

Mind, Body and Everything in Between: Implementing mindfulness in public performance

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Who owns the Space?

Mindfulness
Week 1

Thoughts on the concept of space, a reflection and a translation in a medium of my choice

Flexible, fluid, positive/negative, niche, volume, to breath.

Space is a volume, a fluid than can create all kinds of emotions depending how it is inserted. It can be measured but the perception depends on the individual. Since I'm studying architecture, I am much more focused on my surroundings and it's an interesting aspect for me in urban development how you can change the space in a way that people feel better with themselves and behaving accordingly.

It's hard for me to orientate. If it is needed it stresses me if I don't find the right way immediately. If I have time and can be relaxed it is a real pleasure for me to get lost. Then, most of the time, I also enjoy Mind Wandering. I read in one of the articles that Mind Wandering is in general seen as unpleasant, and I can agree, but in this situation it's exciting and helps me to be creative.

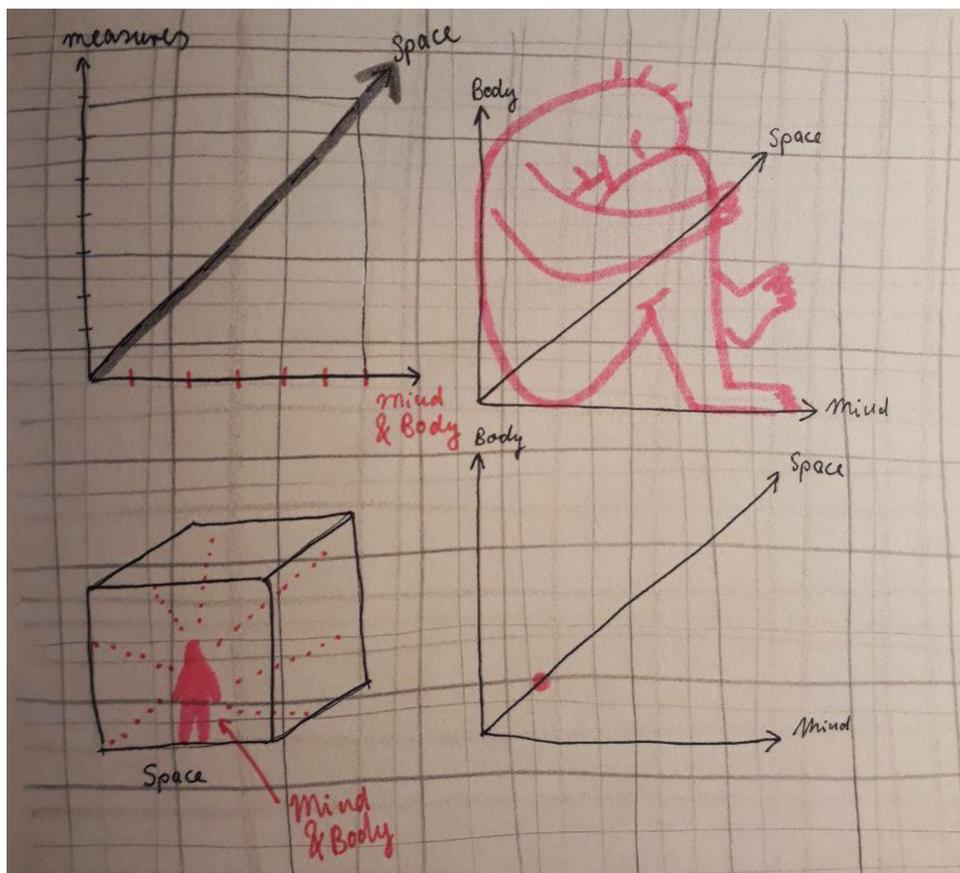
The two main emotions I have about space is fear and relaxation. Relaxation emerge when there is a suitable amount of space, depending on the situation and the persons I am surrounded by. When the amount of space seems to be too large or to small for me, it evokes fear.

Now after following your material I would consider mind and body as one, although I haven't really given thought to it before this module and the concept seems new to me.

Most of the time we can read a person's feeling or situation from their looks. But the concept of being conscious of your movements and thereby changing them to improve your wellbeing is quite logic but rather new (?) in the Western World.

For me both, the body and the mind, communicate with each other. But they perceive and process in a different way.

I wonder if I can have a more positive perception of space/my surroundings by building my consciousness towards my performance.



