Deconstructing Tercerunquinto

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Both from one private lot to the next in many Mexican cities. The nuisance that this protrusion posed to pedestrians was only mar
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La BF15 + Pared

supplement of the brisure as fold, the effect of which being to multiply the length and
parapet;

Robert's French dictionary) with an additional sense culled from the
own by supplementing Laporte's glosses of the word

cracked part. Cf. breach, crack, fracture, fracture, fault, split, fragment . . . Hinged articulation of
articulation. I have perhaps located it [. . .]. This word is

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“...You have, I suppose, dreamt of finding a single word for designating difference and articulation. I have perhaps located it...” The words brasure joint, crevice, broken, cracked, crimped, crack, fracture, fault, split, fragment... Hinged articulation of
two parts of wood or metal-work. The fringe, the brasure [fréjou-part] of a shuttle or.
—Roger Laporte

This passage from a letter from one French philosopher to another somehow made its way to me, and now it has made its way to you. I would begin this mission of my own by supplementing Laporte's gloss of the word brasure (themselves lifted from Robert's French dictionary) with an additional series derived from the Oxford English Dictionary, “brisure, n. 2. Fbrillation: A break in the general direction of a compact or parallel plane of the cortic of certain species of stration constructed with not-
tone; To Laporte's figure of the brasure as an operation and opening, then, I am adding the supplement of the brisure as fold, the effect of which being to multiply the length and surface area of a defective barriere. This will point our ree-entry, a-ay, a joint, a threshold or, alternatively, a fold here through the architectural border that would separate inside from out.

The artists known jointly as T ercerunquinto came together in their current configu-
rative in 1996 while studying at the Facultad de Artes Visuales of the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, on the northern edge of Monterrey, Mexico. From the
start, Julio Castro, 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 microsocial practices. T ras pasapuertas (after the working title of the show “Door Jams,” 1999-2003) was in its first instalation, part of an exhibition held in an apartment whose tenants had recently been evicted. The artists modified one of the doorframes in the apartment slightly, making it impossible to open or close the door completely. Given the circumstances of this exhibition, this intervention was both site-specific and situation-specific. Their compromising the accessibility of the exhi-
bition space itself must be read as not only in terms of architectural functionality or dysfunctionality, but also as an act of protest or even as an act of counteraction (with all its economic-moral implications of debt and repayment). Impeding the op-
eration of a physical brasure, T ercerunquinto simultaneously introduced a brisure of
another order, joining the phenomenal field of space-time to the extra- or nonphe-
nomenal field of social and ethical relations.

Other early pieces that the two worked on from the other side of our com-
p(CLARIF. BF = Finnis (The EIFS. (Belfort, Va., 1999) consisted of an addi-
tion to the interior wall that separated the first-floor Gabriel BF in Monterrey
from the adjoining lot. This wall was extended along an axis perpendicular to
the facades of the two buildings, blocking the sidewalk and the street just enough to introduce a new spatial constraint into the curbside parking pattern in front
of the gallery. The nuisance that this protrusion posed to pedestrians was only mar-
gen more inconvenient than the uneven sidewalk that typically passes the passage from one pedestrian to the next in many Mexican cities.

Both Tras pasapuertas and BF = Finnis might be regarded as repositioning the “breaching procedures” that sociologist Harold Garfinkel had developed in his ethno-
methodological studies. “Since each of the expectancies that make up the attitude
of daily life assigns an expected feature to the actor’s environment—doors should
open and close, sidewalks and streets should be unobstructed— It should be pos-
tible to breach these expectancies by deliberately modifying scenic events so as to
disrupt these associations.” 

