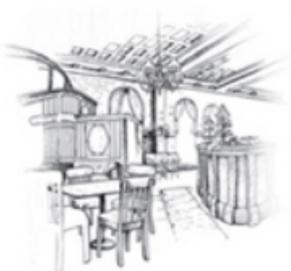


Design Thinking *for* Interiors



INQUIRY + EXPERIENCE + IMPACT

Joy Dohr

Margaret Portillo

Design Thinking *for* Interiors

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Inquiry + Experience + Impact

Joy H. Dohr and Margaret Portillo



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Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey.

Published simultaneously in Canada.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data:

Dohr, Joy Hook.

Design thinking for interiors : inquiry, experience, impact / Joy Dohr and Margaret Portillo.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-470-56901-6 (cloth); ISBN 978-1-118-02877-3 (ebk); ISBN 978-1-118-02878-0 (ebk); ISBN 978-1-118-03051-6 (ebk); ISBN 978-1-118-03052-3 (ebk); ISBN 978-1-118-03053-0 (ebk)

1. Interior decoration—Practice. I. Portillo, Margaret, 1962- II. Title.

NK2116.D55 2011

747—dc22

2010047230

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Preface

Design thinking for interiors shares practice processes, design development, and experience in interiors. It's the journey in living design. In today's world, design thinking has a global or holistic connotation. Designers work in an environment that addresses large and complex issues and work in collaborative settings. Such an expansive context demands interplay of critical and creative thinking, entailing inquiry with consequential interpretation. Depth in design aligns substantive ideas and know-how with socially pertinent development and ultimately environments meaningful to individuals. In this milieu, designers ask, "What is best in design?" "What is memorable?" They want to articulate how design matters and how it is experienced. Additionally, we see a need to delve more deeply into the mind of the designer to uncover strategic thinking and imaginative solutions necessary for the world in which we live.

Narrative inquiry offers a method to tap this reality and reveals markers of what is memorable to the journey and interior experience. As authors, we discuss six impact markers through true accounts of designers, clients, users, and projects that strengthen and deepen conventional expectations of design excellence. We have identified these markers as: *process of engagement*, *contextual civility*, *empathy*, *place identity*, *innovation*, and *maturation*. Exploring each marker, in turn, provides the content for six of the chapters.

This book explores design as experience and process. Progressive ideas, revealed through narratives, bring into sharp relief the complex nature of design work as a whole. All address realities of a progressive professional practice and offer definitive points for teaching and learning. New expanded services may come to mind as well. It shows research-based design and narrative design inquiry in action.

OUR JOURNEY IN ARRIVING HERE . . .

In many experiences of life, individuals find themselves at threshold moments—a place in time where someone or something will either move forward, stay in place, or retreat. These often are the moments vividly remembered from the broad strokes to fine details. We, the authors, share a time that was a threshold to our writing this book and tributes our collaborators.

Late in the last decade, six members of the FIDER Research Councilⁱ were at a threshold point. The FIDER leadership had challenged the council to propose a study to gauge the pulse of the profession in ways that would hold meaning for the field and ultimately could help direct education. The council took this challenge very seriously. The group spent weeks reading and considering ways to study interior design holistically with a vitality fitting the dynamic nature of the field. The Chair of the council, faculty members, a practitioner and principal of an international architecture and design firm, and an associate dean and FIDER board member traveled from different parts of the country to gather in Lexington, Kentucky, to face the task at hand.ⁱⁱ All six were recognized in the field for their leadership in research and scholarship, having presented and written about key issues in field. All were committed to closing alleged gaps between education and practice, particularly as they relate to future interior design accreditation standards for higher education.

Others in interior design had been conscious of a gap and the need to bring industry, practice, and education into better alignment since the 1970sⁱⁱⁱ This was a fact true for other professional fields such as education, medicine, engineering, and business as well.

