“Embedding Studio Cultures Online” An investigation on design studio cultures for digital learning environments

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The global lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic has imposed a threat to the studio pedagogy. Students and educators suffer not only from the loss of tangible space, but that of a unique and nuanced studio culture with almost no online presence. Our position is that the signature pedagogy must be re-imagined in a digital context that allows institutions to visualize their own studio cultures, augment the existing tactile space, and remain self-aware of their identity in both digital and physical environments. The studio acts as a microcosm of an institution, where pedagogy and approach to design are visibly perceived. The interactions embodied in studio learning, in unison with the provided spatial adequacy, weave into a culture that is distinct to each institution, and that is experienced first-hand within their physical boundary and space. Through ethnographic research, the paper reveals how these studio cultures are formed respectively in the Architectural Association, The London School of Architecture, and Central St. Martin’s in London. By evaluating their approaches to the pedagogy in pre and post-pandemic contexts, the paper argues that the existing threat to studio cultures is an effect of over-reliance on a physical learning environment. The paper then proposes that studio learners require a digital space where specific interactions can be documented, visualized, and measured. In effect, the studio becomes a porous concept that does not eradicate but rather supports the existing physical space. Finally, the investigation concludes by emphasizing an institution’s need
to consolidate its online presence by evaluating potential digital equivalents of foundational interactions that define a studio culture. Institutions must explore building their nuanced cultures and inner networks online, where they can establish a solid sense of place for their students, educators and staff outside of the physical realm.

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**Stella Pangilinan (London, 1999)** is a fresh graduate from the University of Navarre (ETSAUN) in Spain where she specialized in Service Design. She was a recipient of the distinction award for her dissertation on building studio cultures digitally, collaborating with fellows from the London School of Architecture, The Architectural Association, The Bartlett School of Architecture, The Cass School of Architecture, and Central St. Martin's. Originally from the Philippines, her background has made her instinctively sensitive to the interpretation of cultural contexts in design. Currently as a practitioner and researcher in UX, she is interested in the translation of these cultural nuances in new and emerging online environments.

**Javier Antón (Pamplona, 1982)** is an architect graduated from University of Navarre (ETSAUN), where he also received his PhD in 2016. He previously graduated from the Master in Critical, Curatorial and Conceptual Practices in Architecture at GSAPP, Columbia University. He has received multiple research grants, has presented his research at various international conferences and has published in several indexed Academic Journals. He has taught at Columbia University and the Architectural Association in London. Since September 2016, he has been teaching at ETSAUN in Spain.

**Álvaro Velasco (Guadalajara, 1989)** is an architect from The University of Navarre (ETSAUN) and he received his PhD by the Architectural Association (AA) in 2019 where he previously studied a Masters in History and Critical Thinking in Architecture. He has collaborated in teaching positions at the AA, U.Herts, AA Summer School and ETSAUN. He has also formed part of several research projects presented papers in international conferences and has practiced through design and theory in offices in London, Nigeria, Spain and New York.