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Title: Design as a malleable structure: Reframing the conceptual understanding of design and culture through George Kubler’s morphological approach to the history of things

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Under the banner of globalization and internationalization, what actually happens in design? Has today’s blended culture lost the identity unique to the context? What should be the interior design educator’s attitude toward teaching design and culture in the current age? We encounter dilemmas in global design, the results of which are sometimes almost identical regardless of unique settings because of our tendency to grasp design as a whole with respect to particular style or trend without fully apprehending the core and the deviation. Perceiving the entire design project as a mere symbolic expression also hinders our true understanding of design and culture. In this article, I attempt to answer fundamental questions regarding the complex, innate relationship between design and culture and suggest restructuring a conceptual framework applicable to related research and education that effectively reveals the multi-faceted characteristics of design and culture in the present age.

From the perspective of morphology, current individual design practice can be redefined as one entity comprising two coexisting components: One is a set of particular principles that construe a certain design pattern or type of design practice, and the other is another set of morphed elements embedded in design that reflects the context. The conceptual framework on which this article is based derives from George Kubler’s morphological approach to the history of things and the biological approach to understanding archetypes. Kubler views the history of things as a “system of interlocking, reciprocally supporting routines of course drifts and sways, and swells and shrink, in response to many conditions.”

The biological approach to understanding types helps us interpret Kubler’s idea of core signals and mutants. In this article, I will discuss (a) the main signal of a design type that transmits the core genotype of a design; (b) the need in type recognition exercise to make phenotype visible so that we can recognize the driving factors that cause transformation of mutants; (c) deductive reasoning to examine socio-political, economic, religious, and other cultural forces that lead to such deviation of phenotype; (d) creating successive linked design solutions so we can see the variation of mutants and possibly predict opportunities for rich mutation and crossover among archetypes reflecting the context.

Reframing the conceptual foundation of design and culture will allow interior design educators to empower students not only to discover potential ground upon which culture and identity can dynamically intervene but also to witness the core design archetypes that tie genuine global understanding to design.

References:

Title: minding the gaps: disability culture + cultural competence in interior design

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Despite the increased attention to the relationship of disability and design, this area still suffers from terminological confusion, oversimplification and a positivist bias that continues to produce ableist space. Here, I am suggesting that space is not a fixed container or a pochéd plan that needs to be ‘altered’ in order to accommodate, but that space is a fundamental element of social life and that space continually reproduces the social and cultural relations of its production. This paper serves as a critical foundation for ongoing explorations into how disability culture is situated within interior design.

A shift towards disability as culture is necessary to move our understanding of how to design for those with disabilities out of the objective realm (prescriptive codes and guidelines) and into a subjective realm (the lived experience and embodied know-how of those with disabilities). By framing disability around a cultural model rather than a medical model it allows for epistemological and pedagogical shifts in our ways of knowing in interior design. In defining culture as “a way of life” it is important to look at disability as both a diverse way of living and a diverse way of knowing. Most significant, is that the everyday expertise of people with disabilities is recognized as knowledge that can inform the field of interior design. The urgency for defining disability culture is essential to our understanding of cultural competence in interior design education and practice.

The aim of this paper is to challenge our current understanding of how to design for those with disabilities and to shift our ways of knowing in interior design towards a deep understanding of the lived experience, embodied knowhow and culture of those with disabilities. This paper will begin by analysing the different models of disability and how interior design education and practice has shifted to reflect these different models. Defining disability culture and all of its complexities is also an essential component of this paper. Finally, this paper will present best practices and case studies of how a cultural model of disability can shape interior environments and interior design pedagogy.
Title: Backstage: A Dramaturgical Analysis of Interior Spaces and What they Say About the Individual

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Culture is an intersection of the communication of various selves. However, the self can consist of varying layers: the body, one’s clothes, one’s belongings, etc. (Burns, 1979; Belk, 1988; Naumann et al., 2009). In addition, signaling theory is a broad construct from the communication literature that seeks to analyze how information is transmitted and received (Lasswell 1948; Heath & Bryant, 2000). The quality of communication can often determine its effectiveness. However, signaling theory has more recently been specifically applied to study how consumers signal aspects of their identity to others through the clothes they wear while they are out in public (Berger & Heath, 2007; Han, Nunes, & Dreze, 2010). Signaling theory has also been adapted to study how individuals signal aspects of their identity to others through their office spaces and bedrooms (Gosling et al., 2002). Signaling could also be applied to other interior spaces.

According to impression management theory, the individual expresses and social others form an impression (Goffman, 1959). This theory argues that the individual strategically engages in certain behaviors in order to shape the impressions others form about him or her. It is a continual negotiation of cultural communication through verbal and non-verbal behaviors. Interestingly, Goffman used a theatrical metaphor to underline his framework. He argued that the researcher can study the individual engaging in impression management as if one were studying an actor in a play. The actor can be studied on stage, off stage, alone, or while communicating with other actors. The research can even focus the attention on the audience, the setting, costumes, props, etc., and see how they are interacting with the actor’s performance. This theatrical lens provides a wealth of descriptive features to study social interaction.

