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# idea journal

unbuilt interiors

vol. 21, no. 01

2024

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

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**about**

*idea journal* recognises interiors and interiority as emerging, discursive, and interdisciplinary fields of research across spatially oriented design, artistic, and architectural practices. It promotes the production of new knowledge on interiors and interiority through the critical appraisal of the conceptual, material, and social relationships between people and built environments. Uniquely, *idea journal* provides a space for scholarly engagement through the publication of both text-based and visual-based research essays. *idea journal* serves an international academic, professional, and student readership. It welcomes contributions from researchers and practitioners involved in bolstering theoretical and creative discourse on spatial design.

<https://journal.idea-edu.com>

Launched in 1999, *idea journal* is an international, double-blind peer-reviewed academic journal dedicated to publishing scholarly and practice-based research on interiors and interiority. *idea journal* is an open-access publication that produces one journal issue annually. It is a subsidiary of the parent institution IDEA—The Interior Design / Interior Architecture Educators Association.

[www.idea-edu.com](http://www.idea-edu.com)

The objectives of IDEA are:

## 1. Objects

1.1 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.

1.2 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.

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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.

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# IDEA

**this issue's provocation**

In both the research and practice of spatial design, unbuilt projects are often occluded by those that eventuate in built form. Unable to deliver genuine qualities of spatial experience, the intangibility of unbuilt interiors can be relegated to the status of 'never was', 'never made it', ideas on backup hard drives, in discarded plan drawers, and ageing materials studies.

Yet, unbuilt projects frequently foreground the ideological, cultural, and political motivations that undergird their conception. Unencumbered by municipal regulations, costs, and compromises, unbuilt interiors can maintain the breathtaking ideas that are too often redacted, conceded, or simply forgotten by the time a design physically manifests.

From the interior worlds of Étienne-Louis Boullée's *Cenotaph for Isaac Newton* (1784) to Superstudio's critique of hyper-modern domesticity in *Supersurface, The Happy Island, Project* (1971), unbuilt interiors have the capacity to challenge existing power and political constructs by uniquely contributing unassailed opinions. Instruments of persuasion, they expand discourse on the social impacts of spatial design in ways their built counterparts cannot.

Conversely, the persuasive power of unbuilt projects can be used to diminish critiques of the status quo. Hyper-realistic renders and the emergence of compelling AI imagery prime our desires to consume unbuildable images of interior luxury and grandeur. Global inflation and supply chain disruptions continue to entrench concerns about the unbuildable within aspirations of home ownership and status, impacting the values and structures of domestic occupation for those who can afford it and those who cannot.

The 2024 issue of *idea journal* sought contributions that explore the history, theory, practice, and futures of unbuilt interiors. In expanded discourses on the social impacts of spatial design, authors were asked to consider what role archived, artificial, and unachievable designs have on the ideological, cultural, and political contexts of their times.

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