Uncertain Future Dwelling: Emergent Interiors of the Metaverse

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Abstract

Contemporarily, a flood of digital interior architectural imagery has emerged of spaces developed for the Metaverse, a forthcoming immersive 3D virtual world. These spaces are not bound by the conventions of architectural practice nor the demands of the physical world, providing an opportunity for design exploration and innovation in the future of interiors and positing challenges to core architectural concepts that have accompanied traditional practice. This research offers a visual analysis of aesthetic trends and new typologies present in the interior architectural spaces designed for the Metaverse. The analysis features a curated and collaged collection of works from ten creators of Metaverse spaces, categorised to examine the impact of digital architectural spaces that increasingly detach from the needs of physical dwellings. The research reveals commanding visual trends in Metaverse interior imagery that challenge traditional notions of interiority and dwelling and finds aesthetic signifiers of belonging in spaces that Augé (1995/2009) would neatly classified as an empirical 'non-place.' Positioned as a form of heterotopia in a realm where architecture is being designed for the purely visual, we posit that the less recognisable these spaces become, the more potential they hold for innovation in both the Metaverse and in dialogue with real-world interior architecture.

Keywords: metaverse, interiority, NFTs, architecture, dwelling

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Introduction

This paper investigates the emerging imagery of domestic spaces within the Metaverse, focusing on their potential to inform traditional interior spaces. By navigating the multifaceted definitions of the Metaverse, we first aim to establish a clear framework for our analysis of Metaverse interiors and propose an exploration of this nascent field.

While the term 'Metaverse' has rapidly entered popular vernacular, both the definition and form of the Metaverse are, at the time of writing, still taking shape. A key driver in the development of the Metaverse, Mark Zuckerberg (2021), has stated, "the next (technological) platform will be even more immersive, an embodied internet where you're in the experience, not just looking at it. We call this the Metaverse..." (para. 3). The proposed 'immersive internet' is set to be an interactive digital world where all manner of human activity, both known and yet to be determined, can take place. With an economy founded on blockchain technology, migration to the Metaverse has begun through the anticipatory purchase of digital 'land' (The Sandbox, reported between the years of 2012–2023), and through curious aesthetic explorations into the notion of digital dwelling.

The Metaverse has emerged as a potential paradigm shift in social connection, characterised by its construction as a 'created world' that is governed by the creator's established rules (Hwang & Chien, 2022; Kye et al., 2021). This created world allows users to build virtual worlds that can simulate real-life experiences (Jonanović & Milosavlijević, 2022). While virtual worlds like Second Life offered earlier iterations of similar simulated experiences, the contemporary Metaverse is distinguished by its emphasis on the social experiences of Generation Z (Park & Kim, 2022). In recent years, many applications related to the Metaverse have been reported from different fields, from healthcare to language learning and professional training (Huang et al., 2023; Hwang & Chien, 2022). Research suggests that the Metaverse shows the potential to transform the educational environment, fostering creation and collaboration, which extends beyond the realm of games and entertainment, possibly impacting our daily lives and economic structures (Kye et al., 2021).

This potential new life that the Metaverse proposes also demands new environments, which has renewed excitement in the city planning, architecture, and interior design sectors to explore design concepts and improve design outcomes (Abhari et al., 2021; Yüksel et al., 2024). In fact, the Metaverse in architecture is a growing field of exploration. Studies like those by Darwish et al. (2023) demonstrate how VR can improve the design process through virtual prototyping.

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Vaguez et al. (2021) highlight the potential for generating mixed reality experiences for clients. The exploration of Metaverse spaces has become a critical area of investigation, holding the potential to significantly impact the field of interior architecture.

Defining Metaverse Interiors

The concept of interiority is not limited to an enclosed area spatiality defined by physical boundaries (Atmodiwirjo & Yatmo, 2020). Instead, interiority can be understood as various kinds of systems in a state of flux. These new conditions proposed by the Metaverse require a dynamic understanding beyond the physical meaning of enclosure, in other words, beyond the conventional notion of interiority. Grosz (2001) argues that the outside, being active in the production of an inside, leads to a subtle renegotiation and redefinition of the inside in a non-dualistic consideration. This also applies to the concept of "interiority," providing opportunities for a renewed relational understanding as an exploration of a "moving matter" rather than a "fixed limit" (Deleuze 1986/2006, pp. 80–82). In fact, this dynamic relationship itself becomes a key actor, constantly redefining what constitutes an inside and outside (Dincer et al., 2019).