Here, a framework is offered that is adapted from the use of a dramaturgical lens in impression management theory to study the signals that can be sent about one’s self via their interior spaces. This framework describes the interplay of private and public spaces, and how the individual navigates these social planes. In particular, the private, interior space is the main focus of this paper. This space is where the individual rehearses for social, public roles, but it is also a space where social others are sometimes invited to enter. Interior spaces signal cultural clues about the individual’s sense of self, and are therefore rich sources of information to others about the individual. By combining signaling theory and impression management theory, a framework of cultural communication through interior design is presented. Although preliminary, this framework could be further fleshed out through the incorporation of various interior design concepts and theories. This framework is a study of consumers’ interior lives, which is also an area of consumer research that only has a thin amount of research in the literature (Fournier, 1998; Coupland, 2005). Therefore, this paper is a cross-disciplinary look at the culture of interior design.
References:

Title: Ethnography and logical argumentation as a research method for clarifying complex client/user cultures

Authors: Dana Vaux, Assistant Professor of Interior Design, Department of Family Studies and Interior Design, University of Nebraska at Kearney
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Along with other design professionals in a globalizing world, interior designers are serving clients who are increasingly complex. Clients tend less to be individuals, but rather institutions and corporations; and even the smaller ones among these may well have international scope. This increase in complexity has also rendered the distinction between “client” and “user” more sophisticated. Often the client, in the form of a corporate representative, may not be the end user of the design.

Understanding exactly who design professionals are designing for now requires more than just developing a program; it requires the designer to comprehend his or her client’s culture. There is increased attention in the literature on design ethnography, the practice of living in midst of client/user cultures in situ for purposes of clarifying client/user needs by means of “thick description” (Geertz, 19, 1973). This paper surveys examples of these cases from the literature, and then proposes logical argumentation as a research methodology by which complex cultural lineaments are clarified into empirical matrices that help in establishing design programs.

Logical argumentation, as defined by Groat and Wang, takes “a set of previously disparate factors, or previously unknown and/or unappreciated factors, and interconnects them into unified frameworks that have significant … explanatory power.” (Groat and Wang, 2013, 387). This paper outlines ways to harness logical argumentation methods and tactics specifically for design ethnography in client/user cultures. Culture is complicated. Logical argument serves as an interdisciplinary means to sort, catalog, and categorize data enabling designers to operationalize it for design solutions. In addition to examples from the literature, this paper reports on specific cases of logical argumentation in design studio venues. In sum, the paper argues for a rigorous way by which complex client/user cultural processes can be comprehended by empirically robust logical frameworks for the purposes of informing accurate design programs.
Title: USER CULTURE
Author: Mary Anne Beecher, Chair, Department of Design, Ohio State University

The notion that design influences culture and vice versa is now long accepted. Still, we muse over the nature of the relationship of one on the other. Too often, however, “culture” is considered as an external factor tied to notions of globalism, nationalism, and the creation of sustainable perspectives on the social and economic systems that provide the context for contemporary interior design practice. Anthropologists such as Hofstede assert that cultures develop as a result of processes of internal programming through which values are formed and behaviors are created subconsciously and shared within groups (Hofstede, 1997). This suggests that much can be learned about design in relationship to the notion of culture by taking a closer look at design as a culture in order to better understand culture’s significance as an influence on factors such as establishment of world views, the nature of interactions, and the framing of self-identity.

To do so, this research will review a range of educational resources and professional literature to examine the historiography of the notion of the “user” within the context of a set of related but distinct design disciplines: interior design, industrial design, interaction design, and architecture. By analyzing how the conceptualization of the client/occupant/subject of the design process as a “user” has influenced the philosophical and methodological approaches of the various design disciplines, attitudes that define designers’ relationships to the world/other will be compared to reveal areas of cultural overlap and cultural distinction that have emerged over time. Considering the critical role of language will be important in explaining how perceptions of “the user” have come to frame and express these shifting cultural identities.

The chronology of ways in which “users” have been perceived by varying disciplines reveals several phases of the evolution of design as culture. For instance, the invocation of scientific language and methods that established user needs as the focus of designers’ efforts helped establish the legitimacy of design practices as they evolved from the early twentieth century to today. In the latter part of the twentieth century, the usefulness of the collective notion of “users” in collaborative and participatory strategies made it possible for designers to work with (not for) non-designers to define problems and generate new possibilities for designs for the commercial and public realm. Finally, with the emerging twenty-first century preoccupation with “user experience” as an outgrowth of the predominance of mobile technologies in the lives of contemporary Americans, “the user” has become ubiquitous as a lens for understanding the actions, perceptions, and preferences of individuals and collective groups. The notion of the “user” today serves as a constant reminder of the changing state of individuals’ relationships to what Dholakia and Zwick call increasingly denatured designed environments, objects and experiences that are less likely to be shaped by structural factors and designer predictions than they are by users’ fragmented and less physical modes of perceiving information. A new culture for design has emerged from this shift; one that challenges traditional notions of what designers need to know and do in order to maximize their contributions to contemporary life.

