

Abstract

The Viral Institute of Performance Architecture Launch performance-lecture.

26 June 2015, 11.30am, Clam-Gallas Palace, Prague

IFTR "Shared Space", Prague Quadrennial of Performance Design and Space

On 26.06.2015 the Viral Institute of Performance Architecture launched in Prague Quadrennial within the IFTR working group of Theatre and Architecture. The presentation took the form of a performance-lecture / workshop and highlighted the history of performance architecture, what performance architecture describes and the introduction of 'Architectural Improvisation' as an alternative process for producing space. It also included a five-minute workshop where the audience was asked to draw the shape of a wall with their bodies. At the end of the presentation VIPA cards and a questionnaire were distributed together with a series of key questions that the Institute proposed for further thought.

Authors: Kyveli Anastasiadi, Alikı Kylika, Alex Schweder

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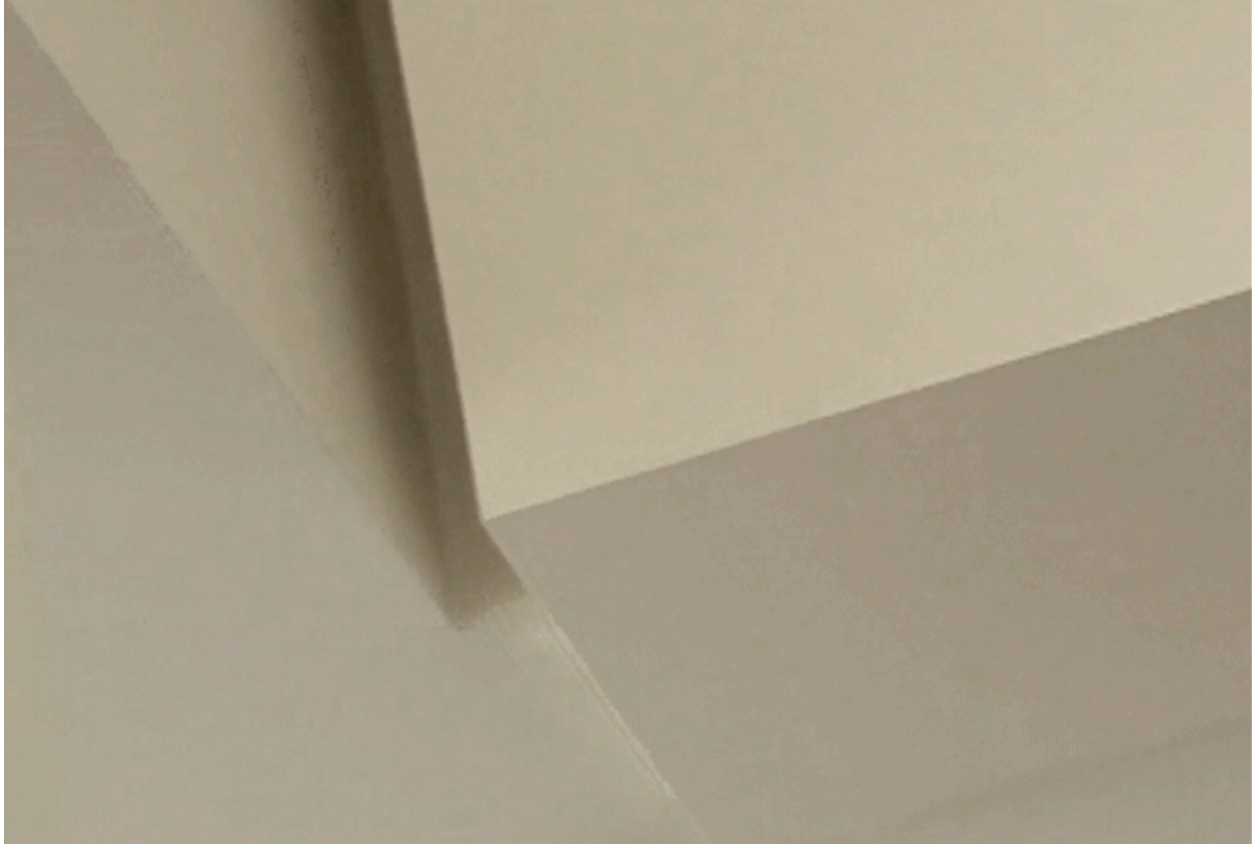
On the 26th of June 2015 the Viral Institute of Performance Architecture launched in Prague Quadrennial within the IFTR working group of Theatre and Architecture. The presentation took the form of a performance-lecture / workshop and highlighted the history of performance architecture, what performance architecture describes and the introduction of 'Architectural Improvisation' as an alternative way and process for producing space. It also included a five-minute workshop where the audience was asked to draw the shape of a wall with their bodies. At the end of the presentation VIPA cards and a questionnaire were distributed together with a series of key questions that the Institute proposed for further thought.

