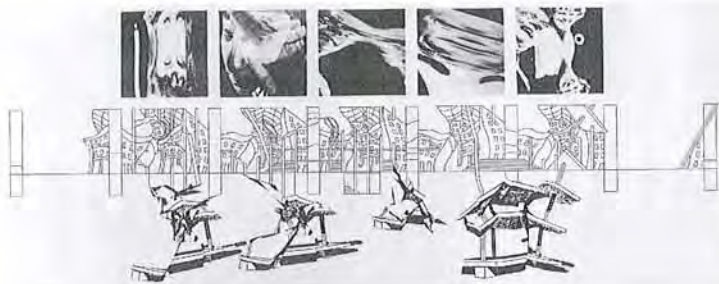
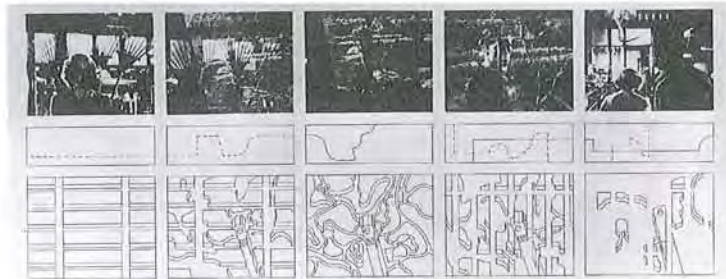


Tschumi, Bernard. *Architecture and Disjunction*. MIT Press, 1996. Print

Bernard Tschumi, *Screenplays* (The Fight), 1977.

Bernard Tschumi, *Screenplays* (Psycho Dissolve), 1977.

Bernard Tschumi, *Screenplays* (Domino Distortion), 1979.



Sequences

Any architectural sequence includes or implies at least three relations. First, an internal relation, which deals with the method of work; then two external relations—one dealing with the juxtaposition of actual spaces, the other with program (occurrences or events). The first relation, or *transformational* sequence, can also be described as a device, a procedure. The second *spatial* sequence is constant throughout history; its typological precedents abound and its mor-

phological variations are endless. Social and symbolic connotations characterize the third relation; we shall call it for now the *programmatic* sequence.¹

One customary mode of architectural drawing already implies a transformational sequence. Successive layers of transparent tracing paper are laid one upon another, each with its respective variations, around a basic theme or *parti*. Each subsequent reworking leads to or refines the organizing principle. The process is generally based on intuition, precedents, and habit.

This sequence can also be based on a precise, rational set of transformational rules and discrete architectural elements. The sequential transformation then becomes its own theoretical object, insofar as the process becomes the result, while the sum of transformations counts at least as much as the outcome of the final transformation.

Transformational sequences tend to rely on the use of *devices*, or rules of transformation, such as compression, rotation, insertion, and transference. They can also display particular sets of variations, multiplications, fusions, repetitions, inversions, substitutions, metamorphoses, anamorphoses, dissolutions. These devices can be applied to the transformation of spaces as well as programs.

There are closed sequences of transformation as well as open ones. Closed sequences have a predictable end because the

chosen rules ultimately imply the exhaustion of a process, its circularity, or its repetition. The open ones are sequences without closures, where new elements of transformation can be added at will according to other criteria, such as concurrent or juxtaposed sequences of another order—say, a narrative or programmatic structure, juxtaposed to the formal transformational structure.

Roland Barthes, in the "*Structural Analysis of Narratives*," defining a sequence: "A logical succession of nuclei bound together by a relation of solidarity: the sequence opens when one of its terms has no solitary antecedent and closes when another of its terms has no consequences."²

Sequences of space, *configurations-en-suite*, *enfilades*, spaces aligned along a common axis—all are specific architectural organizations, from Egyptian temples through the churches of the quattrocento to the present. All have emphasized a planned path with fixed halting points, a family of spatial points linked by continuous movement.

Sequences of transformation and sequences of spaces rarely intersect, as if architects carefully distinguished means of inception from end product through a sort of discrete restraint that does not reveal the maker's artifices in the final result and favors the certainty of a well-defined axis over the passionate uncertainties of thought.

If spatial sequences can be obviously manifest differences of geometrical *form* (the Villa Adriana), they can also differ by *dimension* alone, while maintaining similar geometrical form (the Ducal Palace at Urbino). They can even steadily increase in complexity, be constructed, step-by-step—or deconstructed—according to any rule or device.

Spatial transformations can be included within the time sequence—for example, through continuous scenery such as Frederick Kiesler's 1923 space stage set for Eugene O'Neill's *Emperor Jones*.

