idea journal

fictions, fantasies, and fabulations:
imagineing other interior worlds

vol. 19, no. 01

2022

the journal of IDEA: the interior design +
interior architecture educators association
idea journal

fictions, fantasies, and fabulations: imagining other interior worlds

vol. 19, no. 01

2022

the journal of IDEA: the interior design + interior architecture educators association
about

idea journal recognises interiors and interiority as an emerging, discursive, and interdisciplinary field of research concerned with conceptual, material, and social relationships between people and environments. It identifies the study of interiors and interiority as necessarily expanded and non-canonical, derived from the confluence of knowledge distributed across many spatially oriented design, art, and architecture fields. Promoting the production of new knowledge and critical practices of interiors and interiority, idea journal provides a space of scholarly engagement for text- and visual-based research. idea journal serves an international academic, professional, and student readership and welcomes contributions from those involved in bolstering theoretical and creative discourse.

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 programmes at a minimum of AQF7 or equivalent education in interior design/interior architecture/spatial design;

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

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

(d) to foster an attitude of lifelong learning;

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

(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 programmes at higher education institutions in Australasia that can demonstrate an on-going commitment to the objectives of IDEA.

Current members:

AUT University, Auckland
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 Technology Sydney, Sydney
Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington

Affiliate Members:

Affiliate membership is open to programmes 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, Anthony Fryatt, Susan Hedges, Roger Kemp, Tim Laurence, Gini Lee, Marina Lommerse, Gill Matthewson, Antony Pelosi, Dianne Smith, Harry Stephens, George Verghese, Andrew Wallace, and Bruce Watson.
this issue’s provocation

While the world reels, reconfigures, and recovers from the drama and trauma of 2020, wishing to thwart the effects of grief and comprehend what was once incomprehensible, there is all good reason to turn our imagination to ‘what ifs’, dreams, and other speculations as an antidote to hopelessness. This issue, Fictions, Fantasies, and Fabulations, calls for contributions that consider the unlikely, improbable, or downright impossible in spatial design. In recent history, fictions, fantasies, and fabulations have offered productive opposition to the rampant instrumentality of pragmatism and functional planning. Their impact has instilled optimism, sparked alternative visions, and been sites of countless critiques of conformity and the status quo. Loosely defined impulses towards the unrealisable and the most illogical of things approached in the most logical of ways have led to unparalleled episodes of creativity in drawings, poems, and material production. From Piranesi, Peter Greenaway, Kurt Schwitters, Dora Maar, Hans Op de Beeck, Ursula Le Guinn, John Hejduk, to Daniel Libeskind, explorations of the impossible have led to new interpretative frontiers that move the limits of interiority and spatial practices. Lest we forget or become complacent with the contributory and often unrecognised impact of contemporary social media, advertisement, and technological surveillance that continues to shape interior worlds, experiences, and values. In many ways, there is as much focus on unpacking, making sense of, and disproving the dangerous impacts of fictions, fantasies, and fabulations as there is on setting the scene for dreams and magical realities.

This issue recognises the complex story of fictions, fantasies, and fabulations in spatial design, not as counter-productive forces, but as the necessary counter-balances that offer liberty from convention, propriety, and rational assumptions about behaviour, space, time, and material — the core elements of interior worlds. Far from retreating into solipsistic escapism, fictions, fantasies, and fabulations serve as crucial sites for speculative invention, futuring, and critical reflection. Resistant to the reductive inertia of pragmatism, these generative properties reign in that mercurial shadow world of meaning and value not directly associated with cause and effect.

