

Learning Places Fall 2016
Chin/Swift

SITE REPORT [part II: performer/spectator]

Times Square Costume characters



Costume characters in the “activity zones” in Times Square. A regulation, which limits performers to the teal zones while soliciting tips.

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INTRODUCTION

Times Square on Friday, we first visited some other theater located throughout Broadway. One of them was Minskoff Theater in which we were able to walk by their lobby where The Lion King show was advertised. We then were assigned to look for performers around the area and we did find a few costumed characters penning around and other tip seekers to painted zones within its plazas. The performers mostly obeyed the rules as they were monitored within the square. It was an interesting thing to watch on how they approached people and got tips for just taking a picture with them.

PRE-VISIT REFLECTION

Before attending time square we had a history overview on the theaters in times square and how broadway moved its way up. Expectations were to see some of the theaters that we talked about and understand how they are being used today. Getting to know how they were updated and structure was something I was looking forward to see.

SITE DOCUMENTATION (photos/sketches)



QUALITATIVE SITE OBSERVATIONS

1. Description of the performance object, person, or technology (costume, media, text, props, sets, etc.)

Costume characters walking around and waving that people to get them to take picture with them while they surround you and then ask for a tip.

2. Choreography of performance.

Tourist and New Yorkers walking and taking pictures of themselves. Spidey-like abilities for tourists, hoping they would pose with him for photos in exchange for tips

3. Description of performance limits (ground, walls, barricades, streets, buildings)

The city has now limited the space for Costume characters so they are limited to how far they can go throughout timeshare. An assigned area of 10 by 50ft.

4. Description of audience (static, moving, direction of attention)

Tourist and New Yorkers walking and taking pictures of themselves. They are mostly site seeing times square you'll see people standing or sitting everywhere talking pictures or video.

5. Description of audience (socio-economic, community identity)

The crowd of people give times square a valuable location because of the amount of traffic it's build.

6. Description of performer/spectator dynamics (engagement, morphology)

Performer target mostly tourist .They bring the people around and also follow them to make the catch and then convince them to give them money.



Quantitative Data for Area of Study

Subject	Data
Size of performance space	10 by 50ft
Size of spectator space	10 by 50ft
Range of dynamic change	Fast pace
# of points of focus	5-10 Charaters
Number of spectators (range)	350,000+
Time period of performance	24 hours
# of repetitions	3-5 shifts
Cost of performance (if any)	estimate costume - \$200-\$300

QUESTIONS TO RESEARCH FURTHER

QUESTIONS:

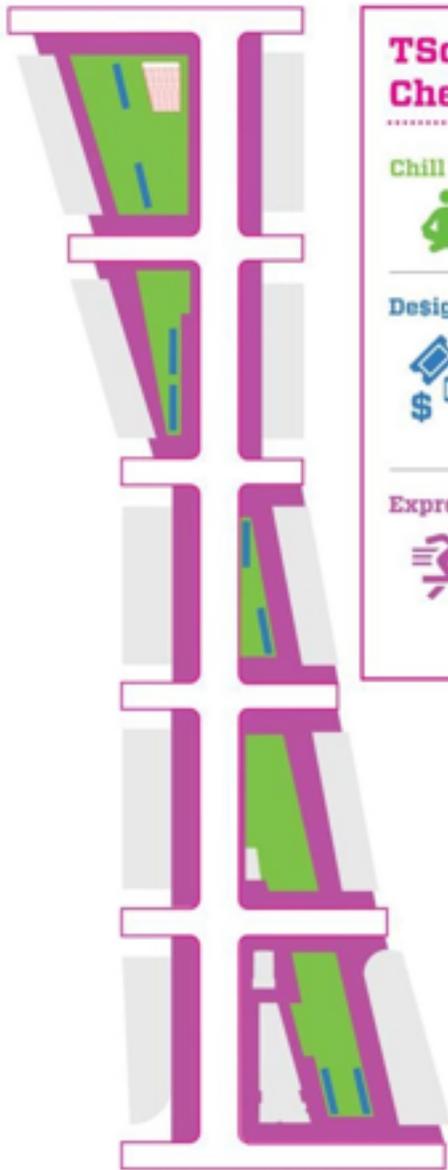
1. Why has the costumed characters been boxed in?
2. Why become a costume character in Times Square?
3. How much money are they making per day?

RESEARCH METHOD/SOURCE FOR EACH QUESTION ABOVE:

1. Question 1
 - a. Complaints about aggressive demands for tips.
 - b. Bad behavior by some of the costumed characters.
 - c. Street characters were confined to the new zones.
2. Question 2
 - a. Cash profits that aren't taxable.
 - b. The characters work for themselves
 - c. They do not have employers and do not belong to a union.
3. Question 3
 - a. 350,000 and 450,000 pedestrians pass through it daily
 - b. \$200 a day to about \$80
 - c. Burck, who has been working Times Square for more than 18 years, said his business has been unaffected, still bringing in \$500 to \$600 a day in tips.

SUMMARY / POST VISIT REFLECTION

The characters in Times Square work for themselves. They do not have employers and do not belong to a union. The characters pocket their own earnings, up to two hundred dollars for eight hours, on a good day, but usually less than a hundred dollars. They buy their own costumes, which cost anywhere from two hundred and fifty dollars. The city will also create pedestrian zones a fast track for people who find themselves in Times Square and immediately want to get the hell out. All of these new regulations stem from a push to regulate the performers and topless who have gotten a reputation for aggressively panhandling and harassing tourists. After doing the research and understand what goes on behind the scenes of the Costume Characters it all ends on the business and how they could make more money.



TSq Plaza Rules Cheat Sheet

Chill Zone (TSq Version)



Sit, nosh, meditate, take in the sights, and watch the world go by (literally) on a different kind of Broadway stage.

Designated Activity Zones



Commercial activities, street entertainment, posing for photos, vendors of expressive matter (without tables or chairs), in exchange for compensation, donations, or tips. (Existing vending rules remain in effect.)

Express Lanes



Pedestrian through lanes (NHC Style) for getting where you need to go without commercial hassle, interference, or encumbrances.

For inspiration download the **TSqExpress** playlist on Spotify. 

Map not drawn to scale.

