

# Interior design as architecture's 'Other'

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# ABSTRACT

## Interior design as architecture's 'Other'

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The study lies within in the realm of architectural theory and considers the ontology of interior design by investigating the marginalisation of the discipline within the architectural profession. The discipline is personified and placed in a dialectic relationship with architecture. This enables the researcher to disengage interior design from architecture and, by stating the disciplines as 'absolute Others', the researcher is allowed to essentialise the disciplines in question.

The research was conducted with a liberal plural meta-theoretical approach and can best be described as a heuristic enquiry. In this situation neither the objective realm, nor the researcher's subjectivity is the primary focus. Literature studies were employed to identify relevant architectural theories to supply the necessary empirical material.

The dissertation is presented as object-relations oriented criticism and follows a subversive strategy to allow the researcher to inscribe his self-identification as an interior designer.

The findings are presented as a negative depiction of the *status quo*. This can be summarised as a situation where the existence of a dialectic opposite pair ('interior design' : 'architecture') is the main obstacle in the establishment of a discrete identity for interior design. The dialectic pair is deconstructed to allow interior design to form its own identity without reference to architecture.

The study concludes that interior design and architecture are not separate professions, since they are unable to establish discrete, autonomous fields of knowledge; they are, however, distinct disciplines or 'branches of learning'.

The study defines interior design as a mode of cultural production which engages in the design of enclosed spaces in existing structures, with emphasis on the design of volume.

In addition, the study proposes the creation of a single architectural profession to contain the architectural disciplines.

Keywords: Architecture  
Interior design  
Normative theory  
Ontology  
Professions  
The 'Other'

# EKSERP

## Binne-ontwerp as argitektuur se 'Ander'

deur

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Die studie vind plaas binne die vakgebied argitektuurteorie en oorweeg die wesenlikheid van binne-ontwerp deur die marginalisering van die dissipline binne die argitektuurprofessie te ondersoek. Die dissipline word persoonifiseer en in 'n dialektiese verhouding met argitektuur geplaas. Dit laat die navorser toe om binne-ontwerp van argitektuur te skei en, deur die dissiplines as mekaar se 'absolute Ander' voor te stel word die navorser in staat gestel om die dissiplines se wesenseienskappe te identifiseer.

Die navorsing is teen 'n liberaal pluralistiese meta-teoretiese agtergrond voltooi en kan, ten beste, as 'n heuristiese vraagstuk beskryf word. Onder hierdie omstandighede kan nóg die objektiewe terrein nóg die navorser se subjektiwiteit voorrang geniet. Literatuurstudies is gebruik om die relevante argitektuurteorieë te identifiseer om die nodige empiriese material te verskaf.

Die verhandeling word aangebied as voorwerp-verwantskap georiënteerde kritiek en volg 'n ondermynende strategie om die navorser toe te laat om sy self-identifikasie as binne-ontwerper uit te leef.

Die bevindinge word as 'n negatiewe uitbeelding van die *status quo* aangebied. Dié kan opgesom word as 'n situasie waar die bestaan van 'n dialekties-teenoorgestelde paar ('binne-ontwerp' : 'argitektuur') die hoof struikelblok is wat binne-ontwerp verhoed om 'n eie identiteit te vorm. Die dialektiese paar is gedekonstrueer om binne-ontwerp toe te laat om 'n eie identiteit sonder verwysing na argitektuur te bepaal.

Die studie bevind dat binne-ontwerp en argitektuur nie afsonderlike professies is nie, aangesien hulle nie daarin kan slaag om eie, selfstandige kennisvelde te beding nie. Hulle is wel afsonderlike dissiplines.

Die studie definieer binne-ontwerp as 'n kultuurproduksiemodus wat hom besig hou met die ontwerp van geslote ruimtes in bestaande strukture, met die klem op die ontwerp van volume.

Bykomend stel die studie die stigting van 'n enkele argitektuurprofessie om die verskillende argitektoniese dissiplines te bevat, voor.

Sleutelterme: Argitektuur  
Binne-ontwerp  
Die 'Ander'  
Normatiewe teorie  
Ontologie  
Professies

*At that time the individual did not exist. There was not an awareness of a distinction between 'I' and 'you'. The birth of I derived from fear of death, and only afterwards an entity which was not I came to constitute you. At that time people did not have an awareness of fearing oneself, knowledge of the self came from an other and was affirmed by possessing and being possessed, and by conquering and being conquered. He, the third person who is not directly relevant to I and you, was gradually differentiated. After this the I also discovered that he was to be found in large numbers everywhere and was a separate existence from oneself, and it was only then that the consciousness of you and I became secondary. In the individual's struggle for survival amongst others, the self was gradually forgotten and gradually churned like a grain of sand into the chaos of the boundless universe.*

Gao Xingjian, *Soul Mountain*  
translated by Mabel Lee

## PREFACE

The research was completed with a postgraduate scholarship from the University of Pretoria.

The research for this dissertation was conducted between 2007 and 2009. It is important to note that during this period the interior design occupation did not receive any formal professional recognition in South Africa. The built environment professionals who achieved occupational closure are the following: engineers, architects, landscape architects, property valuers, quantity surveyors, project and construction managers, planners, and surveyors (as listed by the Council for the Built Environment (CBE)). In 2004 the practice of interior design was placed under pressure when the South African Council for the Architectural Profession (SACAP) took steps to identify and monopolise architectural work. This served as a provocation for interior design to professionalise and led to the launch of the South African Institute for the Interior Design Professions (IID) in 2006. At the time of submission interior design has not reached professional status, although negotiations to achieve occupational closure for the discipline are ongoing between the Department of Architecture of the University of Pretoria, SACAP, and the IID.

The research was conducted in a Department of Architecture which offers programmes in architecture, interior architecture and landscape architecture. The Department fosters a collaborative relationship between the three programmes while striving to maintain the autonomous identities of each. This relationship clearly influenced my compulsion to undertake this study.

Interior design is a valuable contributor to the built environment; this study elucidates this fact.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I declare that the dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree Master of Interior Architecture at the University of Pretoria, is my own work, and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.



**Raymund König**  
11 February 2010

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING	1
INTRODUCTION	2
RATIONALE AND LITERATURE STUDY	2
RESEARCH PROBLEMS AND OBJECTIVES	4
<i>The subproblems</i>	4
<i>The hypotheses</i>	5
THE DELIMITATIONS	5
THE DEFINITION OF TERMS	6
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	6
RESEARCH METHODS	7
THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY	8
CONCLUSION	8

## CHAPTER 1

INTERIOR DESIGN AS ARCHITECTURE'S 'OTHER'	9
1.1 INTRODUCTION	10
1.2 THE EXPERIENCE OF ABJECTION	10
1.3 AN ONTOLOGY OF INTERIOR DESIGN	11
1.4 CONTESTED IDENTITIES	15
1.5 CONCLUSION	19

## CHAPTER 2

PROFESSIONAL MARGINALISATION	20
2.1 INTRODUCTION	21
2.2 PROFESSIONALISATION	21
2.3 ARCHITECTURE'S INCOMPLETE PROFESSIONALISATION	23
2.4 THE MARGINALISATION OF INTERIOR DESIGN	25
<i>Opposition to the licensing of interior designers in the United States</i>	26
<i>Monopolising interior design services in South Africa</i>	28
2.5 CONCLUSION	31

<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	
<b>PROFESSIONAL EMBARRASSMENT</b>	32
3.1 INTRODUCTION	33
3.2 EMBARRASSMENT	33
3.3 “INTERIOR DECORATION IS NOT INTERIOR DESIGN”	35
<i>Essentialist depictions of interior design on television</i>	36
<i>In defence of decoration</i>	39
3.4 TITLE CHANGE	41
3.5 CONCLUSION	45
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	
<b>A NORMATIVE POSITION FOR INTERIOR DESIGN</b>	46
4.1 INTRODUCTION	47
4.2 APPROPRIATE NORMATIVE THEORY	47
4.3 THE <i>STATUS QUO</i> : THE CONSOLIDATED RESEARCH FINDINGS	50
<i>First Hypothesis: ‘Interior design as architecture’s ‘Other’</i>	50
<i>Second Hypothesis: ‘Professional marginalisation’</i>	51
<i>Third Hypothesis: Professional embarrassment</i>	51
<i>The status quo</i>	52
4.4 A NORMATIVE POSITION FOR INTERIOR DESIGN	52
i) <i>Deconstruct the ontological pair</i>	53
ii) <i>Professionalise the discipline of interior design</i>	54
iii) <i>Avoid title change</i>	57
4.5 CONCLUSION	57
<b>RECAPITULATION</b>	
<b>THE RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS</b>	58
INTRODUCTION	59
WHAT IS INTERIOR DESIGN? – A CONCISE IDENTITY	59
HOW CAN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERIOR DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE BE RESOLVED? – A PROPOSAL	60
THE RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS	62
RECOMMENDED FUTURE RESEARCH QUESTIONS	62
CONCLUSION	63
<b>LIST OF REFERENCES</b>	64
<b>APPENDIX A</b>	
<b>PROPOSAL FOR THE CREATION OF THE DISCIPLINE “INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE” WITHIN THE ARCHITECTURAL PROFESSION</b>	73

# INTRODUCTION

## THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

## INTRODUCTION

The study falls within the realm of architectural theory and is comprised of interdisciplinary research. It focuses on the discipline that designs interior space, i.e. the discipline that alters architecture.

The study is presented in accordance with the elements of a normative position as defined by Peter Rowe (1987:116): firstly, it identifies a problem, secondly it offers an unfavourable assessment of the *status quo*, and thirdly it presents a counter-proposal and rationale. The dissertation is organised into an introductory chapter to present the research question, and thereafter four chapters are numbered to correspond with hypotheses (e.g. Chapter 1 will investigate Hypothesis 1). Finally, the dissertation is recapitulated and the research contributions stated.

This chapter serves to introduce the research problem. After a review of the relevant subject literature, a lacuna is indicated. A research problem with subproblems and hypotheses will be proposed. The chapter will present the research methods in principle, and list the delimitations. Finally, the importance and relevance of the study will be argued.

## RATIONALE AND LITERATURE STUDY

To inhabit is the process whereby an individual dwells in built-space. It may thus be argued that the act of inhabitation lends meaning to the built environment. It can then be claimed that built-space is created to facilitate inhabitation; in other words, built-space is contrived to make interior space. Although “[w]e come to know the world from an interior” (Gausa *et al*, 2003:358), it must be noted that architecture does not only provide interior spaces. If built objects that are unable to enclose sufficient space for human activity are excluded from the definition of architecture, then facades, urban spaces and so forth cannot be architecture (Rowe, 1987:115). This study is not preoccupied with these specific ontological questions of architecture, but will deal with the questions concerning the being of interior design.

Following the research of Lucinda Kaukas Havenhand (2004:32-42), the argument is made that interior design occupies a position on the margin of architecture; the discipline is regarded as supplemental and inferior to architecture:

*Although the subtext is not said out loud, it still is clear: interior design is inferior to architecture. In spite of many postmodern / poststructuralist reassessments during the last thirty years, the duality that places architecture as the dominant term in a binary opposition with interior design remains largely undeconstructed (Havenhand, 2004:33).*

This indicates the necessity to deconstruct the dialectic relationship that exist between interior design and architecture. The study recognizes this and aims to examine the *status quo*. It will argue for self-consciousness and self-confidence. Interior design should develop its own design methodologies, education standards and design language; furthermore, interior design should study a canon of built and unbuilt works that clearly distinguishes the discipline from architecture and other related disciplines. Havenhand (2004:33) argues that since interior design occupies a truly marginal position it has the potential to offer “more adequate, sustained, objective, transforming accounts of the world” and that it can only reach this potential when it discontinues to emulate architecture and explores its ‘Otherness’<sup>1</sup> (Havenhand, 2004:38). The perceived assumptions regarding interior design’s role as ‘Other’ to architecture must be studied.

In their comprehensive history *Interior design in the 20th Century*, a statement made by Allen Tate and C. Ray Smith (1986:560), which postulates that architecture is about ideas

<sup>1</sup> The concept of the ‘Other’ is discussed on page 3

while interior design is about vision and touch, contributes to the 'Othering' of interior design. They continue by stating that interior designers do not "develop complete systems of thought or ideology" (Tate and Smith, 1986:559) and that they write books for popular consumption to increase their fame. Smith reinforces this idea in *Interior design in 20th Century America: a history* with the words:

*...are they destined to be – quite properly, numerous critics claim – separate and distinct because they focus on completely different things – architecture on ideas, space, and structure; interiors on vision and touch?* (Smith, 1987:341).

Subsequent works by authors such as Stanley Abercrombie (*A philosophy of interior design*, 1990), John Kurtich and Garret Eakin (*Interior Architecture*, 1993), Joy Monice Malnar and Frank Vodvarka (*The interior dimension*, 1993) and Anne Massey (*Interior design of the 20th Century*, 2001), amongst others, may be reviewed under the discourse of the 'Other'. According to Paula Baxter (1991:250), Abercrombie specifically counters academic ideas regarding interior design's lack of literature and theory. Consequently Fred Scott wrote *On altering architecture* (2008), and states in his preface (2008:xv) that the book found its source as a counter-argument to the widely accepted hegemony that considers the work of architects, which in the most part is about creating new buildings, as a more valid exercise than interior design, which only alters the built environment. Scott's work is a seminal piece in the establishment of a comprehensive body of interior design theory. In contrast with architectural theory, there is a positive rapport between the public (layperson) and the semiotics of interior design; this offers many opportunities for the development of a distinct language and identity for interior design (Hill and Matthews, 2007:13-14).

The main problem contained in this study is to investigate the ontology of interior design by studying its relationship with architecture. The study accepts the device known as the 'Other' as a mechanism to study identity. The 'Other' is used successfully as a device to understand racial and gender relationships; this is evident in the work of Edward Said (*Orientalism*, 1978) and Simone de Beauvoir (*The second sex*, 1953). The study does not aim to offer new insights into the nature of the ontological construct denoted as the 'Other', but it views the lack of application of this device to understand professional relationships (particularly amongst closely related disciplines) as a lacuna in existing design theory and ontology. The study aims to offer new insights in this area, and an attempt is made to understand the binary oppositions related to the relationship between the disciplines: the public and the private; exteriority and interiority; rationalism and intuition; inherent materiality and applied decoration; etc. To inform the inquiry the process of 'abjection', as proposed by Julia Kristeva in *Powers of horror* (1982), is taken as a starting point. Abjection is the process whereby an object is expelled from a subject without attaining a separate 'Otherness'. "The object is an impossible object, still part of the subject [but unabolishable]" (Grosz, 1992:198). It is the premise of this study that interior design is architecture's object 'Other'. Since all built work may be considered architecture (Scott, 2008:xv), it is difficult for interior design to establish a discrete 'Otherness';<sup>1</sup> a discrete identity will only be established when the object is

<sup>1</sup> This is also evident in the definition of architecture as proposed by the South African Council for the Architectural Profession (SACAP):

*"Architectural work" comprises the business and management of the process of investigating, assessing, defining, conceptualising and designing a physical intervention in the environment, and processing the design through technological development and co-ordination of the input of professionals from other disciplines, to produce documentation which can be utilized for the tendering and construction of the project and which the architectural professional will use for the administration, cost and quality control of the construction process, with the ultimate purpose of delivering an architectural product which responds to the client's requirements in a manner which exemplifies design excellence, enhancement of the environment, social responsibility, appropriate*

collapsed. The study must consider both the aspects of commonality and of difference between the disciplines in question. The idea of interior design as architecture's 'Other' is informed by the gendered bias that relates architecture to masculinity and interior design to femininity (Havenhand, 2004:33). The origins and manifestations of gendered connotations are documented in the works of McNeil (1994), Braham (1999), Clegg and Mayfield (1999) and Hanna (1999). This study will consider gendered manifestations in current expressions of the disciplines. The interrelated histories of both disciplines are well documented in sources such as *Architecture and interior design* (Ball, 1980), *Modern architecture since 1900* (Curtis, 1996) and *A century of interior design, 1900-2000* (Abercrombie, 2003).

