

IE:Studio

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Introduction

David Littlefield and Shelley McNulty, September 2017

David Littlefield is a Senior Lecturer at the University of the West of England, Bristol. David has led the BA (Hons) Interior Architecture programme at UWE since its inception in 2012. He co-leads the MA Place: Spaces, Environments, Design which is scheduled to commence in September 2018. David is IE Council Chair for Research & Enterprise.

Shelley McNulty is a Senior Lecturer at the Manchester School of Art, Manchester Metropolitan University where she teaches on the BA(Hons) Interior Design programme and currently leads the MA Interior Design. Shelley is IE Council Chair for Engagement.

Shelley and David share the editor-in-chief role for IE:Studio, and edited this first issue. editors@interioeducators.co.uk

This inaugural edition of IE:Studio explores the edges of our discipline – considering and exposing the diversity, breadth and potential of interiors, and affirming the discipline as a multi-faceted, dynamic and nimble field of knowledge. In the call for papers, issued in March 2017, the editors invited academics and practitioners within Interiors to share their thinking concerning the edges of the field. What happens at those edges? Where are the edges found? Are they there at all?

Edges, like boundaries and borders, are familiar terms. Physical edges can be mapped and located spatially, in that you can be on one side or the other. Less tangible edges, such as cultural or even legal ones, are the subject of shared understanding, negotiation and interpretation. Beyond these, there are those edges which shift; discoveries, and changes of ownership and mind, will move the safe centre to another place. The one-time outsider becomes part of the canon.

The subject of Interiors is arguably bound by edges which are very hard to define indeed. Interiors might be more accurately defined as a zone of operation, infused with a freedom to borrow freely and roam widely, at liberty to conceive multiple outcomes for the occupants we design for. There are few Interiors degree programmes which confine themselves strictly within the confines of the inside of a building; designing interiors commonly considers the architecture, the context and the landscape, and certainly there are good reasons why this should be so. Equally, Interiors has embraced the concepts of interpretation and narrative, thus venturing into theoretical and psychological territory – the interior of the mind. More so, the design of Interiors and their inhabitation are sources of intrigue for the sociologist and anthropologist. However, as a group of people dedicated to the teaching of Interiors, we can recognise an Interior project when we see one and in this inaugural journal, we actively celebrate the scope of our domain. Our discipline makes room for others, and as new methods, practices and demands emerge (technical, professional, social) the discipline of Interiors manages to adapt and remain relevant. In that sense, then, Interiors (as a discipline and as a mind-set) is defined not so much by edges but by broad, ever shifting thresholds of varying density - of networks and points of contact – of subjects borrowed and appropriated.

Perhaps we're a discipline of transgressors, moving across boundary-lines in a spirit of adventure and enquiry. "He who transgresses not only breaks a rule. He goes somewhere that the others are not; and he knows something the others don't know"^[1]. This was Susan Sontag, writing on pornography as it happens, but the point is well made. Edges are not impenetrable, and when we walk to the other side we can make connections that haven't been made before – out of which comes rich experience and understanding. The papers within this first issue of IE:Studio are explorations of that, and we can find within the contributions below (embracing experience from the UK, the US, Italy and



Figure 1: Drawing, writing and space making: illustration and interiors come together at the University of Portsmouth.

Australia) how exciting studio practice can become when Interiors borrows techniques from other disciplines, challenges ideas of scale, considers the act of destruction and, interestingly, contemplates that most physical expression of the interior – the front door.

As several of the essays in this journal demonstrate, flexibility of the Interior approach and open design process also makes us keen collaborators, for an Interior cannot be constructed in isolation. Rachel Simmonds from Edinburgh College of Art authored a co-design brief, which asked several design disciplines to celebrate each others' process by developing concepts in partnership but making final responses in their discipline. Collaboration can be challenging for students and Simmonds identifies a set of principles to enable successful partnerships. Rachel Brown and Phevos Kallitsis from the University of Portsmouth present two collaborative briefs that underpin the ethos of pedagogy in their School; to encourage an experimental design process and develop students' own design identity [Figure 1].

An Interior student is expected to be a metaphorical sponge, but being receptive to other ways of working can sometimes make a student doubt what their discipline is. The transgressional qualities we academics celebrate can be in direct opposition to preconceived ideas of Interiors generated in the wider media. The brief delivered to 1st year RMIT students by Chris Cottrell, Olivia Hamilton and Andrew Miller recognises this and encourages students to investigate the poetics and materiality of space, rather than presupposed functionality.

Disrupting and challenging assumed Interior norms and ways of working is also a theme in Belinda Mitchell and Maureen O'Neil's brief. They bring Interiors and Illustration students together in a project that explores links between drawing, writing and space making through Artist's books.

In this first edition of IE:Studio we have also published essays that, while based in student-centric teaching and the source of inspired student responses, are not typical studio projects – though they very much could be. We have called this section 'Ruminations', alluding to a collection of papers which could inspire further creative studio interrogation. You may choose to appropriate one of these essays and submit your own ruminations-based studio project to a future issue of IE:S, thus exploring another key attribute of the "Interiorist" - adaption and reuse. But that's for another issue. In the meantime, we hope you find this first issue to be a source of inspiration in terms of your own practice and consideration of the reach of our discipline.

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Risk – Breaking Boundaries

Rachel Simmonds

Rachel Simmonds is a Lecturer and the Programme Director for Interior Design at the University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh College of Art. Rachel.Simmonds@ed.ac.uk

In February 2013 Edinburgh College of Art ran a week-long symposium project for first year students based on the concept of Risk. Involving students from seven different departments working in interdisciplinary groups, the project was focused around the themes of barriers and exclusions. Students formed their reactions to historic and modern day concepts of risks and barriers by the design and building of a series of vitrines in large cardboard boxes. These were then constructed into a temporary wall across the sculpture court in the Art School, before being destroyed by the students.

Background

In the academic year 2012/2013, The University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh College of Art ran a collaborative symposium project for their first year students (QAA level 4/ SQA level 7) in each semester, based on the concept of risk. Worth 20 credits, its format was a week-long intensive workshop with a defined outcome, from which students then produced their own individual response relevant to their departmental discipline over the rest of the semester. The stated learning outcomes for the project were to introduce students to an issues-based approach to creative and intellectual endeavour, to provide students with the opportunity to reflect on their discipline within a wider context and to encourage interdisciplinary collaborative activity and debate. The challenge of the project was that seven separate first year departments had to be included, so the project structure had to relate to students from Animation, Fashion, Graphics, Illustration, Interiors, Performance Costume and Textiles. Staff from throughout the Design School were encouraged to submit proposals for the project, which had £1000 of funding available. I was successful in the pitch for the second of these, with my project entitled Breaking Barriers. Using Mark Wallinger's 2007 Turner Prize-winning State Britain project as an inspiration, my aim for the project was to look at how Interior Design could influence and support collaborative responses from other design disciplines. The State Britain project was a direct representation of Brian Haw's five year protest camp outside Parliament. The camp was removed in 2006 under the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act which prevents unauthorised protest within a kilometre of Parliament. The exclusion zone ran through the centre of Tate Britain, where Wallinger's project was then cited^[1].

Format

I recognised the contextual importance of State Britain and found a similar scenario in Edinburgh. The Art College sits at the base of Edinburgh Castle, close to the line of the Flodden Wall, which was built in 1513 after the Scots defeat to the English at the Battle of Flodden. Whilst it didn't function as a particularly strong defensive wall, it was an important barrier in regard to the movement of trade and people in and out of the city. It ran close to where the Art College now sits, with the Sculpture Court, the gallery where the finished project would be exhibited, at its centre. As it was also the 500th anniversary of the construction of the wall, this too seemed a suitable reference point. The intention of the project was not to be a direct copy of Wallinger's, rather for the students to be influenced and experience sustained inspiration available through the act of caricature as homage^[2]. Using Wallinger's practice as a reference point would give the students a framework in which to insert their own response to the brief, by the creation of individual components that ultimately form a complete piece of work. A main objective when designing the project was for students to initially engage with the wider city and themes around barriers, gradually focusing them into a more specific response. Using the format of research, ideas development, and creation of a final piece,

the intention was the project would have a focus on not just making, but also destroying. This was important to avoid students becoming precious about their work and also ensured a more creative response to the brief. From the start, students were aware this was not a precious object and their final work would only exist in sketch books, photos and film at the end of the project. This knowledge enabled them to approach the solution with a more open mind and concentrate on the cataloguing of their ideas and process in a more focused way.

The available funding was spent on materials and the employment of an environmental artist, external to the University, to assist in the process. Following a short lecture series on the related themes, the first two days were spent in small mixed groups of 3–4 students. They traced the line of the wall and recorded, in various methods, what they saw and what they perceived as barriers in an historic and also modern day context of the urban environment. In their groups, students were asked to turn these ideas into three dimensional representations by inhabiting a series of large cardboard boxes in whatever way they wished. From an Interiors perspective, the aim of the project was to challenge students to look at their environment and to think about how to express ideas in a three dimensional form.

Execution

It was interesting to watch, in these first two days, how different disciplines tackled the task. This was also extremely useful to the students to experience other students ways of working, which may influence their own approach and practice. Whilst most design courses follow a similar iterative process to reach an end result, specific programmes have a different emphasis on their scale of reference, process and degree of making. Textiles students tended to focus on the textures of the environment they were looking at, due to their interest and focus on pattern. Product and Interiors students tended to look at the wider urban fabric, due to the greater emphasis on their courses towards the influence of people and environments on the design solution. Illustration students recorded their findings predominately as drawings in a sketch book, due to their strong focus on communication through drawn form. On the other hand the Graphics students were more photo based in their response, due in part to their way of gathering information coming from a much more experiential and visual perspective. At the end of the two days, we introduced another dimension to the project, the award winning environmental artist Matt Baker^[3]. Baker gave a talk about his practice and how he has responded to different urban and rural environments. This proved very positive by inspiring the students to be more ambitious with what their final response would be. Discussions had centred around the final response being a wall but after listening to Matt, the students began to think about their final piece in relation to its scale and the duration it would be in situ.

