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Teaching/Learning Strategies Through Art: Theatre and Basic Design Education

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the theatre as an architecture learning strategy in Basic Design Education. Hence, the study examines the art as a tool in Basic Design Education through the concept of the “body”, which is the common point of Architecture and Theatre discipline. Human being has used different ways to transfer feelings and thoughts. Theater is one of them. Theatre is staged feelings and thoughts through with space and body, by different topics and event patterns. The body becomes physical reflection of the soul and space accompanies to it. As Merleau-Ponty (2005) explains: “The human is not a body and a soul, it is a soul with a body. We able to access our outside of every asset if and only can access through our body; our outside of every asset becomes a mixture of soul and body with assumes the characteristics of human.” In this way, the soul and space are integrated. Body movements draw boundaries of space and also space draws the boundaries of the body. Body and space become complement and provision to each other. Architectural design activities are founded on “body and space” which are two basic elements. In the context of body and space relationship; a different training method was tested together with performance art that is “theater” and building art that is “architecture” over Basic Design Education. Transferring of the human body to a designed structure has been revealed by direct and (or) indirect way.

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1. Body-Space-Architecture

Human body fills a gap in the space given its physical existence and designates space in an unconditional way. This is not a result of a series of conscious actions, but it is completely its reason for being. As human beings have their consciousness, the human body apart from being only a body, identifies volume and areas in space. Every action made by human beings actually point to a production activity. In this context, the movement of the body ensures the production of space from a corporeal and volumetric point of view.

In relation to the production of space, Lefebvre (1991) categorizes them as lived space, perceived space and conceived space. Following this categorization, the space is generated after the stages of physical experimentation, cognitive perception and intellectual blending. The space, where daily life experiences are acquired is depicted as a designed space, where the designers' ideas and plans are evident, and as perceived space when it is described as a concrete and physical object.

In this context, the "living space", the "perceived space" and the "designed space" concepts and the "body" oriented space, which is generated as a result of our physical experiences, perception and design capability, overlap with the generation of the architectural space. As part of the experiences that have been acquired, the body is a practical and perceptible area and within this area, the space is perceived as something that is smelled, tasted, touched, heard and seen (Lefebvre, 1991). Pile (1996) also states that the body not only generates itself in space but it also generates the space. The author adds that each body is scattered into space and occupies this space, and each body is a space and owns a space (Lefebvre, 1991).

The conscious formulation, design and production of the space is possible through the discipline of architecture. With the discipline of architecture, the production of space is analyzed both functionally and with the aesthetic dimensions and they are presented to the user. The human being, which is essential for the production process of space, together with the body and the ability to move, sits at the core of the discipline of architecture. Body and bodily movements also serve as the most significant points in determining the limits of space. Human beings draw the borders of the space with a series of movements that serve their intended purpose within space and as a result volumetric dimensions are determined through the spatial magnitude and third dimension.

Movement, balance and scale are felt by the architect and they are reflected to the architectural piece. The piece of work interacts with the body of the user while the experience reflects the bodily senses of the producer. Therefore, architecture is a direct transfer from the body of the architect to the body of the person that comes across the piece of work in question (Pallasma, 2011).

Leonardo Da Vinci in 1492 has drawn the space within the limits of a man at Vitruvian Man, as a reflection of mathematical diagrams. The relationship between body and space was expressed with drawing of Man as Dancer figures drawn by Oscar Schlemmer at the Bauhaus school of architecture (Teksoz, 2011). These studies brought the human body and architecture together and the humans' ability to move, which is spatially limited, is carried over to the consciousness level.

