AN ANOLOGY

"When we awaken from a dream, descend from a journey in the air, or arise from illness, our first necessity is to locate ourselves in time and place."

– *Roger G. Kennedy*
(*Porter 2004:142*).

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SPACE, PLACE AND PLACELESSNESS

In determining the meaning of 'placelessness', it would be sensible to first define 'place'.

Porter (2004:142) and Relph (1976:3) outline the concept of place as an exact geographical position or location (space), one that comprises the internal features of a site, as well as external linkages to the surrounding locations; a localised part forming part of a larger whole. Here one finds a complex amalgamation of natural and cultural factors, unique to the setting, while remaining interlinked by a network of spatial relationships and exchanges, often strongly grounded in a specific historical or cultural environment. Place is not simply physical location, but the location along with all aspects that inhabit the space (Relph 1976:29). Places are not experienced independently, instead they are felt, or sensed, as part of a greater multifaceted phenomenon comprising setting, landscape, ritual, routine, personal experiences occurring within the context of surrounding places.
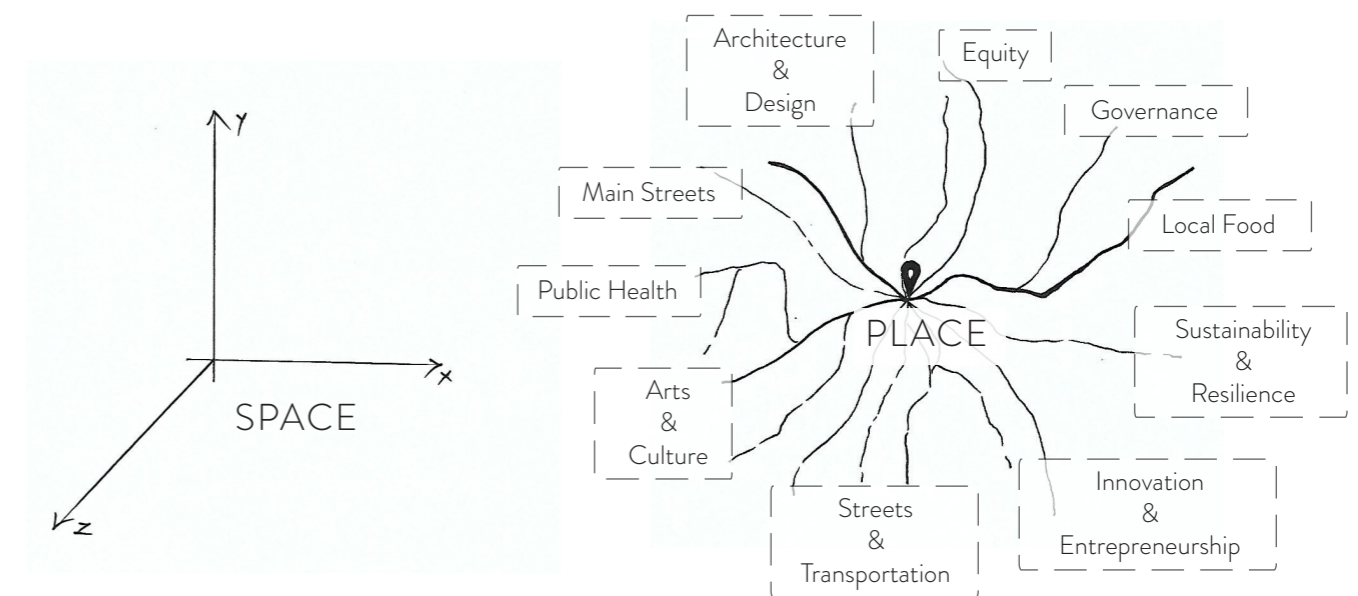

Figure 3.1   Space vs. Place (adapted from Project for Public Spaces 2018).

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These places hold meaning, an aspect central to human existence and defined by human motivations (Relph 1976:7) where the genius loci, environmental energy or 'essence or spirit of place' (Ots 2011:188-189, Porter 2004:88) may be sensed, referring to any quality that captures the experience of a place. These meanings associated with place are often determined by those who occupy the space, and their behaviour, attitudes and intentions (Relph 1976:42, 122). In essence, 'place' can be described as 'lived-in space'(Porter 2004:142), encompassing the entire range of experiences and meaningful interactions between people, objects as well as geographical experience, and how these places manifest themselves in the consciousness of the individuals who inhabit them, either permanently or transiently, with the suggestion that "people are their place and a place is its people…" (Relph 1976:4, 6, 11, 34).

There is an intrinsic human desire to associate significance to place as a vital source of personal and communal identity (Relph 1976:141, 147). Places to which we attach strong emotional and psychological ties are felt and understood as symbolic and

functional centres, are 'human' in their scale, can be easily travelled by foot and contains a good quantity and quality of visual information, it is therefore that these significant places are retained in our memories. Although these places may seem messy and chaotic, they may capture the honest and uncontrived expression of peoples' wants and needs (Relph 1976:132, University of Alicante 2014:21).

