These Pretzels are Making Me Thirsty

920 grams of Architectural Humour

by

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Preface

Architecture is a serious discipline, but that doesn't mean it is entirely humorless.

This thesis was written with the intention to allow the reader to laugh (or not) whenever they feel the urge to do so, but please do so. It would really validate me.

Note: All borrowed and created images have used image sources from the internet unless otherwise stated. Notable/specific sources used for images are cited in the figures bibliography.

Classic brick wall

Figure 1

An iconic backdrop for stand-up comedians.

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Abstract

Comedy in performance, in space, is primarily understood as a genre where people attempt to evoke laughter from an audience through some type of medium, whether it be literary or performative. Alternatively, comedy can be regarded as a means by which reality is put through a filter to generate a more humorous approach to the absurdities, difficulties, and unpredictable events we encounter in our everyday lives. In order to approach these events with a sense of humour, we must be open and vulnerable to the possibilities of unexpected outcomes, both as a performer and as an audience member. This thesis aims to explore the ways that people experience vulnerability within 'comedic' spaces, due to the set expectations of these spaces, and how that vulnerability can result in humorous narratives and events when expectations are broken. Through diagrams, axonometric representations, and sections, we will explore the ways that architects and designers set certain expectations within spaces, and the ways that comedy breaks those expectations.

1 The Usual Set-up Figure 2
Representational collage displaying
the typical stand-up comedy
backdrop. Created by author using
various sources from the internet.

Introduction

A laugh is one of the sincerest reactions a human can experience. It can be an instinctive and spontaneous response that typically arises in moments of amusement, but can be accompanied by a variety of emotions. Laughter can occur in virtually any space and during any time - depending on the situation - because it is ephemeral and very nearly uncontrollable.

Enter, the comedian.

The most important goal for the comedian is to incite laughter from an audience. Comedians put themselves in a vulnerable position both mentally as well as physically within a variety of performance spaces. How is it that the modern comedian becomes vulnerable within their own network of comedic spaces? To understand the vulnerability of the comedian, we must analyse the spaces within which they perform. In the context of this thesis, this is the most apparent connection between architecture and comedy, precisely because the spaces where the comedian performs can impact the performer's vulnerability. Specifically in stand-up comedy.

The objects you find at most comedy clubs. The waterbottle can be substituted for a cocktail.

2 **WÖTÖR BÖTÖL** Figure 3
Comedians usually have a drink with them up on stage, sometimes to help with a dry throat and sometimes as liquid courage.

3 **MIKROFON** Figure 4
Comedians often use the microphone and stand as a prop to act out bits.

4 **STÜL** Figure 5
Comedians will use the stool as a prop, a nearby surface for their drink, and/or as a seat when they have a particularly long set.

The stand-up comedian generally performs in comedy clubs that are dark, cramped, and often underground - both when starting out as an amateur comic and later as a seasoned professional who is still testing material.¹ These spaces become an “underground” network that can be uncovered to display how and where comedians perform and subject themselves to vulnerability. By mapping these spaces in a performance rich city, like New York², we can begin to analyze how space and architecture, in relation to its immediate surroundings, frames the comedian’s vulnerability.

Taking this further we can ask ourselves how the idea of expectations play a significant role both within architecture, as much as within comedy. In comedy, expectations associated with our comparable life experiences and understanding of the world are challenged for the sake of humour. In architecture, we often have similar expectations of a space based on our understanding of its purpose, and our past experiences.

5 LILY TOMLIN Figure 7

6 JOAN RIVERS Figure 8

When these expectations are broken it can result in a comedic situation (or a lawsuit). Expectations imply that there are certain structures in place in both architecture and comedy that allow us to understand the difference between what is “typical” and what is “atypical”. Here we will use the most spatially applicable ideas and theories of comedy to read comedic spaces, including the theories of pain and superiority, tension and relief, and congruity and incongruity. Turning these into axonometric analyses of the performer within different types of performance spaces, we can understand how expectations are set or broken within a performance space and how this impacts the vulnerability of the performer, the experience of the audience, as well as the comedic value of the situation.

Finally, this methodology of using ideas and theories on comedy to read a space will be used to alter one of the most notable furniture stores known to our capital driven world, IKEA, in order to produce an unexpected spatial and vulnerable comedic narrative. If these theories help us understand why we laugh in certain situations, it is perhaps possible to use them to create spatially comedic situations; a parody of the usual Ikea showroom.

7 **RICHARD PRYOR** Figure 9

8 **ROBIN WILLIAMS** Figure 10

Vulnerability

The word “vulnerable” is defined according to the Oxford Dictionary as “susceptible to physical or emotional attack or harm”¹. Vulnerability is often thought of with a negative connotation and an implication that whoever is vulnerable is put in an adverse situation when feeling this way. Does being vulnerable then necessarily mean that the context of the situation is negative? Psychoanalyst Paul Marcus suggests in *How to Laugh Your Way Through Life* (2013) that this is not the case and that situations where we are most vulnerable and frustrated are actually best met with humour. Marcus affirms that, “—it is a well known observation that the capacity to find humour amidst the difficulties of life is one of the best ways of effectively coping”² with that life. This seems to suggest that finding humour in difficult situations is what makes life bearable. Whether or not this is applicable to everyone, it is apparent that humour potentially arises more easily than other unfavorable emotions often associated with vulnerability. Marcus continues,

“one can say there are at least two ways to existentially respond to everyday human vulnerability, weakness, helplessness, stupidity, and cruelty – either with contemptuousness, lodged in outrage at the inadequate, unsatisfying, and unjust aspects of life, or with tragicomic humour, lodged in a mindfulness of the pathetic aspects of life, but striving to rise above and go beyond them and make things better.”³

¹ **DANIEL SLOSS** Figure 11
Comedian Daniel Sloss gets vulnerable with his audience in his stand-up special *Dark* when discussing how comedy and humor has helped him cope with the loss of his sister (age 7) since age 9.

We can either respond negatively or positively to the situations we encounter in our lives, but of course there are contextual influences that accompany these events. Is it possible that the spaces in which these events occur have an impact on how comedic the outcome is? Can some spaces evoke a more comedic narrative than others?