Taylor (2018) describes how the relationship between interiority—connection with one's psychological life, memory, and a sense of intimacy—has become disconnected from interiors in recent years. Architecture's role as a "device that measures specific events and moments in time" (Taylor, 2018, p. 54) has been affected by advances in digital, electronic, and interactive technologies, leading Bouman (2005) to propose that "human behavior is no longer framed by place" (p. 14) and people, rather than place, have become the interface.

Interestingly, while interior designed for the Metaverse are not bound by traditional architectural briefs, typologies, or the constraints applied to physical, real-world architecture, many remain largely visually responsive to these parameters. The designers of these spaces need not consider the demands of physics, visual privacy, weather conditions, technical functionality, structural integrity, geography, nor material limitations. Yet, Metaverse interiors largely remain characterised by a narrow visual style that floods social media gallery-style applications. Typified by their arched windows and door portals, cream, or monochrome 'Adobe-rendered walls' (Wiener, 2021), the resort-style dwellings feature seamless pastel pillowy furniture and eternal Tatooine[1] sunsets. Devoid of any culturally specific markers or ornamentation, the open-plan rooms evade classification to any

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[1] Never setting suns and multiple moons: https://starwars.fandom.com/wiki/Tatooine

defined architectural period, and subconsciously amalgamate the canon of architectural history into contemporary, visually enticing imagery. In these new 'interiors,' we look to examine how this specific aesthetic style can signify a sense of 'belonging' in the undefined time and space of the Metaverse.

While there still exists a strong degree of uncertainty around these spaces—how they may come to be used, or if the Metaverse as a construct will come into existence at all—the typological nature of the Metaverse as a space, and its implications have been explored previously in architectural theory. In 2009, Marc Augé revisited notions of the 'non-place,' originally published in 1995. In the introduction of this new print, Augé defined a new *empirical non-place* as inclusive of "spaces of communication, circulation and consumption, and some hypermarkets" (Auge, 2009, p. viii). At the time of writing, the Metaverse is primarily a hypermarket founded on cryptocurrency and a proposed space for digital meeting, experience, commercial exchange, and communication. Devoid of any relationality, history or defined cultural identity, the Metaverse is subject to what Augé (1995) previously defined as a 'triple de-centring.' Typically, Augé (1995) argued, this process of deidentification that deconstructs place has resulted in individuals becoming strangers to themselves, others, and place, in an alienating setting.

In contrast to the definition of a *non-place* described by Augé, the reader will note an aesthetic similarity among the images featured herein, together with numerous others, which results in a visual sense of 'belonging' to the Metaverse, just as they dismiss all signifiers of relationality or historicity. Although these spaces are being developed for a yet-to-arrive future, the presence of contemporary software tools, such as Adobe rendering and Photoshop AI, unconsciously timestamp these renders. It is interesting to note Augé's 2009 reference to 'fragments of utopia,' as the Metaverse neatly aligns with Foucault's (1967/1984) description of utopias as "sites with no real place… fundamentally unreal spaces" (p. 3). Foucault (1967/1984) offers some insight into the amalgamation of architectural aesthetic history observed in Metaverse interiors, in describing the subset *heterotopia*, as,

> the idea of accumulating everything, of establishing a sort of general archive, the will to enclose in one place all time, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages, the project of organizing in this way a sort of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place. (p. 7)

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Within architecture, many of the academically proposed uses of the Metaverse align with the proposition of it as a heterotopian space for a 'general archive,' including heritage documentation (Al-Tabeeb & Al-Desouqi, 2023; Gaafar, 2021) or conservation (Zhang et al., 2022) of existing or historical physical architecture. However, the emergent imagery of Metaverse spaces performs a different, unanticipated flattening and combining of elements from various architectural periods within the popularised aesthetic: all times, all forms, all tastes.

Augé (2009) further notes that *empirical non-places* are "fragments of utopia, in the image of our time, divided between passivity, anxiety, and despite everything, hope or, at the very least, expectation" (p. xxii). Within our visual analysis, we note the presence of these tensions—passivity and anxiety—expressed symbolically and with some compositional uncertainty within the selected works, which remain heavy with expectations for the future.

