

## STUDIO 'bdytrcs-plc': BODY-TRACE-SPACE-PLACE

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to express the idea of a second year architectural design studio in Beykent University. The re-construction of the boundary is analyzed through space. The relations between the subjective expression, the scientific expression and the forms have been questioned.

**Keywords:** Body, Boundary, Movement, Event, Action

### INTRODUCTION

This study aims to express the idea of a second year architectural design studio in Beykent University, Department of Architecture. It is a special program which has been applied for the first time in Fall Semester, 2008.

The main goals of the program were to show the students that there might be various ways of thinking, to improve their ability of critical thinking and to provide the students with different points of views that were adopted by different disciplines. To provide them with an original point of view was also aimed at. Besides these, this studio program has concentrated on the apprehension of the computer-aided design. So far it has tried to answer the question of how the computer could transform the architectonic into the images. It has done so by searching for how we can make sense out of some data and express this data as a mathematical rule. The relations between the subjective expression, the scientific expression and the forms have been questioned. In this environment, certain questions have been answered. One of these questions is that whether a handmade model can be constructed by transforming it into certain rules in the computer environment.

'Body', 'action', 'boundary', 'event' and 'space', 'experience', 'meaning', have been the basic concepts that were discussed in the studio. The objective was to have the students gain the ability to discover how bodies in action and as creators of events continually create the space through transforming spatial boundaries as well as the

boundaries of themselves. In this sense, the studio is based on a parametric approach and is structured in four phases. Each concept has been added to the design process in different phases. In this way, it has become possible for the students to work on the concepts separately, as well as to discover and take out different parameters for design in each phase.

### **1ST PHASE; EXPLORING THE BODY**

The first phase is questioning the relationship of the body with its boundary inside an action. The aim is discovering the cosmos of the body by enveloping it in an inert action. At that point the boundary can be defined over the interaction of the surface with the limbs in order to understand the body as a system. Construction of this system and its boundaries are created by transforming the inert action to an extraordinary way. "Formerly, the body was a head, torso, two upper extremities and two lower extremities. Now, it is number of heads, number of torsos, number of extremities (upper and lower) and number of accessories" (Cros, 2003) For this reason in this phase, the students are expected to redefine the body through analyzing the infinite number of relationships inside a inert action which represents a critical situation. The parameters of these relationships are explored from the interaction of the body parts with the limits of the action. "The critical action is precise (intentional) and transgressive (undisciplined); a nasty but salutary shock of and for possible dormant scenarios, aimed at stimulating the present and arousing possible future spaces. It signifies alternative possibilities-anticipatory lines of research or decidedly innovative project-and accepts, at the same time, the risk of all hazardous adventure that ends up involved in-and marked by the action itself" (Cros, 2003). During this process the limits of the body was redefined not just by surrounding the things but also inside the things itself. It is body that has put itself inside objects. Therefore, posture founds this relationship with the objects. "We are occupied with a backbone, which means that we face the world straight ahead. The result is a double and simultaneous reaction: on the one hand, 'what is' appears initially to be on the vertical and horizontal axis; at the same time 'what is' shows itself always in the first place to be straight ahead, over there, over against us. Posture initiates us in to situation as distant" (Grange, 1985).

In order to explore the limits of body, all the chosen actions should be related with an object supporting the action (reading a book, using a notebook, playing a musical instrument, etc.) The actions that were worked on by each student individually and they were not selected from already defined clichés but they turned them in to an absurd way of doing something (using the notebook in a lying position, a pregnant woman's sleeping with pillows, etc). The represent points of junctions of the action have been analyzed. The proportions between these junctions were examined in order to find the parameters which create the surface that will house the action. The smallest unit that creates the surface was searched within these parameters and redefined with a model (Figure 1).



