



Analysis of the most liked content of the world's 10 most followed Instagram accounts in 2022.

Mediated Archives: The Interiors of Instagram and TikTok

“To raise the question of typology in architecture is to raise a question of the nature of the architectural work itself. To answer it means, for each generation, a redefinition of the essence of architecture and an explanation of all its attendant problems. This in turn requires the establishment of a theory, whose first question must be, what kind of object is a work of architecture? This question ultimately has to return to the concept of type.”¹

THE ARCHITECTURAL TYPES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Few concepts more accurately reflect the ethos of dominant architectural discourse throughout history than that of “type”. From Quatremère de Quincy’s and Jean Nicolas Louis Durand’s emphasis on tectonic and geometric elements in the 19th century to Le Corbusier’s functionalist approach and the cultural and historicist perspectives of Giulio C. Argan, Aldo Rossi, and Alan Colquhoun in the 20th century, the understanding of type and typology in architecture has undergone significant changes in the last two centuries. With the emergence of mass communications, these concepts expanded to include mediated and multimedia spatial types, where mediums such as cinema or commercial catalogues created new patterns that informed the architectural ethos and, in particular, the design of interior spaces.² More recently, the emergence of social media platforms has created new types of space, further bolstered by users’ identities and their ability to perform within this architecture.. The platforms’ algorithmic structures create classifications based on their own hierarchisation, which constitute an archiving process in its own right.

This essay examines the interior spaces of social media, with a particular emphasis on Instagram and TikTok as two of the dominant platforms shaping both contemporary and future architectural archiving through the massive production, editing, and circulation of images and videos of interiors, and questions the role social media plays in the contemporary redefinition of our material environment and its blurred boundaries, namely how its representation directly affects our everyday material surroundings. It suggests that the immense quantity of data produced by social media about space and architecture, and the inner neoliberal platforms’ structure that hierarchise and classify them, participate in the shaping of the architectural

¹ Raphael Moneo, “On Typology,” *Oppositions* 13 (Summer 1978): 23.

² As explained by authors such as Beatriz Colomina and Penny Sparke.

discipline through an archiving³ process that defines categories, or spatial types, of both analysis and conception.

ARCHIVING THE EVERYDAY

This study focused on the ten most followed accounts on Instagram and TikTok,⁴ analysing all the posts of 2022 that represent interior spaces⁵ without any officially stated commercial or professional purpose (e.g. partnership or brand tag). Following both Instagram and TikTok's primary initial aim, the research focused only on the *staged everyday life*, the alleged backstage of the professional lives of the account owners.⁶ At stake is the very definition of architecture in the 21st century and the question of any linear association with its historical mediums, i.e., physicality since its inception, textual geometry in the classical era, printed plans and scale models since the Renaissance, photographic and multimedia image since the modern era, and software and digital realms in the internet era.

Both Instagram and TikTok's media characteristics suggest that all the information communicated on the platforms is shared by account owners. The apps have integrated the complete processes of photograph and video production into a single device, the smartphone.⁷ Users are sold the idea of democratic access to the production and appreciation of these media cultures without any distinction. However, this supposedly inclusive immateriality has also made social media a powerful capitalist hub, which has developed its own social distinction processes.⁸ Following a production/consumption structure, the apps create a hierarchy of the most successful type of content (based on algorithms, number of likes, most followed accounts, partnerships with brands, etc.), the most valued body types (still heterosexual, mostly American, white, and hyper-sexualised) and their material environment, all products of this immaterial market, infiltrating the homes of populations worldwide.

3 In this study, "archive" is defined as an evolving database that shapes the major heritage of an event through the categorization and classification of its documentation. Over the past few decades, digitisation has had a profound impact on the archival process in architecture and interiors. The history can be traced back to the 1990s, when Nicholas Olsberg (1996) first mentioned the challenges presented to archivists by digital architecture archives when records were in digital CAD (Computer-aided design) formats. In the same line, William Mitchell (1996) explained the volatility of storage media, which would create a tendency to retain everything in a disorganized way in digital environments, with software and hardware dependencies of CAD systems as significant obstacles to preservation efforts. Ann. R. Armstrong (2006) noticed that digitisation would bring about profound shifts in archival studies and education, signaling an end to the historical practices of physical archive preservation.

4 Visual analytics for Instagram conducted by Paule Perron; visual analytics for TikTok conducted by BA students in interior architecture Camille Bodin, Annie Bornet, and Taiana Broillet as part of the module "Theory of Mediated Spaces" (Prof. Javier Fernández Contreras, HEAD – Genève, spring semester 2023).

