SOHO design in the near future

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Rochester Institute of Technology

A thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
The College of Imaging Arts and Sciences
In Candidacy for the Degree of
Master of Fine Arts

SOHO Design in the near future

By
SooJung Lee
Dec. 2005
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SooJung Lee
Rochester, New York
Dec. 2005
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CHAPTER 1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

BACKGROUND

The change of lifestyle and workplace

When architects Philip J. Stone and Robert Luchetti wrote: “Your Office Is Where You Are,” an article for the Harvard Business Review, it was already 1985. Today, the wisdom of Stone and Luchetti has proven to be true – whether people are fully aware of the evolving technology driven workplace or not, through use of the World Wide Web and day to day advances in immediate communications we can work whenever or wherever we want. Because of the Internet and our newly adopted quick-pace way of life, lifestyle is rapidly changing, as quickly as a new one can be advertised. We now experience huge changes to our lives, for example how distances between isolated parts of the world have significantly shrunk allowing for communication barriers to be broken making a virtual world, and accomplishing a concept of the global village. In other words, we obtain mobility, flexibility, and convenience in our lives.

Hand in hand, our workplaces also become more technologically developed as well. New business generations of the 21st century, who are called generation X and generation Y, or sometimes referred to as generation N have quickly adapted their work ways and created a new foundation in digital technology and the Internet. These two generations have grown up with digital technology and readily accessible computers are now so accustomed to the benefits from high technology that it would be culture shock without such amenities. Their parents’ generations worked in much more rigid and
traditional ways; however, "Traditional" is becoming obsolete as contemporary business types, new media jobs and more modern work environments arise. For example, we can create a website in a very minimal amount of time and begin selling products – like the numerous shopping mall websites; this website can then become our business. Functioning solely under one manager, while excluding the need for employees and also without an official office space. There is no difficulty, with a little ambition and knowledge, for us to start our own business with a laptop, mobile phone, and the Internet. As a result, our workplaces have shown changed figures according to the advance of technology and the changes of our lives.

Fig 1.1 Development of the workplaces
Christopher Budd explained to us the evolution of the office from 1950 to present day in his book: *Work Spheres: Design and Contemporary Work Styles.* (The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2001). He classifies the evolution into 5 groups: 1950 to 1960, 1960 to 1970, 1970 to 1980, 1980 to 1990, and 1990 to 2000. From his explanation, the office of 1950 to 1960 can be condensed into a rigid planning module which is explained with the suspended, luminous ceiling, movable partitions, and partial-height. The office of 1960 to 1970 is the foundation period for cubical applications, which will become prevalent for the next thirty years, also introducing the original panel system of office furniture. During 1970 to 1980, people started to notice the balance of privacy, open communication, and corporate control in the work environment; although, work environments were still developed and implemented hierarchically. From the decade of 1980-1990, innovation and forward thinking of office environments started. In the early 1980’s the personal computer became widely accepted, people started to focus more on the individual and personal work environments. The activity-based planning, the balance between individual and group space, and the increase of individual work space brought about the need for a more complex office-furniture system. The next decade, 1990 to 2000, opened the door to a variety of diverse concepts for the workplace, each meeting a need and different implementation for working. Architects, researchers, designers and environmental psychologist studied this “Alternative Office.”

In 1994, *The HOK Facilities Consulting Report* coined the term “Alternative Office,” referring to the label for new approaches to how, when, and where people work. For example, “Hoteling,” one of the contemporary terms, was created to mean: non-dedicated desks or offices reserved for short term use by employees (*New Workplaces*
for New Workstyles, Marilyn Zelinsky, 1997) project by Ernst & Young, Chicago, 1992, IBM Cranford, New Jersey, 1993. Another concept was labeled “SoHo,” meaning small office/home office. Both of these newly fashioned terms can be representative examples of alternative office.

In this modern age, time and geography are of less importance than in traditional workplaces, allowing work to be accomplished almost anywhere at anytime – with technological advances, wireless capabilities, mobile technology, and the Internet. With this in mind, we need innovative workplaces which serve to gratify new business groups, business styles and also work environments, but most importantly we seek to create favorable workplaces for our lives. For this reason, it is important to predict the future needs and amenities of workplaces as a designer.

