

## INTRODUCTION TO A SOMATIC INQUIRY OF ARCHITECTURAL SPACE

A heightened bodily self-consciousness enhances the perception of the environment<sup>1</sup>. How can this correlation be consciously and effectively applied in architectural praxis? An account of the first phase of doctoral research will be presented, including its interdisciplinary theoretical framework (in the fields of architecture and somatics) and introduce somatic inquiry as a spatial research method and explore the concept of architectural design through documentation of experienced spatial relations.

The study's framework draws from body-oriented architectural theory (Einfühlungsästhetik<sup>2</sup>, phenomenology<sup>3</sup>, perception psychology<sup>4</sup>) and exemplary somatic methods (Body-Mind Centering®<sup>5</sup>, Feldenkrais Method®<sup>6</sup>). This study examines the reduction of a spatial experience to bodily felt phenomena<sup>7</sup> – a method used in both somatic and phenomenological analysis. It also discusses how the tacit knowledge of the body 'feeling' itself correlates with explicit knowledge about the environment.

As a field of corporeal practices and methods which mostly developed throughout the 20th century, somatic seeks to heighten body consciousness and relate the body-mind to the environment, by means of perception training<sup>8</sup> (cf. a similar concept in architecture<sup>9</sup>) and particularly through its focus on kinaesthetic and proprioceptive modalities.

This research includes empirical trials of specific bodily practices oriented towards spatial phenomena. Part of its documentation is a first-person perspective record of relational interaction with spaces and places. This kind of documentation of spatial relatedness has properties of architectural design: Despite originating from an ephemeral experience, it is material (non-abstract) because its roots are in the material world. It can define relationships before it addresses structures (cf. Cohen<sup>10</sup>). It has the characteristics of 'construction documentation' because it describes the method and circumstances of spatial experience induction (or emergence).

This performance lecture provides an account of movement-related architectural thinking. Besides a verbal presentation of the above-mentioned topic, it will include the researcher's movement. It also addresses the audience's direct kinesthetic response and may require seating modification in the conference hall. This contribution can be illustrated with work samples from current research.

**Keywords:** space perception, body consciousness, somatic movement, phenomenology, perception psychology, embodiment theory, practice-led artistic research, design methods

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