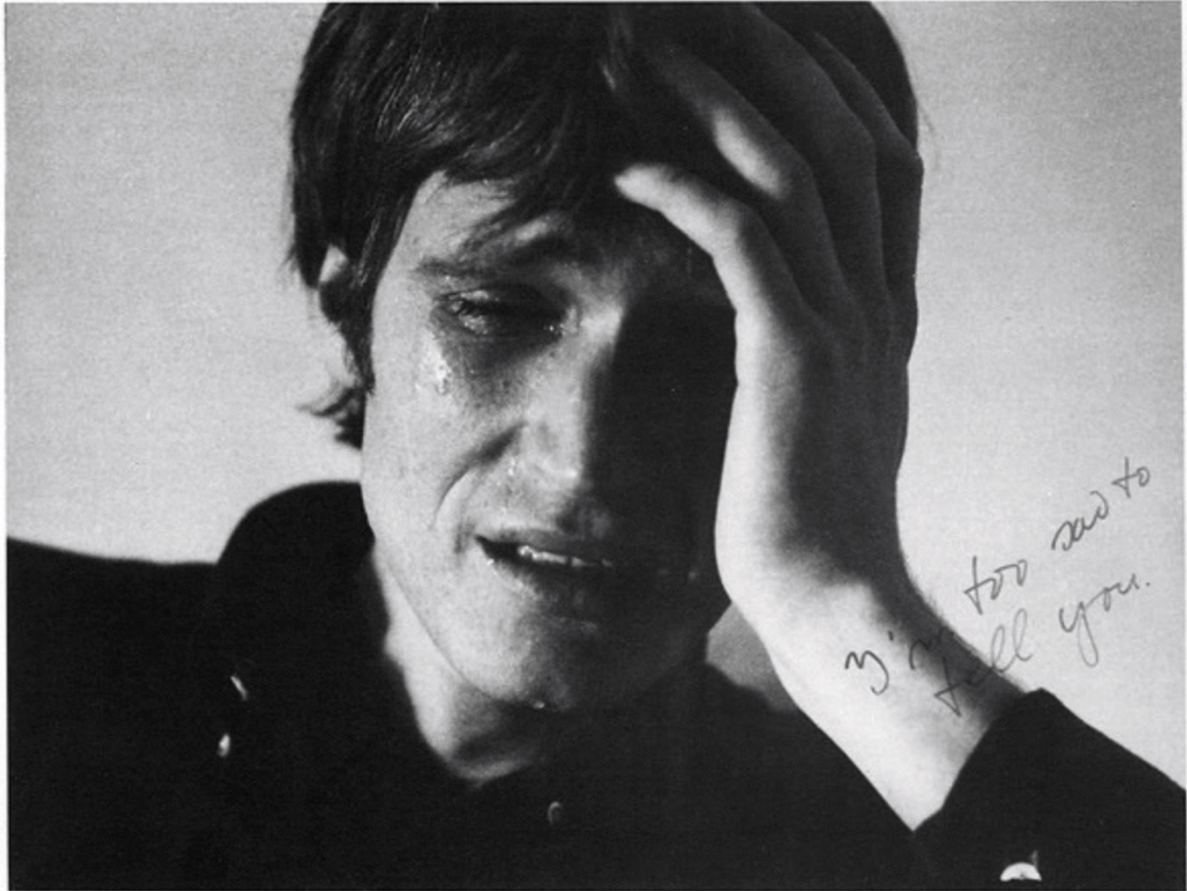


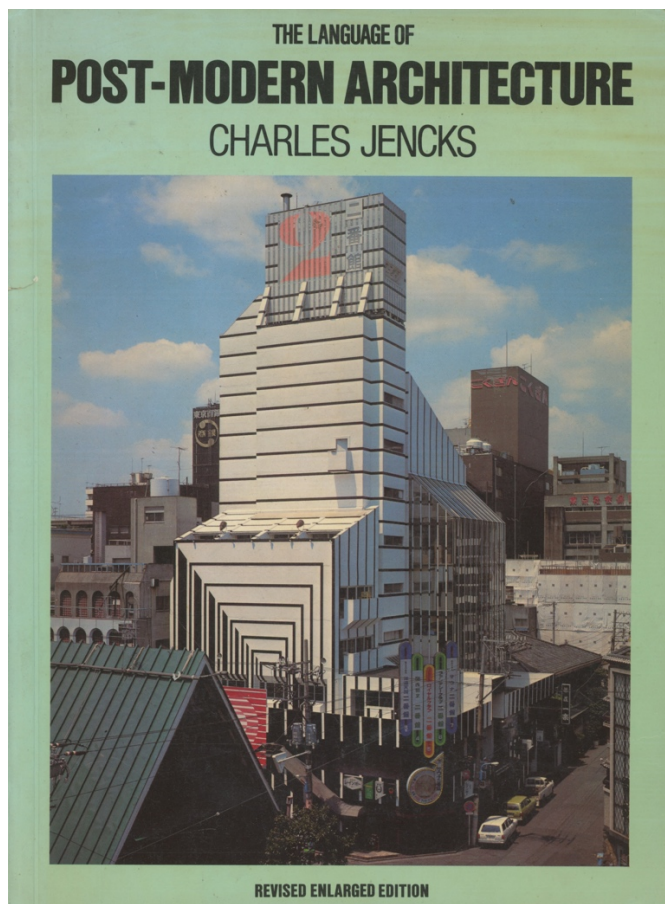
# Goodbye to Language



In 1971, the artist Bas Jan Ader recorded himself in a now famous video, crying. The title of the work is “I’m too sad to tell you”. So, instead of telling us how sad he was, he showed us in his video. Of course, all kind of questions can be asked, but we’ll leave that for now. The most important message is that there are things we can’t express in words, but might be able to express in other ways.

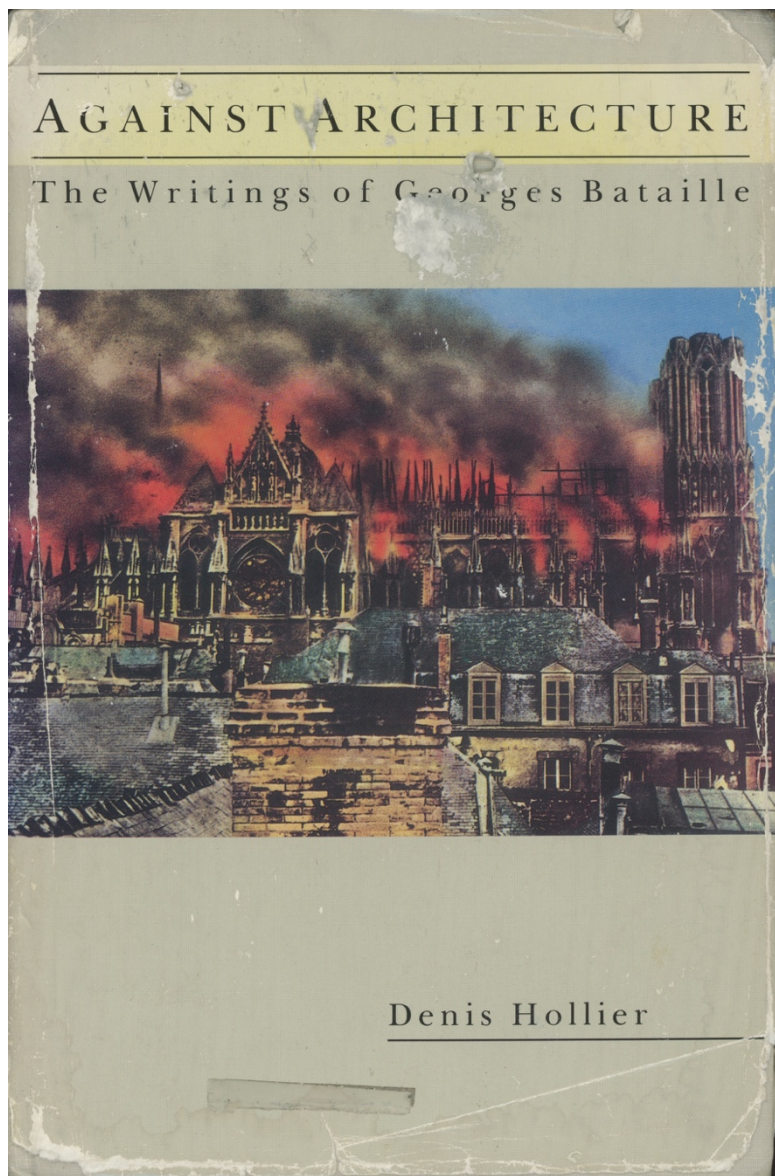
This semester, we will make a series of films tracing aspects of architecture that cannot be expressed in drawings or language. And even though we will start the semester with extensive reading sessions, the final goal will be to show or suggest those aspects, as in a silent movie, the registration of a gesture, pantomime, dance, performance, sound piece or the like. Different from regular architectural designs, that are almost inevitably caught up in good intentions or even obliged to positive rationality, these discoveries might also point at dark, negative or uncanny aspects of architecture.