Comedy is often over compartmentalized if associated solely with laughter. Take the main definitions of comedy for example: comedy according to the Oxford Dictionary is “professional entertainment consisting of jokes and satirical sketches, intended to make an audience laugh”.⁴ Subsequent definitions all point to similar principles as the overarching definition of comedy:

“A movie, play, or broadcast program intended to make an audience laugh”

and

“The humorous or amusing aspects of something”.⁵

Although laughter is generally always the end goal in comedy, it is not necessarily always used as a tool to generate humour. Comedy, namely stand-up comedy, requires an element of vulnerability that comes from “truth and pain”. Comedic television writer and author John Vorhaus describes the notion of truth and pain in comedy in his novel *The Comic Toolbox* through an embarrassing childhood story.⁶

A few of the many different styles of comedy...

2 ANECDOTAL Figure 12
Comedian Ali Wong performing in her Netflix special *Baby Cobra* (2016). Anecdotal comedy mainly consists of story telling.

3 SKETCH Figure 13
Sketch comedy program *Saturday Night Live* during a *Laurence Welk Show* sketch. Sketch comedy includes a group acting out a scene with a set, props, scripts, and costumes.

4 SLAPSTICK Figure 14
Comedic silent film actor Harold Lloyd in the film *Safety Last!* (1923). Slapstick is physical comedy that often portrays individuals in uncomfortable or ridiculous situations.

"I was twelve years old, I fell in love with Leslie Parker.

One day during math class ... Leslie Parker mentioned in passing that she and her family were moving away.

The amputation of a cherished body part could not have hurt me worse.

Ten minutes pass ... I stand up. Pathetically and wildly inappropriately, I bleat, 'Leslie, where are you moving, and why?' By which, of course, I mean, 'Don't leave me!'

There was a sudden stunned silence ... In the next instant, everyone burst out laughing...

I discovered a fundamental rule of humour, though it was many years (and many, many years of therapy) before I recognized it as such:

COMEDY IS TRUTH AND PAIN".⁷

In this anecdote, Vorhaus describes a moment of vulnerability that ultimately turns comedic.

A moment of pain that brings out a roar of laughter. Although this was not his intention, it displays the notion that putting yourself in a vulnerable position has the ability to turn comedic.

To speculate on the relationship between architecture and comedy, we must therefore look into how vulnerability is experienced within a space.

(Brief) History of comedy in New York

New York; if you can make it here, try Los Angeles next.

- 1 **CAROLINES** Figure 16
Famous comedy club in NYC in the 80's and 90's. It still operates today and hosts several up-and-coming comedians as well as seasoned professionals.
- 2 **THE GASLIGHT CAFE** Figure 17
A popular cafe in the 60s and 70s where musicians and comedians alike would perform. It was later depicted in the popular TV show *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*.
- 3 **THE COMIC STRIP LIVE** Figure 18
A still-operating comedy club where many (now) notable comedians got their start.
- 4 **THE IMPROVE THEATRE** Figure 19
One of the most notable comedy clubs in the history of New York comedy - no longer operating under the same name.

How do we establish a connection between two fields that are so inherently different from one another? We can start by looking at the most obvious connection between comedy and architecture and analyse the spaces where comedy is performed.

Here we examine a comedy rich city; the one that comes to mind for most people - New York City. New York has a rich history of entertainment spanning from Vaudeville in the 1900s to the modern comedy clubs of today.¹

Vaudeville was a popular variety entertainment style during the late 19th century, and through to the early 20th century.² It is thought to be the place from which stand-up comedy emerged as its own specific style of comedic performance, but it also presented burlesque, dancing, farce, juggling, and other performance styles.³

In his novel documenting the history of comedians from the Vaudeville period up until today's modern comedians, comedian and historian Kliph Nesteroff describes the first "stand-up" comedian known to Vaudeville, Frank Fay "a long-standing emcee at the crown jewel of American vaudeville theatres, the Palace".⁴ Nesteroff writes:

"To stand still and tell jokes was a foreign move. To perform without some kind of gimmick was considered amateurish".⁵ To stand alone as a stand-up was the most vulnerable position for a performer, especially in comedy where there was no gimmick to fall back on if the jokes did not land. The idea of experiencing vulnerability in a space which results in comedy seemingly began with this introduction of the solo comedic performer.

5 **THE HEART OF VAUDEVILLE**
Figure 20

Collage created by author featuring the work of caricaturist Alan Hirschfeld and other sources from the internet. The collage depicts a Vaudeville theatre and the heart of Vaudeville entertainment.

6 **A CLOWN AMONGST MOBSTERS**
Figure 21

Collage created by author featuring the work of caricaturist Alan Hirschfield and other sources from the internet. The collage depicts a MOB owned nightclub where many comedians performed after the closure of Vaudeville theatres across the USA.

In the 1920s, according to comedy historian Nesteroff, “the most important theatre in vaudeville was the Palace, at Broadway and 47th [New York City]”.⁶ Around this time the other vaudeville theatres across the country were coming to a close and once vaudeville was hit by the Great Depression it completely died out.⁷ Comedians turned to Mob-owned nightclubs which were converted from speakeasies following the prohibition. These spaces were often underground, dark, and sometimes dangerous, as they were closely associated with gang members and their illicit activities.⁸

7 **THE COMEDY CELLAR NEW YORK**

Figure 22

A popular comedy club where many famous comedians have - and continue to - perform. Photographed by author.

Netseroff tells the story of a comedian who was attacked by a Mob member following a comedic performance, and we can interpolate the severity of the altercation from his conclusion: "It took three years for Joe E. Lewis to regain the ability to talk".⁹

Typologies

1

PLÄN

An abstracted plan view of the comedic performance space in relation to the street.

2

SEKSHÖÖN

An abstracted section view of the comedic performance space in relation to street level.

+

3

KOMBO

A combination of both typologies.

ESTABLISHMENT The building in which the venue is located.

STREET The street that connects the threshold of the establishment to the general public.

COMEDIC SPACE The space in which the comedian performs to an audience.

8 **TPOLOGIES DIAGRAM** Figure 23
Created by author.

Aside from being vulnerable to physical harm inflicted by Mobsters, these Mob-owned underground spaces which resemble today's comedy clubs and alternative venues continue to put the comedian in a vulnerable position when performing. Typical comedic spaces in New York today seem to share certain characteristics: they are underground, small, and disconnected from the street. If we look at a catalogue of comedic venues in New York, we can see that certain typologies emerge based on the characteristics of each space. In New York there are several "open mic" venues where novice comedians can sign up and perform; the internet provides lists and locations of these venues.¹⁰ Using Google Earth geo-search engine as a tool allows us to map these performance spaces within the urban context.

This index of New York based comedy clubs and alternative venues shows us that there are two essential typologies that support the comedy in relation to the urban context. The first typology shows the performance space disconnected from the street, and the second shows a disconnection between the performance space and ground level. Additionally a third less prominent typology is a combination of the two.

