

**EXPERIENCING BUILT SPACE:
AFFECT AND MOVEMENT**

by

Eva Perez de Vega

EXPERIENCING BUILT SPACE: AFFECT AND MOVEMENT

ABSTRACT **p.2**

PHENOMENOLOGY, PERCEPTION, SENSATION AND AFFECT **p.3**

1.1 Phenomenology in architecture: subject and meaning

1.2 Perception and sensation

1.3 The notion of affect

EXPERIENCING BUILT SPACE **p.8**

2.1 Object of perception. Association and intuition

2.2 Object of sensation. Movement

2.3 Object of affection. Performance

THE PROBLEM OF PHENOMENOLOGY **p.16**

3.1 Deleuze's critiques of phenomenology. Body without organs

3.2 Broadening phenomenology: multiplicity and emergence

3.3. Phenomenology without organs

NOTES **p.21**

BIBLIOGRAPHY **p.23**

ILLUSTRATION CREDITS **p.24**

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to look at the experience of built space beyond the subjective and signifying connotations of phenomenology in architecture. Instead of experiencing through subjective meanings, the attempt is to look at the affective dimension of space. What does it entail to experience built space in terms of *affect*? If affect pertains to an *affection* that modifies both the mind and the body,¹ it is at once a perception and a sensation, and tied to the idea of movement. So how does phenomenology rid itself of the ideas that have helped define it? It will be through Deleuze's critique of phenomenology and the notion of affect as seen through his conception of the *body without organs* that will set the ground for a possible new way of experiencing architecture.

PHENOMENOLOGY, PERCEPTION, SENSATION AND AFFECT

1.1 Phenomenology in architecture: subject and meaning

The repudiation of the term *phenomenology* when theorizing about architecture stemmed largely from its perceived individual and subjective quality as well as from certain association the term has with the notion of significance or meaning. After many years of academic rejection, phenomenology in architecture has acquired sufficient distance from early debates that it is now possible to properly assess its significance. This paper would like to argue that there are certain spaces –certain *architectures*²- which can be experienced beyond the subjective and beyond the meaningful; experiences which blend subject and object, which blend perception and sensation; experience which have *affect* as their main drive. Gilles Deleuze's criticism of phenomenology is indeed targeted at the notions of subjectivity and significance. As we will see further, his critique will actually provide a means for re-evaluating the assumptions made when discussing phenomenology in architecture, and open up new possibilities for the experience of built space.

For Merleau-Ponty phenomenology is a method of describing the nature of our perceptual contact with the world and is concerned with providing a direct description of human experience. Through theorists like Christian Norberg-Schulz and Alberto Perez-Gomez, phenomenology in architecture has been largely identified with Heideggerian thought and what was seen as his call for a return to personal authenticity.³ In practice, phenomenology is indeed associated with the individual experience of a space through its sensational qualities of light, sound, texture, color, and perspective. Even today, so-called phenomenological architects stress the importance of the individual subject; "*space is only perceived when a subject describes it... It is precisely at the level of spatial perception that the most powerful architectural meaning come to the fore.*"⁴ Steven Holl's illustrations often depict a lonely figure immersed in the space of its own experience; it is like a glimpse inside someone's unique interpretation of the space. But do all experiences of built space require or imply a subjective viewpoint? Is it possible to experience beyond the subjectivism that so-called phenomenological architecture substantiates?



Steven Holl, Sketches

According to Deleuze, phenomenology assumes the world to be “*primordially impregnated with univocal meaning.*”⁵ Indeed there are many examples of architecture impregnated with meaning: the Bastille acquired meaning as a result of a particular historic event⁶; the tower Eiffel acquired nationalistic meaning even though its intent was just to be a manifestation of engineering prodigy; in these, as in many other cases it was an imperative human wish to assign specific meanings onto constructs. But is there a way to experience architecture devoid of assigned meaning?

From a neutral, non-human perspective, buildings, constructs, creations or destructions are simply a transformation of matter. Whether it is creation or destruction, transformation of matter only acquires meaning in a human context, through human consciousness. Even the destruction caused by an earthquake can be seen from nature's perspective as a simple rearrangement of matter.⁷ Formed matter in itself has no meaning- has no value as an object of representation. If we were able to look at transformation of matter from a neutral point of view, what would we see? How would it change our experience of built space?

1.2 Perception and Sensation

In attempting to elucidate the problem of phenomenology in architecture it is important to look at the notions of *perception* and *sensation*. In his classic book *The Primary World of the Senses* Erwin Straus, establishes a fundamental distinction between the two. Perception, he argues, is a secondary rational organization of a primary, non-rational dimension of sensation or sense experience (*le sentir*)⁹. The primary sense is the one we share with animals; it is an unreflective and instinctive. Sensation deals with corporeality -the senses- and perception is the intellectualization of that corporeality.