Mounting critique around the notion of the Metaverse (Dwivedi et al., 2022) and the supporting blockchain technology, such as those described by Koh (2023), has often overshadowed opportunities for engagement with the aesthetics that have emerged, which pose significant questions and opportunities for those in architecture, by reconsidering the very nature of dwelling. Commonly dismissed as 'render porn,' Toland (2021) pronounced these spaces "fantasy luxury that will never be built" (para. 5); however, the imagery presented are Metaverse spaces that have been 'constructed' within a software program. While some have been translated into physical spaces, many may one day be occupiable, just not in the physical manner we are accustomed to. These are images of spaces that can be virtually visited, navigated through, furnished, and dwelt in. Unlike the photo-realistic renders of real-estate that Toland mistakenly conflates with Metaverse interiors, these are not images *of* space; they *are* the space.

In a post-pandemic world, meeting in a virtual space has become second nature. Our whole bodies no longer need to 'meet' in a virtual room; the presence of our vision and sometimes voices is enough to occupy the space. The imagery of Metaverse spaces is not that of unbuilt fantasy luxuries; they are realised spaces that can be occupied by the eyes and mind in a virtual world. A rendered design for real-world architecture is a type of simulation, where "a simulator is seen as a model that has the potential of being 'brought to life'" (Crookall et al., 1987, p. 147). Although simulations can produce a certain sense of reality, Metaverse spaces are real, in the sense that "a situation is defined as real if it is real in its consequences" (Crookall et al., 1987, p. 166). We argue herein that the further these interiors venture from

reality simulations, the more impactful the consequences. Looking at the potential of these consequences, we examine diverse examples of how Metaverse design practices might influence and shape the future of interior architecture principles.

Collage and Curation as Methodology

We present a curation of imagery spanning seven years of digital interiors, which reveals a slow and collective effort to redefine notions of dwelling through detachment from a dwindling dependence on the semiotics of real-world living. The spaces presented have been curated through empirical analysis, where curation may be understood as the process of selecting and "placing multiple artefacts in dialogue with one another, [instantiating] them around a complex set of themes" and eliciting multiple meanings from related artefacts (Persohn, 2021, p. 21). Persohn (2021) argues that this process can show viewers a path to thematic interpretations of the artefacts, affording explications of new ideas and themes over time. Bjerregaard (2019) furthers that the curation of a visual display is not "merely about making established knowledge tangible and accessible" (p. 4), but rather the curation and juxtaposition of imagery is a form of knowledge generation, forming new ways of knowing and challenging us to ask new questions about the constitution of the world. In this nascent field, the artists and works selected are drawn from creators who have been recognised through their online influence, including statistics on both their reach and followers, as well as having a commanding aesthetic influence on other emergent works, as detailed in the following analysis.

This curatorial process has been paired with the collage methodology to maximise the collection's generative nature. As Shields (2012) argues, collage offers the potential for a multiplicity of readings, and "creates opportunities for multivalence in the architectural design process, and resultant work of architecture" (p. 85). Shields (2012) details the enduring influence of collage methodologies in the field of architecture over the past century, and as posited by Waldman (1992), "collage has captured some of the most momentous shifts in culture, politics and economics' and presents a 'compelling historical record of our time" (p. 8). At this juncture in time, as we examine the shift in the way we dwell, between the physical and the digital, we draw on this well-worn methodology.

The following discussion of Metaverse spaces is divided into thematic sections, defined by cascading levels of abstraction. The first section, *Metaverse Bodies: Dissolving Boundaries* begins with the foundation of how we experience space and interiority: with the body. The work

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explored in this category illustrates the digital absence of a physical body, replaced by floating ethereal fabrics, and evokes inquiry into how we might occupy, transverse and design digital spaces free from consideration of the human form.

The works discussed in the second section, *Déjà Vu in the Digital: Reimagining Familiar Forms in Metaverse Interiors*, move beyond the body to familiar architectural interior forms, housed in familiar landscapes; yet they are distinctly removed from reality, such as a glass pavilion located on the surface of Mars. The third section is *Echoes of Reality: Employing Domesticity to Define Unfamiliar Worlds*. The interior spaces discussed in this section feature known objects and familiar domestic functions in an entirely unknown environment. An emergent layer of uncertainty is also present in the use of unexpected materials and finishes within the interiors.

