

This item is the archived peer-reviewed author-version of:

Back to basics in interiors education : the morphology of interior space

Reference:

Michels Marjan, Storgaard Eva, Somers Inge.- Back to basics in interiors education : the morphology of interior space
Interiors : design, architecture, culture - ISSN 2041-9120 - 9:2(2019), p. 1-21
Full text (Publisher's DOI): <https://doi.org/10.1080/20419112.2019.1589691>
To cite this reference: <https://hdl.handle.net/10067/1596490151162165141>

BACK TO BASICS IN INTERIOR EDUCATION: THE MORPHOLOGY OF INTERIOR SPACE

Marjan Michels, Eva Storgaard, Inge Somers

ABSTRACT

Today, interior education is characterized by many and variegated approaches and interpretations. Worldwide it is a field in rapid transformation and in search of identity based upon vivid explorations of its theoretical underpinnings. Triggered by the rich perspectives offered within academia, and at the same observing an increased distance towards the everyday, material interior and its basic elements, the Interior Master Program of the Faculty of Design Sciences (University of Antwerp - Belgium) set up a explorative pilot studio: the Morphology of Interior Space. This studio addresses 'lost' knowledge and practices of interior design, aiming to re-actualize its elemental premises and promises. It revolves around a profound and critical investigation, rediscovery and reassessment of the basic elements of the material, enclosed interior - *the door, floor, wall, ceiling and window* – put in relation to phenomenological approaches. This particular format, this studio maintains, holds the key to novel insights in the domain of interiors. This paper explains and explores the studio practices of Morphology of Interior Space, sharing its structure, methodology, educational and disciplinary aims as well as its outcome exemplified by works of students.

KEY WORDS:

Interior education - interior elements - design studio – student works – atlas of interiors

Context studio The Morphology of Interior Space

Since the postwar period the practice of interior education in Europe has been characterized by many and variegated approaches and interpretations. As a relative young, autonomous field of education it has until present day sought for its own entitlement in a context often predominated by the discipline of architecture. Today, interior education is worldwide a field in rapid transformation and in search of identity based upon a vivid exploration of its theoretical underpinnings. This search has generated various content foci and interpretations of the interior, consequently nurturing the wide variety of educational approaches.

An in-depth exploration of the field of interiors within the current Western academic realm, reveals five foci which approach the interior as enclosed physical space, personalized space, phenomenological space, as backdrop for social interaction and the interior as a process of interiorization.ⁱ The focus on the interior as an enclosed physical space is defined as the inside of the architectural envelope explored from the perspective of re-reading the existing. The interest for the interior as a personalized space, as the expression of clients' subjectivities is explored from a more psychological perspective. The phenomenological approach toward interiors, discusses the concept of interiors in terms of experiential and sensory qualities. Within the focus on interiors as backdrops for social interaction, mostly situated in the expanding public domain, the approach is based on an explicit ethical concern. In the last and fifth approach academics focus on the interior as a process of interiorization instead of a preconceived artefact. The interest here is to study and imagine an interior freed from the predominant presence of the architectural envelope in which interiors shape the temporal relationship of people with their intimate built environment.ⁱⁱ This broadening of the field of study is exciting and positive. It nurtures the discipline in general and creates opportunities for interior educational programs to position themselves, defining a particular point of interest.

Against this backdrop the interior education at the Faculty of Design Sciences at the University of Antwerp, Belgium, searches for its own identity and contribution to the development of relevant teaching strategies. The Antwerp interior program has since its inception in 1946 been strongly embedded in the traditional interpretation of the interior as an enclosed and physical space, conditioned by the architectural envelope. This focus is not unique and is reflected in many European interior programs which originated within schools of architecture and which were initiated by early modernist architects. Architect and modernist Jul De Roover, founder of the Antwerp interior program, coined this approach in his welcome speech to the first year interior students in 1951:

“You will notice [...] that what we teach here will be different from elsewhere. [...] We have a totally different, and allow me to say, broader notion of what constitutes the

interior. I would like you to understand, that the interior is directly related to architecture and that the term *ensemblier* (interior decorator, ed.) as no importance within this education. Our first interest is not to educate decorators, but people who understand the art of creating interiors as an integral part of architecture and who have an insight in the deeper and higher values of life.”ⁱⁱⁱ (De Vos 2013: 146)

The young interior program under leadership of De Roover (until 1976) was moreover strongly embedded within the ideology of social modernism. The design of interiors was instructed as a vehicle to improve the life of people by means of spatial qualities of the interior and its organization, functionality, materialization and detailing. It was based upon the embodied knowledge of the material interior and of the craftsmanship needed for its realization.

Toward the turn of the twentieth century, in Europe, the knowledge of and interest for the qualities of the material interior faded to a large extent. This occurrence stems from different general developments. A first reason can be found in the transition from early to late modernism in which the approach of the interior gradually and radically changed. From being center staged, created as a Gesamtkunstwerk, as we saw it in the Art and Crafts Movement, Art Nouveau and early Modernism for instance, the importance of the refined interior and its final execution became of less interest during the second half of the twentieth century. Because of the rationalization and industrialization of the building process with the purpose of providing housing for an expanding population, the major concern became functionality, affordability and mass-production. Combined with the re-occurrence of the rejection of decoration and ornamentation within different architectural movements throughout the twentieth century, the impoverishment of the interior increased. Another reason derives from the expansion of the interior as a field of study, as we have seen above, and as a field of professional practice. Influenced by and relating to divers matters as regulations, new technologies, economics, politics and social developments, the making of interiors has become a highly complex matter. Interior educations are obliged to diversify their programs, focusing on a range of aspects within a limited time span, as many educations only are offering an education of four years instead of five, common for long-term studies. A third cause that can explain the faded attention for and knowledge of the material interior are the disciplinary tensions between architecture and interior design/architecture. In order to gain position within a binary hierarchical relation, dominated by architecture, many interior educational programs took a more architectural stance. They concentrated on the architecture of the interior, such as the re-readings of existing buildings, in which building structure, organization and program requirements are the primordial focus. On this account distinct knowledge transfer about the making of material interiors, and the specific properties of its interior architectural elements and their details, got lost for a great deal or seriously marginalized.

Triggered by these evolutions an explorative pilot studio was set up: the Morphology of Interior Space. The studio takes its point of departure in the approach that the interior is the interface that mediates between the larger architectural framework and the human being by means of a balanced interplay between material and immaterial components. In our everyday built environment it is however the material interior which forms the most tangible and physical 'nearest' entity to the human body.^{iv} The Master program of the University of Antwerp, which is - as explained - strongly anchored within the tradition of exploring the interior as an enclosed and existing space, aspires a re-connection with its roots. This studio addresses 'lost' knowledge and practices of interior design, aiming to re-actualize its elemental premises and promises. It revolves around a profound and critical investigation, rediscovery and reassessment of the basic elements of the material, enclosed interior - *the door, floor, wall, ceiling and window* – put in relation to phenomenological approaches.

