

Universiteit Leiden
Master of Arts Thesis

A Phenomenological Understanding of Fjordenhus Building in Vejle, Denmark
The Role of “Art-and-Architecture” on Contemporaneity

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List of Contents

Acknowledgements		02
Abstract		03
Introduction		04
Chapter 1	Intersections Between Visual Arts and Architecture	08
	1.1 The Exploration of Space in the Art Field	08
	1.2 The Artist Olafur Eliasson	14
Chapter 2	Experiencing the Place: Phenomenology in Architecture	22
	2.1 Architecture and Image in Contemporary Times	22
	2.2 Phenomenology as an Architectural Discourse	23
	2.2.1 The Spirit of a Place	26
	2.2.2 The Senses in Architecture	28
	2.2.3 Architectonic Atmospheres	31
	2.3 Interpreting a Building Phenomenologically	33
Chapter 3	A Lived Experience in Fjordenhus Building	36
	3.1 The Fjordenhus: an Introduction	36
	3.2 Choreographing in Space-in-Time	39
Conclusion		53
Bibliography		57
Further Research		62
List of Illustrations		64

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Abstract

In the last two to three decades, throughout the world, urban and architectural spaces have been losing their identities over cities, driven mainly by commercial and economic interests. Nevertheless, a number of artists have been escaping from their own traditional sphere of activity and exploring questions about space, the main tool of architects. These artists have been creating innovative hybrid works of art-and-architecture that highlight the singularity of places. Furthermore, they have also been focusing on the spectator's bodily experiences using a phenomenological approach on their artworks. Recognizing these issues, this research opens discussions on how the adoption of phenomenological aspects in the creative process of art-and-architecture can contribute to an embodied experience through the artist Olafur Eliasson's constructed work *Fjordenhus* (2018), in Vejle, Denmark, in partnership with the architect Sebastian Behmann. The main argument is that works embedded in a phenomenological bias can serve as a tool for resuscitation and vitality of architectural spaces in a relationship between architecture, space, and body. This study aims to contribute to the recent debates, concerning the tenuous limit of the interdisciplinary fields of visual art and architecture, with the participation of an artist in the conceptual process of an architectural project.

Introduction

Urban and architectural spaces play a primary role in the identity of cities. However, on contemporaneity, with the expansion of capitalist order fueled by growing globalization of technology, functionality equals economic rationality. This results on the construction of hurried, immediate, and consequently universal works of architecture. Thus, commercial and economic interests have been contributing to the increasingly intense conditions of indifference and disparticularization of urban cities.

Nevertheless, a number of artists have been escaping from their own traditional sphere of activity, expanding their studies, and starting to explore questions about space, the main tool of architects. These artists have been making efforts to retrieve lost differences and to reconnect the uniqueness of places creating hybrid works of art-and-architecture. Furthermore, they have also been using a phenomenological approach on their artworks to promote an embodied experience to spectators. In phenomenology, embodied experience is about how a particular place is perceived and experienced. This experience is based on a *lived body*, that is to say, “a vivid body, a body in movement.”¹ Consequently, this embodied experience provokes an acute awareness of our sensory function in an environmental situation.² Instance of that is the *Tilted Arc* in 1981 from Richard Serra (1939) in the Federal Plaza of Washington DC. With the combination of three principles (*making*, *phenomenological*, and *situational*), Serra engaged the artwork with the particularity of the place since he understands sculpture as a structuring of materials in order “to motivate a body and to demarcate a place.”³ Therefore, the construction of these hybrid works can serve as a tool for the vitality of architectural spaces and help to the cultivation of cultural identities. Faced with the current chaotic world, such experimentalism can serve as a way to tackle the problem of globalized cities by celebrating their particularities.

Among these artists, there is the Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson (1967), whose interests are mainly focused on “perception, movement, [and] embodied experience.”⁴ He engages with public spheres through his sculptures, installations, and site-specific pieces, which over time have gradually gained more and more spatiality and even become central to the design of public spaces. He has also collaborated with architects in designing parts of buildings, such as facades. In June 2018, Eliasson created for the first time a whole

¹ Shirazi, M. R. *Towards an Articulated Phenomenological Interpretation of Architecture*. London: Routledge, 2014, 2018.

² Castillo, S. S. *Cenário da Arquitetura da Arte*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2008, 150.

³ Foster, H. *The Art-Architecture Complex*. London and New York: Verso Books, 2013, 140.

⁴ Studio Olafur Eliasson. “Biography.” Accessed on 10 December 2018. <https://olafureliasson.net/biography>.

architectural project in Vejle, Denmark, named Fjordenhus, together with the architect Sebastian Behmann. The project is a sculptural headquarters as the result of Eliasson's experience on concepts such as "perception, physical movement, light, nature, experience of space" to a larger scale.⁵ Thus, it composes "a total work of art and fully functional architecture" according to the artist.⁶ Considering that this project is an up-to-date creation, I decided to have Fjordenhus as a case study in order to understand in which ways can artists contribute in shaping architectural spaces and what is the role of art in the contribution with a better quality of these spaces. Another reason to frame Fjordenhus is that it was the first architectural project entirely conceptualized by Eliasson, artist who I have a particular interest as he clearly works between the visual arts and architecture – where my background is from. In order to foreshadow the theories and concepts behind Fjordenhus building, it is important to understand Olafur Eliasson's background, such as what his conceptual intentions are.

Eliasson was born in Copenhagen 1967; from 1989 to 1995 studied at the Academy of Arts Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in the same city. During this time period, he traveled to New York, where he began to deepen his studies in phenomenology and psychology. Both subjects became very influential and were the basis in the creation of his future artworks. In 1995, at the end of his studies, he went to Berlin and opened the Studio Olafur Eliasson where he still works. The studio, therefore, is considered to him as a space research laboratory. There, the work is done together with a range of specialists – artists, architects, technical assistants, designers, researchers, and art historians – in order to seek the construction of works of art that are integrated with the inserted place. Nowadays, the approaches of Eliasson can adopt different dimensions, such as philosophical, psychological, political and even environmental. However, this research will focus in the phenomenological one not only because it is essentially explored in Fjordenhus building, but also because this approach has been gaining prominence in current debates of architecture as a way of tackling with its current crisis of meaning.

This research aims to investigate how the adoption of phenomenological aspects in the creative process of art-and-architecture can contribute to an embodied experience through Olafur Eliasson's constructed work Fjordenhus, in Vejle, Denmark. The main argument is

⁵ Studio Olafur Eliasson. "Fjordenhus by Olafur Eliasson and Sebastian Behmann with Studio Olafur Eliasson, KIRK KAPITAL Headquarters, Vejle, Denmark, Inaugurated on 9 June, 2018. Press Materials." Available at: <https://olafureliasson.net/press/fjordenhus>. (Accessed on 18 June 2019).

⁶ Studio Olafur Eliasson. "Fjordenhus by Olafur Eliasson and Sebastian Behmann with Studio Olafur Eliasson, KIRK KAPITAL Headquarters, Vejle, Denmark, Inaugurated on 9 June, 2018. Press Materials." Available at: <https://olafureliasson.net/press/fjordenhus>. (Accessed on 18 June 2019).

that a work embedded in a phenomenological bias can serve as a tool for resuscitation and vitality of architectural and urban spaces in a relationship between architecture, space, and body. The objective is to promote a reflective return to the own limits of contemporary architecture, showing alternative ways of constructing and exploring materials – aiming the sensorial, – with the contribution of an artist in the conceptual process of an architectural project. In order to reveal these interconnected aspects, this thesis is based on different fields of discourse, merging the visual art and architecture with a phenomenological discourse. To answer the primary research question, each of the chapters will focus on responding the secondary questions to come up with a final conclusion.

Chapter 1 begins with an overview of the historical background of space in the art field. The question posed here is in which ways have artists been appropriating space and adopting a phenomenological approach on their artworks. To do that, examples of artistic practices are shown and scholars ideas presented. Moreover, understanding in a historical context when, how, and why art began to expand its field as well as to openly appropriate space, it will locate the artist Olafur Eliasson who works in between the intermediate zones of visual art and architecture. In addition, this chapter also presents an overview of this artist: who he is, what his works consist of, what his influences, and conceptual intentions are. This will help to create a primary base to understand Fjordenhus' concepts.

Chapter 2 concentrates on the theoretical basis of the study, which is phenomenology. With the impoverished of the inner meaning of architecture, numerous writings on phenomenological architecture theory have been pondered recently. This paradigm has started being discussed from the postmodernism from architects who have been trying to displace formalism and problematize the body's interaction with the environment based on human experience. The question posed here is how architectural projects embedded on phenomenological issues can contribute to an experience of the place more articulated and organized around the body. This way, it will be important to study a group of authors that stand out for such emphasis. Hence, theorists such as Christian Norberg-Schulz, Kenneth Frampton, and Juhani Pallasmaa will be discussed. They have been exploring ways of looking at architecture in terms of *genius loci* (the spirit of the place), the senses of architecture, and architectonic atmospheres. To apply these ideas, this chapter will also come with examples of projects from the architects Peter Zumthor, Tadao Ando, and Alvar Aalto. The theoretical background discussed will serve as a basis for the interpretation of the building in the coming chapter.

Chapter 3 interprets the Fjordenhus. Taking into account that a phenomenological approach is based on a lived experience of man and the perception of a place, the interpretation will be done through my impressions after visiting it on 23 March 2019. Here the theories will be applied to the work and reflected upon. To interpret the building, the *phenomenal phenomenology* method from the architect and researcher Mohammed Reza Shirazi was adopted. Hence, it will take into account the reader as a traveler on a phenomenological journey and interpret the work as a whole experience by moving through the architectural space. The question in this chapter is how the work dialogues with the visitor on a relationship between body and space. Furthermore, which sensorial provocations the work conveys to the visitor and in which ways it dialogues with the site will be also taken into account.

Chapter 1.

Intersections Between Visual Arts and Architecture

1.1 The Exploration of Space in the Art Field

This chapter aims to investigate the use of space in the art field in a historical context to understand its consequent engagement with the field of architecture. In exploring space – a key element of architectural design – a number of artists have entered into one of the working areas traditionally occupied by architects. As a result, these artists have driven their focus to the spectator's bodily experiences through a phenomenological approach. This in turn has resulted in a variety of hybrid art-and-architectural works across the world. Hence, having a better understanding of these hybrid works of art is helpful in thinking about their contribution to the resuscitation and vitalization of architectural spaces, the main objective of this research.

Over time the visual arts have undergone numerous modifications and experimentations. Among these transformations, includes its close interactions with architecture, making their inter-fields even more permeable. First of all, it is important to point out that even in the face of the classical division of the arts – such as painting, sculpture, and architecture – these fields have frequently been correlated due to their interdisciplinarity. However, from a contemporary prospective, visual arts have begun to establish a greater dialogue with other areas of knowledge in the function of its liberty of new languages, materials, and creative processes. The theme of the autonomy of artistic genres can be understood by the historian Rosalind Krauss (1941). Drawing on the model of sculpture as a monument, Krauss argued in *Sculpture in the Expanded Field* (1979) that this classical logic began to break in the Modernist period.⁷ Like the sculpture *The Gates of Hell* (1880-1917) from the French artist August Rodin (1840-1917), Krauss showed that after being removed from the place thought to be built, it began to lose its real context and sense. According to her, by leaving its initial place of origin, the sculpture took on a “negative condition of the monument”, in order to lose its fixed base.⁸ The work absorbed the pedestal for itself, exposing its own autonomy and becoming encrusted in the roots of the inserted place.

⁷ In the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

⁸ Krauss, R. “Sculpture in the Expanded Field.” *October*, v. 8, 31-44, 1979, 133.

Following the example of *The Gates of Hell*, many artists started to work within the confines of these exclusionary terms, causing space to become intensely explored in the 1950s and 60s. During that time, artists moved away from the notion of objecthood (from seeing artworks as objects) to focusing on the relationship between the artwork and the viewer. Instance of this can be seen on the *Happenings* performances from the artist Allan Kaprow (1927-2006) in the late 1950s and 1960s. These performances mainly occurred outside art gallery and radically transformed the passive observer into an active participant. As states the art critic and curator Jeff Kelley in *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, 1993:

We do not come to look at things; we simply enter, are surrounded, and become part of what surrounds us, passively or actively according to our talents for “engagement,” in much the same way that we have moved out of the totality of the street or our home where we also played a part.⁹

Hence, these *Happenings* created a greater dialogue between participant and environment. Besides Kaprow, the protagonists of minimal art, such as Donald Judd, Robert Morris, and Frank Stella, also rewrote the rules of the dialogue between artwork and its surroundings. On their creations, the space where the artworks were inserted gained fully importance in the totality of works. For example, some of the creations of the artist Donald Judd from 1969 did not consist of a sculpture, because it did not have a pedestal as it was fixed to the wall, nor a painting, as it was a three-dimensional object. Instead, the artwork was directly related with the place inserted, as Judd states, “[it is] intrinsically more potent and specific than painting on a flat surface.”¹⁰ Consequently, when confronted with these artworks, the viewers were required to keep moving, thus creating a closer dialogue these minimal objects.

Emerging out of the lessons of minimalism, site-specific art of the late 1960s and early 1970s could not be elsewhere if not in the place inserted. This conceptual notion is known to incorporate physical conditions of a particular place as integral to the production. According to the curator and historian Miwon Kwon (1961), it was initially based on an experiential understanding of the site, primarily defined as an “agglomeration of the actual physical attributes of a particular location (the size, scale, texture, and dimension of walls, ceilings, rooms, existing lighting conditions, topographical features, [...] etc.), with

⁹ Kaprow, A. *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life: Expanded Edition*. California: University of California Press, 2003, 11.