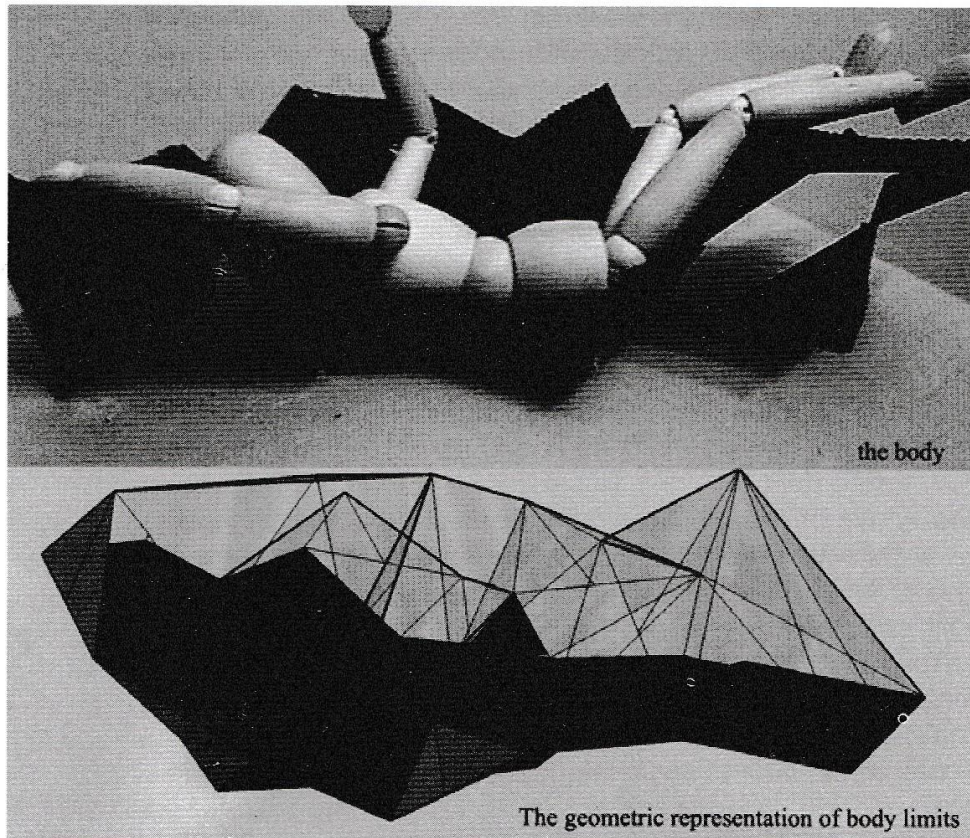


Figure 1. Work of Tutku Kekeç

## 2ND PHASE; READING TANGO AS A SETTING

The second phase is re-questioning the boundary with the traces of the movement instead of an inert action so that the boundary begins to dissolve. The body is the first environment of the human. A new whole based a dialog of two bodies' reference to the multi layer structure of the environment. Because of this, as a tool the movement is defined as a tango performance. The Tango performance was done by two professional dancers in the studio. The dance performance was occurred in 3 ½ circular tours. Before the performance the reference points were marked in the floor and during the performance each student take a video record of the whole dance. Based on the performance, the parameters of the two interactive bodies begin to create the boundary of the space. These parameters were explored by students individually in order to constitute the system.

Tango dance is chosen fort his phase because of its initial potentially of reciprocal relations of the bodies. As Valery (1964) notes; "in the dance, all the sensations of the body, which is both mover and moved, are connected in a certain order- that they call and respond to each other, as though rebounding or being reflected from the invisible wall of a sphere of energy within the living being". All the possibilities inside the movement is a key for reconstructing the space. There isn't a unique form of total action but partial potentials which can create the layers of interactions.



"If movement is to be one of the generating factors of architecture, it will not take a single form or configuration. There is random movement, as experienced on a flat plane, free of any attraction or constriction. But there is also vectorized movement, which interact with static spaces, often activating them through the motion of bodies that populate them" (Tschumi, 2000).

Body becomes itself a construct and is amenable to redefinition based on perceptual and cognitive schemes. Dance (Tango) offers a good way to understand how this may occur precisely because the body is the instrument for the production of form while at the same time the experience and communication of the experience. "Recent theoretical discussions (Johnson, 1987; Lakoff and Johnson, 1999) have brought into focus the importance of embodied experience as a foundation for the development of abstract frames of understanding" (Gavrilou, 2003).

Dance realizes some of the patterns of movement that are potentially implied by empty space, architecture restricts potential movement through the imposition of boundaries and creation of spatial structure. Thus, a heuristic comparison between dance and built space has been used to suggest that our understanding of space involves an exploration of how generative forces interact with constraints, how patterns of movement reveal underlying patterns of order within everyday spatial experience. At the same time, consideration of embodied spatial experience is embedded in commonly used analytic techniques for spatial analysis.

