

Illusory Interior: Public Housing as Uncanny Site

Dea Aulia Widyaevan

Telkom University
Indonesia

Abstract

In 2021, Indonesia participated in the London Design Biennale, focusing on the theme of Resonance. The pavilion's response centred around public housing as an uncanny site, examining the psychological barriers faced by evicted communities during their transition to public housing. This study provides a conceptual analysis by exploring how the uncanny aspects of the occupants' experiences are expressed in installation using the illusory interior as a spatial metaphor. Through practice-led research, utilising ethnographic surrealism and narrative inquiries, data was gathered and translated into artistic mediums through various experiments. The study identifies several factors contributing to the uncanny sensation among public housing occupants, based on the occupants' experiences in public housing in Rancacili (Bandung) and Penjaringan (Jakarta), such as the shift from horizontal to vertical living, inadequate unit design, the absence of communal spaces, and a lack of ownership. The pavilion design attempts to integrate design theory and art practice, showcasing how installation art can express interiority within built spaces and extend it into installation art. Here, the uncanny acts as a methodological framework for critiquing space and transforming interiority into tangible forms by interpreting the actual conditions using installation art as a medium.

Keywords: uncanny, public housing, pavilion design, interiority, illusory interior

Introduction

London Design Biennale 2021 had a central focus on exploring the profound influence of design on our lives and the choices we make. Curated by artistic director Es Devlin, London Design Biennale involved 30 national pavilions that highlight new perspectives on world issues, such as sustainability, environment, globalisation and migration, history, and humanity (Widyaeavan, 2021). To respond to the curatorial theme *Resonance*, the Indonesian pavilion—*The Invisible: Free the Space!*—explores how mass-produced public housing affects people psychologically by studying the relationship between the physical environment and individuals' perceptions. Mass-produced public housing designs frequently overlook the psychological needs of users, resulting in detrimental effects on their mental well-being and overall quality of life. The pavilion design was developed around the concept of uncanny as a synthesis of the occupants' experiences of high-rise public housing in Penjaringan (Jakarta) and Rancacili (Bandung), specifically designed to accommodate relocated evicted communities.

The pavilion aims to uncover the hidden implications of the design by portraying the emotional struggles faced by occupants who have experienced post-eviction trauma. Through the medium of arts, the pavilion serves as a manifestation of the occupants' mental space, revealing the complex and ambiguous relationship between the built design and how it is perceived in the context of public housing. Interiority explores various forms of relational construct that emerge in the interaction between space and the users; and identifies challenges that arise from these interactions (Atmodiwirjo & Yatmo, 2018). In the pavilion, interiority is defined as a relational construct that emerges from a fusion of physical and psychological space by examining the psychological gap that exists between the occupants and their environment. Interiority helps to portray the blurring boundary between what is imagined and what is perceived as real or physical space. In artistic translation, the pavilion employs the concept of a threshold to question how we perceive the relationship between the outside and inside by combining physical and virtual spaces. It aims to create new spatial ideas that define the new relationship between inside and outside, between interior and architecture.

The investigation begins by exploring how the public housing residents interpret their current living spaces, which are shaped by their social relationships, memories, and habits formed in their previous homes. In the context of home, it signifies a profound connection between the physical space and the individual's inner sense of self, which evokes memories, perception of time, directions,

and fantasies; ignites the inhabitant's temporal, emotional, and imaginative relationship with the interior (Ionescu, 2018). This study discovered that occupants face difficulties integrating their previous living habits with the spatial cues provided in the public housing design. As a result, the design may not function as originally intended, causing a feeling of uncanny. In a context of public housing, the design failed to create a sense of familiarity, which hindered the domestication process. The defamiliarisation of the home's interior leads to uncanny result (di Stefano, 2019), which influences their psychological attachment to their new home.

The concept of the uncanny is employed not only to capture the occupants' emotional state but also to establish a metaphorical foundation for artistic interpretation. It evokes a specific emotional state among the occupants, who experience feelings of strangeness or discomfort when their new home becomes an unsettling place. The notion of uncanny revealed by psychoanalysis can articulate practices that operate between art and architecture (Rendell, 2006). Here, the uncanny arises when occupants strive to create a sense of belonging and familiarity in their new home, as their unconsciousness extends to their space to reveal their identity and place-making (D'Arcy-Reed, 2020). As an aesthetic strategy, the uncanny materialises the occupants' psychological experiences in the artistic medium and serves as an emotive framework to highlight their subjective encounters in their new home. To convey a feeling of uncanny, the pavilion uses the *illusive interior* as a spatial metaphor and the concept of *the double* (Banerjee, 2018) where the physical and virtual realm merge to displace and situate them in the occupants' mental space.