¹⁰ Judd, D. *Complete Writings 1959-1975*. New York: New York University Press, 1975.

architecture serving as a foil for the art work in many instances.”¹¹ The American artist Richard Serra (1939), for instance, in a letter to the director of the Art-in-Architecture Program of the General Services Administration in Washington DC, stated the *Tilted Arc* in 1981, a 36.5 meters steel with 3.6 meters high which was commissioned and designed specifically for the Federal Plaza of the city. Seen as an “iron curtain” for some critics, the artwork forced the passengers to take a short detour due to its visual barrier; it is inserted in the place in such a way as to provoke an inevitable relationship between the place and the observer as while the citizens in transit moved, the site’s specificity also seemed to change, hence causing change both to the space and the overall location. In 1989, Serra stated:

Tilted Arc was conceived from the outset as a site-specific sculpture and was not intended to be “site-adjusted” or “relocated”. Site-specific works deal with environmental components of certain places. Scale, size and location of site-specific works are determined by the topography of the place, be it urban or landscaping or architectural closure. Jobs become part of the place and restructure their organization both conceptually and perceptually.¹²

This ideas are understandable in the book *The Art-Architecture Complex*, when the art critic Hal Foster stated the three principles of sculpture approached by Serra.¹³ The first is the stress on *making*. This has led Serra to use materials such as lead and steel to serve as structures. The second principle, called phenomenology, was that sculpture exists in the primary relation to the body. This relationship therefore intends to activate the body “in all its senses, all its apperceptions of weight and measure, size and scale.”¹⁴ The third, *situational*, was that sculpture engages the particularity of place. As states Foster, these principles, together, have guided Serra since in his understanding of sculpture as a structuring of materials in order to motivate a body and to demarcate a place. Thus, merging from these ideas, *Tilted Arc* broke with the traditional idea of art as a form of representation and played with the perception of the passengers through its weight and measurements, in terms of size and scale. Its site specificity, according to Serra, could not be relocated because “to remove it is to destroy it.”¹⁵

¹¹ Kwon, M. *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004, 3.

¹² *Ibid.*, 168.

¹³ Foster, H. *The Art-Architecture Complex*. London and New York: Verso Books, 2013, 140.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Serra in Kwon, “Um Lugar Após o Outro: Anotações Sobre Site-specificity.” *Revista Arte & Ensaio*, n. 17, 167-187, 2008, 168 (translated by the author).

Following the radicalism of these site-specific practices, the 1970s witnessed the appearance of land-art and installations experiments. In the case of land-art, artists came from places that were not typically inhabited by people.¹⁶ Those works were linked to the landscape through sculptures corresponding to the topography of the place, to the specificity of its site, and therefore were inseparable from the terrain itself.¹⁷ One of the most-known land-art works was *Spiral Jetty* created in 1970 by the artist Robert Smithson (1938-1973), a landscape intervention in Salt Lake in Utah. It is represented by a natural spiral with materials collected from the Salt Lake itself. At the time the work was made, it was composed of natural matter – art, nature, and landscape. All these components became integrated into one thing, making the artwork inseparable from the terrain. This is to say, there was an absorption of the place in such a way that artists had to fully understand the surroundings in which the work was inserted. In sum, whether inside museums and galleries, urban cities, or in nature with no human intervention, these works of art initially took the site as an actual location and its identity became composed of a combination of physical elements of the inserted place.

Perhaps the moment where space gained a focused attention on society in general was with the shift between *time* to *space* from the 1990s onwards. According to the researcher Gyorke Agnes, prior to the 1990s historicism had linearized time and marginalized space.¹⁸ This in turn postulated temporal stages of development in such a way that time was seen a dynamic bearer of social development and space was then reduced to a fixed, neutral background.¹⁹ Consequently, universal master narratives, for instance, were developed regardless of the differences places may have had. In the 1990s, many theorists indicated a reinsertion of the concept of space in social sciences and humanities, known as a “spatial turn.”²⁰ It is the case of the critic Fredric Jameson that, in his book *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), stated that paradigm of time has been overcome by the paradigm of space as well as that of cultural languages in that period.²¹ Moreover, he also argues that people’s daily lives are fully dominated by categories of space than by categories of time. In other words, the “spatial turn” concept recognizes that space and local differences are as important in the unfolding of human affairs as they are in time, in such a way that space has become a relevant social construction for understanding different histories of

¹⁶ Tiberghien, G. A. *Land Art*. New York: Princeton Architectural, 1995.

¹⁷ Castillo, 166.

¹⁸ Gyorke, A. “The Spatial Turn in the Humanities.” Accessed on 12 May 2019.

ieas.unideb.hu/admin/file_9191.pptx

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Withers, C. W. “Place and the "Spatial Turn" in Geography and in History.” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, v. 70, n. 4, 637-658, 2009.

²¹ Jameson, F. *Postmodernism, or, the cultural logic of late capitalism*. Duke University Press, 1991.

human subjects and for the production of cultural phenomena. To quote the anthropologist and geographer David Harvey (1935), the elaboration of place-bound identities “has become more rather than less important in a world of diminishing spatial barriers in exchanges, movements, and communications.”²² As a consequence, a richer and more contextualized understanding of human experience and the production of culture emerged from this period.

When the potential of spatiality was recognized by theorists through the reintroduction and reinterpretation of time, this also reverberated in a reorganization of cultural production that, for instance, appropriated site-specific art for the valorization of urban cities.²³ From that moment onwards, there was a new importance in the creation of works of art highlighting the uniqueness of places and favoring the cultivation of cultural identities, such as *Places with a Past* (1991), an exhibition of site-specific works organized by the curator Mary Jane Jacob, who took the city of Charleston, South Carolina. The exhibition created a dialogue between art, the public, and the socio-historical dimension of the place. To do so, artists explored the place not only physically speaking, but also socially and politically, as Jacob explained, while trying to reconnect the uniqueness of the place and its memory, history, and identities.²⁴ The locality itself contributed to “a specific identity of the exhibition presented, injecting the singularity of the place into the experience.”²⁵ Thus, the reality of Charleston of that time and space provided a unique context for the artworks.

Artists have been dealing with questions of space, in such a way that their artworks have become more and more contextualized within the place. In other cases, it creates an experience to the viewer as their body becomes active while experiencing the work of art, idea is embedded in a phenomenological bias. For phenomenology, the experience is defined as the source of all knowledge.²⁶ In *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), the phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) emphasizes the importance of the body – considered the medium for perception of the world – for the experience. These issues have started being explored in the field of art, and artists, inspired in these philosophers, aim to create an embodied experience by their works. Embodied experience is about how the space is perceived and experienced, whether if it is a building, an

²² Harvey in Adams, P. C.; Hoelscher, S. D.; Till, K. E. (eds.). *Textures of Place: Exploring Humanist Geographies*. Chicago: Minnesota Press, 2001, 10.

²³ This comes “at a time of fundamental cultural change, in which architecture and urbanism, previously the principal means of expressing the city's vision, are displaced by other more intimate means such as marketing and advertising.” (Kwon, 2004, 180)

²⁴ Jacob in Kwon. “Um Lugar Após o Outro: Anotações Sobre Site-specificity.” *Revista Arte & Ensaios*, n. 17, 167-187, 2008, 180. (translated by the author)

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ “We know not through our intellect but through our experience.” (Merleau-Ponty, M. *Phenomenology of Perception*. London and New York: Routledge, 1962, 165)

installation, the presence of nature of the surroundings, and so forth. Thus, instead of using an old Cartesian model, these practices adopt an experience based on a *lived body* – in Ponty’s words, – which means that the body is seen as “a vivid body, a body in movement.”²⁷ Therefore, this embodied experience itself is intrinsically embedded in temporality, that is, in a consequently here-and-now presence. Miwon states:

“These [site-specific] art practices was to be singularly and multiply experienced in the here and now through the bodily presence of each viewing subject, in a sensory immediacy of spatial extension and temporal duration [...], rather than instantaneously perceived in a visual epiphany by a disembodied eye.”²⁸

To move is to relate physically to time, and the spatial exploration of a place generates a sense of being in the world for those who experience it. Ultimately, artists have been focusing on establishing an indivisible relationship between work and site, by demanding the physical presence of the viewer through an embodied experience for the work’s completion. As the Brazilian architect, scenographer and artist Sonia Del Castillo would say in *Cenário da Arquitetura da Arte* (Scenery of the Architecture of Art), these practices of art “provoke an acute awareness of our sensory function in an environmental situation” and by investigating the senses, it rescues the human experience by re-approaching art of spectator, and the viewer of himself.²⁹ Hence, as well as architectural spaces should make the person “moves through space and allows a lived experience and existential perception” so artists have been focusing on the same issues in order to create works of art.³⁰

As it was verified, just as architects use space to create architectural works, artists have also used it to create artistic ones; those explore space to making use – e.g. by serving as a shelter and by making it functional – and these, in turn, creating works embedded on a phenomenological bias that reflect on the experience of the viewer. It is through these new approaches and relationships between fields that Rosalind Krauss explained what the *Expanded Field* would be. According to her, art has become integrated with other fields, and with a diagram she shows its relationship between sculpture, architecture, and landscape, as

²⁷ Shirazi, M. R. *Towards an Articulated Phenomenological Interpretation of Architecture*. London: Routledge, 2014, 218.

²⁸ Kwon, 2004, 11.

²⁹ Castillo, S. S. *Cenário da Arquitetura da Arte*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2008, 150. (translated by the author).

³⁰ Shirazi, 219.

well as the implications through artistic practices that could be combined as a logical expansion operation.³¹ With the multiplicity of fields that are related within this expanded field, the fluidity of these encounters leads art to possess an essential characteristic for architecture that, according to the theorist and architect Juhani Pallasmaa, is the act of experiencing.³²

Finally, it can be seen that the conditions of the contemporary world as a whole have influenced the relationship between different fields. Today, what exists is a universal and complex field, which the “parts” are scattered in the universe and they can meet, regardless of the rigidity of the areas of study. It is in front of this evolving scenario that emerges the artist Olafur Eliasson, working close to architects, proposing an art-and-architecture integrating language, and exploring space as a method of art itself. Some of his features and past are following presented.

1.2 The Artist Olafur Eliasson

Eliasson was born in 1967, in Copenhagen, Denmark, having also grown up in Iceland. At age 15, he developed an interest in the arts, having his first exhibition of landscape drawings and gouaches in a small gallery in Denmark. From 1989 to 1995, he began his art studies at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen and, in 1990, he had the opportunity to move temporarily to New York, where he intensified his readings of phenomenology and the psychology of Gestalt.³³ According to the artist, these studies were fundamental to understand how it is possible to use the exploration of the senses in his artworks as they involve perception.³⁴ Still reaffirming his interest in the application of psychology and phenomenology in artworks, the American artists James Turrell and Robert Irwin are cited by Eliasson as a great source of inspiration.³⁵ These artists were ingenious in their creations that exploit the investigation of perception, and he shares the same interest in this sensibility. Moreover, the dynamic, open, and democratic public spaces of the great

³¹ Krauss, 133.

³² According to Pallasmaa, planning has become a play of forms in such a way that the experience of architecture has been neglected. More than thinking and judging a building as a formal composition, he defends its understanding as an experience. Experiencing, for him, means experiencing through the body and the senses. Therefore, he defends an architecture more articulated around the body. For this, architects can think about how the materiality of their works could reflect in the created space in order to awaken our senses. (McCarter, R.; Pallasmaa, J. *Understanding Architecture: a Primer on Architecture as Experience*. London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2012)

³³ The psychology of perception.

³⁴ Olafur Eliasson. “Olafur Eliasson at Foundation Louis Vuitton.” *Financial Times*, 5 December 2015. Accessed on 13 March 2019. <https://www.ft.com/content/2ecac286-7a1c-11e4-9b34-00144feabdc0>.

³⁵ Ibid.

metropolis of New York, known for their urban experiences with a multitude of people, also served as a reference for the artist. In an interview, Eliasson discusses the relation that art might maintain with the public space, as well as the true value that these spaces should possess:

The artist is the person who will be able to help in the processes that allow us to review and rethink our values when it comes to issues facing [public] space. Do we want an inclusive space or do we want an exclusive space? Do we want to facilitate the meeting of two strangers, or do we want to prevent two strangers from joining? Is a stranger always welcome? Jan Gehl and his studio, which made Times Square and Broadway planned in New York, are well established in the reflection on the hospitality of space with regard to hosting the unpredictable and facilitating a process based on the evolution of space. The civic contribution is what makes a space hospitable.³⁶

After graduating, Eliasson moved to Berlin, city of artistic effervescence, where he set up in 1995 the Studio Olafur Eliasson, considered for him as a space research laboratory where he remains until nowadays producing works that span sculpture, painting, photography, films, and installation.³⁷ In parallel to his studio, the artist also worked as a professor at *Berlin University of Arts*. Founder and director of the *Institut für Raumexperimente* (Institute for Space Experiences, 2009-14), this programme aimed to enable experiments in arts education affiliated with the university and was conducted in the same building as his studio. The Studio Olafur Eliasson itself comprises a range of experts – totaling about more than one hundred members – among craftsmen, specialized technicians, architects, art historians, film-makers, graphic and web designers, in order to experiment, develop and produce works together. After creating his own studio, Eliasson has exhibited his works in various parts of the world not limiting to the confines of museums and art galleries. As time passed by, he has gained prominence on the world stage as a result of a series of creations promoting more interactivity with people in an embodied way, which have gradually gained more and more spatiality.

³⁶ Olafur Eliasson, “Artist Olafur Eliasson on how urban design impacts our psyche.” *Co.Design*, 7 April 2015. Accessed on 10 April 2019. <https://www.fastcompany.com/3048184/artist-olafur-eliasson-on-how-urban-design-impacts-our-psyche>.

³⁷ Coles, A. *The Transdisciplinary Studio*. Berlin: Sternberg, 2012.

In general, Eliasson often engages with public spheres through his sculptures, installations, and site-specific pieces, which explore “perception, movement, and embodied experience.”³⁸ To do that, handles materials that will either enhance the quality of experience of a particular place or reinvent the one that already exists. For instance, in his most famous piece to date *The Weather Project* (2003), constructed in the turbine hall of the Tate Modern Museum, he joined simple elements like lamps, smoke and mirrors to create a completely different atmosphere in the space, making it explicit. (Fig.1) As a kind of machine that refers to the sun, symbolic role of the origin of life, it would be difficult for the viewer not to identify with the artwork, as it addresses a theme that is common to all in exploring the image of this accessible natural phenomenon. Due to the lighting that generates a visual field in a monochromatic landscape, the environment is seen through a single color palette, black and yellow. The perception of the place is then transformed, giving an idea of uniformity and a consequent creation of an atmosphere egalitarian to all. In addition to this, Eliasson introduced a curtain of mirrors into the ceiling that runs through the whole environment in which the artwork is installed, generating for spectators a perceptual investigation of the place and of themselves: the visitor sees himself seeing, creating an awareness of his own body unfolded in the egalitarian environment by being bathed by a monochromatic light.



Fig.1. Olafur Eliasson, *The Weather Project*, Tate Modern Museum, 2003.

³⁸ Coles, A. *The Transdisciplinary Studio*. Berlin: Sternberg, 2012, 3.