Look around!
Week 2

Notes on practicing walking meditation

Tried the walking meditation for the first time in my room. I was walking slowly and felt quite heavy while walking. My floor makes creaky and squeaking sounds while walking on it and I notice that while meditating I still try to avoid those noises by rolling my feet gently from heel to toe.

Today I was doing my practice outside. The state you're in while breathing, counting and walking was relieving and I actually could stop my mind from wandering. It ~~is~~ had the same effect as if I ~~was~~ ^{am going for} a ~~run~~ and the breathing and my feet become in sync. But it's hard for me to really pay attention to my surroundings since I'm more focused on my ^{personal} state.

I stopped counting on my walk today which gave me more space in my head to pay attention to the outer world. It was a nice experience to observe my surroundings without drawing conclusions right away or giving my thoughts too much space.

Flanerie
Week 2

An introduction to the work of Anette Baldauf after reading Walter Benjamin's work on *Flanerie*

When I lived in Berlin I was once doing a tour about Walter Benjamin which was organized by a professor of the UDK Berlin. We were walking across Charlottenburg, where we crossed all the places Walter Benjamin was living, working or drinking at and got an introduction to his work. Among other things we talked about his work on *Flanerie* and tried to comprehend it with our own feet.

That's why I felt immediately attached to your literature recommendation on Walter Benjamin. In his work *Passagen Werk* that you've provided, I found the passage where he characterizes Baudelaire's flaneur and describes the arcades as his natural habitat.

"It is in this world that the flaneur is at home, he provides the arcade – "the favorite venue of strollers and smokers, the haunt of all sorts of little *métiers* – with its chronicler and philosopher. As for himself, the arcade provides him with an unfailing remedy for the kind of boredom that easily arises under the baleful eye of stated reactionary regime."

This reminded me of the book "building power. Architektur, Macht, Gender" by Dörte Kuhlmann, Sonja Hniličič and Kari Jormakka. It's about urban but also architectural perception.

On the back cover it says: "Architecture is shaped by dispositives of power. At the same time, our built environment locates individuals and thus contributes to the construction of identity, including such aspects as gender, race or class."

There is an article of Anette Baldauf where she talks about the typology of the Shopping Mall, that is historically grown of the *passage* and the *department store*. In her work she describes these places as a seemingly public space that was – in a time where a woman was at home and she mostly contributed to the street life in form as a prostitute – since it's beginning mainly intended as a place for women. It's really interesting how Baldauf observes these historic and also contemporary architectures. Along these observations she explains the correlation between the image of a woman in the given time and the shape of the building/their surroundings and how they affected each other.

Listening to Drawing, Drawing to Movement
Week 4

While sitting on Frauenplan and listening to the background sounds, we started to draw them. The following pictures are stills from a video where I translated the drawings into a movement.



Listening to Wording, Wording to Movement
Week 4

After drawing the background sounds on Frauenplan, we also started to note words that came into our minds.
The following pictures are stills from a video where I translated the wording into a movement.



Bauen, Wohnen, Denken
Week 5

A translation of Martin Heidegger's *Bauen, Wohnen, Denken*

In the work I created, I engage with the terms of *locations*, *spaces* and *buildings*.

“Der Ort ist nicht schon vor der Brücke vorhanden. [...] So kommt denn die Brücke nicht erst an einen Ort hin zu stehen, sondern von der Brücke selbst her entsteht erst ein Ort.“

“They are *locations* that allow *spaces*. Therefore *building*, because it erects *locations*, is a founding and joining of *spaces*.”

What I understand from the two passages is:

Instead of just filling a space, a *building* itself is erecting *locations* and thereby is forming a *space* / their surroundings.

This does not really seem to be surprising, isn't it?

What strikes me here is the question that is following to that paragraph in my head. What is it really that constitutes (a) space? And hereby I would agree with Heidegger: a building or a built thing is a founding of space, but in my opinion a human being is too.

“Die Räume, die wir alltäglich durchgehen, sind von Orten eingeräumt; deren Wesen gründet in Dingen von der Art der Bauten. Achten wir auf diese Beziehungen zwischen Ort und Räumen, zwischen Räumen und Raum, dann gewinnen wir einen Anhalt, um das Verhältnis von Mensch und Raum zu bedenken. [...] Er ist weder ein äusserer Gegenstand noch ein inneres Erlebnis. Es gibt nicht die Menschen und ausserdem Raum; denn sage ich “ein Mensch” und denke ich mit diesem Wort denjenigen, der menschlicher Weise ist, das heisst wohnt, dann nenne ich mit dem Namen “ein Mensch” bereits den Aufenthalt im Geviert bei den Dingen.”

