

Embodied Perspectives: Using Stanislavski Method to Enhance Empathy of Design Students

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Abstract

Inclusivity in art and design begins with a designer's ability to understand and anticipate the perspectives of diverse users, yet this skill is often underdeveloped in design education. This paper proposes performance, specifically Konstantin Stanislavski's Magic If, as a method to cultivate embodied empathy and deepen spatial awareness in design pedagogy. Unlike conventional role-playing or simulation exercises, which often focus on imitation and cognitive understanding, the Magic If provides a structured, repeatable process for perspective-taking through narrative, intention, and embodied action. Drawing on performance theory, embodied cognition, and experiential learning, the paper explores how students can actively "rehearse" empathy by inhabiting user experiences, integrating imagination, emotion, and bodily awareness. This approach transforms empathy from a brief or superficial exercise into a sustainable practice, while positioning performance as a tool for both creative exploration and inclusive design thinking. By linking narrative, embodiment, and reflective practice, the method supports the development of human-centred design solutions that respond to a wide range of abilities, needs, and spatial interactions, offering a practical pathway for enhancing inclusivity in design education.

Keywords: Performance pedagogy; Inclusive design; Embodied empathy; Stanislavski; Design education; Spatial awareness.

1 Introduction

Creating environments that all users can experience without struggle is part of the responsibilities of the spatial designers and architects. Good design provides solutions to challenges and enables equitable participation in space. Therefore, design education is crucial in developing designers who can see through users' eyes. Designers must deliver inclusive solutions, products, and spaces that are usable by as many people as possible, without the need for special adaptations (Clarkson et al., 2003).

In education, this means preparing students to anticipate diversity, design flexibly, and consider perspectives beyond their own. At the centre of this is empathy, the ability to feel and understand others' emotions and circumstances. In the context of inclusive design, empathy is crucial for meeting fundamental human needs and expectations (Koupric and Visser, 2009).

However, in most curricula, the user's lived experience is not prioritised. Students are trained to create technically and aesthetically appealing designs, but they rarely question the realities of the people for whom they design. This leaves what many scholars identify as an empathy gap. Empathy-focused teaching enhances inclusive design outcomes, but to achieve this, design education needs to incorporate embodiment, not just imagining users, but also inhabiting them (Suri, 2003).

Existing studies show that role-play, simulation, and prototyping activities can enhance empathy in design learning. Altay and Demirkan (2014) state that disability simulations increased empathy and led to more inclusive design decisions. Buchenau and Suri (2000) argued that bodystorming and experience prototyping help designers gain deeper insights by being the user. Kocaoğlu and Demirkan (2019) and Yeşiltepe and Demirkan (2023) also found that role-playing has a direct

influence on empathy levels. These methods work but can be limited and sometimes risk caricature.

Performance methods can help us achieve even greater results. Simulations and role-playing are often task-based and short-lived. They tend to produce cognitive empathy, an understanding of what a user faces, but rarely create affective empathy, a deeper emotional connection (Fuchs, 2015). Performance offers something more substantial: sustained, structured methods of perspective-taking.

Konstantin Stanislavski asked: How can an actor live truthfully in imaginary circumstances? (Stanislavski, 1936). His system combines inner tools, objectives, emotional memory, and analysis, with outer tools, physical action, and transformation (Benedetti, 1998; Carnicke, 2009). The parallels with design are clear: The actor's super-objective mirrors the designer's vision; given circumstances resemble the user's context; character analysis looks like persona-building; physical transformation connects directly to embodied prototyping.

These parallels underscore the comprehensive nature of the approach. One principle, however, speaks directly to the empathy gap in design education: the Magic If. Stanislavski's training begins with the actor asking, What would I do if I were in the character's situation? (Stanislavski, 1936).

Role-play often imitates; students copy how they think a person with a disability might act, sometimes exaggerating their behaviour. The result is usually cognitive empathy; they can describe the problem, but do not deeply feel it. The Magic If shifts this dynamic. Rather than copying a role, students enter a process: What would I need if I were this user? What would I try to do next? How would I feel as I act?

This approach moves from imitation to intention, turning empathy into a repeatable discipline. The paper examines how performance studies, especially Stanislavski's Magic If, can help to build affective empathy as a trainable skill among design students, thereby enhancing embodiment practices and fostering more inclusive design solutions.

