ARCADE
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Concept and Design by

HANNAH FAJNOR

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Arcade Arcade's Executive Summary

Arcade Arcade is an entertainment and shopping destination where the thrill of dystopian fantasy collides with antiquated charm. Here, time is conflated and retrofuturism goes beyond recent vintage. Arcade Arcade takes 1980s nostalgia and molds it to the Art Nouveau motifs of the 1880s. This amalgamation of styles is born into a new era where the boundary is blurred between work and play.

Guests play arcade games in a large concourse flanked by storefronts. They earn credits and spend them on goods and services offered in the adjoined marketplace. This is a main point where Arcade Arcade diverges from other gaming centers that offer only a limited selection of cheap novelty prizes. The marketplace holds various retail, dining, and service options for guests to enjoy their time and spend their credits. Regular payment options are also available to purchase items and services.

The project is an exploration of the commodification of joy and the reformation of modern consumerism. Arcade Arcade prioritizes the place of happiness on the route between labor and the consumption of goods or services, a stop that has not been recognized in contemporary consumerism. This attraction disrupts the notion that leisure activity is not productive and reframes having fun as a valuable act.

The story behind Arcade Arcade warns of the threats of late-stage capitalism and an economy based on corporate greed. The design itself thwarts our not so far off future and ultimately ill fate by highlighting the importance of supporting small business in lieu of exploitative commercial brands. This nod to sustainability in the retail space is accompanied by thorough consideration of the environment. Arcade Arcade follows four primary tiers of sustainability relating to construction, energy efficiency, and retail partnership.

Arcade Arcade's Story

The Lore

Late-stage capitalism has come to a head, effectively breeding hate and widespread poverty. Civil wars between the exploitive corporations and their oppressed counterparts broke out. The great majority faced a harsh and troubled existence, their every need was out of their financial reach. As a result, many people sought asylum by banning together to create like-minded microcosms.

One of these groups was made up of merchants and artisans who had struggled through decades of being undercut by corporations. They travelled away from their war-torn residences and found solace in an abandoned shopping arcade. They were charmed by the beautiful vaults and winding rails amongst shattered glass and dust in the mall. The building was brought back to life by the artisans, not restored to its former glory, but refurbished with hearty materials they came across on their travels. Heavy metal plates and recovered panes of glass were placed to cradle the antique shell they now called home. Solar power, the new perpetual energy as their ozone diminished, was wired in to power the primary concourse of the mall.

They brought in rigid cabinets from a neighboring ruin to block the doors, keeping out their most recent threats of harm in their harsh reality. The various merchants each selected a store front to call their own, making goods here and there as resources became available. Some of the artisans were tinkerers, discovering these cabinets they have brought in to be to be old vessels of entertainment. With little to do in their mall, they found pleasure in these video games. They saw that the more time they played, the more points were cataloged on the equipment. They decided to use these numbers as currency amongst themselves. All taking turns playing and providing. They agreed that they and all who enter shall be able to live off of these games, and no one would compromise the economy founded on fun. The world around them pained and declined but to them, happiness became their greatest currency.

The Inspiration

"The ultimate currency for a human being is happiness."

-Tal Ben Shahar

This quote catalyzed the thesis of Arcade Arcade. Although the attraction seems like all fun and games and is in practice, underneath is an exploration of the commodification of joy and the reformation of modern consumerism. This project brings into question what it means to be able to make something more of happiness, taking a feeling and again cycling it into a material good or service. It postulates that money can be converted into play, then into joy (quantified by credits produced through time spent playing), then into a physical good or service. In the framework of modern consumerism goods are solely achieved through laboring. You earn money and you spend money. Arcade Arcade shows that there is further value in our time and in our dollar when prioritizing pleasure in life as a step in the process of consuming.

The Call to Action

Arcade Arcade prompts guests to invest in themselves and their happiness, carving out time for fun while trapped in a seemingly incessant grind of labor, production, and consumption. Leisure activities are then recognized as rewarding as opposed to avenues of guilt for time spent not being productive. Arcade Arcade also exposes guests to the pleasure of shopping small and seeing the positive impact on real people who own small businesses instead of supporting faceless corporations that prioritize financial greed over the quality of their product, wellbeing of their personnel, and the health of the planet. They can reflect on their experience at Arcade Arcade and look for retail environments with adjacent moral leanings during their every day.

Arcade Arcade's Treatment

The Architecture

Arcade Arcade is Art Nouveau at its core. There are ornate trusses of wrought iron suspending the ceiling of the space above an open concourse. Winding loops of metal add a consistent rhythm to the interior while rustication and patch work disrupt the trends and force the eye to look beyond the Victorian inspired architecture. The ceiling is metal tracery with glass panes allowing natural light to shine in. The marketplace facades line either side of the concourse. They are all uniquely styled and rusticated but maintain whimsical Victorian flare carrying the patinaed iron of the trusses throughout. The amalgamation of art nouveau delicacy and the harsh industrial textures of steel and concrete create an energetic space where tension and juxtaposition become tools in the creation of novelty. Aside from artistic styling the architecture features standard offerings like public restrooms and access to drinking fountains. In the interest of accessibility there are additional handicapped accessible/unisex restrooms. There is also at least one private cool down space to prevent/ease overstimulation of guests.

The Market

The storefronts line the gaming arcade each having discrete access to the concourse. Some have recessed doorways, others are total walkouts, and some have traditional apertures flush to the façade. This push and pull of entry points adds another dynamic layer to the design. The marketplace within the Arcade can host any combination of vendors, the greater the variety the better. A larger scale rendition of Arcade Arcade would have a respectively larger volume of sellers, while a smaller version would of course have fewer. The must have vendors would have to be a sit-down eatery and bar, a quick service restaurant/snack stop, a handmade craft seller/clothing retailer, and an artisan providing a service. Some examples for restaurants, products, and services are as follows: pizzerias, ethnic fusion cafes, bakeries, candles, jewelry, ceramics, sweaters, candy, nail art, haircuts, henna tattoos, etc.