The presentation conveyed the following:

Aliki, K: Hallo, we are very pleased to be here amongst you. We are Kyveli Anasatasiadi and Aliki Kylika together with Alex Schweder who unfortunately could not attend physically, but is with us here with his recorded work. Thank you Julia and Andrew for inviting us to participate in this 'shared practice' to celebrate with you the launching of the Viral Institute of Performance Architecture! The presentation will take the form of a workshop / lecture, so please be prepared to stand up and participate actively in this celebratory event.

Performance Architecture is an emerging idea whose boundaries we don't yet know. It describes the expansion of the architectural discipline towards elements, practices and the theory of performance. Following on from performance art, performance architecture incorporates the human body dynamically, actively and organically in the production of space and uses the human body as the principal tool for designing. Within this practice, architecture becomes a process, an improvisation that can be recorded in space and time, like a dancing 'score'.

Here, Alex discusses with his client Bill about his home, 'in whose new architect designed house he finds it hard to display subtle works of art'.



[Schweder, Alex (2015) "Bill", video: running for 1:51 min]

Performance architecture is sensed, responsive, psychoanalytical, interactive, permissive, open, temporary, flexible, kinetic, notational, subversive and politically, culturally and socially engaged.

Performance Architecture sprang into being in both theory and practice in 2007 when Pedro Gadahno and Alex Schweder simultaneously but separately initiated the term. Just as in performance theory, the spectrum of performance architecture is wide and welcoming, and its roots can be traced in the very beginnings of architecture, when ritual actions dictated the making of space: the predecessors of performance architecture are therefore many and equally variable are the forms that it can take. It involves the building of space and the way we perceive space as well as the way it is used and performed: a cognitive and bodily process for cognitive and embodied space.

Kyveli A: Now stand up please and close your eyes and just stand still for few seconds...Feel your body standing still... Feel the space that you occupy.

Move your attention to your finger tips and very slowly start raising your hands. How much space do you occupy now? Feel your hands and fingertips extending towards your nearest boundary. The chair, the walls of the room, the ceiling or even the person next to you – do not worry if your bodies interlock. That is totally fine. Simultaneously

feel your feet deepening inside the ground. How big are you now? One metre? Two metres? Five metres? Feel your body extending outside your physical body limits.

Now imagine that you are a physical limit, in architectural words: a wall. How does that wall perform? How does your body perform the wall? How does this wall work? Does it slide? Does it rotate? Does it pivot? Does it contract? Imagine your own personal mechanism and allow your body to perform it, to embody this architectural element, to become space and object at the same time, to draw.

Are walls always static and monolithic as we perceive them in architecture? Maybe not. Now that you are describing them with your bodies, walls become fluid and organic.

So now you have decided how big you are, how you move, and how you embody architecture. Now think about your materiality. If you are made out of water, how would your materiality affect your movement? How do you combine your materiality with your previously chosen mechanism? For example, how do you rotate if you are made out of water? How do you slide or contract? Don't be shy, just improvise. There is no right or wrong in the process of design. Design this wall with your body.

You can do this with parts of your body, your legs, your hands, your chest or your waist. Choose your own unique way to design it with your body. Use your body to understand this element, to become the design.

Now open your eyes. Stand a bit still and understand what you just did. You have performed your thought. You are a thinking body scoring a virtual design in space. You took the design outside the two dimensional limits of the paper or the computer screen and you embodied and enacted it.

A: In the modern era the production of space has developed into an industrialised process dictated by corporate interests and architectural 'programs' with limited or no consideration for the user's experience of the final space. The elements that construct space are today mechanized to allow for larger, faster and cheaper buildings. Performance Architecture sheds a critical eye in this process and questions the typology of architectural elements, the geometry of doors, windows and walls.