This call for papers and projects is intended to frame an open examination and exploration of the fictions, fantasies, and fabulations in spatial and interior practices. It prompts us to draw, write, perform, and record the critical edge of the unrealisable in an era that has literally experienced the limits of reason. As described by poet Franny Choi, there is no more time for poetry without stakes because ‘people are literally dying’. There is no more time for creative practices that don’t ask questions that we “truly don’t know the answer to”. Choi’s sentiments air a sense of urgency for relevance as much as they point to the value and agency of poetic meaning and making in artistic, spatial, and interior practices.

reviewers for this issue

Charles Anderson, RMIT
Jen Archer-Martin, Massey University
Thea Brejzek, University of Technology Sydney
Daniel Brown, Victoria University Wellington
Rachel Carley, Auckland University of Technology
Lilian Chee, National University of Singapore
Chris Cotrell, Monash University
Christina Deluchi, University of Technology Sydney
Helene Furjan, Drexel University
Olivia Hamilton, RMIT
Susan Hedges, Auckland University of Technology
Ed Hollis, University of Edinburgh
Cathryn Klasto, University of Gotenburg
Linda Matthews, University of Technology Sydney
Belinda Mitchell, University of Portsmouth
Tiü Poldma, University of Montreal
Remco Roes, Hasselt University
Jana Scholze, Kingston University
George Themistokleus, Leeds Beckett University
Peter Thule Kristensen, Royal Danish Academy
Jiangmei Wu, Indiana University

https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLYUdgQ0LXic/HWlc3nBH7VNNvfr5hDTA&v=iwoS-CB7k8&ab_channel=PBSNewsHour
in this issue

07 introducing, inducing
Julieanna Preston
Luke Tipene

08 a design studio on fantastic space: exploring the narrative of *spirited away*
Demet Dincer
Ilke Tekin
Pelin Cetken

33 variations on piranesi's *carceri*
Andrea Alberto Dutto
Maria Fedorchenko

58 tempering grief through the victorian home's furniture and objects: the emergence of spiritual comfort
Vanessa Galvin

75 imagining a more inclusive world: notes on difference, disability, and space in *the shape of water*
Ann Heylighen
Daniel S. Friedman

93 let it unfold — performative exhibitions: the living interior of the austrian pavilion at expo milan 2015
Ayman Kassem

109 dancing in your brain!: interiority, affective witnessing, and xenoethics
Cathryn Klasto

128 ghost written: the winchester house as cinematic trans-mediation
Cameron Macdonell
John Sicat

138 how not to forget: the speculative interior as apparatus of memory
Evan Pavka

163 refabulating domesticity: a reparative reading of interior genre painting
Kris Pint

182 william heath robinson and k. r. g. browne: literature contraptions as inspiration for facing spatial issues
Sofía Quiroga Fernández
Guillermo Sánchez Sotés

200 whakapapa plotting: an aotearoa-specific method of spatial communication
Georgina Stokes (Ngāi Tahu)
let it unfold — performative exhibitions: the living interior of the austrian pavilion at expo milan 2015

Ayman Kassem
Ajman University
0000-0002-5272-9288

abstract
This essay explores the relationship between fantasy, fabulation, and the performative through the lens of exhibition design in general and, in particular, expo pavilions. While studying the case of the Austrian pavilion visited by the author during Expo Milan 2015, it further examines the repertoire of the performative as a spatial fabulation indicator. Furthermore, the essay proposes a dramaturgy of analytical tools that interpret the exhibition space as a metaphor of a fantasy-oriented spatial production, and as an illustration of a performative interior architecture opening newer perspectives through which we may study and analyse interiors.

cite as:

keywords:
fabulation, exhibitions, performative, unscripted, unfolding, event
introduction
During the last decade, world expos have shifted boldly, in terms of spatial design, from silent monumental pavilions to performative ones. While past expos conceived brutalist monuments and massive concrete forms, recent expos presented ephemeral reversible high-tech structures. In the last two world expos (2015 in Milan and 2020 in Dubai), the architecture and the interior of the pavilions were closer to an event, a show, a stage set, or a fictional spatial performance. In a single pavilion, many performative characteristics could be detected, in which architecture and interior combined a variety of spatial qualities and exhibition types, such as narrative space, experiential interiors, reversible structures, flexible architecture, smart design, interactive interfaces, ephemeral installations, sensorial experiences, scenic and theatrical display of content, and participatory aspects. Thus, world expos have become an architectural wonderland and a festival experimenting with and exhibiting various contemporary trends in spatial design. The design of each pavilion assumes a high complexity level, in which a large amount of data and parameters contribute to shaping the form and the experience. Such shifts towards the performative and the fabulatory require newer scholarship guided by analytical and theoretical lenses.

