ONLINE EDUCATION: TEACHING IN A TIME OF CHANGE

• Paper / Proposal Title:
Subverting the Moment: Design Research as a Means to Increase Digital Literacy within Refugee Community

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• Abstract (300 words):
Higher education’s temporary move or permanent transformation to an online format has increased the knowledge gap between those with technical accessibility and those deprived of it. The luxury of working from home, teaching from home, and taking classes at this time has perpetuated the gap. Specifically, there is basic training for incoming refugees in Salt Lake City’s community on how to turn a computer on, send an email, etc., but nothing beyond that. The only subsequent opportunities are highly skilled positions with start-ups or large tech companies, which have vanished since the start of the pandemic. Nothing in between. Most resort to “essential work” or various driving or delivery services as their role in the community. Through a collaboration with the International Rescue Committee, refugees from Afghanistan, Syria, and the Democratic Republic of Congo were invited to attend Zoom classes at the University of Utah and be part of the design discussion at the School of Architecture and Planning. This broke down the hierarchy of academia while addressing the digital literacy or knowledge gaps specific to the community. Critical thinking was applied to sound topics, alongside demonstrations in time-based, geospatial, and graphic design software introduced to both students and guests. Over the course of the
semester, the studio was guided through a series of movements (similar to a concerto) and furthered by the new neighbors’ (name decided by refugees) personal stories. We created platforms that increase digital literacy, VR experiences that allow migrants to navigate through the city, and clay 3D printed objects derived from sounds made over Zoom.

This pre-recorded video or Zoom lecture will be presented with Milad Mozari (Assistant Professor at the University of Utah) and Mahmood Abbas (former IRC client and refugee).

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Milad Mozari is an Assistant Professor in the Multi-disciplinary Design program. Born in Tehran and raised in Salt Lake City, his research-based practice often starts with sound or spatial experiments, which then attempt to resonate physically, historically, and experientially. While studying for his BS in International Studies at the University of Utah, he began to make and exhibit work about language and place. He continued his studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he received an MFA in the Department of Sound, followed by teaching in the Department of Architecture, Interior Architecture, and Designed Objects for five years focusing on digital fabrication. Exhibitions and performances include the Hong Kong Arts Centre, International Symposium of Electronic Arts, Chicago International Film Festival, IndieLisboa, Litmus Community Space, Chicago Cultural Center, the Studebaker Theater, and Experimental Sound Studio. Fellowships and residencies include Asian Cultural Council Grant to Individuals, Wave Farm, Pioneer Works, Ox-Bow, Incheon Art Platform, Taipei Artist Village, Madou Sugar Industry Triennial, and soundpocket.