

# THE GENERATION OF '68 – TODAY

## Bernard Tschumi, Rem Koolhaas and the Institutionalization of Critique

ELLEN DUNHAM-JONES  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

*This paper examines the manifestation of 1960s anti-establishment and post-structuralist ideas in the work of Bernard Tschumi and Rem Koolhaas. Though the strategies underlying their work originated as sixties counter-cultural critiques, in the nineties they have been institutionalized through MOMA retrospectives, secure academic appointments and exceedingly large monographs. Instead of transgressing the Society of the Spectacle, they now accelerate it, raising questions as to what indeed constitutes a progressive practice today.*

### INTRODUCTION

*The radical protests of the sixties were a defining moment in the shaping of late 20th-Century thought and ideals. The battles against the Vietnam War, technocracy, corporate capitalism and the rat race, and for civil and women's rights defined the ideals of a new generation. In various ways, participatory democracy was vigorously championed as the means to achieve and protect individual rights. While it is odd to describe the impact of these counter-cultural demands in terms of "heritage," we are now, a full thirty years later, the time-span of a generation, in the position to recognize just how much the anti-establishment ideas – and their authors – have been institutionalized in contemporary practice and architectural education.*

*I will argue that our contemporary attitudes to what is deemed progressive and critical descend directly from the anti-establishment views of the sixties. I will trace the manifestation of post-structuralist ideas developed in France at this time in the work of Rem Koolhaas and Bernard Tschumi. Their efforts to deconstruct architectural composition and ordering techniques stem from specific sixties' agendas however they live on in contemporary post-structuralist architecture and theory in an entirely different, largely institutionalized, context. While I greatly admire Tschumi's and Koolhaas' deeply considered strategic arguments, skillful form-making, and significant contributions to architectural thought, I do question the degree to which their work continues to be perceived by the discipline at large as the paradigm of avant-gardism. This paper examines how that*

*perception has been constructed and – counter to its own principles – institutionalized. In the spirit of the Generation of '68, I hope to challenge the discipline today to rethink what indeed constitutes a progressive practice.*

*Many radical concepts which originated in the sixties are common themes in contemporary architecture and education: the refusal to participate in the commodity culture and the interest instead in happenings, art outside of the gallery, and protests against bourgeois materialism; the fascination with surrealist practices as strategies for resisting capitalist totalization; the resentment against architecture's complicity with bureaucratic structures and repressive ordering systems; and the subsequent interest in destabilizing and dematerializing architecture. In particular, these ideas continue to inform the work of Koolhaas and Tschumi, but now from within the very academies and museums they initially opposed.*

*Far from the sixties rebellion in the streets, nineties radicalism takes the form of cultural criticism, abstract and distanced formal representations, really fat monographs and retrospectives at MOMA. While continuing to rely on sixties arguments about critiquing the status quo, such methods and monographs have in fact become the status quo. Secure academic appointments and the media-propelled Star system have mooted the subversive power of sixties post-structuralist strategies. Rather than transgressing what Guy Debord called "the Society of the Spectacle," the Generation of '68 now accelerate it.*

### SIXTIES FRENCH CULTURAL CRITIQUE

*Both Tschumi and Koolhaas were 24 years old and living in Paris in 1968. Koolhaas was a journalist/script-writer watching but not participating in the rebellions. Tschumi, a recent graduate of the ETH, was studying and working for Candilis, Josic and Woods. One of the more progressive firms of the time, leaders within Team X, they are perhaps best known for their North African work with ATBAT and their competition winning proposal for Toulouse-le-Mirail. The principals were also teachers at the Ecole where they joined the students' protests. Tschumi's proximity and interest in the protests is evidenced by the lengthy article he co-wrote with Martin*

Pawley for *Architectural Design* in 1971 on "The Beaux-Arts Since '68."<sup>1</sup> Though both Tschumi and Koolhaas ended up at the AA in London by 1970, (Koolhaas as student, Tschumi as young teacher), Tschumi maintained intellectual ties to the more politicized and critical circles of Paris – in particular, the Situationists and early post-structuralist writings of Foucault, Barthes, and Derrida in journals like *Tel Quel*.<sup>2</sup>

Students in England, France and the US responded in various ways to the increasingly evident contrast between the booming consumerism at home and the legacy of colonial exploitation, the class distinction between intellectuals and workers, and the violence of the war in Vietnam. The AA at the time was an immensely rich stew of concerns: the technopop fantasies of Archigram, the more critical propositions of Superstudio, concern for affordable housing as well as questions of appropriate development in the former colonies in the tropics. Equally liberationist and concerned for progressive politics, work out of the AA was generally more utopian and more concerned with bold visual presentations than the activist protests out of the radicalized Ecole at the time.

