

AGNIESZKA KŁOPOTOWSKA

ORCID: 0000-0002-4596-4052

Białystok University of Technology, Poland

ARCHITECTURAL IMAGINARIUM OF TOUCH

ARCHITEKTONICZNE IMAGINARIUM DOTYKU

Abstract

Among human senses, it is touch that provides the key competences to be in the world. The awareness of “I” as well as the construction of the space around “I” originate from touch. Simple sensory sensations, formed on the membrane of human skin, become the abundance of experiences, involving the body, emotions, and spirit of a recipient.

The aim of this paper is to highlight the fundamental role of touch in experiencing architectural space. Evoking works and ideas from different eras, the author observes the tension-ridden relations taking place in the infra-thin (or quite extensive) Interspace between body and architecture. This thought is carried within the subject of truth and lie of architecture, which are examined in the context of experiencing architecture as physical space and as art. The results of the research are identified gradients and reveals of truths and deceptions that are present in the architectural game of touch, such as: Empathic touch, Super touch, Anti-touch, Pseudo-touch, and False touch.

Keywords: multisensory architecture, touch in architecture, tactile perception, haptic perception, kinaesthesia

Streszczenie

Wśród ludzkich zmysłów to dotyk zapewnia człowiekowi kluczowe kompetencje do bycia w świecie. Świadomość naszego „ja”, jak też konstrukcja przestrzeni wokół „ja” wywodzą się z dotyku. Proste doznania czuciowe, powstające na membranie ludzkiej skóry, stają się materiałem bogactwa doświadczeń, angażując ciało, emocje i ducha odbiorcy.

Celem publikacji jest zwrócenie uwagi na fundamentalną rolę dotyku w doświadczaniu przestrzeni architektonicznej. Przywołując dzieła i idee z różnych epok, autorka obserwuje pełne napięcia relacje zachodzące w infracienkiej (lub całkiem rozległej) Międzyprzestrzeni ciało–architektura. Refleksja ta prowadzona jest w klamrach tematu prawdy i kłamstwa architektury, badanych w kontekście jej doświadczania jako przestrzeni fizycznej oraz jako sztuki.

Rezultatem badań są wskazane gradienty i odsłony prawd i fałszów, obecne w grze architektonicznej z udziałem dotyku, takie jak: Empatyczny dotyk, Super dotyk, Anty dotyk, Niby dotyk, Fałszywy dotyk.

Słowa kluczowe: architektura multisensoryczna, dotyk w architekturze, percepcja dotykowa, percepcja haptyczna, kinestezja

1. INTRODUCTION

Among the human senses, it is touch that provides the key competences to be in the world. A human being can function without vision or hearing, without smell or taste, but “can’t survive at all without skin functions.”¹ Being the first in the ontogenesis of the senses (and

¹ A. Giczewska, *Fenomen dotyku: stymulacja systemu taktylnego i jej wpływ na rozwój psychoruchowy dziecka*, Centrum Aneta Giczewska, Środa Śląska 2005, p. 7.

the last of the senses lost before death), the touch system constructs the remaining sensory modalities. As J. Pallasmaa says: “All senses, including vision, are extensions of the sense of touch [...] and all sensory experiences are modes of touching and thus related to tactility.”² It is impossible to avoid touching. We touch continuously, all the time, even in our sleep. We are able to make gestures and movements quite unknowingly.³ There is also unobvious touch that encourages discovering. Finally, reflexive touch, under the control of the conscious mind. We can discuss experiences and techniques of corporeal immersion in the world, and somaesthetics – affirmation of the body as an art medium. On the other side of the scale, there is empty – uncharacteristic touch of a smartphone screen, telepresence and cyber touch. Jeremiads cannot help here – imaginative touch means also efficiency and usefulness.

All this is perfectly understood by Architecture, which is attentive, observing and changing the surrounding world – also by touch.

2. THE BACKGROUND OF THE DISCUSSION. AUTHOR’S CHOICE OF TRUTHS ABOUT TOUCH

2.1 TOUCH, ME, AND THE WORLD

“I feel myself! I am!”⁴ Herder’s interpretation of the famous *Cogito ergo sum*, regaining the senses and feeling for philosophical and aesthetic reflection, turns especially towards touch as the fundamental power of cognition and certainty of human existence. The progression of touch in the hierarchy of the senses, proclaimed by a representative of Weimar Classicism, recognized by Maine de Biran,⁵ was sealed by Merleau-Ponty in the twentieth century. The author of *Phenomenology of Perception* has seen in this sense the core of experiences that constitute the subjectivity of “I” – the awareness of having a body, being it and of one’s own carnal presence. The inspiration and ground for contemporary philosophical reflections has been the Aristotle’s experiment, discovering the two sides of the take: touching and being touched (one of my hand touches the other). New versions of the experiment allowed us to see the significance of truths hidden behind a simple act of touch.⁶ The existing and living “I” is now constituted in the tactile experience, and it is based not only on the awareness of the role of the body as a place where physical sensations are located (internalized), but also on the perception of the difference (separation) between the touching and touched.

