

Title:

Play therapy room design

Subtitle:

Creativity room design in Queen Silvia Children's Hospital

Name:

Yuanquan Xu

Institutional Affiliation:

School of Design and Crafts, University of Gothenburg

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Abstract

Hospitalization could be an upsetting event in everyone's life, especially a child. Enhancing children's experience during the hospital journey is a necessary and meaningful improvement. In Sweden, Children and Adolescents in hospital need to have the same opportunity of stimulation and development as their healthy peers. It is their legal right to receive play therapy according to article 4 of the Education Law. The whole process of this project is associated with the play therapy rooms in Queen Silvia Children's Hospital in Gothenburg, Sweden. Investigate of the whole play therapy room and focus on the deeper research and design of the creativity room. "Good experience, good memory" is the core concept.

Key words: therapeutic, inclusive, relaxed, creative, play

Foreword

During the procedure of this project, play therapy department in Queen Silvia Children's Hospital supported me very much, especially Sofia Mansson, the head of play therapy department and my contact Cecilia Holmgren, special educator in play therapy ward in Sahlgrenska University Hospital. Additionally, it was my first time to conduct a space related project. I appreciate that Arne Branzell, the architect, helped me much about the knowledge of experienced space research and analysis. Moreover, my tutor, Carl-Johan Skogh, gave me really useful and practical suggestions and guided me in the right track on this project.

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Source

Introduction

Background:

This examination project was a continuation of my previous individual project what was about the experience improvement of the waiting room in children's hospital. In the previous project, I had the contact with Queen Silvia Children's Hospital. During the research phase, I visited the play therapy room and came out the initial idea of examination project.

Aim:

As we all know, hospitalization could be an upsetting event in everyone's life, especially a child. During the hospital journey, children suffered from unknown conditions, fears and pain and became sensitive and vulnerable. In addition, much energy and attention were taken from parents in this situation, which made them tired and vulnerable. The main aim of this project was to improve children and parents' hospital experience and made the hospital journey easier. Play therapy was one of the ways to change negative experience into positive, especially for a child. It was an integral part of the treatment of children and adolescents in hospital. Furthermore, in Sweden, "Children and Adolescents who are in hospitals need to have the same opportunity for stimulation and development as their healthy peers." It is their legal right to receive play therapy according to article 4 of the Education Law. According to the article 19, section 763 of Health and Medical Care Act of 1982, "Children and adolescents have the right to receive the comprehensive information regarding treatment."

Objectives:

The objective of this project was to advise play therapy department useful and practical suggestions upon the research of the effect of play therapy and the whole play therapy rooms. After that, I would focus on the design of creativity room what included space and furniture system in this room.

Problem formulations:

Why play therapy could reduce children's fear and negative feelings and create a better hospital experience?

What is the relationship among people (children, parents, therapists), space and furniture in this play therapy oriented environment?

What is the difference of play at home, school and in hospital?

What sort of the play activities could be therapeutic and useful for children?

How can we improve children and parents' experience in play therapy room?

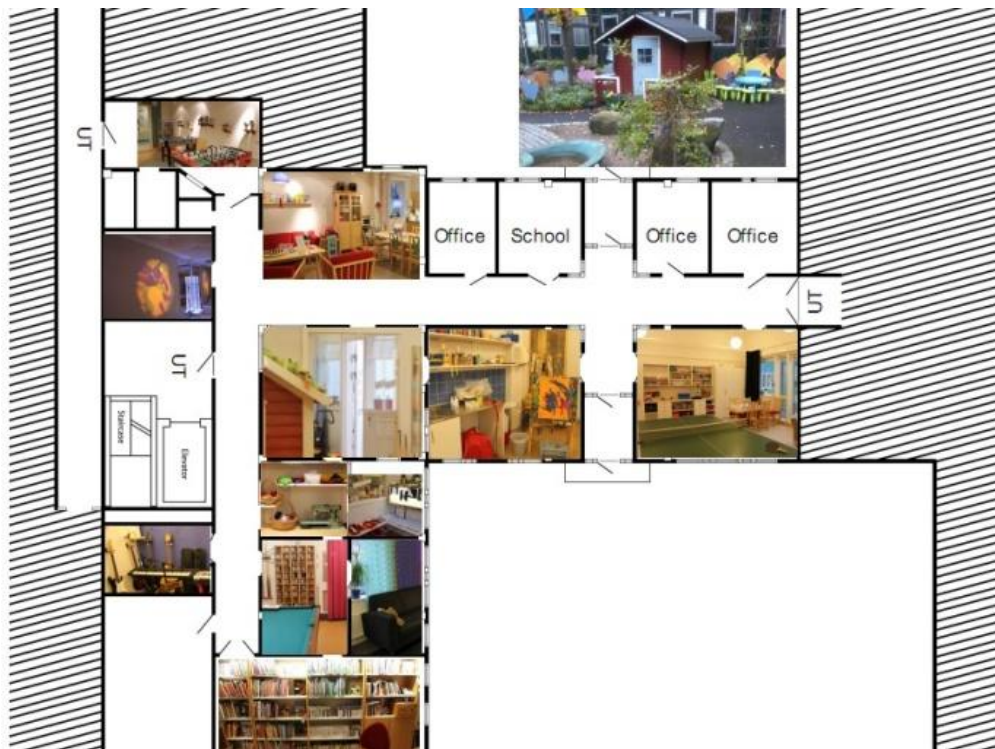
Delimitations:

This project is about space and furniture design, which were the combination of what I used to work and I am interested. I will more focus on the space concept and furniture suggestions, but not the furniture details.

Implementation

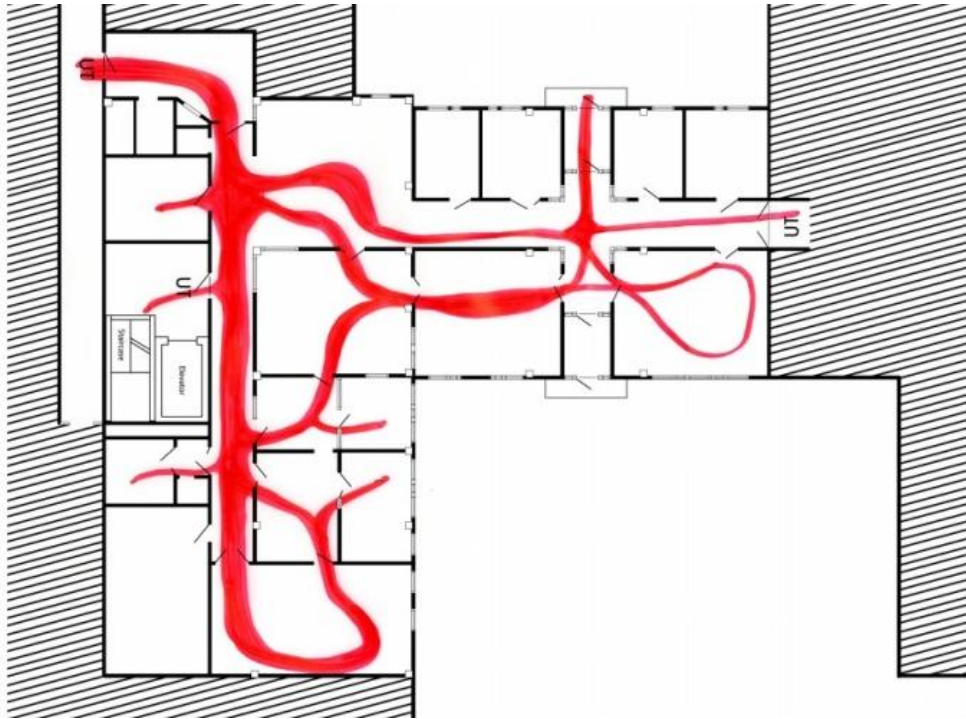
At the first stage, it was investigation and analysis made by the two-day observation, interviews with parents and therapists based in the play therapy room in Queen Silvia Children's Hospital. According to the factual conditions, I came out suggestions for the improvement and focus on the creativity room for further design including space and furniture system design.

Initially, I spent two days for observation in the entire rooms and figured out the human experienced space. It included the layout of the room, different activity in each spot, movement flow, meeting spots where the movement start and end and some physical elements, like lighting, sound and colour effect. Then, Interviews with parents were about children's experience through parents' perspectives and parents themselves experience. In addition, the interviews with therapists were about the relationship between sick child family and the therapists.