This paper provides a conceptual analysis, synthesises collected data, and explores various methods of representing abstract aspects of space—such as memory, imagination, and the blurred boundaries between conscious and unconscious realms—through the medium of installation art. It aims to connect design theory and artistic practice by showcasing how installations can evoke an uncanny quality within architectural spaces. By incorporating practice-led research, ethnographic surrealism, narrative inquiries, and theoretical review, the study stimulates and captures the subjective experiences of individuals within the space. These experiences are documented through texts, sound, and video excerpts; providing insights into how occupants perceive and interpret the public housing design.

Field Inquiry and Art Installation Design

This making of the pavilion involved practice-led research integrating conceptual synthesis and artistic articulations. Ethnographic surrealism and narrative inquiry were used to gather data on occupants' experiences of public housing. Ethnographic surrealism techniques were utilised to stimulate the imagination of the inhabitants and encourage unconventional associations (Judice et al., 2015). Through various props and protocols, participants were encouraged to see the world from a different perspective, disrupting their everyday routines. An example of this was the utilisation of creative writing techniques, like the cadaver exquisite technique (McShane, 2000) where children were playfully invited to contribute to a collage of stories and images, collectively creating narratives about space. This exercise offered valuable insights into uncovering dreams, desires, and imaginations related to the concept of an ideal home. This approach enabled a thorough investigation of the hidden narratives and established a sense of trust with the participants. These techniques aimed to move beyond factual details and instead focused on creating meaningful metaphors or narratives to enhance artistic development. On the other hand, narrative inquiry allowed participants to share their personal stories and experiences (Vaux & Wang, 2020). It emphasised that spatial boundaries are not solely defined by physical walls but can extend as an expression of interiority by capturing subjective feelings to foster a fluid approach to spatial practice.

The data gathered during the field research was analysed to identify common patterns in themes, keywords, and evidence related to the uncanny qualities. This analysis led to the discovery of four narratives, which were then used as a foundation for selecting spatial metaphors through the dream scene technique. The dream scene is one of the techniques to make installation art that serves several purposes: to visualise the character of the space, to create composite structures of narratives and space that can only be interpreted in fragments, and to engage all elements in a free association; similar to how dream elements engage with the free association of words (Bishop, 2005). The installation aims to evoke both the viewer's conscious and unconscious associations (Groys, 2006).

In the dream scene technique, the force of the entire installation is the turning of the wheels of association, cultural or everyday analogy, and personal memory. Therefore, by incorporating memory traces as crucial elements in the installation art, the pavilion's installation art becomes a mnemonic device that triggers the viewer's recollections and establishes a connection to the uncanny emotions experienced

by the occupants across different times and places. For instance, the spatial arrangement of the public housing unit's interior is made to be illusive rather than providing literal depictions. Through this installation, the viewers are transported to the reality of public housing and encouraged to explore visual cues associated with specific memories or cultural references within the domesticity of public housing. So, the uncanny feeling occurs through the process of defamiliarisation within the pavilion's space by creating an elusive and ambiguous representation of the public housing interior. Through carefully selected metaphors, the installation art bridges the gap between viewers and the psychological experiences of the occupants.

The process to bring these artistic concepts to life the process involves several iterations of prototyping, material exploration, and structural experimentation. This process includes creating sketches, 3D models, detailed prototype, as well as simulating lighting and composing sound and video elements for installation. The iterative process allows for adjustments and improvements based on experimentation and feedback, ensuring that the installation accurately represents the factual conditions and evokes the desired emotional responses. These methods combine artistic creativity with scientific inquiry to create an immersive installation art.

Public Housing as an Uncanny Site

Over the past six years, the Indonesian government has implemented the KOTAKU programme (Kota Tanpa Kumuh [A City Without Slums]) to improve the city's image and hygiene. As part of this programme, 163 informal settlements were evicted in Jakarta in 2016 with the aim of eliminating slum-like conditions and reducing hazards and disease transmission (Direktorat Jenderal Cipta Karya, 2016; Miftah, 2017). Consequently, many residents in the affected areas were relocated to subsidised public housing. This relocation had significant repercussions as numerous inhabitants lost their occupations, particularly those reliant on the informal economy, where social connections play a crucial role.

