

Spatial Theory II
Abstract + Contextual
Practice Essay
SPAD603

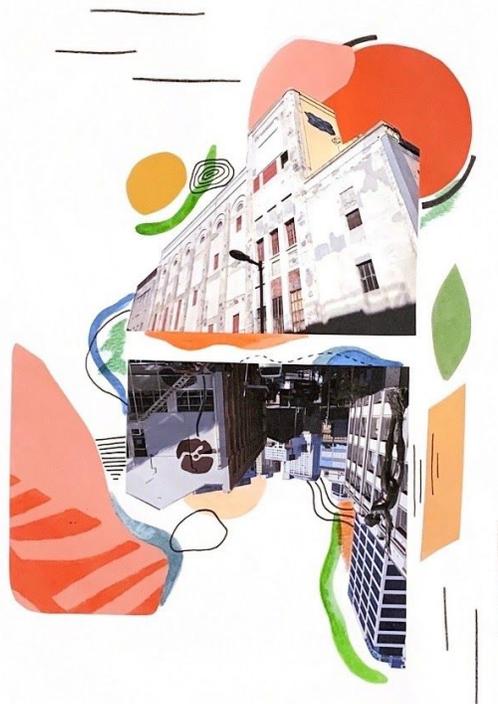
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Spatial Theory Blog Link:
<https://spatialdesign.blog/spatial-theory/>

Abstract

This notion of 'spatial design' deems itself an open ended concept, one that explores the social, cultural and psychological connections between an internal or external space, its inhabitants and the creative or aesthetic formulation of that particular spatial environment. However when I considered this notion it raised questions as to why aesthetic formulation is so fundamental and important for any given creative work? Within the progression of my own spatial practice, I found myself naturally drawn towards this more style conscious perspective, one that is primarily focused on the aesthetic aspects of a space. Yet perceiving a space purely through its visual attributes is only one of the numerous components that coherently affect the overall creation, meaning and purpose behind a space. This outlook prompted further exploration within my design practice, contemplating how I can utilise 'aesthetics' and its relative stylistic features in a way that contributes to not only the look of something but the feelings in which it possesses, the atmospheric experiences in which it creates.

By acknowledging, understanding and implementing a range of creative insights from different resources, particularly ones relevant to conceptual theories analysing how different artists perceive this concept of 'aesthetics', it has allowed for my design outcomes to attain greater significance and meaning. For my current studio project my design intervention will explore ideas surrounding interaction, not only with regards to each other and the environment in which we are situated, but how aesthetic elements can cohesively function together to enhance and entice interest within the entire space. My design will highlight aesthetic details of simplistic yet striking geometric shapes, patterns and colour, in order to create a dynamic, lively atmosphere established through interactive connections between the spaces inhabitants and its captivating visual attributes. Forming a design that composes of a combination of expressive, atmospheric moments encased within this boldly, compelling geometric environment.



Marsden, L. (2020). *Colour Mapping* [Collage]. AUT, Auckland.

Contextual Essay

We live in a visually saturated world, where everything we create is based on, connected to or formulated around aesthetic value. How it has become such a fundamental aspect of art and design practices, where we regard things off of their visual presence. Nowadays it is becoming increasingly common to consider something based on its aesthetics, its appearance, its looks, particularly in the creative field where many artists, creators and makers are striving to create 'aesthetics'. Yet I begin to question why is 'aesthetics' and obtaining 'aesthetic value' so important? Why have they become such a predominant component of the art and design world? Where our creations are being based on, connected to or formulated around aesthetic value.

Throughout time there have been massive developments in technological advancements, mass media, and more presently internet culture, where all have become so profoundly significant and relevant within art and design. Creative practices are heavily influenced by their external contexts, particularly through the involvement of technology and the introduction of digital imagery. The world has become so rich with visuals due to this progression in shareability, where we are able to create, process, develop, change, reproduce and distribute imagery, designs and ideas so easily. The influence of these advancements has helped contribute to the establishment of ever changing trends, styles and therefore aesthetics, or what at the time is deemed to be 'aesthetic' or have 'aesthetic value'. Typically an artists or designer's aesthetic can be viewed as one of the various components in which they establish creative individuality and develop their own look or image. However this visually extensive world, with regards to the continual increase in shareability, makes it extremely hard for creators to differentiate themselves and be unique and original, in whatever way they choose. This perception is acknowledged in the article *Wiggle Room* (Ahmed, 2014) where she articulates how "sometimes to create space we have to wiggle about. You know those moments when you try and fit in a space that is smaller than you are. You wiggle now with purpose; by wiggling you make more room for yourself" (Ahmed, 2014, para. 7). Personally as an evolving designer who is trying to establish my place, path and identity, I completely resonate with Ahmed's words as there is this difficulty, this pressure to make room for myself, to carve out my own space amongst this creative field. For my work to be considered significant through either conforming to what societal views, trends and aesthetics are being prominently 'valued', or disregarding these aesthetics to be radical and bold. Either way I ultimately want to create work that people will like, be interested in, remember, resonate too and connect with.