Porter (2004:142) suggests that 'place' can be a 'body-centred context' that provides individuals with perspectives and a sense of identity. However, when we are faced with formlessness and a lack of concern for human scale, it results in a banal uniformity of 'placelessness'; an interchangeable 'non-place' for tourists or passers-by (Porter 2004:142, Relph 1976:117).

"Placelessness describes both an environment without significant places and the underlying attitude which does not acknowledge significance in places". No meaning is given to the small gestures and routine actions that make up the regular sequence of everyday life, where diversity is replaced by uniformity and conceptual order takes precedence over an

experiential one (Relph 1976:143). The site is simply seen as a homogenous backdrop instead of being given a unique identity that expresses the cultural attitudes, beliefs and intentions of those who use the space (Relph 1976:123-124). This results in an insensitivity to the significance of 'place'.

Looking at "the progress of sickness in Paris" by Januz Deryng (1964),

the author represents the non-significant spaces in Paris at a city-scale with black dots, in essence comparing these spaces to cancer-like tumors of varying sizes. Deryng held that the primary reason for the proliferation of non-significant urban spaces came as a consequence to the insertion of vehicles in cities, where these spaces did not offer valuable visual information to the pedestrian (University of Alicante 2014:22).
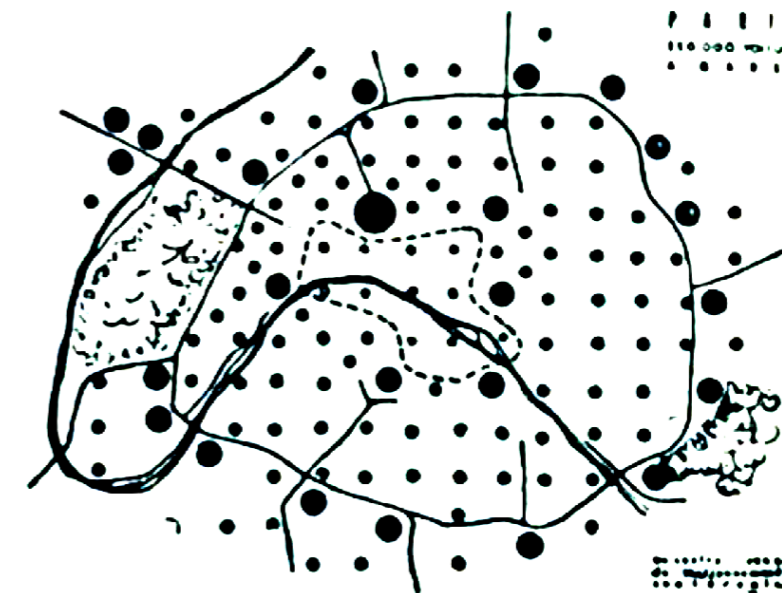
Le progrès de la maladie.

Figure 3.2   The progress of the sickness in Paris by J. Deryng, 1964 (University of Alicante 2014:22)

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Considering the notion of 'place-lessness', as architectural designers, it is imperative to respond in a way where the creation of a diversity of places at a human scale is prioritised, that provide pace, orientation and identity, and where the variety of human activities and experiences are reflected and enhanced (Relph 1976:146-147). These places must consider the most humble and seemingly insignificant activities that form part of the routine of everyday life that are often taken at face value; the actions of sequential pattern-making that allow for interaction and meaning-making within these placeless locales (Relph 1976:131).

Figure 3.3   Hadleigh Drive, Sutton, UK (Montague 2016)

Figure 3.4   Fife Central Retail Park, Kirkcaldy, UK (Montague 2016)

The images above illustrate places that are not relational, historical or concerned with identity and as a result become 'non-places' (Montague 2016).

Architecture and the human body have historically been inseparable within the field of design. By using the human body as a reference, various architectural frameworks may be established that reflect the human figure and its relationship to the space it occupies (Bird 2016). An early example of this intrinsic link between architecture and the human body is first mentioned in Vitruvius' De Architectura (The Ten Books on Architecture) (Frank 1983:229). Whilst it does not form part of the scope of this dissertation, anthropometrics, which is explained as 'the science of measurement' (Taifa 2016) has greatly impacted architectural design, as it takes into account the proportions, strengths and capabilities of the human body; the distances between people; and between people and tactile objects. These measurement and proportion systems are vital to the humanising of architectural spaces. The implementation thereof often leads to the instinctive acceptance or rejection of the space by the user, thereby determining its success. Juxtaposing this, the unconsidered incorporation of these standard anthropometric systems may create a static building environment where form is prioritised over the needs of the user, and in the process aspects of human-centred design, are lost.

