

DESIGNING AN IMMERSIVE WORLD

Exploring Theme Parks through Hayao Miyazaki's *Spirited Away*

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for graduation with Departmental Honors in the Program in
Environmental Design

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Defense Date: April 5, 2018

ABSTRACT

Most theme parks today have a ride component, whether it is a themed roller coaster or water park, but the entertainment design industry has not focused as much on designing interactive experiences without the need for thrill. Experience design and themed entertainment design focus on how thematic elements create a somatic and immersive environment. Design, like entertainment, is constantly transforming to fit the needs of its visitors. The design of entertainment spaces needs to be considered through multiple lenses and this project seeks to understand design elements that are necessary for a successful immersive design. The film *Spirited Away*, by acclaimed director Hayao Miyazaki, is the ideal story and style to fit an alternative theme park design. The loose plot and detailed illustrations throughout the film provide rich visual experiences that can easily be translated into enticing three-dimensional spaces. This project focuses on the best tactics for developing immersive entertainment through the theme of *Spirited Away*. This paper defends the final design of an experiential theme park, without rides, centered on the film *Spirited Away*.

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INTRODUCTION

When most people think about theme parks, the thrill of amusement rides is one of the first things that comes to mind. This is a core element in amusement parks today from Six Flags to Disneyland and Universal Studios. While theme parks should not be banning rides anytime soon, designers should also focus on the design of a theme park and its success without the excitement of rides to get in the way to understand how design impacts the user experience. My project revolves around designing a unique theme park that creates a holistic experience and guest engagement without these thrills to expand how we think about our leisure spaces. It is important to consider the design of theme parks because of the emotional needs these spaces meet and humans' never-ending desire for entertainment.

For the theme of my design, I focused on the film *Spirited Away*, by Japanese director Hayao Miyazaki. *Spirited Away* has a rich storyline and a strong theme of spatial confusion, as well as an animation style that could be recognizable throughout a park design. The ambiguous plot allows for an individualized experience throughout the park, as well as more creativity in the design.

The relevancy of this project has been brought to the forefront of design since it has been announced that a Studio Ghibli Theme park will be opened in 2020 in Japan's Aichi Prefecture Expo Park (A Studio Ghibli Theme Park, 2017). The site was originally the location of an international exhibit that included a play

ground, Ferris wheel, and water park (EXPO Park, 2017). This location was determined by the existing tourist site of Satsuki and Mei's House from Miyazaki's film *My Neighbor Totoro* and the respect for nature throughout the park that is a strong value for Miyazaki and his films. Although illustrator Takumi has released a concept plan for the Studio Ghibli Theme Park inspired by Disneyland Tokyo, there have not been any plans for the design of the park released to the public.

This project studies a potential design grounded in the story and purposeful design of spaces to engage guests rather than relying on rides to bolster their attendance. The purpose of this project is to design a theme park based on Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* that focuses on the user experience, rather than the emotional excitement of the rides. Designing a theme park without any rides reevaluates how designers can expand on entertainment design and pinpoints design elements that are necessary in successful experience design. The project creates a branch off theme parks that engages audiences outside the traditional age demographic associated with theme parks for a more cultural experience as a way to forward the experience design industry.

DISNEYLAND

PETER PAN'S FLIGHT

In Disneyland's ride Peter Pan's Flight, the design was driven from the original film and employed hide and reveal techniques to guide guests through the experience. Unfortunately, it lacked interactive components common in today's theme parks. This ride is located in Fantasyland where children could "step into' and become a part of their favorite animated films" (Marling 12, 1997). Peter Pan's Flight is defined by Disney as a "dark, slow" ride because it focuses on the retelling of a story, rather than the thrill of roller coasters. (Marling 34, 1997). On the ride, guests board a pirate ship and take on the role of one of the Darling children. Guests follow the storyline of Peter Pan from London to Never Land and then Skull Rock. The ships are held up from a track above (see Figure 1), different from the grounded tracks in other dark rides like Alice and Wonderland and Snow White designed to give the illusion of flying from scene to scene. Animatronics, a term Disney originated, bring scenes to life on a human scale while directed lighting draws attention to certain areas along the ride. Focused lighting hides mechan-

ics, supports structures, and even other guests from view. By hiding portions of the ride and other individuals, guests can focus on their experience, rather than distractions from others. Figure 2 shows Disney's original plan for this ride, the entrance and exit, and the track guests take. The path is irregular, confusing guests on which way they have come and the direction they are going. The track takes guests through the Darling nursery, and out the window into the night sky of London. Peter Pan appears in almost every scene but disappears into shadows until the next scene to create a cohesive story. More space is given for details designers feel are more important, like the vast bird's eye view of London and the nooks and crannies of Neverland. Curved walls enclose the various areas, both blocking the view from the upcoming scenes as well as giving context and a backdrop for the current scene, thus providing dual purpose. Disney manipulates viewers through light and darkness to highlight the story and emphasize the magic. The dark ride draws guests into the story, but do not let them fully interact with the scenes around them, wanting patrons to keep all hands and feet inside the boat at all times.



Figure 1: Ship used to carry guests through the ride (<http://photopost.wdwinfo.com/data/888/medium/Fantasyland-Disneyland-25.jpg>)

Figure 2: Original Drawing of Peter Pan's Flight (<https://disneyandmore.blogspot.com/2014/01/1955-disneyland-fantasyland-original.html?m=1>)



Figure 3: Ollivander's Wand Shop in the Wizarding World of Harry Potter (http://www.davonnajuroe.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/MG_5770-1024x703.jpg)



Figure 4: Interior of Ollivander's shop (<https://orlandoinformer.com/wp-content/uploads/photo-gallery/125/ollivanders-wand-shop-wizarding-world-of-harry-potter-768-oi.jpg>)

THE WIZARDING WORLD OF HARRY POTTER OLLIVANDER'S

The Wizarding World of Harry Potter elevates theme parks to a new standard through their attention to detail, lighting manipulation, and overall interactive experience. The newly established Wizarding World of Harry Potter is a theme park where Harry Potter fans can immerse themselves into the world of Harry and his friends through famous locations like Hogsmeade and Diagon Alley, as well as purchase apparel and food found in the films. Some aspects of the Harry Potter films lend themselves well to rides, like *Escape from Gringotts* and *Flight of the Hippogriff*, but many reviewers have discovered that “rides aren’t really the point,”—the park focuses on the “experience of the environment” (Genzlinger, 2010; Waysdorf, 2016). The magic of the villages of Hogsmeade and Diagon Alley come from the detailed exterior and interior architecture replicating scenes from the films and books. Sights and smells also add to the “holistic approach to theming” and enhance the overall atmosphere of the park (Waysdorf, 2016).

Ollivander's Wand Shop is both a store as well as an immersive experience for guests and is a microcosm of other areas

in the Wizarding World of Harry Potter. The scene in Ollivander's is a key part of Harry's journey, thus becoming a key experience in the park. It is not only a detailed replica of the scene from the movies, but also involves a “magical” interaction. In the movie and the book, Harry Potter experiences receiving his own wand alone without other students in the shop. The screenshot in Figure 5 shows a child receiving a wand in the Wizarding World of Harry Potter while Figure 6 represents the iconic scene in the *Sorcerer's Stone* where the “wand chooses the wizard” as Harry purchases his own wand (2001). Between Figure 5 and 6, there are subtle differences, but the main concept and atmosphere is still captured in the Wizarding World of Harry Potter. J.K. Rowling describes the wand shop as “narrow and shabby” with “peeling gold letters over the door, read[ing] Ollivanders: Makers of Fine Wands since 382 B.C.” (62, 1997). This imagery evokes the imagination and paints a picture for Harry Potter fans of a shop that has been there for ages, quiet, undisturbed and personal.

