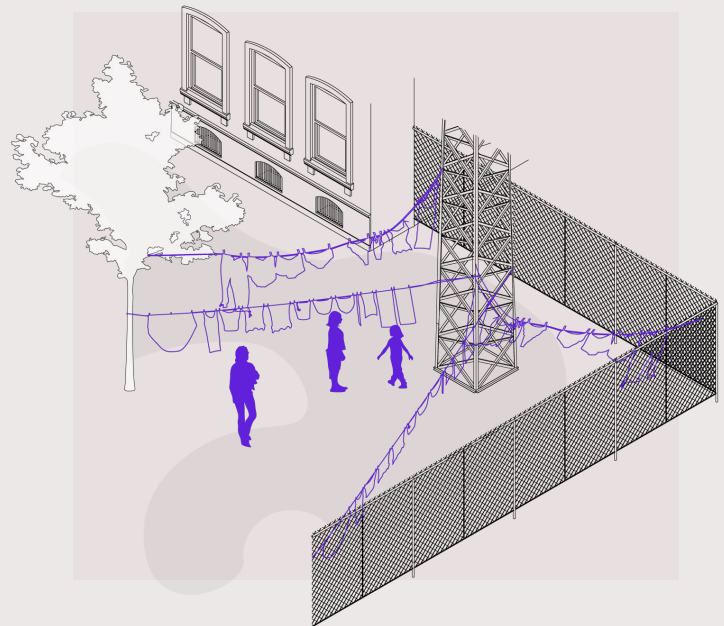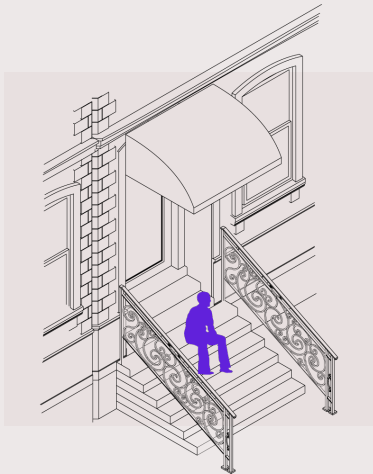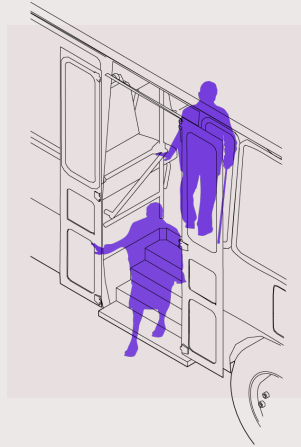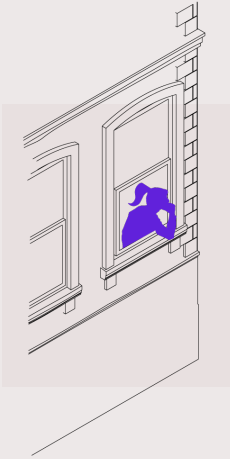Mary Elizabeth Perez

EXTROSPECTIVE DESIGN

Exploring how Immersive Observation and Empathy Exercises Could Improve the Architectural Design Process

Abstract

This thesis investigates the origins of the issues within the client and architect dynamic and dissects the reasons for miscommunication. With this understanding I investigate how method actors approach empathy and effectively communicate the physical and emotional aspects of their character. In dissecting the core elements of 'the method', I will apply these guidelines to a more realistic example through the case study of Nikki S. Lee in her work Projects (1997 - 2001) to see how the method techniques can be applied in realistic scenarios. Moreover, I apply these tactics to the client-architect dynamic and its ability to improve the way humans empathize with each other. In understanding the main reoccurring issues within the architect and client relationship and the origins of method acting, I apply these methodologies to a more realistic example: artist Nikki S. Lee. I analyze the works of Nikki S. Lee and dissect her multidisciplinary approach and creative process to understanding subcommunities. Through analyzing the photographs in Projects, I explore the process's potential application to the initial architectural design phases. Through my research, I investigate how these cross-disciplinary approaches could aid in the design process to effectively create more responsive and mindful spaces. With these applications, could method acting techniques be applied to the design process? And if so, how would these methods be beneficial? This paper merges interviews, psychology research, photography, and architectural experiences to support my proposal for a new multidisciplinary inspired architectural design approach: extrospective design.

Keywords: Architect and Client Relationship, Method Acting, Interactive Observation, Nikki S. Lee, Multidisciplinary Architectural Design, Extrospective Design.

Extrospection

/ex·tro·spec·tion/
Noun

Extrospection is the observation of things external to one's own mind, as opposed to introspection, which is the direct observation of one's mind's internal processes. Extrospection is ordinary sense perception

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Introduction

The top two projects that architects in the United States have categorized to be the most requested are "adaptive reuse and conservation" and "basic interior modernization" (The American Institute of Architects, 2022). Meanwhile, "adding usable space" is only at 10% of all projects indicating that building design does not prioritize the spatial efficiency for its specific inhabitants (Richards, 2022). With this considered, there is a vast amount of architecture and urban projects that require revisions to resume social relevance (Elefante, 2018). This is a concerning issue considering how architecture needs to be remodeled due to the projects being dysfunctional on a socio-spatial dimension (2018). It is vital that architects design specifically for the client and their needs so users can more authentically execute their tasks. To do so, we must investigate the root of the gap between the client and architect relationship: reciprocal understanding of each other (Franck and Sommaruga Howard, 2010, 25). The present research argues that observation and empathy are the tools deficient in the current architectural design approach and method acting techniques are a promising tool for human and site interaction. Moreover, embodying a character creates structure for the actor, and potentially architect, to extrospectively access how a client focused concentration has the potential to give insight on a more general scale. These concepts lead to the following questions: Can method acting techniques be used as a tool for improving the profession of architecture or a specific project? And to what extent can method acting be applied to Architecture without overgeneralizing and over specifying?

1.1: Introduction to the Architect and Client Disconnect

The disconnect within the architect and client dynamic has existed ever since the creation of the profession (Franck and Sommaruga Howard, 2010, 10). In fact, the American Institute of Architects has recognized this lack of client personalization within the industry and modified the standard contracts for architectural services (AIA, 2007; Pressman, 2006, xii). Since then, these documents have updated and implemented language that promotes flexibility around the client's unique circumstances (2007). Though there has been an evident shift in client and project specificity throughout the development of the profession, architects have neglected to account personalization within idiosyncratic spaces. There are many issues to blame, such as the architect and client inability to accurately convert their ideas, desires, and perspectives verbally and visually (Franck and Sommaruga Howard, 2010, 25). However, the main issue hindering architects from being able to design a space that encompasses the essence of its occupants is understanding the experience, knowledge, and familiarity that the future building users have (Franck and Sommaruga Howard, 2010, 28).

Despite the architect's extensive education, licensure, and design expertise to create a wide range of private and public programs, few have personally experienced inhabiting the project they are hired to design. For instance, architects forego their power to improve the spatial efficiency in programs that require optimal building use, such as hospitals, if the designer has never shadowed how its users navigate the space. Architect's failure to understand the intricacies embedded within the programs of their projects restricts them from materializing an ideal design (Franck and Sommaruga Howard, 2010, 35). Often, these result in ignorant design decisions that get built and become an inconvenience to the users in practice (Franck and Sommaruga Howard, 2010, 34). Ideally, every project should respond to the user's lifestyle, routine, habits, and spatial flow to generate projects that coexist with the users and promote them to authentically realize their site purpose.