Exhibitions are a metaphor of a new modernity, as suggested by the Italian architect and thinker Andrea Branzi. In fact, exhibitions in general, and especially expo pavilions, appear to act as illustrations and metaphors of a performative contemporaneity, or of a fluid and constantly changing and event-oriented modernity to which the disciplines of architecture, design, and interior are trying to respond. Exhibitions and pavilions can be predicting and depicting what is happening and what is going to happen in the world of spatial design. Therefore, analysing a pavilion as a ‘space in performance’ and a fantasy-oriented space gives us an opportunity to rehearse new conceptual and analytical tools for spatial design that can be used in education/theory and in practice. This text-based essay explores the concept(s) of performative fabulatory interiors through the case of the Austrian pavilion at Expo Milan 2015. The essay further dissects and analyses the pavilion's various performative aspects, in which the interior space is conceived as open for transformation and non-static; it acts as a performing theatrical milieu with an emphasis on the aesthetics of experience.

fantasy-oriented space conception
Creating magical realities is a speciality of exhibition design. It is a discipline that translates fantasies, temporary realities, illusions, interior scale wonderlands, phenomenological events, and ephemeral spatial performances. Exhibitions and pavilions are territories for testing the unrealisable and the unusual boundaries of
interior, exterior, installation, scenography, illusion, reality, and art. In such a performative–atmospheric turn, surreal, fantastic, and performative spaces are experimental. Sylvia Lavin, a Professor of History and Theory of Architecture at Princeton University, indicates that the performative liberates spatial practices from the limitations imposed by disciplinarity, and that with the performative, architecture allows itself to explore new methods and tools. In fact, these concepts (spatial qualities) drive us to fantasise about spaces designed to be open and flexible, where form, programme, and function are no longer determining factors. The form in this scenario is following a desired fantasy (an experience or a performance), which recalls Bohme Gernot’s statement that spaces affect people through the atmospheres; via its atmosphere, a person experiences their space. A perceiving subject’s body is invaded and penetrated by the atmosphere within which it is immersed. It is the sensation of being transformed or transported into another world. Hence, form is no longer a priority. The pavilion is a metaphor for a shift from the design of space towards the design of experience.

Exhibition design is usually considered an act of creative contextualisation and re-contextualisation of content, especially in the case of immaterial exhibitions where the emphasis on the spatial performance compensates for the absence of objects. When the exhibition space is no longer dedicated to objects and their aura, it becomes dedicated for spatial performances, which denotes a shift from philosopher, cultural critic, and essayist Walter Benjamin’s aura to pioneer of German ecocriticism Gernot Böhme’s atmosphere. This means that when staging an exhibition, the priority is given to the creation of a spatial experience that communicates a certain content related to the exhibits. In this case, the exhibition becomes an opportunity to stage an atmosphere. This approach opposes the traditional display approach that glorifies an object and dramatises an aura around it while disregarding the holistic creation of a spatial experience in a museum or an exhibition space. The communication of the immaterial content is then manifested through the spatial experience that results from performative and fabulatory tools reflected in the co-presence of various features and the layering of experiences and encounters with space-content, content-visitors, and space-visitors. The emergence of such characteristics in spatial design discourses underlines the shift from the design of space towards the design of experience where the aesthetic of perceiving becomes the aesthetic of experiencing. The ‘what to experience’ is therefore more emphasised than the ‘what to see’; the ‘what to experience’ becomes the driving force of the spatial conception process. A performance-oriented creation of space becomes a tool for fantasy creation and fabulisation of the exhibition spaces that propels towards a semi-dematerialisation of the space.
performative repertoire
In spatial discourse, performative is characterised by a broad range of interpretations and uses. It represents an interest in social and human sciences, and literature in the performance of the inanimate on humans, and an approach that recognises space as having qualities that can be shaped. While ‘performative’ has been related to the interest in designing a milieu or a living environment, more recent contemporary texts have expanded the dimensions of the performative. Portuguese architect, curator, and writer Pedro Gadanho indicates a Performative Turn in architecture as the influence of performance on other disciplines including architecture. The Performative Turn comprises spatial practices being inspired by the world of performance while borrowing new performative dynamics and mechanisms such as the participatory, the ephemeral spatial practices, the flexible structure, the emphasis on the scenic and the spectacular, and the emphasis on the experience. For David Leatherbarrow, Professor of Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania School of Design, the term Performative Architecture describes architectures belonging to dynamic environments, indicating a shift in architectural theory, from what the building is to what it does. Related to scripted and unscripted events, the performative character refers to how architecture is productive beyond the planned programme as a play between intentionality and non-intentionality.