Interior/Architectural Elements: A Field of Recurrent Fascination

The attention for the basic defining elements, out of which our intimate built environment – the interior - is composed, is not new or specifically unique. The theme has been a fascinating subject to scholars both in interiors and architecture and the amount of writings and reflections on the theme of elements demonstrates that it is a field of recurrent fascination. Noteworthy contributions have been delivered by for instance Sir Henry Wotton (Wotton 1624), Gottfried Semper (Semper 1851), Thomas Thiis-Evensen (Thiis-Evensen 1987), Rob Krier (Krier 1992), Pierre von Meiss (von Meiss 2011) and Rem Koolhaas (Koolhaas 2014). While these scholars primarily position themselves within the architectural culture, a range of other contributors relate their reflections on the elements specifically to the field of interiors: Christopher Alexander (Alexander 1977), Francis D. K. Ching (Ching 2018), Graeme Brooker & Sally Stone (Brooker & Stone, 2007, 2008, 2010), Coles and House (Coles & House, 2007).

Closer scrutiny reveals that the number of elements has increased over time. Where Semper puts forward four basic elements, Koolhaas adds eleven new ones. Additionally, functions and properties of elements have changed. The hearth/fireplace functions nowadays not only as a source of heating, but even more as a source for domestic relaxation and coziness; the window is not mainly perceived as a light source, but just as well as a communicative interface between interior and exterior, that provides interaction and views. Noticeable is also that ways of interpreting and analyzing elements have become more elaborate. Physical and tangible matters are now merged with psychological, symbolic and semantic aspects of the arts combined with phenomenological positions. Such approach introduces a method of considering elements from a broad scope, enabling endless varieties. Inherent to the properties of many elements, a division

of interior architectural elements versus architectural elements is blurred. Obviously a discussion about the ontological classifications, which elements belong to which discipline, can be relevant. Within the scope of this article, however, ontological questions are not the focus.

Studio Objectives

Against this backdrop, being aware of the rich range of approaches towards interiors and its elements, the Master studio The Morphology of Interior Space was created. Its structure and educational methods are based on an urge to “get back to basics”, to rediscover and elaborate the potential of the material context of interiors *and* to enrich it with phenomenological and experiential approaches. In this way the studio relates, on the one hand, to the tradition of the interior program at the Faculty of Design Sciences, which through the years has been characterized by learning methods that derive from a pragmatic, empirical view on interiors and on the other hand, it engages with recent developments in the discourse on interiors, that implement conceptual and theoretical principles. It is the particular combination of these two stances that contribute to a new way of learning from interiors.

The overall ambition of the studio is to enrich the material interior and to re-examine its narrative potentials by means of a reflective investigation of the five basic elements that constitute the enclosed space: the door, the floor, the wall, the ceiling and the window. A thorough study of these elements can, we advocate, recover and reload lost know-how and expertise about the interior and expand its material and immaterial vocabulary. We believe that by carefully designing the material aspects of these elements, immaterial qualities emerge. Together they define the meaning of the interior space, which we designate the *narrative of the interior*.

The narrative is shaped by the morphology and interrelatedness of (at least) these five elements and holds certain meanings and associations: it determines what the space is, how it is perceived and how it relates to its users. Characterized by its own property, each element contributes to the narrative: is the door frame explicitly designed and does it mediate the transition between spaces? In what way does the depth of the recess, the handle or the model of the door add anything to the narrative? Does the door by means of its position, materialization or typology connect adjoining spaces – or does it purposely divide them? Do the proportions of the plinth and the door frame in combination with the material of the floor evoke a sense of intimacy – or do they educe a spatial grandeur? In other words, in the pursuit of the narrative, the five elements are closely unraveled and examined for their complexity and affiliations - and for their mutual effect on the interior and its intangible, immaterial qualities.

The concept of the studio as locus for both education and research revolves around two objectives. First, it serves *an educational goal*, as already indicated above: to expand students' knowledge of the basic interior elements, to refine both their design and research skills and to nurture their critical attitude towards the making and observing of interiors. Prompted by the applied (research and design) methodology students are trained to approach a problem from an inquiring point of departure, critically reassessing conventional ideas and interpretations of the door, the floor, the wall, the ceiling and the window. In the studio design solutions are not obtained by fulfilling a program, nor by relating to specific site conditions, - but by questioning traditional, conventional perceptions of the elements.

Second, the studio aims to serve a *disciplinary goal* by disseminating the achieved research results of the students by means of a so-called Atlas of Interiors. This document brings reflections and design solutions together, year after year, and becomes in that sense a carrier and transmitter of knowledge. Here, bulks of knowledge and studies into the theme of the elements will be assembled. Being a sourcebook, the Atlas of Interiors accumulates gained knowledge and offers a basis for reflection and further development of insights of the material interior, which can be deployed by succeeding students, educators, practitioners and the interior discipline at large.

Methodology and Output

In the program of the studio The Morphology of Interior Space, the process of learning and developing knowledge about each interior element goes, as already mentioned, hand in hand. In order to make this happen, we developed a twofold methodology in which each element is separately examined. One part of the methodology is based on individual research, another is based on group work.

Furthermore, in order to broaden the scope of the research, each element is connected to a particular property. As such, we defined the themes of investigation, that can vary from year to year, as follows: door & transition, floor & material, wall & addition, ceiling & dimension, window & light and sight.

Individually, students examine each basic element and his particular property by means of three mandatory learning strategies. One is based on analysis and observation - Know Your Masters; another is based on the practice of designing by using specific crafts - Slow Crafts; and finally, a third strategy - the Crit Sessions - is based on sessions of critical discussion and group debates.

Next, the produced material from the individual exercises is assessed, selected and synthesized in smaller work groups and eventually assembled in what we consider an Atlas of Interiors (Figure 1).

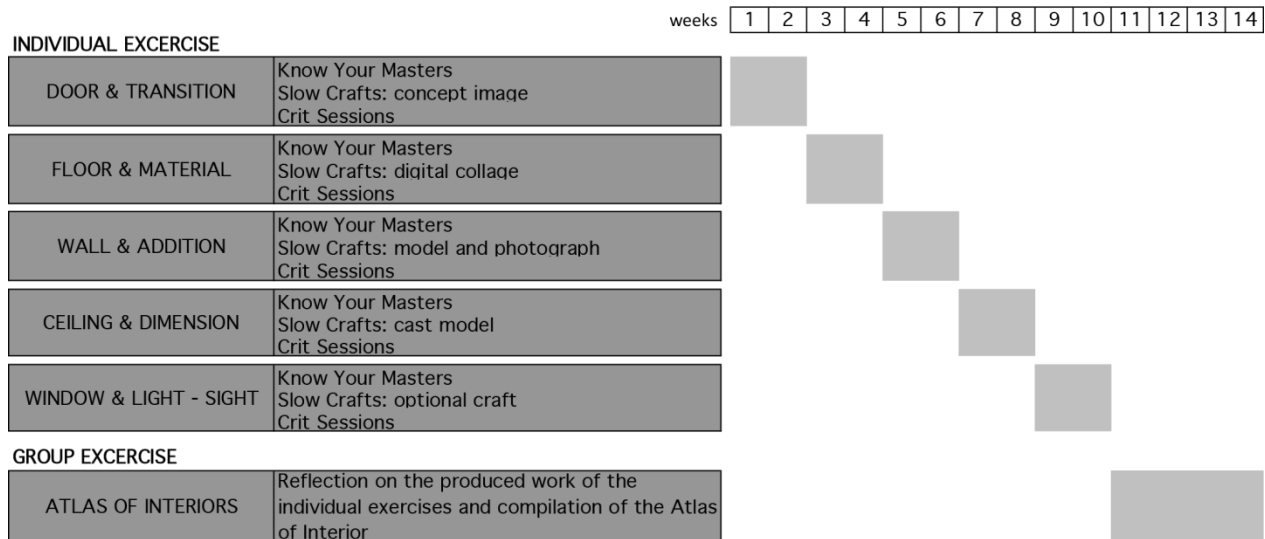


Fig 1: Structure and time schedule of the studio Morphology of Interior Space. First part of the semester is devoted to individual exercises concerning the elements (10 weeks), last part is assigned to group work and the making of the Atlas of Interiors.

