

experience

investigation of the meaning and creation
of experience in interior space

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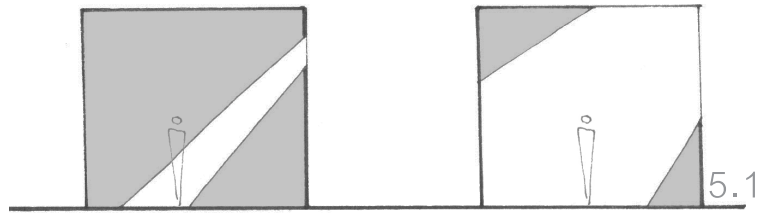
Experience is inherently emotional and subjective and therefore very difficult to judge in terms of quality. There is an inherent privacy to experience that makes it less accessible to evaluation than objects (Hein 2000:67). In this chapter the heuristic method was used to determine the elements of experience and precedent studies were looked at.

It is argued that original objects in museum collections cannot be replaced by simulated or artificial objects or experiences thereof, because the replicas are not the “real thing” and the real thing would evoke a greater thrill. Hein (2000:79) argues that both experiences are equally real. The difference does not lie in the degree of reality, but in the emotional intensity, quality and cognitive effect. Hein (2000:79) is of the opinion that for the public of today, what is known and what is felt becomes inter-woven without sharp distinction. By changing from an ‘object centred’ to ‘experience centred’ viewpoint, museums give emotive meaning priority over cognitive meaning. Experience orientated museums aim to construct realities that are cognitively and emotively totalizing (Hein 2000:80).

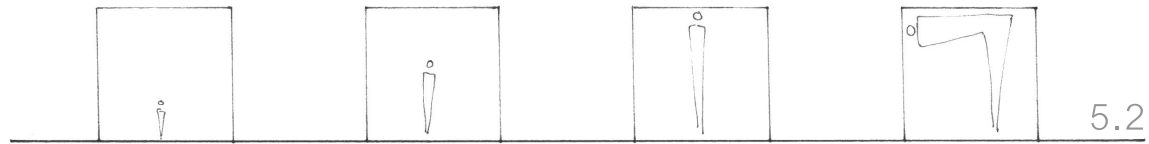
5.1 What is experience?

Experience is more than an observation, more than knowledge of a space or object and more than a feeling. It is a description of the complete, encompassing influence of a space, object or person on the user through mind, perception and senses. There are many influences on the experience of space, many elements that contribute to experience. Some elements are internal and impossible to anticipate for, but others are external and have more or less specific influences on the user in terms of experience. By looking at how these elements in design were applied and manipulated in existing designed space, clues can be derived as to what specific experiences or emotions these elements provoke. The elements to be investigated are light, scale, object, context and material.

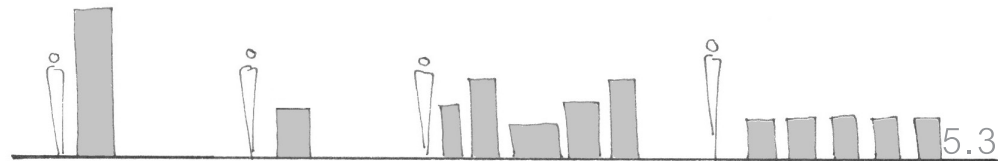
Light



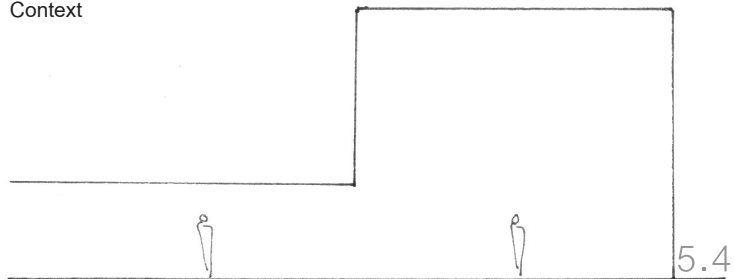
Scale



Object



Context



Material



Figure 5.1: Quality and quantity of light has an influence on experience within a space.