When it comes to the relationship between art and other fields, Eliasson makes clear his particular interest with architecture.³⁹ According to the curator Henry Urbach, among some implications of this expanded field, Eliasson realizes *the projective impulse of architecture*, considered “an effort to realize imagined and desired condition in a more interpretative and phenomenological approach by transferring the language from one field to another.”⁴⁰ Thus, spatial and perceptual questions are brought into his artworks through the investigation of space and design, where their materiality is intensely explored. This exploration is based on its immanence aspects, that is, when the materials are used through the user’s experience.⁴¹ In this sense, materiality is not merely defined from within, but used in order to promote an embodied experience to the viewer. An instance of this is the case of *Your Rainbow Panorama* (2011) created in the Aarhus Kunstmuseum (Aarhus, Denmark), when the artist teased each surface in order to activate them. The artwork consists of a panoramic view through the construction of a belvedere inserted in the top floor of the art museum. By involving the viewer with the landscape with a thin glass film of the facades referring to the colors of the rainbow, the constructive materiality of the work modifies the way of looking and feeling the urban landscape. For example, in the location where the sun sets, the color of the façade develops into warm colors, causing the spectators to see the city flooded in a sunset. When the yellow color is heightened, the visitors are taken by a new atmosphere, where they are completely immersed into the sensation of sunlight. (Fig.2) As a result, the artwork is directly related to the phenomenon of time in function of the position of the colors of the facade, and it produces multiple atmospheres by a direct integration of spectator with landscape and time. According to the artist, more than a work that allows a panoramic view of the city, it is possible to feel the view through the created atmospheres.⁴² Thus, the materiality of *Your Rainbow Panorama* creates a dynamic form of experience and offers new ways of seeing the city, expanding people’s sensory field.

³⁹ “Everything we have been doing for the last ten years is somehow related to architecture. The studio's working method is more like a laboratory: we work theoretically but also empirically. (...) I guess one can say that there is an overlap between the two; they have different ways of developing permanencies and different relationships to the regulations and codes. The challenge is how to compare and transfer the language from one field to another. There are architects who do address this issue and I certainly think there are many artists who do the same.” (Olafur Eliasson. “Eliasson’s Kaleidoscope.” *Domus*, no. 950, September 2011. Accessed on 7 May 2019. <http://www.domusweb.it/en/architecture/2011/09/08/eliasson-s-kaleidoscope.html>)

⁴⁰ Eliasson, O.; Grynsztejn, M.; Bal, M. *Take Your Time: Olafur Eliasson*. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. San Francisco: Thames & Hudson, 2007, 146.

⁴¹ Eliasson, O.; Engberg-Pedersen, A. *Studio Olafur Eliasson: an encyclopedia*. Amsterdam: Taschen, 2012, 49.

⁴² Olafur Eliasson’s video lecture. “Olafur Eliasson about Light in Life.” Accessed on 10 April 2019. <http://www.lightlive.com/en/20150429-olafur-eliasson- about-light-is-life/>.



Fig.2. Olafur Eliasson, *Your Rainbow Panorama*, Aarhus Kunstmuseum, Aarhus, 2011.

The design of others Eliasson’s artworks also refers to the history of the place and its surroundings, which is the case of *Cirkelbroen* (2015), a pedestrian bridge central to one of the public spaces of Denmark. *Cirkelbroen* was designed to the Christianshavn district which is known for its maritime culture, given that the city’s harbor is located in that region. Dialoging with the surrounding area of the harbor, the aesthetic concept of the artwork refers to the maritime history of the place: each of the five platforms has its own “mast”, whose steel wires set at the top connect to the circular end of each platform, thus referring to the idea of five vessels. (Fig.3) The bridge consists of five circular platforms that are arranged irregularly, causing citizens to diminish its pace. Its provisions were determined by the views they could offer to the city, generating new looks and perspectives for the port and its surroundings so that anyone who passes by unconsciously becomes invited to use this space as a means of permanence.⁴³ Thus, besides serving as a connector of places, it also enhances the citizen's experience of urban vivacity.

Once again reaffirming his interests towards an interdisciplinary field, Eliasson joined with the architect Sebastian Behmann and founded the Studio Other Spaces in 2014, an international office of art and architecture. The studio is located in the same building of Studio Olafur Eliasson and is still active today with the intention to create, through a holistic

⁴³ Eliasson, O. “Artist Olafur Eliasson on How Urban Design Impacts our Psyche.” *Co.Desing*, 7 April 2015. Available at: <<https://www.fastcompany.com/3048184/artist-olafur-eliasson-on-how-urban-design-impacts-our-psyche>> (Accessed on 10 April 2019).

practice, experimental building projects. Again showing an interface of art and architecture by exploring the immanence of the materials, Eliasson created the so-called *visually negotiable structure*, that is, when a building do not ceases to change appearance; instead, it always presents a “dynamic convergence of space, time, and light coordinates” due to the shifts in transparency, reflection, and color offered by the facades.⁴⁴ A clear instance of this can be seen in his facades of the striking Harpa Concert Hall & Conference Centre (2011) in Reykjavik, Iceland, a project created in cooperation with the architect Henning Larsen. The building is considered a cultural landmark for the city through its sensitivity, dynamicity, and integration with the context of the place. (Fig.4) The facades of Eliasson’s glass made works are composed of two elements. The first is a series of tubes inspired by Iceland’s volcanic geology. The second is comprised of a number of hexagon-shaped modules that relate to the various colors in Iceland nature. Through natural lighting, the reflection of its tubular geometry, for instance, provides a game of different shade colors inside the building and cause its effects to constantly change over time. Hence, Eliasson uses materiality to activate the eye in order for the visitor to experience a visually changing facade. This constantly changing patterns and light therefore intensities a kinesthetic aspect to the space. The shadows of the building are printed on its floor and the visitor's own body is bathed in the reflection of the work of art, resulting in a playful atmosphere. Paraphrasing the phenomenological philosopher Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961), it seems that, for Eliasson, “no longer is it a matter of speaking about space and light, but of making space and light, which are there, speak to us.”⁴⁵ On the other hand, the hexagon-shaped modules of the facade highlight the elements of the landscape through its shape, which are partly covered by colored glass films, offering a new vision for the external landscape. When it comes to the exterior of the building, the reflection of the facades refers to nature around them, also dialoguing with the phenomenon of time. At the end of the afternoon, for example, the facade of blue-pink-purple hues reflects the sunset, intensifying the phenomenon itself on the facade. All that explains the character of the building by means of its contextualization with the surroundings.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Eliasson, O.; Grynsztejn, M.; Bal, M., 149.

⁴⁵ Merleau-Ponty, 290.

⁴⁶ “The building seems to be a static composition, but at the same time it is an active and dynamic figure that records the changes of the different moments of the day and the year. When the sun is stronger, for example, the contrasts between light and shadow are more pronounced and the building refers to warm colors through golden light, or the blue colors of glaciers in winter, giving the viewer the sensory perception of a change nature.” (Osbjorn, J. “Riflessi nordici nell’Harpa di Reykjavik.” *Progettare Architettura*, 30 April 2013. Accessed on 10 February 2019, translated by the author. <http://www.progettarearchitettura.it/riflessi-nordici-nellharpa-di-reykjavik/>)

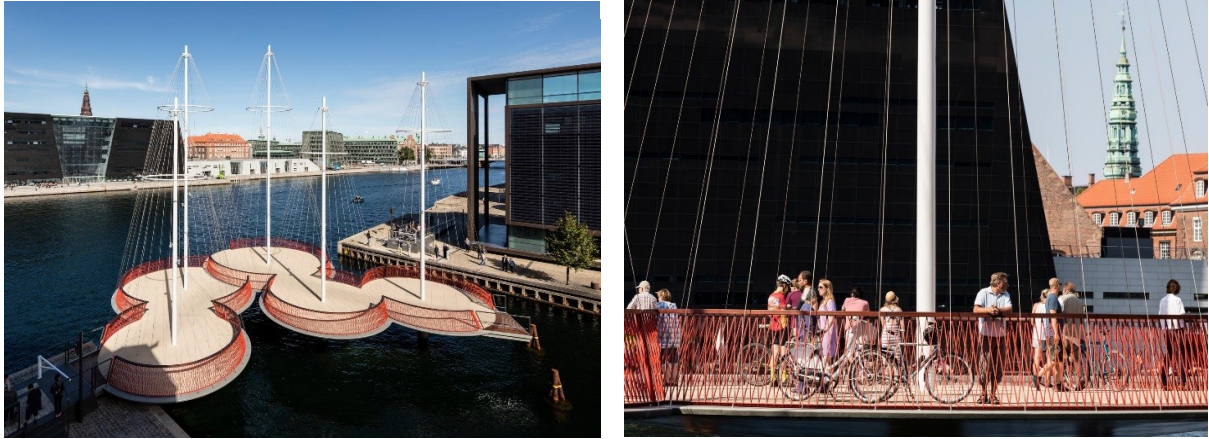


Fig.3. Olafur Eliasson, *Cirkelbroen*, Copenhagen, 2015.



Fig.4. Olafur Eliasson in cooperation with Henning Larsen, Harpa Concert Hall and Conference Center, Reykjavik, 2011.

As it was seen with this brief historical panorama, artists have been seeking to escape from their own traditional sphere of activity, expanding their studies and starting to explore questions space. Furthermore, art has gone from museums and galleries and has entered more easily in people's lives, creating works that turn to the urban space. In addition to being guided by individual experiences, these works also take on a collective dimension, serving as a tool for revitalizing the public space itself. Thus, the construction of these hybrid works of art and architecture leads us to revise our own concepts regarding the tenuous limit of these interdisciplinary fields in the function of the new symbiotic interweaves of contemporaneity. Faced with the current chaotic and globalized world, such experimentalism could serve as a way to tackle the problem of part of contemporary architecture, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

When it comes to Olafur Eliasson's works, they may be whether within an architectural space, be a part of the architecture itself, or be in public spaces serving as urban interventions. Regardless of the dimensions of his works, they are all directed to a single logic which explores the effects sensory perception has on human bodies in a here and now experience. To do that, he has been transferring the language from the field of architecture to the visual art field and creating new ways of promoting an embodied experience for those who experience his artworks. Instances of this are the so-called *projective impulse of architecture* and the *visually negotiable structure*. Both these ideas are embedded in the immanence aspects of materials. This reveals the question posed in this chapter, which is how Eliasson has been appropriating space and adopting a phenomenological approach on their artworks. To summarize, this artist aims to explore elements that stimulate the visitor's experience to create a greater involvement of people within the space. Depending on the scale of his work, it gains social and cultural proportions through a created atmosphere. Therefore, these artworks contribute to sharpen people's gaze and increase their physical awareness. These phenomenological questions, furthermore, will be seen from an architectural perspective in the following chapter.

Chapter 2.

Experiencing the Place: Phenomenology in Architecture

2.1 Architecture and Image in Contemporary Times

As we could see in the last chapter, from the 1990s, different critics claimed that the paradigm of time has been overcome by a paradigm of space. They recognized space and local differences as important questions in human affairs, in such a way that it has become a relevant social construction for understanding the production of cultural phenomena. However, David Harvey, by doing a historical analysis of the contemporary space-time experience in *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1992), came to the conclusion of a number of current frustrations. In the book, he stated that in the last two decades we have been experiencing an intense phase of time-space compression that has had a disorienting and disturbing impact on political-economic practices, the balance of class power, as well as on cultural and social life.⁴⁷ That is, space and time experiences have been fused by speed in function of this technological world. Therefore, what is seen is a dampening of production in a mass of images as goods, and then leading to a culture towards the sense of vision.⁴⁸ This negligence with the body and the senses therefore has caused “an imbalance of our sensory system” and a consequent crisis of representation regarding the scope of architecture.⁴⁹ Instances of this are the creation of projects that seem to be constructed as a theatrical setting for the eyes, often designed by *star architects*, known to have some degree of fame among the general public due to their visibility in the media. These pop architects have been concerned to leave their trademarks in the world with imposing and thought-provoking works, as the criterion of an authentic architectural quality as lived in its totality has been replaced “by the photographed image in the architectural press.”⁵⁰ As a result, the critic and architect Bernard Tschumi (1944) puts forward that this avoidance and even repression of the body and its experience, commonly presented in a contemporary architecture logic form, leads to “the end of an embodiment in architecture” and the “uncanny sense of the presence

⁴⁷ Harvey, D. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Nova Jersey: John Wiley Professio, 1992, 147.

⁴⁸ “The observer becomes detached from an incarnate relation with the environment through the suppression of the other senses, in particularly by means of technological extension of the eye, and the proliferation of images.” (Pallasmaa, J. *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2005c, 27)

⁴⁹ Ibid, 19.

⁵⁰ Pallasmaa, J. *Encounters*. Helsinki: Rakennustieto Oy, 2005a, 182.

of an absence and to the building in pain.”⁵¹ Thus, these works has become contradictory and confused in regards the roots of its primordial function, which is the act of experiencing.⁵²

In addition, with the expansion of the capitalist order, fueled by a growing globalization of technology, functionality equals economic rationality. This results on the construction of hurried, immediate, and consequently universal works of architecture. Thus, commercial and economic interests have been contributed to a crisis of meaning in the architectural field as this principle of simple economic does away with its rich and cultural aspects. As a consequence, architects end up turning to the immediate market generating mechanical constructions, serving only as mere practical day by day aspects. By going against this apparent universal triumph of the “non-place urban realm,” the theorist and architect Kate Nesbitt in *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture* (1996) claims that we have no choice but to determine more consciously the necessary links between *place* and *production*, as well as “the *what* and the *how*.”⁵³ With the increasingly intense conditions of spatial indifference and departicularization, it is perhaps no surprise, then, that efforts to retrieve lost differences become invested in the field of architecture in order to reconnect to the uniqueness of the places. Thus, different theories in the field have become to emerge from the postmodern period against the drive towards a universal architecture which engenders the homogenization of places and the erasure of cultural differences. These theories established to build are fundamental for architecture to rescue its design strength, as they aim to provoke people’s senses, not just vision, and to reinforce values of local and cultural identity, which is the case of phenomenology, understood and discussed below in the field of architecture.

2.2 Phenomenology as an Architectural Discourse

On how phenomenology applies to architecture, it is first worth to understand what this philosophy is. Phenomenology as a method was developed by the philosopher and mathematician Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). It can be defined as the science of phenomena, the study of the essence of perception and consciousness. In the etymology of the word, it is understood that phenomenology means “to leave and to make to see for itself what is shown, as shown from itself” or, in other words, to bring light to the essence of what is shown.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Tschumi in Nesbitt, 444.

⁵² Pallasmaa, J. *Os Olhos da Pele: a Arquitetura e os Sentidos*. Porto Alegre: Artmed Editora, 2009, 483.