Know Your Masters

The first aim of the learning strategy Know Your Masters is to provide a method for observing and searching for good exemplary practices of interiors. Good examples may help the student to learn, to get inspired, to enrich his design vocabulary of interiors and offer new insights and ideas. In this exercise we search for works of high standards, that have a special focus on one of the five elements. Through the deliberate search for qualities of each element students are conditioned to direct their attention and review projects in a methodically manner. They develop a specific way of watching and detecting. In the search for evocative, narrative interiors main questions could be: what makes the design and the implementation of the element distinct? What is the significance of the element and how does it effect and condition the interior? What are the properties and characteristics of it? Students are encouraged to search material in both vernacular, historic and contemporary contexts. It may moreover include works of known as well as un-known creators, professionals as well as non-professionals. Due to the fact that students search for peer work individually, a lot of instructive material is gathered in a short time.

The combination of each element with its relating property directs the theme of research. In their search, students examine for instance how door typologies and its morphology such as size, weight, material, details determine the experience of a specific transition. The floor, highly determined by its materiality, is assessed on its tactile sensation and degree of detailing. Students explore what these characteristics of the material evoke in the encounter with the floor. In the exercise of the wall, students study color as addition to the wall by reading a range of color manifests written by amongst others Le Corbusier, Adolf Loos, Theo Van Doesburg, etc. (Komossa, 2009). The acquaintance of these variegated theories make students aware of color as a many-sided resource, with both emotional and spatial qualities. In contrast to most ceilings in contemporary, often generic interiors, historical ceilings play a pivotal role in the dimension and the totality of former spaces. Students focus therefore on the legacy of ceilings and study typical and important historical ceilings from different style periods. Typology and morphological analysis of the window enhances the awareness of the variety of window types, in which light and sight are manipulated differently.

Slow Crafts

Know Your Masters is followed by the exercise Slow Crafts. At this stage, having built up a repertoire of good practices and peer projects, new ideas and perspectives on the different elements can be developed. Through small and short termed design exercises (two weeks), which are performed by means of different crafts, students are challenged to explore and express their own interpretation of each element.

The act of *crafting* is an essential aspect of each design exercise. Today's dependence of computer technology both in the practical and creative sense is undoubtedly here to stay. A complete surrender leaves, however, important impulses of the creative process at the side. The Finish architect Juhani Pallasmaa calls the attention to this aspect, saying that:

“(…) (T)he computer is a fundamentally different tool from the traditional instruments of drawing and methods of making physical models. The line of charcoal, pencil and pen is an expressive and emotional line and so is a model crafted by human hand. They can express hesitation and assurance, judgement and passion, boredom and excitement, affection and repulsion.” (Pallasmaa, 2009: 100).

In addition, through the application of explicit hands-on crafts, students are obliged to deal with the design process in a “slow” and attentive manner. This method nurtures the process of designing interiors starting from a material and a skill, instead of a function and/or program.

The slow crafts are applied in individual design exercises in which a particular craft is combined with one of the five elements: door – concept image, floor – digital collage, wall – model and photo, ceiling – cast model and finally window – optional craft.

Via the *concept image* the door is explored. The concept image is suggestive and transcend mere reality which is why it enables students to approach the idea of the door taking into account all its properties, tangible as well as intangible. Said differently, it encourages a reassessment and rediscovery of the qualities and possibilities of the door (Figure 2).

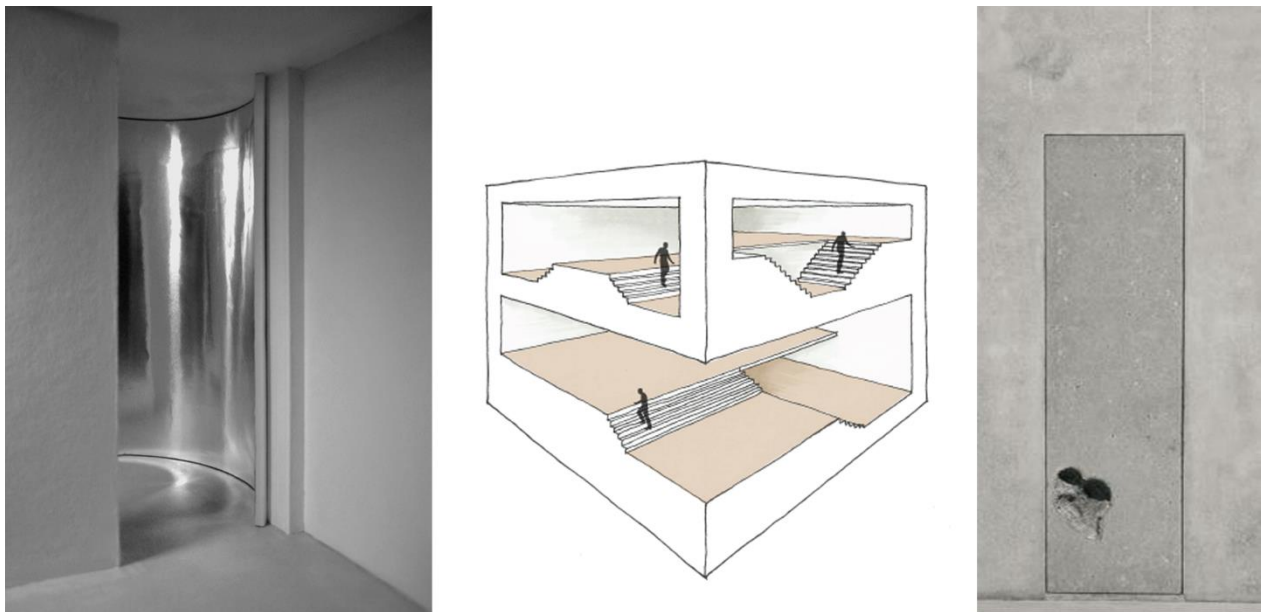


Fig. 2: *Door and transition expressed through the concept image* © Dick Pieter de Hart, Margot Sanders and Tasoula Kontzes.

The floor is examined by means of the *collage*. Like the concept image, the collage makes it possible to express and visualize ideas that go beyond mere reality. The collage is an assemblage of image fragments, brought together in a novel constellation. It can hold bits and pieces of everyday sceneries and at the same time suggests an imaginary situation. The collage enables students to formulate an argument and/or critique through a graphical statement/manifest (Figure 3 and 4).