After visitors enter the shop, it becomes much darker, paralleling the film, where everything seems to be lit by candlelight and the temperature decreases from the July heat. This change in atmosphere and temperature is a design choice that increases the experience by awakening



Figure 5: Boy receiving wand at the Wizarding World of Harry Potter (https://www.universalorlando.co.uk/uocouk/Images/BB_Vert_Ollivanders_tcm37-14027.jpg)



Figure 6: Harry receiving his wand in the film *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (<https://metrouk2.files.wordpress.com/2017/01/feat-ollivander.jpg>)

the senses and informing the visitor that they have entered a “magic” environment. Actors and actresses switch out playing the wand-maker clad in purple robes surrounded by “thousands of narrow boxes piled right up to the ceiling” (Rowling 63, 1997.) Detailed wand boxes fill the store covered in dust with faded designs. The Ollivander's in Universal also mimics the tiny, yet tall proportions of the store, making it seem larger than it is and the sheer number of wands insurmountable. The materials and interior architecture within the shop also enhances the experience for guests. Most of the shop is made to feel like it is built from a dark grey/green wood with a spindly staircase to Ollivander's office. The interaction with the wand maker mixed with the shop's atmosphere is what awakens the magic for the guests. In the Wizarding World of Harry Potter one child, around Harry's age, is chosen from the group to go through the wand choosing process with the wand-maker.

Special effects mimic Harry's experience as the child attempts to use wand after wand with no success. Some of the events that occur in the park as a child tries out a wand is a vase breaking, wand boxes rattling, and lights flickering. Although these effects are not due to the supernatural child, it is still magical to try to understand what triggers these effects. When the child finally receives a wand that has “chosen” them the lights become warmer and brighter and a wind seems to sweep through the store, exactly how it is played out when Harry finds the right wand for him. It is in these interactive moments where guests are invited into the story to create memories and take them outside of the real world. This precedent shows how a story-driven experience design can be just as important as rides in a theme park and what details are needed to make it successful.



Figure 7: Boy at the Wizarding World of Harry Potter trying out wands (<https://i.ytimg.com/vi/jcnuuZfFN-c/maxresdefault.jpg>)



Figure 8: Harry Potter finding his wand in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (<http://www.asynt.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/HP-with-wand.jpeg>)

MEOW WOLF

Meow Wolf in Santa Fe labels itself as an “immersive art installation filled with technology, and fantastic environments to inspire visitors of all ages. . . and is a unique combination of children’s museum, art gallery, jungle gym, and fantasy novel” (Meow Wolf, 2017). Analee Newitz, *ars Technica* writer, describes her experience at Meow Wolf as “a weirder Disneyland,” but it is more than that (1, 2016). While Disney’s main goal was to create an orderly, controlled experience, Meow wolf seeks to allow visitors to “choose his or her own path through the 20,000-sq. ft. exhibition (Marling 52, 1997; Meow Wolf, 2017).

The House of Eternal Return, created from

a run-down bowling alley, is their first permanent exhibit and stands as a concert venue and a space for visiting artists to showcase their work (Meow Wolf, 2017). Meow Wolf describes the exhibit as “a form of non-linear storytelling that unfolds through exploration, discovery, and 21st century interactivity” (2017). The base premise of the House of Eternal Return is to discover what occurred in the Selig family’s Victorian house that caused the dissolving nature of time and space (Meow Wolf, 2017). Neon trees surround the outside of the house, rippling ceiling and floor visually connect the dining room with the bathroom while fireplaces and refrigerators are portals to another part of the house. The overall darkness in the environment hides the shape of the larger building, housing the Selig’s house, and highlights the pieces



Figure 9: Outside the House of Eternal Return (http://culturepop.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/wolf_1.jpg)

we are meant to be looking at, similar to the design of Peter Pan's Flight. Each room is a journey through contrasting colors, and at times no color at all, creating a visual feast for the eyes. In addition to the visual experience in Meow Wolf, visitors are encouraged to touch everything (Newitz, 2016). There are entire walls with various textures and objects that beg to be touched and every kitchen cupboard and dresser drawer and meant to be opened and explored. Although the rooms within the house seem unrelated and sporadic, "each part of the space, and every object, fits into a coherent, well-planned story" (Newitz 2, 2016). Newitz also describes a personal experience she has within "the teenage girl's room" (see Figure 12) of the House of Eternal Return where there are posters of an imaginary band, Dance, Dance, Revolution curtains, and a bed covered in frills (2016). After examining this room and speculating how it fits into the Selig's story, Newitz writes that "at some point the weirdness will get to you and pierce your heart and make you forget that the Selig's aren't real" (2016). The visitor has forgotten their place in the real world for a brief period of time and fully embraced The House of Eternal Return as truth. It is the careful attention to detail that brings the entire experience together. Meow Wolf utilizes the five senses, particularly sight and touch to create an interactive experience that draws visitors into the story of the House of Eternal Return.



Figure 10: Bathroom with ripples inside the House of Eternal Return (<http://weburbanist.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/house-of-eternal-return-5-468x312.jpg>)



Figure 11: Walls that react to visitor's touch (<https://i.pinimg.com/236x/56/21/ae/5621ae7fb17add40c479a20285c34ecc--santa-fe-nm-meow-wolf-santa-fe.jpg>)



Figure 12: Teenage Girl's Room (http://cdn.arstechnica.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/LKIMG_3094-980x653.png)



Figure 14: Nature overgrowing the buildings and Totoro greeting guests into the museum (http://meggiluhouse.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/meggilu_studiohibli5.jpg)

THE STUDIO GHIBLI MUSEUM

The Studio Ghibli Museum memorializes Miyazaki films through exhibits that portray the making of the films as well as artifacts hidden throughout the space. This museum redefines what a museum can be and showcases Miyazaki's attention to detail, not only in his films, but in his architecture as well. Studio Ghibli is the production company that Hayao Miyazaki worked with to create his films. The museum is not a theme park, but has been described as "a building that is equal parts art gallery, funhouse, and shrine to the studio's work" (Collin, 2013). It is a space dedicated to the Studio Ghibli films like Kiki's Delivery Service, My Neighbor Totoro, and Castle in the Sky and is a "portal to a storybook world" where "visitors take the position of the main characters" (Miyazaki 15, 2014). Patrons are meant to "get lost together," exploring the grounds at the visitor's own

will (Studio Ghibli Museum, 2017). This pulls on Disney's idea of letting guests use their imagination within the safety of a contained environment (Cavallaro, 2006).

The Studio Ghibli museum welcomes visitors with a "stuffed toy," a "huge, furry, grey-faced, black-whiskered, owlish creature" which appears in the opening credits of every Studio Ghibli movie (Gatti, 2009; Collin, 2013). This is Totoro, the giant cat-like spirit from My Neighbor Totoro. After entering, visitors receive a film strip ticket with a clip from a Ghibli movie on it.

Hayao Miyazaki helped design the museum through preliminary sketches and its location in the corner of Inokashira Onshi Park. This is "an unusually 'green' anime site for Tokyo" whereas most anime attractions are in a suburb or city (Denison, 2010). This follows Miyazaki's film's themes, focusing on nature, rather

than the city. The exterior of the museum is enveloped in vines and other plant life, turning most of the buildings green. Underneath the vegetation is “a glorious Gaudi-esque castle of bulges, turrets, and portals, stained yellow, green and purple, with shrubs sprouting from the rooftops and climbers reaching out across the walls” (Gatti, 2006). Bright colors and curved walls also help to emphasize the “pro-environment motifs and plot lines” (Denison, 2010). The robot from Castle in the Sky guards the rooftop garden where wild grass, and elevation create the illusion that visitors are not even in the museum anymore, but in the park instead (Studio Ghibli Museum, 2017).

