idea journal

about

IDEA (Interior Design/Interior Architecture Educators Association) was formed in 1996 for the advancement and advocacy of education by encouraging and supporting excellence in interior design/interior architecture education and research within Australasia.

www.idea-edu.com

The objectives of IDEA are:

1. Objects

3.1 The general object of IDEA is the advancement of education by:

(a) encouraging and supporting excellence in interior design/interior architecture/spatial design education and research globally and with specific focus on Oceania; and

(b) being an authority on, and advocate for, interior design/interior architecture/spatial design education and research.

3.2 The specific objects of IDEA are:

(a) to be an advocate for undergraduate and postgraduate programs at a minimum of AQF7 or equivalent education in interior design/interior architecture/spatial design;

(b) to support the rich diversity of individual programs within the higher education sector;

(c) to create collaboration between programs in the higher education sector;

(d) to foster an attitude of lifelong learning;

(e) to encourage staff and student exchange between programs;

(f) to provide recognition for excellence in the advancement of interior design/interior architecture/spatial design education; and

(g to foster, publish and disseminate peer reviewed interior design/interior architecture/spatial design research.

membership

Institutional Members:

Membership is open to programs at higher education institutions in Australasia that can demonstrate an on-going commitment to the objectives of IDEA.

Current members:

AUT University, Auckland
Curtin University, Perth
Massey University, Wellington
Monash University, Melbourne
Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane
RMIT University, Melbourne
University of New South Wales, Sydney
University of South Australia, Adelaide
University of Tasmania, Launceston and Hobart
University of Technology Sydney, Sydney
Victoria University, Wellington

Affiliate Members:

Affiliate membership is open to programs at higher education institutions in Australasia that do not currently qualify for institutional membership but support the objectives of IDEA. Affiliate members are non-voting members of IDEA.

Associate Members:

Associate membership is open to any person who supports the objectives of IDEA. Associate members are non-voting members of IDEA.

Honorary Associate Members:

In recognition of their significant contribution as an initiator of IDEA, a former chair and/or executive editor: Suzie Attiwill, Rachel Carley, Lynn Chalmers, Lynn Churchill, Jill Franz, Roger Kemp, Tim Laurence, Gini Lee, Marina Lommerse, Gill Matthewson, Dianne Smith, Harry Stephens, George Verghese, Andrew Wallace and Bruce Watson.

AADR
ART ARCHITECTURE DESIGN RESEARCH

IDEA
Interior Design/
Interior Architecture
Educators Association

this issue's provocation

(Extra) Ordinary Interiors calls for contributions from academics, research students and practitioners that demonstrate contemporary modes of criticality and reflection on specific interior environments in ways that expand upon that which is ordinary (of the everyday, common, banal, or taken for granted).

This theme has two agendas: First, the desire to amplify critical reflection as a key practice of the disciplines associated with this journal's readership. In short, to prompt interior designers, interior architects, and spatial designers to be more proactive and experimental in asserting their specialist knowledge and expertise as critical commentary. This asks authors to reconsider the role of critique and criticism in their scholarly and creative works, or, to demonstrate how to reflect critically upon a design and to locate the design's relation to material, political, social, cultural, historical and geographical concerns. Such an enterprise may reveal whether models of criticality centred on judgement, authority and historicism are relevant, constructive, insightful or generative, or, as Bruno Latour poses, have they 'run out of steam'?[01] This exercise may prompt some to revisit key thinkers who pose new discursive, visual and temporal models for critical practice in this recent age of criticality. We draw your attention to *Critical Spatial Practice* by Nikolaus Hirsch and Markus Miessen, which asks for thinking "about 'space' without necessarily intervening in it physically, but trying to sensitise, promote, develop and foster an attitude towards contemporary spatial production, its triggers, driving forces, effects and affects... [to] speculate on the modalities of production and potential benefits of the role of 'the outsider.'"[02]

We also look to Jane Rendell's introduction to *Critical Architecture*, which asserts that criticism and design are linked together by virtue of their shared interests in invoking social change.[03] Whether it takes written, built or speculative form, criticism is an action, which according to Roland Barthes, is a calling into crisis, a moment where existing definitions, disciplinary boundaries and assumptions about normativity are put into question.[04]

The second agenda of this journal issue takes heed of the ordinary, and how, in its intense observation, what is normal or often taken for granted exceeds itself, becomes extra or more ordinary. Everyday spaces such as supermarkets, service stations, laundry mats, hardware stores, parks and four-way street intersections, and banal gestures such as washing the dishes, walking the dog or street sweeping become subject to critical scrutiny and introspection. Xavier de Maistre's *Voyage Around My Room*, Julio Cortázar's *Around the Day in Eighty Worlds*, and Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* are but a few historic examples that draw out critical depth and aesthetic meaning about ordinary interiors, interiors understood in the most liberal sense.[05] What new actions to the crisis of critical commentary lurk restlessly in ordinary interiors?

