

Interior Territories: exposing the critical interior

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Exploration of the critical issues facing environments and societies posed through interior discourse and design practice is the theme of concern for Interior Territories: exposing the critical interior. Can thinking conceptually on interior territories – which infers significant relationships with both located place and speculative fields – uncover emerging spatial and temporal practices alongside the material and immaterial ecologies that contribute to a particularly interior discourse? In response to this provocation, writers, educators and practitioners concerned with interiors and its associated disciplines have offered a broad exposition of theoretical writing around built, un-realised and speculative interior projects that are located inside and/or outside, in the city or in remote wilderness, in the public gallery or in the domestic realm. These writings and visual essays expose a number of altered practices and collaborations, which may be considered trans-disciplinary. The IDEA JOURNAL presents accounts of writing and projects that move across disciplinary perspectives and temporal and political systems to express an open-ended enquiry into an expanded territory of the interior. In this issue, it is becoming clear that the nature of interior research is no longer contained within matters habitually considered the domain of the interior.

Pivoting between interior and territory enables ways of seeing interior works as situated and speculative. Such conceptual territory deals simultaneously with region and terrain, field and subject and in situations placed and performed, material and temporal. Elizabeth Grosz writes,

...territory is always the coming together of both spatiotemporal coordinates (and thus the possibilities of measurement, precise location, concreteness) and qualities (which are immeasurable, indeterminate and open-ended)...¹

To stake out one's territory is at the same time an intensely public and a critically private concern, frequently acted out within an interior situation; whether it be in a politico-geographical territory, an urban environment, exposition space, commercialized-hybrid space or in the home. Grosz's territory is capable of undergoing constant transformation and reshaping in order to work between states and planes of stability and of uncertainty, and between conditions of disorder and confusion, or in her terms, chaos.²



To traverse territory is one locus of interior research particularly explored in this issue. Expanding upon the notion of cutting through territory in order to rupture systems that bind and situate, many of the works offered operate in more subtle domains.³ Here, territories, when associated with interior thinking and practice, enable emergent conditions and platforms for speculation and inhabitation. Ruptures that eventuate are less conditional upon visible alteration and more concerned with rethinking methodologies, proposing shifts in practice or engaged with emergent affects and atmospheres.

To expand territory requires the co-existence of Grosz's spatiotemporal coordinates alongside open-ended qualities to craft a field in which to work. The 2009 IDEA JOURNAL's cover image reproduced here in its original form (Figure 1) resonates with both spatial situation and the rupture

Above
Figure 1: Institute for Contemporary Art, Boston, Diller + Scofidio and Renfro, 2006.
Photo © Gini Lee 2007

of sensation. It is an interior territory that simultaneously provokes and represents what Mark Pimlott suggests is the 'continuous interior'⁴; where territory is occupied, traversed and expanded through ephemeral intervention and event, and interiority is both contained within and borrowed from the city without.

The image of the art museum's reception space is included here not simply to encapsulate the condition of that particular moment on a grey afternoon in the newly opened, and highly successful, architectural exemplar/facility; symbol of progressive Bostonian culture. Rather it seeks to open up the potential for readings of complex interior spatial situations. In this unadorned and somewhat uncomfortable space – although it is 'filled' with art and the art-loving public – precise and abstract territories co-exist. The room is disconnected from the spatial and political city, yet the very transparency of its liminal zone both enables the activities going on outside and ruptures the calming presence of the indeterminate interior.

At this moment it is evident that a range of bodily relationships and spatial performances are going on. People gathering – or not, gazing upon the unfolding tableaux – or not, resting and imagining other places and works – or not. The interstitial curtain wall separates and ties inside and outside, expanding the presence of the 'cultured' (interior) space into the (a)cultural urban condition of the winter-cloaked city. The architectural interior as a space of flows is subject to the desires and proclivities of the new consumer affording museum-goers a public meeting place as a place of performance; where artistic creation and exposition meld seamlessly into the new space of consumption, both bodily and intellectually. These spaces are also subject to continual transposition between collection and performance. Spatial enclosure within the sanctioned gallery space transitions into continuous space as the visitor traverses the ICA's observation decks, reception points and hovering outside amphitheatre. And the ever-present city outside acts as both protagonist and provider to the occupation of this interior territory.

