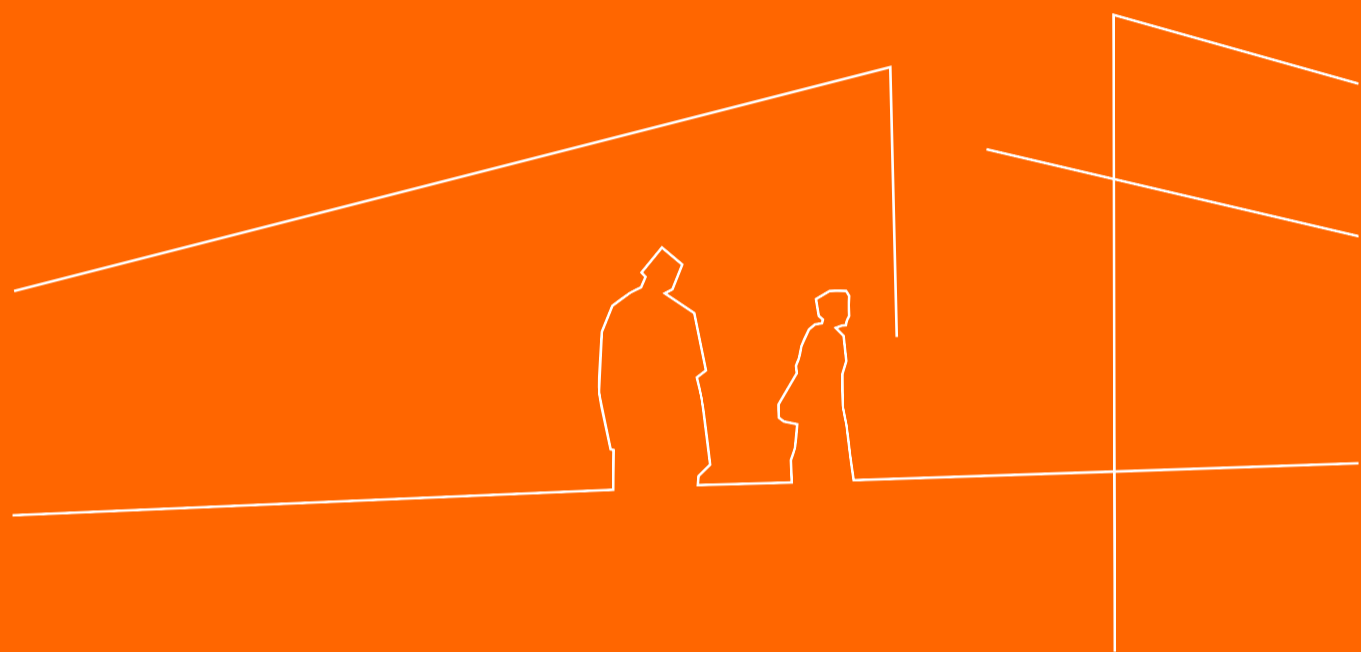


Body and Public Space

International Conference

Krakow, 15.10.2021



Special Guest:

Richard Shusterman

Dorothy F. Schmidt
Eminent Scholar in Humanities
Florida Atlantic University

Organizers:

Center for Body, Mind, and Culture
Somaesthetics and the Arts Center
Architectural and Sculptural Design Department
Faculty of Sculpture
Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow

A part of Open Eyes Art Festival

Richard Shusterman

Florida Atlantic University
Soma as and in Space: Public and Private

This lecture examines the relationships between the soma (the living, sentient, purposive, culturally shaped body) and the varieties of space, both public and private. We begin by considering the ways that the soma both defines space and is conversely defined or shaped by it. We then explore the soma as constituting in itself a space that is articulated into different parts with different significance. Here we critique the familiar view that the body is essentially a private matter by instead showing the body's crucial role in public space and the body's own expression of the public/private distinction through its division into public and private parts or spaces. This leads to a discussion of the nature and value of public space, considering both philosophical and legal approaches to defining such space and its relationship to privately owned space. Among the key values examined are democratic freedoms of access, mobility, and expression but also social integration. However, these values face a problematic dialectic of inclusion and exclusion with respect to the range of the public and those individuals or groups who are on or beyond its margins. The lecture concludes with a short video of a performance work that highlights the discomfort of one such other, the Man in Gold, as he tries to negotiate the public spaces of the Colombian port city of Cartagena, late one Saturday night.

Alexander Kremer

Szeged University
Public Spaces and Social Roles

Public spaces can be very different. They are primarily created to serve some social functions. Streets, squares, buildings, bridges, and other buildups serve human life in some ways. But, of course, they can serve it extremely well or terribly badly, and there are many shades in between. Some public spaces encourage, others discourage the blooming of particular social roles. In my paper, I would like to collect the main characteristics that make public spaces more human. For the Self is permanently embedded, the Self feels itself well if the public areas are well-designed.

