Designing for a Healthcare Environment with Cultural Consideration: African American Aesthetics in the Clinics of Savannah, Georgia

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ABSTRACT

The absence of users in healthcare facilities is caused by various aspects, one of them leading to an unseen cultural thoughtfulness in the environment. The lack of identity through an opposed aesthetic that does not expose the beliefs and values of the culture in these surroundings are causing an increase in the health disparities experienced by the African American population. Most healthcare facilities do not take into consideration the physical, mental, spiritual and emotional impact the space has on the community which they serve. The lack of cultural consideration in environmental design of African American communities has contributed to a distrust in the healthcare system and outright rejection of the spaces. In order to understand this distrust in the healthcare system, it is important to understand African American history and as interior designers how we can modify these oversights by acknowledging the way the built environment reflects healing by creating a sense of belonging. As the United States is fast becoming one of the most ethnically diverse nations in the world, cultural relevance which leads to trust must be felt in the space. It is fundamental we not only begin to take into consideration cultural aspects for a better designed environment but also how can the environment be authentically steeped in it’s culture in terms of approach. This study aims to identify how the African
American population of Savannah, Georgia can benefit from the interior design of neighborhood clinics by readjusting the spatial environment with the integration of cultural considerations in order to increase their physical, emotional and spiritual well being. The sense of social responsibility that has been seen in examples like Jack Travis, who considers African American aesthetics as a central feature of his projects is what inspired this thesis. Hoping to spark a deeper conversation regarding how culture and design could merge to transform people’s lives in healthcare environments. The challenge is to create a space that is not merely aesthetically pleasing and culturally appropriate, but also philosophically relevant. The space should reflect the ideas and ways of being of the culture. These ideas that will be communicated through the design, should be supported by knowledge and philosophy behind the mentality of a culture, by portraying and reflecting design elements as an expression of the space. This thesis was able to identify six key elements: spirituality, sound, togetherness, nature, texture and art. All of which were developed through insightful review of literature, surveys, interviews and field work. The research guided the design proposal to an existing building that has already shown this initiative for almost 20 years. The design proposal for this thesis is envisioned to support and improve the interior design of the African American Health Information and Resource Center, by creating and delivering a culturally conscious and aesthetic environment based on space planning.

REFERENCES

ABSTRACT

The project reflects the South Asian values for harmony, traditions, and collectivity with family and friends for reciprocal social support. A multi-generational household and celebrations with large groups of family and friends embrace the use of a well organized outside space. Interior spaces of the house include a puja, a prayer room for individual or family worship, meditation, devotional singing, and other spiritual practices. Adjacent to the main and open kitchen, is a spice kitchen, whose function is to prevent odors from cooking spicy and greasy food to spread to other parts of the house. To respond to the needs of outdoor family and friend celebrations, the project addresses the requirement for outside areas and spaces, including an enclosed construction, which are designed for specific functions: a kitchen, a gathering area for adults, an area for children’s play, a dance floor that may be transformed into a badminton court, and an outdoor bathroom with a shower. The project’s scope is to support, foster, and aid the family traditions, celebrations and festivities, and to respond to the needs of different age groups, reinforcing strong family and friend relationships.

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A lack of student awareness about social and cultural issues creates predicaments in projects emphasizing solutions for social and cultural problems. This study gauges the challenge of teaching and learning a socio-cultural experience and weighs the interaction between students and the communities addressed in their respective projects. The study applies to three senior student studio classes, totaling thirty-eight students over two semesters. It offers an analysis of given facts, criteria imparted to the students, and the data resulting from the involvement of the students with the community. The qualitative data collected flows from class observation, student reflections, and public student presentations. The quantitative data collected is drawn from surveys distributed to the students at the end of the semester. The students’ initial difficulty in choosing a cultural or social centered project was addressed with faculty guidance. At that point, students were able to identify and acknowledge a social or cultural problem, become accountable, and eventually develop a passion for the project. Thereafter, they became self-motivated and self-directed in their projects and interaction with the community. They also improved their time management and developed an incentive for increased project creativity. In addition, students developed symbiotic relationships with the community, gained understanding of the relevant social factors that contributed to the conditions of vulnerable groups, and challenged cultural and social stereotypes. At the end of the semester, students exhibited an increased intellectual maturity when discussing their projects with the public (invited to view the students’ projects). During these discussions, a relevant synergy developed between the students and the community. This study
underlines the impact that interaction between the students and the community has on the students’ commitment, enthusiasm and growth.