Because today many people do not separate living and working I find the “SoHo” concept to be especially consistent and effective for designing a convenient worker friendly environment. I think it has become a more realistic scenario for us nowadays, thus I think I can develop a SoHo design that suggests a better workplace for the future. Now, after fully reviewing the diversity of past workplaces, we change the future: “What kind of SoHo design can we hope to evolve in the next 15 years?” This question is the start of my thesis.

WHAT IS SOHO?

SoHo (Small Office, Home Office), which is sometimes called “Telework” or domestic office, refers to the small or home office environment and the business culture
that surrounds it. From the website: www.dictionary.com we are given the definition of SoHo as a term describing the market for certain computer goods. It is clear that the notion of SoHo is very much dependent upon computers and Internet technology. In the present, SoHo career styles center on a few occupations such as writers, freelance professionals, traveling salesmen and the majority of Internet business. However, I deem SoHo to be more prevalent in the future since it has shown considerable positive benefits.

According to the book: Workspheres: Design and Contemporary Work Styles. (The museum of modern art, New York, 2001), Paola Antonelli said that in an employment situation, telework responds to the employee’s need to improve the balance between home and work by eliminating or cutting down commute time; by reducing costs; by providing increased mobility and flexibility; by making for healthier personal and family life by leaving more room for serious recreation. On the employer’s side of the fence, it allows for a better use of the existing facilities; and it ultimately increases productivity. I think the most important feature of SoHo may be freedom of life. By decreasing unnecessary elements from the traditional office space, we can attain more free time – a very useful and attractive benefit of SoHo if implemented properly.

Fig 1. 2 The features of Small Office, Home Office
DEFINITION OF PROBLEMS

With the changes of our society, many designers, researchers and architects have tried to improve upon the sundry types of alternative offices that could satisfy today's workers. While hoteling might be more advantageous for large scale companies where there are high costs for personal business and small scale business, SoHo proves to be more popular with both small scale companies as well as large scale companies since it has revealed many gainful advantages. However, I think presently, SoHo has not shown consistent results because people are easily swayed into believing it is simply a matter of setting up home office furniture; be it a desk, chair, bookcase, filing storage or a computer in the house. As a result, today's Soho is far behind official workplaces. When converting the house into a workplace as well, it should be equipped with proper facilities and environments. This is not to say the house has to look like the lobby to Donald Trump's corporate office (although, that might be nice) but it should meet all the requirements of the workplace. I feel that as a workplace, SoHo environments fall somewhere between official workplaces and home environments, and the deciding factor in the effective balance between the two is the design of the environment.

SoHo is not just a matter of purchasing home office furniture, and it should be treated as a broader point of view. In other words, SoHo is a means to design a new workplace in the house, utilizing space effectively and outfitting the area with appropriate furnishings and fixtures. With limited space, we want to establish a well-equipped, functional and good looking workplace for guests. This means we must perceive SoHo as designing of space and furniture systems at the same time. On the other hand, we also must emphasize that SoHo is also for family and the part of home
not solely for working. Therefore, it is imperative to keep the needs of family members in all consideration as well. Drawing from these points of view and trying to establish and maintain a work atmosphere appeasing to family life, I have exposed a few problems with present day SoHo environments:

- How to define relations between family and work place effectively
- How to control work space and family space
- How to improve home office furniture or systems
- How to adjust high technology in the house
- How to control space and furniture systems well within limited space

**HYPOTHESIS**

Through the development of workplaces, we have experienced different types of work environments from rigid modules to alternative offices. Already many designers and architects have attempted to create several types of alternative offices: Hoteling, Soho, and Satellite Offices – fully equipped company-owned offices away from the corporate campus to accommodate workers that live too far away (New Workplaces for New Workstyles, McGraw-hill, 1997). As a designer, I am planning to innovate what kind of workplaces will appear in the next stage. I presume that one possibility will be SoHo, because of its various advantages and how much there is to be desired by it. Many people regard SoHo in a simplistic way – setting up several pieces of home office furniture in their house; however, I view SoHo in a matter of controlling
space with furniture systems by conforming it into a sound and agreeable environment for the people that both dwell there and make it their office. If we can integrate space with furniture systems in the house, I know I can suggest an improved concept of SoHo. Clearly, SoHo is not only purchasing home office furniture, but also designing the workplace using space and system ultimately creating an equilibrium that flows from home to work in a Ying and Yang mentality.
CHAPTER 2. DESIGN RESEARCH