The current architectural design process has five stages and begins with the schematic phase (AIA, 2009). During this four-to-eight-week period, the designer and client have their initial meetings and discuss project goals and aspirations which are then applied to prepare a design proposal (2009). Considering how long the permitting and building process can be, many clients value architects that quickly generate a final design and drawing set to expedite their project's development (Franck and Sommaruga Howard, 2010, 28). Accelerating this phase omits the architects from inquiring about the client's lifestyle, desires, and eccentricities which give personalized insight needed to craft their project. Though the client is demanding with the architect's timeline, the designer's impatience with the client's design proficiency and preferences is another issue that contributes to their disconnect.

1.2: Theorizing the Architect and Client Disconnect

The architecture profession is notorious for their elitism in design expertise and gravitation towards theoretical approaches that are exclusively appreciated by those in the design field (Franck and Sommaruga Howard, 2010, 54). Despite their efforts to "balance their creative ambitions with the client's need for a building that solves real-life problems", scholars suggest that some architects are too driven by their personal motives that they forego the client's desires (Pressman, 2006, xxiii). Moreover, architecture has an exclusive language, both in graphic and verbal communication, that creates an "inherent asymmetry in these exchanges" for an inevitable misunderstanding (Pressman, 2006, xiii). The loss in translation or inability to follow architectural notation can lead to feelings of intimidation and degradation that hold back the client from full involvement in the design process (Pressman, 2006, xiii).
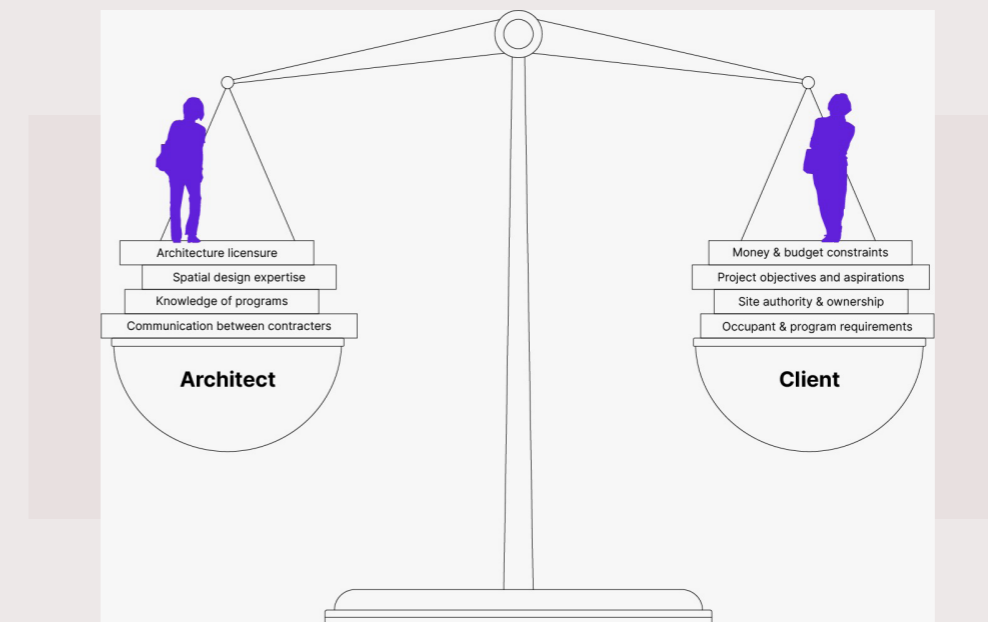
Figure 1: Diagram explaining the architect and client relationship and exchange in knowledge (Perez, 2023)

Figure 1 illustrates that there is a mutual understanding between the architects and the clients. Both parties are heavily reliant on each other and supply their counter with the tools needed to execute their projects (Pressman, 2006, xv). The abovementioned graphic emphasizes the importance for all participants to listen and contribute their expertise and opinions. Architects have become aware of their lack of understanding for their project's users and have incorporated ways of integrating public opinion (Franck and Sommaruga Howard, 2010, 26). This form of engagement is called Participatory Action Research (PAR) and was established in the 1940's and proposed that the researcher and participant collaborate to develop context-specific solutions utilizing quantitative and qualitative procedures (Macbeth). Some architects have implemented PAR procedures to the initial phases of their design process through conducting interviews and surveying the

locals in the prospective project site (Franck and Sommaruga Howard, 2010, 26). Though surveys and interviews appear to be a effective approach to gather information regarding public desires and interest, these methods suffer due to the small demographic that is reached or appeared at the assessment. This form of engagement is only successful if the architect receives meaningful local participation with a proper audience attendance. Though conversation is a clear way to distribute factual information and direct opinions, psychologists have proven that it is through actions, not words, that allow people to understand their thoughts (Tversky, 2019).

In Mind in Motion: How Action Shapes Thought, Tversky (2019) explains how our body's physical relationship to the world is just as strong, if not stronger, than our ability to construct concepts to verbal communication. I find this to be salient because when I verbally expresses myself, I can curate my words to cater to the situation; whereas actions are initial and innate reactions that are more difficult to mitigate. In an interview, Tversky expands on this experience by suggesting that "abstract thought uses the same brain circuitry that underlies spatial thought" (De Witte, 2019). This methodology works alongside our brains and human nature and serves as a seamless tool to express ourselves and integrate perspectives. Through traditional architectural procedures, the architect advances their knowledge of how the client can potentially use the space; however, through Participatory Action Research (PAR) architects can mirror their client's interactions and experience their everyday routines themselves.

The John Dewy theory, or more popularly known as the learn-by-doing approach to teaching, proposes that interaction is the superior way to understanding and retaining information (Dewey, 1938). Similar to the proponents of Participatory Action Research, Dewey elaborates how it "must represent present life – life as real" and it is only through experience that the analysis and application process of knowledge can occur (Dewey, 1897). If this thought procedure were to be implemented into the architectural design context, architects could emulate the client's behaviors and furthermore recreate an authentic simulation for the designer to experience life through the eyes and body of the potential space user. This begs the reflexive question, who better to understand their tactics of embodying a person of interest than method actors? The following chapter elaborates on method actors' approach to understanding their characters through the integration of various behavioral observation and integration techniques.

2.1: Introduction to the origins of Method Acting

Just like architects, actors must fully perceive their subject's intentions, desires, and habits to accurately depict their role – or in the designer's case, design their building (Franck and Sommaruga Howard, 2010, 24). Though the acting profession has many approaches to character interpretation, the method acting technique integrates tools for studying and interpreting human behavior that has resulted in the portrayal of believable characters (Ates, 2022). These tools will be later elaborated in subchapter 2.2 when defining the core properties of the Lee Strasberg's method for acting. Authenticity is an unspoken yet clearly understood characteristic and skilled method actors are impeccably close to replicating people or bringing fictional characters to life (Strasburg, 2021). However, this convincing approach to acting was not always a formalized practice. It was not until the late 19th century when Konstantin Stanislavski, a Russian actor, playwright, and theater director, challenged the typical acting approach and instigated a shift in the profession to a more realistic style (Butler, 2022, 8).

2.2: The Konstantin Stanislavski Strasberg Approach to Acting

The initial goal of an actor was to theatrically portray emotions which was typically depicted with exaggerated performances of how humans truly react (Nashville Film Institute). Annoyed with these unrealistic and grandiose performances, Konstantin Stanislavski created the Moscow Art Theater where his students would implement a new form of acting (Butler, 2022, 9).