Luigi Moretti, writing on the spatial sequences and abstract relationships of Palladio's Palazzo Thiene in Vicenza: "In their pure dimensions, the sequences can be equated graphically as circles whose radii are proportional to the sphere corresponding in volume to each surrounding and whose center coincides with the center of gravity of the volume itself and is marked at the distance which in proportion this center has from the base plane of the spaces, that is from the level of the plinth."³

Spatial sequences can also display mixed formal devices. Moretti, again, writing on Palladio's Villa Rotunda: "in the density of light, the volumes go from portico to hall in the order of maximum to minimum, while in dimensions, the order is medium, least, greatest."

Yet architecture is inhabited: sequences of events, use, activities, incidents are always superimposed on those fixed spatial sequences. These are the programmatic sequences that suggest secret maps and impossible fictions, rambling collections of events all strung along a collection of spaces, frame after frame, room after room, episode after episode.

Is there ever a causal link between a formal system of spaces and a system of events? Rimbaud wondered whether vowels possessed colors, whether the letter *a* was red or blue. Similarly, do cylindrical spaces go with religion and rectangular ones with industry? Is there ever a homology between systems, a one-to-one relationship between space and event, between form and function, two systems that evoke and attract one another?

Adding events to the autonomous spatial sequence is a form of *motivation*, in the sense the Russian formalists gave to motivation, that is, whereby the "procedure" and its devices are the *raison d'être* of literature, and "content" is a simple *a posteriori* justification of form.

Alternately, is adding space to the autonomous sequence of events a reverse form of motivation? Or is it merely an extended form of *programmation*? Any predetermined sequence of events can always be turned into a program.

Program: "a descriptive notice, issued beforehand, of any formal series of proceedings, as a festive celebration, a course



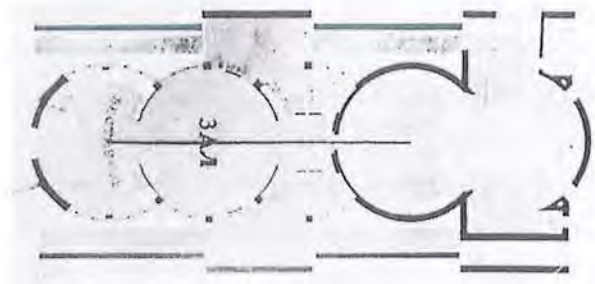
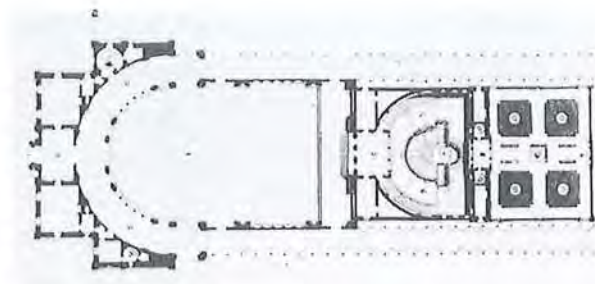
Konstantin Melnikov, preliminary sketches for the Soviet Pavilion, Paris Exhibition, 1924.

Floor plan of Temple, Karnak, Egypt. Reconstructed by Pococke. Reprinted by Quatremère de Quincy, 1803.

Vignola and Ammanni, floor plan for Villa Giulia, Rome, 1552.

Konstantin Melnikov, floor plan for *Worker's Club*, Moscow, 1929.

Luis Bunuel and Salvador Dali, *Un Chien Andalou*, 1928.



of study, etc. . . . , a list of the items or 'numbers' of a concert, etc., in the order of performance; hence the items themselves collectively, the performance as a whole. . . ."⁴

Programs fall into three categories: those that are indifferent to the spatial sequence, those that reinforce it, and those that work obliquely or against it.

Indifference: sequences of events and sequences of spaces can be largely independent of one another—say, assortments of exotic stalls among the regular columniation of the 1851 Crystal Palace. One then observes a strategy of indifference in which formal considerations do not depend on utilitarian ones. (The battalion marches on the fields.)

Reciprocity: Sequences of spaces and sequences of events can, of course, become totally interdependent and fully condition each other's existence—say "*machines à habiter*,"

ideal Werkbund kitchens, space-age vessels where each action, each movement is designed, *programmed*. One then observes a strategy of reciprocity in which each sequence actually reinforces the other—the sort of architectural tautology favored by functionalist doctrines. (The skater skates on the skating rink.)

Conflict: sequences of events and spaces occasionally clash and contradict each other. One then observes a strategy of conflict in which each sequence constantly transgresses the other's internal logic. (The battalion skates on the tightrope.)