Instead of studios, the post-'68 Ecole was transformed by sit-ins. Classes on construction were held in forced occupations of banking offices where discriminatory loan practices were discussed. Design was dismissed as not only irrelevant to the more important class struggles, but as complicit with the technocratic structure of the state. Such thinking drew on the fifties and sixties writings of post-Marxist writers like Jean Paul Sartre, Henri Lefebvre and Guy Debord. Sartre's identification of bureaucracy – both capitalist and communist – with alienation, heightened suspicion towards all forms of functionalist planning. Modern designs emphasizing efficiency and function were increasingly seen as similarly bureaucratic and alienating. Sartre's arguments were bolstered by the writings of Lefebvre, Debord, and their Situationist cohorts railing against the commodification and banalization of everyday life by a society oriented solely to consumerism.<sup>3</sup>

The Situationists were an international, interdisciplinary group formed in 1956, who produced pamphlets, exhibitions, and films in protest of capitalist rationality. Debord in particular excoriated what he called the Society of the Spectacle – mass capitalist society lulled into complacency by advertising, and false promises of material goods and an equitable society.<sup>4</sup> Like the Surrealists, they proposed dis-order, non-sense and what they called *de'tournement* as means to free people from conventions and authority. They championed the idea of the *dérive*; a personal meander through the city, deliberately avoiding the specified routes organized by planners and architects. A *dérive* through backyards, across property lines, with no particular destination in mind was intended to elicit the "psychogeography" of the city, allowing its inhabitants to derive meaning from personal experience rather than authority. One famous Situationist *dérive* involved using a map of London to traverse the Harz region of Germany.<sup>5</sup>

## BATAILLE: ARCHITECTURE'S REPRESSIVE WILL TO ORDER

Tschumi's course on the "Politics of Space" introduced the French critique of architecture's complicity with a corrupt society to the AA.<sup>6</sup> He was fascinated in particular by the work of Georges Bataille, a rebellious surrealist whose writings from the 1920s were rediscovered and made the focus of a symposium in Paris organized by Phillippe Sollers and *Tel Quel* in 1974.<sup>7</sup> Dismissed by Breton as an "excremental philosopher", Bataille's writing combined fantasy and criticism by what he termed "the way of the mole", a blind chthonic crawl through shit, the low material of death, as opposed to other critics who he characterized as setting themselves up for the Icarian fall, by trying to fly above the world, with an omniscient perspective on life. Like the other surrealists, he was opposed to the artifice of order and analyzed life as driven not by reason but the joy of the "little death" of sexual climax. Roland Barthes' later writings on "jouissance" can be traced in part to Bataille's theories of the eroticism of excess. In the book which later firmly established both Bataille's contribution and architecture's centrality to post-structuralist discourse, Denis Hollier focused on a two-page article by Bataille from 1929 entitled "Architecture."<sup>8</sup> In an often quoted passage, Bataille cites architecture as the source of the repressive order of society.

Architecture is the expression of the very soul of societies, just as human physiognomy is the expression of the individuals' souls. It is however, particularly to the physiognomies of official personages ... that this comparison pertains. In fact it is only the ideal soul of society, that which has the authority to command and prohibit, and is expressed in architectural compositions. Thus great monuments are erected like dikes, opposing the logic and majesty of authority against all disturbing elements: it is in the form of cathedral and palace that Church or State speaks to the multitudes and imposes silence upon them.<sup>9</sup>

This repression is manifest not only through the built structures of the city, but through the reliance on architectural composition in other arts. In Bataille's words,

each time that architectural composition turns up somewhere other than in monuments, whether it is in physiognomy, costume, music, or painting, one may infer a prevailing taste for divine or human authority. The great compositions of certain painters express the desire to force the spirit into an official ideal. The disappearance of academic construction in painting is, on the contrary, the opening of the gates to expression to psychological processes that are the most incompatible with social stability."

