

The Public Interior Space Within Louvre Abu Dhabi Dome: A Visual Reflection

Karim Musfy, Marco Sosa, Lina Ahmad

Zayed University
United Arab Emirates

Abstract

What defines an interior space? Is a traditional threshold the only building element considered as a clear component demarcating interiority from the outside environment? Could light or water be just as clear? How can scale challenge the identification of an internal space? Is a living space more identifiable as an interior volume? What about an internal courtyard for a family house outlining the beginning of a nation or the opposite extreme in the time-space continuum, a 24,000 square meters domed roof over a series of intimate spaces establishing a nation's cultural intention internationally? Can a central space act as a gravitational point to other space fragments and elements? Can the ephemerality of the space bind it together in a unique, memorable encounter?

We set ourselves to answer these questions using different phenomenological responses methods including digital video, photography, drawings, and architectural observations. All depict different layered trajectories through the segments of the architectural strata that compose a cultural enclosure, such as Jean Nouvel's Louvre Abu Dhabi. As we transverses through space and time, we use regional typologies to create a timeline spectrum connecting regional context, culture and architecture, attempting to emphasise the interiority qualities of the space under the dome.

Keywords: interiority, space in flux, interior-exterior, public space, animated interior

Introduction



Figure 1
Rain of Light (Image
by authors)

Rain of Light is a poetic description that draws its reference from shade and shadow effects of palm trees and traditional UAE palm frond houses. This phenomenon is now associated with Abu Dhabi's Louvre (Abu Dhabi Louvre, n.d.) eight-layered dome, made out of complex geometric structures that appear to be floating above an inner space defined by the museum's white building structures. The spatial atmosphere has a dynamic quality, derived from the constant changing interplay of light and shadow passing through the perforation and the subtle light reflection of hard and soft surface areas. The surrounded seawater adds another layer composed of sea smell, wave sound, and tidal awareness through the water surface interaction with the museum building.

The notion of space interiority stems from the unique spatial experience of the various bounding surfaces enveloping the space giving it a sense of enclosure. This inner space interacts with the museum galleries through the opening, directed view, and overlooking points. As visitors go through the galleries, they encounter framed views of this interior-exterior inner courtyard space. They experience passing through it and are then reminded of it through glimpses and framed views from different levels, thus revisiting it from different viewpoints. Kayak enthusiasts also enter the space through the water surface, crossing the inside-outside boundary. They continue to experience the sea level while simultaneously feeling the encompassing boundary of the arching dome space.

The area houses several formal activities curated through the careful placement of designed elements within the space. The elements include several art piece installations, the eating area associated with the museum restaurant and the carefully positioned steps

directing the visitors' view to the dynamics of the intruding water. The courtyard also houses an array of informal activities. It is a place where many visitors choose to spend an evening, socialise and catch up with the events of their day or week, or just take a walk around to admire the view of the city. Quite often, one also hears voices of children and toddlers running around, taken by and reacting to the different spatial experience. Visitors linger around, enchanted by the light and water symphonic interplay.

The courtyard is one of the very few public interior spaces within the Abu Dhabi city that offers its visitors an ambient atmospheric quality that reflect the time of the day, the season of the year and the daily atmospheric conditions. It arguably reinstates, within the boundaries of a contemporary setting, the lost and almost forgotten link the local inhabitants once had with their environments—a transient state, feeling and awareness through conforming to the environment's condition.

This 'public interiors' fits within Manuel de Solà Morales description of privately-owned public interiors (de Solà Morales, 1992). It also combines and mediates between the primary and secondary public spaces as classified by Kristiaan Borret (Borret et al., 2012). Through this paper, we are proposing to revisit and re-experience the space, to reflect and document through common observational research methods. The intention is to collate observational data from different times of the day and several days of the week within an identified time frame, as well as from different and varied points of view and elevational levels.

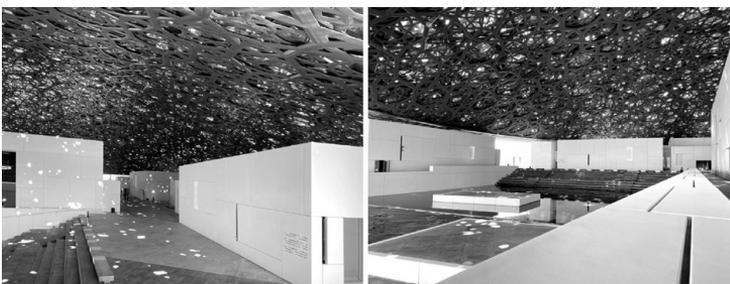


Figure 2
Interior space/
courtyard space
(Image by authors)

The space under the dome of the Louvre can be perceived as an extraordinary public interior space as part of a specific context and framework in Abu Dhabi. This public space begins to allude to a large courtyard space bringing together visitors under the dome. This extraordinary space can also be experienced and contextualised through striations and the seven ephemeral senses. Since this domed

space is constantly in flux, visitors will most likely encounter and experiment with various playful ideas and experiences previously vocalised during the Fluxus movement.