In our former practices, we were focusing of little details in a space to experience it and to be aware of it. At this point we were not only focusing on non-living objects but also on humans or animals that we're coming along. And while I was doing the practice I experienced that not only the weather, the objects or the by-passing people were affecting and thereby forming the space – but also my emotions we're changing the space constantly. The exact same space, be it Frauenplan, seemed to me totally different in a state of anger than in a state of happiness.

So I would state, that not only our built environment affects the space, but also the people –be it ourselves as observer or the people around us that interfere with our surroundings – are part of the space. This means we can appropriate space and thereby change it since space is a matter of perception.

I used the image of skyscrapers and the space between them to help me form the ideas of the meaning behind the terms. In using a GIF as my chosen medium, the sequence of the images represent the connection of the different terms and how locations, spaces, buildings and the people within engage with each other.

Furthermore I think a GIF is a nice image of illustrating the thought process while reading those philosophical texts.



Maintenance Art

Week 6

A public performance using the methods of body movement

I selected Mierle Lademan Ukeles' performance in which she was scrubbing the outside staircase of a museum which she associated with the authority and power within the art museum and also domestic maintenance. She coined the term "maintenance art" after she stuck in a crisis of identity after having children, trying to get the two worlds together: the world of being a mother and the one of being an artist. Her work refers to Marcel Duchamp readymades, in which he took something that was already out in the world and by naming it art, transforming it and changing how we look at something. Thereby she calls our attention to maintenance.

For me her work seemed, even performed in the 70s, like a current topic. It was not so much the focus on workers in maintenance jobs (who fortunately, but still not enough) have been more visible in times of Corona, but homemakers who seem to be totally invisible in these days.

Nearly all social interactions are banned in public life and the burden of caring for the household and children hereby grew bigger since schools and kindergartens are closed.

Due to the need for childcare within one's own four walls, patriarchal structures are once again becoming entrenched, at least in the short term. Unfortunately, it is mostly women who take care of the children and the housework in the home office. This situation, in addition to the actual shutdown, leads to further isolation, as there is hardly any time left for walks or phone calls with friends.

Therefore I wanted to perform one of the duties as a homemaker in the public space to highlight their lack of visibility. For this purpose I made use of Scaling, Pace, Repetition, Strength, Weight change and Sequencing.





Clipping Earrings

Week 7

In this session we focused on ritual as a type of performance.

The following is a performance I created by working with the ritual of putting on my earrings in the morning and taking them out in the evening.

The ritual I was focusing on in our last session was taking out my earrings.

The usual procedure is as follows: I am already lying in my bed, lean on my elbows and first move my right hand to my left earlobe, take out the earring and then do the same thing with my right ear. Then, with my earrings gathered in my left hand I fumble for the bedside table to place them there. These are the same movements I am doing to put my earrings back on in the morning.

Since it is the first and last thing I do in my day, only seen by people who sleep at my side, it is a very intimate ritual. I perform this act mostly in a tired, sleepy condition and do not put any thought or awareness into my actions, however I nearly never forget to take them out. When I lie down for a short nap, I don't take the jewelry off. It's more a sign that indicates the end of the day. When I don't wear them, I feel naked and like I've lost a bit of control over my daily life.

I have been performing this ritual for about five years. I had different earrings then, but I usually don't change the earrings, so it's actually the same pair every day. I got the current ones as a gift from my sister.

While performing the ritual in our online session, I started to modify the movements. Instead of performing in my bedroom, I went into the pantry of my shared apartment. There I slowly took off the earrings, put them down on a shelf, only to put them back on right after. I repeated these movements concentrated in a long procedure.

For the second time, I chose the same place and the same movements. Only I had a more steady flow and it became more fluid and consciously.

Although you can't put the earrings in and out very quickly, over time I found a rhythm that integrated the clicking of the earrings and the sound of putting them on the shelf.

This modification has a different effect on me. I have noticed that it doesn't give me a relieving feeling as usual, but also the rhythm has calmed me as well as stimulated me energetically.

I enjoyed the practice, although I think to a certain extent a performance needs an observer and since this was missing I had more the intention of doing a meditation than doing a performance. These movements are so familiar to me that after a few times I was able to perform them fluidly without thinking much about it. This reminded me of the exercises we did for the walking meditation, only this time I was even more with myself and did not focus much on my surroundings. Since my ritual focuses more on my own body, I was able to concentrate fully on myself.

