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POST-DOMESTIC
HABITAT
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PAD

via Festa del Perdono 1 – 20122 Milano – Italy
via Roma 171 – 90133 Palermo – Italy
info@padjournal.net – editors@padjournal.net

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**MORE-THAN-
HUMAN
PERSPECTIVES**
COHABITATION, TECHNOLOGY,
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Post-Domestic Living

The Challenge of Adapting Domestic Spaces to the Evolution of Digital Technologies

Silvana Donatiello

Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II
Orcid id 0009-0002-6640-4609

Mariarita Gagliardi

Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II
Orcid id 0009-0005-1684-3103

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to examine how the advancement of technology is radically transforming the way we interact with the domestic sphere. The evolution of digital devices has brought new perspectives for redefining living spaces, raising crucial topics about the traditional function-based model. In this context, design plays a key role in shaping the technological revolution of Post-Domestic habitat. This model was challenged by several designer architects, including Joe Colombo and Superstudio.

The integration of Augmented Reality (AR) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) allows the creation of heterotopic spaces, inspired by Foucault's theory. In this perspective, the home environment is transforming into a fluid and mutable space where users can experience new forms of interaction and space relationship. This radical change raises important questions about the future of living.

1. Introduction

In an era characterized by the rapid advancement of technology, the domestic sphere is undergoing a deep and unprecedented transformation, reshaping the way we engage with the spaces we call *home*. The primary objective of this paper is to delve into this ongoing revolution, shedding light on how the evolution of digital devices has opened up new perspectives for the redefinition of living environment.

Already in the past, visionary architect-designers, among them key figures such as Joe Colombo and the avant-garde Superstudio Group, have boldly questioned the conventional paradigm of the function-based model of living spaces. These pioneering minds have embarked on a remarkable journey of exploration, reimagining the intricate relationship between individuals and their domestic surroundings. Over the past few decades, design has emerged as a pivotal force in steering the course of this technological revolution in the realm of Post-Domestic habitat. It has encountered and grappled with distinct challenges and unique opportunities. Pivotal factor propelling this metamorphosis is the seamless integration of Augmented Reality (AR) and Artificial Intelligence (AI). These transformative technologies have paved the way for the creation of heterotopic spaces, a concept inspired by the key theories of Michel Foucault. Within this framework, the conventional division of spaces based primarily on function has become increasingly constrictive. The home environment is rapidly evolving into a dynamic and adaptive domain, where inhabitants can immerse themselves in unseen forms of interaction and spatial dynamics.

This radical and far-reaching transformation has sparked a host of pivotal questions concerning the future of domestic living. How does the real essence of home evolve in a world where technology dismantles traditional demarcations between spaces and their functions? How can we effectively address the multifaceted challenges and capitalize on the myriad opportunities ushered in by this technological revolution in our daily lives?

The paper aspires to explore these questions, dissecting the ongoing metamorphosis of living spaces while accentuating the role of design in driving this paradigm shift. It examines the opportunities that are developing starting from this technological revolution, offering new insights into the evolving relationship between humanity and home.

2. The Technological Revolution of the Domestic Habitat

The evolution of digital technologies has revolutionized the way we perceive and interact with domestic spaces. Augmented Reality (AR) has opened up new perspectives in domestic spaces. Users can now experience advanced interaction with their surroundings through devices such as AR viewers or smartphones. Virtual interfaces have moved from mere representation to becoming key elements of living. AR has enabled individuals to interact with virtual environments superimposed on the real world, dissolving the boundary between what is real and what is virtual. This overlay transforms domestic spaces into hybrid contexts in which digital and physical objects coexist. This radically changes the perception of space, as inhabitants can perceive information and

digital objects overlaid on the physical environment, opening the door to new immersive experiences (Trovato, 2021).

Artificial Intelligence (AI) plays a crucial role in redefining living spaces, especially with the spread of the connected home. AI-powered virtual assistants, such as Amazon Alexa or Google Assistant, enable users to control home devices and services via voice commands or apps. This interconnection and centralized control contribute to greater adaptability of home spaces to individual needs and preferences. The home becomes a place where interaction between the user and the space is highly flexible, enabling unique experiences for each inhabitant and greater interconnection between objects and digital networks. The integration of AI within the home creates an environment where technology is integral part of daily life. These pervasive technologies further amplify the process of redefining domestic spaces, creating an habitat in which design is closely interconnected with technology (Pellegrino, 2011). At the same time, Francesco Mazzucchelli examined the concept of the *Quarta Parete* (Fourth Wall) of the home, which traditionally represented the boundary between private space and the outside world. However, with the advent of immersive technologies such as AR, this fourth wall crumbles, allowing the public to enter the domestic space in unexpected ways. This deep change in the interaction between domestic space and the outside world raises crucial questions about privacy, security and the perception of living space. Homes are increasingly characterized by their being *onlife*, fluctuating spaces in a hybrid regime determined by continuous interconnection through new communication technologies (Mazzucchelli, 2021).

In this scenario of radical transformation, the crucial role of design clearly emerges. Interior design is no longer limited to simply configuring physical spaces, but becomes the medium through which the interaction between users and the digital and physical environment is defined. Designers are called upon to create living spaces that reflect the needs of a rapidly changing society and that are able to adapt to the challenges and opportunities offered by this new era of the Post-Domestic habitat.