While a nostalgic or romantic response to this journal's theme may dwell on interior situations with no special or distinctive features, or explore the persistence and abundance of ordinary interiors, even commonplace spaces, noticed or not, it can not be denied that recent pandemic events world-wide have flung the many facets of everyday life into crisis, including long-standing notions of proximity, intimacy, hapticity, privacy, freedom and rights to access 'essential' services. For many, the world has become home and home has become an internal world, an interior contaminated or augmented by virtual technologies serving as lifelines to a previous highly social and diversified lifestyle. As the interior of one's domestic space finds coincidence with one's isolation bubble, many are finding that interiority and interiors are conflating to take on new meaning, new function, and new configuration. Ordinary scenes of dead flies on windowsills, sun rays pointing to poor house-keeping habits, mounting bags of uncollected rubbish and recycling, shuffling of mattresses, improvised work surfaces, revised chores rubrics, commandeering of the bathroom, and the commodity of headphones and adapters highlight an intensified condition.

Authors are prompted to practice a form of critical reflection on one (extra) ordinary interior.

01   Bruno Latour. 'Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern,' In *Critical Inquiry - Special issue on the Future of Critique* 30, no. 2 (2004): 25-248.

02   Nikolaus Hirsch and Markus Miessen, 'Architecture and Critical Spatial Practice,' 1 May 2020, criticalspatialpractice. org.

03   Jane Rendell, Jonathan Hill, Murray Fraser and Mark Dorrian (Eds), *Critical Architecture* (Oxon UK, USA and Canada: Routledge, 2007), 4.

04   Roland Barthes, *Criticism and Truth*, translated and edited by Katrine Pilcher Keuneman (London and New York: The Althone Press, 1966).

05   Xavier de Maistre, *Voyage Around My Room*, translated by Stephen Sartarelli (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1994); Julio Cortázar, *Around the Day in Eighty Worlds*, translated by Thomas Christensen (San Francisco: North Point Press 1986); Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* [1931] (California: Harvest Books, 1978).

in this issue

[ij]   vol.18, no.01   (extra)ordinary   research   rana   outside in: (extra)ordinary   237
       2021   interiors   paper   abudayyeh   screenteriors in the era of virtual
                                                            public interiority

outside in: (extra)ordinary screenteriors in the era of virtual public interiority

Rana Abudayyeh
University of Tennessee
0000-0003-4160-6802

abstract

The current COVID-19 pandemic has placed immense value on our interior settings and their respective objects. As a result, interior spaces, augmented with virtual streams of data, are becoming instrumental settings for everyday activities. Such a state engenders new thinking regarding interior space, one in which private settings are understood as primary nodes for public exchanges. The implications of this new environment are all-encompassing, positioning the most intimate places and objects at the core of improvised virtual communities and subjecting private spaces to rapid retooling to address unfamiliar urgencies. The resulting condition is one of amalgamated physical and virtual parameters, often with discordant assemblies. Central to this unfolding state of affairs, technology has emerged as an indispensable medium. The legibility of our settings through digital devices has led to a new type of processed interior space; fragmented and dispersed across various localities, it is unified through its reading within the boundary of the screen.

This article presents a set of graphic reflections on computer-screen interiors, coined *screenteriors*. While this new public interior was courtesy of a global pandemic, it is here to stay. *Screenteriors* are set within our intimate places and privy to various facets of our everyday lives. They are transmitted in real-time and often recorded on distant storage clouds, scrambled at times, subject to delays and freezes, filtered, and modified at will, streamed back and forth between recipients and devices, and always under the gaze of the camera. Here and now, a new interior emerges where screens frame and interpolate a new typology of space.

[ij] vol.18, no.01   (extra)ordinary   research   rana   outside in: (extra)ordinary   238
      2021   interiors   paper   abudayyeh   screenteriors in the era of virtual
                                                                    public interiority

introduction

Amid a new normal, our cities lie idle, void of the hustle and bustle of flows and activities. In a prophetic fulfilment to Archigram's Walking City, it becomes clear: the city has walked out, or more accurately, walked in. Among all the future scenarios we imagined, we never thought this one up. The stillness, haunting on many levels, goes against our anticipation of a future dense with multimodal movement and streaming lights and sounds. That narrative was robust, pulsating with activities and soundtracks of buzzing vessels and lively crowds. Yet, within this era, different conditions emerge, allocating immense value to our interior settings. Set within and against our current unfolding contextual parameters, new interior-centric networks are evolving, streamed from our devices and framed within their screens.