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Digital storytelling – Teaching culture in design education

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ABSTRACT

Digital storytelling – Teaching culture in design education As the cultural landscape of American cities and communities diversifies, expanding what has traditionally been the historic canon in interior design is crucial, both for the education of global citizens and for the relevance of interior design scholarship and practice to an interconnected world. This is particularly pertinent given projections that by 2040, 40% of the population of states such as Minnesota, will be people of color and much of that growth is expected to come from international immigrants (Metropolitan Council, 2012). In undertaking this endeavor, interior design educators must move beyond the comfortable and the familiar and employ tools that can push the boundaries of knowledge, reveal insights about “the other” that could remain hidden through conventional approaches, and cultivate in students relatability to diverse ways of living. One such tool is digital storytelling, which provides a flexible and adaptable alternative mode of representation. Through digital storytelling, the everyday lived experiences of immigrants and minorities can be given a voice, exposing differences and biases and translating into mediums for dialogues around the role interior designers can play in combatting marginalization and inequality. This submission shares digital stories created in [insert course name after blind review], a required interior design course at the [insert University name after blind review] interior design program. The course’s purpose is to explore the role of interiors in the production of culture, identity, and difference. In teams, students immerse themselves in the community and engage with one of the immigrant and minority groups in our area. Using interviews with community members, video, photography, historical archives, sound, music, graphic design, and script writing they transform into storytellers who employ interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks to unravel place-making processes. The films capture the stories of a variety of cultural groups and places, ranging from the Native experience as represented in historic Fort Snelling, a
National Historic Landmark; the East African restaurant Red Sea that caters to both the local Somali community and beyond; and ethnic markets including the Hmong marketplace, the Mercado Central, and the Polish market, where cultural aspects such as food blend with history, religion, dress, and social practices to create a unique aesthetic. The benefits span from the students to the instructor and the community. Students strengthen their confidence in their ability to become leaders who problem-solve, have a willingness to listen, and are critical of their own perceptions, assumptions, and reactions. The instructor can use the films to assess students’ comprehension of the complexity behind how places came to be and the implications behind change. Parameters that are evaluated include: Do students move beyond stereotyping? Do they capture contradictions and tensions? Do the stories expose the cultural, political, religious, and historical ramifications of interiors? Lastly, digital stories can be a way to give back to diverse communities. Being digital, these stories can easily be shared with those in the films and others, including LIVEMSP.org, a web site meant to showcase the neighborhoods of the Greater Minneapolis-St Paul region. References: Metropolitan Council (April 2012). What lies ahead – Population, household, and employment forecasts to 2040. Greater MSP report. Available at www.metrocouncil.org.

REFERENCES

Exploratory study: Human perception towards Color integrated with Light

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ABSTRACT

Color is the significant factor to affect emotional and psychological reactions in humans as well as to represent designers’ intentions related to interior ambiance in indoor environments. However, it is still challenging to decide color schemes for a real environment to represent a designer’ intentions and to create interior ambience. Without consideration of integration of light and color in a space, it is hard to explain emotional and psychological effects on humans. Furthermore, color and light work together with form and spatial effect for creating dramatic mood and intrigue and interior space in indoor environments (Beever & Blossom, 2009; Poldma, 2009). It also helps daily activities of people and sets ambience or scene for various types of activities. Mahnke and Mahnke (1993) also mentioned a correlation between color and light. According to them, color and light are specified simultaneously because color shifts do occur and some light renders colors better than others, depending on a lights’ spectral distribution and the color of the light itself. Thus, integral process of the two with form and spatial contexts should be considered for practical applications in interior design space. The purpose of this study is to address human perception (feelings of warmth and feelings of coolness) towards integration of color and light in a space though exploratory study and to provide the practical framework on the relationship between human emotion and the integration of the two for future application. In this study, controlled empirical experiments were conducted in the interior design lab of a mid-western
university. Two opposite colors, to represent feelings of warmth and coolness, were selected by a focus group to examine the controlled settings by different choices of integrated surroundings, such as the comparison of wooden materials under two different settings of light: warm light and cool light. According to the light spectral distribution, a warm (incandescent, 2700K) and a cool (fluorescent, 4700K) light source were chosen and settled in the lighting fixtures separately in real physical settings and were used for this experiment. Also, three partition walls surround this physical setting so there was no consideration of natural light. Three-dimensional pieces of colored wood were placed on the bottom of each setting based on two colors; feelings of warmth versus coolness. Voluntary university student subjects were recruited; 80 subjects were selected to participate in an anonymous experiment and answer Likert scale survey questions. No identifying information was collected. Mean Likert scale scores were analyzed for each setting (2 paints x 2 lights). A repeated measures ANOVA was used to examine the data to find significant differences between the two human perceptions (feeling of warmth, and feeling of coolness) for each setting. Findings show that two-dimensional color chosen is affected by light in a three-dimensional space and suggest the integration of color and light should be considered at the beginning of the conceptual design process in order to represent desired ambiance of indoor environments.