Bataille's identification of architecture with authority and bureaucracy resonated with the turbulent and anti-establish-

ment thought of the late sixties and early seventies. Between Bataille and the Situationists' proposals of dis-order, efforts to program and plan social activity came to smell of authoritarianism. Planning itself came to be associated in radical thought more with Stalinist five-year plans than with liberal management. Instead of trying to order space, radical architects focused instead on providing the stage for unprogrammed events.

In an essay on his student work at the AA in the early seventies, Koolhaas recalls the "Bataille-soaked" need to transgress the "profane" human world of order that Bataille opposed to a "sacred" animal world of disorder, cruelty, and excess. His thesis, an analysis of the Berlin Wall as architecture, understood the Wall as the transgression to end all transgressions." The ideas from the thesis were extended into the 1972 project he designed with Elia Zenghelis, "Exodus" (the opening project in *S,M,L,XL*.) They designed an occupiable wall within the city that is both prison and utopia, and very much a stage for unprogrammed exhibitionist events. Merging the influences of Bataille, Superstudio, and the Berlin Wall, this was an architecture for what they called "the voluntary prisoners" – contemporary society.. Koolhaas wrote,

"In the early seventies, it was impossible not to sense an enormous reservoir of resentment *against* architecture, with new evidence of its inadequacies – of its cruel and exhausted performance – accumulating daily; *looking at the (Berlin) wall as architecture, it was inevitable to transpose the despair, hatred, frustration it inspired to the field of architecture....* Were not division, enclosure, (i.e., imprisonment), and exclusion – which defined the wall's performance and explained its efficiency – the essential stratagems of *any* architecture? In comparison, the sixties dream of architecture's liberating potential – in which I had been marinating for years as a student – seemed feeble rhetorical play. It evaporated on the spot."

### POST-STRUCTURALIST STRATEGIES OF LIBERATING ARCHITECTURE FROM ITSELF

Koolhaas came to the conclusion that architecture was fundamentally a prison. What was the point of the demands for a more socially relevant architecture, of using architecture to liberate society when architecture was so much at fault for constraining it in the first place? Recalling Foucault's arguments to that effect about Bentham's panopticon, Hollier similarly asked "Is prison then the generic name designating all architectural production?"<sup>13</sup> While in his 1979-81 renovation of a panopticon prison at Arnheim, Koolhaas tried to insert an anti-panopticon system of sunken streets intersecting at right angles, his later work would concentrate not on redesigning prisons, but redesigning architecture itself. If architectural ordering is inherently imprisoning, then social liberation is to be achieved only by destabilizing architecture, deconstructing it as an ordering system altogether. In Tschumi's words, the point is to produce an architecture against architecture," or what Koolhaas has termed a "post-architectural modernity."<sup>15</sup>

Chief amongst the post-structuralist strategies to deconstruct architecture has been the de-emphasis of fixed and enduring architectural form in favor of the transient event.<sup>16</sup> By seemingly dematerializing architecture and mobilizing program, events emphasize individual freedom and spontaneity instead of architectural control. They are moments of spontaneous invention and discovery. Both Tschumi and Koolhaas give particular attention to ramps and places of movement as the indeterminate, unprogrammed sites of potential unplanned events. Freedom is exemplified in the mobility of the modern nomad, not in the participatory democracy of sixties activism or the citizen of civic humanism. Koolhaas and OMA's designs, such as those for Euralille and the *Bibliothèque de France*, focus on intersections and voids rather than programmed solids as spaces which will trigger events.

Tschumi has similarly emphasized not the design of forms, but of events. His projects often associate architecture with mass media, (magazines, computer networks, cinema, etc.) as more conducive than architecture to temporal events. In his 1970 Do-It-Yourself-city project with Fernando Montes, he proposed a series of mobile computer relay stations distributed around the city to facilitate social interaction and entertainment." Deliberately lacking a plan, the drawings explored the imagery of networks, screens and connections, accompanied by the description not of a permanent space, but a scenario, a temporal event.

Tschumi's 1975 Advertisements for Architecture project similarly dispersed architecture and further dematerialized it by constructing what he called "magazine space." He placed "Bataille-soaked" ads about the desire for architecture in *Architectural Design*, calling into question the metaphysical reality of architecture. Which is more real – architecture as physically experienced or as conceptually imagined space?<sup>18</sup> The unpredictable experience of multiple viewers of the ads in the same space constitutes a temporal architectural event.