The touch brings us also the awareness of the external space (the individuality and status of other beings – objects and organisms). The irreducible (absolutely permanent) body, states Merleau-Ponty, is our way to communicate with the world.⁷ “Reaching for things and playing

² J. Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*, Chichester, Wiley 2008, p. 10.

³ The so-called enactive representation – situational movements that do not require higher mental activity.

⁴ After: K. Tkaczyk, *Johan Gottfried Herder. Sensualistyczny bunt wobec klasycznej estetyki* [in:] A. Łebkowska, Ł. Wróblewski, P. Badysiak (eds.), *W kulturze dotyku? Dotyk i jego reprezentacje w tekstach kultury*, Nomos, Kraków 2016, p. 26.

⁵ He considered the touch as a philosophical sense.

⁶ Autoaffection was studied by E. Husserl. (Being a living body – *Leib*). Cf.: E. Husserl, *Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, Dordrecht-Boston, Kluwer Academic 1989.

⁷ Cf.: M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1978.

with them disclose their separateness and relative spacing,”⁸ says Yi-Fu Tuan, and highlighting the inseparability of touch and kinaesthesia, he adds after Husserl: “Space is experienced directly as having room in which to move.”⁹ Also, the construction of space around “I” derives from the touch and physical experience of spatial relationships. The sense of touch, in its broadest sense, makes us acquainted with “the schemes of the whole and part, the centre and peripheries [...], the circle, the bond, the cyclicity, the path, the container.”¹⁰

Another everyday “experiment” that makes us feel present of ourselves and things in a single cognitive act is the experience of resistance. “Before things start to function as instruments of my everyday life, they appear as resisting beings” – “before a thing obey me, it shows its disobedience.”¹¹ De Biran states: I experience resistance “most intensely just when I touch.”¹² “I” can therefore be “found in the apperception of effort [...] [which] is necessary to overcome the resistance of the world’s matter.”¹³ Resistance is the fullest testimony to the existence of things outside of us, while effort is ours.

2.2 THE INTERSPACE OF TOUCH

Both of the above-mentioned experience scenarios (auto-affection and resistance) show also another nature of touch, which is the experience both connecting and separating things from one another. Our physical “contact with the world takes place at the boundary line of the self through specialised parts of our enveloping membrane.”¹⁴ The French philosopher Nancy describes touch as a paradoxical figure in which the antinomy of closeness and distance is revealed: “The touch is closeness, emotional appreciation and absolute intimacy, but it does not give us full identification of subjects”¹⁵ – there is always a distance, that sanctions the individuality of beings. This infinitely small interval (present in the touch but also in other senses) was observed earlier by Duchamp, while creating the term of the *infrathin* – relational phenomenon, allowing at the same time for distance (difference) and directness (similarity) of the touching and touched.¹⁶ Merleau Ponty, on the other hand, defining this spatial (but also bodily and spiritual) property, says: neither synthesis, nor separateness of a subject and an object, but a “limited” synthesis – unfinished and impermanent.

Thus, the Interspace of touch is founded.¹⁷ The Polish poet and literary scholar T. Sławek allows us to approach it, showing the dynamism of processes occurring within: “Touch

⁸ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1977, p. 23. As E. Husserl states: “it is only through the motion and kinaesthetic and tactile sensations that the body is given”, *op. cit.*

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 12.

¹⁰ After: K. Kwapisz-Osadnik, *Język jako miejsce osławiania przestrzeni* [in:] J. Kurek, K. Maliszewski (eds.), *W przestrzeni dotyku*, Miejski Dom Kultury “Batory”, Chorzów 2009, p. 46.

¹¹ T. Sławek, *Cienie i rzeczy. Rozważania o dotyku* [in:] *ibidem*, p. 17.

