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Affective Architecture. Film as a Sensory Transference Tool and an Intimacy Projection Environment

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Abstract. *This paper elucidates how film may offer itself as a tool for both the representation and conception of space that can strengthen an alternative, phenomenological and transcendental position in architecture. Through an analysis of two films, it points to the medium of film as both a tool and an environment, based on Gernot Böhme's 'Raum leiblicher Anwesenheit' (Böhme 2006). These films illustrate how the film's picture frame becomes almost like a skin and through its surface and sound projects both a site and a near-sensual experience simultaneously. The medium of film as both tool and an environment thereby supports an extended sensory-intimate reflection on outer experiences and inner sensations that—in its audio-visual and time-space-based presentation—is close to a human experience. This transference and performance may lead to an extended awareness of touch, as the base for intensive projections of becoming and a new affective architecture.*

Keywords: *affective architecture, atmosphere, film, intimacy, environment, architectural design*

The medium of film as a sensory transference tool of atmosphere(s)

In design and architecture, perception and conception often take place in an abstract space, where space is dealt with conceptually—a space or special spatial condition is mostly worked out without physically inhabiting it. Here, for example, an experience or a wish for a special atmosphere comes to express a (more) desirable state of space. How we engage with space bodily, both the physical *and* an abstract design space, is crucial for architectural practice. We need to work more critically with how bodily perception engages with and influences design processes. Our overall thesis is that bodily experience and knowledge—what Gernot Böhme (2006, p. 120) has described as a *körperunabhängiger Raumerfahrung* (space perception autonomous of the body) and the ability to perceive *and* project bodily sensations without being physical bodily present in space (Munck Petersen 2010, p. 200)—may be supported or strengthened in the design process by using film as a research and projection medium. The medium of film can increase an awareness of how space and the experience of space is defined by the bodily subject (Merleau-Ponty 2012)

and confer the ability to experience bodily affect even while the viewer is not in a particular physical space, functioning as an *Intimacy Projection Environment* (IPE). In this way, film may offer itself as a medium of both representation and conception and hence as tool overcome the challenges of translating an atmosphere or feeling into a drawing or other classic architectural medium of representation and conception. The medium of film may thus help architects to articulate normally tacit and intuitive areas of design thinking and making.

Befindlichkeit and Atmosphere

Böhme (2006, p. 110) uses the German *Befindlichkeit* to describe an emotional link between a perceiving person and a physical space: beginning with how we are emotionally moved, we tend to grasp what it is that characterises the space we are in. In this perspective, his term *Raum leiblicher Anwesenheit* can be linked to an inner, subjective or personal emotion appearing in-between physical space and the perceiving person (Munck Petersen 2010, p. 104). The quality of any physical space is always defined by a human subject. Böhme further stresses that atmosphere is something you must learn to perceive, to be touched by, and, more substantially, learn to create. This can only be done through the *Raum leiblicher Anwesenheit*. It describes the ability to be aware of and reflect upon one's own senses and interaction with a space, and how this affects one bodily. Böhme (2006, p. 122) states that the *Raum leiblicher Anwesenheit* is 'atmosphere': 'Faktisch ist [...] der Raum der leiblichen Anwesenheit die Atmosphäre, in die man eintritt, bzw. in der man sich befindet'.

Böhme's own notion of *Atmosphäre* appears to do more than define the inner space itself – grasping, wondering and reflecting on how actions, moods and perception (Böhme 2003, p. 5) come together. In other words, this condition is beyond *Befindlichkeit*, as it may reflect an aspect of something emerging. The person is affected emotionally when the awareness *transcends* from an outer experience to an inner sensation. Böhme (2003, p. 4) states: 'The space of bodily presence [*der Raum leiblicher Anwesenheit*] is something deeply subjective, although common to all subjects. [...] It's the space within which we each experience our bodily existence: it is "being-here", a place articulated absolutely within the indeterminate expanse of space – absolutely in the sense that it is without relation to anything else, especially to things: the "here" is implicit in the intuition of oneself. [...] the difference between the absolute "here" and the expanse of space is the difference between inner and outer'. Later, Böhme (2013, p. 27) formulates atmosphere as a 'mindful' inner, emotional sensation.

