



A Phenomenological Approach Towards the Architecture of Peter Zumthor: The Concept of "Atmospheres" and Therme Vals

Peter Zumthor Mimarlığı Üzerine Fenomenolojik Bir Yaklaşım: "Atmosferler" Konsepti ve Vals Termal Hamamı

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ABSTRACT

Architects, interested in philosophy and phenomenology, take into consideration not only the functionality and formal characteristics of architecture but also the perceptual and experiential features of it. Peter Zumthor is one of them. This study aims to examine the architectural approach of Zumthor within the context of its relationship with phenomenology. For this purpose, Zumthor's concept of "atmospheres" and his architectural approach were examined through conceptual analysis. In the first part of the study, the relation between architecture and philosophy and the concept of architectural phenomenology were evaluated to present the theoretical basis. In this context, Gugalun House, Expo 2000 Swiss Pavilion and Bruder Klaus Chapel projects were examined in order to highlight the architectural characteristics of his design approach. Zumthor has defined nine components that affect the concept he calls "atmospheres". These components comprise the body of architecture, material compatibility, the sound of a space, the temperature of a space, surrounding objects, between composure and seduction, the tension between interior and exterior, levels of intimacy, and the light on things. In the second part of the study, his Therme Vals project was analyzed within the scope of the components of space atmosphere concept, and the relation that Zumthor established between architecture and phenomenology is deepened. At the end of the study, it is concluded that each of the components affecting the spatial atmospheres have certain architectural correspondences in Therme Vals project, and the relationship between space and user can be deepened when the components affecting the spatial atmospheres are applied to create a meaningful reality.

Keywords: Architecture, Spatial Atmospheres, Peter Zumthor, Phenomenology, Therme Vals

Öz

Felsefe ve fenomenolojiyle ilgilenen mimarlar, mimarlığın yalnızca işlevselliğini ve biçimsel özelliklerini değil, aynı zamanda algısal ve deneysel özelliklerini de dikkate alırlar. Peter Zumthor bu mimarlardan biridir. Bu çalışma, Zumthor'un mimari yaklaşımını fenomenolojiyle ilişkisi bağlamında incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaçla, Zumthor'un "Atmosferler" konsepti ile mimarlık yaklaşımı kavramsal analiz yöntemiyle irdelenmiştir. Çalışmanın birinci kısmında, mimarlık ve felsefe arasındaki ilişki ve mimari fenomenoloji kavramı teorik temeli sunmak amacıyla değerlendirilmiştir. Bu bağlamda, Gugalun Evi, Expo 2000 İsviçre Pavyonu ve Bruder Klaus Şapeli projeleri Zumthor'un tasarım yaklaşımının mimari özelliklerini vurgulamak amacıyla incelenmiştir. Zumthor, "Atmosferler" olarak adlandırdığı mekan konseptini etkileyen bileşenleri dokuz başlık altında tanımlamıştır. Bu bileşenler; mimari beden, malzemenin uyumu, mekanın sesi, mekanın sıcaklığı, kuşatan nesnelere, sakinlik ve cazibe arasındaki ilişki, iç ve dış arasındaki gerilim, samimiyet dereceleri ve şeylerin sahip olduğu ışıktır. Çalışmanın ikinci kısmında, Zumthor'un Vals Termal Hamamı projesi, mekan atmosferleri konseptinin bileşenleri kapsamında analiz edilmiş ve Zumthor'un mimarlık ile fenomenoloji arasında kurduğu ilişki derinleştirilmiştir. Çalışmanın sonucunda, mekan atmosferlerini etkileyen bileşenlerin her birinin Vals Termal Hamamı projesinde belirli mimari karşılıklarının bulunduğu, mekan atmosferlerini etkileyen bileşenlerin anlamlı bir gerçeklik yaratmak amacıyla uygulandığında mekan ve kullanıcı arasındaki ilişkiyi derinleştirilebileceği sonucuna varılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Fenomenoloji, Mekan Atmosferleri, Mimarlık, Peter Zumthor, Vals Termal Hamamı

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INTRODUCTION

Human beings live in different places throughout their lives and interact with these places. Every place experienced throughout one’s life has a different meaning depending on the function, form, historical background and one’s level of consciousness available at that particular time. In order for the designer of such places to truly relate to and therefore develop an authentic “innerstanding” in regards to her/his field of study, it is always advisable to go beyond the limits of the discipline, seek out opportunities to expand her/his creative force and finally find out original ways to integrate that which is new into the basic premises of the discipline. Likewise, it is not surprising for architects to be inspired by certain philosophical approaches throughout the ages in their quest for conceptualization, form creating and the construction of their works.

When the relationship between architecture and philosophy is analyzed, it is seen that architecture benefits greatly from the scope and methods of philosophy through its various inquiries. Even though architecture provided certain sets of metaphors for philosophy to enjoy from Plato to Descartes and onwards (Galison, 1990; Karatani, 1995), it would not be wrong to claim that it is philosophy that provides the wider and more fertile ground for architectural thinking to flourish. In the literature, there are studies dealing with the relationship between architecture, philosophy and phenomenology (Baudrillard and Nouvel, 2017; Güney and Yürekli, 2004; Norberg-Schulz, 1991; Örnek, 2015; Shirazi, 2013). Such literature can be extended by the introduction of the focal architect of this study, that is Peter Zumthor.