Figure 2 Konstantin Stanislavski and other prominent figures of the Moscow Art Theatre, 1990. Usage terms © Popperfoto / Getty Images.

https://www.bl.uk/20th-century-literature/articles/an-introduction-to-stanislavski

The Stanislavski method emphasized the concept of perezhivanie, a Russian word referring to "that moment where the actor is so into the imagined reality of the character that, to some extent, they're really feeling and experiencing what the character is going through" (Gross and Butler, 2022). To achieve this state, actors must exercise emotional and physical dedication to develop their persona (Ates, 2022). 'Emotional memory' can be activated when actors recall from the past and apply akin experiences to their character's scenario (2022). Physically, Stanislavski writes that those dedicated should "build a character's behavior through specific, concrete, performable actions" to build a relationship with the play's world (2022). Stanislavski's more believable and authentic reading of acting became popularized and brought to the theater and film scene of the United States where it was reinterpreted and taught in acting schools (Nashville Film Institute). 'The Method's' evolution through the years is a direct result of it's application in practice and student's reinterpretation from their teacher and employing their own stylistic elements to distinguish their craft (Ates, 2022).Though there are many interpretations and schools of his approach, I will be focusing on Lee Strasberg's 'the method' that features the core principles that I believe have the greatest potential to enhance the architectural design process.

2.3: The Lee Strasberg's method for acting

Lee Strasberg is an American actor and director who has developed one of the most iconic interpretations of Stanislavski teachings: 'The Method' (Strasburg, 2021). Method acting principals are rooted in utilizing the actors "physical, mental and emotional self" during the character development phase (Strasburg, 2021). Strasberg trains his students to implement the following five core principles: the magic if, objective, emotional memory, physical action, and subtext (MasterClass, 2021).

'The magic if' refers to the actor getting into character and questioning all details that allows them to connect to their characters circumstances (2021). 'Objective' is when the actor questions the character's "emotional throughline over the course of the whole play" (2021). 'Emotional memory' is pulled from Stanislavski's original teachings and regards the actor's "personal experiences to inflect their performance, giving it greater urgency and authenticity" (2021). 'Physical action' regards the actor interpreting their character's behavior in real-time and interacting with the other actors and space around them (Strasburg, 2021). Finally, 'subtext' was the initiative to understand the "overall meaning and emotional thrust of the play" which is "implied by the text" and is the actor's responsibility to "understand this submerged content" (MasterClass, 2021). It is these practices that strengthens the actor's character competence to execute a performance that encompasses all dimensions of their subject.

Figure 3 Scene From Fight Club featuring Brad Pitt and Edward Norton, Moviestore, 1999.

https://www.indiewire.com/2019/11/edward-norton-fight-club-box-office-1202190088/

In an interview with Edward Norton, a student of 'the Method', he defined the Strasberg style as "the idea that your emotional memory and your sense memory was the conduit through which you accessed all of what you needed for the work — and it was the deepest and most intense way for you to bring out the deep truth of a certain piece of work" (Kolker and Norton, 2010). Norton follows a sequence of steps inspired by Strasberg which is: "investigate, investigate, absorb, absorb, and then channel" (2010). The above Figure 3 is a scene from Fight Club (1999), where Edward Norton applied method acting tactics to his role. In this role, Norton implemented the key to what he believes encapsulates 'the method': empathy (2010).

Another interview with method actor Robert De Niro recalls how the Strasberg style emphasizes the unique process of each student actor and how once "they [an actor] learns the work it's theirs. Lee used to say, 'It's not mine, it's what the actor gets from it and gives to it'" (De Niro and Tribeca Film Institute, 2014).

Figure 4 Robert De Niro as the boxer Jake La Motta in Martin Scorsese's "Raging Bull," 1980.Photograph from Alamy

https://www.newyorker.com/culture/the-front-row/revisiting-the-violence-and-style-of-martin-scorseses-raging-bull

Figure 4 presents Robert De Niro exercising method techniques when embodying his character as Jake La Motta in the film Raging Bull (1980). In this interview, De Niro comments on the essence of the method – from the actor, the character they portray, the process, and the result –is entirely tailored (2014). This personalization results in one-of-a-kind, non-replicable, and authentic performance.

'The Method's' unconventional and personal approach to gain perspective of the identity and quality of their character has great potential for being extrapolated and integrated into the initial stages of the design process. Method acting's tactics of understanding subtleties, implied through the attention to detail, brings an interactive proposal for the issue that many architects face when interpreting their clients (Nashville Film Institute). It is these reasons that lead me to conclude that applying method acting techniques could give designers the empathetic edge needed to craft projects for their clients.

Architects should understand their clients like how actors understanding their characters: being introspectively conscious to be extrospectively receptive. Though there has been no significant attempt or project where architects have explored the instillment of these methods, many artists have incorporated qualities akin to that of the method, for instance in the work of Nikki S. Lee. In the following chapter, I reflect on Lee's work and apply her stylistic processes, along with that of Strasberg, and propose potential applications to the architectural design process.

Figure 4 Nikki S. Lee, Guggenheim, photo courtesy of Nikki S. Lee

https://www.guggenheim.org/teaching-materials/teaching-modern-and-contemporary-asian-art/nikki-s-lee-
%EC%9D%B4%EC%8A%B9%ED%9D%AC

Chapter 3.1: Nikki S. Lee's background and Interactive approach to observation

Actors, among many things, are primarily life replicators. A skilled method actor is highly observant and is aware that implementing minute details into their character embodiment enhances their performance (MasterClass, 2021). Method acting has lived on the stage and screen until performance artist Nikki S. Lee exercised similar techniques and principals throughout her art. Though Lee is not a trained actress or identifies as a method actor, I believe that the procedures exhibited to achieve her work is guided by her fascination with perception which draws parallels to that of 'the Method'. Lee identifies as a 'performance photographer' with an emphasis on 'community and identity' and is derived from her international mindset and passion for cultural understanding (Lee).

Lee is born and raised in South Korea and moved to New York City to pursue a career in fashion photography where she worked alongside professionals like David LaChapelle (Lee, 2010). Though Lee has been classically trained in photography, her art is driven by her fascination of identity which has influenced her to incorporate multi-disciplinary approaches to her projects (Lee, 2010). In all her projects, Lee interacts and collaborates with the subjects in her art and is sure to integrate their impressions (Lee). In an interview, Lee describes her artistic approach stating:

"The work I do always needs to involve others, and that's mainly because of my views about my own identity. I realized I couldn't understand who I am without the people around me. I believe that it is only through my relationships with others that I can see myself."

–Nikki S. Lee

The Creators Project, *Photographer Nikki S. Lee Can Turn Into Anyone*, 2010

The concept of understanding self through interactions with others and their surroundings is parallel to 'the method's' individualized approach to acting. Lee has her own style of getting into character and dedicates her process to externally changing her appearance and surroundings so she can absorb these sub-cultural influences and internally embody her new persona (Mindiak, 2021). Lee practices fieldwork exercises which "observes life in action. It engages with people and communities and evokes questions on use and meaning. Life unfolds in habits, rhythms, routines, and rituals." (Havik, 2022, 54:32). Lee's *Projects* (1997 - 2001) series exhibits this exactly through her extroquestive explorations and discovered facets of herself by becoming the subject (Lee and Uher, 2019). In the following sub-chapters, I investigate Nikki S. Lee's *Projects* (1997 - 2001) and how her implementation of the method techniques guides her in understanding her surroundings within the built environment. Finally, I will dissect if architecture helps her method act? And if she was an architect, would this help her design better?

Chapter 3.2: Projects (1997 - 2001): Description and Implementation of 'The Method'

Over the course of five years, Nikki S. Lee selected twelve sub-cultures found within the New York City area and, in a sense, became an apprentice to the way that they lived (Lee, 2010). Within the period of one month, Nikki would become a member of a specific sub-community and picked up on dialect, mannerisms, and cultural peculiarities that encapsulated the soul of what it is to be them (2010). She did so by focusing on a variety of distinctive ethnic and cultural interests defining their group (Mindiak, 2021). Though Lee studied photography, she was not behind the camera for this project – pivoting from the observer to the observed. She frequently asked a friend or strangers to take the photos of her with a simple point-and-shoot camera (Lee and Lee, 2013). In an interview, she explained how "with a snapshot camera, they [sub-community members] are comfortable" (2013). Incorporating non-professional materials makes those in the subgroup Lee joins to feel less pressure to perform a certain way or portray themselves as a false, alternate or desired view; it is through these colloquial tools that she was able to yield

authentic responses, opinions, actions and reactions (Lee and Lee, 2013). Moreover, the date stamped onto the image realizes these projects as true and experienced – it is through these small details that giver her project a sense of genuineness (2013).