USER RESEARCH

Main users – Generation Y (or Generation N)

Main users are Generation Y, also known as Generation N, people who were born in the early 1980s and will become the main business group as they climb into their 30’s in 2015. Currently, or entering this next stage of their life Generation Y might find themselves graduating from college, entering the vows of marriage, career researching, or having a first child and becoming parents. This cohort has numerous nicknames like Generation Why?, the “Echo Boom,” and even the Millennial Generation. However, Generation Y is also considered to be very distinctly grouped together with Generation X. Both generations experienced similar culture traits such as: the growth of the rap music genre, facilitated means of communication through mediums such as cell phones, AOL instant messenger and e-mail, and also the reliance
on entertainment through video games. From his book, *Growing up Digital* (Mcgrow-hill, New York, 1998), business strategist and psychologist Don Tapscott coined the term “Net Generation” for Generation Y – as this group has grown up with the widespread use of personal computers, DVD players, iPods, cellphones, TiVo, digital cable, iBooks, and other ubiquitous items. Moreover, from an early age – even at the point where children are beginning to learn how to read they can use some sort of video game education guide, this group was the first generation to use highly modern conveniences: the Internet, PCs, computer graphics in many video games, animated movies, and television shows, cellular phones and instant messaging. He also said “The N-Gen mind is ideally suited for wealth creation in the new economy. This generation is exceptionally curious, self-reliant, contrarians, smart, focused, able to adapt, high in self-esteem, and has a global orientation. These attributes combined with N-Genres’ ease with digital tools spell trouble for the traditional enterprise and the traditional manager. This generation will create huge pressure for radical change in existing companies.” (*Growing up digital, Mcgrow-hill, New York, 1998*) Emotionally and empathetically, this group has concepts of environmental concerns, social problems, sexual and ethnic diversity, and global community. Also, this age group recognizes pursuit of quality of life through inventing extreme sports, new culture streams and by accepting “new age” into their lives.

**Sub users – Generation X**

Sub users fall into Generation X people who born between the years of 1965 and 1980 and will be age 35 - 45 in 2015. This faction is sometimes known as the Baby-Busters. According to the website, [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org), the term was coined as a result
of a 1964 study of British youth by Jane Deverson. Initially, Deverson was asked by the editor of the magazine *Woman's Own* to conduct a series of interviews with teenagers of the time. The study revealed: teenagers who “sleep together before they are married don’t believe in God, dislike the Queen and don’t respect their parents” which, due to being a new phenomenon, was deemed unsuitable for the magazine. Deverson, in an attempt to save her research, worked with Hollywood correspondent Charles Hamblett to create a book dissecting the study. Hamblett would decide to name it Generation X. After that, this term generation X became ever so more popularized when Douglas Coupland published his famous novel, *Generation X: Tales for Accelerated Culture* in 1991.

As we know from the title of Douglas Coupland’s novel, this group grew up in a huge transition beginning with the end of World War II, the decline of colonial imperialism, oil shock, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the end of Cold War. Through this turbulent world situation, the X generation suffered faced many problems arising out of their parents’ period. As a result this new age group was forced to conceptualize completely different and sometimes opposite opinions and ideas from what their parents’ generation, Baby Boomers were based on. In childhood, many of Generation X experienced parental divorce, open classrooms, widespread political corruption, inflation and recession, and environmental disasters. As young adults, they have had to grow in the revolution of technology like the Internet, widespread use of personal computers, and other surprising results of technological advancement, as well as MTV culture and many music genres. They might live in the turning point. Overall, I extract important key words; free, technology, diversity, option and the Internet of both main users and sub users that are essential to design the process.
MARKET RESEARCH

Current official work environments and systems

Most companies now identify that their workers are the most important and intellectual asset. They also regard the work space as a tool that can be managed efficiently and purposefully for increasing efficiency and learning, enhancing teamwork and supporting cheerful surroundings in work. It is not simple to define current work environments briefly, since there are both typical work environments and innovative work environments in the present; moreover, current work environments are continually improving in many ways.

