Learning and Celebrating:
The Glamour of Design Lecture Series

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the celebratory aspect of the Design Lecture Series, a tradition in architecture schools and interior design programs, its meaning for all constituent parties, and its contributions to creating professional identity and community. The Design Lecture Series is a public event popular in design programs, ranging from graphic and industrial design to interior and architectural design. At these events, prominent professionals and academics present their newest work and discuss ideas in the making. The research design is a case study, conceived from a Symbolic Interactionist perspective in accordance with the principles of Grounded Theory methodology. The project unveils the complex and multilayered universe of the Design Lecture Series and depicts how all of its components fuse in a flamboyant celebration of professionalism, academic achievement, and community outreach.

INTRODUCTION

The Design Lecture Series is a public event popular in design programs, ranging from graphic and industrial design to interior and architectural design. This event is both a professional celebration and a celebration of the profession. At these lectures, prominent professionals and academics present their newest work and discuss ideas in the making. The event might take place once a year or once a month, depending upon each school's resources and customs. This is an occasion to showcase prominent practitioners and academics and to discuss their newest ideas. The purpose is to keep design students current on the most advanced developments in their field, and to do so in a timely manner.

The lecture draws together students, faculty, university administrators, practitioners, and local community members in an atmosphere of celebration and student pride. The design lecture series is considered an extracurricular activity, but it has tremendous potential for fostering students' development and growth into young, ambitious design professionals. The lecture series bridges classroom experiences with professional lifelong learning, and in doing so, it has become an important component of design culture. In this respect, I have conceptualized the current study as a component of a larger project on design culture and design education. There is no literature on this colorful phenomenon, but it deserves its fair share of research because of its great potential as a tool for educational and professional growth. The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of the nature, structure, and functions of this event, and to promote this understanding as a means of enhancing the quality of design education.

Here I interpret the lecture series as a component of design culture and design education, and it is from this perspective that I discuss its traits. Although this delineation of the scope of the phenomenon provides a focal point for my research, there are a number of other aspects that are of particular interest. My research highlights those aspects of the lecture series that are relevant to the quality of design students' education and professional growth. Furthermore, it also addresses matters pertinent to event logistics and space planning. In this respect, the study has several functions and may be of interest of a number of professional groups, among them design educators, university administrators, advisory board members, researchers, and even design practitioners.

Design culture is very important for design education, lifelong learning, and professional growth. Unlike many other occupations where the work process happens only from nine to five, in the designer's mind, the design process continues around the clock. Designers have a myriad of reasons to celebrate after days and weeks of work around the clock. Design culture is about work ethics, motivation, values, and attitudes that foster a drive for achievement and professional excellence. Design acculturation makes people study and work over and above what is usual among other professionals in our society, and, I would posit, over and above what they are paid. Design

culture is also about competition and the celebration of winning, or even just of putting forth maximum effort to meet a given challenge.

Design culture also reinforces educational and work processes, sustains individual perseverance, and keeps people in their right mind in a field that is marked by a deluge of information, overwhelming task complexity, and stressful timelines. In this respect, fostering a lively design culture is indispensible for design education and is a necessary step toward the preparation of design practitioners. This explains my interest in design culture and in the mechanisms for generating and reproducing it.

My initial impressions of the lecture series have indicated that this is an exceptional phenomenon in terms of its many layers, its human interactions, and its myriad meanings and implications. I am mesmerized by the energy and vibrancy of the lecture series, which can be construed as a celebration of the profession, complete with the festive atmosphere of a professional holiday. In some ways, it is comparable to the spirit and festivities at professional conferences and symposia, although on a different scale and with different ramifications. This unusual fusion of functions and meanings has generated my research interest and has presupposed the directions of the inquiry. This same fusion has also influenced my decisions regarding appropriate research methods, sampling, and site selection.