Brief Overview—Public Interiors, Interiority Attributes

Public interiors have been identified as an important phenomenon in various cities, contributing to the culture, social evolution and transformation. Over time, these public interiors have intertwined, influenced and integrated themselves into the social fabric (Harteveld, 2014). Public interiors have been explored and given several definitions over the years. In 1969, Banham's description of the interiority concept suggested the deviation from bourgeois private homes to include internal enclosures irrespective of their class, typology, or representation (Banham, 1969). More recently, McCarthy (2005) identified control, boundary, exteriority, habitation, bodies, time, and atmosphere as attributes of a changing perception for a public interior, one that is reliant on social, cultural, physical and technological attributes. In 2010, public interiority was further affirmed through by reiterating its expansion beyond the boundaries of the 'domestic environment', thus affirming the inclusion of public space and its associated characteristics of mobility, communication and consumption (Peressut, 2010). Today, many of our daily used urban settings, influenced by the programmatic use and inhabitation nature, exhibit several intertwined interior-exterior characteristics, thus blurring the boundary between the two (Atmodiwirjo et al., 2015).

Interior space is defined by its enclosures and is contained within boundaries separating it from the exterior realm. Interiors are intimate environments that constitute an integral part of their inhabitants' lives. They house many forms of interactions and embody intricate spatial relationships that conform to programmatic typologies and various forms of inhabitation. Materiality, finishes, acoustics, furniture, colour, light are amongst the interior design elements that form the occupant-human interface (Dodsworth, 2009).

In other words, the interior is an intramural arrangement of any built environment that actualizes a specific interiority. The interior is the condition of possibility that allows us to represent these (inter-) subjective dimensions: power relations, intimacy, (semi-) public encounters, imagination, memory, attention, desires and understanding. (Ionescu, 2018, p. 2)

The following visual essay departs equally from the scientific and artistic writing practices and explores a number of recollections, various spatial contexts, and retrospectives of spatial exhibits and

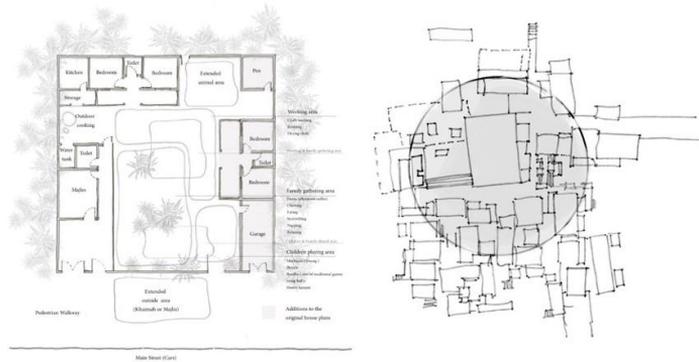
encounters. Through our journey, we intend to shed light on an extraordinary space enjoyed and visited by many. We depart from the identified boundaries and narrate our experience as reflective users of the space. The following text highlights the creative angle and experimental approach. How can various ephemeral elements come together to articulate a spatial experience? How do these elements relate and intertwine with the stationed building components? How does the notion of time become an expression of the spatial experience?

Contextual Relation

To many, the UAE is perceived as a global international metropolis with very little association to any regional and climatic settings. Even though the statement applies to many of the city's contexts and dwelling, the identified interior stems and very much relates to the immediate past. Having the exterior be part of the interior domain is a notion that is rooted within the Emirati culture. The UAE National House was introduced around the 1960s with the intention to replace the dominant at the time ephemeral housing typologies. The first basic model was based on a two-bedroom unit on an 80 x 80 feet gross land area. It evolved through the following two decades to include more units and several varied organisations. However, within its evolution, a main typology of the house interior encompassing a central exterior-interior space remained the same. The National House was oriented inwards, opening to a central courtyard, considered to be the family main communal place where most of the daily activities took place. Despite the presence of the exterior elements, this part of the house was regarded as an interior one. It was seen as the heart of the household, housing many activities associated with the interior space, including working and family gathering areas (Elsheshtawy, 2016).

Despite the different scale, program and typologies, we see distinct similarities between the National House courtyard and Abu Dhabi Louvre exterior-interior space. Both spaces are inward-oriented and are enveloped by the more specific program units. They act as central gravitating points to which the surrounding buildings conform to and open into, thus acting as mediating zones for entering and exiting. They house an intricate array of overlapping informal activities, directed but the various relaxed regions formed around the various elements placed within. Both are regarded as private spaces that belong to and are accessed by their members. Just like the family members who lingered in the courtyard throughout the seasons, visitors to the museum and city dwellers alike linger in the courtyard enchanted by the curated and encountered experiences.