Figure 5 *The Yuppie Project* (4), 1998, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York Gift, Danielle and David Ganek, 2003

https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/12989

Figure 5 above is a photograph from *The Yuppie Project* (1998) where she joins Wall Street professionals and fuses their lifestyles and mannerisms into her daily routine (Mindiak, 2021). Though for this project she might have required a larger emphasis on portrayal of status, some of the sub-communities she entered required her to learn certain skills (2021). For instance, in *The Exotic Dancers Project* (2000) she inquired a personal trainer for three months to be physically fit to perform and *The Skateboarders Project* (2000) required her learn how to skate (Lee, 2010). Though Lee does not explicitly state, it is through these artistic approaches and methods of integration that lead me to believe that she exemplifies the key principals in 'the Method'.

Method practitioners physically embed themselves into their character's worlds by doing things like altering their voices or dressing as them (MasterClass, 2021). In parallel, Nikki dedicated her days to fully understanding the way her subjects live and experiences their routines, places herself in their settings, and tries to understand their headspaces (Mindiak, 2021). Lee's techniques continue to parallel Strasberg's when she described her approach as:

"Essentially life itself is a performance. When we change our clothes to alter our appearance, the real act is the transformation of our way of expression—the outward expression of our psyche"

-Nikki S. Lee

The Creators Project, *Photographer Nikki S. Lee Can Turn Into Anyone*, 2010

Alternating her visual appearance has made it easier for Lee to get into character. Analogous to the Strasberg method's principals of 'physical action' and 'subtext', Lee is constantly engaged to her urban context and is keen to the reactions of the people around her (Strasburg, 2021; Lee, 2010). In the following subchapters, I will examine the photographs from *The Seniors Project* (1999), *The Hispanics Project* (1998), and *The Punk Project* (1997) due to her evident engagement with the built environment. In these three studies from *Projects* (1997 - 2001), I highlight the three underlying aspects from her surroundings that assist her in integrating method acting: small-scale props, architectural elements, and the main structure. Finally, I propose how these observations can be implemented into and improve the design process.

Chapter 3.3: The Seniors Project (1999)

In *The Seniors Project* (1999), Lee wanted to understand what it was like to be a part of an elderly community and all the intricacies that come with old age (Lee). Unlike her other projects, The Seniors Project required a more extreme change to her physical appearance, so she hired professional makeup artists to apply prosthetics to age her face and body (Lee and Lee, 2013). Besides makeup, Lee mirrored the comfortable fashion of the elderly within the New York City community she followed. Behavior wise, Lee was sure to embed herself in the settings that the specified elderly group commonly frequented, such as the public parks, benches, and transportation systems (2013).

Figure 6 Original Image: *The Seniors Project (14)*, 1999, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York Gift, Danielle and David Ganek, 2003
Image Editing: Perez, 2023

https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/12990

Figure 6 is an analysis of the photograph of Lee descending the New York City bus steps. Here she is mimicking the previous observations she had of how elders get off the bus and utilizes her surrounding's structure to support her in her descent. The image above is an analysis of Lee's original work, The Seniors Project (14), and highlights the three components that enhance her understanding of the character and relation to the built environment.

Yellow highlights the small-scale props used in the images. However, throughout The Seniors Project (1999), Lee has not been photographed using a walking assistant accessory. Her choice to opt out of its use allows her character to experience the world as a walking-abled elderly and this ability influences how she interacts with her physical surroundings (2013); meaning that she would be heavily reliant on the architectural elements and structure to support her actions. The violet color in the image analysis highlights the core structural elements of her architectural surroundings. The photograph depicts Nikki grabbing the double-doors of the bus as support instead of the steel grab bars, which are highlighted in green. The way that Lee interacts with the double-doors, tightly grasping its sides, is indicative of the current inefficient placement of the grab bars. These physical observations teach a lot about the way that public spaces are designed and informs designers how to improve it.
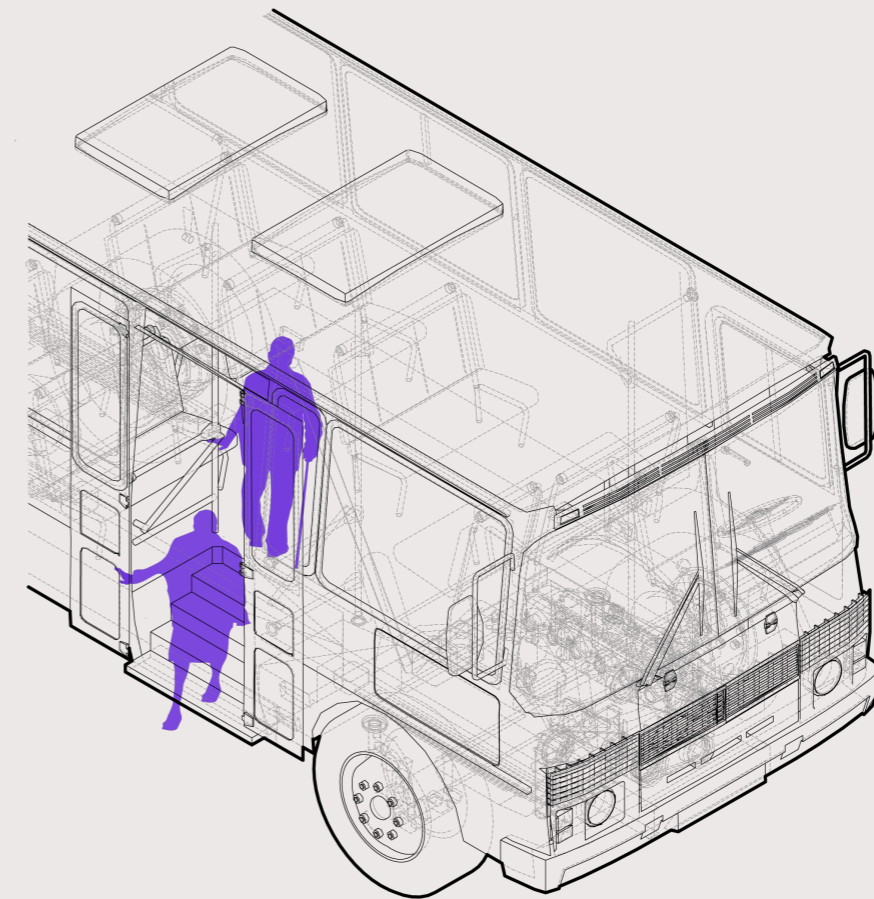
Figure 7 Isometric drawing of bus and user interaction (Perez, 2023)

Figure 7 is a isonometric diagram I produced that gives a clearer depiction of how the two subjects in the original photograph occupy the site and could help designers re-evaluate the design of the space. If Lee was an architect, then she could have noted how the location of the door is more useful over the grab bars, which is ironic considering that the bars are placed for balance support in the descent and mounting of the bus. A solution that could be devised from Lee's character embodiment could be a proposal for steel handlebars attached to the exterior or interior of the bus's double-doors. This design application could make public transportation more accessible for the elderly. Experiencing moments like this could help designers understand how users of the space would utilize the area and improve public space design. While this project is prominent on the smaller and more detailed human scale, the following project heightens the larger social-scale interactions.