¹² After: A. Wolińska, *Dotyk i pamięć* [in:] A. Łebkowska, Ł. Wróblewski, P. Badysiak (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 78.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ Pallasmaa, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

¹⁵ After: S. Bąk, *Dotyk w performansie* [in:] A. Łebkowska, Ł. Wróblewski, P. Badysiak (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 305.

¹⁶ After: P. Schollenberger, *Strefy kontaktu – Merleau-Ponty i Duchamp o związkach widzenia i dotyku*, [in:] A. Łebkowska, Ł. Wróblewski, P. Badysiak (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 58–60.

¹⁷ A. Wolińska, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

is a meeting of two forces: ‘the strength of things’ and ‘the strength of me’, which also becomes a ‘thing’ in this context – touch takes me out of a privileged situation in which I can only look at things...”¹⁸ A. Wolińska added: Touch and being touched “is in effect of an experience created at the intersection, it is a contact full of tension.”¹⁹ A feature immanently embedded in Interspace is bidirectionality (bilateralism). Thus, the potential of the *Infrathin* includes all aspects related to relativity, reciprocity, dialogue of physical encounters of entities, such as: co- (or counter-) action, confrontation, intentionality, activity of parties. Finally, the consequence of the action of touch is double affection. By touching, the individual is confronted both with the affect of the one who touches and with their own feelings.”²⁰ Exploring this delicate, fascinating borderland zone, E. Skorupa notes that in human (including interpersonal) touch, contact is never a neutral act. “The contact of one man with another is always immersed in axiology.”²¹ The subjective or intersubjective relationship established each time between the participating bodies is, therefore, given a cognitive, emotional, moral dimension.

2.3 THE INTERTIME OF TOUCH

The “shift” between the sensations of touching and being touched also concerns the Time that accompanies Space. Even when perceived as simultaneous, tactile experiences do not actually overlap, marking the infrashort (and sometimes quite substantial) time distance between the active and passive experience of touching.

The structure of the Intertime of touch outlined in this way is always determined by the situation – incidence and sometimes unpredictability of touching. The touch “happens in the substantial time and matter and disperses in them, leaving a trace of the reality in ourselves.”²² The inevitable transience of the experience of the Space and Time in the act of touching is most clearly concluded by the Heraclitus of Ephesus doctrine *You cannot step into the same river twice*, just as you cannot touch the same transient substance...”

The time in tactile sensations is curved by subjectivity – an immanent property of human sensory experience. Individual perception of time is always inscribed in the context of the experience, but also in the changing and impermanent context of the viewer himself – his current vulnerability, sensitivity and resistance to specific sensory experiences.

Despite these shifts and curves, S. Bąk states that touch is a powerful tool of human perception of time: “And the touch that happens in the act makes time real and tangible. There is no better situation to experience the time and space than through touch. In it, the present is tangible, and the space is material.”²³ In spite of perceptual traps, the author also writes: “Touch stabilises experience. Embedding it precisely at the moment when it occurs is a discovery of the here and now.”²⁴

¹⁸ T. Sławek, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

¹⁹ A. Wolińska, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

²⁰ Ł. Wróblewski, P. Badysiak, *Pamięć dotyku. Od awersji do empatii w filmie Przez Dotyk Magdaleny Łazarkiewicz* [in:] A. Łebkowska, Ł. Wróblewski, P. Badysiak (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 216.

²¹ E. Skorupa, *Dotyk jako wyraz emocji. Pozytywistyczno-modernistyczne realizacje literackie* [in:] A. Łebkowska, Ł. Wróblewski, P. Badysiak (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 38.

²² S. Bąk, *op. cit.*, p. 311.

²³ *Ibidem*, pp. 311–312.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 311.

There is also a belief that touch gives a person a possibility of a kind of “time travel”. Touched objects and places, especially those bearing traces of past events, can take us to the distant past, make it present, tactile, tangible.

The ambiguous, full of contradictions Interspaces and Intertimes of Touch appear to the author to be an exceptionally interesting field for architectural explorations. An excuse for them shall be the specific brackets of the discourse around the subject of Truth and the Lies of Architecture. Evoking works and ideas from different epochs, the author observes the tense relations between the human body and Architecture, taking place at infrathin (or quite extensive) distances. The personal aim of the research is to take a closer look at the finesse and depth of touch, while the aim of the publication is to draw attention to the fundamental role of touch in experiencing architectural space.