NYC COMEDY CLUBS

CAROLINE'S

STAND UP NEW YORK

GOTHAM COMEDY CLUB

NEW YORK
COMEDY CLUB

LoL TIMES SQUARE
COMEDY CLUB

THE STAND
COMEDY CLUB
AND RESTAURANT

WEST SIDE
COMEDY CLUB

THE
COMIC STRIP
LIVE

DANGERFIELD'S

NEW YORK
COMEDY CLUB -
EASTVILLE

BROADWAY
COMEDY CLUB

NYC ALTERNATIVE VENUES

THE CREEK AND THE CAVE

PIONEER'S BAR

UPRIGHT CITIZENS BRIGAD

BEAUTY BAR

KLIMAT LOUNGE

OTTO'S SHRUNKEN
HEAD

THE PIT

STAX SPORTS BAR

THE APOLLO THEATRE

MCSWIGGAN'S

THE GRISLY PEAR

What does this tell us about performance spaces and how a performer might become vulnerable in them?

Firstly we observe that comedic spaces are separated architecturally from the general public, they have no direct connection to the street and are not immediately accessible from the street entrance. These spaces seem to have evolved in such a way that allows performers to be completely vulnerable while expressing themselves freely.

When these spaces (even historically) are disconnected from the general public, they allow the performers within them to experiment while leaving them utterly vulnerable to the reaction of the audience. Of course this does not mean that comedians have the freedom to say things without repercussion. Comedy historian Nesteroff states "They often attacked [comedy] clubs for the 'immoral' comedians they presented. While Lenny Bruce was the famous martyr, several other comedians were arrested before he came along".¹¹ Although there were, and still are, repercussions to testing the limits of comedy, when the space is disconnected from the general public it gives comedians the room to be truly vulnerable within their performance space.

Comedy theories

In addition to drawing from ethical standards, customs and norms, society, culture, and so on, comedy is often produced by also drawing from comedy theories.¹ These theories allow us to better understand what we laugh at and why, and even though it may not always be immediately apparent when we use them, all comedy falls amongst one or another of these theories.² There is no single theory that represents the epitome of comedy, instead there are multiple theories that comedic events might fall under.³ According to Professor of speech communication at the University of Georgia Charles Gruner in *The Game of Humor*, “—with humor theories, they borrow heavily from one another, and many have common bases”.⁴ Four acknowledged theories will lead us to a better understanding of the connection between architecture and comedy including; superiority and pain, tension and relief, and congruity and incongruity.⁵ Professor of linguistics at Purdue University Victor Raskin, in *Semantic Mechanisms of Humor*, explains that so long as comedic events, and the theories they are attached to, are not taken too seriously they will result in humour.⁶

1 SEMANTIC MECHANISMS OF HUMOR Figure 26

2 THE GAME OF HUMOR Figure 27

The *superiority and pain* theory is a combination of two theories that tend to go hand in hand. Many comedians employ the superiority theory to their advantage by allowing themselves to be made the fool for the sake of a laugh, successively making the audience feel superior.⁷ Raskin summarizes the thinking of historic writers and philosophers regarding the superiority theory:

"As a ridicule of a human fault or error, but not too serious because then it would not be an appropriate cause for laughter (Aristotle), as an exhibition of superiority over somebody else, but again not too serious, as an attempt to abase, denigrate a person or a cause of high stature (Bain) or to lower a value (Propp, Stern)".⁸

This ties into the pain theory because it is typically the emotion that comedians draw from to employ the superiority theory.⁹ When we use the term "pain", we don't limit the definition to emotional or physical pain; it encompasses all the emotions that might be associated with pain; vulnerability, embarrassment, frustration, and so on. In Raskin's summarization of the ideas surrounding these theories, we can infer that pain is an emotion that is closely linked to these explanations. Comedians put themselves in a vulnerable position by using their own pain to create comedic material that will allow the audience to feel superior and detached from the negative feelings associated with the jokes being told.¹⁰

Another theory that is employed by many comedians is the tension and relief theory.¹¹

"As a metamorphosis of tense expectation into nothing (Kant), as a switch of one's mind and attention from something big and significant to something small and insignificant (Spencer)."¹²

Raskin relays this theory in a way that highlights the importance of unexpectedness in comedy.¹³ The build up of dramatic tension allows comedians to set up expectations about where a joke might be headed so that they can then break those expectations for comic relief.¹⁴ Sometimes comedians even use comedy to break tension in a tense or uncomfortable social setting.¹⁵

³ **ANTHONY JESELNIK** Figure 28
One of the masters of tension building and unexpected punchlines Anthony Jeselnik during his Netflix special *Fire in the Maternity Ward* (2019).

Finally, Raskin relays the theory of congruity and incongruity;

"as an incongruent treatment of things, in deviation from the customary norm (Hegel, Schopenhauer)."¹⁶

This is another example where expectations play an important role. Incongruity is also about juxtaposing different concepts.¹⁷ We find it humorous when something disrupts our mental patterns and expectations.¹⁸

These comedy theories give us an idea of what it is that we laugh at and why. The most important underlying aspects of these theories reinforce the ideas on vulnerability and expectations in comedy. It is important for the comedian to be able to feel vulnerable to allow their audience to feel superior, and it is also important for the comedian to break the audiences expectations. In architecture there are several expectations set by building codes, socio-cultural contexts, economic contexts, our experiences within our own built environments, and so on. If we were to study existing comedic spaces we would have certain expectations of these spaces based on our knowledge of them and their contexts. How then can comedy theories help us analyse comedic spaces and our understanding of the expectations we have of those spaces? We can begin by conceptualizing a comedic space and an architecture that is read through comedy theories.

Marketplace

The modern day comedy club is often the first thing we think of when imagining a comedic performance space. However, humorous events can occur in virtually any space; it is the performance which sets the space apart for our purpose here.

Assistant Professor of English at the state University of New York Andrew Stott, in his novel *Comedy* describes a 20th Century Russian philosopher's (Mikhail Bakhtin) comparison of comedy to a medieval marketplace.¹ Bakhtin developed this idea from analyzing a French comic novelist's work from the late medieval era, Francois Rabelais.² He argues that there are two synchronic world views that existed during the medieval era which contradicted one another,

"'Official' culture, which he characterizes as ecclesiastical, sombre, excluding profanity, and supressing the body, driven by the bureaucracy of the Church and the administration of Grade, is contrasted with what he calls the culture of the marketplace, the popular and boisterous voice of the people".³

¹ **THE JESTER** Figure 29
Jesters, fools, clowns, etc. These were the stand-up comedians of the medieval period. Not much has changed since.