Similar intentions underlay his efforts to construct a *dérive* at the Parc de la Villette. Layers of points, planes, and paths are randomly juxtaposed so as to produce unpredictable architectural events that invite undirected meandering. Perhaps even more than Koolhaas, Tschumi's work consistently emphasizes mobility and such overlaid movement systems. From the notational system of choreography used in his Manhattan Transcripts, the cinematic promenade at La Villette, the running track inserted into his Bibliothèque de France proposal, to his emphasis of ramps in the Columbia University Student Union, (currently under construction) the emphasis on intersecting movement systems is intended to promote casual social interaction and unpredicted, unauthorized events. Although of course in a sense they are very much planned, they are intended to lie outside the realm of programmed space – much like meetings in the street, outside bureaucratic control.

In addition to emphasizing the spaces of movement, both Koolhaas and Tschumi have also tried to de-emphasize built composition and promote events by seriously questioning the

role of the architectural program. Tschumi has elaborated strategies of disprogramming, transprogramming, and cross-programming as means of subverting the purity, and therefore controlled aspect of the program.<sup>19</sup> Again the running track in the library is a good example – the deliberate juxtaposition and contamination of two seemingly incompatible programs as a means of defying convention.

Koolhaas is also interested in using program not to separate uses, but to compact them. Both his Melun-Senart and Yokohama urban design proposals, involve an effort to intensify program independent of form – often by structuring it around bands or voids, a kind of anti-architecture much like the "Exodus" project. Program is destabilized by reconceiving of it less in terms of function, something that is quasi-mechanical and controlled, and more as a dynamic, transient activity freed from formal definition.

In defiance of modern functionalism with its metaphors of machine-like production, the overriding metaphors for work promoting "events" are freedom and play. Whether in terms of erotics or hedonism, Tschumi's La Villette follies or Koolhaas' and Zenghelis' Hotel Sphinx of 1975-76, the architectures of events are intended to function as pleasurable heterotopic places beyond functionalism, or planned programs. However, this play is far from innocent or utopian. It springs from acynical disillusionment with the collapse of the sixties' promises of revolution. The generation of '68's utopian proposals were replaced by critiques of the status quo and explorations into the more (Bataille-like) animalistic pleasures of eros and excess – the only means by which architecture could escape complicity with capitalist rationality and focus instead on individual expression and freedom.

In *Delirious New York* Koolhaas found just such pleasures. Rather than focus on capitalist alienation and exploitation, he wrote of erotic artifice and fantasy in the culture of congestion. Who could forget Molly the Moet Cow? His more recent research into the Chinese experiments with capitalism along the Pearl River Delta similarly focus on the surreal delights produced by capitalism – instead of the sweatshops. He calls attention to the 500 24-hour golf courses, the world's longest waterfront promenade, the theme park at the center of the city, and the parking garage that after 6 months became inhabited by different programs and 26 different types of curtain walls!<sup>20</sup> Koolhaas revels in the seemingly absurd juxtapositions as testimony to the freeing dynamic and unpredictability of development.

However, the Special Economic Zone Koolhaas is studying is based on an economy of export-oriented production similar to the maquiladoras of Mexico or the Export Production Zones of Indonesia. Reliant upon vast quantities of cheap, docile non-unionized labor to produce everything from bootleg compact disks to athletic shoes or electronic components for multinational corporations, it is a mistake to equate their participation in Free Trade and unfettered development with growth in individual freedoms. The mobility of capital and the mobility of individuals are not the same thing – especially in Asia.

On the one hand, Koolhaas' technique of revealing the values and systems of contemporary capital is not so different from that of Debord and the Situationists. His research into development patterns participates in a similar kind of consciousness-raising. However, it is far less clear that Koolhaas is interested in transgressing the logic he exposes.?' Though claiming to simply be a non-judgmental chronicler, he is thrilled by the speed and audacity of new, unplanned development – the city as un-authorized event. In his writings on urbanism he scathingly criticizes the sterile and ultimately futile efforts of architects and planners to control and plan development.?' He derides architecture's aspirations of stability and permanence in the face of the instability and dynamism of the metropolis.?' Beyond Bataille, Koolhaas now argues that capital exceeds architecture and planning's vain efforts to order society. His call for a Lite Urbanism concerned with the staging of uncertainty can be interpreted as an appeal for architecture not to critique but to better serve the voracious appetite of mobile capital.?'

## THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF CRITIQUE

The profession as a whole paid little attention to post-structuralist critiques. However, in the schools, such critiques gave a political mission and renewed intellectual status to the discipline. Architectural theory and criticism have grown in importance over the last thirty years. They have led architectural discourse away from technocratic concerns, (with program, construction, and cost) towards the Humanities and speculation about more existential questions.

As is well known, the sixties demands for a more politically relevant and critical curriculum led to the incorporation of a variety of social science and environmental psychology perspectives in the teaching of architecture in the sixties. There was a great deal of emphasis placed on user participation in the design process by people such as Herman Hertzberger and Charles Moore. These were followed by a renewed focus on the expertise of the designer in the seventies with the gestalt psychology and formalism of Colin Rowe. However, in the eighties and nineties, post-structuralist criticism increasingly supplanted the earlier more applied theories.

Philosophy and literary criticism were increasingly cited in architectural criticism. Ridiculed as irrelevant to design by some, they resulted in a focus on the critique of architecture itself and the transformation of architecture from a medium ordering society into a medium of cultural criticism. Peter Eisenman's work is paradigmatic of this questioning of the medium itself and its mode of representation. He continues to explore the limits of the discipline by introducing concepts from other disciplines into architectural discourse. Via Foucault's and Lacan's post-structuralism on the one hand, and Benjamin's and Adorno's critical theory on the other, the ideas of Marx and Freud entered architectural discourse. Programs such as MIT's History, Theory, Criticism section, established in 1973, led the way in recognizing that theory and

criticism were intellectual discourses on a par with history. The contemporary insistence on students' development of a critical position in their design studios is a legacy not of modernism's efforts to reform the world, but of the sixties promotion of a counter-culture. Ironically however, the importance of establishing critical distance in academic work has removed architects from the kind of direct societal engagement associated with the sixties. Today, fear of being deemed affirmative of the status quo inhibits direct engagement with society in academic projects. Instead, representation and attention to more theoretical and abstracted levels of meaning are privileged as more critical means of advancing (the discourse of) the profession. Again, it is architecture itself, not society which is deemed in need of advancing.

This is especially true of deconstruction. Projects like Tschumi's Parc de la Villette of '82 and Eisenman's Wexner Center of '83 used architecture to transgress itself, to represent the instability of meaning and the artificiality of its own – and all – ordering systems. By randomly juxtaposing and colliding ordering systems, both La Villette and the Wexner Center were intended to defy architecture's will to order. Both can be seen as direct descendants of Bataille's challenge of architectural composition. However, unlike Bataille's underground "way of the mole," they were elevated to elite cultural icons and exhibited in the Deconstructivist Exhibition at MOMA in 1987. More about style than critique, and more counter-cultural in appearance than fact, the Deconstructivist show mixed architects with an explicitly post-structuralist agenda, with those who shared a similar aesthetic. Simply by being shown at MOMA, the work received official, institutional sanction and quickly inserted itself into the capitalist merchandising system selling more big fat monographs. An engineered "event," it produced predictable results: critical ideas were stylized and large-scale commissions began to flow to the participants. Far from deconstructing social systems, the exhibition institutionalized the architects' critiques as fashion, one of the driving forces of capitalism. In the process, they sold them to a wider audience but drained them of transgressive tendencies, causing echoes of Tafuri's pronouncements on the co-optation of the avant garde to ring in some of our ears.

Tschumi and Koolhaas soon followed with solo exhibitions at MOMA accompanied by the enormously fat monographs on their work. Koolhaas is now tenured as a professor of practice at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design. As dean of the School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation at Columbia, Tschumi is even more safely ensconced in a position of authority. Stars in the architectural firmament, beneficiaries of capitalism's need for stylistic innovation, Tschumi and Koolhaas now argue for capitalism as a dynamic and destabilizing force. In 1994 Tschumi began calling on architects to "accelerate capitalism."<sup>25</sup> Koolhaas similarly talks of the architect as a surfer on the wave of the *grosstadt*.<sup>26</sup> If he or she tries to alter the wave, they'll wipe out. The best they can do is master surfing and exploit the force of capital.