Figure 3
UAE National
House and Louvre
Abu Dhabi; similar
courtyard notion
(Images by authors)



Under the Dome of Louvre Abu Dhabi—Reflections

We have identified the space enclosed by the dome as the subject of their research, observation, and investigation. It is arguably an extraordinary interior that links to the city's culture, interacts with the visitors and forms an extension to the museum galleries. Equally curated, the display is formed by an array of everchanging light that penetrates, reflects and refracts through the various static and in-motion surface. The space is sheltered, enveloped and defined by the 9 layer, 180 m diameter dome, supported by four masterfully hidden towers and thus appear to be gently floating above the museum buildings (Happold, 2021). With several axes and framed views into the city, the space is inward-oriented. The passers' view is directed towards the inner layer of the dome or one of the vertical or horizontal surfaces beneath.

The space under the Dome at Louvre Abu Dhabi offers a new kind of public interior space to the city and its inhabitants. Excluding the city's outdoor public spaces, most current public interiors are associated with a consumerism activity. They include the various shopping malls located within the city centre and its periphery, housing an abundance of public activities located close to the retail place. The countries drastic rapid socio-economic change brought upon the commercialisation of the nation's oil and gas reserve has led to shifts in the lifestyle of its inhabitants, including a massive increase in consumer spending (World Health Organization, 2006). This had a direct reflection on the city's urban structure. Today the city is considered one of the highest per-capita retail shopping centers densities in the world. (Mourtada-Sabbah et al., 2008).

The space is part of an under dome associated with Louvre Abu Dhabi, one of a series of museum planned on Saadiyat cultural district area (Oxford Business Group, 2007; The Government of Abu Dhabi, 2009).

Nevertheless, the outdoor space constituting approximately 41% of the museum gross floor area, situated under a 90 m radius dome. To the authors' knowledge, it is the only public space in Abu Dhabi not associated with mall-centre. Despite being enclosed, defined and enveloped, it mediates between outdoor and indoor, and brings together an interesting combination of both characters. Further, a myriad of banal gestures and ordinary activities are intertwined with more formal programmed ones, making it in our eyes an example of an extraordinary interior-exterior space that they chose to reflect on and communicate its allure and attractive charm.

We utilise a phenomenological framework to describe the experience of walking under the dome. They refer to the genetic theme, one of three Husserlian phenomenology parts that Anthony Steinbock (1998) further developed to explore and study architectural phenomena. The theme is associated with an architectural stance, with the experience of seeing and with space perception; "a constitution of sense and meaning through the development or genesis of individuals" (Tweed, 2000, p. 8). As such, genetic analyses focuses the "attention on the passive synthesis of sense and meaning, through sedimentation, association, memory, etc" (Tweed, 2000, p. 8). Through this framework, we use photographs, sketch drawings, a film, and the written word as tools for spatial investigation and reflection. Our reflections are generated through inhabiting and using the space at different times of the day.

Louvre Abu Dhabi: Extraordinary Interior

Here is a reflective video and sound recorded tale of our meandering journey through the extra-ordinary courtyard at Louvre Abu Dhabi (Ahmad, et al., 2021). Our discoveries include *Strata*, *Ephemeral Senses*, *Living Space*, and *Space in Flux*.

<https://youtu.be/oHIZ90ldmK4>



Scene 1: Strata

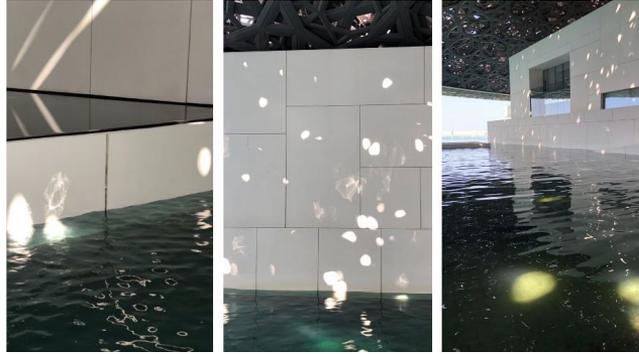


Figure 4
Striations (Image
by authors)



Figure 5
Idiosyncrasies
(Image capture from
film by authors)

09h00 Idiosyncrasies

We discovered strong relationships across horizontal and vertical strata lines that are distinctively found and captured in the Louvre's courtyard with the aim to propagate new meaning. Once we carefully assessed the horizontal strata lines across the courtyard, distinct layers seemed juxtaposed, collapsed, folded, transformed, and evolved into a harmonious identity. The idiosyncrasies of the sky, dome, air, ground, water, and underground bands were perceived and appreciated as unique musical instruments yet collectively working together in union to form a symphony orchestra.