Zumthor contributes to the field of architecture with his openness to philosophy. This attitude can be traced not only from his architectural designs but also through his writings on architecture where he ponders upon the experiential qualities of spatial phenomena, his own architectural practices and approach (Zumthor, 2006a; Zumthor, 2006b; Zumthor, 2007). There are also research evaluating Zumthor’s understanding of architecture through analysing his buildings and the ways he deals with space in a phenomenological manner (Murray, 2007; Sharr, 2007; Spier, 2001). Uysal and Cordan (2020) defined the experience spaces designed by Zumthor through spatial atmospheres and explained the components of spatial atmospheres by giving examples through different structures. In another study examining the experience and perception of space through the concept of atmosphere, the components that make up the atmospheres are defined and exemplified through the Therme Vals project (Yücel and Bekdaş, 2023). In this study, the relationship between Zumthor’s concept of “atmospheres” and architectural practice is examined through conceptual analysis. According to Myburgh and Tammaro (2013), there is a mutual and reinforcing relation between concepts and the theories in which they are embedded. “The ontological commitments of a theory can be expressed in terms that represent the concepts that the theory addresses; at the same time, a theory cannot be developed unless it makes the concepts (and the properties of the concepts) it addresses quite clear” (Myburgh and Tammaro, 2013). Therefore, the relationships revealed by the concepts and their reflections in practice are important. This study attempts to interpret the concept defined by Zumthor as “atmospheres” through a conceptual analysis study on Therme Vals project in order to examine its counterpart in his architectural approach constitutes the originality of this study.

Within the scope of this study, first of all, the relationship between architecture and philosophy and the concept of architectural phenomenology were evaluated to present the theoretical basis. In this context, in order to present the architectural features of Zumthor’s design approach, Gugalun House, Expo 2000 Swiss Pavilion and Bruder Klaus Chapel projects were introduced within the context of the relationship between architecture and phenomenology and their architectural qualities. In order to develop an understanding of the qualities of Zumthor’s architectural approach, his work “Atmospheres” (2006a) plays an important role. In this work, the components that constitute the atmosphere of the space are defined as the body of architecture, material compatibility, the sound of

a space, the temperature of a space, surrounding objects, between composure and seduction, tension between interior and exterior, levels of intimacy, and the light on things. This study aims to analyze Zumthor’s Therme Vals project through the components of the concept of space atmospheres. The interpretation of the relationship established by Zumthor between architecture and phenomenology in terms of both architectural thinking and practices aims to contribute to literature in general.

1. Methodology

In this study, the reflections of Zumthor’s concept of “atmospheres” in his architectural approach was evaluated by conceptual analysis method. Concepts provide a framework for understanding and making sense of the world and are expressed in an ontology (Myburgh and Tamaro, 2013). As Söyler (2020) stated, concepts are parts of theories and contribute to the collection of data and its transformation into knowledge. In this sense, numerical and statistical operations are possible if there is a concept, and concepts decide for what purpose qualitative and quantitative data will be used. In the conceptual analysis method, the structure, meaning and function of a concept are examined and the basic elements, function, relationship with other concepts and role in our social practices of the examined concept are expressed in a clear and understandable way (Aydoğdu, 2021; Coombs and Daniels, 1991). This method is frequently used in philosophy and has contributed to the emergence of a field called analytical philosophy (Kosterec, 2016). This study aims to evaluate the conceptual aspects of architectural phenomenology and its counterparts in practice within the scope of the relationship between architecture and philosophy.

There are different approaches within the scope of conceptual analysis, such as the constructive method, the detection method and the reductive method (Kosterec, 2016). This study used the detection analysis method of conceptual analysis. In the detection analysis, conceptual theory is examined, and conceptual relationships are determined based on this background without changing the theory (Kosterec, 2016). Table 1 shows the scope and stages of the detection analysis conducted in this study, based on the detection analysis steps defined by Kosterec (2016).

Table 1. Detection Analysis Stages and Stages of the Study within the Scope of Conceptual Analysis

Detection Analysis Stages	Stages of the Study
1- Specification of conceptual theory	The concept of “atmospheres” that appears in Peter Zumthor’s discourses and publications.
2- Specification of conceptual problem according to the theory	Based on the concept of “atmospheres”, the conceptual problem was determined as spatial atmospheres and the examination of whether these spatial atmospheres have counterparts in Zumthor’s architectural practices.
3- Specification of the set of logical constraints	The set of logical constraints consists of the body of architecture, material compatibility, the sound of a space, the temperature of a space, surrounding objects, between composure and seduction, tension between interior and exterior, levels of intimacy, and the light on things, which are defined as the components of space atmospheres.

4- Expansion of conceptual theory based on a set of logical constraints	Based on Zumthor’s discourses and other studies in literature, the aim is to determine the physical, perceptual and experiential counterparts of each of the components of spatial atmospheres in Therme Vals project.
5- Repeat steps 6 and 7	Other studies in literature support the results of this study.
6- If the extended conceptual theory provides a counterexample, it should be concluded negatively	It was concluded that in the extended conceptual theory, the theory and the problem are related and there is no opposing situation.
7- If the extended conceptual theory offers a relationship, it should be concluded positively	The extended conceptual theory concluded that there is a connection between Zumthor’s concept of “atmospheres” and Therme Vals complex.