In keeping with the tradition of academic research, it is typical to start with a literature review. I searched several databases with numerous combinations of key words, but these searches failed to yield anything related to the topic of this project–the lecture series as a component of design culture within programs and schools ranging from graphic to architectural design. There are hundreds of announcements about such lectures, but no analyses of the phenomenon. My interpretation of this lack of analysis is that, although exciting and interesting as a phenomenon and an event, the design lecture series as an object of study has yet to attract the interest of design researchers, design educators, cultural scholars, and sociologists. The lack of published materials presupposes the initiation of an exploratory study with a qualitative research design. The methodology of my research is elaborated on later in this paper.

I have delimited the scope of inquiry to programs of architectural and interior design. Based on commonalities in the culture, traditions, and ways of thinking in all of these programs, and in order to conceal identities (as well as for reasons of brevity), I will often use the term "design" without particular specification of the type of design and program.

This study is intended to contribute to several research areas and professional communities. My research on lecture series enhances the body of knowledge within the domains of design pedagogy, curriculum planning, and extracurricular activities in interior and architectural design programs. The study also encourages design educators to take full advantage of the lecture series as a means of facilitating student learning and professional growth, the development of professional identity and self-esteem, and engagement with both local practitioners and community members.

METHODOLOGY

My initial interpretations of the Lecture Series phenomenon indicated that I needed a research perspective that could make sense of social interaction and the construction of meaning in multifunctional and multifaceted situations, without the benefits of previous publications. These considerations led me to selecting Symbolic Interactionism as a guiding paradigm and to adopt one of its field research strategies, the Grounded Theory methodology (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Charmaz, 2006; Clarke, 2005; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This methodological platform is one of the best for understanding human interaction and the social construction of meaning, and also for unveiling hidden functions and implications surrounding the research subject. I also made use of some additional methodological and epistemological considerations following Guba and Lincoln (2000), Lincoln and Guba (1985), and Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland (2005).

The problem formulation and the goal structure of the study were developed as part of a long process of analysis and interpretation. The problem was construed in light of the insufficient information that exists—or rather, does not exist—about the nature and implications of the design lecture series. The goal of the study was to explore the design lecture series as a component of design education culture with the purpose of enhancing its value for learning, creating a design community, and fostering student growth and professionalization. The objectives were to unveil the multifunctional nature, the meanings, and the generative mechanisms of the lecture series, as well as to investigate the functions and contributions of these events toward creating educational synergies and augmenting the quality of education.

The sampling considerations were based on the goals and objectives of the study and with respect to the epistemological principles of Grounded Theory. The unit of sampling was the design lecture series event. In this project, I emphasized understanding the phenomenon rather than transferability of the findings. I wanted to under-

stand the lecture series in its most developed form, with its most pronounced interrelationships and contributions to design culture and design education. I also wanted to produce findings from best-in-class practices and to present information that could be useful for design educators. Consequently, I adopted an extreme case sampling strategy (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) and searched for exemplary, best-in-class situations, as in qualitative management research.

With that in mind, this project involved one geographic setting that I studied over a period of eight years, with a total of five events, as well as three auxiliary settings. The main research setting was at an interior design program at a Midwestern university. It displayed high levels of energy and vitality. Both faculty and students were immensely dedicated and inspired, and they participated with enthusiasm and passion. In addition, the setting allowed for prolonged engagement, leading to rich data and descriptions. This setting was explored until theoretical saturation. The three auxiliary settings were also situated at Midwestern universities, within architectural design programs and schools. The auxiliary settings were used to ensure that the findings were comparable to events of this sort and that the biases were controlled. A major role of the auxiliary settings was to indicate that while an outlier in terms of its richness, energy and vibrancy, the main setting is not an unusual representation of design lecture series.

The sampling of respondents for guided interviews was performed after prolonged observations and informal, conversational interviews. The intention was to reach representatives of different participating groups in order to build a realistic and coherent picture of the event and to create basis for comparisons. Participants were selected for their potential to present either typical or heuristic views. The respondent selection strategy was to look both for informants with insightful and heuristic viewpoints and for people who represent typical participants in order to search for insights into the phenomenon and to compare and consider individual biases. Twenty-seven participants were interviewed. The number of interviews was guided by considerations for information saturation.