Chapter 3.4: The Hispanic Project (1998)

For The Hispanic Project (1998), Lee affiliated with some Latinos living in Spanish Harlem in the New York City area and implemented their lifestyles, social values, and interests as her own for the course of a month (Lee and Lee, 2013). For this project, she joined the group in public and private settings ranging from attending "the Puerto Rican Day parade" to "the private porch of someone's house" (Lee, 2022). Despite the different settings Lee was immersed in during The Hispanic Project, there is one common sub-cultural theme present throughout the photographs: The user's flexibility and adjustments to their environment. The Hispanic community that she temporarily accompanied personalized their spaces through small supplements to their existing built environment – doing these adjustments supported their lifestyles and is evident in the following two photographs.


Figure 8 Original Image: *The Hispanics Project* (18), Gift of the Heather and Tony Podesta Collection, Washington, DC, 2011. Image Editing: Perez, 2023

https://www.phillipscollection.org/collection/hispanic-project-18

Figure 8 is an analysis of Lee's original photograph The Hispanic Project (18) and depicts local residents socializing on the sidewalk and interacting with each other. Besides the liveliness and amount of human interaction between subjects in the image, those photographed are also highly interactive with the space; whether it be leaning out of the window from the house, sitting on the stoop or leaning against the rails, the inhabitants are fully exercising the space's abilities. Moreover, the use of props and impermanent furniture has been evident throughout Nikki's photos but specifically in The Hispanic Project (1998). The yellow highlights 'the props' in the space such as the steel fold-up chairs and wooden kitchen tables brought from the inside. Noting how the local habitants utilize their belongings demonstrates their ability to navigate their surroundings. Integrating tables large enough for four people showcases the community driven qualities of the group she was here with and can be a sign to observant designers how this is a valuable part of their lifestyle. The way that they are posted outside on the sidewalk, rather than inside and inviting friends over to their house, is also a statement to their openness and inclusivity. Moreover, being outdoors has the potential to have new or familiar faces enter their gathering – also being a sentiment to their inclusivity and community centered values. Occupying the sidewalk for recreational hangouts may also be a sentiment to how the housing they currently live in might not be large enough to endure their prospective guests. In conclusion, their use of impermanent furniture is indicative of the sub-culture's preferences and ability to personalize and create a more intimate urban scape.
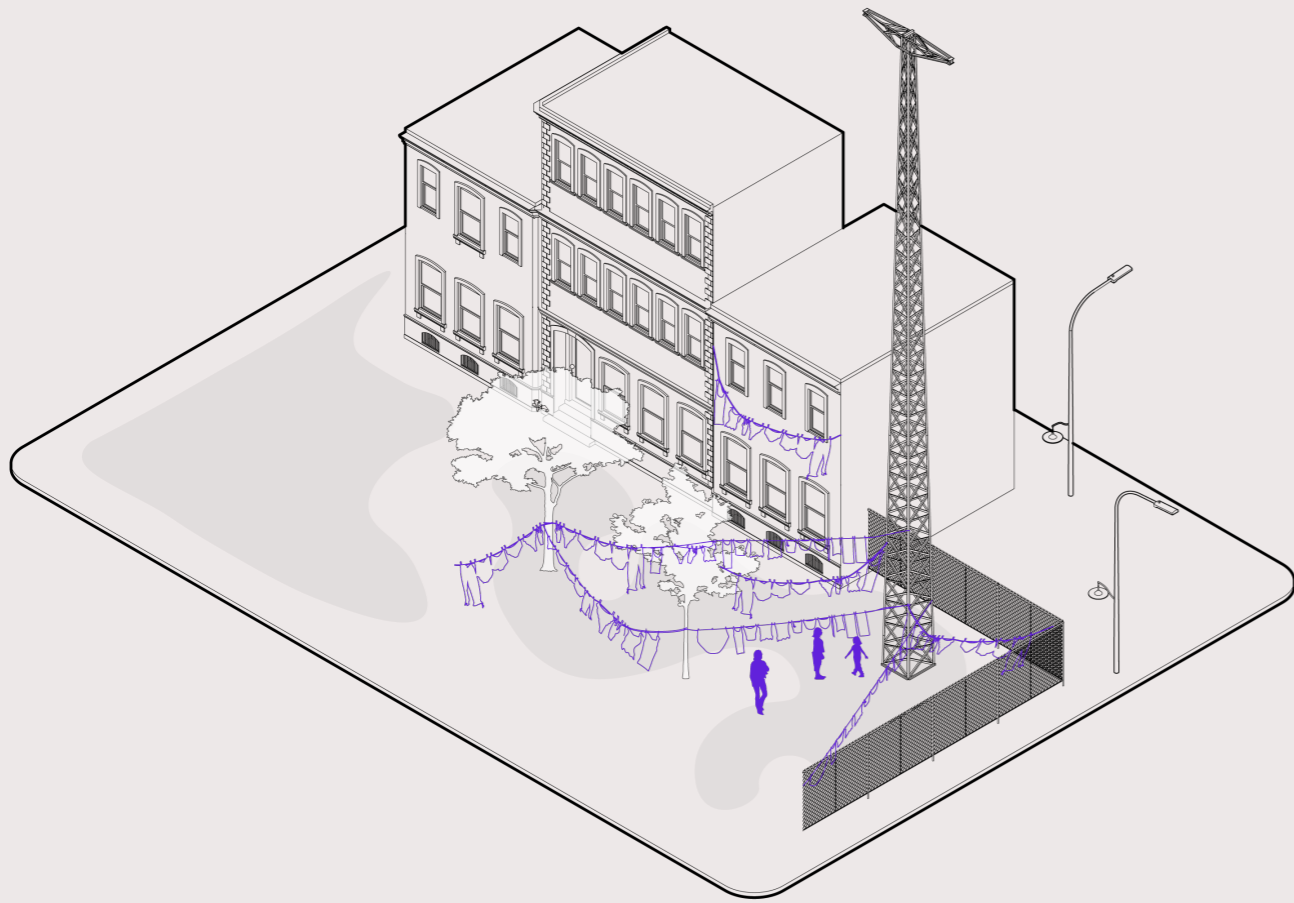
Figure 9 on the right is an isometric drawing of the site's 'set design' and clarifies the location of the users visible in the photograph and how they use the space. Diagrams like this have the potential to be used by extrospective designers in the future to create solutions for specific scenarios that cater to their unique urban interactions.