Strauss elaborates on this distinction by contrasting the *space of geography* and the *space of landscape*. Geographical space is that of the perceptual world, where things are fixed with inalterable properties and an objective notion of space-time. Landscape space is the sensory world, a space with shifting reference that constantly moves as we move. Strauss talks of landscape painting as illustrating this concept of the sensory: "*Landscape painting does not depict what we see ... but it makes visible the invisible ... In such landscape*

we gain access to the Mitwelt of an unfolding self-world that knows no clear differentiation of subject and object. Hence the more we absorb the more we lose ourselves in it."¹⁰

It is said that during a walk the nineteenth century painter James Whistler stopped impressed with the landscape perspective beyond him. His disciple, seeing that he did not have his drawing utensils, quickly offered him his. But Whistler explained that he purposefully did not have his drawing materials in order to paint the perspective from his memory's impression of the place. He was not interested in depicting what he saw, it was the vague sensory experience he had in viewing the landscape that he wanted to depict on canvas, that sense of being lost in the painting. The body of sensation emphasized the irrational disorientation of sensation, which is very effective in the experience of certain paintings like those created by Whistler. We can be drawn into a painting almost viscerally, without necessarily having a clear intellectualized notion of that which we are experiencing. We can consciously perceive it intellectually by focusing on the brush strokes (technique) and analyzing their intensity, or on the depiction (representation) of what is shown, but it is the visceral sensory experience that Whistler seemed to be after.



James Whistler, Harmony in blue and silver, 1865

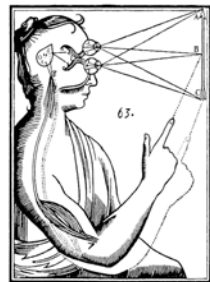
Perception and sensation are easily identified in the example of experiencing a crowd: by observing a crowd from a distance, one is aware of the crowd as an object external to oneself and can thus perceive it almost instantaneously as what it is. If one is within the crowd, embedded in its flux, it is hard to clearly grasp the objectness of the crowd, one can sense it is crowd and feel the qualities of the crowd through ones sensory organs, but there is only a vague notion/sensation of that which is being experienced. The crowd becomes an object of sensation- the smells, textures and sounds of the crowd are almost impossible to distinguish from those of oneself- one becomes part of the object of sensation; subject and object become fused together.

Sensation pertains to the physical body, the senses; it is intrinsic, irrational and unstable, often mutating and moving. Perception, on the other hand, is of the mind; it is rational, extrinsic, static and with clear distinctions between the subject and the object of

perception. If as Straus suggests, perception pertains to the rational world of geographical space and sensation to the irrational landscape space, then what kind of world do we live in when experiencing built space? In this context is there such thing as a pure sensory experience, or a purely perceptual one? What kind of built space allows for such an itemized experience? What is lacking, if anything, in that space that touches only the irrational, leaving the rational unscathed? These are only some of the questions that this paper would like to address, and in order to do so there is a third notion that needs to be brought to the fore; *affect*.

1.3 The notion of affect

If perception is of the mind and sensation of the body, in trying to explore these two notions as an experiential unit we seem to be faced with the classic mind-body problem. If we were to take the Cartesian dualist standpoint, then perception and sensation would have opposing and irreconcilable properties, with the mind's perception as dominant and in control of the body's sensation. Seen through Straus' conception, sensation seems to precede perception; it is the body which holds primacy over the mind, the body's sensation triggers the mind's perception. On the other hand, if we were to take the Spinozistic conception of the mind-body problem then we would be dealing with a single reality; perception and sensation would be seen as two attributes of one same substance just seen from different ontological viewpoints.¹¹ Thus neither the body nor the mind prevail over the other, neither one is dependent or dominant over the other, the body cannot command the mind to think and the mind cannot make the body feel.



Descartes' illustration of mind-body dualism

It is this relationship of perception-sensation/ mind-body that we would like to expand upon when looking at the problem of experience, specifically the experience of built space. Spinoza further develops it through his notion of *affect*. As he explains, the concept of *affect* is inclusive of both the mind and the body. Although often equated with the emotions, the concept of *affect* is much more encompassing; it pertains to an affection that modifies both the body and the mind through the idea of *desire* and *potential*. It is at

once perception -of the mind- and sensation -of the body¹². In Spinoza words affects are: "*affections of the body by which the body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections.*"¹³

Affect is both external and internal. Affection is the state of a body insofar as it is subject to being affected by another body, by the action of another body. Therefore, affection implies an exteriority, a mixture of two bodies; one body acting on the other, affecting it, and the other being acted on by the first, being affected by it. However, affect does not depend on the affection, it is enveloped by it. In other words, within affection there is an affect.¹⁴

Spinoza's above definition includes "*the idea of these affections*". There is a distinction to be made between the notion of affect and of *idea*. If we look at the affect of love for instance, there is an idea of the loved thing and this idea has a representation (the image of the loved object) but love itself, as a mode of thought, does not represent anything and is not represented by anything. Therefore it is the *idea* of an affect which is representational. Affect is associated with an idea, and that idea has a representation external to the body, but the affect itself does not have a representation and is not necessarily external to the body undergoing that affection.¹⁵ Affect in itself is not an idea; it remains within the abstract un-representational realm of pure sensation.

