

Notes on Presentation and Storytelling

1.1 Speak to your audience

In this architecture school, presentations are generally considered to be “pin ups”... a short presentation followed by a critique. A question and answer process. It is critical to get this presentation right... how do you invite your audience into your presentation? How do you *lure* them into your presentation?

Always be generous. Always be humble. Always be authentic. Know your work backwards and forwards. But also be open to input and critique. In an academic setting remember that the presentation is not necessarily about making a “sale” or “closing the deal” (whatever that means), or about driving in the point because you know it is right, it is about making strong points, yet inviting discourse, or conversation about your work... You want to actively grow conversation around your work in a positive way.

You never want to alienate your audience. And lecturers can be alienated. So can your peers. People are only people, right? What this means, though, is that you will have to find the right tone. You already know the personality of many of your lecturers... or you will learn it in the next few weeks. Adopt your presentation tone to their style. Tone is one of the most important things to get right in presentations. Again: you do not want to alienate your audience.

Great presentations are about speaking to the audience you are presenting to.

In one of the articles I include below I read the following: "When you make the audience the star of your presentation, your reach rises, your impact increases, and your bottom-line blossoms."

I couldn't agree more... because when I'm listening to a presentation, I want to know *should I be listening*... I want to know *if this person knows what they are talking about*... and I want to know *whats in it for me*...

Here is a useful link about audience analyses...

<http://sixminutes.dlugan.com/audience-analysis/>

Here is another useful link about audience analyses...

<https://www.thoughtco.com/audience-analysis-important-tool-for-presentations-2767434>

Here is an article that gives information on how to make the audience the focus of your presentation...

<https://www.fastcompany.com/3041558/5-ways-to-make-the-audience-the-star-of-your-presentation>

1.1 The crit presentation

Please listen to this presentation by an architectural student N. Underwood. It uses the general crit format: informative presentation followed by discussion. Look at how she presents, look at her understanding and handle on her project, and look at how she works *with* commentary.

<https://youtu.be/WRSStzpDPI4?t=3>

Do you think that this presenter found a way to engage with her audience? I want you to think about what you learn from your peers' presentations in the coming months, and I want you to help your peers in adjusting aspects of their presentation style.

What is your authentic voice in a presentation? It is within each of your individual powers to find presentation styles that connect with your future audiences in authentic ways. Let people see you, and let them engage with you. Continue to develop the capacity in yourself to connect with people through the “discoursing” that characterises an architecture educational studio. Think about your context in an architectural school. Develop strategies to connect with lecturers and peers through your presentations.

1.2 Working with tonality

While what you say in a presentation is important, how you say it is also really important. Listen to this speech by Laura Sicola. She gives insights into how your vocal delivery influences the reception of messages, and how to use this to your advantage.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=02EJ1ldC6tE>

So much of the architectural industry revolves around reputation, and building credibility within a network of practitioners. The content of your presentations are important, but how you present this content is also very important. By not working on your delivery, you can undermine your message. I'm asking you to consider how the message you put out in the world builds a practice around you. I'm asking you to consider how the way you deliver messages can help you build your network.

1.3 Engage through stories

The video of the student represents a more generic architectural presentation at roughly your level of study. That student had a way to vividly speak to the place she was imagining on the plan. But how could this imaginative way of entering a plan have been expanded? Watch this video by business storyteller expert Nancy Duarte for an overview of what story can do for you...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GY3u6QuZXE8>

And please watch this video to learn how to lure an audience into your presentation...

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vi6uA_N55yY

Note that the story structure presented in the above video is only one possible form. You can google to learn about other story structures, but we will visit story structure in a future date again.

Storytelling is useful in different contexts.

- Stories can communicate new possibilities
- Stories can illustrate new perspectives
- Stories can take people to new places in their imaginations
- Stories can connect with people: imaginatively, and metaphorically with a sense of new meaning and purpose
- Stories can shift stuck and unproductive limiting reactions, beliefs, attitudes and thinking
- Stories can unlock potential for humour, imagination, creativity, and renewal
- Stories can reveal a pattern
- Stories can show a truth
- Stories can inspire and they can
- Stories can help people see an existing problem, and see how it may change

1.4 Stories are magical

When speakers manage to get their audiences to respond to them... it happens intuitively, and on a biological level. Good speakers guide their audiences into the presentation, and their audiences enjoy being guided into the presentation. Good presenters make their audience feel something... and to JP Phillips, this is a bit of magic.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nj-hdQMa3uA>

This magic happens, however, in the framing. Watch this speech by Nat Kendall-Taylor to see how framing your work in the right way leads to different levels of reception in the audience.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y8wol2nGSpY>

The keys to getting an audience to respond to your presentation is to know your subject matter, and to know the needs and biases of your audience, and then to craft your message in a way that you know will resonate with them, whilst remembering to keep your message simple, and get to the point. Let your audience step away from your presentation feeling like they learnt something, as if the message was crafted for each individual audience member specifically. Another takeaway from this is how everything we make is set within a larger cultural sphere. Embrace that fact.