This use of impermanent furniture is revealing of the sub-culture's preferences and ability to personalize and create an intimate and close-knit urban neighborhood. This 'method acting' approach can not only be used as a tool for architects designing at larger inhabitable scales, but also informative for product and furniture designers who design at a more intimate scale. For instance, product designers could design a solution to make sitting on the stoop more comfortable. Another observational based solution that could be proposed is designing a table that has chairs built into it so the users only have to make one trip to carry all of the furniture outside. These observations, solutions and more could be applied to the design of impermanent furniture and other 'site props'.
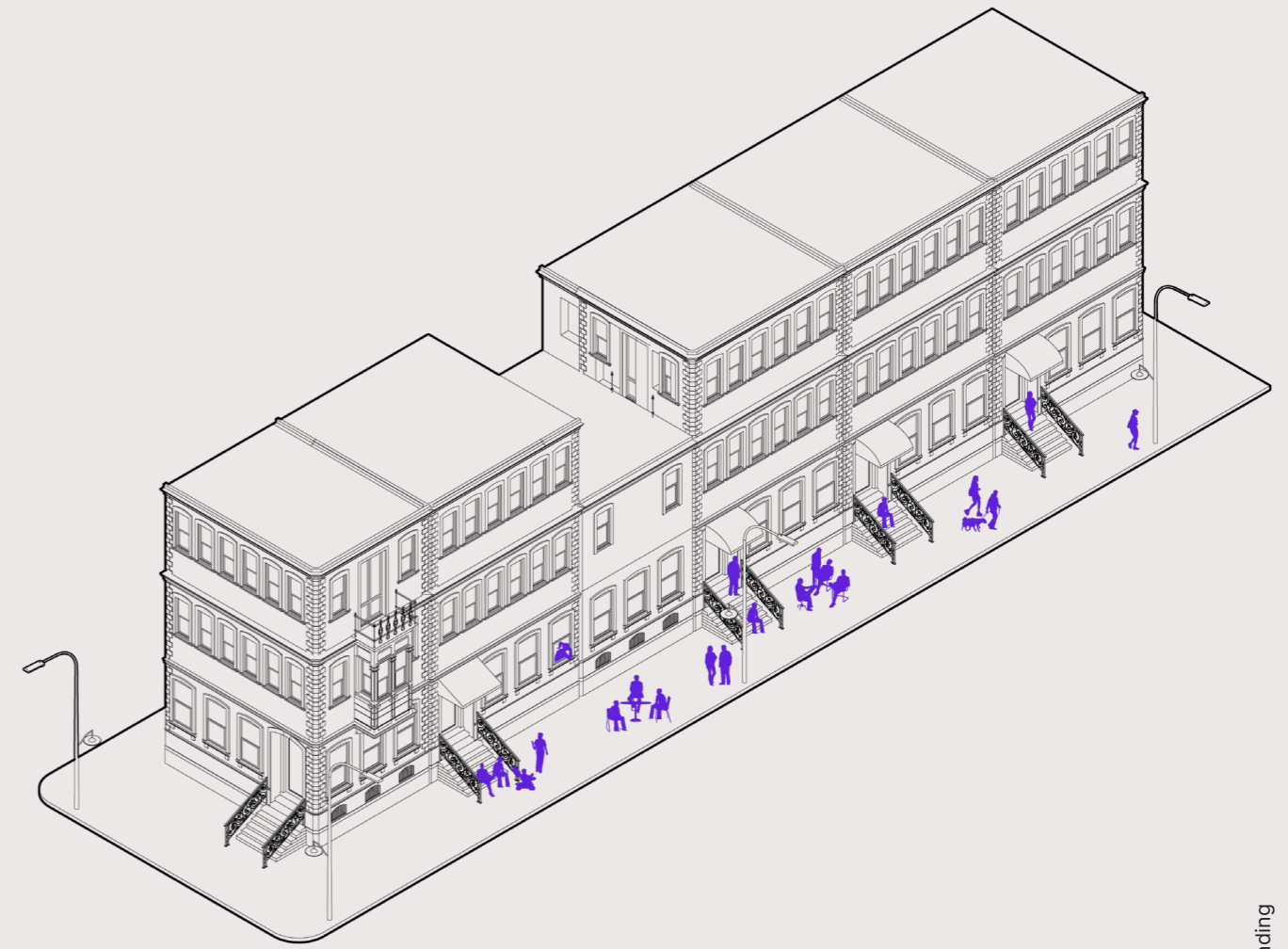
Figure 9 Isometric drawing of residential block and user interaction (Perez, 2023)

Because Lee was present and interacted with the users of the space, she would be able to allude more proper conclusions or accurate assumptions about the space's functionality than I could just being an observer to the photograph. For instance, if Lee was an architect and wanted to use these observations for design benefit, she could ask questions such as 'why do you prefer to gather on the street rather than be inside or in the rear yard?'. The people inhabiting these areas have been so accustomed to these lifestyles that asking such questions could provoke deeper thought and reveal reasons that designers could have otherwise not come to. Lee continues to be extrospectively interested in The Hispanic Project in the following figure 10.

One design proposal could be designing the building's exterior to have a drying rack shaped façade or an exterior composed of laundry lines to optimize hanging. However, it is important to note that this is an observation I am making as an image spectator and I believe that if extrospective design techniques were to be inserted, the designer's spatial interactions would provide richer observations to supplement their site proposals. Moreover, employing extrospective design techniques, such as embodying their clients, could create spaces that help building inhabitants utilize the space in an authentic manner. While The Hispanic Project emphasized the use of props, the following project emphasizes the lack of and how it's subculture addresses it.

Figure 10 Isometric drawing of rear of residential block and user interaction (Perez, 2023)

Figure 10 above is an isometric drawing of the backyard's 'set design' and clarifies the site of the users in the photograph and how they use the space. This diagram depicts how the entire space was adjusted to suit the needs of the building users and has the potential to be used in the future by Extrospective designers to create solutions for specific scenarios that cater to their unique urban interactions. The key observation made from the edits to *The Hispanic Project* (17), also seen in figure 11 to the right, is the user's ability to attach laundry lines and modify the existing surrounding structures to their benefit. While there can be a multitude of reasons as to why the laundry is hanging outside – such as low access to drying machines, economical efficient, or environmental reasons – no proper accusation could be made unless being present and asking the inhabitants. However, because Lee was present, she would be able to devise a more accurate assumption as to why the users operate in this manner. If Lee were an architect, she would be able to interact with and assess the effectiveness of the environment and propose new solutions. Based off of the observations made in the image and the isometric site analysis diagram, I feel that potential solutions could regard adjustments to the exterior of the building to optimize the clothes drying and hanging process.

Figure 11 Original Image: *The Hispanics Project* (17), Nikki S. Lee, Artnet. Image Editing: Perez, 2023

https://www.artnet.com/artists/nikki-s-lee/untitled-17-from-the-hispanic-project-LVHHrbM0CNEoLJivGEbkTQ2

Figure 12 Original Image: *The Seniors Project (14)*, 1999, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York Gift, Danielle and David Ganek, 2003 Image Editing: Perez, 2023

https://www.sfmoma.org/artwork/2004.46/

Chapter 3.5: *The Punk Project* (1997)

In this project, Lee joins a group of "punks" and assimilated their fashion, lifestyle, routine, and interests into her life (Lee and Lee, 2013). Figure 0 is an analysis of the original image of The Punk Project (6) that depicts Lee sitting on the curb with her new friend. It is evident that Lee is mirroring their attitudes through her body language and actions. This project is a prime example of Lee's dedication to embodying her character where she echoed the punk style and implanted garments that are found throughout the punk scene such as leather, piercings and dyed hair (2013). While on the surface it may appear as just an avant-garde style choice, punk fashion originates from a deeper meaning. In fact, punk entered "the scene as an expression of rebellion. Punks railed against traditional notions of gender, family and hierarchy, with punk fashion being the strongest symbol of this" (Bloomfield, 2016). These clothing pieces are the wearable history of the punk life-style and ethics and her wearing it gives a deeper understanding punk identity and attitude.

Fashion also played a big role in *The Skateboarders Project* (2000) Figure 13 where Lee was seen wearing sporting baggy shirts and pants. Besides creating the effect of looking effortlessly cool, loose clothing actually has a deeper meaning in the skater community. According to Vans, one of the largest skater fashion companies, "skaters wear baggy clothing for comfort, movement and protection. Skateboarding needs a wide range of motion, and baggy clothing is less restrictive than tighter fits" (Vans). Loose clothing's ability to serve as a form of protection creates a sense of functionality and is a factor that could benefit the design process.