Garfinkel's own procedures involved transposing unexpected, preconscious social norms in order to phänomenalize them—that, is to make them apparent and thus to make their operation available to empirical obser-
despite their formal parnasianismus. T ercerunquinto's early, architecturally inflected interventions had a similar effect. The non-operational door in
Baranda
La BF15 + Pared

brisure
[fold, juncture] of a shutter.

brisure
[joint, break]—broken, cracked, crevice, fracture, fracture, fracture, fracture, fracture, fault, split, fragment—Hinged articulation of
two parts of wood or metal-work. The fringe, the brasure [éjou-part] of a shuttle or.
—Roger Laporte

Much of T ercerunquinto's work around the turn of the millennium was characterized by a greater projection on the spatial relations of neighborliness. This intervention was made particularly explicit in a project called velocidad (2007), a word that came-
 refer to the on-hand, to a specific kind of multi-family housing unit arranged around a central patio, prevalent in certain lower income neighborhoods in Mexico City, or, on the other, to more general notions of locality and neighborliness. For this project, the artists prompted negotiations between the owners of two adjacent prefabricat-
ed homes in order to reconfigure the wall separating their property, adding additional folds to its surface without altering the square footage of land occupied by either one.

With an eye to the operation of the brasure in the collective's work, it might be tempt-
ing to read the angular form of the reconstructed wall as first architectural step on
the evolutionary path toward defensive parapet for each other. The most salient aspect of velocid (on the contrary, is that T ercerunquinto assumed the position of a third party, Vitalizing and mobilizing that exchange between two different actors. How
the artists' architectural intervention was but a pretext for a social process, which ul-
transform the space of the Museo Universitario de Ciencias y Artes in Colonia Roma, an on-
outpost of Mexico City's Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, by convert-
ing into storage space for a group of merchants who sold their wares at an annual weekend market on the median that bisects near Avenida Dinogena.

According to Mariana David, 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 temporally extending its exhibition space to commercial use is mandated to legal acts.” Individuals would have to enter into short-term contracts before they were assigned a dedicated 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, by this time, a specialized space of university museology had the effect of
putting the vendors—however briefly—back-as with university officials, museum
staff and the city's art-going public.” Similar processes of negotiation have been cru-
cial elements of a number of T ercerunquinto's recent works, notably Architext: Consulado General de Mexico en Miami a la exposición Mexicano Sensible Regula-
tions (Instituto Cultural de Mexico, Miami) and Acceso abierto (2005, The Pow-
er Plant, Toronto).

Unbeknown to Laporte, Jacques Derrida had found his own way of “designating dis-
tinction and articulation” with a single word: With Of Grammatology, his concern was
to conceptualize the specific brasure that joins the putative linear flow of speech to the space of writing, in the name (alphabetic) sense of the word. He designates this
articulation space which Spinoza's translation cunningly nominalised as “spaceing.”

The lexeme “Tercerunquinto” itself offers a handy illustration of what Derrida was
describing. In an interview the artists gave an indication as to how they under-
stand their name—that it has often been rendered somewhat misleadingly as “third
of a fifth” in Julio Cazares’s words, T his is like Forouhar's whole into five parts and then
name each of the parts made up of...” [Gabriel Cázaros confirms this: Primenercun-
lon, segundoercunquinto, tercerunquinto. [FortinesBF, secondonquinto, firstthreeBF]. It also
refers to something that is never complete, which reflects our way of producing OBJ.2C6.70.5025.13.98.720.30]
Here the artists instruct us in how to parse what they themselves typewrite as a single
clear in unit: “Tercerunquinto” is to be read as “tercer on quinto” (either for
example, as “terce runquinto”). Regardless of the graphic decision to erase or
to close the implied spacing within the Spanish syntagm “tercer un quinto,” that spacing
spaceing continues to operate (for Spanish speakers, at any rate) at the level of signification.

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By Christopher Michael Fraga

A set of spacing procedures constitutes a counterpart to the breaching procedures described above. Perhaps the most joint examples of these is Deleuze's and Guattari'sifikasiación del disco acuñado (Dismounting and Reinstallation of the National Museum of Anthropology) in Mexico City on October 2, 1968. In the weeks leading up to the fortieth anniversary of the Tlatelolco massacre, Terceunquinto removed five of the six marble panels that comprise the Mexican national crest on the façade of the CCUT. On October 2, 2008, the last of the six panels was dismantled, leaving in its place an empty space. This stood as a poignant index of the state of exception that had exemplified the perpetrators of the massacre from the rule of law. The following day, however, the artists re-installed the crest. In the interim it had not only resisted its original functionality, articulating two different moments in time with this installation of a novel trace.

