

Interiorism as a Means to Go Forward in Designing for the Adaptable City

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ABSTRACT

In the context of the city, we must—especially today—study the types of places cities present as public, free and open. To re-think the notion of the urban public sphere, a focus on interiorism expands and deepens the awareness and perception of how urban forms, materials, and the senses interact, to invite various behaviors. This essay presents a pedagogy that extends interior and architectural design practice and theory, through multi-disciplinary and multi-site research. A course created by the author called New Interior Urbanism, included a series of local and global urban interior research scenarios to study how streets, parks, plazas, and markets normally considered urban exteriors, should be understood as interiors. Along with on site and virtual fieldwork, a multi-disciplinary reading list informed student opinions; while, the addition of a COVID-19 pandemic-influenced Sketch Problem/Charrette asked for contemplating interior-based, forward-thinking attitudes to create hypothetical adaptations for existing global public urban spaces, with social/physical distancing strategies. Planned and unplanned course explorations yielded new realizations about: distinguishing interiorism within urban public places; pondering how individuals and the collective navigate, experience and witness freedom in public space; and, how to consider designing in this dynamic era, and beyond.

Keywords: adaptable morphology, fieldwork, interiorism, market-park-plaza typology, urban interiors

INTRODUCTION

As the means to suggest and guide design for the so-called “new normal,” it is believed that the approaches presented in this essay will help people to understand how our cities, and the adaptations we must make, are part of a set of ideas put forth in SDRJ’s call for papers signalling a “transition to the new world that might come after the pandemic.” Yet, while readily applicable to this current need, the author believes these suggestions and directions should not be considered fixing what has existed, nor become predetermined and unchangeable. Indeed, the opinions presented resulting from work in the featured New Interior Urbanism course, agree that a COVID-19 pandemic-inspired design idea can involve permanent or temporary adaptations and insertions, at various scales. The clever ideas for the schemes shown here, utilize concepts of urban interiorism to also further urban freedoms seamlessly, and to turn the notions of social/physical distancing, separation and boundary into healthy, and hopefully inviting and welcoming additions to the external environment—whether provocative, or receding and quiet.

The clever design could recede—thus being totally useful and lasting. The clever ideas for the schemes shown here, utilize concepts of urban interiorism to also further urban freedoms seamlessly, and to turn the notions of social/physical distancing, separation and

boundary into healthy, and hopefully inviting and welcoming additions to the external environment.

The author's research involving urban interiors influenced seeking an outlet for experimental teaching involving several kinds of hands-on and virtual urban research (Snyder: 2020). The course that was developed makes use of practical, theoretical and pedagogical attitudes and methods that include multi-disciplinary approaches to fieldwork, research opinion writing, and visual analysis presentations concerning local New York City streets and sites, as well as similar sites in global cities. This essay highlights the course's intentions and how the goals were enhanced because of the onslaught of the pandemic and its restrictions, enabling the design of hypothetical examples of social/physical distancing designs for global public locations.

1. THE LENS OF URBAN INTERIORISM WITHIN THE CITY, AND THE PANDEMIC

In the context of the city, designers must—especially today—study and be sensitive to the types of spaces cities present as public, free and open. Urbanist Richard Sennett puts forth compelling arguments for maintaining personal and collective freedoms in his book *Building and Dwelling* (2018). An interrelated set of ideas can be read in the well-used, but ever important phrasing of David Harvey (2008), the social geographer and theorist who borrowed Henri Lefebvre's term, 'the right to the city.' He expounds on these rights with regard to forming the contemporary city declaring:

The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is...one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights. (p. 23)

A changing set of contexts are not new for cities, but the rapid speed of transforming since the COVID-19 pandemic broke in December 2019, and forced the shutdown of much of the U.S.A. in March 2020, is notable. Thus, considering notions for urban study and re-making, are extremely pertinent.

In the case of cities and their design, overlaps between the fields of urban design, landscape architecture and architecture are well known, yet are still often separated disciplines when taught or practiced. A focus on how interior design or interior architecture—two related disciplines that study, analyze and theorize how people act inside many types of designed spaces—highlights a necessary blurring of urban spatial design methods to create a more dynamic and nuanced city. Professor and author Gregory Marinic, writes about siloed fields in the *Interior Architecture Theory Reader* arguing that being between disciplines creates “an expansive field rather than a reductive discipline,” and that “simultaneously challenging the assumptions and underinvestigated boundaries of interior design” must be worthwhile (2018: 434).

Rather than considering urban spaces as described and divided by discipline, type and scale, a realization of interiorism reframes our way of seeing and interacting in the spatially nuanced city, in a multi-scaler, and multi-disciplinary way. The notion of thinking from an

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interior perspective takes on an “expanded interior field” of recognition, constituting a sophisticated viewpoint that is decidedly inclusive (Snyder: forthcoming 2021).

Interior designers/interior architects are exceptional observers of behavior, and analysts of all scales of space and the resulting making of place. They are critical thinkers, and particularly interested in how constructed form and detail work with materials and awaken sensory awareness. Looking through the eyes of these specialists who concentrate on people, their actions, and what affects movement between them, is a natural fit for considering how urban spaces are actually interiors. Thus, an attitude that focuses on interiorism centers on the adaptability of the urban domain for people, and its transmutability at many scales. In these contexts we can also ask, does something called urban intimacy or public interiority exist? Interior design academic, Liz Teston writes that “public interiority is also a perceived condition found in the public sphere, without structure. It is possible to have a place that feels like an interior, without the constraints of architectural form” (2020, 62).

