Deconstructing Tercerunquinto

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You have, I suppose, dreamt of finding a single word for designating difference and articulation, (have perhaps localized...). The word "brisure", (joint, break, crack, fracture, fault, split, fragment...) “Hinged articulation of two parts of wood or metalwork. The hinge, the brisure (folding joint) of a shutter or door.” —Roger Laporte

This passage from a letter from one French philosopher to another somehow made its way to me. I think I may have missed the point of one of the many authors who write about the world of art (themselves thrilled by Robert’s French dictionary) with an additional series called the Oxford English Dictionary, “brisure, n. 2. Fig.: A break in the general direction of a rampart or defensive wall, especially in a bastion constructed with mortars.” To Laporte’s figure of the brisure as a point of rupture and opening, I am adding the supplement of the word brisure as the effect of which is to multiply the length and surface area of a differential barrier. This will point of entry/exit, a hinge, a joint, a threshold or, alternatively, a fold/crease along the architectural border that separated inside from out.

The artists known jointly as Tercerunquinto came together in their current configuration in 1998 while studying at the Facultad de Artes Visuales of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, in the northern edge of Mexico City. From the start, Julio Castro Carreón, Gabriel Cázares Salas, and Rolando Flores were drawn toward the architectural functionality of doorways and walls. Indeed, in hindsight some of their earliest works seem to have been the product of a meticulous analysis of architectural/infrastructural concepts. These processes involved the investigation of the exhibition space itself to be read not only in terms of its architectural functionality or dysfunctionality, but also as an act of poetic or even as an act of resistance (with all its economic-moral implications of debt and repayment). Impeding the operation of a physical brisure, Tercerunquinto simultaneously introduced a brisure of another order, joining the phenomenal field of space-time to the extra- or non-phenomenal field of social and ethical relations.

Other early pieces by the trio worked at the brisure from the other side of our compositional definition. La BF15 + Pared (The BF15 [Gallery] + Wall, 1999) consisted of an addition to the exterior wall that separated the short-lived Galería BF15 in Monterrey, México, from the neighboring building. This addition would evolve from a two-dimensional into a three-dimensional form, blocking the sidewalk and invading the street just in front of the gallery. The nuisance that this protrusion posed to pedestrians was only marred by supplementing Laporte’s glosses of the word brisure —“brisure, n. 2. Fig.: A break in the general direction of a rampart or defensive wall, especially in a bastion constructed with mortars.”—Roger Laporte 1

Although David and then curator of the MUCA, Roma, the project involved negotiations with several actors, including the Legal Department of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, “since temporarily lending its exhibition space to commercial use made it vulnerable to legal suits.” Individual vendors were eventually enjoined to sign short-term contracts before they were assigned a padlocked storage space within the museum. The negotiations leading up to the exhibition lasted longer than the exhibition itself. The incorporation of participants in Mexico City’s bustling informal economy into the walled space of surveillant museums had the effect of putting the vendors—however briefly—à-á avec university officials, museum staff, and the city’s art-going public. 2 Individual processes of negotiation have been crucial elements of a number of Tercerunquinto’s recent works, notably Tokyo (consulato de México en Tokio) and Shangai (2004, Instituto Cultural de México, Shanghai, China), which involved negotiations between neighboring sets of actors to reconfigure and re-phenomenalize the barrier between them, if only temporarily. For this project, the artists sought to transform the space of the Museo Universitario de Ciencias y Artes en Colonia Roma, an outreach of Mexico City’s Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, by converting into storage space for a group of merchants who sold their wares at anthropomimetic weekend markets on the median that bisects nearby Avenida Obregón.

According to Mariana David, then curator of the MUCA, Roma, the project involved several negotiations with several actors, including the Legal Department of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, “since temporarily lending its exhibition space to commercial use made it vulnerable to legal suits.” Individual vendors were eventually enjoined to sign short-term contracts before they were assigned a padlocked storage space within the museum. The negotiations leading up to the exhibition lasted longer than the exhibition itself. The incorporation of participants in Mexico City’s bustling informal economy into the walled space of surveillant museums had the effect of putting the vendors—however briefly—à-á avec university officials, museum staff, and the city’s art-going public. Individual processes of negotiation have been crucial elements of a number of Tercerunquinto’s recent works, notably Tokyo (consulato de México en Tokio) and Shanghai (2004, Instituto Cultural de México, Shanghai, China), which involved negotiations between neighboring sets of actors to reconfigure and re-phenomenalize the barrier between them, if only temporarily. For this project, the artists sought to transform the space of the Museo Universitario de Ciencias y Artes in Colonia Roma, an outreach of Mexico City’s Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, by converting it into storage space for a group of merchants who sold their wares at anthropomimetic weekend markets on the median that bisects nearby Avenida Obregón.

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A set of spacing procedures constitutes a counterpart to the breaching procedures described above. Perhaps the most joint examples of these is Deleuze's representation of the separation of the past and the future and of the temporal function of the brisure. In Deleuze's famous passage on the brisure, he states: “The spatiotemporal fiend of the brisure is the ineffable blank interval that separates the words on this page, these very words, here—is precisely the non-phenomenal, that which doesn't declare itself to our sensorial experience. The impossibility of a brisure that would articulate these two different procedures has become evident only in some of the artist's most recent projects.”

Whether or not the artists had intended it to be so, the fate of Wafa Art Fair (2009) was foretold by its own title. The project was conceived in part to deal with Dastoum, an event which occurred on October 2, 1968. In the weeks leading up to the fortieth anniversary of the Tlatelolco Massacre, the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and the Centro Cultural Universitario Tlatelolco (CCUT) in Mexico City, where the massacre took place, announced a program of events, including an installation by Terceounquinto, the name of the art collective. The December 2, 1968, issue of the National Student Alliance's newspaper El Nationalista carried the following story: “The metamorphosis of the brisure. The National Student Alliance, which is responsible for the new generation of students and intellectuals, presented the work of the National Autonomous University and the Centro Cultural Universitario Tlatelolco.”

The installation, “La Diferencia en el Objeto,” was commissioned by the Centro Cultural Universitario Tlatelolco (CCUT) in 2008, as part of a broader commemoration of the hundreds of protestors and bystanders killed at the site. The work was created by Casita, the collective of Tercerounquinto—which was “in charge of the project.” The installation was the first to conceive of polygonal walls as an effective architectural defense against heavy artillery, according to Pierre Dac. This act of spacing confounded the distinction between inside and outside by suggesting the museum's proper name from its proper place.

(Please see the references page for further details.)
No young artist can resist a $50,000 cannon blast, 2012. Installation view at Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, part of the group show Resisting the Present, Mexico 2000-2012. Courtesy of the artists.