The contentious relationship between interior design and interior decoration, or between the 'architect designer' and the 'decorator designer', will be tested against the process of abjection. In this investigation the semantic problems related to naming the discipline should be highlighted (e.g. 'interior decoration', 'interior design', 'interior architecture' and 'architecture').

In his article 'Problematizing exclusion', David Sibley (1998) argues that a form of exclusion might occur when marginal groups try to create spaces where a form of autonomy can be established. Sibley further investigates the possibility that while knowledge of minorities may be used to deconstruct the myth of the abject 'Other', it may also be a tool to control or colonise the marginalized group. Colonisation is a specific threat when knowledge is no longer belittled, but placed within the body of discourse. Attempts by architecture to colonise interior design are already evident. The number of architectural practices offering 'interior design' as an expanded service to protect the practice against cycles in the building industry is increasing (Hughes, 2003:102) – this while a survey of American schools of architecture revealed that only 0,44% of curricular content is focused on the knowledge and skills required to design interiors (Gürel and Potthoff, 2006).

Patrik Schumacher (2002) divides labour in architecture between the avant-garde and mainstream architects. Schumacher states that innovation is the responsibility of the avant-garde. The avant-garde is differentiated from the mainstream by the fact that the latter's responsibility is to adopt the work of the avant-garde according to circumstance, i.e. functional and economic criteria. Schumacher (2002) states that innovation is dependent on theory which strives towards the 'good life' and the 'good society': "theory offers an implicit utopia".

Considering interior design's role as abject 'Other' and the opinion that interior design has the potential to offer "more adequate, sustained, objective, transforming accounts of the world" (Haraway in Havenhand, 2004:38), the question arises whether interior design has a discrete worldview and a subsequent design product.

## RESEARCH PROBLEMS AND OBJECTIVES

The main research problem contained in this study is to consider the ontology of interior design by investigating the marginalisation of the discipline within the architectural profession. The study will consider the *status quo* with specific reference to ontology, the legal framework, and depictions of the discipline in the media.

The main hypothesis asserts that interior design has an abject relationship with architecture which leads to its legal and professional marginalisation.

### The subproblems

#### Subproblem 1

How is interior design defined in terms of architecture?

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*technology and quality of construction and the whole executed in an ethical, competent and professional manner (SACAP, 2007: 4-5).*

All environmental work for which drawings are produced is considered 'architecture'.

#### Subproblem 2

Does architecture marginalise interior design?

#### Subproblem 3

Does interior design feel embarrassed for itself and what are the consequences of this embarrassment?

#### Subproblem 4

Can a normative position for interior design be formulated under the *status quo*?

### The hypotheses

#### Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis states that the beings of interior design and architecture hold opposing views. Architecture is an inclusive profession; it is utopian and strives to create new buildings. In contrast interior design is exclusive; it highlights architecture's failure to achieve Utopia, and is a discipline of alteration. Architecture is the normative profession which considers interior design as a part of architecture.

#### Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis states that architecture must marginalise interior design to protect its own professional status.

#### Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis states that interior design is embarrassed by its decorative aspects. This may induce title change (to 'interior architecture') and, through delegation, the elimination of decoration from its repertoire, which would impoverish the discipline through the loss of a valuable mode of cultural production.

#### Hypothesis 4

A normative position for interior design may be formulated through heuristic research in response to the *status quo*.

### THE DELIMITATIONS

The study is limited to the Anglosphere.

The study will focus on matters of identity and expression.

The study may raise questions about the identity, or being, of other disciplines of architecture, but its primary focus will be interior design.

For the purposes of this study it is not clear if architecture and interior design are distinct professions, or whether they are separate disciplines within the same profession (the terms 'discipline' and 'profession' will be used intermittently). In South Africa interior design receives no legal recognition, neither as a distinct profession, nor as a separate discipline within the architectural profession.

The debate on marginal groups does not only include racial or ethnic minorities but extends to economic groupings (Sibley, 1998). This study will include professional minorities in the discussion.

This study will not attempt historical research; historical facts and personalities will inform the arguments only. The study will consider events and personalities of the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries only.

With regard to matters of practice and professional responsibility, this study will concentrate on the South African situation. The standing of the professions in other parts of the world may be cited for reasons of example or comparison. This study will not attempt to offer a comprehensive world view of the legal standing of interior design.

Although gendered connotations are closely linked to the professions / disciplines under discussion, this study does not conduct research on gender, feminism and related discourses. Since the study is completed from a male perspective, the male gender will be employed in unspecified instances.

## THE DEFINITION OF TERMS

All words have the meanings contained in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, except where otherwise indicated.

The term 'Other' used in its capitalized form, in inverted commas, indicates the ontological construct. Different forms reflect the use of a particular author.

The following definition is included for clarity:

**Interior design** *in.* based on the definition by the International Federation of Interior Architects/Designers (IFI) (2006a), the term 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 study, particularly to allow for the determined heuristic enquiries, the term includes the closely related disciplines (interior decoration and interior architecture) as distinct from architecture.

Although this discipline is regarded under a number of pseudonyms: 'interior design' (Pile, 1988), 'interior architecture' (Kurtich and Eakin, 1993), 'interventional design' (Scott, 2008:210) and 'space design' (Klingenberg, 2006:62), amongst others, for the purposes of this study the term '**interior design**' is preferred since it is the most universally used. It is also a term without implicit reference to architecture (Attiwill, 2007:59). 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, 1993:3).

The term describes both the product ('interior space') and process ('design') of the discipline.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIA	American Institute of Architects
ASID	American Society of Interior Designers
BAK	<i>Bundesarchitektenkammer</i> (Federal Chamber of German Architects)
CBE	Council for the Built Environment
IDEA	Interior Design/Interior Architecture Educators Association
IFI	International Federation of Interior Architects/Designers
IFS	Interiors Forum Scotland
NCARB	National Council of Architectural Registration Boards
SABS Design Institute	South African Bureau of Standards Design Institute
SACAP	South African Council for the Architectural Profession

## RESEARCH METHODS

The dissertation follows a liberal plural meta-theoretical approach. This concept was developed by the political theorist William Galston in *Liberal pluralism* (2002) and *The practice of liberal pluralism* (2005).

As such the study recognizes multiple, sometimes contradictory, theories and the inherent equality of these theories. The study recognizes multiplicity with its references to individuality and equality, which includes the equality of dissimilar, even contradictory, viewpoints. Additionally, in the pluralist tradition it recognizes the rights of groups to maintain their individual traditions. The study values autonomy above tolerance. Although liberal pluralism allows for value judgements and moral statements, the study does not attempt to offer judgements on interior design or architecture, and recognizes that both disciplines have valuable traditions.

In its concern with the nature of being, ontology is suitable for application in an inquiry about the character of interior design as being. The concept of the impossible object ('object') has direct impact on the relationship between architecture and interior design. The phenomena representing this relationship may be studied to understand the nature of the relationship between, and the beings of, the disciplines.

All heuristic enquiries pursue a question which is closely related to one's own identity and selfhood (Moustakas, 1990:40). A heuristic enquiry into the nature of interior design will enable the researcher (as interior designer) to evaluate material from the empirical world (policy documents, reservations of work, legal frameworks, the popular media, direct quotations, and theory created by architects and interior designers) and to produce qualitative descriptions about the being of interior design. It is in the nature of design and heuristic enquiry that this evaluation will include intuition and tacit understanding. In the Western world the quest for knowledge has been narrowly defined by positivist empirical science, which ignored much of the human experience (Sela-Smith, 2002:82). The heuristic method introduces both experience and the '*I-who-feels*' into research (Sela-Smith, 2002:63). The broadest definition of the heuristic describes the act (or process) of design.<sup>1</sup> The heuristic method is then the appropriate tool for conducting research on design.

Although hypotheses do not typically form part of the heuristic method, they are included in this document. They are not part of the scientific method to be tested, but are the result of several years of introspection, as student, practitioner and teacher, into the nature of interior design.

In relation to the language of interior design, Havenhand (2004:40-41) reiterates the importance of speaking outside the controlling system. Referring to the French feminists Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous, she argues for a different kind of writing that values the first person over the third and which allows for personal expression. To claim objectivity in study by writing in the passive voice is a false construct born from 19th Century positivism. Although it is appropriate for purely scientific writing based on quantitative, empirical research, the nature of design, the heuristic and non-empirical study excludes the possibility of objectivity. In her emphatic article, 'Gender, the personal, and the voice of scholarship', Susan Fleischman (1998) argues for the personal viewpoint in scholarly writing. She points to the irony of writing about the personal in an 'older', male dominated academic rhetoric, simply to claim hard science by abstraction (Fleischman, 1998:980). I will value the personal and the experiential in both my research and my writing; even in phenomenological observation, the *observer* cannot be removed. In using this method, I claim the right to

<sup>1</sup> Initial engagement, Immersion, Incubation, Illumination, Explication, Creative synthesis (Moustakas, 1990: 27-32).

subjectivity. Empirical research is not excluded where it is the most appropriate method to employ.

The research is dependent on the personification of the professional identities of the disciplines in question.

To summarize the research problem and objectives, the following question is asked: *what is the nature of interior design?* This is a personal question; to answer it will require the sensitive study of highly personal work. The question can only be answered by research methods and a language which values personal and creative expression.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

In the closing paragraphs of 'A view from the margin', Havenhand states the following:

*At present, however, interior design is at a crossroads. Interior design must decide whether it wants to become architecture or continue to try to maintain a distinct identity of its own ... does interior design have an identity outside architecture? Is it a distinct field that offers something different to architecture? Is interior design a valuable category of the design disciplines that needs to be preserved?* (Havenhand, 2004:42).

At the 2006 IFI Round Table discussion (*Interior design: the state of the art*), the federation asserted the importance of a continued close working relationship between interior design professionals and educators. It specifically called on design educators to articulate the role of interior design (IFI, 2006b:7).

The question was subsequently again raised by others, but no conclusive findings were forthcoming from their deliberations:

- 2007: Interiors Forum Scotland (IFS) Congress, *Thinking inside the box: new visions, new horizons and new challenges*, Glasgow (IFS, 2007).
- 2008: IFS, *Interior tools, interior tactics*, Edinburgh (IFS, 2008).
- Interior Design/Interior Architecture Educators Association (IDEA). The IDEA Journal from 2004-2008 published articles on this topic (IDEA, 2008).

In 2007 a perspective published in *The Journal of Interior Design* asks the question, 'What is wrong with pretty?' (Hill and Matthews, 2007:13-14). The authors discuss and question the foundations, or threads, of a unique interior design language.

If this study concludes that interior design is a profession separate from architecture (with a distinct body of knowledge, design methodologies, education standards and design language, and a canon of built and unbuilt works), the practice by interior design education of emulating architecture might harm students of interior design and limit their creative processes and design integrity.

This study also strives to contribute directly to the possibility of professional registration for interior designers in South Africa.

The debate about the nature of interior design is a contemporary question in the global interior design community. This study offers its opinions and perspectives as part of this debate.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter introduced the research problem. A lacuna was indicated after a review of the relevant subject literature. The subproblems and hypotheses were identified and the relevant research methods described. Finally, the importance and relevance of the study was argued.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTERIOR DESIGN AS ARCHITECTURE'S 'OTHER'

### Subproblem 1

How is interior design defined in terms of architecture?

### Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis states that the beings of interior design and architecture hold opposing views. Architecture is an inclusive profession; it is utopian and strives to create new buildings. In contrast, interior design is exclusive; it highlights architecture's failure to achieve Utopia, and is a discipline of alteration. Architecture is the normative profession which considers interior design as a part of architecture.

### Research methods

The subproblem will be researched by conducting a heuristic enquiry into the nature of abjection and the role of the 'Other' in the establishment of professional identities.

A synopsis of the theory defining the cores of architecture and interior design will be read to comprehend the dialectic relationship and overlap between the disciplines. The reading will not attempt to be synchronically or diachronically exhaustive; it will identify relevant theories and mainly consider the post-modern blurring of boundaries between the disciplines.

The heuristic enquiry will further attempt an ontological analysis of interior design with reference to essentialist aspects of architecture, in order to establish the core values of the disciplines in question and their interrelationship.

The beings of the disciplines will be stated as 'Others'; architecture's inclusion of interior design in its self-definition indicates interior design as incomplete 'Other', or abject 'Other'. The Manichean dialectic will be purposefully employed to disengage interior design from architecture. This process will essentialise the disciplines and allow me to differentiate between them. Subsequent chapters will respond to the dangers inherent in this method.

## 1.1 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, 2004:35). By doing this interior design inadvertently supports the hegemony that places it in a supplemental position. The obverse position would be to ensure that interior design does not emulate architecture, although the two disciplines share a studio education: that the discipline places emphasis on aspects of its differentiation from architecture; that it is in its difference from, and not in its similarity to architecture, that interior design gains legitimacy. The validity of this position will become clear through further enquiry.

This chapter will be presented as object-relations oriented criticism, and will follow a subversive strategy which will allow me to inscribe my own self-identification as interior designer. To prove the hypothesis the experience and roots of abjection will be discussed. Following this, an ontology of interior design will be established. It may be argued that within the realm of the 'Other' it will be necessary to establish an ontology for architecture against which interior design may be measured. This is not necessary. Firstly, an architectural ontology falls outside the scope of this study; secondly, the 'Other', as device, may be studied by referring to essentialist aspects of architecture.

Finally, interior design will be stated as architecture's abject 'Other'.

## 1.2 THE EXPERIENCE OF ABJECTION

*[The Other] is not unknown but unknowable, refractory to all light. But this precisely indicates that the other is in no way another myself, participating with me in a common existence. The relationship with the other is not an idyllic and harmonious relationship of communion, or a sympathy through which we put ourselves in each other's place; we recognize the other as resembling us, but exterior to us; the relationship with the other is a relationship with Mystery. The other's entire being is constituted by its exteriority, or rather its alterity, for exteriority is a property of space and leads the subject back to itself through light (Levinas, 1989:43).*

Abjection relates to the process of the separation and differentiation of identities; it is not only applicable to the individual, but also to the collective (Lloyd, 2004:141). Identity formation is an "attempt to overcome a lack, as a process of desire for the power of the other, that produces the image of the self" (Neumann, 1999:8). In understanding the process of establishing professional identity, the process of abjection is a valid device. Abjection is discussed from two points of view: firstly, it is considered from a positive viewpoint as the process whereby the 'Same'/'Other' conceptual pair gains separate identities. It is therefore the process whereby a new identity is established. During the process the abject is the incomplete object; it has only one quality of the object – "that of being opposed to the I" (Kristeva, 1982:1). This is in opposition to the conventional discussions of abjection which describe it as negative and ugly, and leads to the second, and traumatic, point of view where "[t]he abject is what threatens identity" (Oliver, 1993:56). Abjection is considered traumatic because it represents an unfinished process of ambiguity.