References:
Our built environment is a social construct based on values, practices, perceptions, culture, and production. In Houston, a metropolis shaped by immigration and resoundingly unregulated methods of urbanization—incrementalism and multiplicity reflect human needs, daily routines, social expectations, and conventional desires. Suburban sprawl is central to Houston’s identity and defined by an astonishing level of obsolescence. Here, intermingled within abandoned retail strips and enclosed shopping malls, participatory waves of adaptation challenge the notion that such places are dead. Fundamental to the growth of the city, and thus to capitalism itself, informal adaptations are agents of resilience within a dynamic and changing city. These interventions, physically and psychologically distant from the gentrified urban core, are primarily interior and adaptive. They act as interior places of otherness—as emergent heterotopias and spaces of a shared ethnic, social, or cultural experience—places of compromise offering opportunities for economic freedom.

The everyday strip mall falls into the category of non-pedigreed “architecture” and is defined by its vernacular, spontaneous, and anonymous development. Like other American storefront typologies—Houston’s suburban retail corridors are defined by their neutrality and functionality. As one of the most ubiquitous ‘vernaculars’, the strip mall is a quotidian architecture that develops informally and operates much like an urban retail street. Similar to the Lower East Side of Manhattan storefront mercantile culture in the early 20th century, it provides a plug-in system of quick-start economic opportunity. Conventionally ‘obsolete’ strip malls of the outermost reaches of Houston provide an affordable and accessible place to find autonomy and to build community.

As a temporal typology, the strip mall remains largely undocumented, however, it serves as a catalyst for ethnic retail, sacred spaces, cultural organizations, and restaurants. In these finely grained retail strips and residential streets of a forgotten periphery, the idiosyncrasies of a more diverse population have become a thriving and diverse new context with an inherently globalized street culture.

Within the unremarkable environment of Houston’s periphery, modest community needs shape an everyday built environment, framing desires leveraged through an accessible cache of undervalued buildings and neighborhoods. This paper examines commercial obsolescence in a fragmented suburban environment that has allowed immigrants to thrive and prosper. As interior interventions, appropriation supports a form of socio-economic resilience that is enviable, culturally diverse, and quintessentially American. Transformational shifts in sensibility have fueled the emergence of a New Periphery—a palimpsest—an appropriated and dynamic ersatz-urban place advanced through emergent global interiorities.
**Title:** The Evolution of Design and Cultural Meanings

**Author:** Janis Brickey, Associate Professor, Department of Human Sciences, Interior Design Program, Middle Tennessee State University

Historical researchers investigate the complex junctures of economics, social changes, aesthetics, and behavioral sciences to interpret their implications reflected in the changes in interior artifacts and structures. Likewise, in order to ascertain a methodology to reveal the tangent and symbolic relationships between meanings of design and culture, it is prudent to delineate the complex events that prompted a call for clarification. The impacts of technology, diversity, the evolution of the fields of interior design and interior design education, and the capricious nature of culture will be explored in the context of a systems theory model.

Design educators currently represent four generations and a wide diversity of experience and educational backgrounds. Interior design education emerged through curriculums based in home economics, art, architecture, and industrial studies. As the profession formalized with FIDER/CIDA and the evolution of the NCIDQ (Buie, 2013) to reflect actual professional practice, the concepts and applications of interior design and meanings of culture changed in education. A small pilot study of senior-level interior designers and faculty validated this researcher’s perception that meanings of these terms have changed drastically during the past forty years. In college, the Boomer generation studied culture reflected in aesthetics, the Gen Xers learned about the behavioral implications of culture, and the Millennials are learning that culture is a reflection and interpretation of global meanings of culture immersed in the diversity of people and their artifacts.

Cultural interpretations are the focus of many design decisions. Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton (1981) established that individuals attach personal cultural meaning to the objects that adorn their family spaces. The importance of meaning in context and Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological model stressed the relationships of systems are dependent on the user (micro-system level) and the various people, places, and experiences that define one’s worldview. Belsky (1995) expanded the application of Bronfenbrenner’s model to include the impact of history on systems. Historically, as the acquisition and implementation of new technology increases, the speed or rates of cultural change (and meanings) are directly proportional.

An analysis using Bronfenbrenner’s system model will superimpose the changes in the American macro-systems including but not limited to technology, politics, social behavior, economic factors, and culture with the evolution of design education. The proposed outcomes will include an interdisciplinary literature review, graphics, and tables to illustrate the symbiotic relationship between changing meanings of culture and interior design in practice and education.
References:


A tree-lined road twists along the edge of the rocky bluff. 

Leaves give way to the forest floor, exposing the lights below.

Labyrinthine Cherokee fragments cling to the edge.

Civil War entrenchments resist as the hairpin plummets as Save Fort Higley dangles from the tree.

The ghost street binds the bluff with the river road.

Homes decompose.

Canna lilies persist.

Plinths once housed intimate dinner table conversations.

Wild turkeys take an evening stroll under the street lights as the cypress glows with whitewash.

The ghost sentinel.

