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Structuring senses- The impact of design on human mind

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ABSTRACT

Senses, the only information input media, play a mediating role between the built spaces and their experiences by the users. These spaces act as a stimulus on the senses of its users, the response to which is initially generated by the 'non-conscious' mind of the user; eventually leading to a like or dislike towards space. Architecture is all about experience created in a space, the look, feel and aesthetics; the success of which is measured by the time a user spends appreciating the space. Structuring senses, as the name puts forward, is a study that focuses upon the relationship between a space structure and its impact on the sensory media of the users, aiming to establish a balance and reduce the gap between the design intent and the design product. This declaration shall point towards an exchange of dialogue between a person and space.

Keywords— Senses, Spaces, Architecture, Design, Feel, Emotion

1. AN ARCHITECT'S RESPONSIBILITY

From the three basic needs of human life, Food, Clothing and Shelter, the building industry is associated with the latter one. Having spent centuries in developing upon these necessities, this industry strongly attends to the user experience in the spaces being built. The environments we live in affect us hugely in molding our lifestyle in the social and cultural aspects; sometimes economic aspects as well. The power of design in shaping the lives of people has not been away from the attention of the field theoreticians. The role of this industry, today, is to be responsible for a comfortable, healthy, smooth and happy living of all the people. The ultimate purpose of building the varied scale settings is to enhance the experience of the users spending their lives in these spaces.

In the interaction between built spaces and human beings, Architects play a role similar to a movie director; involving reading and recognizing spatial potential, on the one hand, and understanding societal needs on the other. The design language adapts from situation to situation in accordance with these factors, constantly constructing perspectives anew, observe and listen to and since the space from a range of different angles of expression. As a discipline, architecture harbours the potential to endow ephemeral things in concrete. [1].

2. CIRCUMSCRIBING THE SCOPE

- This declaration focuses upon public architecture- spaces effectively used by multiple groups and classes of people.
- Talking about moods and emotions in spaces for all, this shall not necessarily be similar for all individuals. This process of subconscious assessment is also associated with the personal memories and the social and cultural upbringings of an individual user.
- This declaration is a literature review including substantive findings, as well as theoretical and methodological contributions to the topic.

3. THE INTENT OF BUILDING DESIGN

Architecture is all about creating experience, having been conceived after using up enormous resources and time, every space instils an experiential emotion or feeling within its users, which in most of the cases happens through the non-conscious- a term used by Sarah Goldhagen [2], referring to cognitions that we could access consciously, but most don't.

Architects are ethically passive designers, whether designing a single room or an entire community, the intention is to enhance the leftover space for the user(s) that exists between things- could be walls, greens, water, furniture or any feature. With this, it is clear that architects are on a roll of creating these set of events in spaces for various users. Architecture is a journey over a series of spaces travelling through numerous transitions, breakpoints and interaction zones, setting up the mood for the forthcoming

scenes. The experience of architecture revolves around this engagement of users with the building and at the same time, keeping balanced aesthetics with natural and synthetic methods of comforting the users.

3.1 Conceiving a structure

Design thinking is a method for the practical, creative resolution of problems using the strategies designers use during the process of designing [3]. Rather than a product, the design is a process starting with the brief and conceptualization following schemes, their developments and finally an element incomplete. The process includes many varied scale decisions and gets filtered at various stages through justifications over various aspects. However, there is always an initial idea before everything else which forms the foundation of the proposal. The spaces we inhabit influence how we act and how we feel.

3.2 Crafting an experience

Architects and urban planners create the constructed worlds that people consciously or unconsciously accept, the places where they spend and enjoy their time. But in just the same way, spaces can emerge that are uninviting, that generate discontent, and those are ultimately shunned. Regardless of the formal design language employed, the quality of a space is determined above all by the users' intuitive acceptance of it. Working in a discipline that exercises an influence on people's daily lives, architects are faced with the constant challenge of reading and interpreting a particular space's potential impact, using all their intelligence and looking at it from many different perspectives, and hence enhancing its positive qualities.

4. INTANGIBLE QUALITIES OF BUILT SPACES

In urban settings, we're at no time free from architecture, in various forms, shapes, sizes and colors, we happen to be in constant interaction with the spaces around us. Every space, by default, has a story to say, a direction to follow, or a culture to showcase. The spirituality of a space lies in the sensitivity of the design of that space.

“Space has always been the spiritual dimension of architecture. It is not the physical statement of the structure so much as contains that move us.”

- Arthur Erickson [4].

The word emotion is often applied to a wide variety of phenomena, such as passions, settlements, temperament, and moods. Reference to emotions here shall include all the intangible impacts of design- the moods, feelings, sentiments and other emotional traits.

4.1 Case in Point

The power of architecture is evidently witnessed in our day-to-day routines. Every environment is rationalized with the essence of a feel or emotion associated with it, for example of community interaction in design, a designer can encourage the same as done in an institutional campus; or keep a control over the same through strategies as witnessed in prisons [5]; memorials can trigger emotions like pride, sadness, or gratitude [6]; a recreational park should be calming and peaceful, an institution should be disciplined and a sports complex should be energetic and enthusing; solitude is a sitting room and happiness is a garden. There is no emotion in us without a place, just as there is no place that does not generate somatic commotions, as mild as they may be. The infrastructure of our emotions are our emotions, they contain a habitable space and are contained by a habitable space [7].

“There is no emotion within us without a place, just as there is no place that does not generate somatic commotions, as mild as they may be”

-Faena Aleph

Similarly, other building types can yield surprising, some can even mellow one's mood. It all becomes a matter of how a particular place is designed — to trigger for an emotional response in its occupants. Emotion in architecture can often be linked to how well an environment exudes a “sense of place” — where the emotion experienced a particular piece of built work can be shaped by its “sense of place”. [8].

5. PERCEIVING SPACES- A USER'S EXPERIENCE

Every space instils a certain emotion and feeling within its users, which in most of the cases happens through the non-conscious- a term used by Sarah Goldhagen [9], referring to cognitions that we could access consciously, but most don't.

In the book, Nudge, Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein lay out an approach to improving “decisions about health, wealth and happiness” by playing to the brain's unconscious networks. A small nudge in our environment can change behaviours and decision making for the better, without one being aware of it. Placing fruit at the eye level in supermarkets nudges people to make healthier food choices. Pasting a picture of a housefly in urinals at airports nudges men to aim better. Thaler and Sunstein believe that gently guiding the unconscious brain has a far more powerful influence on our decision making than outright enforcement ever can [10].

Moving into space, a user unintentionally/intentionally relates to space and all their perceptive receptors start reading the doings of the space in their way. When travelling through, one uses certain cues to help navigation. Our senses help determine things like orientation, distance and direction. There is an association of certain intangible qualities with each space such as comfortable, serene, romantic, energetic, etc.; each of which comes with a specific stimulus in the design intent, may be impulsive or deliberate. Also, with each intangible/tangible quality attribute of the space, there come several design layers which separately impact the user's sensory receptors and hence the space as a whole. [11].

6. CONCLUSION

Emotions are more than just being impulsive in nature. There are a lot of many events and factors that affect our emotions. Architecture, with its emotional ability, certainly affects the momentary, if not lasting, mental state of an individual. Architecture

has a direct rapport with our physical being, there is a strong relationship between the built spaces we're surrounded in and the way we think, react and respond to other things.

Every environment has an influence on the moods and emotions of its users through non-conscious thought processes. This research shall lead further to establish the means of the relation between tangible space design elements and their emotive impacts.

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BIOGRAPHY



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