Bernard Tschumi, architecture and event: April 21-July 5, 1994
[organized by Terence Riley and Anne Dixon]
The Museum of Modern Art
BERNARD TSCHUMI
Architecture and Event
This exhibition is made possible by grants from Obayashi Corporation; YKK; Pro Helvetia Arts Council of Switzerland; the Federal Office of Culture, Switzerland; Etablissement Public du Parc de la Villette; Escofet; and the Nestlé Foundation for Art.
Bernard Tschumi was born in 1944 of French-Swiss parentage. He studied at the Federal Institute of Technology (ETH), Zurich, where he received a degree in architecture in 1969. He is principal of Bernard Tschumi Architects, New York and Paris, and dean of the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, Columbia University.
BERNARD TSCHUMI Architecture and Event

Throughout the twentieth century, the machine has served as one of the most pervasive of cultural metaphors, particularly in regard to architectural form and theory. Designers have not only tried to emulate the machine's aesthetic qualities, but to envision an architecture whose relationship to its function corresponds as directly as that of a machine to its purpose. Indeed, the spare beauty of Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye is due to his single-mindedness in applying the machine metaphor.

This resoluteness is called into question by Bernard Tschumi's proposition that architecture is continually transformed by the multitudinous events that take place in and around it; events which in themselves are too varied to be described by any architectural program. Tschumi's premise is most compelling within the urban context, wherein the singular focus of the machine metaphor is least capable of representing the complex intricacies inherent in metropolitan life. Rather than projecting a structure on the disorderliness of urban life, Tschumi's architecture is emblematic of the metropolis. Parc de la Villette, for example, becomes a stage set for an infinite number of human transactions, planned and unplanned, authorized and illicit, which momentarily form part of the metropolis, and which will ultimately transform the whole.

Post-war urban planners have frequently sought to categorize and segregate various urban activities, ensuring the necessary lack of density needed to monitor them. In contrast, Tschumi's designs tend to affirm the random disorderliness of the city and, in the Metropont and Kansai airport projects, for example, they achieve a density that contributes to the melding of disparate activities. If the ethic of the machine has been somewhat antagonistic toward the vibrancy of urban life, other twentieth-century cultural manifestations, particularly film, have been more sympathetic. As early as 1932, the architect Paul Nelson proposed the possibility of "cinematographic space," that is, an architecture conceived as a sequence of fluid experiences which unfold over time. Certainly, Tschumi's work displays an affinity with this conception of space. His interest in film, however, is apparent in other ways.

In a literal sense, the Le Fresnoy project integrates film imagery within its structure; projection screens are inserted into the interstices of the roof trusses. The La Villette and Le Fresnoy projects also refer to the cinematic world in a more atmospheric sense; both of these projects are designed to have nocturnal identities quite independent of those perceived by day. Thus architecture is not only a daylight phenomenon, but one which occurs in the flickering orphic light of the cinematic dream world. As with the machine, the greatest impact of the cinema as a metaphor is not in the formal sense, but in its ethical dimension. Unlike the reductive and selective character of the machine, film is inherently inclusive, absorbing and recording all that falls within its scope. In the same way, Tschumi's architecture, with its sensitivity to the importance of events which surround it, aspires to an inclusivity which reflects the heterogeneous complexity of the modern metropolis.

THE MANHATTAN TRANSCRIPTS (1976–81)

This theoretical project consists of four series of drawings, each of which transcribes, through a combination of two-dimensional representational systems, an imagined event that is specific to the place in which it occurs. For example, the twenty-four panels comprising Episode 1: The Park, narrate a murder in New York's Central Park using three modes of representation: photographs of the event, site plans, and diagrams. Episode 2: The Street (Border Crossing), overlays sequential drawings on a plan of New York's 42nd Street to narrate a person's movement along the street and in and out of buildings in which events of an occasionally violent or sexual nature occur, illustrated by photographs. The third and fourth parts of the project are less narrative, more schematic. Episode 3: The Tower (The Fall) depicts a fall through a Manhattan tower building; Episode 4: The Block represents unlikely events such as a high-wire act and a congregation of soldiers occurring in five courtyards of a city block.

The drawings are a study in the relationship between architecture and event, between pure conceptual space and real space as the site of unplanned activity. The events and movements imag-
BRIDGE-CITY, LAUSANNE, SWITZERLAND (1988– )

This project consists of four bridge structures for the Flon Valley in the center of Lausanne, augmenting the existing system of bridges. Serving as traversals across the valley, the bridges also function as buildings with multiple stories, providing vertical linkage between the industrial district of the valley floor and the upper-level historical city. Tschumi has developed detailed designs for two of the bridges: the Center for Contemporary Visual Arts (CAPC), which will occupy half of the Pont Montbenon, and Metropont transportation station.

The design for CAPC (1991) includes exhibition spaces, conference rooms, offices, artists' studios, and a bookstore. Its main structure is a horizontal opaque beam, with slender columns providing additional support. The beam is intersected by glass-enclosed diagonal boxes containing ramps and stairs. The circulation pattern through the museum is diverse, with access from the north or south end of the bridge and two options of movement once inside the museum. The multiple circuits incorporate into the building's program its double role as a thoroughfare.

Metropont transportation station (1992– ) will serve as an interchange station for three train and subway lines on one level and two bus lines on another level. Offices and commercial space are to occupy two levels along the western side. A glass-and-steel beam comprises the main structural unit with a diagonal glass box containing escalators abutting the east side of the bridge, formal elements similar to those of CAPC. A framework for advertisements and images will run along the bridge and the layered movement of text, images, and people in the glass box is intended to privilege the momentary over stability and event over architecture.

