DEMOLITION THERAPY

We have interviewed 5 different actors that have a relation to demolition, whether they have a professional expertise related to acts of destruction or they actively participate in demolition in both the virtual and physical world. The data we collected from this research is presented in a text format, which we juxtapose with our own narrative concerning the development of demolition as a form of therapy and consumer product. This research took place in the week of 20-27 of March for a Masterclass organized by AMO/OMA and The Berlage, and was conducted by Guillem Colomer i Fontanet and Bart de Hartog.

Different trends in contemporary society, both virtual and physical, are showing an increased desire for the demolition of objects as a way for stress relief.

We see that on the one hand more and more countries are opening up Anger Rooms, in which you pay a sum of money to be able to smash an interior of choice like an office environment or a kitchen full of dishes and appliances. People who enter these rooms are able to blow off steam by physically dealing with their frustrations through the demolition of objects.

On the other hand there are trends in the gaming world where you can pretend to be professional demolition workers taking down buildings on site in the proper in the game Demolition Company, or gamers build up large structures in a game like Minecraft which they then blow up with fictional TNT.

By looking at the market for both of these options we are trying to show the development of this trend while trying to project an increased role for architecture in future scenario’s concerning demolition.



Prof. Barbara Krahé

Professor of Social-Psychology at the University of Potsdam. Author of the book *The Social Psychology of Aggression*.

If it is a derelict building that will be replaced by something nicer, I could see some beauty in it. However in the anger rooms beauty doesn´t play a role at all since I find it hard to see any esthetics in destroying things that are perfectly usable. I find it hard to see beauty in demolition.



Wasilja Peterse &
Wim van Otterdijk

Members of DutchDominoTeam, and actively designing, buidling and demolishing with dominoes.

If you would only build domino and let it stand it would be a nice artwork, like the ones in a museum, but if you demolish it and it starts moving you get an extra effect of movement and color which is unique.
There are domino fields but you can also stack and go in all directions, both give a different effect and the 3d might be more interesting if it works.



Jorge Arribas Haro

Founder and CEO StopStress, a Spanish company specialized in stress-relief and created Destructo Therapy in 2003.

To me demolition is super elegant. It is a moment of the end to begin again. Demolition is the end to start with something new. Sometimes in life you must end up with things to move on.
I have always found spectacular the Casino demolitions in Las Vegas and all the show around. They make a party to demolish the hotel and then build a bigger one.



Liam Andrews

Sales-agent and pasttime gamer who enjoys virtual games like Demolition Company and Minecraft.

I find it so beautiful really, because it allows you to release your frustrations and anger. Personally for me it is fascinating to watch explosion bring a building down all the way down. There are all sorts of different types of techniques to destroy. It is interesting to watch and I'm interested by physics as well.



Guido Dodero

Owner and designer of The Break Room, a space to blow of steam by physically destroying objects.

A big demolition is very interesting in a voyeur of way where you shouldn't look but you still want to see. People destroying things in the anger room is comparable to the attraction of a music video.

Could you describe your act of demolition?

Wasilja & Wim

The second principle of domino is that you build it up, and then let it fall. This results in a dynamic effect that you can only create with domino pieces. It is an expression of joy. Expressing yourself creatively; with the demolition as the climax.

Liam Andrews

Removing something that someone spent ages to create is such a powerful thing itself. I picked the game because I've always been interested in demolition. It makes me feel powerful as a person to flatten that particular building. It's not something that I chose to do because I wanted to remove my anger, but I feel that when playing the game it is satisfying.

Guido Dodero

Basically there are three rooms. One when you get the safety gear and you prepare yourself before entering the anger room. You choose your weapons, music and what you want to break. Once inside you do the destruction and afterwards there is a relax room where you can chill a little bit.

Prof. Barbara Krahé

It is a fact that more and more of these rage rooms are opening up, while empirical psychological research shows that demolition is counter-productive in decreasing aggressive impulses. On the contrary, it is likely to increase them.

How do you perceive the situation after demolition?

Liam Andrews

There is always a lot of dust. It is satisfying to see the end result. Myself I don't like to fail as a person, and to see something from the start to the end result, a completely flat demolition site, means that you've reached your end goal, completed your task, and have got a thumbs up.