EXPERIENCING BUILT SPACE

2.1 Object of perception

What roles do perception and sensation play when experiencing space? Can a space be perceived objectively? Bernard Tschumi's *Questions about space*¹⁶ seem to point to the thorny issue: *"Is the perception of space common to everyone? If perceptions differ, do they constitute different worlds that are the products of one's past experience?"* When we experience something through perception - be it a space, an object, a painting, basically a *thing* - we project our past lived experiences onto that thing through the idea of association and memory. As Spinoza pointed out when writing about knowledge in *The Ethics*, perception, or *imagination* as he referred to it, cannot be relied upon as a source of truth since the perception of one thing triggers the perception of another thing in a random and subjective way. It is external stimuli that act on the body allowing it to perceive only a subjective view of reality¹⁷.

Spinoza illustrates this with the example of a soldier and a farmer observing the traces of a horse. The two will recall different thoughts based on their own subjective view; for the soldier these will bring images of other soldiers and of war, for the farmer they will remind him of a plow and of a farm field¹⁸. For Spinoza our perception of something involves attributing it existence, but it does not give us any knowledge of its true nature. Therefore perception cannot be trusted as a source of knowledge due to its inherent subjectivity.



Spinoza's example of Perception

Paul Valery seems to be aiming at something similar in his "On Painting" when he writes:

*"Man lives and moves in what he sees, but he only sees what he wants to see. Try different types of people in the midst of any landscape. A philosopher will only vaguely see phenomena; a geologist, crystallized, confused, ruined and pulverized époques; a soldier, opportunities and obstacles; and for a peasant it will only represent acres, and perspiration and profits but all of them will have this in common, that they will see nothing as simply a view"*¹⁹

Each individual mentioned in this passage is perceiving the landscape in a distinctly subjective way and projecting different possibilities for the landscape which are shaped by association of their respective professions. So if man sees only what he wants to see, and perceives the world according to that which has already shaped him, does everyone see a different reality? Two individuals could have radically different experiences of a space if it is experienced solely through perception of association; their experience would say more about the individual than about the space. So is there an experience of space that goes beyond the subjective? What kind of experience is possible if we somehow manage to avoid projecting our past experiences onto what we see? The answer seems to lie in the idea of perception as primary force of experience. Thus, we can re-word the question as: is there an experience beyond the perceptual?

We could almost distinguish between two types of perception by association; an association which is *external* to our being, a kind of imposed association, which is passive and bound; and association which is *internal*, self-motivated, active and free. The association generated by each landscape spectator in Valery's passage is internally motivated, generated by that which constitutes the individual freedom of each viewer; their profession. An externally motivated perception by association would be that imposed from without, like the reading of postmodern architecture. One is more instantaneous and instinctive; the other requires ponderance and interpretation.

Post modern architecture attempted to point almost exclusively to our power of association by using representation and playing semantic games with architectural language. In order to appreciate this kind of architectural construct one had to be 'educated' and instructed specifically on how to read such work, which usually made references to historic architecture. It played with our perception of history and was driven by a strong will to produce a result that would have a specific reading. While all architecture can to a certain degree be read, it is postmodern architecture that reduces architectural space to a semiotic interpretative game.



Venturi. House for his mother

To exemplify this is the figure of Robert Venturi who worked trying to find values from the past, “As an architect I try to be guided not by habit but by a conscious sense of the

past—by precedent, thoughtfully considered."²⁰ Precedent is the externally motivated association, and knowledge of this precedent is necessary to experience his work. Even though Venturi has suggested that he avoids any kind of intellectualization about his practice²¹, any appreciation of his work needs an intellectualization of architectural historical language.

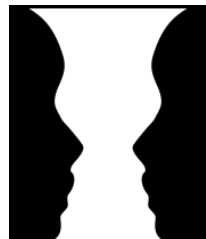
The house he designed for his mother is the embodiment of his semantic and associative approach to architecture; it is emblematic of an architecture which needs to be read, it is like a game for architects and critics who can read into the details and realize Venturi's gestural messages through continual references and playful associations with historic architecture. There is nothing sensual about this work, nothing visceral or moving; it is purely an exercise for the perceiving mind.