With this overarching situation in mind, the six asked:

How can our research contributions build on findings of the Future of Interior Design^{iv} (a study previously completed for FIDER) and explore trends identified such as:

- New ways of networking and collaborating in education and practice
- Custom design
- Global knowledge
- Ecological concerns
- Innovation and creativity
- Technology

-
- i. FIDER is the acronym for the Foundation for Interior Design Education Research. It was the former name of the current Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA). It is a regulatory nonprofit agency that sets standards for higher education in the field.
 - ii. Council members: Ann Black, Christopher Budd, Sheila Danko, Joan McLain-Kark; Chair: Margaret Portillo, and FIDER board liaison Joy Dohr.
 - iii. Articles on accreditation, evaluation, NCIDQ, as well as articles by D. Fowles, A. Carll-White, A. Dickson, the Polsky Forum, D. Guerin, J. Thompson, B. Harwood, M.J. Hasell, P. Eshelman, and other scholar/educators document the interest.
 - iv. Mary Joyce Hasell and Suzanne Scott, *The Future Is Now: FIDER Futures Report*; also “Interior Design Visionaries’ Exploration of Emerging Trends.”

How might these findings be further explored in a specific context and mined for detailed information?

In what way will continued exploration of trends inform accreditation standards and advance education?

Thus, the starting point for a new study was guided by earlier findings on trends in the field's future as authored by Dr. Mary Joyce Hasell and Dr. Suzanne Scott. Their purpose for doing the Future's study initially and our purpose for the subsequent work were to anticipate and inform the educational milieu for the future of the field. The Research Council of six also brought understanding of the complexity of interior design and complicating factors in studying it. They identified objectives to deepen knowledge about given trends and to provide clear, vivid understandings of a trend as acted upon and engaged in education and practice. They wanted constituents to universally know innovation or technology or collaboration in action and through a workplace project and its design.

In preparation, conference calls commenced and meetings were held at FIDER headquarters and member's offices. After posing more questions, conversing, and sharing articles and readings, we began to focus on the topic. One paper, in particular, from the *Harvard Business Review*, on the use of stories to capture corporate vision resonated strongly with the group, who after some deliberation committed to using a narrative inquiry approach to explore leading practices in workplace design. Thus, was born the study "Strategic Stories."

The gathering in Lexington was a professional workshop, arranged by the Chair, and included an outside expert. The invited expert was experienced in narrative inquiry, having completed several major studies using this approach and having published a book on this topic as well.

The preparation and training session ensured consistency as council members selected cases of excellence to study, gathered data, and then reassembled to analyze their work eight months later. Given the expertise on the council, a decision was made to focus the study on three trends from the Futures study: innovation and creativity in the field, design leadership, and technology. They conceived the narrative approach contributed to understanding the trend of new ways of networking and collaborating given holistic experiences of practitioners and educators and cooperative internships in education as well.

To examine these issues, the narrative approach appeared promising to all as a framework for inquiry and a method of analysis. After his introduction to narrative methods while on the council, the practitioner began incorporating narratives into the mixed method approach he was using in several client projects and found the approach particularly effective for disclosing client/user values and tensions, augmenting quantitative information normally gathered by designers during programming. Equally, all six became familiar with the growing literature on narratives from other professions, such as medicine and law. In addition, they examined models of narrative inquiry that had been accepted and used in the arts and humanities and in the social sciences.

They had also used multiple information-gathering techniques to uncover general findings in design studies or in programming, while also being sensitive

to the voices of clients, users, and place. They brought experience in research and research-based practice to the table. All saw a real potential in tapping into strategic thinking through this method. Designers must analyze information as they bring disparate elements together in a new physical structure and form. A seamless fit appeared between the content of interior design and a process of inquiry.

Studies were completed and a special issue on narrative inquiry in 2000 appeared in the *Journal of Interior Design*. The issue shared papers on design leadership, technology, and innovation from Strategic Stories, as well as focus reports on narrative applications in practice and co-op experiences.

Over time, the initial effort of the council did indeed prove to be the threshold for moving forward. It propelled the group and other interested practitioners and faculty to new studies, to new work with graduate students, to new workshops and ways of teaching interior design studios and survey classes, to new features in marketing and predesign research with clients, and ultimately to uncovering deeper meanings of interior design.