Figure 6
Reflection &
Refraction (Image
capture from film
by authors)

10h00 Reflection & Refraction

We appreciated how the dome adopts a horizontal band inviting the movement of dancing light, the sounds of chirping birds, and all forms of glances, peeps, and blinks revealing the environmental setting above and below the courtyard space. The dome structure collects the sky, air, ground, water, and underground into a fascinating and absurd datum of new meaning and identity. The dome begins to frame the endless and everchanging blue sky into pixels of light reflected and refracted both inwards and outwards.



Figure 7
Sound of Silence
(Image capture from
film by authors)

11h00 Sound of Silence

We noticed the dome houses the flying birds and, in effect, substantiates the structure as part of the environment. The air travels through the peepholes of the dome leaving whistling air across the courtyard. The sound of silence found in nature are rekindled within the courtyard. The ground level reflecting the dome's presence pulls in the movement of pedestrians, connective platforms, endless bridges, changing materials, all in harmony.

12h00 Lunch

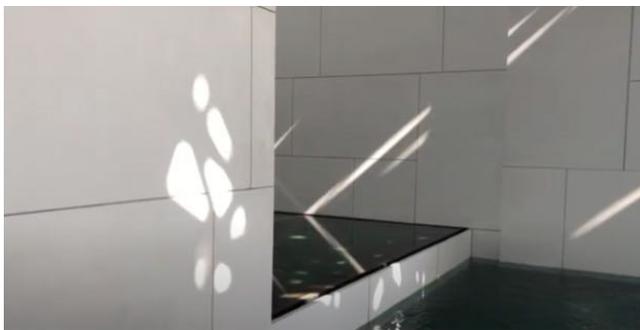


Figure 8
Dialogue (Image
capture from film
by authors)

13h00 Dialogue

We noticed how the water line subsides and dialogues with the ground line perimeter of the courtyard as such capturing the fluctuating tides, the seamless movement of fish, the snooping and curious kayaks along with other intricacies as part of the boundaries. The dome begins to establish relationships, affiliations, interactions, reminders, and at times symbols and codes with the environment. It contours the environmental layers into a seamless continuity found below in the courtyard.



Figure 9
Strata (Image capture
from film by authors)

14h00 Strata

Strata are typically formed during the layering down of sediment or deposition. Bedding planes are surfaces that separate a stratum from another—the strata and striations found in architecture during the Renaissance period depicting the Piano Nobile. During the Italian Renaissance period, a space of the building was divided into a rusticated ground floor, main floor (Piano Nobile), and second main floor for the purpose of views, lighting, and odours found on the street level. We uncovered how the courtyard establishes natural striations of light, sound, smell, and views depending on the time of day and season. These haphazard striations reflect the architectural beauty of the dome by narrating the raw conditions. The random and irregular associations of horizontal, vertical, and at times diagonal incisions are beautifully crafted both within and under the dome. The chaotic order of such markings seamlessly flowing through space eradicates the notion of order—form disconnects from function, scale no longer adheres to space, proportions are mismatched, and time freezes.

15h00 Synchronised Harmony

Mysteriously, harmony is somewhat synchronised into a new meaning of order. An orchestra requires musicians and instruments to create and play a perfect symphony. This symbiosis we detected is played by both the users of the space and the impressions of the dome, creating a flawless symphony of elevated momentary senses.



Figure 10
Synchronised
Harmony (Image
capture from film
by authors)



Figure 11
Un-private Territories
(Image capture from
film by authors)

16h00 Un-private Territories

The Louvre's courtyard negotiates limitations across public and private perimeters by setting new meaning to un-private territories of interest. These terrains are both sheltered yet accessible, unforthcoming however outgoing, restricted nonetheless public, privy but underprivileged, and both private and public. The user experiencing the courtyard space determines to be in a synonym or antonym experiential moment of that space.

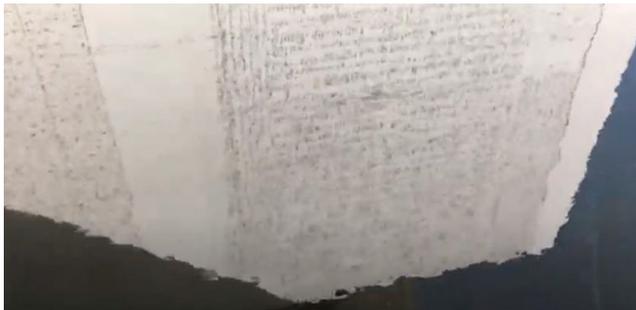


Figure 12
Then, Now, Later,
Far or Near (Image
capture from film by
authors)

17h00 Then, Now, Later, Far or Near

The courtyard also brings together the exchanges of then, now, later, far or near joined together into a balanced space of void. A uniformity is found in the void, without distance, of the sound of silence, merging

everything into oneness. The user begins to experience the qualities of being one, single, and unique within this space. The viewer self-proclaims an identity by means of this architectural space. A feeling of affinity to that space is captured when predetermined perceptions are released in order to belong to this place. A globalised place understood by all cultures under a common denominator—the dome.



