ABSTRACT

An enduring consideration within architectural discourse, the notion of performance is intrinsically embedded within design. Over the past several years, architecture has been increasingly attentive to the framework of performance and its potential contributions to contemporary issues within the field. Numerous derivatives of the word perform—for example performance, performative, performalism, performalistic—have been applied to architectural contexts within several significant publications providing evidence of the mounting interest of researchers, academics, and theorists to this premise. Within his essay “Architecture as Performative Art,” architect and historian Antoine Picon remarks, “From its Renaissance origins, architecture inherited a concern with effectiveness that other arts did not possess,” (Grobman and Neuman 2012) while also emphasizing that current inquiry into performative criteria within the profession instigates even broader aspirations. Contemporary research surrounding performance in architecture articulates mediated aspirations that negotiate between quantitative and qualitative measures.
In the book, *Performative Materials in Architecture and Design* (Intellect 2013), we present an expanded lens on how the confluence of innovations in areas of materials science, advanced fabrication, computational techniques, and interactive media can provide fresh insight on the context of performative materiality. Through a series of select essays, projects, and interviews, the book emphasizes the value of research as a mode of design inquiry. Descriptive of the design intents and working processes within specific projects, the work presented is experimental and provocative of future innovations. Purposefully heterogeneous, this book presents a multiplicity of perspectives from researchers, theorists, and designers.

This poster draws from the content of the book, representing the work through a graphic mapping of the interrelationships between seemingly discrete areas of material inquiry and design research. The book is organized into a series of four categories—Material Ontologies, Material Elements, Material Fabrications, and Material Behaviors—which signify a primary theoretical position within the various projects presented. The poster illustrates the expressed and proposed capacities for overlap and intersection between these broad categories. Providing a taxonomy of performative criteria, the mapping (Figure 1) contributes to the emerging definition of performance, elucidating the plurality of latent affinities between distinct areas of research.

The future trajectory of performative materials suggests alternatives and possibilities that have not yet been fully explored. The intent of this poster is to stimulate discussion and motivate investigative questioning and productive dialogue toward the reconsideration of architecture’s relation to matter and its surrounding atmospheres. In opposition to the longstanding paradigm of materials as fixed and dimensionally stable, the notion of performative materials proposes a destabilizing viewpoint that celebrates materials that interact with the environment in more deliberate and tangible ways. Collectively, this research suggests a future in which the reductive dichotomies that commonly define the discipline—such as inside and outside, natural and constructed, technical and poetic, even digital and analog—can be matured, redefined and less distanced.

**WORKS CITED**


RASHIDA NG’s research broadly examines emerging material technologies and their potential within design to provide sustainable and responsive architecture. Central to this inquiry is the potential for experimental technologies to redefine the interdisciplinary and collaborative modes of architecture and design praxes. Her ongoing projects include investigations into new lighting technologies and the development of a responsive daylighting panel utilizing phase change material. Rashida is an associate professor at Temple University’s Tyler School of Art and the co-founder of SEAMLab, a non-profit dedicated to research and dissemination of design-based knowledge focused on materiality.

SNEHA PATEL is an assistant professor at Temple University’s Tyler School of Art in the architecture department. Her research and pedagogical initiatives are broadly defined as the intersection between materiality and representation. Believing that architecture is a discipline that is fully connected to visualization and communication, Sneha is interested in the potential that material experimentation and fabrication advancements offer in enhancing process and time-based desires in design and in relationship to larger ecological, cultural and archival contexts. Her work addresses how architectural thinking might operate at expanded scales, from installation to device to landscape. She is also a founding partner of SEAMLab.