The fourth section, *Dreamscapes Made Real: Reimagining Interiors in the Metaverse,* presents a step further towards the unknown. These spaces in this section feature semi-recognisable dwelling-forms in unknown landscapes, with lingering remnants of known domestic objects, suggesting the potential for occupation. The images in the final section, *Beyond Interiority: Redefining Dwelling*, feature entirely unknown forms in unknown or undefined spaces. These images feature unconstrained abstraction, exploration of possible future digital environments, and challenges to traditional conceptions of interiority and dwelling.

The images presented are not arranged in chronological order; they are rather curated into a narrative that represents a slow surrender of the constraints or signifiers of real-world dwellings, such as enclosure, a sense of Earthly gravity, recognisable materiality, weather-protection, and culminating in the dismissal of notions of the human form, or even the need for interiority. This arrangement suggests a line of development for this imagery as it shifts away from all that we recognise as physical architecture and traditional dwelling and towards aesthetics that pose inspiring challenges to what the future of both digital and physical dwelling could entail.

Metaverse Bodies: Dissolving Boundaries

Void Season *by ZEITGUISED (2016)*

Beginning as early as 2004, the work of ZEITGUISED uniquely represents both examples of some of the earliest image-making dedicated to exploring the Metaverse 'digital self' and remaining contemporarily one of the most avant-garde practices in this space.

Animated exhibitions of virtual textile design projects (Zeitguised, 2016) feature forms draped in bright, layered, synthetic fabrics, both buoyant and grounded, ethereal yet undeniably recognisable.

Figure 1
Void Season by
ZEITGUISED, 2016
(Images © the artist)

Figure 2
Void Season by
ZEITGUISED, 2016
(Images © the artist)

The forms display mimicry of human-like movement, which is extended and distorted, suggestive of initial explorations of the potential liberties afforded to the virtual self. The floating, weightless, and faceless forms suggest that the virtual self needs not to be concerned with gravity, sight, or skin, and that personal expression and signification of self could be entirely textile, free of all bodily functions and needs. Although not strictly architectural or interior in nature, the digital figurative abstractions serve to redefine notions of our virtual twin and, in doing so, represent an early and provocative

exploration of what dwelling in the Metaverse could entail—a fragment of utopia in a non-place.

Déjà Vu in the Digital: Reimagining Familiar Forms in Metaverse Interiors

Mars House *by Krista Kim (2020)*

Contemporary artist Krista Kim's *Mars House* (Figure 3) represents a significant historical marker, as the first digital dwelling sold as a non-fungible token (NFT) in March of 2020. In addition to being a significant trend setter in establishing the popular dichotomy of the futuristic-but-familiar domestic interior paired with an otherworldly exterior, more significantly, it established the fiscal viability and desirability of these digital dwellings.

Figure 3
Mars House, Krista Kim, 2020 (top, bottom left) (Images © the artist); *Barcelona Pavilion*, Mies van der Rohe, 1929 (bottom middle) (Photograph by Vicens, Creative Commons); NASA image of Mars surface, Mars Curiosity Rover, NASA, 2022 (bottom right) (Photograph by NASA, Creative Commons)

The observer may note a hum of similarity between the *Mars House* and Mies van der Rohe's *Barcelona Pavilion* (1929), mirroring the historical gravitas that the Pavilion held for architectural modernism within the Metaverse. Enclosed within slabs of rainbow light and transparent walls, the facilities of the *Mars House* perhaps unnecessarily attend to all basic human needs, with a bedroom, dining, and living room that look out to the rough terrain of Martian hills and burnt umber sunsets. While the rugged landscape may suggest a certain inhospitality, in many ways, the *Barcelona Pavilion* served functionally as a place for reflection and tranquility, which extending an invitation

for the viewer to find 'wellness' (Kim, in Thomas, 2022) and belonging in Krista Kim's work. Sophia Psarra (2009), details how architectural criticism grappled with describing the meaning and classification of the Barcelona Pavilion, theorised as everything from a domestic building (Tegethoff, 1985) to an abstract temple (Padovan, 1999) or a small landscape (Constant, 1990). Returning to the notion of Metaverse spaces as a form of heterotopia, the *Mars House*, in the name not dissimilar to van der Rohe's *Farnsworth House* (1951), keenly illustrates the heterotopia's "accumulation of time in an immobile place" (Augé, 2009, p. xxii), and points toward the development of unclassified architectural typologies that emerge amongst Metaverse interiors in the following years.