Figure 13
Oneness (Image
capture from film
by authors)

18h00 Oneness

The dome's spatial outcomes set out a formula enjoyed and cherished by users of various cultures and traditions. To every visitor, there is a different story being told, identifying a unique and one-off encounter of events. This experiential oneness of the visitor, to nature, to environment, to architecture and interiority, is what makes this courtyard so magical.

Scene 2: Ephemeral Senses



Figure 14. Senses
(Image by authors)

Our seven senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, movement, and body position were vibrant, musical, aromatic, tasty, thriving, fluctuating, and bodily in union under this paranormal and theatrical dome. We experienced and cherished the magical vision of dancing

light synchronised in space; the intricate auditory sounds of shifting water tides, chirping birds, and sporadic echoes of sound and silence were heard in accord; the effect of scent uplifting our palates of nature; tactile feelings of materiality mixed with the natural environment enlightened our perception of tectonics; and our body position to our vestibular movements relative to our proportions and scale through the spatial experience became significantly playful and enjoyable.

Our seven senses were suddenly acute and eminent once we entered the space under the dome. Like the tourist's experience of the flooding in Venice within St. Mark's square, the aqua sonata of tides can be experienced in a kayak around and under the space of the dome.

Scene 3: Living Space

John Hejduk's (1985) *Mask of Medusa* engages the 'masque' as a fascinating mode to recognise the architectural identity through craftsmanship within a given place and space. It is mentioned that identity can be solved through this Masque. If an architectural space can become part of a meaning tied to nowhere or solely exposed to a linguistic communicating itself, it must then be left in silence somewhere off the threshold of a void (Hejduk, 1985). Within UAE National Houses, the courtyard is perceived as the family's common space, where different member congregates and many of the activities common between several members of the household take place. Since the home remains an archetype for programmatic novelty, this mega room courtyard identifies challenges such as scale, nature, typology, context, functionality, proportions, and materiality. The hierarchical identity of this courtyard transmutes into a new set of personalities. The courtyard begins to bring an outside narrative to ground a dynamic system for mapping peculiarities in the present time. It also questions existing relationships to a known historical typology. The purpose of living space is to gather a family under a roof of commonalities. As such, the mega room dome sets a common ground for diverse walks of life and families to discover and identify these agreements and harmonies. Once we understand that architecture and interiority are related to different worlds, we recognise its symbolic nature that architecture and interiority are never simply about themselves.

The living space is characteristically spatially crafted by the family itself. This room, also known as the family room, comprises shared activities such as lounging, sharing, entertainment, eating, playing, reading, and the like. The space embodies essential behaviours needed to form a hearth where the family can congregate. A

congregational space allows the family member to selectively retain their individualistic attributes while sharing other aspects among family members. The space, therefore, becomes an active place for family members to express their extroverted thoughts and retain their introverted secrets and mysteries. Activities as such these can be found in the mega room of the courtyard. Similar shared activities and preserved mysteries are encountered while wandering under the dome. Visitors become open to sharing their spontaneous encounters with strangers while others mask their discoveries to themselves. The mega room is a treasure hunt of interiority discoveries adjacent to a museum space rich with revealed artefacts and art. The idea of one's ability to oscillate between the space of the discovered past and the space of the mysterious present evokes a captivating spatial experience for the visitor.

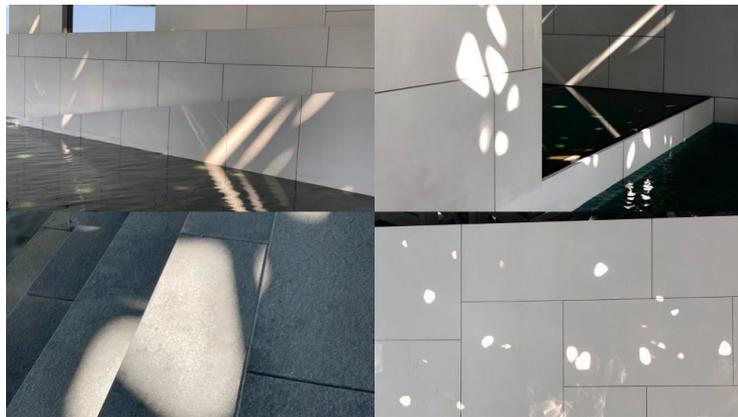


Figure 15
Senses (Image
by authors)

