Experiential Design – Rethinking relations between people, objects and environments

• Paper / Proposal Title:
The poetics of classroom spaces: Producing an effective learning environment for the aspiring experiential designer

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• Abstract (300 words):
Gaston Bachelard’s “The Poetics of Space” conveyed a new understanding of how we apply the methods of phenomenology to architecture, focusing on the lived experiences within places and their contexts in nature. In a new course I have developed, titled Multi-sensory Environments, the students engage in their understanding of place through the five senses. Personal and emotional responses to buildings, rooms and scenarios, both in life and in literary works, create poetic attributes relevant to a student’s lived experience. Those prospects culminate in four three-week-long projects in this second year course. Spatial types such as bedrooms, doctor’s offices, attics cellars, drawers are examined as mediators of emotions and are refined through the gravitas of in-class mentorship and guest expert critics of various sense-making careers (e.g., chefs, perfumers).
I wish to demonstrate the importance of integrating early in a program the skills surrounding sensory acuity. My talk will focus on 1) articulating and creating observances of these senses to design students; 2) developing poetic language for greater fluency and coherence in describing sensory stimuli; and 3) integrating these senses into sophisticated design projects situated within a greater understanding of space and place.

As with the Effective Learning Environments initiative of the OECD, I aim to improve learning environments for the 21st century. Design students would benefit greatly from a deeper understanding of the senses they encounter amongst the spaces they influence, and with curriculum that supports this comprehension early in their career, an increasingly empathetic and observant class of designers can be produced.

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

James March is a designer and educator from Newfoundland, Canada. He finds satisfaction in a diverse and unspecialized practice, taking on a wide range of projects in the fields of design, art, and photography for companies and organizations of all sizes. James has received recognition for his work in design education, typeface design, editorial design, interaction design and photography. He graduated with a Master of Design from York University, a Master of Science in Experimental Psychology, and a Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Psychology from Memorial University. Over the past eight years, James has taught interaction design, user experience design, typography, statistics, and health psychology at various institutions. He has been a speaker and visiting critic at conferences, institutions, and festivals in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom. James is currently a full-time professor and program coordinator at Sheridan College in Oakville, Ontario, Canada.