Echoes of Reality: Employing Domesticity to Define Unfamiliar Worlds

The* Shirinda Residence *by Joe Mortell, with chair design by James Walsh (2022)

The *Shirinda Residence* (2022) keenly encapsulates where some of the most commanding stylistic trends of Metaverse interiors have landed contemporarily, with carefully composed interior environments set against the backdrop of a dreamy landscape. Digital designer Joe Mortell has filled the monochromatic spaceship-like bedroom with all the comforts of domesticity, bringing a warm familiarity while offering a sense of escapism as one gazes through an aperture to the unknown.

Stripped of any functional value, the objects that fill the interior instead become semiotics of occupation, a digital mimesis of 'home.' Mortell's work often includes shoes, magazines, plants and record players—objects that ground the interior in the familiar. The presence of these objects also insinuates that from Mortell's perspective, the occupation of digital space may look very similar to the way we live in the real world, still responsive to the demands and dimensions of the human body. The *Shirinda Residence* was realised as a life-sized physical model in 2022 as part of the *Songs to Experience*, Perth Festival, Australia. Pulled from its soothing landscape into the real world, the verisimilitude to reality has allowed this design to be notably agile between the digital and tangible worlds.
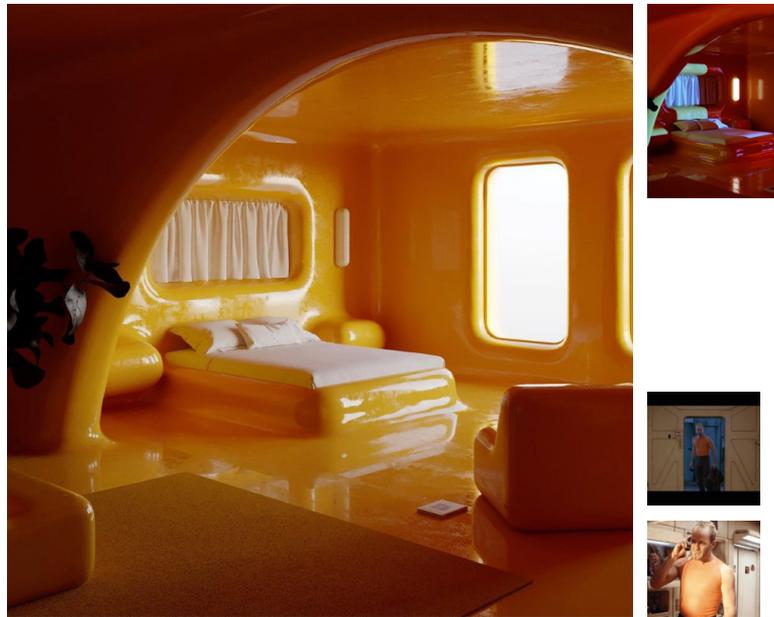
Figure 4
The *Shirinda Residence*, Joe Mortell, 2022 (left, right middle, right bottom) (Images © the artist); *The Shirinda Residence*, physical installation at Perth Festival, 2022 (right top) (Photograph by Edward Maradona)

Korben Dallas Room *by Benjamin Guedj (2021)*

The *Korben Dallas Room* (Figure 5), a name that references a living quarter from *The Fifth Element* (1997), illustrates the push-pull balance between an adherence to some elements of reality and experimental departures towards the unknown that is negotiated by designers of Metaverse interiors. In this seemingly human-scale interior, many familiar fixtures and fittings can be identified, and while remaining functional, they have become a strange seamless continuum of injection-moulded environment. Honeycomb-coloured and shiny with a latex sheen, the artificiality of the material is contrasted with a flood of natural-looking light. A few objects remain—sheets, a book, and a plant—comforting artefacts from the old world. With no visible exterior element, Benjamin Guedj draws the viewer into an inner world of pure plastic interiority, edging closer toward unrecognisable spaces through saturation and material homogeneity. With the flash of white light that reflects off the imperfect plastic and floods the interior fenestration, the environmental conditions exaggerate the removal of the natural, beckoning the artificial. The push-pull between reality and representation is explored by Guedj in an astute and self-aware manner in both subject and medium, as he makes real an unreal fictional space, aesthetically blurring both occupant and dwelling (Figure 5, bottom right). By extending a 1990s projection of

the future into the coming Metaverse, we see a hopeful 're-futuring' of this slick reference to the 'mass-manufactured' aesthetic.