Data quality procedures were developed with concerns about the trustworthiness of the information. Trustworthiness was conceptualized as truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality. The truth value concern was interpreted through the concept of credibility. Regarding credibility, several techniques for ensuring quality of data were employed during the data collection stage, including a methodological log, triangulation by source, triangulation by method, member checks, peer debriefing, and referential adequacy. During the analysis and interpretation

stages, several other methods were used; these included performing negative case analyses, establishing referential adequacy, obtaining structural corroboration, and practicing reflexivity. The issue of consistency was interpreted in terms of quality and, in particular, dependability of instruments. The research process involved modifications of the interview tactics, interview guide, and probes, as well as emerging insights and digressions. The techniques used for managing these threats included an overlap of methods, stepwise replication, an audit trail, and a dependability audit.

The data analysis techniques used during coding and interpretation were adopted from the authors on Grounded Theory I mentioned previously. The interview narratives were processed with open, axial, and selective coding. In addition to the most common Grounded Theory methods, I used several complementary techniques borrowed from Lofland et al. (2005): questioning, analysis of phrases and words, flip-flop techniques, comparisons, use of a conditional matrix and conditional paths, and "thinking units." Multiple comparisons and close-in comparisons were made for each of the interviewees, each research setting, and each annual event at the main research setting.

RESULTS

Lecture Series as an Event and Behavior Setting

The Setting

The composite picture of the design lecture series used in this analysis is based predominantly on the events in the interior design program of the Midwestern state university that was chosen as the primary research site. The lecture series has become a renowned tradition of the program, and has a strong reputation, high expectations, and a festive atmosphere. The program invests numerous resources and maximum effort into the organization of activities. The lecture is attended by students and faculty from several colleges and programs and has acquired the status of a university event. Furthermore, alumni and guests from local firms and professional communities endow it with even higher status.

The event takes place in a new and modern student union that comparable to a small conference center. It is the newest and most luxurious building on campus. For the event, almost half of the second floor is booked and adapted to the needs of the students. There is a 250-seat theater with a spacious lobby, a large ballroom, and several large spaces adjacent to the theater suite. On the day of the lecture, all these spaces are filled with life and people. The public nature, central location, and attractiveness of this space generate a special air of importance. The excellent quality

of the physical environment and the privilege students feel in using it contribute to the atmosphere of the event.

The lecture itself is held in the theater. The ballroom houses a concurrent trade show with dozens of manufacturers' representatives, furniture sales associates, and practitioners from local design firms. The lobby of the theater and the large spaces around it accommodate event registration, receptions, delivery of refreshments, and occasional additional activities for small groups.

The Actors

There are several groups of actors involved in the lecture event. The main participants are current students and faculty from the interior design program. Attendees include a large number of guests, some of them of particular importance: the dean of the college, the school director and program chairs, deans and administrators from other colleges, the leaders of the local chapters of professional associations, students and faculty from other programs, emeritus faculty, alumni, design practitioners, and product manufacturers and sales associates. The students are both the main actors and the guests of honor as the entire event is organized for them. They are at the center of the action. They actually "make" the event, just as the event is made for them.

Most of the students are female (with only a few exceptions); they are of traditional student age and generally hail from small Midwestern towns. Many students see the design lecture as an upscale occasion and dress accordingly. Others dress up because they are encouraged to do so by the faculty. Many young women trade jeans and sneakers for skirts and high heels for the first time in several months, and some of them wear makeup. The high heels evidently make some of them uncomfortable, but they diligently resolve to walk in them anyway. Students are also encouraged by the faculty to act professionally, to immerse themselves in this situation with professionals, and to prepare for a possible meeting with prospective employers. All students wear specially prepared name tags received at registration, which indicate their affiliation with the program and create a sense of community. A vast majority of students, first-year students and sophomores in particular, have rarely taken a class together. This event is the first time many understand the true size and scope of their program.

