

A Room of My Own

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Des 1101W Introduction to Design Thinking

Abstract

This paper will be discussing my relationship with the author's college room. The room will be described through the author's day and time spent in quarantine during the week of December 5th, 2022. This place is memorable as it is a space uniquely the authors own, as well as a space they are able to overcome their fears of being alone. The author will look at the space through the lens of biophilic design theory and place attachment theory. Through this paper one will learn the importance this space has on the author and the decisions that went into decorating the space to make it a reflection of a home.

Introduction

Many people say that your room is a reflection of your mind—your interest can be seen on the walls, your likes and dislikes in the clothes that hang in the closet, your mental wellbeing on the spaces or lack thereof on the floor. I spent most of my childhood sharing a room with my sister which was the root of many late night screaming matches over a laundry basket left uncleaned. When I started the 8th grade, my brother left for college and I was able to take over his room. A teenage boy's room turned into my sanctuary. Ever since then, I sunk my personality into that room from the candle wax stains on the wall to the many covered up holes from old decor to the midnight room rearrangements that awoke my parents. Like many other teenagers, it became my escape; a place that was all mine, a space I was in total control of, a space that became a reflection of my mind. I love that room.

Why This Place is Memorable

That room however, is not the space I am choosing to reflect on. I am choosing to discuss my current bedroom, the first space I am paying for, decorating, living in on my own. The room that was, through a long and complicated story I do not have time to discuss here, once my sisters'. A room that has seen me through all of college, the beautiful moments and the ugly ones. A room I have never felt quite at home in—until last week. For a long time, my college room was not the sanctuary that my high school room was, it was where I slept, where I occasionally studied, but not much else. I spent so much of my time outside of my room, with friends, with housemates, at classes, at work, at my girlfriends house, anywhere to not be alone. Alone meant anxiety, alone meant negative thoughts, alone meant fear, alone meant my room. Last week I spent my time isolated in my room quarenting with covid. My deepest fear was

coming true, a week alone with my thoughts and nothing to keep me company but the room I did not like. However, I found a deep connection with my room throughout the week, I sunk myself into my room the same way I did in high school, and now it has become my sanctuary.

Description of Memorable Place

To get through each day of my isolation, I drew a different section of my room as a way to document my time (see image 11 as an example). Each time I drew my room, I saw how it had changed from the day before, how the sun changed the way I felt about my room. I drew them at different times of the day, and labeled them as such: the sun will rise, the day will drift and the sun will set.

The sun will rise, and it will reflect through the snowy window in rays of warmth (see image 3). My bed will be a pile of forest green comforter, and way too many pillows. Yet the only one in use will be a turtle pillow pet named Timmy, who lies peacefully in the center of the bed (see image 9). The sun will rise and I will be awoken by my phone beeping loudly from its charger plugged into the wall between the door and my bed. I will get up slowly, moving across the room to the small walk-in closet full to the brim with a wood dresser, hung up jackets, and too many sweaters for one person to own. I will rummage around the messy dresser top, searching for the hair ties, deodorant, perfume, and earrings that live on top (see image 2). I will disregard the multiple clean pants folded neatly in the bottom drawer, and instead reach for the same pair of black jeans left on the floor every night after a day of wear. The sun will rise and I will move to the mirror to the left of the closet, the same mirror that has been with me since I was ten. I will look at the multiple family pictures jammed into the corner of the mirror, and smile being reminded of all those happy memories (see image 5).

