



2021 ARCC Conference

PERFORMATIVE ENVIRONMENTS

University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ, April 7-10, 2021

Overall statement

Performative environments encompass a range of topics and scales, from building components to buildings, from urban to landscape performances, and from structural, environmental, and material systems to information networks. While technological performances of built environments may be the dominant framework through which performance has been conceptualized, architecture and built environments succeed or fail according to a broad spectrum of performance criteria including the aesthetic, social, cultural, economic, and political production and inhabitation of space. The concept of performative environments, therefore, not only posits that people create and act upon buildings, but also that the latter have agency of their own. Space performs!

The 2021 ARCC Conference will gather a broad and entangled series of presentations under three thematic umbrellas—*technological*, *organizational*, and *cultural*. This organization is modeled after performance studies scholar Jon McKenzie’s “rehears(ed) general theory of performance,” reinterpreted to challenge the environments: “Perform—or else.” These sub-themes also build upon many designers and scholars whose work has broken disciplinary boundaries to examine the complexities of performance in spatial culture, research, pedagogy, and/or practice.

To this end, we invite paper and poster submissions spanning the spectrum of technological, organizational, and cultural issues. Work might examine contemporary or historical research on building performance, biosensing, digital fabrication, robotics, material, or urban systems, as well as wellbeing. Papers could address or intertwine contemporary or historical matters concerning regulations and accreditation, institutional models and modes of labor, economies and ecologies of collaborating, media and means of communication, and spatial politics. Finally, papers could leverage diverse theoretical perspectives with interdisciplinary or transversal methodologies and challenge the conventional modes of presentation by making present or enacting research.

TECHNOLOGICAL PERFORMANCES

Research concerning the built environment's technological performances navigates between nano and planetary scales, and interrogates methods, materials, and media; ethics and aesthetics; and efficacy, efficiency, and affect. Histories of architectural technologies reveal oscillations and cross-pollination between mechanistic and organic paradigms and range from single-issue, scientific research to more holistic, complex models. With shifts from inert to vibrant matter paradigms, both materials and material systems perform multiple functions, generating and integrating information flows, and behaving according to biological models in dialogue with humans. Ecological and socio-economic imperatives alert us to the ethics of material extraction, supply chains, by-products, and life cycles, and bring into view architecture's myriad durational performances beyond biome-specific, seasonal adaptations.

Architects and engineers have devised technological solutions to varying environmental conditions through contextual responses and socio-cultural behaviors, as well as ones abiding by universal laws of physics. The history of energy and buildings exposes a shifting stance from the earliest place-based climate-protective structures, through strict environmental management and control, to adaptive and responsive systems. The interconnected roles of materials and spatial design greatly influence the energetic performance, as does the occupant culture. In a context of climate crises and global pandemics, the design of environments across scales with a focus on the health of diverse life-forms in our biosphere presents the possibility of catalyzing positive planetary transformation. How do we process, measure, visualize, and simulate these issues? How do the complex, technological working methodologies that represent our complex world frame technological research?

ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCES

Over the course of modernization, institutional performances have shifted modes from Taylorism to performance management under the rules of socialism, capitalism, and neoliberalism. Contemporary organizational performances are exemplified by the "new (entrepreneurial) spirit of capitalism" through mechanisms of out-sourcing, flex-timing, multi-tasking, and by networks of creatives gathered on a (precarious) project basis. Undergirding these historical shifts and varied institutional forms are social and managerial hierarchies shaping mutually dependent relationships as well as operational and aspirational ideologies.

Techniques of measurement govern and guide institutions (from families to universities, corporations, and governments), operating through social rituals and media. Informed by feedback loops and performance reviews, institutions and individuals adapt to shifting, complex, and conflicting forces. Built environments are integral to the formation, growth, maintenance, or closure of institutions. Organizational performances include institutions' social structures and purposes, their representations through architecture and other media, the importance of metrics and performed values, and the social-spatial-economic-political rituals of foundation. As organizations' characteristics inflect how practice and research are performed, the contexts for performance matter, be they architectural practices, building sites, user contexts, or those of research and teaching. Architectural offices and academies depend on a spectrum of forms of labor, and thus how designers organize labor practices and working teams, both internal to firms and in dialogue with governing authorities, matter. How might experiments in organizational performances yield new theoretical models, processes, and designs?

CULTURAL PERFORMANCES

While environments may perform as places for scripted events playing out before an audience, urban sites, spaces, buildings, and landscapes have the potential to be more than mere locations; they are events in themselves. Cultural performances of environments are enacted through daily practices and recurrent rituals; they embody cultural traditions; and they challenge and transform through improvisation and agency. Mis-performed iterations, durations, *dérives*, and repetitions are generative. The event may, in fact, not be that which is planned, but the punctual, unscripted, and unintended irruptions that the liminal space-time of the event affords. Human and non-human performances in space are discursive in that space impresses assumed behaviors upon us even as we exert our agency to be and perform in and with space. Environments perform upon sensesmoving embodied beings, choreographically and emotively, through immersive atmospheres experienced over time. The dialogue between bodies and environments establish and evidence culture. The media, be they environments themselves, models, drawings, or films, constitute the message and the meaning. These dialogue with us, conveying ideas, social hierarchies, desires, and values. Materials translate cultural attributes and aspirations; visual and textual narratives recount (hi)stories. Building materials, spatial configurations, and representations parlay cultural conditions that reveal social values, modalities, and forms. Tactical assemblies of bodies with public spaces—protest, occupations, demonstrations, and flash-mobs—enact emerging cultural conditions. How are critical spatial performances particularly pertinent amidst augmented policing of roundabouts, boulevards, and boundaries under past, present, and future states of emergency; in a context of self-sequestering and spatial re-partitioning in response to pandemics; and in the shifting spatial practices that respond to climate crises?

Open Theme

Technological, organizational, and cultural performances span considerable scholarly terrain. However, research may reside outside this tripartite thematic framework. Rigorously researched papers are invited for consideration under the theme “open performances,” whether they expand the concept of performance above and beyond the provocations of the conference theme or address other topics pertinent to the design of built environments from the interior to the territorial.

Important Dates and Deadlines

Sept. 11, 2020	Deadline for submitting abstracts for full papers and posters
Oct. 19, 2020	Acceptance notification of abstracts for full papers and posters
Jan. 4, 2021	Deadline for full papers and posters submissions
Jan. 4, 2021	Deadline for plenary sessions and PhD workshops submissions
Feb. 1, 2021	Acceptance confirmation for full papers, plenary sessions, and PhD workshops
Feb. 1, 2020	Registration Opens
Feb. 22, 2021	Deadline for submission of final papers, and posters
Mar. 1, 2021	Early bird registration deadline
April 7, 2021	Conference Opening
April 8, 20201	Registration Closing
April 10, 2021	Conference Closing