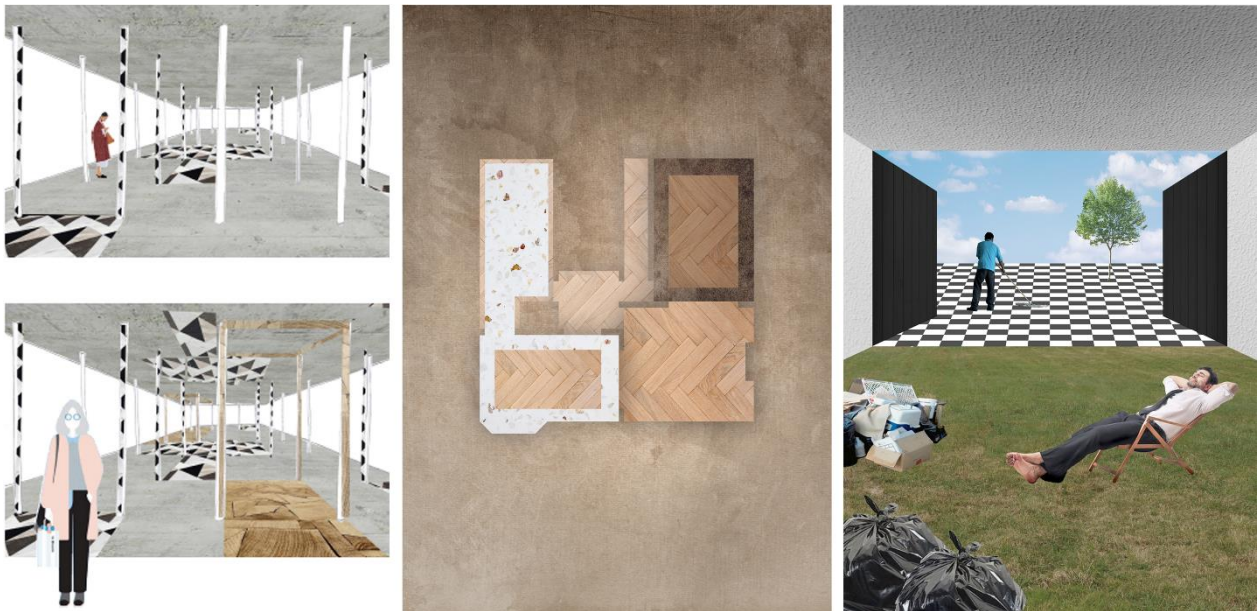


Fig 3: *Research on the element of floor related to material.* © Nathalie Storimans, H el ene Heijstek and Oskar De Roover.

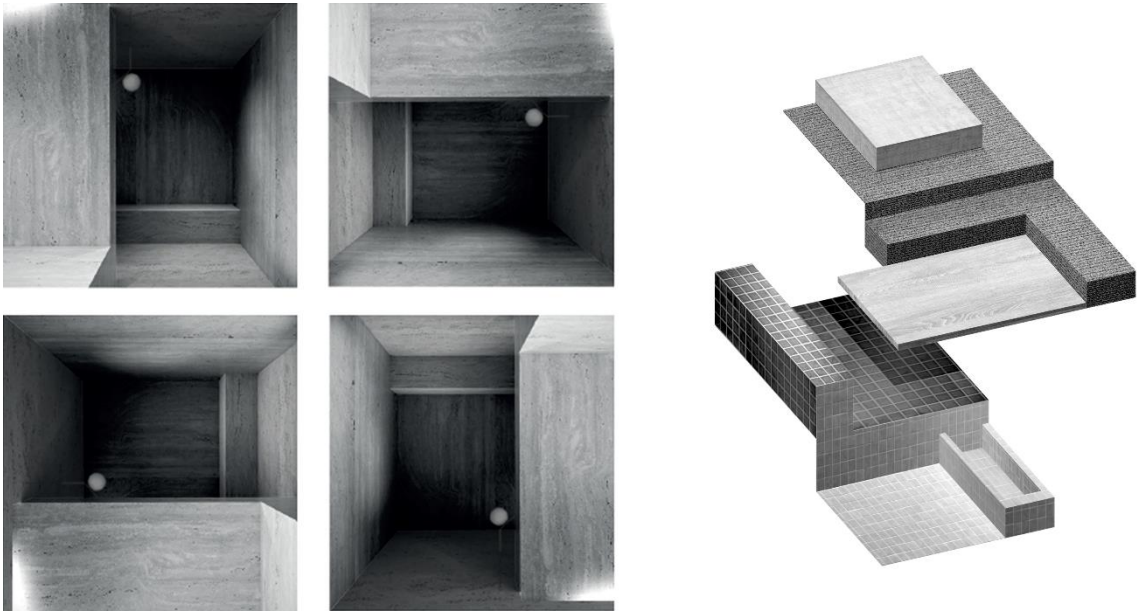


Fig 4: *Research on the element of floor related to material.* © Sara van Loven and Lieve van Drongelen.

The exercise of the wall develops from two crafts: on the one hand from the model and on the other hand by the making of a photo of this model. Students make a cardboard model of an existing space while reinterpreting the qualities of this space and at the same time applying principles of one or more color theories .

Through the model students observe various spatial features such as light, reflections, proportions and the relation of wall to other elements present in the space. The completed design, expressed in the model, is finally captured in one ideal photographic image.⁹ Working with models is an important part of the design process in this exercise. The model embodies ideas quite literally and it forces the designer to think in three dimensions. It offers an 'open' way of designing where changes, if needed, can be made fast and new ideas can be tested. Because it is close to realistic representation it furthermore allows empirical investigation of for instance light, dimensions, colors etc. Different from perspective drawing and photo-shop images, a model doesn't 'lie' and is less easy to manipulate. It doesn't prioritize one fixed, but innumerable viewpoints, - an aspect in the process of designing which nourishes curiosity. Additionally the model represents a sort of abstract realism, inherent to the handcrafted model which never can reproduce exact reality, moreover, the model magnify a particular atmosphere. When making the photo of the model students search for that one particular, desirable atmosphere, which cannot be expressed in the model, nor in a photo-shop image or a CAD render. The act of capturing this momentum goes hand in hand with an intensified attention for the details of the wall and their reciprocal contribution to the narrative of the space (Figure 5).

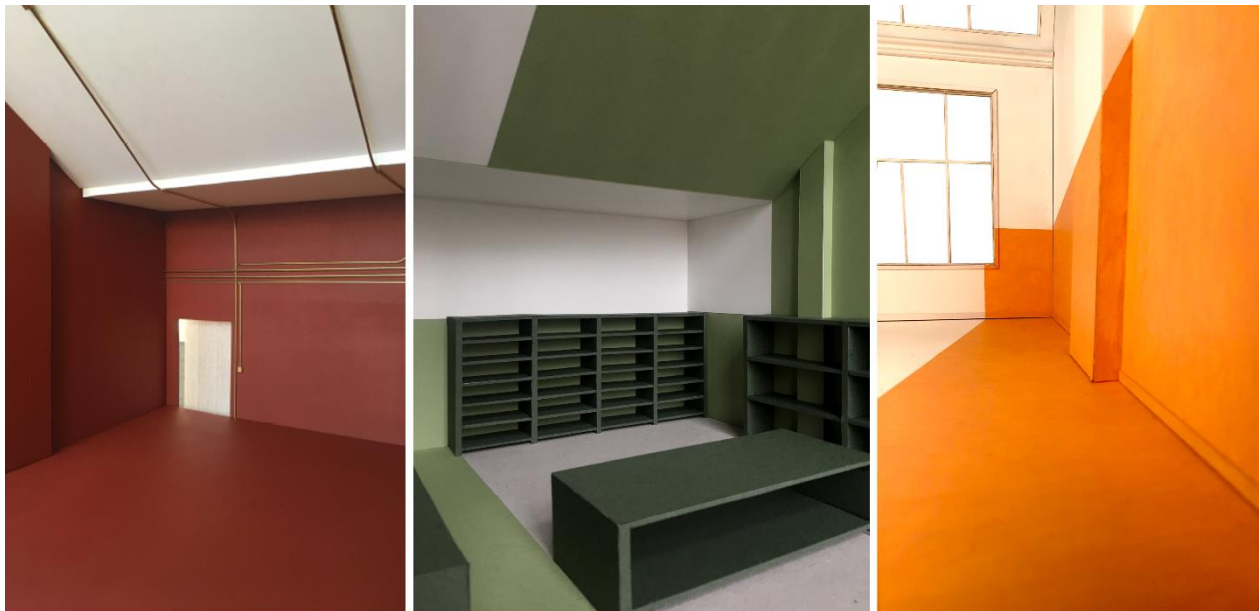


Fig 5: *Exploration of wall and colour through model and photo.* © Dien De Rycker, Lieve van Drongelen, Jana Vanderstraeten