The guests also contribute to the professional atmosphere. They come in their office attire, in keeping with their own routine. The attendance of several dozen design practitioners and salespeople changes the usual demographics in the program and introduces an element of maturity to the event, contrasting with the atmosphere of a typical campus event in the student union. These guests make the lecture series to look more like a professional conference or a trade show instead of an ordinary lecture in a university setting. Since many of these practitioners and salespeople are alumni of the program, they still remember the faculty and some students.

The guests are given slightly different name tags, indicating that they belong to the community but at the same time have a professional status. Local design practitioners and furniture salespeople enjoy particular attention. They are the role models and the future of the students. They can also help in a very pragmatic way by offering job prospects or at least tips for gaining employment after graduation. Alumni provide the lifeline between the university and the Real World. They are the vital bridge that everyone hopes will be open at graduation. This opportunity for students and off-campus people to both integrate and differentiate produces an atmosphere comparable to a homecoming or open house. This is one more reason to feel the celebratory spirit of the occasion.

Activities and Experiences

This lecture series is an incredible constellation of activities, characters, and settings. In it, several spheres intersect: intramural and extramural, academic and professional. These aspects fuse to produce a complex and multilayered student experience. The lecture series involves several activity hubs, each one with a different nature and contribution to the overall experience. Not all of these activity hubs take place at each and every series, but I do include them in the composite picture of the event. Here I talk about the lecture itself, the trade show, the pre-event and break activities, and the reception.

The lecture itself is the axis of the event. It is the main reason for everyone to attend. Everything else is scheduled and organized around the lecture and acquires specific meaning only in relation to it. The lecture is delivered by a prominent professional and educator, usually someone who operates at national level. The lecture is customized for the occasion and usually presents new ideas or information. It can be about the design method of the speaker, his/her new projects and future plans, or new conceptualizations of design. The idea is to introduce students and local practitioners to the field's newest ideas and developments, which may not yet be included in books and journals. The lecture is an opportunity for students, practitioners, and faculty to update their knowledge and learn about the state of the art of the profession. That alone is a good incentive for everyone to eagerly await the lecture invitations.

The lecture usually opens with addresses and introductions by the dean of the college and the school director. The high ranks of the university administrators and the

prominence of the speaker endow the event with importance and status comparable to a conference. This also creates similarities to a conference keynote address or a special plenary session. In some ways, the physiognomy of the event is shaped after the image of a professional conference with keynotes, receptions, and vibrant professional socialization. Although most of the students have never attended a conference or professional symposium before, they have heard about the routines and now enjoy the experience of something very similar.

The trade show portion is a way to bring a glimpse of the "real world" of the profession directly into the design school. The trade show involves several dozen product exhibits, along with a few design firms. It takes place in a large space, usually the ballroom in the student union. Every exhibitor has a table, and some participants bring their portable exhibit hardware. Although a far outcry from high-tech national exhibitions, the trade show has enough "oomph" to endow the lecture series with a sense of prominence and importance. Because the show requires a great deal of resources, it is not organized yearly; however, it is mentionable since it brings synergy to the lecture and other event activities.

Students love the product exhibition for a number of reasons. For many of them, it illustrates one viable professional career track – that of the product or furniture sales associate. For others, it is an opportunity to see new products, to touch and feel them, and to obtain more information about their design applications. It is important for them to obtain experience in searching for new products, interacting with salespeople, and obtaining information, advice, and tips about applications. In this way, they get a glimpse at the real process of product inquiry and specification that takes place in design practice. It is also enables them to feel like a practicing designer, something that every student dreams about and looks forward to with eagerness. Some students enjoy the special treatment by the exhibitors, who try to attract their attention and spur interest in the products they sell. Still other students love the fair atmosphere and the vibrancy that comes with the large crowd. The young people are delighted by the honor that the expo came to them, rather then their having to travel dozens of miles to go to the expo. Students appreciate the work of the university and faculty to create this special experience.