Figure 5
Korben Dallas Room,
Benjamin Guedj,
2021 (left, right top)
(Images © the artist);
Bruce Willis as Korben
Dallas, *The Fifth
Element*, 1997 (right
middle, right bottom)
(Photographs by Die
Hard Scenario Wiki,
Creative Commons)

Plastic Rain *by Reisinger Andres (2018)*

While digital artist Reisinger Andres' *Plastic Rain* (2018) still features a smooth, pastel interior and cloudy backdrop (Figure 6), it introduces a pronounced deviation from some of the constraints of real-world architecture, such as the need for enclosure or domestic functions, hinting at the new bodies and new modes of occupation proposed earlier by ZEITGUISED. Andres' open walls and ceilings dismiss concerns for weather protection or privacy, and the vast scale suggests a loosening of dependence on enclosure altogether. Within this space, the carving and subtraction of real-world elements and utility notably boost the capacity of this space as an innovative 3D environment. From where soothing natural light filters in, the large dark orb balances precariously overhead, illustrating what Augé (1995/2009) describes as the 'anxiety (and) expectation' inherent within non-places. The black orb also introduces some balance within the utopian environment—the sinister and the serene. Even the title, *Plastic Rain*, invites concern for the occupant should rain ever arrive. Strategically, a few comforts of home remain—a bed, a book, and a glass of water—continuing the popularised narrative of solo domestic bliss, a room of one's own within the Metaverse.

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Figure 6
Plastic Rain, Reisinger
Andres, 2018 (Images
© the artist)

Dreamscapes Made Real: Reimagining Interiors in the Metaverse

Rocky View *by Hugo Fournier (2022)*

Rocky View (2022) by Hugo Fournier introduces a more explicit and deliberate connection between the enclosure and its exterior environment, demonstrated through an exterior wide-angle view of the architecture (Figure 7). The semi-submerged, carved-out, dynamic form nestles in the baron vastness of its singularly unique landscape. Formally, it takes the shape of a periscope coiling around an astronomy dome, dousing the work in symbolism of escapism and discovery. The inclusion of the vast rocky terrain perpetuates the motif of discovery with no time or ill weather hindering the potential for wandering and investigation. Any lingering attachment to rectilinearity is gone and immersion in a meditative space prevails.

Fournier's work offers exciting departures from many observed trends, as he moves away from the traditional interior and domestic furnishings, while still responding to a few familiar real-world demands. While somewhat alien, the landscape remains something that could be likened to that found on Earth. The architecture remains rooted to the ground, heavy with a sense of gravity, strengthened through the use of a material that could read as carved stone or cast

cement. The dwelling is semi-enclosed, and visible human-scale chairs offer a view of the landscape beyond.

Figure 7
Rocky View, Hugo Fournier, 2022 (left, right top) (Images © the artist); A periscope (right middle) (Photograph by Andrea Danti); An astronomical observatory dome (right bottom) (Photograph by Visitor7)

Biospheres *by Alexis Christodoulou (2021)*

Alexis Christodoulou can be classified as another pioneer of many stylistic trends borrowed and reproduced en masse across social media by those designing for the Metaverse. In *Biospheres* (2021) (Figure 8), Christodoulou pivots, with this synthetic insertion of a 'biosphere' into a bright, rocky landscape. The notion of a 'biosphere' poses questions about what sustains life or may be valuable while dwelling in or experiencing the Metaverse. In this small, transient architectural pod, comprised of two dramatically different threshold experiences so closely together, Christodoulou still manages to create a hierarchy of space for dwelling and transition. The pod itself, a semi-circular vestibule, appears to emit a warm and inviting light, more conducive to sustaining life than the harsh environment outside, evidenced through the lush greenery thriving within, drawing upon one of the oldest tropes of paradise: an oasis in the desert.