Accordingly, analyze of the dance can be considered in terms of sequence s of transitions, or transmutations, from one pose to the next. In this context, however, the body is used for its ability to realize the spatial forms. Pictorial compositions that bodies fit in are not as important as the direct experience of body and its mechanics. The configurations of body movement define the configuration of the space. The joints and the limbs are the structures that articulate the movement. This entire configurationally context with the partial movements inside, was transformed into diagrams of articulated movements. These diagrams are graphical representations of a dynamic process synthesized through compression, abstraction and simulation. Although diagrams can serve an analytic way of representing the content to the designer in time and space, also diagram's primary utility is an abstract means of producing new models of organization. The variables in these organizational diagrams include formal configurations: Space and event, force and resistance, density, distribution and direction. The configurations are momentary clusters of matter in space, subject to continual modification. A diagram is therefore not a thing in itself, but a description of potential relationships among elements; not only an abstract model of the way things behave in the world, but a map of possible worlds.

On the other hand tango was considered as an event created by two bodies. We often confuse event and occurrence. Occurrence is what occurs, event is what comes about. The event, on the other hand, forms part of a process and, at the same time, appears as something emotive and unforeseen. Singular in its particularness. "Projective". Not so much exceptional -unique- as exciting; excited and causing excitement. Like a wave. Expansive and extensive. A local incident of global repercussion; special (specific) and general (generic) and symptomatic. Case and class at the same time. (Cros, 2003).



From the same tango performance, the students explored individual settings within the concepts of flow of the movement, configurational context, sequences etc. They used different representations and calculations through the formulation of selective figures which permit ordering, transmission and processing of information (Figure 2, 3).