3. Heterotopic Spaces. The Influence of Foucault

Philosopher Michel Foucault defines heterotopias as *counter-spatial places*, areas of transition in which conventional rules are suspended. The heterotopias challenge the traditional form-function pair, juxtaposing places where people are present and absent at the same time. This conceptualization, as introduced by Foucault, has been the subject of extensive scholarly reflection. Heterotopias, unlike traditional places, are not easily classified by their form or function, but rather exist as liminal spaces that defy conventional categorizations (Knight, 2017). Foucault himself explored this concept in his later writings, as evidenced in his work *Other Spaces: Places of Heterotopias*. Here, the author expands his analysis on heterotopias, emphasizing how these spaces are not simply places of opposition to dominant social structures, but also spaces of critical reflection and potentiality. Heterotopias can, therefore, represent not only challenges to spatial conventions, but also challenges to social and cultural norms.

Technological evolution has led to the emergence of heterotopic spaces in which AR and VR challenge the usual rela-

tionships between form and function. In this habitat, human experience intertwines with technology in complex and unexpected ways, creating a heterotopic dimension in which the boundaries between the real and the virtual worlds blur. Individuals can be physically present in a space while simultaneously immersing themselves in an alternate reality through advanced technological devices. The spaces in the Post-Domestic habitat offer new opportunities for critical analysis of power dynamics, perception of space and the construction of individual identity. It poses a challenge to traditional conceptions of place and opens the way for further theoretical explorations on the complexity of interactions between technology and society. Consideration of how heterotopias can be applied to this contemporary context requires an interdisciplinary approach that integrates the theoretical perspectives of philosophy, sociology and technology. In this way, Foucault's enduring influence and his relevance in contemporary society can be fully understood.

4. The Concept of Post-Domestic in Preciado

Philosopher Paul B. Preciado, in his book *Pornotopia. An Essay on Playboy's Architecture and Biopolitics*, introduces the term Post-Domestic to describe an iconic image that encapsulates the radical transformation of the domestic environment in the context of the contemporary era (Preciado, 2014). This image depicts Hugh Hefner, the founder of *Playboy*, working on his distinctive round equipped bed. Initially, we might view this space as simply a bedroom, but Preciado's Post-Domestic perspective prompts us to look beyond that. The concept of Post-Domestic, thus presented by Preciado, transcends

the traditional idea of a dwelling as a place of rest and privacy. This space actually serves as an epicenter for a multiplicity of activities that go beyond mere rest and individual pleasure. It is a place where work, entertainment, hyperconnected systems and voyeuristic design converge (Bassanelli, 2022). Hugh Hefner's bed becomes a multifunctional platform, an intersection of private and public spheres, a microcosm of a society undergoing a deep transformation.

The concept of the Post-Domestic surprisingly anticipates our contemporary times. Today, we are witnessing the gradual disappearance of traditional boundaries between public and private spheres. Domestic spaces are no longer exclusively dedicated to rest and family life, but have become the stage for multiple activities and interactions, often influenced by the ubiquitous presence of technology and AI. The advent of AI devices in the home has further amplified this domestic metamorphosis. Every aspect of private life is involved in production and work processes, thanks to automation, interconnection of devices and centralized management of home systems. Homes are no longer mere shelters, but become hubs of control and production, where the management of daily activities is increasingly delegated to AI and home automation systems.

Preciado's perspective on the Post-Domestic invites us to reflect on how the perception of domestic space has changed radically, transforming into a place where the private and the public, the human and the technological, work and pleasure are intertwined. In this context, the challenge for contemporary design is to create environments that reflect this new under-

standing of domestic space, harmoniously incorporating AI and Post-Domestic elements into people's everyday experience.

5. Joe Colombo and Superstudio. New Visionaires Habitat

In the design and architecture scene of the 1970s, two figures emerged as true visionaries of the new habitat: Joe Colombo and the Superstudio collective. The movement known as Radical Design, heavily influenced by the ideas of these designers, challenged the traditional form-function pair in interior architecture, paving the way for a conceptual revolution that finds new relevance today in the era of the Post-Domestic habitat.



Figure 1. Superstudio, Sofa Design, Poltronova, 1966.



Figure 2. Joe Colombo, Experimental project Visiona 1, Interzum exhibition in Cologne, Bayer, 1969.

Superstudio coined the bold concept of *life without objects*. This mantra emphasized the crucial importance of experience and flexibility in living spaces, challenging traditional conceptions of furniture and household objects (Fig. 1). Through their radical design, they proposed a vision of home environment in which freedom and openness were the cornerstones, strikingly anticipating the concept of the Post-Domestic (Quesada, 2011). At the same time, Joe Colombo's work contributed significantly to this conceptual revolution. Colombo challenged the conventions of home furnishing, creating flexible and modular spaces that responded to the changing needs of inhabitants (Fig. 2). His vision of a *new domestic landscape* promoted the idea of an ever-changing living environment in which architectural elements and furniture harmoniously integrated to offer a wide range of possibilities for use (Rossi, 2014).

