

# Interiority on Spatial Sonata's Design Process

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## **ABSTRACT**

Interior as a discipline is often associated with Architecture. This raises the question, where and how is the position of Interior towards Architecture. Does the Interior's process come after Architecture? or go hand in hand with the Architectural process? In Spatial Sonata, as design consultant for Interior and Architecture, the Principals do not segregate areas as Interior or Architecture. They assume that Interior and Architecture are interconnected. Thus, only consider areas divided into Interior (inside) and Exterior (outside) areas. Between the Interior and the Exterior, there must be continuity and relation since they are seen as a single unit, known as Interiority. The Principals have a perspective from inside to outside, arguing that the area that will be lived in is the inside, not outside. This indicates that even in Architecture's design process, Interior is present through being considered as an approach to achieve Interiority. This research intends to explore the influence and strategy of interiority on the design process done by Spatial Sonata. As qualitative research with ethnographic methods, this research aims to understand the system of interiority that is applied and become a learning reference for students, practitioners, and others that interior is not limited by space and comes after Architecture. Analysis shows how Interiority influenced the design process, hence concludes that in Spatial Sonata, Interiority is not only a perspective, but as a design approach that has strategies and parameters.

Keywords: Interior, Architecture, Interiority, Design Process, Strategy

## **INTRODUCTION**

In history, Architecture as a discipline perceives the Interior as separate and dissimilar. It is usually thought of as temporary and additional makes Interior vulnerable. There some Interiors are built together with Architecture, but there are also Interiors that are easy to move or adjust, thus creating ambiguity as to what interior means.

Ionescu (2018) assumes that Interior Design is more than just the arrangement of space or a collection of objects, but is a form of acceptance and response to the cultural significance of the building. The Interior used as a medium between tectonic structures in 'talking' with its users. McCarter (2016) reveals an Interior that builds according to its location and has a maximum attachment to its environment and enriches the space experience for its users is what makes the Architecture last.

McCarter (2016) explained further how the Interior is included as a consideration in the Architectural design process so it transforms into a composition. Interior is an essential part because it can make space in architecture into a habitable room (Verschaffel in Ionescu, 2018). However, the inside view also needs to be complemented by an awareness of the outside area and its position towards the outside. Through these views it is known that, in the Architectural design process, the Interior aspect needs to be considered as a way that connects the Architecture with the user. On the other hand, the Interior must not forget about Architecture because the Interior serves as a medium to continue the message Architecture wants to give to its users, also so that the Interior is not isolated. This makes Architecture and Interior interconnected by having the same primary focus, user's experience. This view is known as interiority. Keane (2002) states that the interiority or quality of an interior space is the concept of limitations (boundedness) and openness both physically and culturally. Physically, interiority is a product of boundaries whereas culturally, interiority expresses the presence of the other side or the exterior that creates conditions for the interior.

As the design industry is growing, many new design firms or consultants are emerging. One of those is Spatial Sonata. Even though the design consultant is relatively new, founded in 2020, both EE (Interior Designer) and IJ (Architect) as the Principals have already been in the field for around 5 up to 8 years. In order to succeed, they combined their experience, specialities and preferences and synchronized it into principles to be able to move further as a team and identify their market. Amongst new design consultants, SS seems to have consistent aesthetic values.

The Principal of Spatial Sonata (later referred to as SS), EE said that Interior and Architecture are interconnected. Although, in practice the Architecture design process comes first and interior later to fill in the space, EE has an entirely different view. According to EE, rather than looking from the 'outside' (Architecture) to the 'inside' (Interior), EE prefers to look from the 'inside' to the 'outside' because, the space that will be enjoyed and lived in is the Interior. Hence, EE believes that architectural design processes have to include interior design as consideration and how components in architecture such as geographical location, environment, point of views, etc.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

According to Atmodiwirjo & Yatmo (2018), the view of interiority as a relational construct that connects the user and his environment should be the main basis for design practitioners. Interiority intended to explore various forms of relational construction that unite the interaction between space and users as a form of spatial design practice to identify challenges that may face.

