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The History of Objects

Charcoal and acrylic paint on canvas

Whenever I make art I always focus on the making. I consider each piece of my art their own individual experiments, and with this painting I experimented with color and symbolism. I don't usually attach or focus on a meaning with my art, but this time I did. I wanted to create art while delving into a particular memory of mine, one that I usually am scared to make art about. I've had to protect someone quite dear to me from themselves, and with that from the objects surrounding them. With this painting I wanted to show these unlikely objects that very quickly became dangerous, scary, and even a bit taboo for me. Part of why these objects are so scary is how common they are, and how they used to fade into the background, when now they're all I seem to think about. I wanted to use color to express this contrast in how innocent and boring these objects can be. Versus how scary and dangerous they became to me.

How to Recognize How Your Environment Affects You and Why You Should



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Author's Note: I wanted to write about how the space around you can affect your mood, but I wanted to push it a step further by adding how consumerism plays into this. I wanted to explain some of the tricks that large corporations or businesses might use to increase profit. I also wanted to delve into how people can shape the space around them and curate that space to their needs and wants. That way the people living in a space know to inhabit that space in ways they didn't know how to before. Though a good amount of this writing is pretty idealistic, imagining and envisioning is the first step to creating. Allow for some of this paper to be a reach, explore the "what ifs" and I hope that everyone who reads this will realize something. Whether it's one of the fun facts that in part drove me to write this paper, or that there are different ways to do things that they hadn't before imagined. I realized so much while writing and researching this paper so I hope you do the same reading it.

The environment around you can change your perspective more than you might think. The lighting, colors, the temperature, and even the smell surrounding you can be subtly influencing you. This is happening right as you read this, so take a second to observe the space you're in. Large corporations will use this to influence your purchasing habits, however, you can use these same senses to choose your next piece of furniture. Imagine you're buying a couch, and as you walk into the store you notice they have a candle lit. The store already feels more comfortable, and that's exactly what you're searching for, a comfortable place to sit. The next thing you notice is how calm you feel as you browse through your options, their nice warm lighting starts to calm you down. Now as you're walking through this cozy store you realize how nice and warm it is, as you take off your sweater the store feels more homey, and you can start to imagine what it would be like to live with one of their couches. The neutral and complementary colors of the couch to

the carpet they added to their display. You've been successfully influenced into seeing this couch as a cozy and calm house essential, you've been shopping around for a while, so why not buy this one? Now I'm sure you have excellent taste and wouldn't buy an ugly couch just because the store is cozy, but it sure helps.

Just like how this deceptively cozy store convinced you to buy their couch, large corporations use similar techniques for the same effect. However, these corporations are a little more sneaky in going about it. However, by noticing these things you are much less likely to be so easily convinced that their product is as perfect as it may seem. Although businesses are the majority that intentionally use these senses to influence people, many others use them too. Artists are the best at controlling and curating color and light, temperature, and smell not so much. However it is not only experts or professionals that can do this, so can you! Being strategic in how you curate your home can help you achieve the atmosphere that you're going for.

Color is the least subtle, so when trying to curate a space it's one of the first things you should notice. Red is the most used color by retailers so be aware when you see it in stores.”Red is seen by many as a warning color, known to get one's heart racing; this is possibly why it is also the color used by most retailers at sale times when they encourage a shopping frenzy by ensuring their customers literally “see red”.Just like how a stop sign is red to quickly get your attention, so are the “deals” that retail stores plaster on their windows. Color is not only used to increase excitement, it is also used to calm people down. “The mint-green aprons that British surgeons wear are by no means a fashion statement; they are colored that way because the eye will settle more easily looking at them after focusing on the color of blood—light green is calming”. Both uses of color manipulate people, however only one of these examples feels controlling. When corporations use color it's strategic and cunning, but when hospitals use it it seems kind and

considerate. Whether you live in an apartment or home you can use color in a considerate way to your guests. For homeowners, an easy way to do this is to be experimental with your paint colors and branch out from the classic white wall. A more temporary way to do this is to get a fun-colored carpet or chair. At the end of the day, however, you're the one living in these spaces so customize the color to your preference. I always find getting out of the house stressful, I always tend to forget something. Though color can't change my forgetfulness, I can make the entrance to my home more calming with color to reduce stress.