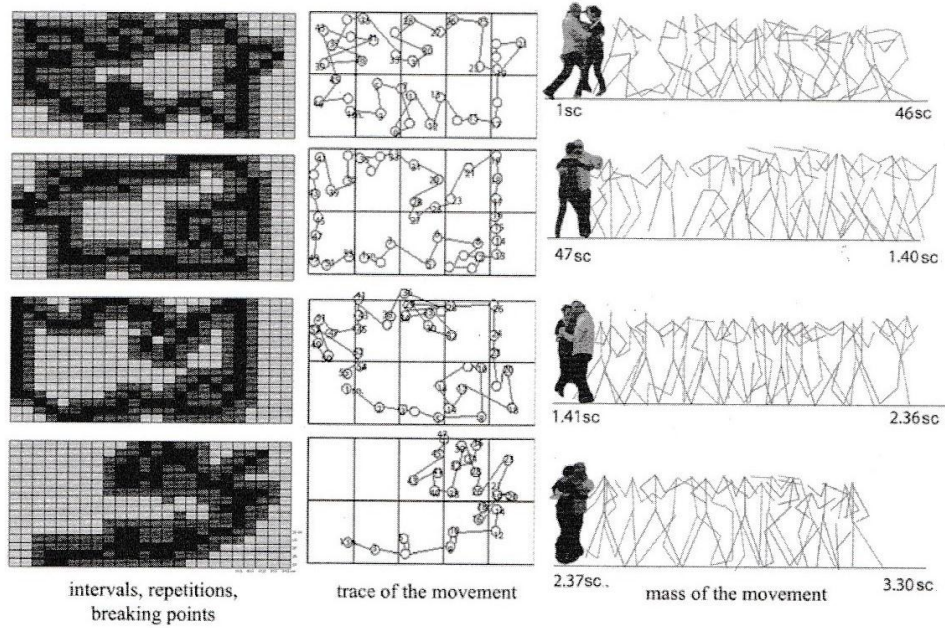


Figure 2. Work of Berke Karadeniz

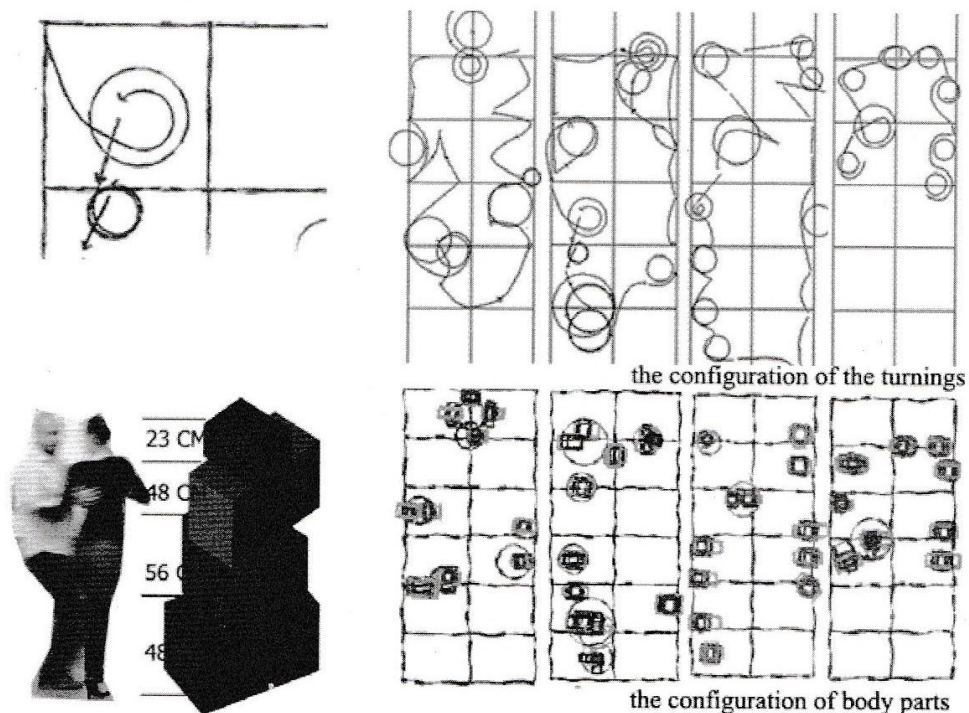


Figure 3. Work of Ilgın Ezgi Tunç

### 3RD PHASE; TANGO MEETS THE AUDIENCE

As the third phase, the experience of Tango by an audience is added to the studio problem as a new design input. The aim is to explore the problems which come out of the watching situation in order to re-construct the boundaries. As the structure of the 'event' changes the structure of the boundary is destroyed. The students are canalized to criticize the conventional perception of a performance that is based on the existence of a supposed 'unseen wall' between the stage and the audience. In contrast to this two dimensional boundary that is there to create a sterile relationship between the stage and the audience, the students are expected to design a three dimensional boundary – or better to say a threshold – which will be able to create new ways of both perceiving and doing Tango. In order to support the problem with performance arts theory, we discussed Antonin Artaud's 'Theatre of Cruelty' with the students (Artaud, 1958). The discussion is focused on Artaud's critique of conventional stage-audience relationship that takes these two as two disconnected worlds which prevents the occurrence of any communication or a real effect of one to the other. According to Artaud, a performance should be able to make a direct, spontaneous impact on the bodies of the viewers, which can only be reached by creating a multi-sensational perception which is beyond a limited visual perception. Although Artaud has also come up with some concrete suggestions on how a performance space should be designed, which is based on getting rid of the 'unseen wall' and a three dimensional integration of the spaces of stage and the audience; we encouraged students to do their own critique about this 'unseen wall' in the way to deconstruct/reconstruct their own Tango space. In this sense, the boundaries that they have constructed at the second stage have become open to transformation and have been rethought as a space where dancers and audience meet -or crash- in order to create a unique 'event' that happens at a time. In other words, the students are expected to design a Tango 'event' happening between the dancers and the audience, in their way of forming the Tango Box.

While at the second stage, the students have formed the boundaries of the space by taking the trace of the Tango dance as their parameters, the inclusion of the audience to the design problem have had different effects to their projects. While sometimes the boundaries that have been found at the second stage have become more important in the constitution of the form, sometimes the parameters that have been added by the inclusion of the audience have become more important. For example, in one of studies, the Tango Box has taken its form from the three dimensional organic trace of the dancers, which has turned into a spatial skin (Figure 4). Although the student's first suggestion for the integration of the audience to the project was addition of a another skin which tries to wrap and sometimes intersect the first skin, at the end the actual dance has turned into images on the inner side of this first skin by leaving its place to the audience.