A similar albeit less politically fraught operation was at work in a piece the artists undertook the following month as part of their exhibition Neductional Institutions. For Projectspace/Musée d’Arts d’Montréal (Carnegie ’74) (2008), Terry Cannon to negotiated the dismounting of all exterior signage indicating the museum’s name, moving it inside the exhibition space, where it was periodically cleared and republished by unionized museum workers.7 This act of spacing confounded the distinction between inside and outside by subverting the museum’s proper name from its proper place. (Derrida had of course already acknowledged that “this proper name of the museum does not escape spacing.”8)

The spacing procedure that distinguishes these projects from the breaching procedures described above implies, again, a relation to phenomenality: Spacing—the blank interval that separates the words on this page, these very words, here—is precisely the non-phenomenal, that which exists without appearance, which does not disclose itself to sensory experience. The impossibility of a brisure that would articulate these two different procedures has become evident only in some of the most recent projects.

Whether or not the artist had intended to be so, the failure of If Was Built To Fail (2009) was readily visible to all. The proposed work was to be part of Desert to Revolution, an exhibition curated by James Voorhies at the Columbus College of Art & Design in Columbus, Ohio, as part of the Venice Open Culture Initiative. The artists proposed to embalm the eponymous words—spelling—Michael Coleman, the mayor of Columbus at the time—on the exterior of the City Hall. Cannon and Voorhies were the artists who were able to elicit a response from the city officials.

With the collective negotiation process thereby forestalled, the project went unrealized, and the conjoined brisure of the piece inscribed itself in the artistic performance gesture.9

By contrast, Terceunquinto’s most felicitous negotiation process to date has perhaps been New Langton Arts Archive for Sale: A Sacrificial Act (2007, 2008). In 2007, during an investigation of New Langton’s Astounding Stanislausian and after many consults with architects and pur- figures at other institutions in the city, Terceunquinto suggested that the non-profit arts organization would be most valuable assisted, namely its artistic and institutional arch-ives, consisting of documentation for three decades’ worth of exhibitions, including photographs, slides, press releases, postcards, and audiodocument recordings, of events, as well as the organization’s financial records.10 These materials were col-lected in a non-descript cardboard storage box and put on display in anticipation of a possible sale. The proposal generated a series of impassioned discussions among the staff at New Langton Arts as well as in the San Francisco art community; some of these debates were in turn recorded as part of the documentation of the project itself. This circular stabilization of the structure of the project—here proposing the possibility of an interminable, almost Borgesian archive—leans more than a passing resemblance to the circle of infelicitous that would condemn If Was Built To Fail fail fatally thereafter.

The artists have repeatedly underscored the importance of the substitute to their con-ception of the place for New Langton Arts. It was to be a Sacrificial Act from an ar-chitectural standpoint, the title of the project constituting something of a category error, as sacrifice by definition entails an act of making (sac)red (space)—and it is thus a form of communion with the divine—whereas a sale meditated by the money form would be difficult to regard as anything but the most profane of human acts.11 Immaterial, the artists were considering the organization itself detached itself from its institutional memory and its symbolic capital, thereby committing a kind of auto-decipation. The money form of New Langton Arts payment would irreversibly see the work for the vehicle for the organization’s resurrection to come.12 With this sacrificial act, the collective negotiation process has assumed a decidedly messianic cast. This confrontation with death is the experience of the impossibly per excellence. And here Terceunquinto’s analysis has placed them before yet another threshold. They are poised to take their leave of the ontogeny that has grounded Western aesthe-tics since Aristotle framed the philosophical value of poiesis in terms of its relation to the realm of the probable.13 But to displace this ontology, to depart from the realm of the actual, the probable, the immanent, or the virtual would be to step into death itself. “The impossible is the final death, the necessity for destruction for existence.”14 The impossible, as Derrida argued in his own right, is a special kind of aporia.