Here we can begin to visualize a space that contrasts a hierarchical system based on standards and expectations imparted by a social, religious, and political authority; a space where comedic events might take place. This space is not limited to the idea of one single performer and an organized audience, but instead represents the idea of humour where anyone part of the general public can engage with whoever is being/acting humorous.

Russian philosopher Bakhtin argues that this marketplace culture was a culture of its own, produced by the people that lived outside the exclusive hierarchy of the Church. Essentially these were people with no power or merit, but who enjoyed themselves among one another and created a type of open community for themselves. The idea of comedy here is a very open public practice where almost anyone can take part in as long as they have a sense of humour (or not!).

2 **MARKETPLACE CULTURE** Figure 30
Christmas Mummers
(1847).

3 THE COMEDIC MARKETPLACE IN

AXO Figure 31

Created by author.

This axonometric represents a conceptual understanding of comedy that focuses on the idea of the boisterous common folk who create the culture of this comedic marketplace.

The marketplace is illustrated as the “underdog” space of society that opposes the official hierarchy, which puts those in the marketplace culture in a position vulnerable to the potential penalties instituted by the dominant hierarchy. Comedy is similar in the sense that it opposes the official culture of our modern society, *Comedy* author Stott states, “The world of the marketplace operates according to what is essentially a comic logic, one that runs parallel to official, serious, improving culture, laughing at it, and sometimes violently humiliating it”.⁴ Stott also argues that comedy tends to oppose the exclusive culture of highly academic or noble pursuits by attempting to be inclusive to all those outside the exclusive culture.⁵ Stott describes the reasoning behind the historical tendencies of excluding comedy from noble pursuits due to the “fear that if comedy were to be rehabilitated within respectable academic contexts, the conceptual order of things would be radically altered, and with it the social fabric that draws on its hierarchies”.⁶ This parallels with the idea of the marketplace, but situates it in the modern comedic culture.

Similar to how the marketplace opposes the Church in the medieval era - in the sense that the marketplace is a place for “the people” and the Church is a place for those at the top of the hierarchy - today's modern society sees comedy as an opposition to highly established academic and political culture, where comedy is a culture for everyone and academia is a culture only for some.

4 **MARKETPLACE ATMOSPHERE
COLLAGE**
Figure 32
Collage by author, various images
sourced from internet.

Establishing this connection between a marketplace and comedy allows us to visualize the idea of comedy spatially, which will allow us to recognize which theories might be applicable to reading the space. In this axonometric of the conceptual marketplace we can see that there is room for multiple performers, and plenty of room for the general public. Visualizing this marketplace as a place of comedy also allows us to understand comedy as an open practice. However, within its context we see it as being limited or supported by its surroundings, similar to how comedy operates within different social contexts.

If we diagram the spatial dynamics of the performers in relation to the general public within the marketplace, we can see that although there is a strong relationship between performer and audience, this relationship does not move beyond the space of the marketplace. This shows the marketplace, and comedy, as being restricted by their contextual surroundings. It also illustrates the vulnerability that comedy has to its surroundings, as contexts have the ability to control what is perceived as comedic as well as the spaces where it is allowed to take place.

5 SOCIAL DYNAMICS OF THE COMEDIC MARKETPLACE IN PLAN

Figure 33
Diagram created by author.

CONGRUITY AND INCONGRUITY THEORY
DIAGRAM Figure 34
 Diagram created by author.
 This diagram illustrates the concept of incongruity in comedy; when order, or congruency, is disrupted and our expectations are broken.

The idea of performing in front of an audience, or even the general public, is a vulnerable act in and of itself. However, what makes comedic performances particularly vulnerable is their objective to induce one specific type of reaction over and over again. This is why comedians create material that is rooted in comedy theories to structure their performances.

In an analysis of the marketplace we can see that the congruity and incongruity theory is manifested through programme, where the marketplace contrasts its surrounding sombre context of an overbearing hierarchy. If we look back to the axonometric depiction of the space we can see that the boisterous market is incongruent to its mundane surroundings of simple medieval houses. The sudden marketplace in a sea of congruent housing breaks the expectations of one circulating through the narrow alleyways.

This brings up another important comedic theory applicable to this space; the build up of tension followed by a comedic release.⁷ The tension builds as one moves through narrow spaces into a larger open space; into comedic relief.

7 TENSION AND RELIEF THEORY IN PLAN

Figure 35
Diagram created by author.
This diagram illustrates the concept of the tension and relief theory in space as one moves toward the marketplace.

The final theories we can analyze through this space are the theories of pain and superiority. One way of looking at the pain theory in this context is to consider pain as a void, one that the comedian must fill. The pain of this will be very evident to you if you have ever attempted to fill a space with laughter continuously for a period of time. Since the marketplace is unenclosed the performers must fill the void of this entire space. The comedian must also make themselves the fool in order for those around them to feel superior and comfortable enough to respond with laughter, for they are not the ones acting foolish, instead they enjoy the foolishness from a distance.

From this analysis we can infer that spaces can potentially express the same comedic theories that are used to create comedy and understand comedic events. If we want to better understand the comedian in their modern space we must look at spaces where the modern comedian has performed. This includes both comedy clubs as well as alternative venues.

8 PAIN AND SUPERIORITY THEORY IN PLAN

Figure 36
Diagram created by author.
This diagram illustrates the pain and superiority theory. The performers take up a very small fraction within their large space making them the vulnerable as well as the center of attention.

Typical and atypical spaces

In order to understand how modern comedic spaces can express comedy theories, we must look at both a typical performance space and an atypical performance space. Each will have different spatial dynamics between audience and performer, as well as different architectural expectations from the users of the space regarding programme, circulation, atmosphere, and so on.

One of the most well-known comedy clubs in New York is the Comedy Cellar in Manhattan. Famous comedian Jon Stewart recalls the period in his life where he spent a large amount of time at the Comedy Cellar testing his material. Stewart recalls, "I went on for two years at the Comedy Cellar at 2:30 am or 3 am, as the last guy. It was me and the waitstaff and a table of drunken Dutch sailors. And in that place, I learned how to be myself". The way Stewart describes his relationship to the space is interesting; the atmosphere he describes is bleak though what he took from that atmosphere is what pushed him forward in his career as a comedian. Stewart was able to be vulnerable in his typical comedic space, a space that might even be comforting to him, but nonetheless this allowed him to wrestle with his vulnerability as a performer and eventually gave him the experience to venture out beyond the typical space.