2 Inclusive Design and Empathy in Education

Inclusivity in architecture and interior design starts with questioning: “Does this space answer the needs of various users?” In reality, creating an environment that suits everybody’s needs is impossible. However, as the British Standards Institute defines, inclusive design is “The design of mainstream products and/or services that are accessible to, and usable by, as many people as reasonably possible ... without the need for special adaptation or specialised design.” (British Standards Institute, cited in Clarkson et al., 2003). In light of this, incorporating an inclusive design approach into the curriculum of architecture and interior design programs is crucial for increasing awareness of the diversity of space users and various human needs (Afacan and Demirkan, 2010; Olgunturk and Demirkan, 2009). It is the responsibility of spatial creators to remove restrictions for people with disabilities, providing them with the rightful opportunity to easily experience any space (Altay and Demirkan, 2014).

Empathy is the primary skill required to effectively understand diverse user needs, which is the ability to “feel and understand others’ emotions and circumstances” (Tellez and Gonzalez-Tobon, 2019, p.909). Empathy is a critical element for inclusive design because designers must move beyond egocentric approaches to the world and no longer design based on their own needs or preferences.

Taking the user’s perspective encourages designers to navigate conflicting needs, at the end leading to the development of design solutions that are functional, comprehensible, usable, and enjoyable (IDEO, 2011; Norman, 2013). Empathy is a key element of design practice, as it allows the creation of holistic solutions that address the functional and emotional dimensions of human experience. Empathy enables designers to gain profound, personal insights into people’s lives and emotions.

Furthermore, empathy is crucial to human-centred design, as it fosters designers’ understanding of how diverse users interact with and experience their surroundings. As Tellez and Gonzalez-Tobon (2019, p. 909) explain, this crucial awareness

emerges through direct engagement with users, sharing their daily experiences, and actively involving them in the design process.

This raises an important question: How can designers and architects develop empathy for user needs that differ from their own experiences? The answer to this question can be stepping into another person's shoes, even in a literal way, through role-playing. In design education and practice, role-playing enables participants to experience the world from alternative perspectives, helping them recognize barriers and generate more thoughtful design responses.

Research supports the value of this approach. As mentioned above, there are various empirical studies show that experiential, role-based activities can boost empathy and lead to more inclusive design solutions (Altay and Demirkan, 2014; Kocaoğlu and Demirkan, 2019; Yeşiltepe and Demirkan, 2023; Buchenau and Suri, 2000). In particular, Altay and Demirkan (2014) found role-playing among the most effective techniques for increasing students' empathy levels and encouraging accessible design thinking.

Ultimately, gaining deeper user insight involves understanding users on a cognitive level and engaging with their experiences through physical and emotional immersion. As Buchenau and Suri (2000) highlight, being in the users' shoes, even for a limited time period, can help designers get a deeper understanding of user needs and experiences. Therefore, their studies, along with those mentioned above, emphasize that embodied and active learning approaches foster stronger empathy and lead to more human-centred, inclusive design solutions.

Role-playing has been proven effective in boosting empathy and encouraging designers to create more user-friendly, inclusive design solutions. It has weaknesses as well. As Kocaoğlu and Demirkan state, role-playing activities are stronger in cognitive empathy and weaker in affective/emotional immersion. Also, they are mostly task-based and short-lived (2019). To overcome these gaps, we can turn our heads to a related area of role-playing: performance. Performance practices are shaped around empathy to bring stories to life as truthfully as possible; therefore, borrowing approaches from the performance area can foster a deeper understanding

of the user's perspective and build a bridge from cognitive empathy to emotional immersion.

3 Performance as a Tool for Empathy

Performance is deeply connected to embodied cognition, the concept that our bodily experiences influence our thinking (Olenina, Amazeen, Eckard, and Papenfuss, 2019). Therefore, through performance designers can gain sustained perspective-taking, compared to simple role-play activities. To explore the relationship between performance and empathy, Konstantin Stanislavski's System (Stanislavski, 1936) provides a strong framework, as he suggests a way of acting that centres on embodying a character, aiming "to live truthfully in imaginary circumstances." His system employs a blend of inner tools, objectives, emotional memory, analysis, and outer tools, including physical action and transformation (Moore, 1960; Carnicke, 2009).