Above: Exploded site axonometric, detail. 1988. Ink on paper. 29 1/2″ x 46 1/4″.
Tschumi's design for the master plan and structuring elements of Parc de la Villette was selected from over 470 entries in an international competition held in 1983. The 125-acre park is for the most part completed, with twenty-two folies already built. Three additional folies—the small structures serving various functions such as restaurant, art workshop, video theater—are currently under construction.

The design for the park is a treatise on the rational systems of architecture, particularly their limitations and contradictions. Over-reasoned to a great degree, Tschumi's design questions the validity of reason as the primary guide for designing and evaluating architecture. The organizing principle of the park's design is the superimposition of three independent ordering systems, which each use a separate vocabulary of either lines, points, or surfaces, so that there is no single or true master plan. In combination, the logic of each system loses its coherence, and accident and chance become determining factors in the resulting design. The most prominently ordered system, the grid of points, is marked by the location of the red folie structures. Each of these structures is based on the ideal form of the cube, which is then subjected to complex operations of explosion, dissection, and recombination, transforming pure geometry into dissonance.

As in The Manhattan Transcripts, Tschumi uses the tools of architecture to question the validity of its own rules. Employing multiple organizing principles, he sets them up to collide with one another; each one serving to cancel, interrupt, and undermine the others. The disorganizing operations performed on the cubic structures can be read as a subversive architectural pun: an exploded drawing is normally one which diagrams connections between parts; Tschumi's explosions assert the value of disconnection and make manifest the effect of event.
This project is a plan and buildings for an office development with leisure facilities and housing units on the edge of the city of Chartres. Recreation is to be integrated into the 450-acre district so that the area is attractive to the inhabitants of the city proper and becomes a legitimate extension of the city.

A wide lawn avenue, called the "long-cours," connects the development to the city of Chartres, which lies across a highway. The avenue is the locus of the development's attractions, such as tennis courts, swimming pool, open-air theater, sports fields, golf course, and is marked by three curved halls which house a theater, indoor sports facilities, meeting halls, restaurants, and stores. Offices and light industry will be located in a band at an angle to the avenue and the entire area will be planted with long parallel lines of trees.

The curved halls are steel-framed with corrugated metal walls. The roofs are suspended from crane-like truss supports resulting in uninterrupted expansive interior space. The halls vary in size but are typical in form and are not intended to reflect their specific functions. The halls are mere enclosures which have no effect or determined use until specifically fitted.

BERNARD TSCUMI Architecture and Event was organized by Terence Riley and Anne Dixon, Department of Architecture and Design.
Tschumi's competition entry for a new airport to be built on an artificial island off Osaka posits the airport as a modern border town, a place of continuous twenty-four-hour-a-day activity. The airport is divided into two main parts: the deck and the linear city. The deck, a four-story, curtain-walled structure with an open expanse of interior space, is designed to house check-in counters, baggage claim, and other terminal facilities, as well as spaces for undefined art and cultural uses.

KANSAI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, OSAKA, JAPAN (1988)

The linear city is an extendable assemblage of elongated structures that Tschumi calls the double strip, the wave, and the slab. The glass-and-steel double strip contains the gate connections to the planes. The long slab building above the deck-side strip accommodates hotel rooms and hourly-rental office spaces. The wave structure contains the airport-as-urban-attraction's entertainment, cultural, and sports facilities, including cinemas, exhibition spaces, swimming pools, a golf practice range, and shooting galleries. The structure is situated between the two bands of the double strip, intermittently connected to them, and is held above the ground by trussed supports. The curves of the wave structure occur at irregular intervals along its length, and its copper-cladding is oxidized to blue-green, relating to both the sky and the water.

The emphatic linearity of Tschumi's design represents movement and time and the sequencing of constant events marked by the curves of the wave. Tschumi sees the linear city as conceptually extended around the globe, suggesting a physical linkage of places that will make travel between them obsolete, disturbing the hierarchy of destination over movement.
Tschumi's competition-winning design for a multi-media art school incorporates the existing 1920s structures of Le Fresnoy indoor amusement center, which was closed in the mid-70s. A new glass-and-steel roof structure will encompass the old building complex, and the interiors of its structures, which formerly housed a skating rink, dance floor, boxing ring, equestrian facilities, and cinema, will be refitted with new facilities for the art school: performance and exhibition spaces; two cinemas; film, video, sound, electronic image, and photography studios; production laboratories; media library; administrative offices; housing; a combination bar and restaurant; and commercial space. Tschumi's scheme provides cost-effective preservation of the original structures with minimal restoration, and allows for the installation of modern climate control and ventilation systems. The buildings-within-a-building design becomes a physical metaphor for the layering of history and attests to the architectural possibilities of reconfigured use.

The space between the new and old roofs is a free, unprogrammed space, so irregular and happenstance in its geometry as to be defined primarily by the ductwork, pathways, platforms, and foot-bridges marking movement through the space. Film and video images will be projected onto screens in the framework of the structural roof beams; viewer seating will be set up on the slope of the 1920s roofs. The changing images underline the instability of the noncohesive negative space that is not intended as formal space but as a site of potential activity. Irregular, cloud-shaped windows perforate the roof, referencing it as a false sky and further dematerializing the building form.

Above: Aerial axonometric. 1993. Color ink and watercolor on photographic print. 26 x 36".
Above right: Cinematic beams. 1992. Ink on paper. 23 x 31".

LE FRESNOY, NATIONAL STUDIO OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS, TOURCOING, FRANCE (1991- )