The Embarrassment Over Decoration. Arguing Against Title Change – The Case of 'Interior Design' : 'Interior Architecture'

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Abstract—This paper argues against the second course of title change for interior design (from 'interior design' to 'interior architecture'). Heuristic reasoning based on design theory argues that interior design is an architectural discipline. Interior design experiences professional embarrassment (based on its marginalisation within the architectural profession) over the decorative aspects of its ontology, resulting in a situation where the discipline attempts title change to differentiate itself from a 'less professional' occupation (i.e. interior decoration) to assert its legitimacy. Title change may lead to artificial differentiations between 'interior design' and 'interior architecture' which will eliminate decoration from the discipline's repertoire, leaving it impoverished. If interior design is defined broadly, differentiation between interior design and interior architecture will be redundant.

Keywords: architectural design; design theory; distributed design; professionalisation; interior design

1. INTRODUCTION

To a large extent, interior design tries to assert its legitimacy by making the case that it is equal to, or similar to, architecture (Havenhand, 2004). These efforts inadvertently support the hegemony that placed it in a supplemental position in the first place. The most recent manifestation of this phenomenon is the course of title change to rename the discipline 'interior architecture'; this paper aims to argue for the retention of the existing title ('interior design').

The research contained in this paper can best be described as heuristic reasoning. It is comprised of a literature study to identify relevant architectural and interior design theories to support the argument.

To form the argument the paper will give an overview of current professionalisation theories and will consider critical commentary on the process of professionalisation. Following this it will establish an ontology for interior design by stating that it is an architectural discipline. The professional status of the disciplines ('architecture' and 'interior design') will be evaluated and it is argued that since the disciplines share knowledge areas, neither discipline is able to fully professionalise.

It will be illustrated that interior design's efforts to assert its legitimacy leads to professional embarrassment, and that the discipline subsequently tries to minimise associations between interior design and decoration. In this context the discipline's desire to undergo title change becomes intelligible.

Finally, the paper will argue against title change and conclude that 'interior design' is the title that best describes the process ('design') and products ('interior space') of the discipline.

2. PROFESSIONALISATION THEORY

In its narrowest meaning, Elliot Freidson (1986) defines a 'profession' as an occupation that places importance on the "special nature and source of knowledge or skill involved in specialized work, locating it in abstract concepts most often taught today in universities" (p. 24). Formal higher education distinguishes between the professions and other occupations; it distinguishes between both the nature of their training and the skills involved (Freidson, 1986). The formal knowledge of a profession exceeds the training that is required for its day to day occupational practice to include tacit knowledge that cannot be applied directly: "a profession is a learned (i.e. scholarly) activity, and thus involves formal training, but with a broad intellectual context" (Bell in Freidson, 1986, p.13).

In an earlier article Harold L. Wilenzky (1964) states that the traditional model of professionalism places emphasis on autonomous expertise. He expands the definition of a profession by stating that, in order for an occupation to establish professional authority, it must find a technical basis, assert exclusive jurisdiction, link skill and jurisdiction to standards of training, and it should convince the public that its services are uniquely trustworthy; this would establish the profession as a carrier and agent of knowledge. In addition to higher education, professions are those occupations which are organised into institutions that control the conduct and commitment of its members, implying a form of social control over professional behaviour (Freidson, 1986). In discussing the professionalism of interior design Caren S. Martin (2008) states that "[o]ne characteristic of a profession is the regulation of its practice" (p. 5). Wilenzky (1964) offers the following synopsis of the process of professionalisation:

> In sum, there is a typical process by which the established professions have arrived:

men begin doing the work full time and stake out a jurisdiction; the early masters of the technique or adherents of the movement become concerned about standards of training and practice and set up a training school, which, if not lodged in universities at the outset, makes academic connection within two or three decades; the teachers and activists then achieve success in promoting more effective organization, first local, then national – through either the transformation of an existing occupational association or the creation of a new one. Toward the end, legal protection of the monopoly of skill appears; at the end, a formal code of ethics is adopted. (p. 145-146)

After World War II the theory of professions developed out of an effort to provide a coherent definition for professions where expertise was the central construct (Freidson, 1986). In the academic treatment of professions the aspect of power has been an important consideration from the 1960's onwards. Writers emphasised that monopolistic professional institutions treated knowledge, skill and ethics as an ideology to preserve the status and privileges of the professions (Freidson, 1986). Professions are occupations which have managed to establish and maintain monopolies for expert services in the labour market; by introducing service monopolies they strengthen occupational hierarchies and exacerbate socioeconomic inequities (Sciulli, 2005). Professions imply "the fact that bodies of formal knowledge, or disciplines, are differentiated into specialized occupations" (Freidson, 1986, p. 20). As occupations define and control their core areas of autonomous expertise, specialisation within and between disciplines emerges. Wilenzky (1986) offers the following:

> It is in the further self-conscious definition of the core tasks that a pecking order of delegation occurs. The doctor allocates much of his job to less-trained nurses and laboratory and X-ray technicians; the nurses, as they seek to professionalize, allocate much of their less attractive work to practical nurses, aides, and nurse assistants; and these, in turn, allocate some of their chores to ward helpers. A similar tendency exists among all professional groups in short supply – dentists, teachers, engineers, scientists, and social workers, all of whom are redefining their functions upward and at the same time are sloughing off their dirty work, that is, their less-technical or less rewarding tasks. (p. 144)

This phenomenon establishes the formation of hierarchies between occupations, especially as downward delegation occurs. Specialisation also introduces competition between occupations, since their core expertise areas are no longer autonomous, and competition emerges with outsiders who do similar work. The autonomy and control of the power of a profession is threatened by knowledge bases which endanger its exclusive jurisdiction (Wilenzky, 1964).