1 **THE TYPICAL COMEDIC SPACE**
 Figure 37
 Created by author.
 This axonometric represents the *Comedy Cellar* in New York and how it serves its intended purpose as a comedy club.

The Comedy Cellar is like most comedy clubs in New York: dark, underground, and very cramped. The density of the space means that the audience sits very close to the stage, and the dynamics between the performer and the immediate audience surrounding the stage becomes very intimate. However, those that sit further from the stage in the dark corners of the space become slightly disconnected from the performer, as their reactions can be heard but cannot be directly seen. This dynamic puts the performer in a vulnerable position: immediately in front of a row of strangers waiting to judge their performance (imagine getting a front row full of nuns, and a back row full of clowns).

2 THE ATMOSPHERE OF A COMEDY CLUB

Figure 38
Collage by author, various images sourced from internet.
This collage depicts the typical atmosphere of a comedy club. The attention is mostly focused on the performer(s) (Kumail Najiani pictured) and the audience is typically lively during a good performance.

- **AUDIENCE FEEDBACK** This can come in the form of laughter, shock, amusement, or even offense. Feedback from an audience is any reaction that they have in response to the comedian's performance throughout it.
- **COMEDIC OUTPUT** This refers to the rehearsed material that the comedian is performing, as well as any improvised material.
- **PERFORMER** This one is pretty self-explanatory.

3 **3 SOCIAL DYNAMICS OF THE TYPICAL COMEDIC SPACE**
 Figure 39
 Diagram created by author.

This also puts the audience, especially those in the most visible row, in a position of superiority, as they have the ability to navigate the success of a performance based on their feedback.

3

THE COMEDY CELLAR IN PLAN

If we try to understand the incongruencies of the space, we might want to look at the different programmes operating within the same space of the comedy club. The congruity and incongruity theory is expressed within the space as it operating simultaneously a restaurant-bar and a live performance venue. Somehow the wait staff must serve the audience while ensuring they do not interrupt the performance. In this case the performer is also vulnerable to the commotion of a restaurant-bar disrupting their performance. This also exhibits the notion of expectations, and how this venue breaks the expectations we have when entering either a restaurant-bar, or performance venue separately.

4 PROGRAM INCONGRUITY OF THE TYPICAL COMEDIC SPACE
Figure 40
Diagram created by author.

Upon arrival, tension is evident as one moves into the comedic space from outside, and even through the space during a performance. Immediately upon entering the space one travels down a set of narrow steps, into a narrow hallway, and yet another narrow set of steps until the tension is released as one enters the comedic space.

5 **TENSION AND RELIEF IN A TYPICAL COMEDIC SPACE**

Figure 41
Diagram created by author.

The pain theory is expressed within the intimacy of the void that is being filled with laughter by the comedian. Instead of pain deriving from the attempt at filling a large space with laughter, the pain instead is a result of the denseness of the void. A space in which the reactions of the audience have a larger impact on the performer than the space itself, means that the performer is more vulnerable to the reaction of the audience rather than the space in which they are performing; such as a space which architecturally disconnects the performer from their audience.

6 **PAIN AND SUPERIORITY IN
A TYPICAL COMEDIC SPACE**
Figure 42
Diagram created by author.

7 **AN ATYPICAL COMEDIC
SPACE; THE TEMPLE OF
DENDUR AT THE MET**
Figure 43
Created by author.

What we can infer from analyzing a typical comedic space is that, although the performer is still vulnerable in this space, and though the space might break some architectural expectations, the space is nonetheless very suitable for the comedic event, hence limiting the humorousness of the space itself.

If we look at a completely different and atypical performance space, we can see that a performer's vulnerability is manifested differently by virtue of the unusual setting. During a podcast interview with fellow comedian Amy Schumer, the reputed performer Jerry Seinfeld discusses a corporate event in which he was booked to perform.

8 JERRY DEEP IN THOUGHT
Figure 44
Comedian Jerry Seinfeld answers thought provoking questions like, "Do you have any goals?", while guest starring on the podcast *3 Girls 1 Keith*. (His answer was "no").

9 **THE ATMOSPHERE OF A MUSEUM** Figure 45
Collage by author, various images sourced from internet.
Comedian Jerry Seinfeld performs for a corporate event in the Temple of Dendur at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Seinfeld: So there was a corporate event in there, its called the Temple of Dendur.

Schumer: Oh my God, you did not do a set there.

Seinfeld: Yeah, yeah...

Schumer: You had a microphone, and a stage, and everything?

Seinfeld: Yeah. And as I got up there I realized 'Oh... you can't make out a word I'm saying', because of the acoustics. And I had to do an hour, to nothing!⁴

When analyzing the dynamic between the audience and performer, we can assume that the audience was close enough to the stage to see Seinfeld, but the volume of the space impeded their ability to hear his performance.

This makes Seinfeld vulnerable to his performance space, not in the sense that he is open to a possible attack from the space itself, but rather that he becomes dominated by the space which disconnects him from his audience.

10 **SOCIAL DYNAMICS OF THE ATYPICAL SPACE** Figure 46
Diagram created by author.

The congruity and incongruity theory is very apparent programmatically; the Metropolitan Museum of Art is hardly the space we expect for a comedian's performance. In fact when we think about museums, we often think about our experiences moving through quiet spaces, pretending to understand what we are looking at, and then heading for the gift shop (because that's why we agreed to come in the first place). The event becomes more humorous in comparison to the space because of the expectations that this incongruity breaks.

11 **PROGRAM INCONGRUITY OF AN ATYPICAL SPACE** Figure 47
Diagram created by author.

THE TEMPLE OF DENDUR IN PLAN

We can see that there are areas in the space with more circulatory tension than others, including the movement around the reflecting pond. However, due to the spatial openness we

can see how little tension builds as one moves through the rest of the space, showing a lack of relevance to the tension and relief theory, and a lack of humour to the way one would move through the space.

12 **TENSION AND RELIEF IN AN ATYPICAL SPACE** Figure 48
Diagram created by author.

Finally, we can see how the pain theory is expressed in two ways. The first is how the void is expansive and almost impossible to fill entirely with laughter, especially with an intimate audience; the second is how there is a large amount of room for Seinfeld to move and use the space to his advantage, but he is instead limited to a small stage. The superiority theory is evident here with the audience in a typical position of authority; surrounding the solo performer.

THE TEMPLE OF DENDUR IN PLAN

13

13 **PAIN AND SUPERIORITY IN AN ATYPICAL SPACE** Figure 49
Diagram created by author.