Space in Flux

During the 1960s and 1970s, an international and interdisciplinary group of designers, artists, poets, and composers known as Fluxus decided to engage in experimental art and design by underlining the process rather than the finished outcome. The process is a powerful tool to understand both art and design. It begins to describe, question, examine, and assess a design rather than instinctively selecting a design. The interdisciplinary process involves juggling around design as it recounts narrative. Fluxus was known for its experimental contributions to musical compositions, performance events, and radical art to generate a new art form and identity. The idea of intensely simple spaces can generate rich, powerful, and complex interfaces that contribute to unexpected outcomes. We seek to understand and describe how simple elements interact by transgressing boundaries and perimeters. This shift evolves naturally into space in flux. The courtyard space is in constant flux, innately

progressing and reminding us of the Fluxus key ideas and messages. Unlike any artistic movements, the Fluxus doctrines of anti-art are echoed throughout this playful courtyard at the Louvre.



Figure 16
Space in Flux (Image
by authors)

As I see it, Fluxus was a laboratory. The research program of the Fluxus laboratory is characterised by twelve ideas: globalism, the unity of art and life, intermedia, experimentalism, chance, playfulness, simplicity, implicativeness, exemplativism, specificity, presence in time, and musicality. (Friedman, 2007, p. 3)

The courtyard echoes similarities of those twelve ideas to experiential situations and moments found under the majestic dome.

As marrying art to life is a key factor to Fluxus, the courtyard identifies the viewer's existence vis-a-vis a cultural platform of global art within a traditionally rich and proud society of the United Arab Emirates. Once in the courtyard, the boundaries between art to self are blurred, confused, lost and forgotten in contrast to the implicate socio-cultural time-based story narrated inside the museum. In other words, cultural art to existence is part of a fused orientation, a single environment perceived under this dome.

As intermedia serves as a suitable vehicle for Fluxus, thresholds found within the courtyard establish a seamless continuity across the everchanging space in flux. The courtyard visitor undergoes a treasure hunt by overtaking plenty of thresholds and perimeters in order to seek out countless transparencies into uncharted spaces of adjacencies. As Fluxus applied experimentalism to a scientific form of art, the courtyard measures, records, scales, graphs, and diagrams precise experiential moments in time. These moments

are as intense as planet discoveries observed using a telescope—a precise mathematical dome that delivers environmental outcomes in an instant blink of time. The experience of the courtyard can best be defined by chance. Whether it is a fate of time, day, weather or season, the spatial pursued experience becomes whimsical and improvisational. We wandered arbitrarily through the courtyard in pursuit of a sudden awareness form to function. As chance embodies a new form, the random chance becomes evolutionary. Both random and evolutionary chance play a role in experimentation found in Fluxus.

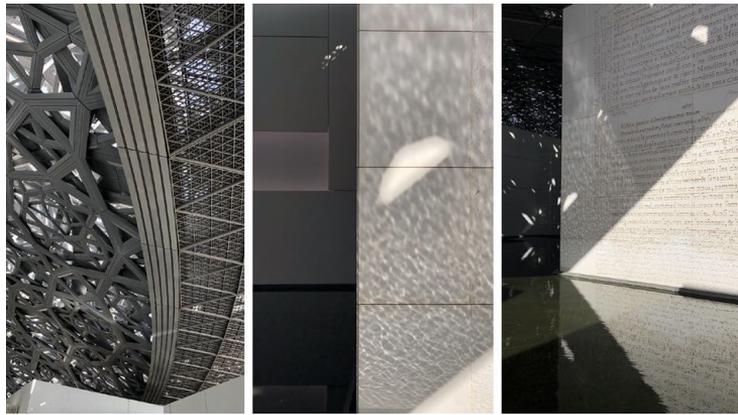


Figure 17
Edges (Image
by authors)

The courtyard plays a paradigm shift with our fundamental understanding of our senses. For example, our rudimentary understanding of light and sound becomes distorted while under the dome as if a prank is being played. We tend to perceive an architectural space by form, function, scale and style. Once these perceptions are unrecognisable under the dome, the spatial experience becomes novice, raw and animalistic. Those moments of playfulness captured under the dome makes us enjoy and belong to that place—the courtyard. Fluxus describes simplicity as the association of truth and beauty, an impression of elegance.

The dome is arguably truthful, beautiful and collectively elegant. The juxtaposition of simplistic ecological shifts under this complex structural dome discloses the elegance and sophistication of this courtyard space. The dome amalgamates environmental science under a calculated mathematical structure. For instance, the perimeter of the dome frames and reveals moments of rains of light forcing their way out of the apertures found in the roof. These wonderful tubular shapes of light begin to remind us of icicles as part of architecture. The dome houses thousands of apertures where light passes arbitrarily as a controlled shower. A visitor's movement

and place within this space can be selectively regulated by the degree of exposure to light—a playfulness of aperture control to light haphazardness to bodily movement.

