Experiential Design – Rethinking relations between people, objects and environments

• Paper / Proposal Title:
Hello Body, Nice to Meet You! A call to move from disassociation from to integration of the body in the design process.

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• Abstract (300 words):
“Embodied learning!” read the ad for the teaching workshop. Seated in a circle, faculty from a variety of disciplines introduce themselves. Our attention is now on the guest speaker. A dance instructor mirrors back to us the natural movements we make when we speak. The realization that I move when I talk is stunning. As a dance emerges from our collective bodily expressions, the revelation sets in: I have a body that moves!

How broad and deep is this affliction amongst designers of the built environment? The narrative involving a designer’s disconnection between mind and body cannot end well. To what extent does disembodiment factor into design failures of our interiors, buildings, neighborhoods, and cities?

In 2020 we still live in and design for the physical world serving real bodies that move through, interact with, and form connections to other bodies. Yet cultivation of new environments happens in the studio where designers and architects work indoors, in
stationary positions for hours (days, nights, weekends. . .) at a time. We sit, hashing out visions in miniature diagrammatic format on paper and on the computer. It seems counterintuitive that we do not actually engage our bodies in our design processes.

If designers are disconnected from their bodies in their creative processes, how can they fully connect with, be empathetic to and make best decisions for imagined bodies in imagined future spaces? Are traditional design processes at odds with desired outcomes? This paper considers lessons from history through the lens of disembodiment and the role design of the built environment plays in detachment of the body from its surroundings. Examination of forces at play in our collective disassociated state informs strategies toward re-embodiment of designers in service to humanizing our future built environment.

**Author(s) Biography:**

Amy Roehl is an Associate Professor of Interior Design at Texas Christian University. Her research interests focus upon digital media and popular culture impact upon design of the built environment.