Repurposing the Tower: 
From Work to Home/Work

The transformative nature of the Covid 19 Pandemic is affecting how we work, how we live and how we negotiate between these two parts of our lives. When workplaces closed in spring of 2020, corporate America was forced to innovate and experiment with large scale remote work. This experience changed perceptions of the office as the primary and necessary site of most knowledge work. At the same time, many people working from home found that they could productively work remotely, despite living spaces that were ill suited to handle both living and working. Although we are not yet sure of the long term influence of these Covid 19 induced changes, many are predicting that the need for commercial office space will shrink dramatically, as companies shift to radically smaller and different types of offices. If this happens, what do we do with “leftover” office lease spaces and buildings?

In this studio, we will experiment with redesigning excess office capacity into hybrid living/working spaces to provide “work friendly” housing in the city. During the Pandemic people living in dense urban areas where dwelling units tend to be smaller and more expensive faced particular challenges. Office building conversions that are based on the real needs of working people and families could revolutionize the experience of living and working in cities. We will look at converted towers as precedents but also ask questions about the flexible options for how conventional (or not) offices can coexist with living spaces in the same building. The prospect of redesigning an iconic building provides an additional challenge. Downtown Portland buildings with their small floor plates provide great potential (see the Equitable Building above). Students will evaluate buildings and/or propose options for consideration.

Note: This studio is designed as an interdisciplinary Interior Architecture/Architecture graduate student experience and includes elevated research and reading options for students. Readings on living and working post Covid 19 along with past “house of the future” and “office of the future” predictions will feature prominently in our “base” research as will notable work to live tower projects and experimental designs for dwelling in the city.

IARC 610 Graduate Interior Design Studio

This Studio is equivalent to IARC 584 and is open to Interior Architecture and Architecture graduate students.

SIX CREDITS; MEETS MWF 1:00 - 4:50; PASS/NO PASS

INSTRUCTOR: LINDA ZIMMER