Utilizing the lens of interiorism also asks for realizing and accepting that urbanism consists of spaces within spaces, and that they can be investigated and categorized. It relates to behavioral studies and asks why and how people are attracted to places for interacting and for being alone. The interior designer/architect is versed in: the ability to sculpt different public rooms or zones; working with detail or pattern of materials (soft and/or hard); the knowledge of furniture and light as design instruments, and their positioning for the effect on place-making; the understanding of how larger arenas for activity can be developed with or without an architectural surround. These capabilities point to the perceptual and tangible factors that recognize that all urban places can be broken down into a series of interior spaces for a stronger understanding of spatial use, and the different approaches to an adaptable design development.

What is different about what we do inside, versus outside? Can we not do most of the same activities in the outside air (where it is presumed that during the pandemic spread, we are safer)? As we consider the current pandemic, what constants in the city remain, and what is this condition asking us to recognize or re-think about urbanism? Does the notion of the open city and its freedoms still exist, while there are partial, or full lockdowns in cities and countries around the world?

With these questions or concerns in mind, readily transposing the many exterior public areas we inhabit in cities, such as with streets, parks, plazas, and markets, means recognizing, appreciating and understanding them as being distinctive urban interiors. A focus on their interiorism will explain how these urban spaces act as interiors, by studying the qualities, characters and types of activities they support. Perceiving urban interiority, then, is formed by particular boundaries, edges and thresholds, and is exposed through behavior, use, and materiality; as well as, existing culture, or culture in development.

As the means to suggest and guide design for the so-called “new normal,” it is believed that the approaches presented here will help people to understand how our cities, and the adaptations we must make, are part of a set of ideas listed in SDRJ’s call for papers, to be a “transition to the new world that might come after the pandemic.” Yet, while readily applicable to this current need; the author believes these directions should not be considered fixing what has existed; nor become predetermined and unchangeable. Indeed, class opinions agreed that a COVID-19 pandemic design idea can involve permanent or temporary adaptations and insertions, at various scales. And, the design should recede—thus

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being totally useful and invisible. These schemes are also meant to further urban freedoms seamlessly, and to turn the ideas of social/physical distancing, separation and boundary into healthy, and hopefully interesting living, within a new normalcy. Interior urbanism, or the notion of urban interiorism, is always present and needs recognition so that clever innovations are developed for the external environment.

2. THE CLASS AND THE WORK

A new course about researching urban interior space was created by the author just prior to the pandemic. Teaching it for the second time, re-development was necessary as it was to be taught entirely remote, and could take advantage of the opportunity to more deeply contemplate the pandemic. It was renamed, “New Interior Urbanism.” New York City continued to be the primary site for research, as the author teaches at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, NY, USA. Global urban sites were secondary, rounding out different manners of exploring fieldwork as a means of hands on investigation, mixed with a diverse series of methods for forming visual presentations and written analyses. The course intentions ask students to work through a series of local and global urban interior research scenarios, a multi-disciplinary reading list consisting of urbanists, theorists, practicing designers, architects and academics, journalists and critics writings to aid assigned opinion papers; and, it culminated with a previously unplanned Sketch Problem/Charrette exercise influenced by the pandemic social/physical distancing needs.

During the course, the author asked for researching and speculating on how people come to understand urban intimacy, privacy, and publicness, simultaneously. The students were asked to adopt the inquisitive eyes of the flaneur, a term coined in the 19th century by poet Charles Baudelaire, but became well-known through Walter Benjamin’s, *Arcades Project* (1999). This anonymous onlooker, who strolled the city and acted as a social commentator and critic, is important and especially useful today, as we perceive our individual separateness during extreme change. This practice of being the critic observer engaged students in writing reflections informed their physical on-site work, and readings. A short, yet more complete opinion paper specific to pivoting towards city observations in these pandemic times, rounded out their personal urban interiority observations with collective analyses.

2.1. Approaching Local and Global Fieldwork and Forming Opinions

The safety of meeting each week online to discuss and present findings consistently, found a rhythm and necessary rigor. Our lessons commenced with what constitutes a public urban interior spatial “type” within city morphology. The author started with asking for student awareness of the overlapping series of “interior” spaces seen from one’s apartment. In this early assignment, students were keen to be involved in seeking from their online Zoom home spaces, before leaving the premises of home to inhabit the nearby street, to immerse oneself in ascertaining the urban layers.

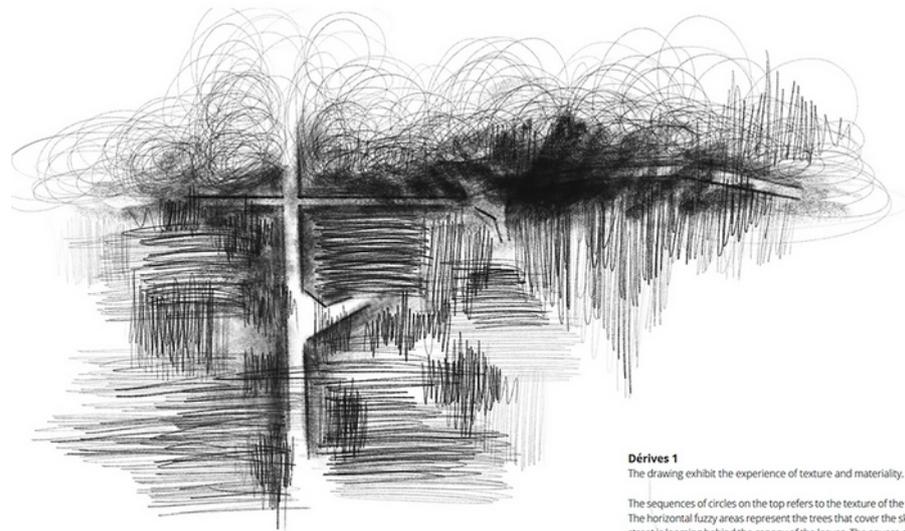
Carefully, quietly, and actively participating in analyzing urban interior locales, we used New York City’s *street space* as our starting point to understand how a city is composed, and how street space is also inhabited as interior space. We adjusted our urban vocabulary to defining and deepening the notions of urban interior morphologies, by locating and soon documenting physical street boundaries, edges and thresholds. We also consulted a multi-

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disciplinary set of readings for research that presents social-psychological-phenomenal-memory-cultural-based topics to integrate aspects of temporality, adaptation, urban layering, with modernity and globalization, to further define the urban interior domain.