With Christodoulou's deft dismissal of any recognisable typology, the biosphere encourages architects to reconsider the typological

constraints placed on real-world architecture, which have seen rapid disruption in the post-pandemic era and inspired a new era of adaptive reuse. The biosphere is not a home, a workplace, or a public space but draws closer to a new Metaverse typology of a human terrarium, mediative garden, or adventurer's checkpoint. With its interior light, defiant lush greenery, and openings without doors, the biosphere speaks again to Foucault's (1967/1984) heterotopia, a place outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages.

Figure 8
Biospheres, Alexis Christodoulou, 2021 (left, right top) (Images © the artist); Terrarium (right bottom) (Photograph by Lisa Rothwell)

Make Room for Us *by Six N. Five (2022)*

The title of Six N. Five's *Make Room for Us* (2022) straddles both a rare suggestion of collective digital dwelling—us—seldom featured in Metaverse depictions and perhaps a call-to-action to those in development of the Metaverse (Figure 9). As though it was spawned in place, compositionally, it is unclear who came first, the pod or the landscape, each making room for the other—remarkably unlike the human occupation of Earth. This image is one of many in a series featuring the repeated form of a warmly glowing cellular cluster, pinched among often mountainous, rough, and inhospitable environments that have a strange allure and strong sense of escapism. Among a landscape visually borrowing from the most rugged and remote of earthly environments, abstracted into extreme sheer precipices, the pod-like dwellings always appear simultaneously purpose-built and precariously balanced—an apt metaphor for the uncertain future of the many spaces being generated for the Metaverse.

Beyond Interiority: Redefining Dwelling

Abstract Composition in Moss Green *by Studio Brasch (2017)*

In Jodi Larson's 2018 publication, *Hearts, Minds and Dishwashers*, Larson details the role of Interior Architecture in the mid-1900s during the Cold War. Larson (2018) describes the scale-model interior expositions shown at the World's Fairs, where the US Government directly employed architects and designers to wield the machinations of architectural interiors and domestic objects to sell entire political regimes as a way of life—"try it our way!" In the 'war of domestic space,' the message was clear: It would not do to simply import a shiny new General Motors car, or the modern furniture, to truly enjoy the American way of life, one would also need to import capitalism. Reminiscent of this all-encompassing charm offensive, Studio Brasch's *Abstract Composition in Moss Green* is an unfamiliar and unidentified object, wholly at home in its serene unknown environment (Figure 10). The exorbitant uncertainty concerning the typology of this domestic object is profoundly generative in nature—it invites the imagining of an entirely new world and way of life to house it.

Wrapped in a glossy, stretched, and shining skin, the abstract composition is undeniably biomorphic in nature, and suggestively appears to conceal a form not dissimilar to the head of an *Alien* (1975), and yet remains more seductive than unnerving. Entering

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the atmosphere as a meteor from a world yet to exist, Studio Brasch's composition captures the power of aesthetic uncertainty as a tool for innovation. The typology of this work is unclassified, the use for this object is undefined, and in this Studio Brash illustrates the potential for Metaverse spaces to be designed in complete removal from the way the physical world has been crafted. The environmental conditions of the Metaverse are, at present, hyper-ocularcentric; the domestic object is now being designed purely for vision, and Studio Brasch takes full advantage of this.


Figure 10
Abstract Composition in Moss Green, Studio Brasch, 2017 (left, right top) (Images © the artist); Xenomorph, featured in *Alien*, 1979 (right bottom) (Photograph by Mike Sibthorp)

BOMBING_7 by Julian Guzman (2022)

Forward looking, we present 3D artist Julian Guzman's *BOMBING_7* (2022). While Studio Brasch's objects (Figure 10) appear as though they have come from the Metaverse, Guzman's work appears as a probe into the future of what digital objects and Metaverse occupation *could* be (Figure 11, left). Formed from unknown materials, of an unknown weight and scale, this figure deflects all signs of known domestic use. Yet, its grounding within a strange sandy substrate suggests a potential as a landmark, perhaps even for occupation—a home. There are no doors, no windows, no inside or outside, but the sweeping metallic arc and careful composition suggest enclosure.

Visually comparable to a conceptual architectural sketch, such as those produced by the late Zaha Hadid (Figure 11, right), Guzman captures virtual urban energies and proposes a form in an emphatic and gestural manner. In an interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist (2006), Hadid described her desire to break up the rigid order of all prior architecture by injecting explosive and dynamic energy, evidenced in many of her paintings and sketches, often of architecturally adjacent forms, but never realised as buildings. This disruptive energy is mirrored in *BOMBING*, both in name and form, and is suggestive of the capacity for work such as this to disrupt constraining trends within digital interiors.