The lecture and the trade show are related by their connection to design education and by their contributions to professional growth. However, the actual forces that bring together these two activity hubs stem from the social interaction that takes place at the lecture series. This socialization process is equally important for professional development. With the exception of the lecture time itself, the socialization process and development of connections take place everywhere constantly, concurrent with other activities. Students may be found socializing in the theater while waiting for the speaker to start his/her talk, after the lecture while they wait for the crowd to move out of the space, or in the line while they wait to talk personally to the speaker. The proximity of the seats in the theater brings young people together, encouraging them to introduce themselves, starting conversations or perhaps future relationships.

The groups in the theater lobby before the lecture, in the mid-lecture break, and after the lecture provide opportunities to meet people and to socialize. These are the times when young people can see other students from the program, be seen by their classmates, and be seen by passersby in the student union. This is a good opportunity for them to make contact with the guests, and in particular, with the local practitioners. Students get excited and become impatient to see friends and meet new people. They appear surprised at how many new faces they see as they begin to recognize how large their program actually is. This "strength in numbers" gives them confidence and reassurance. Students engage in cheerful chatting and laughter. They pass each other with salutations and friendly gestures. These future designers start moving around with confidence and a sense of pride and importance, like celebrities. They have reason to feel this way, as they sense the curious and envious stares of passing students from other programs. This imbues the event with a special air of triumph and celebration.

The crowning moment of socialization is the reception. For once, the students' enthusiasm is not so much about free food, although the food is both free and excellent. Rather, the excitement is about the high status and the importance of many of the guests – the university administrators, the speaker, and the leading officers of the local chapters of professional organizations. For students, it is uncommon to have opportunities to socialize with so many people of importance, both from the university and from the local professional community, in one place. For a moment, students feel that they have friends in high places, and that they are living life at the top. The reception reinforces the significance of the event, providing an air of future professional meetings, including the cocktail party or reception, although without the fancy drinks.

Many students look at the event not only as a special occasion and a thrill, but also as an opportunity to talk to potential employers, and maybe even to get an informal interview. Add in the trade show with practitioners and salespeople, and the reception begins to resemble a business cocktail party. Resumes are exchanged for business cards. Some savvy students prepare in advance for this oc-

casion. The conversations are about work opportunities, careers, and "real world" challenges. Students are thrilled to learn more about the professional life of the guests, such as daily activities and the scope of their work. Students also use this time to inquire about job opportunities, internships, co-ops, and other future possibilities.

DISCUSSION

Developing Design Culture

The design lecture series is a phenomenon that emerges at the intersection of several spheres of design education and design culture. For this reason, it acquires both complexity and polyfunctionality. In this way, it can be seen as a multifaceted and multilayered phenomenon in terms of activities, functions, and experiences that transcend the boundaries of the intra- and the extramural, the mundane classroom experience and the holiday, the celebration and the professional acculturation. The discussion highlights several major aspects and their constituent components.

Professional Celebration

The lecture series is a celebration. This is both evident from and perpetuated by the festive atmosphere in the anticipation of the reception and at the reception itself, from the vibrant fairground ambience of the trade expo to the exuberant social interaction in the lobby and in the corridors of the student union before and after the main lecture. The celebration is obvious from the dressy attire, the makeup, the cheerful faces, and the animated conversations. This atmosphere is also created by the catering and the prompt service that are can be seen everywhere at the event venues.

The celebratory element is all pervasive, penetrating deeply into the nature of every activity and experience and coloring each element of the event. The celebratory element is not only a part of the lecture series, but it is also a driving force and a mechanism for accomplishing a myriad of objectives and tasks with graciousness and enjoyment. Many of these benefits are unintended, but very useful and highly valued. The celebratory moment provides a synergistic capstone to almost all other aspects and activities. The festivities provide a medium for fusing all other features in order to attain numerous constructive outcomes regarding design culture and education in a relaxed manner. The celebration creates the magic of the event and the miracle of learning without effort. That is what Millennials (or GenY-ers) seem to dream about and enjoy with their full being (Espinoza, Ukleja, & Rusch, 2010).