Since the nineteen sixties, the linguistic turn has defined architectural discourse. That means that we’ve grown to understand architecture as a language. Of course, we’ve seen a digital turn and a pictorial turn as well, but somehow the idea of architecture as a language, be it as syntax or as semantics, is quite persistent. It defined two globally hegemonic movements, Postmodernism and Deconstructivism. In fact, according to Rem Koolhaas, Postmodernism is so successful that “The style of choice is postmodern and *will always remain so*.”



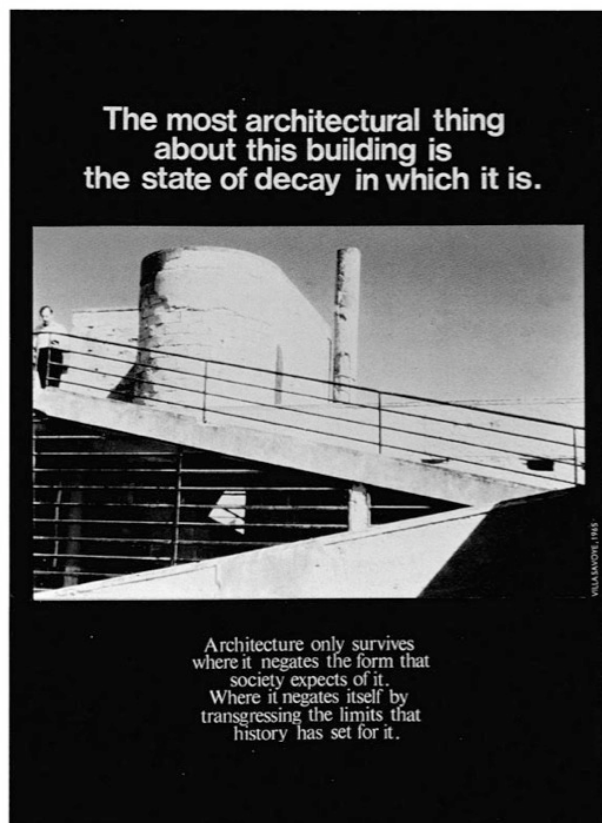
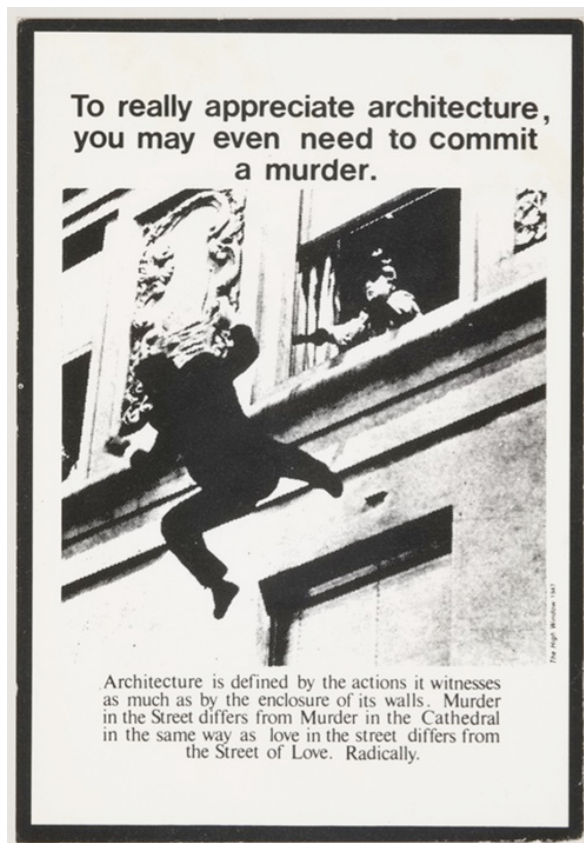
Postmodernism is the only movement that has succeeded in connecting the practice of architecture with the practice of panic. Postmodernism is not a doctrine based on a highly civilized reading of architectural history but a method, a mutation in professional architecture that produces results fast enough to keep pace with the Generic City's development. Instead of consciousness, as its original inventors may have hoped, it creates a new unconscious. It is modernization's little helper. Anyone can do it – a skyscraper based on the Chinese pagoda *and/or* a Tuscan hill town." Koolhaas continues: "All resistance to postmodernism is anti-democratic. It creates a "stealth" wrapping around architecture that makes it irresistible, like a Christmas present from a charity." So, even though the linguistic turn, as the subtitle states, was about methods to make or keep philosophy meaningful, in architecture it turned into its reverse. And even if Postmodernism might be inevitable, Koolhaas suggests that architecture -the real surprise inside the colourful wrapping- is really about something else.

