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

• Paper / Proposal Title:
Fully Preparing for Practice: The symbiosis of creative thinking and professional skillsets in early design education

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• Abstract (300 words):
At the onset of their architectural education, students arrive with preconceived ideas about the practice of architecture and its inherent qualities, responsibilities, and motivations, making it difficult to initiate design education from the perspective of the tabula rasa (blank slate). While beginning design education remains fundamental to the development of young architects, these preconceptions affect a beginning designer’s ability to discern real world architectural practice from the development of skillsets intended to enhance it. This presents a challenge to design educators, who are tasked not only with addressing professional requirements and concerns, but also in connecting this education to the symbiotic creative and design thinking skillsets that facilitates well-rounded architectural practice.

To bridge this gap, it is imperative that beginning design education focuses on a layering of professional skillsets with creative thinking skills, teaching students to design within constraints while developing their own critical understanding of the breadth of architectural possibility. This paper will discuss three studio projects taught together as
part of an early architectural studio, beginning with developing design thinking skills through conceptual collaging and evolving through the introduction of practical principles through a real world, real client project, emphasizing a symbiotic relationship between creative thinking and practice as a way of educating future professionals. The projects, which introduce additional controls as the project progresses, encourage students to see professional or practice principles as an enhancement to their design thinking instead of a constraint to their creativity, mitigating their preconceptions about what architectural practice is, and establishing a base education for future development.

The study suggests that with variable programs, requirements, and emphases assigned in early design studios, students learn to see architectural design first as having infinite possibilities, which are then edited to accomplish particular tasks through program, site requirements, environmental technologies, or structural efficiencies.

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

Dr. Kristin Barry is an Assistant Professor and Director of Undergraduate Programs in the Architecture department at Ball State University, specializing in architectural design, history/theory, and heritage interpretation. Kristin holds a Master of Architecture degree from the University of Cincinnati and a doctorate in Art and Architecture History from Penn State University. Her teaching focuses on beginning architectural education and the development of critical and design thinking skills in emerging architectural professionals, and has previously taught the Critical Practice professional practice course at Ball State. She enjoys working with students to dispel preconceptions about architecture and encourage creative thinking in practice.

Kristin’s scholarship primarily focuses on how to design and interpret archaeological and historic sites for the international public, architectural design and history education, and the role of architecture in heritage management and planning. She has also initiated several immersive learning courses and opportunities for students, including the developing of an interactive augmented reality mobile and desktop application for Columbus, Indiana. She continues to practice interpretive planning, and recent projects include interpretive signage and a travelling exhibit for the Battle of the Wabash and Battle of Fort Recovery, Ohio, and an interpretation plan for the National Cemetery in Dayton, Ohio.