

# BERNARD TSCHUMI

CONCEPT & NOTATION

30 APRIL – 28 JULY 2014

The exhibition “Bernard Tschumi: Concept and Notation” retraces for the first time the entire career of this celebrated architect. It reveals his working methods by demonstrating the process by which an architectural concept is transformed into a project. The two principles at the core of Tschumi’s activity are thereby underlined. First, architecture must be based in concepts or ideas rather than form. Second, architecture cannot be dissociated from events and the movements of the bodies that inhabit it hence, the need to explore new modes of notation and representation so as to develop architectural projects that embody the interactions between space, movement, and action.

Organized thematically and chronologically across five thematic zones (Space and Event; Program, Juxtaposition and Superimposition; Vectors and Envelopes; Context and Content; Concept-Forms), the exhibition brings into focus Tschumi’s triple role as an architectural theoretician, an educator, and a builder. These three axes are evident here in the most emblematic works of Tschumi’s career, from the first drawings for The Manhattan Transcripts to The Acropolis Museum (Athens), the Parc de la Villette (Paris), the multidisciplinary art school at Le Fresnoy, buildings for the watch manufacturer Vacheron Constantin (Switzerland), and urban projects developed for New York, Beijing, or Santo Domingo.

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# 1. SPACE AND EVENT

In his early work, Bernard Tschumi asked what architecture really is—whether it is indeed “the masterly, correct and magnificent play of masses brought together in light,” as Le Corbusier famously said. Tschumi argued that the reality of architecture lies elsewhere, in aspects of the body and social activity that are often excluded from the definition of architecture. He insisted that there is no architecture without movement, without events, without the activities that take place inside buildings. Trying to free himself from the received ideas of the discipline, he examined other domains, including art, film, and literature. He soon realized that questioning architecture forced a parallel questioning of its modes of representation. To traditional plans, sections, axonometrics, and perspectives he added the missing elements of movement and action so as to inscribe the dynamism of the body into the otherwise static representation of architecture. Tschumi invented innovative modes of notation, including a system for structuring the elements of architecture (event, space, and movement) that he used in his early architectural “manifestos” as well as the drawing series titled *The Manhattan Transcripts*. For his project for the Parc de la Villette, he used a pre-defined grid made out of points, lines and surfaces.

# 2. PROGRAM / JUXTAPOSITION / SUPERIMPOSITION

The question of the relationship between an architectural space and the events that take place inside became more urgent for Tschumi than the simple expression of architectural form. In a way far different from the prevalent historicism of the 1980s and early 1990s, he continued his investigations into the notion of use or program through several major competitions. Tschumi defined three possible relationships between a space and its use: reciprocity, when a space is made perfectly functional; conflict, when a space is intentionally incompatible with its intended use; and indifference, when a given space is capable of accommodating a variety of different activities. Rather than serving as a simple translator of a user’s needs, an architect can also propose unexpected uses. Therefore, Tschumi explored different architectural strategies

and modes of representation (like “photograms”). These propositions illustrate the multiple and often conflictual nature of the contemporary city, as in projects for Le Fresnoy, the National Library of France, and the New National Theater of Tokyo.

# 3. VECTORS AND ENVELOPES

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

# 4. CONCEPT, CONTEXT, CONTENT

In opposition to “contextualism,” by which architects imitate the appearance of the immediate surroundings of their buildings, Tschumi insisted that no architecture exists without the context it accompanies or generates. As Marcel Duchamp had demonstrated a century ago, a bottle rack placed inside a museum is immediately transformed into a work of art. Hence, in architecture, a concept can be “contextualized” or, inversely, a context can be “conceptualized,” as Tschumi did at The Acropolis Museum. Similarly, two buildings with identical programs and concepts differ according to whether they are designed for and situated in Marne-la-Vallée or Miami, in Florida. The context of a building informs the expression of a concept, much as the building redefines or alters its context. In these projects, Tschumi explores systems of combination based on repetition and variation.

