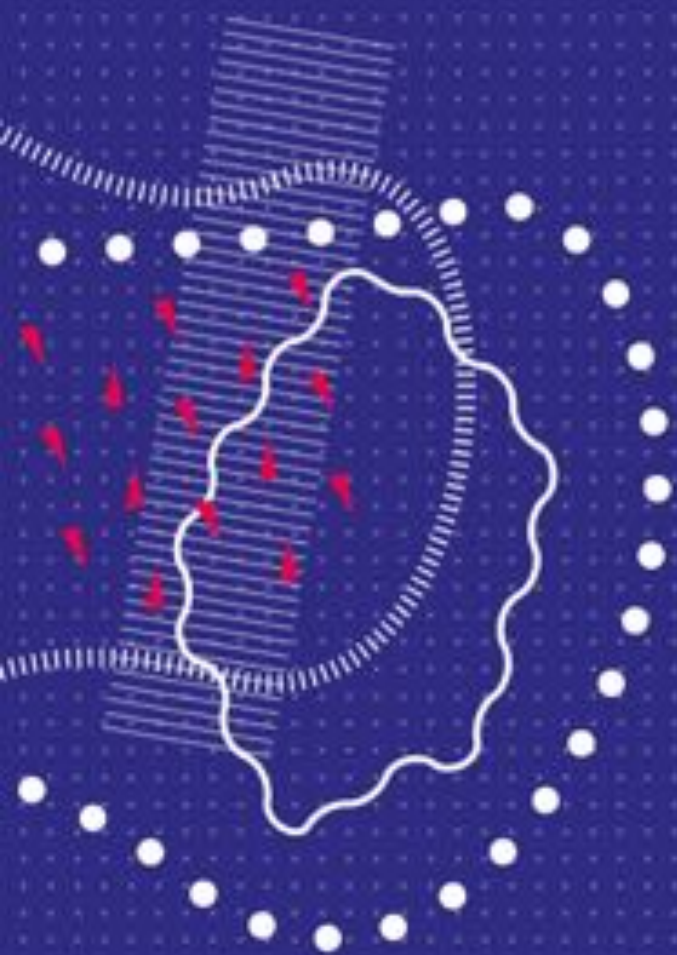


# Public Interiority

Exploring Interiors  
in the Public Realm



Edited by

**LIZ  
TESTON**

with

**KARIN TEHVE,  
LADI'SASHA  
JONES, and  
AMY CAMPOS**



# PUBLIC INTERIORITY

*Public Interiority* reconsiders the limits of the interior and its perceived spaces, exploring the notion that interior conditions can exist within an exterior environment, and therefore challenging the very foundations of the interior architecture field.

*Public Interiority* contains eight chapters and 16 visual essays that document the historical, material, and social conditions in contemporary cities, reconsidering the limits of the interior, resiliency in design, spatial perception, and territories within curated urban exteriors. Topics include the supergraphics of Black Lives Matter protests, privacy and US Supreme Court landmark cases, Instagram as a quasi-public interior, domestic simulation in Victorian curative environments, the micro-urban commons of public transit, and the timely study uncovering Jean-Michel Wilmotte's approach to "urban interior designing," among many others.

Including scholarly and visual essays by experts from a range of disciplines, including architecture, interior architecture, landscape architecture, exhibition design, craft and the visual arts, and design history and theory, this volume will be a helpful resource for all those upper-level students and scholars working in these related fields.

**Liz Teston** is an associate professor of interior architecture at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in the Southeast United States and a Fulbright Scholar. Teston's research explores public interiority, design politics, atmospheres, and cultures. Teston's work has been exhibited in Atlanta, Bucharest, Knoxville, New York, Lincoln, Stockholm, and Venice. Teston hosted the Public Interiority Symposium + Exhibition at the University of Tennessee—this volume is a product of that event. Her essays are found in journals such as *Interiority*, *MONU*, the *Journal of Interior Design*, and *Int/AR*, volumes such as *Interior Futures* (2019), and such Routledge volumes as *Interiors On Edge: History, Theory, Praxis* (2024), *The Interior Urbanism Theory Reader* (2024), and *The Interior Architecture Theory Reader* (2018).

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# PUBLIC INTERIORITY

Exploring Interiors in the Public Realm

*Edited by Liz Teston, Karin Tehve, Ladi'Sasha Jones, and  
Amy Campos*

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# 6

## MUSEUMS AND PUBLIC INTERIORITY

### Contributions from Interaction and Exhibit Design

*Emanuela Bonini Lessing and Lucilla Calogero*

We address the topic of public interiority from the disciplinary perspective of “interior design as a pluralistic practice”<sup>1</sup> with different dimensions of focus on construction, interior design, communication design, and interaction design. From our perspective, museums are pluralistic spaces in which exhibits amplify human-object interactions and where interior-exterior extensions that reinforce the museum’s role as an urban activator, and dynamic social hubs cultivate communal sensibilities. Museums are both physical and virtual; they are places where communication design, interaction design, and exhibit design operate in unison, offering the visitor an expanded experience based on the observations of physical artifacts and acquiring knowledge through digital technologies. Conversely, museums imply an interior-exterior extension in their multifaceted public dimensions. At the physical level, they should include installations in the surrounding public space; at the narrative level, the territorial and socioeconomic criticalities of the “outside” of museums should be integrated by interior design proposals. As a result, museums can become dynamic and multifunctional places that operate as cultural and social hubs, fostering a sense of community.