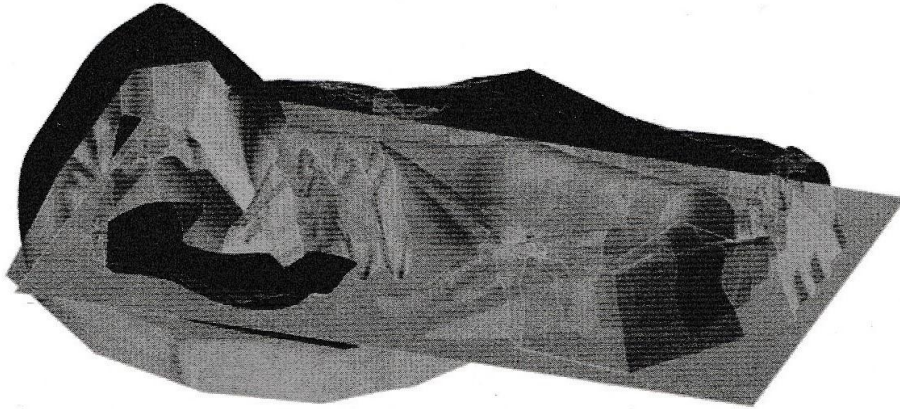


Figure 4. Work of Meryem Filiz; Spatial Skin

Another study tried to create a partial perception of the bodies of the dancers. In this way, it has formed the boundaries of the Tango Box by using many frames that is dividing the space both horizontally and vertically (Figure 5). In this sense, the boundaries of the Tango Box, which try to catch partial moments of the dance, have been the basic constitutive element of the project rather than the trace of the dance.

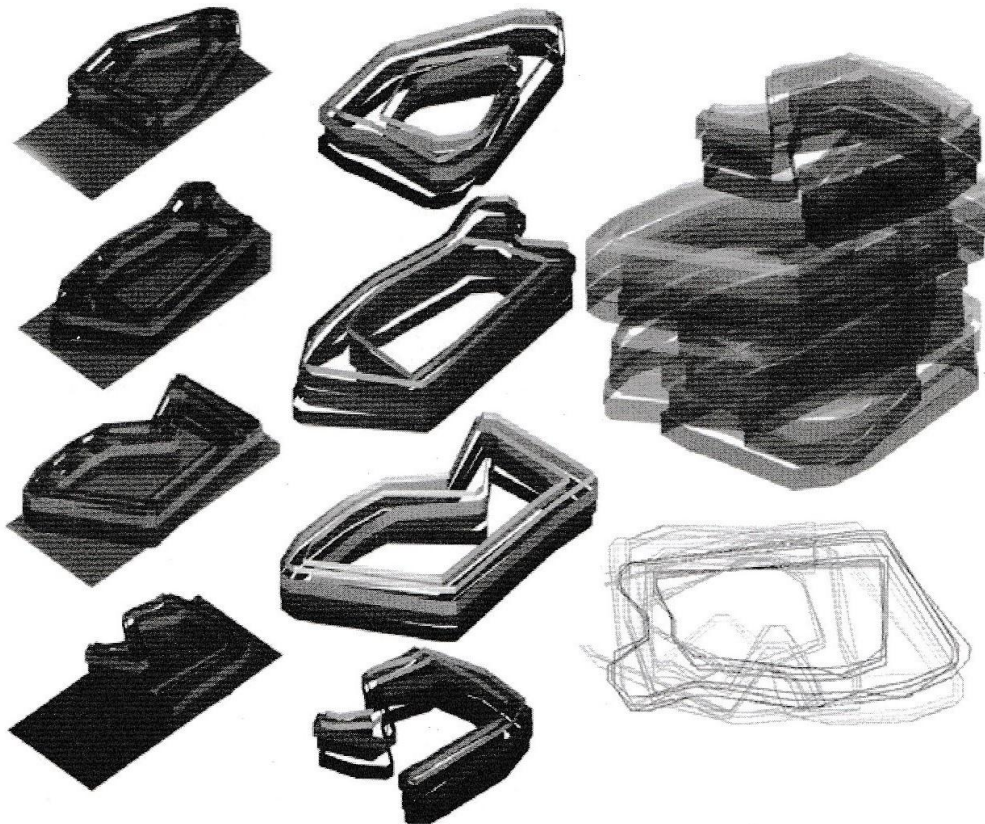


Figure 5. The Work of Ilgın Ezgi Tunç; Frames

One of the projects was mostly affected by Artaud's thought on the crash of the performers and the audience (Figure 6). In his project, the boundaries have basically worked for creating spaces for the possible actual meetings -or crashes- of two sides who are considered as both hunters and the hunted.