The dome's specificity embodies a self-contained structure of parts. Those parts produce ambiguous moments in space. This is similar to artworks relying on ambiguity to generate a meaningful meaning. It is in the details of the dome that makes the collective whole of the space. The architectural tectonics and logic of the dome shine through the light to reveal its details and intricacies. The numerous apertures found in the cosmic dome demarcate the f-numbers found in a photographic lens. We begin to appreciate the dome that acts like a lens with its circumstantial degree of openings anywhere from an f/1.4 to f/8.0 focal length. An aperture portrays the size of the hole that allows the light, while the shutter speed indicates the time required for the opening to allow the light to reach a place in space. We can simulate that the dome's gigantic diaphragm housing all those intricate apertures directly responds to nature utilising various shutter speeds of light allowed in this space.

Under the dome, time is ephemeral. A visitor experiences a temporary moment in the present time. Once there, time is endless and with no limitations. A visitor's existence is captured under the dome in relation to time and space.

Fluxus works often embody a different sense of duration as: musical compositions lasting days or weeks, performances that take place in segments over decades, even artworks that grow and evolve over equally long spans. Time, the great condition of human existence, is a central issue in Fluxus and in the work that artists in the Fluxus circle create. (Friedman, 2007, p. 21)

The space that belongs to the dome sets a stage for innate and real performances in present time, day, week, month and even year to reflect evolved long spans of time. The earlier understanding of time to presence turns out to be convoluted. Water tides in relation to the courtyard's edge are recorded and experienced in these evolved times.

As musicality is a significant idea to Fluxus, it also plays an important role under the dome. Musicality is alleged in Fluxus as any partaker can play the music. Think of a visitor aimlessly wandering through the courtyard under the dome, absorbed by the symbiosis of sound, water, light, and air known in both numerous phases and in each distinctive state of sensory experiences in the present time. That

equally rich experience symphony of sound, water, light and air takes shape differently over endless time.



Figure 18
Reflections (Image
by authors)

Contrary to the internal museum, the courtyard space sets the stage by drawing extraordinary parallels between the public, objects, and the city. Events are unremittingly performed throughout the space in flux. The incredible dancing light meets the sound of air, water and birds while capturing time-based frames of the surrounding environment. The performance is both magical, spontaneous, hybrid, and synchronised. The spectator utilising the courtyard becomes part of the show, whereas the art displayed inside the museum is the show perceived by the viewer. A reversed experience takes place between the internal museum and the external courtyard. The museum engulfs the viewer through a historical timeline of past and future experiences. At the same time, while the courtyard turns the viewer into a present performer as part of the naturally evolving environment. The courtyard unites art and life through a simple playfulness of environmental shifts and readings.



Figure 19
Courtyard space—A
theatre space of light
and shadow (Image
by authors)

A black box theatre is an open, flexible and adaptable performance space that does not require fixed seating. The theatre is blackened out to eliminate distractions and control the ideal quantity and quality of light required, similar to a dark room for photography. The black also acts as a *tabula rasa*, a blank and clean slate to set off from. In effect, the actors and musicians can perform free of any strings attached—natural to pure movements and sounds translated into matchless performances. The Louvre courtyard space addresses similar conditions utilising its natural ecosystem. The space below the dome adjusts and complies with its environment setting a unique stage for visitors to experience. Under the dome, the light transmitted by the structure projects light raining, dancing, twirling, swaying, deflecting, diverting, and hopping through the surfaces of the space. This natural and spontaneous enactment collapses the present time into skipping moments of the display. Under the ploy of this playful dome, the visitor begins to experience ephemeral wisdom of pleasure and gratification. The showery white light replaces the blackout found in the black box, leaving the viewer in a spatial illusion of magical discoveries (Friedman, 2007).

Conclusion

What defines an interior space and the association between it and urban space is a topic that has been discussed and interrogated by a number of authors over the past few years (Attiwill et al., 2015). For us, the interiority notion stems from the feeling of enclosure and defined envelop—a sheltered area that offers a breeze from the harsh outdoor environment and a mechanically controlled indoor one. It forms the unique spatial experiences that are testament to timeless forms of occupation and inhabitation. It is a fragmented yet connected series of spaces whose accumulation forms the holistic experience. The inner space courtyard creates the central gravitational space. It does not only houses carefully placed activities within the architectural elements and tectonics. It evokes a framework of contextualisation, a vertical to horizontal layering of striations, brings into play the ephemeral seven senses of a being, sets the stage as a shared living space, and finally acts as a space in flux characterised by a laboratory of ideas and spatial experiences. The courtyard space under the dome can be easily identified as a public interior resonating cunning and paranormal interiority attributes appealing to the user. It stands as an example of an interior atmosphere where interior-exterior boundaries are merged and dissolved.