Beyond, riverfront cottages shiver with the coming freight train.

From cellar to attic, rocking horses, steel-toe boots, and walkers accommodate.

Tugboats force a barge upriver.

Ceramic princesses hold court alongside plastic deer.

No trespassing.

Native stones march along the porch lintel.

Patches of maroon shingles mix with charcoal black.
Title: Ceramic Princesses and Plastic Deer
Author: Liz Teston, Assistant Professor, Interior Design, College of Architecture + Design, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

In the spirit of critics who have come before, this speculative text is an alternative history of the built environment. It examines the ephemerality of memory in a regional context. The human condition influences the memory of everyone that drives down that rocky bluff. Memory culture is codified, a part of our collective memory. Our local landscape is often analyzed, obliterated, reconstructed and memorialized. However, the shared topography, urban fabric and ecologies persist while the interiors are reimagined. This ghost street still binds the bluff with the river road, despite the demolished homes. These dinnertime conversations still influence a grown daughter’s daily choices, although the kitchen is now an overgrown slab.

This city’s cultural heritage is situated at the intersection of a unique urban and Appalachian environment. In many places, including this city, globalization deprives communities of their unique character. The paper investigates the role of narrative in human-centered design. Starting from this theoretical position, we will interpret findings from the author’s oral history project. These architectural interviews uncover the network connecting design and culture. Older residents’ formative memories of everyday design recognize history’s role in design today. To examine this relationship, the interviews focus on the qualitative aspects of the historic downtown markethouse. Remembering the smell of the fishmonger’s booth, “makes us unknowingly re-enter a space completely forgotten by the retinal memory; the nostrils awaken a forgotten image, and we are enticed to enter a vivid daydream.

A forthcoming archive hopes to create a comprehensive collection of primary source narratives, bridging practice and scholarly research. The paper will examine oral history archives like Craft, Art and Design, African- American Texas Architecture, Post-war Queensland Architecture, and the Jack Lenor Larsen project. Our environment is a part of our collective memory. Studying these research methods and memories is an act of historic preservation – the most sustainable form of design. Memory, especially with the elderly, is unpredictable. The narratives recorded might be fuzzy, but phenomenologically detailed. But, that’s the nature of memory. In a subjective way, narratives clearly illustrate interiors. As such, this project addresses storytelling as an investigative tool. These conversations direct us to the messy fact that memory is ephemeral, yet culture endures.

3 City name and supporting local historic research will be included upon acceptance.
Title: Character Types and Beaux-Arts Interiors: Transposing Typologies of Tradition, Function, and Location Across Cultures

Author: Diane Al Shihabi, Assistant Professor, Department of Interior Design
Iowa State University

Rarely addressed in design history are interior character types in French academic architecture, and their transformation across time and culture. The use of the word Caractere, as a quality of architecture, and the word Type, as a metaphorical model, developed within French architectural Academies (Boffrand 1745; Blondel 1771; Quatremere de Quincy 1832). Both concepts became classificatory devices, with systematic expression evolving rapidly in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, particularly within L’Ecole des Beaux-Arts (Egbert 1980). Yet, the theoretical precepts that guided the assignment, varieties, and meanings of interior character, and the typologies they reflect, remain obscure.

This paper argues that the French Academie developed character types to communicate specific information about artistic history and contemporary society, in terms of tradition, purpose, and location. Further, that the principles guiding and uniting interior and exterior character types are not only essential components in the interpretation of the complex Beaux-Arts interior design system, but also in the physical transposition and metamorphosis of the Academie’s doctrines beyond France. As such, they distinguish between academic doctrine and cultural identity in global transmutations of the design system.

The paper’s research methodology integrates literary analysis of period works, content analysis (Mostyn 1985) of architects’ documents, material culture analysis (Prown 1980) of interiors, and iconographical analysis (Panofsky 1955) of symbolism. Specifically, the study analyzes written discourse on the development of character variations in French academic architecture, including its foundation in Classical architecture and literature, and its systemization in Beaux-Arts architecture. It evaluates the physical transformation of character qualities in interiors of monumental American Beaux-Arts structures (capitols, libraries, and universities), by analyzing the architects’ specified rooms, spaces, and interior design elements (floors, walls, ceilings, decorative paint finishes, furnishings, decorative arts, and artwork).

Findings indicate that Beaux-Arts architects applied a limited number of character types to express salient traits of edifices and interiors, and assigned disposition of distinctive signs of each type in hierarchical order, ranked by social purpose. The process of assignment allowed the academic design system to be both transposed and maintained, while sanctioning individual expression. The resultant levels of character variations delineated archetypes of rooms and finish elements through complex, yet consistent configurations of forms, styles, and materials, creating typologies with bases in French academic and Classical architecture that expanded beyond to accommodate temporal, spatial, and cultural conditions.