Wilenzky identifies title change as a typical step in the professionalisation process. Title change coincides with the establishment of autonomous expertise and downward delegation. When the name of an occupation is changed, it may coincide with the formation of a professional association. Title change is linked to prescribed training becoming a prerequisite to perform work in the occupation. "The change in label may function to reduce identification with the previous, less-professional occupation" (Wilensky, 1964, p. 144).

To protect the jurisdiction of a profession, formal legal protection might be sought. Professional recognition for an occupation would provide political legitimacy to the effort to gain protection from competition. State sanctioned protection may take one of two forms: where the area of competence is not clearly exclusive, legal protection of the title will be sought; where the area of competence is clear, the practice of the profession will be protected to the extent that the performance of the profession's work by an outsider may be considered criminal (Wilenzky, 1964). Title and practice acts establish professional standards while further acts of professionalisation include the accreditation of educational facilities and qualifying exams (Allderdice, 2002).

In summary, for an occupation to achieve full professionalisation it needs to acquire and control a discrete, autonomous field of knowledge which will enable it to eliminate competition for its services. In addition, professions seek legal protection of their titles and practices. Any occupation whose body of knowledge overlaps that of another profession, or that has similar titles or practices, will be a threat to the identity and monopoly of that profession.

3. INTERIOR DESIGN AS AN ARCHITECTURAL DISCIPLINE

This section will indicate that the architectural profession has not yet achieved full professionalisation. In contrast to architecture, the careers in the 'learned professions' (Medicine, Law and the Church) were established in the middle ages and access to them was restricted to persons who had attended a university, who had followed a course in the humanities and were accepted as scholars (Hudson, 1977). To achieve full professionalisation a profession must restrict access to both its title and its practice.

Dentistry, architecture and engineering were professionalised in the early 1900's (Wilenzky, 1964). In the United States architecture only developed features of a fully fledged profession in

the nineteenth century (Cuff, 1991). As long as architecture as a profession is indeterminate, it is impossible to establish a monopoly of services or an autonomous area of expertise. This is one of the factors contributing to architecture's inability to protect its practice.

> Another component of architecture's high indeterminacy is the profession's unusual tendency to slough off constitutive skill areas, which subsequently become professions in their own right – for example, civil engineering, structural engineering, interior design, site planning, and urban design. These related professions then compete with architecture. (Rittel in Cuff, 1991, p. 39).

The accreditation process for schools of architecture and the licensing process for their graduates tend to stress breadth within the body of knowledge of architecture (Burnham, 1988). The market for traditional architectural work becomes more competitive, which leads to a flourishing of jobs on the profession's margins and among other architecturally informed occupations (Cuff, 1996). These in turn are in competition with architecture.

Interior design may be considered as such an occupation. Based on the definition by the International Federation of Interior Architects/Designers (IFI) (2006), the term interior design describes the process whereby a person solves problems pertaining to the function and quality of the interior environment, performs services relative to interior spaces and prepares drawings and documents relative to the design of interior space. For the purposes of this paper the term is used in an inclusive manner to incorporate all work preoccupied with the design of interior space: an entire building designed to contain integrated interiors, the completion of space in existing architecture, or the adaptive re-use of existing buildings (including additions) with a focus on interior space (Kurtich and Eakin, 1993). The term describes both the product ('interior space') and process ('design') of the discipline. Interior design is defined by Raymund Königk (2010) as:

> ... a space making discipline in the built environment. It is a method of cultural production and in their working methods interior designers compile drawings and construction documents. Interior design works in, or responds to, found space or existing built material; it can therefore be described as a discipline of alteration, adaptation, or adaptive re-use. This presents a temporal aspect to the discipline. Interior design is the design of interior space with a requirement for containment. Finally, the discipline's attentiveness to the client establishes the professional ground. (p. 59-60)

Interior design is ontologically defined as "a mode of cultural production which engages in the design of enclosed spaces in existing structures, with emphasis on the design of volume" (Königk, 2010, p. 60).

If a legalistic definition of architecture is considered ('architecture is the design of interventions in the environment for which documentation is produced') it becomes necessary to codify interior design precisely and discretely. Thus interior design can further be defined as the design of *enclosed* interventions in the *built*-environment. A definition of interior design would then read: "'Interior design' is the design of enclosed interventions in the built-environment for which documentation is produced". This definition diverges from the ontological definition stated above, since it can purely be used for purposes of legally distinguishing between the disciplines. The ontological definition allows for the complexity of the discipline's identity, its modes of production and its creative realm. If this were the case interior design would be an architectural discipline.