In order to help me focusing more on the outside, I tried to add a costume to the performance. I just chose simple black clothes, but it helped me to change the atmosphere around me since it helped me to get into the situation.

For me it is interesting to see that my originally ritual, that I did on the same day in the evening, didn't change even though the two movements are so linked to each other.

Social Status

Week 7

Reflection of a social role one can perform as a human being in public

In the following text I want to reflect on my social role and my public performance regarding my gender. I am a female of 25 years and live in a small city where I move around the university circuit.

There are codes both for clothes and for behavior. Before, I lived in a much bigger city and I could experience that there were much more (small-scale) codes, so it was much easier to find acceptance or at least to blend in than here in Weimar.

I would not say that there are more codes for female persons, but I think that they are still much more important, since women are still defined more by their looks than men and in my opinion it is also more often women who classify other people according to these standards.

So, there is another awareness and clothing as well as companions are chosen with much more attention.

Regarding the social performances, I think women are still more tentative. Of course, nowadays women are seen everywhere in public spaces, but I would say that they are still performing differently than men. For example they are not so often just relaxing in public spaces over a longer period. In my opinion only, if they are with another person or in a group. But there are definitely men who are observing alone or interfering with alien people on a regular basis.

I chose a character for the performance that helped me to leave my comfort zone. I was thinking about a male persona that is seen in the public space and chose the silent observer.

He has not a certain task to fulfill and is just there to enjoy his time on Theaterplatz. He is strolling over squares, big streets in order to find a bench from where he can observe the scenery, ready to mingle in case he sees a familiar face or a situation that seems interesting to him. He stops at stores from people he knows, you see him smoking and sometimes chatting, sometimes just waving at people.

Even though he has this present role in the public space and seems to know people, he is mostly alone and evokes in me a feeling of loneliness. I'm intimidated by these men and try to avoid eye contact with them.

This persona does not exist exclusively here in Weimar, I also know it from other German cities as well as foreign countries. When I am on holidays on my own in other foreign cities, I normally give myself time to adapt to new surroundings and like to take my time on big squares or parks to adapt to a new language and climate around me. I am using a book or headphones to avoid any contact because I am afraid of being made fun of and not being able to be quick-witted.





Kettenbrief
Week 8

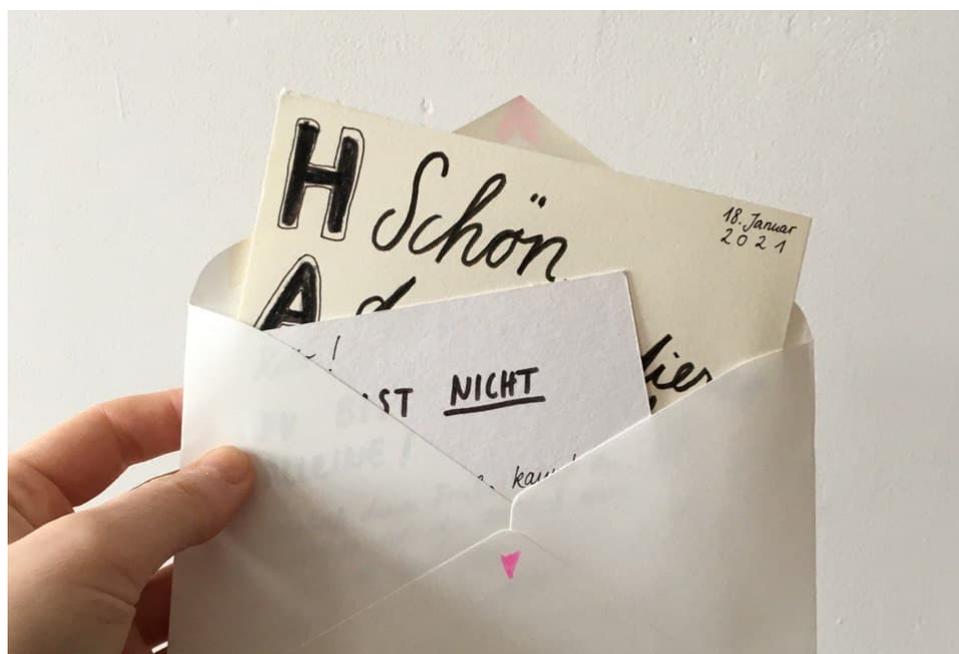
Kettenbriefe as an activity that represents the act of kindness and is engaged socially

During conversations with friends and family, I realized that it's also* the casual social interaction that is missed most. In the lockdown, we ourselves always have to become active in order to get in touch with others. But often it is only the people who are very close to us and not casual acquaintances or new people.