The study has pragmatic applications in academia and in contemporary practice. Scholarship reveals the constitutive qualities of an evolving design system with the freedom to facilitate innovation and transform across cultures, while maintaining fundamental structural principles that held universal appeal for two millennia. It offers insight into how the Beaux-Arts tradition’s expression of architectural character continued, yet transformed in Italian and German modern movements of the twentieth century. The information facilitates thoughtful judgments of designers’ intended semiotics in historic
preservation and provides a theoretical basis for Neo Beaux-Arts Classicism, trending globally. Importantly, it disseminates new knowledge on Beaux-Arts architectural theory from the interiors specialization and corroborates prior scholarship on character types within French academic architecture.

**Major Bibliographical Sources:**


Title: The Evolution of Tradition: a Case Study on the Impact of Industrialization on Caribbean Design

Author: Lisa Phillips, Assistant Professor, Interior Design, Philadelphia University

Throughout human history both exterior and interior building materials have primarily been chosen with local conditions and limitations in mind. Designers “...tended to use materials that were available and plentiful in their location and thus uniquely representative of (their environment)...” (Bell, 2006, p. 9) “Materiality spoke more to place, to locale, and in a way was more purely definitive as to what a building should look like. (Bell, p. 9) In this way material selections became connected not only to their setting but also to the culture and traditions of the local population.

In the Caribbean, subtropical and tropical climates impacted material selections as well. High temperatures, humidity and a likelihood of hurricanes all needed to be carefully considered. In many locations timber and limestone were often the primary traditional building materials, selected for their ability to promote ventilation and maintain durability.

The industrial revolution brought many changes to building processes throughout the world however. Materials were easily transported from region to region. Climate control in the way of air conditioning allowed for more variety in building materials and in the design of the interior. Travel also became more common during this time and builders were exposed to a greater range of solutions.

With more choices available does tradition continue to influence material preference?

This paper will compare two Caribbean nations: the Bahamas and Bermuda. Both countries share similar climates and a history of British influence on their architecture and material selections. These two nations vary however in the evolution of their recent designs. Bermuda maintains its vernacular style and materiality throughout the island, with moderate material adaptations on both the exterior and interior. In the Bahamas, however, recent development of modern design is often less predictable. How is tradition maintained in the two settings? What factors are responsible for the variations?

This paper will follow the evolution of these island nations’ building styles throughout the last century, with a particular emphasis on changes and adaptations in materiality. How do deviations in the vernacular design affect the cohesion of culture and human behavior in these regions? How is the interior environment affected by the introduction of artificial cooling methods?

The author has visited both Bermuda and the Bahamas frequently and draws evidence from personal experience, an extensive literary search, and discussions with designers and locals from both countries. It should be noted that the author has also worked for a design firm where approximately 40% of the clientele were Bermudian, lending an additional level of expertise to the discussion.

Reference:
The study of culture and its influence on design can be found in the Japanese communities. Their identity and cohesion was evident during the early 19th century and late 20th century in the Japan Towns within cities on the west coast and later in the ten internment camps located in Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming. In both cases, displacement was a key factor and in the formation of both the Japan Towns and the town-like internment camps communities, which were forged by occupying existing architecture either on the west coast or the skeleton framework in the camps. It is my argument that the Japan Towns and town-like internment camps were created through a deep commitment by the Japanese to their existing traditional values, which reinforced their identity and how the spaces were occupied. The continuation of identity through tangible and intangible properties in the two contexts showed the importance of social bonds, networks and capital in the development of sustainable communities.

It is the utmost importance for the Japanese to adapt to changing needs without losing group cohesiveness and this commitment is the backbone of their culture and identity. My argument focuses on this commitment, which creates social cohesion, trust, and mutual expectations about the goals of the community. This argument is similar to the theory of collective efficacy, which examines a community’s willingness to act when needed, benefiting the greater public good instead of the individual. While similar to the Japanese value of peoplehood that focuses on the commitment to the community instead of individual accomplishments, collective efficacy focuses on the reduction of crime resulting in strengthening of a community and supports neighborhood intervention. I argue the deep commitment of the Japanese to the community is not guided by the reduction of crime or intervention but rather to reinforce the Japanese identity and culture in occupied spaces developing social cohesion and bonding.

Historical analysis of the Japan Towns and the town-like internment camps focus on the transformations, which occurred during the late 19th century and early 20th century but do not fully compare and contrast the Japan Towns and the town-like internment camps nor provide a deeper understanding of sustaining social properties, which arose in both. I argue that in both the Japan Towns and the town-like internment camps provided an opportunity to understand how communities become socially sustainable through measurable aspects of social interactions, participation, generational equity, place, and stability.

Within this paper, I propose to study and explicate the development of the communities in the Japan Towns and the town-like internment camps while focusing on the identity and how the spaces are occupied. As a result, I reveal the intricate formation of the communities through the specific Japanese values of Gamen, On, Enryo, and avoidance of conflict and the need to understand the connection of social networks, bonds, and capital in the context of sustainable communities.

Title: Encouraging Cultural Competence Through Effective Empathy

Author: Sarah Boehm, Assistant Professor, Interior Architecture, College of Architecture and the Arts, Florida International University.

