

reviewing the education of designers. Many of these surveys acknowledge the understanding that life-long learning is integral to design education. The effort to distinguish between that which needs to be introduced in an academic setting, understood and applied in school, acquired during internship, and testable and applicable during practice, is being questioned, along with definition of the limits of practice.

One way to send this message is to enhance and support continuing education. Continuing education offers opportunities for practitioners to infuse work with new thinking, changing technology, and new methodologies. The IIDA is implementing an initiative to look at the continuing education needs of the profession. Neil Frankel, past president of the IIDA, writes that currently continuing education offerings are random, nonsequential, and inconsistent in quality. Available material needs to be cataloged and enriched with both current expertise in the profession and emerging theoretical content. “The ultimate goal is to create a cogent, systematic educational road map that will lead design professionals to literacy and effectiveness at every point on the learning curve, providing momentum for a lifetime of learning.”¹⁹ In addressing a practice that is changing and redefining its range, continuing education becomes essential.

The consciousness-raising efforts outlined so far must not remain static, and must incorporate an understanding that interior design is challenged by new thinking about interiority. Although programs exist which continue to respect the skill of the decorator, emphasizing the world of the artificial, there are other forces at work on both the conception of interiority and design of space. Claudia Dona writes that “Many old distinctions, in short, will have to be abandoned and supplanted by new ways of thinking if we are to respond to the different design needs of the new human reality now emerging.”²⁰ She accepts that this is the attitude of society, which for historical reasons has introduced the necessity of continuously redesigning itself. Karim Rasid, the Cairo-born Canadian industrial designer, says that “Today we are dealing with a society based on experience, so objects need to blur experience with form.”²¹ Mark Taylor, professor of religion at Williams College, says that “we are undergoing a reconfiguration of the very spatiality of experience.”²² As definition of interiority influences our living on the inside, interior design practice and educational needs of the interior designer expand. From the interiors of homes, to the office, to commercial and institutional

space, to riverfronts and streets of the cities, to the World Wide Web, the inside and outside of cultural existence and production are being physically and virtually connected. Divisions between architecture and interiors, objects, space, and our habitation with and in them are sharing meaning and contributing to understanding.

INTERIOR DESIGN EDUCATION TODAY

As designers study not only interior decoration but also interiority, different pedagogical models have developed. When the International Interior Design Association (IIDA), the International Interior Design Association Foundation (IIDAF), and E-Lab (now Sapient) collaborated on a study of education, practice, and the industry, they found two distinct models in education: “simulation” and “safe-haven.” Schools that offer “simulation” replicate the office environment and its proceedings. The “safe-haven” model pursues interior design through ideation and invention. Simulation and safe-haven models differ in context of projects, interpretation (evaluation) of the design process, and the nature of collaboration between students and faculty, and they expose students to very different educational experiences.²³ These models are presented within three disciplinary orientations to design education: interior decoration, interior design, and interior architecture.

According to the IIDA/E-Lab Report, “The main goal of a simulation school is to cultivate an environment where students learn sets of skills that can transfer directly to the workplace.”²⁴ Real clients, real programs, real time and budget constraints form the proscriptive approach to interior design education. Boundaries are explicit, and a linear design process is emphasized. The shortcoming of the “simulation” model is that it involves more instruction in the practice of interiors and less ideation and invention in the culture of habitation; collaborative experiences are not modeled, and a theoretical basis for student work is often lacking. The majority of interior programs offer the simulation model and have practitioners as instructors. Graduates become entry-level designers and technicians.