These designers thus anticipated a radical transformation of the home environment and their legacy finds new relevance in the current Post-Domestic era. The advent of digital devices, AI and AR viewers in homes is further challenging the traditional conception of home space. Colombo and Superstudio ideas on flexibility, adaptability and the importance of experience become even more relevant. Today, contemporary living takes place in increasingly fluid home environments, where spaces can adapt to the different activities and needs of the users. Smart technology enables precise control of the home environment, offering greater interactivity and personalization. AI, for example, can anticipate occupants' preferences and adjust lighting, temperature and other parameters based on those preferences. This convergence of technology and design is redefining the real idea of home and giving rise to an era in which the home environment is constantly evolving and adapting, reflecting the changing needs and aspirations of the inhabitants.

Joe Colombo and the Superstudio collective have thus played a key role in shaping our understanding of the domestic environment, anticipating key concepts such as flexibility and experience. Their legacy finds new relevance in the Post-Domestic habitat era, in which the presence of digital devices, AI and AR viewers is radically redefining the traditional conception of domestic space. These pioneers paved the way for a future in which design and technology merge to create increasingly adaptable and immersive environments.

6. Domestic Design Perspectives

Home design is experiencing an unprecedented revolution thanks to the integration of emerging technologies that are helping to transform home environments into smarter, more efficient, safer, and more personalized spaces, creating a more advanced and adaptable living experience. There are numerous technologies that can interact with the home space. One of the most widely used currently is Internet of Things (IoT) technology, applied for centralized control and connectivity, which finds application in advanced home automation, home appliances and smart sensors. Another technology on the rise is the Additive Manufacturing, used for rapid prototyping and production of customized objects. However, the real frontiers of the domestic future are: Augmented Reality (AR), used to enrich the home experience by overlaying digital elements on top of the real world, Virtual Reality (VR), which can offer a fully virtual experience and Artificial Intelligence (AI-based systems), which can reprocess data by learning users' preferences and automatically optimizing the home environment.

This new design perspective is not only redefining our perception of home spaces, but is also opening new directions for the creation of innovative and immersive environments based primarily on the use of AR, VR, and AI. “New notions of augmented reality are developing that suggest new, common yet individually decorated and populated ways of sharing living spaces for socializing, playing and loving” (Szacka, 2021). In this section we will explore some of these new perspectives, taking as example one of the most revolutionary groups

of the last decade: Space Popular, an art and architecture studio that explores the future of spatial experience through research and design.

The group coined the term *Venn Room* in 2019 to describe virtually overlapped domestic environments by Space Popular. On the occasion of the *Tallinn Architecture Biennale* in 2020, they created an installation that serves as a perfect example of integrating AR into home design (Fig. 3). They use this technology to allow people to modify the appearance and function of the space in real-time. Users can use an AR application to change wall colors, furniture arrangements and even create virtual artworks seamlessly blending with the surrounding environment (Fig. 4). This project demonstrates how augmented reality enables a level of customization and adaptability never seen before in a home setting. Building upon this concept, a research project called *Tomorrow Living* was presented at the MEET Digital Culture Center during *Milan Design Week 2022*, created by Huawei Milan Aesthetic Research Center in partnership with Space Popular. The project explores new scenarios of living in mixed reality, ubiquitous and intelligent technology to reconnect with nature, empower communities, promote physical and mental well-being, and optimize consumption and spaces. The question is: Which role can intelligent technology and design currently play? Space Popular attempts to answer through the immersive documentary *The Global Home*, presenting a series of virtually connected rooms transporting the observer through different everyday scenario, developing a small community of avatars that becomes a home in constant movement (Fig. 5).

