Architecture as Performing Art: Puddin' and the Grumble

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Architecture as a performing art was the focus of a second-year architecture studio project that enabled students to design, construct 1:1 prototypes, and fabricate inflatable elements for a play: Puddin’ and the Grumble. The project was an interdisciplinary collaboration that situated beginning design students in a creatively risky setting at the junction of introductory architectural knowledge, knowledge creation (research), and multiple communities beyond the traditional design studio.

Puddin’ and the Grumble is a play that examines issues surrounding childhood hunger and food insecurity (approximately 19% of children in our university’s county experience these issues and 15.8 million nationally). The play tells the story of a 10-year-old girl whose mother works a day and night job. Needing to live with her grandma, Puddin’ misses her mother, struggles with 5th grade math, and feels as empty as her stomach. Added to this she’s being followed by the Grumble, an obnoxious creature symbolizing her hunger. Written by Becky Boesen and David Von Kampen. Inspired by the kids of the Clinton Elementary Creative Club. Commissioned and produced by the Lied Center for Performing Arts, it was created by Becky Boesen and Petra Wahlqvist as part of the GROW A SHOW program in collaboration with ASCAP in Los Angeles, the Lincoln Food Bank, the College of Fine and Performing Arts, and the second-year architecture students in the College of Architecture.

The project was truly collaborative. The script, music, and actions informed the conception, development, and realization of the architectural elements and vice-versa. For the studio’s deliverables, the students were required to generate a research pamphlet (summarizing their findings), drawings (from process to scalar documents), models, 1:1 prototypes for proof of concept, and the final working elements at 1:1 scale that were used on stage. Not only did the students have to consider all of the structural, material and logistical issues of their work but also they had to responsibly engage with larger communities (kids, audience, etc.) that demanded ethical and social consideration.
ARCHITECTURE AS PERFORMING ART

PUDDIN’ AND THE GRUMBLE

Architecture as a performing art was the focus of a second-year
architecture studio project, which provided students to design,
conceptual, and 3D prototypes, and then work with inflatable
structures for a new show. The project was an interdisciplinary
collaboration that involved a design studio and the exploration of
architectural knowledge, knowledge about inflatable structures, and
multiple communities to create a design that is a new environment. This
show played out on a stage designed by the students, which was
constructed of the inflatable, inflatable materials, and inflatable
false. The project was a collaboration that was rich and complex.

In the first phase of the project, students were asked to create
the fragments of the script and present them to the studio. The
students then explored the design elements in collaboration with the
student director and environmental architect. The project was
completed by the students who were given the opportunity to
develop and realize an architecture element. This was
accomplished through a series of workshops, discussions, and
presentations.

To explore the students’ architectural elements, we
fostered a collaborative process where students were
involved in the project. The project was conducted in a
series of workshops, discussions, and presentations.

The students were encouraged to work together and
present their ideas to the class. The project was
completed by the students who were given the opportunity to
develop and realize an architecture element. This was
accomplished through a series of workshops, discussions,
and presentations.

PHASE 1

Identifying desired elements & concepts

PHASE 2

Identifying, developing processes, & prototypes

PHASE 3

Constructing & deploying components

PHASE 4

Finalizing, refining elements, & interacting

The Ethical Imperative