Perception by internal association allows us certain freedom of experience; it allows us to fabricate any figure and ground relationship we wish between the objects of our attention. Depending on how we fix our attention the figure and ground can change completely. When one looks for something and cannot find it, as with Sartre's example of looking for Pierre in the café, one experiences the negation of that thing, one experiences that thing as a lack.²² This phenomenological understanding of negation has to do with the perception of the existence of a lack. Thus perception becomes a kind of intuition, which is free to be experienced in any way desired. This notion of figure-ground can be visualized through the work of MC Escher, who actively plays with our fleeting perception of shape and space. These illustrations have been further developed in psychological tests as with the famous Rubin vase-figure illustration or the Rorschach test²⁴.

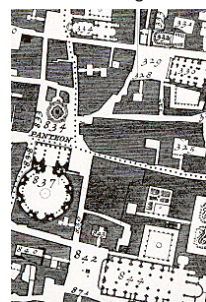
The maps of Rome created by Gianbattista Nolli in the mid eighteenth century were revolutionary simply for the fact that they reverted the figure and the ground of traditional maps, therefore all of sudden the city could be experienced in terms of its public space -its voids- rather than from its positive volumes -constructions. This brings us to a crucial issue when looking at the idea of built space; when we perceive a space do we focus on the space itself, its emptiness- the volume of negative space, or is it



MC Escher



Rubin vase-figure



Nolli, Map of Rome

the boundaries of the space that first come to our attention? And how does this shifting focus affect our experience?

Recent research in spatial orientation has actually put into question the traditional cognitive model which was based on a reading of visual cues given by objects and forms within a space. Instead, it has been found that the brain's ability to orient increases the emptier the space; thus humans orient more by the shape of a space than by visual characteristics found within it.²⁵ So what is the shape of space and how do we experience it? These studies suggest that rather than an exoreferential visual-cue system, our spatial experience follows a self-referential system based on movement and variations of movement. We experience space as qualitative movement; through notions of sensation rather than object-oriented perception.

2.2 Object of sensation

By the distinction made earlier between perception and sensation we have seen how perception is referred to as an object-oriented experience with clear differentiation between subject and object; while sensation as a self-referential experience where subject and object lose their boundaries. So can there be such a thing as a purely sensory experience?

The work of Australian body-artist Stelarc seems to aim at this. It is based on the idea that the human body has become biologically inadequate and through interventions on his own body he attempts to objectify the body; to erase the body as subject in order to create a body as object. Stelarc's body is not performing to acquire a new identity, its actions are not directed to produce meaning, rather they are directed at the notion of pure sensation. As described by Paul Virilio, Stelarc's work: "*approach(es) the body-as-object in order to "negate" it (counteract it) in favor of pure sensation.*"²⁶ The body becomes an object of sensation. How does this notion translate to the experience of built space?

There are spaces that can be perceived and understood at a single glance. Essentialist spaces, spaces related to minimalist conceptions of architecture can be perceived this way; they are static, unchanging and already unfolded. These are spaces of

perception, not spaces of sensation. They can be described with a single idea, with a single sketch, and offer little or no ambiguity of interpretation or experience.



Alberto Campo Baeza

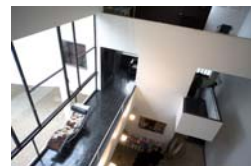
Spaces of sensation are those that need to be sensed; experienced through sensation - through a changing, moving conception, at times ambiguous and fleeting. Sensation and movement are inseparable aspects of experience. Sensation is in fact a kind of movement, a tending towards; a force. We don't move in a space as much as the space moves with us, there is no separation between the object and subject, between inside and outside. *"In sensing, both self and world unfold simultaneously for the sensing subject; the sensing being experiences himself and the world, himself in the world, himself with the world"*²⁷ The body of sensation renders itself part of what is being sensed; it is an indivisible aspect of that which is being experienced.

The work of Spanish architect Enric Miralles is an eloquent example of this. The spaces he creates are impossible to perceive, one cannot understand them by simply looking at them and pondering about them from a distance. One needs to be immersed within the space, to move in and around it, to become a body of sensation in order to sense it without assigning meaning or representations- there are none to be assigned. Experience of such spaces, as with the University of Vigo, do not render clear mental pictures; only confused and vague approximations; ambiguities and potentialities. Indeed sensation is linked to the idea of potentiality and the Deleuzian term *"becoming"*, something which is in a constant process of constructing itself.



Enric Miralles,
University of Vigo

Movement can however play an important part also in the notion of perception. Le Corbusier's *promenade architecturale* speaks quite clearly to this idea; it deals with experiencing a temporal progression through an ingenious link of spaces that allow a gradual exploration of the space, often through the use of ramps. The perception of the space and the elements surrounding it changes progressively depending on their location in space-time within the project. However this progression, this change, is fixed and directed; it has a specific intentionality and a specific reading. It is almost like a cinematic sequence. Thus perception can relate to movement but it is a fixed, qualitative, notion of movement, unlike sensation which is a constantly



Le Corbusier, Villa Savoie

changing movement. This difference is of crucial importance when dealing with the notion of *affect*.