The relationship between the human body and architectural built space should consider the behaviour of the person within it, as well as the motivations for the manifestation of those behaviours. The designed space should consider not only the occupant's behaviour, but also their intellectual, emotional, physiological, and even spiritual perspectives. We do not experience space as a pair of disembodied eyes, but through all of our senses, including our kinaesthetic sense that responds to our bodies' movement (Scheer 2014).
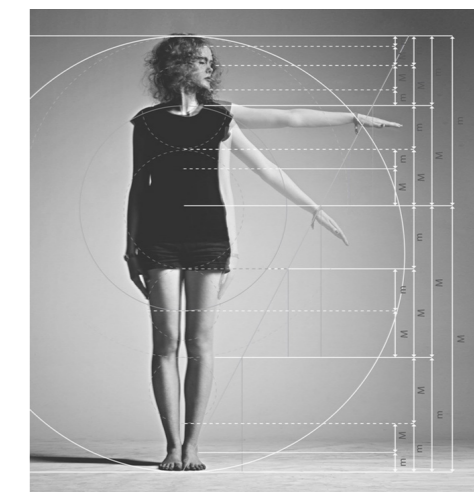

Figure 3.5   The relationship between the human body and architecture - as depicted in the photographic essay by Mònica Arellano (Arellano 2019).

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HUMAN-, DANCE-CENTRED DESIGN

Drawing on a human-orientated perspective, dance can be described as a primal, omnipresent, telepathic expression of human emotion that understands the nuances, movement, and capabilities of the human body (Haupt 1997:1). According to Van Dyck (2017), dance is defined as a series of steps and movements, essentially creating a playground where geometrical functions are expressed through fluidity of motion and an acute understanding of the body and its relation to itself and the space around it.

The formal term of this dance-step organisation is known as choreography. Perusinovic (2009:1) defines this term as "the act of composing patterns of movement for the human body", and in a similar manner to the sequence of dance patterns, the movement of the human body can also be determined by a sequence of architectural spaces. Both architecture and choreography address the intrinsic relationship between body and space. Furthermore, choreography plays an essential role in conveying the mood and overall emotive quality of dance (Sirridge and Armelagos 1977) where without it, dance steps can seem discontinuous and disconnected. Architecture can also, by directing movement, dictate the mood of those moving within or through a designed space.

Figure 3.6   The relationship between the human body and architecture - as depicted in the photographic essay by Mònica Arellano (Arellano 2019).

CHOREOGRAPHY AND ARCHITECTURE

With specific reference to architecture, Perusinovic (2009) continues to explain that the relationship between building and inhabitant can be precisely choreographed, where the creation of a "guided sequence of spatial experiences become reinforced as a habitual pattern of passage through an architectural composition".

Research since the 1990s has shown a strong correlation between architecture and the arrangement of designed spatial interactions leading to numerous discussions between architects and dance choreographers (Kato and Glynn 2016). While the dancer/choreographer plan movements in space through a series of written or drawn diagrams, in which they direct the human body, the architect by contrast manipulates the body's movements by the formation and organisation of space (Meyer 2006).

Within architecture, the control of movement and precise navigation of spatial sequences allow the architectural form to be experienced in a very particular manner by the user (Perusinovic 2009). Additionally, this architectural 'choreography' enforces the significance of the use ascribed to any specific architectural space and more specifically the role imposed on each individual within that space.

There are strong parallels that can be drawn between dance and architecture, both as spatial organisers that structure the way in which we see the world, that brings to the fore the prevalent ways in which space is experienced and visualised, and subsequently the impact this has on shaping our thoughts and subjectivity when locating the viewer (or user) from a particular perspective. Dance, as well as architecture, has the ability to disrupt the logic of visualisation by obscuring the boundaries between inside and outside, of bodies, buildings as well as spaces, hereby creating and functioning in the in-between spaces (Briginshaw 2009:183-184).

Doris Humphrey, an American dancer and choreographer, holds that movement is the essence of dance; it remains its keynote and its language (Humphrey 1959:17). She addresses the design of dance in her