Still, a non-passage whose “everywhere milieus does not allow for something that could be called passage, step, walk, situation, replacement, a kinesis in general”7 through a predictable articulation of the problems of the hereafter, the members of Terceunquinto—that partial and peripheral collective, that something that is never complete—have arrived at a breach into which they cannot step.

2 The functional purpose of this fold was to provide a line of fire from the rampart to any would-be attacker that would be beyond the range of attack. The functional purpose of the adage is to support the relationship between the iterability of Coleman’s brisure to sensory experience. The impos-
3 See Ricardo Porrero, “Contrato colectivo de desmonte. Intervención (2007, 2013). In 2007, during an investigation of New Langton’s Astounding Stanislausian and after many consults with architects and pur- figures at other institutions in the city, Terceunquinto suggested that the non-profit arts organization would be most valuable assisted, namely its artistic and institutional arch-ives, consisting of documentation for three decades’ worth of exhibitions, including photographs, slides, press releases, postcards, and audiodocument recordings, of events, as well as the organization’s financial records. These materials were collected in a non-descript cardboard storage box and put on display in anticipation of a possible sale. The proposal generated a series of impassioned discussions among the staff at New Langton Arts as well as in the San Francisco art community; some of these debates were in turn recorded as part of the documentation of the project itself. This circular stabilization of the structure of the project—here proposing the possibility of an interminable, almost Borgesian archive—leans more than a passing resemblance to the circle of infelicitous that would condemn If Was Built To Fail fail fatally thereafter.
4 It is unclear whether the decision to render “primerounquinto, segundounquinto, tercerunquinto” was foretold by its own title. The proposed work was to be part of Desert to Revolution, an exhibition curated by James Voorhies at the Columbus College of Art & Design in Columbus, Ohio, as part of the Venice Open Culture Initiative. The artists proposed to embalm the eponymous words—spelling—Michael Coleman, the mayor of Columbus at the time—on the exterior of the City Hall. Cannon and Voorhies were the artists who were able to elicit a response from the city officials.
5 With the collective negotiation process thereby forestalled, the project went unrealized, and the conjoined brisure of the piece inscribed itself in the artistic performance gesture.
6 It is not the poet’s function to relate actual events, but the
7 See Emmanuel Lévinas, The Unfinished System of Nonknowl-
8 Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and(conceived in 1975) to the circle of exception that would condemn If Was Built To Fail fail fatally thereafter.
9 If Was Built to Fail was to be a Sacrificial Act from an architectural standpoint, the title of the project constituting something of a category error, as sacrifice by definition entails an act of making (sac)red (space)—and it is thus a form of communion with the divine—whereas a sale meditated by the money form would be difficult to regard as anything but the most profane of human acts. Immaterial, the artists were considering the organization itself detached itself from its institutional memory and its symbolic capital, thereby committing a kind of auto-decipation. The money form of New Langton Arts payment would irreversibly see the work for the vehicle for the organization’s resurrection to come. With this sacrificial act, the collective negotiation process has assumed a decidedly messianic cast. This confrontation with death is the experience of the impossibly per excellence. And here Terceunquinto’s analysis has placed them before yet another threshold. They are poised to take their leave of the ontogeny that has grounded Western aesthetics since Aristotle framed the philosophical value of poiesis in terms of its relation to the realm of the probable. But to displace this ontology, to depart from the realm of the actual, the probable, the immanent, or the virtual would be to step into death itself. “The impossible is the final death, the necessity for destruction for existence.” The impossible, as Derrida argued in his own right, is a special kind of aporia.
11 See non-represented event inscribed with the exhibition catalog, Tayyare Primed, ed. Investiduras institucionales (Mexico City: Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, 2008).
15 “It is not the poet’s function to relate actual events, but the
16 “It is not the poet’s function to relate actual events, but the