This author's own research, often relying on urban fieldwork, brought to the course the belief that many things happen when one engages in real time and in the real space of the environment. Students were taught fieldwork methods, including several ways to be able to discern the urban interior environment spatially and tactilely. As artist and designer Jeremie Michael McGowan has quoted in his chapter on fieldwork practice in Suzanne Ewing, et al's *Architecture and Field/Work*, "fieldwork is personal, emotional and identity work...the construction and production of self and identity occurs both during and after fieldwork. In writing, remembering and representing our fieldwork experiences we are involved in processes of self-presentation and identity construction" (2011, 7). To promote the emotional parts of research, and to provide different ways for students to gather opinions about their surroundings, I asked that we read Guy Debord's theory of the French *derive*, from the 1958 *Internationale Situationniste* no. 2, as a source of interest and inspiration in some original provocative fieldworks. To find different aspects of investigating oneself in a place from the standpoint of the senses, with an emphasis on noticing these and finding a way to depict them, "The lessons drawn from derives enable us to draft the first surveys of the psychogeographical articulations of a modern city. Beyond the discovery of unities of ambience, of their main components and their spatial localization, one comes to perceive their principal axes of passage, their exits and their defenses" (Debord in Knabb, 66).

With this information, the students were eager to safely explore (depending on a student's comfort in fieldwork, flexibility was always built-in to adjust their work in any way) their adopted street intersections that showed many kinds of containments for observation and documentation. They looked, with keen eyes, and sensed the city they knew was changing. Their analyses, then, were inclusive of investigating first on-site using a hybrid of experimental drawing sketching, mapping, basic interviewing, photographing, collage-montaging, and plan or sectional modeling, to show and suggest the aural and tactile conditions of the urban surround (fig. 1). This kind of physical and interpretive work also included taking note of local spatial separations and boundaries to aid in distinguishing spaces within spaces. All of these positions are related to interiorism and become influential for an adaptable morphology.



Dérives 1
The drawing exhibit the experience of texture and materiality.

The sequences of circles on the top refers to the texture of the water. The horizontal fuzzy areas represent the trees that cover the sky. The street is looming behind the canopy of the leaves. The square of lines shows the mass (area and height) of building blocks.

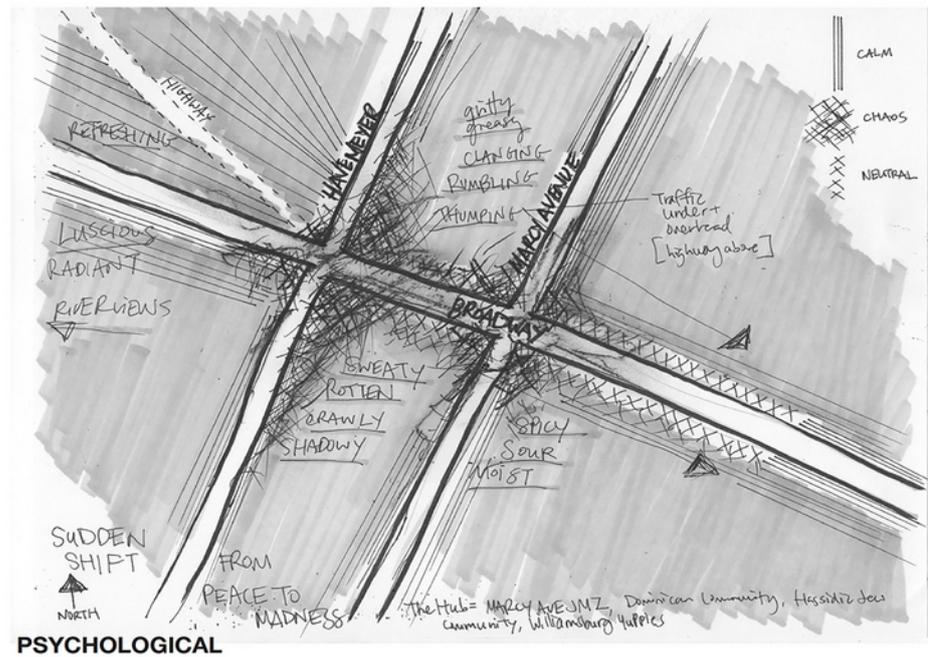


Figure 1. Representing two psychogeographical sensing of streets, through individual derive sketch methods (top Bingxiao Yang, bottom Naomi Hoffman).

Subsequently, we discussed urban public types and typologies from an interior-based standpoint and students were asked to select and discover their urban type, such as a plaza, park, or market (some of which also relate to transport spaces, public art, or contemplation, study or refuge).

2.2. A Pandemic-inspired Sketch Problem/Charette

When we came to the final assignment to conduct virtual global fieldwork over a three-week time period, students were poised to go forward in various ways, urged by the varied fieldwork experiences. We all agreed that investigating a park, plaza, or market in a global city they were unfamiliar with, would be a good analogue to compare-contrast their work done previously when selecting New York City streets and urban interior types. Each student selected from the global cities present as choices, and then each identified an urban type choice (plaza, market or park) and mapped the locations and presented information on use, history and local culture, by consulting, maps, readings and videos.

At the same time, opinions were forming through the informal reflection writings, heading towards the assignment of a short opinion paper that integrated the notions of urban freedoms. Students were asked to interpret and respond to the spatial-physical boundaries and the behavioral-psychological aspects that they felt described interiorism and interiority within the exterior world of the urban domain, for the individual and the collective. They were asked to identify the dominant concepts, ex. urban thresholds, and other phenomenological conditions they were finding in the city.