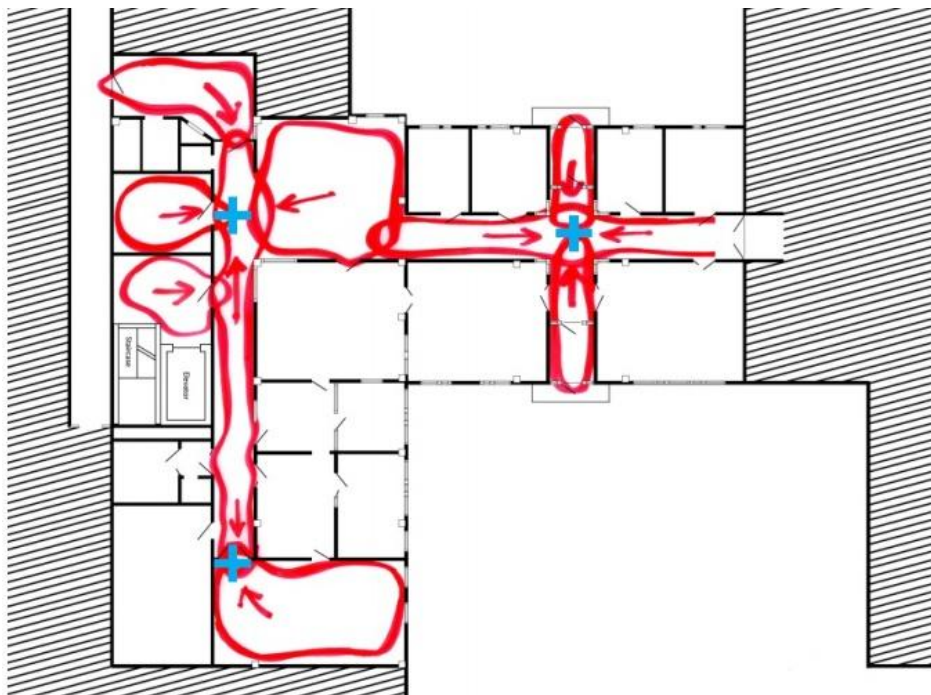
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Play therapy room contained many play activities for children in different ages, almost inclusive. There were a relaxation room in where children can calm down with soft environment, lighting effects and smooth music. While, in front of the room was a meeting spot where the movement start and end which made the surroundings noisy. Parents usually spent time in the kitchen sharing their hospital experience. There were a sewing room, hospital scenario play, leisure room for adolescents, music room, library, doll-room, creativity room, flexible room and a garden and so on.



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More people walked through the straight hallway showed on the left of layout map. So, sometime there were many people in the hallway at the same time. We should guide people to the appropriate place according to their age, interest and needs.



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There were three meeting spots where the movement starts and ends. It was noisy and led more people

getting together. We could move the rooms need quietness away from the meeting spots and create more social activity at those meeting spots.



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From the research, most adolescents did not like to play with younger children. It was because the activities they like to play were different comparing with that of younger children. In every development step, the game children played was different and the play activity was more and more difficult with the growth of age. In addition, parents usually stayed in the kitchen and chatted with each other to share their hospital experience what was a good way to release stress.



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Children with different sensitiveness needed different openness space. Some sensitive children needed a quieter room than the other and some children liked to play actively. So, according to the need of children, we should put the appropriate in the right place. Since these rooms had not much nature light from outside, it was very important to take advantage of the sunlight to get closer to the nature. It was also a good way to attract children's attention and reduce their stress and fear.

	Issues	Needs
Sick Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Fear, Stress, Strange, Unsafety, Lonely * Wait long time for treatments * Stay in hospital for long time * Isolated with outside world (siblings, friends, etc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Informed what is going on * Be with parents * Comfort * Free Play (free expression and control the situation) * Connection with outside world * Cheerful and fun ambience or low-stimulate ambience
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Stress, Worry, Tired * Wait long time for treatment * Companion with children all the time * No time and energy to take care of other children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Share experience * Sense of orientation * Energy (inherent need) to go through the hospital journey. * Cheerful and fun ambience
Siblings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Unhappy * Limited play activities * Get less love/care from parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Active play activity * Be with their parents and siblings
Therapists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Face to different miserable families * Sometime, hard to build a trusting relationship with the child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Cheerful and fun ambience * Play with children equally (respect them)