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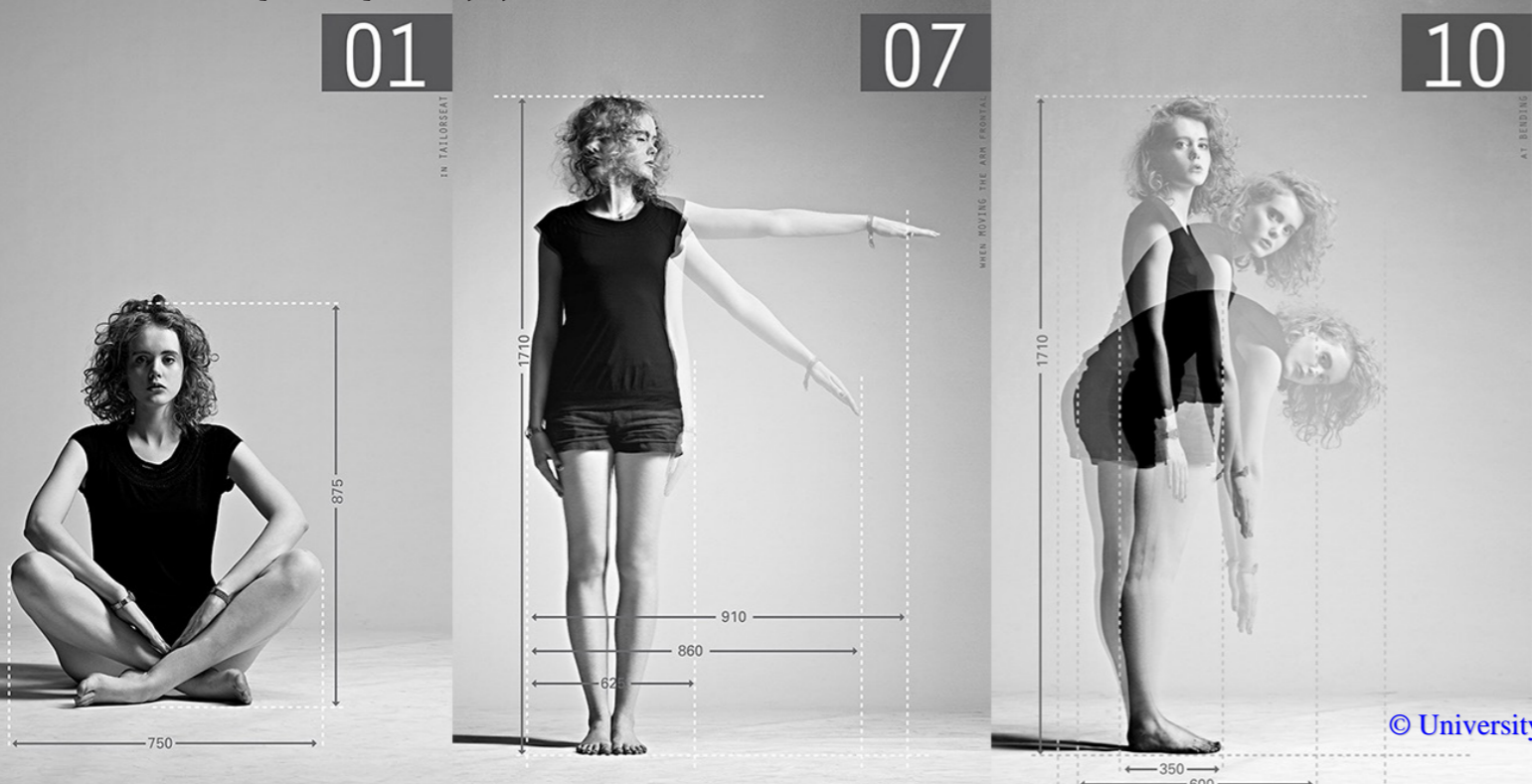
book 'The Art of Making Dances' and notes the importance of creating a "dynamic sequence of rises and falls within a choreographed whole". (Humphrey 1959).

Her perspective on dance choreography rests on the 'composing' of steps to produce visual excitement (Haupt 1997:54), rather than the 'arranging' thereof (Humphrey 1959:46), and it is here, with the focus on architectural design, where the analogy is made between the choreographing of a dance and the composing of architectural shape.

The theory stems from the notion that every movement made by an individual has a design in space, a relationship to other objects in both time and space, which are referred to as 'dynamics', as well as a 'rhythm'. These movements are made for a variety of reasons, perhaps voluntarily or involuntarily, perhaps physical, emotive or instinctive, from which the notion of 'motivation' is derived, without which, no movement would be made (Humphrey 1959:46).

And so, the basis for dance, and in this case the compositional exercise of the architectural intervention is defined in four elements:

> Design
> Dynamics
> Rhythm
> Motivation

1. Design

There is an intrinsic sense of structure in human beings that have been gained from the battery of everyday life experiences with designs with which we are confronted. This sense is strengthened with the shape of objects, from something as small and inconsequential as a hairbrush to grandiose architectural designs or natural occurrences, such as the ocean or a mountain (Humphrey 1959:49).

Design is considered to fall into one of two major categories, symmetrical and asymmetrical (Humphrey 1959:50). Symmetry can be seen to suggest stability, security, comfort and repose, while asymmetry elicits stimulation, excitement and adventure.