The performative project, as described by Italian architect and scholar Valentina Signore, is able to adjust itself for the unscripted by being open and flexible. It is based on the concept of open form, in which the project is designed to be open for transformations, in contrast to the idea of definitive perfect form where the form and the programme are pre-defined. The performative project accepts uncertainty, incompleteness, and openness to events and users, urban and interior improvisations, responding to a contemporary complex and changing context. With flexible mechanisms instead of linear ones, the performative is transformative; it can restructure spatial and social order by impacting both audience and context. Performative refers to scenic and theatrical potentials in spatial situations; it refers to the ability of the space to communicate and spatial performance acts as a communication medium. This essay used the above attributes of what constitutes performative as a benchmark for challenging interior spatial boundaries and to reflect a fantasy-oriented vision of a mutating living space.

a living interior: a space in performance
The following case study considers a 2015 expo pavilion that was designed to be an autonomous micro-climate, inclusive of scenic and narrative aspects, experiential features, sensorial emphasis, metamorphic evolutionary spatial qualities, and dimensions...
of a simulated reality. This pavilion was a representation of what a performance-oriented space could be. The project was a mini-Austrian forest implemented inside a magical wooden curiosity box. It was designed by team.breathe.austria led by Professor Klaus K. Loenhart and his studio terrain: integral designs BDA. Their study looked for evidence of fabulation within the living interior, how it challenged the definitions and boundaries of what interior space is, and how the conception of interior atmosphere was indebted to temporal conditions. The pavilion design was guided by an imagined and fantasised experience, and the form it takes is conceived to follow and fulfil that performance. The fabulousness of a desired spatial experience, with all its material and immaterial qualities such as atmosphere, emotions, time-based experience, and sensoriality grounds the design process even in its early stages.

The pavilion was developed by the interdisciplinary project group team.breathe.austria of the Institute for Architecture and Landscape at TU Graz, under the direction of architect, landscape architect, and university professor Klaus K. Loenhart. It involved: Terrain: Integral Designs BDA — Prof. Klaus K Loenhart With Agency in Biosphere — Markus Jeschaunig Hohensinn Architektur ZT GmbH — Karlheinz Boiger LANDLAB, i, a&l, TU-Graz — Andreas Goritschnig und Bernhard König Lendlabor Graz — Anna Resch und Lisa Enzenhofer See breatheaustria.at

Figures 01 & 02. The Austrian Pavilion from the interior and the exterior. A pavilion conceived as a forest in a wooden box. 2015 © team.breathe.austria/terrain: integral designs.
The pavilion Breathe.Austria was constructed by architectural and vegetal elements. It relied on bio-geo-natural processes as hybrid tools. The pavilion was an attempt to recreate the interior of an Austrian forest with its decreasing temperatures and increasing humidity. It created an experience one had when moving towards its centre that included Austrian bio-diverse vegetation and unique Austrian scents for which the design team used devices and mechanisms to optimise the desired performance of a forest including modifying temperature and humidity levels, and air flow. The interior architecture of the pavilion was constructed mostly from living elements (trees and plants) that grow and change over time. These design elements made time a significant factor within the design and construction process. The mini forest was conceived to be ready with a sufficient level of growth immediately before the opening of the expo. However, the fact that the mini-forest kept growing and evolving during the entire expo period of six months had a dramatic impact on visitor experience. As the space evolved, the boundaries between a stable form/space and a fluid/living space were challenged. We also noted an illusionary fictive factor: the simulated mini forest performed an illusion of being transported to a fictive forest in a parallel world/reality to the crowded expo.

