

Agency and Atmosphere:

A Sociocultural Lens for the Perception of Architectural Affordances

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keywords

atmosphere — agency — behavioral affordances — affective affordances — spatial perception — resonance — interior spaces — affectiveness — autonomy — body

abstract

The field of architectural atmosphere is enriched by the study of human experience through affordances. However, agency's role in affordances has not been consistently explored in architectural atmospheres. Agency acts like a filter — the social allowance — that influences what affordances are perceivable and accessible within a space. We expand on existing affordance research developed by the psychologist James J. Gibson (action-affordances, namely behavioral affordances) and the philosopher Tonino Griffero (atmosphere-affordances, namely affective affordances), by investigating the ways agency conditions one's felt presence and accessibility within interior spaces. A focus on agency is beneficial to the craft of atmosphere in understanding how people's perception changes of what is afforded to them in a space. We compare the notions of agency, affectiveness, and autonomy. Resonance is the emotional frequency shared between the body and one's context of movement and interaction. Architectural experiences are verbs rather than nouns. Architecture's elements are not bounded by their physical limits, but extend themselves as ecstasies in their surroundings, articulating the sphere of their presence, taking away the homogeneity of the space, and priming it with affective and behavioral affordances.

