Spatial scripts, scores, and choreographic objects: performative practices in architectural education

Prof. Oren Lieberman

University of Salford, UK

Architecture worlds, that is, as a verb, architecting participates in becoming. It is not separate from our bodies, but is our bodies, just as the sun is light because our retinas register it so, or sound is sound because the waves intra-act with the tympanic membrane in our ears. This essential performativity of architecture is not about causality, but about entangled materials, technologies, discourses and bodies, and how through this meshwork phenomena come into being. The materials and constructions of architecture afford, in our bodily intra-action with them, possibilities of worlding.

Both the education and practice of architecture are participants in this worlding, and the relationship between the two can be a symbiotic one. Tensions arise when universities, seeing themselves as part of a market, focus on education’s efficacy and its ability to produce an ‘oven ready’ labour force. But when there is a shared understanding that the essential reality of architecture resides exactly in its performativ
affordance of being and co-existence, both education and practice can establish their own foci and nuances of expression which can support each other.

Across various higher education settings, including in the UK, Germany, and Sweden, I have been using and developing a sequence of projects and exercises which engage students in practicing this performativity through spatial acts which make differences in the world. This paper draws on one of those, taking an object for a walk, and specifically focuses on taking a stick for a walk. In relation to these pedagogical methods, this paper discusses the notions of spatial scripts and scores, and develops architecture as choreographic objects. Interwoven within a backdrop of theoretical positions which foreground non-dual relationality and the liveliness of matter, discourses, and bodies, the paper discusses how these methods offer transformative experiences which develop students' experiential understandings architecture.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Oren Lieberman is Professor of Architecture at University of Salford. He has a BA in psychology (minor in philosophy) and a postgraduate MArch degree (SCI-ARC) and further studied environmental design and installation art. He has developed a wide-ranging practice, as an architect, teacher, writer, publisher, and initiator and curator of events and exhibitions. He has taught widely in the UK and elsewhere in Europe, and practiced as an architect in Germany. His research focuses on performative practices which entangle knowledge, methodologies and techniques from various disciplines, including architecture, performance, geography, anthropology, and sociology. He is interested in the role architecture and its processes of production play in the construction of political practices and the establishment of the 'common'; in critical pedagogies inhering in embodied practices; and in research as intraventional. Much of his work in pedagogy and other areas of research draws particularly upon theories and views which are expressed in feminist situated and 'new materialist' work, including that of Donna Haraway and Karen Barad. These standpoints are inclusive and nondual, performative in their diffractive mode, and are fundamentally about an ethical and responsible engagement with the making of the world with others.