

**Transgression – Where Experience and Concept meet?
– Tschumi's »Paradox of Architecture« revisited (Abstract)**

In 1976 Bernard Tschumi introduced the notion of transgression into architectural discourse through the theoretical platform *Oppositions* of the IAUS. Aiming both at the very title of the journal, as well as at the main protagonists of a conceptual architecture modeled after minimal and post-minimal art as well as the “radical” Austrian or Italian architects post 1968, he identified a seemingly unsurpassable paradox of architecture: space could either be sensually experienced or rationally understood, it could either be practiced or represented. But not both at the same time. Skeptical of the linguistically informed “neo-avantgardes” and their distancing from societal reality by means of “disciplinary autonomy”, Tschumi identified an underlying Hegelian dialectic of idea versus social reality implied in their arguments. Unwilling to play out these dialectics, and be forced into the silence of the paradox, he proposes transgression as “a way around”. Heavily imbued to George Bataille, Tschumi construes two “correspondences”: the first parallels architecture with eroticism, as a form of intellectual sensuality, both individual experience and universal rationality; the second parallels architecture with the other taboo of (modern) society: death, decay and putrefaction. Taking the rotten state of Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye as an example, a stinking ruin he visited in 1965 while still studying at the ETH Zurich, Tschumi explains that in the moment where knowledge meets with disgust – or concept with sensuality, even if a repulsive one – the paradox of architecture would be overcome, at least momentarily.

This re-vision of Tschumi's text will not stop at exploring the layers of the text, its Dionysian-Apollonian transgression, but move on to the current epoch, where similar to the Villa Savoye for a Corbusian, the author experienced MRVD's Dutch Pavilion of the EXPO Hannover as a conceptual building in the state of decay, not decent white bones, but rotting flesh. Here, the knowledge of the concept of stacked Dutch landscape beforehand met with the painful experience of repulsion. Yet it did not deliver the architectural event Tschumi promised, rather, this transgression opened into another silence of architectural excess...

Bio:

Dr. Ole W. Fischer is an architectural theoretician and historian, and associate professor as well as associate director of the University of Utah School of Architecture. Before his appointment in 2010, he conducted research and teaching at the ETH Zurich, Harvard GSD, MIT, and RISD, and since then held visiting appointments at the TU Vienna and TU Graz. He lectured and published internationally on history, theory, and criticism of architecture, amongst others in: *Archithese*, *Werk*, *JSAH*, *MIT Thresholds*, *Arch+*, *AnArchitektur*, *GAM*, *Umeni*, *Beyond*, *West 86th*, *Framework* and *log*. He contributed chapters to numerous books, such as *The Handbook of Architectural Theory* (London: 2012) and *This Thing called Theory* (London: 2016), and he is the author of *Nietzsches Schatten* (Berlin: 2012) as well as co-editor of the peer-reviewed journal *Dialectic* (since 2011) awarded by the Graham Foundation in 2013 and 2020.

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