With currently available technology and real estate, it may be difficult for every worker to have a perfectly customized space for themselves, because of occupational hierarchy in their company. Although many companies still have typical work environments, they do not adhere to anachronistic work environments, but try to accept less-hierarchical systems and to then become organizations that focus on interaction and communication. Recently, most work environments became equipped with wireless capabilities, mobile technology and the Internet.

To finalize these goals for more innovative office environment to facilitate employee productivity, corporations and businesses alike might try to keep pace with the times for workers and companies as well. I gathered images of current official work environments and systems from many websites by looking up current official work environments in two ways; typical work environments and innovative work environments.
These pictures are from Herman Miller's system furniture which is one of the most famous and leading global providers of office furniture and services in the world. These official systems are based on a panel system that defines the work space, modular desks, and movable walls that support dividing or combining space in a more flexible manner. It looks as if these systems are derived from the office; 1960-1970, which was lead by the cubical and panel system. Here modular desks and structural components provide a rather rigid, conservative and traditional type setting; however, the area is organized with electrical and date wires and well designed detail supports the aesthetic character of the environment.
Figure 2.3 is the Resolve System of Herman Miller, which presently is regarded as the most famous and innovative furniture system. The resolve system is pole-based – free from the typical panel system. In www.Hermanmiller.com it is explained that vertical poles in three heights (96, 60, and 48 inches), work with horizontal support arms to define work areas, this pole and arm system also provides for a structural foundation to support hang-on components. It focuses on personalization using rolling screens, canopies, and floor mats and these components help to define personal territory in whole work environments. Also, by having their own graphics, digitally printed images on a screen, canopies, or flags, workers can customize their territory.
Figure 2.4 is a selection of office systems images by Haworth, Inc. These figures show different organization in office system like the freestanding system. These innovative work environments and systems focus on flexibility, functionality, user control and personalization in space. They also suggest multi-functional systems such as a freestanding office unit that serves as a desk, table, screen, mobile storage cart, and media board. Also doubling as a floor to ceiling wall and foldable desk screen do an active role – providing flexibility, function, and high style.
Figure 2.5 is another innovative office system, A3 system of Knoll.

A3 system clearly shows its concept as a unique, different, mobile and independent workstation. It may reflect current technology and different working situation well; personalization, interaction and communication, and supporting personal computer, laptop and other electronic equipments with work. A3 system is complete assemblies of frame, screen, and other components; therefore, it is easy to set up and adjust height, size and shape for different situations. Also, it is made of new materials; translucent mesh screen, tubular steel frames, and other substitute materials, which is seldom used for office system. It suggests using of new substitute materials of office system.
Without a doubt, I can say that most current home office environments and systems are far behind that of the official work space in both functional and aesthetic ways. This is further worsened because of the deficit and lack of home office environments, all that is offered is some home office furniture. Figure 2.6 is a collection of images of desks used for home office furniture; all of which can easily be found at the mall if desired. Most of them are wooden desks and appear non-functional or inappropriate for work. This does not mean that a wooden desk is necessarily bad for working, but these desks clearly need to be more developed in terms of electrical equipping, organization, and aesthetic quality.
Figure 2.7 also depicts normal home office furniture; which we can easily purchase for bookshelves. Most of them are made of wood and were not created for professional functions but more so in the image of typical household bookshelves. With simple structure and design, it is hard to expect efficient functions: hardness, durability, mobility, flexibility and storing all ideal and necessary functions needed for work at home.
These are examples of home office furniture used for and as a filing cart.

Filing carts or cabinets are more diverse than other home office furniture; from wooden materials to assorted and colored plastics, they are made of different materials and come in a variety of shapes. Most of them consist of a box shape frame, several drawers and wheels because of this – filing carts are functional as a mobile and flexible unit. However, comparatively speaking when it comes to official systems, they are still lacking. I think it may be necessary to enable the filing cart ensemble to be able to combine with a desk in order to create a more functional workstation.
In contrast with the other home office furniture, home office chairs show a more positive tendency as well as similar function, aesthetic, and shape to that of the official chair. Even though home office chairs are slightly under par in variety, they are not that far behind the official work chair. Most home office chairs are ergonomically designed enabling height adjustment; they also appear more comfortable or cozy than official chairs. In fact, some commercial office furniture companies sell furniture to the home market and I think this can be helpful to improving of the development of home office furniture market.
Figure 2.10 is an assortment of images of home office furniture from the Swedish warehouse IKEA. With its modernism, functionalism, human-centered assembly and child-friendly design, IKEA furniture has become world renown. Compared to other home office furniture, I think that the products offered by IKEA look a lot more creative and efficient considering its cheap price. For instance, IKEA tries to combine two components – cart mobility with organizational storage, while maintaining a strong sense of aesthetic appeal.
Developed hypothesis