What are we to make of the endorsement of capitalism by these two children of the sixties? Is this adisingenuous tactic by two counter-culture heroes to suddenly justify the mainstream system they've found themselves comfortably within? Is it a response to the collapse of communism? A pragmatic attempt to direct capitalist development towards constructive and socially progressive ends? Koolhaas confessed to his disillusionment with sixties idealism at the time of his thesis. Since then, like the boys of *The Endless Summer*, Koolhaas' research of Manhattan, Atlanta, and Asia, has since been in pursuit of the perfect wave. *Delirious New York* is a love letter to capitalist development, stories of enchantment by a smitten lover, anxious to stylishly surrender to its consuming embrace. In Atlanta, while not altogether uncritical of the developer-driven architecture there, he similarly surrendered to what he called its surreal and beautiful landscape.<sup>27</sup> More curious than critical, Koolhaas says he withholds passing judgment on capital. He describes his studies of the banal, the generic, and the big simply as research, an effort to understand changed conditions. His refusal to criticize the architecture is replaced by his thrill for the speed of the process and the scale of the endeavor. While he stops short of praising generic or big buildings, he romanticizes (and implicitly endorses) the process of unfettered capitalization.

Tschumi's work on the other hand, has remained more aligned with radical rhetoric. His interest in deconstructing architecture, in exploring eros, pleasure, and events has consistently been couched in terms of liberating people from the technocratic order of rational planning. Liberation is to be achieved through destabilizing order. Tschumi incorporated computers, magazines, and film into his work precisely because of their ability to transgress architectural order, to seemingly dematerialize architecture. Now, however, very much in synch with Koolhaas' pronouncements on the futility of architectural efforts to order, Tschumi too recognizes the market as an ally, as a promoter of difference. Capitalism is to be befriended because it is the greatest source of destabilization. Destabilization - one of the great legacies of the sixties counter-culture - now turns out to be best accomplished by venture capitalists, big business, and mobile money markets! By mistake all these years, the avant-garde has been critiquing its best friend! In a tour de force of self-serving rhetoric, Tschumi and Koolhaas present market capitalism as "radical," "mobile," destabilizing, and therefore as continuous with the goals of the generation of '68.

And while the destabilizing impact of capitalism is surely not to be underestimated, its liberating aspect surely has to be questioned! In their interest to represent social freedom and mobility through the destabilization of architecture, they have lost track of the workers their generation once marched with. They have lost track of the 4/5 of the world's population who toil as producers so that the rest of us can live as consumers. They have lost track of a real analysis of society. Is uncontrolled inflation, unemployment, and the exploitation of cheap third world labor the desired end of a policy of destabilization? While the destabilization produced by mobile capital

may indeed free the architect, it also produces sprawl in the first world, sweatshops in the third world and increases income inequality. Between Tschumi's faith in the unerring progressiveness of destabilizing architecture, and Koolhaas' conviction that architecture is inherently destabilized by contemporary conditions of development, neither of them has questioned the less than liberating reality of social destabilization. The telecommunications media that Tschumi emulates and the global capital that Koolhaas pursues, have in fact contributed to a world economy which has become economically integrated but socially segregated. From the 1920s to the 1960s, disparities in incomes and wealth between individuals, places, and nations, were converging. That progressive trend has been in reverse since the mid-seventies and the emergence of the post-industrial economy and the technologies upon which it depends. The rich have gotten richer, and the poor poorer – within the US, but also worldwide, between nations.<sup>28</sup> In terms of social equity, the same dynamism and destabilization which Tschumi and Koolhaas wish to see accelerated or surfed, can only be understood as regressive not progressive.

## CONCLUSION

In addition to allying themselves with the acceleration of capitalism, Tschumi's alliance with mass media and Koolhaas' alliance with global capital have been strategic means of critiquing and disabling architecture's placemaking and ordering capacity. (And though I have generalized and lumped Tschumi and Koolhaas together it is important to recognize the differences in their approaches as well. Tschumi is that much more interested in referencing "media" and maintaining a more conventionally "critical" position, while Koolhaas is that much more interested in the conditions of development, in abstaining from criticism, and designing an operational architecture. Nonetheless, the similarities between them justify a few more further generalizations.) As I have tried to show, instead of critiquing society, they critique architecture's role in society, and instead of joining forces with labor unions or marching in the streets, they are now joining forces with the Society of the Spectacle. They celebrate individual mobility – especially Koolhaas – but speak little about participatory democracy. Their architectural projects emulate the dynamism and destabilization effected by global capital and post-industrial media. They frame these forces as "radical" and "progressive" because, ala Bataille, they dismantle the regressive tendencies of architectural order. However, I believe, in their deconstruction of architecture, Koolhaas and Tschumi end up endorsing even more complicit and regressive media and power structures.