2.3 Object of affection

The experience of *spaces of sensation* depend on stimuli which arrive at our various sensory organs from the external world causing changes in our mental and physical states, ultimately causing us to feel a sensation which has affected both the mind and the body; in other words an *affect*.

The idea of movement is essential to understand affect. Indeed, movement and affect are linked through the Spinozistic conception of the body, which is a mode determined not by its substance but by degrees of motion and rest.²⁸ Indeed what distinguishes one body from another, what individuates a body, is its mechanic properties of motion and rest, speed and slowness. In this sense, a body consists of an intensity of motion, or variation of motion/rest states.²⁹ However, Spinoza also recognizes the greater structural complexity of the body and conceives of it beyond the purely mechanistic principals of motion, tying it to the notion of *potential*. Each transition the body undergoes is accompanied by a variation in capacity, a change in the power to affect and be affected.³⁰ Movement has a physical component (the body) and a mental/emotional counterpart (affect). Gilles Deleuze, put it very clearly in the following quote:

"A body is not defined by the form that determines it nor as a determinate substance of subject (...) a body is defined only by (...) the sum total of the material elements belonging to it under given relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness (...); the sum total of the intensive affects it is capable of at a given power or degree of potential (...). Nothing but affects and local movements."³¹

The body highly conditions our engagement with the world; it is our physical presence and the means through which we understand our environment both built and natural; *"the body ... it is our expression in the world, the visible form of our intentions. Even our most secret affective movements...help to shape our perception of things."*³² By receiving external stimuli from the world, through a reflective experience, we become aware of our

body. But while we are aware of its existence, we do not have full knowledge of the body's capacity or its internal mechanisms.³³ “*We know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of another body.*”³⁴ The body is thus more about a set of dynamic relations and interactions than proportions and static whole-parts relationships. It is as an entity in transition, in constant changing relationship with the environment.

In this context we have to ask ourselves, what can the body *do*? How does it understand the environment? As a first approximation one could intuit that it is through experience, through a kind of *phenomenal* reading of the environment. But instead of relying purely on the sensorial, we would like to look at a broader and de-personalized notion of experience, which is that of experiencing through a *multiplicity*³⁵ of movements and affects. A body that experiences space as a changing entity, is that which is allowed to move in and around it, enhancing the dynamics of the physical milieu and simultaneously enhancing its understanding of it without erasing its ambiguities and nuances. There must be a kind of symbiosis between body, action and space, which allows the body to *perform* as an extension of the space and the space as an extension of the body's action, rather than as a representation of it. Instead of relying on analogy and proportion, sublimating the body to measurement and representation, one could think of the body almost as if it were a collection of force fields, or vectors, which affect a space through its changing movement within it.

There is a strong affirmation within the realm of contemporary architectural practice to negate older conceptions of anthropomorphism in favor of discovering new unforeseen relationships between the body and its physical milieu not based on symbols and representation but rather on effect and affect through action/ performance.

*“Architecture should seek less to be an abstraction of the lineaments of the body and more to engage the body's effective and affective spectrum. It is a faulty assumption that patterning architecture on the body makes it more human, just as it is a faulty assumption that the body is the pattern of the universe.”*³⁶

The meaning of the body itself has no interest. Instead it gains significance when it is activated by a multiplicity of external connections and *affects*; through how it can operate,

through its *actions*. Therefore space ceases to be a mere container for the body and becomes an element of multiple *events* that includes the body.

To exemplify this idea of symbiosis between body and space through the notion of potential, let us take a look at an architectural installation called *Choreographing Space*.³⁷ The project, developed by *e+i architecture*, aimed at exploring the intersection of architecture, movement and performance and became at once performance event and architectural environment by fusing performer, audience, space and movement into one continuous experience. This was achieved by enveloping a neutral space with an interactive mesh capable of transformation through the interaction of viewers or performers. The movement of the body would affect the space, transforming it, and in turn the transformation of the space would affect the possibilities for movement of the body. Affecting and being affected in a continuous loop of exchange. Even though the physical body was used as a means to explore sensuous space, by fusing the body with the space itself, the subject (viewer/performer) became part of the object (interactive space) and the body lost its very subjectivity giving way to a subject-object experience.



Choreographing Space e+i
architecture

Not all spaces can be experienced in the same way. We have seen how certain architectures were indeed generated with the very intention of being objects of interpretation, of the perceiving mind, and others intentionally created for the body of sensation. With projects like *Choreographing Space* it is hard to conceive of the experience of space as purely sensual or purely perceptual; both the world of the senses and that of the mind need to work together to experience this space in its changing facets. Experiences of space that are both, moving on a sensual and irrational level yet inspiring and clarifying on an intellectual level are those related to the notions of *affect* and *movement* as first put forth by Spinoza and later developed by Deleuze.