The other way around, in philosophy, architecture, as a metaphor, is considered as the structure of magnificent philosophical systems. Denis Hollier has demonstrated in his book *Against Architecture*, how Georges Bataille used the Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Aesthetics, in which architecture does not only have a commanding position but which seems guided by architectural principles in its structure as well, thus turning philosophy into the servant of architecture. Large parts of Bataille's work can be seen as a deconstruction of Hegel's Aesthetics through series of transgressions and violations of the rules, the method, it dictates.



It was Bernard Tschumi who, in a series of essays in the nineteen seventies inspired by Hollier, tried to translate Bataille's method to architecture again. He largely failed in his texts and buildings, as Hollier proved in a new introduction to the English translation of his book, but a series of installations, performances and Advertisements for Architecture, inspired by early New York performance art might have brought him closer to the kind of insights Bataille thought about. Maybe even more than in philosophy, in which there's a widespread consensus that we can only philosophize in language, that philosophy depends on language only, we might ask if architecture is a language at all. And even if it is, if we can say and do everything we want to say and do with it and about it in language.





<sup>15</sup> Bernard Tschumi, from *Advertisements for Architecture*, 1976-77.

Scepsis about language has a long tradition in philosophy and even in literature, in Austria in particular. But this scepsis always went hand in hand with attempts to say, show, point to or suggest things with other means. Ludwig Wittgenstein thought that with his *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*, he had written the final book on philosophy and try to stop philosophizing. In later years he developed a wordless critique of sculpture, showed the essence of what a Wittgenstein was through photography, built a house and finally continued philosophy without writing it down himself through series of fragments instead of fully formed and structured books. Alys X. George shows in her book *The Naked Truth, Viennese Modernism and the Body*, how the scepsis about language pushed writers like Hugo von Hoffmansthal to choreographing pantomimes.