The day will drift, and I will be on the floor, crowded by clothes, art supplies, a computer, the day's coffee cup, and the previous day's coffee cup. The red and cream rug underneath me will remind me of my sister and the days spent crafting on it in her room back home (see image 8). There will be a record on, probably Bowie, playing out of my speakers. My record player is sat on top of a chestnut colored table, with a stack of records in the middle. Next to the record player is my bookshelf. I call it a bookshelf, but it is really just three wooden crates from Micheals craft store stacked on top and next to one another to hold all my favorite things. It contains my books, well worn and well loved, as well as little trinkets, rocks, pinecones, and anything else I hoard like a squirrel preparing for winter (see image 7). The day will drift and the sun will hit my plants on top of the bookshelf, they will open up their leaves basking in the winter sun. The two Pothos, two Scheffleras and Dracaena will be the objects of much worry for me as they sit dormant over winter. I wonder if the window next to the bookshelf is letting in enough sun, wonder if it is too cold, am I watering them enough? Above the window are the ten national park postcards from a big roadtrip with my best friend, backpacking trips with my dad and friends. (see image 4). Under the window will start the corner of doom. Between the end of the bed and window, is a mess of art supplies thrown after finished projects and the end of class (see image 10). It also holds the black box fan I have been meaning to put away for the winter time since early October. The day will drift and I will still not put away the box fan.

The sun will set, and it will leave glowing shadows in corners of the room I never knew it reached (see image 1 and 2). I will be curled up in bed, laptop on my chest attempting to start the homework I have been meaning to do all day. The sun will set, and the string lights will need to be plugged in filling the room with a warm glow. They start by the door, wrapping around one side of my room, creating a cozy corner above my bed. They illuminate both wall collages by my

bed. The colleges have one main poster, and hundreds of memories surrounding them. Pictures from adventures, birthday cards, art collections from my mother, and handmade pictures from friends and family. The day will drift, and I will close my computer, crawl under my soft, green comforter, plug in my phone, and drift off to sleep.

Biophilic theory

I was raised by parents who valued the outdoors; much of my childhood was spent learning about plants, helping dig up rocks in the garden or finding trees to climb. This appreciation of nature is as much a part of me as my blood that runs through my body. If it were possible, my bedroom would be a REI tent, set up under the summer stars, surrounded by everything wild. Since I cannot attain that, I designed my room with many aspects of biophilic design as I could fit into the small space. Biophilic design strives to integrate nature and natural elements into the built environment through both direct and indirect experiences (Kellert 2022).

Direct biophilic experiences are natural elements that are brought directly into the space including natural light, air, plants, animals and weather. The single south facing window is my only source of natural light, but during the day it lights up my room so I never have to turn on lights. I strive to have my room, and entire house, become as jungle-like as possible. I currently have six house plants in my room, and another 25 scattered around the house that will occasionally take refuge in my room. This gives my rooms a sense of life that is otherwise lacking, and brings in those natural elements that are few and far between in the built environment.

Indirect biophilic design is the experiences that mimics natural elements inside of human made spaces. In my room, these are string lights and lamps that have warm, yellow light bulbs,

the diffuser that billows lavender scented fumes, and the postcards of national parks I have visited. These designs bring in natural occurring elements of the outside world into the built environment. My national park postcards are my favorite example of biophilic design, because it is so abstract that one does not immediately think of it as being a natural element. Yet, when looking at those postcards, I am reminded of my months spent sleeping next to redwoods and redrocks and the sound of a stream 20 miles and two days deep in the woods. These reminders of my favorite memories show me just how important nature is to me and brings it into my everyday life where nature is lacking.

Place attachment theory

Place attachment theory, the ways in which we as humans emotionally connect with the built environment, has a big impact on the way I have seen my living spaces throughout the years. In Paul Bennett's article "*Curious About... Home*", he looks at place attachment theory through the lens of feeling at home, the spaces we feel at home in are the ones we naturally have the most emotional attachment to. I sunk years of decorating, emotions, and memories into my childhood home, it felt like a sigh of relief. My room now should feel like home, it is where I live, it is where all of my things are, it is everything a home should be, but it did not feel like home for so long. Because a home is not just where you live, but it is that feeling of being at peace and 100% comfortable. I never fully sunk into my room until I was trapped inside of it for a week, until I was forced to truly make every corner of it mine.