The relocation process goes beyond simply offering a new shelter, but also involves restoring the occupant's way of life and familiar surroundings—a habitus. The habitus encompasses the system of dispositions, behaviours, and attitudes acquired through socialisation and ingrained in individuals as second nature (Bourdieu, 1980/1992). The habitus plays a significant role in how people perceive, interpret, and engage with their surroundings; including spatial environments. Habitus relates to how we think about or perceive space and place, and how these perceptions affect our actions (Hillier, 1999). The

habitus has an impact on preferences, habits, and behaviours within a specific space. How a place is designed, the social interactions, and individual backgrounds can shape and reinforce specific behaviours and habits in people. The occupants' familiarity and sense of belonging in their previous homes, whether it's an informal residence or a *kampung*, are developed through ongoing interactions with their social environment. The arrangement of their living space also affects their perception of what feels like home, creating a sense of familiarity within their interior environment. This interaction happens on both conscious and unconscious levels, influencing their relationship with the space.

Without recognising the influence of habitus, the relocation process can often lead to feelings of exile and alienation for the occupants. Moving from their previous homes, such as informal residences or *kampung*, where horizontal relationships and connections were prominent, to a vertical high-rise building, disrupts the familiar spatial order they were accustomed to. The high-rise public housing building introduces a new spatial layout that feels unfamiliar and disconnected from the occupants' previous spatial order. This change disrupts the social relationships that were essential for their support and overall well-being. Consequently, this change exacerbates the sense of estrangement and disconnection, which turn public housing into a site of the uncanny. The occupants of the public house often feel unsettled, as they don't perceive it as their true home. The uncanny feeling can arise even in the most familiar spaces, like one's own house, where suppressed emotions and memories resurface (Freud, 1919/1955). The occupants experience post-traumatic feelings as memories and grief of losing their previous homes resurface, sometimes causing them to suppress these emotions in order to move forward. The return of the repressed can be overwhelming, like intruding into the ego's 'house' and making the occupant feel completely displaced and homeless (Huskinson, 2016).

This situation worsens as the design of these housing units tends to prioritise economic considerations and efficiency without fully addressing the needs of the residents. This problem can be seen in the housing units with substandard dimensions, making it uncomfortable for nuclear families to fit in comfortably and conduct economic activities effectively. In their previous way of life found in *kampung* or informal settlements, the occupant often turns their domestic space into a commercial or economic activity; such as opening a tailor shop, vegetable stalls, or street food stands. They also utilise their yard for raising crops and poultry to raise income. Despite living in vertical public housing structures, the residents still

perceive their homes from the perspective of their previous way of living. However, the design of these units fails to accommodate their desired lifestyle. In late capitalism, the standardised public housing high-rise, meant to provide comfort and familiarity, has turned into a space where unsettling experiences are commonly encountered (Lewis & Cho, 2006). The modern home tends to provide a container rather than a space to dwell (Adorno, 1951/2001). This sense of discrepancy contributes to the sense of unease and unfamiliarity. Consequently, the residents navigate their daily lives with a sense of dissonance, where the boundaries between the known and familiar intertwine with new and unfamiliar experiences.



Figure 1
Uncanny aspects
in public housing:
Living space turned
into shop (top)
and corridor as
extended domestic
space (bottom) as
the reminiscent
of previous living
arrangements
(Photographs by
author)

The feeling of uncanny is also caused by the absence of communal spaces in public housing design. The lack of social connections contributes to how the occupants express their emotions towards the space—resulting in a sense of uncanniness. This concept of the uncanny, as described by Mukherjee (2018), highlights a projection of the psychological apparatus, which confounds inside and outside, or self and others. This concept involves a psychological process where their internal thoughts and perceptions are projected onto the external environment. Through observation, it is evident that this projection blurs the boundary between internal thoughts and experiences, and the external physical surroundings and interactions with others. The neglect of social needs puts the occupant caught between the disintegration of the traditional and modern ways of

living, influencing the occupant's attitude towards their living space. It creates a sense of disorientation in the occupants' perception of which interiority can no longer be fostered within the public house design because it fails to foster a sense of inner emotional space or personal connection beyond the physical attributes of space.