⁵³ Nesbitt, K. *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture: an Anthology of Architectural Theory*. New York: Princeton Architecture Press, 1996, 445.

⁵⁴ Heidegger in Moura, I. F. *A Luz Sobre as Formas: Corpo e Experiência na Arquitetura de Steven Holl*. MA thesis, Recife: UFPE, 2017, 28.

According to Husserl, starting from the observation of things by the way they present themselves to the human, it would be possible to reveal the essence of the thing and its real meaning, that is, its epistemological essence. For him, the understanding of something is only possible through a conscious being, and consciousness is the reflection of what the senses have grasped so that a thing has no meaning until it is experienced.⁵⁵ Thus, it is necessary for a being to experience the thing so that it acquires meaning.⁵⁶ For phenomenology, an object is only known when it is experienced, and experiencing is related to the act of experiencing something through the body, that is, through the senses.

In order to rethink the design praxis and its pedagogical substance, architects began to question once again the full nature of the art of building. From the 1950s, with translations of works by the philosophers Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), who studied philosophy under Husserl, and Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962), phenomenology in architecture has started to displace formalism and problematize the body's interaction with its environment based on human experience regarding the spatial reflections of these philosophers. One of the most influential phenomenological works for architecture is *Bauen Wohnen Denken* (Building Dwelling Thinking), written in 1954 by Heidegger and translated in English and Italian in 1975, in which the philosopher articulates the relationship between "building and dwelling, being, constructing, cultivating, and sparing."⁵⁷ In this text, Heidegger addresses the theme of dwell from the ontological point of view of what it *is*. The central question in the text is: "what is man's dwelling?." However, this dwelling is not from the point of view of architecture and technique. Dwelling here means the mode of dwelling, or the dwelling condition which, for Heidegger, is nothing more than the manner of *being in the world* by man (*Dasein*). For him, to dwell is much more a delay with the things and, for that, the man constructs. Thus, to dwell is to build, to preserve natural things, and to construct unnatural things. It is only from the built that a place is born, understood as a place that offers man a space to exist as such.

Once phenomenology was recognized in the architectural field from the postmodernism period, architects have started employing and adopting the precepts of this method in their works. Phenomenology can be seen as "a practice rather than a system," its practical character is among the reasons why it has become considerably explored in the architectural

⁵⁵ Heidegger in Moura, 28.

⁵⁶ "Everything that I know about the world, even through science, I know from a perspective that is my own or from an experience of the world without which scientific symbols would be meaningless." (Merleau-Ponty, 1945)

⁵⁷ Nesbitt, 29.

field.⁵⁸ According to Mohammed Reza Shirazi, researcher, and lecturer at the Center for Technology and Society (Berlin University of Technology), due to its applicability, architects have been using this *way, method* or *approach* as a potential discourse, that is, as a common point of departure which can guide them through the process of design and architectural creation.⁵⁹ Phenomenology in architecture means the act of being in a place, experiencing it and understanding it through the body and the senses. This corporeality enables the human to perceive things, spaces, and the world through a living and dynamic perception, that is, as an experienced perception.⁶⁰ Thus, body should not be seen as a mere physical sense only, but instead, as a *lived* and *existential* organism which corporeal awareness can be understood, according to Shirazi, as the union of the body with the engagement with the world through the senses. So, in phenomenological projects of architecture, vision is not the prioritized sense; instead, the senses are interrelated and connected each other to promote a multisensorial experience “organized and articulated around the center of the body.”⁶¹ To do that, architects manipulate various parameters of built space by exploring “materials, textures, qualities of light, colors, and joints of spaces” to rescue the relation of the individual to the generated place, as it will be shown with examples in the coming topics.⁶²

To summarize, in architecture’s phenomenology, the narrowing of the relation of the viewer to the work is linked to the sensorial force that architects explore in their projects. To do that, architects are encouraged to think about how their works can promote an embodied experience to people with a manipulation of form, materials, space, and light. This way, the experience is more “organized and articulated around the body in a constant dialogue of interaction with the environment.”⁶³ According to Shirazi, they can explore this in different ways.⁶⁴ With an effort to foreshadow phenomenological theories that would dialogue the most with Fjordenhus building, this research came up with three main branches on this chapter: the spirit of a place, the senses in architecture, and architectonic atmospheres. These

⁵⁸ Moran, D. *Introduction to Phenomenology*. London: Routledge, 2002, 4.

⁵⁹ Shirazi, 17.

⁶⁰ “My perception is not a sum or visual, tactile, and audible givens: I perceive in a total way with my whole being: I grasp a unique structure of the thing, a unique way of being, which speaks to all my sense at once.” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964)

⁶¹ Pallasmaa, 2005b, 61.

⁶² Shirazi, 13.

⁶³ Pallasmaa, 2005b, 61.

⁶⁴ In *Towards an Articulated Phenomenological Interpretation of Architecture* (2014), Shirazi reviewed the phenomenological philosophical foundations (Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty) followed by a review of architects and architecture theorists who have used the phenomenological approach (such as Norberg-Schulz, Pallasmaa, Frampton, among others). In making a balance of the common and peculiar aspects of each author, he identifies that the majority of the architects linked to the phenomenology does not communicate to each other. These architects end up developing their own theories, starting from their own convictions, so their methods of interpretation are limited to the same. Thus, Shirazi characterizes phenomenology nowadays, in the context of architecture, as a fragmented interpretation. (Shirazi, 113)

three topics will be discussed in order to serve as the theoretical background in the analysis of the case study in the following chapter, and are therefore presented below.

2.2.1 The Spirit of a Place

Norwegian architect and professor at the University of Yale in the United States in the 1960s, Christian Norberg-Schulz (1926-2000) was associated with the espousal of a phenomenology of architecture by bringing Heidegger's writings on inhabiting to the field of architecture and developing the idea of place cited by the philosopher. For Norberg-Schulz, the phenomenology's potential in architecture lies in the "ability to give meaning to space through the creation of places."⁶⁵ He started his theory in *Architecture: Meaning and Place* (1988) reintroducing the Roman concept *genius loci*, that means the spirit of a particular place, which should be respected. He refers to place as an element of the environment created by man in the various "scales, towns, houses, or cities, and also the paths, connections, bridges or roads."⁶⁶ This way, place means more than a simple location: it is constituted of meaning and composed by the materials, the architectural form, the textures, and the colors. According to him, all these elements together make up and gives sense to the place, relating it to nature in three different steps:

Firstly, man wants to make the natural structure more precise. That is, he wants to *visualize* his "understanding" of nature, "expressing" the existential foothold he has designed. To achieve this, he *builds* what he has seen. (...) Secondly, man has to *symbolize* his understanding of nature (including himself). Symbolization implies that an experienced meaning is "translated" into another medium. (...) The purpose of symbolization is to free the meaning from the immediate situation, whereby it becomes a "cultural object." (...) Finally, man needs to *gather* the experienced meanings to create for himself *an imago mundi* or *microcosmos* which concretizes his world.⁶⁷

This attitude of *visualizing*, *symbolizing*, and *gathering*, constitute the existential purpose of building according to the architect, which consists of the basic relationship

⁶⁵ Nesbitt, 412.

⁶⁶ Norberg-Schulz in Nesbitt, 419.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 421.

between man and his environment.⁶⁸ The true dwelling defended by Heidegger symbolizes the existential sense of the world, and for Norberg-Schulz, it is necessary these three steps in order to concretize a unified place endowed with sense. Thus, by the use of local symbolic architectural forms (style) explored by materiality and design, architects concretize this “existential space,” term introduced by Norberg-Schulz. Following the same logic as him celebrating the particular qualities of place, the theorist and architect Kenneth Frampton (1930) also contributes to the discussion by introducing a Critical Regionalist practice. Showing a phenomenological interest in the specificity of the place, in *The Isms of Contemporary Architecture* (1982) he proposes a program for an architecture of resistance. For Frampton, a specific place already exists with its identity or a priori identity properties whenever new cultural forms are introduced or emerged.⁶⁹ Architectural and urban projects are understood in this regionalist practice as reactive, that is, they should cultivate what is presumed to be already there rather than generating new identities and histories. The Leça Swimming Pools project (1966) from the Portuguese architect Alvaro Siza (1933) is a classic example of that, located at Leça beach, in a small city in the north of Porto, Portugal. As you enter the building through a slight concrete ramp and as you walk down the aisle, past the changing rooms and showers, the rough concrete walls obscure the view of the ocean ahead. Without views, the ocean becomes barely audible. When finally arriving at the edge of the sea, the Leça Swimming Pools are revealed. With the exploration of stone and concrete, the pools naturally integrate with the ocean and with the natural pools along with the coast, thus creating a greater connection with the natural landscape. (Fig.5)

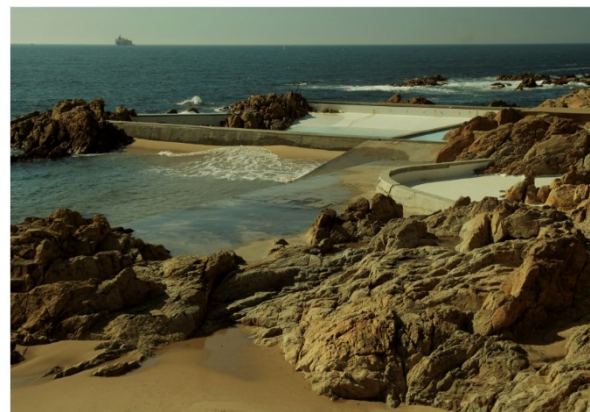


Fig.5. Alvaro Siza, Leça Swimming Pools, Leça, 1966.

⁶⁸ “The existential purpose of building (architecture) is [...] to uncover the meanings potentially present in the given environment.” (Norberg-Schulz, C. *Genius Loci. Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*. New York: Rizzoli, 1991, 18).

⁶⁹ Kwon, 2004, 182.

To summarize, these critics and theorists proposed refusal to the homogenization of the built environment resulted from product manufacturing and construction techniques from the postmodern period. Their themes merged from the resistance to optimization in capitalism and the search for meaning and cultural association with the place. Therefore, these regionalist works of architecture embedded on a *genius loci* concept help them to become more integrated with the urban space inserted, thus contributing to the identity of the place. Another theory of phenomenology in architecture is the exploration of the senses. This idea also plays an important role in the resuscitation of architectural spaces as it is more articulated around the body, which will be discussed below.

2.2.2 The Senses in Architecture

The Finish theorist and architect Juhani Pallasmaa (1936) had also concerned with the loss of communicative power of architecture. In *The Eyes of the Skin* (2011), he shows from a historical panorama starting from classical antiquity how valued the sense of vision is, seen as the greatest gift of humanity according to Plato, considered as a “metaphor of truth.”⁷⁰ In the Renaissance period, both this fact remained and the very representation of the perspective continued to leave vision at the top of the hierarchy between the five human senses, followed by touch, hearing, smell, and taste.⁷¹ The valorization of vision in relation to the other senses lasts from the antiquity and still keeps going until nowadays. Pallasmaa’s main argument is that there is a crisis of meaning of part of contemporary architecture which is directly linked with the neglect of the body and its senses.⁷² This causes, according to him, an imbalance of our sensory system, as the vision is the sense mainly explored in architecture nowadays.⁷³ Thus, also inspired on readings of Husserl, Heidegger, and Bachelard, Pallasmaa goes against this paradigm of vision and interprets phenomenology in architecture as the importance of the encounter of the body with the place that is “exploited by body movements” giving a return to the sensibility of perception through the senses.⁷⁴ Therefore, if the essence of architecture depends on its ability to symbolize human existence on a spatial experience of the work, the theorist comes with a paradigm of an architecture more integrated with the senses and the

⁷⁰ Pallasmaa, 2005c, 15.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Mccarter, R.; Pallasmaa, J. *Understanding Architecture: A Primer on Architecture as Experience*. London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2012, 5.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Pallasmaa, 2011, 60.

body.⁷⁵ This idea is also discussed in his essay “The Geometry of Feeling,” where he argues that architecture, a direct expression of human presence in the world, is an expression largely based on a language of the body.⁷⁶

Concerning this body centered paradigm, the eyes should not be seen independently of other senses, but rather in collaboration with them. To understand that, one can differentiate between two modes of vision, explained by the American philosopher David Michael Levin (1943). First, there is *the assertoric gaze* which is “narrow, dogmatic, intolerant, rigid, fixed, inflexible, exclusionary and unmoved.”⁷⁷ Second, there is *the aletheic gaze*, that tends to see from “a multiplicity of standpoints and perspectives, and is multiple, pluralistic, democratic, contextual, inclusionary, horizontal, and caring.”⁷⁸ Advocated by Pallasmaa, the prime example for the creation of an *aletheic gaze* is the exploration of peripheral vision. Through peripheral vision, we are able not to dwell merely on the focal Cartesian perspective, but we come to see things through multiple and dynamic points of view that can be intensified with our own movements.⁷⁹ The architect Peter Zumthor, for instance, explores the aletheic gaze by his so-called way of project *between composure and seduction*, which involves the spatial and temporal movement of the viewer. He argues that instead of only providing direct orientation to passing through users, buildings should seduce them by “giving a sense of freedom of movement” and of “strolling at [free] will.”⁸⁰ The Mount Rokko Chapel, a church on the water projected by Tadao Ando (1941), for instance, can be seen as a ritual procession of a body in movement. The path to the building – which resembles the historical paths to shrines in Japan – prepares the visitor to enter the interior according to Ando. To quote the writings of the Italian architect Renzo Piano about the chapel:

Like music, this building takes time to understand... Since the building is large, Tadao has cut it into fragments. Like music, beauty comes not only from the fragments but from their sequence... In this building, you immediately understand the fragments. You see a fragment of big volume, then the fragment of a great

⁷⁵ "It is similarly inconceivable that we could think of purely cerebral architecture that would not be a projection of the human body and its movement through space. The art of architecture is also engaged with metaphysic and existential questions concerning man's being in the world." (Pallasmaa, 2012b, 45)

⁷⁶ Pallasmaa, J. “The Geometry of Feeling: the Phenomenology of Architecture. 2007” *Essential Writings from Vitruvius to the Present. The Architectural Reader*. New York: George Brazillier Publishers, 241-245, 2005b.