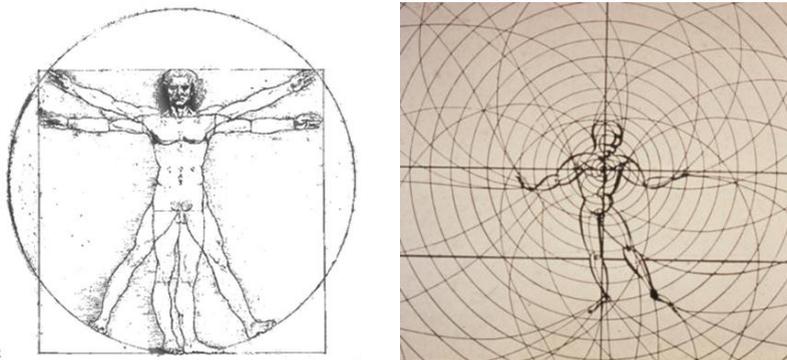


Fig. 1. (a)Leonardo Da Vinci, Vitruvian Man;(b) drawing of Man as Dancer (Leonardo's Vitruvian Man), (Oskar Schlemmer drawing of Man as Dancer).

2. Architecture-Basic Design-Theatre

The position of the human body within different forms of art and its significance is realized when different disciplines complement each other. This is also valid for architecture and the disciplines of theater.

For the discipline of architecture, which involves a lot of entries, the essence of the production of space is formed by the design process. During the design process, certain principles are taken into account to reach the final product. This process operation, which exists in all disciplines of art, is predicated upon basic design elements and principles. The design of space in architecture is shaped within the framework of basic design elements and principles.

Space in theater is used as a tool while space in architecture is manifested as a final product. Even though space is used as a tool in theater, human body and movement capabilities give its final shape as a produced output. Theater and architecture overlap in terms of producing space. For the space in theater, the deterministic character of the body is no different than the body acting as a determinant for the space. With the body, the space gains meaning, while it is shaped with the movement capability of the body. The body transforms the theatrical space from emptiness to a fictional reality.

The art of theater that has changed and developed since Ancient Greece until the present day, met with the audience in different forms and types during different periods. The characters of the theatrical space have also constantly changed as well as its set up. The study entitled "Machine for Living" by Brown and Rollinson includes a liquid architectural state installation where the stage is covered with metal pieces that divide the space, shatters the ideal understanding of the home and the study aims to replace the space with sound, light, animation and movement (Grant, 2000). Flamand and Zaha Hadid's work entitled "Metapolis: Project 972" includes the reflections of the combination of dance and architecture. With this piece of work, Flamand and Hadid combined the intellectual and visual searches that they developed on the body, movement, space and city. The concept of the utopian city, the themes of fluidity/prohibition, moving/still, order/chaos are conveyed through the integration of the bodies of the dancers and the space.



Fig. 2. (a) Machine for Living; (b) Metapolis: Project 972 (Balaban, 2009), (Metapolis Project972).

Even though it is a union that has naturally occurred or designed, the only thing that does not change in architecture and theater is the existence of the body. The body has always shaped the stage and structure and served as a deterministic factor.

3. The Form Of Presentation The Basic Design Class

The basic design class is for freshman students at Karadeniz Technical University (Trabzon, Turkey), Faculty of Architecture, and it is given during the first semester. The aim of the class is to provide the basic information about design, teach the design principles and elements and to provide practical examples to increase creative talents (KTU Ders Bilgi Paketi). Moving forward with the hypothesis by Pablo Picasso, "Every child is born an artist. The actual problem is to make them stay that way.", the primary objective of the class is to bring out the covert talents of the students and the ensure that their talents are used efficiently during architectural design activities.

The class is generally conveyed by transferring theoretical knowledge to students and in light of this theoretical knowledge, the formation of 2 and 3 dimensional applications. Theoretical information are presented during class in a manner that each of the titles such as basic design elements; point, line, direction, measurement, form, interval, texture, color and basic design principles; repetition, harmony, order, contrast, theory, dominance, balance and union (Gurer, 1990) make up the class contents for a different week. In practice, the problems are determined in such a way that they allow the utilization of theoretical information and the students are expected to form their original designs.

At the beginning of the semester, when the basic design class is given, in light of the main themes that have been determined, in order to better comprehend the concept of space, workshops are organized about the perception of space in the different branches of art other than architecture. The space of art, the space in poetry, the space in music are the concepts that assist in questioning the approaches and interpretations related to space in other fields of art. This way the students also find the opportunity to get to know the works in other fields of art. The workshop that aims to reveal the relationship between architecture and theatre also serves as a final workshop for the other studies.