Figure 2
Uncanny aspects
of public housing:
Transformation
of corridor into a
hanging garden
(top) and bypassing
of utility (bottom)
(Photographs by
author)



Furthermore, in the public housing, dissatisfaction about ownership, from the unit's status to utility and facilities management, makes the occupants feel powerless and not own the space entirely. This lack of ownership led to the loss of control and lack of a sense of belonging which raised a feeling of uncanny. The uncanny here divulges a hidden interrelationship that essentially remains unresolved, causing a sense of loss of control and a disconcerting disturbance in the relationship between the self and the surrounding space (Evans, 2010). Consequently, aggressive and illegal responses—such as vandalism and bypassing plumbing and electricity for personal use—transform the ordered, hygienic impression of modern public housing into conditions resembling a slum. Public housing's intention to promote an organised or modernised lifestyle does not always lead to a more civilised way of life. Instead, it can trigger a passive-aggressive attitude when it fails to connect with the residents. These behaviours demonstrate how the feeling of uncanniness, arising from a disrupted perception of reality, can lead to destructive actions.

Illusory Interior as a Spatial Metaphor of the Uncanny

In artistic translation, the pavilion utilises an illusionary interior as a spatial metaphor to express the uncanny nature of public housing. The concept of illusory interior finds its roots in the surrealist movement, which aimed to disrupt the boundaries between reality and illusion by creating multi-referential illusory interior forms. It starts with René Magritte's painting *L'Homme au Journal* (1928), which explores the unsettling new realities and blurs the distinction between the real and the illusory within the interior, such as the fabric of the house, doors, windows, picture frames, and mirror frames, which function as portals to a disrupted reality. Similarly, Salvador Dalí's artwork *Mae West's Face Which May Be Used as a Surrealist Apartment* (1934) explores the interior as a complex interplay between public and private life by blurring the boundaries between personal identity and the external environment, turning facial features into furniture and architectural elements. These pieces investigate the relationship between the individual and their surroundings, blurring the boundaries between personal identity and the external environment (Wood, 2007). Magritte (1928) and Dalí (1934) examined the home interior as a subject of inquiry, transforming it into a psychological landscape, aiming to stimulate reflection and evoke emotions by questioning the stability of the home and delving into its uncertain boundaries.

In the pavilion, the uncanny also describes the discomfort or strangeness triggered by something that closely resembles oneself, like certain objects, situations, or experiences—the double (Steiner, 2010). This concept of the double extends the understanding of illusory interior where the blurring between two boundaries, doubling, are juxtaposed to each other as it introduces a mirror-image, an identical twin, which defies the laws of nature and evokes a sense of unease (Comaroff & Ker-Shing, 2013). In extension to Mukherjee's (2018) perspective, the uncanny arises when the boundaries are blurred in our daily life. The uncanny can also manifest in ordinary everyday experiences and objects, defying the notion that it is limited to extraordinary or supernatural occurrences (Gineprini, 2022).

In this context, the illusory interior portrays what happened in the in-between—the threshold zone—as something precarious, anxious, and potentially revealing something unexpected. For instance, the corridors in public housing, originally intended for movement, can transform into spaces for diverse activities. Occupants view these corridors not just as pathways but also as small alleys, house yards, terraces, playgrounds, and more. This dynamic nature of the space is captured by a pavilion that reimagines it as fluid, transparent, and with an illusory interior. The pavilion portrays space as a threshold, which

serves as a transitional space, blurring the boundaries between inside and outside and allowing for diverse perceptions, movements, and social interactions (Stevens, 2007). The pavilion merges the viewer's experience in both physical and virtual space, as both illusive and juxtaposed to each other.

Figure 3
Doubling space:
The wide-screen
projection in
Somerset creates
a parallel space
within the virtual
pavilion environment
(Photograph by
author)



The pavilion merges virtual and physical spaces, enabling simultaneous interaction between viewers in Jakarta and London, despite being located in different places. The virtual pavilion is situated at Somerset House in London as part of the London Design Biennale 2021, while the physical pavilion is located at Indonesia Contemporary Art and Design 2021 in Grand Kemang Hotel, Jakarta. A viewer in London enters an empty gallery where the pavilion is only visible via Virtual Reality (VR). Conversely, a viewer in Jakarta enters a site-specific installation art and utilises the VR to reimagine the similar space situated in Somerset House. These two audiences can interact and meet within the virtual environment of the Indonesian pavilion, engaging with a riddle within the space. These two physical and digital worlds are essentially one experience where the digital materials of the space interact with our eyes or ears and construct the phenomena of our experience (Nash et al., 2021). The shared physical space creates a peculiar and unfamiliar atmosphere with unique interactivity, generating an uncanny sensation as the overlapping layers of interiority constantly shift in response to the presence of the viewer's body in the physical-virtual realm. In this case, the use of virtual environment serves as a catalyst for critically examining reality, aligning with the concept of speculative realism in discussions on the built environment (Vahdat, 2022). Speculative realism in this context explores the unpredictable relationships that emerge from the merging of two spaces, reflecting the ambiguity experienced by occupants in their interpretation of their new home.