Unlike a brief exercise in imitation, performance changes the student's focus from merely acting as a user to genuinely becoming the user. This disciplined approach turns the process of embodied empathy from the theatrical stage directly into the design studio (Lecoq, 2000; Schechner, 2013), transforming simple user simulations into deep, affective embodied empathy (Fuchs, 2015; Thompson, 2019). Design education primarily relies on scenario-based activities or simulations, which are not particularly effective for sustained empathetic practice (Kouprie and Visser, 2009; McDonagh, 2006). However, performance requires repetition and reflection, which lead to embodiment, allowing empathy to be rehearsed and developed (Gallese, 2005; McConachie, 2013).

One must both literally and figuratively take on the user's role to fully understand their experience. Stanislavski's System stands out for its transferable pedagogical value and potential to create a structured way to embody empathy within design education (Carnicke, 2009; Murray, 2010).

4 Stanislavski's System

Konstantin Stanislavski's System has been interpreted and expanded over time. It should be noted that Stanislavski did not present his principles as rigid laws of acting, but rather as a flexible system that has been interpreted and expanded over time. However, this paper builds its argument around his "An Actor Prepares" (1936) work as the primary source for the framework of the system.

Stanislavski proposes an acting system focusing on psychological realism, emotional truth, and embodied performance. The system aims to integrate experience, awareness, and physical expression, enabling the actor to become fully immersed in the character. At the heart of the system is the concept of a super objective, which is the character's core motivation, an overarching goal or driving force behind their actions (Stanislavski, 1936; Moore, 1960). Focusing on a super objective enables actors to stay on track, regardless of what happens to the character or how the story arc unfolds throughout the play, allowing them to ground each choice and gesture in a consistent psychological framework (Carnicke, 2009). Character building is a complex and multifaceted process, so clarifying and understanding the super objective of the character allows them to structure this process without getting lost within the character's world.

Even though the super objective is at the core; the behaviours and decisions are shaped by the given circumstances, which can refer to social, physical, and historical conditions. These are the factors to analyse because in that way actors can provide authentic performances without being mechanical, that is why here is a good place to remember Stanislavski's primary goal, "to live truthfully in imaginary circumstances," which can be read as not act out on a stage but be in these conditions fully and react to them. To complement this approach, he also suggests the "Magic If", a concept that this paper will explore in more detail. It encourages actors to ask, "What would I do if I were in this situation?" (Stanislavski, 1936; Carnicke, 2009). This exercise is designed for actors to put themselves in a character's shoes, not thinking about what the character does, but rather what they would do in these situations. This builds a strong relationship between the actor and the character, as they start to imagine themselves in these magical situations. In the

end, it fosters empathetic engagement with the character and enhances the believability of emotional and behavioural responses.

The subjectivity of the process expands through emotional memory. Actors' own experiences are used to build a connection to the characters' states (Stanislavski, 1936; Moore, 1960). Therefore, the line between character and the actor becomes blurred, and an authentic performance occurs. Combining this with concentration and observation, actors can stay in character in the present and respond to whichever story brings. Once the emotional and imaginative backbone is created, the physicality is integrated. Stanislavski emphasizes that internal understanding is achieved through physicality, gestures, posture, and movement help to understand a character. The key is that it should not merely be expressive but also generative, producing authentic emotion as the actor engages in purposeful behaviour (Stanislavski, 1936). This integration of thought, emotion, and physicality demonstrates Stanislavski's focus on embodiment, which aligns with contemporary theories around embodied cognition and performance (Olenina et al., 2019; Varela, Thompson, and Rosch, 1991).

Building character is not enough to perform on stage; therefore, the system emphasizes the importance of relaxation, preparation, and control. These practices enable actors to exhibit fluidity and naturalness during performance (Stanislavski, 1936; Moore, 1960). Finally, rhythm and tempo in both speech and movement are also essential because a theatrical performance is also a choreographed event, and it has its own dynamic to stay in the flow. The actor should harmonise through rhythm and tempo (Stanislavski, 1936; Lecoq, 2000).

Stanislavski's System has shaped modern performance practice, but his framework is not limited to it; it also provides a conceptual understanding for other creative areas. It highlights the importance of empathy, engagement, and embodiment, which is valuable especially for design practices where understanding user needs, inhabiting experiences, and translating insights into actionable outcomes are central to effective problem-solving (Sanders and Stappers, 2012).