4. Workshop Study

Within the scope of the workshop study, taking into account the relationship between body and space, theater, which is a performance art and architecture, which is an art of structure are associated over the Basic Design Education and a different education strategy is being tried. Within this framework, it is aimed for the student to acquire knowledge on space through his/her body while living in the space where its body is located and the knowledge that has been acquired is efficiently transferred to the practice of architecture in a permanent manner.

In this context, the common point of architecture and theater as disciplines, the "BODY" concept is used to formulate a workshop study related to the use of art as a tool.

The problem that makes up the subject of the workshop study is presented to the students as may be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Theme, Aims and Problem

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Theme: | BODY SPACE |
| Aims: | To understand the relationship between architecture and philosophy. To identify an architect. To identify a building. To identify a movement. To interpret a motto. To define motto building relationships. To identify the basic design elements and principles. To interpret the Gestalt perception theory To experience the relationship between architecture and body language. |
| Problem: | To exhibit a performance, describing relationships building-architect-discourse-practice, by using BODY LANGUAGE. |

Within the scope of the problem that has been determined, the structures selected from different movements such as "modernism", "postmodernism", "deconstructivism", "high-tech" (Table 2) are disseminated to the groups formed by 8-10 students.

The objective of the performances is to have the students use their bodies and to convey to the audience 1 basic design element, 1 Gestalt perception theory title and 1 basic design principle in order to explain the designated discourse.

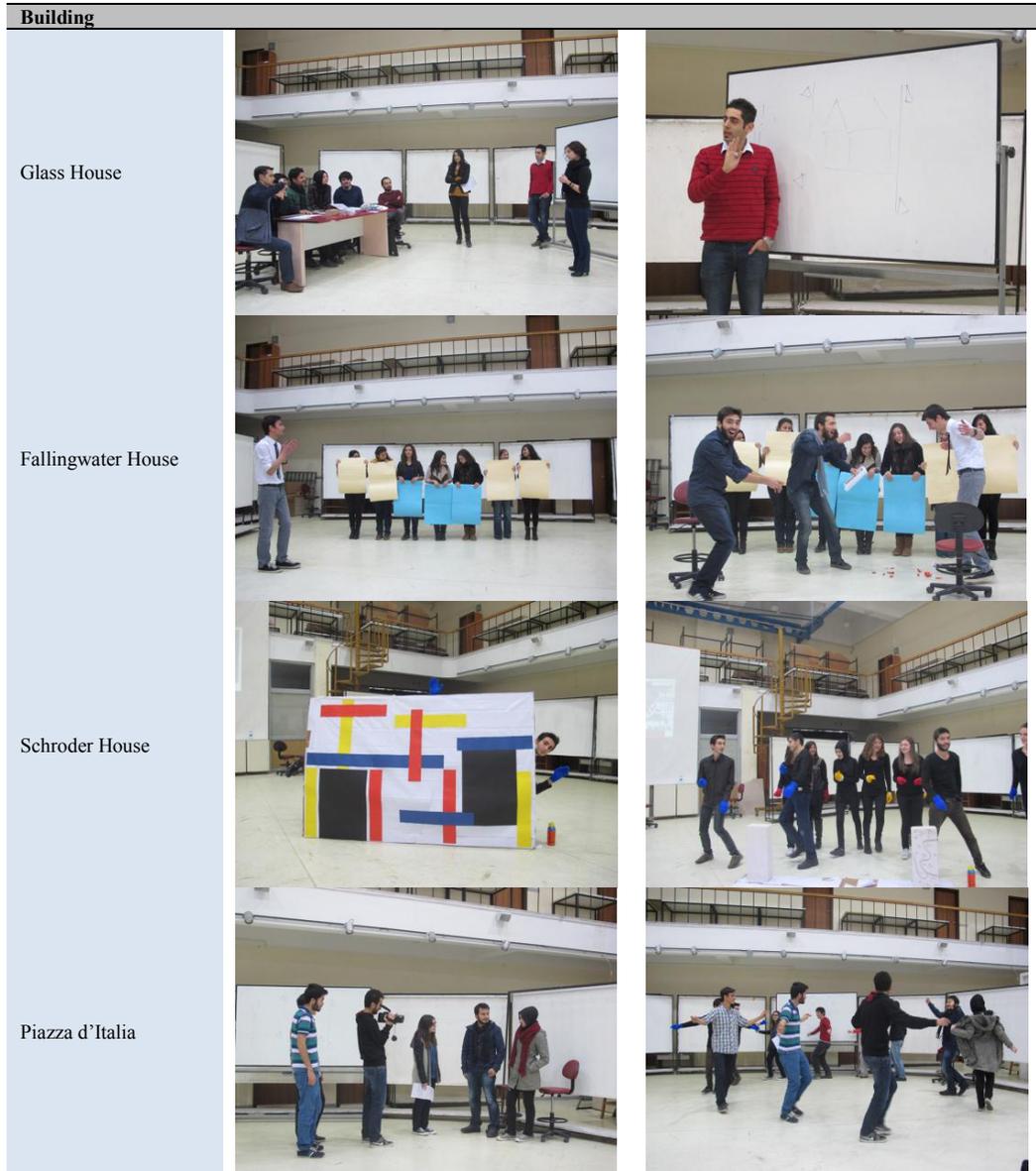
Each group was given 15 minutes to present the structure and discourses that were assigned to them. Within the performances, students were free to use all kinds of technical materials so that their creativities in material use could be tested.