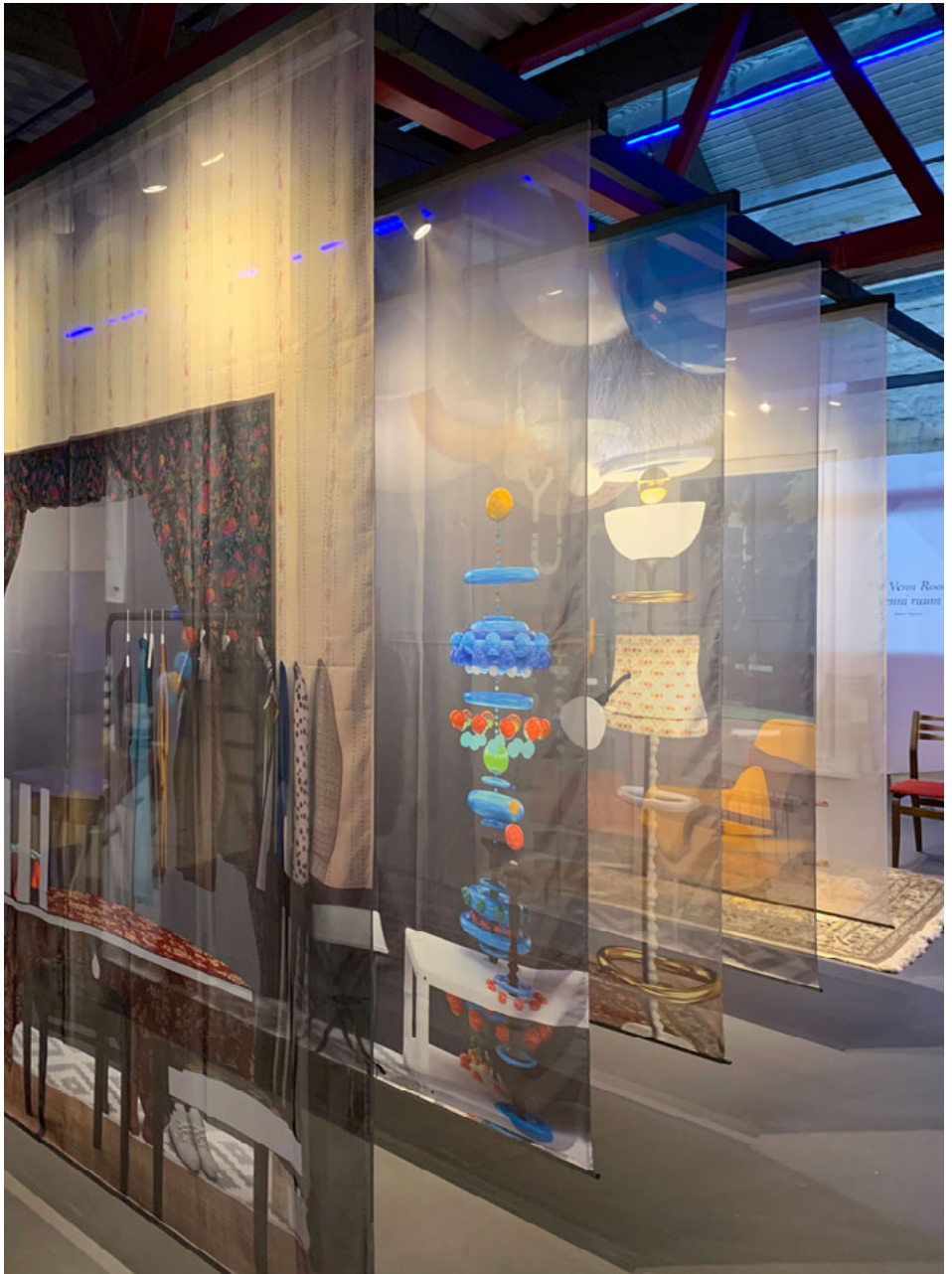


Figure 3. Space Popular, The Venn Room, Tallinn Architecture Biennale, 2020.



Figure 4. Space Popular, The Venn Room, Tallinn Architecture Biennale, 2020.

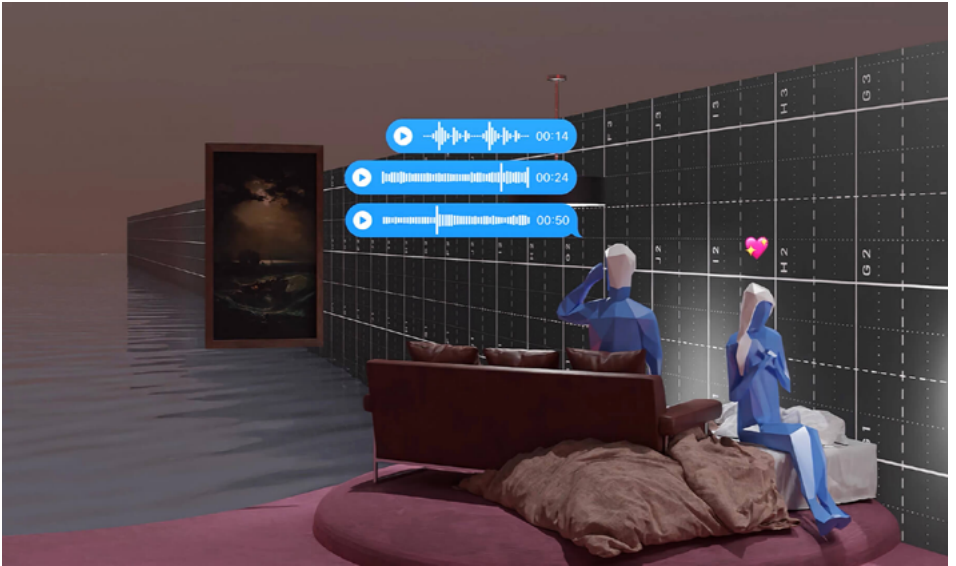


Figure 5. Tomorrow Living Exhibition, 2022. Site specific immersive film: The Global Home by Space Popular.



Figure 6. Tomorrow Living Exhibition, 2022. Site specific immersive film: The Global Home by Space Popular.

The Global Home will be to the experience of virtual space what the body is to the physical experience of architecture. Bodies dictate which doors we can pass through, the size of the beds. Similarly, the size and layout of our homes dictate where we can stand, sit, walk, or reach in a virtual world. In this space it is possible to create customizable shared environments (Fig. 6). The virtual home goes beyond the concept of ownership, becoming a placeless and lawless *Global Home* (Thiébat, 2023).

In the same way, Zaha Hadid Architects Group has also experimented with the use of AR to create futuristic spaces in the *Liberland* project. This project is based on the philosophy of liberating domestic spaces from physical limitations through the use of advanced AR technologies. The environments of *Liberland* are designed to be completely customizable and interactive. Virtual walls can transform into panoramic windows displaying breathtaking landscapes or interactive screens providing real-time information (Fig. 7). This project paves the way for a new era of dynamic and highly functional domestic spaces, where AR technology harmoniously merges with architecture.