The interior has traces of Miyazaki from the architectural style of the central hall paralleling the inside of the bathhouse in *Spirited Away* to the cat faucets at the Straw Hat Restaurant resembling Jiji from *Kiki's Delivery Service* (appetiteforjapan, 2017). There is a frog animation in the bathroom and imprinted cat paws out-

side the patio (Denison, 2010).

Miyazaki's designs rely on subtle detail to immerse the visitors into his world and his films.

This Studio Ghibli museum blurs the lines between a traditional museum and a theme park, with more interactive experiences and wayfinding, but nowhere near the line of theme parks or immersive art. The environmental themes and geography of the site is just as influential to the design as the minute details throughout the museum. Like his films, Miyazaki focuses on the larger story being told, but supports it through his animated smaller details.



Figure 15: Entry ticket for the Studio Ghibli Museum (appetiteforjapan)



Figure 16: Jiji detail on the faucet at the Straw hat restaurant (appetiteforjapan)

DESIGN STRATEGIES FOR AN IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE

In sum, these four precedents provide an overview of the elements that create a strong immersive experience without the need of rides. I will use these elements in the design of my own theme park through the smaller details to engage visitors on a human scale. These elements were identified as techniques that could be used in a theme park setting, but were not exclusive to rides, or were not generally experienced on rides, giving them further credibility within my theme park.

	Interactive	Purposeful Lighting	Hidden Surprises	Employs Touch
Disneyland		X		
Wizarding World of Harry Potter	X	X	X	
Meow Wolf	X	X	X	X
Studio Ghibli Museum	X		X	X

THEMES FROM MIYAZAKI FILMS

To understand how these design elements could be implemented in the Spirited Away Theme Park design it was essential to analyze the themes in Hayao Miyazaki's films as well as the themes specific to Spirited Away.

Hayao Miyazaki is a Japanese film animation director who is best-known for his work with Studio Ghibli in the late 1980's to 2000's (Cavallaro, 2006). In Japan, Miyazaki is as well-known as J.K. Rowling or Steven Spielberg in the U.S. and has also garnered attention in the West when the studio allowed Disney distribution rights for several of his most well-known films (Cavallaro, 2006; Denison, 2017). Currently, many Americans are intrigued with Japanese culture and the anime industry. This fascination has grown to continuing to screen his past films in American theaters today and encouraging cosplaying of his characters at comic conventions. His work ranges between fantasy, realistic, and science fiction, but all are meant for viewers to reconsider animated films as "just for kids." Cavallaro states that Miyazaki's films "tackle philosophical and political questions of grave relevance to today's world" making viewers aware of "issues that reflect us all" (46, 2015).

It is due to this popularity that it was announced that a Studio Ghibli Theme park will be open to the public in 2020. Its designated location is in the Aichi Expo Memorial Park, also known as Morikoro Park in Mideastern Japan. The tourist site is 185 hectares and already consists of a waterpark, swimming pool, memorial center and much more. The park also contains Mei and Satsuki's House from the

Hayao Miyazaki film My Neighbor Totoro. This structure helped determine the location of the coming Hayao Miyazaki Theme Park.

It was important to incorporate the overall themes from Miyazaki's films as well as the ones specific to Spirited Away to emphasize the reoccurring motifs within all of Hayao Miyazaki's films, but also understand the themes that make Spirited Away different from his other films and specific for the portion of the theme park being designed.

Each of his ten main films tells a different story, but they all have persistent themes running throughout. Environmentalism, strong female heroines, and overall moral ambiguity are all prominent themes running throughout his films (Cavallaro, 2013; Reinders, 2016; Osmond, 2008).



Figure 17: The stink spirit expelling all of the objects that were clogging up his river (<https://madeleineinspiredaway.files.wordpress.com/2016/04/figure-4b.png?w=700>)

ENVIRONMENTALISM

Environmental themes present in Spirited Away are shown through the two river spirits histories and the jibe at Japan's 'bubble economy' at the beginning of the film. As Chihiro is catering to spirits in the bathhouse, she receives the arduous

task of bathing the “stink spirit” whose “smell is so awful it makes hair stand on end” (Reinders 38, 2016). After Chihiro notices a “thorn” in the spirits side she and the other bathhouse works end up pulling out “a bicycle, a playground slide, car tires. . . a fridge, a toilet, a traffic light” (Reinders 38, 2016). This symbolizes the items that get thrown into rivers and are forgotten about; out of sight, out of mind, until the stench becomes unbearable and we must do something about it. Haku, Chihiro's friend, also turns out to be a river spirit. He has forgotten his original identity because his river has been paved over and built upon (Osmond, 2008). Miyazaki uses Chihiro's father to emphasize the disregard modern-day Japan has on its environment. He assumes that the run-down buildings the family encounters after leaving the red building are a “derelict theme park” that “went down with the economy” (Osmond 17, 2008; *Spirited Away*, 2001). He is referring to the considerable number of postwar buildings that destroyed both Japan's heritage and landscape (Osmond, 2008).

STRONG FEMALE CHARACTERS

Hayao Miyazaki is also famous for his spotlight on the strong, intelligent, female

feminine heroines he creates. He does this through younger women or children that use their gentleness and nurturing nature to conquer the fears and challenges put in front of them. *Spirited Away* centers on on 10-year old Chihiro who begins as a sulky brat but transforms into a confident young woman in the end. Miyazaki also works to destroy the myth that if a male and female appear on screen together, they must develop a romantic relationship. Haku and Chihiro are primarily friends and support for one another through their journeys and although “love” heals Haku according to Kamaji it is clear this is not romantic love, but deep friendship love that has transcended space and time (Osmond, 2008).

AMBIGUITY

Moral ambiguity and overall plot confusion on who is the “good” and “bad” guy and what the “point” of the movie is, are staples of Hayao Miyazaki movies, making the films the topic of many debates whether his films are creative genius or poor storytelling (Reinders, 2016). Reinders goes as far to state that “this ambiguity is essential to the films” (56, 2016). Critic Stephanie Zacharek, disagrees, describes “Miyazaki's storytelling style as. . .that of



Figure 18: Chihiro sulking in the back of her parent's car (<https://i.pinimg.com/originals/6d/4f/0b/6d4f0bf5341fca457b7cd5e5bbe96fde.jpg>)

Figure 19: Chihiro staring determinedly out the window of the train (<http://moviemezzanine.com/wp-content/uploads/spirited-10-1024x552.png>)

a breathless young tot. . . and that his narratives are wriggly, noodle-shaped things" (2005). Either way the ambiguous plots allows for exploration of the meaning and style behind Miyazaki's films. In the case of *Spirited Away*, Miyazaki's intention was for the viewers to see the world through Chihiro's "bubbling spontaneity" (Osmond, 2008). Another reason Western viewers might find Miyazaki's films difficult to interpret is that they are not done in the classic fairytale fashion. Miyazaki does not usually have clear villains, but characters where their reasons for their actions lie in the gray area of right and wrong. Yubaba, is the perfect example of a character that could be viewed as someone running a hectic business and cannot tolerate laziness or unwillingness to work. The villain generally turns out to be humanity and our failure to work harmoniously with the world we are given (Reinders, 2016). Miyazaki's films also offer up "emotional advice" like "don't give up! Persevere, even if you're unappreciated. Don't be quick to judge others. And most fundamentally: live!" rather than moral lessons like "be a good person and good things will happen" or "work hard and you will succeed" (Reinders 58, 2016). Despite Miyazaki's morally complex films, it is a theme that ties the films together along with his emphasis on strong female characters, and desire to see humans and nature working together.