Architecture, as a profession, is unable to protect its practice. Interior design, in turn, threatens architecture's core expertise.

Professional knowledge is to some extent tacit, a fact that contributes to the established professions' 'aura of mystery' (Wilenzky, 1964). Tacit knowledge contributes to the achievement of exclusive jurisdiction, to building prestige and power; and since it is out of reach of the ordinary individual, it makes long training necessary and persuades the public of the mystery (and usefulness) of the profession (Wilenzky, 1964). Interior design has an understanding of architectural knowledge and can evaluate the architectural profession from the outside; as such it threatens architecture's autonomy.

In summary architecture has yet not reached full professionalisation since it is unable to protect both its title and its practice. It is an indeterminate profession which, as it specialises, creates architecturally informed disciplines which compete with it. The tacit knowledge contained in architecture is undermined and threatened by the knowledge base of interior design.

4. THE 'DANGEROUS MARGINS' BETWEEN ARCHITECTURE AND INTERIOR DESIGN

Mary Douglas (1966) underpins the dangers of ambiguous margins. All margins are dangerous: if they are moved the fundamental experience is altered. Both interior design and architecture can be considered idea structures which are vulnerable at their margins.[i] The boundaries or margins between the two disciplines overlap and are indistinct.

> But there are other dangers to be reckoned with, which persons may set off knowingly or unknowingly, which are not part of the psyche and which are not to be bought or learned by initiation and training. These are

pollution powers which inhere in the structure of ideas itself and which punish a symbolic breaking of that which should be joined or joining that which should be separate. (Douglas, 1966, p. 113)

Forms of defilement may contribute to the deterioration of the profession's discourse; these elements may then be delegated to protect the profession's core expertise areas.

To mitigate these effects the architectural profession may follow one of two strategies. Firstly, interior design may not be considered a separate discipline which is ignored in architectural discourse. Secondly, it may acknowledge interior design (or pertinent aspects of its ontology) but regard it as a source of defilement which diminishes the professional practice of architecture.

In the first instance interior design is not considered a separate discipline since the design of interior space falls within the scope of architectural work. It is documented that principals of architecture firms who offer interior design services state that, as licensed architects they are fully qualified to undertake interior design work (Gürel and Potthoff, 2006). This belief of architects "portray disciplinary norms that reprehend the education and practice of interior design as a specialized sphere … a discrete and different pedagogy and practice of interior design does not fit into a 'normalized' notion of architecture" (Gürel and Potthoff, 2006, p. 220). In this case interior space is considered to fall within the architect's realm.

John Kurtich and Garret Eakin (1993) stated that architectural curricula do not give adequate attention to the design of interior space, thus establishing the prevalent attitude that architecture is the essential profession and that interior design is secondary. Interior design as a discrete discipline is disregarded. Architecture becomes the normative discipline against which other disciplines are judged and categorised.

A more insidious form of discontent occurs when aspects of interior design's ontology are considered as a source of degradation for architecture. These are the 'polluting powers' which must be punished when things which should be joined are broken apart. In this case there are three aspects of discontent: firstly, the influence that the act of alteration has on architecture; secondly, the role of the image in both disciplines; and thirdly, scale (physical and temporal).

Fred Scott (2008) defines 'pure' architecture as the production of a new building on a cleared site. The purpose of pure architecture is to create buildings befitting the nascent principles of a particular time and place (Scott, 2008). Architectural imagination is an implicitly utopian practice (Coleman, 2005). "The architect's initial story of a building is a fictionalized account of some ought that enduring inhabitation alone can verify" (Coleman, 2005, p. 47). It is this notion which establishes architecture as the normative profession in the built environment.

In contrast, interior design is temporal and concerned with the experiential aspects of space. In the necessity to alter architecture, architecture's tragic failing is revealed: it is unable to establish utopia. This highlights two elements which contribute to interior design's perceived inferiority:

Firstly, interior design is dependent on pre-existing pieces of architecture for its existence, while architecture can exist without interior design, albeit only temporarily. Secondly, the existence of a discipline that is reliant on intervention illustrates the failure of architecture. Interior design is a necessary aspect to assure the 'enduring inhabitation' which will verify the architect's fictional account of utopia. The act of alteration causes architecture to experience grief and to perceive interior design as uncanny. [ii] This is the cause of a contentious relationship between two interrelated disciplines: while one is dependent on the other for its very existence, the other is in turn dependent on the first for its continued existence. Interior design intervention is required to keep a building in use, to prevent loss of occupation and eventual redundancy and demolition.