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According to the research, many sick children had fear and felt stressful in hospital, especially when they needed to wait for treatment long time or stay in hospital months. One reason was inpatient children were almost isolated with outside world and lost or had less the connection with siblings and friends. It made

them feel much lonely. The second was children had to confront the unknown and strange situation what also could make them feel upset. So, it was very necessary to inform children what's going on of the treatment before the treatment and have a sense of control. Because, the sense of control made children feel of their capability of accomplishing and satisfied themselves. Moreover, we should create the opportunities to build more connection with life outside, like friends, classmates and nature. A cheerful and fun ambience could also impress children. The low-stimulated ambience was made for children with sensitive mind. When children felt nervous and stressful, let them be with their parents, at least they could see each other, which made them feel safety.

Concerned about parents, they took much energy and time on their children what could make them stressful, worried and tired. Share experience with other parents could help them release stress and unhappiness. Since, parents spent more care and time on the sick child, which made other siblings feel getting less love. Moreover, they always wanted to perform more actively than life out of hospital. Therapists encountered the situation that they cannot build a good relationship with the child and sometime they had to face to the sorrow.

Home	School	Hospital
Cozy, comfortable and familiar environment	Familiar environment	strange, stressful environment
Siblings or neighbor, sometime parents	Classmates, teachers	Parents, therapist, sibling, other children
* Free * Comfortable	* Pedagogical * Organised-activity free activity	* therapeutic * Not much active play * Play alone/ or with trusted people
* Toys * Limited play space	* Various toys/ Playground * Bigger play space	* Various toys Playground(not active) * Bigger play space

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Comparing with play in other situations, like home and school. In hospital, children usually encounter a stranger environment with fear, pain and stress. Almost, they play alone or play with the trusted people, like parents, siblings and therapists. Because they can feel safety when they played with people they trusted. The play activities were much quieter and therapeutic, comparing with pedagogical activities at school and free play at home. Additionally, there were bigger place, more toys and more activities, which children can spend their time. Moreover, the play activities were more therapeutic in hospital and pedagogical at school.

Since, in the laws of Sweden, this play therapy room should be inclusive and every child and adolescent should have equal opportunities to play in the therapy rooms. However, children with different ages liked different sorts of activities and they learnt from play. So, with the growth of children, the needs of play changed at the same time. For example, the infants, they also need sensory stimulation to explore and understand their own body and the world, and simple social interaction helps later on. Then, they will explore the relationship between objects, practise physical movement, play creatively and develop

friendships and social skills.

After research and analysis, I came out that an attractive, child-friendly and comfortable environment was very necessary to create a relaxing, happy and inspiring atmosphere. According to different sensitive children, open space, semi-public space and private space were all needed. The different rooms should move to right positions according to quietness, lighting effects and play activities. A good sense of orientation made people know where they were and where they could head for. Moreover, the connection between space and space could make difference. It created possibilities for children to see each other in different rooms what could avoid them feeling lonely and help children closer to the nature and friends. In addition, since children reflected reality through play, it was very necessary to have a hospital theme play activities what could help children acknowledge of the treatment procedure through an interesting and acceptable ways of presenting. Moreover, creativity plays significant role in realising stress and fear. It was not only helping children immersed in creativity to make them calm down, but also offering them a chance to have a sense of controlling the situation, which was opposite of hospital treatment.

After gaining knowledge about play therapy and analyzing the whole rooms, I narrowed down and focused on the creativity room design. It was because the creativity room was the most popular and had the best reputation from the feedback of interviews. However, why the creativity room was children's favourite? From the research and observation, I found out that children can express themselves freely and concentrate on the play deeply, which made them calm down easily. Second, in the creative play, they decided what to draw and how to make, which made them have a sense of control what is opposite in the treatment. Furthermore, the play itself was a learning process satisfied them and the physical result usually as a gift given to their family members and reminded them a good experience of playing here.