During the third and fourth days of the week, the students then worked on their own pieces for the wall that related to a more personal view of what were barriers and risk to them [Figure 1].



Figure 1: Studio space for breaking barriers project, Edinburgh College of Art



Figure 2: Detail from interior of a vitrine

Themes that emerged related to a variety of topics including feelings of isolation, history of witchcraft and violence. A studio space was allocated for the project in which all students were encouraged to work [Figure 2]. This was a very positive aspect of the process as it focused the momentum of the project in one space, and encouraged students to push boundaries through a series of informal crits with staff and each other.

On the Friday of the week, all the boxes were taken to the Sculpture Court to begin construction [Figure 3].



Figure 3: Start of building the wall

Matt Baker returned to assist in this process and his presence became important for the success of the project in that students could see how an artist works; understanding that sometimes there is not a set plan, it's a case of trial and error to see how something will be completed. An unforeseen issue was that the Sculpture Court had also been booked for a screening of a TedTalk that afternoon, of which we were not aware. We turned this potential issue into a positive influence as the wall then suddenly had a more subversive meaning for the students. Rather than the students feeling pushed out of the Sculpture Court, due to the formal nature of the screening set up at one end, it created a sense of rebellion in the work. They then became, to the casual observer, the infiltrators of the space which really fuelled their enthusiasm for its construction. It took around 6 hours to complete the wall and put together a small information sheet to accompany it [Figure 4].



Figure 4: The completed wall

Invites were sent out to all staff and students to come and see it. At 5pm the students then had to destroy it and remove all trace from the Sculpture Court [Figure 5].



Figure 5: The wall after demolition

A time lapse film, made by the animation department, captured the rise and fall of the wall^[4]. <https://vimeo.com/80381103>. For the remaining 10 weeks of the semester, students then took ideas and themes from the week and evolved them into a single piece of work relating to what they had discovered. The individual pieces were developed in the students' specific department, but part way through the process I met with all students, within their individual departments, to discuss the evolution of their ideas be it a piece of jewellery, a poster, a costume etc.

Lessons

From an Interiors perspective, the structure of this project raised a series of points that are useful to consider not just in the structure of Interior Design focused projects, but those relating to interdisciplinary design collaboration. Firstly, giving designers from different backgrounds a task to do, outside of their normal process, not only bonds them, but allows them to see each others' strengths and differences at first hand as part of the collaborative process. For this to be successful, it was important that the groups contained people from different disciplines, and that the mix of disciplines varied between groups. Secondly, having a space that can accommodate everyone is key to the sharing and evolving of ideas. Even when the students were allowed to work individually they stayed in the studio and commented on each others' work, which kept the group dynamic alive. Thirdly, the outcome of the project was not obviously an interior, although it did deal with three dimensional space, the inhabitation of an existing interior, and the timescale and materiality of interior intervention. This helped students feel that they weren't working exclusively outside their discipline, a scenario that has been supported by educational theorists. They argue for a need to restore balance in our thinking about academic climates in which different positions, practices and values can be voiced and realised^[5]. Fourthly, the input of a specialist environmental artist to support the aims of the project was vital. It gave the students first hand experience of directly working with someone outside their field, which resulted in a tangible outcome.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this project was important in the respect that it distilled down aspects of Interior Design such as scale, degree of inhabitation, ephemeral materiality and put them in the hands of other professionals to respond to. At the start of the project, my focus very much on what the process of Interiors could teach other disciplines, and had rather overlooked how that process would be enriched by a greater understanding of how other designers view and work within interior spaces.

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The Complexity of Containment

Dr Chris Cottrell, Olivia Hamilton & Andrew Miller

Dr Chris Cottrell, Lecturer and First year coordinator, Interior Design.

chris.cottrell@rmit.edu.au

Olivia Hamilton, Associate Lecturer, Interior Design. olivia.hamilton@rmit.edu.au

Andrew Miller, Associate Lecturer and Technology coordinator, Interior Design.

andrew.miller@rmit.edu.au

RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia.

First year students often arrive at university with preconceived ideas of what Interior Design is, based on how the discipline is portrayed in popular culture. We challenge these ideas with 'Container', the first project students encounter in their education at RMIT University. Students are asked to design a container that responds to an object's specific material and poetic qualities. Complexity arises as students are guided away from functional problem solving and, instead, must research material technologies, histories and poetics to generate new ways of forming interiors. This paper discusses the integrated teaching model we have developed, alongside case studies of student projects.

Introduction

"What is your definition of a container? A mountain can be a container but so can an eye dropper. The body is a container of sorts and, in English, we refer to ships as vessels. All to say, it's a tricky question: What is a container?"^[1]

Conventional interiors are easy to recognise. They are parcels of contained space, typically the insides of buildings. But the discipline of Interior Design is limited by this conventional understanding of interiors contained within walls, an issue we try to open up during the first year of a student's education. A conversation creates an interior; so does an umbrella opened to fend off the rain. Our clothing provides pockets of interior space that are always close to hand. Spaces such as the pocket suggest a conception of interiors at the scale of objects, and designed to suit.

Our first year project 'Container' challenges students to produce unconventional interiors for particular objects.^[2] They begin with a very general description of an object, selected by lucky dip. Examples of these descriptions include: 'a piece of fruit', 'something to light a fire with', 'currency' or 'a ball'. Students' first design decision was to choose a specific instance of this object. After reflection and research, students nominated pineapples, a zippo lighter gifted to them, five handfuls of rice (payment for a day's work in 18th century Philippines) or a toy ball – creating a diverse and unusual range of objects. Each student then undertook a process of research and analysis to identify the key poetic qualities of their chosen object in order to design a container for it. We prompted student's understanding of poetics^[3] through a series of questions: What are your item's material qualities? How is it made? What is its history? How does it move, or feel? What does it offer? How does it operate? At the end of this first class each student had a unique brief; to design a container for their particular object that articulates its poetics and the poetics of containment. We were already a long way away from designing the inside buildings!

An integrated teaching model

The six-week Container project emphasises physical modelling and material experimentation, and exposes students to design as an iterative process. Beginning with quick physical models constructed from materials like paper, card, thread, masking tape and clay, students experimented with strategies of containment and forms that expressed the poetics of containing their particular object. Over the following weeks these models were discussed, re-made and refined. The students' material choices developed in parallel with

the formal experiments, and responded to the particularities of each object and its poetics. The final outcomes of the project were one finely crafted container and one sectional presentation drawing, both at 1:1 scale.

Working towards these outcomes did not occur only in Design Studio classes. In their Technology subject students were introduced to processes of prototyping, hands-on material discovery of structures and forms through playful experimentation, all the while reinforcing ideas of design development as an iterative process. Communication classes covered photography, model-making and drawing skills. These skills were brought together in the making of a single project, much like in professional design practice. As Inger Mewburn describes, design practice is “characterized by uncertainty, complexity, instability, uniqueness and value conflicts.”^[4] These challenges were built into the teaching structure of Container. Students developed their design expertise through the iterative making of models and drawings, with materiality playing a key role in this process. Design expertise comes about by learning to listen to the ways a particular iteration ‘talks back’ and suggests the next steps to take.^[5]

We made the connections between these three subjects explicit, leading to what we call an integrated model of teaching. This is a pedagogical approach where students are working on a single project that spans across their various subjects. The value in doing this was two-fold. First, it reduced the quantity of work for students as the central design ideas could develop across all their classes. Secondly, and more significantly, working on one project across these different subjects allowed students to understand the connections between different skills and modes of enquiry, and how each approach can push a design forward.

The integrated model also helped us emphasise to the students the value of sharing resources and supporting each other as a community of learners. In doing so, our approach was similar to what Ashraf Salama calls “systemic pedagogy”, a system of teaching focused on the “acquisition of holistic knowledge.”^[6] According to Salama this proceeds from the “basic and well-proven premise that learning best takes place when:

- subjects are learned by teaching them to oneself;
- subjects are assimilated by teaching them to others;
- skills are learned through demonstration and instruction;
- fundamentals are attained in seminar discussions guided by one specialised in the relevant area; and
- certain skills are acquired in groups while others are attained individually.”^[7]

Our emphasis on in-class making in Design Studio classes, supported by short demonstrations and group discussions of the student work, was integrated with the skills acquired in Technology and Communication classes. This helped students to acquire holistic knowledge that reflects how designers actually work in practice.

Studio teaching is itself an iterative process and there is room to further tighten the connections between subjects in future versions of the project. In particular, a series of classes in the communication subject will focus on the significance of sectional drawing for interior designers. These classes will also equip students with specific skills and techniques for better resolving the sectional drawings of their containers.

Student projects: some case studies

Our first year cohort is well over 100 students, but a short discussion of some selected projects will give a sense of the diversity of materials and ideas that students used in making their containers, and the conceptual complexities that were opened up.

Charlotte Paule created a container for a corkscrew, working with a solid block of cork ingeniously sourced from a yoga equipment retailer [Figure 1].



Figure 1: Charlotte Paule, *Helices*, 2017. Photograph by Andrew Miller and Chris Cottrell

She titled this project 'Helices' in reference to the screw-like geometry of the bottle opener. Paule worked closely with workshop staff to lathe a helical path that allowed the container to be unscrewed, with a cut-out to hold the corkscrew. Opening the container acted as a prelude to the opening of a bottle of wine. Following traditional methods of wine storage, her container was sealed with wax, which was then broken before the central core was twisted out to reveal the corkscrew.

Other students worked with ideas of motion, and the container as space to be enjoyed by the object it housed. Elisa Yimin Xu's 'Toy ball amusement park' created an orbital pathway along which a small ball could circulate [Figure 2].

