

Designing Interiors in Architecture

by Yetta Starr

The practices of interiors (micro design) and architecture (macro design) have evolved in this century as separate domains, isolated from one another. However, good design is achieved when each discipline has the knowledge of both areas, while respecting and recognizing the specialty of one another, unifying the architectural arena.

The importance of unifying these disciplines is often dismissed. The beauty of an exterior is fully realized when a connection is made to the public or private dwelling. Conversely, significant interiors in architecture purposefully ignore or complement the architectural vocabulary. Isolating the two leads to a limited vision of architectural form, function and possibilities. It also prevents the interior industry from achieving the recognition it deserves in relation to the larger architecture area. In short, both within the professional community of architecture as well as the public, there is continued stigmatization and devaluation of interiors as an integral, important entity in and of itself.

Many individuals who are practicing professional interior architecture and design are reluctant to acknowledge that they are "interior designers," and attempt to employ architectural rhetoric as a way to legitimize their work. Public, as well as professional, perception of what constitutes an

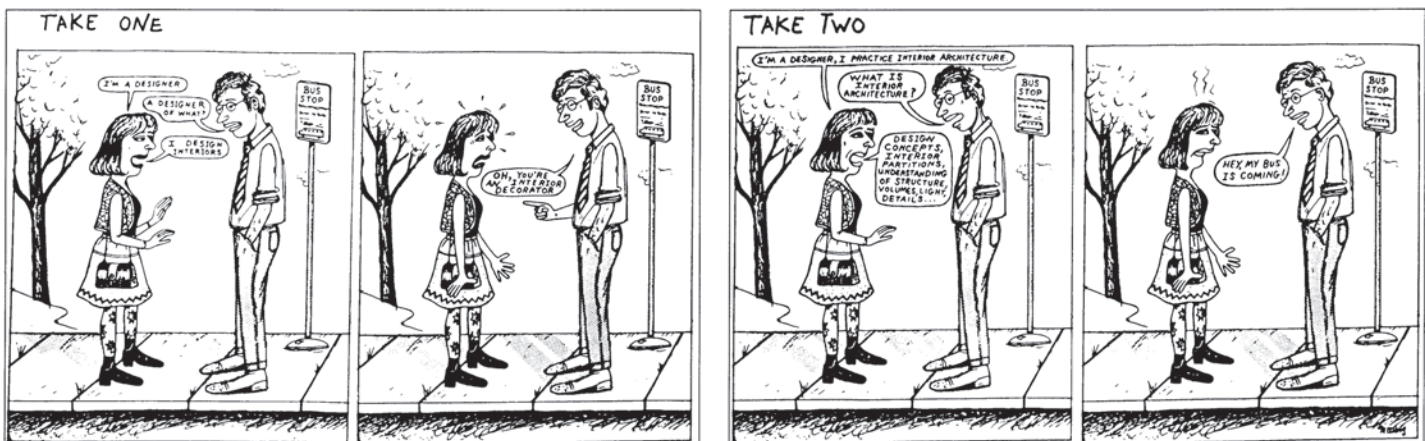
interior designer spans from the frivolous decorator to the interiors practitioner that understands technology and theory of architecture and integrates conceptual creative integrity to a specific client program. Without establishing criteria for professional excellence of interior architectural design, the gamete of practicing individuals will remain, perpetuating the interior stigma. It is the efforts of the educational system and qualification of interiors practitioners through state and practice act legislation that may have a substantial impact on our practice.

Multidisciplinary Study

Training in a comprehensive architectural curriculum with multidisciplinary study is important to prevent departmental separation in professional practice. Leading university programs, such as the University of Cincinnati, incorporate the interior design discipline as a significant and dignified component in the study of architecture. Students of interior design and architecture have unified courses, while maintaining separate individual curricular structures. These universities offer students interdisciplinary study within their specialized structures. The guiding principles and philosophy for the interior design program often are found in the definition provided

by the National Council for Interior Design Qualification (NCIDQ). NCIDQ's exam for interior design professionals clearly identifies the architectural as well as interiors knowledge essential to practice. Students aspiring to become interior specialists are offered a realistic educational experience to prepare for examination. The late Patricia L. Edison, AIA, a prominent educator and professional, agreed with the need to elevate the interiors discipline at academic institutions and was a strong proponent for establishing professional licensing for interior designers.