During the development of my own spatial design practices and understandings, I have noticed myself to be naturally drawn towards a more style conscious perspective, focused predominantly on aesthetics to seemingly view spaces by absolute taste values. Yet perceiving a space purely through its visual attributes is only one of the various components that coherently influence the overall creation, meaning and purpose behind a space. There are also many other significant factors that work in collaboration with a space's aesthetic features, as well as the consideration of potential external requirements, all of which have very differential effects on the overall design outcome. These factors along with the decisive choices I make as a designer are influential to one's experience within a space, how they view, perceive, understand and connect with it. However when I began considering this notion of 'aesthetics' and the possible meanings in which they have within a space, whether that's solely through how the space is observed as its own idealised entity, or through a combination of stylistic elements aimed to create something that views nicely, I started to question

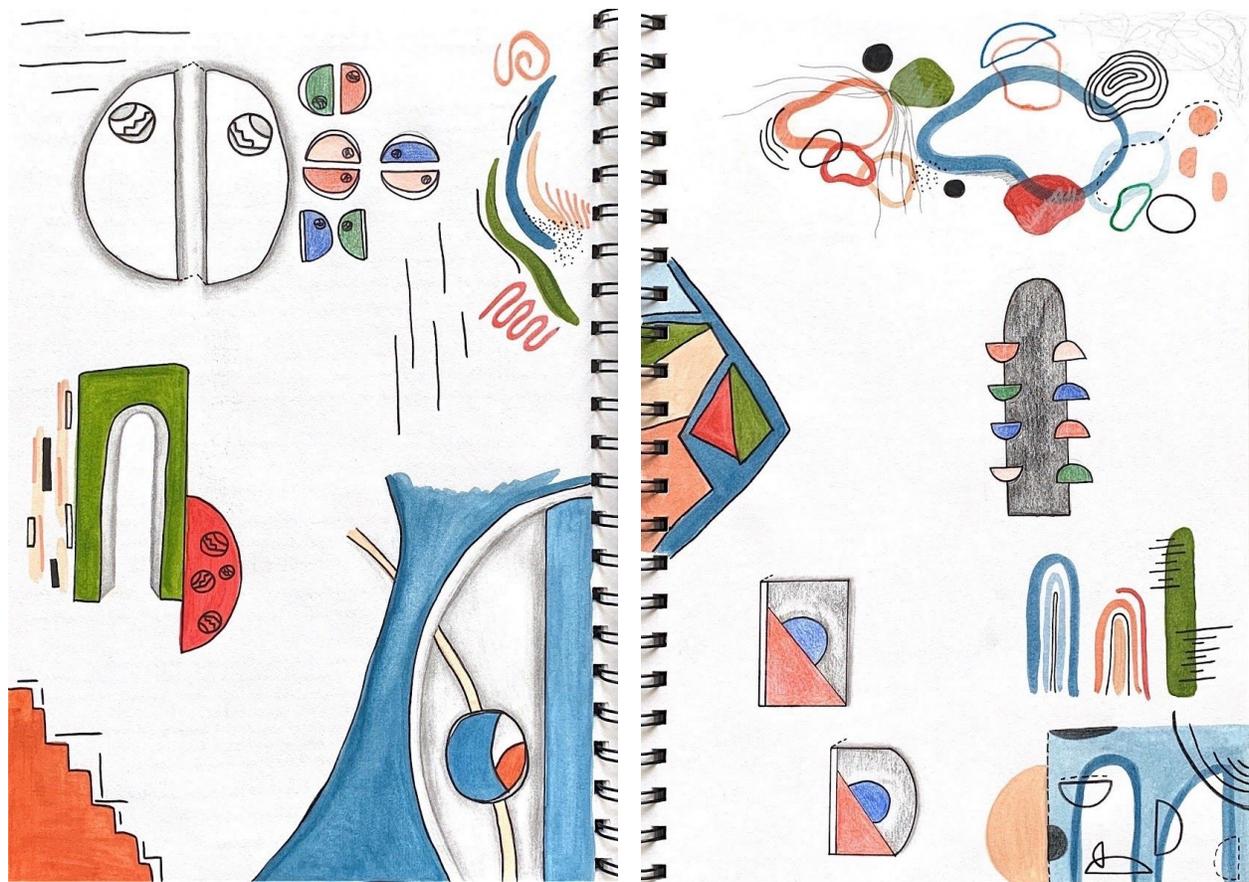
how and why I use these visual details in my own designs. Contemplating how I can utilise 'aesthetics' and its relative stylistic features within my own spatial practice, in a way that is not only focused on its looks. How can 'aesthetics' contribute to not only the look of something but the feelings in which it possesses, the experiences in which it creates? Exploring how spaces can uphold such varied meanings and experiences for each who is immersed within it and how these spatial interactions are influenced by a multitude of factors, particularly with aesthetic decisions being a main concern.