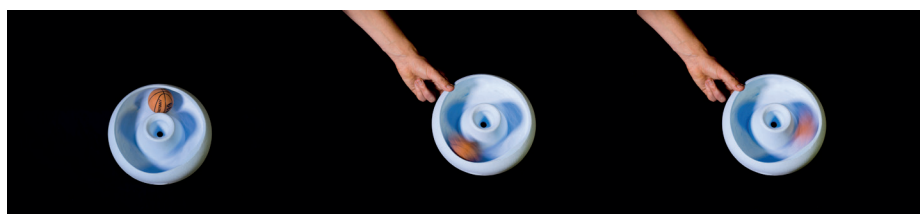


Figure 2: Elisa Yimin Xu, *Toy ball amusement park*, 2017. Photograph by Andrew Miller and Chris Cottrell.

Like Paule, Xu used a lathe to shape the centre of her container, before carefully hand-carving and sanding away at the high density modelling foam. The container has an almost addictive tactile quality where the hand, container and ball all operate together to keep the ball simultaneously contained while remaining in motion.

The performative quality of the container and object were also evident in 'Match guard' a container for 45 extra-long matches by Ilana Leber [Figures 3 and 4].

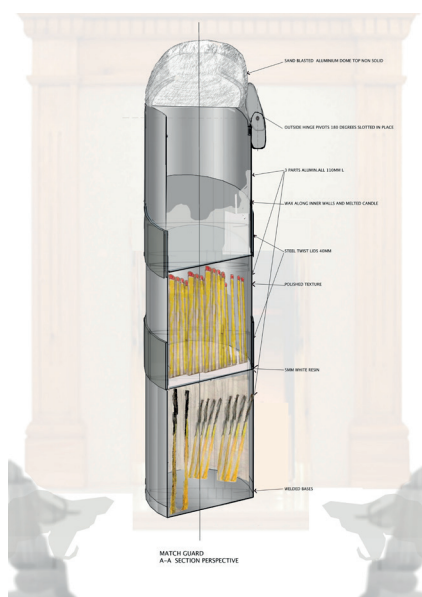


Figure 4: Ilana Leber, *Match guard*, 2017. Sectional drawing by Ilana Leber. Photograph by Andrew Miller and Chris Cottrell.

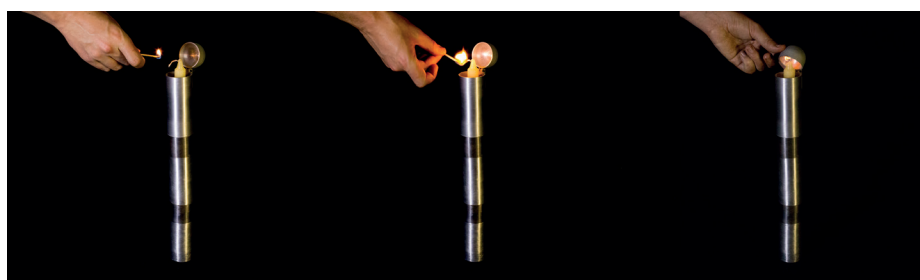


Figure 3: Ilana Leber, *Match guard*, 2017. Sectional drawing by Ilana Leber. Photograph by Andrew Miller and Chris Cottrell.

The container exaggerated the match form and was organised into three sections. The middle section held fresh matches, which could then be struck against the side of the metal tube. A top section housed a candle and included a cover to extinguish the candle as required. Once the candle in the top section was lit, dead matches were stored in the lower section. In Leber's project, there is an interplay between use and containment, suggesting ideas of Interior Design concerned with time and performance as well as space.

Siobhan McCarthy's 'Piña futura' [Figure 5] moved beyond the idea of a container as a void space enclosing a particular object and instead offered an idea of container as plenum. McCarthy's pineapple was cast from a range of semi-synthetic, edible pineapple gel materials, which she developed through a process of remarkable and meticulous material experimentation. Her project proposed a future of food production and consumption in response to the traditional farming of pineapples where each plant produces only a single fruit each year. 'Piña futura' also acknowledged the pineapple as a sculptural form in reference to its 18th century use as an exotic object and symbol of wealth.



Figure 5: Siobhan McCarthy, Piña futura, 2017. Photograph by Andrew Miller and Olivia Hamilton.

Making the work public

Immediately after presentations and reviews of their final containers and drawings, all the projects were brought together for a student-organised exhibition that celebrated the diversity of work and engaged a wider audience [Figure 6].

We consider exhibition-making as a practical way for Interior Design students to develop a valuable set of skills. These include thinking spatially, curation, sequencing of experiences, team work, communication and the idea of producing and hosting an event. Students organised a bar and food, a digital catalogue, and a promotional poster. The intense time constraint meant students worked together, made decisions quickly, and gained confidence – all valuable in creating a supportive “community of learning”⁸ and for the remainder of their studies and later work in professional practice.

In making the work public, students receive feedback from a wider audience, and learn to articulate their work to fellow students, family and friends, and the wider design community. Exhibiting their work encourages students to understand the value of their work to a public audience, away from the



Figure 6: Students setting up the exhibition at the RMIT Design Hub, Melbourne, Australia. Photograph by Chris Cottrell.

narratives around the work that are constructed within a design studio teaching environment. Despite these benefits, there is surprisingly little literature on the pedagogical value of exhibition-making.

Conclusion

The integrated teaching model introduced in 'Container' was extended and strengthened in the subsequent project that students undertook. This project utilised an even tighter connection between Design Studio and Technology classes. Students began with physical model making (reinforcing the skills acquired in 'Container') before being introduced to digital 3D modelling in Rhino. They worked with this software across Studio and Technology classes to develop their designs. Once again, the integrated model was valuable in eliminating the duplication of work, enabling students more time for in-depth investigation. Time spent on developing their digital models had value for both their Design Studio and Technology classes. Personal investment in the design projects also motivated students to extend their technical skills in order to better model their designs. This predominantly digital workflow culminated in a set of presentation drawings that showed a huge advance in skills compared those produced for 'Container' (but this is a story for another time).

The diversity of responses to the 'Container' project greatly expanded students' material skills, and shifted their thinking of interiors away from the conventional tropes of design for residential, commercial and hospitality spaces contained within buildings. Instead, interiors were understood as being formed through material, spatial and poetic relations, dependent on time, motion and performativity.

Perhaps the most rewarding aspect of this model of teaching has been seeing the students form an inclusive and supportive community, with a high degree of independent learning skills. It will be exciting to see how this group of students continues to progress through their education and into the world of practice.

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Productive design processes and creative collaboration: common grounds of fashion, music and interior design

Rachael Brown & Phevos Kallitsis

Rachael Brown is a senior lecturer at the BA (Hons) Interior Architecture and Design, at the School of Architecture, University of Portsmouth

Phevos Kallitsis is a senior lecturer and architect at the BA (Hons) Interior Architecture and Design, at the School of Architecture, University of Portsmouth

The paper presents workshops that have been applied in a 2nd year Interior Design studio in an exploration of the common grounds among fashion design, music and interior design. The workshops aim to generate discussions and design tools that support students into generating design briefs and alternative concepts, during their initial steps into the project. These workshops support the making process through the idea of analytical play, while introducing students to sustainability, co-design and different experimentations with materials.

‘Assemble’, the winners of the Turner Prize in 2015, describe themselves as “sort-of-architects” and “non-architects” and they work alongside set designers, carpenters and artists^[1]. ‘Droog’, a similar but more established collective based in the Netherlands, present themselves as “a conceptual design company” that focuses on “matters that affect society and its people. The process is key. Our work is anti-disciplinary. And the outcome can be anything that contributes to society”^[2]. ‘Participle’, a London-based practice, also applied their design skills and participatory design methods to solving social issues such as encouraging a flourishing third-age, the engagement of disaffected young people and the reduction of re-offending rates^[3]. Emerging anti-disciplinary and interdisciplinary practices like these point to a future where spatial design is no longer like a classical orchestra where each one plays their part led by a conductor, but has the spirit of jazz, a process of improvisation, call and response, with greater freedom for creative collaboration and co-designing.

With this dynamic professional context in mind, the BA2 Interior Architecture and Design year group at Portsmouth School of Architecture has been designed to encourage students to apply their creative skills to a broad range of problems and to understand and value the contributions of potential users, clients and other creative professionals; students are also encouraged to explore different routes into the creative process. This approach is underpinned by clear pedagogic principles that inform our practice:

- Learning sits within the framework of “process” and “praxis” where emphasis is given to experiential learning^{[4][5]} and includes creative, iterative and cognitive processes; knowledge and understanding is constructed by the individual.
- To create a community of inquiry that encourages respectful and critical collaboration with others (tutors, students, practitioners, communities and clients).^{[6][7]}
- To engender socially responsible attitudes and an understanding that design is an ethical act; to raise awareness of local, national and global issues.
- To encourage deep learning and to promote intrinsic motivation and critical thinking.

“Emerging anti-disciplinary and interdisciplinary practices like these point to a future where spatial design is no longer like a classical orchestra where each one plays their part led by a conductor, but has the spirit of jazz, a process of improvisation, call and response, with greater freedom for creative collaboration and co-designing.”

- To encourage the development of the student’s individual design identity informed by an understanding of practice, the broad cultural and social context of design and by reference to theory.

To support these pedagogic aims, the BA2 curriculum introduces ethical approaches to design and an engagement with theory and the wider cultural context of interior practice including art, craft and the broad spectrum of design practices.

To exemplify these pedagogic approaches, this article describes two projects. The first, Re-Make, examines the historic and contemporary connections between textiles, fashion and architectural design and associated environmental issues. The second project, Sound Space, introduces the students to participatory design processes and examines the creative connections between music and design.

Re-make: fashion-inspired approaches to sustainable spatial design

The Re-Make project asked the students to design a making and selling space for Junky Styling, a fashion house that creates one-off garments from discarded clothing and which, at the time of the project, were in the process of rebranding and reviewing their business strategy; the site for the project was an empty shop. The project encouraged students to research and analyse connections between fashion and interior design and to apply their findings to their own practice; the project also enabled students to deepen their awareness of the social, economic and environmental considerations that inform sustainable approaches to both disciplines [Figure 1].

