

PROGRAMMING

▶ DISCOVERING SACRED SPACES

When you begin designing, the possibilities are endless! The tricky part is figuring out how to filter out the good ideas from the not-so-good ones, and making sure that what you end up with actually meets the needs of the project. Designers use a process called programming to learn a great deal of valuable information about the project from their client before they ever start designing. Programming is the process of doing research and asking the right questions in order to make decisions about the design work to be done. Learning about what your client expects to have when your project is built will help you create a design that meets your client's needs in the best way possible. But getting the right information can sometimes be trickier than it seems...

Activity – Twenty Questions

Pick a partner for a game of Twenty Questions. One person should think of an object – any object will do. Using only twenty questions (keep track of how many you use!) try to find out enough information about your partner's object that you can guess what it is. Here's the catch – each question can only be answered "yes" or "no". Did you guess what it was? Now switch roles and try it again!

Variation: Play 20 Questions as a class. Teacher or Architect thinks of the object and answers questions from the class.

Follow-up Discussion: Was it difficult to guess the object with only twenty questions? Why do you think that might be? _____

Did you ask the right questions? What are some important questions to ask?

Go Deeper: Play 20 Questions a second time, same as the first, using a familiar Place instead of an object. Was it easier? or more difficult? Did it take more than 20 questions? Would it be easier or more difficult to figure out a place that doesn't exist yet? How different would it be if the answers could be something other than Yes and No? easier? harder?

Designers seek specific, detailed information from their clients in order to develop some idea about number, type, and nature of the spaces they design. How does it all fit together? What are the most important ideas? And how do you figure out what the right questions are? It's very important to know how to listen to what your client tells you so that you can determine what the most important information is. What things do they focus on – what are they passionate about? What things do they keep coming back to? What can you learn about your client by listening to how they describe the things that are important to them? Keeping these questions in mind will help you filter and organize the information you gather into useful ideas to help you start your design.

Soon you will interview your client to learn about what sorts of things they consider to be a part of their sacred space. Many questions have been provided to help you guide your client on a journey to their sacred space. Ask additional questions whenever you need more information, or if you think of important topics that have not been covered. And be sure to listen closely to what your client has to say about his or her sacred space.

ACTIVITY – SELF ANALYSIS

▶ OUR OWN IDEAS OF SACRED SPACES

Very soon you will be designing a sacred space for your client. First, you should understand what your own sacred space might be like. Answer the following questions to describe what this special place might be like for you.

What types of activities do you do when you want to relax? When you want to have quiet thoughts?

Where do you go when you want to be peaceful? To think? To rest? Do you have a special place to do these things?

Do you go to your sacred space to be away from other people? Or to be near other people? Which people? How many?

Do you visit your space often, or only once in awhile?

What do you see in your sacred space – what does it look like?

Are there sounds or smells that make your space special to you? How does your space feel?

What is the best part about your sacred space?

INTERVIEWING THE CLIENT

▶ WHAT DO OTHERS CONSIDER SACRED?

Now it's time to interview your client. You will learn about what they consider sacred through a series of interview questions. Pay careful attention to the answers, and feel free to add your own questions during the interview to learn more about your client's sacred space.

“Sacred can mean many things to many people. I want to discover what it means to you. The series of questions that I'll be asking you will help us both find out what is sacred to you, and how to make a place that represents those ideas:”

1. Who are you? Tell me something about yourself that makes you a special person.

2. What kinds of things do you like to do? With others? By yourself? Would you rather be alone or with other people?

3. What sorts of things or ideas are important to you? What is the one most important idea in your life?

4. Where do you go when you want to be by yourself? To think? To relax? To reflect?

5. What types of places or activities are peaceful for you?

6. What types of places do you think are awe-inspiring?

GO BACK AND REVIEW THE FIRST 6 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH THE CLIENT TO CONFIRM WHAT YOU RECORDED IS WHAT THEY MEANT. ASK ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS IF YOU DON'T QUITE UNDERSTAND, OR NEED ADDITIONAL DETAILS.

THEN:

“With these answers in mind, I have a few more questions for you that will help me better understand your sacred space. Imagine yourself in this sacred space – I'll ask you about what you experience:”

7. What does it sound like? Is it quiet and still? Are there noises – what sorts of things can you hear?

INTERVIEWING THE CLIENT

▶ WHAT DO OTHERS CONSIDER SACRED?

8. What does it smell like – or taste like? Are there smells or tastes that help define your space?

9. What does it feel like? Hard, soft, textured, smooth – what do you feel around you, under your feet?

10. What do you see? Is it dark or light? Open or closed? Large or small?

11. Will you share your space? Is it someplace special just for you? Are there other people – can it be used by anyone, any time? If so, how many people can use this sacred space?

12. Is it a place you come to frequently, or only very rarely? Why do you come to your sacred space?

13. How does it make you feel? Are you safe and tucked away in your space or is it open and exposed? Does it stimulate your senses or help you to relax?

GO BACK AND REVIEW QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS TO 7 THROUGH 13 WITH THE CLIENT TO CONFIRM WHAT YOU RECORDED IS WHAT THEY MEANT. ASK ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS IF YOU DON'T QUITE UNDERSTAND, OR NEED ADDITIONAL DETAILS.

Can you think of other questions you should ask?

Q. _____

A. _____

Q. _____

A. _____

Q. _____

A. _____

Use extra paper if necessary.