

Adult Playground

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In this essay I will describe the ideas and considerations that went into designing our adult playground. I will first describe how we choose to view a playground and how we saw this in relation to adults. From here I will go into a discussion about adult play and its relation to taboos, which is a thing we found quite interesting, but ultimately decided not to incorporate. Lastly I will try to wrap this up in describing some of our major design goals for the playground.

The first thing we considered when faced with the challenge of designing a playground was what a playground actually is. After some consideration we decided that we understood a playground as a space or place that signals and affords play. Since playgrounds is mainly considered a thing for children we found the signaling part quite important. If a playground is simply a place that affords play, everything will more or less be a playground for a child, since they are able to play pretty much anywhere. Therefor when we settled on designing a playground for adults it was clear that the most important part was to somehow signal to people that they are meant to be playing in the space we created. We found that there where different ways in which you could signal to adults that they were supposed play, some of which are the same as for children. The fundamental idea was to create some sense of entering an alternate reality, the magic circle, where normal behavior is not expected. Sensory stimulation is one way of shifting a persons attention from her own behavior to something else, I believe it is the phenomena you see when people likes having colored, flickering light when they are dancing. Sensory deprivation functions in a similar way, since it also shift a persons attention to her the sensory input she is not deprived of. Additionally it seems like people are more likely to be playful if they have some sense of anonymity. If we again look at a dance floor people are more likely to dance on a crowded dance floor where they are not feeling observed, than on a dance floor with a lot of people watching them. We also discussed intoxicating people to create the sense of an entering an ludic state of mind. Lastly we thought that creating some bizarre atmosphere, for example by forcing people to be naked, might also contribute to a change of state in mind.

The next problem to consider was what adult play is and what kind of play we wanted to create. We found that there is a connection between adult play and taboos, where playing can be a way of dealing with taboos. For a major part of the design process we had an idea of structuring rooms around different taboos or not normally accepted feelings such as shame, fear and anger. However it seemed difficult to design for these experiences without creating a rigid structured setting. The concept of a playground seems to inherently foster freeform play, where it is very much up to the players to create and structure their play in the way they desire. We wanted to create a playground with similar properties and therefor decided to focus on how we could work with sensory stimulation/deprivation and hoping this would be enough to let people enter a

ludic state of mind.

We decided to create some sort of connected room system where each room designed should have some things in common. First of all there should be very little light in the rooms, this serves both as a way of depriving people of sensory input and letting them be more anonymous. Second of all it the created rooms should preferably also function for people under intoxication. Third of all rooms should have toy-like things. Preferably they should include things that people ended up playing with simply by exploring the properties of the things. We separately designed different rooms and ended up a bit rushed putting them together in a tree-structure. Unfortunately we did not get to, or took the time to, make an overall coherent design of the rooms which could have been interesting. When talking about the concept we thought that it would be nice, if people where moved from different contrasting moods. In a room such as the sound making rooms, people are likely to be physical active and it would be nice to progress from that into a slowly paced room such as the water room where less activity is required by the person. When looking back at the project it is also pretty clear that we did not consider where such a playground should actually be placed. In my mind this kind of thing is something you would see at an exhibition, but our goal was not to create installation art but rather a place where people would more or less accidentally enter and start playing. If we imagine this construction being put up at Sankt Hans Torv where people can freely enter, then at least some consideration should be made towards the use of drugs in the playground. Not because of legal reasons but because the presence of drugs could break the ludic experience for a lot of people, especially if they are not prepared that they could encounter these.

In this essay I explained the design process and considerations put into making our adult playground. We focused on sensory stimulation and deprivation when trying to provoke a ludic state of minds in the people using the playgrounds. The playground was the sum of a series of smaller rooms that mainly plays with sound, light and tactility. If this playground is to be actually realized in any shape or form, more attention should be put into both the rooms them self and how to connect them in a coherent manner.