Throughout the book, subject matter of design thinking, inquiry, and experience in interiors interconnect, as they do in our Journey Story. Any reader may enter the story: the possibilities appear boundless. With the fusion of design thinking, inquiry, and experience comes new themes of understanding. Specific to this writing are the understandings about key characteristics leading to memorable design experiences that we call markers of impact.

Those markers and themes crossing the narratives shared in this book, in turn, are examined collectively in the epilogue to explore additional design topics related to thinking and experience. The last chapter leaves the reader with a protocol for applying narratives in research, education, and practice.

Objectives for the book intend:

- To add insight and clarity to design thinking in interiors, clarifying global views, creativity and innovation, and community building and service among other standards that advance the field
- To add insight and clarity to understand the experience of design from the stance of different stakeholders, including clients, end users, designers, students, and the public, and to even give voice to place and setting itself
- To add insight and clarity to see the potential of narrative through our framework for design engagement that can guide design thinking and problem solving

The book's content reflects the dynamic and multidimensional factors of design and interiors over time. Stories disclose discoveries about interior spaces that people seek out, make, live and work in, and love. Some stories feature the designer's voice in shaping the interior; other stories feature clients' or users' experience with interiors, while yet other stories feature the place itself or those whose voice sometimes goes unheard. All stories are interpreted visually through the work of five different design illustrators, who skillfully capture, through their own unique styles, the identity and emotionality of designed place. Equally, the narrative lessons draw from a wide range of literature and theory in the field. Some of the scholarship cited are classic readings well known and used the past four decades; other recent narratives from research studies are being published the first time in this book.

The combination of unique and valid perspectives captures values and larger ideas behind the nature of design processes, place, and experience. They make us think anew. . . .

Acknowledgments

*To a person who sees a mountain and climbs it;
To those persons who see a mountain and create a path for others
to climb;
To those persons preparing to climb the mountain;
All love the mountain.*

—jhd

I extend my deepest appreciation to colleagues in Design Studies and related departments at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, as well as many friends and associates in our international design community. They questioned. They listened. They inspired. They reviewed ideas and offered suggestions that I took to heart. Collectively, they contributed to shaping ***Design Thinking For Interiors: Inquiry + Experience + Impact***. These individuals represent a core surrounded by rings of wonderful graduate students, inspiring undergraduate students, and practitioners and industry leaders who assisted over the years.

Specifically I acknowledge and thank my co-author, Margaret Portillo. We've worked together for two decades and with compatibility that makes each endeavor a beautiful experience. I thank four members of the Strategic Stories project, Sheila Danko, Christopher Budd, Ann Black, and Joan McClain-Kark, who gave energy and commitment to narrative inquiry even before the text took shape. Equally, I so appreciate the authors and featured clients, users and designers of the book's stories whose names follow in the List of Narratives. Their voices and their design experiences are invaluable. These individuals permitted us to speak and to question in ways that hopefully the reader will find as beneficial. The illustrators, Brooke Godfrey, Jihyun Song, Siriporn Kobnithikulwong, Candy Carmel-Gilfilen, and Anderson Illustration Associates put image to story that celebrates an integral power of inquiry and impact in the field. They share in our aspiration to give a vividness and clarity to what design thinking and experience offers society.

The suggestions from the initial reviewers of John Wiley & Sons gave necessary direction from the start. Thank you. During the journey of writing, readers and responders Cynthia Milota, Suzanne Scott, and those associated with the featured narratives confirmed and added. And I most heartily appreciate Debra McFarlane for her

arrival at my door and her expert assistance when technical details of a manuscript were before me.

I am grateful for the guidance and interests of Editor Paul Drougas and Senior Production Editor Nancy Cintron of John Wiley & Sons and to Production Manager Kerstin Nasdeo and team. These individuals gave word and visual image another look with fresh sets of eyes and expectations; the matters of publication are well placed in their hands. It has been my privilege to work with them.

Lastly, but always first, is Peter, who not only tested my clarity of voice, but gave daily support at all costs to complete the work. And with Peter come Deborah and Paul, Julie and Mark, Ray and Amy, plus their shiny young ones who really make my day and keep me in tune with the importance of play.