SPIRITED AWAY

Spirited Away is one of Miyazaki's most well-known films in the west sharing the Golden Bear at the 2002 Berlin Film Festival and winning the Best Animated Feature Academy Award (Osmond, 2008). It came out in Japan around the same time as *Shrek* and *The Simpsons* in America where there was a vast difference in the types of films that were being released around the world. America was creating films with "dual-response jokes and references" to make the films enjoyable for both adults and children (Osmond 18, 2008). Miyazaki produced the opposite, stating that *Spirited Away* would be "for the people who used to be ten years old, and the people who are going to be ten years old" (Miyazaki 23, 2014). The film is seen as the Japanese Alice in Wonderland where a young girl stumbles upon an alternate world and faces many trials and challenges before returning to the real world (Cavallaro, 2006). This film was ideal for a theme park grounded in the story due to its ambiguous nature within the plot to parallel what could occur in the physical world. The strong settings and Miyazaki's detailed animation style also brought a lot of detail to the overall design of the park, giving it a strong sense of presence and a consistent style.

Spirited Away revolves around 10-year old Chihiro who finds herself trapped in the spirit world and must save her parents who have been transformed into pigs. She learns from her friend Haku that she must receive a job from the intimidating owner of the bathhouse, Yubaba, who steals her name and renames her Sen. Chihiro meets many strange characters throughout her time at the bathhouse, but in the end, is able to recover Haku's identity, redeem the spirit No-Face, and

save her parents before returning to the human world.

There are themes of identity, greed and isolation, and loss of past that are specific to the film *Spirited Away* in addition to the larger films' themes.



Figure 20: Yubaba stealing Chihiro's name
(<https://forestofjapan.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/yubaba-stealing-name.png>)

IDENTITY

There are many themes that are specific to *Spirited Away*. Miyazaki focuses on identity, isolation, and loss of the past. Identity is made clear the minute Yubaba steals Chihiro's name. This is how Yubaba controls people and ensures that Chihiro must work to prevent being turned into a pig. In the film, names are a character's identity. Reinders even goes so far as to state that "[humans] have to find some connections to [their] past in order to have an identity" (57, 2016). Haku does not fully realize who he is or his past until Chihiro remembers falling into a river and being safely washed to shore, that he is the Kohaku river. His name, and thus his memories were taken by Yubaba. Chihiro, in return, only remembers her actual name, when Haku presents her with her old clothes and the letter from her friend with her name on it; memories of the past give the characters clues to



Figure 21: Yubaba scaring Chihiro as she pleads for a job in the bathhouse (<https://haleyg7.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/chihiro-yubaba-spirited-away.jpg>)



Figure 22: Zeniba serving food to Chihiro and No-Face (<http://nerdist.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Spirited-Away.jpg>)

their identity. Chihiro finds her identity in her name so important that she tells Zeniba at the end "I want you to know my real name. It's Chihiro" (Spirited Away, 2001). Chihiro learns responsibility and maturity through her name Sen, but she is Chihiro through it all. The film begins and ends with Chihiro, but with a different identity at the end, after all her experiences.

Even before Chihiro signs her name away, there are other examples of a split identity to understanding the duality within every person. Haku is the first human-like person Chihiro meets and seems helpful and protective at first, but ignores Chihiro in the presence of Yubaba ordering her to "Call [him] Master Haku" (Reinders, 2016, Miyazaki, 2001). This duality is blatantly found in Yubaba and her twin sister Zeniba, who are "two halves of a whole" as Zeniba describes them (Miyazaki 2001). They are nothing alike with menacing Yubaba who is greedy and power hungry, living in luxury at the top of the bathhouse with multiple workers underneath her, while Zeniba lives in a secluded cottage satisfied with her simplistic lifestyle. Cavallaro takes this analysis further and asserts that these split personalities are perhaps our own work versus home self, and can be found in everyone (2015).

GREED & ISOLATION

Greed is a prevalent theme throughout Spirited Away beginning with Chihiro's parents eating food that is not theirs, to the bathhouse workers obsession with the gold No-Face drops. The underlying theme that is less clear is the isolation that stems from the greed (Cavallaro, 2006). Chihiro is alone at the beginning of the film through her attitude and unwillingness to follow her parents into the tunnel; she remains isolated at the end of the film, losing her Bathhouse friends and her memories. The theme of loneliness is portrayed most clearly through the spirit No-Face, or Kaonashi (Cavallaro, 2015). He is a mysterious spirit that has taken a liking to Chihiro after she lets him into the bathhouse. Miyazaki compares this to other people that want to "glom onto someone, but have no sense of self" (2001). No-Face's shapeless form, blank face, and occasional invisibility personify the concept of isolation. Searching for a friend, he discovers that the bathhouse workers will supply him with food and attention if he gives them gold. He swallows some of the workers, ingesting their greedy nature and becoming as selfish as any of them. After terrorizing the bathhouse, "he continually [yearns] to establish some kind of connection with Sen [Chihiro] as his last hope of transen-



Figure 23: No-Face attempting to win Chihiro's friendship through gold, while Chihiro looks upon him confused (<http://scoopempire.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/4a3c729325d098930b8c27054eb12f59.jpg>)



Figure 24: No-Face as a monster of greed (http://31.media.tumblr.com/c2c99a0dfe72c66d77af5ae6746a518f/tumblr_inline_n7bwyZUSJ11sf0slg.png)

ding his crippling solitude" (Cavallaro 73, 2015). No-Face only finds an antidote to his loneliness by being separated from the bathhouse and befriending Zeniba in her humble home. Haku and Chihiro are also seen as isolated, with Chihiro being out of place in the spirit world and with Haku's loss of name and identity. They work together to find each other's identities through their relationship, rather than their isolation (Reinders 2016).

LOSS OF PAST

Another theme that is prevalent throughout the film is loss of the past. This is an idea Miyazaki represents through the way we treat the environment as well as our constant push towards the future. The criticism of Japan's history begins after Chihiro's family exits the red building to find run-down buildings. Osmond sees Miyazaki as animating a "silent corrective to the modern world at the other end of the tunnel" (2008). Chihiro's father, very much a part of the present day, does not see the history of Japan, but rather an abandoned theme park that "went down with the economy" (*Spirited Away*, 2001). Miyazaki shows his distaste for this period in Japan's history where the economy had complete disregard for the effects they were having on the environment.

The bathhouse is another symbol for the past being taken over by the present. The building draws on inspiration from the Edo-Tokyo Open Air Architectural Museum (Cavallaro, 2015). This museum showcases buildings that were "relocated or reconstructed" to preserve materials and architecture that would have been "erased" by "wars, urban development or natural catastrophes" (Cavallaro 43, 2006). In addition to the bathhouse's Japanese origins, it also draws on "pseudo-Western buildings from the prewar decades when Japan modernized and Westernized" showing more of the presence overtaking the past (Osmond, 2008). Miyazaki works to keep the history of Japan alive through his own films and animations.

The stink spirit/river god and Kohaku's river are another example of Miyazaki's disdain for forsaking our past and moving too quickly into the future without considering the consequences. The stink spirit holds objects that humans "forget about" which brings up the idea that Miyazaki feels humans are not only disregarding the past, but forgetting about it as well (Reinders, 2016). The Kohaku River is another example where a river has been filled in due to the economy boom (Osmond, 2008).

Miyazaki comments on the idea of memory and loss when Chihiro sits in Zeniba's cottage worrying about the well-being of Haku. She pleads to Yubaba if she can tell her when they met before but Zeniba merely replies with the riddled line "Nothing that happens is ever forgotten, even if you can't remember it" (*Spirited Away*, 2001). This alludes to the fact that Chihiro does not actually forget meeting Haku, but needs the experience of riding on his back as a dragon to stir up the memory of being washed ashore by his river. Reinders further analyzes this line to mean that our actions have the ripple effect and that even if we forget something, someone else does not (2016). Miyazaki brings up the theme of the loss of our past through history and forgetting moments of our life to share his views of humanity's desire to progress without always considering the consequences.