The image ('vision and touch') is a significant aspect of interior design's ontology. When image making is present in architectural practice it is considered to be something which reduces the integrity of the profession. In a criticism on the contemporary professional practice of architecture, Zaha Hadid (1993) offers the following:

> The new role of the architect is to comply with competitively asserted standards of efficiency, to cater to commercial clients, increasingly with the objective of representing corporate identity or else of satisfying the fluctuating standards of good taste. The profession is thus torn into two distinct aspects: on the one hand, architecture becomes a pure technique, as if it were a branch of engineering; on the other hand, it becomes image production, as if it were a branch of advertising. It is in the rise of this second role which is the half-conscious background to the recent flourishing of 'experimentalism' in architecture. (p. 27)

This statement is noteworthy when compared to Crysler's (2003) description of a new form of interdisciplinarity:

> Architectural practices are increasingly forming working relationships with advertising agencies, marketing consultants, and media strategies in a new form of 'professional interdisciplinarity' geared towards developing architecture as an

integrated part of product 'theming'. (p. 202)

Both authors consider the influence of corporate identity on architecture. They are specifically concerned with the influence of the image on architecture. Hadid is especially critical of this aspect since it leads to the deterioration of the architectural discourse. In her view image in architecture is a form of defilement which leads to the deterioration of discourse. This replicates the idea that architecture is about ideas; in contrast, interior design is about 'vision and touch' (image) (Tate and Smith, 1986).

Architecture stigmatises interior design as a discipline that is concerned with the cosmetics of interior space; in contrast, interior design feels that architecture cannot create interior space that is positively centred on human experience (Kurtich and Eakin, 1993). Kurtich and Eakin (1993) elaborate by stating that architects can plan buildings well, but they do not study and develop the interior spaces contained in those buildings. It is especially evident in architect's drawings which are devoid of furniture and finishes and indicate a lack of awareness of interior design.

The issue of scale is one of the most obvious points of differentiation between the design disciplines. The interior dimension is experienced more intimately than architecture, and this makes interior scale smaller than exterior scale (Malnar and Vodvarka, 1992). Interior design is the discipline which operates on a smaller physical scale than architecture. This opinion is shared by Milton Tan who differentiates between architecture and interior design on the basis of scale (2003 and 2006).

The temporal aspect of interior design's ontology introduces a shorter time scale as a second point of differentiation. In general interior design products are physically smaller and survive for a shorter period of time than pieces of architecture. The combined effects of a small-scale design project that survives for a short time is that the work is considered less important, less complex, easier to execute and therefore inferior to architecture.

Luis Diaz (2007) states that architecture has no 'objective logic'; to the layman architecture is indistinguishable from other methods of designing buildings (e.g. engineering). Architecture has a fragile 'monopoly of expertise', and architectural services are marketed by using the image of professional practice in the competitive arena of professional services (Crysler, 2003). Interior design, as a discipline, enters this competitive market, and its own strategies of legitimisation and professional practice undermine that of architecture. Thus interior design is in professional competition with architecture and will strive to limit essentialisms about its being that may be considered to be 'polluting powers' (i.e. its decorative aspects and perceived simplicity).

5. PROFESSIONAL EMBARRASSMENT

Embarrassment is an emotion which is suffered when an ontological crisis occurs, largely when one is being perceived for that which one is not, accompanied by the subsequent loss of social esteem.

'Downward' specialisation in the architectural profession sets up the emergence of a professional hierarchy. The hierarchical structure (decorators : designers : architects) is clear in this text from an architectural journal:

> If architects fear losing work to interior designers, then interior designers have their own nervous perch on the food chain: directly below them are the hordes of semi-professionals known as 'interior decorators'. (McKee, 2000, p. 68)

Interior design is embarrassed over its decorative aspects due to an ontological dilemma. The dilemma is based on the clear inclusion of decorative aspects in the interior design body of knowledge. Essentialist depictions of interior design tend to condense the practice of interior design to its decorative aspects.[iii] The response by interior design is embarrassment, since its technical aspects (especially those that pertain to 'health, safety and welfare') are undermined. As implied by McKee (above), the struggle for professionalism lies at the heart of the contention. Interior design is reluctant to be defined as interior decoration because it wants to highlight its corporate and commercial credentials, while interior decoration is associated with a domestic repertoire (Stone, 2007); this is not a reluctance to be associated with soft furnishings but with the nineteenth-century implication that decorators are suppliers of products to wealthy clients, i.e. as 'trade' or 'amateur' (Stone, 2007). Interior designers hold decoration, especially its depiction on lifestyle television, in low esteem:

> The general perception is that a decorator's work is based on artistic talents rather than the more respected rational decision making drawn from empirical knowledge. We suspect in this time when individuals are searching for greater meaning within the context of a life of material abundance, interior decoration (even interior design as a whole) is misunderstood as shallow materialism. (Anderson et al, 2007, p. xiii endnote)

Since decoration is considered to be an innate capacity based on 'taste and flair' it is assumed to lack a body of knowledge; it is not rational and cannot be learnt through long periods of study. Therefore the discipline of interior decoration cannot be considered a profession. With reference to Caren S, Martin and Denise Guerin's (2005) *The Interior Design Profession's Body of Knowledge*, and Scott's

(2008) *On Altering Architecture*, I will provide arguments that decoration is an essential part of interior design. To commence the discussion I include a definition of interior decoration:

> Interior decoration is the art of decorating interior spaces or rooms to impart a particular character that fits well with the existing architecture. Interior decoration is concerned with such issues as surface pattern, ornament, furniture, soft furnishings, lighting and materials. (Brooker and Stone, 2008, p. 126).

