Experiential Design – Rethinking relations between people, objects and environments

• Paper / Proposal Title:
Trust Issues: Testing to Failure before Failure is Too Costly

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• Abstract (300 words):
Today’s consumers expect goods and services tailored to their individual needs. Accordingly, preeminent design houses such as Gensler, Perkins+Will, and Steelcase employ research teams to ensure their designs meet consumer demands. Of late, lab testing has embraced human-centered performance qualities to meet such demands, yet education has not modeled industry practice in classroom settings. Accreditation standards, such as CIDA standard 13, demand programs produce students who are able
to understand and apply knowledge on products and materials. Many times students do not develop these understandings themselves, but rather trust the information afforded to them is accurate and complete as delivered in lectures by faculty or manufacturer’s representatives. However, this approach only offers students part of the equation by not directly engaging them with performance testing which is key in understanding material application. Traditional delivery methods include attending lecture and applying the knowledge gained in studio, omitting the critical element of lab testing. Yet, there is no “safer” place for testing performance qualities than in the classroom where the risk of failing is protected by the boundaries of education.

This project examines two case studies where students model the industry practice of evaluating performance qualities. Consequently, they are filling the gap of the critical trust issue in design: understanding suitability of material selections to inform studio projects. It is suggested that students engaged in testing materials and objects to failure are better positioned to make informed selections. Additionally, they can overcome the “trust issue” through discovery. This approach contextualizes the educational experience through interacting with the performance characteristics of materials.

Exploring performance qualities of materials aids in the understanding of materials futures. As the industry evolves at lightening pace, the component of maintaining relevance and keeping up with future expectations can be solved through engaging emerging professionals in a truer understanding of the design process.

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

Stephanie Sickler is an Assistant Professor and Foundations Coordinator in the Department of Interior Architecture and Design at Florida State University. She holds an MFA in interior design and serves on the Board of Directors for the Interior Design Educators Council. Her interest and experience centers around student success in design education and beyond, as well as materials selections and performance. Her work has been recognized at the national and international level and her first book, Soft Goods Guidebook for Interiors will be released from Bloomsbury Publishing in October, 2019.

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