The lecture series is both a professional celebration and a celebration of the profession. There is some difference in the way these vantage points are construed. The professional temperament of celebration comes from professional culture and traditions. It is the way the profession celebrates. This is an important moment in professional acculturation, because the professional character and personality are built up not only by professors, bosses, and motivational speakers, but also by professional retreats, respites, and celebrations. The lecture series illustrates this invisible process very well and provides ample reason for investing in such events.

The celebration of the profession is another key aspect of the design lecture series. It is about celebrating the social standing and impact of the profession, the untold stories and contributions of the thousands of men and women engaged in it, and of course of the students of that profession themselves. This celebration of the profession is a very modest way for students to be endowed with the social prestige of the profession and to get credit for becoming a part of it. It is a way for students to achieve self-actualization.

The lecture series is also a straightforward celebration of the design school, the department, and the program, in several respects. This event rides on the prestige of the profession, but it is also based on the actual achievements and contributions of these university units. While students enjoy the status and prominence they attain during the celebration, the administration and faculty are happy to display their units and to showcase to the campus and the outside world their accomplishments and successes. It is a demonstration of professional pride, regarding both the occupational and the educational aspects. It demonstrates pride in a job well done, in contribution to society, and in engagement in the education of the new generation. It is not accidental that the event is generously sponsored and well attended by high-ranking administrators. This celebration of the school's achievements provides a tribute to the effort and expertise of faculty and students in service to the local community and design practitioners.

At the individual level, the lecture series is a display of personal pride: pride with the professional affiliation, with the program, and most of all, with one's personal achievements. I see the personal reasons for students to celebrate and to enjoy the day, and I see the different ways in which they do so. This is the way to celebrate successfully submitted projects, sleepless nights, and self-imposed restrictions in the name of achievement. This is the way students treat themselves for all the sacrifices they have made during the semester. At such times, students feel the halo of their martyrdom and have a sense that everybody around them sees it as well. They then feel rewarded for their dedication and for the energy and time they have devoted to learning their profession.

Professional Socialization and Acculturation

Celebration is an overarching experience during the lecture series and permeates all activities. It provides a framework and background for professional socialization and acculturation. Celebration also melds all of the activities into a coherent event and in this way further reinforces and enhances the effectiveness of socialization and acculturation. The acculturation takes place in the process of social interaction and in building professional community. On the other hand, professional networks constitute a component of design culture and are an important mechanism for acculturation.

Because the major activities that take place at that event stimulate students to familiarize themselves with and to adopt professional values and patterns of behavior, the lecture series is important for developing design culture. By observing the behavior of practitioners attending the lecture, students are introduced to the idea of learning outside of class, learning at public lectures, and going to lectures long after graduation. In conversations with alumni and other practitioners, students learn about the realities of the world of design—about hard work, long hours at the office, compressed due dates, project schedule discipline, and many other issues and problems of professional life. Students perceive and trust practitioners as role models, and they emulate their behavior, views, and values. This approach promulgates smooth and effortless professional acculturation. Such learning about the real world of practice has important implications for increasing the work ethic and motivation for learning at school. During this acculturation process, students build a foundation for developing professional ethics and values, and for networking, bonding, and developing camaraderie.

The lecture series also brings with it an infrastructure for building a professional community. Students learn how to interact with unfamiliar colleagues—with people that they may not have seen up to that moment, but that they need to approach to establish a relationship. It helps develop skills for conducting a professional conversation, obtaining information, creating a good impression, and making friends. Students also learn how to network in the presence of large groups of people. In the process of the events, celebrations, and interactions, students start developing a sense of belonging. In this way, they start feeling the emergence of community. They feel budding bonds of camaraderie. This is an exceptional experience with important educational and professional implications.