Illusory interior in the physical pavilion

The physical installation of the pavilion is site-specifically situated in Grand Kemang Jakarta, occupying a transitional zone between a restaurant and a swimming pool. A site-specific installation refers to an artwork or installation that is created specifically for a particular location or site. It is designed to interact with and respond to the unique characteristics, features, and context of the chosen site (Kwon, 1997). In this context, the installation appears as a 'parasite' within the formal building, taking root in the transitional space. This approach echoes the notion of informal spatial practices found in public houses, where spaces such as yards, corridors, and sidewalks are transformed into storage areas, waiting zones, or impromptu cooking spaces.



Figure 4
Physical pavilion:
Reflections create
an infinite space
and blur interior-
exterior boundaries
(Photograph by
author)



Figure 5
Physical pavilion:
Parasite to
existing structures
(Photograph by
author)

To convey the illusory interior metaphor, the installation use glass reflection from the restaurant's façade to create an infinite space and blurs the boundaries between the interior and exterior. The vertical reflection from swimming pool water also adds to the illusive impression of verticality of high-rise public housing. Each installation element is moulded from interior features such furniture, walls, and windowsills found in Rancacili and Penjarangan housing units. The elements are made from wire-mesh material, giving an illusory effect and generating a series of juxtapositions, where space and objects overlap with one another. Then, the objects inside wire-mesh furniture are portrayed with the use of hologram-like sculptures. This composition evokes an uncanny sensation, blurring the boundaries between what is real and imagined, inside and outside, and the private and public; entering the mental realm of the occupants and providing insight into their understanding of space. In addition, the mental space extends to the virtual pavilion through VR, which allows viewers to interact with other viewers in London.



Figure 6
Simultaneous
audience encounter
through VR
(Photograph by
author)

Illusory interior in the virtual pavilion

Inside the virtual pavilion, the illusory metaphor emerges within two approaches of the spatial illusion strategy: *mise en abyme* and *trompe l'œil*. *Mise en abyme* refers to the inclusion of images-within-images, creating a structure of nest and frames (Herman, 2000). Uncanny experiences are typically constructed through and associated with themes and metaphors of vision, blindness, mirrors, and other optical tropes (Rahimi, 2013). The use of mirrors and reflections also serves as metaphors for this concept, forming interconnected networks that resemble a labyrinth with shifting perspectives (Cardwell, 1989), while the appearance of another space behind the mirror adds a

metaphysical dimension to the overall experience (Snow, 2016). This effect can be achieved within the game engine software, which creates a realistic spatial illusion with live interaction. Additionally, the technique of *trompe l'œil*, which translates to 'deceive the eye' (Gosetti-Ferencei, 2005), is employed to create optical illusions by incorporating realistic imagery through the placement of images and widescreen videos that influence the user-avatar perspective. These visual elements are seamlessly integrated into the scenery, such as within windows or as part of door views.