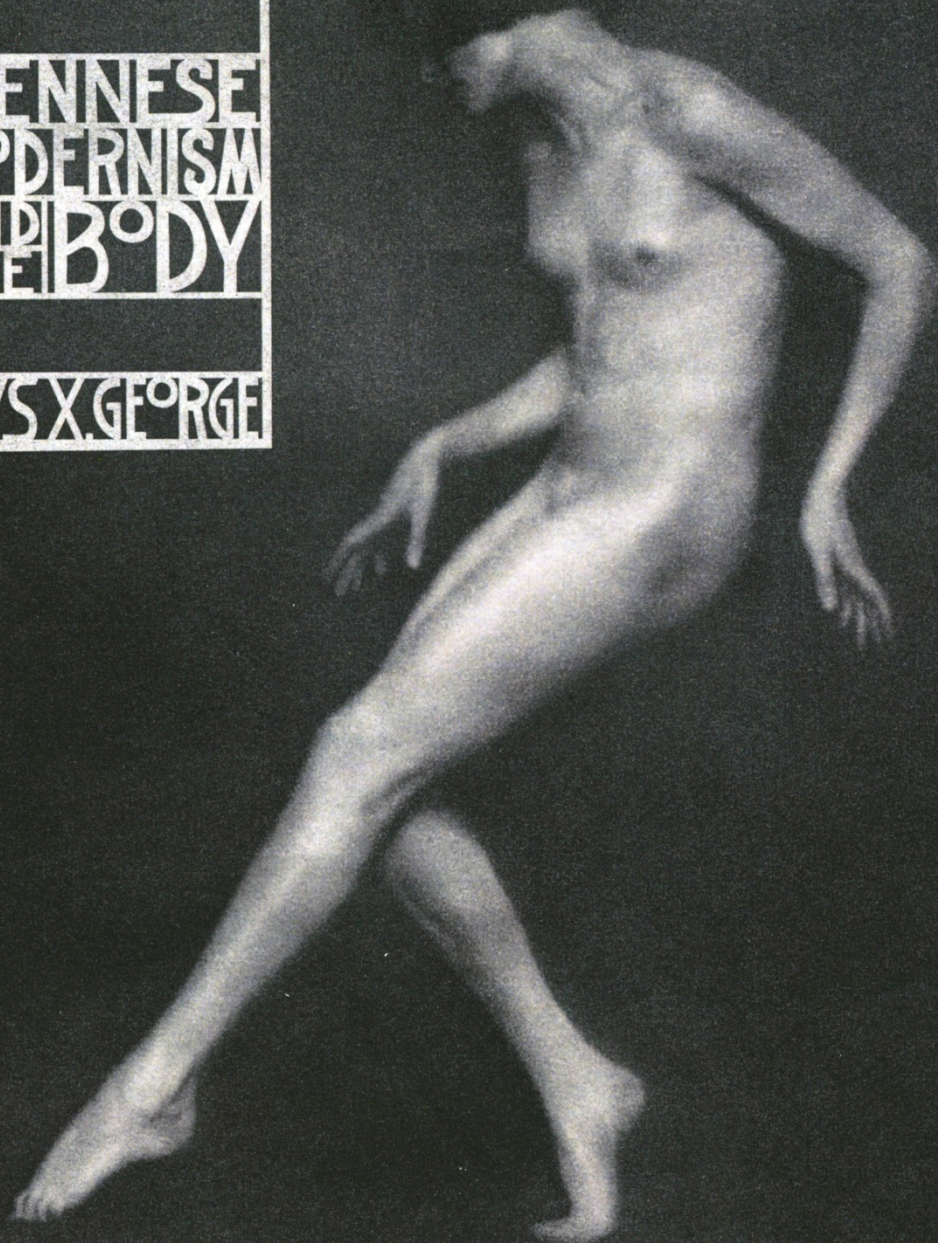
In the course of the twentieth century, concept art and performance art renewed the art world dramatically. They did not want to rely on the traditional methods of art, like painting and sculpting, but find new ways of showing contents, that traditional disciplines couldn't. Intriguingly, many of these new art forms related to architecture or at least to concepts of space implicitly or explicitly. In 1980, the artist and curator Gerhard von Graevenitz curated the exhibition *Pier + Ocean*, an overview of how artists with their desperately different approaches explored different phenomena. Apart from the reading this studio by [architecturatheory.eu](http://architecturatheory.eu) will involve, we will also discuss examples from contemporary art and film as inspirations for our own work.



