Mirrors of the Self: Exploring How Our Environment Reflects Our Personality

In the intricate dance between individuals and their environments, the spaces they inhabit become more than mere physical structures; they transform into reflections of their innermost selves. From the cozy familiarity of their homes to the bustling energy of their workplaces, every corner, every decoration, every choice of color speaks volumes about who they are. Through an exploration of interior design, color psychology, lighting, and spatial organization, they uncover the intricacies of self-expression woven into the fabric of their surroundings and reveal the rich tapestry of human personality, where every design choice tells a story and reveals personality.

The spaces individuals inhabit - their homes, workplaces, and other social settings - are all extensions of who they are as individuals. Their personal spaces serve as an outlet for their self-expression, and as a result, the way they design, decorate, and organize spaces says a lot about their personalities. Interior design and everything it encompass symbolizes and expresses our personality, aesthetic preferences, and personal background. Specifically, through decoration environments such as homes can be customized to allow individuals to inscribe their distinct personalities into their space. Within an environment "people personalize their interiors … by adorning them with identity claims." (Churchill) When individuals make an effort to surround themselves with décor that aligns with their values, they learn more about themselves when paying attention to the things they are drawn to, as décor can relate to their interests and passions. Individuals who enjoy abstract art may be seen as more creative and unconventional, while individuals who prefer realistic landscapes may be seen as more grounded and appreciative of nature. Individuals who also display a lot of family photos may be seen as family-oriented and sentimental, while individuals who display a lot of souvenirs from traveling may be seen as

adventurous. Décor "allows [individuals] to imprint their own personality on their dwellings, and the interior and its contents become a mirror of the self." (Aragonés) It creates a sense of belonging and comfort, as it allows individuals to express themselves in a way that is true to who they are.

Besides décor within an environment reflecting our personality, color also plays an important role. The "color tones you choose can drastically affect your mood and emotions"-whether consciously or subconsciously. (Cubicoon) Colors can evoke certain emotions, and the way we choose to use them can reveal a lot about our personality. Our color preferences can give insight into our individual traits and characteristics, such as our emotions, energy levels, and personal values. Individuals who like vibrant colors and use them in their environment may be seen as energetic and outgoing, while someone who likes pastels may be seen as gentle and nurturing. "The warmer the color is, the more compact space becomes." (Harrouk) Warm colors like red, yellow, or orange can give you a feeling of passion or comfort but can also give rise to feelings of anger and even hostility. Taking a closer look into cooler colors, blue is a common color that is often associated with calmness and tranquility. People who tend to choose blue for their decor may be seen as calm and peaceful individuals. Similarly, green is associated with nature and relaxation. Those who prefer green may be viewed as individuals who value a connection to the outdoors and the environment.

Following the previous point, lighting sets the mood of an environment and is an integral part of the psychology of space and individuals' personalities. Being in a space can add to someone's anxiety or for others it can provoke a sense of serenity. Irving Weiner stated that "environmental influences we cannot see or touch, … have a direct influence on our behavior or mood." (Harrouk) There are many ways lighting can be used to show the psychology of space

such as "a dim light suggesting a gloomy space" and indicating a more introverted and reserved personality while bright or vibrant lights indicating a more energetic and lively personality. (Harrouk) Another example is "entering a room filled with natural light which can effectively lift the mood, energy and introduce a happy feeling." (Cubicoon) This is because exposure to natural environments has been found to reduce stress and improve mood, which can ultimately lead to more of a positive personality trait such as increased empathy or a greater openness to experience.

The use of space in an environment can also reveal a lot about an individual's personality and affect their daily lives in numerous ways. An example of this is having a cluttered or clean environment. In a 2012 study, research found that "workspace clutter or messiness has been linked to … perceived positive and negative personality traits." (Horgan) Participants in this study believed that working in a messy office tied the owner with lower conscientiousness (organized, responsible, hardworking) compared to that of a neat and organized office. Individuals who prefer a cluttered environment may enjoy the unpredictability and excitement of not knowing where things are or what to expect. A cluttered environment can also be a sign of individuals who are overwhelmed or stressed and lack the energy or motivation to keep their space tidy. Cluttered environments overall can indicate more of a chaotic and disorganized personality. Even the famous Winston Churchill stated, "People evoke environmental features by engaging in activities that leave material traces in their wake – examples include a messy desk or a diverse collection of books on the shelves." (Churchill) A clean and organized environment, on the other hand, can reveal a more meticulous and detail-oriented personality. Someone who values a clean and organized space may have a strong desire for order and control in their life.

They may also be more focused and efficient in their daily tasks, as clutter and disorganization can be distracting and draining.