⁷⁷ Levin in Pallasmaa, 2005c, 36.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Zumthor in Tzortzi, K. *Museum Architectures for Embodied Experience. Museum Management and Curatorship*, v. 32, n. 5, 491-508, 2017, 494.

wall, then the fragment of circular slope, then the fragment of another volume. When connected, they become music.⁸¹

Through the exploration of a multisensory experience by mass manipulation, geometric structure, scale, and rhythm, architecture can affect our sense of movement. As we can see from Piano's interpretation about Mount Rokko Chapel, its fragmental configuration brings about a gradual perception of the building that is achieved by moving through its spaces. As a consequence, the experience is more articulated around the body and the gaze becomes related to other sensorial modalities, such as spatial and temporal movement. Like music, architecture can be understood over time. Thus, it should not be conceived as static objects, but as fluidly "evolving environments that people can only behold by passing through them, experiencing the before and afters as well as present through a moving eye and kinesthetic body."⁸² With the "poetics of movement" and an "art of choreographing space-in-time," Ando helped to return man to his material body through a here and now experience of time.⁸³

In addition, considering that in phenomenological architecture the experience of a place is deeply linked to the body, it is dispensable to explore the multisensorial characteristics of the materials, their textures, and colors. Since they have their own language and therefore can communicate, materials play a vital role in the architectural experience. According to the Swedish architect Peter Zumthor (1943), who describes himself as a phenomenological architect, the harmony of construction lies in the choice of materials and in their arrangements in place. For him, materials must have an essential reason to be inserted in a certain space. This idea is understandable, for example, through his work *Therme Vals* (1996), a designed spa built over the only thermal spring in the Graubunden Canton in Switzerland, when Zumthor based on the sensorial experiences of materials. In this project, three materials were used systematically in the building: metal, water, and stone, composing what he calls the *triad*. Although working with few materials, he explored the various possibilities of each one creating different repertoires with a logic of the use of textures through proportions, proximities, and quantities of these materials, thus composing the meaning of the place. (Fig.5) This texture logic, in itself, refers to the language of the body.

⁸¹ Piano in Shirazi, 168.

⁸² Shirazi, 169.

⁸³ Ibid.

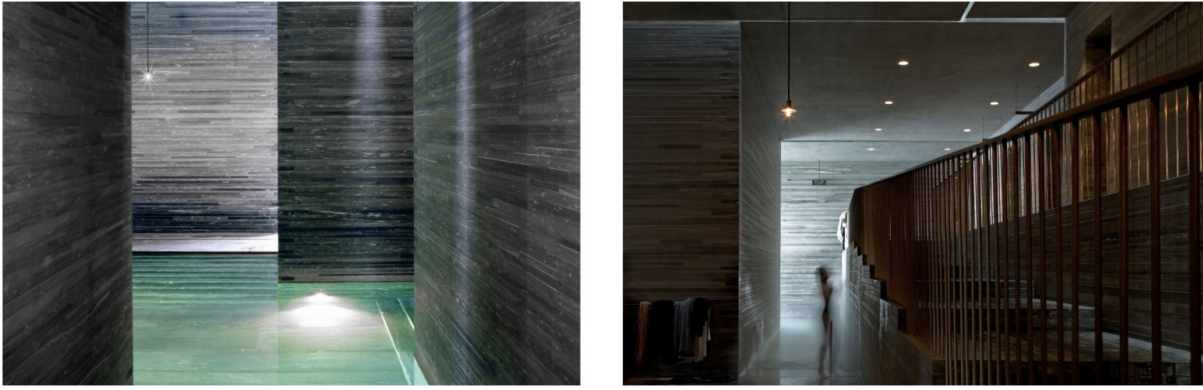


Fig.6. Peter Zumthor, Therme Vals, Graubunden Canton, Switzerland, 1996.

To summarize, through these conscious means of architecture discussed above, people can reflect on their own bodily existence. For instance, through the exploration and manipulation of materials, geometry, rhythm, scale, color, and illumination. These manipulations add social dimensions to these architectural works, that therefore allow them to reach a collective dimension and the spaces to create an intense atmosphere, as will be discussed below.

2.2.3 Architectonic Atmospheres

How could the atmosphere of a place be explained? What relationship does it have with architecture and how does it excite us? Bringing its definition to an existential architectural point of view, the architect Peter Zumthor explains in *Atmospheres: Architectural Environments, Surrounding Objects* (2006) that there are two important points in identifying the atmosphere of a place: the first is that atmospheres are emotionally experienced before being understood intellectually; it is perceived immediately, as a spontaneous emotional response through sensitivity. The second is that human's pre-intellectual encounter with architecture is a multisensory experience, that is, our encounter with buildings is very corporeal: "we have inwardly felt the buildings, the haptic quality of their materials, we hear its sounds, we see its lights, we feel its temperature and smells, etc."⁸⁴ This way, factors such as material compatibility, coherence, and tension between "interior and exterior, the sound and the temperature of a space, the light on things," can be explored in architecture in order to embrace the atmosphere of a place. Another fact argued by Zumthor is that the design of atmospheres is not confined to the interior of an architectural space but also in how the

⁸⁴ Bohme, G.; Eliasson, O.; Pallasmaa, J. *Architectural Atmospheres: On the Experience and Politics of Architecture*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2014, 7.

building relates to the environment; therefore, they should not be conceived as singular entities, but be thought of as part of a larger atmospheric whole.

The definition of atmosphere is uncertain, and can be understood and conceptualized in different ways. In order to seek to advance the recent debates in atmospheric social theory and its growing recognition within architecture, in *Architectural Atmospheres: on the experience and politics of architecture* (2014), four experts from different fields came together to discuss the subject: the sociologist Christian Borch, the philosopher Gernot Bohme, the architect and theorist Juhani Pallasmaa, and the artist Olafur Eliasson. In the book, a major factor to be considered about the architectural creation of atmospheres is that it equates to a subtle form of power by being able to influence people's behavior as “desires and experiences are managed without them being consciously aware of it.”⁸⁵ According to Borch, atmospheres can be designed in a multisensory way to govern or induce particular behaviors. They are able to suggest activities and acts in certain situations and this makes them to reflect about how powerful this tool is, which should be taken more seriously in the realm of architecture and urbanism. When building an architectural or urban space, a complex fusion of innumerable factors is created in space that is immediately understood in a global atmosphere through human sensibility. The more the architecture endows with multisensory exploration, the more it will contribute to the enhancement of an atmosphere that will touch people. Otherwise, it may not be perceived, which makes the place neutral, impartial, or it may also negatively affect citizens with a sense of insecurity, such as the feeling of being in an abandoned place. Through the creation of works, rich in the multisensory scope, the atmosphere of the place becomes richer of sensations, being easier to feel it and to awaken emotions in the person. To quote Olafur Eliasson:

When we speak of normativity and atmospheres, I think it is important to note that we are often insensitive to the atmospheres that surround us. Architectural details and artistic interventions can make people more aware of an already existing atmosphere. That is, materiality can actually make the atmosphere explicit – it can draw its attention and amplify its sensitivity to a particular environment.⁸⁶

Atmospheres are capable of reproducing insights into the existential dimensions of architecture. They cannot be seen, but felt. Buildings generate atmospheres through

⁸⁵ Bohme, G.; Eliasson, O.; Pallasmaa, J. *Architectural Atmospheres: On the Experience and Politics of Architecture*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2014, 78.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 95.

“manipulations of the form, light, space in which visitors do not think in images or words but sense.”⁸⁷ The Fallingwater project (1935) from the architect Frank Lloyd Wright, for instance, a house built partly over a waterfall in a rural area of Pennsylvania, dialogues with the nature surrounded, making the atmosphere of the environment more explicit by a lived experience. It “weaves the surrounding forest, the volumes, surfaces, textures, and colors of the house, and even the smells of the forest and the sounds of the river.”⁸⁸ Once again reaffirming the importance of exploring a multisensory architecture in order to contribute to the creation of more humanized spaces, one must dwell on Borch's thoughts about the relation that the atmosphere can have: “to adopt an atmospheric perspective implies paying attention to how architecture and urban planning are capable of providing food for multisensory experiences.”⁸⁹ Summing up, they are spaces with a mood, or emotionally felt spaces by the fusion of material functions or existing properties of the place with the immaterial means of human perception, imagination, and sensibility, therefore being able to affect us, modify our mood and even influence our behaviors without our realizing it.

2.3 Interpreting a Building Phenomenologically

After discussing how architects can explore phenomenology in architecture, it is important to understand how a building can be analyzed by this paradigm in order to interpret the Fjordenhus in the following chapter. In *Towards an Articulated Phenomenological Interpretation of Architecture* (2014), M. Reza Shirazi helps on analyzing architectonic and built environments by introducing a practical method of interpretation, defined by him as *phenomenal phenomenology*. Rather than concentrating on selective views, this method interprets the work as a whole experience by moving through architectural space. In *phenomenal phenomenology*, a work of architecture is understood in a dynamic way and the body is, therefore, a “vivid body, a body in movement, a multisensory body” that moves through space and allows “a lived experience and existential perception.”⁹⁰ In order to describe this experience, Shirazi uses architectural plans and photographs to guide his interpretation. (Fig.7)

⁸⁷ Krogh in Tzortzi, 112.

⁸⁸ Pallasmaa, 2012, 45.

⁸⁹ Borch in Bohme, 15.

⁹⁰ Shirazi, 173.

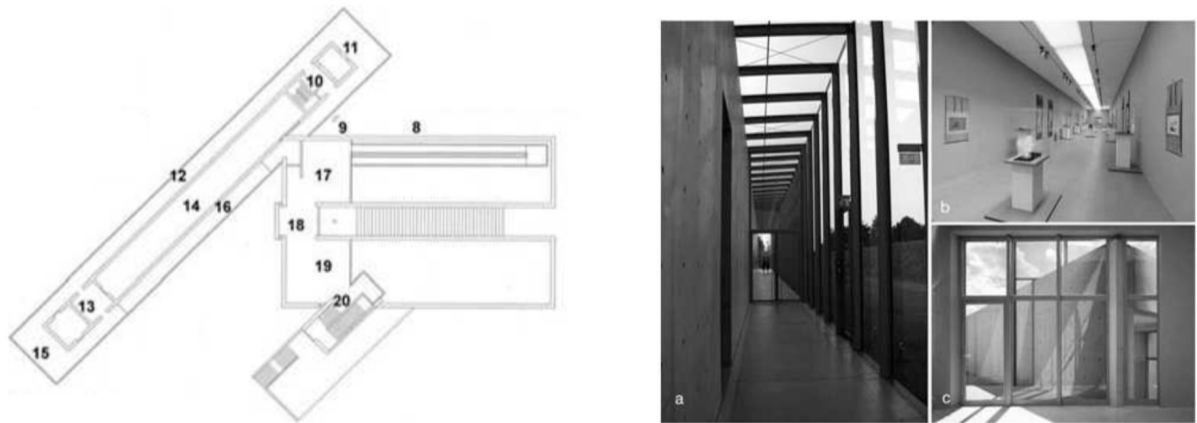


Fig.7. Phenomenological interpretation's method by M. Reza Shirazi in *Towards an Articulated Phenomenological Interpretation of Architecture*, 2014.

Furthermore, Shirazi engages the reader in the analysis taking into account the reader/interpreter regarded as a traveler on a phenomenological journey. This journey is initiated at a macro level until approaching the periphery of the building and finally experiencing the interior. This method of interpretation will be applied to the case studied in *Chapter 3*. As Shirazi explains:

The reader/interpreter is considered as a traveler on a phenomenological journey. By describing the interpreter of a work of architecture as “the traveler” in what follows, the essential mobility of the phenomenological interpreter is emphasized. The traveler – the interpreter – approaches the building from its periphery, and follows the building’s general circulation routes, while keeping all phenomenological concerns in mind. Thus, the study begins from the macro level, from reading the environment, its characteristics and specialities. By means of approaching the building from the periphery to the interior, the traveler experiences the environment phenomenologically from a continuous succession of positions and views, that is, in movement. The traveler approaches the site, moves towards the building, experiences the exterior, enters into the interior, perceives the interior step by step by following the general path of circulation and, and considers all the attendant phenomena in detail and with great attention, trying not to leave any element unread or unnoticed. In this careful and cautious reading, which considers all aspects and dimensions of the work, the traveller perceives numerous feelings and draws his own “image” step by step. As a result of his gradual apperception, there is a continuous interaction between the phenomenological concerns of the mind and the vivid perceptions of the senses.

This continuous interaction evokes multiple “sub-images” and leads to the overall “image” in the mind of the traveller, which is originally and fundamentally phenomenological.⁹¹

Despite the confused, abstract, and fragmented aspects of postmodern theory of phenomenology in architecture, there are many reasons to adopt it in this research. The main reason is because these phenomenological theories from 1965 to 1995 helped to promote works that are not only linked to the inserted place, but also more organized around the body. These phenomenological works preserve their surroundings and are essentially connected to their site, paying attention to their particularities. For example, architectural theories that drew on these philosophical ideas were those of Christian Norberg-Schulz and Kenneth Frampton. By applying them in a work of architecture, the building becomes more integrated to the place, contributing to the sense of identity of the city where it is inserted. In addition, architects such as Pallasmaa have also begun to reflect on how the tangible aspects of architecture (such as materiality, shape, texture, and color) reflect in the built space. The intention was to contribute to an embodied experience to people. Therefore, the more architects explore a multisensory architecture, the richer the experience of those experiencing it becomes. Consequently, the atmosphere of a place is intensified. Finally, the issues in this chapter have helped to understand how architectural projects embedded on phenomenological issues contribute to an experience more articulated and organized around the body.

In order to better analyze Fjordenhus building and to relate it to the current debate of architecture, it was essential to explore the discussions in this chapter. With a better understanding of contemporary architecture and the senses, the relationship between space, body, and experience, as well as the concept of atmosphere from today's important theorists, this chapter has helped to create a critical basis for interpreting the building presented in the following chapter.

⁹¹ Shirazi, 217-8.

Chapter 3.