2. The Relationship Between Philosophy and Architecture and Architectural Phenomenology

Philosophy can be described as a comprehensive and inclusive activity that addresses and questions various disciplines, assisting them to define their boundaries and structural formations and enabling them to develop reflective methods to relate to their intrinsic natures (Cevizci, 2012). Being one such discipline, architecture creates meaningful structures that goes far beyond the functional and constructional dimensions through establishing a genuine relationship with philosophy in the design process. The architect’s use of philosophy in the process of organizing her/his thoughts and developing concepts enables her/him to establish a theoretical framework as well as bestows her/him critical thinking abilities towards her/his own work and the work of others. Such application to philosophy offers not only an increase in creativity but also provides a better comprehension of the work at hand and thus presents a potential gift for the architect, that is the revelation of the true meaning of architecture itself (İnam, 2002).

Philosophy’s contribution to architecture owes greatly to approaches such as phenomenology and ontology. The emergence (or rather re-emergence) of ontological inquiries within the field of philosophy encouraged architecture to replace its function-oriented paradigm with a different one. The introduction and then the integration of phenomenological approaches with the essential qualities of architecture initiated intuitive and holistic ways to understand and evaluate the formation of space and the other spatial phenomena (Aydınlı, 2002). Phenomenology as “the understanding of philosophy or the theory of knowledge that focuses on the way the world appears to human beings” (Cevizci, 2019) aims to describe the things presented to human consciousness and therefore understand how human beings attribute meaning to their world. For Heidegger, a supporter and then a critic of Husserl’s phenomenology, human being’s fundamental relation to “being” itself is not primarily mental but phenomenological. This statement suggests that human beings relate to their world first and foremost as an experiential pre-thought activity and the best way to make sense of things in the world is not evaluating them as mental abstractions or concepts, but rather directly experiencing them as concrete phenomena (Sharr, 2007).

When such philosophical stance is translated into architecture, it refers to evaluating the buildings not merely as functional products or “machines” as Le Corbusier (1931) might put it but as places where the mystery of life occurs through meaningful synchronicities. A meaningfully, therefore artfully

created architectural space enables people to experience themselves as souls or spiritual beings. They interact with things and with each other and participate in the events of life. It is obvious that such phenomenological way of being with its tactile quality that requires a full bodily presence form quite a strong opposition with the mental abstractions of the way of Cartesian kind where human beings are understood as “*res cogitans*”. Cartesian transformation “of the embodied self into a disembodied thinking substance” (Harries, 2009), in its very essence, refers to the division of reality into abstract and experiential fragments. Within this historical bifurcation, phenomenology serves as a tool to re-introduce the significance of phenomena, to re-member the dimension of embodied experience and therefore to re-value that which has been de-valued by the Cartesian paradigm.

Phenomenology addresses the experience of human and space differently from classical rationalism (Merleau-Ponty, 2005). That is to say, rather than leaning on a factual frame of reference that prioritises scientific and technological aspects of reality, architectural phenomenology tends to focus more on the values, the experiential dimension and human beings’ interaction with architectural phenomena. Therefore, “...architecture (is) best understood not through abstract mental analytic categories but through direct experiences of the building, during which one would project oneself fully onto it, especially one’s feelings and emotions, as a way of fully grasping its intentional content” (Otero-Pailos, 2010).

Norberg-Schulz (1991) in his renowned work on the phenomenology of architecture introduced the concept of “spirit of space” (*genius loci*) as a way of expressing a sense of belonging and identification with the space in one’s relationship and interaction with it. According to Norberg-Schulz, the aim of architecture is to concretize the spirit of a certain place and that of architect’s is to create meaningful places for human beings to live. That has been the case for many hundreds of years. However, as the *modus operandi* of an age changes, it continuously conditions the theoretical frameworks and the practical activities that are inherent within that age. Place being an instrument for shelter as well as an artful and meaningful expression for the existence of human beings has been profoundly transformed due to basic premises of the modern age. Heidegger (2002a), as one of Norberg-Schulz’s sources of inspiration, titles modern age as the “age of world-picture” referring to the essential shift that has occurred within the very nature of human beings. For Heidegger, because the human-spirit turned into the human-subject (the “*cogito*” of *ego cogito ergo sum*), the world as a sacred dwelling place morphed into a visual image to look at and simultaneously, the disciplines engaged in design activities have grown more and more optic-centred every day. The central axis of architecture moved from the effort to relate to the spirit of the place -in the sense that staying open and available for intuitions to then work on and translate them to concrete products- into the desire to create visual characteristics with an overemphasis on functionality being the legitimate ground and the predecessor of form.

According to Pallasmaa (2005), the ocular-centric approach that prioritizes the sense of vision in architecture causes other senses to be withdrawn and this runs the risk of the sensory qualities in fine arts and architecture to be lost. He claims that all senses, including vision, are in fact extensions of the sense of tactile and in order to relate to architecture in a more authentic way, this simple truth must be recognized and vision’s place in architecture must be re-evaluated. Similar to Heidegger whose philosophy, in a way, is devoted to present the limitations of Cartesian paradigm, Pallasmaa draws attention to the fact that the dominance of the vision over other senses is creating a type of reduction as it does not embrace the totality of the feeling dimension thus creating certain forms of isolation, alienation and disconnection among human beings and the interaction with their environments. In the following sections, the study aims to explore how Zumthor’s architectural stance and the practices he offers help transcend those negative ways of being.

3. The Architectural Approach of Peter Zumthor

“Building in stone, building with stone, building into the mountain, building out of the mountain, being inside the mountain – our attempts give this chain of words an architectural interpretation, to translate into architecture its meanings and sensuousness, guided our design for the building and step by step gave it form.” (Zumthor, cited in Hauser, 2007).