The question becomes whether in the nineties, Bataille's 1929 critique of architecture still holds. Is architecture and architectural composition what is fundamentally ordering and determining society and societal behavior? Or, in fact, has it been superseded by global capital and post-industrial telecommunications? Rendering architecture and place in-

creasingly irrelevant, have they in fact become the invisible prison which constrains contemporary society? Are the networks of capital and information controlling social and political development more than architecture? I certainly believe so. Is there a new face and a new aesthetic, (one can't call it composition) to this order? I think that is part of what Tschumi and Koolhaas have been developing – a means of representing the immaterial, ephemeral, and transient world of electronic data transactions, an architecture of speed, instantaneity, and malleability. The fact is that the electronic world has destabilized architecture, rendered walls, boundaries, and borders relatively meaningless. Bataille's resentment for architecture's compartmentalization of society knew nothing of the ability of television, satellites or the internet to eradicate the distinctions between public and private, near and far. The question for us is whether the post-industrial world that Tschumi and Koolhaas have endorsed is indeed more progressive than what it replaced. In terms of human rights it unquestionably is, but in other areas I have my doubts, (justice?). As the liberationist dreams of the sixties fade further from realization and income inequity and uneven development increase – what today constitutes a radical practice? The nineties are not the sixties and our assumptions about progressive strategies need to be re-examined.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Martin Pawley, Bernard Tschumi, "The Beaux-Arts Since '68," *Architectural Design*, vol. 9, 1971.

<sup>2</sup> See Louis Martin, "Transpositions: On the Intellectual Origins of Tschumi's Architectural Theory," *Assemblage* 11, April 1990, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press).

<sup>3</sup> Kristin Ross argues that "With the waning of its empire, France turned to a form of interior colonialism; rational administrative techniques developed in the colonies were brought home and put to use side by side with new technological innovations such as advertising in reordering metropolitan, domestic society, the "everyday life" of its citizens." *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies, Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture*, (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1996), p. 7. She argues that these practices spurred the Situationists' concern for the "colonization of everyday life."

<sup>4</sup> "The spectacle is capital to such a degree of accumulation that it becomes an image." (thesis #34) Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, (Detroit, MI: Black and Red, 1977).

<sup>5</sup> Mentioned by Debord in "Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography", in Ken Knabb, ed., *Situationist International Anthology*, (Berkeley, CA: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981), p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> While Tschumi was not alone at the AA in discussing the writings of the Situationists. he recalls that the summaries from his lectures on Foucault, Lefebvre, Bataille and others were widely distributed and xeroxed within the school.

<sup>7</sup> Tschumi's 1978 article for *Architectural Design*, "Architecture and its Double" examines the relationship between architecture and surrealism, devoting considerable attention to Bataille, in addition to Duchamp, Artaud, and Kiesler. Republished in *Text 5: Questions of Space*, (London: AA Publications, 1990).

<sup>8</sup> Denis Hollier, trans. by Betsy Wing, *Against Architecture, The Writings of George Bataille*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989) Originally published as *La Prise de la Concorde* in 1974 following the symposium.