3. TRUTHS AND DECEPTIONS OF TOUCH IN ARCHITECTURAL EXPERIENCE

3.1 THE CARNAL TRUTH AND ITS HALF-TRUTHS

The vision, which seems to be the greatest sense to experience Architecture, is in fact a carrier of distance and illusion. When we get to know the Architecture with our eyes only, we do not encounter it, but only its image – we see “[...] ‘shadows’ instead of objects, reflections instead of things, ideas instead of substances.”²⁵ Touch can be the salvation from the platonic cave of illusion; touch, which guarantees true, and thus, direct contact of the body with the reality of architecture. Doubting Thomas gets physical evidence of the existence of buildings, their tangibility and real presence in space. The buildings stand in front of me (which is not obvious today!), because I can touch them!

The advantage of touch over vision is particularly noticeable when considering the texture. It’s a little bit like buying fabric for a dress – I don’t know if the wall or the floor is the way I see it, until I feel it with my hand, rub my elbow against it, touch it with my knee. The haptic truth of Architecture is also the trace of a tool in the concrete or imprint of the formwork. With a half-real bridge of time it meets with a touch – a gesture of the creator, and then – with a handicraft(?) of the project.

Architectural concepts: mass, weight, dimensions, structure, equilibrium, statics – come from touch, no less than the geometry of shapes (roundness or sharpness). Some of these “facts” are again only semi-truths of architecture – I cannot weigh the building.

They are similar to the half-truths of the embodiment and personification of the architectural matter, which stems from the human need for reciprocity. Buildings, like us, are standing, climbing, growing up. They settle under the influence of weights, or bravely support them – with a binder, pole, caryatid. They bend and cut walls, run with the rhythm of windows, and even hug and sway in the dance! In this half-truth, the need for co-substantiality is also important – the combination of the body and Architecture. The stealthy touch of the walls, handle, furniture in the family house – is like a desire to touch the clothes of someone dear to us. Touching architecture is also a constant confrontation with the body. I feel all the resistance of the heavy cathedral door or, leaning over the chasm, I give in my safety to a solid railing.

²⁵ After: T. Sławek, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

It is also the omnipresent sense of scale, resulting from unconscious measurement – designing my own body for the space I experience. I measure a vast square in steps, fit my body into a nice recess, instinctively bend my head under the slanting ceiling of the attic.

As J. Pallasmaa argues: “There is an inherent suggestion of action in images of architecture, the moment of active encounter, or a ‘promise of a purpose.’”²⁶ The touch is to identify the usability of Architecture, to read out (and really try it out!) the affordances that call me. Checking the ergonomic correctness of things and casual curling up in the experience of comfort, convenience, harmony of bodily matching.

In Architecture there is a routine, familiar, everyday touch. Thanks to the haptic memory carrying the memories of touches, we can walk around the house in the dark and perform various activities, even sleepwalking. On the other hand, touch is uncertain and surprised: “Every move and surprise in contact with small things proves it. Like with a tap in a bathroom that suddenly has to be turned in a different direction. Or with a handle that your hand seeks every time too much to the left.”²⁷

The human need to be among other beings is also fulfilled in the touch of Architecture. Square, stadium, ballroom, church – this architecture triggers coexistence, compassion. For our sake, there is also architecture isolating us within zones – of cities, airports, hospitals, or housing estates for unknown reasons closed behind fences. The boundaries of social norms of contact are imprinted in architecture: intimate, personal, social, public.²⁸ Finally, there is the architectural culture of *hands off* and haphophobia, once present in a tape protecting a piece of art in a museum, and today in a tape in a grocery store, that is supposed to protect me from the coronavirus. In the humanised touch of architecture there is care or oppression. The patio surrounds me, the gazebo gives me shelter, the balustrade secures me, the wall blocks the passage and cuts the city, the skyscrapers violently invade districts of traditional buildings.

Architecture – the Space is built by touch!

3.2 SUBJECTIVE POETICS OF TOUCH AND TACTILE EMOTIONS

Architecture – Art is the Form more than the Function. Post-sensual categories of the beauty and originality, exceeding the realism of architectural matter. Barthes’s concept of *punctum*, which means being “touched from within,” matters here most. Puncturing, wounding, moving, stinging, stabbing, pressing a man who meets a work of art.²⁹ This *punctum* can be a mature, captured emotion or a pre-subjective, unconditional, atavistic affect. Buildings touch me and stir emotions, they magnetise me with their beauty, soothe me with their harmony, or irritate me with their mismatch.