The discipline of architecture aims to change and transform the landscape through the structures it produces and the stages within the production process (Yücel, 2002). Zumthor, as an architect, also creates changes within a given landscape through the manifestation of a physical product and its production stages. Yet, he cares about the location of the building and the natural surroundings to such a degree that, unlike many, his way of architecting produces spaces that are harmonious and in peace with the living habitat and its inhabitants. The integration of the productive dimension and its transcendence through care brings to mind how Norberg-Schulz understands architecture as well as Heidegger interprets art.

According to Norberg-Schulz (1991), the true purpose of architecture is to turn the space into a “place”. That is to say, to reveal the sheets of meaning that are potentially present yet still hidden within the environmental landscape. Heidegger (2002b) relates this revelation with Truth, being the ultimate aim of arts. Truth, in Greek, is called “*aletheia*”. The word *letheia* means that which is concealed, that which has not yet brought into the light. Together with the prefix *a-*, it comes to suggest the act of revealing of the unrevealed and thus, indicates the very gesture of actualisation or manifestation (Çelikel, 2015). Since art, in Heidegger’s understanding of the term, is not restrained to the limits of the fine arts, one can replace the term “art” with that of “architecture” without violating of its essence. This is how space is transformed into a place and therefore become recognized, and this is what bestows Zumthor’s projects their power. The easily detectable underlying tone of poetry in his works comes from the act of genuine architectural effort which is in itself an authentic relatedness to the spirit, an ontological connectedness with the living, breathing planet and an integral form of craftsmanship that is in humble service for the unfoldment of Truth.

3.1. Zumthor’s Background and an Analysis of a few Selected Works

Peter Zumthor is a contemporary architect living and working in the suburb of Haldenstein in the Swiss state of Graubünden. His interest in design comes from the family lineage. Being raised in a family of craftsmen evolved into being an apprentice carpenter and this was followed by first a degree on design and then in architecture, the field he is recognized for. This particular training where he cultivated craftsmanship is balanced by a strong theoretical background through which he developed his unique architectural approach. He was influenced by philosophy, especially Heidegger’s works on architecture (Sharr, 2007) and combined his practical design skills with the tools phenomenology and ontology offer. His interest in philosophy is not only manifested as works of architecture that are inspired by certain philosophical stances but also gave birth to texts on architecture.

Zumthor’s architecture manifesto titled *Thinking Architecture* (2006b) is a meditation on the experience of architecture and its sensory qualities. According to Zumthor (2006b), even though architecture has a professional aspect that is responsible for its production, it is not devoid of an extra immaterial one that embraces elements such as memory, meaning or experience. The architect, in a similar fashion, is not barely responsible for fulfilling the functional and technical requirements of a certain design. His task expands into a level where the meaning dimension is taken care of through being authentically related to the surrounding where it is meant to be built. Such relatedness of the building to its environment is what bestows the building its aura and the ability to reflect and even empower the spirit, or the “mood” as he calls it, of that particular area. The building designed with such connectivity attains the formal and visual qualities of originality while the perception of depth within space is achieved through the application of sensory features, connotations etc.

For Zumthor, in the process of designing an architectural project, the qualities of a certain space must be determined within the scope of the characteristics of the environment together with the layers of sensual connotations, memories and mythological implications that the building aims to evoke within the framework of those characteristics (Sharr, 2007). “Every building is built for a specific use in a specific place and for a specific society” says Zumthor (2006b). Such sensitivity to the environment and humility towards the needs of the users render the buildings designed by Zumthor lack a distinctive formal design language that is instantly recognized. He lets the qualities of the overall project determine the formal language, that is to say, rather than placing an overlay of a typical imprint or style, he lets his signature as an architect blend in the project itself. He takes the design decisions in accordance with the requirements of the situation at hand and the material.

For instance, his Gugalun House project in the Swiss mountains was a response to the request to enlarge and reuse an old wooden cottage. Since the wooden cottage was located on a sloping land, he extended the cottage to the back and rested it on the high part of the hill so that the new part would act as an extension of the old part (Figure 1). As seen in the plan diagram in Figure 2, a large addition was made to the cottage with kitchen, bathroom and living areas. “It is essential to the quality of the intervention that the new building should embrace qualities that can enter into a meaningful dialogue with the existing situation” (Zumthor, 2006b). Although the difference between the years of construction of the two parts of the building can easily be recognized through the texture and colours of the wood, the choice of wood as a material and the continuity of the formal elements ensures that the coming of the old and the new still forms a balanced and harmonious whole.



Figure 1. Gugalun House (Merin, 2013)



Figure 2. The Floor Plans of Gugalun House (Studio Adam Caruso, as Cited in Alonso de los Ríos, 2024)

The Swiss Pavilion at the EXPO fair held in 2000 is another coherent example to reflect further on his architectural approach. Since the theme of the fair was sustainability, Zumthor preferred to design the walls of the Pavilion by piling up timber in a reusable fashion. Between these wooden walls, he formed small spaces aiming to activate different sensual experiences (Bilgin, 2020) (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Expo 2000 Swiss Pavilion (URL 1, 2000)

A short contemplation on Zumthor’s Bruder Klaus Chapel can also be quite revealing. The building is located in the village of Wachendorf, in the city of Cologne, among desolate and quiet fields. Its interior space is comma-shaped, while the exterior is designed as a high, five-sided concrete mass (Figure 4). The inspiration behind the design was the old production methods of making earthenware pottery and the wooden woven baskets. He formed the skeleton of the structure with wooden timber and left traces of wooden timber on the walls. The natural light filters through the wide opening at the top and through the many little holes within the concrete walls. The reference to the traditional techniques

together with the natural light’s penetration into the interior space creates an atmosphere where the boundaries between the natural and artefact as well as the current and past dissolves into a one unified amalgam of experience, evoking various layers of meaning for the visitor to enjoy (Bilgin, 2020).