Within these two categories, are two subdivisions – these patterns are either successional or oppositional (Humphrey 1959:57). Opposing lines emphasize ideas of force, aggression, vitality, exuberance or power; the closer the opposing lines come to form a right angle, the more power is suggested, enticing an idea of conflict, either emotive and intrinsic, or towards an exterior subject, while the more the angle is narrowed, the weaker the antagonism becomes (Humphrey 1959:58).
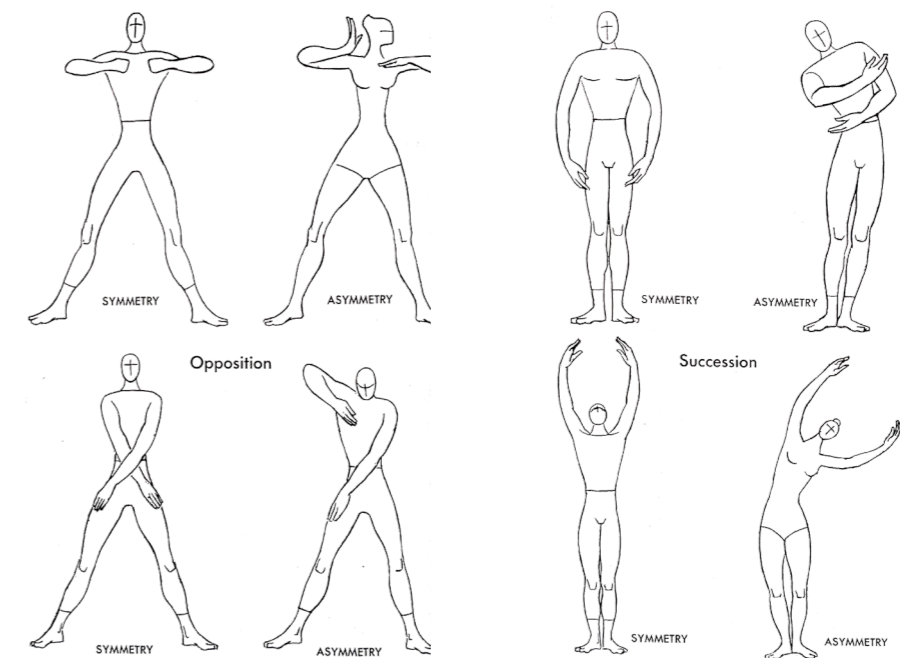

Figure 3.7   Symmetrical and asymmetrical design illustrated, the two major design categories, and within those, the subdivisions, opposition and succession, as defined by Doris Humphrey (Humphrey 1959:52-53).

On the contrary, successional design is always milder and gentler; its unobstructed linear shape or curve flowing continually, uninterrupted. This renders the symmetrical design with a successional pattern as the most soothing interpretation, while an asymmetrical successional design becomes considerably more stimulating, providing an apt balance of amusing alertness with no opposing forces or the predictable balance of symmetry. The oppositional design interpretations however always seem to retain some or all of its power, with the crossing of opposing lines seemingly anchoring, or imprisoning the body onto the space (Humphrey 1959:58).

In the interest of designing for two opposing bodies, contrasting angles of the bodies to each other is advised. This allows for a three-dimensional, full impact observation to be made, while too-flat bodies can become two-dimensional in the user experience. A call for simpler lines is made when designing for multiple bodies, while the principle of contrast is emphasized (Humphrey 1959:64-65).
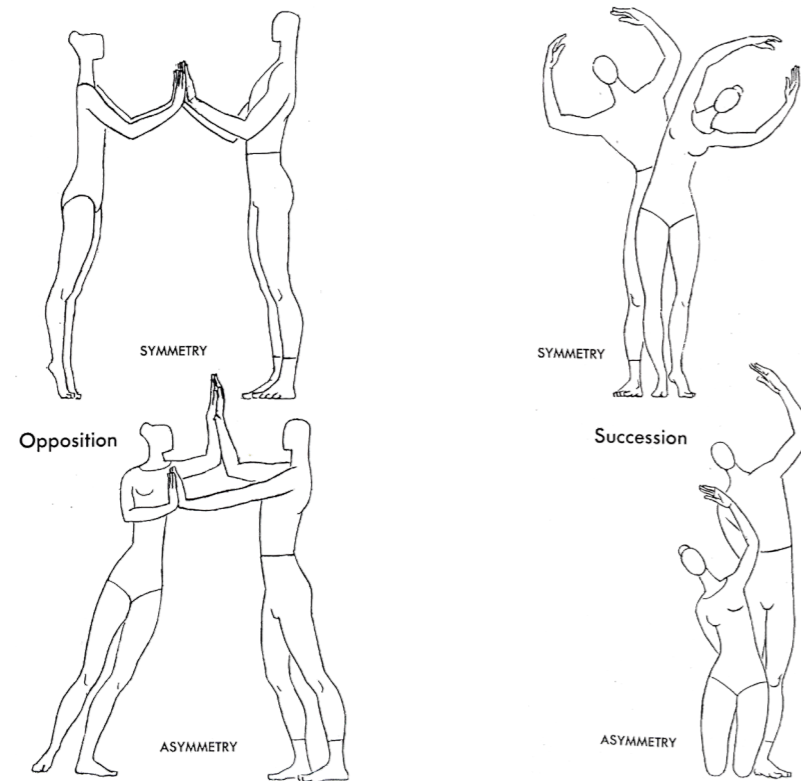

Figure 3.8   Symmetrical and asymmetrical design illustrated, the two major design categories, and within those, the subdivisions, opposition and succession, for two bodies, as defined by Doris Humphrey (Humphrey 1959:54-55).