REFERENCES

Presentation

_Exploring Inclusive, Participatory Interior Design: Collaboration between an Interior Designer and a Non-Designer in Writing an Interior Design Book_

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**ABSTRACT**

This presentation reviews the collaboration of a non-designer, the client, and an interior designer in writing an inclusive, participatory interior design book for professional designers and students. Both authors were interested in small dwelling design as a way of providing human centered design and small home advantages of affordable living in preferred areas, less consumption and values of simplicity. The authors both live in small homes. The book explores key principles essential to residing and designing small interiors with emphasis on client involvement with sensitivity and relevance to the client. The book is a teaching benchmark, a practical manual and a philosophy based on meeting individual personal needs and the power of simplicity. The authors argue that by simplifying lives and dwellings, one can recognize what is personally important to the individual. Chapters include images, case studies, exercises, sample worksheets, activities and suggested explorations with appendices that provide worksheets and a sample program. Part 1 analyzes client needs and recommends planning techniques and strategies. Part 2 discusses design theory considerations when designing a small house. Part 3 offers practical solutions for specific design problems for small living. Programming is paramount in the book and the authors offer questionnaires that revolve around individual preferences framed, in part, from a non-designer’s point of view. The book addresses contemporary issues including sustainability, wellness principles, biophilic design and global understanding. The authors, working as a designer and non-designer team, uncover specific problem areas that are associated with small living issues. The book
includes the non-designer’s insights into issues and solution for storage; the small kitchen; multifunctional, flexible and adjustable furnishing, fixtures and equipment; recycled ideas with the concept of recycled knowledge from past generations and other cultures; and entertaining in a small space. By working together, the interior designer and the end-user, the client, bridged a hands-on approach and stimulated multiple ways of thinking and doing interior design. In presenting teaching practices from the perspectives of the designer and the user, both participants learned from each other and realized first-hand the power of co-designing. The book follows suit and advocates active designer and client teamwork in the design process.

REFERENCES

Impact of Effective Collaboration in Healthcare Design Studio, Going Beyond CIDA Standards

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ABSTRACT

This study concerns scholarship of teaching and learning, and focuses on collaboration in the junior level interior design studio. Collaborative projects are discussed to demonstrate how different approaches to the pedagogical process can help support collaboration, and highlight collaboration challenges and potential problems. Students taking undergraduate design studio are often more inclined to complete projects alone, which results in lack of experiencing collaboration. This inclination is presumably due to the impression that working in a group impedes contributing their individual concepts and solutions. The CIDA designates collaboration as “standard 5” and states, “Interior designers collaborate and also participate in interdisciplinary teams.” Despite widely accepted positive impact of collaboration on the learning experience, in general, it seems it has not been effectively implemented in interior design education. Overcoming students initial reservations about collaboration and encouraging teamwork, prepares them for future career in industry, and teaches them an invaluable lesson in collaboration in spite of differences in levels of expertise, cultural backgrounds, etc. This studio presented in this study started with a collaboration workshop to highlight different aspects of effective teamwork, self awareness, MBTI and True Color personality tests, and five stage of group development and assessment by starting dialogue by posing questions such as “what makes team great?” and “what do you bring to your team?” This approach fosters connection between the students, the instructor, and study projects.
clients, which transformed junior studio into a fully team-experience collaborated studio. Initially, nineteen students were grouped in to six teams by the instructor to start working on designing a sustainable design center. In doing so, different criteria were taken into consideration such as personality types and interior design skills, experience, knowledge, and communication skills. At various stages of the completion of the project, students were surveyed to evaluate their satisfaction and awareness of collaboration as well as their opinion of their group members’ contribution to the project. In the second half of the semester, the students were asked to design a multifunctional environment (a concert hall and nightclub) for a real client, where again the instructor grouped students. Students were advised to incorporate their experience and understanding of collaboration strategies, which they gained in the previous project, in the new setting. The collaboration within groups were monitored and evaluated by the instructor during different stages of each project. It was observed that communication is the main obstacle to effective collaboration among students. Also, it was found that similarities and dissimilarities of personality types, strongly affect fostering collaboration. At the end of studio, students seem to have gained effective skills to resolve conflicts in the groups. Becoming aware of each other’s strengths and weaknesses, and accepting differences in personalities, as well as the power of effective communication enabled them to achieve successful collaboration, and explore the various aspects of design from different perspectives.