For the opinion paper, students selected quotes from the many readings that they agreed or disagreed with, and used them as guides, as they referenced aspects of urban freedom and notions of interiorism that were forming. Many also considered the documentation of oneself in place, especially during the responses to the city re-opening (which was and is continuing to contract and expand).

In considering the swift move to separate people for safety from stemming transmission of the virus, logical social distancing or physical distancing rules have been introduced all over the world. Being out in the city and within the teaching of the class, it became apparent that the ways that NYC was approaching the division of spaces was rather elementary. It appears that quick judgements to transform spaces for social/physical distancing were and are still being made by merely measuring space, for ex., with various signs simply showing a six-foot length at a park entrance, by taping lines on sidewalks outside schools, by making chalk markings at markets or with providing circles painted on grass in some parks, and through the use of stickers on the ground of subways alerting people where to stand or not stand. The author believes there is potential to treat these needs as design opportunities that should not be approached as a sad or frightening removal of public freedom to interact. Instead, designs can represent careful shifts, that can easily be inserted into the fabric of everyday life, and possibly last seamlessly, when they are not needed for current health reasons. Within a course based on urban interiorism, the chance to propose seeing and feeling a city and its places, could be speculated upon and designed in more particular and appropriate ways. It was clear that a more comprehensive study was needed to propose not only new, but extended use of urban spaces.

Building on student research study skills requiring cultural understanding; and prepping for the Sketch Problem/Charrette, students investigated their adopted global cities, and the urban public site (plaza, market or park). Consulting maps, articles, videos, and plan and street views student were ready with knowledge of history, local culture and current use to apply. To prep further, students were given a reading by New York Times journalist Michael Kimmelman on the question of whether cities would continue to exist, and they were asked to refer to readings from Sennett on the open city. They were also given an array of recent spatial/physical distance design precedents published in Dezeen and Business Insider, as well as a document the office of the Mayor of Baltimore, Maryland.

New to the concept of utilizing a sketch problem as an in-class quick idea-making precursor to the “charrette,” the first session took place over three hours and yielded three innovative social/physical distancing ideas that were urban interior focused on enhancing the site physically and culturally. Cost was open, but there had to be an understanding of beginning tectonics and materiality to justify their ideas. Each design also had to be designated permanent, temporary or somewhere between. To finish the semester, students wrote final reflections, and worked through iterations of the original sketch problem possibilities, to suggest one final design.

3. SPECULATIVE URBAN INTERIORISM FOR GLOBAL SITES

The designs depicted here, are only a portion of the rich forward thinking work that came out of the flow of our layered class research, documentation and analysis. These six global urban public sites illustrate speculative hypothetical designs that consider ways to social/physical distance in less obvious and more nuanced ways than merely marking the ground with lines or circles. They invite use in public urban interiors in inventive ways for this era, and beyond.

The first group (figures 2, 3, 4) are concerned with streets that also encompass plazas and markets of various kinds and scales, in Cairo, Mumbai and Marrakech. The second group (figures 5, 6, 7) represent unusual approaches to creating spaces within parks and plaza in Madrid, Berlin, and Bangkok.

In northeastern Africa, Cairo, Egypt was selected by Lena Han (fig. 2). She settled on a portion of the often-visited Khan al Khalili market, focusing on the Bayn al-Qasrayn portions. She calls her project “An Elevated Social Bridge” and her design created a bridge-like encircling upper walkway that was meant to be a prototypical concept that could be implemented above the streets wherever an interior courtyard situation existed as a people collector in the market. The design intends to separate and decrease the circulation of different groups during the pandemic, but it also creates opportunities for people to have visual engagement with the surroundings and of each other. Similar to Debord’s concept of the theatre of life and sensing the vitality in seeing and being seen, this student was increasingly interested in the theatre of the city and the sometimes subtle, sometimes loud and busy spectacle that occurs in the give and take of market places. Sennett also talks about urban theatre, as a meeting point. The author believes Han’s structural insertion of the narrow rectangular metal perimeter bridge is an elegant and minimal way to contrast the historic masonry architecture of the khan, as it provides an intention to see and view from a contemporary perspective. Han is aware that her design is not open to those who are disabled, but she wanted to express a very different way to engage the city with the invention of different vertical layers. Her bridging is also an obvious metaphor for reaching out and bringing together, in this time.

The south central Asian city of Mumbai, India was selected by Zichen (Clara) Song (fig. 3). She settled upon parts of the large and complexly intimate Chor Bazaar Market, calling her project a “Weaving Nexus.” It is obvious that Song’s analysis of space is a careful and sensitive one. Her sleek ability to identify small pockets of space that can be quietly redesigned as a series of subtle separation devices, seen as insertions, are also based in Mumbai’s (and India’s) deep textile traditions. Easily a fully sustainable design, Song is experimental in considering how a ceiling can be formed, as well sheltering or marking the ground level. Many kinds of minimal apparatus would be developed that gently touch the individual areas, and each owner could craft their own responses with the few generalized ideas depicted here, for their installation. Platforms, seats, screens, awnings, could take on different forms with a kit of parts construction. The production of self-sensitivity and identity as a field worker, but also as designer, as suggested in the words of McGowan, ring true in this design. Song consciously, put herself into the spaces of Chor, even in this virtual method of global experiencing, to suggest possibilities for shielding and re-distributing density.