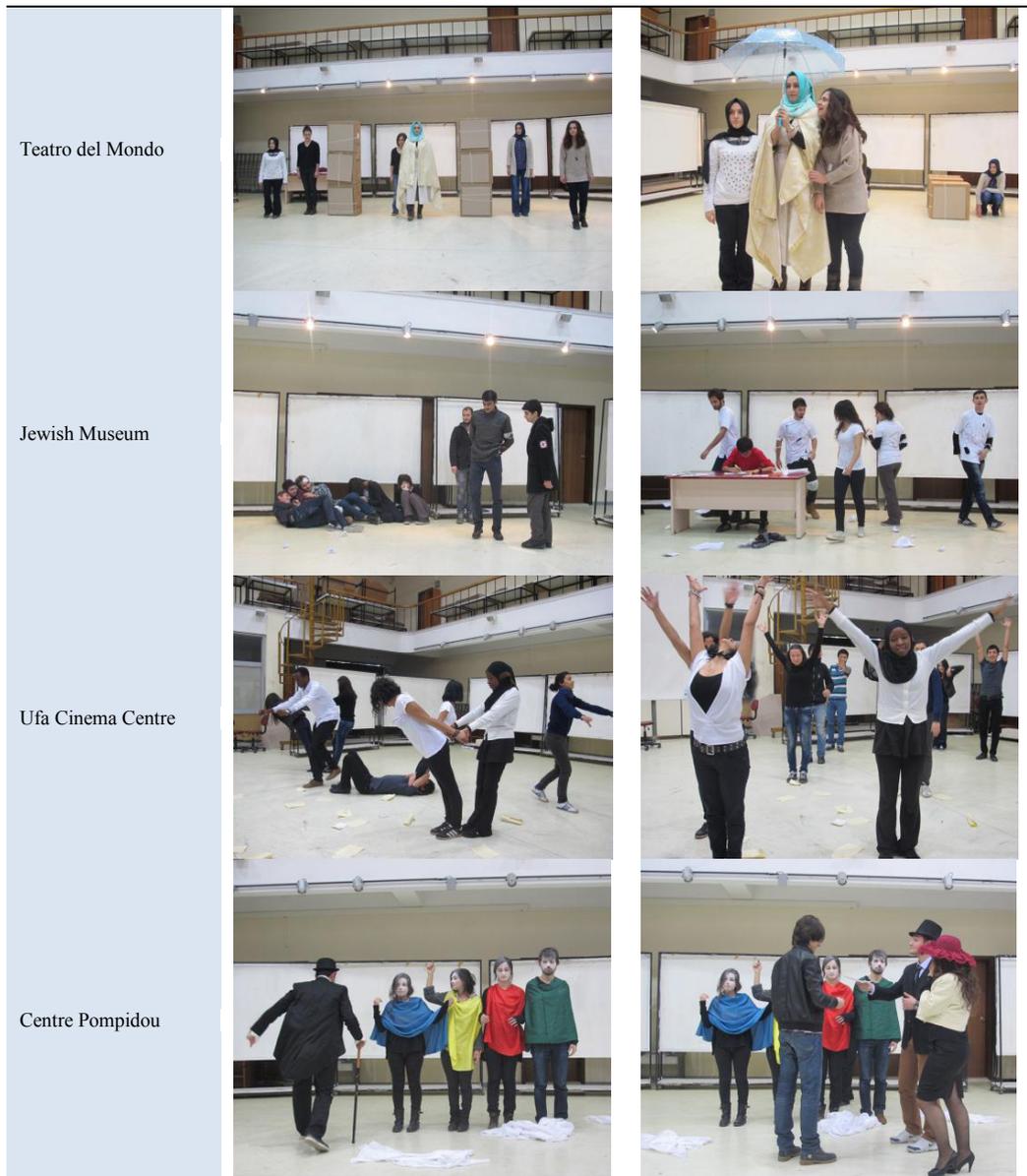
The performances prepared in this framework were evaluated to select 8 works whose approaches were found successful and the visual materials related to these works are presented in Figure 3.

