Education, Design and Practice – Understanding skills in a Complex World

• Paper / Proposal Title:
Zukunft: Practice + Theory: Lessons in Experiential Learning

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• Abstract (300 words):

“Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.” - David Kolb

Architecture by practice inherently involves both conceptual thinking and the physical manifestation of a built form. Students traditionally are fully immersed in the abstract thinking necessary for a design process but are less frequently afforded the opportunity to experience the act of building at full scale and interface with clients. It is precisely because architecture is a service industry charged with imagining and translating ideas into physical realities that experiential learning opportunities, where students are exposed to actual working environments and tools, are essential to our curriculum. The intention behind this approach is to establish a mindset of translating limitations into design explorations where students are encouraged to innovate, test, and investigate while considering the pragmatic parameters and constraints of real world applications. By exposing students early in their career to these challenges, we can train them to be resourceful and inventive troubleshooters and inherently promote proactive critical thinking and learning.
This paper will use two different student-led design-build projects as case studies to discuss strategies for scaffolding and embedding experiential learning opportunities as part of required coursework. Each covers aspects of client interaction, feasibility studies, budget, project management, material constraints and waste management, fabrication processes, performance, and detailing in addition to a collaborative design process and construction of a physical product. One project is a 20ft long furniture piece that accommodates multiple programs designed and built to be used within the department and the other is the design of an acoustic ceiling installation for a community organization. Taking cues from John Dewey’s statement, “We do not learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on experience,” the paper will reflect on lessons learned, student learning outcomes, logistics, applications for future projects, and, most importantly, how these opportunities connect the learning in the present to the experiences of the future.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

  Ting Chin

Professor Chin is a licensed architect and a founding principal of Linearscape, an award-winning interdisciplinary design studio based out of New York City. Her teaching and practice engage in research, exploration, and collaboration to arise at design solutions that are inspired by the fluidity of movement and the integration of landscape and context with building form, materials and systems. Linearscape is committed to work that is socially and environmentally responsible and actively participates in non-profit projects. The firm was the recipient of the 2012 Emerging New York Architects award.

Before founding Linearscape Professor Chin had over ten years of experience working in a diverse array of architectural and landscape design offices. Her project experience includes airports, office towers, master planning, healthcare, laboratory, cultural and educational facilities and the design of public urban spaces.

Claudia Hernandez

Claudia is a licensed Architect who currently teaches both at the Department of Architectural Technology at NYCCT and in the Department of Interior Design at Pratt Institute. She holds a Master of Science degree in Advanced Architectural Design from Columbia University and a Bachelor of Architecture from California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo.

For the past ten years she has worked in several design-oriented architecture firms both San Francisco and New York. Her work has focused on residential, institutional, and commercial project types. In independent practice, Claudia presently is collaborating with a AH Design (www.ahdzmdesign.com), a California-based automotive research, development, and design firm. Their research focuses on the use and adaptation of automotive fabrication technology and materials for architectural and interior design applications.