2. Dynamics

Dynamics is the lifeblood of the dance (Humphrey 1959:102) and should be regarded as the ingredient which adds variety and texture, the 'spice' if you will, to the dance. These dynamics may include terms such as sharp, smooth, fast, slow, tension, relaxation, but it should be considered that these indications are all subject to individual interpretation (Humphrey 1959:97).

It has been proven that overall, a combination of alternate dynamics that result in a variety of timing or phrasing as well as dynamics are found to be rich in interest and refreshing, as people are likely drawn to variety in colour and texture (Humphrey 1959:102), however, it must be noted that the subtle and apt use of dynamics within certain programmatic spaces have the potential to elicit a specific mood the architect wishes to instil within the user.

3. Rhythm

Rhythm is ingrained in every human being, and "might be compared to the ambience of existence" (Humphrey 1959:104), reaching as far back as that remarkable creation of nature – man - within whom can be found, four sources of rhythmic organization. The first can be referred to as the breathing-singing-speaking instruments, secondly, the unconscious beats of function, such as the heartbeat, peristalsis, the contraction and relaxation of muscles, and waves of sensation through the nerve ends. The third rhythmic system, the legs, is the driving mechanism, propelling and supporting man through space in the continues transferring of weight from one leg to the other, and finally, the emotional rhythm, the swelling and ebbing tides of emotion and feeling within each and every individual (Humphrey 1959:105). Rhythm can be considered to be the most persuasive and most powerful element of the dance, and yet it remains one of the most unappreciated tools, having the capability of relaxing, soothing, or driving and rushing an individual to the next space or step.

4. <u>Motivation and Gesture</u>

While design may be striking, rhythm, triggering and the dynamics a subtle colouring, movement without motivation is inconceivable, and while a change in position induced by some force may be understandable or not, the conscious motivation for movement is favoured no matter how simple it may seem to be (Humphrey 1959:110), movement should be underpinned by purpose. "I live, therefore I move!" beautifully captures not only the thoughts and motivations of the dancer but of the activities of everyday life as well. Movement is life, and the cessation thereof is death.

Motivation is the essential core of dance composition, the necessity or urge to move driving a body to move from one place to another, while gesture, a sort of recognizable patterned language of movement is a branch thereof (Humphrey 1959:112, 114-115). These gestures involve the movement of the face, hands and body and are meant to assist in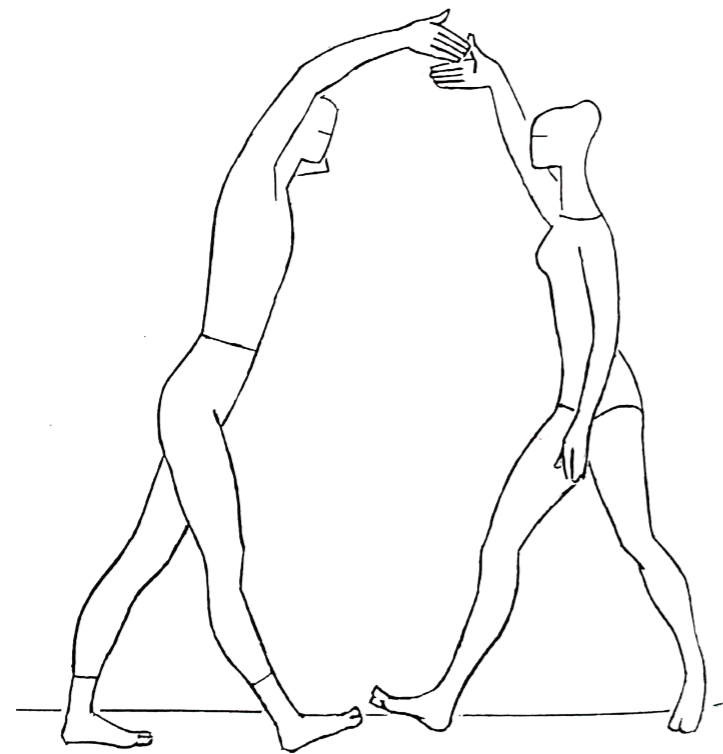 the understanding of other people, as well as defining those relationships, reinforcing the communication of thought and emotion (Porter 2004:90). Examples of gestural movements in dance can be shown in drawing near to, close but not touching, touching, surrounding without touch, and with touch, carrying, addressing, greeting, parting, holding, and lifting (Haupt 1997:54). In architectural terms, gesture may convey motion or action, the way in which a building may 'hug' a landscape, 'embrace' the visitor or may even take on physical attitudes as in the stylized gestures of ballet, where architectural forms can 'lean', 'arch', 'point' and 'pirouette'.