Martin and Guerin (2005) identify six knowledge areas in the interior design profession. These are listed as: human environment needs, interior construction codes and regulations, design, products and materials, professional practice, and communication. Although they do not identify 'decoration' as a knowledge area, the description of 'products and materials' is insightful:

> This category [products and materials] of knowledge areas is sometimes considered the heart of interior design practice as building products, materials and finishes, furnishings, fixtures, and equipment; and their attributes, properties, selection, specification, cost, application, installation, performance and maintenance are experienced on an intimate level by the inhabitants and owners of the interior space ... Aesthetics and meaning of place still contribute to decision making in terms of products and materials. (Martin and Guerin, 2005, p. 82)

Their use of the phrase 'heart of interior design' is noteworthy, especially since the knowledge area is described with words that are traditionally associated with decoration. Scott (2008) asserts that the "designer is more inclined than the architect to experiment with new materials" (p. 174). He also states that white (the absence of colour) signifies timelessness. Thus it becomes clear that interior design has an active association with colour. Interior decoration (especially as far as colour, surface treatment, furnishing and material choice is concerned) is an intrinsic aspect of interior design. To deny it would be to deny a portion of the discipline's being.

The links between culture and consumption must be borne in mind when decoration is placed in the realm of cultural production. This is necessary since interiors practice produces a large output which is devoted to conspicuous consumption (Hannay, 2007). This may be interpreted as shallow materialism (Anderson *et al*, 2007). Mary Douglas makes a case for consumption as cultural output; she specifically states that culture is the arbiter of taste (Douglas, 1996). Thus, if culture has an influence on the taste of consumers, it will directly influence their consumer behaviour and choices. Consumption is the arena in which culture is defined and deliberated (Douglas and Isherwood, 1979).

In this context the interior decorator must be reconsidered; and can be thought of as 'tastemaker'. Decorators are remunerated for their taste and are considered 'experts' of consumer products. The tastemaker is a cultural intermediary, a person who is able to communicate their opinions across a range of media and is who mediates between legitimate culture and mass production. Decoration is a way to transform cultural capital into affordable goods. In this way the designer becomes an intermediary with specialist knowledge, whose actions benefit 'ordinary people' (Phillips, 2005). It is important to place emphasis on decoration's role in cultural production.

> Instead of supposing that goods are primarily needed for subsistence plus competitive display, let us assume that they are needed for making visible and stable categories of culture. (Douglas and Isherwood, 1979, p. 38)

Interior design may be embarrassed by the depiction of interior decoration which minimises its professional ground. Its embarrassment lies at the centre of its differentiation from decoration in its attempts to professionalise. Despite this, decoration lies at 'the heart of interior design'. Furthermore, it plays a significant role in the production and communication of culture. When they decorate, interior designers act as cultural intermediaries who interpret and disseminate 'legitimate culture'. Decoration is not merely mimetic, pastiche, or the superficial application of style.

The effects of how interior design is depicted in popular television programmes are documented in a number of sources: Lisa K. Waxman and Stephanie Clemons (2007) state that the design-related reality show allows the audience to construct a reality which is not an accurate portrayal of the profession. C. Thomas Mitchell and Steven M. Rudner (2007) conclude from focus group research that television programmes labeled as 'interior design' are "glorified exercises in decorating" (p. 69); these programmes create an image of interior design as an amateur occupation which trivialises the profession. Havenhand (2004) declares that television shows "perpetuate the image of a feminized, self-expressive, decorative, and superficial kind of interior design" (p. 33). The sources cited portray a negative stance, or dismay, experienced by interior design regarding its television persona. The television interior designer is depicted as a person who, without explaining the means of cultural acquisition, has innate sensibility, good taste and congenital ability which enables the designer to create a fast and inexpensive 'look'. Interior design

is perceived as superficial and mimetic (Havenhand, 2004).

Interior designers resist this depiction since it weakens the discipline's claim of professionalism. The television interior designer is depicted as someone without formal design education: "It is not clear to the public how you can license interior designers, because how can you license artistic ability?" (Hughes in Bone, 1996, p. 93). Interior design cannot be regarded as professional since the public perceives it as otherwise (Bone, 1996).

Interior design responds by emphasising its 'health, safety and welfare' knowledge areas (Carpenter, 2007); it simultaneously de-emphasises its decorative aspects.

Although the IFI's definition (above) of interior design predates lifestyle television it is enlightening since it considers the decorative and aesthetic aspects as negligible, while placing emphasis on function, drawing practice, project management, building systems and regulations.

The embarrassment experienced by interior design is understandable. Although the decoration of domestic space is of great value, it only reflects a limited segment of the practice of interior design Interior design employs an expanded and unique knowledge and skill set to design a wide range of interior spaces (Martin, 2008).