INTRODUCTION
The ever-evolving nature of interior design presents opportunities and protean challenges for those responsible for educating future practitioners. Furthermore, global citizenship and social responsibility necessitate a need for cultural competence to designing commercial interiors that are appropriate and relevant to the users. But what constitutes cultural competence as it relates to design? How do we teach the complex and multi-faceted relationship between design and culture? Finally, how do we ascertain assessment parameters for such a competence? This abstract advances the idea that an empathetic approach to design, one that includes immersive research methods, can cultivate a cultural competence in students to allow them a better application of their knowledge, values, and skills, as governed by empathy, to design in a global market.

ARGUMENT AND APPROACH
Conceptualizing cultural competence in relation to interior design education is the first step needed to ascertain assessment for such a construct. The National Education Association President Van Roekel (2010) cited appreciation of cultural diversity as one of four basic elements necessary for one to attain global competency. He further describes appreciation of cultural diversity as “the ability to know, understand, and appreciate people from other cultures along with the capacity to acknowledge other points of view about pressing world issues” (p. 1). Building on the NEA’s definition, a culturally competent interior designer should know, understand, and appreciate a variety of cultures and also have a capacity to acknowledge outside viewpoints. But how do we accomplish this? I forward the idea that empathy cultivating activities must become more applicable to the learning process; such activities would allow for Gerdes et al three key components of empathy to facilitate the learning experience: (1) affective response, (2) cognitive processing that enables one to take the other person’s perspective, and (3) conscious decision-making or voluntary choices for action made in response to cognitive processing (2011, p. 116). These can provide ample opportunities for students to break away from their own cultural perspectives and genuinely understand users of space from and for foreign perspectives.

Infusing empathy-cultivating activities throughout the curriculum is necessary if educators want to shape global-minded citizens. Utilizing existing psychology tools such as the Interpersonal Reactivity Index, a measure of dispositional empathy (Davis, 1996. p. 55), allows for assessment before and after empathy activities. Limitless amounts of projects exist that could be utilized to build cultural competence such as role-playing, practicing mindfulness, narratives writing from others perspectives, mirroring user experiences, using art to engage opinions, among others.

CONCLUSION
“The cognitive processing components of empathy (self/other-awareness, perspective-taking, and emotion regulation) are not automatic” (Gerdes et al, 2011, p. 121), but they can be learned and cultivated. This approach emphasizes such opportunities and activities for shaping culturally sensitive globally minded interior designers.
References:


The discipline of interior design education is committed to providing diverse learning opportunities for examining the topic of culture while implementing design practices that respond to the “needs of all humans” (Hadjiyanni, 2013, p.v). According to Conner et al. (2013), the number of people living in a country in which they were not born has increased by 51 percent worldwide since 1990. Therefore, the significance of cultural context in our daily lives demands effectively applicable design, and supporting design pedagogy that enhances cultural competency and global perspective. Cultural competency is gained from a transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people and their respective values and beliefs. This raises the question: How can design pedagogy disclose students’ presuppositions to generate profound perspective changes on culture? And secondly, what are the contexts within which this can occur? It is the goal of this paper to demonstrate the use of a transformative learning model (Mezirow, 2000) and its effectiveness in the achievement of cultural competency among design students, implemented from both remote and in-place cultural investigations.

“Transformative learning refers to dramatic change, where the learner achieves a shift in perspective. This shift results from a critical examination of one’s own assumptions, values, and beliefs, and of the foundations and expectations of the system in which one operates” (Nemec, 2012, p. 478). To implement this process, one instructor utilized methods of cultural investigation and documentation with interior design students in a study abroad experience, while in another course, first-year interior design students were tasked with the design of a habitable place that reflected a cultural context assigned to them. Both courses began by asking students to critically analyze cultural assumptions and to engage in an accompanying discourse regarding the varied perspectives. As such, critical reflection and discourse were identified as key components of both courses.

It was found that several pedagogical methodologies were deemed more appropriate to the examination of culture when considering the various contexts of the courses. Thus, the transformative learning model was adapted to consider cultural context. For those students studying abroad, documentation strongly correlated to the attainment of cultural competence and was achieved through inter-cultural experiences including observations, personal reflection, and comparative analyses. By contrast, those students in the design studio expanded their cultural knowledge through remote research as a means of cultural investigation, and application of this through the design process, implementing collaborative thinking and imaginative problem solving. Student learning outcomes revealed a transformation of cultural perspective, which was achieved through documented personal reflections of an experience and design applications with integrated collaborative discourse. In both courses, critical reflection and the accompanying dialog were identified as essential to gaining a shift in cultural understanding. This demonstrates that the adapted transformative learning model, which considers cultural context, was effective in the achievement of cultural competency.
References:


As members of communities, we have multiple community identities--what we do, what we eat, what we wear, what we speak. These diverse, multiple identities shape our sense of self and who we are. And these diversities are not inconsistent with our common humanity.  

--Vandana Shiva

The Tenderloin AIDS Resource Center (TARC), built in 1991, was the first walk--in storefront facility in San Francisco offering free testing, counseling and information on HIV--AIDS. While serving everyone in this inner--city neighborhood--including immigrants, the homeless, addicts and sex workers--TARC implicitly acknowledged a relatively new source of identity: HIV status. The interior design of TARC represented the facility's mission to combat this disease, as well as this new form of identity, to its users, to San Francisco, and--as it turned out--to a national audience.