In themselves, spatial sequences are independent of what happens in them. (Yesterday I cooked in the bathroom and slept in the kitchen.) They may coincide for a shorter or longer period. As sequences of events do not depend on spatial sequences (and vice versa), both can form independent systems, with their own implicit schemes of parts.

Spatial sequences are generally structural; that is, they can be viewed or experienced independently of the meaning they may occasionally evoke. Programmatic sequences are generally inferential; conclusions or inferences can be drawn from the events or the "decor" that provide the sequence's connotative aspects. Such opposition is, of course, quite artificial; these distinctions do not exist separately.

Events "take place." And again. And again.

The linearity of sequences orders events, movements, spaces into a single progression that either combines or parallels divergent concerns. It provides "security" and at least one overriding rule against architectural fears.

Not all architecture is linear, nor is it all made of spatial additions, of detachable parts and clearly defined entities. Circular buildings, grid cities, *as well as* accumulations of fragmentary perspectives and cities without beginnings or ends, produce scrambled structures where meaning is derived from the order of experience rather than the order of composition.

Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion: dissociation, fragmentation of unitary space. There is one sequence of direct vision and one for the experience of the body where a set of indeterminate and equivocal articulations suggests a multiplicity of readings. Its spatial sequence is nevertheless organized around a *thematic* structure, a series of variations around a limited number of elements that play the role of the fundamental theme—the *paradigm*.

By order of experience, one speaks of time, of chronology, of repetition. But some architects are suspicious of time and would wish their buildings to be read at a glance, like billboards.

Sequences have emotional value. Moretti, again, discussing St. Peter's: "pressure (access doors), limited liberation

(atrium), opposition (atrium walls), very short pressure (basilica doors), total liberation (transversal of nave), final contemplation (space of central system)."

Like snapshots at key moments in the making of architecture, whether in the procedure or real space. Like a series of frozen frames.

If the spatial sequence inevitably implies the movement of an observer, then such movement can be objectively mapped and formalized—sequentially. Movement notation: an extension from the drawn conventions of choreography, it attempts to eliminate the preconceived meanings given to particular actions in order to concentrate on their spatial effects: the movement of bodies in space (dancers, footballers, acrobats).

For Lautréamont, to move is never to go from one place to the next, but always to execute some figure, to assume a certain body rhythm. "He is running away . . . he is running away." Or "the mad woman who passes by, dancing."

S	E	M
Space	Event	Movement

The final meaning of any sequence is dependent on the relation space/event/movement. By extension, the meaning of any architectural situation depends on the relation S E M.

The composite sequence SEM breaks the linearity of the elementary sequence, whether S, E, or M.

But architectural sequences do not mean only the reality of actual buildings, or the symbolic reality of their fictions. An implied narrative is always there, whether of method, use, or form. It combines the presentation of an event (or chain of events) with its progressive spatial interpretation (which of course alters it). Such, for instance, are *rituals* and their routes of initiation where, from points of entry to point of arrival, successive challenges await the new candidate. Here, the order of the sequence is intrinsic. The route is more important than any one place along it.

A ritual implies a near-frozen relationship between space and event. It institutes a new order against the disorder it aims to avoid. When it becomes necessary to mediate the tension between events and spaces and fix it by custom, then no single fragment must escape attention. Nothing strange or unexpected must happen. Control must be absolute.

Partial control is exercised through the use of the frame. Each frame, each part of a sequence qualifies, reinforces, or alters the parts that precede and follow it. The associations so formed allow for a plurality of interpretations rather than a singular fact. Each part is thus both complete and incomplete. And each part is a statement against indeterminacy; indeterminacy is always present in the sequence, irrespective of its methodological, spatial, or narrative nature.

Gap / closure / gap / closure / gap / closure

Is there such a thing as an architectural narrative? A narrative not only presupposes a sequence but also a language. As we all know, the "language" of architecture, the architecture "that speaks," is a controversial matter. Another question: If such architectural narrative corresponds to the narrative of literature, would space intersect with signs to give us a *discourse*?

The ability to translate narrative from one medium to another—to translate *Don Juan* into a play, an opera, a ballet, a film or comic strip—suggests architectural equivalences, equivalences that are not made by analogy to an architectural strip of course, but through carefully observed parallels. Terragni's *Danteum* does not tell us a story of events but reminds us about the temporality of a search—the impossibility of being at several places at the same time—a special type of allegory wherein every element initially corresponds to a physical reality.

The use of a plot may suggest the sense of an ending, an end to the overall organization. It superimposes a conclusion to the open-endedness of the transformational (or methodological) sequence. Whenever a program or "plot" (the single-family house, or "Cinderella") is well known (as are most architectural programs), only the "retelling" counts: the "telling" has been done enough.