In Architecture, not only do I experience mental touch: excitement, bliss, attachment, distrust, embarrassment, impatience, fear, but I also experience intensely the Space with my own body. As J. Pallasmaa states, “The encounter of any work of art implies a bodily interaction.”³⁰ The touch of architectural art can evoke feelings that are directly sensual: it can gently grasp me, fill me up, guide me, but it can also become a trigger of strong

²⁶ J. Pallasmaa, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

²⁷ E.T. Hall, *The Silent Language*, Doubleday & Company, Garden City 1959.

²⁸ E.T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension*, Anchor Books, New York 1990.

²⁹ After: A. Łebkowska, *Afirmacja dotyku w dyskursie współczesności* [in:] A. Łebkowska, Ł. Wróblewski, P. Badysiak (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 19.

³⁰ J. Pallasmaa, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

oppression: jerk, touch, knock off, shake, choke, grab, tear apart, catch off-balance. This illusion is sometimes collective, and the force with which it operates is used socially. In the spaces of different epochs and cultures I get to know imprints of kindness, understanding, or trust of planners of space, or on the contrary – tangible traces of power, manipulation, control, violence, profanation, destruction, annihilation. “Splashes” or “contamination” with a bad touch in architecture can be so strong that after such an experience “the landscape can no longer give aesthetic pleasure and talking about the beauty of the landscape becomes inappropriate.”³¹

The existing, although difficult to grasp, *genius loci* – the identity of the place perceived with the whole body and our identification with it – also grows from touch, as we believe. The spirit of the place may be the harmony of home touches (the cooperation between me and the interior – perfectly tuned to my needs), but also the sanctity and uniqueness of touch of various Galleries of Architecture. In such spaces and moments: “What counts is the slowness, unhurriedness, gentle sliding on the smooth surface of the stone, like on the skin, the caution and uncertainty of every touch, and finally – growing with every touch and stroke – the conviction one is dealing with something special.”³² The spiritual identity of places is also the magic and transcendence of touch – touching a mosaic on the floor, or a sculpture “for luck” or “to reverse back luck,” bodily approach, bowing or skin contact – for the feeling of metaphysical mysteries of being.

Sensory emotions also include secondary physiological reactions, related to the emotional experience of the architectural touches. A part of the architectural untruth are goose bumps, tingling, shivers – when I see a wonderful student design, body tension and muscle trembling – on a bridge which is seemingly or really shaking, throbbing and beating of my heart – when I meet my dream space!

But most of all, the Touch in Architecture is the power of creation, bringing to life the non-existent, imaginary, expected. The creationist, causative gesture of the designer and toil of the builder that follows it, reveal and convey new dimensions, ideas and values to my touch. This creation is at the same time full of reciprocity. I – the recipient – with the touch of my body, also create Architecture – I get to know it, check, evaluate, experience, and even influence it, leaving my fleeting or permanent trace in it.

Architecture – the Art becomes by touch!

4. THE STRATEGIES OF THE ARCHITECTURAL GAME OF TOUCH

EMPATHIC TOUCH is the daily bread of architects. A part of the essential knowledge and a code of vocational service to humanity. It was supervised by Vitruvius and the ethics of the profession, today also law and (hopefully) sustainable development. Ergonomics, which likes numbers but at the same time grows out of the dreams of a perfect relationship between the man and world of things, threw light on it.

Empathy is probably more than ergonomics. It is Architecture that is full of understanding and tenderness: for our habits, our weaknesses, our fears, our phobias. It is the inspiring

³¹ K. Koprowska, *Haptyczność krajobrazu pamięci w poezji Henryka Grynberga* [in:] A. Łebkowska, Ł. Wróblewski, P. Badysiak (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 106.

³² K. Tkaczyk, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

flexibility of Skibniewska (and the one of IKEA), a hospital with places to sleep for the mothers who are holding hands of their sick children, small steps for the shaky feet of a toddler, atrium with Madonna in the Białystok Hospice – for the last, maybe most important conversations. It is the quite ordinary Jesuit Church in Jastrzębia Góra and a closed niche where I can kneel in an emphatically hidden confessional. And a regular churchyard, where a priest is waiting every evening for people who want to talk and have a walk. The organ that makes the whole building vibrate remembering Master Penderecki's every birthday until today...