To stimulate the examination of historic and contemporary links between fashion and architecture, students were introduced to texts by Adolf Loos^[8], Gottfried Semper and Bradley Quinn and referred to exhibitions like ‘Skin and Bones’ and ‘Lost in Lace’. Based on this research the students mapped the common areas of practice including design processes, conceptual aims, use of materials and construction methods. To conclude this phase of the project the students defined a ‘lexicon for practice’ that could be shared by both disciplines and summarised their explorations.

To understand sustainable approaches to both disciplines the students analysed the objectives of the Sustainable Clothing Action Plan (SCAP) and considered how their aims for 2020 could inform interior practice. SCAP is a government-funded initiative to improve the sustainability of clothing across its lifecycle. It has four steering groups: the Design Group; the Re-Use and Recycling Group; the Metrics Group and the Influencing Consumer Behaviours Group. This last group has identified three key behavioural changes which consumers can make to reduce the footprints of their clothing, including: ‘Acquisition’ (consider purchasing pre-owned and reused clothing, the durability of garments and the source and quality of fibres), ‘In-use’ (caring for products, laundering & repair) and ‘Discard’ (the re-use & recycling of products). The students shared their findings and applied their understanding to the generation of designs that were socially, economically and environmentally sustainable.

To deepen understanding and an appreciation of cross-disciplinary practice, the students participated in two workshops. The first, led by a pattern cutter, introduced the students to the processes of garment design using paper templates, cutting and stitching to create sculptural three-dimensional forms [Figure 1].

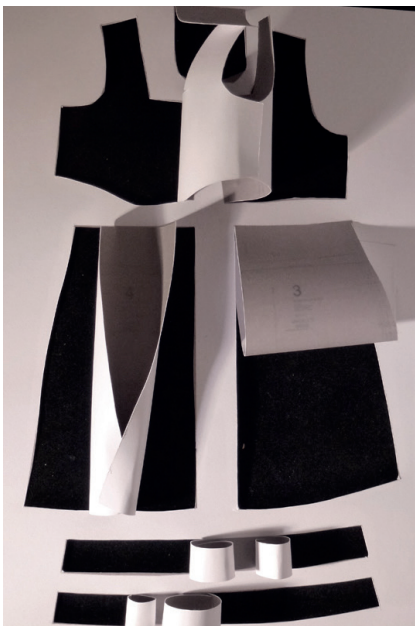


Figure 1: Pattern Cutting Rachael Ball

The second workshop, led by a fashion and textiles tutor, resulted in the creation of paper garments and the investigation of containment at the scale of the body, the scale of the room and at the scale of the building, using drawing and photography. In addition, the students also experimented with approaches to representation informed by textile artists and 'Drawn to Stitch' [Figures 2 & 3].



Figure 2: Paper Garments - Exploring the spatial potential



Figure 3: Paper Garments - Scale of the Body

These creative and cross-disciplinary processes influenced all stages of the students' projects: the sculptural garments that were initially designed to contain the body were expanded to create innovative interiors. Materials and processes, usually linked to fashion and textiles, inspired the students' designs and details; for example, the use of zips, weaving, stitching and pleating materials. The students also considered SCAP's behavioural changes and applied their understanding to the selection of sustainable and recycled materials, which included the re-appropriation of discarded garments that were deconstructed and reassembled to create furniture and divisions of space [Figures 4 & 5].



Figure 4: Junky Styling Interior Rachael Ball



Figure 5: Junky Styling Concept Model Rachael Ball

Overall, this project led to creative, ethical and well-substantiated proposals that exemplified the value of cross-disciplinary approaches.

Sound Space: Co-design and musical inspirations

The last project in BA2, 'Sound Space', was located in St Agatha's Church, an historic building set in the northern quarter of Portsmouth, which is an area of social deprivation. The project brief set up two main challenges for the students: to develop a brief for the space that placed music at its centre; and to identify the common grounds between spatial design and music and discover how design concepts may be generated from non-visual elements.

"Students had to define the new function and what kind of spaces would be needed, but most importantly to demonstrate how young people and the wider community may benefit from such a facility."

The first challenge was to develop a strategic brief and schedule of accommodation that responded to the needs of the local community. The second challenge applied to concept design where the fluid art of music became an integral part of the students' concepts and design development. In our experience, students face difficulties in designing spaces that they have not experienced before and find it hard to read precedents successfully. Quite often these two important processes depend on students' background and prior knowledge. To respond to this need and facilitate the generation of ideas the School organised two workshops, one at the brief writing stage and the other at the stage of concept design.

Following the co-creation and co-design pattern increasingly evident in practice, the brief writing workshop was a collaboration with Portsmouth College, Portsmouth Music Services and Tonic Music for Mental Health, a non-profit organisation. Students were tasked with defining the new function and considering what kind of spaces would be needed, but most importantly to demonstrate how young people and the wider community may benefit from such a facility. Through the collaboration the students had the opportunity to discuss the positive influence that engagement with music can have on communities and individuals' socio-economics, well-being and happiness. To frame the investigation, Christopher Mahy from Portsmouth Music Services talked about the educational value of music, and Stephanie Langan from Tonic Music for Mental Health, discussed her work as a counsellor, underlining how music can help mental and physical well-being; this was particularly pertinent as mental health issues among young people are increasing.

The most important part of the workshop, though, was the inclusion of 6th form pupils from Portsmouth College who acted as potential users and introduced the students to the practice of participatory design, focusing on the user and not just the clients' needs or their own design aspirations. At the same time the pupils had a valuable insight into design studio in Higher Education.

The second workshop was based on a set of productive design operations, which triggered the production of sketches and physical models, examining the common ground between music and spatial design. The workshop was divided into four parts in order to map a journey from musical fluidity to a three-dimensional concept for a specific building. A small presentation preceded every activity introducing main concepts and generating discussions among students and tutors.

The first part, called 'Materialisation', asked the students to create a collage or a painting based on music of their choice; further, they were asked to reflect on the elements of the composition and the mood. The second part called, 'Organisation', introduced musical terms including rhythm, repetition, crescendo, sequence and musical colour; students were asked to revisit their collage and rearrange it according to the composition.

Examples including John Cage's musical scores, Xenaki's work, Kandinsky and Klee, provided a framework for this activity [Figure 6 & 7].

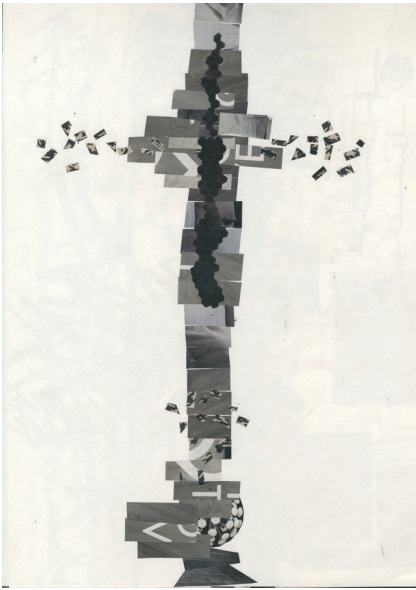


Figure 6: Sound Space 'Materialisation'

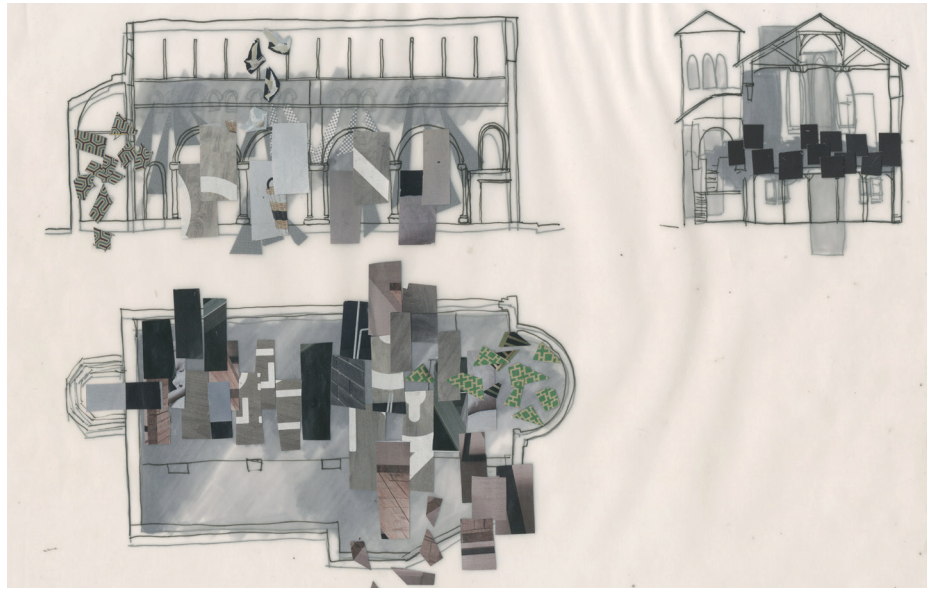


Figure 7: Sound Space 'Abstraction'



Figure 8: Sound Space Section Thomas Franklin

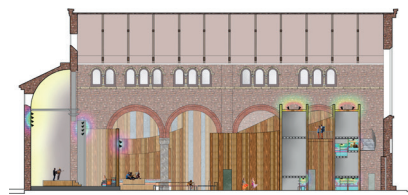


Figure 9: Sound Space Section Stephanie Norris

Part three, called 'Abstraction', included the introduction of architectural projects based on the synergies between the two arts, and asked the students to frame parts of their drawings within the plans and the sections of St Agatha's, making the first connections with the building. The students then traced over these collages to create diagrams that would start to incorporate their schedule of accommodation and concept design [Figure 7]. The last part, 'Structure', started with the introduction of sculptural works based on music and asked the students to create a series of models expressing the diagrams and the collages of the previous stages. The models provided stimuli for more targeted research into design precedents and helped students to set up a narrative for their schemes [Figures 8 and Figure 9].