Sequence (after J.-L. Godard): "Surely you agree, Mr. Architect, that buildings should have a base, a middle, and a top?" "Yes, but not necessarily in that order."

In literature and in the cinema, sequences can be manipulated by such devices as flashbacks, crosscuttings, close-ups, and dissolves. Are the inclusions of baroque details in the modern architectural sequence . . . temporary flashbacks?

Forms of composition: collage sequences (collisions) or montage sequences (progressions).

Contracted sequences fragment individual spaces and actions into discrete segments. In this manner, we might see the beginning of a use in space followed immediately by the beginning of another in a further space. Contracted sequences have occasionally reduced architecture's three dimensions into one (Le Corbusier's Villa Stein at Garches). The *expanded* sequence makes a solid of the gap between spaces. The gap thus becomes a space of its own, a corridor, threshold, or doorstep—a proper symbol inserted between each event (John Hejduk's Wall House). Combinations of expanded and contracted sequences can form special series, either coordinated or rhythmical.

All sequences are cumulative. Their "frames" derive significance from juxtaposition. They establish memory—of the preceding frame, of the course of events. To experience and to follow an architectural sequence is to reflect upon events

in order to place them into successive wholes. The simplest sequence is always more than a *configuration-en-suite*, even if there is no need to specify the nature of each episode.

Frame: the moments of the sequence. Examining architecture "frame by frame," as through a film-editing machine.

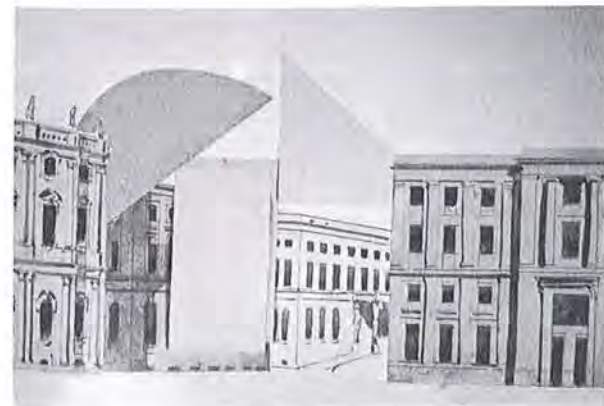
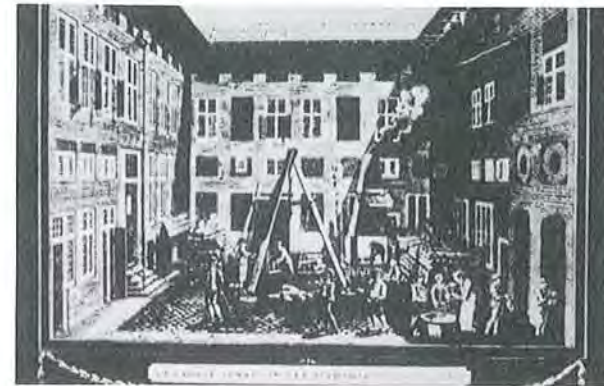
Frames are both the *framing device*—conforming, regular, solid—and the *framed material*—questioning, distorting, and displacing. Occasionally the framing device can itself become the object of distortions and the framed material be conformist and orderly.

The frame permits the extreme formal manipulations of the sequence, for the content of congenial frames can be mixed, superimposed, dissolved, or cut up, giving endless possibilities to the narrative sequence. At the limit, these material manipulations can be classified according to formal strategies such as repetition, disjunction, distortion, dissolution, or insertion. For example, devices such as the insertion of additional elements within the sequence can change the meaning of the sequence as well as its impact on the experiencing subject, as in the well-known Kuleshov experiment, where the same shot of the actor's impassive face is introduced in a variety of situations, and the audience reads different expressions in each successive juxtaposition.

Parameters that remain constant and passive for the duration of the sequence can be added and transferred, as when a given

Courtyard in Amsterdam, c. seventeenth century.

Nathan Altman, *Re-enactment of the Revolution*, Design for Palace Square, Petrograd 1918.



spatial configuration (the "circle") repeatedly passes from frame to frame, from room to room: a *displacement*.

All transformational devices (repetition, distortion, etc.) can apply equally and independently to spaces, events, or movements. Thus we can have a repetitive sequence of spaces (the successive courtyards of a Berlin block) coupled with an additive sequence of events (dancing in the first court, fighting in the second, skating in the third).

Alternatively, of course, architectural sequences can also be made strategically disjunctive (the pole-vaulter in the catacombs).