Figure 11
Julian Guzman, *BOMBING_7*, Julian Guzman, 2022 (left) (Image © the artist); Wireframe sculpture perspective, Victoria City Aerial, Berlin, Germany, Zaha Hadid, 1988 (right top) (Image © Zaha Hadid Foundation); The Peak Leisure Club, Hong Kong, China, Zaha Hadid (1982-1983) (right bottom) (Image © Zaha Hadid Foundation)
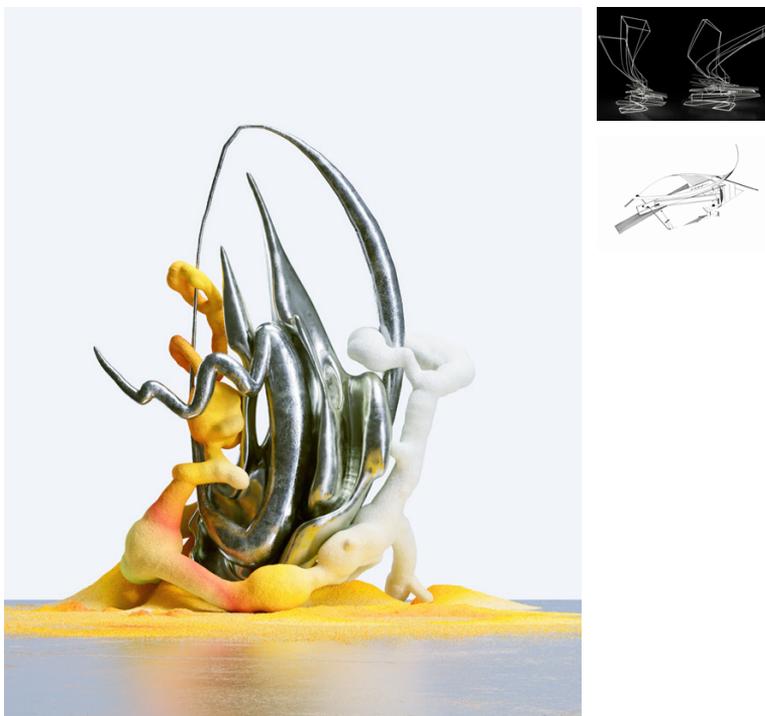
In his 2009 introduction, Augé concludes "Perhaps today's artists and writers are doomed to seek beauty in 'non-places', to discover it by resisting the apparent obviousness of current events" (p. xxii). One way Augé suggests this might happen is through "things disconnected from any exegesis or practical use … by rejecting sham and mimicry" (p. xxii). Guzman often entitles their works with names such as 'CANDYFLIP' and 'BANANA BRAIN', and they are not necessarily posited as spaces or any known form. For this reason, and because they do not look like anything we know or recognise, disconnected from exegesis or practical use, we view these works as

carrying the most avant-garde potential in redefining the future of digital dwelling.

Conclusion

The recent influx of imagery of interior architectural spaces being designed for the Metaverse deserves critical engagement for its potential for innovation and in shaping real-world architectural practice. In a digital world where humans rather than space become the interface, the role of architecture in responding to the demands of the body and the natural environment, defining interior from exterior, and marking the passage of time will be overturned. Instead, digital architecture presents an opportunity to revisit fundamental notions of interiority, domesticity, and dwelling, and reconsider existing architectural typologies.

The spaces presented reflect and challenge a pastiche of theoretical definitions, forming what could be classified as an empirical 'non-place' heterotopia, yet a clear aesthetic style binds them in belonging to the Metaverse. Causing us to revisit notions of reality and representation, these architectural spaces and domestic objects keenly engage traditional architecture in their mimesis of canonised works and styles, their adaptations to digital landscapes, the plasticisation of tensions about the future, and their re-futuring and fusions of the known and unknown. Through analysis of this curated collection of works of Metaverse interiors we posit that the more the designers of these spaces wrestle with loosening their grip on the constraints of the real and reach for the unknown, the more they offer a form of reality more informative and valuable than simulation.

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