Shifting Interiority:
Changing Encounters With Our Environment

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During COVID-19 pandemic, the whole world has witnessed and experienced dramatic changes in all aspects of life. As we adapt our everyday lives to restrictions and limitations to fight the pandemic, it also has become a trigger for us to rethink and re-position knowledge on spatial design disciplines. This *Interiority* issue compiles contributions that respond to a special call for papers that address these questions: How does the pandemic, including its impacts from lockdowns and physical distancing, affect how we think about interior and architecture? What lessons can we learn from this situation that we can use in future interior and architectural spaces and practices? How does the idea of interiority shift in this challenging situation?

The main priority in keeping virus transmission at bay to protect public health has shifted the focus of our spatial knowledge and practice. Research and practice have indicated that the built environment plays a critical role as part of "the transmission vectors" for the spread of the disease (Dietz et al., 2020, p. 3). Modern architecture has been preoccupied with the idea of hygiene and cleanliness, along with the important role of sunlight, air circulation and open spaces in the design principles (Overy, 2007; Schrank & Ekici, 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic has elicited further awareness on how knowledge about environmental qualities, spatial configurations and surface performance can minimise the transmission of disease within various spatial settings.

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The COVID-19 pandemic, as with other previous pandemic events in human history (such as Spanish flu, Ebola, SARS and MERS), provides some lessons learned that can transform the idea of our built environment and how we navigate within such a transformation. The pandemic event becomes an opportunity to "reset and reshape our built environment" (Megahed & Ghoneim, 2020, p. 4), triggering a rethinking of various research and practice agendas that need to be explored and developed further.

The critical concern over regulating physical distance to minimise disease transmission brings forward the issues of interiority at various scales. Transactions between bodies and surfaces or objects in an environment is understood differently, as physical contact tends to be minimised. Spatial adaptation and alteration become necessary in various settings to respond to everyday-life changes, as well as the need for protection. Physical interactions among individuals and the configuration of space gain a new dimension due to distancing requirements and changing communication media. The celebration of virtual media emerge as a result of adjustments to the limited physical interaction. The dominant role of virtual media in everyday life during the pandemic has shifted our relationship with space, generating different modes of encounter with space, redefining the role of sensorial and spatial engagement, and eventually defining a new kind of interior and interiority.

The articles in this *Interiority* issue propose various perspectives to examine the idea of interiority during the pandemic. The pandemic events trigger some important questions on the nature of encounters in public spaces and our engagement with architecture and interior contexts. In the first article, Rochus Urban Hinkel speculates on how our urban interior will shift in the near future of *Pandemicene*. Reflecting on some critical moments during the past few months of the COVID-19 outbreak, as well as reflecting on historical pandemic moments, he envisions a future for the interior as a mixed reality, along with various social and political consequences.

Ying-Lan Dann and Liz Lambrou elaborate further on the opportunities provided by alternative forms of engagement and encounters with the built environment through the idea of digital *flânerie*. Drawing on Walter Benjamin's idea of *flânerie*, some experiments in the design studio demonstrate various techniques of virtual engagement with the 'sites.' Lina Ahmad, Marco Sosa and Karim Musfy present another discussion on the shift of interior design teaching methodology and the transformation of representation media through enforced online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. These examples of practices suggest possibilities for how design activities and engagement with

the project sites may shift, while simultaneously eliciting theoretical discourses on the meaning of contexts and experiences, as well as emerging forms of representation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has limited everyday activities and movement to within the home environment's boundaries. The role of domestic space as the main setting for everyday spatial practice becomes more significant than ever before and poses challenges for the future of domestic space design (Makhno, 2020). The next articles examine various aspects of the domestic environment in relation to the pandemic. Afifah Karimah and Kristanti Dewi Paramita revisit the built environment's layers by examining how domestic spatial layers are adapted to pandemic conditions. The merging of layers, the formation of new layers and the reconfiguration of multiple layers have resulted from various domestic strategies to achieve the spatial conditions and qualities required to protect household spaces and activities. David T. De Celis shared his personal experiences adapting his family's Queen Anne-style home as family activities shift to home spaces. He highlights several key aspects of domestic interior design resulting from the negotiation between features of the original style and necessary transformations during the pandemic.

As the domestic environment plays an ever-increasing significance in our everyday life, comfort and convenience within the domestic spaces become increasingly critical. The qualities of domestic space may also be determined by the role of occupants in ordering and organising the interior. In the final article in this issue, Elena Marco, Katie Williams and Sonja Oliveira present an elaborate analysis of 'stuff' in the domestic environment. They propose a conceptual framework to understand why and how our home environment is stuffed with our personal possessions. Such a framework becomes an important basis for the future design of the domestic environment that takes into account the personal values, life cycles and identity as manifested in the material possession.

These articles demonstrate various strategies and transformations in response to the pandemic situation, leading to a new kind of interior reality on various scales. Such transformations reveal some critical aspects of interiority that emerge as a new reality; they are manifested in alternative forms of spatial encounters, the merging of the real and the virtual, and the adaptation and transformation of interior layers. These are only a few of the many changes that the pandemic has triggered. Understanding these emerging aspects of interiority suggests possibilities on how our interior and architectural design practices may be expanded to respond strategically to our unpredictable future existence. The changing

everyday life and experiences, as well as the changing nature of our encounters and interactions during the pandemic, provide an opportunity to establish alternative scenarios for the future of our interior and design practice.

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