Joanne Bauer of the Bauer/Latoza Studio, Chicago, IL, did not set out to pursue the interior sector when she was completing an architecture degree at City College of New York. As a collaborative entrepreneur with husband and partner Bill Latoza, Joanne is not surprised to experience business growth with conservation, planning commissions and new construction. These architectural projects have benefitted from Bauer's specialized interiors knowledge, and have provided a substantial income since the pair established their practice in 1990. "I think the practice of interiors should be integral to an architectural curriculum," said Bauer, adding that her interiors experience has been invaluable in private practice.



Cartoon Concept: Yetta Starr

In the '90s and into the 21st century, interior design and architectural programs cannot just re-label their programs "interior architecture." This ploy, which is a marketing faux pas, will not correct the incomplete curriculum in many architectural schools, nor will this name give credibility to floundering interior design programs. The curriculum with substance will recruit educators who have successfully pursued the practice of interiors in architecture. A progressive program would offer/require computer literacy, speaking and writing skills, knowledge of global environment and political issues, new types of presentation/document production and study in multidisciplinary projects. Perhaps the objective should be to give the student a comprehensive curriculum that will enable the future interiors professional to adapt to a complex and actively growing industry.

State Registration and Practice Act Legislation

In addition to renovating curriculum at universities and vocational schools, state registration and licensure is another step towards qualifying the interior specialist. Following extensive discussions, debates and lobbying, the state of Illinois has outlined its own registration and license certificate practices, as written in its Interior Design Professional Title Act 86-1404:

"Interior Design in the State of Illinois is hereby declared to affect the public health, safety, and welfare and to be subject to regulation and control in the public interest. It is further declared to be a matter of public interest and concern that the interior design professional merit and receive confidence of the public and that only qualified persons be permitted to use the title of Interior Designer in the State of Illinois."

Although the current statute is a step toward defining the profession, it does not have the ingredients necessary to protect the general public. The proposed Interior

Design Practice Act Legislation will replace the current Interior Design Professional Title Act and will prescribe penalties for incompetence, malpractice or unethical practices that can result in the loss of right to practice. It will further require state-established criteria of education, experience and testing.

As defined by NCIDQ, the professional interior designer is qualified by education, experience and examination to enhance the function and quality of interior spaces. For the purpose of improving the quality of life, increasing productivity, and protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the public, the professional interiors practitioner is qualified to:

- Research and analyze the clients' needs, goals and life safety requirements.
- Integrate program with learned and intuitive knowledge of interior architectural design.
- Formulate preliminary design concepts that are based on an approved program of requirements, budget, and spirit.
- Develop and present final design recommendations.
- Prepare specifications and contract documents for non-load bearing interior construction, millwork, lighting details, materials, finishes, space planning, furniture, fixtures, and equipment.
- Consult with other licensed practitioners in the technical areas of mechanical, electrical, and load bearing design for regulatory approval.
- Prepare and administer bids and contract documents and specifications as the clients agent for non-load bearing interior construction and furniture installation.
- During the construction phase, visit the site periodically and consult with associated practitioners to ensure accordance with design intent and contract documents.

The diversity that exists in the practice of interior architecture and design is vast. The individual that decorates and furnishes

interior architecture is a distinctly honorable member of architectural practice. The architect/developer that creates spec office buildings also is a valid member of architectural practice. Both of these individuals have referred to themselves as interior designers. Thus, one can see from the aforementioned examples, how important practice act legislation becomes, for it will be more difficult for salespeople to claim to possess specialized training in interior environments. The lack of licensure also fosters the confusion on the part of the public as to what constitutes interior design.

Historically, requirements for architectural design were not as complex and individuals practiced with greater boundaries. Specialization has been necessary as a result of urban environments, building technology and complex interior spaces. However, we have become too macro and too micro, and have lost a sense of the architectural arena. The interiors discipline has sprung off into an undefined and unmeasurable contributor.

The effective application for licensure sets a minimum standard of competence and qualification associated with the professional "interior designer." For those of us recognizing the specialized practice of interiors in architecture, state practice act legislation is an important step toward qualifying, quantifying and gaining statistical information for individuals practicing in the interiors sector and ultimately may help in the legitimization of the practice of interior design.

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