As a young professional, I contributed to the design. Now, as an academic, I assign TARC to my interior design students. In this symposium, I will present TARC as a case study in teaching, where the goals are to: (1) introduce students to the application of design as a form of public service, and (2) challenge students to generate designs providing a positive visual identity to members of a stigmatized or marginalized community. As an adaptive reuse of a gritty old retail building, the project teaches students about the vital link between interior design and urban design.

Students will work within the design constraints that attended the actual project. For example, the client--a group of community activists--stipulated that the contractor perform the work with a crew composed of Tenderloin residents receiving on-the-job construction training. In addition the budget was extremely limited, and the funds had to be spent in a short amount of time--four months.

While the assignment follows the typical model of a simulated design commission, its narrative compels students to consider questions that focus their attention on interior design as an empathetic, interpretive act:

• How can the designer presume to speak for a community of which she is not a part?
• What research or activities are necessary to prepare the designer to interact with the client and the end user with knowledge and respect?
• What visual imagery is appropriate to this use?
• How can the design simultaneously accommodate--and bring together--visitors coming from a broad range of backgrounds and cultures?
• How can material selection and detailing accommodate the anticipated low skill level of the crew and the modest budget? Can this limitation become a positive factor in the design?
• Does the concept of stewardship--borrowed from the environmental lexicon--suggest a metaphorical connection between the neighborhood, the building and the users that can inform the design?

My presentation will include an introduction to the project, a photographic tour of the original architectural design, and an analysis of new projects for TARC developed by undergraduates studying interior design.

Title: The Tile Mosaic: Communicating Individual and Group Cultures in Visual Form With Architectural Functionality

Author: Aaron Kadoch, Assistant Professor, Interior Architecture, University of Wisconsin Stevens Point

Context:

Mosaics communicate information with diverse visual texture in architectural form. This is exemplified in the early Christian Mausoleum Galla Placidia (c.430) in Ravenna, Italy where Roman-Hellenistic sensibilities were balanced with emerging intellectual concepts of monotheism, while technologies of silica glazing communicated an ethereal interior experience with color and light. (Bustacchini) Contemporary uses of digitally tiled pixellations allow for multimedia linkages of cultural data across information architecture using software and hardware imbedded in society. (Kappel) In both historical and contemporary contexts, design may be defined as visual language manipulated by intentions and cultural identities using “time” and “diversity” as experiential syntax. (McLuhan)(Kruger)(Venturi) Art and architecture have always been linked to fluctuations in social and technological pursuations. (Aynsley)(Bryson) The mosaic is a visual form of human expression capable of showing how humans modulate between global contexts and local experiences in forming cultural identities.

Objective:

This study explores undergraduate student enculturation through perceptions and self-identities, issues of contemporary society, and relationships between interior spaces and human experiences. It seeks to understand the role of visual communication in defining individual and collective experiences, and virtual and spatial architectures that build on these cultural foundations.

Methods of Inquiry:

The study used a mixed methods approach to collect, analyze and utilize cultural data within the pedagogical framework of three student projects; a cultural biography, a researched cultural boundaries topic, and an environmental behavior case study. (Rapoport) (Zeisel) (Alexander) Qualitative cultural information was collected from surveys, discussions, research and spatial observations. Students translated data into visual representations categorized by “Individual”, “Group”, and “Environmental” identities for each project. The “translation process” included the use of symbolic graphics, photography, internet, video, and sketches to fill in a gridlined template of blank tiles on a single page. Individual pages from each student were combined to form a group mural. A gallery installation was created to study the process of experiencing cultural data as interior space. Quantitative analysis compared individuals’ written perspectives with their visual transformations and identified cultural themes evident in larger group murals.

Conclusions:

It is difficult to see “culture” writ large, yet “cultural diversity” is an immediate visual experience. Nuances in perspectives, backgrounds, preferences, opinions, moods, and identities emerge in the process of organizing data into tiled visual form. When we are able to perceive an individual’s identity as an aggregate of experiences and beliefs, we can also contextualize group identities in a similar pattern at a larger scale. The mosaic of tiles provides an architecture of diversity, allowing the viewer to zoom in or out from constituent parts, revealing the gestalt of a cohort’s culture. Trends of popular movies, notions
of freedom, ethnicity, family, recreation and politics surface. When background information is coupled with visual outcomes they form a tangible educational entity as may be experienced with books, events, or buildings. Technology allows cultural data to materialize interactively and functionally in posters, videos, websites and as rooms, enhancing a more immediate experience in time and space. The result is a methodology for creating a responsive, living architecture of culture. (Wright)

References:


Title: CULTURE AND THE INTERIOR DESIGN CURRICULUM: The Relocated Interior Design Program

Author: Reem Fathallah, Lecturer, Dar Al-Hekma University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Culture is a key feature influential as much on education as on interior design; this is particularly true within the thorny context of globalization vs. regionalization taking over the world. This paper looks at the educational transfer of an interior design curriculum from the West to the Middle East, and identifies factors that may undermine the effectiveness of the relocated program, which is supposedly the main reason behind the borrowing in the first place. This is more so true due to the heavily cultural content that an interior design program can bare. The study considers the difficulties faced by students and faculty from a cultural and pedagogical stance and the adaptive measures required by receiving institutions. Discussions and findings extend to all multicultural classrooms, where students have different cultural idiosyncrasies.