The discipline of interior design experiences embarrassment when it is faced with the essentialist depiction of itself as decoration; there is a 'sense of disparity between what ought to be and what is there' (in Douglas' description of embarrassment (1996, p. 75)). This is an ontological response because the self-image of the discipline is incompatible with its public depiction. The embarrassment is seated in the underestimation of the interior by the architectural profession. Interior design tries to establish architectural legitimacy, and is embarrassed over its decorative aspects. To counter this occurrence the act of decoration should be defended as a valuable mode of cultural production.

6. TITLE CHANGE

It was indicated earlier that title change is a step in the professionalisation process to differentiate an occupation from an older, less professional occupation. The discipline currently called 'interior design' underwent two periods of title change: the first, after the Second World War, to differentiate itself from 'interior decoration'; and the second, which is occurring now, to 'interior architecture', initiated because the first course of title change was unsuccessful.

Interior design is the discipline that designs interior space, or the discipline that alters architecture. The discipline is described by a number of pseudonyms: 'interior design' (Pile, 1988), 'interior architecture' (Kurtich and Eakin, 1993), 'interventional design' (Scott, 2008) and 'space design' (Klingenberg, 2006), amongst others.

Interior design emerged as a discipline after the Second World War, as interior designers received formal (graduate) education and increasingly worked in the commercial sector. Designers in this discipline relied less on 'natural good taste' and more on formal education (Massey, 2001).

The title change, from 'interior decoration' to 'interior design', is a result of delegation and a process whereby graduate education became more important as practitioners accepted more commercial commissions. Interior design is differentiated from interior decoration because it has corporate and commercial credentials while the latter has a domestic repertoire (Stone, 2007). The period after the Second World War is characterised by delegation, differentiation and title change between the similar disciplines of interior design and interior decoration. It is understandable, in this context, that interior designers are reluctant to be essentialised as interior decorators.

Many occupations are unsuccessful in their attempts to achieve title change (Wilensky, 1964); this may explain a number of pseudonyms for a single discipline. To place these titles in chronological order will lead to oversimplification, but there seems to have been, especially in the Anglophone world, a flourishing of new titles since the 1990's. I prefer 'interior design' as title for the discipline. Not only is it the oldest of the terms, it is also the most universally used and it describes the product ('interior space') and process ('design') of the profession. 'Interior design' also denotes the first title change that the discipline experienced. To understand the phenomenon of title change in the discipline's professionalisation process I will spend some time on the other designations.

At the IFI Round Table Conference in 2006, Klingenberg (2006) referred to the discipline as 'space design'. She describes space design as a field of study with its roots in the Arts and Crafts tradition. Crafts like cabinet making, painted decoration and weaving have formed part of the design of interior space through the treatment of walls, ceilings, floors and objects. The term is not widely used and Klingenberg also refers to 'interior design' and 'interior architecture' intermittently. The term is extremely vague and may be used to describe any of the space making disciplines, regardless of practice or scale and will not be considered further.

Scott (2008) uses the term 'interventional design'. His book (*On Altering Architecture)* is a considerable contribution to the interior design corpus. In his acknowledgements and preface he refers to 'interior design' (p. xiii) and 'art school designers' (p. xv). Scott refers to the architect Carlo Scarpa, when he mentions interventional design. It is in the spirit of the book to differentiate between 'pure' architecture (a new building on a clear site) and the design of intervention. Interventional design may therefore include architecture and is insufficient to differentiate the disciplines under discussion. As with

Klingenberg's term the designation lacks wide support and it will not be considered further.

This leaves the title which claims the interior realm, 'interior architecture'. A literature study (Königk, 2010) revealed that the English term first emerged in 1993 in Kurtich and Eakin's book *Interior Architecture*, and indicates the start of a second course of title change.[iv]

This has a number of implications: firstly, it indicates that the first course of title change was unsuccessful; like 'morticians' and 'salvage consultants', interior designers failed to differentiate themselves from the 'less-professional occupation'. This state of affairs is clear when interior design is essentialised as interior decoration in the popular media. This in turn may lead to interior design's embarrassment over its decorative aspects.

Secondly, it may indicate that interior design is a marginal profession. As Wilensky (1964) states:

> ... marginal professions often adopt new titles, announce elaborate codes of ethics, or set up paper organizations on a national level long before an institutional and technical base has been formed. (p. 146)

Interior design is undervalued or marginalised within the architectural profession. A second round of title change may be immature if the previous attempt was unsuccessful because interior design's 'institutional and technical base' is still embryonic.

Thirdly, title change may introduce a sequence of delegation which will lead to a set of artificial differentiations between 'interior design' and 'interior architecture'. This would lead to further marginalisation when the range of titles that claim the interior realm is considered. A noteworthy sequence of title change comes to light (interior decoration – interior design – interior architecture), which corresponds to a previously noted hierarchy (decoration : design : architecture). In this situation the discipline would make itself guilty of that of which it accuses architecture: delegation, downward marginalisation and underestimation. To illustrate the point, the title ('interior architecture') must be considered.