Figure 5.2: Scale of a space alters the experience

Figure 5.3: Object in space as element of experience

Figure 5.4: The context from which the user enter into another space has a great influence on how that space is experienced

Figure 5.5: Material, not only of floor finishes, but in general, can create a specific experience



5.6

5.2 Investigation of experience in existing designed space

5.2.1 The Church

In Church of The Light by Tadao Ando, the light source behind the preacher and in the direction the congregation are facing, is natural light through a cross shaped opening in the concrete wall. This accentuates the importance of God and puts the focus on Him rather than the preacher. Ando states that he would have wanted to keep the cross-shaped opening in the wall without glass so that wind can enter just as the light does. This was unfortunately not possible because of climatic reasons. Through the downward slope to the front of the church and the absence of objects except for the pews and the floor of blackened cedar wood, the church projects an image of simplicity (Jodidio 2007:127). Although not typical of church architecture, the simplicity in this building adds to the experience of humbleness, and focus on God.

Figure 5.6: Church of The Light, Tadao Ando (Jodidio 2007:126)

Figure 5.7: Catholic Basilica, Bern, Switzerland (Chris Spracklen 2008:sp).

Light becomes integral to the design in terms of symbols as well as experience. The use of natural light shows the time of day. Ando investigates the angles at which light enters space (Jodidio 2007:129). This influences the amount of light entering the space and the areas that will be cast in light, and is therefore a very important consideration. Church architecture aims to convey the importance and power of God through the monumentality of the building. High volumes within a church contribute to the feeling of awe and the rows of seats create a feeling of humbleness and smallness in front of God.

In the photo (figure 5.7) of a Catholic basilica in Bern, Switzerland, the scale of the interior can be seen with the focus on the pulpit to the front of the church. The focus is directed through the difference in scale as well as the colour added through stained glass windows. Light does not play such an integral part in this experience as it does in Church of the Light, although some of the same feelings are conveyed.



5.2.2. Aquariums

Aquariums are a form of exhibition. The difference between this and the insect collection in the Ditsong Museum, for instance, is the fact that the objects are alive and in their own context. The idea is created that they are not brought into our context, but that the building is punctured into their habitat. This adds to the authenticity of the experience.

Aquariums surround the user with ocean life so that the experience of walking under water is created, with the added benefits of not getting wet and breathing normally. The darkness within the passages puts the focus on the creatures in the water and the natural light seeping in from above the water enhances that focus and creates an almost mystical feeling. Although the environment in which the ocean life is placed is artificial, the animals are real, alive and flourishing in it so the animals can be observed in their 'natural' environment from a safe vantage point. The users are almost overwhelmed by the ocean surrounding them, which gives the impression of the vastness of the ocean and the life it contains. Even though the user feels completely safe within the glass surroundings, a big shark swimming close by will still create a feeling of fear.

Light and the absence thereof are integral to the experience created in this space. The feeling is created that this can be used as a space for contemplation and thinking, because of the anonymity given to the user through the darkness of the space and the shifted focus from the user to the exhibition.



Figure 5.8 - 5.9: Lisbon Oceanarium (Modernnomad 2010:sp)

5.2.3 Cour Puget, Louvre, Paris, France

The *Cour Puget*, designed by the architect Lefuel, forms part of the Louvre in Paris. A glass roof was added in 1872 to cover and protect the space (Thematic Trails: sp). When walking through the Louvre, the user looks at hundreds of paintings, one after the other. Then, without really expecting it, the user walks into the *Cour Puget*, which is an open space with a large volume and natural light flooding in through the glass roof above (figure 5.9). When the user walks into this space, a feeling of calmness and relaxation is experienced. The context contributes to the experience of relief, because of the contrast with the smaller scale of the darker passages that the user has become accustomed to throughout the museum. The natural light also plays an important role in the experience of relief. Although the space is frequented by many users, there still exists the feeling of rest which is enhanced by the trees in planters (figure 5.10).