Place attachment theory can be broken down into three sections, person, place and process (Scannell & Gifford 2009). Each of these branches show a different way how the built work can become so important and meaningful to us. The person aspect of place attachment

theory is the individual way you relate to a place, the memories or realizations you have connected to that place. My room is the first space that I have paid for on my own, it is the first place that is truly my own—the place where I am starting adulthood. The memories that I have about college, my friends, my girlfriend, my early 20s, will always be connected to this room. They are displayed on pictures on the walls, in the basket of my girlfriend's clothes in the corner, in the birthday cards hung up to show that time has passed. These memories are entrenched into every crack and crevice of my room.

The next branch, place, is the cultural reasons why a place has importance. When I think of my relationship with my room, after coming off a week of total isolation within it, I think of Virginia Woolf's book *A Room of One's Own*, which is a beautiful discussion of womanhood, writing and the importance of having your own space. The book discusses the important role a bedroom can play in one's life, it is something uniquely your own that you have total control over. Unless you live alone, which I do not, your room is the only place in your home that is just yours; where you have the ability to be as weird, loud, messy, creative, emotional and personal as you want. The vulnerability your room sees is what makes it so powerful.

Lastly, the process section of place attachment theory discusses the emotions one has surrounding a space. This is the piece of attachment that was lacking for me in my current room. I had the memories, I had the cultural importances, but I did not have the deep emotional connection to it. My room felt just as a space I existed rather than the place I thrived. After spending a week alone with only my room as company, I sunk myself deep into the walls. I noticed the beautiful way the sun left rainbows dancing across the closet door, the way my plants lit up with a little water, the way my brain felt calmer when my floor was cleaned, the way the

sounds of my records being played filled the entire room. After a whole week of learning to love my room, I found myself not wanting to immerse myself into the outside world. My room was enough. I had finally found that emotional attachment to my room that was keeping it from feeling like home.

Conclusion

My room, whether it be my childhood room, or my college room, has always been a bubble. A space away from the rest of the world where I could have a scrap of control. After spending a week alone in my room, I learned not only how to be okay with my own thoughts again, but also how to love the space I call my own. I put so much work into my room, setting up the bookshelf, organizing all my clothes and decorating the walls. But all that work and time did not make it feel like home. It took really looking around and seeing the sun light up the snow stained windows in the morning or noticing the way all my sweaters fit perfectly into the five bins or putting on my favorite record and sinking into a new book. I spent a week noticing every detail of my room I had overlooked constantly trying to not be alone. Now I love my room—it finally feels like home.



Image 1



Image 2



Image 3



Image 4

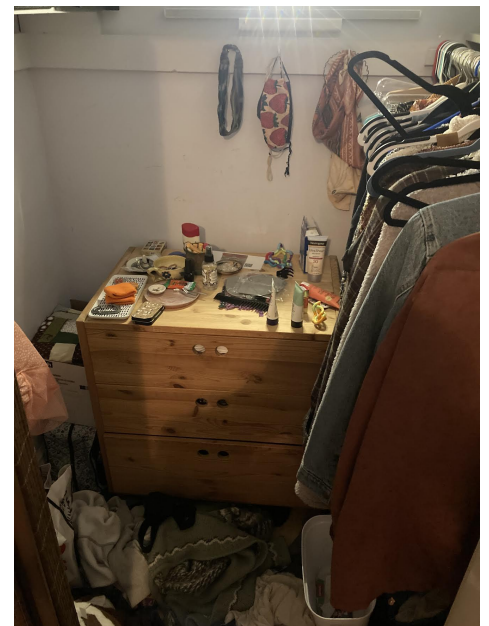


Image 6



Image 5

A ROOM OF MY OWN

11



Image 7



Image 8



Image 9



Image 10



Image 11

Resources

Kellert, S. R. (2022, September 19). *What is and is not biophilic design*. Metropolis. Retrieved December 16, 2022, from

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