Another way to reduce stress is to use the right lighting. Imagine a doctor's office with its sterile feeling of cold overhead lighting, it's uncomfortable. However the opposite is also true” Warm lighting can help create a cozy, social atmosphere, while cool lighting can help create an atmosphere for focus and concentration”. This might be why you study better at your desk at home with a warm-colored lamp rather than at school or work with cool overhead lighting. Even though warm lighting is a good alternative, nothing is as good for you as natural light.” Natural light has the potential to enhance people’s mood, creativity, and cognitive performance”. The optimal study stop would be someplace next to a window or simply in a park or backyard. However in your home to emulate how lighting would work naturally I would suggest using a mix of warm lamps and cool overhead lighting. As “Placing warmer lighting in tabletop and floor lamps and cooler light overhead reflects how light appears in nature”. In doing so your home would have a calmer but still productive atmosphere. While the warm lights would keep it cozy, it would get sleepy because of the cool overhead lighting. Creating a nice atmosphere at home is incredibly important to maintaining a healthy and productive outlook.

In terms of home maintenance, smell is the easiest to introduce. The feeling of cleaning your house and finishing it off with a nice lit candle is always so satisfying. However, the smell

can be so polarizing, "whether we find a smell nice, nasty, or neutral is very subjective and depends upon familiarity, intensity, and perception as pleasant or unpleasant". "For example, people who fear the dentist do not like the clove-like smell of eugenol, which is used in dental cement; those without a fear of the dentist react positively or neutrally to this odor". So my lighting a rose-scented candle could for some be quite unpleasant. However, there is a common ground with the majority of people who like certain scents. Some examples of this are" Decaying flesh Repulsive to most people; may evoke thoughts of death, skunk odor horrible to most, but a few people find it "interesting", Vomit Often associated with illness, which may heighten disgust". However the same is true for people also enjoying the same nice smells. This can be used against you. A common way to use smell that you've probably heard of is how realtors might put cookies into the oven before showing a house. The smell is pleasant and homey, making it easier to imagine living in the home the realtor is showing you. The power of smell is undeniable, there are whole companies and brands just dedicated to candles, incense, perfume, and body spray. Though smell is overlooked you can't deny its importance. If you were to walk into a store that smelled like cleaning supplies, sure you would know that it's clean, it would feel sterile and just slightly uncomfortable. However, if it smelt like lavender, just as clean, however, it would be more comfortable and you wouldn't mind lingering for a while, adding maybe a couple of things you wouldn't have to your cart.

Temperature is used a lot less as a marketing tactic, however, it does play into that same theme of comfort. A cold doctor's office is very different from a warm waiting room. Temperature can even affect your study habits, imagine you're studying in a cold classroom, and all you can think about is the cold. Then imagine it's all nice and warm, you might get too cozy and fall asleep. The importance of temperature can also be seen in how common it is for family

members to argue about the thermostat. You might think that it's because you have a different body temperature in front of the rest of your family. However "it's a myth that healthy people tend to have significantly different body temperatures from one another. Most of them have body temperatures that vary within a narrow range". With this in mind, it might be surprisingly easy for a store to be at an optimal temperature. Maybe to increase the number of people trying on sweaters they lower the temperature. There are all manner of ways to use temperature to sell products. However, the need to be aware of temperature in interpersonal relationships is more pressing. In the rest of my examples with color and smell corporations' uses of them lean more on the manipulative side. However with temperature, it's the exact opposite, usually, temperature is a passing thought to corporations where it's heavily used by regular people. I previously mentioned how temperature is used for studying, however, there are more sinister uses. Some hosts aren't using temperature to make their guests more comfortable, but instead to influence them to wear lighter clothing. Stay aware of your surroundings and how the temperature of the room you're in is affecting you.