### **A. Users (Material)**

The quality of the space to live is defined by the relationship between subjective responses (experience) and the physical material of space and its elements (Atmodiwirjo & Yatmo, 2018). Rather than seen as passive recipients of their environment, users are seen as active entities, related reciprocally with interior spaces and architecture. Reciprocal relationships could happen as if users

have the intention to participate in commands and forming, not just occupy the space (Tuan, 1997; 35, in Atmodiwirjo Yatmo, 2018).

Interiority in everyday life is not only defined through occupation but also through materiality. Ordinary space becomes a place for spatial practice through occupation and materiality, which are always present in dialogue. Apart from being innovated and gives form, researchers also say that materials translate physical and psychological conditions of space (structure, finishing, and content) as expressions of functional and aesthetic systems that reflect solutions for the interior environment (Pile, 2008 and Kilmer & Kilmer, 1992 in Alawad & Malek, 2018).

#### B. Interior

Coleman (2001), interiority or quality of interior space is the concept of boundedness and openness, both physically and culturally. Physically, interiority is a product or result of boundaries. Culturally there is an exterior presence that creates conditions in the interior. The company of the exterior demands a relationship between the inside and the outside.

Wright (in Coleman, 2001:94) argues that the 'inside' should integrate with the 'outside'. According to Wright, how the soul of a building is perceived as a collection that works to form one thing, so it is impossible to think of a building as a single unit with different finishing, setting and environment. Similar to how the exterior can affect the Interior, the Interior can also affect the exterior and even stand alone.

Leblois (in Coleman 2001; 95) writes the main point is Architecture (interior) is a spirit (spirit) and a way to feel, see and live so that what needs to be emphasized is not about the interior and exterior but everything that is in between.

#### C. Architecture

Wright (in McCarter, 2012:14) says the Architect is to build 'space' (The room, the simple room) which is referred to as 'The Space Within'. Wright (in McCarter, 2012) explained that interior space is the reality of a building so that architecture will not be present if it is not through the room because architecture is not just a 'form following function' but contains the enclosed space. In interior the reality of a building can be seen.

Many of the leading contemporary Architects emphasize the superiority of interior spaces both in design and experience. Steven Holl (in McCarter, 2012) said that when you already have a concept and strategy, work from the interior of the core space towards the outside of the building because the inside is always more important than the outside. Wright (in McCarter 2012: 29) states that architecture should be define as a provider of 'a room to live in'. According to Wright (in McCarter, 2012), Architecture is involved in providing usability and convenience for users.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This paper collected data using a qualitative method, with an ethnographic approach, full-participant type. Through qualitative research, authors are more likely to obtain data about phenomena or obstacles that occur daily (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The ethnographic method chosen by Authors is considered the most appropriate. After all, Authors can approach and mingle with the research subject and see firsthand the phenomena daily within 8 (eight) months of internship. By conducting research with a full-participant type, Authors can obtain data directly and better understand the design process, as Authors get involved and become the subject itself. This experience became Authors opportunity to collect data through observation, discussion sessions and interviews with related parties.

To get deeper understanding about Interiority as applied design strategies, 2 (Two) recent Residential projects; GGT House (Architecture and Interior) and Wungkal House (Interior only) used as design precedents. Residential projects are settled as it has a personal and closer connection to its users than other types of projects. With different scope of work, GGT House as precedent is aimed to understand, arrange, and clarify ideals value of Interiority whereas Wungkal House is determined to know SS ability to apply Interiority in relation with Architecture.

## **RESULT & DISCUSSION**

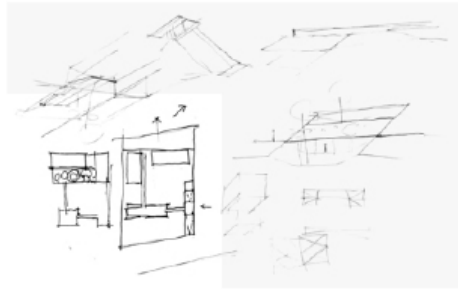
In order to understand SS application of Interiority, this study is divided into each design process conducted by SS. This way, readers can carefully grasp how interiority is applied as strategies and influenced each of the design process.