The northwestern African city of Marrakech, Morocco was selected by Carla Baca (fig 4). She settled upon the lively Jemaa el Fnaa Market and plazas, and calls her project “Monolith

Mark.” This is a permanent solution that enhances the original openness of the plaza, even as it fills it, seeking to define and unify the spaces for its many uses. Baca intends to merge the natural geometries derived from the market areas boundaries. The design intervenes by creating new pedestal/platforms to increase organization and a call for adaptable zones. People can circulate the areas, interweaving through ground scape patterning that mark proper distancing, while the platforms are used for performance, resting, viewing or shopping. Baca, says, the inspiration came from basic Moroccan geometric tile patterns and an interweaving of simple repeated forms that read as silent monumental ideas of making place. Her deep interest in the existing masonry environment merges seamlessly with the contemporary fair-like atmosphere, as she also pays attention to the local colors and the deep shadows resulting from natural light tendencies. Flexible in use, there is also a seriousness to the solid layouts.

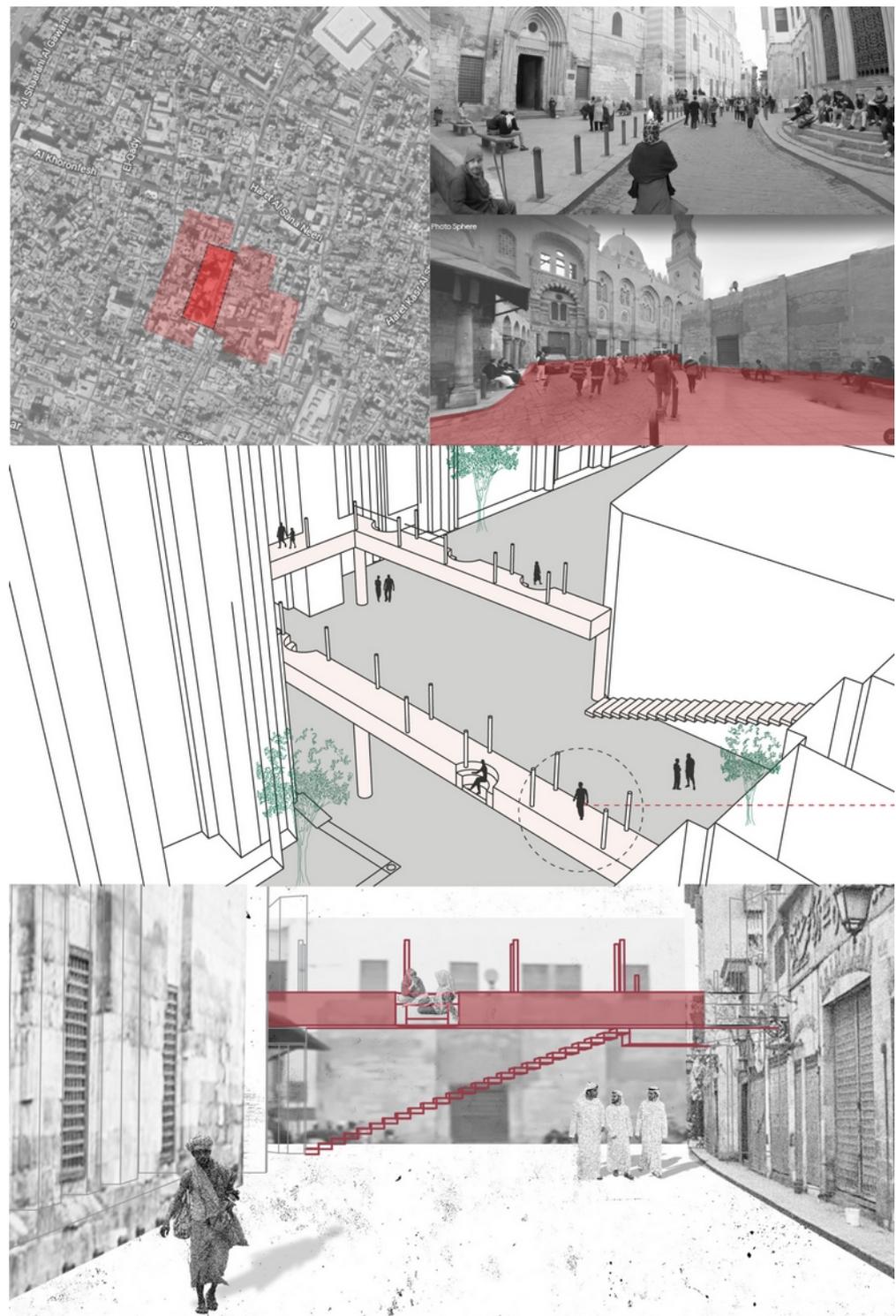


Figure 2. Cairo “An Elevated Social Bridge.”