In the article 'The Gaps Between Interior Design and Architecture', Henry Hildebrandt (2004) considers the differences between 'interior design' and 'interior architecture' (the article is therefore incorrectly named). According to Hildebrandt 'subtle conceptual constructs' serve as parameters to differentiate interior design and interior architecture:

> Interior architecture is never removed from the architectural condition ... An interior architecture manifests itself as the meaning embedded within the building inside as well as out, and as such must be housed within the practice of architecture and professional architectural services.

> In addition, an interior architectural product is placed within the business of architectural practice ... it involves the contractual agreement of design services encompassing interior elements equally with shell and site conditions associated in building design. (Hildebrandt, 2004)

The 'subtle conceptual constructs' to differentiate 'interior design' are "grounded in the condition of additive assemblies and separate contracted services" (Hildebrandt, 2004).

> [I]nterior design, both as a discipline and in its product, is (or can be) free of the weight of the architecture. Additive assemblies within the 'interior' may establish an independent language, often very different and removed from the architecture that houses it. (Hildebrandt, 2004)

In other words, the differences between 'interior architecture' and 'interior design' manifest mainly in the contractual agreement (a single contract encompassing building site and interior vs. distributed design with different contracts and a team of designers), and in the response to architecture (interior architecture encompasses and responds to the architectural envelope, while interior design does not); *id est*. 'interior architecture' is interior design that is designed by architects. To use the form of contractual agreement to differentiate between interior design and interior architecture is an artificial construct.

In 'Interior Architecture', Frazer Hay (2007) defines 'interior architecture' as a discipline which loosely began with the Arts and Crafts movement, where architects paid equal attention to the interior and exterior of a building. This displays similarities to Klingenberg's definition of 'space design'. 'Interior architecture' emerged over the last 30 years to fill the void between interior design and architecture (Hay, 2007). There exists, however, no 'void' between interior design and architecture. The existence of a lacuna between the knowledge areas of interior design and architecture would attest to the autonomous expertise of the disciplines and their subsequent ability to professionalise. It is the shared knowledge areas that contribute to the contention between the disciplines.

Hay (2007) continues to describe 'interior architecture' as an approach to design interventions in existing buildings. Similarly, Graeme Brooker and Sally Stone (2007) state that:

> [Interior architecture is] concerned with the remodelling of existing buildings ... It bridges the practices of interior design and architecture, often dealing with complex structural, environmental and servicing problems. (p. 126)

In contrast, 'interior design' describes:

> ... projects that require little or no structural changes to the existing building ... The original space is very much retained in its original structural state and the new interior inserted within it. (Brooker and Stone, 2007, p. 126).

This approach is similar to that of Hildebrandt, where 'interior design' is a separate entity 'inserted' into an architectural envelope, while 'interior architecture' responds to, and changes the architectural host. Defining interior design as an insertion or a purely decorative discipline is an essentialisation that only considers a partial ontology of interior design.

To place the differentiation in context, a wider definition of interior design should be considered: Interior design is the discipline that designs interior space, or the discipline that alters architecture. The term is used in an inclusive manner to incorporate all work preoccupied with the design of interior space: an entire building designed to contain integrated interiors, the completion of space in existing architecture or the adaptive re-use of existing buildings (including additions) with a focus on interior space (after Kurtich and Eakin, 1993).

This definition deals with both the insertion of interior design within an architectural envelope and the adaptation and change of existing architecture. According to this definition, differentiation between interior design and interior architecture is redundant. If the differentiation is omitted it will lead to no loss of significance.

This view is supported by a number of theorists. Anderson *et al* (2007) state:

> It seems to us that those who wish to define design that has continuity with, or responds to, the architectural context as interior architecture are missing the point ... Good interior design is contextually responsive. Interior design that is not contextual is not good design. (p. vii)

This is title change and an attempt to "correct the inherent perceived inferiority of interior design [to architecture]" (Havenhand, 2004, p. 35). She continues:

> But this method supports the system that created the problem, and does little to dislodge the connection of the interior with the supplemental. Renaming interior design interior architecture becomes a futile game of 'passing'. This strategy, like that of the early feminists, also assumes a kind of androgyny, and therefore the inherent link between the feminine and interior design remains unbroken and continues to be confined to its supplemental position. In

most cases, interior design seems neither to be aware of nor moving in a direction to correct this quandary. (p. 35-36)

To rename the practice and product of interior design as interior architecture relies on the essentialisation of architecture. Hildebrandt (2004) expresses it as such:

> Architecture as a discipline has always been engaged in the struggle to raise human and spiritual meaning to a higher purpose and a meaningful focus for at least three millenniums. An architectural structure is an expression of cultural principles and deliberate design choices based on current technology and understandings – its meaning. This is the essence of all architecture.

Furthermore, Havenhand is correct when she states that the title 'interior architecture' re-establishes interior design's supplemental position. Hildebrandt (2004) is guilty of this when he defines interior architecture: "Interior architecture is never removed from the architectural condition". In Suzie Attiwill's (2007) opinion 'interior design' "is understood without implicit reference to architecture" (p. 59). If interior design undergoes title change and is renamed 'interior architecture', it would no longer be able to exist as an independent discipline. It will always be dependent on an essentialist definition of 'what is significant' about architecture.