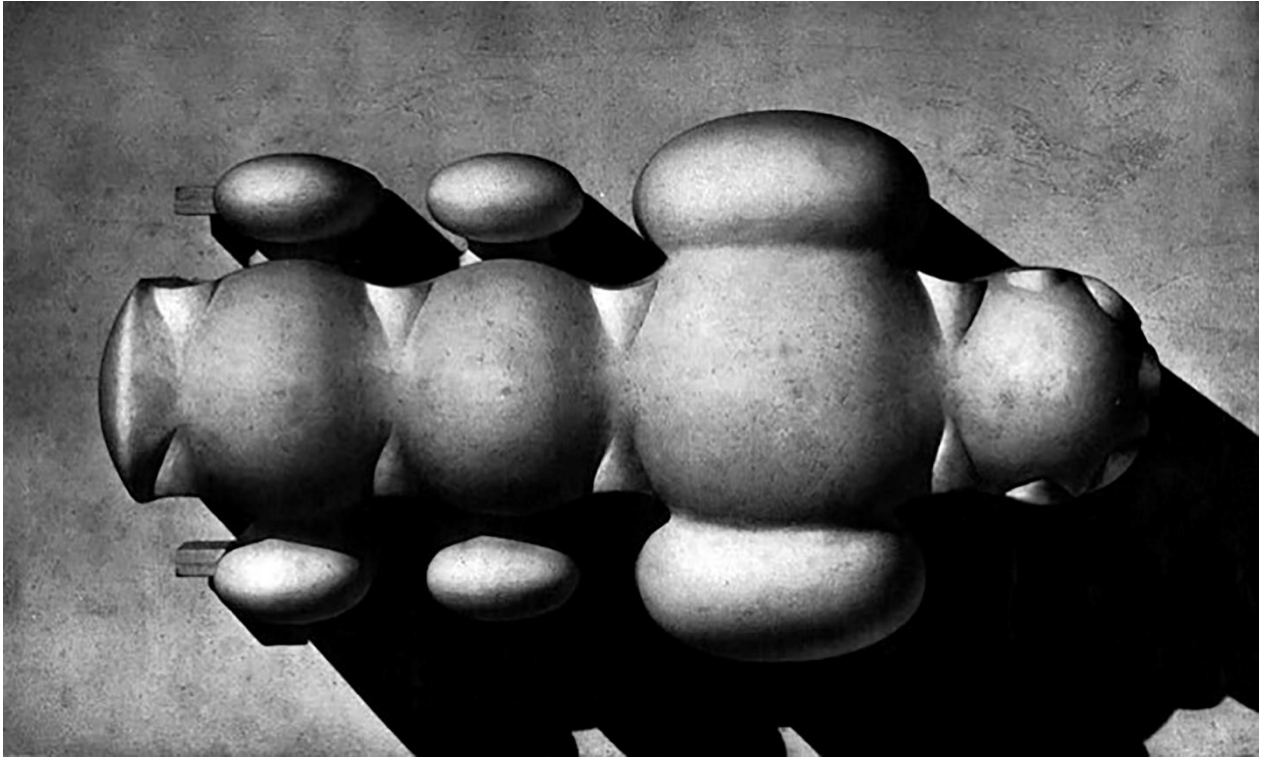


Fig. 6: Luigi Moretti's cast model of the interior space of Santa Maria (Guarino Guarini, Lisbon), 1952-1953.
Source: *Spazio* (1952-1953) n. 7, p. 19

The ceiling is explored through the *cast model*. This exercise is inspired by the method of analysis introduced by the Italian architect Luigi Moretti in his 1953 article "Structures and Sequences of Space" (Moretti 1952: 19) (Figure 6). Moretti uses the cast model as a tool to understand and perceive space as well as a method to visualize less discernable spatial qualities. A cast model is an 'imprint' of the architectural void - or the stripped building fabric which define the "solid" space. It is an act of isolating inner spaces and representing space by the void.

While ceilings often remain a "forgotten", neglected element without much significance other than that of mere closure of a space, the cast model incites students to become aware of the ceiling by approaching it from a volumetric perspective. In this exercise the process of designing and making goes hand in hand. It prompts design solutions that transcend the ceiling as a mere horizontal surface. Moreover, the method of the cast model reveals the ceiling as an element that can hold meaning, functions and narratives (Figure 7).

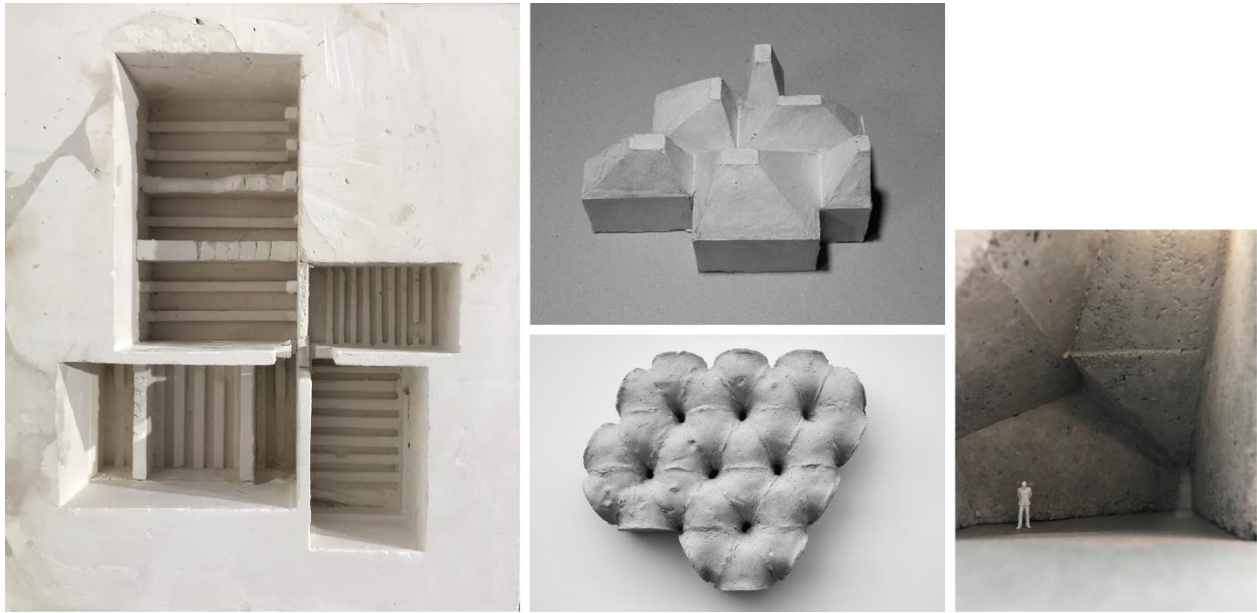


Fig 7: Research on ceilings by means of cast models (positive/negative) © Jana Vanderstraeten, Dick Peter de Hart, Suyin François and Tasoula Kontze

In the last exercise, the element window, students are asked to make a window design for a specific space. The choice of space is free, but should hold potential to improve the spatial qualities through the design of the window. Students are expected to apply and to benefit of the knowledge they have obtained throughout the previous exercises. They are furthermore free to choose how the design is crafted and carried out (Figure 8).