Besides fashion, sitting on the public infrastructure is another sentiment of her subject's character and attitude. The action of sitting on the curb is also evident in The Seniors Project (1999) depicted in Figure 14 and The Skateboarders Project (2000) as seen previously in Figure 13. However, these photographs exhibit different scenarios that the users interact with. In *The Seniors Project* (1999) Lee was using the flag pole's concrete footing as a bench, most likely to replicate her elderly embodiment's need to rest. The subjects of *The Punk Project* (1997) may be doing so as a projection of their attitudes. Since sitting on the city's infrastructure has been a reoccurring theme throughout her observations, urban planners can factor their interactions into the future design of urban elements in the areas featuring these demographic social groups.
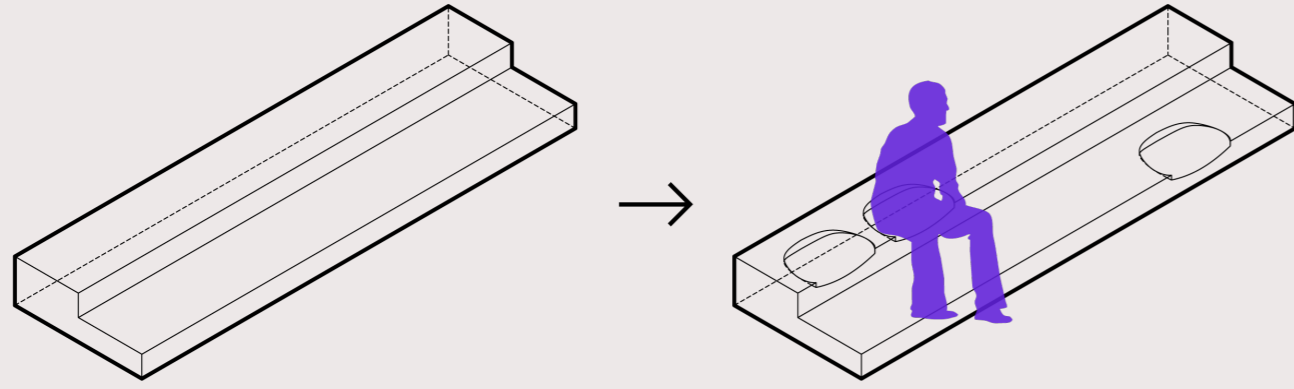

Figure 13 Nikki S. Lee, *The Skateboarders Project* 2000, Fujiflex print. Ann Arbor, The Ross Art Collection.

https://www.tonkonow.com/lee_projects_8.html

Figure 14 Original Image: *The Seniors Project* (29), 1999, Gift of Ann and Mel Schaffer in honor of the graduation of their granddaughter, Elizabeth (Ellie) Schaffer, class of '19

https://exchange.umma.umich.edu/resources/29383/

Figure 15 Isometric drawing of potential sidewalk seat design (Perez, 2023)

Figure 15 is an isometric diagram that depicts the concrete stairs leading to the main entry. This design proposal is inspired by local engagement with the steps and suggests that the concrete has an indent that makes it more comfortable and convenient to sit on. Having this indent would also be inviting for those who pass by to sit and interact with the surroundings in an organic way. This proposal takes these observations into consideration and explores the possibility of using these 'rebellious' behaviors of resting on non-seat designed elements. This detail can be applied to the urban context in regions where locals tend to interact with these infrastructural and urban elements in a punk adjacent fashion. Lee's interaction with her environment as a new version of herself gives her the edge needed to embody someone that she would have not been able to understand in another circumstance. Despite the success in her ability to blend into and interactively comprehend a subculture, it is important to consider the pressing issues of generalization and specification in her findings – which can have implications if applied to the extrospective design practice.

CHAPTER 4

Reflecting on and Applying
Extrospection Design
Techniques to the Design
Process

4.1: Generalization versus specificity in regard to *Projects* (1997 - 2001) and Method Acting

Though Lee has demonstrated method acting techniques throughout her work, there is one key factor that differences herself from method actors: that she is still a version of herself. Unlike method actors, Lee is not pretending to be an existing person or an established character, Lee is navigating her persona in real time and is constantly evolving herself to become a 'new' fitting member of the specified community. Lee follows her subjects and understands their behaviors because they are materialized in this physical realm. Lee's observe and emulate approach really emphasizes her specific surroundings that are catered to her unique circumstances. Whereas method actors attempt to mimic the character that has already existed or is fictionally crafted, Nikki is adjusting and learning in real time. Actor's concept of mimicry and performance is laced with a layer of fantasy that can hinder the architect from fully designing a user catered space. Lee's realistic take on 'the method' proves that observing, interpreting, and acting heightens awareness of spatial interaction and results in specific qualities for specific users.

Stanislavski's method and Lee's integration techniques are both intimate and interactive understandings of characters using their surroundings to generate unique outcomes yielded only by that person (Strasburg, 2021; Lee, 2010). The aim of Lee's projects was to better understand her subjects who were apart of specific communities that she would otherwise not have the opportunity to be a part of due to her life circumstances. It is through literally 'wearing other people's shoes' that she is able to come as close as she does to understanding these communities. Despite her efforts in embodying personas of these subcultures, it is important to note Lee's issue with specialization and generalization throughout the Projects (1997 – 2001), and all her other projects for that matter. For instance, she titles one of her project's The Hispanic Project (1998) yet she is only joining a select few Hispanics in the New York City area. In doing so, Lee is inconsiderately generalizing all of the people she integrates with under the large category of 'Hispanics' rather than specifying their names, unique individual backgrounds or stating her subject's location. While at least in The Young Japanese (East Village) Project (1997) she more clearly specifies her target sub-group with the keywords young, Japanese, and East Village – nonetheless, the title is still a generalization. The Projects (1997 - 2001) inability to clarify that it is just the specific group she surrounded herself may suggest that all in the target sub-culture act, dress and behave like those photographed – which could have detrimental implications to the results.

Though overgeneralization can become an issue when its applied to every client and may lead to typecasting, stereotyping, and categorizing of people, generalization in design is necessary to some extent. If Lee were to properly specify, she would have to assimilate into thousands

of subculture groups categorized with the same title to gain an honest understanding of the community. This would take a lifetime to complete and be unrealistic to implement into the architecture profession. A dilemma arises: to what extent can method acting be applied to architecture without overgeneralizing and over specifying? And to what degree is this replicable.

4.2 Proposal to implement and replicate these techniques

"Consequently, a reproduction, as well as making its own references to the image of its original, becomes itself the reference point for other images"

–John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, page 29, 2010

If extrospective design techniques were to be implanted, pivots in the design process must be implemented from the beginning phases of the design process – starting with time adjustments. Architects must dedicate more time to familiarizing with the client to implement an amalgam of human behavioral, social sciences, interpretations of method acting, and field study techniques. Researchers spend much longer on their subjects, however their commitment is worth it considering the quality in their results. To develop a new architectural practice that exceeds the existing requires architects to not only be dedicated, but also forgo their initial personal intentions and project aspirations and be open minded to new spatial understandings to optimize the unique process. The architect's presence and involvement encourage extrospective curiosities and site-specific questions that invoke behavioral intentions. Both tools demonstrate potential success in being reproduced within the architectural setting and the gathered observatory information that can be shared with other architects and its findings could progress the design process.

The process can be replicated; however, the same or similar results are not guaranteed due to issues in generalization and specificity. Yielding these new results could give a new perspective on the world that could influence architects into stepping into the shoes of their clients of less represented communities, such as disability groups. This is plausible and relevant as architects live in their 'design bubble' and it's difficult to empathize with the client. This is worth further investigation because if numerous architects integrate this technique into their practice and record their observations and discoveries – such as with photographs, journal entries or videos - then a catalogue of sorts could track these observations and be uploaded into a database. This idea could serve as a learning lab for spatial interaction and provide observations, evidence, conclusions, and more to inspire and teach architects around the world.