Figure 01:
Student work by Lydia Russell. A conceptual collage depicting the state of our fixed (quarantined) physical condition, offset by our multi-locational virtual [omni] presence. As part of a special topics seminar in interior architecture, the project asked students to speculate on the state of our pandemic space-bound being, surveying the objects, settings, and matter needed to sustain it.

[ij] vol.18, no.01   (extra)ordinary   research   rana   outside in: (extra)ordinary   239
      2021   interiors   paper   abudayyeh   screenteriors in the era of virtual
                                                                 public interiority

Physical and virtual space have often forged a coalescence that carries multiple implications to our habits and habitations.[01] A parallel universe to our physical one, cyberspace is malleable and responsive. It links our disparate physical spaces through networked systems of communication.[02] Within these conjugate locations (physical and virtual),our screens become tangible mediators of space, time, and occupancy.

screenteriors, a new paradigm

Since the onset of the digital revolution, architecture has had to contend with the virtual assuming spatial properties. In his book, *CITY OF BITS: Space, Place, and the Infobahn*, William J. Mitchell made an unequivocal call for architects to take on the design of virtual space. He further questioned the fixed physical body and its immediate sensory environment as the prime subject of the architectural space.[03] Mitchell postulated that electronically enhanced virtual bodies that are anchored in their surroundings yet capable of sensing and acting at a distance would become central to the 'emerging civic structures and spatial arrangements of the digital era.'[04]

Even pre-pandemic, our daily lives were making a swift transition towards screen space. Activities such as online shopping, dating, and even a doctor's consultation were already assuming a dominant virtual presence; everyday online engagements were unavoidable. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this inevitable transition to screen space and online places. As bits and pieces of our daily lives are implanted within Zoom rooms and streamed through Tik Toks and virtual feeds, the domestic interior unit is undergoing a transformation in real-time, becoming the setting for everything from work to play. This shift engenders new thinking about interior space, one in which internal settings are thresholds for public exchanges. Here, screens are the new glass curtain wall demarking a membrane of separation between users, rooms, and the external world.

Figure 02:
Student work by Grace Ann Altenbern for an interior architecture seminar exploring the new typology of nested spaces mediated through the screens of our digital devices. The image illustrates the convergence of our intimate settings and virtual screens, operating together as primary nodes for public exchanges. The virtual interface positioned within the interior volume demarks new territories defined by immaterial boundaries.

[ij]   vol.18, no.01   (extra)ordinary   research   rana   outside in: (extra)ordinary   240
2021   interiors   paper   abudayyeh   screenteriors in the era of virtual
public interiority

Referencing Wolfgang Meisenheimer's collapse of poché and the thinning out of the building-body to a membrane,[05] Lois Weinthal, in her article 'Dress Code', addresses the role glass curtain walls played in dismantling the separation between the interior and the exterior. The introduction of the glass curtain wall changed many aspects of a building, from construction to the occupants' behaviours.[06] Suddenly, the intimate acts that were hidden within heavy walls were on full display, and a new link between interior and exterior environments was established. Similarly, the glass wall of the screen is reinventing not only our spaces but the very nature of our habits and, ultimately, humanity.

tactile virtuality and our near-future being

In her work, *Broken Nature*, Lucy McRae asks, 'Will machines be designed to affectionately squeeze the body in an attempt to prepare the self for a future that lacks human touch?'[07] Building on this inquiry that questions the nature of the future self, its social exchanges (or lack thereof), and its evolving sentiments and connections, her work constructs narratives of dissonant realities with subjects that are neither human nor machined, arguing for an altered species of humans and objects alike. In this new realm of hybrid physical-virtual exchanges, what is the state of our 'near-future' being? While there is undoubtedly a loss of direct physical touch in our digital settings, there is no lack of haptic exchanges. From clicking the mouse to using our lap as a prop, our bodies and devices are in constant dialogue directing our postures and gestures. We talk to our devices;

they sense our presence and remember our preferences. We are immersed in a unique reality positioned in the physical entity of place and supported by digital operations. The resulting dexterity is manual and mental, expanding our reach outwardly and inwardly, and juxtaposing multiple scales and angles of our humanity.[08]

The prevalence of digital devices and their impact on the contemporary every day is well documented and experienced. Historian and theorist Antoine Picon addresses this impact as an expansion of the mind, acknowledging that digital interfaces extend the realm of our sensation and directly alter users' motor skills, gestures, and reflexes.[09] Therein, our nature changes — some may argue, evolves — not only hypothetically, but in a real and physical sense, ushering in our digital selves.

