Experiential Design – Rethinking relations between people, objects and environments

• Paper / Proposal Title:

Innovating Residential Environmental Design Guidelines for Adults with ASD: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach

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• Abstract (300 words):

A crisis exists in residential housing for adults with intellectual disabilities in Ontario, (Brown and Radford, 2015). In 2009 the Ontario long-term residential care model for adults with intellectual disabilities shifted from government-funded residential facilities to a community-based model. As such, and increasingly, more adults with intellectual disabilities are forced to live at home with their families long term (https://www150.statcan.gc.ca). These adults require specialized interior living considerations. Autism specifically, is a neurodevelopmental disorder affecting individuals in the areas of communication, socialization, sensory input and behaviour. There is no cure however, there are treatments to deal with the effects, most delivered as part of an early intervention strategy. A strong evidence base exists to show the link between the built environment and its positive effects on the user (Ulrich et al. 2004). These interventions have been utilized primarily in healthcare design but can be considered for residential environments.
Autism Speaks created a set of construction guidelines in 2009 for residential remodelling, providing proposed interventions for homeowners. These changes aim to mitigate negative behaviours and ensure the safety and well-being of all family members. This research aims to add a multidisciplinary approach to these interventions by employing a range of architectural, interior, art-based, and industrial design strategies as clinical interventions for homeowners to consider as conventions in their home remodelling. By considering a multidisciplinary approach, new knowledge will be added to this industry.

The study employs a case study method as a vehicle to translate clinical and safety recommendations through a bedroom redesign project. As the issue is a common one in most urban and rural centres, the research will be of interest to a wider global audience as a form of social innovation.

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

Geraghty and Associates (G+A) is a global interdisciplinary research practice based in Toronto, Canada. With a focus on design education, residential, commercial and institutional built-environments, their portfolio of work spans public, private and non-profit sectors. The firm specializes in a broad definition of design including its tangible and intangible expressions as process, methods and approaches. These are used strategically to achieve impact, value and facilitate change for clients and end users.

Rhonda Geraghty FRSA, PhD candidate, is a senior interior architect and senior researcher at G+A. Her work operates from an international, interdisciplinary paradigm as researcher, practitioner and educator with over two decades of experience directing and leading teams towards strategic goals while innovating change in the public, private and non-governmental sectors. She is the co-director of a social innovation think tank and a former Program Chair of a tertiary level design program in Toronto. She holds degrees in Political Science and Interior Architecture from Universities in Toronto, Canada and Paris, France. Her current PhD research out of the UK focuses on design-led government.

Matana Geraghty MFA Candidate, GradCert, B.A. (Hons), is a Junior Research Assistant at G+A specializing in Fine Arts and Behavioural Psychology. Her knowledge of participatory and ethnographic methods adds human centered and user centered approaches to her work. Matana holds undergraduate degrees from the University of Toronto in visual arts, psychology and media studies. She is currently a Graduate Student in Interdisciplinary Arts, Media and Design at the Ontario College of Art and Design University. Her applied research looks at design for health in terms of therapeutic art interventions.

Aaron Geraghty B.A. (Hons), is a Junior Researcher at G+A where he specializes in applied social science research. His background with Special Needs Populations has significantly contributed to the way he considers and tackles problems in social affairs. Aaron is a holistic, design-thinker with a background working with organizations such as the MaRS Innovation Centre and the McMichael Gallery of Canadian Art. His recent
academic work as a Research Assistant at Oxford University and Cranfield University in the United Kingdom, laid the groundwork in defining and dissecting research material for Caribbean History and Design Policy. Aaron is a graduate in Architecture Theory from the Daniels School of Architecture, Landscape and Design at the University of Toronto. He is a passionate researcher with specialisms in urban planning, social justice and community affairs as they related to with both developed and developing countries and impoverished populations.