Kettenbrief is my idea of an activity that represents the act of kindness and is engaged socially. A Kettenbrief, a chain letter, can be a way of interacting with people we never even met and a possibility of empowering each other.

I was writing letters, telling what gets me through this difficult time and put them in mailboxes half of people I know and half of strangers. Every letter has another 10 free spots, so this letter can be passed on another 10 people who can benefit of this little something and the advice that it contains. Since having a walk seems to be the one of the most performed activities these days, you can simply put the letter in a randomly chosen mailbox you see on your way, so spending money for postage is not an obstacle. I hope these letters will reach as many people as possible!

*beside of not being able to see close family and friends



ANLEITUNG:

1. Wenn du Lust hast zu erzählen wie du durch diese schwierige Zeit kommst, dann schreib es auf. Zeichne oder klebe dein Lieblingsboubou rein.
2. Wirf mich bei deinem nächsten Spaziergang in einen Briefkasten deiner Wahl - egal wo!

Hallo!

**DU BIST NICHT
ALLEINE!**

Mithilfe dieses Briefes kannst du erreichen, wenn du willst & deine Zuversicht weitergeben.

Danke für deine Hilfe!

H Schön,
A dass dich dieser
Brief erreicht

LASST UNS HUTHACHER AUSTAUSCHEN,
UNS VERNETZEN, SODASS WIR GEMEINSAM MIT
ZUVERSICHT DURCH DIESE ZEIT KOMMEN!

WAS MIR GUTTUT:



18. Januar
2021



Who owns the Space?
Week 9

ABOUT

The performance deals with the appropriation of public space by women. The place that I picked is a rear exit of the train station in Weimar, a dark space that is poorly visible and could be taken as a fear space. Also in rather 'traditional' public spaces, like squares, streets, public transport etc. men tend to appropriate more space (Men Spreading, listening to loud music without headphones) than women do, but in regards of fear spaces women's restriction of freedom of movement becomes more obvious. The statistics show that fear spaces are usually not crime scenes. Nevertheless, the restriction of freedom of movement is often not recognized or usually dismissed as an individual problem.

Furthermore this passage, a space of transit, should represent a space that is seen as a 'male' space, considering the paradigm of gendering the 'separate spheres', an oppositional and a hierarchical system consisting of a dominant public male realm of production (the city) and a subordinate private female one of reproduction (the home).

In appropriating this fear space, I want to show the difficulty of crossing these spaces and take it ad absurdum. The space stays the same, but I use it to perform a rather personal, with the female gender associated activity that seems preposterous in its surroundings: relaxing over a cup of coffee.

WHY

Throughout the course I started to be more aware of my surroundings while walking through the city and got more conscious about how spaces are used, when and from whom. That's how I came up with the topic of appropriation of space and how space is perceived differently between various social roles regarding gender, sex, class, age, mental or physical ability, age, personal history or background, appearance, etc. as we have discussed it in the course.

For me it was interesting to initiate the process of dealing with the subject in form of a performance that engaged with my personal experience and to turn it in something creative. And since I study architecture it is now for me also of professional interest to get more insights into the topic to be able to integrate this knowledge into future drafts and concepts.

PROCESS

First I thought about working with the topic of flânerie that we read about in the article of Walter Benjamin and to illuminate the female side of this phenomenon today.

Most of the women have a tale or two of street harassment to tell, so strolling the streets alone seems a nerve-racking thing to do. But flânerie is still a more passive way of interacting with the public space than appropriating space in the first place. That's why I decided to engage with the topic of appropriation of public space.

CONCEPT

The idea is to show the contrast between our expectations of how this particular space is used and by whom and the actual performance that takes place in it.

CONNECTION

The course 'Mind, Body and Everything in Between' was all about mindfulness – in regards of the body and the mind.

The project emerged from my notions about my body and my movements in public space. Through the instructions of the course I analyze myself in the public, how I feel in certain situations and I analyzed how my movements affected my feelings and how my feelings affected my movements. Furthermore, I connected these experiences with the mind and explored the reasons for these particular notions by experimenting with tools I learnt in the course such as mindfulness practices or changing one's own social status.

As an inspiration I looked at the course's materials from week 7 again, the video about Elina Brotherus "Only in Art Can Adults Play". She is also using space in her favor by appropriating it in an unusual way. On the one hand I like it because of its aesthetics and on the other hand because it provides much possibility for variously interpretations – in the end you can also just laugh about it.







