

## Imaginary Inhabitation and Bodily Imagination of Architectural Space

Keywords: bodily self-consciousness, space perception, spatial imagination, somatic movement, phenomenology, perception psychology, embodiment theory, practice-led artistic research, architectural design methods

The architectural design process may include imaginary inhabitation of the conceived space. However, this cognitive and embodied effort is often replaced by computer-aided modelling and reduced to visual images and sterile geometries. The presented doctoral research develops bodily movement practices which emphasise the moment of imaginary inhabitation in order to relate the designed space to architect's own body<sup>1</sup> and by doing so to infuse it with poetic, existential and humane qualities, as advocated for by thinkers such as Gaston Bachelard, Juhani Pallasmaa or Alberto Pérez-Gómez.

Experimental psychological studies show, that a heightened bodily self-consciousness enhances the perception of the environment<sup>2</sup>. How can this correlation be consciously and effectively applied in architectural practice? Imaginary inhabitation is a competence which involves both embodied and mental processes. It includes spatial perceiving, remembering, imagining and shaping. Followed by methodological translation of those experiences through media of language and drawing they can converge into an architectural design. In its current state, this research seeks to hurdle the transition from imaginary wandering to analytic choice making. The aim of the research is a ready-to-use design toolkit for immersive, aesthetic design practice and sensually elaborated architecture.

The study's interdisciplinary framework draws from body-oriented architectural theory (Einfühlungsästhetik<sup>3</sup>, phenomenology<sup>4</sup>, perception psychology<sup>5</sup>) and post-Laban somatic movement methods, such as Body-Mind Centering<sup>6</sup>. This study investigates the reduction of a spatial experience to a bodily felt phenomena<sup>7</sup>—a method used in both somatics and phenomenological analysis. It also discusses, how the tacit knowledge of the body sensing and feeling itself correlates with explicit knowledge about its near environment. In this sense, it is an educational approach, which is currently being developed and tested within a university experimental design seminar.

Somatics, as a field of corporeal practices and methods which mostly developed throughout the 20th century, seeks to heighten bodily self-consciousness and relate the body-mind to the environment, by means of perception training<sup>8</sup> (cf. Neutra's similar concept in architecture<sup>9</sup>) and particularly through the focus on kinaesthetic and proprioceptive experiences of the practitioner.

Besides spoken word—the introduction to and instructions for the imagination practice, this performance lecture will include presenter's moving body and a projection of the visual documentation of similar previous practices. This presentation is open for audience participation through contemplation of one's own kinetic responses or active movement.

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<sup>1</sup> Pérez-Gómez in: Jacquet, Benoit; Giraud, Vincent (2013): From the things themselves: Architecture and phenomenology. Kyoto: Kyoto University Press., 467 Pérez-Gómez call for "recognizing ourselves as complete, in order to dwell poetically on earth".

<sup>2</sup> Pasqualini, Isabella; Llobera, Joan; Blanke, Olaf (2013): "Seeing" and "feeling" architecture: how bodily self-consciousness alters architectonic experience and affects the perception of interiors. In *Frontiers in Psychology* 4. DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00354., Fingerhut, Jörg. (2013): Philosophie der Verkörperung: Grundlagentexte zu einer aktuellen Debatte. Berlin: Suhrkamp

<sup>3</sup> Vischer R. (1927 [1873]) Über das optische Formgefühl. In: *Drei Schriften zum ästhetischen Formproblem*. Halle an der Saale: Niemeyer;

Wölfflin, Heinrich (2009): Prolegomena zu einer Psychologie der Architektur. In *Kunstgeschichte*: open peer reviewed journal. Available online at <http://www.kunstgeschichte-ejournal.net/44/>.

<sup>4</sup> Friedrich, Thomas; Gleiter Jörg (2007): *Einführung und phänomenologische Reduktion: Grundlagentexte zu Architektur, Design und Kunst*. Berlin [u.a.]: Lit-Verl.

<sup>5</sup> Ballestrem, M. G. v. (2014). *Nebenbei Raum: Die Bedeutung von Form und Struktur architektonischer Räume für die Mechanismen der impliziten visuellen Raumwahrnehmung*. Berlin: epubli.;

Mallgrave, Harry Francis (2011): *The architect's brain. Neuroscience, creativity and architecture*. paperback ed. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

<sup>6</sup> Cohen, Bonnie Bainbridge (2014): *Sensing, feeling, and action. The experiential anatomy of body-mind centering: the collected articles for Contact Quarterly dance journal 1980-2009*. Johanneshov: MTM.;

Hartley, Linda (1995): *Wisdom of the body moving. An introduction to body-mind centering*. Berkeley, Calif.: North Atlantic Books.

<sup>7</sup> Friedrich, Gleiter 2007

<sup>8</sup> Eddy, Martha (2016): *Mindful Movement. The Evolution of the Somatic Arts and Conscious Action*: Intellect L&DEFAE.

<sup>9</sup> Neutra, Richard Joseph (1956): *Wenn wir weiterleben wollen. Erfahrungen und Forderungen eines Architekten*. Hamburg: Claassen.