JAPANESE CULTURE

Spirited Away has been dubbed in English and is well-known in the West, yet

its original audience is Japanese viewers. There are only so many references Westerners can understand from *Spirited Away*, while Japanese audiences recognize them immediately. Steve Alpert, Vice President of Studio Ghibli, notes that "[He's] seen *Spirited Away* in many different countries" and "every single time [he] sees it in Japan, the audience is crying when the lights come up, without fail. It is a constant in Japan up, without fail. It's a constant in Japan you don't see elsewhere" (presentation, Osmond Andrew, 2008). Miyazaki sees this emotion tied to nostalgia as *Spirited Away* represents an older Japan and that "perhaps they were reminded of their own childhoods" (12, 2002).

As Chihiro's family goes off the beaten path into the woods, foreigners and Japanese alike will recognize the archetype of leaving the normal and entering the strange, but Japanese viewers get another clue with the Shinto gateway the family passes through; this symbolizes a portal that links humans to the spirited world (Osmond, 2008). Although many speculate that the crea-



Figure 25: Edo-Tokyo Open Air Architectural Museum (<https://svcstrg2.navitime.jp/curation/img/NTJarea0065-en/NTJarea0065-en6.jpg>)



Figure 26: The bathhouse in *Spirited Away* (http://images.fanpop.com/images/image_uploads/Spirited-Away-spirited-away-544731_402_500.jpg)



Figure 27: View of the city as Chihiro and her family drive by (<https://www.awn.com/sites/default/files/styles/original/public/image/attached/1024700-spiritedawaybackgroundart-02.jpg?itok=G4c8Relj>)



Figure 28: Kasuga mask spirits exiting the ferry to go to the bathhouse (<https://vignette.wikia.nocookie.net/spiritedaway/images/9/95/Kasuga.png/revision/latest?cb=20130522190158>)

tures/spirits in the bathhouse seem to derive from Japanese folklore, Miyazaki states that the majority of the creatures are from his own invention (Osmond, 2008). The only Japanese reference is through the first guests that come off the boat to enter the bathhouse. They are phantom-like creatures with white Kasuga masks that are inspired by rituals performed in Japanese shrines (Cavallaro, 2006). They are meant to look distinctly Japanese to anchor foreigners and Japanese audiences for the fantastical creatures to come (Osmond, 2008). There are other smaller scenes where Japanese viewers might have more of an insight to the film. When Chihiro learns to work by scrubbing floors, it reminds Japanese viewers of a chore chore they did as children in class and as Chihiro gratefully eats the riceball Haku offers her, it is reminiscent of bento lunches lunches that Japanese parents make

for children (Osmond, 2008). One of the largest parallels to Japanese culture Western viewers might not catch onto is the symbolism of the train skimming the water Chihiro and company takes to Yubaba's cottage at the end of the film (Osmond, 2008). This scene parallels the fantasy novella, *Night on the Galactic Railroad* that relies on Buddhist beliefs where the "central image is of a steam train bearing the souls of the dead down the banks of the shining river of the Milky Way" (Osmond 45, 2008). This signifies the true end to Chihiro's journey, as she is taken away from the bathhouse and transformed into her new self; everything that happens after is epilogue (Miyazaki, 2001; Osmond, 2008). These cultural differences are not so large that they make the film unenjoyable for foreign viewers, but give the film more richness and historical commentary for Japanese viewers.



Figure 29: Passengers on the steam train in *Night on the Galactic Railroad* (https://i.ytimg.com/vi/eepekXc_6dho/hqdefault.jpg)

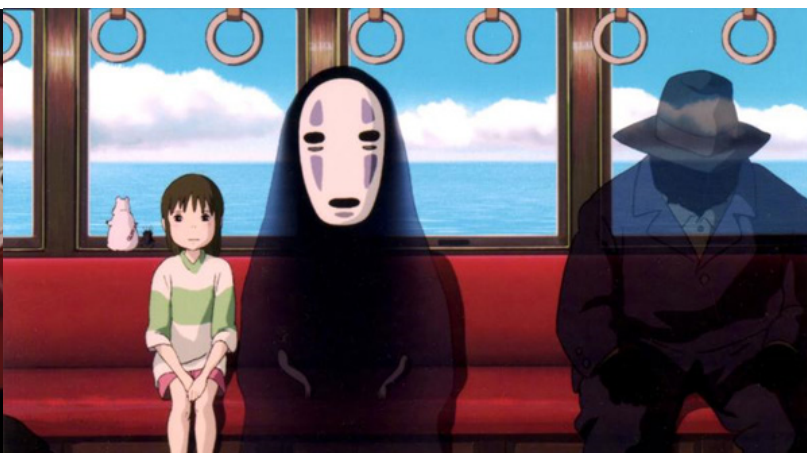


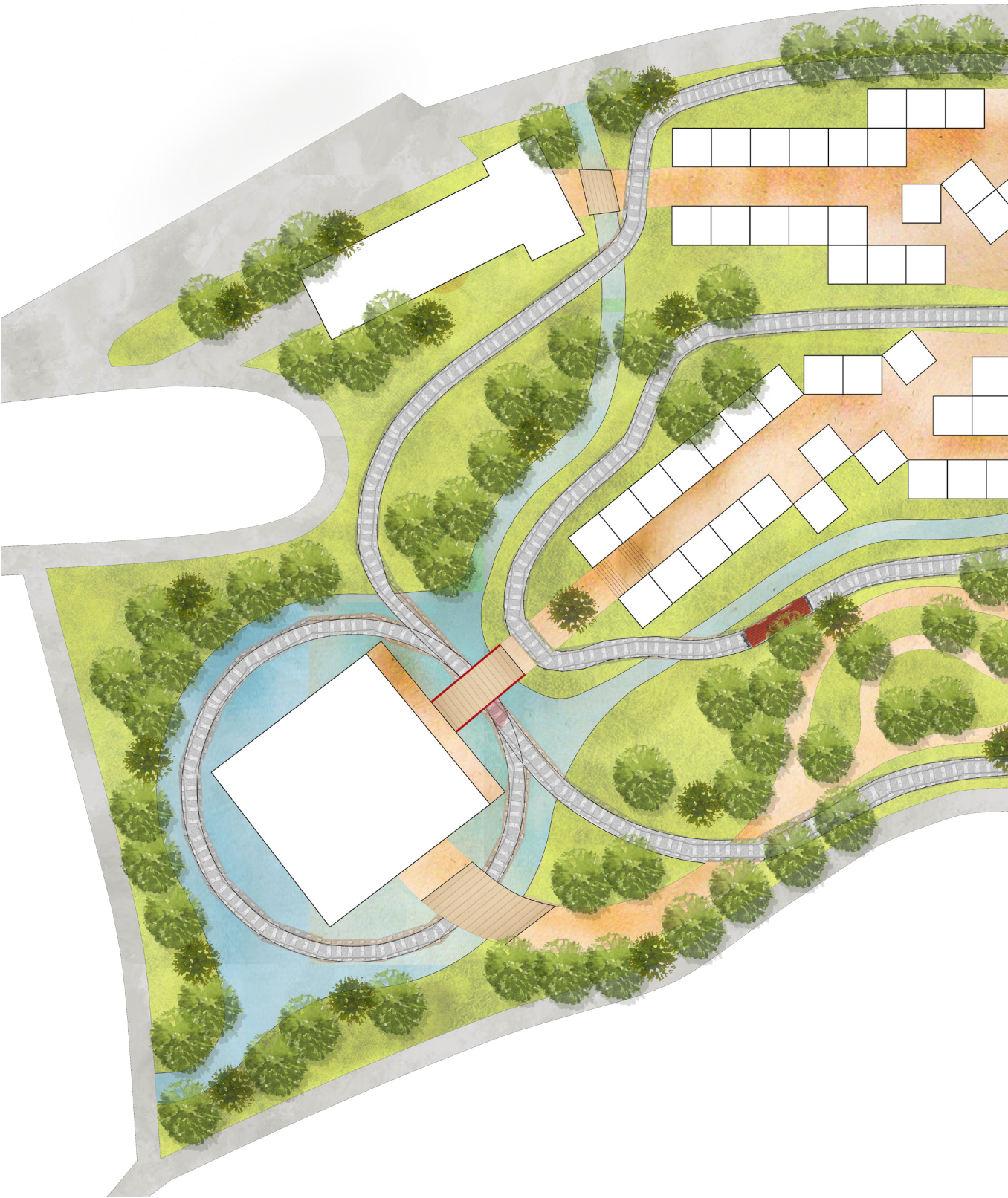
Figure 30: Chihiro and No-Face taking the train to Zeniba's cottage (<http://www.neontommy.com/sites/default/files/users/user535/spirited-away-1.jpg>)