The abject is neither subject nor object (self or 'Other'); it makes the impossible identity of each clear. The abject signifies the precarious grasp that the subject has over its identity and boundaries (Grosz, 1992:197-198). Architecture's own identity is precarious; in answering its own ontological questions it is met with disagreement (Shepherd, 1995:15). Interior design is a discipline that threatens and questions the identity and boundaries of the architectural profession.

Individual and collective identities are not only created in the difference between the 'Same'/'Other' conceptual pair but also in the ambiguity "where one is other to oneself, and in the recognition of the other as like" (Norton in Neumann, 1999:8). Abjection is above all other things ambiguity; it does not separate the object from the subject, but it acknowledges the

perpetual danger to the identity of the subject (Kristeva, 1982:9). In the separation of identities abjection blurs the boundaries:

*I experience abjection only if an Other has settled in place and stead of what will be 'me'. Not at all an other with whom I identify and incorporate, but an Other who precedes and possesses me, and through such possession causes me to be* (Kristeva, 1982:10).

Mary Douglas (1966) underpins the dangers of ambiguous margins in *Purity and danger*. All margins are dangerous; if they are moved the fundamental experience is altered. The structure of ideas is vulnerable at its margins (Douglas, 1966:121). Both interior design and architecture can be considered as idea structures. I will go so far as to say that they have different *thought styles*.<sup>1</sup> Both are 'weak disciplines' vulnerable at their margins. The boundaries or margins between the two disciplines overlap and are indistinct. Both disciplines will experience instances where an 'Other' has settled where it expects to find itself.

*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, 1966:113).

The 'pollution powers' are clearly at work on the boundary between the disciplines of architecture and interior design. This ambiguity and lack of definition is the abject; interior design and architecture are abject 'Others'. To refer to a group as abject represents it as something that is alien to the collective (Sibley 1998). The *abject* can only exist while abjection is in process. On completion the *abject* will collapse into the *object* (Kristeva, 1982:210). This reiterates the positive aspect of abjection: it is the process whereby the same/'Other' conceptual pair separate and gain individual identities.

For the purposes of this study, *abjection* will be referred to as a construct employed to understand how the disciplines are differentiating and establishing separate identities.

### 1.3 AN ONTOLOGY OF INTERIOR DESIGN

*[The interior] exists between the physical, the poetic and the phenomenological. The interior domain is the place of dwelling, dreaming, belonging, sanctuary, memory and association, and a metaphorical stage set in which we act out life, simultaneously saturated with artefacts of conspicuous consumption in a world deeply concerned with sustainability. It is a platform on which to benchmark fashionable social mores, project social status and a lab in which to test ethnographic methods and patterns of use, behaviour and ritual* (Milligan et al., 2007:20).

Interior design is often criticised because it lacks a deep, comprehensive body of theory and history. For example, in the preface to *A philosophy of interior design*, Abercrombie (1990:ix) states that during a debate in 1987, an argument was made against the licensing of interior designers; interior design could not be considered a true profession since it lacked a body of theory. I stated in the introduction to this dissertation that a number of writers developed theories for interior design after Smith and Tate's (1986:560) statement that interior design is preoccupied with 'vision and touch'.<sup>2</sup> The discomfort amongst interior designers regarding this concept indicates a reluctance to be associated with decoration. This

1 The term 'thought styles' is borrowed from the book of the same title by Douglas (1996).

2 Refer to page 3.

discomfort is rooted in the concept that decoration is superficial when compared to functional or spatial aspects. Furthermore, it builds on an inferiority complex that links decoration to femininity and spatiality to masculinity. A stereotypical dualism exists that associates women with the body and decoration and men with technology and the shaping of nature (Clegg and Mayfield, 1999:3).

Interior design should not be criticised for its decorative aspects. Decoration is a critical aspect in any conversation about interior design (Attiwill, 2007:62). For this argument, 'vision and touch' are considered decorative elements. When interior design preoccupies itself with vision and touch (which are very closely related) it is born out of deep concern for the user of space. The distinction between interior design and decoration creates an allegiance with architecture where interior design cannot be separated from it. If interior design follows a strategy to align itself with architecture, it will strengthen its supplemental role; in contrast, Havenhand suggests that interior design should embrace its dissimilarity:

*In a new strategy for interior design that celebrates its marginal feminine position, and therefore a wider, more complete, and more robust view of interiority, issues such as materiality, sensuousness, decoration, nurturing, self expression, desire and mothering which have been de-emphasised in a male, rationalist, architectural framework would be brought to the foreground (Havenhand, 2004:40).*

The choice of materials can give an intervention a temporal aspect; in addition, "[t]he designer is more inclined than the architect to experiment with new materials" (Scott, 2008:174). Interior design deals primarily with the experiential and temporal aspects of space. It deals with the body in space, and it does so in a practical way, concerned with space usage, anthropometrics, ergonomics and comfort; but it also deals with a deeper philosophical way of understanding the way the user will experience space, the way people interact with space, understand space, and intuitively are in constant dialogue with space. The concept of 'vision and touch' is not merely a superficial way of dealing with trends and fashion.

In Baxter's (1991) article, 'Thirty years of growth in the literature of interior design', a body of interior literature from the period 1961-1991 is suggested. The article states that works like *A philosophy of interior design* (Abercrombie, 1991) undermine the idea that interior design lacks a scholarly body of theory (Baxter, 1991:249). Although *A philosophy of interior design* is used as a source document for this study, a review of the text indicates that it relies on the *description* of the most universal aspects of interior design. This can be contrasted with older texts in architecture (from Vitruvius to Le Corbusier) as well as recent theories in interior design. In recent interior theories the most notable work is Scott's *On altering architecture* (2008), which offers a theory and vocabulary for the design work that responds to, and alters, architecture. It is an attempt to argue against the hegemony that declares architectural work to be of more value. Increasingly, the disparity between the theoretical approaches of architects and interior designers is diminishing as interior designers consider the impact of culture on the design process (Baxter, 1991:249). Suzie Attiwill ('Towards an interior history', 2004, and 'What is in a canon?', 2007) and Luis Diaz ('Discourse, history and interior architecture: notes on a possible history of interior architecture', 2007) start to speculate on the possible objects of an interior design history and canon.

In my opinion, attempts to create a history for interior design that pre-empts that of architecture is a device which undermines the contemporary professional practice of interior design. This might be achieved by referring to cave paintings, or other prehistoric interventions in 'found space' (for example, William Turner (1981:8) refers to 25 000 year old cave paintings at Dordogne). The objectives of prehistoric spatial interventions and interior design in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are not comparable. Malnar and Vodvarka (1992:4) trace the architectural specialisation in the interior realm to the Rococo period, which was a result of the financial position of the *petit* aristocracy. The interior had become financially and symbolically important enough to warrant specialist attention (Malnar and Vodvarka, 1992:18-

19). At this stage interior design work was performed by architects. Recognition of interior design as a discipline separate from architecture is a 20th century phenomenon (Gürel and Potthoff, 2006:218). Interior decoration has its origins in the involvement of women in the Arts and Crafts movement (McNeil, 1994:632). At the turn of the 20th Century decoration was considered an appropriate occupation for women, with academic programs in interior decoration established in the home economics departments of American universities (Gürel and Potthoff, 2006:219). After the Second World War the profession of 'interior design' emerged. Designers usually received formal (graduate) education, and "increasingly worked on non-domestic commissions, as the commercial sector realized the value of good interior design" (Massey, 2001:142). Despite its technical and spatial aspects interior design is still viewed, by both men and women, as a 'feminine' discipline (Clegg and Mayfield, 1999:10). In the broader construction of public and private spaces, the 'inside' is still associated with women; this causes interior design to remain on the feminine side of the gender dualism despite the discipline's orientation towards public commercial and industrial spaces (Clegg and Mayfield, 1999:11). The association of interior design with the feminine, and architecture with masculinity, is clear in the following description of an interior design student who has technical interests: "[she] found herself frustrated by the presumed associations of femininity despite her own preferences for the *architectural*" [my emphasis] (Clegg and Mayfield, 1999:11).

The origins of interior design as an applied art are rooted in architectural practice, but it is developing into an interconnected but independent discipline (Baxter, 1991:241). This discipline can be distinguished from interior decoration and architecture because it is a discipline of spatial performance and experience and not a discipline of composition or style (Pringle in Attiwill, 2004:6).

There exists a conceptual lacuna between architectural and interior design theory, where architectural theory prioritises the 'building' or the 'object' over the ensemble (Milligan *et al*, 2007:20). "[A]rchitects design buildings from the outside; the inside is fallout" (Gürel and Potthoff, 2006:220). Beyond a very brief first impression, interior design is an amalgam of elements experienced individually (Abercrombie, 1990:143). During the experience of an interior space, the observer has to be inside the space, from whence it is then impossible to experience the totality. The experience of interior space relies on a sequence of partial understandings of viewings of the space. The sequential partial understanding of interior space is the phenomenological agent that prohibits interior design from being a discipline of composition.

*Unlike architecture, interior design has never been based on formal visual composition, but always on an understanding of experiential reality and meaning of form. Such experiential reality is emotion based and embodied (Solovyova, 2008:3).*

Composition and style are intricately linked in architecture. To achieve consistency and coherence in architecture, allegiance to a particular style is an effective device: "the great developments of architecture and design in the last century were manifestations of such allegiances" (Scott, 2008:174-174). Architectural style is the product of the design process; it is not a concept based on classifying features of design. A consistent way of doing results in a consistent style. In a broader sense, style is consistent with a collective adoption of organizing principles. Changes of style can be observed when dominant principles are no longer productive and the architectural community's way of doing changes (Rowe, 1987:109-110). Kurtich and Eakin (1993:407-408) state that during times of stylistic change the fashion in design becomes trendy without substance; a trend will only develop into a style if it matures into an expression of the current culture. Since the 1990's the literature of interior design has pointed to a shift away from the study of trends (Baxter, 1991:249). Style is not a device that is available to the interior designer. In interventional design, the designer must follow other paths than the search for cohesive composition; the means to achieve contradiction and confrontation in the composition may be more appropriate (Scott, 2008:174-175).

Scott's (2008:xv) definition of 'pure' architecture, i.e. as the making of a new building on a cleared site, is used to construct the following argument. For architecture, a major source of decision-making and form giving is theoretical discourse. To be valid, a theory should have a community of subscribers that represents shared principles worthy of emulation. Architectural theory is generally concerned with the ontological question, "What is architecture?", and the utopian question, "What ought to be?" (Rowe, 1987:115). Architecture is utopian in its nature. The answer to the question, 'what ought to be?' lies in utopia as a project; in this instance 'utopia' is meant in its broadest, idealistic meaning. In 'utopia as a project', the work of architecture is directed towards construction that would overcome the crisis and antagonism of contemporary life (Tarfuri in Cunningham, 2001:169). If Utopia is achieved, if the State is functioning perfectly, there will be no alteration work necessary in architectural work. Buildings will either remain as they are indefinitely or be demolished. "Through forethought and prescience, buildings would remain unchanged from the moment of their inception up to their eventual demise" (Scott, 2008:1).

Different points of view define architecture's role in the relationship between inside and outside. For Robert Venturi, architecture happens on the boundary between interior and exterior:

*Designing from the outside in, as well as the inside out, creates necessary tensions, which help make architecture. Since the inside is different from the outside, the wall – the point of change – becomes an architectural event. Architecture occurs at the meeting of interior and exterior forces of use and space (Venturi, 1966:88-89).<sup>1</sup>*

Opposed to Venturi's notion is the idea that 'interior' and 'exterior' simply describe opposite sides of the same wall (Gordon, 1974:viii). In one description the *wall* is the architecture; in the other the *spaces on either side of it*. The architect's self-image relies on the conviction that he is a 'problem solver'. The problems on both sides of the wall are subject to the same functional analysis and rules of harmony and visual order (Gordon, 1974:viii). Although Venturi (1966:89) recognises the difference between interior and exterior space, Gordon proposes the same approach to solve the problems of both. This establishes the idea that in the design of interior space architecture is reliant on composition and style. The modes by which interior space is produced are different for the two disciplines under discussion.

The interior created by an architectural envelope is an oppressive and exclusive space (Irigaray in Smith, 2004:93); "[i]n other words, the interior is inferior and limited by the architectural form that contains it" (Smith, 2004:93-4). Conceptually, the interior space is contained and constrained by the architectural envelope. The perceived inferiority of interior design is seated in this fact. It is a construct that the discipline is inferior since its sites of intervention are dependent on architecture. Inter-dependence does not indicate hierarchy. Approaches in interior design thinking should not see the interior space as an empty container to be filled with 'interior design', because it would imply that the discipline is inferior to and defined by architecture (Smith, 2004:100).

Interior designers have responded to the concept of the oppressive and exclusive architectural space in a number of ways. For Tate and Smith (1986:xiv-xv) 'interiors' are distinguished from 'spaces' when they are fully enclosed and have *ceilings*, and 'interior design' is the creation and organization of interior spaces. A progressive and recent description, which tries to break down the boundaries between inside and outside, is that of Ellen Klingenberg (2006:22), who holds the opinion that interior space is not specifically inside a building; "it could be under the sky but it is not architecture either". In my opinion the first description is too restrictive and the second too general. Klingenberg is unable to define the

<sup>1</sup> I was alerted to Venturi's portrayal by Abercrombie (1993:7).

discipline and its field of expertise, but she opens the discipline to scrutiny and self-definition. Neither of these descriptions adequately answers the threat of architectural containment and conscription.

Attiwill offers an appealing point of view:

*The question of interior and exterior are still pertinent and potent but they are dynamic, changing relations rather than one of permanence defined by built form. Interior design then becomes an activity of organizing material spatially and temporally (Attiwill, 2004:3).*

For Christine McCarthy (2005:119), habitation related to interiority is not literal but projected across space, scale and time: “This preoccupation addresses how one might occupy a dollhouse ... and how the two dimensions of an architectural drawing, a shadow, or a computer screen might be spatial and interior. Interiority touches, but is beyond, three-dimensionality”. The temporal and experiential aspects are pertinent in Attiwill and McCarthy’s descriptions. The interior becomes a space of interconnectedness, not containment (Smith, 2004:94).

The discipline should be careful not to become too general and undefined. Interior space should be contained in some way. This containment should be more specific than saying that “the horizon is an interior” (Colomina in McCarthy, 2005:114). I wish to reiterate the definition for interior design given in the Introduction:

*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.<sup>1</sup>*

For both interior design and architecture, the criterion that design must engage its audience is a precondition for achieving other goals (Rowe, 1987:147). The goals of the work might differ for interior design and architecture, but without communication between the work and its audience these goals cannot be met.