The knowledge you have of the space around you is very important. Not only to stay aware of how it is being used to manipulate you, kindly or otherwise. Staying aware can also show you the dynamic that the space you're in is creating. A perfect example is in crosswalks, the dynamic that they create between cars and pedestrians very usually in the USA is hostile. Usually, there are separate spaces for cars and pedestrians; however, this practice fails to take into account the fact that cars and pedestrians also need each other: and that a great deal of urban life occurs at just the point where these two systems meet". Unfortunately, most people don't have anywhere close to the power to change this, but being aware of this dynamic can lead to possible solutions. One of which is to create both pedestrian walkways and roads at the same

time to increase where they meet while also using the buildings to separate the roads from the pathways. If this system were to be implemented then the separation of cars and pedestrians would remain for safety while also increasing the number of times cars and pedestrians meet. This would cause a more bustling city while increasing safety. Since these pedestrian walkways would go through house clusters as cars went around them, it would create a more safe room for children to play. The other benefits include a better neighborhood community. Living in a housing cluster would increase communication with neighbors and create more shared space without the barrier of a road between two blocks. This would also just be a more pleasant walk for pedestrians and would lessen the disruptions that cars cause. There would be less noise and an increase in safety. Of course, everything can't be safe, but there can be more of a separation between residential and shopping districts. "Any part of a large or small is to be identified by its inhabitants as a precinct of some kind, will be reinforced, helped in its distinctness, marked, and made more vivid, if the paths which enter it are marked by gateways where they cross a boundary". By creating a visual boundary the change or shift in attitude or noise level will be rooted in reality. There would be no wishy-washy idea that "that" part of town is for nightlife and the other is for homes and a more child friendly crowd. That boundary would be visibly marked which would make that imaginary boundary stronger and more real. That way when there is a crossing of this boundary it would be easier to reprimand the person. There would be no vague sense that the next block over is only for kids but a physical reminder that if you do go over there it is expected for children to be at play. To do this we would need to "make the gateways solid elements, visible from every line of approach, enclosing the paths, punching a hole through a building, creating a bridge or a sharp change of level-but above all make them "things," in just the same way specified for MAIN ENTRANCE, but make them larger". In doing so there would

be a clear main entrance and side entrance, this would also make getting lost harder. By changing the way roads and paths are made along with the addition of entryways, neighborhoods could become a lot safer, and a lot more pleasant to live in.

The use of color, light, smell, temperature, and architecture, could be used to improve quality of life. However, currently, they are being used against you instead of for you. The list of ways these senses can be used here in this paper is not all intensive. There are plenty of other ways to use color to create an environment, make your house productive with light, enjoy a pleasant smell, enjoy temperature, and envision different ways to plan a city. I wanted to show some of the ways these invisible factors affect your day to day. Currently, they're working against you and instead for corporations and businesses. I hope that in turn with learning how to use these techniques positively you've also discovered how awareness can change the power of these deceptively manipulative techniques. That just as I've become a more aware consumer, through learning and researching this paper, you have gotten the same information, just a bit more easily. That my hard work benefited the readers of my paper for having the opportunity to the same amount of information with less than half the work to get to it. That this paper served its main and only function and purpose, informing its readers about the ways to manipulate their surroundings. Noting that these aren't new techniques rather old ones that can be repurposed and reused, maybe even recycled into home improvement techniques. Though there were many fun facts that didn't make the cut, or that I didn't have adequate information/sources for, I hope reading this was enjoyable all the same. Although thinking about how easily we as consumers are manipulated on a day to day basis can get depressing and almost feel dystopian. I hope that these semi depressing facts have helped you be a more aware consumer and a more creative homeowner or apartment renter, or just a person with access or control over their space.

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