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Presentation

Industry Partnerships, Integrated Coursework, and Immersive Global Experiences: Curricular Revisions Impacting Capstone Studio Outcomes

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ABSTRACT

This presentation examines three award-winning senior capstone projects to demonstrate the impact of recent curricular revisions on the quality of student outcomes in the design studio. Revisions to the undergraduate interior design curriculum at a public research university were implemented in response to the program’s upper division coursework being relocated from an urban to a rural campus. Faculty recognized new challenges presented by this relocation in addressing certain student learning outcomes. In particular, the Council for Interior Design Education (CIDA) places importance on students demonstrating global perspective and multi-cultural awareness; understanding of the nature and value of integrated design practices; and the ability to effectively collaborate with multiple disciplines in developing design solutions. Previous strategies to achieve these learning outcomes relied in-part upon the program’s physical proximity to multi-disciplinary industry partners and the opportunity to engage diverse stakeholders - and the city itself as urban laboratory. In response to the program relocation, faculty developed new strategies and subsequent revisions to the curriculum including: implementing distance models for industry-partnered delivery of design studio courses, establishing immersive cultural experiences through required study tours, and expanding the number of integrated courses with allied disciplines at the foundational level. Six years after the program relocation and curriculum revisions, impacts on student outcomes are being observed. The capstone studio projects examined in this presentation received first, second, and third prize in a 2018 national student retail design competition.
The unprecedented competition sweep prompted the author to investigate factors which may have contributed to the success of these students. Analysis of the work suggests that the new program initiatives directly impacted the quality of student solutions. The connection between curricular revisions and quality of student outcomes will be discussed in this presentation – as will the challenges, benefits, and lessons learned from implementing industry-partnered studio deliver models, integrating lower division coursework, and introducing study tour requirements for undergraduate students.

REFERENCES

The problem addressed here is that many students’ solutions do not accurately address or reflect users’ needs. Many students don’t research users because it is not part of their scope. Students make up users’ needs. This is a problem. As educators, it is our responsibility to teach students to conduct research to understand their users. This is challenging because studio projects are fabricated, and users’ needs are provided in a brief. Students are not applying human experience and behavior when designing. Users perform functions in distinct ways or as a collective. This sense of unique tone becomes a consideration that influences the expression (Rengal p.101). As interior designers, we must consider our role in constructing environments that offer the best user experience (Institute for Human Centered Design.org). One strategy to address the lack of user inclusion asks students to complete in-depth research assignments where they become inspired and create original design solutions. Assignments that include user/expert interviews, surveys, questionnaires, and simple post-occupancy evaluations assist in obtaining critical user data (Robinson and Parman, pp. 142-157). The simplest way to identify user’s wants and needs is through surveys. Surveys can help identify unmet needs and reveal opportunities (Clark and Saw, p.4). Speaking to users and experts directly offers a deep understanding that results in empathy and the desire to create unique design solutions. Researching potential end users, expert designers or anyone who has important insights can assist students to think about how their design impacts people (Robinson and Parman, pp. 143-146). Observation user research methods include shadowing, place or person-centered mapping through experiment or simulation, site visits, or field trips that identify both negative and positive design decisions. Students can research specific users and then
share their in-depth findings with a class. Design scope must include researching users and implementing their needs. This effort will result in a rewarding intersection between the user need and student’s development of an empathetic design. CIDA noted in a recent accreditation report that research completed by my students led to well-informed design solutions that result in projects that had design intent that deeply considered the wellbeing of the occupants within those spaces. Students that had a deep understanding of the user were inspired to complete original and empathetic designs. One student’s solutions included sleep pods for overworked employees, custom climate-controlled workstations, and opportunities for more openness and spatial privacy. A second project included fusing a gap between users attending an art exhibit and a tattoo studio. This user gap was expressed in material and lighting application. A third considered the importance of teaching children to grow and cook their own food. This student’s design expresses a symbiotic relationship in connecting the user to nature and the outdoors. My student outcomes show that user research provided a stronger understanding of what was needed to develop a successful empathetic design response. User research assisted in developing early project goals and objectives, concepts and students had an easier time making decisions about design.

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