When we examine Stanislavski's System or method from a design perspective, it is difficult not to see the parallels. Both disciplines and practices utilize empathy, imagination, and embodiment in the creation process (Olenina et al., 2019; Sanders and Stappers, 2012). Stanislavski's super-objectives are what drive the character in a play and shape each decision, similarly to a designer's vision during a design process, which informs all the design choices (Stanislavski, 1936; Cross, 2011). Similar to the way actors work with given circumstances, these social, physical, and emotional conditions influence the character's behaviour or development within the story; designers must analyse the environment, target groups, context, and other parameters that could affect user experience (Stanislavski, 1936; Norman, 2013). The character analysis, which involves understanding backstory, motivations, and other aspects, shares similarities with the human-centred narrative that informs decision-making in the designer's context (Cooper et al., 2014). Moreover, the physical transformations that actors undergo to understand the character physically and the underlying physical experience directly resonate with embodied prototyping in design, which allows designers to inhabit and physically test ideas (Löwgren and Stolterman, 2004).

Therefore, in Stanislavski's System, performance is something designed. It does not exist through a purely emotional act, but through a systematic development in creating the character, which aligns with the design disciplines, and in this case, spatial design. Even though each step of the system resonates in design, the Magic If has the most important role in the case of inclusivity because it is the primary exercise in building empathy; it is where we begin to imagine ourselves as someone else. The next chapter will offer a deeper perspective on how the Magic If can enhance the designer's perspective in a pedagogical context.

5 The Magic If

The Magic If is a part of Stanislavski's System that leads performers to question themselves through 'if' questions, allowing them to inhabit another perspective. Unlike conventional role-play or simulation exercises, which often rely on cognitive empathy and mimicry, the Magic If combines intentionality with embodied enactment,

fostering affective empathy by engaging participants' imagination, emotion, and bodily awareness simultaneously (Benedetti, 1998). There is a critical difference between role-play and Magic. Even though role-play allows one to “act like” someone else, the Magic If encourages the performer in our context, the student, to ask, “What would I do if I were in this situation?” and to respond in a way that integrates thought, feeling, and physicality (Stanislavski, 1936).

The most significant aspect of it is the repeatability. Over time, repeated engagement with this exercise fosters empathy as a disciplined practice, rather than a one-time experience, thereby strengthening the ability to inhabit multiple perspectives consistently.

However, that does not mean that there are no limitations: the Magic If does not replicate lived experience. Still, it provides a sustainable and imaginative space for perspective-taking. Performers or design students can explore their emotional and behavioural responses in an ethical and reflective manner (Moore, 1960; Carnicke, 2009). Therefore, the Magic If demonstrates how a performance-based pedagogical technique can develop empathy as a skill, and not just a spontaneous or superficial engagement with others' experiences.

6 Embodied Perception and Spatial Exploration

After the imagination is trained through the Magic If, the body becomes, as Merleau-Ponty reminds us, a “medium for having a world,” shaping perception through movement, orientation, and touch rather than vision alone (Merleau-Ponty 2012). Actors are deliberately trained to explore space in this embodied way, and within Stanislavski's System, physical action and bodily engagement remain essential tools for constructing a role (Stanislavski 2013; Benedetti 1998). For design students, the same methods reveal how a doorway feels, or how a handle welcomes or excludes, by foregrounding the sensory and affective dimensions of spatial interaction.

Juhani Pallasmaa's arguments on architecture have also shed light on this matter. He states that we understand the space through our body, not just with our eyes, but

also with our hands, movement through space, and the senses collectively informing our perception and memory of the environment (Pallasmaa, 2005). Therefore, to build arguments on space and provide design decisions, especially in an inclusivity context, the body is a valuable medium to use. The embodied approach in design pedagogy mirrors Pallasmaa's phenomenological perspective: students do not merely observe spaces visually, but inhabit them through bodily experience, noticing subtleties of scale, texture, orientation, and movement that can otherwise be overlooked.

For instance, in a typical role-playing exercise where a student sits in a wheelchair to simulate navigating a gallery, the student may perceive obstacles such as steep ramps or narrow doorways. However, this insight often remains at the level of restriction and mechanical difficulty. By contrast, applying the Magic If shifts the exercise from imitation to intentional inhabitation: What if I were a visitor here, in this wheelchair, trying to meet a friend and enjoy an exhibition? This narrative "if" questions reframe the experience, prompting the student to notice not only the ramp but also where one might pause to rest, whether signage is legible at eye level, how it feels to join a group discussion in a crowded room, or how staff members respond when assistance is needed. Through this approach, space is not just a neutral container but becomes part of a lived, unfolding story. This marks the shift from short-term imitation to sustained perspective-taking, demonstrating how performance, through the Magic If, functions as a method for embodied spatial exploration.