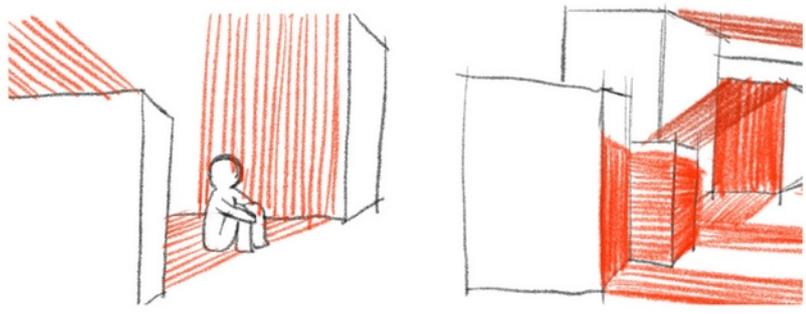
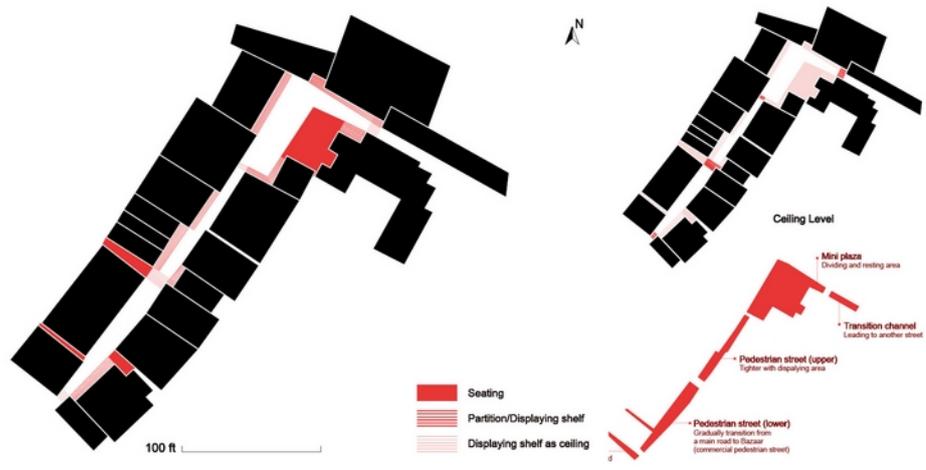
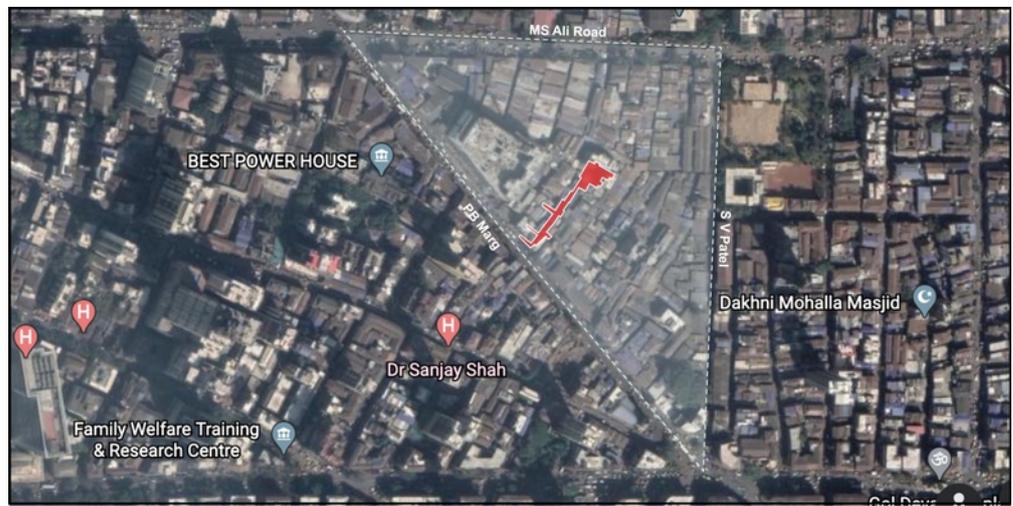


Figure 3. Mumbai, "Weaving Nexus."

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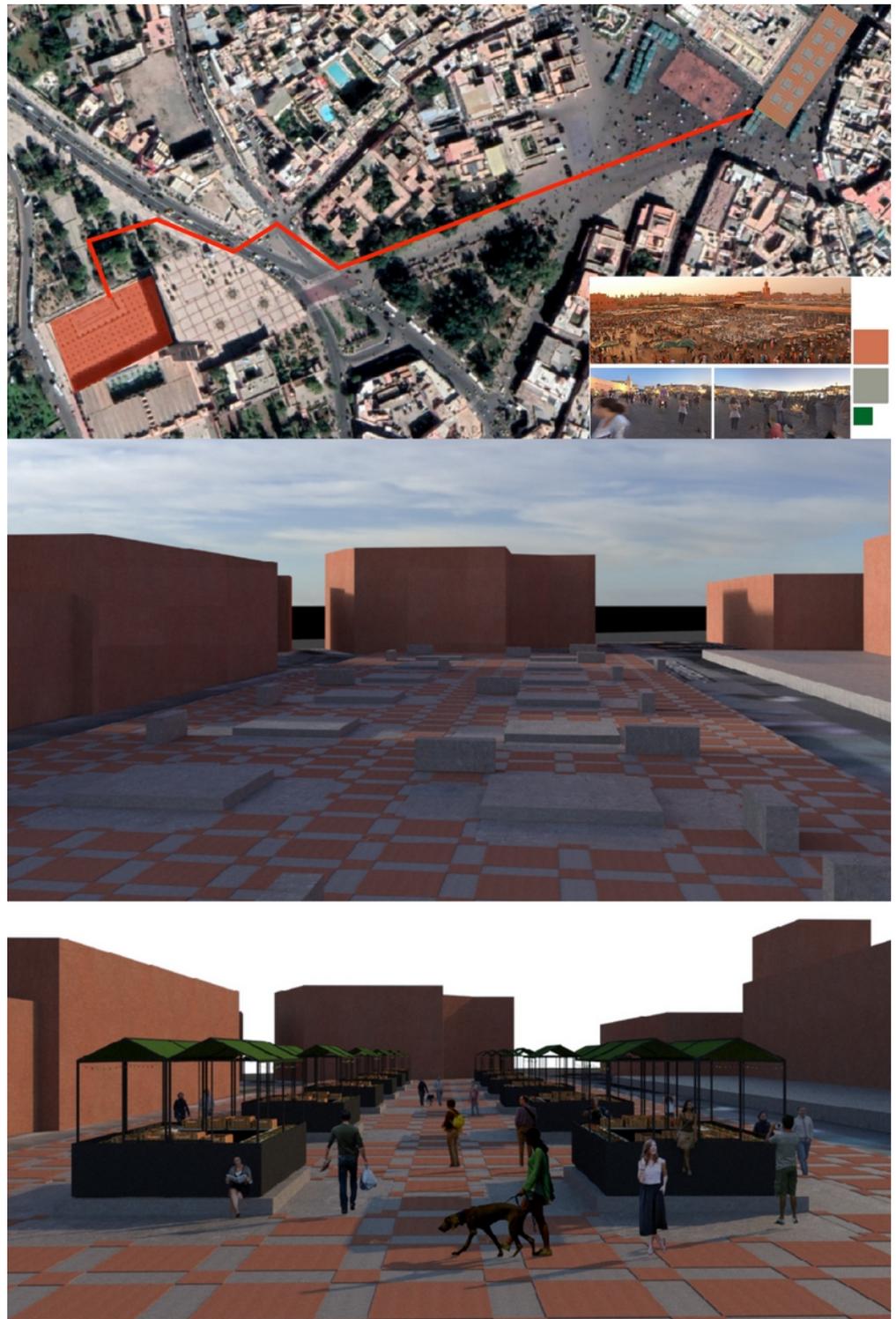


Figure 4. Morocco, "Monolith Mark."