Figure 03.
A planting timeline that demonstrates the evolution of the vegetation through the months of the expo and the transformation of the pavilion. 2015 © team.breathe.austria/terrain: integral designs.
This project also embedded an event-characterisation of the space, which is manifested in its lifetime as an ephemeral spatial event, a living architecture performing for the visitors: the Before, the During, the Unfolding, and the After. The changes in the growth and the density of the vegetation; the unexpected gradual attraction of birds, insects, and lizards; the dismantling of the pavilion; the distribution of the trees to the municipality of Milan were all parts of this spatial event’s timeline, with scripted and unscripted happenings. With no pre-testing of the pavilion, it was an experiment waiting to unfold. This case study allowed us to examine the concept of spatial fabulation of a living and performative interior through the following key concepts aligned with repertoire of the performative: left to unfold, the event-character, fluid interior, open-form, anticipatory and improvisatory design, scripted and unscripted performances, and form follows performance.

**pavilions as performative architectures**

One of the uses of the term ‘performance’ in architecture goes back to the impact of the scientific developments on architecture, in particular biology, from the mid-eighteenth century onwards and the rise of the notions of environment and milieu. It also goes back to ‘systems theory’ in the twentieth century, the complex systems-engineering of the 1960s, and the design of contained life or eco-systems, where these theories required a more complex approach to design and engineering. The Austrian pavilion relates to those aspects of ‘complex systems’
and to the interest to design a 'performing
milieu', a 'space in performance'. The pavilion translates the philosophy of 'form
follows content' elaborated by the German
exhibition designer Uwe Brueckner. We re-
interpret that philosophy as 'form follows
performance' in keeping with Brueckner's own
elaboration on the shift in exhibitions design
from an aesthetic of perceiving towards the
aesthetic of experiencing. Memory design
and experience design are also manifested
within the aim to create a fabulated spatial
experience engraved in visitors' memory.
These dimensions of the performative
character are detected in the openness of the
interior, where the interior is a metamorphic
 evolutionary space open for the unscripted
improvisation of the natural elements that
constitute it. This pavilion is a significant
representation of what a fantasy-oriented
spatial design may be, or what a performance-
oriented space may mean. The form of the
pavilion follows its performativity as an
Austrian forest.

The architect Klaus K. Loenhart
expresses that:

The pavilion forms a frame around
a generous vegetation body and
acts as a vessel for the performance
of the internal landscape [...] The
central element is a dense Austrian
forest brought together with technical
elements in order to create a breathing
microclimate. With this oxygen and
carbon-producing core, the pavilion
becomes an air generating station [...] without conventional air conditioning.

The designers of the exhibition asked:
How does the Austrian forest perform? As
explained by the Austrian architect, when
people visit an Austrian forest, the more
they move toward its centre, the lower the
temperature, the greater the humidity, and,
simultaneously, the more intense the smells,
and the types of vegetation change.

Figure 05.
Floor plan of the pavilion
demonstrating the pavilion
conceived as a mini forest inside a
box. 2015 © team.breathe.austria/
terrain: integral designs.
Moreover, this project expresses the concept of performative within the design and the construction process. The architecture of the pavilion is constructed from living elements (trees and plants). These elements grow and change, which is an important factor considered earlier in the process. The mini-forest was conceived to be ready, and with a sufficient level of growth, immediately before the expo opening. However, it would keep growing and evolving during the six-month expo period. Strategising the time factor was crucial in the design process in order to emphasise its performative qualities. It is a living architecture that is performing. The pavilion was named Breathe.Austria, a title emphasising the experiential factor, the ‘experiencing’ and the ‘sensorial’ aspects of the pavilion and its architecture. The space was hybrid as it was constructed using architectural and vegetal elements; however, it relied on bio/geo-natural processes along with technical devices and mechanisms to achieve and optimise the atmospherically desired performance of a forest: the desired temperatures, the different humidity levels, and the air flows. Adequate trees were planted to provide oxygen for up to 1800 people. The main message of the Austrian pavilion, in relation to the theme of the expo, was to highlight the importance of oxygen and cooling air to the environment. The design team team.breathe.austria designed the space as a mini-forest that combines natural cooling systems instead of artificial air conditioning, to create its own microclimate.