UNDERSTANDING THE SITE

Understanding the film and its themes allowed me to work with the existing landscape to determine the best locations for the different settings throughout the film. The site currently has two main access points from the north and an existing ticket booth for the Totoro House as well as a café. The site is around 550 sq miles which is much smaller compared to other theme parks at less than a quarter mile across in both directions. From designer Takumi's inspirational layout, it seems that there will be multiple lands within the park that correlate to different films.

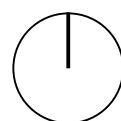
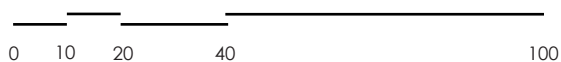
When determining the best location for the Spirited Away portion of the park the current pathways, water sources, and existing foliage were considered. Following Miyazaki's environmental values, it was important to maintain the existing trees and redirect the water only as needed. The ideal location was the northern portion of the site near the ticket booth. This was to create the feeling that guests were entering the "spirit world" into the theme park like Chihiro enters the spirit world from the real world. This location has an existing marshy area with available ditches to create a small pond and stream system; there are fewer trees than the rest of the site which allows for more infrastructure without clear-cutting. The site is split north and south with trees on the south side and barren land to the north and sloping down towards the south where the existing marsh is. The existing landscape mimicked the concept of transformation by contrasting the industrial with the environment in various parts of the site.

SPIRITED AWAY PLAN





- 1 | ENTRANCE
- 2 | MARKETPLACE
- 3 | TRAIN
- 4 | BRIDGE
- 5 | BATHHOUSE
- 6 | FOREST PATH
- 7 | ZENIBA'S COTTAGE



DESIGN PRINCIPLES THROUGHOUT PARK



INTERACTIVE

Interactivity can be found throughout the park to engage guests within the various settings. Guests can eat food to enter the spirit world, help Kamaji to move on to next room, pull bath tokens to create various water effects, and sign their name to Yubaba.

Entrance, Marketplace, Bathhouse

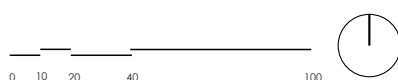
UTILIZING THE SENSES

Guests can experience their senses, other than sight, through the texture of the buildings and warmth or breeze in various location and the sound of character's voices and underlying songs throughout the park. Guests can taste and eat the food within the park and enjoy the smell of cooking food and gag at the smell of rotting food in the bathhouse.

Entrance, Marketplace, Bathhouse, Zeniba's Cottage



- 1 | ENTRANCE
- 2 | MARKETPLACE
- 3 | TRAIN
- 4 | BRIDGE
- 5 | BATHHOUSE
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- 7 | ZENIBA'S COTTAGE



PURPOSEFUL LIGHTING

Both the inside and outdoor areas have purposeful lighting to enhance the scenes guests walk through. The marketplace has red glowing lanterns that light up at dusk, the bathhouse has varying lighting effects to emphasize the way guests are meant to feel inside a space and the forest path has twinkling lights strung throughout the trees.

Marketplace, Bathhouse, Forest Path

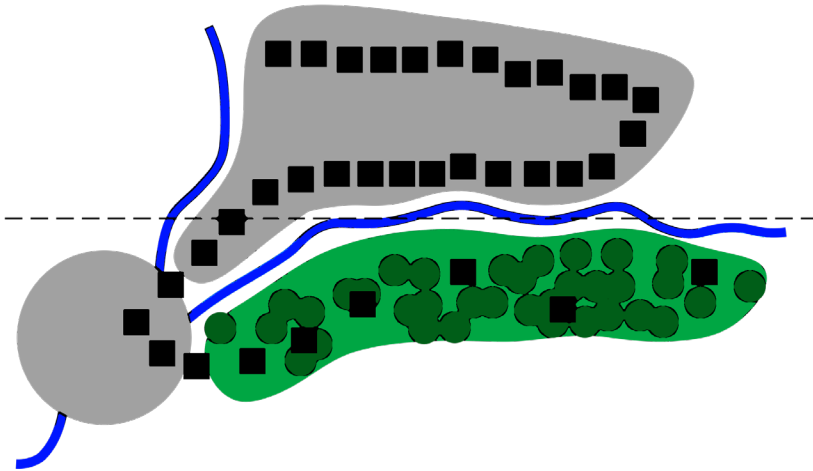
HIDDEN SURPRISES

The various settings within the park will give subtle nods to the film in smaller details as well as to Japanese culture overall. Many of the signs will be replicas of the ones animated for the film and characters will be wandering the park, less as costumed actors, but attempting to blend in with the guests. Images seen in the film, but don't have a large role in the theme park, will appear, such as the flying paper men that chase Haku and Haku in his dragon form.

Entrance, Marketplace, Bathhouse, Forest Path, Zeniba's Cottage

THEMES THROUGHOUT THE DESIGN

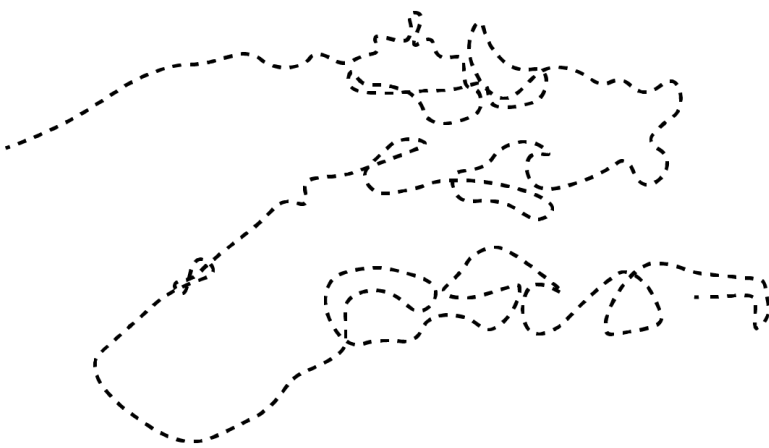
ENVIRONMENTALISM



The theme park embodies environmentalism by designing with the existing landscape and creating a space where the result of humans' impact on nature is prominent

- Trash filled river vs. pure river
- Preserving the existing landscape and creating a more harmonious landscape where possible
- Juxtaposition of marketplace and forest; rigid and angular path vs. relaxed and curvy paths

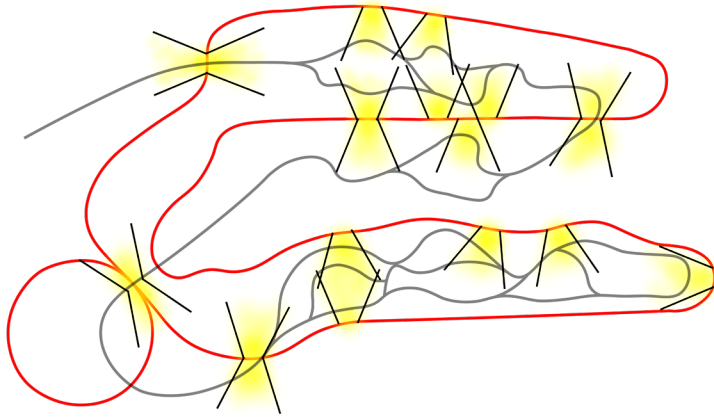
AMBIGUITY



The theme park creates ambiguity through the procession of guests throughout the park.