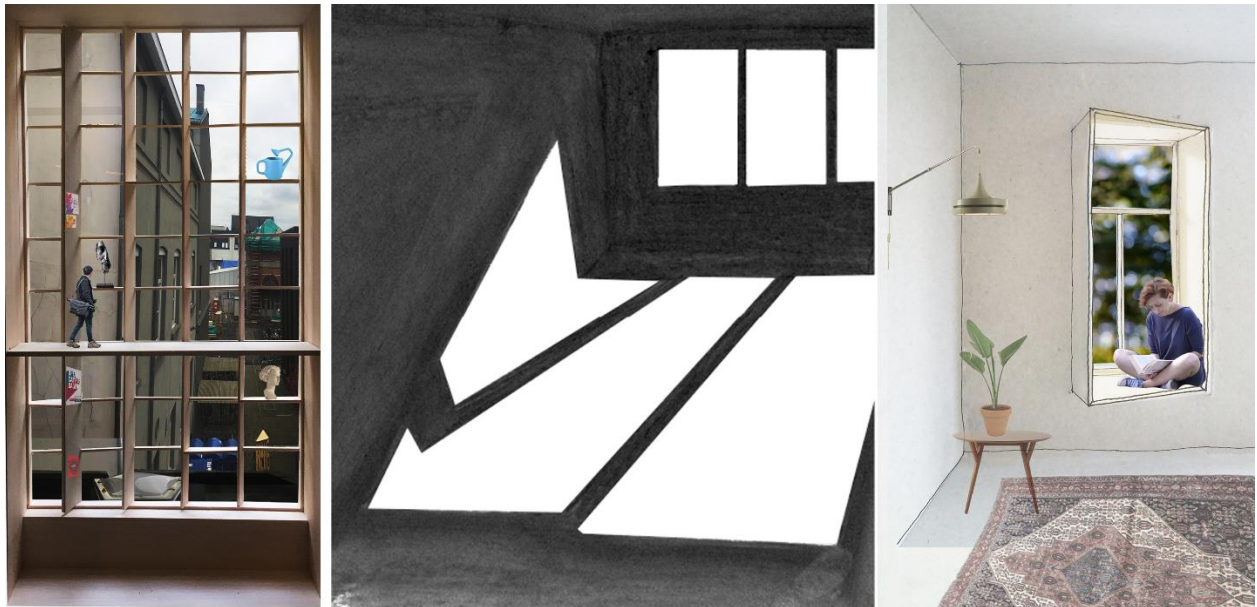


Fig 8: Window, Light and Sight. Various craft methods. © Iris van Casteren, Orily van Overbeke, and H  l  ne Heijstek.

Crit Sessions. Learning by Discussing

Besides the exercises of Know Your Masters and the Slow Crafts, in which students ‘learn by doing’, The Morphology of Interior Space includes a last learning strategy: the Crit Sessions.^{vi} These sessions are scheduled directly after each element exercise and are meant as collective, reflective moments in which design solutions and peer projects are presented and discussed. All projects are closely and jointly examined by the entire studio, both by students and instructors. The main purpose of the Crit Sessions is to activate and enrich the rhetorical and critical capacities of the students and to help create their own advocacy and standpoints. In the discussion of the peer projects and the individual designs, exchange of viewpoints and arguments of others help shape students own position in relation to a particular issue. Students learn during the joint analysis of peer projects to verbalize design approaches of others; during the presentations of own designs, students are trained in building up their own stance.

In addition, it is from these discussions and dialogues that narratives of the interior emerge and become shared knowledge. The idea behind the crit sessions is based on approaches found in philosophy, which say that knowledge based on meanings and cultural values only gain legitimacy through communication. What we find meaningful or not, is not our individual judgement, but a posture that occurs in discussions with others (Michels 2018; Michels, Meeus and De Walsche 2016). The philosopher Nehamas explains the importance of such joint exchange of visions in contexts which are sensitive to perceptivity:

“But when I say that something is beautiful, I am clearly saying something about others as well. [...] I imply that others should agree with me, join me in my commitment and make the beautiful thing part of their live as well” (Nehamas 2000: 7).

Said differently, our judgement of what is significant or meaningless only counts when others think in a similar way. It is through profound critique and advocacy that we can agree on what is superior or inferior. According to philosopher Roger Scruton the student “will need to persuade his fellows to accept the product of his labor, and must therefore seek for reasons which have an authority transcending the appeal of individual preference” (Scruton 2013: 185). From this perspective, the studio puts the development of discussion skills central.

Reflection in the Atlas of Interiors

Having accomplished the exercises of Know Your Masters, Slow Crafts and the Crit Sessions, in which insights and knowledge about interior elements have been developed individually and in group, a last exercise departs. During this exercise students examine and reassess the entire bulk of material that has been accumulated throughout the previous exercises. The purpose is to

assemble this material into an Atlas of Interiors, in which each interior element is depicted in a distinct chapter. Each chapter synthesizes on the one hand the research results achieved through the examination of exemplary interiors of the exercise Know Your Masters; on the other hand, it implements the design results of the students themselves, produced during the exercise Slow Crafts. The body of collected material of each element makes it theoretically possible to reflect on its fundamental properties and its specific impact on the narrative of the interior. Students detect per element recurrent themes, discover general tendencies or notice specific details of meanings which are forgotten in the contemporary interior architectural culture. By means of a parallel lay-out, the Atlas of Interiors confronts peer projects with experimental student works. Such combination incites discovery and examination of differences, correlations – or novel approaches. Each chapter is eventually concluded by a discursive summary, completed with appropriate illustrations.

In this way, the Atlas of Interiors contributes to the development of the body of knowledge of interiors. The assembled material gives profound insights about the five basic interior elements and forms a repertoire of good practices in interiors and with a special focus on the elements. It aims to nurture and inform, not only students but also professionals and instructors of interiors. Additionally, in the long run the making of such Atlas of Interiors serves to construct a *canon* of interiors which brings valuable aspects to notice and builds up a collective memory. For the moment, an overview of such canonical work with a focus on interior elements, we find, is lacking.

The making of the Atlas of Interiors is in its totality regarded as an essential part of the learning and developing process of the studio. The assembled results will be transferred to the next group of students attending the studio. This group will continue the search and assembly of exemplary works – and finally add their findings to the previous edition of the atlas. In this ways students are learning from the research output of other students and they are encouraged to take the research a step further by adding new material. In other words, the exercise is a work in progress and of continuous evolution (Figure 9).