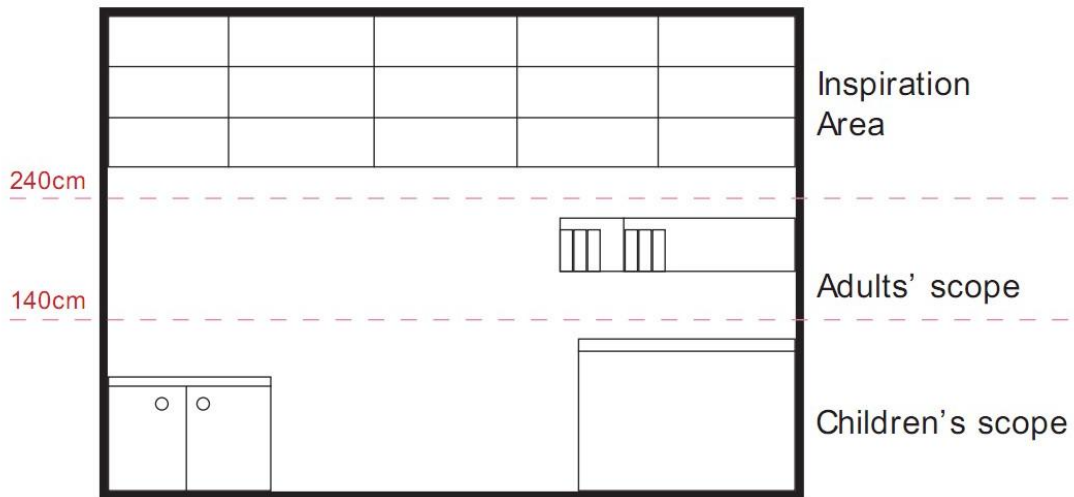
So, the next step was what sorts of creative activities were suitable in this creativity room? There were many activities could suit in this room, like play with arts, open-ended material, craft-making, multi-sense play and sewing and so on.

Focus on the creativity room itself. After research and observation, I found some points could develop further. Firstly, the whole feeling of the room was messy and all the furniture was adult-size. Secondly, there were many materials and tools put on the high shelf and closet what were beyond children's scope. Furthermore, there was not enough room for children's objects storage.



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Before people enter a room, they usually had an expectation of the room. They always had better experience with good memory if it was better than their expectation. So, the main concept was good child-centred experience and good memory. This room was for children with age 0-18. Firstly, attractive environment could arouse children's curiosity and inspire them, then trigger them play creatively. The main function of creativity was to help children express freely and have a sense of control. Furthermore, the flexible environment was changeable and gave children a new impression in the next play time. In order to remain children's good memory, children's crafts displayed on the high shelf and gave them a sense of self-confidence as well.



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The room had five functional parts, inspiration area, material storages, play space, displaying area and resting place. In order to utilize the space and meet children's needs, I made the vertical space into three parts. Children could touch the lowest part and get a sense of control. The upper space was for therapists to put materials and displaying children's crafts. The highest part was for displaying children's crafts to remind a good experience of last time and inspiring them at the same time.

Results

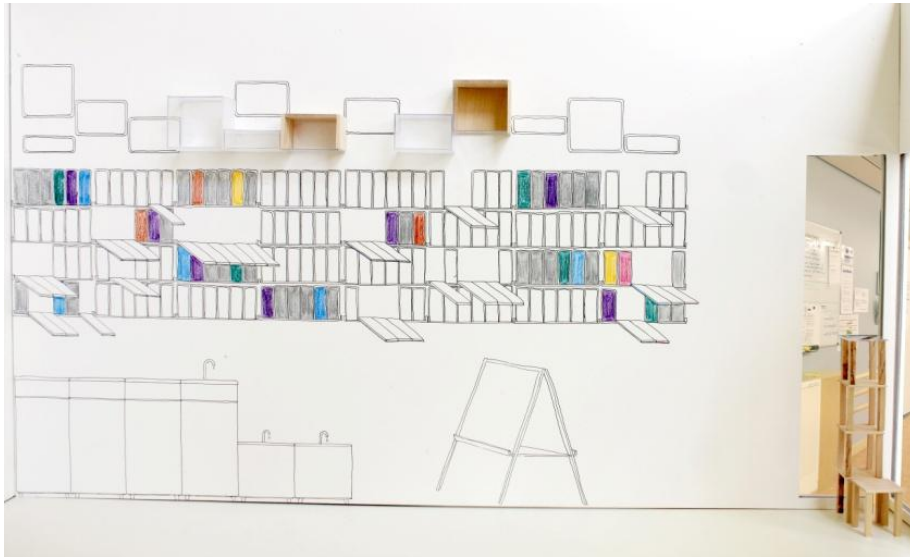
This room was designed through children's perspective, aiming at reducing children's negative feelings in hospital through enhancing children's play experience and remaining them good memories of it. This inspiring, attractive, and changeable interior design triggered children's interests and creativity. All the material and tools used in creative activities were easily accessible in fun and interesting ways. The design of this room enhances a child's sense of control in play and freedom for expression. The design connects the room with the surrounding allowing children to interact with others, the outdoors, and passersby. Children are also able to leave their mark and display their craft on the wall.



