

Designing the Built Environment to Music

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NARRATIVE

The power of music is profound. Music affects most every aspect of a person's life. Music has the ability to evoke pleasure, as well as other emotions, including anxiety, nostalgia, happiness, and sadness (Vuust & Kringelbach, 2010). Music can be experienced in a variety of forms and is readily available for personal pleasure. Music is utilized to enhance the atmosphere of spaces, adding ambiance to restaurants, dynamic energy to gymnasiums, and improved sales to retail stores. Music plays a vital role to emphasize critical moments in a movie, play, or performance. Music surrounds everyday life, sometimes standing out, loud and vivacious, like the music at a carnival or a concert. Other times music is barely noticeable, such as the mundane background music in a grocery store. Even a person without the sense of hearing can experience the patterned vibrations of music.

Throughout the ages, music has also been associated with the ability to incite conflict. Although no studies have focused specifically on documented military use, several studies have examined the correlation between music and military conflicts and wars. Music has been used to promote political propaganda, incite hatred, and encourage violence. However, recent studies have shown that music can play an integral role in promoting non-violence and conflict resolution. (Grant, Mollemann, Morlandsto, Munz, & Nuxoll, 2010)

The emotional aspect of music is powerful enough to enhance, emphasize, and inspire.

According to Vuust & Kringelbach (2010), all music provides an element of prediction/anticipation that is the commonality of the emotional experience of pleasure.

Similarly to the principles and elements of design, music can be broken down into elements that form together as structures to produce principles such as harmony and balance. Additionally, Vuust & Kringelbach (2010) suggest that emotion derived from music is conditioned in humans over time and through experiences. In essence, one person's music can be another person's noise, barely tolerated, and considered an unwanted sound. While in other instances, the same music can provide the foundation for a subculture, inspiring personal image, branding, lifestyle, and communication.

Today, the new generations of interior design students have replaced the once audible music playing in late night design studios with the outwardly silent personal media players and headsets. Although the generations, music genres, and certainly the media and media players have change, students have remained connected to music. The connectivity of students to music, as well as music to everyday life, can serve as the conceptual inspiration for a student interior design project.

METHODOLOGY

Student correlation of music to the built environment can provide a solid and flexible foundation for inspiration to convey the abstract process of conceptual thinking. The abstraction of music compels students to dissect and analyze the elements of sounds and words into graphic representations. The result is the inspiration for a course long endeavor, separated into three (3) projects for clarity and design feedback opportunities.

At the onset of the course, each student begins the project development by selecting a favorite song from any genre from which there is sentiment, an emotional response, or some sort of significance. Additionally, students are warned to select a song that will not become

tiresome, and to avoid the selection of romance music. Each student selects his or her own song, brings the music to class, and discusses the emotional response and/or significance of the music while playing the music in class. Students are asked to translate the music into the built environment by translating the emotion of the music into visual elements. In an effort to assist with the visual translation, students complete a series of assignments, including the initial assignment of drawing concept sketches that best describe the imagery in the student's mind while listening to the music. After completing the concept sketches, each student develops a concept statement, again using the music, as well as the sketches, as inspiration.

Project One (1) develops the concept board and project proposal board. The concept board, designed as an artistically expressive mood board, allows students to utilize photo editing software to portray the graphic representation and/or translation of the music. Students are told to use imagery, words, lyrics, and the principles and elements of design to create a symbolic translation of the music. The resulting concept board becomes the graphic foundation for the design of all project materials for the remainder of the course. To achieve graphic cohesiveness, students are told to create a presentation layout for the project proposal board based on the concept board design. The overall goal is to create a layout that is unified without overpowering the content of the presentation materials. Students create a preliminary furnishing layout using computer-aided design (CAD) software, incorporating design elements derived from the music. The result is a project proposal board, including the written concept statement and the proposed floor plan, which is profoundly reminiscent of the musical concept.

Project Two (2) is the development of the complete project using Building Information Modeling (BIM) software. The floor plan is exported into the BIM software and modified based on the evaluation of the project proposal. All furnishings, finishes, and equipment

(FF&E) are specified and applied in the three-dimensional model of the space. Perspective views of each area are generated and rendered, as well as the floor plan view of the furnished space. The rendered furnishings plan, perspective views, and enlarged plans for

each area are composed in a project presentation book, along with images and schedules for all FF&E.

Students are directed to re-think the project presentation. The presentation layout for the project book must be graphically cohesive, but cannot appear to be a typical interior design board layout. Students are asked to avoid outlining images with squares or using square backdrops for images, unless extraordinarily unique in application. Although, FF&E images are shown on the layouts, schedule information may only be shown if incorporated in an atypical manner. Otherwise, schedule information must be provided in table format in the back of the project book, as to not take away from the graphic quality of the layouts.

Project Three (3) is the development of the project presentation. Students are told to transform the layouts from the project presentation book into presentation slides appropriate for projection during the verbal presentation. In order to convert the content, layouts must be reconfigured into slides, showing fewer objects for each slide and illustrating larger fonts. All print formatting is removed, such as the table of contents, page numbers, and specification listings. The concept music is embedded into the slideshow in order to play in the background during the verbal presentation. Additionally, a video walkthrough of the space generated with the BIM software is added to the conclusion of the presentation, and prior to the slide designated for the questions and answers segment.

RESULTS

Students develop abstract thinking skills, while developing technical skills using a myriad of software programs typically utilized in the interior design profession. Overall student ability to create more cohesive project components, develop advanced presentation compositions, and use a variety of media has increased significantly as demonstrated in overall project scores and scores of subsequent courses since the implementation of this project.

REFERENCES (APA)

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