Through user and market research, I have become aware of the needs of all prospective users for a SoHo design in 2015 and also concerning that of the current situations of both official work and home office environments. It is most definite that prospective users; generation Y and generation X, expect other alternative work environments to influence their new work and life style further upon improving current work environments.

Now people who spend a lot of time working out of home, or even SoHo business people, install a computer, add some home office furniture such as a desk, bookshelves, and/or a storage system and regard their house as a SoHo place. People have the tendency to be only concerned about furniture, not space (or environments). As a result, it is difficult to maintain an appropriate work environment at home. Moreover, most of the current home office furniture is not that functional or sufficient for working, because the majority of designs are really behind compared to official work systems. I think current home office systems have to become more developed, not to say that home office systems and environments should look official, but at least be able to function equally, if not better. Since home office environments and systems are part of a home it is necessary that they also satisfy all family members’ lives. For this reason, I think if we consider SoHo design as a matter of both space and systems, and control both the space and system effectively, we can suggest better a SoHo design in the near future.

My scenario is a design of a SoHo space in 2015. Prospective users are in their 30s, possibly a married couple without kids who operate a SoHo style business in 2015. I especially want to extract three concepts: the independent workstation, the
moving wall, and a translucent moving screen-wall from research. It is important to consider space and system at the same time in order to define the relations between them. In house, I think it is necessary that both space and systems (or furniture) are considered together when defining the purpose of environments. My main issue concerns how to improve current SoHo space and suggest a better SoHo concept for the future.

Fig 2. 11 Hypothesis concept (Images from Knoll, Herman miller, and Haworth)
CHAPTER 3. DESIGN PROCESS

EARLY DESIGN STUDY

First, I have focused on dividing and combing space in a normal house plan. Inspired by docking systems of a spaceship and space station, I put the work area in the center and tried to connect the outer areas by moving walls. Through the use of rotating moving walls, space can be open space and closed space as well, while connecting bridges provide for electronic power and communication.

Fig 3.1 Early design study
Fig 3.2 Early design rough mock-up

Fig 3.3 Early design idea sketches
Through committee meetings, I realized several points about the concept of combining and separating space worth while of further development, because earlier design has yet to satisfy these requirements. I understand (having a boundary of thinking) that the house is box-shaped. Even as I am trying to make the SoHo design of the future; my thinking still lies in the fixed idea of a cubical space. As a result, early designs are limited, under-developed and not effectively improved current home environments; furthermore, I feel like it seems to be a rather negative way to hang on solid moving walls and rotating walls. So, I changed my thinking from the cubical space to a variety of ways. Then, I broke the fixed concept that a house must be cubical. Do not misinterpret what I am saying, cubical space is not necessarily bad for future SoHo design yet, I want to portray SoHo design in a plethora of different ways. I realize that house environments can be different shapes – from a box, to a circle, or triangular – even free form.

As a designer, I think we sometimes need to break fixed ideas and make new things and that is the start of making creative and unique concepts. Taking this into consideration, I started my design from an empty space with no fixed shape in mind; with the idea that it would be a place in which people both would dwell in, as well as accomplish their daily work. After that, it is clear to me that I can design space itself, not just systems or furniture. I think about the variety existing in people’s lifestyles: from the intimacy of one’s bathroom, the creative accessibility achieved in some kitchens, the personal taste reflected in a bedroom, and the other sundry examples of people’s characteristics shown in their recreation and entertainment areas. Then, I tried to make a connection between these spaces and home furniture and systems, because home office systems and furniture are not objects for exhibition. Home office systems
and furniture should be considered as part of the space in house environments, not separately.