We can draw one important conclusion from these analyses of comedic spaces. Comedy theories can be manifested architecturally, which can be humorous. We see that they can exist in a space through the relationship between “audience” and “performer”, how one moves through the space itself, and what expectations we might have about the space versus the actual events that occur within it. These comedy theories now become key in creating potential comedic narratives through architecture.

Ikea under public scrutiny after being boring and lame

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- ☐ I would like to receive 500 emails everyday for the rest of my life, because I thought this would be a good idea at the time and now I'm too lazy to unsubscribe.
- ☐ I agree to the terms and conditions even though there is absolutely no way I have, or ever will, read them.

Figure 50 News website log-in
Created by author.

Ikea under public scrutiny after being boring and lame

IVANA ROVIC

STUCK IN HER ROOM RIGHT NOW

PUBLISHED APRIL 1, 2020.

Following an outcry of disappointment from customers who viewed the BBC 2 documentary Inside Ikea¹, Ikea listened to the concerns of their valued customers and decided to look for a way to be more inclusive in their advertisements with “real people” instead of paid models. The documentary featured creative marketing designer Sara Blomquist’s proposal to “break from tradition and back her idea of having a front [catalogue] cover that is more about people than furniture”.² Blomquist’s idea was ultimately rejected by the catalogue board who felt variously:

“It disturbs me, personally.”

“That disturbs me a lot!”

“It feels like this wouldn’t

actually happen in a

home”.

“The people disturb

me. I didn’t

find it [very]

*commercial”.*³

Figure 51 Face Off For the Cover. A member of the Ikea Catalogue Board (left) denies Creative marketing designer Sara Blomquist’s (right) idea to include people living joyously on the cover of the famous catalogue because - apparently - they do not believe a real family would live this way.

Figure 52 Ikea catalogue covers. The traditional cover (left) was selected over the cover including people (right).

Others spoke up and demanded justice for Blomquist's approach for a more human-centered portrayal of an Ikea space, using the hashtag #cancelIKEA. When this hashtag began trending on the popular social networking site, Twitter, the news was out. Ikea was deemed as insensitive by the general public - essentially similar to a federal crime these days. As everyone knows, it is extremely difficult to both financially and socially recover from a cancellation hashtag on Twitter induced by the millennials — Ikea needed to over-correct fast.

Figure 53 Twitter users incorporated the hashtag #cancelIKEA to show their disapproval of the Catalogue Board's decision.

The IKEA Real People Event!

Introducing The IKEA Real People Event!

We at Ikea would like to extend the greatest thanks to our loyal customers. We want you to know that without you, the Ikea brand would not be what it is today. That is why we have decided to ditch the models and create a marketing event that includes people just like you! We are dedicated to representing our real customers in a way that we never have before; a real way. We've decided to open up rooms in our showroom for customers to really live in! (until all this twitter bullshit blows over)

1 THE IKEA EVENT FLYER
Figure 54
Created by author featuring Ikea
stool and lamp.

Individuals will be able to experience “The Wonderful Everyday”™ (that familiar Ikea mantra) every day as they live their real lives in the showroom. We hope that this shows our customers how amazing our products are and that they can make any space livable.

We also want our Ikea tenants to know that we respect their privacy. That is why we will ensure that each occupied room will be enclosed with a fourth wall and will feature an entrance only accessible by the occupant.

Ikea reserves the right to allow customers to view Ikea tenants during store operating hours through design techniques that allow views into the space, while simultaneously limiting the disturbance of the tenants. Using carefully placed fenestration, customers will be able to view how real people really live in an Ikea furnished home.

Did we mention this is real? Because it is.

2 **IKEA LIVING ROOM**
Figure 55

3 **IKEA KITCHEN**
Figure 56

4 **IKEA BEDROOM**
Figure 57

**IKEA REAL PEOPLE EVENT:
SHOWROOM MAP**
Figure 58

A living room, not just for the living

Don't you hate it when you try to summon demons in the comfort of your own home, but they have no interest in visiting you because of your living room? We know we do. Ikea has all the furnishings you need for a night of selling your soul to the dark lord.

⑦ \$12⁹⁹

6 **THE CÖVEN (TENANT 1)**
Figure 59

7 **TEA CANDLES**
Whether you're setting the mood for romance, or a seance, we've got you covered.

Everything you want for your dark sided needs

\$575⁹⁹

- 8 **KISTA**
We take the saying "cradle-to-grave" literally. This amazing sofa that doubles as a coffin!
Figure 60

\$666⁹⁹

- 9 **SKÜUL**
The remains of your greatest enemy. If you can't get them fresh, store bought is also fine.
Figure 61

\$39⁹⁹

- 10 **BÖRD KĚDG**
Every goth needs a pet raven. *Raven sold separately; look for the guy with an eyepatch wandering around the warehouse.*
Figure 62

Showroom
section
concealed

A CHILD WHO HAS WITNESSED
TOO MUCH FOR HIS AGE AND
WILL FOREVER BE CHANGED
BY THIS MOMENT

Showroom
section
revealed

LORD OF DARKNESS
ASKING FOR DIRECTIONS
TO THE SHOWROOM
BECAUSE HE'S BEING
SUMMONED. BUT FIRST
HE WANTS TO ASK ABOUT
THESE SHELF UNITS; ARE
THEY ON SALE?

IKEA EMPLOYEE 12
MINUTES FROM THE END
OF HER SHIFT WHO IS NOT
EVEN GOING TO QUESTION
WHAT'S GOING ON RIGHT
NOW, BECAUSE SHE JUST
WANTS TO GET OUT OF
HERE

All the shelf space you need for your hoarded supplies

Looking for extra storage space for the 5 years worth of toilet paper you bought for some inexplicable reason? Look no further! At Ikea, we know that it is absolutely ludacris that people are hoarding supplies that they don't even need during a global pandemic, but we still want to capitalize on the situation. We have all the storage space you need for your ridiculous purchases.

13 **KOVIDIOTERS (TENANT 2)**
Figure 65

14 **BIG BIG SHELF**
A shelf that takes up 1/4 of your living room is totally our thing.

15 **ÖXYTENK**
Don't ask where we got our supply of oxygen tanks from and definitely don't google "Ikea stealing oxygen tanks from hospitals to increase profits during COVID-19".