Another visionary designer is Andrés Reisinger: he has taken interior design to a completely new level, challenging conventions and embracing the concept of a multiverse in his work. His approach to design is characterized by a surreal and dreamlike aesthetic, where reality merges with imagination in unique ways. Reisinger has gained prominence for his digital projects, creating virtual environments that seem to exist in a parallel world (Fig. 8).

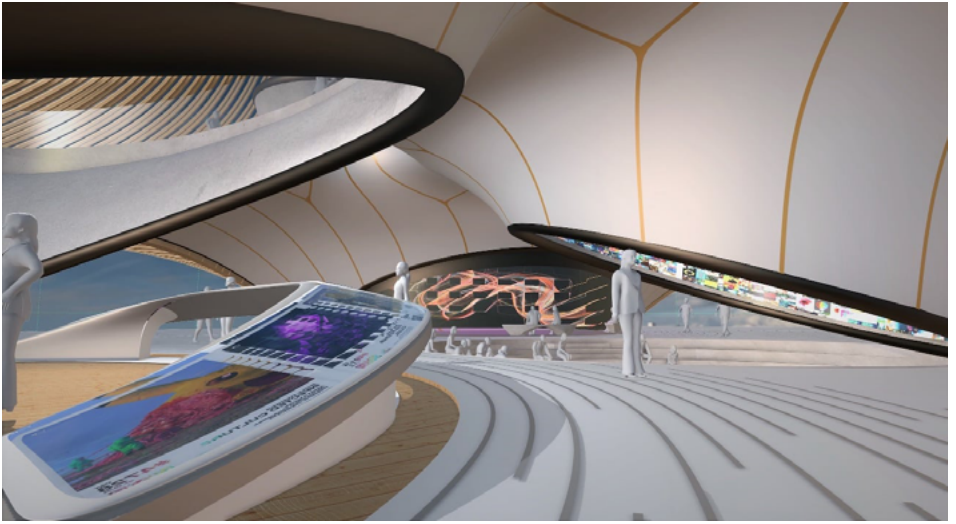


Figure 7. Zaha Hadid Architects, Liberland Metaverse, 2022.



Figure 8. Reisinger Studio, Odyssey, 2021.



Figure 9. Reisinger Studio, *Electric Nature*, 2020.

These spaces, often characterized by fluid forms, vibrant colors, and a sense of unreality, have been enthusiastically embraced by an increasingly wide audience. What sets Reisinger apart is his ability to make these virtual worlds tangible, turning his creations into physical pieces that can be experienced in the real world. Thanks to 3D printing and custom production, his furniture and artworks come to life, bringing his multiverse into the everyday lives of people. Andrés Reisinger's work challenges the traditional notion of interior design, opening doors to new possibilities and stimulating our imagination about the nature of the spaces we inhabit (Fig. 9).

It is evident that, with the advent of metaverses, the influence of the medium on the design of domestic, urban or commercial environments is evolving from web 2.0 to web 3.0.

There are numerous repercussions on the design of physical space due to the presence of devices supporting AR and AI that dictate new laws in the development of a Post-Domestic scenario. The radical change is not only physical but, above all, social. Designers, through the integration of AI, sensors, and 5th Generation (5G), can develop smarter and more interactive domestic spaces, also improving personal and health-care assistance for individuals who are alone, elderly or disabled. The home thus becomes a living organism that reacts and responds in a fluid and empathetic manner. It can understand and anticipate the user's behaviors, monitor their health status, understand their emotions and even anticipate their needs. Design must rethink the home as a series of online windows, where furniture and objects overlap both formally and functionally. Environments will be dilated, expanded and without boundaries.

The real designed environment will be only the skeleton upon which to graft and expand ever-evolving virtual walls. The same space can be a meeting place for people or a refuge for the well-being of the body and the mind. The space envelops the user, blends with nature, changes through LEDs and sound effects, communicating different perceptions each time and processing, through AI, real-time feedback, adapting to them. The exploration of new ecologies, the articulation of physical and virtual realms, the integration of human and non-human minorities, and the respect for political, sexual, and racial diversity are all constructions linked to the ideas, techniques, and iconography of contemporary interiors (Fernandez Contreras, 2022).

7. Conclusions

The integration of AI and AR is crucial to the evolution of home design in the Post-Domestic era. The result is a home that responds intelligently to the needs and preferences of its inhabitants, offering a comfort level and convenience that was once unimaginable. Furthermore, AI-driven design and automation are contributing to the creation of energy-efficient and sustainable homes. Smart sensors and AI algorithms can optimize energy consumption by adjusting lighting, heating, and cooling systems based on real-time data and user behavior. These systems not only reduce energy costs but also have a positive impact on the environment, aligning with the growing trend toward eco-friendly living. In the context of the Post-Domestic habitat, the role of designers becomes increasingly complex and multifaceted. Designers are not only responsible for creating aesthetically pleasing spaces but also for integrating technology seamlessly into the domestic environment. There is the need to understand the potential of augmented reality, artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies, as well as to consider the ethical implications of these innovations in terms of privacy, security and sustainability.

