSTRACT:

Please add a 70-100 word abstract for the website

Tschumi's experimental use of the literary text as part of design briefs for students at the Architectural Association in the late 1970s formed the basis for a preoccupation with what he termed the disjunction between space and the events which happen within it. For Coates, the literary briefs triggered a fixation with what was happening in space – but instead of focusing on its conceptual interaction with events, he moved towards the dramatisation of architecture. Grounded in the architects' shared teaching at the AA, the article discusses the early briefs and projects that shaped the directions they would each take.

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