Mark Pimlott's invited contribution 'Only Within' is a pivotal visual essay for Interior Territories; pivotal in the sense that the work is itself a provocation rather than a positioning piece. The images, many of which appear in his book *Without and Within; essays on territory and the interior*,⁵ are here reorganised and reproduced with new captions prepared for the Journal. They chronicle situations and events that enable and impact upon the continuous, hybrid, commercialised modern and postmodern interior. Situating this work within the contemporary western condition, he ponders the potential future of the interior condition within the socio-political arrangements that will shape the architectures and landscapes of the coming century. Pimlott's earlier writing documents the shifting functions of the core activities of interior spaces,⁶ examining such corporate and event spaces as the museum, airport and underground stations, describing them as continuous, urbanised interior environments that devour the very individuality of interiors; with the resulting spaces experienced as ambiguous, hybrid and typologically indeterminate.

Two noticeable positions emerge in the fourteen papers contained within Interior Territories. One approach to design research concerns reading an interior theory through closely observing, recording and speculating upon practiced spaces within a framework developed through adoption of wide-ranging theoretical constructs. Yet another speculates upon an expanded interior practice through performance and event-making in interior and other spaces. Additionally, the recognition that writing on interior discourses is represented in a number of ways is evident in the weaving of image and text in many papers that employ the textual and the visual in their essays.

Underpinning most papers is the demonstration of new methods for design thinking through investigating the theory and realisation of built and performative works. **Jan Smitheram** and **Ian Woodcock** examine recent publications framed through interior research, *Thinking Inside the Box* and *Interior Atmosphere*, to uncover perspectives on the critical nature of affect as it relates to territory; the aim being to posit new understandings of the connections and complexities implicit in conceptualising interior territories. **Joanne Cys** undertakes a parallel literature review supported through analysis of the peer evaluation of contemporary interior practice in Australia's national design arena. In this research Cys is concerned to broaden the territory of interior design through reviewing how it is done, by whom, to posit the criticality of designed spaces to 'broader environmental, cultural, commercial and social concerns'.

The local, yet atypical, hairdressing salon is read as critical design space in **Michael Chapman's** textual and visual essay that engages with avant-garde experiments arising out of Surrealism and psychoanalysis to theorise sensual interiors and the frameworks that support them. **Paul Blindell** and **Penny Sykes** appropriate the literary concept TMESIS to develop a theory for reading enhanced relationships between interior interventions within compound architectures. They suggest that such a method enables a redefinition of interior architectures through critical readings of the insertions in interstitial spaces of designed (interior) spaces.

Investigating the urban interior as an essential contributor to the 'resignification of public and collective spaces' is central to **Elena Enrica Giunta's** research into developing methodologies for urban regeneration. Giunta's interest lies within the reactivation of public space through interaction between (interior) designers and the community of users of such spaces; the instigator is the 'spatial script' as generator of operations within a field of potential public activity. For **Anthony Fryatt** and **Roger Kemp** and their collaborators, **Paul Ritchard**, **Christine Rogers** and **David Carlin**, interior and film practices are expanded through discovering altered roles and new design methodologies framed around the scripting of three scenarios for a fictional everyday motel. The public interior in *Motel* is constructed through sequence and narrative operations, yet the interior is conceived 'beyond defined location' and now through the manipulation of spatial, rather than narrative, relations afforded through negotiations between interior and filmic spatial practices.

The intensely private interior spaces of **Julieanna Preston**'s observatories; of wilderness, weather and shifting conceptual atmospheres, locate the essential interior as a place from which to expand one's world view from within. Interiorised activities of observation and contemplation implicitly embrace interior architectures that provoke an occupation of moving outside through performing conceptual boundary crossing. **Peter Downton**'s research exposes curated views outside experienced while travelling. The implied interior enables a framing gaze over the city and over cultural landscapes as a methodological platform for sorting through images captured over time, to develop metaphors for the nature of interior territories. Downton suggests that 'constructed relations between images provide a means of reading the whole' through personal and performative dissemination of co-existing imagery.

Writing as a performance practice underpins **Linda Marie Walker**'s thinking through of interior spatial practices concerned with territories that are made and informed by movement. Walker's thirteen writing-performances collaborate with **Jude Walton**'s rehearsal images of the everyday and the precise moving around of objects in a discrete moment in time. Interior territories that are spaces for 'intuition and improvisation' are read and visualised as points of coincidence and of difference.

