

6

The
Culture of
Design
Education

LINDA KEANE
MARK KEANE

Productions at the limit of literature, at the limit of music, at the limit of any discipline, often inform us about the state of that discipline, its paradoxes and its contradictions. Questioning limits is a means of determining the nature of the discipline.

Bernard Tschumi,
Manhattan Transcripts

At present, interior design education may seem to be bifurcated: designers learn from established methods of design education in school, then learn from their actual practice. One aspect of education emphasizes theory, another practice, technique, and specialization. On a daily basis, it may be difficult to understand how education merges with practice and practice with education. To contemporary design professionals, that bifurcation may be seamless, and their work may change the way designers, and their clients, view interiors and habitation. The practice of interior design involves cultural production of spaces for habitation. Our very definition of habitation, the place where we spend most of our time, is being challenged by the pervasiveness of computers, expanded with global connectivity, and heightened in value by the sense that design is increasingly sophisticated, diversified, and sustainability oriented. Design education, as well, is redefining itself as a liberal arts-grounded, ideological, knowledge-based, innovative education. If design professionals share the trend in design education toward problem seeking (rather than problem solving) and a more fully theorized approach to habitation, they can better assess how their own practices will best mesh with an increasingly complex world, and can better rethink and refresh their approach to the work of design to meet that world's challenges. In looking at the education of the interior designer, it is essential to develop an approach to design education that embraces the changing understanding of both interiority and the practice, theory, and life-long learning of design.