The projects generated by these workshops allowed students to express themselves in unexpected ways and to enter into unmapped territories of imagination and creativity. The briefs were informed by a deeper understanding of the user experience, while the second workshop allowed them to overcome the fear of the blank page and introduced alternative forms of spatial exploration.

Reflections

The learning paradigm of 'process' and 'praxis' at Portsmouth is supported by short, studio-based workshops which are designed to create a dynamic and unpredictable learning environment that energises both students and lecturers, and enhances engagement and intrinsic motivation. These short projects encourage experimentation and risk-taking - processes that can be overlooked if students are concerned about marks and are rushing towards conclusions. Furthermore, these instinctive approaches allow students to discover and process images and forms, which would have remained latent within more conventional approaches of concept generation.

The students are also encouraged to look beyond the conventions of their own discipline and to engage with alternative approaches to concept generation, design development and representation of ideas; a process of meaningful and analytical play that allows the student to sustain investigations, experiment and to understand themselves as designers.

These playful and cross-disciplinary approaches allow students to kick-start discussions, visualise theories and start making and designing; they are processes which enrich and enliven the early stages of a project and which lead to unpredictable, creative and substantiated outcomes.

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Lines between: writing/drawing, space and the artists' book

Belinda Mitchell & Dr Maureen O'Neill

Belinda Mitchell is Senior Lecturer in Interior Design

Dr Maureen O'Neill is Senior Lecturer in Illustration

Both work at the University of Portsmouth

Lines between: writing/drawing, space and the artists' book is an interdisciplinary exchange between Interior design and Illustration. The artists' book acts as a hinge between 2D drawing/writing practices and 3D space to generate material propositions for major project briefs and to develop new forms of disciplinary representations. The book supports an engagement with space that is located in embodied experience and the generation of ideas through the dance of writing, the play of text and the tactile engagement with visual images [Figure 1].

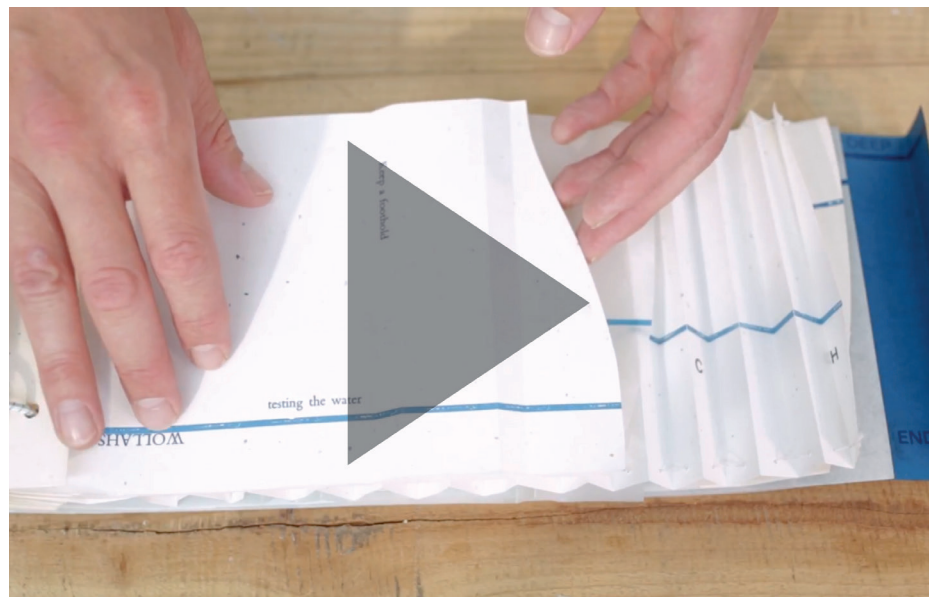


Figure 1: Meredith, T. & Cleary, C. (2017). *The Thin Blue Line: An Audio Visual Representation*, Media Production Centre, University of Portsmouth
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GfSr-3-Z4Y>

The BA Interior Architecture and Design course at the University of Portsmouth uses interdisciplinary process to support students to engage with interior texts, theories and subject representations. We draw on work from the artists' book collection in the Illustration department and the 'Ministry of Books', an online library at UoP ^[1].

The project uses creative writing practices, drawing and photography to generate the beginning of third year, final major project design briefs and to support MA Interior Design students to engage in embodied research methodologies. "All books are tactile and spatial as well – their physicality is fundamental to their meaning. Similarly, the elements of visual and physical materiality participate in a book's temporal affect – the weight of paper, covers, endpapers or insets, fold-outs or enclosures all contribute to the experience of a book" ^[2].

These qualities are interior pre-occupations and in an age of digital representation the book encourages play with material and immaterial matters to create poeticised affects in architectural space.



Figure 2: PURSE, Unknown Author,
[http://theministryofbooks.blogspot.co.uk/search/label/Books % 20- % 20P](http://theministryofbooks.blogspot.co.uk/search/label/Books%20-%20P)

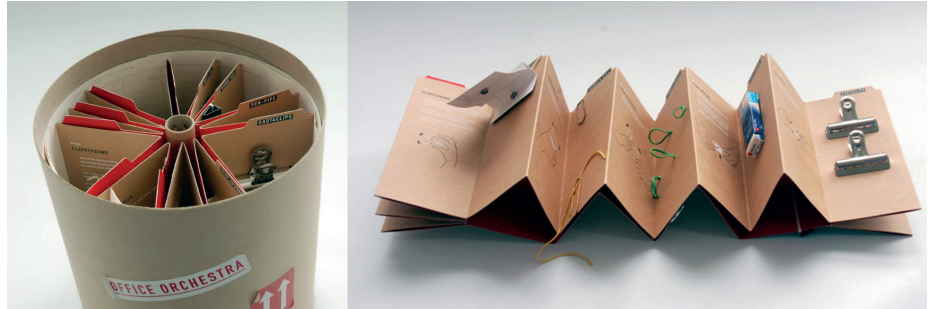


Figure 3: The Office Orchestra, Andrea Chappell & Cherry Goddard
[http://theministryofbooks.blogspot.co.uk/search/label/Books % 20- % 20O](http://theministryofbooks.blogspot.co.uk/search/label/Books%20-%20O)

The Ministry of Books is a physical collection of approximately 250 books, held in the Illustration department at the University of Portsmouth, which can be viewed online with open access to students from all courses [Figure 2 & 3]. The physical access for students to these books is vital through interaction with the real object. To ‘read’ an artists’ book requires intimate engagement. What became obvious when watching and appraising student reaction to their introduction to this medium is their absolute delight to this tactile experience. Artists’ books test our senses through the quality and smell of the paper, sounds as we open, reveal and unfold. They need to be examined and inspected closely for construction techniques, the method of printing and binding. Many of the physical attributes are not often visible. How the books are contained - often coming with specially created cases or containers to help in the storage, protection and transportation - becomes an integral part of the production. The relationship between the viewer and book is an intimate one where time and concentration is required. Many of the books in the collection are not ‘book like’ or follow the codex system. A number of the books are interactive creations where intimacy, haptics, text, sequence, space, shape and form become critical elements offering a dynamic experience for the reader to evoke memories, emotions and sensations ^[3].



Figure 4: Mohammad Mostakin, Interior Design and Architecture BA3, 2017.

Figures 4 and 5 show examples of artists’ books from interior design students in BA3. Mohammad Mostakin explored the performance of the artefact through the opening of a black fabric A3 archival box, and the unwrapping of printed crinkly white tissue paper, to reveal a crisply starched white shirt and a letterpress calling card slipped into its breast pocket. Mollie Hayter produced a set of images of Wymering Manor, a historic site, wrapped in paper and black book cloth. She provided two large bulldog clips and invited the audience to curate a set of images printed on cartridge, tracing paper and acetate in order to choreograph their own journey through the house and its many thresholds.



Figure 5: Mollie Hayter, *Interior Design and Architecture BA3*, 2017.

At MA level, students worked collaboratively with the MARCH Landscape studio at Chawton House Library, Alton, a centre for early women's writers, to explore the landscape and inscapes of the site [Figures 6 and 7]. The collaborative work produced a collection of 'chapters' keyed to a journey relating to a series of interventions around, on, in and under the site. In its closed form individual stories were tucked into a box, while the opening of the book supported an unfolding of the scenes into laser cut paper and a tunnel book. The work created a horizontal plane away from the binary of inside and out that is the norm at historic sites and in architectural practice.

The artists' book encourages engagement with issues of interiority, of material matters, and asks students to question their disciplinary gestures in order to find alternative modes of representation. "The very method we use to develop architectural proposals – orthographic drawing – describes only form, and relegates material to the empty spaces between the lines" [4]. The book opens out the space between these lines through haptic engagements and material play to develop alternative patterns of practice and ways to represent and re-imagine interior space through the "...condensations of distinct architectural essences" [5].



Figure 6: Marta Mantoan, *Chawton House Library, MA Interior Design*, 2016.

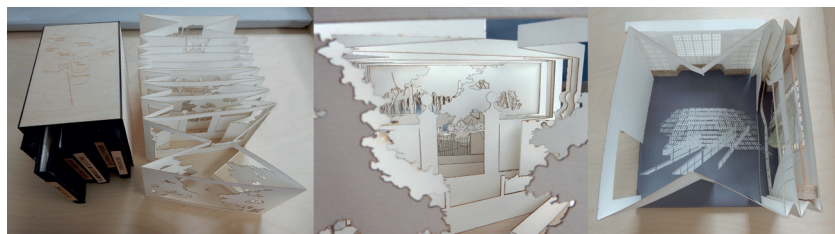


Figure 7: Chawton House Library, collaborative book. MA Interior Design and MARCH Landscape Studio, 2016.