Figure 4. Bruder Klaus Chapel (Sveiven, 2011)

In conclusion, Zumthor seems to ensure that his architectural projects fulfil functionality without ignoring the need for meaning creation. He accomplishes this through the skilful organisation of sensory, emotional, mental and inspirational elements as well as developing original technical solutions to the given projects. From the relationship of the building with its surroundings to the spatial setting, the choice of materials, the amount and intensity of light and shadow, the products installed, the fluidity, the air circulation, the temperature etc., they all have a unique impact on the way the users’ experience his architectural spaces.

3.2. The Therme Vals Project through the Lens of “Atmospheres”

It is the “architectural space” which architects like Zumthor aim to design in order to enable users to experience certain forms of meaning. Zumthor has made his designs in the context of geography, culture and natural environment, and aimed to design buildings that will prioritize the user’s perception and experience of space. Therme Vals is one of his works that achieves this goal and emerged as a result of the initiative of a local cooperative to operate the spring water of the village of Vals in the Swiss Alps. The thermal facility was built between 1993 and 1996 as part of the hotel complex in Vals (Figure 5). It has a capacity of 150 people, and it was designed as a building where washing, sleeping, resting and many other rituals are carried out in sensuous and experiential manner (Gümüş, 2019).



Figure 5. Therme Vals (Left: Souza, 2016; Right: Archdaily, 2009)

In order to make a space meaningful, it is necessary to realize intellectual and emotional interaction beyond the physical relationship. Zumthor ensures that the designed space becomes a “place” and

encoded with various meanings by creating an “atmosphere” in the space. According to Zumthor (2006b), the concept of atmosphere is everything that appeals to a person’s mood, feelings and expectations, including people, things, air, light, sound, colour, texture, shape etc. In his book “Atmospheres” (2006a), he explained the atmosphere of space in terms of nine main factors: the body of architecture, material compatibility, the sound of a space, the temperature of a space, surrounding objects, between composure and seduction, tension between interior and exterior, levels of intimacy, and the light on things.

The Body of Architecture: Buildings are bodies consisting of structures and various materials (Zumthor, 2006b). According to Zumthor (2006b), there are two types of spatial composition possibilities: The closed architectural body that isolates the space within itself and the open architectural body associated with endless continuum. The spatial composition of Therme Vals was organized as an architectural body formed by the spaces around the indoor and outdoor pools (Figure 6). The meander provides circulation inside the building, and the water element and the linear light coming from the ceiling in the meander were designed to take the visitors to different spaces in the building and to have different experiences.

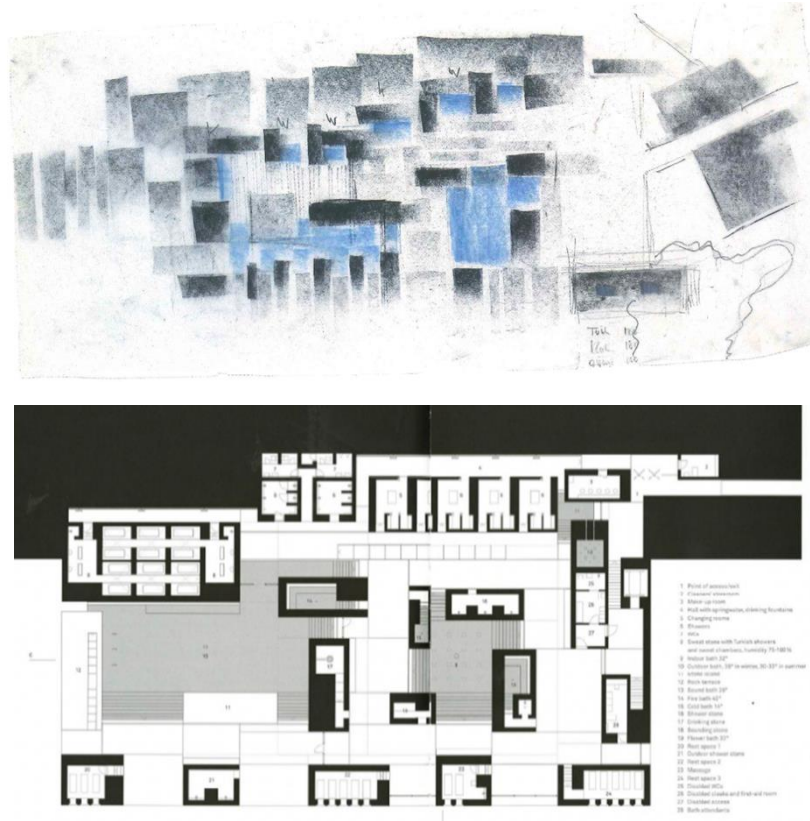


Figure 6. Top: Zumthor’s Spatial Composition Sketch (Zumthor, 2007); Bottom: The Floor Plan (Zumthor, 2007)