- Maze-like wayfinding to allow people to choose their own paths and explore where they want to go
- Feeling of getting lost in the park and not knowing exactly where you are at any given time
- Back-tracking paths and unclear route to bathhouse

IDENTITY



Guests have the opportunity to reflect on their own identities and how the experience in the park has impacted them in any way through multiple modes of transportation.

- Users can ride the ever-present train throughout the park to provide a different perspective and experience than just exploring the park on foot
- Guests can assist Haku and No-Face along the way to help them find their true identity

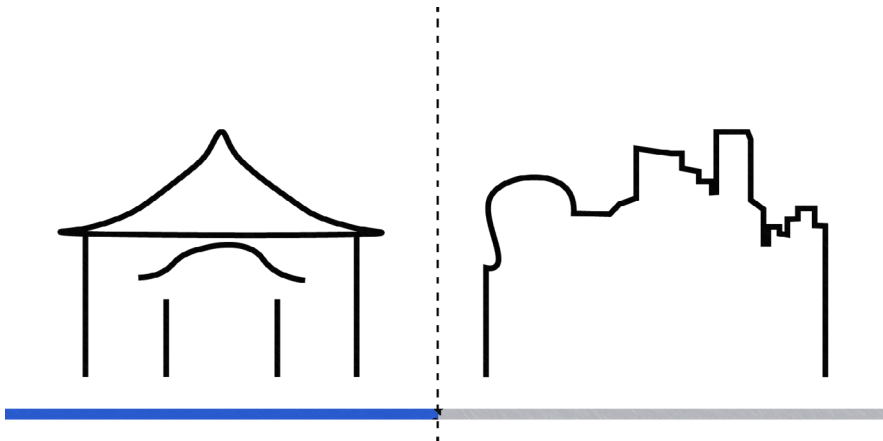
GREED & ISOLATION

Paralleling to the film, greed grows exponentially throughout the park beginning in the marketplace and reaching its peak in the bathhouse.

- Food and merchandise appealing to guests consumerist nature
- Guests must help cure No-Face of his greed and resist fake gold being offered by actors within bathhouse



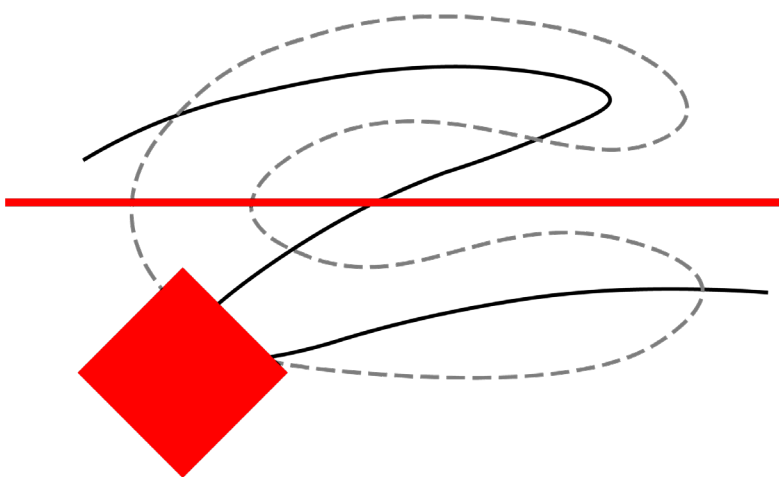
LOSS OF PAST



This theme is apparent throughout the architecture of the buildings in the design as well as the juxtaposition between the varying water qualities.

- Bathhouse is based off of the Edo-Tokyo Open Air Museum resembling traditional Japanese architecture
- Marketplace mimicking old run-down amusement parks in Japan to signify the economy boom
- Clean water near forest path, but dirty near bathhouse and marketplace to represent how rivers and other bodies of water are being impacted by humans

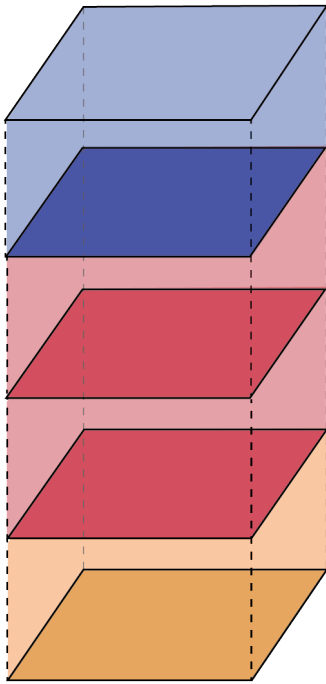
PARTI



The overall design of the plan can be represented through this parti diagram with the overall circulation through the park on foot as well as on train, the division between the natural and the industrial and the bathhouse being the main focal point.

- The color red represents importance to the design and was chosen due to its consistent presence throughout the film
- Dashed line and solid line represent the different modes of travel

CONCEPTUAL LAYOUTS FOR BATHHOUSE



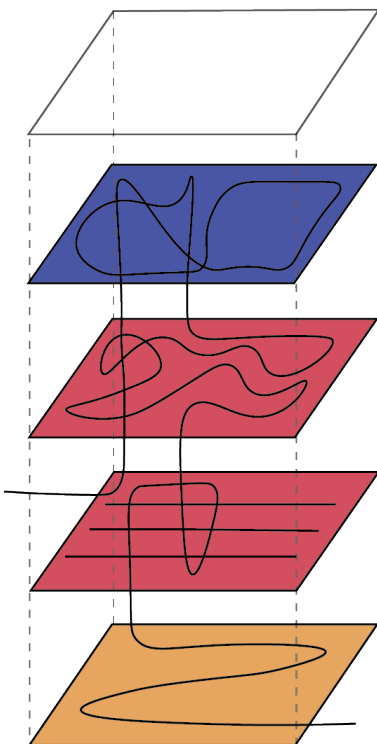
PROGRAM

4th Floor: Yubaba and Boh's room divided in half where guests can explore both rooms and discover more about the complicated villian and her baby

3rd Floor: Chaotic bathhouse where guests see the flipside of the relaxing bathhouse and can attempt to calm No-Face

2nd Floor: Calm bathhouse where guests can enjoy the baths, be pampered, meet bathhouse creatures and explore Chihiro's work world

1st Floor/Basement: Kamaji's Boiler Room where guests can communicate with Kamaji, feel the heat of the flames, and send the correct bath salts up to the second floor guests