<sup>9</sup> Georges Bataille, "Architecture," *Documents*, number 2, May

- 1929, as translated in Denis Hollier, *ibid.* p. 47.
- <sup>10</sup> Bataille, *ibid.* as quoted in Hollier, *ibid.* p. 51.
- <sup>11</sup> Rem Koolhaas, "Field Trip, A (A) MEMOIR (First and Last...), in O.M.A., Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, (New York: Monacelli Press, 1995), p. 225.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* p. 226
- <sup>13</sup> Hollier, *op cit.*, p. x.
- <sup>14</sup> Tschumi, *Cinématique Folie*, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1987), p. vii.
- <sup>15</sup> Koolhaas, "Sixteen years of OMA," *OMA-Rem Koolhaas Architecture 1970-1990*, ed. by Jacques Lucan, (New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 1991), p. 163.
- <sup>16</sup> Both Koolhaas and Tschumi make repeated reference to the term "event", picking up both on its association to "les événements du Mai" as well as Fernand Braudel's use of the term to distinguish that which is temporal, almost breathless, from history or the *longue durée*. Tschumi opens his article "Spaces and Events" with "Can one attempt to make a contribution to architectural discourse by relentlessly stating that there is no space without event, no architecture without program?", *Architecture and Disjunction*, (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1994), p.139. See also Tschumi's more recent discussion of event in "Six Concepts" in the same anthology.
- <sup>17</sup> Fernando Montes and Bernard Tschumi, "Do-It-Yourself-city", *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* 148, (February-March, 1970), pp. 98-105.
- <sup>18</sup> This dichotomy is further explored in his writings where, picking up from Bataille, he compares the conceptual clarity of the pyramid to the experiential understanding provided by the labyrinth. "The Architectural Paradox" and "Questions of Space," in *Architecture and Disjunction*, (*op cit.*)
- <sup>19</sup> Tschumi, "Abstract Mediation and Strategy", *Architecture and Disjunction (op cit.*, p. 205)
- <sup>20</sup> Koolhaas, public lecture at Columbia University, March 26, 1997.
- <sup>21</sup> He is concerned that his generation's idealistic upbringing has rendered it incapable of operating in the real world. He writes, "So marked was the generation of May '68, my generation ... by the failure of this [Beaubourg] and similar models of density and integration ... that it proposed two major defense lines: dismantlement and disappearance.... Otherwise engaged, an entire profession was incapable, finally, of exploiting dramatic social and economic events [those associated with Bigness] that, if confronted, could restore its credibility." "Bigness," *S,M,L,XL (op cit.* p. 505-509)
- <sup>22</sup> Koolhaas, "What Ever Happened to Urbanism?," *S,M,L,XL (op cit.*, pp. 959-971).
- <sup>23</sup> Koolhaas, "Elegy for the Vacant Lot," *S,M,L,XL*, *op cit.*, p.937.
- <sup>24</sup> Koolhaas, "What Ever Happened to Urbanism?," *S,M,L,XL (op cit.*, pp. 969-71).
- <sup>25</sup> Tschumi concluded a public lecture on his work in April 1994 by challenging students to "accelerate capitalism." He expanded the description of his intentions in "Urban Pleasures and the Moral Good" in *Assemblage 25*, (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, December, 1994).
- <sup>26</sup> Koolhaas, *op cit.*, p. 937.
- <sup>27</sup> Koolhaas, "When I drive around Atlanta, to actually find things beautiful or exciting – and the same goes for the *villes nouvelles* around Paris – you could go around saying everything is ridiculous there or you could also surrender to the feeling that maybe it's a very unique landscape that is emerging there." Rem Koolhaas, "I Combine Architectural Specificity with Programmatic Instability," interview with Hajime Yatsuka, *Skala* no. 21, 1990, as quoted in *Rem Koolhaas: Projects Urbans (1985-1990)*, (Barcelona: Quaderns d'Arquitectura i Urbanisme Monographs, 1990), p. 30.
- <sup>28</sup> The Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme cites a dramatic enlargement of global income differences in the past three decades. It states that in 1960 the wealthiest 20 percent of the world population had more than thirty times the income of the poorest 20 percent. In 1989 that figure had grown to more than sixty times, such that the richest 20 percent of the population held 82.7 percent of global income. This comparison relates to the distribution between rich and poor countries. If one also looks at the income disparities within countries, the richest 20 percent of the world population have at least 150 times the income of the poorest 20 percent. Ingomar Hauchler and Paul M. Kennedy eds., *Global Trends, The World Almanac of Development and Peace* (New York: Continuum, 1994), p. 54. Within the United States, Robert Reich former Secretary of Labor writes, "For most of the nation's history, poorer towns and regions steadily gained ground on wealthier areas, as American industry spread to Southern and Western states in search of cheap labor. This trend ended sometime in the 1970s, as American industry moved on to Mexico, Southeast Asia, and other places around the world... American cities and counties with the lowest per-person incomes in 1979 had dropped even further below the nation's average by the late 1980s; cities and counties with the highest incomes headed in the opposite direction." *The Work of Nations, Preparing Ourselves for 21st Century Capitalism* (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1992), p. 272.