Demolition: The *Afterdrawing* of Architecture

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When does a building become a building? And when does a building cease to be a building? Is the drawing of its ruin an architectural drawing—that is, can an architectural drawing release rather than determine form?

In 'Translations from Drawing to Building' (1986),[1] his seminal investigation of the possibilities and limitations of the architectural drawing in relation to the building of architecture, Robin Evans observes that the building 'is brought into existence through drawing. The subject-matter (the building or space) will exist *after* the drawing, not before it.'[1] Evans calls this 'the principle of *reversed directionality* in drawing': the architectural drawing prefigures something that is yet to be, it carries a potentiality that the representational drawing does not have. [2] The architectural drawing is by definition incomplete, not only because it is instrumental to the making of something other than itself, but because in order to produce that other a translation (from drawing to building) must be performed. The translation that takes drawing beyond drawing is made possible by a complex knowledge that performs a cultural and contextual operation besides the technology of building, acting deep into the layered significations that invest the built environment.

When then does the building cease to be a building? What is the role of drawing in relation to building when the building is no more? Is the architectural drawing still architectural when its 'reversed directionality' is reversed once again? The twice-reversed directionality, which passes back through the drawing again, produces a different potentiality, in fact opening it further, as it renders explicit the relation of architecture with time. The *afterdrawing* of architecture is more powerful (it has more generative potentiality) because it is not the rendering of a closed project fixed in the moment that informs its translation (to building), but it includes also the undoing of the project. The planned demolition of the building by implosion can be considered a powerful architectural statement that carries building (but not its project) literally to the end. More than weathering and slow ruination, more than destructive attacks, planned demolition is a project whose logistics and layout are orchestrated as much as the project of building. Implosion applies explosive force to release the energy that is embedded in the building; it releases matter from the form

imposed on it by design (through drawing and its translation). It controls the sequence of the process, but not the details of its formal outcome. It re-releases the potentiality of drawing.

Heide Fasnacht has explored through drawing the planning and execution of implosions of buildings (*Three Buildings*, 2000-2001, *Demo*, 2000-2001).[3] More recently, *New Frontier* , 2015, has focused on the debris of demolition, showing that while the drawing continues to represent forms, it does not define forms, but releases the possibility of forming the building, again or anew.[4] Another form of translation from drawing to building is invited here. Evans had observed that drawing is done 'prior to construction; it is not so much produced by reflection on the reality outside the drawing, as productive of a reality that will end up outside the drawing.'[5] The *afterdrawing*, the drawing of the demolition's rubble that still bears the identity of the building, and with it the history of its many incarnations, marks the restarting of the project (indeed its continuation). The drawing becomes translative again, placing again the making, the knowledge and the thinking of architecture precisely in the moment of discontinuity between drawing and building. The *afterdrawing* is architectural because it makes space.

1 Robin Evans, 'Translations from Drawing to Building' (1986), in *Translations from Drawing to Building and Other Essays*, Architectural Association, London, 1997, pp. 153-194.

2 ibid., p. 165.

3 Sculptor Heide Fasnacht on the Ephemerality of Our Built Environment, *Artnet News*, 11th August 2015, <https://news.artnet.com/people/interview-with-heide-fasnacht-323167> (accessed 14.08.2015).

4 Teresa Stoppani, 'The Fasnacht Fold', *lo Squaderno,* 37, September 2015. ISSN 1973-9141. <http://www.losquaderno.professionaldreamers.net>

5 Evans, op. cit., p. 165.

Caption

Heide Fasnacht, *New Frontier*, 2015, coloured pencil on paper, 1016 x 1524mm, Courtesy of the artist and Kent Fine Art, New York.