### **A. Design Brief**

When giving the design brief, the client wants a bright house with single materiality. This is because the place they live in at the moment is dark and too 'crowded' visually. Apart from that, the client also had a scenario where they watched the sunset across the golf course while having tea or coffee. Through these two briefs, it seems the client has an awareness of what they want and need. The scenario also worked as it helped the client to elaborate their wants whilst it helped designers to compose and form the space.

### **B. Brainstorming**

Before entering the design phase, the Principal designer makes rough drawing (sketches). Principal Designer uses sketches to imagine the potential ambiance/ atmosphere that could be applied in the design. This phase is aimed to pour out all the ideas or potential that can be used later on.



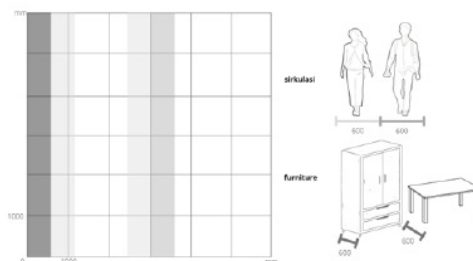
**Image 1. Rough drawing (sketches)**  
**Source : Document of SS (2021)**

For example, the drawing above (Image 1) captured how the Principal tried to imagine the space and create an ambiance by shaping a sequence from the entrance through the inside. Although only as a study, the drawing showed Principal consideration about users' experience by creating sequences and setting the point of view. View and opening is important as it can enhance user experience by giving a sense of relation to the environment hence showing the influence of Interiority.

#### C. Concept

If the concept usually comes from a narrative or problem, on this precedent, it comes from the material. The Principals said that when the clients said they wanted to use single materiality, they were immediately interested. For the materials, the designer offers lapitec or marble materials as those have pretty easy maintenance, are durable, and can be applied at outdoor areas. To know whether in the concept design stage, there is an influence of interiority, Authors analyze through materialistic objects that make up the material, such as; color, texture, surface, thermal conductivity, density, and finishing. The designer chose beige to support the formation of a bright space because it can transmit light, not absorb hence allowing more light into the room. The lapitec or marble material used has a flat and smooth surface as Gesimondo, Nancy & Postell (2011) said smooth texture could give a calm feeling. Located in a tropical country, Lapitec and Marmer application as material seems appropriate, as those provide a cool sensation while touched and can lower the temperature.

#### D. Layout

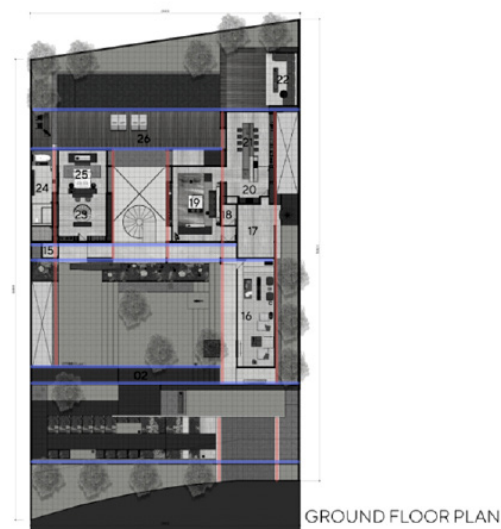


**Image 2. Circulation & Furniture on Grid 1000x1000mm**  
**Source: Private Document (2022)**

To design the floor plan, SS used a 600x600mm grid. Based on the theory from Sully (2015), designers must use grids that respect human circulation and user requirements. According to that, the 600x600mm grid used by SS is suitable as it serves its function. For example, a 1000x1000mm grid is easier to divide or multiply, but it is not ideal as it will leave space when placing the furniture as it is common to make credenza or cabinets with 600mm depth hence making grids usage becomes useless.



**Image 3. Ground floor layout, GGT House**  
Source: Document of SS (2021)



**Image 4. Axis on the layout, GGT House**  
Source: Private documents (2022)

In addition to the grid, there were axes found in the GGT House plan (Image 4). The Axis is created by placing walls and furniture in line, so it gives perception of continuity and interconnectedness between the interior and the exterior.