**DESIGN CONCEPT**

Design concept

After early design studies, I inspired by water with its variety of properties - flow, flux, spread, wave, curve, motion, the characters of its appearance: colorless and transparent, rippled, bubbled, opacity and the mere image of water: clean, cool, pure, fresh - the possibilities are endless. I think these properties suits my ideas; controlling spaces well and connection between space and home furniture and systems. Using these individualities, I want to make a SoHo space that resembles the free form in the flow of water, to achieve this I have developed freely move-away, in-house environments. Also, I seek to form a SoHo space which is interactive and flexible, enabling the ability, if desired, to combine or separate areas and environments in the house. This should dictate a sense of consequence in the relationship between the space and the systems or that of the furniture. The whole image is clean and cool in the space with white color, blue tone and different uses of opacities like that of a sparkling sea or the vitality of a river. As flowing water, this SoHo space is not fixed, but flexible and movable allowing for better and transitional house environments.

Another concept of design we can look at is an organic shaped environment, in the sense of shape and also what it means to be organic. This concept of organic space presents a facial resemblance of free form and spherical shape. Also, like the
fluidity of something organic, this SoHo space and its systems are vivid and alive through the concept of mobility. I want to design the SoHo space to be alive, by having mobile systems inside of the space so both space and systems can interact with people closely.

Fig 3. 4 Design concept image - Water

Fig 3. 5 Design concept image - Organic
Detail design concept - Space

Organic shaped or cell division shaped space has four subordinate dictations. Each of the four spaces is equipped with the appropriate facilities: power, plumbing, heating, water and other basic utilities, all which serve to represent the general concept of the room's environments. Because of the fully equipped functions of these facilities, these four spaces can perform any different role the user may wish to apply. Furthermore, these subordinate spaces can be divided and combined by moving the walls each representing the general concept of a wall.

Fig 3.6 Design concept - Space
**Detail design concept - 5 mobile systems**

All four of the facilities can have the same functions; they can also support mobile systems by supplying power, plumbing, heating and cooling. Each space can perform five different roles – that of a kitchen, bathroom, living-room, bedroom and the work area. In other words, people can rearrange and design their home environments when they want, simply by moving and setting up the mobile system. It paints a picture of an organic concept, continuously ready to evolve. This in turn gives life to the space facilitating a positive interaction and communication between the users and the system. By creating both the space and system, I can avoid the heterogeneous association which may occur when people just purchase and set up home office furniture in their house.

![Diagram](image.png)

*Fig 3. 7 Design concept - 5 Mobile systems*
ROUGH MOCK-UP

Space

Fig 3.8 Rough mock-up - Space
5 mobile systems

Fig 3.9 Rough mock-up – Mobile systems
CHAPTER 4. DESIGN SOLUTION

SPACE

Idea sketches

Fig 4.1 Space idea sketches
For the most part, space consists of three elements: basic structures, four equipped structures and moving walls. Each of the four sides has an entrance. The four equipped structures each have several functions in the house; supplying plumbing, power, heating and cooling, storage and seating. With their multiple tasks, home environments can save space and add aesthetic charm as well. Smart windows which can be changed from transparent to opaque at the flick of a switch help family members maintain privacy in their lives.

In the case of the moving wall, which replaces the foundational wall in current homes, they play several roles; acting as a wall, door and big screen in the house environment. Moving walls are made of a half-transparent material and are fully mobile.
following a predetermined overhead track. Each of the four moving walls – make up two layers – so totaled the four walls combine to make eight layers. By moving them around and rotating at 360 degrees, it is designed to be able to combine and divide each space in its own diversified way. Also, for the work station, these mobile walls serve as a space divider and big screen as well. With their half transparent material quality, people do not feel suffocated or claustrophobic in the space no matter the size of the created compartment.

Along the lines of style, it is important to discuss what is known as ‘Zen style’ a combination of eastern and western culture. The main theme underlying the Zen style is a tone of simplicity, but it is a modern approach affording me the liberty to add and use Asian style patterns and such materials as accents. Colors and material for crafting a visual balance of coordination are kept on one palate level, allowing for an artistic flow from one space into the remaining five mobile systems. In each space, I also tried to use simpler and softer colors and non-busy patterned materials, in order to avoid a sense of clutter and distraction. With the color white as the underlying background, I use blue tones, silver, black, and a selection of wood material for complementation. The white color also expresses a feeling of cleanliness and purity both positive characteristics I try to draw from water. By finishing with similar colors and materials, the five mobile systems easily match and accent each other no matter how they are arranged in the space. Also, metal materials and an assortment of translucent materials offer a preview of a futuristic aspect to the user. Overall, I try to achieve a SoHo environment that promotes the appearance of a cool, slick, simple and futuristic atmosphere.
White mock-up