THE PROBLEM OF PHENOMENOLOGY

3.1 Deleuze's critiques of phenomenology. Body without organs

Deleuze's critique of phenomenology targets its conception of both perception and consciousness. For him all consciousness *is* something, as opposed to the Husserlian phenomenological point of view where all consciousness is consciousness *of* something.³⁸

*"By invoking the primordial lived, by making immanence an immanence to a subject, phenomenology could not prevent the subject from forming no more than opinions that already extracted clichés from new perceptions and promised affections."*³⁹

We have seen how phenomenology has been largely understood as setting up conditions for a perceiving subject to be anchored in the world through an experience of a perceived object, and this experience is directed towards something by virtue of its content or meaning. Phenomenology in architecture has been primarily associated with an experience from the first-person point of view, and often linked to a perception of a space based on its assigned subjective meaning. But architecture today can no longer be understood simply in terms of meaning or content, and Deleuze's critique of phenomenology offers a new way of looking at, and experiencing, architecture which re-thinks traditional notions associated with the experience of built space. Can architectural space be experienced beyond the individual, beyond the subjective and devoid of inherent meaning? Deleuze gives us insight into how this might be possible, and sets the ground for a possible exploration of this through his notion of *body without organs*.

Deleuze's critique of the terms subjectivity, significance (meaning) and organism (body) are rooted in an understanding that they proclaim a kind of binding and closure. Where phenomenology proclaims interpretation and closure in experience, Deleuze suggests the possibility of openings and the creation of new models of experience; an alternate mode of experience related to continuous *becoming* rather than simply *being*. He suggests that within the notions of identity and consciousness there are other more *affective* states of being: fields of immanence.

Deleuze denies the world of the self-defining enclosed subject, of the organized organism, and as a counterpart he proposes the *Body without Organs* (BwO). A BwO is not an organism where all the senses work together to report fixed characteristics of the outside world. It is not so much without organs as without organization, it is opposed to the organizing principals that define the assemblages of organs and experiences. The BwO has no need for interpretation as the subjective body does, yet it cannot exist in complete opposition to subjectivity. It cannot completely break free from the notions which it is trying to challenge, subjectivity and signification, without risking disintegration. In order to have *affect* and be affective, it must still exist within the system it aims to subvert.

The BwO denies the structure of organization which composes an organism yet is necessarily the host of such an organism. Inspired by the biologist August Weismann, Deleuze provides the example of the egg and the chicken⁴⁰; the chicken is put forth as the device created by the egg in order to reproduce itself. The chicken is the organism; the egg is the BwO. Yet the egg did not come before the chicken; the BwO does not precede the organism, it is adjacent to it and continually in the process of making itself.⁴¹ *"It is no longer an organism that functions but a BwO that is constructed ... There is no longer a Self [moi] that feels, acts and recalls; there is a "glowing fog, a dark yellow mist" that has affects and experiences movements, speeds."*⁴² In seeking to make ourselves a BwO we need to maintain a mode of expression, but one that is rid of a-priori signifiers and of the conclusive field of language. Therefore, the BwO denies the subjective and the implied meaning of the experience of things, yet cannot exist without affect, an affect that is in a continuous process of becoming. The BwO has its own mode of organization, whose principals are primarily derived from Spinoza's single substance.⁴³

So what kind of space are we dealing with in a BwO? What kind of physical properties does this space have? Clearly it cannot be part of the static universe described by Newtonian physics, since Newtonian dynamics describes only part of our physical experience.⁴⁴ If the Newtonian universe is one of *being without becoming*, what Deleuze seems to propose is a universe of *becoming without being*, that is, a universe where individuals exist but only as an outcome of becomings.

Deleuze considers traditional notions of space to be imposed by the subject. Therefore he introduces the concept of *the virtual* which is instead linked to the *space of possibilities*. The virtual does not deny experience, instead it is a condition of actual experience; a system of relations that creates actual spaces and sensations, it is defined by its *affects*. On the same lines, topological space is virtual space that has the capacity to affect and be affected, in other words it has *affects*.

So what is a space that has the capacity to affect and be affected? Earlier we gave the example of *Choreographing Space* project where space and body were reciprocally affecting and being affected. Therefore, in a Deleuzian sense this is a topological space, a virtual space which has become a metric space through a process of *becoming*.

3.2 Broadening phenomenology: multiplicity and emergence

An expansion of phenomenological theory suggests that architects and architecture theorists address the concepts of *becoming*, *multiplicity* and *emergence* as facets of phenomenology. To do this it is necessary to take another look at perception and lived experience. To avoid one-to-one subject-object experience one must take note of Deleuze's statement: "*Perception will no longer reside in the relation between a subject and an object, but rather in the movement serving as the limit of that relation (...) look only at movements.*"⁴⁵ But what kind of movements are we to look at?