A Lived Experience in the Fjordenhus Building

3.1 The Fjordenhus: An Introduction

Vejle is a city located in the central part of the Danish peninsula of Jutland near the head of the Vejle fjord, where the Grejs and Vejle rivers converge. Being the ninth largest Danish city with around fifty-five thousand inhabitants, Vejle is mainly known for its wooded hills and its fjord.⁹² It is so in this natural context that the Fjordenhus building (or fjord house) was constructed, July of 2018, in the harbor area. Standing alongside *Havneøen* (The Harbor Island), Fjordenhus was developed in response to a concept by Vejle Municipality to revitalize the harbor area with new residential buildings into the traditional industrial environment. In an urban context, considering the fact that most of the pedestrian activity was focused in the city center, the building serves as a link between the center and the harbor, thus contributing to the recovery of the area being one of the main tourist attractions of the city nowadays. This way, turning the city's main face of the city center to draw attention to the harbor, Fjordenhus was created rising from the water and can be accessed across a footbridge. The building appears as the focal point for the people approaching from Vejle's main urban axis, and its cylindrical forms harmoniously dialogue with the typologies of the port – covered by warehouses and silos – and gently confronts with Vejle Fjord at the bottom of the landscape. (Fig.8)

The Fjordenhus building was commissioned by Kirk Kapital, investment company owned by three brothers who are direct descendants of the founder of Lego. The project is twenty-eight meters high and has two distinct uses: the double-height ground floor is open to the public, whereas the upper three floors have a private use containing the three offices of Kirk Kapital.⁹³ On the ground floor, an open area encompasses a sequence of spaces in between the environment, the harbor, and the building, which contains site-specific artworks by Olafur Eliasson that engage and dialogue with the architecture, and are to be analyzed in the next topic. On the office floors, the furniture and lighting were all designed by the Studio Olafur Eliasson. The different floors are connected by spiral staircases and organized around

⁹² According to the Cambridge dictionary, a fjord is a long, narrow arm of the sea bordered by steep cliffs typically formed by submergence of a glaciated valley. Vejle Fjord has approximately twenty-two km in length, and it stretches east from the town of Vejle.

⁹³ Studio Olafur Eliasson. "Fjordenhus by Olafur Eliasson and Sebastian Behmann with Studio Olafur Eliasson, KIRK KAPITAL Headquarters, Vejle, Denmark, Inaugurated on 9 June, 2018. Press Materials." Available at: <https://olafureliasson.net/press/fjordenhus>. (Accessed on 18 June 2019).

circles and ellipses. With experiences on “perception, physical movement, light, nature, and the experience of space,” Eliasson’s starting point of the project was embedded on the ephemerality idea, so that the experience of being in the building would embrace the natural qualities of the place: nature, light, the weather, the seasons, and the Vejle Fjord.⁹⁴ To do that, the artist together with the architect Sebastian Behmann created a geometric form, which is made of four brick cylinder shapes that merge to form the organic main structure, from which ellipsoidal negative spaces were removed to create curved forms at ground level and arched windows for the upper floors. (Fig.9) The generated spaces are not simply cylinders due to their deformities, and the geometrical operations connect the circle and the ellipsis created; this sort of tridimensional curve is the main design feature of the building from the outside.



Fig.8. Fjordenhus building and its surroundings (East view, facing Vejle Fjord)

⁹⁴ Eliasson, “Fjordenhus Press Materials 2018,” 10.

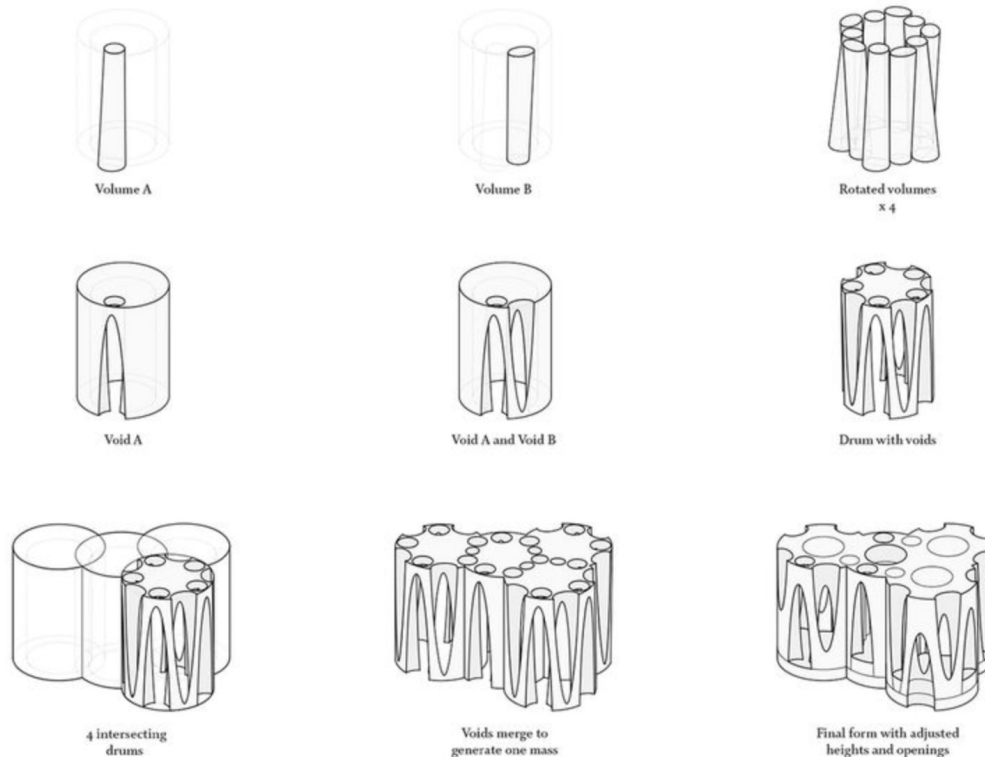


Fig.9. The geometric form concept of Fjordenhus.

Fjordenhus’ sculptural form results in an interaction of structures and voids. These voids – the main points of interaction between inside and outside – are the major design element of the building. Therefore, there is a porosity to the building: while it stands directly in the water, which permeates parts of the ground floor, the building is shot through with many different openings that frame views of the fjord and the surrounding’s natural elements. With the idea of the geometry taking the volumes of, it “opens the building from the inside out in a generous way,” says Behmann, and the generated series of vertical spaces that cut the parameter of the cylinder connect the sky with the water.⁹⁵ Therefore, it is more the environment that shapes the building, than the building that shapes the environment. By setting the building within the environment extending Vejle into the Fjord, the relation to the city, to the harbor, and to the water, the story of the building is composed. When it comes to its materiality, Fjordenhus' inner and outer walls are built from 970,000 regional Danish bricks, with fifteen different hues of unglazed brick, along with blue, green and silver glazed bricks. Each of the external facades has different combinations of bricks depending on the light that it receives (glazed blue bricks are more often used near the base and blue bricks

⁹⁵ Behmann, “Fjordenhus Press Materials 2018,” 11.

more frequently at the top of the building). Hollow ventilation bricks are also incorporated in some parts of the building so as to regulate sound and temperature inside. As suggested by Behmann, they were “very attentive to the choreography and sequencing of spaces, using modulation of light and acoustics to heighten all the building’s sensory aspects.”⁹⁶ With this overall information and applying Shirazi’s *phenomenal phenomenology* method, the author living experience in the building Fjordenhus is analyzed and interpreted below.

3.2 Choreographing in Space-in-Time

Generally speaking, Vejle city is merged besides the Baltic sea, and its plain lacks any prominent relief. Nonetheless, on the East area – where the Vejle Fjord is located, – the topography reaches a peak due to its natural geography, thus conveying a force of orientation and providing a natural identity to the area. (Fig.10) To get from the city center to the Harbor Island, where Fjordenhus is inserted, it takes around fifteen minutes on foot. During the walk, the landscape of the city, mainly covered by residential houses, is gradually changed into industrial factories when getting into the harbor area. Across Strandgade venue, it is possible to reach Harbor Island. (Fig.11) When it comes to the Island itself, the site does not have any ridge; it is mainly covered with cobblestone floors and has a few residential and commercial buildings with around ten floors. In the vicinity of the island, a wide public square offers a direct view of the work of art, contemplating the landscape around it: further on the North afield there is a bucolic landscape, with a more natural geography, composed by the Vejle fjord and some wooded hills, the East directly framing the marina, the South offering shelter to the city, and the West, facing Harbor Island buildings. Thus, the site in question has its own atmosphere composed by a mix of natural, industrial, and urban surroundings. These are the elements that compose the scene of public space, cement and city, nature and colors – all opening space for the insertion of Fjordenhus, and it can be accessed by a narrow and short footbridge.

⁹⁶ Behmann, “Fjordenhus Press Materials 2018,” 11.



Fig.10. General view of the area: on the West side, Vejle city; on the East, Vejle Fjord and the Baltic ocean.

**Vejle Fjord
direction**



**Vejle city
direction**

Fig.11. Route to get at Fjordenhus: from the Strandgrade Venue, cross Harbor Island (in yellow); the building is located by the end of the Island, on the right side (in red).

Upon arriving in front of it, the form of the building seems like a complex composition of volumes and surfaces that seems to be interconnected and inter-penetrated. Its curved glass surfaces reflects the water, the sky, and the surroundings, which create vibrant image on its surfaces, therefore decreasing its heaviness of concrete. Furthermore, the walls are tilted with respect to the floor and do not contain right angles, which also helps to soften their curved shapes and strengthen the feeling of lightness.⁹⁷ Thus, the clear idea that we have of weight and lightness seems to dissolve, and the result is a solid building, but at the same time light, which dialogues with its surroundings. The simple steel walkway bridge in gray invites us to get into the inwards. After crossing it by walking a few meters, the building welcomes with a long main entrance in an eclipse form. (1) This elliptical shape of the wall inevitably induces us looking upwards so as to follow its form and, by doing that, a leaked circular structure suddenly is promptly revealed, fitting the sky, framing the dancing clouds like a painting in real time. (Fig.13) Thus, the opening of the path invites us into the interior.

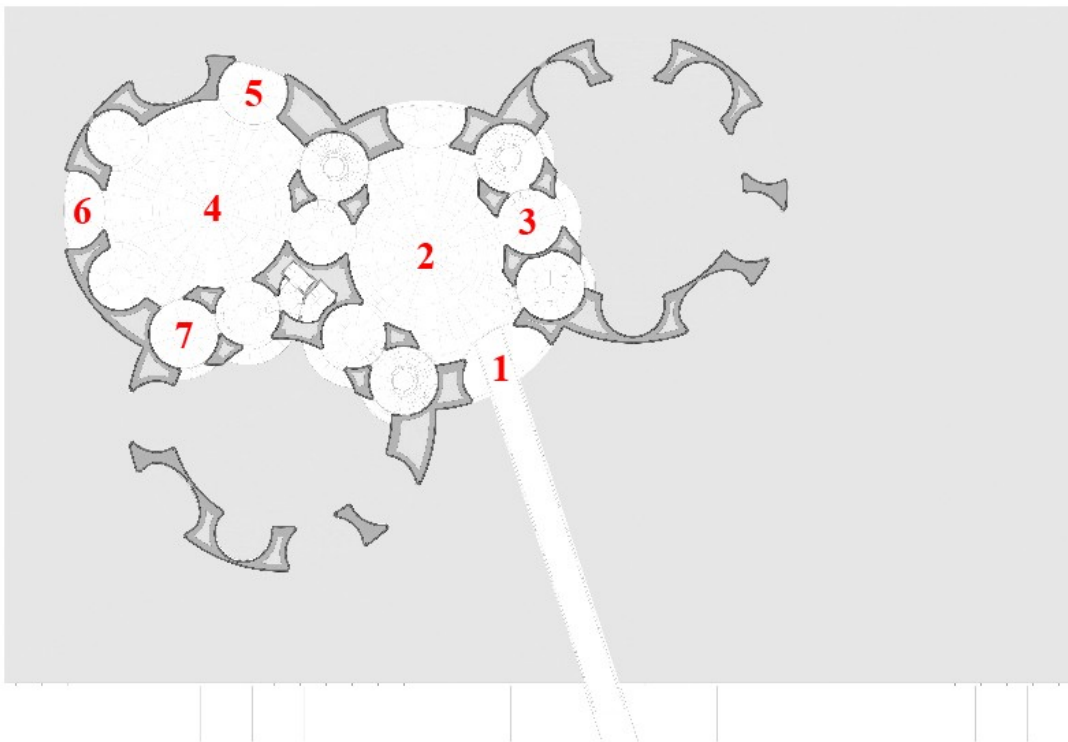


Fig.12. Ground floor plant of Fjordenhus.

⁹⁷ Paraphrasing the architects Herzog & De Meuron, who are known for their sensitive contradictions regarding the materiality of facades in their projects, Eliasson and Behmann seemed to be interested in “making the surface turn the volume.” (Kipnis, J. “A Conversation with Jacques Herzog.” *El Croquis*, 60-84, Madrid, 2000, 73)



Fig.13. Main entrance (on the left) and circular structure of the main entrance of the building (on the right).

Upon entering the foyer area, we can see that there is only one small room to the right side, serving as a room office; apart from it, the building is only possessed by the space itself, without even a piece of furniture. Exactly at the center of the foyer there is a sculpture formed by three bright brass rings hanging from the ceiling – the *Fjordenhus Meridian* (Fjord House Meridian), – remembering of the meridians of a globe. (Fig.14) Just below that installation, the granite floor has a circular design, whose lines directs our view to a point that indicates that it is the center point of the foyer. (2) Once getting there, four different views are revealed: the front view with the industrial factories to the other side of the ocean, to the right side also presenting some industrial buildings, the back view pointing to the main entrance, and the left side revealing the Vejle Fjord in the horizon together with a delicate bridge above the sea. It is perhaps not by chance that this sculpture is there, indicating a place whose projections of the meridians reveal different visions. From there, any direction seems to be the same. However, the location does not allow us to have a complete understanding and perception of the other interior spaces.⁹⁸ The circular space of the foyer is connected to three staircases as well as to three different vestibules that contain three similar installations on the floor of each. These installations – entitled *Cirkelpejl* (Circle Mirror) – have a luminous ring

⁹⁸ This voyage of discovery can be related with *between composure and seduction*, from Peter Zumthor.

that passes through its mirrored surface. (Fig.15) Due to their reflections, two of them indicate presence of surrounding water. Moving to the vestibule of the right, the space reaches the peak of walk, where the space is unraveled by the ocean. (3) From that little circular point, more perspectives are revealed. (Fig.16) Once again, it seems that the building plays with the curiosity of us, the viewer: with a gradual perception of the space, new things are revealed during the journey.⁹⁹



Fig.14. Olafur Eliasson, *Fjordenhus Meridian*, pointing out the center of the foyer. Behind, the *Circle Mirrors* installations are hanged on the ceiling of the two vestibules and besides them, there are two staircases.



Fig.15. Olafur Eliasson, *Circle Mirror*.