In conclusion, this transformation challenges traditional notions of space, function, and interaction within the home. Designers play a pivotal role in shaping this new landscape, creating flexible, immersive, and sustainable living environments that respond to the changing needs and desires of inhabitants. They become creators not only of the domestic skeleton that must fulfill needs, but must also take into account the infinite possibilities that this skeleton can generate,

conceiving it as an ever-evolving organism. The combination of AR, AI and innovative design promises a future where the home is a dynamic and adaptive space, enhancing the quality of life and redefining our relationship with domesticity. As we continue to navigate this ever-evolving landscape, it is imperative that we embrace the opportunities and responsibilities designing the future of the Post-Domestic Habitat.

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BIOGRAPHIES

Elena Baharlouei

She graduated in Interior and Spatial Design at Politecnico di Milano. She has been Design Intern at Labirint - Laboratory of Innovation and Research on Interiors - Department of Design, Politecnico di Milano. Former Designer at Fluid Motion Architects.

elena.baharlouei@mail.polimi.it

Nicolas Bailleul

Since October 2020, he's a PHD candidate at the AIAC Laboratory (University Paris 8), under the supervision of Patrick Nardin (MCF) and co-supervision with Gwenola Wagon (MCF). Title of the thesis: *The Bedroom. A Space of Contained Creation*. Through the creation of documentary films, installations, and performances, his work is defined by the use, appropriation, collection, and exploration of platforms, virtual worlds, connected spaces, and the web's uncertain logics and geographies. By attempting to concretely depict what unfolds in supposedly unreal, invisible, and inaccessible places, he aims to bring forth contemporary issues related to creation, sociology, economy, and ecology.

bailleul.n@gmail.com

Anna Barbara

She is Associate Professor in Architecture and Interior Design at Design Department, Politecnico di Milano. President of POLI.design; Member of the Board of Directors of the World Design Organisation; Co-founder of the Global Design Futures Network; Scientific coordinator (with Venere Ferraro) of the D\Tank, Design Department, Politecnico di Milano.

Graduated in Architecture at Politecnico di Milano, she taught at Tsinghua University, Academy of Art and Design, Beijing (China); Kookmin University, School of Architecture, interior Design and at Master Brain 21 (South Korea); and in universities in USA, France, Thailand, Brazil, Jordan, UAE, India, etc.

She was Foundation Fellow 2000 at Hosei University in Japan, Special Mention of Borromini Prize 2001, selected by Arch-marathon 2018, selected ADI-Index 2019, 2023, Special Mention Fedrigoni Top Award – Large Format Communication, 2023; Eccellenze della Lombardia 2019, 2023.

anna.barbara@polimi.it

Michela Bassanelli

Ph.D., she is an Assistant Professor in Interior Architecture and Exhibition Design at Department of Architecture and Urban Studies, Politecnico di Milano. Her research focuses on domestic interiors, museography and exhibition design, and practices of disseminating collective memory through a multidisciplinary theoretical approach. Among her publications: *Abitare oltre la casa. Metamorfosi del domestico* (ed., 2022); *Covid Home. Luoghi e modi dell'abitare, dalla pandemia in poi* (ed., 2020); *Oltre il memoriale. Le tracce, lo spazio, il ricordo* (2015).

michela.bassanelli@polimi.it

Gerhard Bruyns

He is an architect and urbanist and an associate professor of Environment and Interior Design at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University School of Design in Hong Kong. He is the PhD coordinator, the Deputy Specialisation Leader of Transition Environmental Design, and the Discipline Leader of Environmental and Interior Design.

He holds a PhD and MSc from TU Delft, the Netherlands. His research deals with the aspects of spatial forms and how typologies of use impact behaviour through the formal expression of space. This relates to the societal conditions of cities whose landscapes are compressed by speculation and excess. He has published research in journals, conferences, and edited volumes, with the most recent being a Springer-published editorial collection on Design Commons.

gerhard.bruyns@polyu.edu.hk

Ece Canli

She is a researcher and artist whose work intersects body politics, design performativities and gendered reproduction of material regimes. She holds a PhD in Design from the *University of Porto* (PT) and is a founding member of the *Decolonising Design Group*. She is currently a full-time researcher at *CECS (The Communication and Society Research Centre)* in the *Cultural Studies* cluster at the *University of Minho* (PT) where she investigates spatial, material and technological

conditions of the criminal justice system, queer incarceration, penal design and abolition feminism. As a researcher and educator, she lectured and published internationally on queer materialities, critical making and penal design.

She is a member of the *Carceral Geography Working Group (CGWG)* (UK), *AtGender* (NL) and *SOPCOM* (PT) research entities. As an artist, she works with extended vocal techniques and electronics, producing sound for staged performances, exhibitions and films both in collaborations and as a soloist.