The southern European city of Madrid, Spain was selected by Fatema Alkhamis (fig. 5). She settled on the quiet Plaza de la Villa, composed of governmental structures and a stately central statue, calling her project "Rhythmic Flow." Alkhamis was intent on looking at her site through the eyes of one interested in the local palette and at the same time, she took a minimal approach to creating and activating space. Her sculptural furniture-like installation augments and suggests a linear flowing with somewhat freeform future. The long bench-like designs are meant to provoke a sense of belonging while they separate, conveyed in the subtle coloration and spatial variations that both divide or serve as boundaries inside the plaza spaces. Alkhamis was very careful not to interrupt the solemnity and beauty of the plaza. To visually unite the spaces, she also worked with lighting the plaza within the benches, to create an intentional and different nightscape.

The northern European city of Berlin, Germany was selected by Fangming Cai (fig. 6). She settled on the energetic Mauer Park, most known for its remnant of the Berlin Wall. Calling her project “Me, We, They” it is based on the multi-cultural aspects of Berlin’s street art culture, and the obvious expression of Berlin’s past, with the remnant of the wall that separated East and West Berlin. The park invites a wide group of people; and Cai wanted to emphasize the notion of free speech so she designed a series of aligned circular and patterned furniture or table-like installations that act as measured places to congregate either at an elevated table/seat ring-configuration on the hill, or marked at grade. She wanted to create a landscape sculpture with materials and coloration derived from the local park elements, to invite a continuing of public relaxation while also highlighting the expression of private freedoms through using the concrete furniture as an erasable tableau for writing or the tradition of graffiti.

The Southeast Asian city of Bangkok, Thailand was selected by Yating Liu (fig. 7). She settled upon the large royal strolling park named Sanam Luang that is, today, open to anyone. She calls her project “Bubble Sea?” and according to Lawrence Herzog’s *Return to the center: culture, public space, and city building in a global era*, “Two states of mind have been suggested for city dwellers. ‘Ordinary perception’ is the stream of consciousness that shuts out place and surroundings; it is the conscious state of typical city residents during their daily routines of moving around the city. On the other hand, ‘simultaneous perception’ is a way of taking in one’s surroundings and experiencing a place more completely” (2006: 7). Liu’s design is another form of expression that works with the revealed and the hidden with contemporary technology. Her gridded bubbles are activated as colourful holograms to define the spaces when they are approached, rested or stood in, by both individual or small groups. These spaces are fluid and fleeting, therefore, marking space and warning at the same time. Metaphorically, a connection is formed between the two.



Figure 5. Madrid, "Rhythmic Flow."



Figure 6. Berlin, "Me, We, They."

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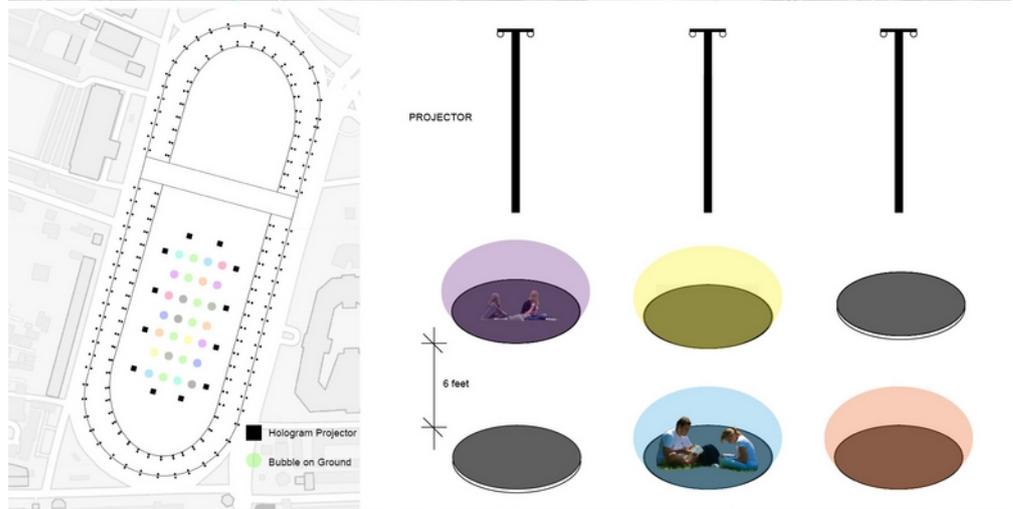
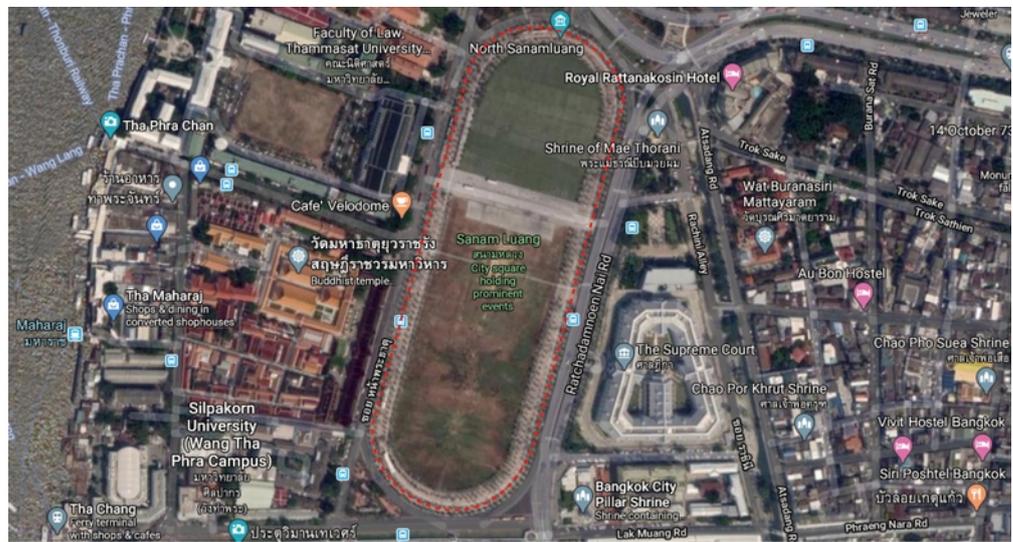