Figure 5.10: Cour Puget, Louvre, Paris, France

Figure 5.11: Trees in planters in the Cour Puget, Louvre

5.2.4 Restaurants

Restaurant interiors immediately inform the user as to what might be expected from the prices, the food, as well as the service. Amongst other factors, materials used play a very important role in this split second summary of a space and the experience when dining there.

5.2.4.1 Mugg & Bean

Quick lunches, relatively priced food and bottomless coffees are expected from Mugg & Bean. The materials used are durable and easy to clean and replace. Chairs are relatively light, which does not give the impression of quality. The seats of the chairs can easily be replaced or re-upholstered without much cost. Exposed services create an informal, but also unfinished feeling and contribute to the experience of a less expensive environment. Most Mugg & Bean franchises are open to the walkways that surround it, so even if the user is seated inside, it doesn't offer much privacy.



5.2.4.2 Kream

Light colours, heavy, fully upholstered chairs, table cloths, curtains and reflective surfaces that are kept reflective, contribute to the feeling of luxury, comfort and quality. Excessive use of textile for the curtains, which hang from the high ceiling to the ground, creates the feeling of extravagance. A relaxed atmosphere with a feeling of importance and privacy is created through the light coloured materials and placement of the tables, separated at some places by planters and screens. The feeling that time can be spent here is generated. The different textures used contribute to the lavishness of the space.



Figure 5.12: Interior of a Mugg & Bean Franchise (Top places 2008)
Figure 5.13 - 5.14: Interior of Kream Restaurant (Kream 2010)

5.2.4.3 Primi Piatti

An informal setting is created in the interior of Primi Piatti. The durable materials, brick, steel, concrete, screed floor, the bright colours and use of graphics and exposed services generate an industrial feeling. Although the afore mentioned materials all contribute to a more informal interior, the use of light and exhibition of bottles of water, as well as the high ceiling and mezzanine floor contribute to a feeling of luxury, which enhances the overall experience. The exhibition of drinks shows availability and abundance.

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In conclusion, these five elements of experience contribute to the experience created within an interior space. It should be noted though that these five are only a few of the elements that can influence a user's experience, and it would be remiss to limit one's thinking of experiential influences to these five. Colour use, sound and temperature, for example, can be added to the list, but these are more specific. These elements will be held in mind when designing experience within interior space. It is important to realize the subconscious impact that elements, that might seem to be only of aesthetic value, can have on the user and influence how the space is approached and experienced.

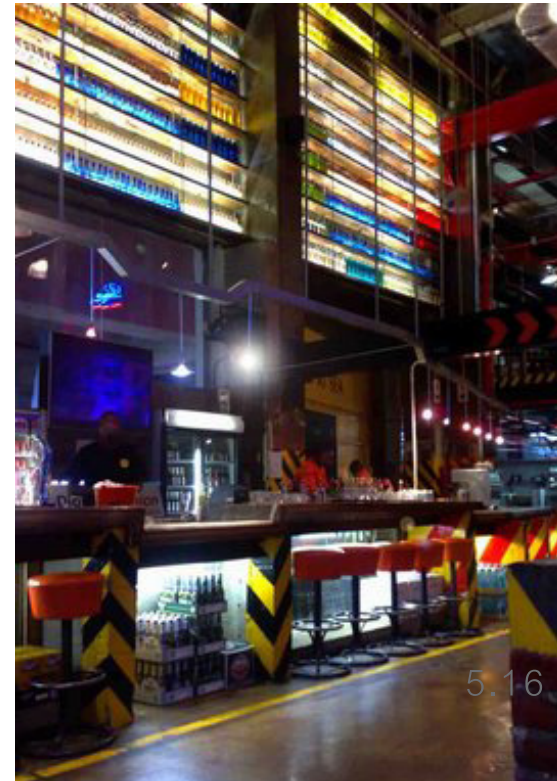


Figure 5.15 - 5.16: Interior of Primi Piatti Restaurant (Menlyn Park 2010)