Furthermore title change will lead to delegation and downward specialisation. In this situation it may lead to 'interior architecture' rejecting decoration as a valuable mode of production. "Interior design involves a wide range of activities, including the much-maligned act of decoration" (Anderson *et al*, 2007, p. vii-viii); interior architecture does not.

Title change, delegation and differentiation would lead to the emergence of an impoverished discipline which has lost a valuable mode of cultural production. This would be a sad deficit for the discipline.

7. CONCLUSION

It is important to restate that the title 'interior design' describes the product ('interior space') and process ('design') of the discipline. Interior design is a space making discipline that responds to found space; the product must be contained in some way.

Attempts to change the title should be resisted. In lieu of title change, interior design practitioners should protect the existing title, while expanding the discipline's range of skills and body of knowledge, i.e. the discipline's 'institutional and technical base' must be expanded. This will create an active and growing profession. The current sequence of title change will in fact divide the discipline and contract its institutional base.

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ENDNOTES

i I refer implicitly to the process of 'abjection' as described by Julia Kristeva in *Powers of Horror* (1982). Abjection is the process whereby an object is expelled from a subject without attaining a separate 'Otherness'. Abjection specifically generates negative emotions of ambiguity. Interior design is a discipline that threatens and questions the identity and boundaries of the architectural profession (Königk, 2010. p. 10). Kristeva purposefully describes abjection in negative and even crude terms (e.g. 'banishment', 'convulsion', 'loathsome', 'loathing', 'repellent', 'defilement', 'pollution', 'repugnance', 'disgust', etc.). It is in this tradition (with Douglas) that I employ robust terms to describe the relationship between interior design and architecture.

ii I refer here to the cognitive dissonance which the subject (in this case 'architecture') experiences due to the paradox of being familiar and unfamiliar with the object (in this case 'interior design') at the same time.

iii In this instance interior design will experience the uncanny.

iv It is beyond the scope and objectives of this paper to consider the nomenclature globally, therefore it focused on the Anglosphere. The nomenclature becomes more complex when other language communities are considered. This is reflected in the International Federation of Interior Architects/Designers' name (where 'interior design' and 'interior architecture' are used as synonyms; in this case it does not indicate a round of title change). Let us considerer IFI's name as it appears in German (*Die Internationale Föderation der Innenarchitekten*), it is mutually intelligble with Germanic and Romance languages. For instance *innenarchitekt* (German) is mutually intelligible with *architecte d'intérieur* (French), *arquiteto de interiores* (Portuguese), *interieurarchitect* (Dutch), and *interiørarkitekt* (Norwegian). It is asymmetrically intelligible with English which delivers the name: *The International Federation of*

Interior Architects. This translation is asymmetrical, since at the founding of IFI in 1963 the interiors occupation was titled 'interior design' the newer title only emerged later. This is the origin of the synonymic name: *The International Federation of Interior Architects/Designers*. In this instance it is important to note that there is no distinction between the practice of 'interior design' and 'interior architecture'. The 'correct' translation of *innenarchitekt* (German) is *interior designer* (English) and *binne-ontwerper* (Afrikaans); terms which would be unintelligible to a foreign ear. Interestingly the Lusophone transformation of *design* is *desenhar*, which is the verb <to draw>; the process which we call '*design*' is called '*design*' in Portuguese, in this instance *interior designer* (English) could be translated as *designer de interiores* (Portuguese).

The title 'interior architect' enjoys legal recognition in Germany (The German titles for the architectural disciplines, used by the Federal Chamber of German Architects (*Bundesarchitektenkammer/BAK*) are *hochbauarchitektur, landschaftsarchitektur, innenarchitektur, and stadtplanung*) in this instance, 'interior architecture' is a sub-speciality of the architectural profession.), the Netherlands, Iceland, Spain, and Liechtenstein. In France, '*architects d'intérieur*' is restricted to use by those practitioners registered with *Conseil Français des Architectes d'Intérieur (CFAI)*, a register initiated by *the Ordre des Architectes CNOA* and the *Interior Architects Association (FNSAI)*.

However, in the Anglosphere 'design' and 'architecture' are considered as discrete terms which denote discrete activities (If an alternative German name for IFI (*Der Weltverband der Innenarchitekten und Interior Designer*) is considered it becomes clear that the distinction between 'design' and 'architecture' is being exported from the Anglosphere). For instance in the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO): 'interior designer' (3471 1-62.30) is a title separate from 'interior architect' (2141 0-21.20) which is a subcategory of 'architect' (2141). The obvious solution would be to accept 'interior architecture' as the new title and correct translation, but in many countries the title 'interior architect' is restricted due to the separate legal protection of the title 'architect'. In the USA the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) proposed that the practice of 'interior architecture' be included within the architectural realm (NCARB, 2008: 30-31) ('interior design' is an autonomous occupation).

This endnote is derived from comments I delivered on the IFI Interiors Entity: Design Frontiers process in 2011.