

Report and Plan for Library Interior

Mangueira Library Interior Design Project
The World of Books

Architecture is always present in peoples' lives

The Library of Mangueira de Botafogo

The library of Mangueira de Botafogo is a small space that has inherited or been donated furniture. Today it is designed with "adult furniture", like tables, chairs, bookshelves, neon lights, etc. and some childrens toys, like a doll house, colored pillows to sit on, baskets with books, etc.

The room does not have a "childrens look". More an "administrative office look" with a playground area. Brown and beige dominates. The first thing you see when you enter the Library are books placed in a very tall old looking brown bookshelf. The books are mostly reference books and are predominately brown leather bounded ones.

We encountered a problem between the community and ciespi. We heard remarks about that we cannot do anything outside the room, and we cannot change anything fundamental within the room and with most of the furniture. This needs a process to get the right people involved within the community, to create an understanding about the interior design project as well as the role and importance of the library in the community.

But it should be said that the children seems very much to love the library, the events and the staff, and that Gabriela is an important and intelligent factor in the work.

The Library of Santa Marta

In Santa Marta there is two small rooms in a basement. The greatest problem there is the humidity. Just a short time after the walls was painted pink the mould began to come through. It is a health threat as the mould flies in the air and is breathed in. It is a very complicated and expensive process to stop the humidity.

The space can host 5-10 children at the time. Outside is a little square with water running through. This has a potential for hosting a small bamboo house (cabana)!

There seems to be a good integration and dialogue between ciespi and the community.

The Process

We have had two meetings to discuss what we want to do. The first was on Saturday the 6.12.2003 with Gabriela, Fabiana, Sara, Janaina and Kenneth. Here we made an analysis of the library and the situation for the library in the community, and came up with some initial ideas for change. The main decision however, was to change the library into a space that developed imagination, was like walking into a book, into a fairytale, an exciting story, an imaginary world; the World of Books.

The second meeting started on that basis. Besides Gabriela, Fabiana, Sara, Janaina and Kenneth, also Fabiana and Sonia from Santa Marta, Anjali and Klaus (architect) participated. This was a great meeting, we had a very fruitful brainstorming process with lots of ideas:

The room would be divided into three themes:

- The house
- The rainforest
- The mountain

and contain the following ideas:

- A house for children made of bamboo with two floors, a place to create a story, and play out “domestic scenes”, e.g. with stove, iron, washing machine, grass, flowers, fence, apple tree, etc.
- Tree trunks to climb in and as support for bookshelves, could be painted in colors
- Rainbow with a treasure chest
- Bookshelf staircases
- Waterfall
- Children size tables and benches/chairs with games (e.g. chess) or patterns painted on them, or tables cut into shapes
- Mobiles like aeroplanes, moon, star, sun, car, butterfly, bird, etc. Fixed with velcro or with rope so that e.g. the aeroplane could be drawn from one end to the other
- Airballoons with books in the basket, that is sitting in the ceiling but can be lowered by realising a rope, could be with light inside
- A theater curtain with a removable hole for puppet theater
- Lighting with bulbs or neon fixed on tree branches
- A hiding place, or boxes which you can open with surprises inside
- Funny shoes for the children and teachers, and a thousand leg (centopéia) that could hold their outdoor shoes
- Pillows in funny shapes like a snake, a heart, ladybird, alligator, etc.
- A swing
- A hamak
- Mirrors in convex and concave forms
- Mountain with trains that transport books
- Entrance door painted as a book
- An outside tree house, from the opening you make a bridge to the big tree to the left that leads into a small wooden or bamboo house

Further development of the ideas

In order for the ideas to work in practice they need to be “qualified” further. This by thinking them towards the aim of the library: To get children interested in books! How do we intelligently and especially empathically get the interior design to lead the children towards the universe of the books?

The Implementation

With the ideas above, Klaus has made an inspirational drawing that illustrates how it can look like. Together with this text it is possible for the communities and cities to build the library interior design.

A fund has been set up with R\$ 1,000 for both the Mangureira de Botafogo and Santa Marta library interiors. The fund is administered by Helmut Batista, Anjali Kaur and Kenneth A. Balfelt. Time and engagement will have to be put in by the community and cities jointly.

It might be possible to get the main part of the materials from the forest behind Mangureira and manpower from volunteers.

Kenneth A. Balfelt
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