[ececanni@ics.uminho.pt](mailto:ececanli@ics.uminho.pt)

António Carvalho

PhD degree in Architecture with a thesis on housing design for older people. Associate professor at Politecnico di Milano, where he teaches how to design inclusive and age-friendly environments. His research interests are age-friendly housing, intergenerational spaces, inclusive environments, shared urban space, universal design, neighborhood green spaces, placemaking. Antonio Carvalho is an awarded practising architect and urban designer who runs his own architectural practice in Lisbon since 1988, with extensive built work in Portugal.

antonio.dasilva@polimi.it

Tianqin Chen

PhD candidate at AUID, Politecnico di Milano, her research interest is focused on the age-appropriate architectural design in Covid-19 era.

tianqin.chen@polimi.it

Veronica Ching Lee

She is a Hong Kong born interior and architectural designer and researcher. With an MSc in Architecture from the TU Delft, and a BA in Environment and Interior Design from The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, her research background and interest lies in urban interiority and the negotiation of territories from an interdisciplinary approach. Her master thesis *The interior is the exterior; the exterior is the interior* deals with the negotiation of territories between the *public* and the *private* in the hyperdense city of Hong Kong, seeking a theoretical approach to redefine and understand the complex relations between inhabitants and the collective urban city. Her PhD research extends the discussion of the master thesis and further challenge the conventional concepts of interiority and exteriority and the public-private dichotomy from a perspectivist approach.

veronica-ching.lee@connect.polyu.hk

Sofia Cretaio

PhD student in Management, Production, and Design at the Polytechnic of Turin. Her research focuses on using data to innovate spatial and organizational dynamics in the workplace, fostering safety and sustainability. She has a Master's Degree in Systemic Design and she is a member of the Innovation Design Lab and the Graphicus magazine.

sofia.cretaio@polito.it

Davide Crippa

He is a senior researcher at Università Iuav di Venezia, where he is also director of the Master in Innovation Design Management. He obtained a PhD in Architecture and Interior Design in 2007 and has taught at the Milan Polytechnic and the New Academy of Fine Arts in Milan. Head of the ADI designer commission until 2012, he writes articles and publishes books on theory and criticism of the project, always projecting his attention towards constantly evolving scenarios. In 2004 he founded Ghigos studio and, since then, has carried out both theoretical research and projects awarded in international competitions. In particular, he is now investigating the potential of interaction design and new digital fabrication technologies from a circular economy perspective.

dcrippa@iuav.it

Jiarui Cui

He is a PhD candidate, Department of Architecture and Urban Studies at Politecnico di Milano, Italy. With a background in architecture and interior design, Jiarui has pursued academic research and practical projects in both China and Italy, providing a rich, cross-cultural perspective on spatial design and urban development. His primary area of research focuses on the *Pro-*

ductive Environment, specifically exploring the redefinition of spaces designated for production in a contemporary context. Through his studies, Jiarui aims to unravel the complexities of how spatial configurations and urban designs influence, and are influenced by, the evolving nature of production in modern societies. His hands-on experience in architecture and interior design projects enhances his academic inquiries, offering practical insights into the theoretical frameworks he examines. Jiarui's interdisciplinary approach leverages both qualitative and quantitative methods, blending architectural design, urban studies, and sociocultural analysis.

jiarui.cui@polimi.it

Silvana Donatiello

She is a research fellow in Industrial Design at University of Naples Federico II. Her research focuses on ecological transition, with a specific focus on social design, Nature Based Solutions, digital manufacturing and community-based systems. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Architecture and an international Master's Degree in Design for the Built Environment from the University of Naples Federico II. She has been a visiting student at the University of Applied Sciences Fachhochschule Potsdam, Germany.

silvana.donatiello@unina.it

Daniel Elkin

He is a researcher and designer specializing in spatial agency research, agency driven design, and housing science. He is an associate professor and the Deputy Discipline Leader of the Department of Environment and Interior Design at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University School of Design. Educated at Cranbrook Academy of Art (MArch) and the University of Cincinnati (MArch, BSArch), Mr. Elkin's career spans between sociological research, architecture, product design, and activism. Elkin has established scholarship in spatial agency research and housing science, branches of social and spatial research concerned with individual and collective decision making, particularly regarding housing acts and artifacts.

daniel.k.elkin@polyu.edu.hk

Raffaella Fagnoni

She is full professor of Design at Università Iuav di Venezia, where she teaches design laboratories and civic space design. She also directs the PhD school in Science of Design. She has lectured abroad, in Iran and China, and has coordinated local and international research groups, both public and privately funded. Her research topics focus on design for social impact, service design for public interests, social innovation, reuse and recycling, and design for sustainability, with the aim of intervening in emerging issues through active stakeholder involvement and the enhancement of local heritage. She is focused on the ongoing role of design in contemporary society, considering environmental emergencies and the state of alert in which our planet finds itself, working on the circular economy, local territory, waste recovery, and care for people and habitats.

rfagnoni@iuav.it

Mariarita Gagliardi

She graduated with honours in the international master's degree DBE Design For The Built Environment at the University of Naples Federico II. She is currently a full-time research fellow in industrial design at the University of Naples Federico II. She is specialised in the field of digital manufacturing and parametric design, participating in several international workshops. Her research topics focus on the field of Nature-Based-Solutions (NBS) and IoT (internet of things).

mariarita.gagliardi@unina.it

Vanessa Galvin

She is a lecturer in the Department of Interior Architecture at the School of Design and Built Environment, Curtin University. She completed her PhD in Architecture: History and Theory at the University of Western Australia. Her dissertation is theoretical, and it adopts a Foucauldian approach to the history of the domestic interior. The research extends to questions of inhabitation that include notions of subjectivity and the processes of self-formation as they relate to the built environment. In addition, her research often explores the counter-positioning of fictional and imagined regimes against empirical bases for understanding and managing domestic environments.