7 Reflective Practice: From Workshop Observations to the Magic If

What inspired the question for this paper was a workshop I led at The Glasgow School of Art, MDes Interior Design, which I teach. The workshop focused on narrative and embodiment, using a performance-based approach to build characters, experience their site, create a narrative for their project, and embody these characters using their own bodies as a tool to explore spatiality.

The students were given prompts; songs, monologues, and images and based on these, they were expected to create a character, considering both internal and external features. They then wrote a story around this character, set within their project site. Later, they built cardboard models of their characters and interacted with them in their site models to explore spatiality. In the end, they embodied the character and performed the short story.

Reflections from the workshop revealed two main points: narrative helped them develop strong empathy for motivation and perspective, while embodiment, even when brief, revealed spatial potentials and challenges they had not anticipated. One challenge was that students had limited time and focus to work on embodiment. However, the creation of character and narrative was successful, they wrote emotionally strong stories and built a connection to the characters they created. This led them to imagine themselves as the character in their minds and follow them through a detailed narrative context.

This made me consider the potential of combining this performative approach with role-playing exercises for inclusive design. The observations from this workshop highlighted a specific pedagogical friction: while students could intellectually and emotionally connect with a user's story, translating that empathy into a physical, spatial exploration often remained at a surface level. I noticed that without a structured bridge between 'thinking' as a character and 'moving' as a character, the embodiment exercises risked becoming mere physical simulations rather than deep empathic inquiries. This gap suggested that for a performative approach to truly impact design sensitivity, it needed a mechanism to sustain the student's focus and intentionality throughout the entire creative process. When I reviewed Stanislavski's acting theories, I realized that "the Magic If" is the missing piece. This reflection led us to reconsider the balance between narrative and embodiment in the brief, showing that narrative alone is not enough, but embodiment without narrative is also shallow. Both are needed to build immersive empathy.

8. Theoretical Reflections on Experiential Learning

Teaching approaches on inclusivity that incorporate embodiment and role-playing, which this paper seeks to enrich through Stanislavski's System framework, create an interdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning in design practice, aiming to foster more empathic perspectives and more inclusive solutions. In this context, D. A. Kolb's experiential learning model provides theoretical support for the enhanced approach. This model suggests that life experience is a core and necessary aspect of the learning process, where "knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 2015, p. 49; emphasis in original). Kolb's four-stage model of learning elaborated in the book is regarded as classical and as a foundation for experiential learning. It has been an important starting point for several attempts to develop adult education theory (Jarvis 1987; Weil and McGill 1989). Kolb states that his aim is not to develop an alternative theory of learning, "but rather to suggest through experiential learning theory a holistic integrative perspective on learning that combines experience, perception, cognition, and behaviour" (2015: 21). Based on his model he suggests four-stage experiential learning cycle:

- Concrete Experience (CE) – learning begins with direct, embodied experience.
- Reflective Observation (RO) – the learner steps back to reflect on what happened, noticing patterns, difficulties, and surprises.
- Abstract Conceptualisation (AC) – reflections are transformed into concepts, theories, or frameworks that explain the experience.
- Active Experimentation (AE) – learners apply these insights in new situations, testing and adjusting their understanding through action.

Here, we see another parallel to Stanislavski's System. Kolb's four-stage model helps clarify why performance-based approaches can be so effective in design education. Both models emphasise that learning is a process that begins with experience and deepens through reflection, conceptualisation, and re-experimentation. However, what makes this connection particularly meaningful for design pedagogy is the role of the Magic If as the "bridging layer" between the two frameworks. The Magic If starts the process in the imagination: by asking, "If I were

this person, in these circumstances, what would I feel or do?”, approaching the experience through a narrative. The student effectively performs a preliminary simulation of Kolb’s concrete experience. This imagined positioning turns into embodiment as students physically enact and test the perspective they initially constructed mentally. Therefore, the transition from mental role-taking to bodily exploration mirrors the iterative movement within Kolb’s cycle, linking internal (imaginative) and external (physical and spatial) dimensions of learning. Thus, the Magic If functions not only as a tool for boosting empathy but also as the pedagogical “glue” that brings these theoretical models together. It enables design students to begin with an imaginative shift, extend it into embodied practice, and ultimately transform both understanding and spatial exploration through performance.