Paradoxically, interior design has its origins both from within architecture (the interior is an indisputable aspect of architecture) and from without (as a ‘women’s profession’ based in the applied arts and homemaking). In its spatiality, studio education and knowledge of construction and structure it is similar to architecture; as a discipline outside architecture, interior design brings intellectual capital and a worldview that is dissimilar to that of architecture. It is in this dissimilar similarity that the roots of abjection lie.

## 1.4 CONTESTED IDENTITIES

The contested identities of interior design and architecture are manifest in two ways. In the first instance, interior design is not considered a separate discipline and may be ignored in the discourse of architecture. Secondly, interior design (or those aspects that are pertinent to its ontology) may be acknowledged but is regarded as inferior to architecture and as a source of defilement which diminishes the professional practice of architecture.

*The domain of interiors constitutes a point of tension between practicing architects and interior designers. Design of interior spaces is a significant part of the architectural profession (Gürel and Potthoff, 2006:217).*

In the first instance of contestation interior design is not considered a distinct discipline, since the design of interior space falls within the scope of architectural work. It was stated in the introductory chapter that the current SACAP definition of ‘architectural work’ includes all

<sup>1</sup> Refer to page 6.

work in the built environment for which drawings are produced.<sup>1</sup> The interior domain falls within this scope, and as such interior design is considered as part of the architectural profession. The implication is that interior designers are people who “practise just a little bit of architecture...” (Giattina in Hughes 2003:45).

A pertinent example of this way of thinking can be found in the book *Writing spaces*, by C. Greig Crysler (2003). In his introduction Crysler presents the interdisciplinary nature of the built environment professions. He specifically mentions “disciplines such as architecture, planning, geography, and urban studies”, and criticises the fact that these disciplines are organised around research and professional training that are linked to scales of analysis (2003:1). It is interesting to note that Crysler fails to mention any disciplines which primarily deal with the creation of interior space. In his conclusion he states that “the categories of ‘world’, ‘territory’, ‘nation’, ‘city’, ‘settlement’, ‘architecture’, ‘room’, and ‘body’ are increasingly difficult to separate” (2003:203). When discussing *space*, the text does not exclude interior space or the body’s relationship to space (“‘architecture’, ‘room’, and ‘body’”). The discrepancy that is evident in the exclusion of the *discipline* of interior design, while *interior space* is included in a discussion that states that “the idea of the architect as a singular author is more popular and widespread than at any other time” (Crysler, 2003:202), indicates that the creation of interior space is considered to be within the architect’s realm. Interior design as a discrete discipline is disregarded.

In the article ‘Interior design in architectural education’ (Gürel and Potthoff, 2006), it is documented by Joy Potthoff 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, 2006:219). 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, 2006:220). In this instance architecture is the normative discipline against which other disciplines are judged and categorised. The anthropologist Marc Augé (1998:58) states that once a culture institutes norms and standards it will recognise deviants and stigmatise them. Gürel and Potthoff conclude their article by stating:

*[T]he propensity of architectural programs to neglect interior design as an area of study promotes the concept that interiors are of little importance and readily relegated as an afterthought in the total design of buildings* (Gürel and Potthoff, 2006:226).

More than a decade earlier Kurtich and Eakin (1993:461) 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.

Even though the interior may be regarded as a secondary aspect, it is still considered part of the architectural realm. When interior designers claim that interior design is a distinct discipline, it forces architects to experience the abject. “I experience abjection only if an Other has settled in place and instead of what will be ‘me’” (Kristeva, 1982:10). This represents an instance where the act of the disciplines differentiating and establishing separate identities causes distress.

A more insidious form of discontent occurs when the discipline (interior design) is acknowledged but aspects of its ontology are a source of degradation for architecture. These are the ‘polluting powers’ Douglas (1966:113) considers to punish 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 scale and time scale).

<sup>1</sup> Refer to page 3, footnote.

In his preface to *On Altering Architecture*, Scott (2008:xv) defines 'pure' architecture as the production of a new building on a cleared site. He elaborates that the purpose of pure architecture is to create buildings that are fitting to the nascent principles of a particular time and place (Scott, 2008:11). Reiterating Schumacher's (2002) notion that "theory offers implicit utopia", 'pure' architecture relies on utopian ideology. Architectural imagination is an implicitly utopian practice (Coleman, 2005:236). When pure architecture is created, it is done with the intention to better the world to the best ability of people at the time of its creation. In the words of Nathaniel Coleman (2005:47), "[t]he architect's initial story of a building is a fictionalized account of some *ought* that enduring inhabitation alone can verify". It is this notion, of improving the world and creating utopia, 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. It can be described as the discipline which alters architecture. 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. This also indicates interior design's abject 'Otherness'; it is similar to, but distinct from architecture.

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 interior design causes architecture to experience grief; this, from architecture's point of view, makes interior design disgusting. Every intervention in architecture highlights its failure. 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. Unless a work of architecture is preserved as an empty monument<sup>1</sup>, the architect is unable to gain immortality through his work without the intervention of other designers at a later stage. The intervention of an 'Other' is required to keep a building in use, to prevent loss of occupation and eventual redundancy and demolition.

Rem Koolhaas claimed that due to the declining rate of new building against the growth of alteration, the 'end of architecture' will occur at the point on a graph where the two lines would cross (Koolhaas in Scott, 2008:56). To counter this, Koolhaas proposes that the city should be zoned into areas where new architecture should be built, which will remain unaltered for a hundred years, after which it will be demolished and replaced with new buildings. This solution would be the end of alteration, and to a large extent, the end of interior design.

This introduces a further point of difference between pure architecture and the design of intervention. In order to be 'pure', architecture must establish a new building on a clear site. To exist, architecture is dependent on one of two forms of destruction: firstly, if a building exists, architecture must first be destroyed to allow new building to take place; secondly, if architecture is to inhabit a greenfield site, it requires the destruction of the natural environment. Interior design does not require destruction for its existence. This highlights a second failure by architecture in terms of its own principles: to ultimately exist, architecture must destroy something in the environment (either natural or built), this while it is a discipline that is founded on utopian principles to better that same environment.

It was established earlier in this chapter that the image ('vision and touch') is a significant aspect of interior design's being.<sup>2</sup> When image making is present in architectural practice it is considered to be something which reduces the integrity of the profession. In a

1 It is arguable whether architecture that exists without inhabitation has any purpose.

2 Refer to page 12.

criticism on the contemporary professional practice of architecture, Zaha Hadid 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 (Hadid, 1993:27).*

This statement is noteworthy when compared to Crysler's 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' (Crysler, 2003:202).*

Both authors consider the influence of corporate identity on architecture. They are specifically concerned with the influence of the *image* on architecture. Hadid (1993:27) is especially critical of this aspect since it leads to the *deterioration of the architectural discourse*. This repeats Tate and Smith's perception that architecture is about ideas (1986:560); in contrast, interior design is about 'vision and touch' (*image*). In Hadid's view the inclusion of the image in architecture is a form of defilement which leads to the deterioration of discourse.

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, 1993:462). The idea that architecture is unable to adequately deal with interior space was expressed in 1877 by Edith Wharton and Ogden Codman in *The decoration of houses*:

*Architects [sic] task seems virtually confined to the elevation and floor-plan. The designing of what are today regarded as insignificant details, such as moldings, architraves, and cornices, has become a perfunctory work, hurried over and unregarded; and when this work is done, the upholsterer is called in to decorate and furnish the rooms (Wharton and Codman in Gürel and Potthoff, 2006:219).*

Kurtich and Eakin (1993:461) elaborate on this point by stating that architects can plan buildings well, but they do not study and develop the interior spaces. It is especially evident in architect's drawings which are devoid of furniture and finishes and indicate a lack of awareness of interior design. In contrast, in her design for E.1027, Eileen Grey considered the divans to be 'indispensable' and drew them directly on plan (Rault, 2005:169).

The 'image' can be considered as a case in point, where both disciplines establish norms and standards against which deviants are stigmatised, according to Augé's principle.

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, 1992:20). As mentioned earlier, in Crysler's (2003:1) analysis of disciplinary discourses he specifically mentions "architecture, planning, geography, and urban studies".<sup>1</sup> In his conclusion scale is identified as a point of differentiation in the "space" disciplines:

<sup>1</sup> Refer to page 16.

... I would suggest that if there is a fault in the model of interdisciplinarity that has developed until now, it is rooted in the reluctance of the 'space' disciplines to communicate with each other, and hence reinforce the scale politics of spatial analysis that continues to divide the field as whole (Crysler, 2003:202).

If interior design were added to Crysler's discussion it would inevitably be the discipline which operates on a smaller physical scale than architecture. This opinion is shared by Milton Tan (2003:7 and 2006:13-14), who differentiates between architecture and interior design on the basis of scale.

This study establishes and discusses the temporal aspect of interior design's ontology. It introduces a shorter time scale as a point of differentiation from physical scale. Although there will be areas of overlap, interior design products are in general physically smaller and survive for a shorter period of time than pieces of architecture. In my opinion, the combined effects of a small-scale design project that only survives for a short time is that the work is considered less important, less complex, and therefore easier to execute and inferior to architecture.

In itself architecture is a discipline which is difficult to define. Architecture is a 'weak discipline' and efforts to make the practice comprehensible depend, in part, on the acceptance of utopia as project (Coleman, 2005:236-7). Diaz (2007:168) states that architecture has no 'objective logic'. To the layperson architecture is indistinguishable from other methods of designing buildings (e.g. engineering); the specificity of architecture is based on its theory. 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, 2003:200-1). Interior design, as a discipline, enters this competitive market, and its own strategies of legitimisation and professional practice undermine that of architecture.<sup>1</sup>

This section was dependent on essentialist depictions of architecture; it was stated in the research methods that this device is used purposefully. In no way should this be construed as meaning that I am unaware of the contradictions evident in architecture's ontology. For an example the reader can refer to the dualist discussion of the romantic and rational traditions in architecture in Wojciech G. Lesnikowski's *Rationalism and romanticism in architecture* (1982). In order to employ the abject to understand the relationship between the architectural disciplines, certain generalisations are necessary.

## 1.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter it was established that the experience of abjection is a valid device for understanding the establishment of professional identities.

An ontology of interior design was established which compared the *being* of interior design with that of architecture. It was postulated that the modes of production of space differs for the disciplines, but that the disciplines have certain similarities.

Architecture and interior design have contested identities. Interior design's strategies of legitimisation and its professional practice undermine that of architecture.

The beings of interior design and architecture hold opposing views. Architecture is an inclusive profession; it is utopian and strives to create new buildings. In contrast, interior design is exclusive; it highlights architecture's failure to achieve Utopia, and is a discipline of alteration. Architecture is the normative profession which considers interior design as part of architecture. The hypothesis is supported.

<sup>1</sup> More information regarding professionalisation theory is presented in Chapter 2, 'Professional marginalisation'.

# CHAPTER 2

## PROFESSIONAL MARGINALISATION

### Subproblem 2

Does architecture marginalise interior design?

### Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis states that architecture must marginalise interior design to protect its own professional status.

### Research methods

The subproblem will be researched by conducting a literature study of professionalisation theory.

Architecture's professional status will be critically reviewed in the context of professionalism and current paradigmatic shifts.

To indicate the marginalisation of interior design I will investigate two critical case studies. The source documents for these case studies are official board notices, resolutions and acts, and commentary by designers and architects in the design media.

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 established the ontological differences between the disciplines under discussion; it focussed on the beings of interior design and architecture. This chapter will investigate the actual marginalisation that occurs.

The discipline of interior design is marginalised by architecture because the interior realm forms a major part of architectural work. Architecture must marginalise interior design to protect its own weak professional status. To investigate the stated hypothesis, this chapter will consider professionalisation theory as well as critical commentary on the process of professionalisation, and will subsequently evaluate the disciplines' professional status. A hierarchy emerges as a result of the 'downward' marginalisation by architecture of interior design in an attempt to establish and protect its professional status.

This chapter will offer a brief overview of professionalisation theory, followed by a discussion of architecture's weak professional status. Finally, the chapter will conclude by indicating the means and acts by which the marginalisation of interior design is achieved.

## 2.2 PROFESSIONALISATION

Two principal sources were considered to ascertain a theory of professionalisation: *The professionalisation of everyone?* by Harold L. Wilensky (1964) and Elliot Freidson's *Professional powers* (1986). The reading was accentuated by contemporary refereed articles from the journals *Current sociology* (Sciulli, 2005; Malatesta, 2005; Torstendahl, 2005; Champy, 2006; and Pfadenhauer, 2006) and *Social science and medicine* (Goodman, 2007).

In its narrowest meaning, Freidson (1986:24) defines '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". Formal higher education distinguishes between the professions and other occupations; it distinguishes between both the nature of their training and the skills involved (Freidson, 1986:26). The formal knowledge of professions exceeds the training that is required for the 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, 1986:13).

In an earlier article on professionalisation, Wilensky (1964:137) states that the traditional model of professionalism places emphasis on autonomous expertise. Wilensky (1964:138) 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 of professional behaviour (Freidson, 1986:26). In discussing the professionalism of interior design Caren S. Martin (2008:5) states that "[o]ne characteristic of a profession is the regulation of its practice". Wilensky 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 (Wilensky, 1964:145-146).*

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, 1986:28-29). In the academic treatment of professions the aspect of power became 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 privilege of the professions (Freidson, 1986:29). Professions are occupations which have managed to establish and maintain monopolies in the labour market for expert services; by introducing service monopolies they strengthen occupational hierarchies and exacerbate socioeconomic inequities (Sciulli, 2005:917). Social criticism of professions state that they reduce competition and that they prohibit entry into the labour market (Carpenter, 2007:26).

The power relationships that become clear in any discussion of professionalism are based on the requirements of professions to establish autonomous expertise. This is based on two aspects: firstly, when formal knowledge is used to order human affairs it is an exercise in power; it is an "act of domination over those who are the object" (Freidson, 1986:7). Secondly, professions imply "the fact that bodies of formal knowledge, or disciplines, are differentiated into specialized occupations" (Freidson, 1986:20). As occupations define and control their core area of autonomous expertise, specialisation within and between disciplines emerges. Wilensky 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 (Wilensky, 1964:144).*

This phenomenon establishes the formation of hierarchies between occupations, especially as downward delegation occurs. It was established in Chapter 1 that forms of defilement or elements which reduce the integrity of a profession may contribute to the deterioration of the profession's discourse;<sup>1</sup> these elements may then be delegated downwards to protect the profession's core expertise.

Specialisation also introduces competition between occupations, since the core expertise is 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 exclusive jurisdiction (Wilensky, 1964:146).

To protect the jurisdiction of a profession formal legal protection might be sought. To gain professional recognition for occupations would provide political legitimacy to the effort to gain protection from competition. In a laissez-faire environment (which is certainly true of contemporary South Africa) the state does not easily sanction the creation of market shelter (Freidson, 1986:33). 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 (Wilensky, 1964:145). Title and practice acts "help define and codify professional standards"

<sup>1</sup> Refer to pages 17-18.

(Allderdice, 2002:46). Further acts of professionalisation include the accreditation of educational facilities and qualifying exams (Allderdice, 2002:46).

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 services. In addition, professions seek legal protection of their titles and practices. Any occupation whose body of knowledge overlaps that of another profession, or who has similar titles or practices, will be a threat to the identity and monopoly of that profession.