Figure 03 (overleaf):
Student work by Mary Grace Galpin, 2020. A conceptual collage depicting the state of our quarantined body. Present through the screens, this projected and altered body traverses virtual scapes and assumes various identities. In this assignment, students were asked to reflect on the hybrid state of interiority critically and the changing nature of the body within it.

[ij]   vol.18, no.01   (extra)ordinary   research   rana   outside in: (extra)ordinary   241
        2021   interiors   paper   abudayyeh   screenteriors in the era of virtual
                                                                           public interiority

[ij]   vol.18, no.01   (extra)ordinary   research   rana   outside in: (extra)ordinary   242
2021   interiors   paper   abudayyeh   screenteriors in the era of virtual
public interiority

The ongoing pandemic circumstances have thrust this digital self into overdrive. Indubitably, in the emerging spaces of digital reality, our many senses navigate a new experience of multiplicity. Our eyes see not just one space but many simultaneously. Our ears hear sounds and voices from many sources and various geographical locations while our hands orchestrate a distinct choreography of muted/unmuted and visible/blacked-out settings. Like it or not, we are living within a new typology of interior space.

Within the back-and-forth exchanges of this new (extra) ordinary reality, the set of forthcoming images furl conceptual views of familiar places, processed and reprocessed through the medium of the screen. In tandem with the click of a mouse, divisions and subdivisions are directed by a computer script that segments the images. The resulting mosaics are thus telling of not only the scenes they represent but the duration and navigation of virtual exchanges, conveying a unique understanding of occupancy and place informed by our interaction with the mouse and screen. Together, the images illustrate the interactive and tactile nature of emerging interior and virtual environments.

If we have learned anything this past year, it is that virtuality has presented itself as a viable alternative to physicality, and that, contrary to common belief, it is not void of emotions and human values and interactions. And while pre-pandemic 'virtuality' implied a measure of 'unreality', we have come to know that that is simply untrue. In the past few months in which our physical presence was limited to curb the spread of the virus, virtual sites nested in interior spaces were able to host our living. Even though we altered our mannerisms and habits to accommodate the shift from physical to virtual locations, we found new ways to engage remotely in activities that are heavily regulated by touching, clicking, and manoeuvring our devices and screens. These interior and virtual settings are real and tactile, albeit in different ways altogether.

[ij]

vol.18, no.01   (extra)ordinary   research   rana   outside in: (extra)ordinary   243
2021   interiors   paper   abudayyeh   screenteriors in the era of virtual
                                                            public interiority

Figure 04:
The screen's fragmentised scape, illustrated by breaking down a Zoom virtual background of the author's workplace (thumbnail image on the lower left). The fragmentation is directed by a computer script that subdivided the image based on the user's mouse clicks. Source: by the author, 2020.

Figure 05 (overleaf):
A newfound tactility. A series of images showing the subdivision logic of the applied computer script. The subdivisions are controlled by the duration of use and the number of clicks on the screen. The upper left image shows the least and shortest interaction with the mouse and screen, while the lower right image reveals the most and longest virtual engagement. Source: by the author, 2020.

Figure 06 (overleaf):
Haptic Virtual Occupancy. A generic interior scene that is commonly used as a teleconferencing/Zoom background to obscure the real interior setting and replace it with an orderly, highly designed virtual set. The image is subjected to the same computer script to induce a reflection on occupancy by the user (dweller). Source: by the author, 2020, base image: https://design-milk.com/10-minimalist-modern-zoom-backdrops-for-virtual-meetings/

vol.18, no.01
2021

(extra)ordinary
interiors

research
paper

rana
abudayyeh

outside in: (extra)ordinary
screenteriors in the era of virtual
public interiority

244

vol.18, no.01
2021

(extra)ordinary
interiors

research
paper

rana
abudayyeh

outside in: (extra)ordinary
screenteriors in the era of virtual
public interiority

245

Figure 07:
Tiled Faces. Any teleconferencing application relies on tiling the occupants in a collective public virtual space. The division shown here is established via clicking through a mute/unmute and share/unshare screen sequence throughout a 5-hour duration of a zoom class. Source: by the author, 2020.

Figure 08 (overleaf):
Fragmented Landscapes. Occupying the landscape through navigating in Google Earth is indicative of an emerging interior space of hybridised scales and realities. Source: by the author, 2020, base image: Google Earth.