Conclusion

The origins of the client and architect disconnect are essentially rooted in lack of empathy and the potential implications of cross-disciplinary approaches to understanding, such as 'the method', could improve architect's current ways of understanding their client. Both Strasberg and Lee's emphasis on exploring emotional and physical tactics to generate a more specific outcome also applies to the architectural setting where the client's site and personal conditions are unique and circumstantial. Behaviors, such as habits, are physical expressions of the user's thought process so having an architect shadow the client could personalize the schematic phase (Uher, 2019). Method acting's techniques are evident through the work of Lee's interactive observer approach and has potential for being extrapolated and integrated into the initial stages of the design process. Furthermore, Lee's exploration of perception proves that it is difficult for architects to solely design buildings based off observation - it is pivotal that architects engage deeper. Doing so would guide architects to prioritize the specific routines, rituals, lifestyles, habits, and necessities of the prospective inhabitants into her or his design process. Integrating multi-disciplinary medium strategies into the process has proven successful in advancing other fields and is logical if architects do so as well. The principals of extrospective design are derived from the method acting approaches, field work techniques, and the physical and spiritual understanding of others. If architects were to implement this into their design process than it could avoid miscommunication between the two parties and generate unique and catered design solutions that support the users in living authentically.

If extrospective design were to be integrated to the initial steps of the design process, it is essential for the designer to begin with intention. To be equipped with curiosity for their lifestyle, routines, habits and goals, and open mindedness to arrive to specific and atypical design proposals. The goal of extrospective design is not to generate general solutions for mass produced architecture, it is to create projects that serve its targeted community. To blindly integrate solutions that have worked in other "similar" circumstances defeats the personalized quality of extrospective design.

Through the extrospective approach, the architect becomes an extension of the client and gains insight into the user's current spatial interaction habits and designs tomorrow's architecture using today's actions. Though the extrospective design technique is not a perfect method, it is a closer method to being a more empathetic designer. This methodology proposal can support a better understanding of our clients and design buildings that will be used to their maximum potential, responds to the user's spatial flow, and could become an essential assistant to the occupant's day. The built environment has a history of having significant impact on the user's social dynamics within a space and architects must use this power to its full capacity to influence – and could do so through extrospective design.

Ates, Alex. "The Stanislavski Method of Acting." Backstage, 12 May 2022, https://www.backstage.com/magazine/article/the-definitive-guide-to-the-stanislavsky-acting-technique-65716/.

Berger, John. Ways of Seeing. British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 2008.

Bloomfield, Jessye. "Punk: The Ultimate Fashion Statement." Roundhouse, 7 July 2016, https://www.roundhouse.org.uk/blog/2016/07/punk-the-ultimate-fashion-statement/.

Butler, Isaac. The Method: How the Twentieth Century Learned to Act. Bloomsbury, 2022.

Dewey, J. (1938). Experience and education. New York: Macmillan

Dewey, J. (1897). School Journal vol. 54 (January 1897), pp. 77-80   http://dewey.pragmatism.org/creed.htm

De Niro, Robert, and Tribeca Film Institute. "What It Means To Be 'Method'." Tribeca Film Institute, 19 Dec. 2014, https://www.tfiny.org/blog/detail/what_it_means_to_be_method#:~:text=The%20Method%20as%20Lee%20Strasberg,a%20certain%20piece%20of%20work.

De Witte, Melissa. Stanford University. (2019, August 5). To understand how people think, look to their actions, not their words | Stanford News. Stanford News. https://news.stanford.edu/2019/08/02/thinking-faster-words/

Elefante, Carl. "Architecture's Relevance Revolution." The American Institute of Architects, 6 Aug. 2018, https://www.aia.org/articles/205986-architectures-relevance-revolution.

Franck, Karen A., and Teresa von Sommaruga. Howard. "Design through Dialogue: A Guide for Clients and Architects." Amazon, Wiley, 2010, https://www.amazon.com/Design-through-Dialogue-Architects-Clients/dp/0470721901.

Havik, K. M. "Lecture on Fieldwork Positions." TU Delft Faculty of Architecture AR1A061. Delft Lectures on Architectural Design and Research Methods, 13 Oct. 2022, Delft, TU Delft Faculty of Architecture. Kolker, Robert, and Edward Norton. "Edward Norton Takes Apart His Acting Process and Filmography." Vulture Magazine, 6 Oct. 2010.
Lee, Niki S. Lee in collaboration with Creators. (2010, July 21). Photographer Nikki S. Lee Can Turn Into Anyone [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v =oI8xpJItPVI

Lee, Nikki S., and Susan Lee. "[INNERview] Who Am I? The Artist Drawing

Lee, Nikki S., and Susan Lee. "[INNERview] Who Am I? The Artist Drawing Attention in NY - Nikki S. Lee." Arirang TV, 12 Sept. 2013.

Lee, Nikki S. "Nikki S. Lee." The Guggenheim Museums and Foundation, https://www.guggenheim.org/teaching-materials/teaching-modern-and-contemporary-asian-art/nikki-s-lee-%EC%9D%B4%EC%8A%B9%ED%9D%AC#_edn1.

Macbeth, Sarah. "Participatory Action Research." Participatory Action Research | Participatory Methods, https://www.participatorymethods.org/glossary/participatory-action-research#:~:text=Participatory%20Action%20Research%20(PAR)%20is,change%20it%20for%20the%20better.

Mindiak, Oleg. "Style and Simulacrum: The Performative Photography of Nikki Lee by Oleg Mindiak." Assemblage Joural, 2021, https://www.assemblagejournal.org/issue-3-fall-2021/oleg-mindiak.

Nashville Film Institute. "Method Acting - Everything You Need to Know." NFI, 18 Apr. 2023, https://www.nfi.edu/method-acting/.

Pressman, Andy. Curing The Fountain Headache: How Architects And Their Clients Communicate. 2nd ed., Sterling Publishing Co., 2006.

Richards, William. "Renovation Claims 50% Share of Firm Billings for First Time." The American Institute of Architects, 3 May 2022, https://www.aia.org/articles/6502007-renovation-claims-50-share-of-firm-billing.

Strasberg, Lee. "What Is Method Acting?: Lee Strasberg Theatre & Film Institute." The Lee Strasberg Theatre & Film Institute, 26 Mar. 2021, https://strasberg.edu/about/what-is-method-acting/.

The American Institute of Architects (AIA), The Architecture Student's Handbook of Professional Practice. 14th ed. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2009.

Tversky, Barbara (2019). Mind in Motion: How Action Shapes Thought. Hachette UK.

Uher, Jana. "Introspection Put Back on Its Feet: New Research Reveals Conceptual Leap." LSE Psychological & Behavioural Science, 24 Oct. 2019, https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/psychologylse/2015/10/12/introspection-put-back-on-its-feet-new-research-reveals-conceptual-leap/#:~:text=A%20key%20method%20for%20exploring,from%20a%20third%2Dperson%20perspective.
Vans "Why Do Skaters Wear Baggy Clothing? ." Vans, https://www.vans.co.uk/news/blog/why-do-skaters-wear-baggy-clothing.html#:~:text=Skaters%20wear%20baggy%20clothing%20for,protection%20when%20you%20wipe%20out.

Bibliography

Uher, Jana. "Introspection Put Back on Its Feet: New Research Reveals Conceptual Leap." LSE Psychological & Behavioural Science, 24 Oct. 2019, https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/psychologylse/2015/10/12/introspection-put-back-on-its-feet-new-research-reveals-conceptual-leap/#:~:text=A%20key%20method%20for%20exploring,from%20a%20third%2Dperson%20perspective.

Vans "Why Do Skaters Wear Baggy Clothing? ." Vans, https://www.vans.co.uk/news/blog/why-do-skaters-wear-baggy-clothing.html#:~:text=Skaters%20wear%20baggy%20clothing%20for,protection%20when%20you%20wipe%20out.