v.galvin@curtin.edu.au

Guillaume Guenat

He is a PhD student at the Institute of social sciences at UNIL, where he's working on a thesis about the social History of video games practices in Romandy, directed by Prof. Gianni Haver. Graduated in political science, he focuses his research on the social, political and historical dimensions of leisure, games, media and images.

guillaume.guenat@unil.ch

Cyrus Khalatbari

He is an artist, designer and PhD candidate of the joint program between the Geneva Arts and Design University (HEAD – Genève, HES-SO) and the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (EPFL). Inside his PhD, Cyrus' bridges ethnographic fieldwork, Science and Technology Studies (STS) with arts and design methodologies in order to address, at the level of the Graphical Processing Unit (GPU), the ecological implications of computing power and the digital.

cyrus.l.khalatbari@gmail.com

Nicholas Thomas Lee

PhD, Architect MAA, he is an Assistant professor at the Institute of Architecture and Design, Royal Danish Academy – Architecture, Design, Conservation. With an academic and professional background in both architecture and design, his research interests occupy the fertile domain between these disciplines, with a particular focus on domestic architecture. He is specifically concerned with *In-between places* within, thresholds between, and the morphology of domestic landscapes. As a core scholar at *STAY HOME* and the Center for Interior Studies, his post doctoral research project, entitled *Dwelling in a Time of Social Distancing*, examines the unprecedented demands that the Covid-19 pandemic has placed on the private home and its architectural arrangement. He actively works with a *Research by Design* method, whereby architectural installations and exhibitions are central to both knowledge production and dissemination.

nee@kglakademi.dk

Jacopo Leveratto

PhD Architect, he is a senior lecturer at the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies of Politecnico di Milano, where he focuses his research on radical forms of habitability and posthuman architecture. Local Principal Investigator of the European Research *en/counter/points* (2018-22) and head of Walden Architects during the last Seoul Biennale on Architecture and Urbanism (2021), he is now a coordinating member of the Italian National Biodiversity Future Center (2022-25), and the National Coordinator of the research project PRIN *D7^2* (2023-25). Besides having authored numerous publications in peer-reviewed journals and edited volumes, he published *Posthuman Architectures: A Catalogue of Archetypes* (ORO Editions, 2021).

jacopo.leveratto@polimi.it

Andrea Navarrete

She recently gained a doctoral degree from the School of Design at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Her research focuses on the promotion of autonomy and decoloniality through design. After graduating from a bachelor of Industrial Design in Mexico – where she investigated design's impact and its possible future within a Latin American context – she realized that the role of design in the ruling economic dynamics promotes unsustainable ways of production and consumption, leading her to study a MA in Social Design & Arts as Urban Innovation in Vienna.

She has worked with participatory processes through design workshops, creating synergies toward endogenous forms of development, design and autonomy.

andrea.navarrete@connect.polyu.hk

Lucrezia Perrig

She holds a Bachelor's degree in philosophy from Saint Louis University, and a Master's degree in political science from Lausanne University. She wrote a dissertation on visual arts students' relationship with politics, and then spent two editions of the feminist festival Les Créatives in Geneva, where she co-wrote a guide to gender equality in culture.

lucrezia.perrig@unil.ch

Vera Sacchetti

She is a Basel-based design critic and curator. She specializes in contemporary design and architecture and serves in a variety of curatorial, research and editorial roles. Recently, she co-founded *Fazer*, a new design magazine in Portugal; co-initiated the *Design and Democracy* platform (2020–); and served as program coordinator of the multidisciplinary research initiative *Driving the Human: Seven Prototypes for Eco-social Renewal* (2020-2023). Sacchetti teaches at HEAD Geneva and Design Academy Eindhoven, and in 2020 joined the Federal Design Commission of Switzerland.

vera.vilardebo-sacchetti@hesge.ch

Paolo Tamborrini

Full professor in Design, in 2015 he co-founded the Innovation Design Lab. He has coordinated numerous research in the field of design and communication for sustainability. He is the director of “Graphicus - designing communication”, a magazine that tells the world of communication involving authors of distant but connected disciplines.

paolo.tamborrini@unipr.it

Annapaola Vacanti

She is a junior researcher at Università Iuav di Venezia, where she teaches in design laboratories for the curricula of Product design and Interior design of the master degree design courses. She obtained a PhD in Design at the University of Genoa in 2022. Her research focuses on Interaction Design and the opportunities offered by data-driven tools and Artificial Intelligence for design, exploring the challenges that lie at the intersection between technology, human factors, and sustainability issues. She is working within the iNEST (Interconnected Nord-Est Innovation Ecosystem) project, funded by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR). Alongside her academic career, since 2018 she has been art director and organizer of TEDxGenova, an autonomous event operating under official TED license for the local dissemination of valuable ideas.

avacanti@iuav.it

Jingya Zhou

PhD candidate at AUJD, Politecnico di Milano, her research interest is focused on curability and impact of architectural space design on depression in older people.

jingya.zhou@mail.polimi.it



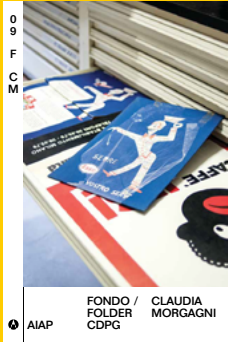
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