Architectural improvisation promotes an embodied process as the key characteristic of experiencing space. This process becomes the focus of the space and releases the design from the urgent demand for a final product. Engaging with performance, architecture works with art to make more than objects. It enters into a fluid communication between body, time and space. It implements methodologies, mechanisms and relationships.

Performance Architecture develops in time, it transforms with the communities and individuals that 'build' it: each design has the qualities of an action and a gesture that interacts with situations and invites reactions. It is playful and intuitive and fundamentally communal.

The Viral Institute of Performance Architecture is launching today amongst you as a formal body that aims to promote the co-relation between performance practices and architectural practices expanding the way that architecture has so far been taught, perceived, made and thought through.

We associate with the work of many pioneers who have paved the path and are walking towards performance architecture: Oscar Schlemmer, Gego, the International Situationists, Archigram, the Architecture Principe, Haus Rucker & Co, Coop Himmelb(l)au, Gordon Matta-Clark, the 'Stalker' collective, Vito Acconci, Diller & Scofidio, Didier Faustino, the 'Office for Political Innovation', Pedro Gadanho and the Forsythe Company. We want to open this discussion with you and work with you – hear your thoughts on what you have here experienced. For this, we would like to share with you this questionnaire, which you can fill and give back to us. Please feel free to express your interest in joining our workshops and projects or suggesting new projects and collaborations.

The Institute is housed within the bodies of all its members: it is therefore Viral. It focuses on defining Performance Architecture as a movement in architecture of the 21st century, by undertaking practical, educational and theoretical work.

We would like to close with a series of questions:

- How do we perceive space through our bodies?
- How do we enact and practice space?
- How do we speak of space and imagine it?
- Where does form come from?
- What is the process for the design of space and who is involved in it?
- How do we build with our own bodies?
- How do we involve movement and action in architecture and its education?

Please visit our website to learn more and look at our work. Thank you very much!

Biographies

Alex Schweder, works with architecture and performance art to complicate the distinction between occupying subjects and occupied objects. His exhibitions include *Endless House* at the Museum of Modern Art, *Antarctopia* at the 2014 Venice Biennale, *In Orbit* at the Pierogi Boiler in Brooklyn, *Wall to Wall Floor To Ceiling* at the Tel Aviv Art Museum, *Performance Architecture* at the 2013 Moscow Biennial, *The Real and Other Fictions* at the 2013 Lisbon Architecture Biennial, *Draft Urbanism* at the Biennial of the Americas *Practise Architecture* at Tate Britain, *A Sac of Rooms All Day Long* at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, *Counterweight Roommate* in Scope Basel, *Roomograph* at the deCordova Museum, and *The Rise and fall* in the Marrakech Biennial.

The Pollack Krasner and Graham Foundations have both funded his projects and he has been an artist in residence at the Kohler Company, the Chinati Foundation, and American Academy in Rome as the 2005-6 Rome Prize Fellow in Architecture. Schweder has been a guest professor at the Southern California Institute of Architecture, Pratt Institute, The New School, the Architectural Association, and the Institute for Art and Architecture in Vienna.

Aliki Kylika is an architect and performance maker. She studied architecture at NTU Athens, and performance design at CSM UA London. Her work focuses on performative representations of urban and architectural concepts exploring the meeting point of architecture, urbanism and performance. It is her belief that architectural innovation lies in the application of performative principles in the design process. Works include: "Aldgate Territoriality" in "This is City-Centric" London, "Pre-Bard // Post-Shard" in Somerset House (LFA 2014) and "Dramatised Urbanism: Performance Cities" in "Dramatic Architectures" conference (ESAP Porto). Alongside her personal work, she works professionally in architecture, interior design and exhibition design.

<http://alikipylika.com/>

Kyveli Anastasiadi is an architect and performer, incorporating Physical Thinking as a tool for designing and making. *Design Through Performance* merges the world of architecture with the world of performance, improvisation and cognitive science, challenging existing architectural typologies while rediscovering architecture as an embodied 'process' of making a design. Seeking inspiration from everyday objects, the urge to understand and capture the repetitive yet unnoticed moments of everyday human interaction with space, Kyveli's work focuses on architectural representation as part and extension of the making itself, through photography and film-making.

<https://kyvelia.wordpress.com/>