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Based on the concept, I started to design the furniture system. Since the time was limited, I just designed some concept of the furniture and the details and construction were not completely finished. I would like to spend more time on the details of furniture in the future work, if I have enough time. The following content, I will show the furniture concept and the reasons behind the concept.

Stairs



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The stairs close to the windows built the connection with other people, nature and it was a place for parents to supervise and had a rest at the same time. Children could climb on the stairs and draw on the glass windows. It helped children interacting with other children playing in the other room and nature outside. Furthermore, the stairs were also storages from where children can get materials. The materials seen blurred from the matt plastic drawers could arouse children curiosity, a good starting point of creativity. Moreover, it was a relaxing place, where parents could sit and supervise children's playing to make each other feel more comfortable and get a feeling of security.

Table



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From the research, many materials and tools put on the high shelf, which children cannot get by themselves. This was a painting and craft-making table. It helped children getting tools and materials by themselves and controlling the play. The box on the right side was for putting pens and tools and the draw is for storing paper.

Storage Table



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Make children curious and trigger exploration. It was a table for material storage. Children can see the blurred colour and shape of material in the divided box through the matt plastic board what arouses children's interest and explore different box. Moving the board and checking material in different boxes. The way of exploration was also a memory game, challenge children's memory. It offered opportunities for children to have the sense of control and easy-accomplished challenge.



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After making the model of the table, I tested it in the creativity room in Queen Silvia Children's Hospital. The height of the table was appropriate. It was suitable for every child, no matter child with or without wheelchair. The size of the board was appropriate for almost every child. Younger child could use both hand to move it easily and older child could move it with one hand. Additionally, it aroused children's curiosity and children moved every board to check the material under the board.



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I also got feedback from the testing that it was quite boring without material. So, I coloured inside and use the wood nature colour outside. It could be also interesting and fun without material inside.

Closet



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Those flexible closets made change possible. These closets with characters were child-welcome. Children could see the material's blur colour and shape through the matt plastic boards. It triggered children to observe and explore, which was the start point of creativity. Moreover, different ways of opening offered children challenges accomplished easily and got the sense of self-confidence. These closets were built in different forms and be hanged on the wall as a displaying area. They could be closet, stool and shelf in different forms. The two tracks made the closets structure much stable.



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Shelf



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Make space used effectively and efficiently. It was a flexible and multi-functional shelf made by wood and colourful wool. It could be vertical and the wool used could absorb noise and could be a board where children can pin on their paintings and sewing fabric. It could be spinning into flat to be a shelf as well. It aimed at utilizing the space and making it effectively and efficiently.

Screen



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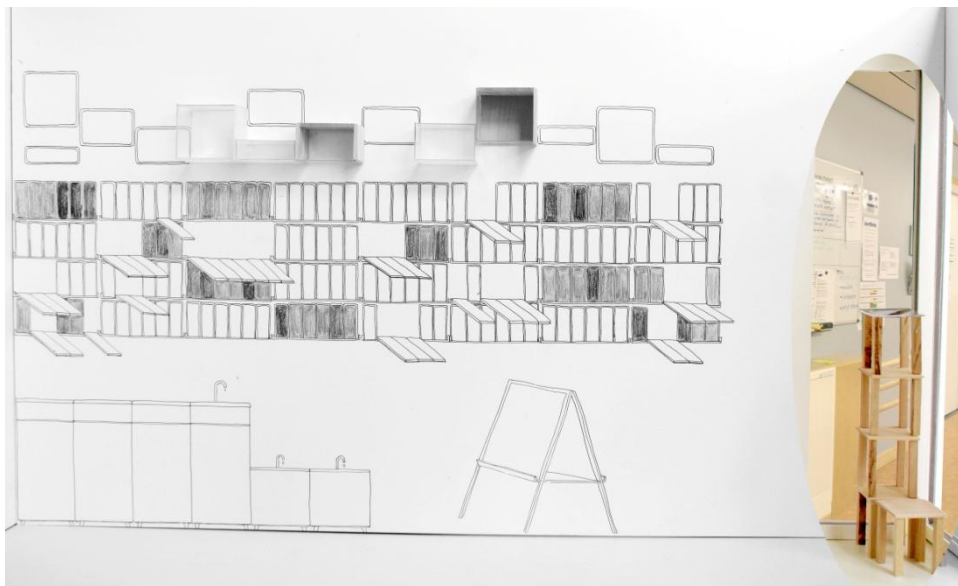
This was a screen helping space divided into two different parts, on part was for children and the other were for adolescent. The coloured side can arouse children's attention. Children could pin drawings and sewing crafts on the fabric coloured in which was also as an inspiring play. Additional, children could crawl and have an interesting interaction with adolescents.