Fig 4.3 Space white mock-up -1
Alias renderings
Finding inspiration in the spread and rippled image, I designed an independent type mobile workstation. Like a droplet falling into water that makes ripples and echoes outward, I want to apply or input different types of information, feasibly allow for the spread of that information and share the information with multiple people through the workstation. My workstation is comprised of one large screen that serves as the primary, several small screens, a CPU and wheels. The main larger screen is a flat touch screen and has a virtual keyboard. When people hold meetings or conferences, smaller LCD screens emerge from beneath the main screen. The CPU, which has pole type ports, will be a server that accepts information from different types of communication devices as it will be connected to a projector, mp3 player, digital
camera, and other electronic hardware. Also, the workstation’s moving walls can be used as a big size screen for power point presentations or slide shows.

**White mock-up**

![White mock-up](image-url)
Alias renderings

Fig 4. 12 Workstation alias rendering -1

Fig 4. 13 Workstation alias rendering -2
Fig 4. 14 Workstation alias rendering -3

Fig 4. 15 Workstation alias rendering -4
LIVING PLACE

Idea sketches

Fig 4.16 Living place idea sketches
The created “living place” represents today’s current living room; however, enabling a more flexible lifestyle which meets the needs of the majority today’s people. This mobile system consists of four parts: embossed surface seating, a control system, an entertainment system and tables. Inspired from the organic shapes created by a water droplet, seating is designed with a bubbly shape cushion. Each cushion has a magnet inside positively maintaining the connection between each chair and itself. Combining and separating each other, the seating can support various positions. The control system is developed with functions for lighting as well as electronic furniture all connected to several electronic devices including massaged seating. The entertainment system can sustain peoples’ diverse lifestyle choices and be connected to other electronic devices.
with pole type ports. Tables, which come in three pieces, are movable and can be used together or separately; furthermore, they offer organized storage space as well.

White mock-up

Fig 4.18 Living place white mock-up -1
Fig 4. 19 Living place white mock-up -2
Fig 4.20 Living place white mock-up -3
Alias renderings

Fig 4.21 Living place alias rendering -1

Fig 4.22 Living place alias rendering -2
PERSONAL PLACE

Idea sketches
Instead of preserving the contemporary bedroom, I suggest a cocoon type "personal place" (or systems). Created out of the image of air bubbles surfacing, each one rolling over and over each other in a combination and separation of bubbles, I have developed a personal place consisting of several bubble shaped cocoons. A bed cocoon, storage cocoon and a mirror stand comprise the new concept of the bedroom. Each cocoon is able to move around, functioning solely or assembled to another piece. The bed cocoon has self-contained lighting and a control system which offers control of luminosity, a clock, a digital music system and also telecommunications system. To incorporate the privacy usually desired in this space, the design is more closed than the rest of the systems. The storage cocoon and mirror stand are mobile and both of them
can be assembled alongside the bed cocoon. A special feature of the mirror stand is its ability to rotate a full 360 degrees.

White mock-up
Fig 4. 28 Personal place white mock-up -2
Alias renderings

Fig 4.30 Personal place alias rendering -1

Fig 4.31 Personal place alias rendering -2
BATHROOM

Idea sketches

Fig 4.32 Bathroom idea sketches
The design for the bathroom has been made to resemble the curved shape of a wave with its soft curved line structure. I tried to make the bathroom into one unit; as a result, I combined the bathtub, wash basin and toilet. Unlike any of today’s modern bathrooms this design sets the water closet on wheels allowing for the entire unit to move throughout the structure as free as the other systems. A glass door secures the bathtub and shower area, and you can find ample storage space both outside and inside the bathtub. Waterproof wooden floors make fast the boundary of bathroom preventing excess water from spreading into other areas. Through this model I have accomplished a bathroom that can operate as an independent unit allowing for its added feature of mobility.
White mock-up