## 2.3 ARCHITECTURE'S INCOMPLETE PROFESSIONALISATION

Although its title is old, and architecture never underwent title change as part of the process of professionalisation, the profession of architecture is relatively young. This section will indicate that the architectural profession has yet not achieved full professionalisation. In contrast to architecture, the careers in the 'learned professions' (the Church, Medicine and the Law) 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, 1977:22). Wilensky (1964:141) includes "law, the clergy, university teaching, and to some extent medicine" in his list of professions dating from the middle ages. With the recent exception of the clergy, the practise of these professions is still restricted. 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 (Wilensky, 1964:141). In the United States architecture only developed features of a fully fledged profession in the nineteenth century (Cuff, 1991:24). In South Africa architecture achieved partial professionalisation in 1970 with the promulgation of *The Architects' Act* (Act 35 of 1970). This act protected the title but did not place adequate restrictions on the practice of architecture. *The Architectural Profession Act* (Act 44 of 2000) provides for professional registration with SACAP, which protects the title of the profession, but only makes preliminary provisions to protect the practice. The 'Identification of architectural work' (SACAP, 2004; 2007) is an attempt to address this issue. This document defines architectural work, and limits its practice to registered professionals of the council. The identification of architectural work is insufficient to control the practice of architecture; it exempts all professionals registered with the professional councils and allows them to perform architectural work in the course of practising their profession (South Africa, 2007:6). Architectural work can still be undertaken by persons who do not belong to the architectural profession.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to architecture's failure to protect its practice, the profession, "unlike other fields, [has] failed to develop a set of hypotheses that can be advanced or refuted" (Rittel in Cuff, 1991:39). This leads to a high level of indeterminacy, partially based on the nature of architectural problems which defy clear definition and solution (Cuff, 1991:39). As long as architecture as a profession is indeterminate, it is impossible to establish a monopoly of service or an autonomous area of expertise. This is one of the contributing factors 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, 1991:39).

<sup>1</sup> More detail will follow later in the chapter; refer to pages 28-31.

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, 1988:55). The market for traditional architectural work becomes more competitive, which leads to a flourishing of jobs on the profession's margins and among "architecturally informed occupations external to the profession" (Cuff, 1996:94). Dana Cuff still considers these 'architect's work' and sees the development as architects practicing in a broader arena.

The aforementioned has one of two alternative implications for the architectural profession. Firstly, the growth of peripheral professions might indicate the growth and expansion of the architectural profession. Secondly, and in opposition, it might indicate the architectural profession's attempt to limit competition by narrowing the field of expertise to clearly (and without indeterminacy) define a limited field of autonomous expertise. If the process of specialisation within professionalisation theory is considered, the second alternative seems probable.

Because architecture is unable to protect its practice, and in so doing, assert exclusive jurisdiction and establish a monopoly of services, it is continually specialising and contributes to the formation of architecturally informed professions. These professions in turn threaten architecture's core expertise, and the process is repeated. Specialisation is an attempt by the profession to establish and protect a body of knowledge.

*[A] profession involves some objective information, but there is always more that cannot explicitly be known. Although professions try to establish and protect a technical, objective knowledge base to counterbalance their indeterminacy, architecture has been relatively unsuccessful (Cuff, 1991:39).*

Wilensky (1964:149) states that professional knowledge is to some extent tacit, a fact that contributes to the established professions' 'aura of mystery'. 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 (Wilensky, 1964:149-150). "Mysteriously based knowledge and the profession's control of its own evaluation help establish the exclusive (exclusionary) nature of the profession and the primacy of the autonomous architect" (Cuff, 1993:37). I believe that the peripheral disciplines in the architectural profession do not consider the profession's tacit knowledge to be mysterious. They have an understanding of architectural knowledge and can evaluate the architectural profession from the outside; as such they threaten architecture's autonomy.

It was established in Chapter 1 that architecture is the most normative and utopian discipline of all the built environment professions. It acts from a point of *what ought to be*. 'Normative superiority' is the authority accorded to professions to make binding decisions concerning social function and purpose. Professionals gain their authority by the profession's orientation towards the "common good or the public interest" (Pfadenhauer, 2006:571). The architectural profession gains its tacit knowledge (which is a necessary aspect of professionalisation) in its normative superiority and in its utopian drive, which is often expressed in ambiguous terms such as 'architectural quality'. In Peter Eisenman's view the idealised professional architect holds the power to decide what is best for the client. "If you believe, as I do, that architecture can change culture, you don't make architecture to please a rich client" (Eisenman in Cuff, 1996:40-41). The reputations of architects are dependent on the formal qualities of their buildings and the opinions of architectural critics (Champy, 2006:658); this leads to a situation where architects' own conception of quality outweighs public interest (Champy, 2006:658). In professionalisation theory the benefits accorded to the professions by the public is offset by public trust that the professions will use their benefits for the public interest.

Under modernism the normative superiority of the professions was based on placing the demands of the client under the trusteeship of the common good. Under post-modernism, however, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the individual to sacrifice his needs to the

collective good (Pfadenhauer, 2006:573). This reduces the normative superiority of the professions; it also reduces the importance of architecture's tacit knowledge and thus its own professional status. Under these circumstances, a discipline that represents the needs and experiences of the individual, in contrast to the utopian collective, becomes increasingly threatening and needs to be marginalised or excluded from the marketplace. In the current paradigmatic transition the asymmetrical relationship between the client and the professional is changing to one of an "unsettled service provider and a self-confidently critical receiver of services" (Pfadenhauer, 2006:576). Under these circumstances architecture struggles to adapt to new demands and to maintain social utility, which fewer members of the public understand (Champy, 2006:658). The professions face increasing difficulty to maintain their autonomy when faced with market pressures and demands for accountability (Champy, 2006:659).

In summary, architecture is a relatively young profession which has 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 bases of the peripheral disciplines. Architecture is losing its normative superiority due to the pressures of competing disciplines, and is struggling to maintain its social utility. This puts pressure on architecture to deprofessionalise. Under these circumstances architecture must marginalise the peripheral disciplines to protect its own professional status.

## 2.4 THE MARGINALISATION OF INTERIOR DESIGN

Efforts toward the professionalisation of interior design have serious implications for the architectural profession, which is experiencing societal pressures to deprofessionalise. In South Africa this is evident in the inclusion of draughtspersons and technologists in the architectural profession and their increasing share in architectural work. Similar pressures on, and responses from, architecture is evident worldwide; in France the architectural profession considers alteration to be of less value than pure architecture, and does not include it in its practice protection measures. The result is that the market (which spends more money on alteration than on new building) currently favours interior design above architecture (Champy, 2006:655).

The professionalisation of interior design and architecture follows similar patterns. Both were conducted as a trade and only recently formalised professional education (Allderdice, 2002:46). In accordance with professionalisation theory, architecture typically reinforced its professionalisation by formalising legislation to protect its title. In their attempts to professionalise, architecture and interior design follow similar strategies and are in competition. It is the competitive nature of both disciplines that leads to marginalisation.

The activities of professions can be motivated more by economic self-interest than by considerations of the common good (Freidson, 1986:28); this underlying factor contributes to professional marginalisation. In 'Piercing the veil' Steffie Goodman (2007:612) describes professional marginalisation as the process whereby some are placed on the periphery by a dominant, central majority (Hall in Goodman, 2007:612). Professionally this is achieved by constructing social, political and personal boundaries, and by deciding who controls and maintains these boundaries and who is permitted on the inside. Professions are marginalised when dominant groups control the market to protect their interests from competitors (Saks in Goodman, 2007:612). This pre-existing power structure is a barrier to full professionalisation and it determines the mixed forms of organisation that aspirant professions adopt (Wilensky, 1964:146).

In order for architecture to protect its weak professional status, it must undermine, or marginalise, the peripheral disciplines that compete with it. It is a matter of defending autonomous professional knowledge, and with that a monopoly of services. When buildings are collectively generated, the image of the architect as the sole creative person responsible

for the building's realisation is threatened. In the professional team interior design is the only discipline that is in competition with architecture's expertise and core values. Architecture's marginalisation of interior design takes two forms:

Firstly, it actively opposes the attempts by interior design to professionalise; this usually takes the form of opposing title or licensing (i.e. control of practice) efforts. Architects may undermine the professional status of interior designers by undermining their work, work methods or the ontology of interior design. An insidious way to attack interior design is to equate the discipline with decoration, and therefore render it inferior due to its decorative (perceived superficial) and gender aspects.

Secondly, in a passive form of marginalisation, architecture may attempt to monopolise services that form part of the interior realm.

As evidence of interior design's marginalisation I will consider two critical case studies. In the first case, an example of active marginalisation, attempts to establish title and licensing acts by the interior design profession in the United States are actively monitored and opposed by the architectural profession. In the second case, an example of passive marginalisation, the architectural profession in South Africa tries to monopolise architectural work in such a way that it includes the services offered by interior designers in the identification of architectural work, and thus makes it an offence for interior designers to practise.

### Opposition to the licensing of interior designers in the United States

It was established earlier in this chapter that a profession must be able to protect both its title and practice before it can establish a monopoly of services.<sup>1</sup> The drive towards the regulation of interior design in the United States is led by the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID). In the mid 1980s it began a nationwide campaign to regulate the profession (Carpenter, 2006:9). In an effort to gain recognition the profession tried to establish licensing legislation and standards while educating the public about the qualifications of practitioners (Shulman, 2003:98). ASID had its first success in 1982 when the state legislature of Alabama passed a title act which protected the title ('interior designer'), but the practice of interior design was still unregulated (McKee, 2000:68, 135). During the 1980's interior design's efforts to gain professional recognition were opposed by the American Institute of Architects (AIA), and the opposition was intensified when the ASID began lobbying for practice laws (McKee, 2000:68, 135). In 1989 the ASID and the AIA formalised an agreement of good-faith cooperation. According to the agreement the AIA will not oppose the ASID's efforts as long as it seeks title registration only (McKee, 2000:135; Giattina, 2000:1-2). The agreement was dissolved when the ASID announced in 1999 that it will no longer honour the accord and will continue the pursuit of practice legislation since it had already raised the standards of professionalism (McKee, 2000:135). Interior designers seek practice acts because these would enable them to be the responsible professional and to apply for building permits. Without practice acts interior designers need to contract an architect to take 'responsible control' (NCARB, 2000).

Regarding this issue in the United States Nina Hughes asserts:

*Interior designers deeply committed to the profession are raising the standards for the practice of interior design. This is being accomplished through the legal recognition of interior designers. Twenty-four states in [the United States] have some form of legal recognition of interior designers.*

<sup>1</sup> Refer to pages 21-23.

*Oddly enough, the most serious threat to these efforts to raise the standards for interior designers has come from organizations representing our cousins in the architectural profession (Hughes, 2003:102).*

While the AIA acts as an institute on behalf of the architectural profession, the profession is regulated by the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB). NCARB is the official body which acts in the public interest. Late in 1999 it joined the debate regarding interior design licensing, after the ASID abandoned their agreement with the AIA (NCARB, 2000a). NCARB felt that if interior design is allowed to professionalise by the passing of practice acts, the public will not be adequately protected. In a May 2000 newsletter the president stated:

*No one would oppose raising the standards of any occupation, but interior designers don't need legislation to do that ... The great majority of their 'practitioners' are simply decorators who consider rigorous standards excessive and beyond their grasp. In our view, those engaged in decoration should give up the quest for licensure, and those wanting to be involved in 'interior architecture' should meet our education, training, and examination standards and become licensed as architects ... If interior design is anything, it is a sub-speciality of architecture (NCARB, 2000).*

In June 2000, the NCARB passed Resolution 00-1, *Opposition to interior design licensing* (Giattina, 2000) which states:

*RESOLVED, inasmuch as the licensing of interior designers may not protect the health, safety and welfare of the public in the built environment, the National Council of the Architectural Registration Boards opposes the enactment of additional interior designer licensing laws and directs the Board of Directors (i) to monitor the licensing efforts of the interior designers, (ii) to take appropriate action to oppose such efforts, and (iii) to continue to support Member Boards of the Council with accurate information with which the Member boards may effectively oppose such efforts (NCARB, 2000b).*

According to Hughes the resolution is completed by the following sentence:

*Educators need to assist the practitioners in promoting the profession and testifying in jurisdictional hearings as necessary (Hughes, 2003:102).*

In the NCARB's opposition to interior design's professionalisation, and especially in the wording of Resolution 00-1, the following aspects are clear: the architectural profession claims to act in the public interest, interior design is a threat to the architectural profession, and the opposition to interior design licensing is an attempt to promote the architectural profession. It is noteworthy that in this case 'public interest' coincides with the economic interests of the architectural profession. This is especially distressing when it is considered that the NCARB itself states that interior designers must contract architects to obtain building permits in the United States. Economic interest is further highlighted when it is considered that nearly 90 per cent of architects in the United States offer 'expanded services', which include interior design and space-planning (Shulman, 2003:101), in an effort to insulate the profession from the "boom and bust cycles endemic to the construction industry" (Chong in Hughes, 2003:102). The economic realities are expressed thus:

*But there's a fear [among architects] that interior designers are going to take work away from them. The reality is that it's already happened (Arabolos in McKee, 2000:68).*

The two points of contention (title and practice) between interior design and architecture are raised by the editor of *Architectural Record*. Robert Ivy does not oppose title acts for interior designers, but he voices a strong opposition to practice acts for interior designers within the United States:

*...it would be a mistake to assume that practice law will serve as an automatic panacea for [interior designers]. Our own professional status reflects a public trust we have earned at high cost, and it should not be diluted (Ivy, 2000:17).*

His opinion that the professional practice of interior design will *dilute* the professional status of architecture is notable. The AIA offers similar imagery:

*...we see the proposed [interior] designer laws as diluting protection to the public as well as diluting the resources to enforce architecture and engineering [laws] (AIA in McKee, 2000:68).*

It is clear that in the United States the architectural profession opposes efforts by the discipline of interior design to professionalise because it represents a threat to the architectural profession; the professionalisation of interior design would lead to the dilution of the architectural profession.

To restate the words of Freidson:

*...we can find overt recognition and criticism of deficiencies in the performance of professions and most particularly of the degree to which economic self-interest rather than the common good can motivate the activities of professionals and their associations (Freidson, 1986:28).*

Interior design's efforts to gain professional status are ongoing. The ASID is still lobbying state legislature and has three registered lobbyists in the House of Representatives and in the Senate (ASID, 2009).

An effort to protect architecture's economic interests in the interior realm is evident in the NCARB's (2008) *Legislative guidelines and model law: Model regulations, 2008-2009*. The legislative guidelines serve as a manual for the boards of individual states to develop national standards and regulations for architecture. The model regulations make provision for the regulation of the practice of 'interior architecture'. It includes, within the realm of architectural practice and without limitation, all 'the space within' buildings to which codes, laws and regulations regarding public safety are applicable, but it excludes decorative aspects:

*... [interior architecture] would not include services rendered in selling, selecting or assisting in the selection of furnishings, furniture, decorative accessories, art work or other decorative materials, paint and color schemes, textiles, wall coverings, window treatments or floor coverings (NCARB 2008:31).*

It seems that architecture sees interior design as economic competition, but that interior decoration poses no threat. This highlights interior design's growing professional status as a threat to architecture.