Following this, Böhme understands atmosphere as the sensation created by a sensing subject between inner and outer space. The question is how the creation of and an influence on a person's emotional sensation can be worked with and expressed through or in a design? And how might the way, a physical/outer space is designed, create a new awareness that again may provoke other atmospheres of inner sensations? We believe aesthetic values emerge from you, yourself, through your bodily being's position in space and from the relations being established between intuitive sensing and an abstract emotional space. Böhme does not specify how to work with, or in, the inner emotional and projective space, or how to enter

this condition. Against this background, we find film an apposite tool as it may (re)present not only an experience of the 'extension of the skin' (Bruno 2014, p. 194) but a projection of outer and inner space as well as a projective abstract space of extended intimacy.

Film as an Intimacy Projection Environment (IPE)

Atmosphere could be linked to what Böhme labels a 'virtual projection'. 'Virtual spaces', or, as we would suggest renaming them, 'projection environments', are 'two-dimensional or multidimensional media in which a manifold attains representation. [...] immaterial regardless whether what is represented is merely a product of thought or is derived from reality' (Böhme 2003, p. 6). In our view, the medium of film could be seen as a sensory transference tool and (re)presentation of such environments. We deliberately use the word 'environment' to distinguish the virtual from the classic geometrical and object-bounded understanding of physical space, while at the same time highlighting the complexity of space and its capacity to surround a subject, all meanings conveyed well by the term 'environment'. To situate our reading of Böhme in a film context, and to put the IPE concept into theoretical perspective, we turn to Giuliana Bruno's definition of a *cinematic space* as a specific intimacy. Bruno (2002, p. 7) states: 'Cinematic space moves not only through time and space or narrative development, but through inner space. Film moves, and fundamentally "moves us", with its ability to render affects and, in turn, to affect'.

If we accept that film can be used as a representation and projection of an *Atmosphere*, we might allow architects to come closer to sensory experience through film (and hence how these expressions can render new affects). The ability of film to operationalise and design with and for a specific atmosphere for another person's intimate experience has not often received theoretical attention. Yet, when we focus not only on something physical, inside, or measurable, but also on an inner relation, a sensation in-between the sensing body and its surrounding space, the medium of film appears highly relevant. In this way, film can be used as an IPE in the design research process, stimulating the architect in the process of (re) creating or simulating more affective surroundings in which subjects could become more aware, engaged and stimulated. Computer games present to us such avatar-based 'viewpoint', in this case a first-person view for us to relate and be engaged by. Film may operate as a tool effecting the *transference of outer and inner spaces* and creating new relations between physical space and bodily subjects. The film's picture frame could become almost like a skin – a membrane of transference – with its surface and sound, projecting both a site and a near-sensual experience simultaneously in both the making and screening of the film. The sensory thickness of the *Atmosphere* – on which designers tend to build their abstract design space and their designs – is sometimes less articulated in their design process. This may be due to the demands for simplification of a concept, conception processes or technical and economic demands. Additionally, there has been little research into the intimate projections of becoming in design studios.

Exemplifying concepts

The Austrian filmmaker Johann Lurf explores an immediate reality through the use of sound and movement and creates eidetic moving images of inner motion. In his *VERTIGO RUSH* (2007), the motion of the perceiver's eyes (the camera) supports an experience of physical movement with one's body, which affects one corporeally through dizziness and pressure in the stomach'. Experimenting with the 'dolly zoom', Lurf takes the viewer on a spatial and mental journey. Images emerge through the smooth movement of a camera dolly. The camera feels strangely alive as it is moved repeatedly forward by zooming, while it at the same time slides backwards. Here, shadow and light create new shapes, almost the faces of humans or unnatural creatures, while moving. In the last part a new, almost psychedelic space appears and is very different from the romantic forest with which the film began: the film becomes an IPE. Very literally, one finds oneself in a new spatial condition, affected by the images. One knows it is still an image of a forest but one also starts to connect new meanings to it. One steps into the image with one's body and mind, and then slides from a *Atmosphere* (e.g. an specific experience of a forest) to something unreal, a surreal condition or environment, in which one is dragged deeper and deeper into the audiovisual architecture – intimate space – created by the film. The added sound is mechanical and consists of a loud, low bass tone. It comes, goes or follows the visual images. The visual and aural impressions stimulate a strong corporeal affect; loud music and fast movements press one's body back into the seat and make one dizzy and somewhat stressed. The forest experience is gradually distorted by the film's virtual projection and the bodily affects. The forest turns out no longer to be a forest and the film turns out no longer to be a film but a condition, an environment that is perceived as real in the moment by the subject, but only exists in the setting of the cinema.