CIRCULATION

4th Floor: Guests enter into Yubaba's office, but explore both available rooms

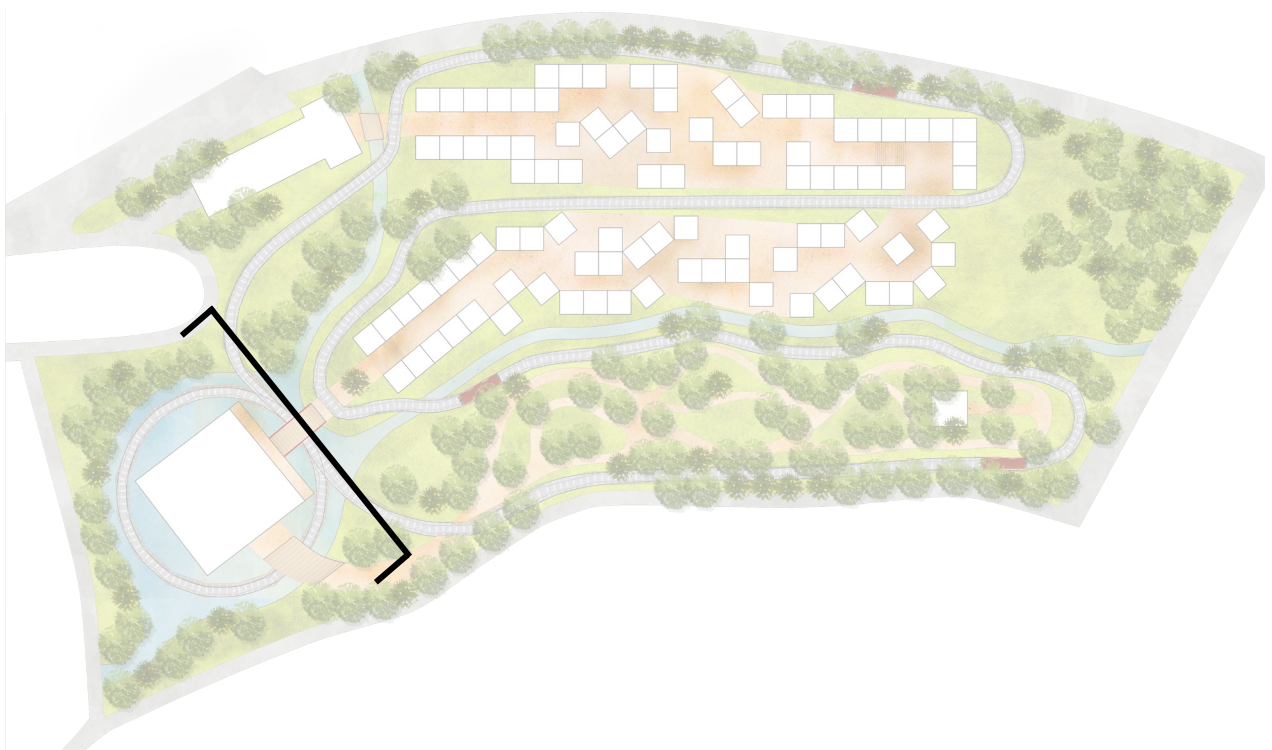
3rd Floor: Guests roam aimlessly through the bathhouse, interacting with No-Face, contrasting the rigidness of the floor below

2nd Floor: Bathhouse is divided into even sections providing more linear circulation

1st Floor/Basement: Guests can move thoroughout the space, generally designed to go back and forth dependent on areas of interest

SECTIONS

SECTION A

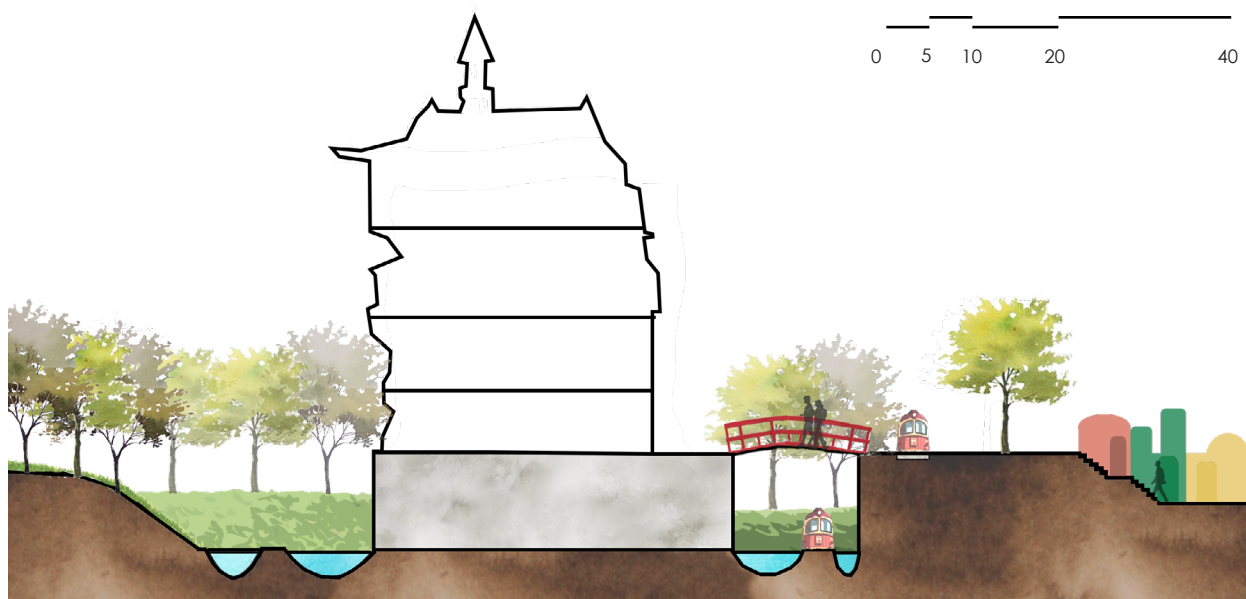


0 5 10 20 40



Section A cuts through the bridge leading up to the bathhouse facing southwest. The section shows the elevation variance as well as an example of how the train and pedestrians intersection.

SECTION B



Section B cuts through the bathhouse from south to north showing the trains circular route around the bathhouse, the tracks on varying elevations, as well as the ascend up from the marketplace to get to the bathhouse.

SECTION C



0 10 20 40 100



Section C cuts through the entire site from west to east showing elevation change throughout the marketplace as well as the views into the marketplace guests might see from the train.

SECTION D



Section D cuts through the entire site from south to north to show the elevation shift from the forest path to the marketplace as well as the density of vegetations vs. buildings.





Perspective of the marketplace as sunset with red lanterns lighting up the maze-like paths. Stands are filled with mouthwatering food and merchandise, while guests fill every available space.



View from the train going under the bridge leading up to the bathhouse gaining a new perspective after crossing the bridge on foot the first time. Bathhouse looms over guests, while native trees create a tunnel.



CONCLUSION

The design examines the elements needed to develop a successful theme park experience without rides through the film *Spirited Away*. Precedent research revealed the design principles that were essential to creating a holistic experience without the thrill of rides. The themes analyzed in the film as well as the storyline shaped the programs and overall layout of the theme park design and added more depth to the existing body of knowledge surrounding the film. Aside from the understanding of the film, my project brings the design of entertainment spaces to the forefront, questioning why theme parks are centered on physical thrills, and how they can be modified to focus on the experience and spaces created from the design, rather than copying what has already been done for future designs. Since there is a Studio Ghibli Theme Park in the making, this design serves as a prototype or precedent for the upcoming design of the park. It is aligned with Hayao Miyazaki's values and reconsiders the design of the classic theme park. It is through the absence of rides that the design can be appropriately critiqued if it is appealing to guests. This project's focus on guest engagement through design provides the opportunity for designers to reconsider and redesign experiential design. My design provides the opportunity to engage with audiences outside the traditional age demographic associated with theme parks that are looking for a deeper cultural and intellectual experience within theme parks to further advance the experience design industry.

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