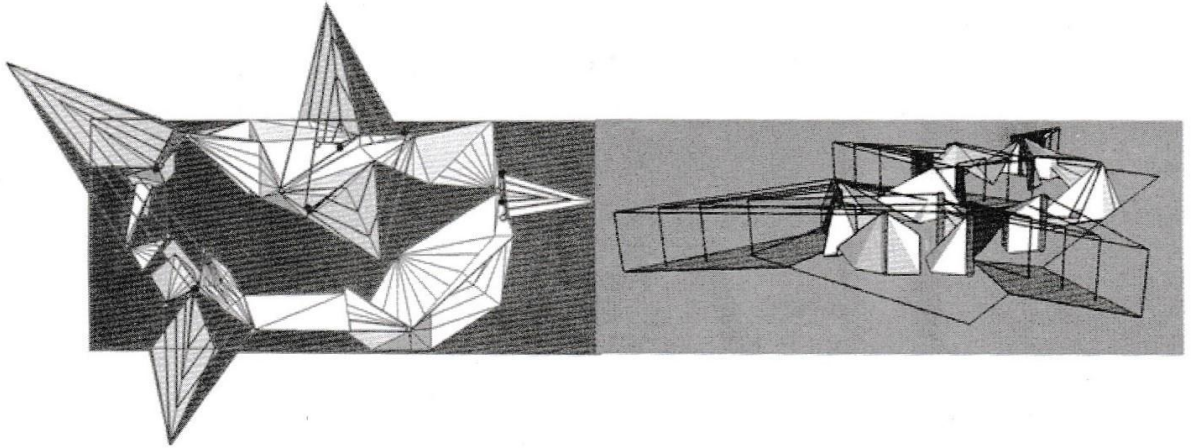


Figure 6. The Work of Berke Karadeniz; Crashes

In another project, both the trace of the dance and the input of the audience were equally constitutive (Figure 7). The potentials of the boundaries that have been reached at the second stage were used in creating a cinematographic perception of the dance by turning these boundaries into a kind of screen.

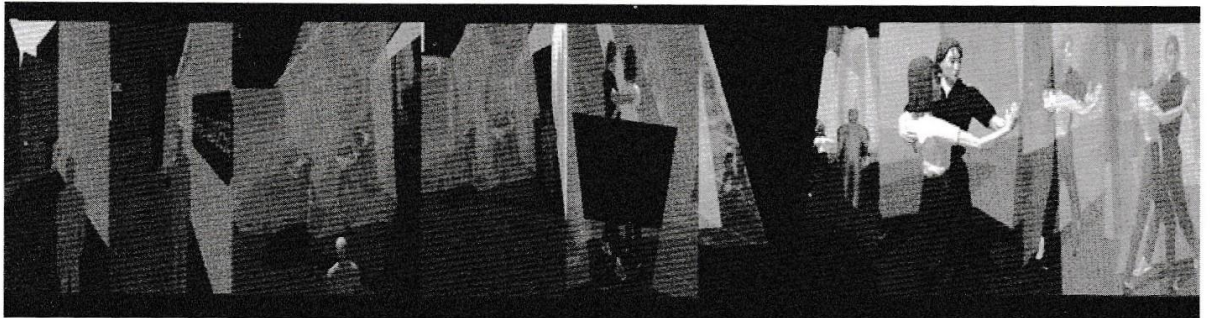


Figure 7. Work of Can Ozan Çakır; Cinematographic Perception

#### **4TH PHASE; TANGO BOX IN THE CITY**

Although the previous phases were thought independent of any place, in the fourth phase the Tango Box try to find its place in the city. At first, the Tango Box doesn't let any transformation of itself by the place and try to find the most proper possibility. Afterwards the boundary of the Tango Box was reconstructed by a place around Taksim although at the same time reconstructing the place. After conceptualizing the parameters, students tried to explore the contextual transformation through limits. The important point in this transformation is to look the activity inside like an 'event' in



the city while designing conditions, rather than conditioning design and to explore flows and vectors often intersect unprogrammed spaces: the place of the in between, the space of the potentialities, and the motion of the bodies in it.

