

Synaesthesia. Body – Space / Architecture

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Curated by Katharina Brichetti and Franz Mechsner

»Architecture is the art of mediating between ourselves and the world, and this mediation takes place through the senses,« wrote the Finnish architect and architectural theorist Juhani Pallasmaa. Our senses are by no means isolated and passive. In this way, our sense of motion combines with the other senses when the overall shape of a house is only comprehended by walking around and looking around. Our senses can arouse each other, for instance when an interesting surface becomes palpable by only viewing it, when we can already see from a distance whether a door will open stiffly or smoothly, when we feel the delicate touch of the floor in the play of a sunbeam on the ground. Our senses can make meaning perceptible, for instance when the leaning steles of the Berlin Holocaust Memorial evoke wobbling uncertainty, which merges with the memory of the Holocaust and thus establishes elementary physical perceptual experiences.

Architects and urban planners increasingly recognize and respect the fundamental anthropological importance of human perception of being and quality of life, its multidimensionality, its dependence on activity and context, its role in mediating and consolidating cultural content.

The essays in the issue explore forms of appearance, function and the importance of our senses, sensory systems and sensory imagination when experiencing and designing built space. The following authors have already accepted (our invitation to write for the issue): Christoph Asendorf (Frankfurt / Oder), Elisabeth Blum (Zurich), Gernot Böhme (Darmstadt), Andres Bosshard (Zurich), Nathalie Bredella (Weimar), Margitta Buchert (Hannover), Katharina Brichetti and Franz Mechsner (Berlin), Andreas Denk (Berlin), Madalina Diaconu (Vienna), Achim Hahn (Dresden), Jürgen Hasse (Frankfurt), Alban Janson (Karlsruhe), Bettina Köhler (Basel), Jörg Seifert (Hamburg), Jürgen Strauss (Bern).



Play of light on the stone floor of the crypt in the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Chartres

Looking at the bricks one experiences spontaneous synaesthesia with the sense of touch. The play of colours creates a trace of lightness, as well as warmth – it also conveys the quiet atmosphere of the small room, in which the light filters gently through the stained glass windows to the ground. (Photo: Franz Mechsner)