[ij]   vol.18, no.01   (extra)ordinary   research   rana   outside in: (extra)ordinary   246
           2021   interiors   paper   abudayyeh   screenteriors in the era of virtual
                                                                                    public interiority

vol.18, no.01
2021

(extra)ordinary
interiors

research
paper

rana
abudayyeh

outside in: (extra)ordinary
screenteriors in the era of virtual
public interiority

247

Figure 09:
Screenterrior: Tactile Virtuality. A conceptual study/representation of a new type of interior space between the virtual and real, behind the glass of the screen. Source: by the author, 2020.

[ij]   vol.18, no.01   (extra)ordinary   research   rana   outside in: (extra)ordinary   248
2021   interiors   paper   abudayyeh   screenteriors in the era of virtual
public interiority

conclusion

While virtual reality has been permeating our lives for years now, the past months of limited physical mobility on a global scale have thrust all of us — regardless of our prior technological proficiencies — into a collective reliance on a unique hybrid (interior and virtual) spatiality. These amalgamated settings become the sites of complex programmatic sequences that demand a unique orchestration between physical spatial features and digital functions. The result is a multivalent interior space tailored with many devices and screens oscillating between the real and the virtual. This new state is not the digital ubiquity of the recent past; rather, it is an intertwined interior and screen space, demarcated and contained by the screen camera's cone of vision. Temporal and itinerant, it is proliferated or diffused by control sliders, clicks, and buttons regulated by the users, inverting an expansive exterior network.

Today, we all find ourselves inside this emerging interior typology. Occupying the world in multi frames; possessing an omnipresence of sorts is a new normal that places interiority within and without the physical bounds of its architecture. Understanding interiors as a highly layered, temporal, incongruous, and constructed mode of socio-spatial organisation filtered through the operational lenses of virtuality challenges the singular and private nature of interior space, taking interiority beyond physical limitations into many sites and places. Thus, this newfound normalcy bestows a unique agency to the interior setting, a silver lining to the perilous reality of a pandemic that

disabled our global systems and physical, social structures. Such an Interiority places the body within conventional physical parameters and simultaneously propels its image and reproductions into infinite localities. It provides refuge while facilitating extensions to public platforms at a grand scale, potentially becoming an inclusive mixing chamber for social, economic, educational, political, and technical networks. The impact of this new environment is significantly relevant to interior discourse, changing the intrinsic ways of our habits and methods of habitations — from how we dress to the way we engage with spaces. Such a provocation must not fizzle away with our slow return to a semblance of pre-pandemic living. Instead, it seems set to usher a rich territory for interior explorations and unearth new spatial practices that extend the designer's attention and imagination.

author biography

Rana Abudayyeh is an Assistant Professor and the Robin Klehr Avia Professor of Interior Architecture at the University of Tennessee's College of Architecture and Design. Abudayyeh's pedagogical interests focus on advancing new modes of architectural production employing computational design, digital fabrication, and novel material logics. She seeks to define innovative design trajectories rooted in a site-based approach that responds to various contextual layers. Understanding context constitutes the foundational premise of the design intent and its consequent manifestations.

[ij]   vol.18, no.01   (extra)ordinary   research   rana   outside in: (extra)ordinary   250
2021   interiors   paper   abudayyeh   screenteriors in the era of virtual
public interiority

notes

01   Elisabeth A. Grosz and Peter
Eisenman, 'Cyberspace,
Virtuality, and the Real: Some
Architectural Reflections,' In
*Architecture from the Outside:
Essays on Virtual and Real
Space* (Cambridge, MA: The
MIT Press, 2006), 76.

02   Grosz and Eisenman,
'Cyberspace, Virtuality, and the
Real,' 76.

03   William John Mitchell, *City
of Bits: Space, Place, and the
Infobahn* (Cambridge, Mass:
MIT Press, 2010), 43.

04   Mitchell, *City of Bits*, 43.

05   Lois Weinthal, 'Dress Codes,'
Harvard Design Magazine
47, S/S 2019, http://www.
harvarddesignmagazine.org/
issues/47/dress-codes.

06   Weinthal, 'Dress Codes.'

07   'Bio,' About page, Lucy McRae
website, Accessed January 25,
2021, https://www.lucymcrae.
net/about.

08   Beatriz Colomina and Mark
Wigley, *Are we Human? Notes
on an Archaeology of Design*
(Zurich: Lars Müller Publishers,
2016), 16.

09   Antoine Picon. 'Architecture
and the Virtual Towards a New
Materiality,' *PRAXIS: Journal of
Writing Building* 6 (2004): 118.