I found the text *How to Encounter a Puddle* (Li, 2018) sparked this intrigue, as she discusses how various elements no matter how visually ordinary, can connect with all aspects of its surroundings, upholding meaningful perspectives that we wouldn't normally consider or aren't deemed obvious to the eye (Li, 2018). A profound outlook that allows for a more open minded perception, one that engages with observing the qualities of aesthetics and the deeper level of meaning and connection they have to a space and their external environments. Another insightful piece of writing that provoked this new way of thinking was the article *WTF is...Relational Aesthetics* (Chayka, 2011) where he describes how aesthetics can be used in a completely different approach, one that is not entirely centered on a work's visual appearance. Instead it explores the constructed environment, the space itself and the atmospheric experiences in which it creates, focusing on connection and interaction between people and the space in a 'non aesthetic' based way. The creation of a social moment, an experience where what happens between people and their surrounding spatial environment exceeds the significance of what is aesthetically in front of them (Chayka, 2011). Practitioner Rikrit Tiravanija adopts this newly profound artistic practice, where he's interested in exploring the ability to construct congenial, collective spaces. Tiravanija's work *untitled(free/still)* (1992-2011), an installation space composed of an art gallery office converted into a restaurant, cooking and serving Thai food to all visitors, explores this creative thought process and application of space. He defines the work as "a platform for people to interact with, the work itself, but also with each other. A lot of it is also about a kind of experiential relationship, so you actually are not really looking at something, but you are within it, you are part of it" (Tiravanija, 1992-2011, para. 5). This particular work along with the concept of 'relational aesthetics' completely opened my mindset to this kind of perception of aesthetic, its relative stylistic features and how they may be applied or not applied, either way bringing purpose to a space. All these creative outlooks have developed my perspective on generating spaces that uphold influential experiences through connection and interaction, with either other people or with the visual attributes themselves. Where aesthetic aspects become additions, inclusions within the space helping to produce the designers desired spatial environment.

As part of my creative practice, I am starting to consider how I can implement these perceptive insights into my own spatial designs, developing deeper levels of meaning and purpose within my work, where I am not just fixated on the visual, 'aesthetic' components, to instead recognise how my designs can establish connections and create unforgettable experiences through other mechanisms. I am utilising this new profound knowledge in my current studio project, an intervention space constructed within the St James Theatre foyer, a thoroughfare between Queen St and Lorne St. For this design intervention my interests are in exploring ideas surrounding interaction, not only with each other and the space in which we are situated, but how various aesthetic elements can coherently function together to enhance the space and entice interest amongst the viewer, in order for them to establish a more memorable experience and connection with it. I am wanting to create a harmonised balance between the inhabitants forming interactive connectedness with both the aesthetic qualities present in the space, and the social ambience generated from my designed bar setting being right alongside the captivating theatre performances occurring next door.

A design that composes of a combination of expressive, atmospheric moments encased within this boldly, compelling geometric environment. To establish these aesthetic qualities I am playing around with visual details of colour, shape, pattern and surface, where my design is drawn towards exploring a more vivid, energetic appearance through these stylistic features.