Fig 4.34 Bathroom white mock-up -1
Fig 4.36 Bathroom white mock-up -3
Alias renderings

Fig 4.37 Bathroom alias rendering -1

Fig 4.38 Bathroom alias rendering -2
Fig 4.39 Bathroom alias rendering -3

Fig 4.40 Bathroom alias rendering -4
KITCHEN

Idea sketches

Fig 4.45 Kitchen idea sketches
In my draft of the kitchen system, I wanted to express a sense of water flow and the phenomenon of its continuous expansion if not contained. Like the model of the bathroom, I also tried to make the kitchen system as an independent unit permitting mobility. From the refrigerator to the table top counter there is a connection of soft form with line curvature as that found in flowing water. This kitchen system is intended for one to two people since my prospective users are married couples without children. This question-mark loop system can reduce any unnecessary direction of movement in the kitchen. Also, a balance of aesthetic aspects is upheld. I placed a circular type refrigerator in the design and also suggest curve shaped electronic devices – dish washer, electric cook-top and oven. In case there is an instance of multiple people, the table is
fashioned to expand or slide under itself depending on the desired amount of surface area.

White mock-up
Fig 4.48 Kitchen white mock-up -2
Alias renderings

Fig 4.50 Kitchen alias rendering -1

Fig 4.51 Kitchen alias rendering -2
ALIAS RENDERING IMAGES

Fig 4. 56 Alias rendering image -1

Fig 4. 57 Alias rendering image -2
WHITE MOCK-UP IMAGES

Fig 4.62 White mock-up images - 1
Fig 4.64 White mock-up image -3
Fig 4. 66 White mock-up image -5
Fig 4. 68 White mock-up image -7
Fig 4.69 White mock-up image -8
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

Clearly, my thesis is currently a conceptual project not practical in today’s market. Some designers believe that creating new concepts for the future is of more importance than solving current problems. However, I myself, as a designer at least, have to put precedence in both. For those who believe the current issues are most imperative, we may solve lots of problems and improve current situations it’s what is expected of us as designers. Although, for the future we have to suggest creative ideas that cultivate new trends and possibly answer problems of today. It is not easy to find the balance between what is realistic and what creativity can meld up in the design process. As a result, I want to combine both the solving of the “now” and the imagination of “down the road” in my thesis project. This is why I chose the SoHo design concept of today, but with a futuristic creative spin that leaves us wanting to time fly five years ahead.

From the start of my research to the creation of scale mock-ups and computer renderings, it was not easy for me to quickly develop a concept, but talking with my committee members I have found a direction that I want to pursue. In the beginning, I tried to design home office furniture without taking into consideration the whole environment; however, I realized there are already countless solutions to merely creating new designs for just home office furniture. Simply designing these solutions for home office furniture gets lost amongst the many other styles, when what I am trying to do is create a distinguishing trend. As a result, I tried to design both the SoHo space and the systems for a future preview of concepts to come.
Through my work I came across the tumultuous challenge of breaking the box, both creatively and literally in the sense of space being contained in a cube. Upon arriving at this new revelation, I am now able to broaden the spectrum of my imagination – I can now envision space in free form and without typical contemporary boundaries. Enroot to developing the concept of water dictating the shape and atmosphere of space I found it challenging, but more so exciting creating a solution for each of the five systems that make up our homes. I submerged myself in the concept of water – what it looks like, feels like, flows like, and how it reacts. In doing so, I have ascertained a newfound curiosity and intrigue for water and its endless mysterious character and features.

Limited by both time and funds, and the nonrealistic idea of creating a life-size model, I was restricted to creating smaller scaled examples. To further help me depict my concept I also used computer renderings; however, my ability creating the renderings could never do my intentions justice. It is unfortunate that through renderings I cannot captivate the hearth of home and am left with what appears as a more commercially designed space, rather than the desired homey feeling. In actual creation of my concept and with human occupation a definite reflection of a sense of home could be achieved and it is only because of this lack of human touch that the model and details are limited to whatever personal artifacts the computer renderings could provide.

As a designer, the time, effort and design process for this project were a valuable experience, affording me the ability to study a range of office environments granting me experience working diligently on a long term project which in turn has
taught me a certain endurance when trying to achieve a goal. From these difficult but valuable experiences, I think I can go a step forward to be a good designer.
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