For the realisation of the proposed approach presented in this paper, integrating structured reflection mechanisms after each the Magic If enactment is one of the important steps. Reflective journaling, such as maintaining an Empathy Journal, could enable students to capture affective responses, moments of discomfort, and shifts in understanding that may not be visible externally. Video documentation and analysis provide a concrete basis for examining how intention, physical action, and spatial interaction align or diverge in practice, supporting Kolb’s Reflective Observation stage.

Because empathy cannot be created and rooted through a single event, the approach also requires intentional repetition. Performance-based embodiment needs cyclical reinforcement to move from episodic insight to habitual sensitivity. Embedding the Magic If at multiple points within a semester, such as during user definition, mid-project spatial testing, and final evaluation, this creates iterative experiential learning cycles. Establishing performative enactments per project supports that empathy becomes a sustained discipline, in relation to Stanislavski’s emphasis on repeated practice and Kolb’s cyclical model of experiential transformation.

9 Conclusion

This paper has argued that integrating performance-based methods focusing on Stanislavski's Magic If, into design education can meaningfully strengthen embodied empathy and deepen spatial awareness, offering a more holistic pathway toward inclusive design practice. Inclusivity in spatial design is a multi-layered concern that cannot be understood just by sitting at a desk and making assumptions. Designers should embrace more hands-on approaches and empathetic perspectives to understand actual needs and ensure that design solutions truly work. The main point here is not to propose an approach that replaces role-playing or simulation, but to enhance it.

Stanislavski's System offers a structured methodology for this transformation. The notions of super-objective, given circumstances, emotional memory, and the Magic If provide a pedagogical framework that aligns closely with contemporary design education needs. In particular, the Magic If glues the layers of imaginative reflection and embodied action, initiating a cycle of experiential learning that can be sustainably rehearsed and refined. Through this approach, empathy becomes not just an abstract concept but a trainable skill.

The parallels between Stanislavski's performance techniques and Kolb's experiential learning theory further explore the pedagogical potential of this approach. Both emphasize the importance of experience, reflection, conceptualization, and active experimentation, creating a loop in which students' insights are continuously deepened and applied. This suggests that narrative building, embodied practice, and repeated engagement with spatial contexts can work together to reveal unforeseen affordances and challenges, pointing toward a way to enhance students' design sensitivity and capacity for inclusion. While these insights emerge from a specific workshop setting, they indicate a significant potential for this approach to be further developed and evaluated through more structured educational research. Findings from the workshop at The Glasgow School of Art illustrate that when students create characters, narratives, and embodied enactments, they develop a stronger empathic connection to diverse users while gaining insight into spatial interaction. Even brief enactments reveal subtle potentials and limitations in design choices, demonstrating

the value of integrating performative methods into the studio pedagogy. Therefore, these methods show potential for shifting from episodic, superficial exercises toward sustained, reflective, and embodied learning practices, offering a holistic approach to cultivating empathy in design.

Of course, this paper acknowledges several limitations. It adopts a relatively narrow theoretical framework, drawing mainly on Stanislavski's System, Kolb's experiential learning theory, and phenomenological perspectives on embodiment such as Pallasmaa's. While this focus offers conceptual clarity, it inevitably excludes other acting methodologies (e.g., Brecht, Grotowski), broader theories of experiential and reflective learning (e.g., Dewey, Schön), and alternative accounts of embodied perception. The discussion also remains largely theoretical and is not supported by empirical classroom data, which limits how far the proposed framework can be generalized or evaluated in real pedagogical settings. Future research could address these gaps by incorporating empirical evidence, testing the approach with design students, and expanding the theoretical scope to include a wider range of performance and learning paradigms.

In conclusion, embedding performance-based pedagogy into design education has a strong potential. This pedagogy can enrich students' understanding of human diversity and enable the translation of this understanding into inclusive design. The Magic If, as a catalyst for imaginative and embodied exploration, connects narrative, reflection, and physical practice into a thorough educational approach. Through fostering embodied empathy and repeated, rehearsed spatial exploration, performance methods provide designers with tools not only to anticipate and meet diverse user needs but also to develop a mindset of curiosity, imagination, and responsiveness which qualities crucial for the creation of genuinely inclusive and human-centred spaces.

Disclosure Statement

All materials included in this article represent the author's own work. Any ideas, findings, or text cited or paraphrased from other sources are appropriately

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referenced in the bibliography. This work has not been previously published and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere. The author declares that there are no potential conflicts of interest that could have influenced the reporting or interpretation of the findings.

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