September 2026

Özlem Gezgin

SCENOGRAPHIC AFFORDANCES AND THE EMERGENCE OF MOVEMENT

A CHOREOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF SPATIAL AGENCY IN THE MADMAN AND THE NUN





Ari Elefterin, 100 Ways of Sitting

~~WHAT DOES THIS OBJECT MEAN?~~

WHAT CAN THIS OBJECT DO?

BODY  SPACE  ACTION

AFFORDANCES ARE RELATIONAL POSSIBILITIES FOR ACTION.

James J. Gibson
Affordances emerge between environment and body.
Juhani Pallasmaa
Space is experienced through embodied, tactile and kinaesthetic perception.

SCENOGRAPHIC AFFORDANCE

A possibility for action emerging through the encounter between:

MATERIAL PROPERTIES

weight · angle · height · instability

BODILY CAPACITIES

reach · balance · weight · scale

SPATIAL CONFIGURATION

proximity · obstruction · enclosure · elevation

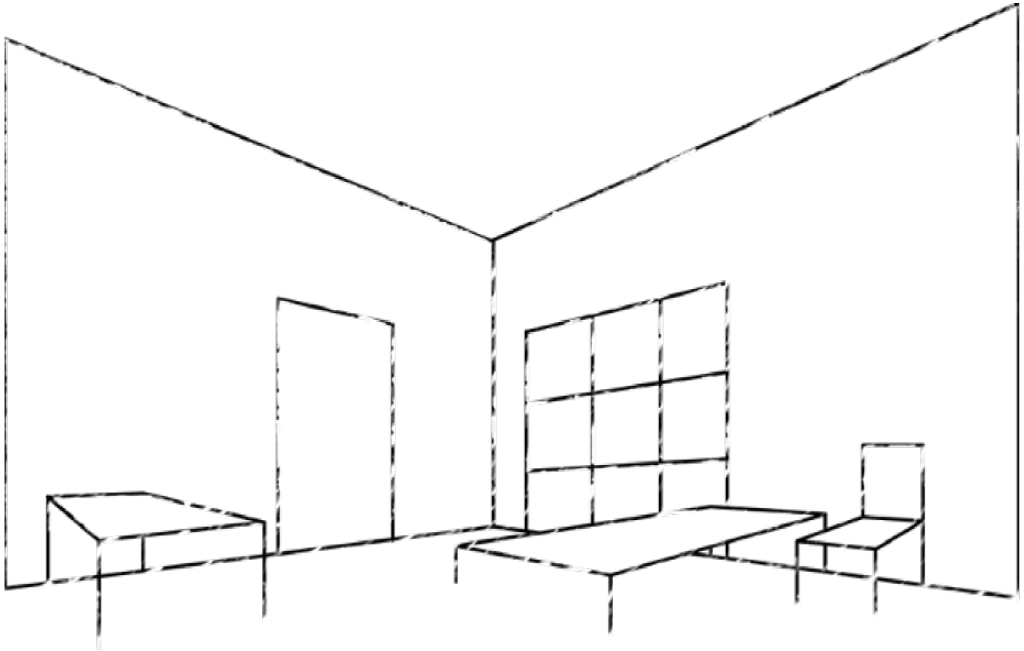
EMERGENT ACTION

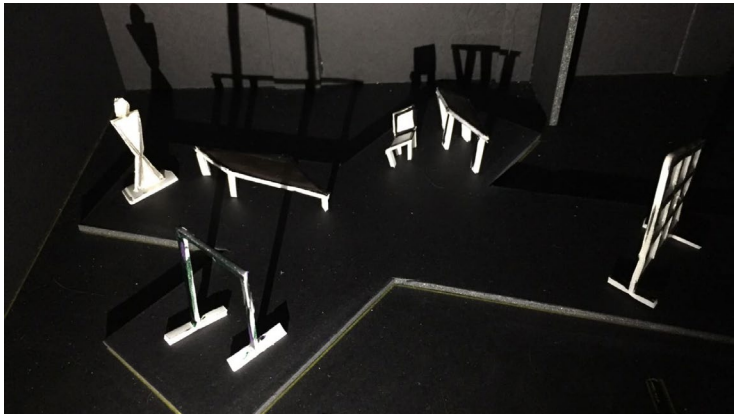
Özlem Gezgin

THE MADMAN AND THE NUN

written by Witkacy
directed by Daniel Irizarry
set design by Özlem Gezgin
costume design by Selvi Şaşmaz

Özlem Gezgin





Özlem Gezgin

Design Intention

recognisable domestic objects
psychiatric confinement
symbolic environment
visual composition

Performance Encounter

bodily negotiation
material resistance
spatial possibilities
emergent movement

FROM REPRESENTATION TO AFFORDANCE

Özlem Gezgin



THE BED AS AN AFFORDANCE SYSTEM


CONSTRAINT →
TENSION →
INTIMACY
obstacle · chasing ·
climbing · lying


SAME OBJECT →
DIFFERENT BODILY
RELATION
standing ·
conversation · support


BED → PLATFORM
pulling · elevating ·
performing

Özlem Gezgin



flip



resist



sit



elevate

SCENOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS CAN MOVE BEYOND WHAT OBJECTS REPRESENT
TO EXAMINE WHAT SPATIAL AND MATERIAL CONFIGURATIONS MAKE POSSIBLE.

THIS ALSO SUGGESTS A SHIFT IN DESIGN PRACTICE:

FROM DESIGNING OBJECTS TO DESIGNING FOR THE VERB.

Thank you!

Elefterin, A. (n.d.). 100 Ways of Sitting. Available at: ari-elefterin.com (Accessed: 9 August 2026)

Brook, P. (1968) The Empty Space. London: MacGibbon & Kee.

Gibson, J.J. (1979) The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

McKinney, J. (2015) 'Scenographic materialism, affordance and extended cognition in Kris Verdonck's ACTOR #1', Theatre and Performance Design, 1(1–2), pp. 79–93. doi: 10.1080/23322551.2015.1024952.

McKinney, J. and Palmer, S. (eds.) (2017) Scenography Expanded: An Introduction to Contemporary Performance Design. London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama.

Paavolainen, T. (2010) 'From Props to Affordances: An Ecological Approach to Theatrical Objects', Theatre Symposium, 18, pp. 116–134.

Pallasmaa, J. (2005) The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses. Chichester: Wiley-Academy.

Schechner, R. (2003) Performance Theory. 2nd edn. London: Routledge.

Stanislavsky, K. (1936) An Actor Prepares. Translated by E.R. Hapgood. New York: Theatre Arts Books.