Questionnaires, interviews and personal experience in universities from Lebanon, the Gulf and the U.K. provide data that is further triangulated with western and nonwestern literature on educational transfer, the interior design discipline, educational continuity, comparative international education and multicultural education.

Findings underline that in a trans-cultural educational transfer, many changes and adaptations need to be implemented through specific filters and revised across time. Such adjustments improve educational continuity. The paper reveals critical discontinuities in the interior design curriculum imported from the West into the Middle East in terms of: design education and portfolio submission, pedagogical approaches, assessment, language and finally appropriateness for the local job market.

The paper emphasizes the importance of a foundation preparatory year for the overall program, focusing on design language as well as English language. In terms of subjects the discussion highlights the necessity of indigenization in the most culturally bound subjects. Such subjects include but are not limited to the design studio; it would benefit from discussions on international design education, exploring design in a variety of diverse cultural settings and virtual design charettes or actual physical exchanges. Another subject would be design history which could possibly shift from a chronological canonical approach, to a thematic comparative one.

In fact, more cultural sensitivity on all levels in education would encourage collaborative work amongst students as well as the inclusion of the students’ own cultural background to the design process, thus respecting the ‘student culture’ and allowing an approach to design, stemming from strong knowledge of self and local identity.

Above mentioned measures and a more comparative educational approach in general can benefit western institutions as well; especially at a time when classes are as multicultural as ever, and when interculturalism is arguably a goal that needs to be achieved for inclusion and for more sensitive, sensible and critical interior design students. Design students who can respect and reflect local traditions in their designs, while integrating them into a modern lifestyle.

In addition the paper looks at how issues on global perspectives and cultural sensitivity are addressed by organizations such as IDEC (Interior Design Educators Council) and CIDA (Council for Interior Design Accreditation). It looks at CIDA standards and analyzes to what extent they support cultural diversity.
Title: Concerting with Past Souls and Future Minds
Authors: Jun Zou, Associate Professor, Department of Interior Design, Louisiana State University
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This paper outlines two design scholarship-pedagogy projects: Meishan (Plum Mountain) ecological park design (Anhua, China) and Magnolia mount plantation daylighting analysis (Baton Rouge, USA). Both projects involve Environmental Arts Design (EA) programs at Hunan University (HU) and Interior Design (ID) Louisiana State University (LSU). The collaborative experience is examined to motive further thinking and actions from ID professionals riding the waves of globalization and sustainability movement, in which local culture and traditions may be overwhelmed, or be rejuvenated -- the choice is often in our own hands.

To be more concrete, Meishan culture can be trailed back to the legendary era of Chi You about 5000 years ago. To revitalize this nearly forgotten piece of ancient history, the EA program at HU carry out a design project a decade ago for the establishment of the Chinese Meishan Cultural and Ecological Park. The ID Department at LSU joined this project in Fall 2008, which started a long-term educational exchange program between the two universities.

By integrating modern design methods with traditional construction techniques, local building materials and local labor force, the Meishan design team created a series of ecological and natural scenes to restore an ancient cultural atmosphere under the general principle of “Let weeds sprawl; let flowers blossom; let animals wander, just like the old days.”

At LSU, the junior design studio course were chosen as the base of exchange, which reflects a departmental effort to strengthen the globalization component in ID curriculum. For students, accessing to such a unique opportunity exposed them to foreign social-cultural context, language, and more subtly, to a different design education system and metric system. The exotic setting and a degree of unpreparedness, guided by intense coordination and instructional support, generated abundant enthusiasm and sense of accomplishment among the student body. Feedback on the learning experience has been positive. For educators, direct comparison and contrast between the two design education systems offer precious insights, beneficial not just for the globalization sack, but also for rethinking of ID curriculum as a whole.

The same level of desires arising from HU rooted on the same logic. As a natural arrangement, students from both universities took identical design projects, alternating between Hunan and Louisiana vernaculars in a semester-by-semester basis.

Exchange as such goes beyond the classroom. A research collaboration on daylighting analysis for Magnolia mount plantation, a historical landmark nearby LSU, has been carried out, which involves on-site measurement, computer 3D modeling, simulation, data analysis, and a comparative study with a typical Hunan vernacular building. The latter would not possibly be accomplished without existing collaboration infrastructure.

The above two collaborative projects, initiated in response to the calling of globalization, confirm our confidence on commonality over difference across west-east horizontal distance. What also to be crossed is the vertical distance between the past and now, and between now and the future. Through both projects, we see culture, as both a goal and a tool, is capable of bringing the past and the future together in a harmonic way.