Jorge Arribas Haro

As soon as they finish they are an uncut diamond emotionally. What you would normally do in a coach room we do it in the middle of the destruction field. The afterwards scenario is crucial, unfortunately when a journalist has recorded our activities they never show it because it doesn't sell. There is danger in the way it is communicated.

Prof. Barbara Krahé

Afterwards they feel better, I do believe, but what does this mean to their subsequent feelings and behaviors? You learn that harming objects and physical environment gives you a nice feeling, as a reward. This is how you acquire this behavior, where acting aggressively feels nice.

Wasilja & Wim

Everybody is curious about the cleaning up, but we like it. We sort the domino pieces by color with music and coffee or tea. Before you have been very focused, at your maximum, and then afterwards when it is all over you are really relaxed.

Is demolition a way to relief stress?

Jorge Arribas Haro

We invented a company to organize activities in order to liberate stress and destructotherapy seemed the proper way. We mobilize their adrenaline so that they themselves realize it was not necessary to reach those levels of stress.

Wasilja & Wim

If I am really annoyed I may think it would be great to throw a plate and smash it. This might end up with you having no dishes. Sometimes when you drop a piece and the structure falls you want to run around and kick all the other structures so that you feel relieved, but this would only make it worse.

Prof. Barbara Krahé

Everybody knows the feeling when you are really angry and you want to smash something. People might feel better but that might not be the only consequence. Let people stroke a puppy, let them watch images of animal babies, tell funny jokes, something that is contrary to the anger and neutralize it. It is a way more effective approach.

Liam Andrews

I can see it having benefits to removing stress, definitely. When I personally play the game I get in the zone, so the zone is me in the game. When I’ve had a bad day I can particularly go and use a lot of TNT or a jackhammer, to flatten a building completely, and its gone, and I feel relieved. It’s like a channel to escape. Especially if it is not your building.

Are you concerned with the risks of demolition?

Prof. Barbara Krahé

I am not a neuro-scientist, but people learn through reinforcement: destroy an object and get a nice feeling of relief. You then connect this to destroying something which makes future aggression more likely. It provides more risks for other people under different circumstances where they are likely to trigger the same aggressive behavior as when they are training in the anger rooms. And not only in the long term.

Liam Andrews

You need to understand the risks. You need to know what you are doing. I'm concerned with safety. Plus you need to know where to stop and keep it controlled. I have been a couple of times in situations that escaped from my control. There are huge risks and if you don´t know what you are really doing the end result can be disastrous. You can kill somebody essentially.

Jorge Arribas Haro

Not everybody can do this activity. For instance we don't allow people with risk of anxiety attacks to participate. We know we have a big responsibility. You can change the life of people so we must be really responsible.

Guido Dodero

There are two different psychology theories: the ones that they like what we do and the ones who don't. Some psychologists are sending their patients to us as a side therapy. Since it is very difficult to explain the feeling, the best to do is to try it out. We should stop thinking…Just go and break stuff.

Is there a relation between virtual and real demolition?

Guido Dodero

It is a trend. Virtual games work in a similar way. We are creating some kind of environment so different in the way we are, that we need to vent off. It is a game but you feel that you need to get so involved in it that it is not just a game anymore.

Jorge Arribas Haro

We are in favor of virtual games only if they are didactic. When the target is to demolish in the most efficient way and not in the most violent. Destructotherapy tends to the virtual reality for logistic commodity. However you lose the touch of socialization.

Liam Andrews

There is not a relation between what I do in virtual reality and what I would do in real life. However, as virtual reality is there, I can do what I always dreamed to do. I think it stops people from going crazy. If you ask anybody in the world would you like to blow something into thousands of pieces? They will, without question, answer yes. Because it is fun!

Wasilja & Wim

We both play Minecraft, and it’s the creative aspect in Minecraft is what attracts us. But what attracts us in Domino and the virtual games is more the creation than the actual destruction. This is just to celebrate the end of the process of creation.

Do you consider demolition to be a socializing act?

Prof. Barbara Krahé

They give people ideas. The question is: why do people share quite personal information with a wide audience they can´t control? I think it is a way of reassuring themselves that what they do is socially acceptable. That´s why they want to share it with other people and if they like it, then it is ok.

Liam Andrews

I like to get feedback on the videos I post on YouTube which are really aimed to show people about my experiences, and to pull other people into that as well. This shows to people what's out there: this is available and if you like demolition as much as I do, you should play this game. Quite a lot of people comment on my videos saying “Thank you, I really enjoy this game” and there is a lot of other positive feedback.