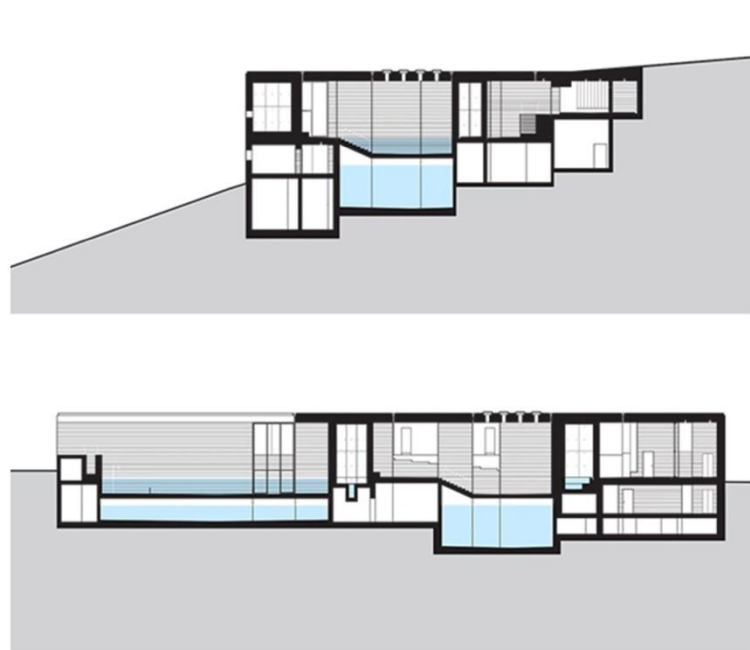


Figure 7. Sections of Therme Vals (Ching, F. D. K., 2015, as cited in Yücel and Bekdaş, 2023)

Material Compatibility: The material composition formed by the combination of different materials ensures the uniqueness of the work to reveal itself and affects the atmosphere of the space (Zumthor, 2006a). In the Therme Vals project, a local material named “Vals stone” and concrete were used for the walls. The use of regional materials and their particular arrangement enable the building to interact naturally with its surroundings as well as creating a textural expression. Also, water is a material that one can immerse oneself in (Hauser, 2007). “... in architecture, stone and water can enter into a natural, and even charmed relationship. Stone loves water. And water loves stone, perhaps even more than any other material.” (Zumthor, 2007). Touching the stone and the combination of the stone with water activate different senses and therefore forms an atmospheric effect.

The Sound of a Space: Interiors collect, amplify and transmit all the sounds that come out during the conversations and movements of the users (Zumthor, 2006a). For this reason, the collection/reflection qualities of the materials and people’s interaction with them creates an auditory atmosphere within space. In one of the rooms, for instance, the walls are isolated with sponges and black fabrics, the themed music called “stone and water” is played and there are two beds for visitors in the middle of the room (Bilgin, 2020). In other parts of the building, an experience dominated by the sound of water and a silent and meditative cleansing ritual is aimed. “... trying to make the building a quiet place. That’s pretty difficult these days, because our world has become so noisy” (Zumthor, 2006a).

The Temperature of a Space: Every building has a physical temperature as well as a psychological dimension that affects the atmosphere of space (Zumthor, 2006a). In the thermal facility, the temperature of the water in the fire bath is 42 degrees and the concrete walls around it are painted red. In the ice bath, the temperature of the water is 14 degrees. The concrete walls of the ice bath are painted blue, which symbolizes cold, water, air and infinite, and the cold water is aimed to strengthen the perception of freedom and individuality (Hauser, 2007). The atmosphere of space that is aimed to be created here is body’s contact with different temperatures and enabling relaxation in a quiet environment during the bath ritual (Zumthor, cited in Hauser, 2007) (Figure 8). In addition, while the temperature drops to minus degrees in cold winter days, the temperature of the outdoor pool’s water is kept around 36 degrees so as to create a contrast through temperature (Zumthor, 2007).



Figure 8. Outdoor and Indoor Pools (Souza, 2016)

Surrounding Objects: The living and inanimate objects within the surroundings also have an effect on the space atmosphere and how the users perceive and experience the space. It is very important for Zumthor to position the objects in their rightful places (Zumthor, 2006a). In Therme Vals, the three basic components determined to define space are stone, water and light. In one of the rooms, where you can swim through the indoor pool, the part of the concrete walls below the water level is painted white and the above is black (Hauser, 2007). In this room, the petals of marigolds floating on the water shine, and the fragrance spreads from the ventilation into the room. In another room, since the water of Vals is drinkable, cool spring water flows through a large pipe for visitors to drink (Bilgin, 2020). In this sense, both the visual quality of the objects and the sounds, smells, tastes and textures affect the experience.

Between Composure and Seduction: It is necessary to make certain arrangements within the space and provide meaningful directions for the users (Zumthor, 2006a). Between the units, a relationship was established between composure and seduction through the skilful introduction of certain sensory features that directs, surprises, relaxes and provides transition. Composure and seduction inviting and calm. While “seduction” creates an inviting effect to attract attention and evokes meaning, “composure” satisfies the need for comfort, calmness and freedom. In this sense, both relaxing the body and activating it through different sensory stimuli is one of goals of the building (Figure 9).