Table 2. List of Building-Architect-Movement/Discourse

| Building | Architect | Movement/Discourse |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Glass House | Philip Johnson | Either that or this / “Modernism” |
| Fallingwater House | Frank L. Wright | |
| Schroder House | Gerrit Rietveld | Both that and this / “Postmodernism” |
| Piazza d’Italia | Charles Moore | |
| Teatro del Mondo | Aldo Rossi | Either that or inverse / “Deconstructivism” |
| Jewish Museum | Daniel Libeskind | |
| Ufa Cinema Cnter | Coop Himmelblau | |
| Center Pompidou | Richard Rogers, Renzo Piano | Tekno / “High-tech” |

Figure 3. Body-Space-Building Performans





5. Results

The structures that the students were asked to explain with basic design elements and principles were categorized into 3 groups as semantic narrative, formal narrative and functional narrative.

The semantic narrative group staged the discourses and the slogans under the scope of the movement that the architectural structure belongs to with the help of the body. The bodily movements were supported by costumes, decors and sounds (music and dialogues). The theoretical infrastructure related to that movement was staged with a method and form that is unconventional.

The formal narrative group presented the architectural structure as a physical object. The mass of the architectural structure, the spaces inside and outside that is identified by this structure and the basic design elements and

principles were imitated and turned into an abstract form with the help of the body. As the formal narrative turns a physical object into an abstract form, the answer given to a problem becomes more understandable in comparison to the abstraction in semantic narrative.

The functional narrative group not only brings out the discourses and slogans belonging to that movement, but also the function of that building or the architectural design philosophy that underlies.

Table 3. Body-Space-Building Performance

| Building | Semantic Narrative | Formal Narrative | Functional Narrative |
|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Glass House | + | - | - |
| Fallingwater House | + | + | - |
| Schroder House | + | + | - |
| Piazza d'Italia | + | - | - |
| Teatro del Mondo | + | + | - |
| Jewish Museum | + | + | + |
| Ufa Cinema Centre | + | + | - |
| Centre Pompidou | + | + | + |

The basic design principles and elements are used to ensure that students acquire knowledge about the different narration methods as well as other accomplishments. Some of these can be listed as;

- The awareness levels about the body and movement capabilities are increased.
- The perception of space is no longer ordinary but the fact that the body makes up space is recognized.
- The opportunity to understand, recognize and transfer the practices of different disciplines is provided.
- By carrying out group work, students are given individual responsibilities within groups.

The basic design class workshop studies allowed the author to determine that the use of art as a tool over the concept of the body can be adopted as an educational strategy. The use of the commonalities between different art disciplines has revealed the interconnectedness of different fields of art. This also demonstrates that similar investigations can be conducted by discussing the commonalities in different fields of art.

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