⁹⁹ “There is a porosity to the building: while it stands directly in the water, which permeates parts of the ground floor, the building is shot through with many different openings that frame views of the fjord and the natural elements, which makes the presence of nature felt.” (Behmann, “Fjordenhus Press Materials 2018,” 11)

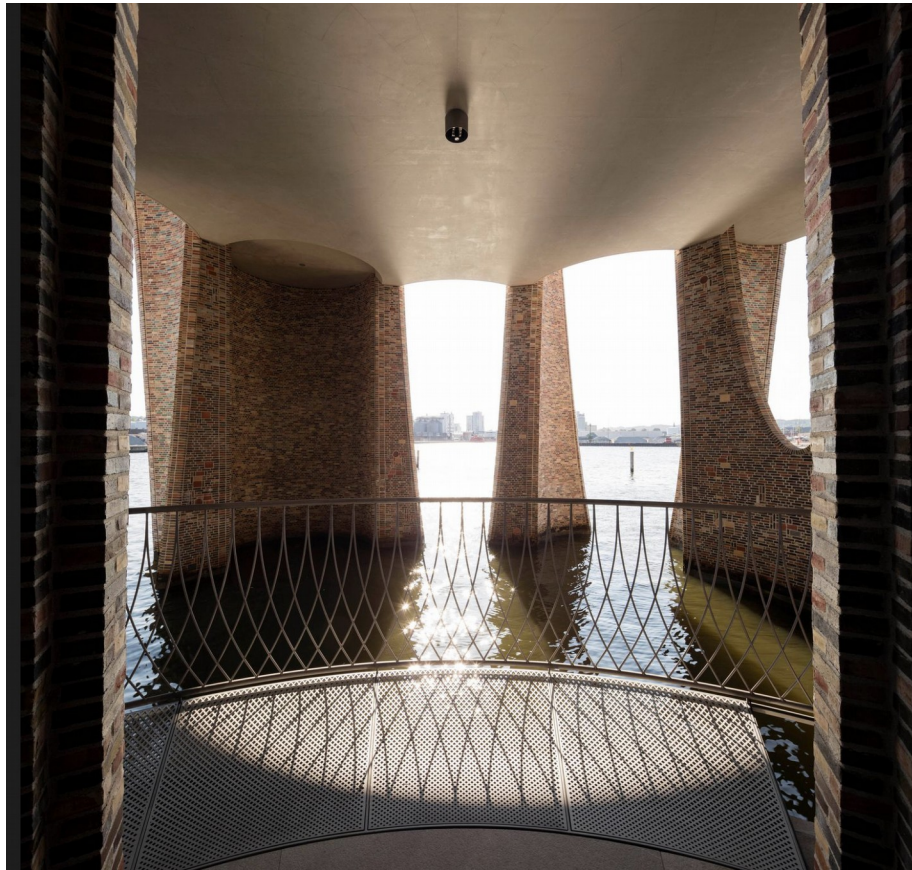


Fig.16. The views revealed at one of the vestibules (number 3 on the ground-floor plant)

Returning to the center of the foyer, a swirling sculpture hang on a far ceiling is seen partially – *Fjordhvirvel* (Fjord Vortex) – and the body unconsciously moves ahead, inducing the next step of the journey. Arriving there (4), we find ourselves with new views of the landscape through the curved structure of the building. When it comes to the swirling installation, there are some coiling tubes of stainless steel that produce a dynamic, perhaps vortex-like form with numerous triangular panes of glass in shades of blue and green suspended, exactly the same color as the bricks of the building. (Fig.17) Its diameter seems to be around seven meters long and its top of the vortex descends to a point just above our head. Would it be the intention to show the wind serving as an active element in this place, a natural element represented by this installation and concretized in that space? After a few seconds immersed by thoughts and listening subtly to the noise of the wind, we move up to the small elliptical space, descending only two little stair steps (5).¹⁰⁰ The sea welcomes us with its little waves generated by the wind. At this point, no guardrail prevents our separation with the water, and anyone could fall or jump out of the ocean if not being aware of their own

¹⁰⁰ “The outer walls, which are normally seen as a membrane between inside and outside, are spaces in Fjordenhus – sometimes the spaces are part of the interior and other times they open to the surroundings as balconies.” (Behmann, “Fjordenhus Press Materials 2018,” 11)

movements.¹⁰¹ Thus, being there requires to be attentive to the “here and now” and take care of not losing the balance and falling, for instance.¹⁰² Moreover, the water also brings the environment into the body’s domain of access as one can easily touch it with one’s hands. In this elliptical space, we can clearly hear the sound of the various birds that circumscribed this harbor site. With this melody, we continue the journey into the other spaces Fjordenhus provided. Moving to the most western side (6), the atmosphere is created by the biggest natural element framed: the Fjord Vejle further, together with a bridge that flows over the sea. Advancing a few steps to another vestibule (7), we find a sort of yellow sphere installation which lightened beneath the surface of the water, called *Undervandsforventning* (Underwater Expectation). (Fig.18) Our look penetrates through the yellow light, however, its details cannot be seen clearly due to the high water level, thus awakening curiosity.



Fig.17. Olafur Eliasson, *Fjord Vortex*.

¹⁰¹ This perceptual investigation of the place and of one self fits with the thought of Merleau-Ponty, who considers becoming consciousness of your own acts a unique quality of human consciousness (Merleau-Ponty, 2001, 283).

¹⁰² “The artistic image focuses my consciousness of my very being. I am not experiencing something distant in space and time; I am listening to myself, confronted with the timeless experience of being human. [...] Art brings me to the threshold of my own being.” (Pallasmaa, 2005a, 310)



Fig.18. Olafur Eliasson, *Underwater Expectation*.

Leaving the small vestibule and going back to the foyer again, the penetration of the light through the curved walls of the building projects the surface into the space, giving an aura of mobility.¹⁰³ Paying more attention to the details of Fjordenshus, a huge combination of materials is seen, touch, heard, and in a word, perceived by the body.¹⁰⁴ All the walls are made out of bricks, which have different shades of brown color together with green and blue, forming different compositions in a very organic way. (Fig.20) Giving a closer inspection, we see that the green is more present in the lower part of the building, thus dialoguing with the color of the sea, whereas the top of the building is transformed into different shades of blue, connecting to the sky. The walls, moreover, with its distinctive form, textures, and colors gaze moves and tumbles within the space, activating our tact sense to touch, and our eyes by

¹⁰³ This remembers the *visually negotiable structure*, explored by Eliasson, as the building do not ceases to change appearance; instead, it always presents a dynamic convergence of space, time, and light coordinates due to the shifts on reflection offered by its form. Thus, it activates the eye.

¹⁰⁴ “The authenticity of architectural experience is founded on the tectonic language of building and the comprehensibility of the act of construction to the senses. We behold, touch, listen, and measure the world with our entire bodily existence, and then experiential world is organized and articulated around the center of the body.” (Pallasmaa, 2005a, 60)

some reflective bricks.¹⁰⁵ By touching them, we can see that they have different textures: some are made of bricks' natural materiality and others are glazed bricks that reflect the sunlight on it, thus awakening our attention to them. Some of the bricks had also openings to help the acoustics.

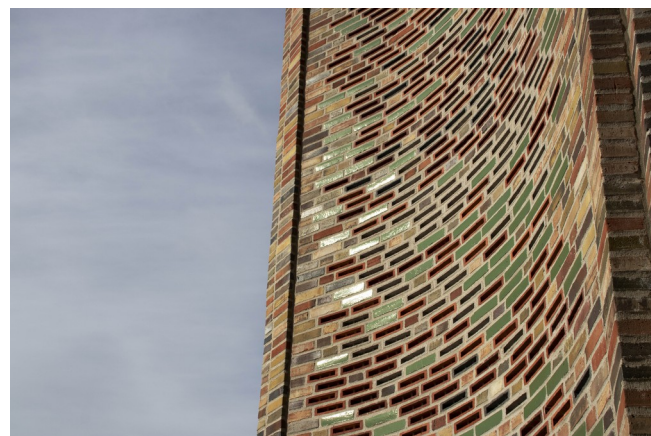
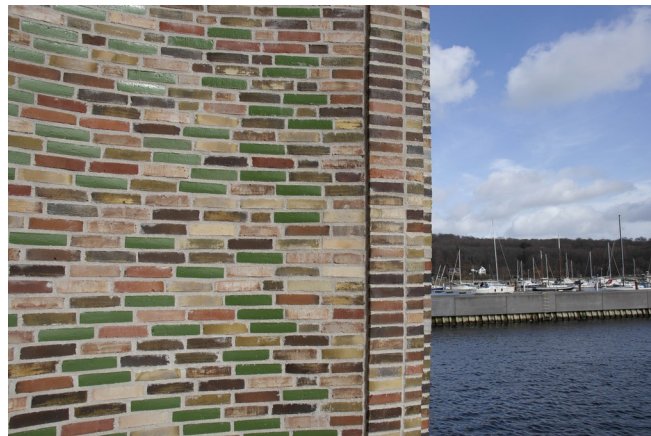


Fig.19. Different compositions and colors of bricks.

¹⁰⁵ “The objects that surround my body reflect their possible action on themselves, writes Henri Bergson. It is this possibility of action that separates architecture from other forms of art. As a consequence of this suggested action, body reaction is an inseparable aspect of the architectural experience.” (Pallasmaa, 2011, 59)



Fig.20. A visitor touching the walls of Fjordenhus. Here we can also see the little details of the granite floor and the reflection of the sun (place number 5 in the ground-floor plant).

Now, let's have a look on the first floor. To get there, we have to climb one of the three spiral stairs that also contain a cylindrical elevator. The stairs poetically grows up like a beanstalk and the masonry in the stairwells has some silver-stained bricks, reflecting the sunlight shining from above. The further we go up, the more silver-stained bricks reflect. (Fig.21) Arriving on the first floor, it culminates in the western office room. There, the

designed furniture seems to complement the narrative of the building: every chair follows the circular carpet, the carpet follows the circular design of the building, the light blue colors of the upholstered remits to the bricks of the building, and the double-curved windows follow the geometry of Fjordenhus. The openness of the western side of this room attracts our attention, and we can easily see all the elements: path, furniture, the semi-circular windows, water, far vista, in a way that nature is opened to man. The eastern side is not visible yet, and we continue to sense, rather than see, the totality. Only moving to the other office room, the eastern view is revealed, and our mental image of the landscape is then completed. In both rooms, because of the large surface of the curved glass envelope, there is an immediate view of the outside, and the direct presence of water and its lightness reduces the sense of interiority. Natural light passes through the glass and disperses on the floor and wall. Moreover, the small rooms created on the extremity of the circular room invite our eyes to look at the view.

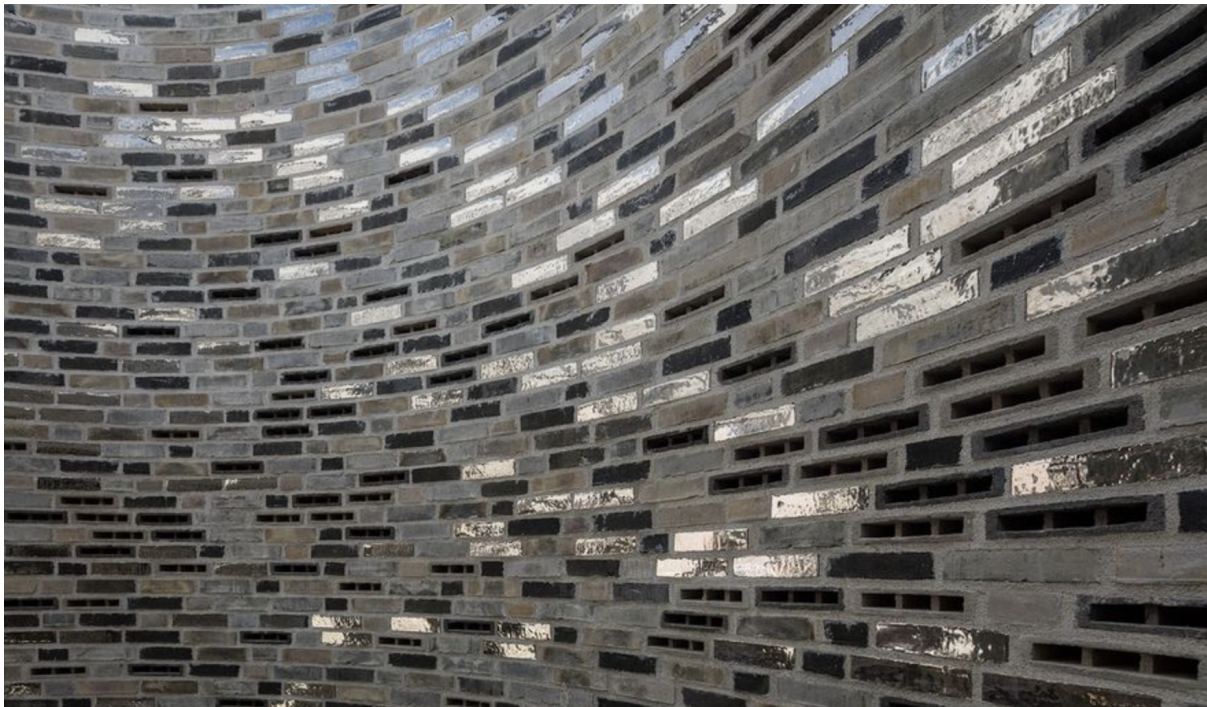


Fig.21. In the stairwell, scattered silver bricks reflect the sunlight shinning from above.



Fig.22. Fjordenhus, first floor, West room-office.



Fig.23. Fjordenhus, first floor, East room-office.