Figure 9. Experience Space Offering Composure and Seduction (Souza, 2016)

Tension between Interior and Exterior: When the transition is made between interior and exterior, the physical space changes as well as the perceptions and feelings. The important thing during the design process is to actualise the intentions for both the inside and outside. According to Zumthor (2007), it is aimed to create differences and tension such as mass and hollow, openness and compactness, rhythm, repetition and variation for the exterior of Therme Vals. In the interior, on the other hand, a holistic spatial continuum instead of difference or tension was created. The meander provides spatial continuum and seeks the view of outside as it moves along a linear light, while the large windows offer mountain views in the valley to the visitors (Figure 10). In this sense, a mysterious

interior-exterior relationship has been established so as to provide a spectrum of different experiences.

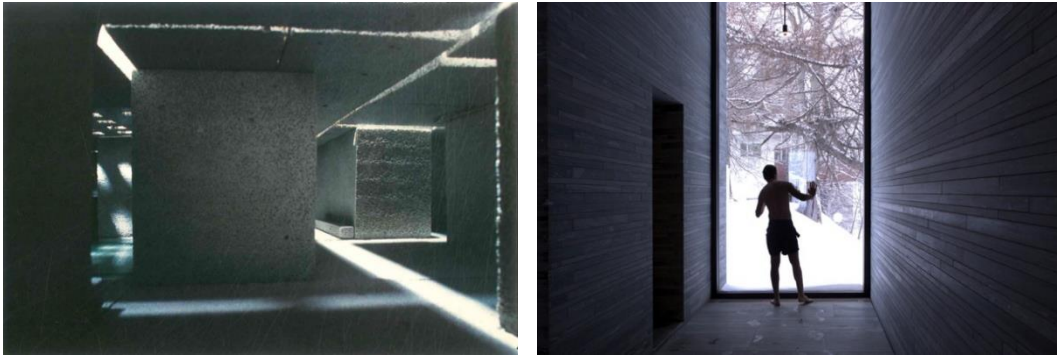


Figure 10. Left: The Meander (Binet, 2007); Right: The view from inside the Therme Vals (Souza, 2016)

Levels of Intimacy: The intimacy desired to be created in the atmosphere of the space is not related to the dimensions and scales, it is rather related to experience and feelings (Zumthor, 2006a). The history of bath and hammam culture dates back to ancient times and Zumthor who was influenced by this culture describes the bathing experience as follows: “And bathing, this ritual kind of bathing, has something to do ...with a pleasing atmosphere for the body” (Spier, 2001). While creating a space atmosphere with the materials, space compositions, interior-exterior relationships, Zumthor aims the users to be open to different perceptions during the bath ritual, to carry out free thinking activities and to feel close to the space by making sense of what they experience in that space. This situation enables the visitors to be physically, emotionally and intellectually engaged with the space, to feel closeness and therefore to establish a relationship with it. The facility welcomes more than one hundred thousand visitors each year. Having felt the atmosphere of the building and interacted with it, visitors are said to have a tendency to visit the facility again and again and expressing their fondness in regard to the serene, meditative state and positive senses of it (Zumthor, 2007).

The light on Things: The value and intensity of light and shadow within the space and objects affect the atmosphere of space. According to Zumthor, one of the methods of working with light is considering the overall building as a pure mass of shadow and then allowing the light to penetrate into that dark space (Zumthor, 2006a). In Therme Vals, natural light enters into the building through large windows serves to enjoy the landscape. The intensity, of course, changes according to the seasons. There are also other small openings in the facades and ceiling (Figure 11). Thin and linear openings on the ceilings, bestowing a taste of uniqueness to the overall design, help guide the users within the interior. The blue square-shaped glasses on the ceiling of the indoor pool supports creating an atmospheric shift.

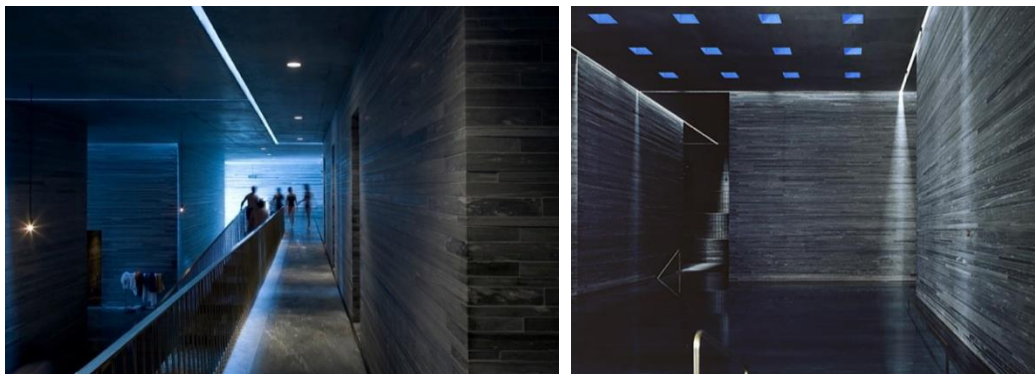


Figure 11. Lighting of Interior Space (Left: Souza, 2016; Right: Binet, 2007)

Table 2 summarizes the spatial, perceptual and experiential reflections of the components affecting the atmosphere of the space in Therme Vals. Eventually, since the world is full of signs and information today, the message contained within ordinary things in everyday life withdraws themselves and remain hidden. No one seems to notice those small things, small details (Zumthor, 2006b). Creation of certain atmospheric “touches” within the space enable people to let go of the business of their minds for a while and enter into a relaxed, meditative state where they can enjoy the simplest of phenomena that life offers such as their bodies, water, sounds and light... Since “the strength of a good design lies in ourselves and in our ability to perceive the world with both emotion and reason”, it has to offer both a “sensuous” and “intelligent” characteristic as Zumthor says (2006b). In order to accomplish that architecture needs to combine the physical, intuitive and spiritual dimensions in a balanced and harmonious way and that is what usually ensures the originality of an architectural design. And Zumthor, as it has been discussed above, through his architectural approach called “atmospheres”, seems to achieve that elegantly yet wisely through his projects, and in the Therme Vals specifically.