16 **TOALETTPAPPER**
Limited time offer. Ikea brand toilet paper made from recycled particle board. *MAY CAUSE SPLINTERS*

Showroom
section
concealed

AH HUMAN BEINGS;
FIGHTING OVER A PACK
OF TOILET PAPER, EVEN
THOUGH THERE ARE STILL
OTHER PACKS AVAILABLE

Showroom
section
revealed

Two great things are made in the kitchen; memories and abs

Achieving the physique of an ancient Greek Olympian is not easy. Our kitchens are orgnaized and stylish, with ample room for meal prepping. Your dream body is only one kitchen renovation, 10 000 meatballs, and several years of exercise away.

19 **MACHO MÄNNISKA (TENANT 3)**
Figure 68

20 **KONTAINÖR**
Ikea is not responsible for the inevitable and inexplicable separation/ loss of lids to containers.

21 **MEATBÄLLEN** Made fresh every day... then frozen.

TWO-WAY
MIRRORS

IT'S NOT
NARCISSISM, IT'S
BEING YOUR OWN
ROLE MODEL

VAPOUR BARRIER
10" RIGID INSULATION
METAL DECK

OPEN WEB STEEL JOIST

PARTICLE BOARD

6" CONCRETE SLAB

METAL DECK

OPEN WEB STEEL JOIST

Plants

SUSTAINABILITY IS OUR
SEVENTH PRIORITY

WE BELIEVE IN
SUSTAINABILITY

6" CONCRETE SLAB

VAPOUR BARRIER

8" RIGID INSULATION

COMPACTED FILL

22 **MACHO MÄNNISKA INTERIOR**
SECTION
Figure 69

23 **MACHO MÄNNISKA CONCEALED**
Figure 70

24 **MACHO MÄNNISKA REVEALED**
Figure 71

IKEA pet furnishings, now and forever

A decorated home can be a great stress reliever. Our modern and comfortable furnishings will help you unwind. Whether you had a tough day at work, or fed your husband to tigers years ago, your Ikea furnished home will be your relaxation station.

25 **CRAZY KAT KVINNA (TENANT 4)**
Figure 72

26 **ÄNYTJÄMBUTBÖKS SHELF**
Bookcases are made to store little bowls of loose change and other random objects, not books.

Furniture your pets will want to destroy

\$675⁹⁹

27 **STRIMLAD**
A couch that also serves as a cat-scratch post, whether you like it or not!
Figure 73

\$1350⁹⁹

28 **ONYTTIG**
Translated to English means "useless".
Your cat will still prefer tearing up the couch.
Figure 74

INEXPLICABLY
LARGE CLAW
MARKS

CAROLE BASKIN

VAPOUR BARRIER
10" RIGID INSULATION
METAL DECK
OPEN WEB STEEL JOIST

PARTICLE BOARD

6" CONCRETE SLAB

METAL DECK

OPEN WEB STEEL JOIST

6" CONCRETE SLAB

VAPOUR BARRIER

8" RIGID INSULATION

COMPACTED FILL

29 **CRAZY KAT KVINNA CONCEALED**
Figure 75

30 CRAZY KAT KVINNA REVEALED
Figure 76

Working from home can work for anyone

We believe that anyone can be productive from the comfort of their own home, illegal tattoo artists are no exception. If you're going to break the law and potentially harm others, at least do it in style.

31 **SKRAPAR (TENANT 5)**
Figure 77

32 **GROGRUND BED**
Ikea is not responsible for any potential infections that develop due to illegal and unregulated tattooing. That was a poor life decision on the recipients part.

33 **SJÄLVREFLEKTION**
If you're willing to get a free tattoo in an Ikea, this would be a great place to go and reflect on those poor life decisions.

34 **SKRAPAR CONCEALED**
Figure 78

Not your average office

Whether you are trying to move on from a childhood trauma, or just had a bad day, Ikea knows that it is important to feel safe with mental health professionals.

36 **BADRUM TERAPI (TENANT 6)**
Figure 80

That's why we know that comfort is the most important aspect of a therapeutic space, and what's more comforting than bathing next to someone who's evaluating your mental health?

How does that make you feel?

37 **SOFFATÜB**
Sit back and relax in this beautiful porcelain tub while you retrace your childhood traumas and get to the root of your personality... issues.
Figure 81

39 **PLENT**
We know you're all incapable of taking care of yourselves, let alone a living plant. That's why our plants are made of 100% polyester.
Figure 83

38 **TOALETSTÜL**
Nothing says professional like using a toilet as a chair.
Figure 82

40 **BADRUM TERAPI CONCEALED**
Figure 84

41 **BADRUH TERAPEI REVEALED**
Figure 85

Interrogate in style

Who says interrogations have to be stressful? With Ikea's beautiful office furnishings, you can provide a stylish space for delusional maniacs to confess to their crimes.

42 **UTFRÅGNING (TENANT 7)**
Figure 86

43 **LÖJLIG LAMP**
At Ikea we take pride in our modern and subtle designs.

44 **UTFRÅGNING CONCEALED**
Figure 87

45 **UTFRÅGNING REVEALED**
Figure 88

How did we get here?

The key to telling a joke, in this novice comedian's opinion, is to not give away too much information in the set-up. The process of coming up with this intervention must be presented in a way that does not reveal an explanation before the joke is told, otherwise it would kill the joke.

The thought process behind the approach to a comedic intervention began with hope, which then distilled into more familiar feelings; confusion, frustration, panic, tears. Defining the scope of a comedic event through architecture is difficult when there are many possible approaches. An analysis of comedy venues in relation to their context showed us that vulnerability can be expressed in spaces that are disconnected from the general public. A closer look at these spaces showed us that the unexpected can be much more comedic than the expected.

Creating a comedic narrative through architecture requires vulnerability to be expressed through a spatial intervention along with expectations of that space broken to some extent.

If we are looking to break expectations, the best place to look for them is a place where expectations are set strictly. There are many places that come to mind in terms of expectations, but the place with the most meatballs is Ikea!

Ikea is an internationally recognized ready-to-assemble furniture and home furnishing company.¹ It is the largest furniture retailer in the world today – with around one billion customer visits recorded in 2019.² Ikea is said to be so successful for their knowledge of their customer base; according to market research collected by statistics reporting company Statista. The author of the report, Liam O’Connell, states that “The company understands the purchasing factors which influence customers to buy furniture and implements the best practices to induce that decision”.³

When O’Connell says this he means mostly likely that Ikea knows how to produce cheap options for furniture and make them look good. This statement has nothing to do with the actual customers themselves - their identities and the way they live within their homes – and everything to do with how much quality customers are willing to be sacrificed for a lower price point.