## 5. CONCEPT-FORMS

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

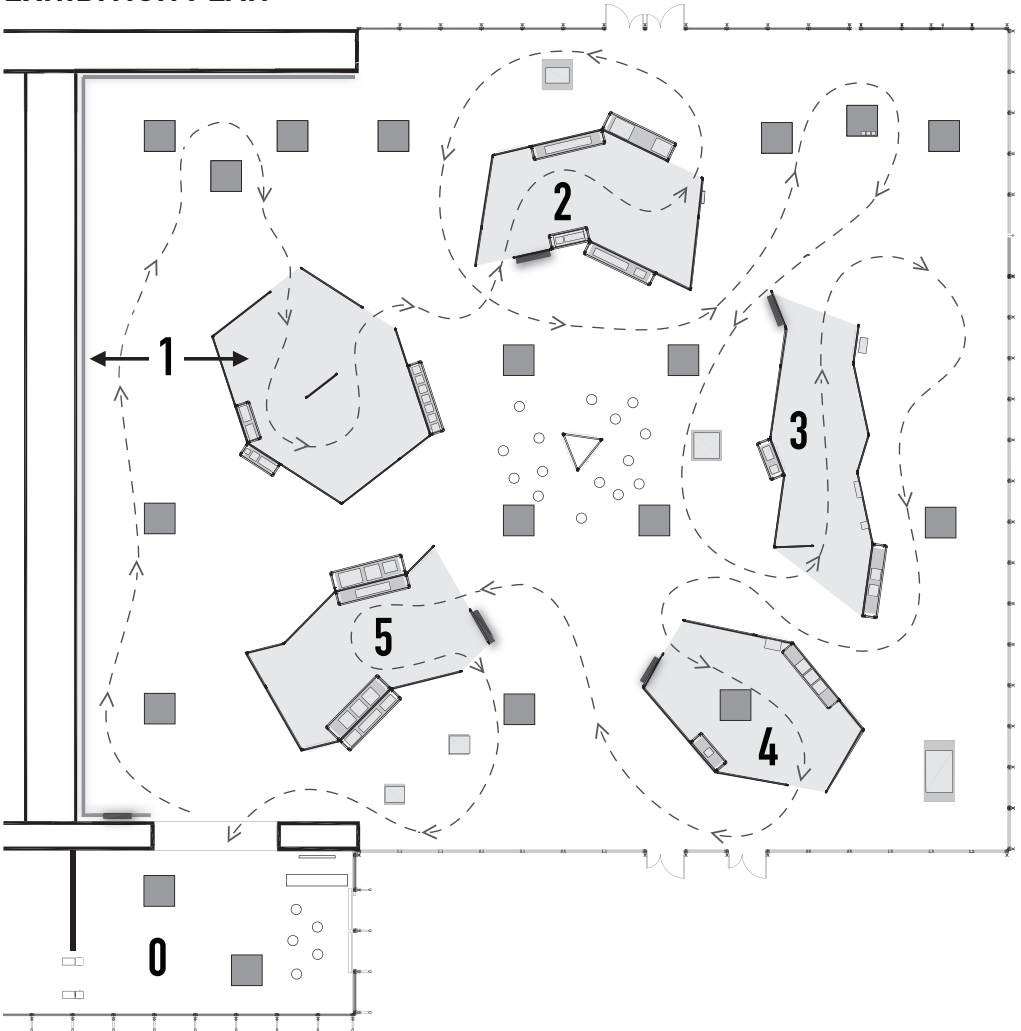
## REFERENCE TABLES

A series of vitrines extends and amplifies the main narrative of the exhibition. Included are elements that inform Tschumi’s reflection across the process of his architectural thought:

- Material strategies
- Rendering techniques before and after the digital age
- Urban planning “games” and strategies
- Iterations and repetition
- Artists’ books and other books designed by Tschumi
- References to other disciplines, such as film, literature, art, and philosophy.

This exhibition allows the work of Bernard Tschumi to be seen and broadly comprehended for the first time in Europe, twenty years after his exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York in 1994.

# EXHIBITION PLAN



## Themes :

0 - Introduction / Biography

1- Space and Event / The Manhattan Transcripts (Red Wall) / Parc de la Villette

2- Program / Juxtaposition / Superimposition

3- Vectors and Envelopes

4- Concept, Context, Content

5- Concept-Forms

■ = Reference Tables

## EXHIBITION

### CURATORS

Frédéric Migayrou  
Aurélien Lemonnier

### CURATORIAL ASSISTANT

Eliza Culea

### EXHIBITION DESIGN

Bernard Tschumi

### PRODUCTION COORDINATOR

Bruno Veret

Bernard Tschumi is supported by



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## CATALOGUE

**Bernard Tschumi**

**Architecture : concept & notation**

Edited by Frédéric Migayrou  
Conception : Bernard Tschumi  
Éditions du Centre Pompidou  
640 color ill., 256 p.  
French and English  
Price : 39.90 €

## AROUND THE EXHIBITION

### PAROLE À L'ARCHITECTURE

**Bernard Tschumi**

A conference by Bernard Tschumi  
5 mai, 19h, Grande Salle

### Bernard Tschumi notations

A conversation between  
Bernard Tschumi and  
Frédéric Migayrou, directeur adjoint  
du musée national d'art moderne  
22 mai, 19h, Petite Salle

**Bernard Tschumi**

**Architecture/Cinéma, littérature**

With Bernard Tschumi,  
Antoine Compagnon (literary historian),  
Alain Fleischer (filmmaker),  
Denis Hollier (literary historian)  
23 mai, 19h, Petite Salle

Free admission,  
subject to seat availability

## INFORMATIONS

**01 44 78 12 33**

**www.centrepompidou.fr**

### EXHIBITION OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

30 April to 28 July 2014  
Galerie Sud  
Every day except Tuesday  
From 11.00 a.m. to 9.00 p. m.  
Ticket offices close at 8.00 p.m.

### PRICES

**Admission**

**with the "Museum & Exhibitions" pass**

Valid the same day for one admission  
to each area at the Museum, to all  
exhibitions, and to the View of Paris  
€13; reduced price €10  
Free for annual Pass holders  
and for those under 18

### Online purchase and printing

(full price tickets only)  
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MODULE

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