Deleuze's conception of movement strongly rests on the Spinozistic foundation discussed earlier. For Spinoza movement is not actual, quantitative movement, but one that combines the physical body with the mental/emotional through the concept of *affect*. Similarly in Deleuze, movement cannot be simply perceived, it is imperceptible by nature and can occur only by means of *affect* and *becoming*. This encompassing characteristic of movement and body of affection is what may set the ground for a broadening of phenomenology.

When experiencing space through affect, we are freeing ourselves of inherited meanings and associated perceptions; we are experiencing space as what it does rather than what it aims to represent. Hence, as seen earlier, there is a tight link between

experience and the notions of potential and performance. These refers to a force, a tending towards, in effect; a movement. And in this process of continual development and change, of *becoming*, we identify the notion of *multiplicity* as a crucial component. This kind of experience does not provide a single reading of a space, but multiple; overlapping, ever-changing and at times, simultaneous. Out of these multiplicities of interactions and affects, certain recognizable patterns will emerge. These patterns however are in constant process of evolving, constantly re-defining and creating themselves.

In our claim that there exists a different kind of phenomenology, one freed from subjectivity and significance, we rely on the concepts of *multiplicity* and *emergence* to provide the groundwork from which to understand our experiencing of built space through affect and movement. And though it is true that certain spaces have more propensities to being experienced as objects of perception while others need to be experienced through their qualities of sensation, all spaces can be experienced within this new understanding of phenomenology. In effect, experience of built space becomes an *emergence of possibilities through multiplicity of affect*.

3.3 Phenomenology without Organs

Someone attempting to propose an argument against this claim might offer a Sartrean-inspired critique, and suggest that it is in fact impossible, within a human context, to have any sort of experience devoid of meaning. Indeed, meaning is often regarded as an indispensable part of human consciousness. Furthermore this critique could suggest that proposing a phenomenology embedded within the notion of multiplicity might simply cause the interpreted meanings to multiply. Thus while it may encourage multiple meanings, we are nonetheless stuck within the realm of meaning.

In response to this counter-claim we would like to take another look the body without organs. As we have seen, the BwO exists within the system that it is attempting to deny; it cannot completely break free from the notions which it is trying to challenge without risking disintegration. Solutions to philosophical problems are never free of the

categories they attempt to dismiss. This is what the BwO has illustrated. Thus a solution to the problem of phenomenology in architecture necessarily will have to deal with the issues of phenomenology that it is trying to question. We will never rid ourselves completely of subjectivity and significance in built space; all spaces can still be given a subjective reading and assigned specific meanings. However, we can look beyond these notions and attempt to define a new kind of experiencing, one that is more inclusive and less fixed; one that incorporates the pre-subjective body of affection through notions of emergence and multiplicity; as a body without organs. In effect what we are proposing is the possibility of a *phenomenology without organs*.

NOTES

¹ Benedict de Spinoza. *The Ethics*. III. D3

²Space is loosely equated with Architecture here, however it is important to point out that not all spaces can be called architecture, but all architecture has spaces. Firstly it is important to clarify what it is we mean by built space. Not all built space is architecture, yet all architecture has built space. So we don't refer to a subway platform as architecture, but we do recognize it as built space. Though it is not the purpose of this paper to define architecture, we would like to note that when referring to built space we are usually referring to the built space of architecture.

³ Steven Perrella, *Form, Being, Absence*. Architecture and philosophy. Pratt journal, p.85

⁴ Steven Holl, *Parallax*, p.13

⁵ Reynolds, Jack, and Jon Roffe. "Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty: Immanence, Univocity and Phenomenology," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 37, no. 3 (October 01, 2006), 230.

⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, "The Storming of the Bastille" in *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, p.351

⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre. *Being and Nothingness*, p.40

⁹ Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze on music, painting and the arts*, p.116-117

¹⁰ Erwin Straus, *The Primary World of Senses: a Vindication of Sensory Experience*, p.322

¹¹ Benedict de Spinoza. *The Ethics*. III.P2 Schol.

¹² I am referring to *sensation* as the physical component of affect and *perception* to the mental component of affect based on Spinoza's notion of affect even though he did not use these terms in this way.

¹³ Benedict de Spinoza. *The Ethics*. III. D3

¹⁴ Gilles Deleuze, Lecture Transcripts On Spinoza's Concept Of Affect

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Bernard Tschumi, "Questions Of Space" in *Architecture and Disjunction*, p.53

¹⁷ Benedict de Spinoza. *The Ethics*. IIP18. Schol.