The Lecture Series, Design Culture, and Their Effect on the Educational Process

The Lecture Series as a Lifelong Education

The lecture series goes beyond and yet draws together the boundaries of intra- and extracurricular learning by illustrating a model of lifelong professional development and learning. This is not new to the design profession, which contends with constant technological innovations, stylistic developments, and evolving user culture. The lecture itself introduces new and unpublished ideas and visions. The concurrent events, such as the trade show and meetings with practitioners, foster new experiences and cultivate new ways of learning. Students develop personal methods for obtaining knowledge outside the classroom, on their own, and "on the go."

In many ways, the event emulates the ways practitioners learn and update their knowledge. The continuing education unit (CEU) system of professional development is a routine in most associations across design specialties. However, the university sponsorship of the event introduces new elements and specifics pertinent only to academic institutions. This hybrid nature provides a mechanism for transition and for bridging the two worlds.

The Lecture Series and Professional Growth

The design lecture series has several major implications for student growth, for the development of design culture, and for the overall quality of design education. As a major event of this type, the series becomes an important landmark in the professional development of students. In a single day, students grow professionally by years. They have learned, seen, and experienced an immense amount. They have met many real practitioners, have connected with them, and have started professional networking. Students also appreciate that administrators from all levels have honored the occasion and paid attention to their development.

As a result of their participation in the event's settings and activities, students feel appreciated, celebrated, and important. This leads to increasing student confidence, self-esteem, and maturity. Students develop a new perspective on their program, their studies, and their future. They start seeing themselves within the context of the professional community—of future professional life and careers. This in turn positively influences student motivation and morale. In the long run, these changes will translate into more diligent study, more attention to studio projects, better discipline, and better performance as a whole.

Design Culture and Education

My inquiry at one of the research sites in the last ten years indicates that the lecture series have produced tangible results in respect to building stronger interest in the pro-

fession and in developing design culture. Although it is important to keep in mind that the purpose of Grounded Theory methodology is not meant to account for causal relationships, and taking into consideration that there are might be other influences and factors, the painstaking but steady growth of the students at that research site is obvious. Their faculty has noticed this as well. Alumni also mention that the lecture series has made them feel different—more confident and inspired to work.

Culture is more than knowledge and education. Building new culture is impossible without fostering new world views and new values in the process of doing, discussing, and experiencing. The design lecture series provides the arena for juxtaposing different cultures, including the cultures of students, faculty, practitioners, and outstanding professionals. By participating directly in lectures, discussions, observations, informal talks, social interactions, and many other activities, students not only learn, but also analyze, compare, relate to role models, and make decisions regarding which way to go in their careers and which ideas and values to accept. The active nature of professional acculturation during the lecture series events is fertile ground for nurturing professional world views and values, as well as understanding about design, design practice, and the process of study.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

I hope that this study will contribute to design education by providing an understanding of the value of the lecture series for developing design culture, suggesting some best practices in conducting the lecture series, and encouraging design administrators and faculty to support the lecture series as a vehicle for delivering high quality design education. The study offers insights to educators who might wish to explore possibilities for employing similar events for increasing the quality of education in their programs; an event of this scope may be incorporated as an educational tool in many other professional areas. There are already precedents from other fields, for instance Human-Computer Interaction (HCI), where educators are studying architectural design culture with the purpose of adopting some of its most productive features to their area of teaching. I have grounds to believe that the introduction of events like the design lecture series in other programs will have a positive impact on creating professional culture and identity, and also on boosting student self-esteem and motivation to study.

This study provides a stepping-stone for other researchers who wish to work on this topic. It delineates an area of investigation that is important and beneficial for design education, particularly in the area of interior and architectural design. Considering that this is only a beginning,

there are untold opportunities ahead. Other researchers can develop the work begun in this project and take it in a number of directions. Additional studies can follow with larger samples or different populations in order to widen the area of transferability of the findings. Researchers can also explore in more detail particular activities that compose the lecture series, new points of view and new aspects, as well as their implications for design acculturation and enhancing the quality of education.

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