Fig. 9
Samples of cast models in Studio Morphology of Interior Space © Hanne Schellekens

Lessons learned and conclusion

The chief aim of the Morphology of Interior Space is to enrich the knowledge and awareness of the material interior and its tangible and intangible potentials by means of a reflective investigation of the five basic elements: the door, the floor, the wall, the ceiling and the window. Included in this objective the studio serves furthermore a disciplinary and an educational purpose; on the one hand to enrich the general knowledge of and within the discipline, to reveal the meanings and effects of the morphological elements that constitute the interior and, on the other hand, to imply vigorous research and learning strategies that combine different design methods. A profound evaluation of the organization and structure the studio discloses some assets and points of improvement with regard to both the disciplinary as the educational goal, that we want to share.

First we address the assets in regard to both the disciplinary as well as the educational goal. From a disciplinary point of view, the studio contributes to the knowledge field of interiors by accumulating a large amount of design results. Due to the quantity of student-researchers, it is possible to collect and develop diverse and rich material. It is eventually through studying a multitude of extreme and divergent (outliers, polar types)^{vii} as well as paradigmatic and exemplary cases with respect to each element, that deep insights arise. Additionally, by searching and collecting examples of good practices (Know Your Masters) with many different researchers, the outcomes more easily cover a cultural, historical and/or regional heterogeneity. Furthermore, during the examination of the research material as a whole, including both the individual design outcomes and the assembled examples of good practices, each student contributes to its enrichment and elaboration. The divergent individual approaches and perceptions are shared and confronted (the crits), also an act which leads to novel and thorough insights. Finally, the quantity and diversity of the entire production of research material enables students, through reflection and comparison, to determine fundamental themes characteristic for each element, - themes that transcend the particular and establish general statements. These uncovered themes are brought together in the Atlas of Interiors and can serve as inspiration for the profound conception of the individual elements or the interior space as a whole.

The disciplinary and educational goals are obviously overlapping, and are in many cases reciprocal. While the disciplinary goal is to enrich the general knowledge of interiors, the educational goal aspires to nurture and train interior architecture students. The educational goal is founded on the exploration of the narrative of the interior, by means of the five elements. Here, students acquire detailed knowledge about each element, which contains both practical and theoretical aspects. Moreover, this method improves their research and design skills in various ways. So does the particular design question of each exercise not depart from a programme or site, but from questioning traditional, conventional perceptions of the elements. Following this approach, students are trained to examine interior problems from less tangible conditions, challenging their imagination and decisiveness. This context arouse unpredictable, fresh outcomes and insights. Furthermore, the outcomes are directly influenced by the use of diverse crafts, of which each has its own logic and premises - and which improves the design skills of students, creating a deliberate link with the act of making. Eventually, the method of treating elements separately sharpens focus and raise the level of attention and awareness, and therefore also the knowledge of each element. This asset makes it possible for students to build up a repertoire of solutions and approaches which instantly will support and enhance future design processes. Another important aspect in the improvement of students research and design skills is the development of a critical attitude. The studio implements different methods to achieve this goal. One is embedded in some of the crafts. So does for instance the concept image, the collage and the cast model allow evocative and imaginative designs. These crafts

encourage students to rethink the elements critically and to develop solutions that transcend reality. During the exercise Know Your Masters, students are additionally trained to get inspired by good practices; not to imitate, but to develop an own individual position by critically analysing and evaluating the work of peers. The cultivation of this ability is supported by the crit sessions in which students are discussing, elaborating and advocating.

However, in the interest of future editions of Morphology of Interior Space, there is still room for improvement. First the necessity occurred to include a final exercise in which all achieved knowledge about the different elements can be synthesized. It is eventually by carefully designing all these elements in consistency that the interior space as a whole becomes meaningful and its narrative is revealed. A second concern is the dense time span and the compactness of the exercises. On the one hand this encourages fast design solutions and a high level of productivity, on the other hand these conditions can hinder students of in-depth study and profound reflection. A third focal point is the implementation of different crafts. This approach turned out for some students to reveal yet unknown aptitudes and a widening of design methods, but it also became obvious that the actual practicing of each craft could benefit from explicit tutorial attention in order to achieve a higher level of outcomes and research data. Finally, although the present structure is customized for master students - strongly addressing research and individual positioning – the content of the studio is obviously also relevant and instructive for bachelor students. At this moment we plan a gradually introduction of the studio in the bachelor program.

The complexity of the studio challenges students on many levels. The deployed methodology requires and expands knowledge, sharpens design skills and demands critical attitude. The structure of the studio Morphology of Interior Space and the theme of interior elements in combination with the applied research and learning strategies, allow for a multiplicity of approaches and learning models. The pilot studio offered the conditions to re-discover the richness of the material interior and the amplitude of meanings it can evoke, even when the focus is directed towards interior's basic elements.

Notes

ⁱ The in-depth exploration of the current Western interior's field of study was part of the Ph.D. research of Inge Somers, which was defended in September 2017. This research focuses on the identity issues of the interior discipline in the Anglo-Saxon countries and Western Europe, its academic development and theoretical underpinnings.

ⁱⁱ For relevant publications on the theme of enclosed physical space and re-reading the existing see: Fred Scott (Scott 2008), Ellen Klingenberg (Klingenberg 2012), Bie Plevoets (Plevoets 2014)

and Graeme Brooker and Sally Stone (Brooker and Stone 2018); for the theme of personalized and private space, see: Joel Sanders (Sanders 2002), Hilde Heynen and Gülsüm Baydar (Heynen and Gülsüm 2005), Charles Rice (Rice 2007a and 2007b) and Penny Sparke (Sparke 2010); for the experiential and sensory approach, see: Mark Taylor (Taylor 2003), George Verghese (Verghese 2007), Julieanna Preston (Preston 2008), Jonsara Ruth (Ruth, 2017) and Lois Weinthal (Weinthal 2011); for the theme on social and ethical concerns, see: Dianne Smith, Marina Lommerse and Priya Metcalfe (Smith, Lommerse and Metcalfe 2011), Yelena McLane and Lisa Waxman (McLane and Waxman 2014), Jill Pable (Pable 2010, 2013) and Mark Pimlott (Pimlott 2016); for the theme on interiorization and the fluid interior, see Darragh O'Brien (2003), Tara Roscoe (2007), Cathy Smith (2004) and Suzie Attiwill (2013).

ⁱⁱⁱ Translated from Dutch: “U zult merken [...] dat wat hier gedaan wordt, afwijkt van wat men elders in hetzelfde onderwijs naar voor brengt. [...] Wij hebben een geheel andere en, laat mij toe te zeggen, bredere opvatting van wat binnenhuis is. Ik zou willen dat U begrijpt dat binnenhuis onmiddellijk verband houdt met architectuur en dat de benaming *ensemblier* in deze cursus geen betekenis heeft. Wij willen hier in de eerste plaats geen decorateurs kweken, maar mensen die interieurkunst begrijpen als een integrerend deel van de architectuur en die [...] inzicht moet hebben in de dieper, in de hogere waarden van het leven.” (De Vos 2013:146).

^{iv} For more information about the concept of the interior as “the nearest entity” to the human body see: Deborah Brooks (Brooks 2010) and Lois Weinthal (Weinthal 2011).