The difference between the program and event is the basic problem in this phase. As Tschumi (2000) says; program is to be distinguished from 'event'. A program is determinate set of expected occurrences, a list of required utilities, often based on social behavior, habit, or custom. In contrast, events occur as an indeterminate set of unexpected outcomes. Revealing hidden potentials or contradictions in a program, and relating them to a particularly appropriate spatial configurations, may create conditions for unexpected events to occur (Tschumi,2000).

The relation between the space and time was searched in order to explore the movement of the body in the city. Space is temporal because we move through it; time is spatial but time also exists to activate our spaces, occasionally transforming them by challenging perceptions of their boundaries. An event is any one of all possible occurrences one of which must happen under architectural conditions (Tschumi,2000). The event was defined firstly with dance and than redefined with the watchers situation. The event becomes a structure which get inside what is happening both inside and outside.

The parametric approach in previous phases should be realized in an architectural space. Therefore, students should deal with the context in this phase. There is no architecture without a concept-an overarching idea, diagram, or parti that gives coherence and identity to a building. Concept, not form, is what distinguishes architecture from mere building (Tschumi, 2005). The approach of the studio to the term 'context' was multi-dimensional and based on the experience instead of physical forms. In this sense, the context was considered beyond just referring to a physical fabric of the site, which is pre-existing, steady and superior to architecture. Instead of focusing on the physical environment, students are directed to think on and interpret everyday experience in the city. As Norberg-Schulz (2000: 19) says; 'Our everyday existence unfold in a world full of things and events. We walk along different streets, and during our walk we meet various people, we walk into an out of buildings, and we perform specific tasks in designated places'. So, as a part of the 'context', they have considered not only the collective memory of the public, and also their individual memories formed through their own experience of the city. Rethinking the context with experience has also led to defining it not as a steady entity, but as a constantly changing thing. As Isenstadt (2005: 158) writes, "...context does not stand still: it changes, from day to day or decade to decade, in cycles and cataclysmically. Physical context is as much a question of when as where".

In this phase, concept and context are in separable and conflict. It can negate or ignore the circumstances that surround it, while the context may blur or dampen the precision of an architectural idea.

Students tried to answer although should one of these two terms take precedence over the other; the generic concepts and specific contexts. The answer may lie not in a choice but also in the relation and interaction between these two terms. As Tschumi (2005) says; there is three basic ways in which concept and context may relate:

Indifference, whereby the idea and its setting are super by ignorant of one another-a kind of accidental collage in which both coexist but do not interact. Poetic juxtapositions or irresponsible impositions may result.

Reciprocally, whereby the architectural concept and its context interact closely with one another, in a complementary way, so that they seem to merge seamlessly into a single continuous entity.

Conflict, whereby the architectural concept is strategically made to clash with its context, in a battle of opposites in which both protagonists may need to negotiate their own survival.

At that point, another issue is content. Every architectural space has something happens inside. Also there is relation between the concept and the context, there is another problem settle with the activities. The relation between the concept and content can be in tree ways again, indifference, reciprocal or conflict. Are all these relations facts or interpretation is another question which has to be asked? Does the answer exist there to find out or it is only an interpretation.

Because of this differences the students first study with a minimum touch with the context in a place they chose and than they explore the interaction in Taksim. Selecting the appropriate strategy for a given project is part of the concept (Figure 8, 9).

At the end, through this experimental approach students also try to explore the materialization problem. As Tschumi (2005) says; the place of the concept is the place of the technological innovation. Even the students explore a project aiming at making connections with concept, context and content; they also search for the technological possibilities which will materialize their conceptual ideas.