Figure 06: Top view of the pavilion demonstrating the pavilion conceived as a mini forest inside a box. 2015 © team.breathe.austria/terrain: integral designs.
During a presentation at the Politecnico di Milano prior to the inauguration of the Expo and before the pavilion construction, we asked the architect if the design had been tested and experimented on a smaller scale in a laboratory, in a way to guarantee the results and the desired performance of the pavilion. The architect confirmed there was no pre-testing or experimentation of the pavilion. Thus, the making of the pavilion was an experiment that unfolded along with all the scripted and unscripted happenings, which makes the design and the making process a testing and a learning process. Another aspect of a fantasy-oriented conception of space and of a performative architecture can be found in the ‘narrative’ and the ‘interactive’ aspects inside the pavilion. Visitors walking through the different sensorial experiences were influenced by its changing topography. London-based writer, editor, and speaker Amy Fearson described the pavilion:

A snaking pathway leads into the base of the timber structure, which is raised off the ground on concrete feet. Inside, trees and bushy plants cover the majority of the exhibition space and are engulfed by clouds of mist […] Illuminated letters spell out the word BREATHE across the path. As visitors get further inside, some of the letters
disappear from sight, and those left over spell out the word EAT. This was intended to suggest a link between the content of the pavilion and the theme of the expo, which is Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life [...] The pathway climbs gently up to meet the floor level of the pavilion [...] Digital microscopes dotted around the perimeter allow visitors to closely inspect and identify the different plants and flowers featured. There are also a series of transparent cylinders containing items including feathers and fabrics. As visitors press down on handles, air is pushed into the containers, causing the contents to float upward.

An ArchDaily article detailed the following:

The pavilion’s entire floor area is densely planted with 12 Austrian forest ecotypes, ranging from mosses and shrubs to towering, 12-metre trees. In a natural, water-rich forest, cooling occurs through evapotranspiration, meaning

---

Figures 09 & 10. Schematics and conceptual sheets demonstrating the combination of natural and artificial solutions to replicate the atmosphere of an Austrian forest. 2015 © team.breathe.austria/terrain: integral designs.
the evaporation of water from flora and fauna as well as from the soil and water surface [...] the evaporative cooling process is technically augmented. While the pavilion surface area is only 560 m², thermodynamic high-pressure misting nozzles are used to activate the total evaporation surface of the pavilion vegetation, amounting to around 43,000 m² [...] Breathe.Austria succeeds in creating a unique climate zone within the pavilion [...] The effective interplay between nature and technology cools the interior space by 5 to 7° C and supplants conventional air conditioning. The pavilion produces 62.5 kg/h of oxygen – enough for 1,800 visitors. On its surface area of 560 m², Breathe. Austria achieves the equivalent of a much larger, 3-hectare natural forest. The pavilion serves as a breathing “photosynthesis collector” […] 30

The Austrian pavilion is described as an experiential space technology, where natural diversity and climatic activations collaborate and intersect. 31

Figure 11.
Interior performance and conceptual schematics. 2015 © team.breathe.austria/terrain: integral designs.
‘fabulatory’-oriented design: implications

Contemporary exhibitions spaces are tending to be more fantasy- and fabulation-oriented and increasingly performative driven. For the Italian architect and exhibition designer Italo Rota, the ‘pedagogical role of exhibitions is finished. Now it is about a simple evocative and emotional role’. The performative qualities of the exhibition space dominate all other characters, as they keep experimenting with fantasy-evocative, event-oriented, and performative-spectacular spatial qualities that are usually the result of hybrid spatial features and an imagination for a fantasy space. Director of Theatre for Social Change Pam Locker highlights that ‘the theatrical opportunities borrowed from multimedia, sound, lighting design and a range of other exhibition technologies, create interesting opportunities for storytelling through performance’. The abundance of new types of museums and exhibitions is leading to constant innovations in exhibition methods, especially with the use of new types of materials and the emergence of immateriality in exhibition design. Performance, hybrid, flexible, narrative, and interactive are spatial concepts that emerged with the rise of exhibitions that have unusual and challenging content that require creative hybrid spatial strategies in the exhibition spaces. Exhibitions are becoming highly hybrid, performative, and multitasking, where a large variety of tools are employed to make a space perform and communicate/exhibit content in a fantasy space where a fusion is conceived between the interior and the exterior, the static and the metamorphic, the virtual and the physical.