Please note also the different presentation styles in the last three videos: Nat Kendall-Taylor, David JP Phillips, and Nancy Duarte. You will have to figure out the right presentation style for your current academic setting. What do you think Natalie Underwood could learn from these speakers? What can you learn from these speakers? I know I have learnt a thing or two! *I was reminded of the need to sometimes say less, be more organised, and to s l o w d o w n!*

1.5 Storytelling and Vulnerability

It takes courage to present something you believe in, or to speak with reference to your own lived experience.

Amandla Stenberg in the following link, presents a speech about the importance of being authentic, how authenticity creates connection, but how being authentic requires vulnerability.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWNCbWVmUJk

The following is a personal story of Imad Elabdala who lived through the Syrian war, and had to deal with PTSD.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KLy1dOBldJ8>

I want you to take note of the strong beginning and end in Elabdala's speech. I also want you to think about how he weaves story around the main points of his speech. I want you to think about how the message he conveys is relatively simple. Like Stenberg's speech before, this is a great speech.

Elabdala is a great example of a person who employs "empathy" and storytelling in his practice as an engineer and now a social entrepreneur: he runs a media innovation lab using science, art storytelling and tech to create tools to help children. Elabdala transformed his vulnerability and his skills into his strength. Into resilience.

Presentations work when we show that we are human, and that we are speaking to other humans. That is, when we can connect with other humans through feeling and fact, propositions and metaphor, we can get powerful messages across. But this is not always so easy. Perhaps indeed it is something between a science, and magic... Between the story of the cartographer, and that of the rastaman.

The academic world does not always appreciate vulnerability... Yet, when presentations are based on an authenticity, they are better, because they enable connection. I can't give you the answer to what this balance is. You will develop this for yourselves over time.

Many of your presentations in university are more based geared towards relaying information than to telling a story with a single powerful message. That means your presentation content and presentation styles would be different to many of those in the videos we are watching in this file. This means that you will never have to go to those human depths that Stenberg and Elabdala go to in their presentations. However, I want you to learn from their styles, and incorporate what you can.

1.6 Consider a question, or a call to action, or a key message

When you are trying to persuade an audience, you need to present them with a call to action that is clear on how the individual can take action. A call to action should never be vague... it should be vivid. Speak to people's imagination and inspire them with the potential reward they will get for taking action.

This article focuses on the different types of action that can be taken by different audience members...

<http://www.duarte.com/presentation-call-to-action/>

Remember, with the call to action you are trying to get people to engage with your ideas in a positive way with constructive discourse... that does not mean you can't start using persuasive techniques in your presentations.

1.7 Role-playing, embodying, and theatre techniques

Roleplaying, embodying, and theatre techniques, as types of storytelling, can be powerful ways to transfer ideas. You are still dealing with messages, and information transfer... but you are involving multiple modalities in the production of story. Think about vocal dynamics, stage presence, body language, stage presence, and authenticity, characterisation.

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Jeremy_Cutsforth-Gregory/publication/51147274_Telling_the_Patient's_Story_using_theatre_training_to_improve_case_presentation_skills/links/00b4951e5a7225e1fe000000.pdf

<http://www.brunel.ac.uk/learnhigher/giving-oral-presentations/Roleplay.pdf>

<https://serc.carleton.edu/introgeo/roleplaying/howto.html>

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0950705100000964>

<https://www.gingerpublicspeaking.com/article/6-of-the-best-theatre-techniques-for-public-speaking>

1.8 Projecting your voice (and using different voices for different messages)

Also please make sure people will hear you in the open spaces that you have to present in. Maybe you can get some tips from this actress.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ynmemxQicQk>

And this voice coach... This is some very interesting info... and she is very entertaining. There are 5 different voices which we can use in different contexts, for different effects.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ze763kgrWGg>

Remember, these people are experts in voice... we never have to be as expert as them to be good presenters.