THE NAKED  
TRUTH

VIENNESE  
MODERNISM  
AND THE BODY

ALYS X. GEORGE



The studio will be guided by Eleni Boutsika and Bart Lootsma

The studio consists of two parts: After introductory lectures to the theme, we first read a series of texts, prepared by teams of two students, in order to get an overview on relevant literature. Also, we will show some films. After that, we start working in small groups on (a series of short) movies that show (aspects of) architecture, or at least buildings, that cannot be expressed in words. Of course, texts will put these experiments in context.

The studio will take place on Zoom. We do speak German and are happy to do so, but as most texts on the subject are in English, the studio will be (for the largest part) in English.

Learning goals:

- To position one's work in a specific discourse.
- To be able to produce (a)short video(s),
- a small book and
- to present one's own work in a lecture.

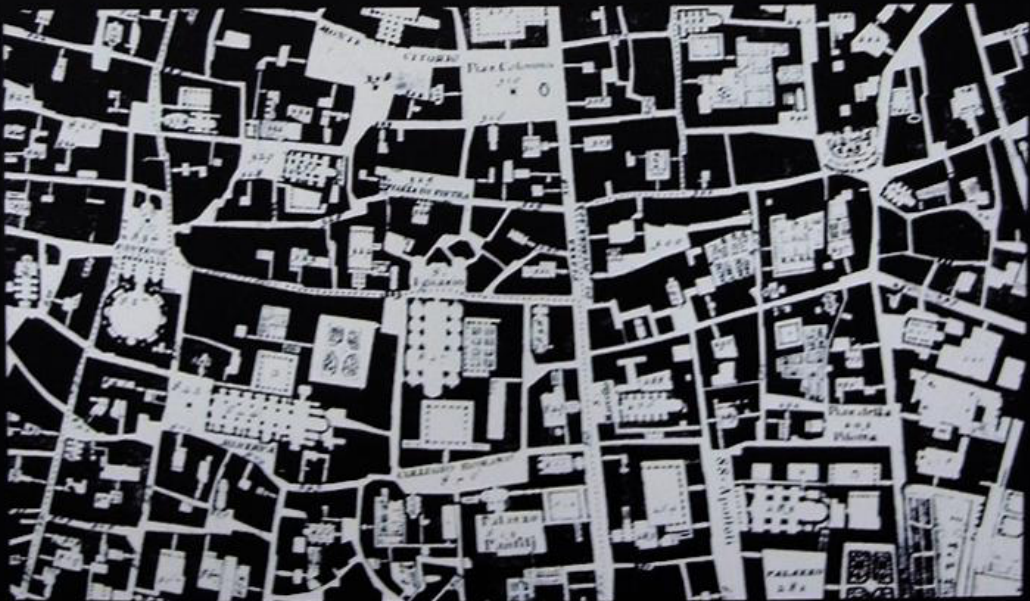
Learning goals of the studio beyond the immediate results:

- 'Learning to learn': Learning from books, from reality, from lecturers and from other students.
- Acquisition of research methods, learning strategies and content in the context of research in architectural history and theory.
- Goal-oriented use of library(s) and learning important research techniques, including working in archives.
- Composing texts, images, books, exhibitions, videos and websites based on the material studied.
- Application of different presentation techniques in different contexts and with different media: essay, short presentation with PowerPoint, book, exhibition, website, video.
- Teamwork: work is regularly done in teams of two students. The topics and presentations are structured in such a way that all teams can benefit from each other and the individual presentations are part of a larger whole.

Goodby to Language is among others the title of a film by Jan Luc Godard and of an album by Daniel Lanois and Rocco Deluca.



**common ground?**



**figure/ground**

**Architecture is not so much the knowledge of form,  
but a form of knowledge.**