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Sacred Spaces: Designing Emotion Through the Journey of Moses

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ABSTRACT

This paper is about more than designing a space it's about creating a journey people can feel. Inspired by the story of Prophet Moses, this design uses emotion as its foundation. Moses' path was filled with moments we all relate to: freedom, fear, doubt, mistakes, forgiveness, and hope. Rather than just telling that story in words, this project brings it to life through space using light, movement, form, and silence to let people experience those emotions physically and spiritually. The design takes shape on Level 3 of a building in Jalan Ampang, where each area represents a part of Moses' journey. One of the spaces celebrates freedom uses open space and light-filled areas, while another invites quiet reflection and repentance. Every element is meant to speak not just to the eye, but to the heart. This is a space where people can walk, feel the emotion, immerse themselves, and experience. It's not just symbolic; it's personal. The goal is to investigate how the journey of Moses may be used in designing sacred spaces so that it helps individuals feel, reflect, and evolve. In the end, it shows that when design and storytelling come together with purpose, space becomes more than just space it becomes a human experience.

Keywords: *Narrative Theory, Emotional Design, Storyline, Sacred Place, Immersive*

INTRODUCTION

Narrative is also more than the act of retelling a story, tale, or sequence of events. It performs a constitutive role in shaping human experience and engaging emotion. This is not only the case with literary or verbal narrative, but also with activities such as architectural design, which shape perception and call forth strong emotional responses. The Testament of Moses presents a particularly rich narrative context that can be mined not just for theological depth but also for its potential to inform the design of emotionally powerful space. Moses' own journey from the Red Sea flight from Pharaoh to arrival in the Promised Land moves through a series of physical landscapes, each of which has inherent symbolic and emotional resonance.

The life of Moses is a heartwarming story filled with emotion, conflict, and depth. It starts by taking the Israelites out of Egypt, where they had been slaves for generations. Moses stood at the edge of the sea, holding his staff, trusting completely in Allah. Then came the miracle the sea split wide open, rising like huge walls on both sides. With hearts pounding, the people of Bani Isra 'il men, women, and children ran through the dry path. They had been scared for so long, but now there was hope. Behind

them, Pharaoh and his army were chasing fast. But just as the last person crossed safely, the sea came crashing down, drowning the army in an instant. In those final moments, Pharaoh was no longer powerful or proud. Afraid and desperate, he cried out, “I believe in the God of the Children of Israel!” But it was too late. He only believed when he saw death, not from real faith and Allah did not accept his repentance (Surah Yunus 10:90–92). It is a moment great joy and freedom. They thank God, not just for saving their lives, but also for starting a new relationship with them. (IslamHouse, n.d.; Ustaz Wadi Annuar (2022). But things don’t stay easy for long. While they journey through the desert, the people become exhausted, terrified, and confused.

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVE

Most space today is only meant to look traditional or symbolic but not to get people to feel profound emotions or connect intimately with their anticipation. The story of Moses' life is full of powerful moments: freedom, fear, faith, mistakes, and eventually hope. Those feelings can evoke the design of spaces that guide people through their own faith journey. However, most buildings fail to significantly utilize this narrative. Stories like Moses' journey have an emotionally significant beginning, middle, and end and can be used to create spaces in which individuals can feel and know. This research attempts to investigate how the journey of Moses may be used in designing sacred spaces so that it helps individuals feel, reflect, and evolve. The aim is to create a space that tells a story and that touches the heart.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative design approach, which means studying ideas, emotions, and stories instead of numbers. There are two key methods derived from. Chatman’s (1993) approach to story and discourse narrative structure in fiction, film, and comic strips. There are two steps for the story and discourse narrative structure in fiction and film. The first step (1S), the structural analysis, examines how a story is organized what events occur first, next, and last and how characters and settings are presented within that sequence. The second step (2S) is semiotic analysis, whereas the latter concentrates on the application of signs and symbols in forwarding meaning, with a focus on how visual or verbal components serve as part of a composite system of narratives. Here, both approaches are used in a comic strip examined by Chatman, (1993) that narrates a king who goes to a casino and loses money, pawns his crown, and comes back to gamble. Despite the restricted employment of text, the images tell the story well. This case study confirms that narrative meaning may be clearly constructed with form and visual signals, devoid of words.

1S. Story and Discourse Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film – Element of A Narrative Theory

In Story and Discourse, Chatman, (1993) explains that every narrative consists of two main parts: story and discourse. The story is what happens it includes the events, characters, and settings. For example, in the story of Moses, the crossing of the Red Sea and the arrival at the Promised Land are key events, while Moses and the desert are part of the setting and characters. The discourse is how the story is told this includes the order of events, the narrator’s point of view, the pacing, and how often things are repeated. Chatman’s theory helps us understand that the same story can be told in many ways, each creating different emotional and interpretive effects. This framework is useful for analysing narratives in books, films, and even in design.