Stephen Loo and **Ross Gibson** present Michael Yuen's performance works as central to their adjacent writings that emerge out of the *K2-02* performance project (2008). These writings are framed by Loo's conceptual parergon – the fragment drawn from, yet positioned outside the main activity of the *K2-02* gallery project. An ensemble of writing and voidal space performance is offered by the three writers/makers as a gift to inform the interiority of the gallery itself. The re-appearance of the past event onto/into the current reading on the pages of this Journal may simply exist as the most recent fragment within this interior territory.

Modelling methods for the domestic interior are explored in **Ana Araujo** and **Ro Spankie**'s research into the historical and experimental doll's house. Through the medium of design teaching they notice that doll's houses embrace 'a fluid mobile field filled with the detail of everyday life'. Araujo and Spankie's research rediscovers the role of the model in interior visualisation, encourages making interior environments to scale and affirms the need to engage found objects in speculating upon the contemporary domestic interior. **Kathy Waghorn** and **Ross T. Smith**'s research also encourages student-based experimental practice in their *bodies + spaces* architectural design studio that utilises performative and experimental methods. Operating across the public/private domain through the design of an emergency dwelling, this refereed studio project speculates on ways to negotiate space, body, temporality, movement and socio-cultural conditions.

Researchers concerned with the spatial dynamics of hybrid public and private space, present the domestic interior redefined through multiple spatial and function juxtapositions. The spatial outcomes of the intersection of consumerism and the domestic interior are investigated in **Beverly**

Grindstaff's research into the expanded outdoor kitchen in the contemporary American home. This new space is an 'arena of socio-domestic performance', potentially surplus to needs, as a space of domestic open territory, operating above local regulation and normative gender relations. **Tijen Roshko** frames field research through readings of Deleuzian spaces of continuity in her work with Chinese communities and their shop houses in Cambodia. Roshko investigates cultural identity in relation to hybrid functional spatial arrangements through drawing, modelling and photography. These floating communities 'defy conventional spatial narrations' collapsing public/private spaces within elastic boundaries and the temporal effects that living and working in fluid space entails.

Under Jill Franz's and Dianne Smith's thoughtful editorship the Journal is now established in national and international arenas as one of the few critical publications for the dissemination of interior research. In effect a double issue for 2008 and 2009, the IDEA JOURNAL 2009 presents a revised format and an expanded array of works that constitute critical research disseminated through text, the visual, teaching and practice. Franz and Smith write in the previous issue that the IDEA JOURNAL is a medium that enables interior research 'to situate the fragments which constitute the field'.⁷ 'Interior Territories: exposing the critical interior' extends this approach with its intention to provoke new thinking and framing of research on the interior and about interior theory through establishing a thematic approach to setting agendas for the field.

Widely collated from across national and international interior design/interior architecture communities and their associates, the Interior Territories provocation has uncovered previously unrecorded design research, new writing and projects concerned with relevant theoretical, social and environmental issues. These scholarly papers challenge conventional perspectives on the interior to move outside and beyond known disciplinary and contextual boundaries. Other territories for occupation and speculation are proposed that explicitly demonstrate the capacity of design academics to intellectually and practically commit to broad ranging enquiry and new experimental methodologies in support of an expanding critical interior discourse.

NOTES

1. Elizabeth Grosz, 'Chaos, Territory, Art. Deleuze and the Framing of Earth' in *Interior Design / Interior Architecture Educator's Association IDEA Journal 2005*, (eds) Suzie Attiwill and Gini Lee (2005) 15-28. This essay is included in a subsequent book with the same name. Grosz, Elizabeth. *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008)
2. Grosz, 'Chaos, Territory, Art. Deleuze and the Framing of Earth', 21-22
3. Grosz, 'Chaos, Territory, Art. Deleuze and the Framing of Earth', 22
4. Mark Pimlott, *Without and within: essays on territory and the interior* (Rotterdam: episode publishers, 2007)
5. Pimlott, *Without and within essays on territory and the interior*.
6. Pimlott, *Without and within essays on territory and the interior*. 237
7. Jill Franz, and Dianne Smith, 'Editorial' in *Interior Design / Interior Architecture Educator's Association IDEA Journal 2007* (ed) Jill Franz (2007): 2