Table 2. Correspondences of Space Atmospheres in Therme Vals

Components affecting the atmosphere of the space	Therme Vals
<i>The Body of Architecture</i>	The structure is organized as an architectural body consisting of spaces around indoor and outdoor pools. The circulation between spaces in this body is enriched by the experience of light and water elements.
<i>Material Compatibility</i>	The use of concrete and “Vals stone” specific to the region allowed the structure to interact naturally with its surroundings. In addition, the unique texture of the stone and its combination with water affect the atmosphere of the space.
<i>The Sound of a Space</i>	While some parts of the structure play music appropriate to the theme of the space, other parts offer a quiet and meditative experience.
<i>The Temperature of a Space</i>	Fire bath and ice bath create different spatial perceptions by changing water temperatures and wall colors. On the other hand, the temperature of the outdoor pool water is kept at 36 degrees in winter to create contrast with the cold weather outside.
<i>Surrounding Objects</i>	In spaces created by the harmony of stone, water and light, the visual qualities, sounds, smells, tastes and textures of objects affect the spatial experience.
<i>Between Composure and Seduction</i>	While elements that appeal to the senses such as light, sound, smell, taste and texture are placed to attract attention and create meaning, areas where water and landscape are experienced offer calm and comfort with their meditative properties.
<i>Tension between Interior and Exterior</i>	For the exterior, it is aimed to create difference and tension such as mass and hollow, openness and compactness, rhythm, repetition and variation. In the

	interior, on the other hand, a holistic spatial continuum instead of difference or tension was created.
<i>Levels of Intimacy</i>	Being open to different perceptions while experiencing the space and the bath ritual allows users to interact with the space physically, emotionally and intellectually and feel closeness.
<i>The light on Things</i>	Large windows allow natural light to enter and offer views, while thin linear openings on the facades and ceiling help to orient the interior. In addition, the blue glass in the indoor pool creates a different atmosphere inside.

CONCLUSION

Philosophy contributes to other disciplines to question their own nature, develop a critical approach and form unique concepts and products. In this sense, architects showing a particular interest in philosophy apply to it so as to discover what ways to enhance their architecture approaches both theoretically and practically. Architectural phenomenology, being one of the most potent approaches the philosophy offered to architecture, is a way to relate to how space is perceived and understood meaningfully. Peter Zumthor, being one of those architects, contributed to both architectural theory and practice through his texts and designs. In this study, Zumthor’s Therme Vals project was evaluated using the conceptual analysis method based on nine factors which he calls “atmospheres”. Zumthor develops this concept to theoretically understand and explain his own architectural approach through some of his works but not necessarily the Therme Vals. Therefore, this study, in a way, can be considered as an attempt to meditate on that which is not specifically offered by Zumthor himself. Through this meditation, it is clearly seen that each of the nine factors are present in the Therme Vals and have certain architectural correspondences.

Zumthor’s interest in philosophy and phenomenology is reflected in his architectural approach that is distinguished by qualities such as giving priority to the perceptions, moods and experiences of the users and the way he creates a harmonious and interconnected relationship between the building, natural environment, history and people. He sincerely aims to integrate all of these different components and achieves to create a meaningful synthesis through his ability to unite the physicality of space with abstract features. Besides, he produced technical solutions by taking many aspects into consideration from functionality to regional characteristics and local materials. He gave importance to creating atmospheres within space in order for the users to relate to space on all levels -physical, emotional, mental and spiritual- and therefore form a meaningful association with it. Such association is what makes it turn to a place and evokes a willingness for the users to revisit it again and again. He accomplishes this through creating successful combinations of interior and exterior, the application of local materials and seeking harmony among those materials, suggesting skillful situations that appeal to the five senses, looking for balance between tension and harmony, enabling the users to establish intimacy with the place and, of course, creating associations and references that are emotionally charged and triggers memory.

The importance of the study may be found within the underlying tone that aims to reveal how the relationship between the space and people can be deepened by creating “atmospheres” and how this relationship supports the translation of the space into a meaningful place. The contribution of the study may be found within the effort to place the discipline of architecture within the broader context

of philosophy, which at the end, helps provide a more in-depth analysis of one of the significant architects of our age, that is of course Peter Zumthor, and perhaps many more in the future. For this very reason, it is expected that the study can make a contribution to the designers and architects in the sense that it points out a possibility that goes beyond the confines of a barely the physical relationship between the space and the user and embraces the deeper experiential layers of such connection. The focus on the Therme Vals project, however, forms the boundary of the study. It is believed that conducting similar research that includes analyses of different structures of Zumthor or different architectural projects of other architects showing particular attention to architectural phenomenology may result in an expansion and a deepening in understanding architecture and may strengthen the interconnectivity between architecture and philosophy.

Compliance with the Ethical Standard

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that there are no conflict of interest between themselves and/or any third parties or institutions regarding this work.

Ethics Committee Approval: There is no need for ethics committee approval in this article, the wet signed consent form stating that the ethics committee decision is not required has been added to the article process files on the system.

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