Fig. 1 The Formula Elements of a Narrative Theory by Chatman, (1993)

2S. Story and Discourse Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film – Narrative A Semiotic Structure

Chatman, (1993) argues that narrative is a semiotic structure, meaning it communicates meaning through a system of signs like language or images. It has both content (what happens in the story) and expression (how the story is told), each with its own form and substance. This structure allows a story to be told in different media books, films, or even spaces while still conveying the same core meaning. In short, narrative goes beyond words; it's a flexible system for expressing meaning across various forms.

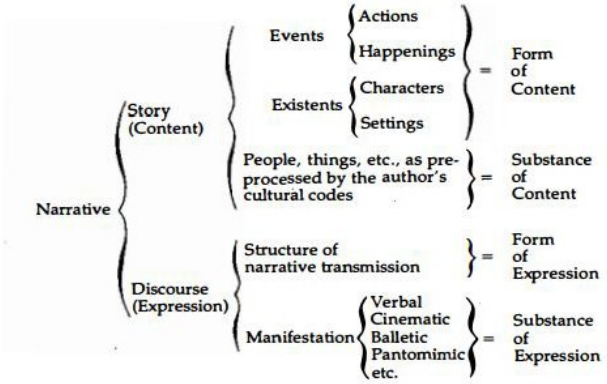

Fig. 3 The Formula Narrative a Semiotic Structure by Chatman, (1993)

SPACE REALIZATION AND FINDINGS

No.	Scene Title	Story Content	Emotional Expression	Design Elements	Spatial Intention
1	Rejoicing in Freedom	Israelites celebrate their escape from slavery	Singing, dancing, unity, divine gratitude	Open space, movement, rhythmic flow, bright lighting	Celebrate freedom and collective joy
2	The Uncharted Path	Confusion and fear in the desert	Silence, uncertainty, tension	Scattered spatial layout, narrow paths, muted tones	Emphasize confusion and spiritual uncertainty
3	Blessings in the Desert	Manna from heaven and divine care	Awe, relief, gratitude	Light from above, open hands gesture, soft textures	Reinforce divine presence and hope
4	Moses' Departure	Moses ascends Sinai to receive revelation	Separation, anticipation, sacred calling	Vertical space, ascending paths, isolation zones	Highlight spiritual distance and elevation
5	The Golden Calf	Idol worship due to fear and impatience	Chaos, betrayal, collective weakness	Circular layout, golden centerpiece, loud contrast	Symbolize distraction and false faith
6	The Broken Tablets	Moses returns and breaks the tablets	Anger, shock, divine judgment	Dramatic motion, strong geometry, breaking visual forms	Convey emotional rupture and moral collapse
7	Moses Returns: The Weight of Truth	Moses confronts the people	Silence, guilt, shame	Stillness, strong central focus, symmetry	Focus attention on truth and accountability
8	Repentance	People seek forgiveness	Kneeling, bowed posture, still, personal prayer	Low ceilings, dim lighting, enclosed spaces	Facilitate inner reflection and humility
9	The Promised Land	Arrival at the end of the journey	Joy, fulfillment, divine promise	Wide-open space, elevated views, sunlight	Inspire hope and spiritual achievement

Table 1. The 9 Scene from The Story of The Prophet Moses

The table 1 created from the analysis based on the story of Prophet Moses acts as a design guide that connects important parts of the story to emotional design ideas. It includes nine key scenes from Moses' journey and looks at each one through five parts. The scene title, what happened (story content), how people felt (emotional expression), what design tools can show those feelings (design elements), and what the space should make people feel (spatial intention). Each scene, like "Rejoicing in Freedom" or "Repentance," shows strong emotions that many people can relate to. These emotions, such as joy, fear, regret, or hope, can be used to shape the feeling of a space. For example, happiness might be shown with an open, bright area, while regret might be shown in a quiet, darker room with low ceilings.

At the spatial realization stage, the research shifts from theory to actual design. In Figure 4 is the development of a spatial layout and 3D render. This sacred space is a representation of Moses' journey in the first scene, called "Rejoicing in Freedom." It shows the joy and relief the Israelites felt after escaping Pharaoh's clutches and being released from their enslaved existence. The design reflects both emotions, as up the concepts in the Table 1.

Fig 4. Layout And 3D Sacred place

The goal is to create spaces that guide people through an emotional and spiritual journey starting with joy, moving through struggle and reflection, and ending in hope. Instead of just using religious symbols or decorations, this design uses emotions, body movement, lighting, and space to help people connect deeply with the story. Overall, the table offers a new way to design sacred spaces. By using stories and emotions as the base.

CONCLUSION

The research conducted displays that narratives can really move people, especially when they are brought to life in space. The design captures real feelings like joy, fear, regret, and hope by following the journey of Prophet Moses. People can feel these things as soon as they walk in. These places aren't just supposed to look like symbolic ornamentation only, but they're supposed to touch people's hearts. For example, "Rejoicing in Freedom" has an open floor plan, bright lighting, and bright colour that makes people feel the relief and joy of being free. When stories are carefully connected into design, a space becomes more than just a place it also becomes a personal journey that encourages people to reflect, reconnect, and find peace within themselves.

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