This book, in my reality, is a model of life's bounty and grace.

—JHD

Working on this manuscript with Joy Dohr represents a culmination of years of collaboration—mentor, colleague, treasured friend—what a privilege it is to have you in my life. I second Joy in my appreciation of Paul Drougas, Nancy Cintron, and the entire Wiley team. Throughout this book journey, my husband, Norman, centered me with a sense of calm and perspective. He really knows how to live life right as do my lively children, Maxim and Ellie, and my ever supportive parents, Arnold and Shirley Peterson. Other colleagues and friends contributed to the foundation of this book by introducing me to narrative inquiry: Joan Mazur, by recognizing the potential of narratives in the field of interior design; Kayem Dunn, by advancing the discipline with her leadership; Sheila Danko, a colleague and friend whose thinking and work in narratives of social entrepreneurship inspires all. I also recognize the many voices of thoughtful and thought-provoking individuals who share their stories and experiences in this book, those known from birth, Amy Milani, to more recent acquaintances: students, graduates, trusted colleagues, wise practitioners, and insightful reviewers. To the artists and designers whose drawings and graphics brought the narratives of the book to life: I thank you. And to all those who appreciate, study, and practice around the world . . . this is your story too.

—MBP

List of Narratives

Title: Matthew's Restaurant

By Margaret Portillo featuring Larry Wilson

Situation/setting: Design team and client design process in Jacksonville, Florida

Who is telling story: Design practitioner and client voices

Type of project: Hospitality

Content focus: Design process, client-designer relations, conflict resolution, artwork, and place identity

Title: Charles' Story

By J. H. Dohr with Charles Gandy

Situation/setting: Continuing Education Workshop in Atlanta, Georgia

Who is telling story: Design practitioner

Type of project: Client retreat near Seattle, Washington

Content focus: Design process, collaboration and innovation, fabrication of materials, and application

Title: No Room for Auditors

By Jacquelyn Purintun

Situation/setting: Mobile worker office experience in the Midwest

Who is telling story: Accounting auditor

Type of project: Workplace—master's thesis

Content focus: hoteling, technology, sense of place, mobile workers, physical and social attributes of place

Title: Orchestrating Change

By Laura Busse

Situation/setting: Company headquarters in Lexington, Kentucky

Who is telling story: Designer, client, and employees

Type of project: Workplace—master's thesis

Content focus: Client-designer relations, color decision making, social attributes

Title: Seeing the Future

By J. H. Dohr featuring David Csont and Anderson Illustration Associates

Situation/setting: Campus sports facility in Madison, Wisconsin

Who is telling story: Environmental design illustrator
Type of project: Design-build project; Illustrations per contract with client, Office of Planning and Construction of the university
Content focus: Visually capturing design decision-making process involving a multidisciplinary team; envisioning facility using illustration as story

Title: Habitually Fresh

By Margaret Portillo from Strategic Stories Research
Reprinted with permission of the *Journal of Interior Design*, Wiley-Blackwell
Situation/setting: Eva Maddox Associates Office and DuPont Antron Showroom in Chicago, Illinois
Who is telling story: Eileen Jones, principal and clients
Type of project: NeoCon Showroom/Educational Center
Content focus: Design process, creative fluency, strategic thinking, concept focus, client values

Title: Sometimes Designers Fail

By: Anonymous student featured in a focus report by Ann Black
Reprinted with permission of the *Journal of Interior Design*, Wiley-Blackwell
Situation/Setting: Design Firm Office in San Francisco, California
Who is telling story: Design intern
Type of project: Design proposal to secure contract
Content focus: Design process; teamwork, conflict, client-design firm relations

Title: Engaging Nontraditional Stakeholders

By J. H. Dohr featuring Karen Dettinger and design professor (pseudonym)
Situation/setting: Predesign process for Engineering College Building
Who is telling story: Engineering researcher and assistant to the dean and a design professor
Type of project: User program for campus learning environments
Content focus: Teamwork; innovation in planning and programming; engagement of nontraditional audience—future learners; research and building relations