But there were also great empathy of ergonomics: the Frankfurt kitchen – to help a busy housewife, or an apartment in Unité d'habitation – designed tailor-made for the body... of a modulator. Optimisation of factory lines, where the body touches like an automaton. As history says, you can fall into the trap of average empathy. You can give a gesture to the crowd, instead of an individual. Sometimes you can also squeeze too tight, almost strangle with the "caring" touch of architecture. You can designate special empathetic zones in cities and buildings – all for the convenience of the disabled. A gesture of equality – not separation – can serve better than such empathy. Comfort of "I can" – not "I need" of a recipient of the universal design. A safe cocoon in the wall of the clinic not for the autistic, but for every child, watching art together, openness instead of zones. Street models of architecture spring from empathy like mushrooms after the rain, for example, the aids for the blind. It's a pity that so many of them are not to be touched! Here knowledge is needed, empathy alone is not enough.

We realise what is empathic touch when it is missing, or when we inverse with empathy the extreme lack of it. Patiently waiting chairs at Plac Bohaterów Getta (Ghetto Heroes Square) in Cracow, trampling masks in Liebeskind's Void, or cruel *Colosseum* converted to the Way of the Cross. An architectural touch of empathy – of memory and forgiveness.

SUPER TOUCH is an architectural touch experiment. It may be a special focus on texture. The sensuality of materials undergoing torment: punching, whisking, burning, melting – in the Zumthor's Bruder Klaus Field Chapel. The eternal stone from Vals is so tangible that it seems drinkable. Game of two matters in the diploma of E. Konstantynowicz: the cavity, looseness, viscosity, fugacity of the sand and hardness of the traces in the concrete that has been formed for a lifetime.

What is more, attention paid to the body and scale. *Mindfulness* of Pallasma's tiny handles that slip out of hand. And a Modulor, suddenly reduced after multiplied a thousand times in a powerful Corbusier machine; or a flattened, "pressed" observer in Wright's horizontal structures.

Super touch is sometimes the whole ideology of the touch. Like the method of learning in the innovative Bauhaus school, which preaches the need to deepen sensory awareness and the ability to perceive materials by the students of Architecture. Also, the Bauhaus' cult of handwritten work – drawing and designing, essential elements of the didactic process adopted by our schools. Then, brutalism and its nudity, the sincerity of the construction and materials – the overwhelming insensitivity of truth, all the way down to the pain of the observer who is not ready for such exposure. After the next decades – deconstruction and its violent handling of form. Curiosity (and cruelty): cutting, shredding, sliding, twisting, crushing. Cabinet of fear is also (growing out of constructivist touches-horror) the giant, mocking the gravity WoZoCo cantilevers in Amsterdam, or the shaky towers of Puerta de Europa in Madrid. This is where the questions about solidity, stability, safety arise – because

it is better not to take a risk with the body. But at the same time there is a thrill of emotions – like listening to terrible stories in the dark. The Labyrinths are also terrible and attractive. The Benedictine Abbey, designed with the words of Umberto Eco, where William and Adso wander down the entangled corridors of the Library, and Minotaur trapped under the palace of Knossos in the elaborate Daedalus Labyrinth, are famous myths of architecture. There are also real buildings, for example, airports built like labyrinths, which are not less terrifying. “Something bad is happening here with space...” – the Nobel Prize winner worries³³. The designers sometimes want to play a game of chaos and spatial confusion. There are also labyrinths of joy and amusement – like the mirrored or rainbow maze of Tarasewicz. Or other cabinets of laughter – playing with the touch that is infantile, almost childish – like the Morris sculpture exhibition called the playground in the Tate Gallery. What it was like to be a child has been recently reminded us by cheerful slides, swings, or nets in the EXPO pavilions in Milan.

ANTI-TOUCH is a fantastic unachievability, an architectural game of distance. Conceived in such a way as not to reach, not to count, not to measure; to chase, but not to catch! For instance, the eternal race of records: further, more, higher. The endless *Viaduc de Millau* over the Tarn Valley – encouraging for a half-marathon; or the mind-boggling, crazy concept of Highline 179 footbridge in Reutte; 2,711 concrete stelae in Berlin; the Eisenmann monument. How to see each of these “pages of the Talmud”? Ancient and modern towers designed to make us lift our heads high. Hiding their tops in the clouds to make us doubt that they are there at all. Sometimes, somebody like Marcin Banot (Polish Spiderman), wants to check this distance tangibly – with his own body.

Keeping distance is important in temples. Separating, erecting, hiding from touch are elements of the construction of *sacrum* known from antiquity and applied to this day. It is sometimes great to touch a saint – unattainable, and for a moment become, for example, part of a dome in the eternal city.