Closet



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The displaying closets store children's crafts and inspire them by others' crafts. The material used was wood and transparent or matt plastic. It was because children are easier to find out the materials in the closets through seeing from the bottom.



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Make connection with outside. It displayed children's stuff and attracts other children passing by. It let children know what was happening in this room. It was also an inspiring area, where children could get inspiration. The transparent plastic boards on the top let children see through it from their perspective.

Reflections

Answer Questions

1. Why play therapy could reduce children's fear and negative feelings and create a better hospital experience?

Children learn from play activities. Children always reflect reality in the play activity and repeat it in play activity. In this way, children learn the reality. Play therapy also helps children draw more attention on the play but not the treatment process. In addition, displaying children's crafts could remind them a good memory of here and ignore the negative feeling of being in the hospital. During the play activities, it refreshes not only children but also parents and makes the continuous hospital journey easier.

2. What is the relationship among people (children, parents, therapists), space and furniture in this play therapy oriented environment?

This room designed was according to people's needs. The connection made between other rooms and nature helping children have more interaction with others and outside world, which could avoid them feel they were alone. Make advantage of space and design it effectively. Every furniture related with play activity was within children's scope what made children easier to control the play and express freely. Additionally, put the visible closets on the higher wall for displaying children's crafts and inspiration.

3. What sort of the play activities could be therapeutic and useful for children?

Creative activities were very effective for children to concentrate play and calm down quickly. Because, creative activity guided children play freely which made them easy to immerse in the activity and calm down. Art activities like painting, colouring and collage were good ways to let children express themselves freely. Open-ended material like dough and craft-making using different materials were both appropriate ways to get a sense of control and sense of expression.

4. How can we improve children and parents' experience in play therapy room?

Children and parents could be both tired and stressful during the hospital journey. Since between children and parents they have a special relationship, it was very helpful for them to see each and get the safety feeling. In this creativity room, parents could have a rest place in one corner of the room and supervise children when they were playing. Children also could see parents during play.

Future Development

It was my first trail to think and work as a space design project. I learnt much knowledge of experienced space analysis and design. In this project, there were still some steps could be developed further. Upon on the core concept, I should come up more ideas and do evaluation of the design step. Then, use the combination of space design and furniture design approach to deepen the furniture. If I have time, I would like to make full-scaled mock up of furniture and put them in the space to make sense of the size, functions and the children's perspective. After make sure of the size, form and material, I would like to make real model and check the details. Then Test it with children in the room, see whether there were still problems needed to solve and details needed to develop.

Conclusion

As an educated product designer, the way I usually think was quite different comparing with space designer. It was quite interesting to explore and experience the way of space thinking. It was an interesting project integrating my favourite two elements, design for children and space design. The collaboration with Queen Silvia Children's Hospital was fantastic. I learnt how to design for children through children's perspective and switch the thinking way in which I used to use. In design project, you had to discover the potential problems. If you cannot find it, it did not mean it did not exist. It was because you did not immerse with the situation and people's experience. At the research step, try to get closer to the users, observe them, listen to them and talk to them, then you will find more valuable issues. The first project about space was not perfect, but the experience was. I know if I wanted to be a space thinker, I had to practise more and more practical projects.

Source

Garry L. Landre(2002). Play therapy : the art of the relationship

The Hospital Playlink

<http://www.childreninhospital.ie/system/assets/30/original/hospital-playlink.pdf>

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