The Games

The gaming arcade is centrally located yet sprawling through the venue and is flanked by retail offerings. The arcade is equipped with an array of games and entertainment options, not unlike Dave & Busters. To appeal to a contemporary audience more modern licenses and gaming systems would be included yet there is an explicit focus on vintage classics like arcade cabinets, pin ball, and Skee-Ball that were made popular in the 1980s. That being said, the new systems would be skinned to follow the retro theme of the vintage cabinets. Many of these game types may not traditionally expel tickets when players score points, but at Arcade Arcade all games will allow players to earn credits to spend at the marketplace.

The Ambiance

During the day, the Art Nouveau aesthetic of the destination is more in focus since the skylights illuminate much of the Victorian details, but Arcade Arcade really comes alive with 80s nostalgia when the sun goes down. Gleaming LED strip lights emulate iconic neon fixtures along the ceiling and among the gaming equipment. This creates variable experiences for guests depending on what time of day they visit Arcade Arcade, adding to the appeal of revisiting the attraction another time. As far as this attraction's sound, it is lively with digital music, beeps, and blips one would expect gaming systems to project. However, it has an overhead audio system to play music to guests. Since this theme is technically based in future it would not be unreasonable to play contemporary music although 80s hits would be in rotation as well as alternative rock and electronic to play into the grunge and dystopian angle of the space. Whatever music is playing should not conflict with the overall attitude of the space, so country and R&B might have to sit this one out.

Arcade Arcade's Four Tiers of Sustainability

Adaptive Reuse

Arcade Arcade is inside an abandoned shopping mall, gymnasium, warehouse, or school within an urban environment. The design can be scaled back to fit into a strip mall/plaza if a smaller footprint is desired, although the open concourse will be lost. This adjustment will not change the social impact of the project, only the grandeur of the resulting space. The goal is to place Arcade Arcade into a building with good bones and go from there.

Reclaimed Materials

The distressed and eclectic style of Arcade Arcade lends itself to the use of mismatched materials and textures, perfect for the utilization of reclaimed materials. The illustrations depict the use of corrugated steel, but this really represents old parts and pieces. Brushed metals, chain link, tread plating, etc could all be used to add grit to the space. Recycled glass and varying colored panes are used in place of the perfect clear window. If quality and safety are not impacted by the reclaimed products used, factory rejects are more than welcome in Arcade Arcade. Rustication is a big factor in the theming of Arcade Arcade, so reclaimed materials will add intended richness.

Clean Energy

Access to existing infrastructure is a perk of building within an existing framework, however abandoned properties are often inefficient. Updates to electrical, plumbing, and havoc systems etc. will be made adhering closely to LEED standards. The energy supply of the building will also undergo a conversion or partial conversion to solar power. A gaming arcade requires a great deal of energy, but steps are taken to offset emissions.

Mindful Consumerism

Arcade Arcade is no regular gaming destination. There are no flimsy toys and trinkets dangling off a prize wall for guests to purchase with their earnings. Those very trinkets are destined to be garbage. They are mass produced overseas somewhere in facilities that pollute the air, clog waterways, exploit laborers, and cause ecological harm by shipping worthless freight. Arcade Arcade does not support these practices and instead prioritizes the wellbeing of local businesses. Credits earned by gaming can be used as partial or complete payment for purchases made in the adjoined marketplace, depending on the amount accrued and the value of the good or service. Guests may also shop there without earning credits in the gaming concourse. Arcade Arcade acts as a showcase for businesses that offer quality products and follow sustainable practices.

Arcade Arcade's Notes on Feasability

Public Interest

Studies show that there is a steady upward trend in revenue generated by the arcade gaming industry. According to Data Bridge Market Research, the global arcade market was worth 4.04 billion USD in 2023 and is projected to increase to 6.06 billion USD by the year 2031. Pyramid Technologies Inc. notes the industry as a "Profitable Venture" stating, "Despite their decline in the 1980s, arcades are making a comeback, driven by a blend of nostalgia and modern gaming experiences. Arcade bars, featuring a mix of retro and contemporary games, are a testament to this revival, attracting a diverse audience eager for a unique social and gaming experience."

Additionally, IPX1031 conducted a survey finding that "57% of Americans are willing to pay more at locally owned shops," and "2 in 3 try to shop locally over shopping at large retail chains." IPX1031 also says that 81% of shoppers tend to only shop larger retail for the sake of convenience but would like to shop small instead. These findings lean in favor of the inclusion of small businesses in entertainment destinations, as opposed to corporate retails spaces and dining franchises.

Construction Savings

MBHarch discusses at length the benefits of adaptive reuse highlighting the cost cutting benefits of the refurbishing method saying, "Since adaptive reuse projects try to reuse rather than buy new materials, the overall construction costs are reduced—sometimes by as much as 16%. Adaptive reuse projects also save money by eliminating demolition costs, which can account for 5 to10% of new construction expenses." They also praise adaptive reuse as being faster than building from the ground up, cutting labor and planning costs. Time is money.

Existing Technology

Arcade Arcade does not use any new or experimental technology that would require research and development. This is advantageous, reducing the overall schedule and budget of the project. The gaming related transactions at Arcade Arcade rely on reloadable cards which are now standard in most arcades. However, any vintage games will need to be retrofitted with compatible card readers to create a consistent credit system throughout the attraction.