^v This learning model is inspired by the studio of Adam Caruso, ETH Zürich. See also: Teerds, H., & Floris, J. (2011). “On Models and Images. An Interview with Adam Caruso”. *Models. The Idea, the Representation and the Visionary*, OASE, (84), 128–132. Retrieved from <https://oasejournal.nl/en/Issues/84/OnModelsAndImages>

^{vi} See: Yeonjoo, Oh et al. 2013. “A theoretical framework of design critiquing in architecture studios”, *Design Studies*, 34(3).

^{vii} Outliers and polar types are strategies involving characteristics of interest that are extreme or unique, as used in qualitative research to select samples in order to get variegated and rich research data.

References

- Alexander, Christopher, Sara Ishikawa and Murray Silverstein. 1977. *A Pattern Language: Towns, Building, Construction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Attiwill, Suzie. 2013. "Practices of Interiorization: An Inter-Story." In Tiiu Vaikl-Poldma (ed.), *Meanings of Designed Spaces*. New York: Fairchild Books, 175-184.
- Brooker, Graeme and Sally Stone. 2007. *Form + Structure. The Organisation of Interior Space*. Lausanne: AVA Academia.
- Brooker, Graeme and Sally Stone. 2008. *Context + environment*. Lausanne: AVA Academia.
- Brooker, Graeme and Sally Stone. 2010. *Elements/objects*. Lausanne: AVA Academia.
- Brooker, Graeme and Sally Stone. 2018. *Re-readings 2: Interior Architecture and the Principles of Remodelling Existing Space*. London: RIBA Publishing.
- Brooks, Deborah. 2010. *Skins and Layers: Constructing Meaningful Concepts*. Paper presented at the IDEC Conference: Celebrating our Foundation. Atlanta.
- Ching, Francis. 2018. *Interior Design. Illustrated*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.
- Coles, John and Naomi House. 2015. *The Fundamentals of Interior Architecture*. New York: Fairchild Books.
- De Vos, Els .2013. "Vanuit het binnenhuis de wereld veroveren. Een geschiedenis van de opleiding interieurarchitectuur (1941-2013)." In Piet Lombaerde & Els De Vos (eds.), *Van academie tot universiteit. 350 Jaar architectuur in Antwerpen (146-165)*. Antwerp: University Press Antwerp.
- Heynen, Hilde and Gülsüm Baydar. 2005. *Negotiating domesticity: spatial productions of gender in modern architecture*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Klingenberg, Ellen. 2012. "Conservation of Cultural Memories in Interiors - A Challenge for New Use." Paper presented at the IE International Conference 2012: Reinventing Architecture and Interiors: the past the present and the future. Ravensbourne.
- Komossa, Susanne. 2009. *Colour in Contemporary Architecture Projects, Essays, Calender, Manifestos*, Amsterdam: SUN.
- Koolhaas, Rem. 2014. "Elements of Architecture". Venice: Marsilio
- Krier, Rob. 1992. *Elements of Architecture*. London: Academy Editions.

-
- McLane, Yelena and Lisa Waxman. 2014. "Designing for Good." In Graham Cairns (ed.), *Design for a Complex World*. Oxfordshire: Libri Publishing, 77-98.
- Michels, Marjan, Wil Meeus and Johan De Walsche. 2016. "Sentiment: the basis for developing aesthetic judgment", *Asian Education Studies*, 1(1).
- Michels, Marjan. 2018. *A sentiment for (Interior)Architecture*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation) University of Antwerp, Antwerp, Belgium.
- Moretti, Luigi. 1952. "Structures and Sequences of Space." *Spazio*, 7: 9-20.
- Nehamas, Alexander. 2000. "The place of beauty and the role of value in the world of art". *Critical Quarterly*, 42 (3).
- O'Brien, Darragh. 2003. "Absolute Zero - Revealing the Void." *IDEA Journal 2003*: 97-106.
- Pable, Jill. 2010. "Socially Beneficial Design: What can Interior Designers do?" In Caren S. Martin and Denise A. Guerin (eds.), *The State of the Interior Design Profession*. New York: Fairchild Books, 8-16.
- Pable, Jill. 2013. "Possessions in the Homeless Shelter Experience: The Built Environment's Potential Role in Self-restoration." *Interiors: Design, Architecture and Culture*, 4(3): 267-293.
- Pallasmaa, Juhani. 2009. *The Thinking Hand: Existential and Embodied Wisdom in Architecture*. Chichester, UK: Wiley
- Pimlott, Mark. 2016. *The Public Interior as Idea and Project*. Heijningen: Jap Sam Books.
- Preston, Julieanna (ed.). 2008. *Architectural Design. Interior Atmospheres*. London: Wiley-Academy.
- Rice, Charles. 2007a. *The Emergence of the Interior. Architecture, Modernity, Domesticity*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Rice, Charles. 2007b. "For a Concept of the Domestic Interior: Some Historical and Theoretical Challenges." Paper presented at the conference *Thinking Inside the Box*. Glasgow.
- Roscoe, Tara. 2007. "Immaterial Culture: The Interior Environment Repositioned." In Edward Hollis (ed.), *Inside the Box: Interior Design Education in the 21st Century*. London: Middlesex University Press, 99-106.

-
- Ruth, Jonsara. 2017. "Designing Experience". *Interiors*, 8(1-2): 53-66. DOI: 10.1080/20419112.2017.1327126
- Sanders, Joel. 2002. "Curtain Wars." *Harvard Design Magazine*, 16(winter/spring)
- Semper, Gottfried. 1989. *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*. Trans. Harry F. Mallgrave and Wolfgang Herrmann. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Scott, Fred. 2008. *On Altering Architecture*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Scruton, Roger. 2013. *The Aesthetics of Architecture*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Smith, Cathy. 2004. "inside-out: speculating on the interior." *IDEA Journal 2004*, 93-102.
- Smith, Cathy. 2005. "Spaces of Architectural Overcoming." *IDEA Journal 2005*, 51-59.
- Smith, Dianne, Lommerse, Marina and Priya Metcalfe (eds.). 2011. *Life from the Inside. Perspectives on Social Sustainability & Interior Architecture* (first ed.). Australia: Paper & Pencil.
- Sparke, Penny. 2010. *As Long as It's Pink. The Sexual Politics of Taste* (2010 edition ed.). Halifax Nova Scotia Canada: The Press of the Nova Scotia College.
- Somers, Inge. 2017. *Advancing Interiors. Interiorist Voices on Identity Issues*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Antwerp, Antwerp, Belgium.
- Taylor, Mark (ed.). 2003. *Surfaces Consciousness* (Vol. 73). London: Wiley-Academy.
- Teerds, H., & Floris, J. (2011). "On Models and Images. An Interview with Adam Caruso." *Models. The Idea, the Representation and the Visionary*, OASE, (84), 128–132.
- Thiis-Evensen, Thomas. 1987. *Archetypes in Architecture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Verghese, George. 2007. "Sensual Spaces Through Material Abstraction. In Edward Hollis (ed.), *Inside the Box. A Reader in Interiors for the 21st Century*. London: Middlesex University Press, 197-206.
- von Meiss, Pierre. 1991. *Elements of Architecture - From Form to Place*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Weinthal, Lois (ed.). 2011. *Toward a New Interior. An Anthology of Interior Design Theory*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press.
- Wotton, Henry. 1624. *The Elements of Architecture*. London: John Bill.

Yeonjoo, Oh et al. 2013. "A theoretical framework of design critiquing in architecture studios",
Design Studies, 34 (3),302-325.