The space under the dome of the Louvre is an extraordinary public interior space living in a dynamic place—Abu Dhabi. This public space draws comparisons to a sheltered, cozy and private space by

inviting visitors from all walks of life under this distinctive dome. The experience of this extraordinary space through striations, ephemeral senses, associations to Fluxus, and the black box theatre leaves us in awe. It is never the same. Multiple visits and continuous observations will inevitably elucidate other properties, relations and allegories. The amazement experienced by us under this remarkable domed space is what should make an architectural space extraordinary.

Figure 20
Light (Image
by authors)



Acknowledgements

All images and film are copyright of the authors.

References

- Ahmad, L., Musfy, K., & Sosa, M. (2021, Feb 9). Interior Strata: Louvre Abu Dhabi [Video]. Youtube. <https://youtu.be/oHIZ90ldmK4>
- Atmodiwirjo, P., Yatmo, Y. A., & Ujung, V. A. (2015). Outside interior: Traversed boundaries in a Jakarta urban neighbourhood. *IDEA Journal*, 15(1), 78–101. <https://doi.org/10.37113/ideaj.vi0.267>
- Attiwill, S., Giunta, E. E., Fassi, D., Crespi, L., & Hermida, B. (2015). Urban + interior. *IDEA Journal*, 15(1), 2–11. <https://doi.org/10.37113/ideaj.vi0.266>
- Banham, R. (1984). *The architecture of the well-tempered environment*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Borret, K., De Somer, P., De Wever, H., Haerens, R., Tan, P., Veken, K.V., & Vermaut, Y. (2012). *Urban development in Antwerp: Designing Antwerp*. Stad Antwerpen. https://www.antwerpen.be/docs/Stad/Stadsvernieuwing/9746949_urbandevlopment_English.pdf

- Coles, J., & House, N. (2007). *The fundamentals of interior architecture*. AVA Publishing.
- de Solà Morales, M. (1992). Openbare en collectieve ruimte: De verstedelijking van het private als nieuwe uitdaging. *OASE*, 33, 3–8.
- Dodsworth, S. (2009). *The fundamentals of interior design*. AVA Academia.
- Elshestawy, Y. (2016). *Transformations: The Emirati national house*. Abu Dhabi: National Pavilion United Arab Emirates.
- Friedman, K. (2007). Twelve fluxus ideas. *The Radical Designist A Design Culture Journal*, 1(1), 1–27. http://unidcom.iade.pt/radicaldesignist/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/001_07.pdf
- Happold, B. (2021, January 20). *Louvre Abu Dhabi: Dome*. Buro Happold. <https://www.burohappold.com/projects/louvre-abu-dhabi-dome/>
- Harteveld, M. G. A. D. (2014). *Interior public space: On the mazes in the network of an urbanist* [Doctoral thesis, TU Delft]. TU Delft Library.
- Hejduk, J. (1985). *Mask of Medusa: Works 1947–1983*. Rizzoli International Publications.
- Ionescu, V. (2018). The interior as interiority. *Palgrave Communications*, 4(1), 1–5. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1057/s41599-018-0088-6>
- Louvre Abu Dhabi. (2020, September 14). *Louvre Abu Dhabi, About, Architecture*. <https://www.louvreabudhabi.ae/en/about-us/architecture>
- McCarthy, C. (2005). Toward a definition of interiority. *Space and Culture*, 8(2), 112–125. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1206331205275020>
- Mourtada-Sabbah, N., al-Mutawa, M., Fox, J. W., & Walters, T. (2008). Media as social matrix in the United Arab Emirates. In A. Alsharekh & R. Springborg (Eds.), *Popular culture and political identity in the Arab Gulf states* (pp. 121–142). Saqi.
- Oxford Business Group, (2007). *The report: Abu Dhabi 2007*. Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority.
- Peressut, L. B. (2010). Parole d'interni/Interiors words. In L. B. Peressut, I. Forino, G. Postiglione, R. Rizzi, M. Averna, F. Lanz, & C. Rubessi (Eds.), *Interior wor(l)ds* (pp. 21–31). Umberto Allemandi&C.

- Steinbock, A. J. (1998). Husserl's static and genetic phenomenology: Translator's introduction to two essays. *Continental Philosophy Review*, 31(2), 127–152. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1010089123758>
- The Government of Abu Dhabi. (2009). *The Abu Dhabi economic vision 2030*. <https://www.actvet.gov.ae/en/Media/Lists/ELibraryLD/economic-vision-2030-full-versionEn.pdf>
- Tweed, A. C. (2000). A phenomenological framework for describing architectural experience. In *Proceedings Phenomenology and Culture Conference* (pp. 1–9). University College Cork.
- World Health Organization (2006). *Working together for health: The World Health Report 2006*. https://www.who.int/whr/2006/whr06_en.pdf