

Session 2

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The Movement Project:

A Pedagogical Case Study Crossing Disciplines Between Architecture & Dance

somatics, movement, architecture, dance, cognition

Throughout history, humans have maintained an interplay between architecture and the body through elements such as scale, proportion, gesture, and their sensory dimensions. The relationship between the body and space have also been a recurring theme in the history of architecture. This is evident in Vitruvius's text, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, where the human body is directly linked to the "body of a building." This connection is drawn through metaphors, perceiving architecture itself as a body. This paper delves into a recent project-based workshop "The Movement Project" from a graduate-level special topics course that shares fundamentals across disciplines – from improvisational dance (body, movement) to cognitive science (mind), through private and University collaborators in an effort to advance architectural pedagogy, research and in turn, practice.

In 1963, cultural anthropologist Edward Hall coined the term "proxemics" that defined the human use of space to regulate interactions. It could be said that proxemics was one of the first terms that define architecture and space in context to the body and mind. In Hall's work, *The Hidden Dimension*, he realized the implications proxemics has on design, "in evaluating not on the way people interact within daily life, but also the organization of space in houses and buildings, and ultimately the layout of towns." Then, in 1976, the term "somatics" came to the forefront from theorist Thomas Hanna. Somatics represents the field of movement studies to include internal and external experiences of the body: the exteroceptive, outside of the body; interceptive, inside the body (mind) and proprioceptive, how is the body configured in space (Macagno). It's no surprise that because of the scale of the products they produce, pedagogies within related design fields such as, Industrial and Interior Design programs, for example, include human centered design as a core curriculum component. This paper ponders on why the body and movement are not considered essential to core pedagogies of architectural education. As elaborated by Pallasmaa, "the specific mental essence of architecture – a realm that is deeply biologically and culturally grounded, although poorly understood in both education and practice."

Topics of human centered design are not uncommon within architectural practice and research centers across the world. For example, initiatives from the Human Experience Lab at Perkins & Will, HUGO at Corgan Architects, and the Art and Mind Lab at Johns Hopkins each incorporate interdisciplinary thinking of the body in space to advance their work. Here, The Movement Project workshops borrow from dance when analyzing movement sequencing. This awareness of the body is seen in the concept of "spatial intent" and "space harmony" found in Bartenieff and Laban theories. Just as breathe is fundamental to movement (Bartenieff), this paper entry uncovers a case study for how interdisciplinary pedagogies fosters a more thorough understanding of the body and its relationship to space, which is fundamental to creating architecture. This idea refocuses us towards an interdisciplinary lens for how architecture could be taught, tested, and understood while expanding research on the intricate relationships between the body, perception, and movement.

Bibliography

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Images

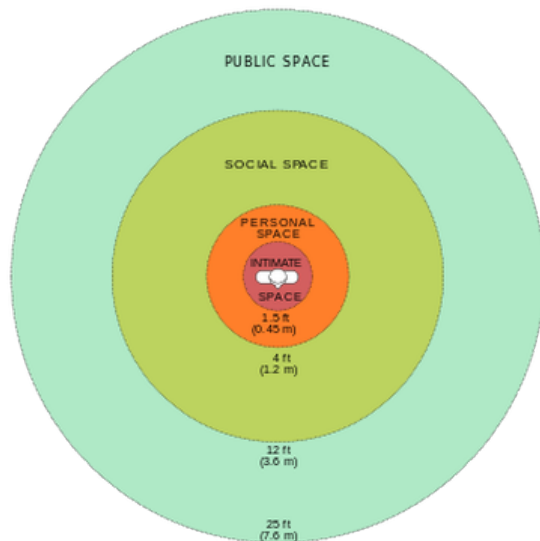


Figure 1 Edward T. Hall, *Proxemics diagram*.

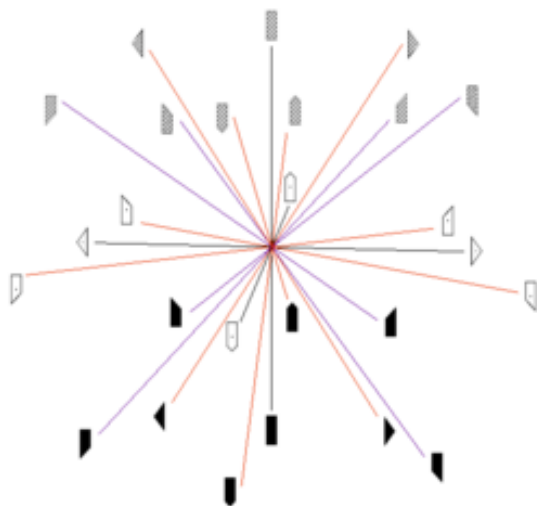


Figure 2 Laban, *Space Harmony diagram*.



Figure 3 Collaborative Workshop between Dance and Architecture students.



Figure 4 Collaborative Workshop between Dance and Architecture students.