## Monopolising interior design services in South Africa<sup>1</sup>

Unlike its counterpart in the United States, the architectural profession in South Africa does not actively oppose the professionalisation efforts of interior design. This may be due to two factors: firstly, interior design's professionalisation efforts are embryonic, with the first real thrust represented by the establishment of the IID in 2006. Secondly, there may be a general underestimation of the interior as a valid site of design effort or source of revenue for South

<sup>1</sup> The section entitled 'Monopolising interior design services in South Africa' was written at the beginning of 2009. The Department of Architecture at the University of Pretoria has since submitted a proposal to SACAP to establish interior design as an architectural discipline — refer to Appendix A. SACAP has accepted the proposal in principle with 'immediate implementation'. These events should be considered, but they do not invalidate the research findings conveyed in this section.

African architects. The marginalisation of interior design takes a passive form where opposition to interior design's professionalisation is evident in attempts by the SACAP to monopolise architectural work in such a way as to severely undermine the ability of interior designers to practise in the country.

SACAP was established through the promulgation of the *Architectural Professions Act 2000* (Act 44 of 2000). The act regulates the titles of the profession and makes provision for the council to regulate architectural practice.

The titles of the architectural profession are regulated by Section 18 of the Act which defines the following categories of registration: professional architect, professional senior architectural technologist, professional architectural technologist, professional architectural draughtsperson, and candidate categories (South Africa, 2000b:8). The titles are protected by Section 21 which states that persons registered in any category may use the title of the category (South Africa, 2000b:9). Practise in any category is restricted in terms of Section 18.2. The title 'interior designer' is not defined or regulated by the act.

Provision for the regulation and monopolisation of the practice of architecture is made in Section 26, which calls on the Council to identify architectural work (South Africa, 2000b:11). The identification of work must be made in consultation with any person, association, body, industry or profession which may be affected by the regulations. Section 21 makes it an offence for a person not registered in terms of the act to perform any "kind of work identified for any category of registered persons"; work may, however, be performed under the direction or in the service of a registered professional (South Africa, 2000b:11).

SACAP has made two attempts to formalise the 'identification of work'. In the first (*Board Notice 70 of 2004*), SACAP makes recommendations to the Council for the Built Environment (CBE) to identify architectural work and at the same time to prohibit a person not registered with SACAP to perform any kind of work identified. The document defines 'architectural work' as:

*[T]he business and management of the process of investigating, assessing, defining, conceptualising and designing a physical intervention in the environment, and processing the design through technological development and co-ordination of the input of professionals from other disciplines, to produce documentation which can be utilized for the tendering and construction of the project and which the architectural professional will use for the administration, cost and quality control of the construction process, with the ultimate purpose of delivering an architectural product which responds to the client's requirements in a manner which exemplifies design excellence, enhancement of the environment, social responsibility, appropriate technology and quality of construction and the whole executed in an ethical, competent and professional manner (SACAP, 2004:117).*

The definition forms the basis of the social contract which will allow the profession to establish a monopoly of services. Public trust underpins professionalism; a monopoly of services is offset by the trust the public places on the profession to not abuse its privileges and autonomy. To gain public trust the architectural profession offers "an architectural product which responds to the client's requirements"; it further qualifies the requirements by making a case for the profession's tacit knowledge. The client's requirements can only be satisfied "in a manner which exemplifies *design excellence*" [my emphasis]. When architecture's weak professional status is considered, especially the public cynicism that is emerging regarding the profession's normative superiority and the value and autonomy of its tacit knowledge, it is clear that this definition does not offer adequate grounds to establish a monopoly. Architecture is attempting to establish, by legislation, a monopoly on 'architectural work'.

To make a précis of the definition of work: architectural work is the design of a physical intervention in the environment which is executed through a process where the professional prepares construction documentation and manages the building process. This definition is so vague that it includes the work of a number of allied and peripheral disciplines (e.g. engineering, landscape architecture, urban design, planning and interior design)<sup>1</sup>. To enforce its monopoly the profession makes it a requirement that all documentation submitted for approvals of building projects to local authorities should be accompanied by an “Architectural Compliance Certificate”, completed and signed by an architectural professional (SACAP, 2004:119).

This attempt by architecture to marginalise the peripheral and allied disciplines is not directed specifically at interior design, but it is included. The ‘Identification of Architectural Work’ document of 2004 made no exemptions for closely allied professions. This is a clear case where the economic self interest of the profession is directing efforts to control the market in order to protect its interests from competitors.

Predictably, the 2004 ‘Identification of Architectural Work’ was insufficient to gain adequate public trust, and the document was rejected after public participation and submission to the CBE and the Competition Commission.

In February 2007 SACAP gazetted a second attempt to establish an identification of work document (SACAP, 2007). Following a period of public participation (where 221 responses were captured) it was submitted to the CBE in November 2007 (SACAP, 2008). At the time of writing the identification of work has not yet been legislated.

The 2007 definition of architectural work is identical to the definition of 2004, and the same problems concerning professionalism apply. Architecture’s incomplete professionalisation, i.e. its inability to establish a monopoly of services, is highlighted by the public’s refusal to grant a monopoly on the design of interventions in the built environment for which drawings are created. Architecture achieves only a partial monopoly since the notice makes provision for a number of exemptions:

Firstly, it exempts members of the closely allied professions registered with the CBE (engineers, landscape architects, property valuers, quantity surveyors, project and construction managers, planners and surveyors) to perform architectural work in the course of practising their profession (SACAP, 2007:4-5).

Secondly, it also exempts one discipline which is not considered a profession by the CBE, the ‘interior architectural designer’. An ‘interior architectural designer’ is defined as:

*[A] person who is qualified by education, experience and recognised skills to design interior spaces, having regard to space planning, building and material technology, specialised knowledge of interior construction, building climate, building regulations, materials and furnishings and capable of preparing drawings and documents relative to the design of interior spaces for submission to a local authority (SACAP, 2007:2).*

SACAP’s definition of interior design is compatible with a number of knowledge areas identified in the *Interior design profession’s body of knowledge* (Martin and Guerin, 2005). The body of knowledge identifies six knowledge areas where the interior design profession contributes to the public’s “life, health, safety, and welfare” (Martin and Guerin, 2005:52). The six knowledge areas are: human environment needs, interior construction, codes and regulations, design, products and materials, professional practice, and communication (Martin and Guerin, 2005:52-96).

<sup>1</sup> The 2004 ‘Identification of Architectural Work’ document makes no mention of the allied and peripheral disciplines; ‘interior’ is only referred to once, in the project classification where the design of ‘shop interiors’ is reserved for all registration categories of the architectural profession.

SACAP's definition addresses most of these, although only cursory reference is made to 'human environment needs'. The underestimation of human environment needs is understandable since this is one of interior design's core knowledge areas, and a source of tacit, autonomous expertise that distinguishes the discipline from architecture. Interior design has a deep knowledge of this, while architecture makes only casual, general reference to it.<sup>1</sup>

The architectural profession's definition of interior design undermines the professionalism of the discipline, because it does not consider professional practice to be a key knowledge area of the discipline. Unlike the definition of architectural work which allows the professional to use documentation for the "administration, cost and quality control of the construction process, with the ultimate goal of delivering an architectural product" (SACAP, 2007:4-5), the 'interior architectural designer' is limited to preparing drawings of interior spaces to submit to a local authority. The interior designer cannot provide a full professional service, and the professional capacity of interior designers to produce built works is underestimated.

In this instance marginalisation is achieved by the architectural profession's construction of professional boundaries, the control and maintenance of these boundaries, and the decision to place interior design on the periphery. According to this definition interior design is not a profession; it is a trade of which the input is subservient to the 'co-ordination' of the architectural professional.

This resembles the AIA's strategy whereby outside consultants are subject to the control of the architectural profession: "[c]onsultants are to provide factual and technical data in a timely manner; they are presented almost as tools for the architect" (Cuff, 1991:77).

The identification of architectural work fails to protect the practice of architecture. It can establish a partial service monopoly only, but it has a severe impact on the practice of interior design, since it limits the interior designer's ability to practise the profession. In this case architecture was not able to marginalise interior design completely, but it underestimates the capacity of the discipline and it does not offer any formal recognition of the interior design profession.

## 2.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter a synopsis of professionalisation theory was established which states that, to reach full professionalisation, an occupation must control a discrete, autonomous field of expertise to enable it to eliminate competition for its services.

Although architecture is an old discipline it has only recently been professionalised. As such it is a young, indeterminate profession which, as it specialises, creates architecturally informed disciplines which compete with it. Architecture is facing societal pressure to deprofessionalise since it struggles to maintain its social utility. Under these circumstances, architecture must marginalise the peripheral disciplines to protect its professional status.

The case studies illustrated the active and passive marginalisation of interior design by the architectural profession.

Architecture must marginalise interior design to protect its professional status. The hypothesis is supported.

<sup>1</sup> Interior design has a narrow and deep body of knowledge, while that of the general architectural practitioner is broad and shallow.

# CHAPTER 3

## PROFESSIONAL EMBARRASSMENT

### Subproblem 3

Does interior design feel embarrassed for itself and what are the consequences of this embarrassment?

### Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis states that interior design is embarrassed over its decorative aspects. This may induce title change (to 'interior architecture') and, through delegation, the elimination of decoration from its repertoire. This would impoverish the discipline through the loss of a valuable mode of cultural production.

### Research methods

The subproblem will be researched by conducting a literature review of post-colonial thinking on the ontologically opposed pair.

Embarrassment as ontological experience will be reviewed.

To indicate interior design's embarrassment over its decorative aspects, the essentialist depictions of the discipline in interior design television programmes will be considered.

A review of the work of Douglas will indicate the cultural aspects of consumption and decoration.

Professionalisation theory will be reviewed in this context to investigate interior design's periods of title change.

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapters purposefully employed the Manichean dialectic to disengage interior design from architecture. I've used this method decisively, by establishing interior design and architecture as 'absolute Others', to allow me (as an architecturally educated interior designer) to essentialise the disciplines in question. This chapter is presented in response to the Manichean dialectic used. When investigating the 'Other'-relationship between the two disciplines it is important to consider the 'Self'-relationship of each. The ontology of interior design presented in Chapter 1 was a depiction of the discipline's relationship with the 'Other'. To oppose the paradoxes that may arise from cross-reference to architecture this chapter will study interior design's relationship with itself.

The displacement of 'the West' in post-colonial African and Oriental thought is applied as a lens to comprehend the influence of 'architecture' and 'decoration' on interior design's ontology. Although interior design places emphasis on its difference from interior decoration, the decorative aspect is a constituent of its body of knowledge that should be embraced.

This chapter will consider post-colonial thinking and the role of the 'Other' in the experience of embarrassment. If embarrassment is considered as an ontological experience where the public image does not correlate with the sense of self, it can be supposed that interior design feels embarrassed about its decorative aspects. Interior design will then distance itself from interior decoration and employ mechanisms (e.g. title change) to put this differentiation into effect.

### 3.2 EMBARRASSMENT

This section will consider the ontological function of embarrassment by investigating the professional embarrassment that a profession (or the professionals personally) may suffer due to perceived inaccuracies that may emerge from its relationship with other professions. Reference will be made to the disciplines under discussion only as far as it will explicate professional embarrassment. To enable me to eliminate architecture from the discussion I will briefly refer to the efforts of post-colonial theorists to displace 'the West' in identity formation.

Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 emphasised the differences between interior design and architecture. This emphasis was dependent on a dialectic position which placed importance on the fundamental character of the two disciplines to draw distinct and essentialist images. James G. Carrier (1992:205; 209, *endnote*) warns that essentialism in the study of conceptual social structures (e.g. 'marriage', 'class', 'gender inequality', and in this case *profession*) may decay into conceptual essentialism that may be judged futile by future researchers. Partial and theory-laden depictions of conceptual entities would become valueless or incomprehensible if the significant conceptual entities changed (Carrier, 1992:209, *endnote*). As remedy he suggests a 'comprehensive approach' which means "attending to the relationships between different areas of social life" (Carrier, 1992:205-206); i.e. the relationships should be studied, not the entities.

The dialectic process entails the imposition of an identity created in "dialectic opposition to another identity" (Carrier, 1992:197). This is a process of self-definition by opposition to the 'Other'. Representations are created by the juxtaposition of two opposed essential entities. "[E]ach is understood in reified, essentialist terms, and each is defined by its difference from the other element of the opposed pair" (Carrier, 1992:196). The 'Same' defines the 'Other' in terms of the 'Same', but the 'Other' defines itself in terms of the 'Same' in the same way both define the 'Same' in terms of the 'Other'. This privileges the 'Same' as the standard of definition; the 'Same' is established as the normative (Carrier, 1992:196). "When we inquire about the Other [it] implies inquiring about one's own self, for whom others are 'other'" (Löwith in Eze, 1997:341). This phenomenon is evident in the ontological depictions of the disciplines in question.

*... essentializations are inseparable. At the most obvious level, they define the two ends of the evolutionary continuum. Equally, they define each other dialectically, in that they are generated as opposites of each other ... Each pole, then, defines what is significant about the other, dialectically (Carrier, 1992:200).*

The African philosopher, Mabika Kalanda, raised this issue in a specific form. He proposed that the “intellectual’ and rhetoric schematizations of ‘the West’” should be examined because these schematizations could be damaging to the wellbeing of post-colonial Africa (Eze, 1997:340). At its core the question is, how does Africa’s sense of the West distort its sense of self (Eze, 1997:340)?

Kalanda states that in post-colonial Africa, this has led to the “imperialists and communists [being accused of our every failing]” (Kalanda in Eze, 1997:340). For the purposes of this study it could be rephrased: interior design’s schematizations of architecture and interior decoration may be damaging to its own ontology; furthermore, the disciplines in question should not blame each other for their inability to attain full professional status.

African literary criticism is characterised by an African awareness of its relationship with the West and the endeavour to replace the West in its self-identification efforts (Izevbaye, 1990:127). This creates a perpetual relationship with the ‘Other’ which may be beneficial for understanding oppositional identities. Emmanuel Eze (1997:343) states that Africa’s engagement with the West becomes susceptible to “the realm of the radically mythical”, where the West is, simultaneously, Africa’s greatest threat and its greatest benefactor. This leads to the ‘Absolute West’, as opposed to an objective West.

A dominant theme has emerged in contemporary African criticism where relationships are depicted in “terms of an increasingly conscious, assertive self discovering [of] its separateness from an ‘other’” (Izevbaye, 1990:128). As stated earlier, this creates representations through the juxtaposition of opposed essentialist entities. A précis of Said by Carrier states that radical separation and opposition present an ‘Other’ that is absolutely different and which promotes the difference between the familiar (us) and the strange (them). This process aids self-identity formation by exaggerating the difference between what is close and what is far away (Carrier, 1992:195), and imparts an ontological present tense, “in which objects are what they are *because* they are what they are, for once, for all time, for ontological reasons that no empirical matter can either dislodge or alter” (Said in Carrier, 1992:196). The ontological present tense distorts the social imagery, which in turn systematically distorts the knowledge system (Eze, 1997:343-4). Eze (1997:343-4) says that this has “rendered us enigma – even to ourselves”. Is interior design’s ontological crisis based on its “increasingly conscious, assertive self discovering of its separateness from an ‘Other’”?

