

A Memorable Place

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Abstract

This paper observes a special yard of a family home located in Greenfield, Wisconsin. The Tudor-inspired house was owned by a loving grandmother who kept their home open to friends and family. The lived experiences and memories made in this particular yard are discussed as they relate to design. Furthermore, the yard is explored as to how it evokes such memorable and emotional responses despite it being just a yard. This discussion is furthered by analyzing how the space connects to both biophilic design and to the place attachment theory. The chosen area naturally integrates the use of greenery and water through gardens, pools, and fountains. The very concrete laid out alongside the bricks that form structures in the yard were placed by generations of family members who always reconvene in this particular space. It is in this yard where family bonds and memories were strengthened and formed over warm summers, chaotic birthdays, and chilly Christmas events. Each of these factors can be connected to various elements and theories that concern design and construction, all of which are explored through thorough research and analysis.

Introduction

Our lives are built on lived experiences and an accumulation of memories, but what makes one particular instance more memorable than all the rest? Our memories are often built around people, places, or objects, but in the case of a singular space how can that one area stand out? A place can be memorable based on its beauty or uniqueness, the people who live there, the experiences and events that take place there, and the emotions and memories associated with it. Based on my experience I have found that a place is most memorable through personal significance, such as a place where someone grew up or a place that holds special meaning for them, for me this was my grandma's backyard. Ultimately, what makes a place memorable can vary greatly from person to person and can be influenced by a wide range of factors. In regards to the yard, its memorability can be attributed to the thoughtful use of design through concepts such as biophilic design and place attachment theory.

Description

This particular yard sits between a garage and a quaint house (Figure 1) that features Tudor-inspired elements such as beige stone and a rich brown outlining across the roof, windows, and the sides of the building (Figure 2). The yard itself is encased by a dark brown fence until it reaches the back wall where it turns into a wooden lattice panel that is embellished by vines and various plants. Along the lattice panel lies a small fountain made of cool-toned stones that were stacked and rounded to meet the wall (Figure 3). The fountain displays a small stream of clear water that bubbles out from the center, the water is littered with leaves and twigs from four surrounding trees. Two of these trees are on the smaller side and lay opposite from one another as they stand next to each end of the fountain. Then there are two much larger trees that

grow from the neighboring property but slightly hover over the lattice. Furthermore, adjacent to the fountain and flush to the side of the house is a raised garden made of the same stone as described for the fountain (Figure 4). This garden features various flowers and tomato plants that can later be used for varying purposes. Across from the garden is where the garage is situated, along with a dark brown door that gives you access to said space through the yard. The yard's ground is barren of grass and instead consists of cream-colored concrete that provides a flat walking experience.

Memorability

Throughout my entire childhood things always seemed to be changing, this change could not be ignored, especially as my limbs grew longer, as my perceptions morphed while peers came and went, and as every year I gained more knowledge. I alongside my family grew and moved often in ways that we couldn't control. Despite the seemingly neverending bouts of change there always remained one constant, one space that I could rely on to always be there, and that constant would be no other than my grandmother's yard. That backyard remained as the foundation for my family to build upon no matter how else everything around it seemed to change. Actually, in reality, her yard might seem quite stark as no furniture stayed put and the hard concrete certainly made for bloody scrapes and falls. But really it was the empty that allowed for the new to manifest and bring a slew of unforgettable moments to life. Upon that concrete I learned to ride a bike, I learned to balance on rollerskates, and most importantly I realized just how much my family meant to me as we shared these firsts on the same ground. For me that backyard often meant opportunity, that opportunity took its shape in birthday parties with bounce houses, summer getaways and warm nights in the buildable pool, and at times tedious

family gatherings. All of this could happen only because of the massive amount of empty space in the backyard.

One of my most profound memories from that yard is when my grandma helped my sister and me plant our flowers in her beloved garden. I remember laughing as I dug up the dirt and made way for my blue morning glory flower, I made sure to put it in a spot where the sunlight would reach it so that way it could flourish. The air smelled of freshly cut grass from next-door neighbors and of sweet florals from the array of plants that lay in front of us. I could hear the slow flow of water from the fountain next to us and little drops as leaves drifted into the tiny pond. My sister planted her flower while I looked for worms amongst the greenery, and much to my disappointment at the time I never did find one. But in the end that didn't matter as my grandma looked over our handy work over and gave us each a high five out of approval. I remember feeling so proud that I could do something like my grandma's especially since it was something that she really enjoyed. That pride from that moment still remains with me to this day alongside all sorts of memories that were only made possible by my grandmother's yard. That space became a sanctuary for me and my family up until the moment when I was ready to leave it. And now, when I'm twenty years old, and I live in a different state where absolutely everything has changed I can still go back to memories of that sanctuary even when its physical presence is long gone.

Analysis Using Biophilic Design

Biophilic design is an approach to design that seeks to connect people with nature. This can be achieved through the use of natural materials, daylight, and vegetation in the built environment, (Kellert, S. R., 2022). Biophilic design can have a range of benefits, including

improved mental and physical health, increased productivity, and a deeper connection to the natural world. By incorporating elements of nature into the design of buildings and spaces, biophilic design can help people feel more comfortable, relaxed, and at peace. In the case of the backyard, its design was created knowing that it would be situated outside in a natural environment. Despite this biophilic design was used to emphasize certain elements of nature that would improve the experience of those in the yard. The first instance of biophilic design would be the fountain that was built in the middle of the back wall. This fountain was created using natural materials such as stone and clay after which was filled with fresh water. The water flowed and circulated through a small pipe which created soothing bubbling noises emulating the natural experience and sound of running water.