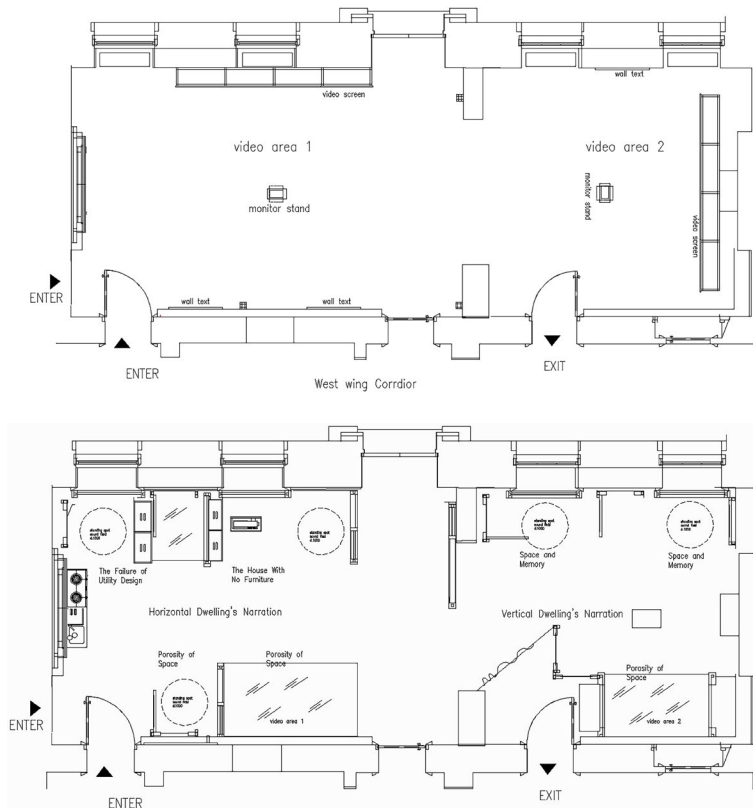


Figure 7
Juxtaposition of
installation: Physical
and virtual pavilion
at Somerset House
(Images by author)

Furthermore, the furniture and objects are made with wire mesh and hologram-like sculptures, identical to the physical installation. Combines with a mirror and a photo stage as *trompe l'œil*, the space plays out with perspective, questioning the fluid relation between what is inside and outside. As visitors enter, they are immersed in a series of overlapping spaces between the interior and exterior spaces of the units. Inside this overlapping space, visitors will hear a sound leak from outside space, such as dripping water, sounds of vehicles outside, or snippets of whispered conversations. This experience

symbolised the permeability of spatial boundaries as external sounds infiltrated interior space. Inside, this space constantly changes, playing out interactivity where every time the viewer moves, some walls and doors move as the space changes over time depending on where the viewer stands. This interactivity represents the imaginary space of inhabitants that continuously juxtaposes the existing space. In actual practice, the occupants improvised their space as a spatial tactic by keep changing the function, rearranging the space layout to feel less uncanny, and overcoming limitations. In this case, the relationship between inside and outside extends beyond the physical realms and presents opportunities for innovative design strategies (Dincer et al., 2019).

Interior Narratives of the Uncanny Illusory

As a mode of engagement, the virtual pavilion deploys narratives to activate the space. This can be defined as a situated or a site-specific narrative resembling an installation artwork, enriched by elements that establish a distinct sense of location or place (Parsons, 2009). The pavilion presents four interior narratives based on the uncanny aspects of public housing obtained from the field inquiries: porosity of space, the house with no furniture, space and memory, and the failure of utility.

Porosity of space

The first theme represents the absence of economic and communal space. The housing units with substandard dimensions, which are unfit for nuclear families and conduct economic activities, cause the occupant to improvise their space. The occupants' spatial practices demonstrate that spatial boundaries are not solely determined by physical structures but rather by agreements and timing. They demarcate their spaces through the arrangement of objects over time and shift them to other uses. This improvisational behaviour takes place in liminal spaces, which exist between objects, architectural features, and even time. Here, the functionality of space transcends predetermined design scripts and becomes performative, resulting in unpredictable and dynamic spatial interactions (Signore, 2015). For instance, the corridor gradually transforms into a playground, waiting area, social gathering spot, storage space, and even a venue for ritual events. It becomes a space shaped by various occurrences and constantly evolves over time.

To represent the found phenomena, the installation uses the *trompe l'œil* effect and *mise en abyme* by putting video, mirror, and installation to create a blurred boundary between private-public, imagined-real space. The virtual installation features two widescreens that are

integrated seamlessly with the view beyond the window, providing an immersive and imaginary space on a one-to-one scale. The first video captures the temporality of space that occurs in public space, captured by the viewer in threshold—the window. The second video utilises generative coding to portray the evolution of temporal spaces and convey a feeling of endless repetition, juxtaposed with the narrative of housing programme failure in architecture history. Combined with mirror and installations, both videos create an ethereal experience, prompting contemplation and introspection on the impermanence of our environment.

