

not content to describe the fact; he wishes to ascertain its relation to experience in general, and thereby get to its meaning and worth.”¹³ Knowledge comes of science, but wisdom comes with experience. In “The Science of Uncertainty: The Potential Contribution of Design to Knowledge,” Clive Dilnot asks, What replaces scientific experiment and prediction? He states that the quick answer to the first part is that propositions replace experiment. The quick answer to the second part is that explanation replaces prediction. Propositions are to design what experiment is to science. What design offers is the capacity to create propositions about things (“this could be that”): if experiment deals with the rule (“if this, then that”), design deals with the possibility (“could this be?”).¹⁴

In this sense of “what could be,” practice and theory are essentially intertwined in the development of a knowledge base for the interior designer. As interior design defines itself as a discipline with its own educational standards and curricula, its own professional organizations, publications, and legal recognition, it needs to have as part of its base of knowledge its own philosophy, its own theory. As Stanley Abercrombie wrote in the 1970s, interior design “turns towards architectural writings where philosophical thinking about interiors has long been subsumed.”¹⁵ Today’s convergence of theory and history as critical studies is essential to the cultural content of design thinking and making, and needs to be integrated within interior design studios. If interior design as a sustainable practice is to concern itself with the understanding of current conditions to propose new forms of practice, it must develop its own critical history, theory, and philosophy based on the nature and quality of human habitation.

Design professionals are beginning to understand the importance of a broad base of knowledge in the community as a whole. At a recent International Interior Design Association Research Summit, the importance of research to a humanistic practice of interior design was discussed. Schools contribute scientific data, gathering information on everything from “what makes a creative environment to the effects of lighting on worker performance.” Susan S. Szenasy, editor of *Metropolis* magazine on art, architecture, and design, reports in “The View from La Jolla,” on the many active areas of research in the field of interiors. Industry invests in market research, in manufacturing processes, and in how people use products, translating this information into cutting-edge development. Interior design offices keep records of projects, collating client needs, project types, material performance; this knowledge

base develops the firm's profile and forms a competitive edge. The interior design community, its schools, offices, and related industries generate a rich body of knowledge about human beings and the environment. This community must begin to share this knowledge and connect the activity in academia with the research of firms and manufacturers. This sharing must also address and reach out to the public to begin to build value in design.¹⁶

LIFELONG LEARNING: A K-80 APPROACH TO LEARNING

The more complex

*You and I are
molded by the
land, the trees,
the sky and all
that surrounds
us, the streets, the
houses. . . . Our
hearts are shaped
by the plaster
walls that cover
us and we reflect
plaster wall
ideals. . . . When
I make a vase, a
cup, or a saucer,
they will be my
expression and
they will tell you
who I am and
what I am.*

Bernard Maybeck

The more complex the world becomes, and the more knowledge there is to master, the more a designer's broad-based education and knowledge will increase in value. If design professionals are to analyze and reconfigure the culture of living in the light of diverse lifestyles, new conceptions of work, entertainment, recreation, and communication, they must be aware of and keep abreast of changing perceptions, cultural shifts, use of sustainable materials, and the impact and potential of new technologies. In the light of such a complex task, developing the designer is a life-long educational process, a process that must be emphasized and supported more fully than it is now by the educational system.

If the field of architecture has expanded with respect to what its practitioners need to learn—some 22 years plus for architects, according to Harvard's Joseph Hudnut's list made in the 1940s—so too has the field of interiors expanded. Originally, design involved the practice of the decorator equipped with knowledge of history, styles, textiles, furnishings, and sources, and on the other hand the integrative architect (who included details of lighting, furnishings, form, structure, and environmental issues seamlessly). Now, the field has enlarged to include differentiated practices in the public realm—design of the workplace, commercial spaces, industrial applications, furniture, entertainment environments, and immersive virtual worlds. The expanding field of interiors puts more demands on academia and on the need for establishing a strong commitment to continuing education.

Internationally, interior design practice complements the practice of architecture in the preservation of interiors, renovation of spaces, or completion