Figure 7. Bangkok, “Bubble Sea?”

4. CONCLUSIONS

The pandemic has produced a hyper-sensitivity towards how we conduct ourselves near others, whether in private, inside our homes, or outside in urban public spaces and places. The immediacy of the situation caused the course content featured, to be adjusted by taking advantage of the positive potentials in this time of transformation. Class meetings and assignments were altered to elicit extra discussion and reflection about the complexity of inserting oneself into daily urban interactions for research and observation; as well as, forming opinions through physical and virtual research methods. Developing the Sketch Problem/Charrette to address the evolving pandemic spatial needs, presented an unexpected approach for expanding student awareness of how a global culture utilizes its

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urban public places; and, then suggesting new hypothetical and innovative potentials for augmenting the current uses for distancing now, but with the future in mind.

The course called New Interior Urbanism, has led to a more established course called Urban Interiorism. The premise of the course remains focused on seeking to find and describe the city interiority that exists literally and phenomenally in local and global conditions. The success of the multi-disciplinary approach, with the opinion and reflective writing, and, the sketch problem/charrette design component continues to involve considering notions of urban freedom, and social conditions calling for attention.

Throughout the work, students literally participated in considering how their being citizens in New York City at this time (no matter their nationality), affected them with regards to notions of previous freedoms and inhabiting the city. Going outside to locate urban interiorism became a new adventure, as they wore their masks, and re-viewed their identities with regard to the cautions that needed re-evaluating beyond the normal or typical way one walks the city. The addition of writing short opinion papers and reflections became central to the course, while examining the micro and macro spaces within each place. Student writing skills increased as they assessed their personal realizations concerning the shift we are all in.

Remarkably, all students agreed that they perceived the city differently through the lens of the class content, focused on comprehending a city as a series of urban interiors, whether they were located in New York City or elsewhere in the world. The author believes the changing attitudes of the students during the time of the course correlates with the depth of their explorations.

Asking the students to research virtually, and to adopt a global city to study urban public places was an original intentional vehicle to teach how to establish a literal and cultural understanding of places not previously known, nor able to be visited. Not only an academic consideration, this initial urban research was meant to also mirror design practice, such as with speculative competitions as well as real client scenarios that ask for design, critical thinking and synthesizing of surroundings that are not local. The addition of the Sketch Problem/Charrette brought students into a closer understanding of their global city and site, while asking them to address the immediate issues with regard to questions about how to achieve good social/physical distancing along with a deepened sense of place-making.

The designs for sites located in Cairo, Mumbai, and Morocco consist of re-thinking different configurations of street and destination market spaces. Each created an enhanced interiorism through methods that increased frames for privacy and urban viewing. All three designs understand local materiality, light and climate and bring attention to social patterns of use and patterns found inside indigenous vernacular, thus honoring the heritage for the new individual and collective motivations. The Madrid, Berlin, Bangkok designs exhibit some overlapping concepts for the three park or plaza sites. All three broke scale down to an individual or small group condition in different expressive ways. Unusual furniture-scale approaches were developed in Madrid, and in Berlin, and each considered the solidity and solemnity of their sites, as they gave spaces for relaxation and gazing. In Bangkok, the technology suggested to make people-sized colorful hologram domes appear as a choice of virtual locations, was exciting. Their existence shifts and recedes with the park space activity. All six are significant in identifying the need for new urban possibilities. They carefully

expand the interior spatial uses, separate people safely, and at the same time, honor local heritage and meaning, that will endure beyond the pandemic.

Capping the course with a short design exercise stimulated reflection on what urban interior designers can achieve as they look to define spaces through experience of scale, materials and the understanding of behavioral need, in city space. In all, one can imagine that the public freedoms delineated through the new designs, ask people to cooperate with new rules, but to also importantly ask for people to perceive themselves anew, in these re-adapted urban interiors.

From the standpoint of considering the pandemic and its influences, the subtlety of offering designs that are both powerful and sublime, so that they always fit in, was of key importance. The students had strong notions to not disturb, but to still make a contemporary design intervention. Whether a permanent construction, or one that would degrade, disappear, or just blend in; as a kind of quiet rebellion, no student wanted to monumentalize the pandemic.

At the same time, we are not ready to forget how the pandemic has begun to mold activities or ask us to conform. These attitudes confirm the need for positive reflecting as designers who seek to work with new potential for change. How people will come to understand and re-negotiate their current spatially-motivated memories, drives a perseverance to add to the collective future meaning, ascribed to urban public sites. Focusing on urban interiorism provokes and stimulates our perceptions of space and place at all scales, continuing the development of our right to the city, while separated and, yet, joined together.

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