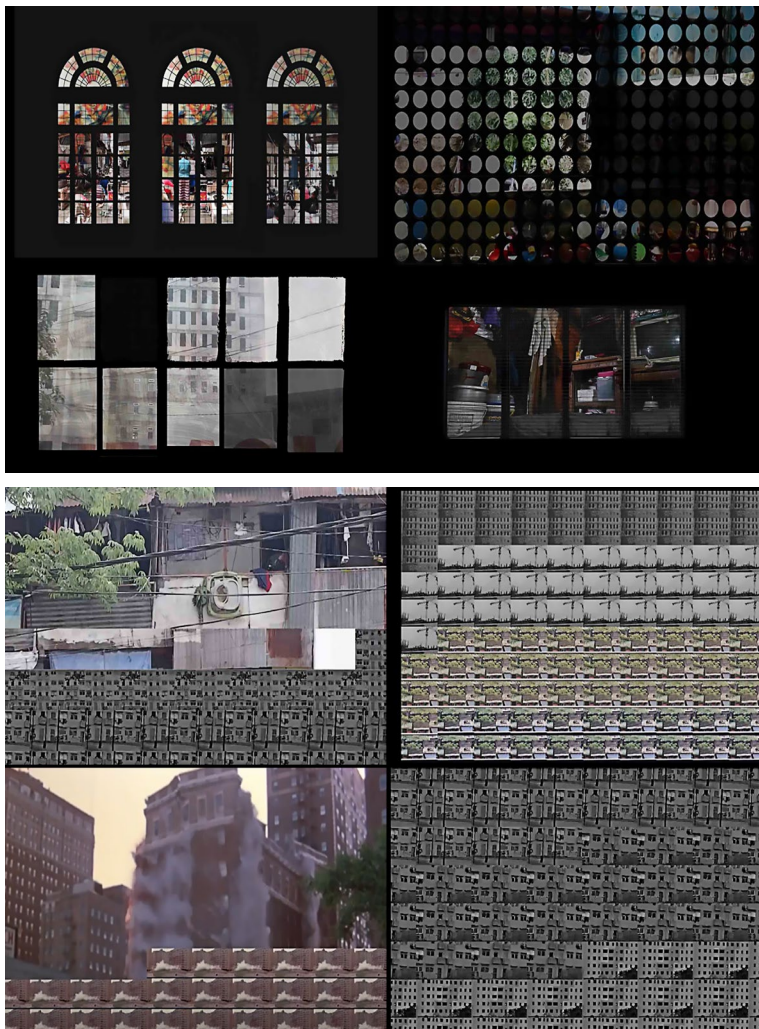


Figure 8
 Inhabitant as voyeur
 (top) and generative
 coding for temporal
 space (bottom)
 (Images captured
 from video by Kelvin
 Djunaidi and Dea
 Aulia Widyaevan)

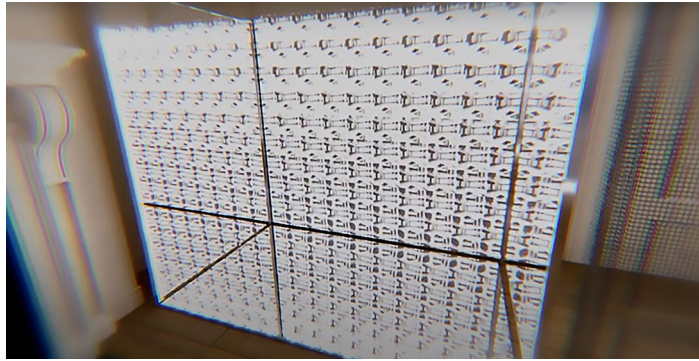


Figure 9
Trompe l'œil effect
 (top) and *mise en*
abyme (bottom) in
 virtual pavilion
 (Photographs
 by author)

The house with no furniture

The second story delves into the lack of space in the occupant's unit. The narrative explores the challenges of the small units in fulfilling their intended domestic functions. The unit allocated to each family, consisting of only 36 m², offers limited space for three to five persons. It comprises two bedrooms, a modest living area (16 m²), and a combined toilet and pantry. Because of the limited space, traditional furniture cannot be accommodated and is absent from the interior. Instead, the living space is arranged using a collection of boxes filled with specific objects. For instance, during the day, one box opens to reveal sewing equipment, transforming the living area into a sewing workspace. In the evening, this box is packed away, and a 'dining' box containing dishes takes place. Similar boxes exist for leisure, sleeping, and cooking purposes. Effective space coordination is essential in this shared living arrangement; designated times are allocated for children to leave the house, providing their parents with privacy and space for work.

Inside the installation, hologram-photo sculptures showcased in the boxes and kitchen cabinet portray random objects that failed

to fit in the small spaces. They provide glimpses of the inhabitants' identities, offering insights into their lives. The photo sculptures, made from transparent acrylic with a waffle structure, display the x-ray views of the objects. Additionally, a sound installation narrates stories of frequent loss of belongings and the occupants' belief in the involvement of a ghost.



Figure 10
X-ray boxes replacing
furniture, a metaphor
of hidden chaos
within interior realm
(Photographs by
author)

Space and memory

The third theme about space and memory represents a sense of exile and alienation caused by eviction trauma. In this narrative, the inhabitants confront haunting memories imbued with a sense of longing, lost identity, and a constant fear of homelessness. They perceive their homes as transient illusions rather than permanent dwellings, yearning for a better place to live. The memories of their former residences and the tight-knit communities intensify their

feelings of alienation. Here, they attribute supernatural occurrences, viewing ghost stories, as manifestations of their unresolved trauma.