For this particular design intervention, I was profoundly intrigued by my artist model Studio Renesa's creative work *The Geometrication* (2019-2020). Their deliberate choices in various aesthetic elements formed a space that is partitioned by distinct yet interconnected volumes of shape and colour (Studio Renesa, 2019-2020). As inspired by their work, my design will use simplistic yet striking geometric shapes, patterns and colour, in order to create a dynamic, lively atmosphere where the aesthetic aspects cohesively function within the space. I am focusing on the application of layered, geometric patterning and how it can be incorporated throughout the entirety of the space but in a multitude of ways. Overall by understanding and utilising these creative, profound insights and resources, it has allowed for a greater depth of meaning and purpose in not only my design outcomes, but in my spatial practice and the perceptions I have towards generating spaces that uphold influential experiences. Acknowledging how my designs can possess a unified balance, highlighting various aesthetic features to create a captivating atmosphere, one that is established through interactive connections with either other people or with the spaces compelling visual attributes.



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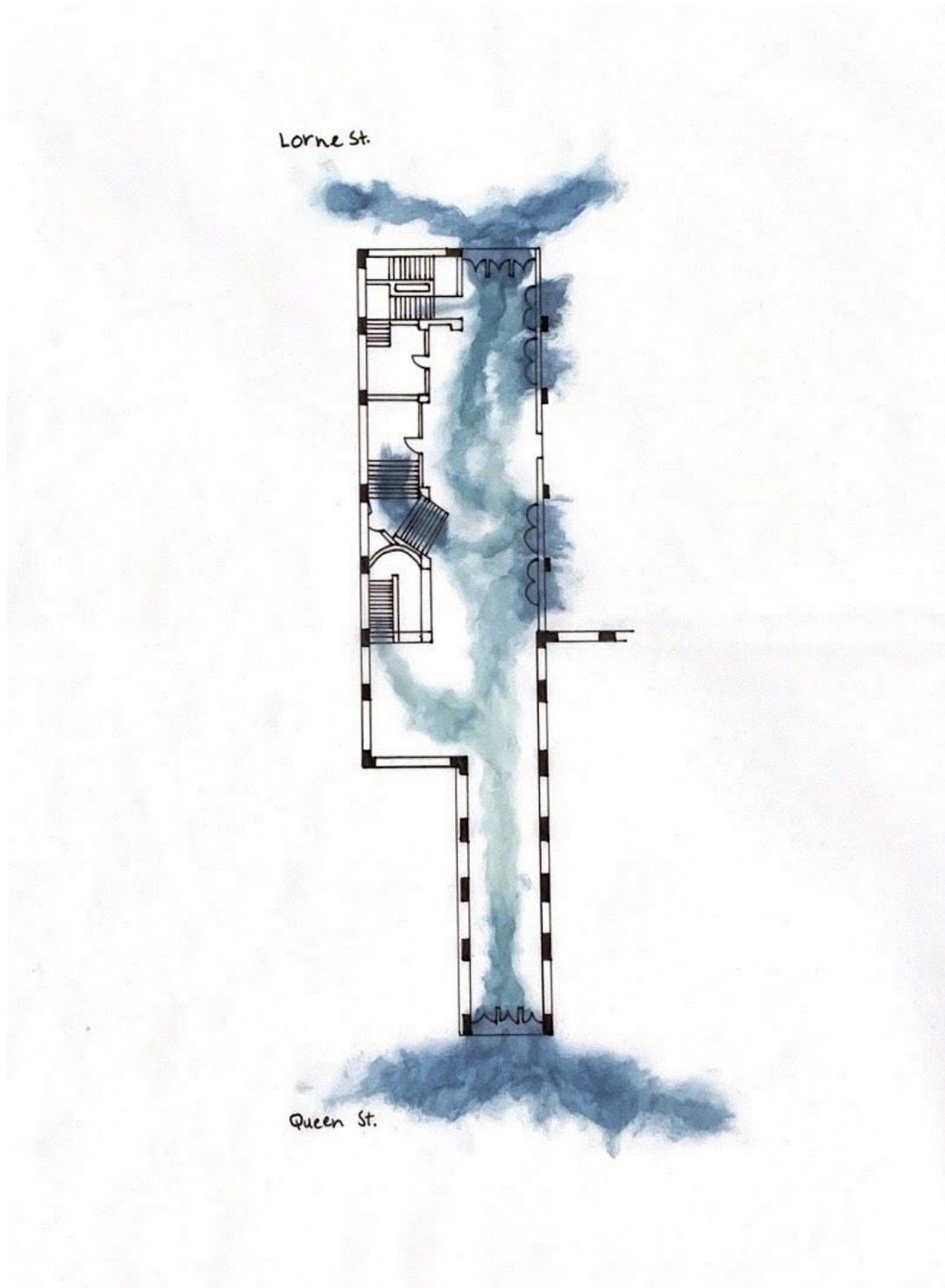
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