Within the use of space in an environment, individuals leave remanences of themselves in the environment they live or work and that becomes cues that reflect their personality. "Environments that people craft around themselves are rich with information about their personalities, values, and lifestyles." (Gosling) Objects that individuals leave behind can provide insight into their personality. An example of this is someone who leaves behind personal items, such as photographs or sentimental trinkets, valuing memories and emotions. Bedrooms overall are a great use of self-discovery and "teenage bedroom can be understood as material spaces in which historical trails are left all over the place, with varying degrees of permanency and significance." (Lincoln) Bedrooms act like containers and if a stranger walked into the room they observe posters on the wall, books on the bookcase, the items on the desk and unintentionally make judgements about the owner's personality and interests. "Bedrooms are historically "connected", and the very fabric of that space is both a present, current story to tell as well as a meaningful past history." (Lincoln) The objects we leave behind can also reveal our hobbies and interests, such as someone who leaves behind musical instruments or sports equipment indicating a passion for creativity or physical activity. Just like a bedroom represents someone's current personality, it can also represent their past self as well. Objects found in environments represent individuals' wishes, values and identities and sometimes those get left behind just like a forgotten item on a dusty shelf.

"The home is a source of thought, resources, energy, and the place where many older adults spend the majority of their time." (Fingerman) Age is a significant factor in shaping an individual's environment and personality. As we age, our values, interests, and preferences

change, which can result in different environmental needs and experiences. Because teen and young adult lifestyles are never static and are constantly changing due to their emerging identity and personality, their environment evolves with them. Very similarly to retired individuals, older adults "living spaces may vary with regard to colors, patterns, lighting, cleanliness, novelty, and other features in ways that reflect an individual's personality and needs." (Fingerman) Young adults may prioritize socializing and entertainment, which may lead them to decorate their living space in a way that is beneficial to entertaining guests. These young adults may be more focused on self-discovery and self-expression, which may lead them to take risks and experiment with new experiences. The older adults may be more focused on their legacy and reminiscing about their past experiences, which may lead them to be more reflective and nostalgic. Individuals, whether young or retired, "adapt their houses to themselves through decoration and personalization. This allows them to imprint their own personality on their dwellings, and the interior and its contents become a mirror of the self." (Aragonés)

When examining the relationship between the psychology of personality and the environment, the Big Five Personality Traits are often a topic of discussion. The Big Five are used to categorize personality traits into five distinct groups: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Each group describes characteristics that are linked to individual differences in how individuals perceive and interact with their environment. Openness emphasizes imagination and insight. "Openness may be evident in a novel or eclectic décor." (Fingerman) They may be more likely to enjoy having an open and flexible personal space, with few physical barriers and plenty of room to move around. "Conscientiousness is associated with cleanliness, neatness, and keeping things up-to-date and tidy." (Fingerman) It can also be described as individuals who are organized, responsible, hardworking, and thorough.

They may be more likely to keep their personal space clean and organized, with a clear division between their private area and the rest of the environment. Extraversion emphasizes the ideals of being outgoing, friendly, lively, active, and talkative. "Extraversion is associated with spaces that invite social contact" and can be seen in environments as pictures of friends or coworkers on a desk. (Fingerman) Extraversion individuals are known for their sociability, assertiveness, and enthusiasm. They may be more likely to use their personal space to interact with others, inviting friends and family to join them in their personal space or decorating it in a way that encourages socializing. Agreeableness can be described as affectionate and welcoming. "Individuals who score high on agreeableness are less materialistic." (Fingerman) They may be more likely to use their personal space to create a welcoming and comfortable environment for others, with plenty of seating, soft lighting, and calming colors. Neuroticism can be described as moody, a person who worries and shows signs of nervousness. Neuroticism is also related to impulsiveness and vulnerability to stress. They may be more likely to use their personal space as a retreat from the outside world, creating a space that is quiet, dark, and free from distractions.

Embarking on a digital journey through the use of 3D visualization, I crafted an environment that embodies the essence of my research findings through careful composition, surfacing and lighting techniques. Within this virtual space,

viewers are invited to view an individual's alchemy workspace, offering glimpses into their personality.

The choice of earthy colors in this environment reflects a connection to nature, indicating a preference for simplicity and tranquility. The warm tones of browns, greens, and soft oranges

evoke a sense of being rooted in the earth, suggesting an appreciation for the beauty of natural landscapes and the simple joys of life and resonate with someone who finds comfort and inspiration in the outdoors.

Within this clean and organized environment, every object has its place, and every detail is carefully curated. This attention to order and cleanliness hints at a person who values structure and organization in their life, someone who finds peace and serenity in a tidy and uncluttered space. This individual may possess a methodical approach to their work and personal life, finding relief in the predictability and reliability of a well-ordered environment.

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