The implication of those tendencies in exhibition design and, in particular, expos, is, as described by Lavin, that spaces come to life only when the lights are on. The pavilions are becoming black boxes that only come to life when the show is on. They are appearing as black boxes waiting to be filled with screenings and projections and scheduled shows. Consequently, the performative fabulation becomes better exercised on us only when visiting the pavilions at night, or when the events and the shining lights are on, while visiting the expo during the day, and, outside the scheduled events, enable us to experience the dry side of the spatial realities including the raw structural skeletons of the pavilions.

Despite its inevitable temporariness and its quasi-event conception, the Austrian Pavilion represented the opposite to those trends; it exercised a unique immersive spatial performance and spatial fabulation through minimum use of technology, screens, smart devices, and lights.

the pavilion as a metaphor

In his famous essay ‘Exhibition Design as Metaphor of a New Modernity’, Founder of Archizoom Associati and Professor at the Polytechnic University of Milan, Andrea Branzi stated:
In the category of the design of displays [...] there are in fact all the genetic elements typical of a new modernity, which we shall call “light” and “diffuse” [...] A modernity characterized by the design of flexible or temporary environmental micro-systems, architectural subsystems.

In fact, the practice of exhibition design has always been a field where designers have tested and forecasted newer trends of spatial qualities. In this regard, Branzi’s predictions are literally happening. The spatial design practices are increasingly allowing unusual spatial systems that are metamorphic and open for the continual changes in how we inhabit and use our spaces. Unplanned functions and uses may emerge and take place in our spaces, which challenge their original spatial qualities and programme. A pavilion can be used as an illustration of a performative/fantasy-oriented interior architecture. It is a rehearsal of a performative dramaturgy, or an analysis based on performative criteria. Moreover, it is an opportunity to reflect on the concepts of performative and fabulation within the design process that shall be instrumentalised as tools that can be used in education and practice. Such analytical tools must be experiential and based on the concepts of openness, performative, flexibility, and temporality. Elaborating such analytical dramaturgical tools is necessary to study interiors as a living malleable spatial creature capable of unfolding and evolving through its lifetime, and capable of fulfilling and performing various scenographic, theatrical, metaphorical, and communicative missions, while examining a fabulatory spatial conception and a performance-driven design process.
Acknowledgements
The access to the necessary visual materials for this manuscript was supported and facilitated by studio Terrain: integral designs BDA – Prof. Klaus K. Loenhart and team Breathe.Austria.

Author biography
Ayman Kassem (1987, Lebanon), studied interior architecture at the Lebanese University and did his PhD at Politecnico di Milano. He is currently an assistant professor at Ajman University, UAE, department of interior design. His fields of interest and research include exhibition design, museum interiors, performance theories, and the concept of performative space. He is also part of the EU Cost action research project 'The geography of New Working Spaces and impact on the periphery CA18214.'
notes

03 Uwe J. Reinhardt and Philipp Teufel, New Exhibition Design 01 (Germay, Avedition, 2009), p. 39.
05 Reinhardt and Teufel, New Exhibition Design 01, p. 39.
06 Reinhardt and Teufel, New Exhibition Design 01, pp. 184–87.

11 Pedro Gadanho, ‘The Performative Turn’.

25 Uwe Brueckner, Atelier Brückner.
29 Frearson, ‘Austria’s Milan Expo Pavilion’.
30 ‘ArchDaily, ‘Austria Pavilion’.
31 Breathe.Austria, Project Concept <http://breatheaustria.at/categories/concept/> [accessed 7 July 2022].
34 Uwe J. Reinhardt and Philipp Teufel, New Exhibition Design 02 (Stuttgart: Avedition, 2010), pp. 184–187.
36 Branzi, ‘Exhibition Design’, p. 100.