**ABSTRACT**

Building as a profession has become more of a rarity, often confined to tourist hubs. The potential audiences are less attentive, busier, and more guarded from the audiences of the building golden age. Designing a space that can better retain audiences could reinvent street performing. The design of 5 street plaza was in response to the success of other public spaces in downtown Davis. Although there is space for street performers, few buskers take advantage of the opportunity. This project will explore how to better design 5 street plaza to attract and retain audiences for street performers. Designing for a street performer program in the center of downtown could transform 5 street plaza into the town center that it was supposed to be, capitalizing on the large student population. A successful design would accommodate for the ephemeral nature of street performance, while providing a flexible space for when it is vacant of busker. City-regulations, case studies, and literature reviews will all inform the final design.

**RESEARCH AND BACKGROUND**

The project recognizes the challenges of the modern-day audience: shorter attention span, less likely to be outside, and increased pace of life. The modern-day audience of a typical busker is less likely to stay and observe, let alone actually bother to pay attention to a busker. A busker may not have a steady audience for their performance if the space does not facilitate audience retention. A space designed specifically for street performance should be able to seemingly merge the two spheres, the sphere of the performer and the sphere of the audience. By blending the two spheres, buskers can take over spaces that are conducive to keeping an audience. This could be a start to reviving the art of busking in using landscape design interventions.

In order to create a successful busking space, there are three main requirements that need to be fulfilled:

1. Spatial identity of a stage within the public sphere
2. Being able to capture the attention of a responsive audience
3. Providing people by high-secured safety and comfort

Another challenge when designing a space for street performers is finding a balance between a constructible space and a flexible space. The impermanence of street performance is a unique characteristic that can easily be ignored when designing a permanent landscape. While there should always be a space waiting for a busker to take over, spaces that are too directed to only be used during a performance can lead to an abandoned installation. Therefore, a successful design should also embrace the ephemeral and individuality of street performance.

Case studies were analyzed in order to provide a better framework for a successful busking space. San Francisco Fisherman’s Wharf, New York Times Square, Inokashira Park in Tokyo, Japan, Hongdae in Seoul, South Korea, and Occidental Park in Seattle, Washington were all case studies that dealt with different aspects of street performance. Policy, people, and form were all studied to inform the final design.

**DESIGN**

**PLAZA ELEMENTS**

1. Smoother seat wall
2. Slot drain with concrete data flush to the drain
3. Raised concrete stage with stage lighting and speaker system
4. Steel roof pitched towards the slot drain
5. Entourage placed in smooth grey concrete
6. Concrete slab identical to the ones along the slot drain, parking lot sidewalk
7. Asphalt parking lot, as-existing
8. Flexible seating placed outside seating establishments
9. Planting: crepe myrtles, fruitless Chinese pistaches and Trident maples, valley oak trees

**SITE ANALYSIS - E STREET PLAZA**

The City of Davis already advocates for the arts, visual and performing. They are already in the process of creating an inventory of public performance spaces that can be reinvented or reimagined (Stevens, 2013). One of these spaces is small camera whereas others are formal stages.

In Downtown Davis, buskers often frequent Davis Commons on 1st Street and Central Park on C St. Both also attract a lot of foot traffic and tend to have people staying for long periods of time. This is due to the adjacent restaurants and their outdoor seating, as in the case of Davis Commons, or because of Farmer’s Markets and other crowd-drawing events, as in the case of Central Park. However, it’s a breathing house frequent 5-o’-clock.

5 Street Plaza falls in the Central Commercial (C-C) zone, which grants more freedoms to the plaza programming and noise limits (City of Davis, 2016). Between 7am and 10pm, the decibel level is at 50, which is like a crowd of conversations like in a restaurant, or non-amplified background music (IAC Acoustics, 2017). As the zoning suggests, most of the buildings are occupied by food or service-related businesses.

Over a span of three weekdays I would sit in the plaza recording people’s behavior. I intentionally only collected data during peak hours to observe the best-case scenario. Observations were taken during the day, between 10am to 1pm, during the months of March and April.

Some important findings were:

1. Many indications showing breach of the reading
2. Perceptibility factor of known parameter
3. But in a need for more parking in that area, drop off/loading zone preferred
4. Place only at end stop for your visits