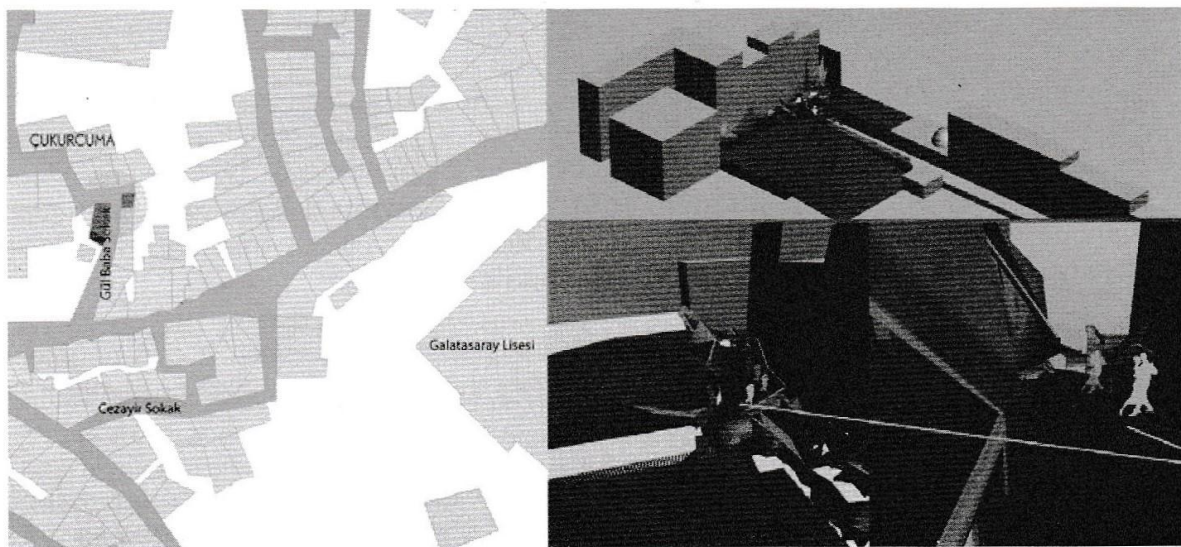


Figure 8. The Work of Berke Karadeniz; The Transformation of the Street by Crashes



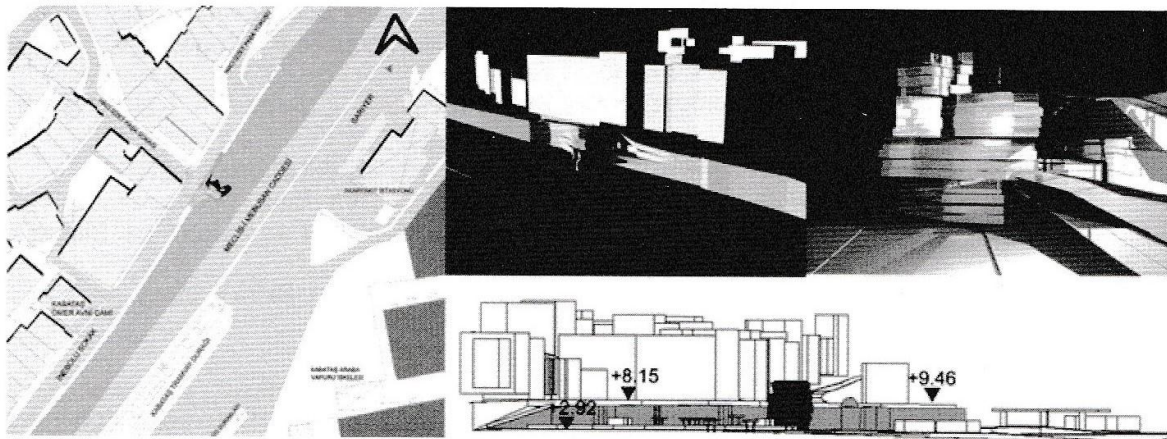


Figure 9. The Work of İlgin Ezgi Tunç; The Transformation of the City Wall by Frames

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

'Space' is thought as a lived and perceived entity, constituted with temporal events. In this sense, architecture is redefined with space-time relations rather than being only a physical environment. This paper has emphasized the potential patterns of provisional interaction between perceiving and thinking human experience. In the studio, the body is considered as the first environment of the human being. Therefore, the relation of the body movement with space as sth. explored and renewed with experience, has been the main discussion of the studio. Each student has individually explored the movements and taken out their own unique parameters. This abstraction has been de/re-constructed in every new phase with the addition of new situations like the existence of an audience, etc. This kind of design process has given way to a spatial configuration which is open to being transformed with many possibilities, rather than a fixed and ideal spatial organization. At the end, the context as a daily experience in the city has been a tool to give meaning to previous abstractions. The students, who have used abstractions for constructing the idea, have reconstructed these abstractions, in order to create a new meaning and subjective experience of the space. In fact, pragma and context can transform into a space only when we give meaning to abstractions. The meaning is constructed in students' minds intuitively through their own experience. This is why this studio program is based on reconstruction.

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