Within the installation, the power of memory is evoked through a captivating sound installation that invites the audience to face the illusive installation window. As they gaze upon the aerial view of the public housing, which includes the adjacent cemetery, the haunting tales of the inhabitants intertwine with the sounds of bulldozed houses and news of the eviction. Ironically, the Rancacili public housing, built above a cemetery, has become a haunting space as it displaces the resting place of the deceased. In this context, the feeling of uncanny emerges as the occupants project their personal traumas into ghost stories in their new homes.

Figure 11
Gazing through the
elusive window at
the cemetery view,
representing the
memory of eviction
(Photograph by
author)



The failure of utility

The final narrative echoes the loss of control and lack of sense of belonging of the occupant. This theme revolves around the neglected utility problems faced by the building management while the residents have no control over their own electricity or water supply. The utility system in the building requires complex bureaucratic procedures for repairs. When the building management does not address the problems promptly, it leads to persistent smells, leaks, and more damage. As a result, activities like cooking and eating have to take place near damp and odorous bathrooms. Additionally, there are times when occupants do not have access to clean water, forcing them to fetch water from outside wells to their floor units. This situation frustrates the occupants, leading to increased aggression as they try to find ways around the system for their needs.

In the installation, the narrative comes to life through a soundscape that includes the dripping sound of a leaking pipe, distorted water

droplets, loud echoes in the bathroom, violence of water pipe sounds, and a recitation of the occupant's personal experiences which tells the story on how their well-being and health are affected by living in deteriorating buildings. The narrative sound is strategically placed in a confined corner of the space, allowing the viewer to fully immerse themselves by facing the wall and gradually hearing the whispered narrative unfold.



Figure 12
The soundscape captures the auditory manifestation of utility failures (Photograph by author)

Conclusion

The pavilion addresses eviction and reallocation in disinvested communities by incorporating uncanny elements of public housing design and illusive interior metaphors in installation art. Several factors contribute to the feeling of uncanniness in public housing, which forms the basis for the narrative embedded in the installation's spatial metaphor. First, the transition from horizontal to vertical living generates a sense of exile and alienation as the spatial order undergoes a significant shift. Second, the substandard design of the units renders traditional furniture unsuitable, restricting occupants from expressing their interiority and persona in their new homes. Third, the lack of communal spaces creates disorientation for occupants coming from close-knit communities where economic survival and well-being are intertwined. Lastly, the absence of ownership over the unit's status, utilities, and amenities leads to a loss of control, fostering feelings of aggression towards the existing design. These factors shape the occupants' spatial attitudes, leading them to informally modify the current housing design to overcome the sense of unfamiliarity.

In terms of artistic translation, the pavilion employs an uncanny aesthetic strategy to portray disorientation, loss, and alienation through illusive interior metaphors. The installation art combines physical and digital elements, immersing viewers in the mental realm

of the occupants and providing a series of immersive experiences. The interactivity in both the virtual and physical pavilions explores the interiority of the audience and their interaction with the merging of virtual and physical space. In the virtual realm, motives and stories guide audience movement, while in the physical installation, spatial arrangement and placement establish a dialogue between the existing context and the concept of the installation.

This paper aims to bridge design theory and art practice by showcasing how installation art can express the interiority of built spaces. It highlights the use of the uncanny concept as a framework for critically examining space, emphasising the importance of exploring aspects like memory, social relations, and subjective perception often overlooked in conventional design approaches. In artistic practice, the uncanny serves as an aesthetic principle to translate the intangible nature of space into tangible forms through installation art. The pavilion offers practical implications for design by providing a post-occupancy evaluation view, demonstrating how design is experienced by occupants beyond initial plans. By integrating artistic strategies, designers can employ empathetic approaches, gaining diverse perspectives on user behaviour and the psychological aspects of user experiences within a space.

This research is limited to a specific type of public housing and future studies could extend the uncanny concept to address different types of ordinary spaces and dwellings—including those associated with informal practices. Exploring alternative artistic strategies within critical spaces and specific case studies can have significant benefits, fostering immediate shared experiences and encouraging interactions among the audience, designer, and disinvested community. Art serves as a tool for facilitating direct dialogue and enables social imagination, allowing underprivileged communities to exercise their imagination.

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