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The Front Door: Interfacing Interior and Exterior Domains

Liza Kuhn

Liza Kuhn is a practising designer and teaches on the MFA Interior Design, Parsons The New School for Design. lizakuhninteriors@gmail.com

Course: History of the Built Interior, 15th – 20th Centuries

Level of Delivery: 1st Year Graduate Students (MFA Interior Design, Parsons The New School for Design)

History of the Built Interior, 15th-20th Centuries is a semester-long curriculum course for the Masters of Fine Arts in Interior Design program at Parsons The New School for Design. The course is structured as two-thirds lecture series and one-third discussion session. The lectures focus on the history and development of Interior Design as a discipline, while the discussion sessions aim to bring these historical concepts into present day design thinking.

The course's online discussion forum serves as a platform for academic prompts and student thought and questioning. The topics considered in this forum often develop into the foundation for the following weeks' in-class discussion sessions.

In this case, the interactive dialogue was progressed into a vibrant in-class discussion about the role of the front door in today's homes, and serves as the jumping off point for this paper, The Front Door: Interfacing Interior and Exterior Domains."

A residence's front door is both literal and metaphorical in its existence. It is simultaneously the primary method of entry into a dwelling, and a symbolic representation of that dwelling itself. It is inextricably linked to the character of a house, belonging both to the architectural facade and to domestic life inside the home. In essence, the front door is a three-dimensional edge that is both interior and exterior — yet neither at the same time — working as a threshold that divides, connects and negotiates the relationship between two domains. This paper will evaluate how the front door — through its situation in space, its relationship to other front doors in a community, its methods of use, and its material and design-based qualities — can be used as a tool through which we can better understand the socioeconomic behaviors of a neighborhood. Furthermore, this paper will explore how a singular component of interior design can inform the everyday experiences of individuals within a community, while simultaneously allowing us to examine the overall character of a community itself.

Situation in Space

On a summer evening many years ago, I sat alongside my college mentor, swaying to and fro in a rocking chair on her front porch. She reminisced about how her home had evolved, how she and her husband had carefully selected the property and the neighborhood before deciding to purchase their first house a decade prior. "Check to see if there are front porches," she advised. I looked at her, unsure at first of what she was implying. "They indicate how a neighborhood functions. If most of the houses have a front porch, it is more likely that you will see your neighbors outside of their homes, and will afford you the opportunity to interact with them. So often nowadays, families choose to spend their outdoor time in the privacy of their own backyards."

It was not until years later, when studying and teaching interior design, that the profundity of her words was fully realized. The front porch can be thought of as an extension of the front door, a fascinating middle ground that is both interior and exterior, and that negotiates the realm between the public space

of the street and the private space of the domestic interior. When a front door is situated so as to share the same surface edges as a porch, inhabitants are drawn out of their house through the front façade, consequently facilitating their interactions with nearby neighbors. This placement softens the transition between interior and exterior domains, blurring the boundary between public and private life.

If there is not a front porch, how is the front door positioned? Is it still part of the front facade? If so, does it sit on the ground, or is it situated above eye level, atop a flight of stairs, so that the incomer is looking up at the resident (and the resident peering down at the incomer)? Is it located directly off of the sidewalk, or is it set far behind the variance line, heightening the experience of a visitor approaching the house? Is there a gate or fence separating the public walk from the front entry? Is the front door visible from the street? [Figure 1].



Figure 1

The situation of the front door in space is a topic that has been long explored throughout design history. Frank Lloyd Wright was iconic in his purposeful hiding of the entryway from street view, intent on highlighting the architectural experience and exaggerating the progression from public to private realm. For those inside the home, his veiling of the front door afforded more privacy, magnifying the disparity between the two domains. His drawings of the Robie House – both the floor plans and elevations – show his opposition to making the front door the focal point of the home; one must study the plans to decipher the point of entry, while the elevations illustrate his intention to camouflage the front door with the façade [Figure 2 & 3].

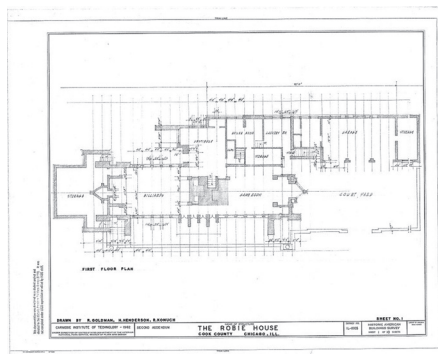


Figure 2

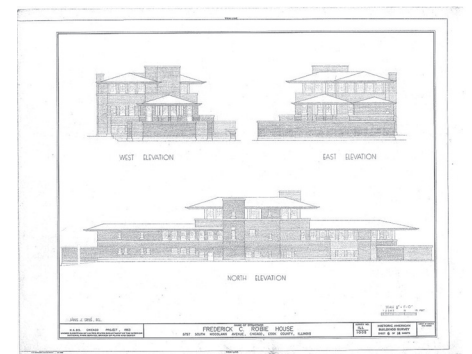


Figure 3

Other residences featured in design literature portray varying philosophies on the proper placement of a house's front door. Photographs in Architectural Digest, for instance, showcase front doors centered on the main axis of a residence's driveway, which itself is centered on the property, thereby making the front door the most visible and prominent element of the home.

While the placement of one front door can help us understand the lifestyle of a particular household, it alone does not accomplish enough in allowing us to understand the character of an entire community. As suggested by my mentor,

there is a crucial collective element when determining the character of a neighborhood. A front door placed alongside a front porch may hint at the behaviors of one family, yet a neighborhood populated by this combination of front door + front porch does much more to educate us on the habits, values and identity of a larger and more diverse group of people. In order to properly evaluate the ramifications of an entry door's situation in space, we must assess its relationship to other entry doors in the same neighborhood. This "collective existence," as I have termed it, is our next criterion of exploration.

Collective Existence

The relationship between adjacent front doors may never be more illuminated than on Halloween night, when young princes and princesses scurry from one house to the next, challenging each other to collect impressive amounts of candy in very short periods of time. In his article "Why the 'Trick or Treat' Test Still Matters," Brent Toderian, a prominent urban design theorist from Vancouver, cites children as the best evaluators of a neighborhood's collective existence, a trait which stems from their innate ability to read neighborhoods and to find comfort in areas where the front door is easily located. These areas are also usually high on the "Halloween Door Density" scale, where transitions from one door to the next are quick and effortless^[1].

While physical proximity is the most evident enabler of a seamless progression from one entryway to the next, there are numerous other design criteria that create communities in which children and their supervisors are inclined to experience feelings of comfort. A well-lit front door, for one, will augment comfort by alleviating darkness and increasing feelings of safety, acting as a beacon for anybody trying to find their way. A house with less trees and foliage in the front yard also allows for more surveillance, minimizing the chances of surprising or unwelcome encounters en route to the entry. Even more, front doors flanked by sidelights or windows enable homeowners to view the street from within, both watching out for their own safety and the safety of passersby on the street outside^[2].

All of these elements – lighting, landscaping and architecture– point to the importance of interior design and its collision with other design disciplines, and to the effect of this collision on the surveillance of a neighborhood, which together begin to define a neighborhood's "quality of design"^[3]. The level of surveillance, I would argue, is perhaps the most important criterion for evaluating a town's safety, and points to the camaraderie (or lack thereof) of the people living in it. One urban theorist notes that "community completeness" is generated when "the power of nearness" is born, through intentional design moves that include "good visual surveillance through doors, windows... porches and 'eyes on the street'" that create "legible streets that let you 'read' the neighborhood easily. All of these are great for walkable, healthy, economically resilient communities year-round."^[4]

While Frank Lloyd Wright's prairie houses offer cerebral and poetic experiences for their users, a community comprised of these houses provides little surveillance, challenging a community's ability to facilitate the completeness and nearness that Toderian praises. Nevertheless, the various styles of suburban house design confirms the importance of the design of the front door – its location, accessibility and relationship to its surroundings – in defining the experience of its users and of an entire community.

Usage

The first two criteria – a front door's situation in space, and a front door's collective existence – help us understand the household in the context of its relationship to other households in the surrounding vicinity. Our third area of discussion, the use of the front door, aids in our understanding of domestic life

inside of the home. While the front door's situation in space certainly plays a role in defining its use, today's suburban houses often have multiple methods of entry. The way these entries are used (or not used) can help us understand the dynamics of the domestic interior.

For example, those of who reside in houses with attached garages often park our vehicles within that garage, causing us (out of efficiency) to enter or leave the house through the door that bridges the interior of the home and the interior of the garage. Those of us with rear house parking may prefer to carry in our groceries through the mudroom door, which is often located at the back of the house and situated in closer proximity to the kitchen or pantry inside of the home. Both of these options leave the front entry door as a vestige of what it once was, relegating it to a formal entry for non-familial guests, less familiar neighbors or mailmen.

Still, many of us may prefer our formal front door as our entry of choice, or the front door may be the only option for entering. When this is the case, it is interesting to ask how this singular method of entry changes in response to the arrival of different visitors; for instance, it may be left unlocked or entirely ajar when one's children are running in and out with their friends, or it may be paired with a screen door when guests are arriving on a sunny and warm Easter Sunday. For those in areas with increased security, the door may never be left open, but instead may be paired with a peephole or camera that allows the user to observe their visitor before granting them entry.

These habitual entries are evidence of how residential design has shifted and evolved throughout the years, and are indicators of how they may change in function in the future. In prior centuries, back doors were reserved as the method of entry for house staff (maids and butlers being relegated to interior circulation at the rear of the house, near the servant quarters), while the owner and their guests entered through the formalized front door. Today, rear doors are commonly used as the entryways for family and close friends, while the front door is relegated to the less familiar salesperson or trick-or-treater. By observing the patterns of use of the front door, for both those within and outside of the household, we can gain a better understanding of domestic life and the habits of a community.

Materiality

Our final section of exploration, the materiality and visual appearance of a front door, points to various aspects of a household's individual or collective identity. Its color, for instance, has been hypothesized as an indicator of the owner's personality and preferences; House Beautiful suggests it is a "portal to your personality – not just your house," identifying those with yellow front doors as the most individualistic, those with orange front doors as the most modern, and those with black front doors as the likely socialites, with crowded schedules and classic taste.