5 In this study, interior space is understood as follows: First, its material boundaries must be visible in the picture (walls, roofs, vegetation, pool, etc.). Second, either the point of view of the photograph or the main character in the picture (their body) must be within these boundaries. Finally, the place is not accessible freely and without distinction from beyond this boundary (for physical reasons, as well as economic or social ones).

6 The study was based on 300 posts total on TikTok and 370 posts on Instagram. They were all reviewed and analysed visually.

7 Lev Manovich, "Subjects and Styles in Instagram Photography (Part 1)," in *Instagram and Contemporary Image* (self-pub., 2016), accessed March 10, 2023, http://manovich.net/content/04-projects/090-subjects-and-styles-in-instagram-photography-part-1/lm_instagram_article_part_1_final.pdf.

8 Pierre Bourdieu, *La Distinction: Critique sociale du jugement* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1979), 150.

The shift in media culture created by social networks has produced its own spatial references and aesthetics, its own architectural types that stage the bodies of the account owners discussed herein, and in which domestic spaces play a critical role. Domestic spaces are not only where social media celebrities live their private lives, but the core of their public existence. Kim Kardashian (7th account on Instagram) is well known for the muted palette of her interiors, without any distinction between her home, her office, or the interior of her car or private plane. Charli D'Amelio (2nd account on TikTok) posts mainly dance videos in her home, on her porch, in front of the bathroom mirrors, or in her living room. These very well-documented homes are mediated as fragmented architectural types that all act as performing envelopes for the body. On the one hand, the defined area of the once bounded house has let both public and productive activities in, making it a hub of capitalist production with all the technical devices needed to create a domestic interior that enacts daily a performed and recorded routine. On the other hand, the documentation of these celebrities' everyday lives has exported these domestic activities outside the home. Their cars, private planes, or friends' houses are external domestic units that act as extended performing envelopes for their body, just like their homes.

From an iconographic perspective, we can define specific spatial figures, types of interiors that are enacted as such: the couch, the elevator, the hotel corridor, the bathroom, the dressing room, the private transportation means (car, plane, bus, or limo), the backstage of an event or show, the swimming pool, the hotel room, the training room, or the nightclub table are categories of spaces with their own codes that we find in all the top accounts of 2022. These spatial figures draw a contemporary landscape of interior architectures, strongly linked to domesticities, that are organised, classified, hierarchised, and therefore, archived through the internal structure of the app. It means that the construction of the progressive actualisation of our everyday material environment normativity is structured by private companies and their neoliberal organisation.

THE BODY, FIRST ARCHITECTURAL TYPE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Our material environment is directly impacted by the evolution of the technologies, rhythms, and processes used to represent it. Paul Preciado showed the radical shift *Playboy* magazine produced in domestic spaces and interiorities in the middle of the 20th century through the simple but infinitely reproducible images of women's bodies in the Playboy Mansion.⁹ Instagram and TikTok have further extended this access to staged intimacy and body representations and accelerated its distribution pace. The platforms' top accounts regularly display their owners' bodies as the main object of their posts. Their representations are amplified and enacted by a variety of material devices that help to broadcast an extended definition

9 Paul Preciado, *Pornotopia: An Essay on Playboy's Architecture and Biopolitics*, 2nd ed. (New York: Zone Books, 2019), 30.

of their performed corporal identity. Cosmetic products, surgical implants, clothes, body prosthetics, sports machines, furniture, and interior spaces are the supporting characters in this theatrical everyday life, and all ten most followed people own at least one brand selling these products. Like Hugh Hefner before them, they have understood that, to build their own public persona, it appears necessary to develop the spatial conditions for this identity narrative, and they are shaping their own bodies as the primary space broadcasting this identity. The material equipment they advertise “make out of this body a fragment of imaginary spaces”,¹⁰ a place where utopias are crystallising, materialised within its flesh, with its own codes, hierarchies, and idealised models. Through their presence on various digital platforms, bodies become utopian spaces, infinite and distanced from their aging and imperfect living materiality, forming a unique architectural realm—a digital space supporting the construction of the public visual identity of its owner.