Going back to the ground floor and standing at the entrance position to finally go out, the general voyage is finished, and we finally draw a layout of the complex in a way that the understanding of Fjordenhus becomes comprehensible: we know the mystery of the voids and

weightiness of the inner volume of the building; we find the inter-connective spaces provided by the different circular structures. The building and its created spaces are not static, stable, and motionless place, but active and dynamic, resulting from the materials exploited, the seduction and composure of the voids, the lively presence of light and the ocean water as well as the constant views of the surroundings, thus forming a symbol of motion of this sort of living organism. The assemblage architectural and natural elements create an attraction that evolves us, and the voids, curved windows, and walls prepare a broad variety of views while we feel the presence of nature everywhere. The more our view of the interior is expanded, the more we feel the presence of the water and the surroundings, in a way that we never feel completely inside of the building. Thus, there is a clear interconnection of two realms of prospects: inside and outside, interiority and exteriority, here and there. Taking into account the entire journey, we find that we have gradually traveled from the realm of architecture, which has a strong presence of the atmosphere surrounding it: the nature, the industrial area, the sky, the water, and the Vejle Fjord. It seems then that experiencing Fjordenhus is to consciously perceive the natural elements that surrounds it through its architectural format, installations, spaces, furniture, and little details that reveal and complement its surroundings.¹⁰⁶

As we can see, Fjordenhus is clearly idealized in the body paradigm, advocated by Juhani Pallasmaa, in which the encounter with the place is “exploited by movements, giving a return to the sensibility of perception through the senses.”¹⁰⁷ Knowing the building means experiencing it throughout the entire course; it is about to contemplate the nature around, to touch, to hear the noise of the ocean, to feel the wind, all in an intertwining sense between interior and exterior, structure and architecture, light and materials. The building did not seem to possess one's ideal position from which to view: for an insider viewer, the perception of space continuously changes, constantly defined and redefined by your movement around and through its structure. Thus, your feet become your eyes through somatic experiences of movement, which is integrated with “several spheres of sensory experience that interact and

¹⁰⁶ “Designing a structure of this scale and purpose was like developing characters in a play or novel; we considered the relation of the elements to each other, the setting, the overall story we wanted to tell. We carefully balanced the characters. So many elements interact with each other here, from Olafur Eliasson’s artworks to the views out over the fjord, from the bricks themselves to the luminous, metal-cast stairwells; from the lighting and furnishings to the harbor setting.” (Behmann, “Fjordenhus Press Materials 2018,” 12)

¹⁰⁷ Pallasmaa, 2011, 60.

merge with each other.”¹⁰⁸ Instead of static gaze, the perception of the place is developed by a peripheral vision of the viewer, in such a way that the retinal images are transformed “into spatial and bodily involvement and encourages participation” thus turning the viewer into an active participant.¹⁰⁹ While walking through the ground floor through the spaces generated, perceiving the installations, and feeling the presence of nature, people can *use* the building to co-create their own journey. This journey, therefore, is embedded in temporality, which defines the visitor’s experience of the spaces in a here-and-now moment.¹¹⁰ Finally, we can conclude that the authenticity of Fjordenhus is precisely in the architectural experience of space and time founded on a perceptive and tectonic language of the construction that compose its understanding. To quote Pallasmaa, “in moving architectural experiences, space, material, and time seem to unite into a single dimension that penetrates our awareness” and they all become part of our body and consciousness; hence, he continues, the experience is returned to the experience to ourselves: “at bottom it is an experience of the self.”¹¹¹ Thus, Fjordenhus is a work directly related to the visitors and the space provides an experience more organized around the body.

Although Fjordenhus is built by seemingly banal materials, such as brick, granite, and glass, Eliasson and Behmann explored in different ways their immanence qualities in order to promote an embodied experience to the viewer, as we could see in the journey previously described. Through the creation of a work that is rich in the multisensory scope resided by the natural qualities of the surroundings, consequently, the atmosphere of the place is enhanced, thus becoming easier to feel it. Furthermore, the narrative of the building also converses with the *genius loci* and the regionalist discourse of the theorists Peter Zumthor and Kenneth Frampton due to its respect and dialogue with the environment surrounded. In addition, experiencing Fjordenhus is about consequently understanding the very elements that form the identity of Harbor Island: its nature, the Vejle Fjord, and the industrial area. Finally, on contemporaneity, the involvement of the body with the work is something that concerns both interdisciplinary fields of art and architecture, and when there is a fusion of them in a work, the relation of the body and the senses become even more dynamic and intensified.

¹⁰⁸ Pallasmaa, 2011, 39.

¹⁰⁹ Pallasmaa, 2005a, 331.

¹¹⁰ “As well as experiencing place, we need to experience time. We need to reassure ourselves of our existence here and now, and of how we fit into time is continuum. This experience of continuity is one of our basic psychological needs, whose origins lie in an unconscious fear of death.” (Ibid., 76-77)

¹¹¹ Ibid., 87.

Conclusion

This research aimed to investigate how the adoption of phenomenological aspects in the creative process of art-and-architecture can contribute to an embodied experience through Olafur Eliasson's constructed work Fjordenhus (2018), in Vejle, Denmark. The starting point of this research was related to the increasingly intense conditions of spatial indifference and disparticularization of urban cities in contemporaneity. This has resulted in hurried, immediate, and consequently universal works of architecture. Recognizing these issues, this thesis has opened discussions on how to best improve these conditions in order for the final result – a building – to be better contextualized in the place it is located and the experience conceived would be more organized and articulated around the body.

This research revealed that Fjordenhus' conceptual project was embedded in the body paradigm. It concluded that, through the exploration and manipulation of materials, shape, and design, the building promoted an embodied experience to the interpreter. This is because, rather than instantaneously perceived in a disembodied eye, Fjordenhus was singularly experienced in the here and now presence, "in a sensory immediacy of spatial extension and temporal duration."¹¹² Therefore, the journey of discovery through the building contributed to sharpen man's gaze and increase his physical and mental awareness. Taking as an example Fjordenhus' case study, a building designed by an artist and an architect, it is important that works of architecture not only serve to fulfill physical and programmatic needs. More than that, it is fundamental that these works also promote places where our sensations can be given rise. This thesis also aims that architecture seeks, whenever possible, to join the visual arts and other forms of artistic expression, since this alliance may offer spaces that, besides serving as physical needs, also raise our own existential consciousness, thus resulting in more humanized architectural spaces.

In order to develop this result, it was first necessary to understand Olafur Eliasson's influences and conceptual intentions. This component demonstrated that phenomenology is among the theories widely explored by the artist. Due to the fact that architects have also relied on this same philosophy in order to design, phenomenology served as the theoretical background of this thesis. Thus, this theory has become the basis to interpret the building. After understanding this link, it was fundamental to create a historical background of art and the exploration of space in order to contextualize the research. *Chapter 1* explored these ideas and showed that visual art and architecture have become, over time, progressively closer.

¹¹² Kwon, 2004, 11.

These changes are particularly evident in installations and site-specific artworks because they entail a greater contextualization of place as well as an experiential understanding of the site. In the case of the artist Olafur Eliasson, by working between the fields of visual art and architecture, he explores the immanence aspects of materials so as to promote an embodied experience to the viewer as well as to enhance the atmosphere of a particular place. After obtained this historical background and contextualized Eliasson, the following chapter came up with phenomenological issues in the field of architecture.

In order to determine which theory would best help to analyze the building in *Chapter 3*, it was necessary to obtain substantial information about Fjordenhus from both the artist's and the architect's perspectives. Considering the confusing and abstract aspects of phenomenology that generated different branches in architecture, deciding which phenomenological theories to use was among the most challenging aspects of this research. After the visit to the case studied on 23 March 2019, the theories were foreshadowed. Hence, *Chapter 2* was divided into three parts: the spirit of a place, the senses in architecture, and architectonic atmospheres. This chapter showed that by questioning the nature of the art of construction, architects questioned the body's interaction with the built environment from the postmodern period. First, it revealed solutions to spatial undifferentiation and departicularization of urban cities, such as with Frampton's critical regionalism and Norberg-Schulz's *genius loci*. Architects, applying these theories through the use of local symbolic architectural forms (style) explored by materiality and design, have collaborated to the identity of a place. Second, *Chapter 2* also showed the various construction methods that went beyond the sense of vision. From the manipulation of various parameters of the built space – such as material, geometry, rhythm, scale, color and illumination, – the result is works that promoted a more body-centered experience.¹¹³ Consequently, the atmosphere of the place has become more intensified, thus collaborating for the spirit of the place. All these theories served as a basis for Fjordenhus's interpretation through a visit on 23 March 2019. M. Reza Shirazi's method of interpretation was then applied for having a phenomenological bias, rendering the interpretation more cohesive with the theories explored.

With a better understanding of the questions explored in *Chapter 1* – focused on both the field of visual art as well as on the artist Olafur Eliasson, – together with the architectural theories of phenomenological bias in *Chapter 2*, it was possible to compose the interpretation of Fjordenhus building in *Chapter 3*. By taking the reader as a traveler in a phenomenological journey, it showed that the architecture of the building is embedded in the body paradigm.

¹¹³ Shirazi, 17.

This is understandable when focusing on the materiality and the shape of Fjordenhus. When it came to the materiality, it was noticed that Eliasson and Behmann explored the multisensorial characteristic of a triad material: brick, glass, and concrete. The bricks were explored by various possibilities through different repertoires by a logic of compositions, the arrangement of textures, proportions, and different colors. These bricks also communicated with nature when the green bricks were more present in the lower part of the building, dialoguing with the color of the sea, whereas the blue bricks were more existent in the top of the building, connecting to the sky. The glass of the facades, by its shifts of reflections and transparency, contributed to the building not ceased to change the appearance. With a dynamic convergence of light, Fjordenhus spaces activated the interpreter's eyes. Moreover, the circular details of the concrete floor followed the shape of the building; through these small details of construction, the narrative of its design became more expressive. Thus, the composure of these three materials has given meaning to Fjordenhus and their logic referred to the language of the body.

Furthermore, Fjordenhus' shape provided the visitor with a gradual perception of the building. This was obtained by the visitor's movements through the structure's voids. By exploring mass manipulation, geometric structure, scale, and rhythm, Eliasson and Behmann affected people's sense of movement with the opened spaces generated. This also created an embodied experience to the viewer, in which your feet became your eyes through somatic experiences of movement. In a broader context, the design of the building also dialogued with the industrial area, as it remembered a silos' shape; thus, it communicated with the landscape. Moreover, Eliasson inserted site-specific artworks on the ground floor. These installations incorporated the place's physical and natural conditions as integral to the building's production. This incorporation showed collaboration with the building's narrative. All of this composed the narrative of the building, this sort of organism rich in multisensory scope, that therefore boosted the atmosphere of the place. With this overall idea, Fjordenhus composed its meaning in a narrative articulated and organized around the body.

Last, the multiple avenues this research has taken helped develop the answer to the research question. That is, how the adoption of phenomenological aspects in the creative process of Fjordenhus enhanced the quality of the visitor's experience in a relationship between architecture, space, and body. As Kate Nesbitt states through a phenomenological and existential argument: the essence of architecture depends on its ability to "symbolize human existence or presence [...] on a spatial experience."¹¹⁴ In the light of this fact, it can be

¹¹⁴ Nesbitt, 448.

argued from this research that Fjordenhus returned to architecture's essence by promoting spaces more integrated with the senses and the body. In today's time when technology reigns, returning to self and reminiscing of our own essence, in fact, would help us to feel more human. Ultimately, art-and-architecture can help us in this regard.

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Further Research

Due to time constraints and space limit, this research did not touch upon other bibliographies that could have been taken into account. Nonetheless, they are following presented to help the reader to continue this research.

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List of Illustrations

Fig.1. Olafur Eliasson, *The Weather Project*, Tate Modern Museum, 2003. [image online]
Available at: <https://olafureliasson.net/archive/artwork/WEK101003/the-weather-project>
(Downloaded 7 February 2019)

Fig.2. Olafur Eliasson, *Your Rainbow Panorama*, Aarhus Kunstmuseum, Aarhus, 2011.
[image captured from a video] Available at: <https://vimeo.com/123824799>
(Accessed 10 February 2019)

Fig.3. Olafur Eliasson, *Cirkelbroen*, Copenhagen, 2015. [image online]
Available at: <https://olafureliasson.net/archive/artwork/WEK100240/cirkelbroen>
(Downloaded 10 February 2019)

Fig.4. Olafur Eliasson in cooperation with Henning Larsen architect, Harpa Concert Hall and Conference Center, Reykjavik, 2011. [image online]
Available at: <https://www.archdaily.com/153520/harpa-concert-hall-and-conference-centre-henning-larsen-architects> (Downloaded 11 February 2019)

Fig.5. Alvaro Siza, Leça Swimming Pools, Leça, 1966. [image online]
Available at: <https://www.archdaily.com.br/br/01-115453/classicos-da-arquitetura-leca-swimming-pools-slash-alvaro-siza> (Downloaded 10 June 2019)

Fig.6. Peter Zumthor, Therme Vals, Graubunden Canton, Switzerland, 1996. [image online]
Left side image available at: <http://fddaecano.blogspot.com/2014/10/termas-de-vals.html>
(Downloaded 2 June 2019)
Right side image available at: <https://www.archdaily.com.br/br/798132/termas-de-vals-de-peter-zumthor-nas-lentes-de-fernando-guerra> (Downloaded 2 June 2019)

Fig.7. Phenomenological interpretation's method by M. Reza Shirazi in *Towards an articulated phenomenological interpretation of architecture*, 2014.

Fig.8. Fjordenhus building and its surroundings (East view, facing Vejle Fjord). [image online] Available at: <https://olafureliasson.net/archive/artwork/WEK107304/fjordenhus> (Downloaded 17 June 2019)

Fig.9. The geometric form concept of Fjordenhus. [image online] Available at: <http://www.studiootherspaces.net/project/fjordenhus> (Downloaded 17 June 2019)

Fig.10. General view of the area. Available at google maps: <https://www.google.com/maps> (Accessed 8 May 2019)

Fig.11. Route to get at Fjordenhus. Available at google maps: <https://www.google.com/maps> (Accessed 17 May 2019)

Fig.12. Ground floor plant of Fjordenhus. [image online and edited by the author] Available at: <http://www.studiootherspaces.net/project/fjordenhus> (Downloaded 8 June 2019)

Fig.13. Main entrance of Fjordenhus building. Author's photo.

Fig.14. Olafur Eliasson, *Fjordenhus Meridian*. [image online] Available at: <https://olafureliasson.net/archive/artwork/WEK107304/fjordenhus> (Downloaded 6 May 2019)

Fig.15. Olafur Eliasson, *Circle Mirror*. Author's photo.

Fig.16. The views revealed at one of the vestibules. [image online] Available at: <https://olafureliasson.net/archive/artwork/WEK107304/fjordenhus> (Downloaded 6 May 2019)

Fig.17. Olafur Eliasson, *Fjord Vortex*. Author's photo.

Fig.18. Olafur Eliasson, *Underwater Expectation*. Author's photo.

Fig.19. Different compositions and colors of bricks. Author's photo.

Fig.20. A visitor touching the walls of Fjordenhus. Here we can also see the little details of the floor and the reflection of the sun (place number 5 in the ground-floor plan). Author's photo.

Fig.21. Stairwell area. [image online]

Available at: <http://www.studiootherspaces.net/project/fjordenhus>

(Downloaded 8 June 2019)

Fig.22. Fjordenhus, first floor. Author's photo.

Fig.23. Fjordenhus, first floor. [image online]

Available at: <http://www.studiootherspaces.net/project/fjordenhus>

(Downloaded 8 June 2019)