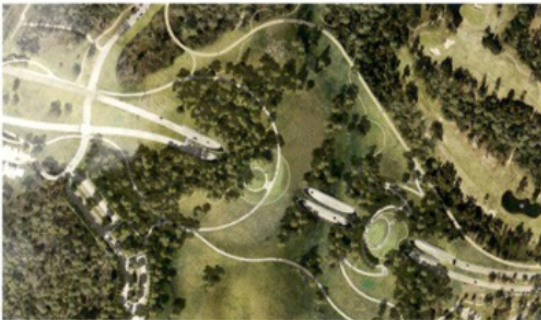
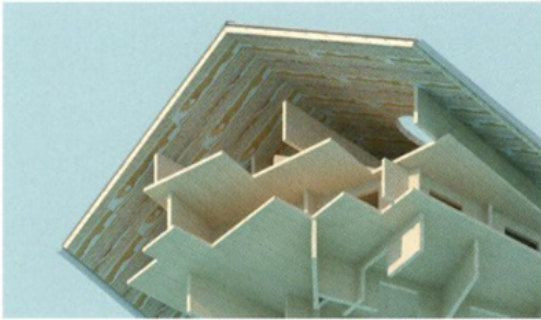


IN THIS ISSUE



From our A to Z of Surfaces, clockwise from top left: CLT (p. 70), VR (p. 106), yarn (p. 116), and soil (p. 102)

Measured, but Creative

In times of crisis, it can be hard to decide on both the right kind and level of response. COVID-19 has been especially challenging in this regard because conclusive information is hard to come by. In April, we were obsessively wiping down every surface to stop the spread (**“Antimicrobials,”** p. 68); in June we learned that airborne transmission is at least as much of a threat. So how much should we worry about surface-based or fomite transmission? “People who come into contact with potentially infectious surfaces often also have close contact with the infectious person,” the WHO pointed out in an early July update to a scientific brief, “making the distinction between respiratory droplet and fomite transmission difficult to discern.”

Perhaps there’s another way to look at this. Architects, designers, and all of us involved in creating the built environment can do something about both forms of spread—we know a thing or two about airflow, and our work involves surfaces of every conceivable kind.

That is why this issue is dedicated to surfaces. With coverage of textiles, tiles, stone, wood, and plastics, we dive deep into an area of design that is often misjudged as superficial. Whether it’s the creative potential of cross-laminated timber (p. 70) or the urgency of rejuvenating soil (p. 102), there is so much yet for architects and designers to learn and explore.

Our creative response to COVID-19 needn’t be limited to antimicrobial treatments, HEPA filters, and cleaning protocols. This pandemic also asks us to face the inequities inherent in paving (**“Urban,”** p. 105) just as much as it forces us to imagine

the design of virtual worlds (**“VR,”** p. 106). In engaging with surfaces in this broad way, we might be able to respond to what continues to plague us now, the societal ills that we have harbored for decades, and the new crises that we are almost certain to face in the future.

Sustainability runs through our coverage of surfaces—see **“Biobased”** (p. 69) and **“Yarn”** (p. 116) for further examples—and will be top of mind at the end of this month, as we host the *Metropolis Perspective: Sustainability* symposium for the second time this year. In July, we brought experts together to discuss new tech for sustainability, strategies for adaptive reuse, and the importance of water management. On September 21, 22, and 23, we will tackle health and comfort as aspects of sustainability, how the circular economy will influence design, and new design approaches to air and water in the wake of COVID-19.

The October 2020 issue of *Metropolis* will be dedicated to wellness in various forms, examining how design intersects with biological research, health-care experiences, public health, and efforts for restorative justice.

In these two print editions of *Metropolis*, virtual events, and continuous online coverage, we hope to show how leaders in architecture and design are advocating solutions that are measured and unafraid of complexity. In this crisis, we are called upon to be creative. And that is something we are all good at. —Avinash Rajagopal, editor in chief