Another instance of anti-touch is designing in such a way that there are no traces of wear and tear. The reason of such approach is not only pragmatism, but also... the fear of ageing of buildings – just like bodies. On the one hand, we want a bus stop to be resistant to urban vandalism, but on the other, we are looking tenderly at the wrinkles and scars of buildings like at the hands of a mother. Perfection of undefined age is anti-tactile; it uproots us from the continuity of time. Excessive durability can take away the authenticity of architecture.

“Machine-made materials: scaleless glass panes, lacquered metals, and synthetic materials display their untouchable surfaces without revealing their material essence or age.”³⁴ The great thing is the conscious acceptance and consent to the “weaknesses” of the material, allowing it to be heard until the end and grow old with dignity. Patina is the trace of time and tactile reality of the material. Designing objects that will age beautifully requires knowledge and practice. The Stelmach’s thermal resort in Nałęczów are becoming less and less black and more and more beautiful. Repairing – rescuing the old, is a difficult issue. The more comfortable floor in front of the cathedral in Białystok is not telling the story anymore. The new-as-old will no longer be the same. Burning Notre-Dame Cathedral was bid farewell with tears of many of us.

³³ O. Tokarczuk, *Szafa*, Wydawnictwo Ruta, Wałbrzych 1998.

³⁴ J. Pallasmaa, *op. cit.*, pp. 40, 41

There's eventually anti-touchability – like a manifesto. The extraordinary Homer Museum in Ancona is completely tactile, so much so that you almost feel blind. Thanks to small, mobile steps, one can stroke a cheek of a tall sculpture, or recognise an Ionic head with their hands – something that is normally unattainable. *Please Touch!* is also the exhibition “(Nie) dotykaj!” at the Centre of Contemporary Art in Toruń and a gallery of paintings meant to be touched at the Silesian Museum.

PSEUDO-TOUCH is the impression that you're touching. An architectural game of synesthetic sensitivity of touch or otherwise: its haptic multisensoriality. The point is to provoke touch through other senses. First, vision, which promises (and owes most!) to touch. “Vision is touching by sight,” states Merleau-Ponty.³⁵ In the pseudo-contact theatre of Architecture, “we don't see through the eyes alone... but sense with our whole carnal being.”³⁶ Although I see the tower with my eyes, with my touch I “see” its slenderness, its perpendicularity. In my mind, I explore the “airiness” of the perforation of the new editions of the Colosseum, and I joyfully play with the shapeless blocks freely scattered by Gehry. The category of Haptic Architecture also includes the one which, through the sight, entices the touch, generates the feeling of “as if one were touching.” “Haptic are therefore those works [...] which ‘question’ and induce a sense of touch in the recipient, without necessarily requiring ‘fulfilment’ in the physical contact.”³⁷ Sometimes the desire is so strong that I fulfil it – like many others, unsuccessfully trying to stay still near the wall that is leaning over me in the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk.

Hearing can also be intertwined with touch in architecture. The master of this synaesthesia is Liebeskind, whose silence is a mild emptiness, the echo of a reassuring (or uncertain) presence, and the mask, knocked down by his foot, pierces to the bones with the howling of iron.

In both cases, it's preperception that matters. I am now touching with my eyes or ears, because I once touched with my eyes or ears. Therefore, which of the senses is real and which one acts as if it were?

Apart from the truthfulness of *sensory immersion*, there is also pseudo-touch in architecture today – an interactive medium. Digital gold and stained glass in the Gate of Poznań (ICHOT), holograms, and the hustle and bustle of street vendors in the Cloth Hall Museum, or the telepresence of the heroes in the Warsaw Rising Museum – these are the past at your fingertips. Today, new architectural worlds can also be brought to life in cyber caves, like the *universes* in increasingly sophisticated computer games. The future of Haptic Architecture seems to be marked by new extents of touch, including inevitable hybridisation, cyborgisation, body-machine.

A FALSE TOUCH is a game of deception. Haptic illusions – deliberate untruths. Intermodal tunnels, leading the recipient afield. They are achieved on the basis of the usual tactile patterns. It can be a material pretending to be something else, for example, ceramic tiles in the

³⁵ After: P. Schollenberger, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

³⁶ Paraphrase of the words of Vivian Sobchack, After: M. Stańczyk, *Kino haptyczne. Przypadek twórczości Helene Cattet i Bruna Forzani* [in:] A. Łebkowska, Ł. Wróblewski, P. Badysiak (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 266.