In contrast to this individualistic assessment, the style and materiality may instead reflect the aesthetic inherent to the country of residence, thereby contributing to a collective voice and hinting at domestic practice inside of the home. These design choices may be byproducts of the economics of the city (is the timber locally sourced, made from reclaimed barn wood, or imported from the rainforests?), or may reflect the economical philosophies of a culture. Furthermore, the door and its décor may indicate the wealth of a household (a custom forged iron pull, for instance, is more expensive than a standard bronze knob), or it may reveal a religious faith, if framed by colored lights or accompanied by a holiday wreath.

In addition to the materiality of the door, its construction reveals additional aspects of an individual's and a community's identity. A solid plank door, for example, may suggest an extreme hot or cold climate, and may also hint at a resident's preference for privacy. In opposition, the owner of a glass front door



Figure 4

may place value on added visibility and surveillance, may want to introduce the element of natural light into his home, or may want to capture its reflective materialistic qualities [Figure 4].

Frank Lloyd Wright sought to harness natural light as a material, using it in combination with leaded glass, which together dissolved the rigidity of a solid wall and shifted it towards that of a screen. This “light screen” opened up space and blurred the division between interior and exterior, thereby simultaneously reinforcing the overall architectural character of the house and enhancing the lives of its users by bringing the exterior inside.

Conclusions

By cumulatively analyzing a front door’s situation in space, its collective existence, its use and its materiality, we can begin to obtain a more holistic understanding of the identity of a neighborhood. Not only will we start to comprehend the personality and character of individual households, but we will also come to understand a community’s social habits, its culture, its level of safety and how it balances the public and private lives of its inhabitants.

As we move into an age of increased technology, sustainable thinking and heightened security, we must question how residential design will change, how the front door will continue to evolve and how we, as creative thinkers, can harness the inherent influential properties of the front door. Certain designers are already beginning to question its function, presenting exciting proposals that challenge traditional design thinking.

In Mumbai, for example, the exterior façade and interior walls of a house are comprised of the same surface – repurposed front doors – collaged together to form the shell of a house built for a family of four generations [Figure 5].



Figure 6: Photography: Akihiro Yoshida

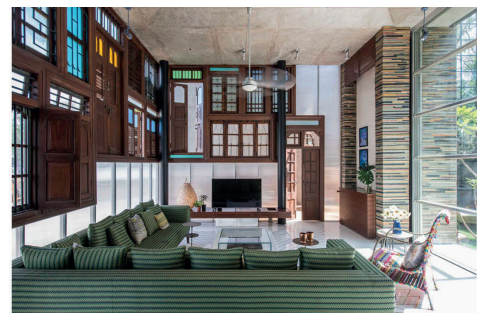


Figure 5: Photography: Sebastian Zachariah, Photographix

Not only does the Collage House encourage sustainable practice by employing front doors as a material unto themselves, but it also brings to light the symbolic importance of the front door, as a personification of family, of security, and of welcoming others into your home. Even more, the doors serve multiple purposes, behaving as both door and window, augmenting surveillance, and bringing in a healthy abundance of natural light.

On the product design scale, Japanese designer Nendo proposed seven different doors that call into question how we use it, and how its materiality relates to its specific function. Lamp fuses the light source with the door (reminding us of how young trick-or-treaters travel from house to house finding their way), Baby creates user-defined doors all within a singular frame (acknowledging the varying body heights of its different users), and Corner reimagines how a door can be situated, suggesting that it can bridge two edges and consequently reconfigure interior and exterior layouts [Figure 6].

These proposals are just two inspiring interpretations of how we can begin to rethink the front door, and are powerful examples of how the front door influences the everyday lives of its users. Furthermore, they are examples of how one element of interior design interacts with and informs other design and socioeconomic disciplines, and how together they have profound influences on the habits and behaviors of its users and of a community as a whole.

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From a Trading Zone to a Sharing Zone: Exploring Interior Architecture as a Multi-Scalar Approach to Inclusivity

Jacopo Leveratto

Jacopo Leveratto is an adjunct professor of Interior Architecture at the School of Architecture, Urban Planning and Construction Engineering, and a research fellow at the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies of Politecnico di Milano, jacopo.leveratto@polimi.it.

In the last few years, the research into more inclusive urban spaces has led a substantial part of town planning to study the concept of the ‘trading zone.’ This approach, however, is based on two traditional anthropological assumptions that need to be reconsidered. Today, in fact, ‘sharing’ has become the preferred modality of using and producing a social space, and interior architecture and design could provide a fundamental perspective to identify effective strategies for its definition. In this regard, this paper outlines some primary features characterizing interiors disciplines, to describe an operative approach to inclusivity that is open to multi-scalar applications.^[1]

In recent years, socio-economic trends have been pushing the concept of inclusivity towards the centre of the architectural debate, increasingly focused on improving urban liveability. Today, however, it seems to be much more than a simple responsible choice for a substantial part of the environmental design culture. Inclusivity has become a sort of necessary design parameter, whereas resilience has been considered the first condition for managing the transformations of contemporary cities.^[2] Identity and diversity, in fact, mark our contemporary society on a daily basis, and the shared spaces of metropolitan life are characterized by the inter-relationship and exchange between people in a very new process of global intensification. For this reason, their definition today requires a total rethinking of the uses and meanings traditionally associated with them, demanding new forms of inclusivity from some spaces that, in the past, had mainly to reflect a sort of collective representation.^[3]

The problem, from a design point of view, is that the architectural culture is still struggling to define a speculative approach to inclusivity, which could produce a differentiated set of operative guidelines. This is because, until now, the focus on this topic – with very few exceptions – has been oriented in one single direction, with an almost exclusive thematization about physical or cognitive accessibility,^[4] thus overlooking the fact that inclusivity, first of all, is a constructive factor that is based on the possibility of intercultural dialogue.^[5]

In this regard, the most interesting advancements have probably been achieved by some urban planners, through the disciplinary translation of Peter Galison’s scientific concept of the ‘trading zone,’ and his idea that it is possible to define an intermediate space – concrete or conceptual – capable of intercepting different strategies and articulating them in a constructive view.^[6] A ‘trading zone,’ in other words, is a sort of ‘third’ local context where different actors can find a common ground of dialogue through the creation of a new intercultural language. For this reason, a growing number of planners have begun to promote an active participation in the process of decision-making by focusing their attention not so much on the correctness of their choices from the point of view of the content and method, but on their ability to propose a plan that is a boundary object between different strategies.^[7]

This approach, however, is based on two traditional anthropological assumptions that today need to be reconsidered. The first is that urban space is the exclusive place for public life, whereas home is the place for the private one;^[8] and the second is that social life in public represents a form of ‘trading,’^[9] while in private it is essentially ‘sharing.’^[10] In other words, despite

its merits, this theory is still based on the undisputed separation between the urban space as a place of trading (with all its rules and procedures) and the domestic one as a place of sharing (devoid of formalities and protocols).

Of course, when looking at everyday reality, things are not so clearly defined. During the last twenty years, a rapid technological transformation has started pushing the act of inhabiting beyond the boundaries of privacy, and the space of the city (with the inclusion of citizens' domestic spheres) has exploded into a plurality of uses and meanings. The same difference between public and private sociality partially got lost – blurred by the uninterrupted form of sharing through which people build and represent their lives – and this sort of disintermediate and informal anthropology introduced by digital platforms also affects the advanced economies in their most innovative aspects.

In this sense, it is not surprising that this form of sharing does not only change the use of urban space, but also its own production. Today, rather than large-scale transformations unable to effectively deal with the dynamics of contemporary urban developments, smaller 'urban catalysts' have pervasively become a preferred mode of intervention for public space building and activation.^[11] These 'tactical' modes of urbanism – from 'Guerrilla Gardening' to 'Open Streets' initiatives – have arisen, as a counterpart to a classic and strategic notion of planning, in the form of everyday and bottom-up approaches to local problems, which make use of short-term, low-cost and scalable interventions and policies.^[12] Be they sanctioned or not by urban authorities, spontaneously arising from the streets or emerging from given creative practices and professional specializations, yet they always represent a creative re-appropriation of the contemporary city's public dimension in the form of a diffuse and uncoordinated acupuncture, advocating for a more flexible and adaptable urban environment.^[13]

From a design point of view, the sudden success of these forms of intervention entails both a meaningful change in scale and a new way of looking at the morphogenetic mechanisms of urban projects – from a series of sequential operations to a simultaneous process in which various decisional agents interact to generate a complex spatial system.^[14] Moreover, it shifts the conceptual core of public space design from a purely spatial dimension to a multi-layered one, which is also made of immaterial factors such as participatory processes, communication projects, marketing strategies, consensus-building mechanisms, specific regulations and conditions of use. In summary, the emerging attempts of tactical urbanism challenge both the traditional parameters of urban design and the role of planners, architects and other urban practitioners, requiring new tools and methodologies that effectively mix top-down and bottom-up impulses.

Today, the most influential voices agree in advocating a new 'curatorial' design approach^[15] that is able to select, coordinate and manage heterogeneous, multidisciplinary and multi-scale design contributions, in a sort of 'open-source urbanism' that is still in search of a clear definition.^[16] The problem, however, is that a curatorial work refers to a form of post-production and systematization of something that is already existing;^[17] and it also implies a final idea of closed form that does not seem to match with the spontaneous tactics of urban re-appropriation. In this regard, it is probably necessary to reverse the optics, starting from the very nature of this principle of sharing, and looking at the domestic space in which it has traditionally materialized.