In addition to their physical/narrative, and interior/exterior features, the overall quality of the visitor’s experience can increase by enhancing effective interrelations within the designed spaces. By surpassing function, museums offer various activities that cater to different dimensions and scales, ensuring inclusivity and diversity.<sup>2</sup>

Exhibit and interactive designs play a crucial role in achieving these goals. Exhibit design curates and presents artifacts and information to guide visitors through thematic journeys, enhancing their understanding and emotional connection. Interaction design facilitates engagement among visitors, objects, and technology, creating immersive experiences. Together, they enable the connection between a museum’s inner and outer spheres at the physical and social-spatial levels.

Therefore, interventions within museums have three primary aims:

- 1) Reinforcing a feeling of public interiority through installations in the museums' outer public spaces, thus involving a wider audience consisting of interested visitors as well as local residents and passersby.
- 2) Blurring threshold interior-external creates a seamless programmatic transition for enriching the quality of the museum visitor's experience.
- 3) Offering participatory co-creation activities using cultural content available in the museums by facilitating interactive workshops, collaborative projects, and opportunities for visitor contributions, museums can draw diverse perspectives and experiences, that will enrich the cultural content and strengthen community bonds.<sup>3</sup>

Museums transcend their role and, instead, as heritage preservation institutions, become dynamic spaces that foster shared public engagement.

The arguments outlined so far are necessary for the reactivation of territories where small museums that are dense with local heritage (consisting of both physical artifacts and peculiar know-how) are located (Figure 6.1).

This type of museum in Italy is widespread: there are thousands all over the suburban areas, far from the main tourist routes.



**FIGURE 6.1** The project sites are mountain territories characterized by depopulation and isolation because of their particular geographical morphology. Places rich in history and traditions where the sense of community is at risk of being lost. In the picture: glimpses of the village of Pesariis, Italy. Image by Lucilla Calogero. In the picture: glimpses of the village of Pesariis (2022).

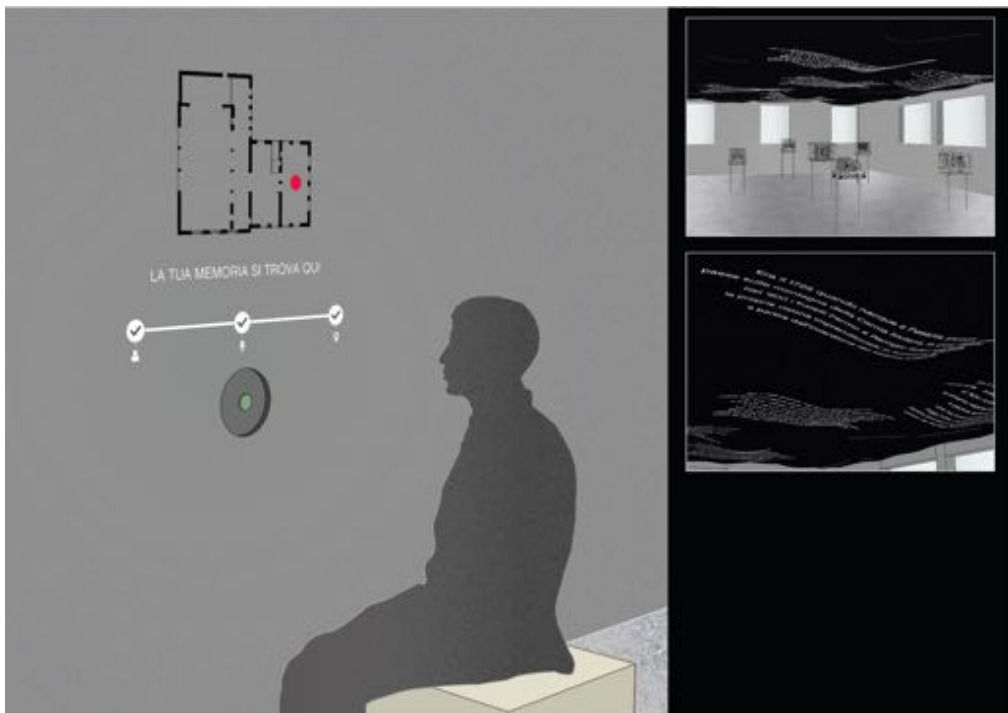
Our three-year-long study focused on a network of civic regional galleries spread throughout several small towns in Carnia, a mountainous region in Northern Italy, in the province of Udine, which display heritages of local and regional relevance despite being characterized by social and economic difficulties (Figure 6.2).

