Experiential Design – Rethinking relations between people, objects and environments

• Paper / Proposal Title:
  EXPERIENCE OF LIGHT - The Role of Natural Light in Understanding Architecture as a Cinematic Experience

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• Abstract (300 words):
  The importance of sunlight has not been studied by scientists alone. The documented fascination for this matter dates as far back as 800 BC, when Homer poetically described sunlight as a “substance that cheers the heart.” (Homer, 1914), which indicates his knowledge on its beneficial effects.

  Natural light has an immense impact on our body and mind. Until now studies have focused on the timing and amount of light, which are examples for a rational understanding of natural light. But through seeing light as a quantity "light’s value is diminished by uniform illumination, becoming shadowless and dead [...]“ (Plummer, 2009, p. 13). Once this rational understanding is being exceeded, a poetic understanding can be achieved. By changing the focus on the quality of light, seeing it as a material that has to be formed and understanding architecture as an optical tool, converts light into
a mental essence. The purpose of this study is to develop a design strategy which will reveal the role of natural light when it comes to experiencing architecture, and consequently functions as a guide for architects to approach designing with natural light.

Through enriching architecture with scientific valorizations in the fields of neuroscience and psychology, mental objectivities are supported. Neuroscience illuminates “this flexibility and dynamic of our interaction with the world” (Pallasmaa, 2017, p. 61). This strategic approach elaborates a written and visual translation of scientific research from the fields of physics, neuroscience and psychology, which ultimately result in the design of sensuously enriched and empathetic spaces through experiencing natural light. So what if we re-think light and see its qualities instead of focusing on the quantities? Guiding its wavelengths through architecture, creating vivid environments, which empower the “integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind.” (Bachelard, 2017, p.6)

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

Elena Sophia Längle was born in Austria 1996. She has always been driven by curiosity and imagination, questioning things, things which to others seem ordinary. From an early age on traveling was an important part of her life. She spent her free time traveling places, learning about cultures and analyzing people. After finishing high school in Austria, Elena decided to study Architecture in Liechtenstein. The University of Liechtenstein was small, which allowed the professors to take their time for each student. For her undergrad thesis Elena designed three baths on the mountain Navajo where people can experience water and light at the same time as they see how the water they use is generated.

After benefiting from the variety of studios offered, the question arose what her next step will look like. She read the book “Welcome to your world. How the built environment shapes our lives” by Sarah Williams Goldhagen and realized this was the direction she has been looking for. Elena found the NewSchool of Architecture and Design, which offered a Master of Science in Architecture with a focus on Neuroscience. Her thesis was about the mystery of lights intangible matter, which captured her soul long ago. After accomplishing her Master degree, Elena continues researching on lights impact on people and plans on publishing her thesis as a book these next years.