For this reason, given their consolidated expertise in this field, interior architecture and design could provide a fundamental perspective to identify effective strategies for building and activating hospitable urban spaces. In fact, beyond any typological and scalar delimitation, interior projects always share a particular approach, which is focused on the task of making architecture inhabitable. That is to say, they are always meant to grant people the possibility to appropriate, use and transform the space in which they live, in order to

adapt it to their real lives, both functionally and symbolically. By consequence, interior projects are always characterized by a specific methodology, which involves a continuous search of concrete strategies and tactics to build effective connections of meaning between two very different dimensions. They are like a physical and porous interface between the purely spatial datum of architecture and the actual possibility of inhabiting it. Their quality, therefore, can be measured only by their ability to adhere or adapt both to architecture's hollow shell and to people's real lives, building a meaningful connection between them. This means that interior architecture and design offers a set of strategies and tactics that are fundamentally different from architectural design, in that they are always concerned with this precise task.^[18]

This design approach, in other words, is based on the clear consciousness that any action of design represents only a part of a continuous process of transformation,^[19] which is not only determined by the institutional strategies of planning, design and management, but it is also made of countless and spontaneous tactics that take the shape of everyday practices.^[20] In fact, freed from the illusion of a an indefinite time horizon, interior projects start with the awareness that they are going to be transformed in a near future, not only by other projects but also by the continuous action of appropriation of the people who live in that space. Therefore, the designer's purpose is not simply to define spaces, but rather to make places, thus building deeper connections between spaces' form, use and meaning.^[21]

Indeed, one of the most significant aspect of the last fifty years of research in this field is the progressive fading of a disciplinary definition traditionally limited to the boundaries of the domestic environment, which has made way for a comprehensive design approach based on the task of transforming an abstract space to a 'place-to-be.'^[22] Interiors, in other words, today are no longer studied as an exclusive typological field, but rather as a philosophy of design focused on the relevance of human 'gesture,' considered as the action of building the place.^[23] In fact, whether inside or outside, in a room or across territories, the main concern of interior architecture and design is to make places that are specifically built, and signified for, and by the act of inhabiting. For this reason, their approach entails the acknowledgement of some specific design parameters that are determined by the spatial consequences of the centrality of the human presence.

The first one concerns the fundamental role of the body^[24] – the real protagonist of the act of dwelling – whose centrality defines a different form of geometry that tends to ignore the traditional idea of architectural composition, in favour of a logic system of spatial organization centred on human motility, perception and understanding. This kind of 'interiorized geometry' determines a qualitative leap in the process of spatial configuration, which is no longer based on a series of sequential enclosures, but is defined by a projective attitude that makes the interior field of application shift from the optic to the haptic dimension.^[25] For this reason, interior disciplines do not exclusively work with surfaces, volumes and masses, but also with multi-sensory and sometimes immaterial factors that translate particular experiential qualities.^[26]

Moreover, this specific focus on the subject's active role in the process of making places pushes interior architecture and design to evaluate the possible effects of their intervention more than the causes that have determined it. In other words, if the sense of a place is mainly connoted by the productive action of the people who live it, the quality of design lies in the kind of experiences that the space is able to suggest. This is to say that the quality of an interior project is not defined by the strict adherence to a precise and predetermined function, but mostly by the different uses it grants – by the many opportunities of appropriation it allows and encourages, both functionally and symbolically. Therefore, its significance does not lie in a univocal meaning inscribed in its shape, but in the different possibilities of personal interpretations that

it opens, thus stressing the need of a more conscious, adaptive attitude that makes architecture deal with the spontaneous practices of inhabiting by ‘taking care’ of places.

All these features, in summary, determine an adaptive philosophy of design that could be extremely productive in defining an operative approach to build and activate inclusive urban spaces.^[27] This, however, would involve a decisive revision of some architectural design parameters, that moves the conceptual centre of urban design from its margins to its interior, in a sort of projective process of formal definition. From this point of view, its formal quality would not lie in its geometric construction, but in its articulation in fields and objects that can be recognized, employed, and personally modified – namely inhabited in a direct and non-mediated way. Therefore, more than the urban morphological matrix, central to such projects is the degree of integration or mobility of that articulation, its exclusivity or its openness, its strictly symbolic connotation, or its interpretative flexibility.

In other words, the possibility of enhancing the inclusive potential of urban spaces would not involve a reversal of the design process that goes from the definition of a single element to that of a whole space. It would rather entail a gradual shift of interest from the shape of space to the forms of its use. Only in this case, urban spaces, as any other interior, could develop around the ‘gesture’ of the subjects who inhabit it, in a sort of ‘sharing zone’ in which the possibility to exert a real control on their environment is explicit, even though only symbolically.

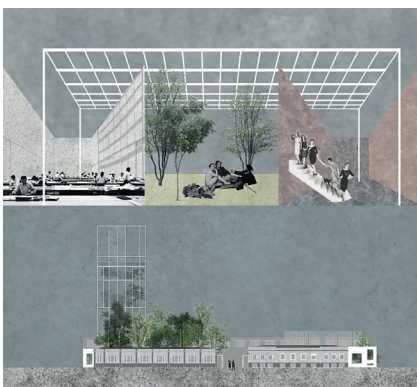


Figure 2: The conceptual definition of a ‘sharing zone.’



Figure 1: The visualization of a new way of living the city.



Figure 3: The elaboration of the 'sharing zone' through the definition of calendars and diagrams of uses.

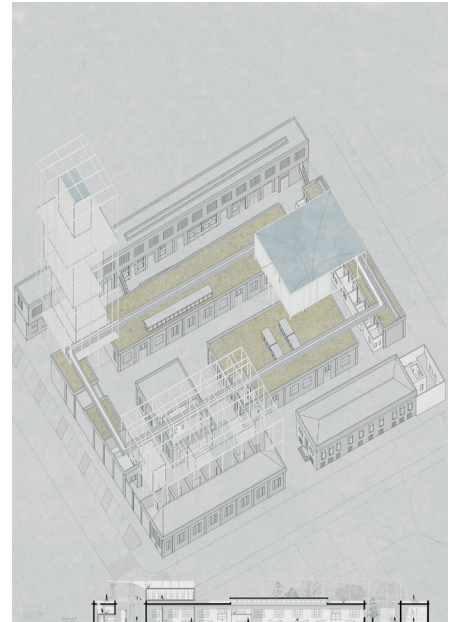


Figure 4: The definition of the physical infrastructure of the 'sharing zone.'

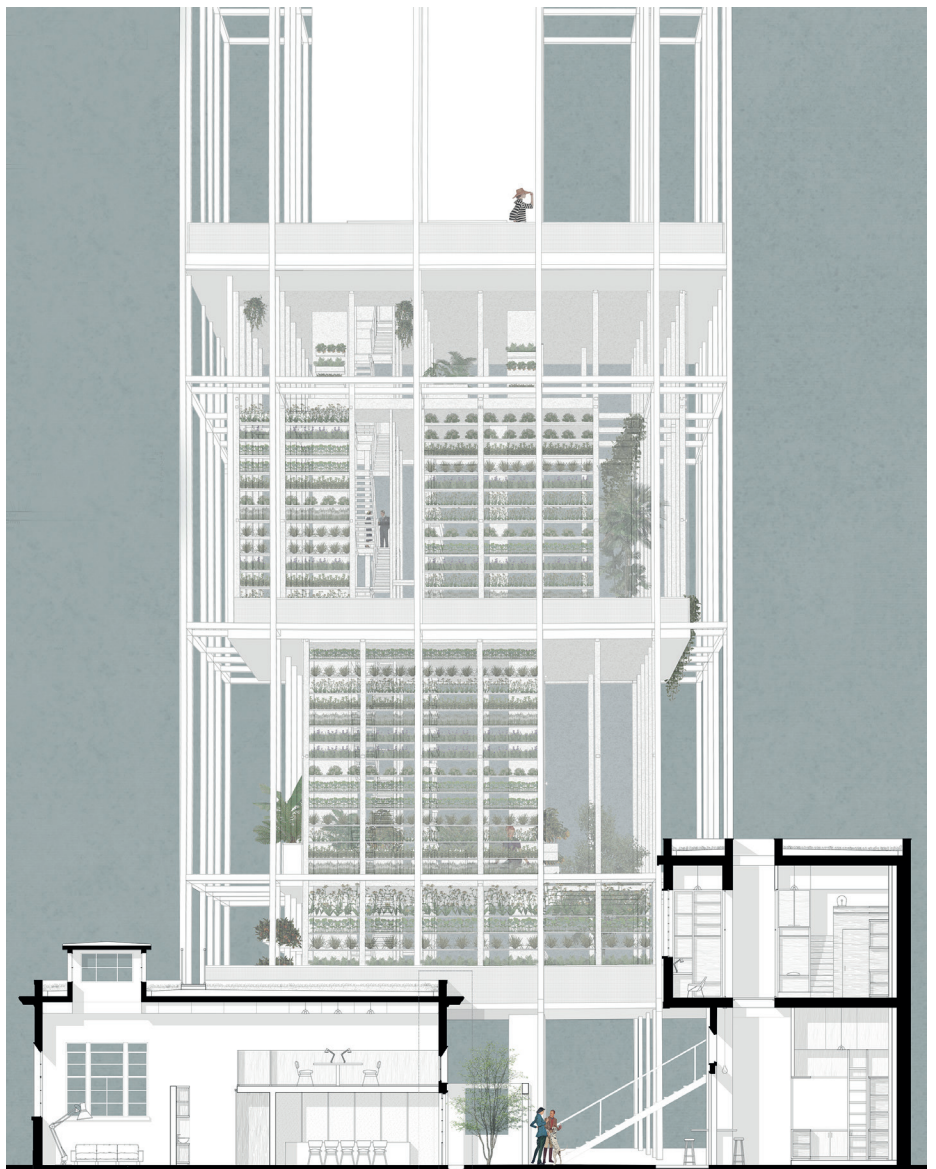


Figure 5: The project of a vertical public space.

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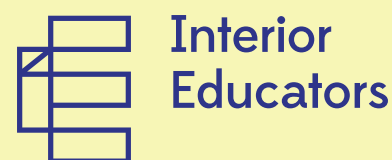
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