Balint Veres

Moholy-Nagy University of Art&Design, Budapest
Notes on the aural aspects of built environment

In the last two decades, research on the arts showed that the perspective provided by somæsthetics could highly contribute to the efforts of rethinking artistic practices and the

aesthetic experience in general. In addition, somæsthetic perspective helped also to re-conceptualize the social impacts art exerts, viewing those from different angles than the ones provided by the sociology of art, relational aesthetics, participation theories or the anthropology of culture. Taking part in these efforts, in an earlier study I suggested taking architecture as the best model for a somæsthetically oriented scrutiny of the arts and conceiving it as the main point of orientation throughout the aesthetic field. However, given that aesthetic phenomena are countless and infinite, I fully admit the model provided by architecture might seem less explanatory with regards to the somæsthetic aspects of intensely performative creative practices, like dance, music or theatre play, and all the human activities, which are relevant aesthetically but do not have the status of art. What directly connects architectural structures to the overall Lebenswelt in an encompassing experience is the dimension of audibility that comes with every kinesphere, most notably in the public space and the multifarious sites of human residency. This presentation shall provide some critical comments for a somæsthetically conscious and acoustically sensitive architectural planning.

Jakub Petri

Jagiellonian University, Cracow
Urban Sports and Aesthetic Power of Infrastructure

Modern urban sports such as parkour, freerunning and skateboarding has recently gained attraction from urban studies researchers coming from different backgrounds, mainly cultural studies and sociology. They are also present, as a medium of embodied performance, in somatic discourse cultivated in disciplines of somatics, somæsthetics or cognitive studies. However, even in the enacted approach paradigm, their location in theoretically constructed model of kinesphere, is rarely completed with broader studies on aesthetic, affective aspects of their material environment. In this regard, we can observe along, well-established tradition of presenting urban infrastructural grid as something invariable, hidden and non-active. Meanwhile, testimonies of skateboarding and parkour pioneers of last decades of 20th century, praise infrastructure as an active element of urban landscape and highlight its key role as a trigger point for their somatic experimentations. During

my lecture I will explore aesthetic dimension of infrastructure as an actant, attracting performers bodies and provoking their movements, and also try to some degree, complete the cognitive map of urban embodiment.

Madalina Diaconu

University of Vienna
Standing, sitting, and lying in the public space

Walking is booming. Artists and architects, urbanists and policy makers, physicians as well as ecologists praise walking. Along with them, scholars discuss the many faces of the flâneur, from Walter Benjamin and the French situationists to walks as a research method, and from the German "promenadology" to climate walks across Europe. Less interest aroused so far corporeal postures. Standing, sitting, kneeling or lying in the public space gives away the social status, relations of power, as well as racial and gender discrimination. The design of urban furniture and public transport enables only few of the circa 1000 possible ways of sitting that were identified by anthropologists and epitomizes the globalisation of the western sitting culture. Kneeling acknowledges voluntary disempowerment or precedes public executions. Finally, lying oscillates between the loss of self-control and the homeless' making themselves at home in the public space. The lecture explores stereotypical postures in the public space and confronts them with artistic projects about jumping and lying in the public space that destabilize our common expectations. Somæsthetics provides a useful framework for approaching this subject, given its combination between a phenomenological approach to the body and a critical social aesthetics.

Liliana Bieszczad

Jagiellonian University, Cracow
The Body in the Dance Theater Space. The Example of Conceptual Dance

The main aim of this presentation is to consider how performances that are defined as conceptual dance can be included in the somæsthetics project. The shows of artists such as Xaviery Le Roy, Jan Ritsema and Jonathan Burrows cannot be classified as art in the traditional sense, but neither can they be labeled as everyday life or as theory – because they are situated on the borderline of all these

fields. In fact, their aim is to dismantle the determinants of dance as art, to critique accepted conventions, including those based on the division between the audience and the stage, and between the roles of the spectator and the artist. Thus, in order to consider such performances, the adoption of a transdisciplinary approach is necessary. The presentation will include performances by Le Roy Untitled, and by Ritsema and Burrows Weak Dance Strong Questions. Particular attention will be paid to the issue of bodily interaction, based on dismantling the hidden perceptual habits of the spectator in the public space of the theater. Consideration will also be given to the performative agency of artists' bodies that critically questions the internalised conventions of the art world. Attempts to destabilise the perception process and shake off habits and expectations are treated as aesthetically and cognitively important components of experience.

Piotr Winskowski

Cracow University of Technology,
Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow
Public Space Around Bodies

The universal message behind the story of Plato's cave is based directly on the specific spatial distribution of material elements and its relations with the bodies of prisoners; some remarks regarding human bodies and the embodied experience of space can also be found in the margins of ancient books on architecture written by Vitruvius and Palladio. A re-reading of both the classical texts mentioned above and certain contemporary works (Rasmussen, Alexander, Pallasmaa) provides us with fresh insights into the important role that the body and all its senses play in our reflections on architecture and our perception of space. Such a perspective highlights how our sense of sight, rather than playing the dominant role, turns out to be only one of a number of possible ways of understanding architecture. A consideration of certain features of a three-dimensional, real, immobile, man-made spatial shell will be the starting point for the architect's speech at the conference entitled Body and Public Space. The key to this analysis will be the findings of Gestalt psychology and the focus on a building's function and its spatial parameters, which is a permanently fixture of professional discourse in the field of architecture. Aesthetical, artistic and ideological values are built on these elementary qualities.