The following section shows how it was possible to address these topics in design studios offered to interior design students at Università luav di Venezia.

Interaction and exhibit design provided new perspectives on heritage displays as well as the socioeconomic impacts of renewed local museums. The aim was to base interventions on two museums conceived as “hub” spatial-relational, capable of offering alternative spatial layouts, but also, beyond functional interactions, to explore multiple dimensions and scales of application to enable “public interiorities or interior-feeling places.”<sup>4</sup> The outcomes show how communication, interaction, and exhibit design concepts and tools can provide new perspectives on public interiority (Figure 6.3).

### A Multidisciplinary Design Studio

From 2020–2022, 120 students Integrating multidisciplinary approaches into their design studios—communication, exhibit, and interior design. Addressing territorial renovation



**FIGURE 6.2** Concept of a collective memory archive shared between inhabitants and museum visitors. The interactive installation becomes a device for transmitting knowledge and know-how, fostering a common and affective sense of belonging to the area. Participatory storytelling enables the transmission of individual and collective memories between generations. Image by Fernando Marius Cojocaru, Arianna Minguzzi, Federico Scaglione, Virginia Pianca, Allison Zarotti (2022).



**FIGURE 6.3** Concept of a museum that provides spaces for the village community's everyday life, open to the public: a restaurant serving local food, a panoramic terrace, and a bed & breakfast. Giada Caglioni, Lucia Kohlschitter, Lara Migliori, Alice Pasetto, Sofia Zanin (2022).

projects through museum design interventions, the first studio was based on the Archaeological Museum of Zuglio, while the second explored the Clockmaking Museum in Pesariis. In both cases, the studio methodology and the timeline consisted of meetings with the community stakeholders who shared publications on village history and its area, plans, fact sheets on the museum's contents, and various existing documentation. Students and stakeholders took part in museum-guided tours, allowing them to share first impressions on existing issues. During the project's development, the students interacted with local figures to gain the necessary knowledge about the village.

The final result consisted of several design proposals generated by theoretical principles and design tools, considering different levels of intervention, ranging from construction details to communication outputs, within a multidisciplinary vision. The proposals were presented to the stakeholders, and a final publication<sup>5</sup> was funded by the local government to enhance the local community's awareness of the potential impact of these studies (Figure 6.4).

In our view, museums are pluralistic spaces in which interior, communication, and interaction design contribute to enhancing public interiority actions. Museums become hubs, hybrid spaces resulting from pulling together mixed functions and providing suitable space for each of them, places completely integrated within the territory and their daily activities. They are places for displaying local heritage as well as responsive membranes facilitating multiple relationships, active in promoting dynamics of public interiority by bringing the peculiarities of the place into their public space (Figure 6.5).



**FIGURE 6.4** Concept of a dynamic, multifunctional museum, a cultural and social hub that creates a sense of community by providing space for craft workshops, local food tasting, sale of handcrafted products, and urban beekeeping on the roof of the building. Francesca De Paoli, Chiara Lievore, Matthew Saporetti, Sofia Pascolo, Emma Vincenti (2022).



**FIGURE 6.5** Concept that highlights the relationship between the museum building and the excavations of the Roman forum, located at the outside. The scope was to bring to light the importance of the village for the commercial exchanges during the Roman period. The goal was achieved by retracing the steps of a wine merchant, allowing the visitor to put himself in the shoes of this character. The drawing is characterized by line art, transparency of materials, and a play on points of view. Elena Arnoldi, Elena Bortoletto, Matilde Da Dalt, Matilde Piovan, Alessandro Vazzoler (2022).

## Notes

- 1 Richard Buchanan, "Surroundings and Environments in Fourth Order Design," *Design Issues* 35, no. 1 (2019): 4.
- 2 Eleonora Lupo, "Design and Innovation for the Cultural Heritage, Phygital Connections for a Heritage of Proximity," *AGATHÓN International Journal of Architecture, Art and Design* 10 (2021): 190.
- 3 Alessandra Bosco, Silvia Gasparotto, & Margot Lengua, "Participatory Flows: A Comparative Analysis of Co-design Processes in the Field of Cultural Heritage," *Strategic Design Research Journal* 15, 2 (2022): 100.
- 4 Liz Teston, "On the Nature of Public Interiority," *Interiority*, 3 (2020): 61.
- 5 Emanuela Bonini Lessing, Lucilla Calogero, Francesca Castellani, and Gabriele Toneguzzi: *Patrimonio, Territorio, Design. Progetti per la Rete Museale della Carnia* (Vicenza, Italy: Ronzani Editore, 2023).