Jorge Arribas Haro

When you demolish a car with somebody you never forget him or her. Our clients remember us but at the same time our biggest secret as a business is the anonymity. We only do events with companies and we have stopped doing it with individual persons because we were afraid of not being able to control the adrenaline of the people who went for entertainment.

Wasilja & Wim

Developing and building a project together is the thing that binds us in Domino, the chain-reaction that you create together. The trial and error you go through during the build-up time is what makes it worth it, with the demolition as the climax of this whole process.

Do you consider yourself a destructive person?

Liam Andrews

I do like to destroy things. By means of explosions, fire, I’m not an arsonist, definitely not, but I like to burn things. I love fire, explosions, fireworks... I am quite a reasonable person so I know when it is enough some people want more and more and more. You need to know where to stop and keep it controlled.

Prof. Barbara Krahé

I would say personally I don´t experience any treasurable feelings about demolishing or destroying objects. I´ve been in situations where people destroy things in front of me and I must say it annoys me. I know buildings that are so hideous that I wish they weren’t there, but that never created the urge to demolish them.

Jorge Arribas Haro

I consider myself a person adapted to change. And by Destructotherapy I have obtained the philosophy in life that teaches how to end things to move on. One must know the limits.

Wasilja & Wim

It is important that you use your qualities to make sure it falls. We are looking at how something is built so we can use its weaknesses to let it fall. By this we create a fantastic WOW effect that is never boring to watch it, over and over again.

Does demolition satisfy more than creation?

Wasilja & Wim

The balance between the building and the fall-time follows the formula: 10 hours building, 1 minute falling, 1 hour cleaning. The falling is maybe the shortest but for us it the most effective.

Guido Dodero

Destroying your own creations in our business strategy is the most difficult kind of event since it demands a whole series of step-by-step processes. The most creative aspect we offer is the selection of music: people come with their own playlists.

Jorge Arribas Haro

Every Destructotherapy session is special and we have organized about a hundred. Most of the time we control the process and they just follow our instructions. However, depending on the demands we have incorporated the construction of certain elements prior to the demolition. Some clients like to take their time and to adjust their things.

Liam Andrews

There is an intrinsic relation between time investment in creation and the release of relief by demolition, so that the more time and effort involved into breaking something the better feelings you get because more time has been spent on it.

How do you see demolition developing as a market?

Guido Dodero

It is a growing market. When I first started we were the only ones in Latin America. We have changed our way of approaching people. We started as a therapy and now we are moving towards entertainment.

Jorge Arribas Haro

There is market, yes. But the problem is that afterwards people never confess publicly that they have participated in such activity. That is the challenge: how you advertise the activity that people will not admit to have done. The actual super crisis we are experiencing is leaving defeated people with huge levels of stress and anxiety.

Wasilja & Wim

Around 2000 Domino was something special and there was money, but it stopped. Now it’s coming back because people who don’t know it love seeing it. They think it is special, unique, I believe it could grow. We have started a foundation because we are asked by companies to do workshops so I would say there is a new trend concerning domino.

Liam Andrews

The virtual reality side of things is really taking off. The boom is enormous. If you could have Virtual Reality vision in demolition it would be beneficial for teaching people by a simulation of real life, so they know how to and how not do it. Such a game experience would be fantastic.

How important is the design of the environment?

Wasilja & Wim

The building up is somehow linked to architecture. We make a concept every year around a theme. When we have that we start designing and building them as beautiful and interesting as possible.

Liam Andrews

The bigger the better, a tall building is better to destroy than a tent. An office tower is ugly to the eye. Demolishing a palace can be a lot more beneficial because more time has been used to build it. There are implosions, explosions… all sorts of different types of techniques to destroy.

Jorge Arribas Haro

We do it in Soria, a little town 2 hours drive from Madrid, because our clients are less exposed and it is easy to keep it anonymous. Our destructotherapy must be done in the open air because it is easier for legal and security standards. Plus we require a lot of space. It would be nice to create a scenography but there is no budget.

Guido Dodero

I am a designer at a base so I think that design really matters. Our Break Club is an old hidden house in a busy tourist area in town. Outside everything is kind of creepy, old and rotten but once inside everything is well designed and well thought. We have designed the sequence to put people in the mood for breaking stuff.

Thank you.