UTOPIAN INTIMACY

Within this context, one could talk of a domain of expanded domesticity, where celebrities are increasingly using domestic-like spaces on social media platforms to showcase their—supposedly—private lives through the staging of their body. The expression of this privacy is enacted within a series of isolated spaces, a territory of domestic islands. Extracted from archetypes of Western bourgeois homes of the 20th century, the couch from the living room or the bed from the bedroom are examples of devices displaying a normative, ideal conception of domestic life, an enduring utopia of late modernity.¹¹ The bed appears in both Instagram and TikTok accounts as a place of performed intimacy. Its recurring representation highlights ambiguity between a place of rest and hedonism, peacefulness and action, sleep and sexual activities, vulnerability and power, and is the location favoured by the Kardashian-Jenner family (3rd, 7th, 9th, 11th accounts on Instagram) to display their private lives. It also features in Cristiano Ronaldo’s (1st account on Instagram) and Lionel Messi’s (2nd) posts, providing a significant boost in the number of likes. Charli D’Amelio’s (2nd on TikTok) most viewed video in 2022 on TikTok shows her laughing in bed in a hotel room with her best friend, allowing the spectator a glimpse into the most private sphere of the celebrity’s life, providing the illusion of closeness and intimacy with them. The whole atmosphere of the bed (through lighting, the colour and texture of the sheets, the shape of the pillows or mattress) both defines and is defined by the body’s visual characteristics—if the body is dark, then the bed may be white to emphasise it by contrast.

10 Michel Foucault, *Le Corps utopique/Les Hétérotopies* (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Lignes, 2019), 15.
11 Hartmut Rosa, *Alienation and Acceleration: Towards a Critical Theory of Late-Modern Temporality*, (Copenhagen: NSU Press, 2010), 10.

Before the digital era, domestic types such as the bedroom were understood and conceptualised as places where private lives were lived behind the façade of buildings, where the most valued activities of normative Western domesticity were enacted, taking place within the room, the served space. Through social media, they have become places of publicly performed individuality and privacy. Although still separated from the physical public sphere by walls and doors, their bounded interiority is redefined through their broad public dissemination. The bed has become an architectural type of public domesticity, conceptualised as a prop for the hypersexualised heteronormative body.

INHABITING THE GLOBAL Poché

Diving into the interior spaces of social media, the transformation of domestic spaces in the past ten years calls into question the shared understanding of their hierarchical relationships, and the way their neoliberal archiving shapes back architectural theory. Zones that for the past hundred years were identified as servant spaces are now the location of public performances. Places of domestic vulnerability spared by the public gaze, places of tending to multiple and imperfect corporeities are now displayed and enacted publicly.

Based on the specificities of their architectural program, the top accounts publicly explore and perform an expected and intimate vulnerability through the enactment of these spaces. The D’Amelio sisters (2nd and 16th accounts on TikTok), for example, also use their dressing rooms to showcase both their designer clothing and the transformation processes through which they become their public selves. Outside the scope of this research, recall the selfie bathroom at the 2017 Met Gala, starring three of the top ten account owners studied here. Away from the buzz of the most famous but invisible (or unphotographed) party of the year, the bathroom—once a place for the isolated transformation of the body in preparation for its public appearance—became a place of public visibility, offering to the public a glimpse of celebrities’ seemingly non-official appearance and private lives behind the doors of their unsituated private spheres.

Ancillary spaces, traditionally unworthy of public attention, are now becoming the theater of social performance, staging corporeal vulnerabilities. The differentiation between servant and served spaces is blurred in social media platforms. The concept of “closed poché,”¹² which refers to the remaining spaces distinguishing the interior of a room from the exterior of a building, and “open poché,” which describes the urban quality resulting from the interaction between interior and exterior spaces, can be applied to social media spaces through the notion of “a global poché.” The careful inversion between what is experienced as serving spaces by most people, when displayed as served spaces for a few, creates repetitive and non-contextual domestic islands floating within an unlimited and undefined territory.

12 Jacques Lucan, “Généalogie du poché—de l’espace au vide,” *Matière 7* (February 2005): 45.

PERFORMING ARCHIVED DOMESTICITIES

Social media culture has blurred the boundaries between public and private, domestic and professional, daily environment and staged advertisement. It has created its own interiorities, language, and has structured its own architectural archive. As the identified types are reiterations of well-known spaces (previously understood as public or domestic), the spatial limitations and the interactions between these categories have profoundly changed. This article stresses the domestic transformations this shift in media culture is producing through the enactment of its inhabitants' bodies. To view these interiorities as a contemporary architectural archive is to recognize their role in shaping space and architecture while contributing to the evolution of the discipline through the inherent engagement of social media, thus generating normativity and spatial behaviors. It is not only to comprehend but to conceptualise domestic spaces, in order to thwart, through architectural action, the power relations they perpetuate. Through the repetition of these spaces' representations, the top account owners are codifying contemporary domesticity through the archiving of an extended territory made of fragments of interior typologies, infinitely reproducible and ready to be sold as the performative spaces of their utopian bodies.