This chapter argues that the essentialisation of interior design and its ‘Others’ (both architecture and interior decoration) may contribute to its ontological crisis. Carrier states that essentialisation itself is not problematic; it is unavoidable since the function of naming it would essentialise certain characteristics. “Instead, the problem is a failure to be conscious of essentialism, whether it springs from the assumptions with which we approach our subjects or the goals that motivate our writing” (Carrier, 1992:207). This chapter is an attempt to consciously investigate the effect of essentialist depictions of interior design on interior designers.

Carrier sums up the dangers as such:

*While making sense of this difference in terms of paired, dialectically generated essentializations may be understandable, or perhaps even unavoidable, it has consequences that may be undesirable. It can lead to an exaggerated and even false sense of difference. Difference itself can become the determining, though perhaps unspoken, characteristic ... so that signs of similarity become embarrassments, to be ignored or explained away in terms that maintain the purity of Us and Them. In a sense, signs of similarity become polluting (Carrier, 1992:203) [my emphasis].*

As indicated above, embarrassment may serve an ontological function, or may be experienced for ontological reasons. Embarrassment is an emotion that is typically experienced by the individual, as contemplated by Erving Goffman in 'Embarrassment and social organization' (1956). It is described as an ontological experience which occurs when an individual feels that an incompatible definition of the self is projected (Goffman, 1956:264). If the ontologically opposed pair serves as the basis of identity formation, it is easy to understand how "signs of similarity become embarrassments". Goffman (1956:265) expands the experience of embarrassment to include factions or groups, if embarrassment is experienced by a representative of the group. I will assume that a profession may experience embarrassment due to the experience of embarrassment by individual professionals.

*Behind a conflict of identity lies a more fundamental conflict, one of organizational principle, since the self, for many purposes, consists merely of the application of legitimate organizational principles of one's self. One builds one's identity out of claims which, if denied, give one the right to feel righteously indignant (Goffman, 1956:271).*

Embarrassment includes more than mere ontological confusion. Two theories for the causes of embarrassment are presented by Sabini *et al* in 'Who is embarrassed by what?' (2000): firstly, 'social evaluation theory' states that people become embarrassed when "their self esteem is eroded because their esteem in the eyes of others has been eroded" (2000:214). Secondly, embarrassment is caused by a disruption of social performance (Sabini *et al*, 2000:214). Thus when the ontological crisis takes place it indicates a loss of social esteem and a disruption of social performance.

Douglas defines embarrassment as:

*...a sign that the self is deeply engaged ... It is the sense of disparity between what ought to be and what is there; it is the fear of seeming to be what one is not, of being seen to strive to be more than one should, or less. So complicated are the turns of embarrassment that it makes the person uncomfortably aware of seeing how he seems to others, and even of seeing that they see what he sees ... Essentially embarrassment is the response to judgement, and depends on the capacity to judge (Douglas, 1996:75).*

When discussing interior design, this embarrassment is evident in its relationship with both architecture and interior decoration. As a discipline, interior design is particularly embarrassed by the signs of similarity to interior decoration. Interior design's main drive towards professional status is an attempt to distinguish itself from interior decoration. This is understandable, and may be based on identity formation created from an ontologically opposed pair (as Martin (2008:5) states, "*interior decoration is not interior design*"), but the professional identity is more complex. The complexity may be manifest in the way interior design emphasises its decorative aspects when defining itself against architecture, and its architectural aspects when opposing interior decoration.

Carrier (1992:206) states that a "comprehensive approach will help counter the tendency to grant a unity and determinacy to [essentialist] entities". The next section will consider the inclusion of interior decoration in the perceptions of interior design's identity as a source of professional embarrassment.

### 3.3 "INTERIOR DECORATION IS NOT INTERIOR DESIGN"

The previous section established that 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. It was also demonstrated that

ontological essentialism in the opposed pair may lead to a situation where signs of similarity lead to the experience of embarrassment.

It was established in Chapter 2 that ‘downward’ specialisation in the architectural profession sets up the emergence of a professional hierarchy.<sup>1</sup> 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, 2000:68).*

This section will consider interior design’s essentialist relationship with interior decoration, and indicate interior design’s embarrassment 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 (particularly in the interior design television programme) tend to condense the practice of interior design to its decorative aspects. The response by interior design is embarrassment, since its technical aspects (especially those that pertain to ‘health, safety and welfare’) are undermined. This in turn weakens the discipline’s attempts to establish its professional ground.

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, 2007:231). In the discussion of the ontology of interior design in Chapter 1, I pointed out the source of interior design’s commercial focus.<sup>2</sup> Andrew Stone (2007:231) elaborates that this is not a reluctance to be associated with soft furnishings but with the nineteenth-century image of decoration and its implication that decorators are suppliers of products to wealthy clients, i.e. as ‘trade’ or ‘amateur’. “Both imply a diminishment of a nascent professionalism” (Stone, 2007:231). To illustrate the point I will refer to essentialist depictions of interior design on television.

### Essentialist depictions of interior design on television

*...home improvement and personal styling are becoming increasingly important markers of self-identification, with these [lifestyle television] programmes providing key information regarding lifestyle consumption (Gorman-Murray, 2006:229).*

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:vii) 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 (2007:69) conclude from focus group research that television programmes labelled as ‘interior design’ are “glorified exercises in decorating”; these programmes create an image of interior design as an amateur occupation which trivialises the profession. Havenhand (2004:33) declares that television shows “perpetuate the image of a feminized, self-expressive, decorative, and superficial kind of interior design”. Martin identified six myths about interior design as portrayed by television: the goal of design is to astonish the client; quality and speed are synonymous; anyone can be an interior designer; good design is ‘trendy and cool’; design is either very expensive or very cheap and interior designers are ‘zany, flamboyant airheads’ (Martin in Waxman and Clemons, 2007:vii and Martin in Chaney, 2007:28-29). The

1 Refer to page 22.

2 Refer to page 13.

sources cited portray a negative stance, or dismay, experienced by the discipline regarding its *television persona*.

To gain an understanding of the causes of this phenomenon I will refer to a number of sources. In her Masters dissertation, *Interior design identity*, Sarah Ashley Chaney (2007) thoroughly investigates the role of television in the public perception of interior design (especially in the section entitled, 'Television design myths' (Chaney, 2007:8-31)). Andrew Gorman-Murray (2006) evaluates the images of gay domesticity in lifestyle and home-decoration television programmes in 'Queering home or domesticating deviance?'. For the purposes of this study, I will focus on the social myths that are revealed regarding the innate knowledge of interior design that is assumed. In 'Transformation scenes' Deborah Philips (2005) investigates the transformation of designers into television personalities. Lastly, Eugenia Bone (1996) investigates the popular image of interior design in *The ASID test*, although she does not specifically highlight the influence of lifestyle television. From the existing literature it is clear that this phenomenon does not warrant further research. I will highlight the essentialisms that are created concerning interior design and indicate how interior design, in turn, essentialises itself to minimise the implications of its decorative aspects.

To achieve a popular following, interior design makeover programmes must convince their viewers that they themselves are able to reproduce the results that were achieved by television interior designers. These programmes emphasise fast, inexpensive solutions that are achieved with commonplace consumer products. This results in an essentialism of interior design that belies the design process. It undermines the value of the creation of custom-designed objects and it ignores the technical knowledge areas of the discipline. Interior design is essentialised as decoration, with a depiction of decoration as an amateur activity that anybody can do. The interior designer is showcased as a person with 'expert' knowledge of consumer products (Philips, 2005:219). Interior designers are celebrated for their ability to achieve a 'look' with affordable and accessible consumer products; this while their knowledge and skills may be mocked as over-aestheticised or intellectual (Philips, 2005:219). In the depictions of interior design the design process is avoided and focus is placed on the discipline as an aesthetic conclusion (Everton in Chaney, 2007:23).

Lifestyle programmes featuring gay men (e.g. *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*) are built on the assumption that gay men are intermediaries of good taste; they have inherent knowledge of and skills for domestic styling (Gorman-Murray, 2006:228). The premise is that gay men are 'natural' domestic experts (Gorman-Murray, 2006:230). Philips (2005:221) states two examples of 'personality designers', where the designers' training or design education is not referred to: Laurence Llewellyn-Bowen and Kelly Hoppen 'know' what is in good taste and fashionable without having learnt; their "knowledge is presented as 'natural' and innate". The means to the acquisition of their knowledge is absent from the design discourse (Philips, 2005:222). "[T]he important thing is to know without ever having learnt" (Bourdieu in Philips, 2005:221). This is an indication of the underestimation of acquired knowledge and formal education in the design of interior space; it points to an expectation of inherent, unlearned, knowledge. The design of interiors can thus not be a profession.

Bone (1996:93) states that the enduring public image of an interior designer is the *interior decorator*, 'a lady who shops'. This is an image that interior designers find "exceedingly unflattering". Catherine Bennett scathingly describes it as "the bilious vision of a television interior designer" (Bennet in Philips, 2005:217).

*This withering assessment of the tastemakers and their transformations is a common journalistic response to the phenomenon of the domestic design programme. The designers, however, believe themselves to be a significant conduit for what they call the 'democratization' of design* (Philips, 2005:217).

To define the 'tastemaker' Philips refers to, Pierre Bourdieu states that they have an "arty off-handedness", and their personal style is characterised by their casual capability and an

overt refusal of didacticism (Bourdieu in Philips, 2005:218). In what Gorman-Murray (2006:234) refers to as the 'education-by-entertainment format', the television designer yields to the demands of entertainment television (Phillips, 2005:218). "To be an interior decorator, all you need is a great eye" (Bone, 1996:93).

Although interior design is depicted as an activity that anyone can do, and although television interior designers believe themselves to be a "conduit for the democratisation of design", the tastemakers surround themselves with signs of cultural authority. This offers guarantees of quality to television viewers (Bourdieu in Philips, 2005:221).

*[T]he television designer recurrently makes allusions to 'legitimate culture'; references to styles such as modernist, bauhaus [sic] or art deco abound. This wild range of referencing to artistic styles and movements might be read as postmodern, but it is clearly conducted not in a spirit of irony, but rather as a homage to 'legitimate' and recognized artists, as the seriousness of ... the designer's reverent citations suggest ... These references continue to function as an implicit confirmation of the designer's status as the possessor of a superior stock of cultural capital (Philips, 2005:222).*

To summarise, the television interior designer is depicted as a person who, without explaining the means of cultural acquisition, has innate sensibility, good taste and congenial ability which enables the designer to create a fast and inexpensive 'look'. Interior design is perceived as superficial and mimetic (Havenhand, 2004:33).

Interior designers resist this depiction since it weakens interior design's claim of professionalism. The television interior designer is depicted as a person 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, 1996:93). Interior design cannot professionalise since the public perceives it as otherwise (Bone, 1996:133).

Interior design responds by emphasising its 'health, safety and welfare' knowledge areas (Carpenter, 2007:11); it simultaneously de-emphasises its decorative aspects.

In *The interior design profession's body of knowledge* Martin and Guerin state:

*The design of the interior environment is based on the knowledge areas embraced by the interior designer who considers them all in a holistic manner so that the outcome will fulfil the goals for the interior space ... [Interior construction, codes and regulations] work toward providing safety in all environments (Martin and Guerin, 2005:66).*

Although the IFI's definition of interior design predates lifestyle television<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

The embarrassment experienced by interior design is understandable. Martin (2008:18) states that, although the decoration of domestic space (with attention to colour, finish, pattern and furnishings) 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 in the practice to design a wide range of interior spaces (Martin, 2008:18-19).

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'. This is an ontological response because the self-image of the discipline is incompatible with its public depiction. To counter this occurrence, I will defend the *act* of decoration (but not the *discipline* of interior decoration) as a valuable mode of cultural production.

1 The definition was originally adopted by the IFI General Assembly in May 1983.

2 Refer to page 6.

## In defence of decoration

I will consider decoration in its general practice, but also in its depiction on television, since it is the image of the television interior designer which interior designers find so repellent. The title of this section (“interior decoration is not interior design”) is quoted from an article by Martin (2008) in which she argues for the licensing of interior design in the United States. She (2008:5-7) asserts that interior decoration is not interior design, since the latter is a profession. Martin’s argument is based on the broader body of knowledge which typifies interior design, but it also indicates the low estimation interior design holds of decoration:

*Decoration is held in low esteem because of its association with fashion, taste, and flair. 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:xiii endnote).*

I have indicated that professional embarrassment may lead to interior design overlooking decoration as a valuable mode of production. 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 an earlier source by Martin and Guerin (2005), *The interior design profession’s body of knowledge* (2005), 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, 2008:126).*

Martin and Guerin (2005:52-96) 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, 2005:82).*

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 (‘materials’, ‘finishes’, ‘furnishings’; the inclusion of the word ‘colour’ would have completed the set).

Scott (2008:174) says that the “designer is more inclined than the architect to experiment with new materials”. As an example he mentions Ben Kelly who applies bold new materials, finishes and colour as an interventionist approach (Scott, 2007:182, *endnote*). He also states that white (the absence of colour) signifies timelessness. Because of this interior design has an active association with colour (Scott, 2008:94); Scott (2008:106, *endnote*) states that many notable interior designers make extensive use of 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. Decoration should be considered a valuable mode of cultural production.

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, 2007:109). As noted by Anderson *et al* (2007:xiii, *endnote*) this may be interpreted as 'shallow materialism'. In the chapter 'On not being seen dead'<sup>1</sup>, Douglas (1996:77-105) makes a case for consumption as cultural output; she specifically states that culture is the arbiter of taste (Douglas, 1996:80). Thus, if culture has an influence on the taste of consumers, it will directly influence their consumer behaviour and choices.

In *The world of goods*, Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood (1979:37) postulate that consumption is the arena in which culture is defined and deliberated. As example they sketch the habits of a 'housewife':

*The housewife with her shopping basket arrives home: some things in it she reserves for the household, some for the father, some for the children; others are destined for the special delectation of guests. Whom she invites into her house, what parts of the house she makes available to outsiders, how often, what she offers them for music, food, drink, and conversation, these choices express and generate culture in its general sense ... Ultimately, they are moral judgments about what a man is, what a woman is ... These are consumption choices which may well involve heavy costs, and which, when made, may determine the evolution of culture* (Douglas and Isherwood, 1979:37).

In this context the interior decorator in general, and the television interior designer specifically, must be reconsidered; both may be thought of as 'tastemakers'. I indicated earlier that decorators are remunerated for their *taste* (which is innate and unlearned) and are considered 'experts' of consumer products. Philips (2005:218) identifies the tastemaker as a cultural intermediary, a person who is able to communicate their opinions across a range of media. Bourdieu describes the cultural intermediary as "halfway between legitimate culture and mass production" (Bourdieu in Philips, 2005:215). Decoration is a way to transform cultural capital obtained from museums, galleries, buildings and artworks into affordable goods that emulate a style. In this case the designer is an intermediary with specialist knowledge, who acts to benefit 'ordinary people' (Phillips, 2005:215).

Douglas summarises Miller's theory of emulation as such:

*According to the theory of emulation, the envious lower classes keep copying the upper-class styles, and the upper keep trying to distinguish themselves, so the style for luxuries seeps down ... First happiness goes up as design travels down the social scale, then the upper class begins to be unhappy because its designs are no longer distinctive. It adopts a change, to outpace low-class emulators, and the emulators' happiness goes down, until they gradually catch up again* (Douglas, 1996:56).