Since it was founded in 1943, Ikea has been setting these, and other expectations for customers.⁴ Not only are we accustomed to Ikea's cheap but stylish products, we've become familiar with their stores and their brand identity. The Ikea brand revolves around the image of perfect people in a perfect space, they portray their understanding of the most idealistic lifestyle – one that is only achievable through the purchase of their products. The notoriety of the brand and their image was one of the factors that made Ikea the optimal space for a comedic narrative told through architecture. This allowed us to play with the expectations associated with the Ikea brand. The other factor that we were able to play with comedically was vulnerability. Since a home is a personal and private space, putting that space on display to a public audience makes it vulnerable. The Ikea showroom, specifically, is just that – a series of fabricated personal and private spaces on display.

Just ask this couple I caught making out at a real Ikea.

¹ **IKEA LOVE** Figure 89
Photographed by author (who swears she didn't see them when she was taking the photo).

Comedy theory methodology (how to kill the joke)

For the purposes of this thesis, the methodology behind the intervention – or “the joke” - will be explained (and spectacularly ruined).

The comedy theories that we discovered to be crucial in a comedic space and narrative included:

Pain and Superiority

Tension and Relief

Congruity and Incongruity

The narrative of the Ikea Real People Event, and the representational drawings that derived from it employ these theories to make them comedic.

Pain and Superiority

Here we see an abstracted plan of a room with its adjacent showroom path. Here, we can see that the general public is in a position of superiority – they are maintaining their usual conduct while the Ikea tenants are attempting to live in privacy while under observation from the public. This paints the Ikea tenants as the “fools”, putting them in the painful, or vulnerable, position.

SHOWROOM UNIT IN PLAN

1 IKEA PAIN AND SUPERIORITY DIAGRAM Figure 90

Tension and Relief

This diagram exhibits how tension is built through the views into and out of the room. Tension is built by revealing certain parts of the comedic event in elevation that are strategically displayed through fenestration before the entirety of the event is unveiled. The punchline of the joke is displayed in section when the entire event is revealed and the tension is relieved.

Congruity and Incongruity

Congruity is implied with the Ikea showroom itself. This diagram represents the idea of what is congruent - or in keeping with our expectations - versus what is not, and how incongruity can create comedic events. Since Ikea is a globally recognized brand, many people are familiar with the Ikea showroom; how it looks and works (but not how to get through it without getting lost). Ikea's showroom is typically congruent with our expectations of it, which makes introducing the notion of people actually living in the showroom spaces incongruent and comedic. Additionally, setting the expectation that these occupants will be people "just like you" allows us to introduce incongruity through the occupant and event occurring within the space.

SHOWROOM UNIT TENSION DIAGRAM

2 IKEA TENSION AND RELIEF DIAGRAM Figure 91

SHOWROOM UNIT INCONGRUITY DIAGRAM

3 IKEA CONGRUITY AND INCONGRUITY DIAGRAM Figure 92

How far is too far?

post-script

Looking back over the course of this thesis, one important question came up following the “completion” of the work: “how far could you have taken this?”. To answer this in one word; this could have been taken very far. That is the great seduction about comedy; it never stops changing, adapting, and developing. It is only now though, when reflecting on the subject, that we can ask why this is. Is it mainly because our lives and cultural influences change and tend to change now more drastically, and frequently, than ever before? Or is it simply because once you’ve heard a joke, it is typically no longer as amusing as it was on first hearing? Whatever the case, we can learn something about architecture through even the most polar opposite of practices, like comedy. The purpose of this thesis was never to make an argument about architecture or comedy, but rather to explore the ways in which these two worlds collide and affect each other, as well as what similarities lay within these two worlds and what this could teach us.

The architecture that surrounds us often creates a certain atmosphere within a space. The events that take place within these cultivated atmospheres also often don't match up to our expectations; they become ordinary. When we see something out of the ordinary, we usually find it funny, but when we see something out of the ordinary in a space that elevates that absurdity, we find it even funnier. Architects have the ability to influence our experiences of a space, however they cannot predict human behaviour. This is where the comedic potential lays - in the absurd events that can occur within our built environment. As a joke becomes old or flat when repeated too many times, architecture suffers similarly when it doesn't serve its users or community in a way that impacts them positively. Architecture, like comedy, must always be changing, adapting, and developing in order to fulfill its purpose and serve its "audience". This also implies that different "audiences" have different architectural needs, just as different audiences have various comedic preferences. Sadly sometimes it seems that architects often think like architects, instead of thinking like their "audience".

A huge company like IKEA, one which has claimed to “know their customers”, also exhibits this way of thinking. The reality is that IKEA sees their customers through a corporate lens, where their main focus is not exploring the individuality of their customers but rather increasing their large customer base for profit. By setting those customers in an IKEA setting who wouldn’t typically even be considered anywhere in their design/manufacturing/sales processes, we upset the claim that IKEA “really knows their customers”. Taking this further, this observation might be comparable to the critique of architects thinking like architects, claiming to really know the users of a space, but then designing with no evidence of that. If architects wish to contribute purposeful design to their community, they must introduce design with the “audience” in mind.

Glossary

Humour – A condition of amusement lacking seriousness typically - but not exclusively - associated with laughter.

Comedic (genre) – A genre of multiple mediums (literature, film, performance, etc.) in which the goal is to make the audience laugh through amusing stories, acts, events, etc.

Comedic (space) – A space in which any style of comedy is performed, whether it be stand-up or improv, etc.

Comedic (quality) – A quality of humorousness associated with the comedic genre.

Performer (stand-up) – Typically an individual comedian (sometimes a pair of two comedians) reciting or acting out some sort of humorous material - whether it is scripted or improvised - in front of an audience.

Audience – A group of people viewing a performance, individual, event, etc.

Performance (comedic) – scripted, or improvised material performed by a comedian - or group of comedians - intended to make an audience laugh multiple times throughout the entirety of the performance.

Vulnerable – Being in a position of openness to a variety of emotions including pain, fear, anxiety, embarrassment, frustration, excitedness, pleasure, etc. which is brought on by putting oneself at the center of attention of a group of people (or “audience”).

Expectations – A set of beliefs that we are able to predict the conditions of our built environment and the events that will occur within it due to our comparable life experiences, understanding of the world, and sociocultural contexts.

Styles of comedy – Genres such as satire, parody, alternative comedy, anti-humour, dark comedy, improv, sketch comedy, etc. Performers typically employ multiple styles of comedy within one performance. A single joke could even be categorized under multiple styles of comedy.

Comedy Theories – Overarching theories that break down the idea of what qualities of a performance are necessary in order to incite laughter from an audience during a comedic performance. The comedy theories include the pain theory, the superiority theory, the tension and relief theory, and the congruity and incongruity theory.

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