Gesture can therefore be regarded as the embodiment of human presence in architectural built form, similarly to how there is a expectation to establish human scale in a building, drawing back to the human origins of architecture (Porter 2004:90).

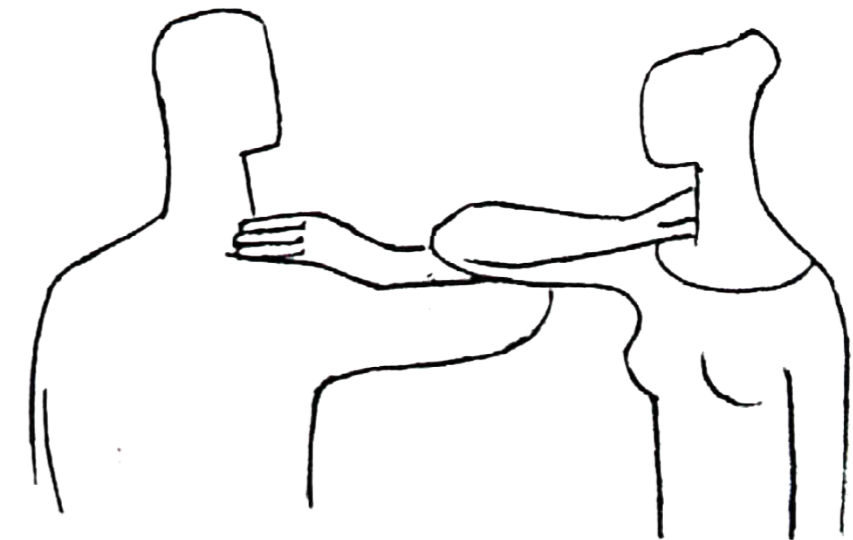

Figure 3.9 The simple motion of a hand shake performed in a stylised, gestural manner (Humphrey 1959:54).

Figure 3.10 The simple motion of a hand shake performed in a stylised, gestural manner (Humphrey 1959:55).

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These choreographic principles were later built upon by dancer, choreographer, and associate professor of dance at the Northwestern University, Lynne Anne Blom, and co-author L. Tarin Chaplin, assistant professor and Head of the Dance Program at Middlebury College, in their book, 'The Intimate Act of Choreography', in which they set out to present a comprehensive synthesis detailing the extensive core of knowledge, fundamental elements and complex issues that comprises the process, art and craft of choreography (Blom & Chaplin 1982:xiii).

Blom & Chaplin (1982:9) commences by accentuating the importance of intention, clarity, and motivation, "with clearness of articulation there comes clearness of communication", as the starting point to any choreographic work. The question to be asked here: "what is your choreographic intention?", can in a similar way be asked at the start of an architectural intervention: "what is your architectural intention?", "what would you like to instill in the users of this space?". The precise defining of your intentions, that may exist on both a conscious and preconscious level, increases the possibility of portraying the initial design concept/

idea successfully. As this intention along with the over-arching theme of the project (the primary scheme around which all else clusters) become better defined, that which drives the project forward, the underlying motivation, comes to the fore (Blom & Chaplin 1982:10-12).

Following this initial exercise at the inception of the project, whether it be architectural or choreographic, the following foundational elements proceed:

Simplicity
Design in Space
Floor Pattern
Stage Space

1. Simplicity

In working with the complexities of the human condition, both on stage and on site, the prevailing criterion becomes one of simplicity, which does not necessarily exclude complex, subtle, or nuanced detailing, but does stipulate a desire for legibility (Blom & Chaplin 1982:13). In creating an accessible, easily perceivable, and elegant design statement, the foundation is laid from which a work of integrity, clarity and purpose can be developed that strives to address the needs of the audience or user on a physical, psychological, and emotional plane (Blom & Chaplin 1982:14).

2. Design in Space

"Design can be thought of as a capturing of form" (Blom & Chaplin 1982:37). Also included in the four choreographic dance elements of Doris Humphrey, the importance of the shape of one or more bodies in space is paramount to choreography as well as to architecture. The design can be defined according to the following criteria (Blom & Chaplin 1982:37-39, 41-42):

i. The lines of the shape, either curved or straight-and-angular, depict a definitive contrast in the sentiment they convey. While curved and circular lines provide a notion of fluidity and continuity, one reflecting the organic or the natural, straight lines indicate a feeling of stasis and stillness; these forms offer a sense of directionality, permanence, and solidity.

ii. The overall shape, either symmetrical or asymmetrical, as previously defined in the work of Doris Humphrey, because of the powerful visual and easily recognizable implications these forms have on the viewer/user. Symmetrical design, which is identical on ei-

