

# DESIGN:

A Global Perspective  
& Practice

By: Kara Seiler

Interior Design is a multi-faceted profession in which creative and technical solutions are applied within a structure to achieve a built interior environment. These solutions are functional, enhance the quality of life and culture of the occupants and are aesthetically attractive. (CIDQ, 2018) Unfortunately, even today, interior design as a profession is still misunderstood by the general public. The media has skewed what interior design is and many people view interior design as interior decorating.

**“Interior design is the art and science of understanding people’s behavior to create functional spaces within a building. Decoration is the furnishing or adorning of a space with fashionable or beautiful things. In short, interior designers may decorate, but decorators do not design”(Certified Interior Designers,CIDQ, 2018)**

People don't always understand what we see as a designer when we enter a building. They don't realize that the space planning, lighting choices, or furniture choices really affect them. When a non-designer enters a new building, they won't recognize what was designed to make the space functional and safer for them. Interior Designers give meaning and purpose as the “behind the scene” creators of an interior space.

## Legitimate Profession

As interior designers, to prove to the public and the profession that we are a qualified designer we can take the National Council for Interior Designers Qualification [NCIDQ] examination. “The NCIDQ is the globally recognized hallmark of a highly qualified interior designer. The certification assures interior designers are competent to meet industry standards not only for aesthetics but also for public health, safety and

welfare” (CIDQ, 2018). The examination tests designers in three parts. One part is designed for graduating seniors or recent graduates. This portion is called the FX exam. It is focused on the fundamentals and information typically learned in an academic environment. The other two portions PX and the Practicum are designed for people with at least two years working in the field. The two years is needed in order to gain the knowledge for this portion of the exam. The NCIDQ examination tests designers over many topics to ensure they are knowledgeable about the profession and the daily practice of interior design. Topics include programming and site analysis, human behavior, designed environment, building systems and construction codes, finishes, equipment and lighting, as well as construction drawings and specifications are tested over in the exam. (Test Takers, CIDQ, 2018)

**“Professional status will come when all interior designers take seriously their obligation to society and, as a result, come to be recognized for their meaningful contributions to the common good”(Anderson,Honey,Dudek, 2007).**

Advocating for the profession has been an ongoing tribulation. Becoming NCIDQ certified is one way to advocate for the profession. Another way of advocating for interior design is becoming registered within the state you practice.

To become registered requires a CIDA accredited interior design degree, successful completion of the NCIDQ exam, and two years of experience within the field. Becoming registered shows clients that you have met the standards to call yourself a “registered interior designer.” Clients can be assured you have the met the qualifications of education and experience and will be able to depend on you to provide the service they need. (Advocacy, IIDA, 2018).

## Health, Safety & Welfare

Interior designers have a responsibility to always design for the health, safety, and welfare of the public. Designers should be aware and knowledgeable about the International building code, the American Disabilities Act, Sustainability of materials and products, and other governing requirements in order to design a safe environment for the end users. Interior designers have the right to practice after earning an education and global certification. With the knowledge gained we should be entitled to work with other professions like architects and engineers.

**“We believe everyone who works to design, build, or manage the built environment shares an obligation to, and should be held accountable for, their specific role in protecting health, safety, and welfare”  
(Anderson, Honey, Dudek, 2007).**

Interior designer have an impact on the built environment and what goes into it. It is the interior designers obligation to choose materials that will have a positive impact on the end user as well as the environment. When choosing paint colors, fabrics, or flooring its important to choose products that are durable, non-toxic, and sustainable.

## Globalized Design

Designing within a world of context is about designing with everyone in mind. It's about designing for the local culture. Joseph Pettipas a senior vice president and and the regional practice leader of Western Canada for HOK wrote about how in the retail and hospitality sectors, the end users now expect that environments provide a place of memory. When users visit a new place they are expecting to

experience something new that they can take away from their visit. Whether this be at a local place or at a destination, people want it to become memorable to them. The best way to do this is to embrace the social and cultural environment of the location. Its about not only focusing on the city, but as well as the neighborhood (Pettipas, 2010).

When designing internationally, one obstacle that is dealt with often is the language differences. The English language has become commonly accepted as a main business language, but sometimes proficiency in the language does not always mean comprehension of words. The English language contains many words that sound alike but have different meanings. For example LeDoux and LeDoux were in a teleconference call with their Korean counterpart. During the call they used the technical word “shear” wall. The intended meaning for the term was to describe a structural wall built to resist lateral forces. The Korean counterpart misunderstood the term and did not know the proper spelling. When they referenced their English dictionary their misinterpretation lead to the different type of sheer, instead they misinterpreted it as a “sheer” wall, a wall that is very thin or transparent (LeDoux & LeDoux, 2010).

Other obstacles that might occur when designing globally that should be remembered, are the differences in material and color options in foriegn countries. The culture, history, and availability of materials in other countries may vary with what is typically used or seen fit in the U.S. Western interior designers typically regard stone as high value, while in a Korea, the stone granite, is very plentiful and used in common areas such as sidewalks, curbs, and gutters. As for color, the application of color in foreign countries can express

different meanings and emotions. Color conveys meaning in two different ways, natural association, and psychological symbolism. Natural association typically shares the same global meaning in most cultures. For example the color green can be associated with nature throughout most cultures. Conversely, psychological symbolism can vary between colors in other cultures. For example, the color of wedding dresses in Asia versus the United States. Asian brides might wear a red dress because it symbolizes happiness and prosperity, but they might view the typical western white wedding dress as the color symbol of death (LeDoux & LeDoux, 2010).

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## Our Obligation

The obligation of the interior design profession to design globally, is to design universally. It goes back to designing for the health, safety, and welfare of the public. It is the goal and obligation of interior designers to be able to design “for the whole population”. This means users of any gender, location, or culture will be able to use the space easily and feel comfortable while interacting within it. Interior Design is focused on enhancing the quality of life of the user. Interior designers attend to this obligation by being aware and knowledgeable of ways to incorporate tools such as wheelchair ramps, braille on signs, wide interior doors, and lever handles versus twisting knobs.

As interior designers it's important to create spaces for not only the client who assigned you to the project but all the users that might come in to contact with

the space. Interior designers need to do excessive research on the client, users, environment, and any information needed to design a space that is functional and affective.

**“We propose that the primary social value of, and the basis for a social compact for the interior design profession, is designing physiologically and psychologically supportive interior environments that enhance quality of life” (Anderson,Honey,Dudek, 2007).**

At the end of the day if an interior designer can create a beautiful and functional space that improves the aspect of the users everyday life, then they have fulfilled their obligation.

| Kara Seiler, Spring 2018 |

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