Additionally, the garden that lay adjacent to the fountain was made with similar natural materials as it contained the same stone and clay. This structure was filled with dirt which gave way for various flowers and vegetables to be planted. The variety of vegetation created a rich ecosystem within a contained area, this brought about living creatures and the natural fragrance of a blooming garden. Lastly, the yard was set up to be very open and to have a lot of space and seeing that this fenced-in yard is outside this meant that a lot of natural sunlight was present. The sunlight gave life to the plants and trees that lived on the grounds and warmed up cool days that were spent outside. Overall, the backyard emphasized the most beneficial parts of nature by creating structures and processes that emulate natural objects and events.

Analysis Using Place Attachment Theory

The place attachment theory is a psychological theory that explains the emotional bond that people can develop with specific places. According to this theory, people form attachments

to places that are significant to them, such as their home or a favorite park, based on there, “experiences and memories associated with that place,” (Scannell, L., Gifford R., 2009). These attachments can be strong and enduring and can influence people's behavior and decision-making. For example, people with a strong attachment to their home may be more likely to invest in its maintenance and improvement and may feel a sense of belonging or comfort when they are there. Place attachment theory can help to explain why some places are more meaningful to people than others and can be used to inform the design of spaces that support a sense of connection.

The yard uses several aspects of the place attachment theory as its creation evokes associations based on positive experiences and memories. The original groundwork of the back yard was designed and constructed by my family, I have distinct memories of my parents building the garden and fountain (Figure 5). Fond memories of family and growth are intertwined with the design of the space demonstrating the connection between the yard's design and the place attachment theory. Additionally, the unique use of concrete rather than grass created a very strong association with fun summers, as the hard and flat surface allowed for things like pools to be placed (Figure 6). This yard was designed to have a lot of space so that family gatherings and different activities would be possible. These associations have only grown stronger as time has passed since unfortunately I don't talk to that side of my family anymore nor do I live in Wisconsin. So, the good memories that I do have are very special and are strongly related to the features of the yard. Overall, the yard illustrates the place attachment theory as connections were built through emotion and the intentional design and layout of the space.

Conclusion

In the end, the backyard was proven to be memorable and significant through the usage of design processes and concepts such as place attachment theory and biophilic design. The overall design of the space provided opportunities for memories to be made and enjoyed across generations of my family. The yard featured elements ranging from pools and fountains to gardens and stone, all of which contributed to the loving experience this yard provided. This backyard was created with and by my family from the ground up, this space changed as we changed and grew. So, though the time of summer trips and crazy group gatherings have passed, the emotions and feelings this place provokes remain with us all, and that is what makes a place memorable.



Figure 1



Figure 2

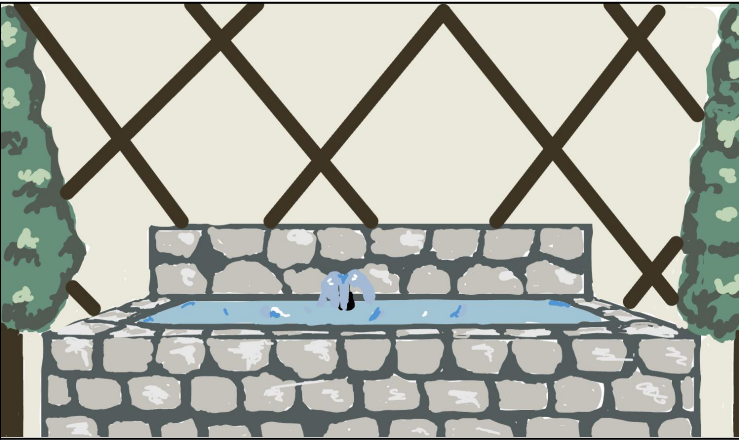


Figure 3

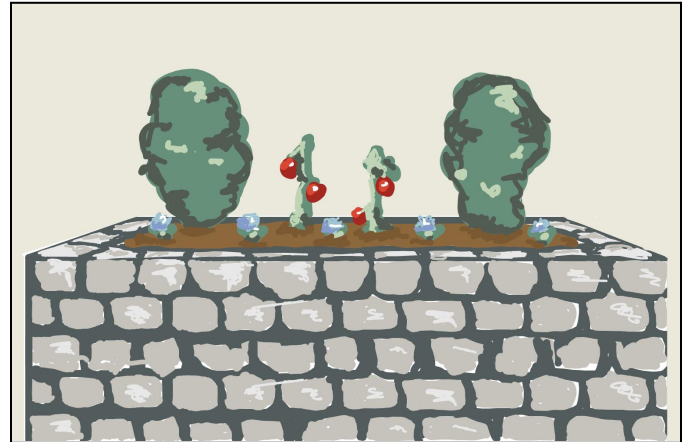


Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

References

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