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ther side of a central point or axis, provides a feeling of equilibrium, strength, and authority. Asymmetrical design, in contrast, implies dynamism, movement and tension, perceived to have a weightedness in some direction. Blom & Chaplin (1982:39) delineates asymmetry as "very un-symmetrical", where the intention is to decidedly differentiate shape or movement about an axis, to create instances of excitement and interest, while symmetry is used in contradiction, to anchor the design, at points of arrival or departure. This concept is particularly applicable in enhancing one's personal perception and appreciated in the viewing of art, sculpture, and architecture.

iii. The relation of shape to space and vice versa, creates the subjective perception of the creation of positive and negative space, with the best visual example being the optical illusion of the vase/face profile illustration. In this instance, the foreground and background become interchangeable, with the viewer deciding which colour is perceived as the object (the positive, tangible, occupying shape) and which is the intervening space (the negative space between objects). These shapes are seen to posses a mallea-

ble quality, their respective shapes reliant on the other – as the one is changed or rearranged, so the other is simultaneously altered.

3. Floor Pattern

Floor pattern, in choreographic terms refers to the path travelled in space by the dancer. In architectural terms, it refers to the walkways and routes articulated in the design project to be utilised by the user. Floor pattern is a vital element in the design process as these paths can hold a variety of potentials and implications to both the viewer and the user (Blom & Chaplin 1982:50).

4. Stage Space

The stage space makes reference to the actual physical area, which in choreographic terms refers to the stage or arena in which the dance

is contained, while in architectural terms may allude to the site or geographical, contextual location of the design intervention. Arrangement of bodies, forms, and floor patterns on stage and/or site should be well-considered as some areas are stronger, while others, more intimate. In dance, one of the most frequently used paths, is the diagonal line from upstage right to downstage left, where the dancer covers the greatest possible distance on stage in a straight, direct path. This presents a very impactful visual and psychological experience, transporting the dancer from a point of distance to close proximity (Blom & Chaplin 1982:52).
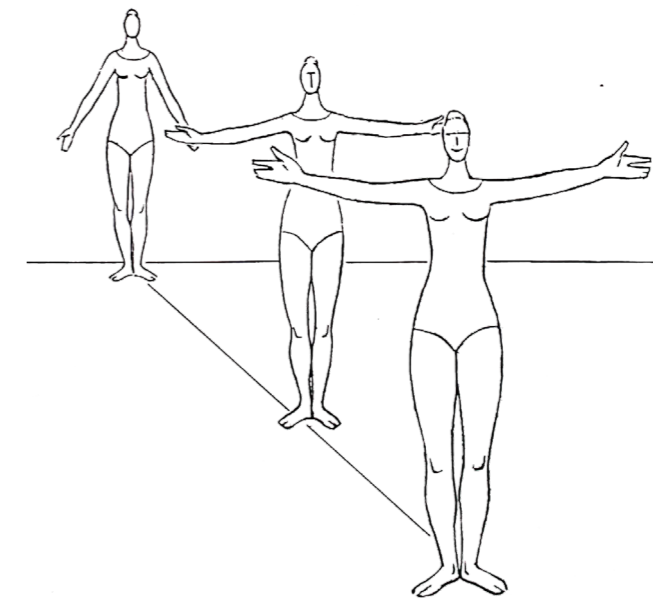

Figure 3.11   The frequently used, visually and psychologically impactful diagonal path, covering the greatest possible distance in a straight, direct path (Humphrey 1959:81).

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While dance is often disregarded from the teaching and experience of other disciplines because it is perceived as containing such a separate category of movement, it is merely a different combination and heightened intensity of movements that comprise all fundamental components of human motion (Bartenieff & Lewis 1980:x). With this in mind, and the choreographic principles of Humphrey and Blom & Chaplin unpacked, it becomes evident that the application of these principles within the architectural profession have the ability to mitigate "placelessness" in transient spaces, in providing pace, orientation and identity, as outlined by Relph (1976:146-147).

NOTATION

The rigorous transcribing of transient dance movements onto a sheet of paper is vital in the recalling and transference of a specific choreography from one dancer to the next. Similarly, informative drawings allow architects the means to visualise, conceptualise and realise their thoughts - a pivotal process in actuating structure and space, communicating those thoughts to the client and builder, and negotiating the adaptability, habitation, and occupation of the space. Kato and Glynn (2016) further argue that the notation of movement may aid in predicting the behaviour of the users in the space, and in addition can begin to explore the interrelations between body, movement, and spatial manipulation. Therefore, the role of notation in both architecture and dance choreography cannot be underestimated.

For the purposes of this dissertation, Labanotation has been selected as the preferred choreographic mapping system to quantify the movement of bodies through space. The term, 'quality of movement', was coined by Rudolf van Laban (1879-1958) who observed and notated the interconnection of geometry and physical movement (Kato and Glynn 2016).

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