¹⁸ Ibid., II P18

¹⁹ Paul Valery, "on Painting" in *Selected Writings of Paul Valery*, trans. Anthony Bower (New York:New Directions, 1964), .222

²⁰ Robert Venturi. *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, p.13

²¹ Steven Perrella, *Form, Being, Absence*. Architecture and philosophy. Pratt journal, p.85

²² Jean-Paul Sartre. *Being and Nothingness*, p.41

²⁴ Rorschach test is a method of psychological evaluation in which subjects' perceptions of inkblots are recorded and then analyzed using intuitive insight. Timing of the response is critical; subjects are usually not allowed to ponder their response.

-
- ²⁵ Brian Massumi. *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, p.180
- ²⁶ Paul Virilio on Stelarc's suspension: Brian Massumi. *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, p.103
- ²⁷ Erwin Straus, *The Primary World of Senses: a Vindication of Sensory Experience*, p.351
- ²⁸ Benedict de Spinoza. *The Ethics*, IIA'1. Definition of the body: "All bodies either move or are at rest"
- ²⁹ Ibid., IIL1
- ³⁰ Brian Massumi. *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, p.15
- ³¹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.260
- ³² Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, p.5
- ³³ This idea of comes from Spinoza, *The Ethics*
- ³⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.257
- ³⁵ Deleuzian concept of multiplicity, which is expanded further on in the paper
- ³⁶ Reiser + Umemoto. *Atlas Of Novel Tectonics*, p.85
- ³⁷ e+i architecture, *Choreographing Space* (www.choreographingspace.com) an interdisciplinary project that explores the intersection between the material world of architecture and the immaterial notions of movement and dance, in order to create an environment that is capable of both visual and physical exchange between participants and the space, both affecting and being affected by it.
- ³⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, p.56
- ³⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *What is Philosophy?* p.150
- ⁴⁰ Kylie Message, "Body Without Organs" in *The Deleuze Dictionary*. p.34
- ⁴¹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*, p164
- ⁴² Ibid., p162
- ⁴³ "Body Without Organs" in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, p.34
- ⁴⁴ DeLanda, Manuel. *Intensive Science & Virtual Philosophy*. New York: Continuum, 2002. P.85
- ⁴⁵ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*, p282

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bogue, Ronald. *Deleuze on music, painting and the arts*. New York: Routledge, 2003
- DeLanda, Manuel. *Intensive Science & Virtual Philosophy*. New York: Continuum, 2002
- Deleuze, Gilles & Guattari, Felix. *A Thousand Plateaus*. trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987
- Deleuze, Gilles & Guattari, Felix, *What is Philosophy?* Trans. Janis Tomlinson, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Lecture Transcripts on Spinoza's Concept of Affect*. www.webdeleuze.com/php/sommaire.html
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Expressionism in philosophy: Spinoza*. trans. Martin Joughin, New York: Zone Books, 1990
- Deleuze, Gilles, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986
- Holl, Steven. *Parallax*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2000
- Ihde, Don, "Phenomenology and Architecture" and Parella, Steven, "Form: Being; Absence", in *Form: Being; Absence*. Pratt Journal of Architecture, Vol2, ed. Steven Parella. New York: Rizzoli, 1988
- Massumi, Brian. *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2002
- Merlau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Primacy of Perception*, ed. James M. Edie. Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1964
- Message, Kylie "Body Without Organs" in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, ed. Adrian Parr New York: Columbia University Press, 2005
- Reiser+Umemoto. *Atlas Of Novel Tectonics*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2003
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness*. New York: Washington Square Press, 1992
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Critique of Dialectical reason. Vol1*. trans, Alan Sheridan-Smith. New York: Verso, 2004
- Spinoza, Benedict d. "The Ethics" in *A Spinoza reader: the Ethics and Other Works*, ed. and trans. Edwin Curley. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994
- Straus, Erwin. *The Primary World of Senses: a Vindication of Sensory Experience*. 1935.
- Tschumi, Bernard. *Architecture and Disjunction*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996
- Paul Valery, "on Painting" in *Selected Writings of Paul Valery*, trans. Anthony Bower. New York: New Directions, 1964
- Venturi, Robert. *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*. New York: Museum of Modern Art Press, 1966

ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

Steven Holl, sketches exhibited at the MOMA, New York

James Whistler, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:James_Abbot_McNeill_Whistler_007.jpg: p.5

Descartes mind and body dualism. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Descartes_mind_and_body.gif : p.6

Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, p.119: p.9

MC Escher, <http://www.mcescher.com> :p.10

Rubin Vase-figure, www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Rubin_vase: p.10

Giambattista Nolli's Map of Rome, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giambattista_Nolli: 10

Campo Baeza, Coleccion Arquitectura Espanola Contemporanea, front cover: p. 12

Enric Miralles, University of Vigo, photo Eva Perez de Vega, 2008: p. 12

Le Corbusier, Villa Savoie. http://farm1.static.flickr.com/228/525010457_6c846fd11e_o.jpg: p.12

e+i architecture, *Choreographing Space*, photo Brandon Jacobs-Mills, 2007: p.15