E. 3D Modeling



**Image 5. Facade, GGT House**  
Source: Document of SS (2021)



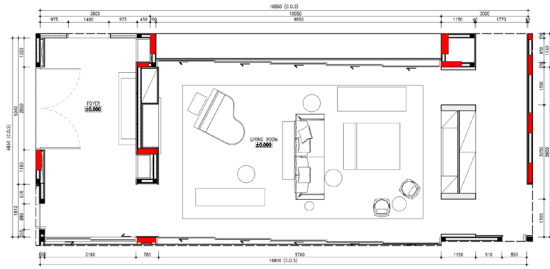
**Image 6. Entrance area (foyer), GGT House**  
Source: Document of SS (2021)



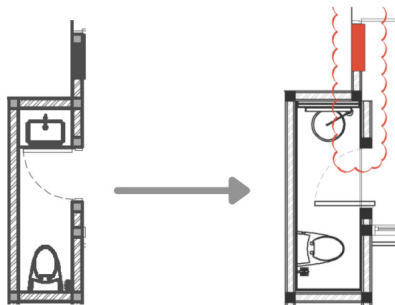
**Image 7. View from the Foyer, GGT House**  
Source: Document of SS (2021)

In the 3D Modeling phase analysis, Authors found there are 3 (three) things such as similarity, continuity and combination of materials. Material similarity is when the materials used are different but have some of the same materialistic objects so that although they are different, there is a shared 'language' such as color, texture, conductivity, or finishing (Image 5). Continuity is when the material used is continued to other areas so that the boundaries between areas become blurred and the room looks unified (Image 6). The combination of materials provide depth to the design so that the space does not look like 2D because it is very plain, and has no flair (Image 7).

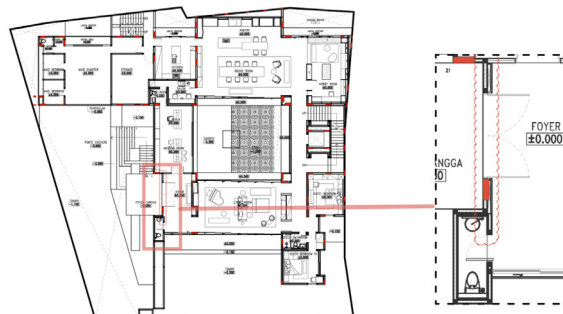
## F. Working Drawing



**Image 8. Layout of foyer & living room, Wungkal House**  
Source: Document of SS (2021)



**Image 9. Before and after wall shifting on the powder room, Wungkal House**  
Source: Document of SS (2021)



**Image 10. Solution for the wall shifting, Wungkal House**  
Source: Document of SS (2021)

Different projects used as another precedent to complete the last design process. In this precedent, the Architecture design process has already finished, and the construction stage has already begun. As the interior design will be placed later, it's essential to ensure the Interior is adjusted, and suitable for the provided area. In the middle of producing the working drawings, there was information from the construction field that the powder room wall shifted by 150mm due to the circulation of the sanitary ware (Image 9). Hence, it created a problem since SS has serious matters with things being in line to show continuity and respect for the exterior. As the solution, additional panels were added to fill in the space (Image 10). This is seen as an attempt by the Interior to connect with Architecture (exterior) to achieve an integrated design.



## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the analysis, it is known that although the wall can physically become a barrier, the wall can be seen not only as a barrier but as a design object to developed, in following the assumption of Leblois (in Coleman, 2001: 95) ,which says that there is no 'interior' architecture or 'exterior' architecture. What is important is not about the interior and exterior but everything between both areas.

McCarter (2016) says that timeless Architecture is what includes the Interior in the process. However, this research proves this is not a significant requirement. Considering there is awareness, urge, and effort from the Interior to adapt with Architecture, Interiority still can be pursued, and applied.

The relationship and dynamics between the Interior and the Exterior show Interiority is not only a view in seeing the reality of the building but also as an approach in design that can be applied in design.

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