³⁷ M. Smolińska, „(Nie) dotykaj! Haptyczne aspekty sztuki polskiej po 1945 roku” – uwagi kuratorki wystawy [in:] A. Łebkowska, Ł. Wróblewski, P. Badysiak (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 66–67.

bathroom, quite like warm, soft, friendly wood, or other – which a person might not want, because they are glass, transparent-blue, or silver like surgical steel, so “cold and unpleasant to the touch, slippery.” Artificial fire in a fireplace seems to heat the whole room. A refreshing waterfall – kitschy droplets on strings. The pretended nobility, rawness, patina on the facades – pseudo-stone, pseudo-concrete, pseudo-rust. These are not only “kennel decorations,” but also decorations of decorations. False texture, colour, and temperature of a material are lies that are so common and accepted that they start to be truths. Some of them can even change our tactile patterns. Corten becomes cosy and concrete warm and homely? Maybe it’s not just reinterpretation but the evolution of touch, some lasting change in the sensitivity of the human skin? Like an improved thumb of teenagers to click on the screen.

You can pretend something that doesn’t really exist – for example, a shadow, thus changing the whole body of the building. The perfect lie is “white on white” – the façade of the ABC Museum in Madrid, so reliably spread over the shadows that I touched it several times to get rid of the impression of bulging. It’s great that the wall goes down as low as if it submitted itself to a confrontational touch.

Intersensory deceptions are also the antinomies of architectural certainties – the physical presence, integrity, materiality, or gravity of Architecture. A conscious effort to de-realise the form and structure, in spite of the Cartesian definition of the body (“bodies” of some buildings I can no longer draw or place).³⁸ Lightness and drifting – architectural absence and weightlessness. The ephemeral, borderless structure of Sou Fujimoto, of the Serpentine Gallery, or the dreamlike British Pavilions at the EXPO: a giant and lightweight dandelion clock and an ethereal, living bee swarm seem to tease Descartes. Or tame giants of office towers made of glass and mirrors – disappearing, dematerialised, levitating. An attack against the seriousness of durability from the Vitruvian Triad. Like a tiny swing, amusingly suspended on inflatable balloons from the “Sensualia” exhibition by Monika Drożdżyńska.

Reading of such works is a part of the viewer’s somaesthetic play of a toucher with the Creator – the Deceiver. The method of interpretation is vigilance and suspicion of a viewer, and the reward is demystification of the game of appearances and soothing of the senses hallucinated by the architect.

5. SUMMARY

A haptic act is in fact an act of creation that makes us aware of the existence of space and ourselves. It establishes boundaries – spatial and temporal intervals between us and the world. It puts us in “the here and now” or easily transfers us to other places and eras. Human life is a constant touch of matter or emptiness. Simple sensory stimuli, created on the skin membrane, result in a wealth of experiences, involving our bodies, emotions and spirit.

Also, Architecture Space – Art exists through touch. This is clearly reflected by the traces of human touches, physical and emotional “interferences” permanently imprinted in the language of architecture, both professional and common. It is on touch that the system of architectural certainties is based: the reality, materiality, directness, agility, creativity, and their surprising antinomies. In it the concepts of the scale, form, structure and texture, the results of encounters between the human body and the built space are being defined. Only

³⁸ R. Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis 1993.

with the body one can check the Utility – the great empathy of Architecture. The beauty (or originality) can also dwell in the touch of the touching no less than the eye of the beholder. But it is not only through touch that the architectural work can be touched. It is also haptic when it touches you through your eyes or ears. Finally, many creative techniques and strategies are derived from touch – after all, architecture is shaping (and deconstructing) of the Form! With some (hopefully!) noble and interesting concept.

The author's discourse has come full circle. Touch – the carnal truth, sent to the rescue from the platonic cave of shadows, leads astray again to seemingly real (and thus artificial?) touches of art: their uncertain, mutually exclusive or exaggerated truths, half-truths based on speculations, individual or collective illusions, innocent untruths – flirtations, or finally, deceptive manipulations of touch!

Subjective poetics, as in the Library of haptic patterns of Architecture.

Wonderful and beautiful Architectural Imaginarium of Touch!

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Author's Note:

Agnieszka Kłopotowska, Assoc. Prof. D.Sc. Ph.D. Arch.

Graduate of WA PB, 1996. Associate professor at the Białystok University of Technology, lecturer at the Lublin University of Technology. Author of several dozen scientific publications, including three monographs. Area of scientific interest: issues of multisensory reception and design of architectural space, problems of blind and visually impaired people, psychology of architecture, cognitive science. Promoter of several dozen projects (including diploma theses) awarded in national and international competitions. akłopotowska@poczta.onet.pl