Transcendental Sensation

We research film and sensory and transcendental parameters in spatial design processes and have explored this in the landscape architecture design studio (Farsø and Munck Petersen 2015). In our studios, film is applied as a transference *tool* – and an *IPE* of subject, site and idea. For example, the encapsulated experience of space as something that surrounds you is key in student Anders Dahl's film, *Southbound* (2014). Through the use of filmic vertical movement – above and below water – the meaning of water as a space is opened up from a surface into a time-related condition that you can enter into as spectator. The change of matter and its soundscape – from air to water – highlights the embedded relationship between the site and subject. We are made aware of our bodily perception of space when we go for a dive, a swim. Dahl presents not only his/an *Atmosphere* in film but also develops an IPE in which one can step into his place, taking one's clothes off and going underwater.

The importance of the aural dimension for one's sensation is brought to the fore in Dahl's film, as he creates affects similar to those experienced in Lurf's film. Unexpected sensual experiences are articulated through the sound. The body and its interaction with, on or 'into' the site are expressed by the bodily engagement with materials such as water and fabric. The at times abnormal viewpoint, for instance of an arm taking off clothes, creates dissonances with the well-known gaze. The film

thereby immediately creates an IPE in which we experience space, where the spatial condition is surprisingly new or different, and loads it with organic, dynamic forms. Here an atmospheric condition of something new and different, personal and intimate, arises. We come to be affected by the cinematic space portrayed by Dahl. His film, manipulated through a slow pace, becomes a tool of *transference* between the inner, subjective experience and the outer, architectural space and an intimate environment. In Dahl's film one is both inside the site and inside the person. The water and textile surrounding the person could also be interpreted as the interior veins and fluids of the body, and thus as a representation of a corporeal and mental unfolding of motion and emotions. Seen as an extended awareness of touch, Dahl's film highlights a set of parameters which could inform a work with intensive projections of becoming. In doing so, the film both reflects an *Atmosphere* and serves as an IPE.

Film as an Intimacy Projection Environment for future architectural practice

Film goes from medium to tool when it transcends both spaces as relational, sonic surroundings of time and the subject who perceives them. IPEs present new, intimate readings of the space that the filmic shooting and editing choices bring forward, which may inspire others to see and experience similar aesthetic values in the spaces surrounding them. Film may therefore also indicate an intimate experienced space of future possibilities: designers may start to edit and strengthen the experience caught on film to underline the human sensory experience of (new) aesthetic values by introducing a spatial design intervention through film. So, by presenting an individual *Atmosphere*, the film's audiovisual qualities can act as an IPE through which new ideas and design may resonate in its dissemination among other bodily subjects. The medium of film unexpectedly helped Dahl to show very intimate spaces, encounters of the site. The effects of the filming, as well as the editing choices, were manifested afterwards as unconscious intensive qualities. Here, the picture frame becomes an extended membrane (skin) of transference to engage with and in. While the medium of film has a strong sensory capacity to support a transcendental *Atmosphere* of both a person's inner and outer space and the space in-between a creator and a spectator, it cannot, in common with pictures, models, plans and sections, equal our direct bodily experience. However, it may come quite close by stimulating the creator's awareness of his/her sensory experience, which again may help the creator to develop sensory intimacies. The film medium opens to a greater sensory awareness because sound, movement and images can activate tactile experiences even though the space portrayed is fictive and virtual.

We find that the cinematographic sensory-intimate projections in the two films show traces of embedded mechanisms of both operation and performance that could outline intimate aspects and awareness in design processes. Here an initial sensory perception is translated into site-specific and contextual performance and proposals of structures, sequences and objects. As an IPE, it offers itself both as an audiovisual sensory-transference tool as well as an intimacy projection environment that supports and stimulates reflection, thinking and sensation. Film thus addresses

aesthetic aspects of ethical value in new and communicative ways when working with design and planning. Using film in our teaching and research has shown us that it is possible to envision a cinematic conception of Böhme's *Atmosphere* in the field of landscape architecture. Could landscape design practice be strengthened through such an extended work with the synthesis of different senses and media and a sliding between operation and creation? In this perspective, film might amplify how we perceive space and project environment with our bodies by 'going beyond mere representation into the processes of design' (Penz 2012, p. 16), since it elucidates unexpected, non-visual, inner conditions and sensations. By applying the medium of film as the basis for our concept of the IPE, we have shown how film allows a subjective experience to intervene in an outer/inner environment and hence establish a bodily and direct sensation of sound, physical and emotional touch. Film thus addresses qualities that may define the values of a future *affective architecture*.

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