Experiential Design – Rethinking relations between people, objects and environments

• Paper / Proposal Title:

“University, as Enabler for Inclusion: The Ceramicist, The Tutor, The Student and The Adult with Autism.”

• Author(s) Name:

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• University or Company Affiliation:

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• Abstract (300 words):

Inclusion of people with disabilities, or ‘different’ abilities, is recognised as a major societal issue, in this instance, people with autism. This pedagogic small-scale investigation rethinks the university educator to student relationship, through an experiential brief, to design a ceramics college for autism. A collaborative, human-centred, case study perspective, encompasses not only an interior architecture student, a tutor with a ceramics research interest and a tutor with a research interest in autism, but also opens up dialogue with a professional ceramic artist and a young person with autism; the latter three, living in the same community. Intrinsically, it offers a cross-disciplinary approach utilising participatory-based learning within an inspiring, fully operational, workshop setting. Opportunities to hear the autistic voice, exploring sensory and behavioural needs first-hand, avoid pre-conceived internal dialogues and artificial objectives, encouraging exploration beyond purely the aesthetic.
The paper describes the process of setting up and running a live ‘sensorium’ ceramics workshop, expanding effective learning beyond the design studio, teaching a complex subject area, wherein no two people are affected by autism identically. It explores how to discern the optimum learning environment and how sensory considerations, primarily offering choice, assist. Inherently, many design strategies developed for people with autism may also be of benefit for neuro-typical people, in different educational settings.

In essence, the research creates and advocates the innovative ‘ASD-Uni-Outreach’ micro-teaching model as being sustainable and viable for piloting in alternative university courses, with community subject expertise. This good practice model maximises social interaction, provides a deeper level of autism understanding for the design student, and augments skills for young people with autism. The paper champions that unconventional users require unconventional approaches to knowledge gathering. The design of autism colleges is advanced through providing budding professionals with an insight into designing responsive spatial environments.

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

Joan Love has been a Senior Lecturer and Level Four Co-ordinator on BA(Hons) Interior Architecture and Design at Leeds Beckett University, UK, since 2001. Love’s research focus, for the last six years, has encompassed educating future designers to design environments for autistic users. This is an ongoing pedagogic project, with eight local SEND schools. She is a Member of Leeds Autism Research Group (LARG LAB, 2019), a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (SFHEA, 2015), a Member of Interior Educators (IE, 2009) and a Member of The Chartered Society of Designers (CSD, 1988). Joan has contributed towards The National Autistic Societies, Network Autism, Useful Resources. Joan has published two recent research papers:

‘Sensory Spaces: Sensory Learning – An experimental approach to educating our future designers to design autism schools.’ http://dx.doi.org/10.26687/archnet-ijar.v12i3.1704

‘Studio teaching experiments - spatial transitioning for autism schools.’ https://doi.org/10.1108/ARCH-11-2018-0019

Love’s experimental research uncovers new information in the form of ‘10 spatial transitioning platforms’ relating to behaviour-informed design. Love’s current research involves the cross-disciplinary inputs of a sensory integration practitioner and a positive behaviour analyst. The advancement of designing for autism is at the centre of the research, assisting future professionals to create responsive spatial environments.