Experiential Design – Rethinking relations between people, objects and environments

• Paper / Proposal Title:

The publics’ misconceptions of interior design vs. the actualities of the profession: The Millennial perspective

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• Abstract (300 words):

The public, at large, possesses inaccurate, and at times negative, perceptions of the interior design profession via media involvement and occupational bias. These misconceptions inadvertently cause a threat to the health, safety, and welfare of those the profession aims to serve and protect, the general public. Interior design professionals constantly utilize empirical evidence to inform their designs within the built environment. Are there potential influences affecting these inaccuracies? How can the interior design profession best educate the public to its actualities as well as to the relevancy of its social impact?

The target research demographic is the Millennial Generation, which comprises an emerging and significant consumer market. The research sample was taken from non-interior design graduate level students and young professionals. Through survey data of this population in the South East United States, the intent was to decipher the existing
inaccurate perceptions they possess of the profession and its practitioners. This research focuses on two predominant variables that facilitate these erroneous perceptions: occupational stereotyping and misleading media portrayals, as they both ultimately influence negative lobbying and deregulation legislation targeted at the profession.

Findings suggest Millennials are exceedingly subject to the proliferation of inaccurate information regarding interior design. It also further explores the result of a plethora of media misrepresentations; all of which exacerbate occupational stereotyping. Findings conclude that both of these factors directly impact the negative bias currently influencing the lobbying and deregulation legislation of the profession across the country.

Therefore, if the profession can successfully educate the public to its actualities, as well as the relevancy of its social impact, the proliferation of accurate knowledge will substantially increase, and many detrimental factors to the public’s health, safety, and welfare significantly will decrease. In effect, mitigating these issues of which the profession of interior design is persistently dedicated to resolving.

• Authors’ Biographies:

Claire Varnedoe is a Master of Fine Arts graduate candidate within the Interior Architecture and Design program at Florida State University. She currently holds a teaching assistantship within the department where she is able to help support and guide underclassmen throughout their interior design educational endeavors. She has dedicated her research to better understanding the sociological and psychological factors that impact the various misconceptions and perceptions the general public holds regarding the profession of interior design, a phenomenon which has persisted over many decades. For the purposes of her research the term “general public” is defined as anyone outside of the profession of interior design, or its affiliated professions, such as architecture, engineering, or building contracting. Her original research concluded with sufficient evidence to supports that there are several prominent factors which inform multiple public biases, which in-turn, influence political legislation to the detriment of the interior design profession.

Dr. Marlo Ransdell is an Associate Professor and Director of Studio D: Design and Fabrication Lab in the Department of Interior Architecture and Design at Florida State University. She specializes in critical thinking and digital fabrication research, along with overseeing furniture design curriculum within the department.