In the depiction of decoration on television, the designer's role as cultural intermediary who facilitates emulation by 'democratising' design is visible in the 'ordinary people's' initial reluctance to accept the designer's vision. This may often be expressed as doubt about a paint colour or material finish. Finally, when the results are revealed, the subject is convinced of the designer's correct decision (Phillips, 2005:221).

<sup>1</sup> Originally published as 'In defence of shopping'. I appropriated the phrase 'in defence of decoration' from this text.

This depiction portrays the designer as arrogant and unwilling to listen to the client. It may be one of the sources of discontent for interior designers, since “interior design’s attentiveness to the client established the professional ground” (Stone, 2007:229).

Regardless of this fact, 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, 1979:38).

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, through the application of emulation theory, interpret and disseminate ‘legitimate culture’. Decoration is not merely mimetic, pastiche, or the superficial application of style.

### 3.4 TITLE CHANGE

As stated in the opening paragraph of this dissertation, the focus of the study is identified as “the discipline that designs interior space, or the discipline that alters architecture”.<sup>1</sup> This discipline is identified by a number of pseudonyms, amongst others: interior design, interior architecture, interventional design, space design, and, to some extent, interior decoration. ‘Interior decoration’ is included since the act or practice of interior decoration is sometimes referred to as ‘interior design’. Furthermore, the designation ‘interior design’ emerged after the discipline of interior decoration commercialised and underwent title change.

In Wilensky’s (1964) account of the professionalisation process he identifies title change as a typical step. 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, 1964:144). Wilensky (1964:144) complicates the process by introducing a “pecking order of delegation”. Delegation is the result of the “definition of the essential professional tasks”, which leads to conflict and competition among practitioners of different backgrounds and with outsiders who do similar work (Wilensky, 1964:144).<sup>2</sup>

As indicated in *An ontology of interior design* (Chapter 1)<sup>3</sup> 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, 2001:142).

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. Stone (2007:231) states that ‘interior design’ is differentiated from ‘interior decoration’ because it has corporate and commercial credentials while the latter has a domestic repertoire. The period after the Second World War is characterised by delegation, differentiation and title change between the similar disciplines of interior design and interior

1 Refer to page 2.

2 For more information refer to my investigation of professionalisation and discussion of architecture’s professionalisation in Chapter 2, pages 21-25.

3 Refer to pages 11-15.

decoration. Although decoration is a valid component of interior design, it is understandable, in this context, that interior designers are reluctant to be essentialised as interior decorators.

Wilensky (1964:144) states that many occupations are unsuccessful in their attempts to achieve title change; as examples he mentions 'morticians' (undertakers) and 'salvage consultants' (junk dealers). Unsuccessful title change may explain the number of pseudonyms for a single discipline (e.g. 'interior design', 'interior architecture', 'interventional design' and 'space design').

To place these titles in chronological order will lead to oversimplification<sup>1</sup>, but there seems to have been, especially in the Anglophone world, a flourishing of new titles since the 1990's. I stated in the introductory chapter of this dissertation that 'interior design' will be my preferred title.<sup>2</sup> Not only is it the oldest of the terms, it is also the most universal 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 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 been involved in the design of interior space through the treatment of walls, ceilings, floors and objects (Klingenberg, 2006:62). The term is not widely used and Klingenberg also refers to 'interior design' and 'interior architecture' intermittently. In my opinion the term is extremely vague and may be used to describe any of the space making disciplines, regardless of practice or scale. 'Space design' may be similarly applicable to urban design or landscape architecture, and will not be considered further.

Scott (2008:210) uses the term 'interventional design' in *On altering architecture*. The book is a considerable contribution to the interior design body of theory. In his acknowledgements and preface he refers to 'interior design' (2008:xiii) and 'art school designers' (2008:xv). Scott refers to Carlo Scarpa, an architect, 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 ('space design'), the designation lacks wide support and it will not be considered further.

This leaves the title which claims the interior realm, *interior architecture*.

For the purposes of the argument I will take some chronological liberties regarding the emergence of the term, and refer to the Anglophone world only.<sup>1</sup> The literature study reveals that the term emerged in Kurtich and Eakin's book (*Interior architecture*) for the first time in 1993, and indicates the start of a second course of title change.<sup>3 4</sup>

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

1 The term '*Innenarchitektur*' precedes the term 'interior architecture' by almost a century, but the German speaking world falls outside the scope of this study. In Norway the title is older than 60 years (Klingenberg, 2006: 60). Furthermore, the construct 'profession' seems to be peculiar to the Anglosphere (Freidson, 1986: 32-35).

2 Refer to page 6.

3 Kurtich and Eakin (1993:3) state that the title was first used in the 1970's.

4 The IFI definition utilise 'interior design' and 'interior architecture' as synonyms, in this case it does not indicate title change.

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 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 (1964:146).*

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 (interior design to interior architecture) 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 will 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, "different and subtle conceptual constructs" serve as parameters to differentiate interior design and interior architecture (2004). In his definition:

*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. In my opinion, to use the form of contractual agreement to differentiate between interior design and interior architecture is an artificial construct.

In 'Interior Architecture', Frazer Hay (2007:33) 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 the building. This displays similarities to Klingenberg's definition of 'space design'. According to Hay (2007:33), 'interior architecture' emerged over the last 30 years to fill the void between interior design and architecture. Hay (2007:36-37) continues to describe 'interior architecture' as an approach to design interventions in existing buildings.

Similarly, Graeme Brooker and Sally Stone 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 (Brooker and Stone, 2007:126).*

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, 2007:126).*

This is a similar approach 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.

To place the differentiation in context, the definition of interior design that I used in the opening paragraph of this dissertation 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.<sup>1</sup> 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* states:

*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 (2007:vii).*

Havenhand (2004:35) sees this as title change and an attempt to "correct the inherent perceived inferiority of interior design [to architecture]". 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 (Havenhand, 2004:35-36).*

To rename the practice and product of interior design as interior architecture firstly relies on the essentialisation of architecture. Hildebrandt 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 millennia. 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 (Hildebrandt, 2004).*

Furthermore, Havenhand is correct when she states that the title 'interior architecture' re-establishes interior design's supplemental position. Hildebrandt is guilty of this when he

<sup>1</sup> Refer to page 6.

defines interior architecture: “Interior architecture is never removed from the architectural condition” (Hildebrandt, 2004). In Attiwill’s (2007:59) opinion ‘interior design’ “is understood without implicit reference to architecture”.

I have used post-colonial thinking to illustrate the inherent problems that emerge for the ontological pair. Although ‘interior architecture’ and ‘architecture’ do not form an opposed pair, the problems persist. To repeat Carrier’s opinion:

*Equally, they define each other dialectically, in that they are generated as opposites of each other ... Each pole, then, defines what is significant about the other, dialectically* (Carrier, 1992:200).

If interior design undergoes title change and is renamed ‘interior architecture’, it is no longer able to exist as an independent discipline. It will always be dependent on an essentialist definition of ‘what is significant’ about architecture.

Furthermore (as Wilensky’s theory of professionalisation, and the definitions stated for interior architecture above illustrate), 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: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.

### 3.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter was presented in response to the Manichean dialectic employed in the previous chapters; as such it made moderate reference to architecture.

The chapter analysed post-colonial thinking to indicate how essentialism in the ontologically opposed pair may lead to embarrassment. Embarrassment is an emotion which is experienced as the result of an ontological crisis, mainly of being seen ‘as what one is not’.

Depictions of interior design on television may essentialise the discipline to its decorative aspects. In this situation interior designers may feel embarrassed for the discipline, since ‘interior decoration is not interior design’. Decoration is a valuable mode of cultural production, but may be underestimated because of interior design’s embarrassment over its decorative aspects.

In the process of professionalisation, occupations may undergo title change in an attempt to delegate their less desirable tasks and to differentiate themselves from less professional occupations. Interior design underwent title change after the Second World War, when interior designers increasingly worked in the commercial sector, as opposed to interior decoration which has a domestic repertoire.

Interior design may be in the midst of a second round of title change, to interior architecture. If this is achieved it will permanently establish interior architecture in an ontological pair with architecture. Furthermore, it may lead to delegation which will eliminate decoration from the discipline’s repertoire. This will eliminate a valuable mode of cultural production from the discipline’s practice which will impoverish the discipline. The hypothesis is supported.

# CHAPTER 4

## A NORMATIVE POSITION FOR INTERIOR DESIGN

### Subproblem 4

Can a normative position for interior design be formulated under the *status quo*?

### Hypothesis 4

A normative position for interior design may be formulated through heuristic research in response to the *status quo*.

### Research methods

The subproblem will be elucidated by conducting a literature study to determine what current normative theory is.

The research findings of the previous chapters will be collated to establish a depiction of the *status quo*.

Heuristic research will establish a viable and positive alternative to the status quo, which will be presented as a normative position for interior design.

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Despite the intended dialogue between the preceding chapters, they were presented (and may to some extent be read) as autonomous essays. This chapter will consolidate the research findings. The findings will be presented as a normative position for interior design.

The study does not propose a normative position on how interior design should be conducted or what makes 'good' interior design, but rather *what* interior design is (following the study of its relationship with architecture). This normative position should not be seen as 'restrictive' but rather as 'open'; nor does it see interior design and architecture forever locked in an ontologically opposed pair.

The research was conducted in a manner in which 'the individual becomes totally absorbed in something, relates it to himself, and begins to understand it'<sup>1</sup>; in this situation the primary focus is neither the objective realm nor my own subjectivity (Rowe, 1987:76). The research was conducted creatively, and the research question was considered as open-ended; it is therefore ambiguous in its nature.

It was stated in the introductory chapter that the dissertation follows a liberal plural meta-theoretical approach. I wish to reiterate the stated description:

*... it recognizes multiple, sometimes contradictory, theories and the inherent equality of these theories. The study recognizes multiplicity with its references to individuality and equality, which includes the equality of dissimilar, even contradictory, viewpoints. Additionally, in the pluralist tradition it recognizes the rights of groups to maintain their individual traditions; it does not attempt to offer value judgments over interior design or architecture, and recognizes that both disciplines have valuable traditions.*<sup>2</sup>

This chapter is presented with two goals in mind: firstly, it aims to consolidate the research findings of the previous chapters; secondly, it aims to answer the new question that has emerged from the study, namely: in a situation where interior design has been freed from the earlier inequitable dialectic bond with architecture, what would a normative position for the discipline be?

To achieve the chapter's twin goals they will be dealt with in synthesis: the consolidated research findings will sketch the *status quo*, and the normative position will provide an answer. The chapter will offer a brief analysis of normative theory to find an appropriate definition which considers the validity of an individual proposing a normative position for the collective. This will be followed by the consolidated research findings in abbreviated form. Finally, the dissertation will conclude by stating a normative position for the discipline.

## 4.2 APPROPRIATE NORMATIVE THEORY

This section will introduce the concept of 'normative theory' to elucidate the study. The section must find an appropriate definition for normative theory and, through heuristic reasoning, integrate the different definitions of normative theory (as defined by others) in the quest for a relevant normative theory for the discipline of interior design. It will evaluate the research conducted in the preceding chapters to determine if this study may be seen as representing a normative interior design theory.

Before normative theory is defined it is important to realise a position that will mediate between the demands of the institution (the collective) and the individual, since normative theory requires the problematic situation where the individual is seen as disputing the *status*

1 The description is paraphrased from Mallin's description of heuristic reasoning in Rowe (1987: 76).

2 Refer to page 6.

*quo* on behalf of the collective. If it is considered that a “designer’s world view is the basis for [his] normative position on design” (Lang, 1987:222), the meta-theory of this dissertation offers an important apparatus to deal with this situation.

The ‘pluralism’ that the meta-theory claims is regarded as “a corner-stone of democracy because it features multiple centres of power, counters authoritarianism, and provides the basic grist for political debate” (Dryzek and Niemeyer, 2006:635). Likewise, liberalism is not merely the celebration of diversity, since diversity is dependent on mechanisms to manage conflict (Dryzek and Niemeyer, 2006:635). To facilitate the argument I will consider ‘interior design’ as an institution or a collective community. In *How institutions think*, Douglas (1986) offers an anthropological perspective on collective thinking. She describes communities as ‘thought worlds’ which are expressed in a particular style. Within the community, individuals share their thoughts and harmonize their preferences, mediated by the ‘thought style’ which defines their experience and determines their moral understanding. Douglas (1986:128) poses this as the way to collectively make ‘big decisions’ within the institution. To explain the collective morality she offers the following:

*Our social interaction consists very much in telling one another what right thinking is and passing blame on wrong thinking. This is indeed how we build the institutions, squeezing each other’s ideas into a common shape so that we can prove rightness by sheer numbers of independent assent. So much is this claim to intellectual independence recognized as a basis of our social life that moral philosophy takes its stand at that very point (Douglas, 1986:91).*

This is not to say that the collective group acts as one mind; neither can an individual express the collective petition. Within institutions individuals sacrifice some independence. What Douglas refers to as ‘rightness by numbers’ is an indication that normative theory’s validity is founded in consensus. Normative consensus is the agreement on the values (‘right thinking’) which will drive the decision-making process.

This creates difficulties: self-regarding motives are the basis for rational behaviour and individual rational choice has difficulty with the concept of collective thinking (Douglas, 1986:9). Some form of mediation between the self and the collective must be found. To enable me to take a normative position, I must assume that I am, even in my individuality, part of a group of individuals with a shared ‘thought style’, and that the ‘rightness’ of my position will be proven by independent assent. I must act in the faith that my study on the ontology of interior design grants me the insight to understand it as an institution.

To identify an appropriate definition of the basis, content, role and requirements of normative theory I will consider the works of Rowe (*Design thinking*, 1987), Jon Lang (*Creating architectural theory*, 1987) and Paul-Alan Johnson (*The theory of architecture*, 1994).<sup>1</sup>

Johnson summarises Rowe and Lang’s work thus:

*[In Lang’s definition, the normative position] involves prescriptions for action through agreed norms, manifestos, design principles, and philosophies arising from an ideological position of what ought to be. Rowe’s normative positions each follow the Hegelian triad of thesis, antithesis, synthesis, which for Rowe are (1) the identification of a contentious problem or issue, (2) an assessment of these matters in current practice and their missed potential, and (3) a counterproposal resolving them (Johnson, 1994:27).*

<sup>1</sup> The work of Peter Rowe was chosen for its lucid writing and deep analysis, while Jon Lang’s reliance on the behavioural sciences is an approach I find particularly applicable to interior design. Paul-Alan Johnson offers a later perspective on the works of Rowe and Lang while delivering a ready comparison between the two authors.

In Lang's (1987:16) opinion normative theory is based on ideology and since it deals with creativity it cannot be scientific: "[n]ormative theory consists of the overtly value-laden statements of ... what ought to be" (Lang, 1987:14-16).

*[N]ormative theory is concerned with the different positions that have been taken or might be taken on what the built environment and/or the design process should be. It is concerned with the views of different designers or schools of design on what the role of the designer is, what a good environment is, and how the design process should be carried out* (Lang, 1987:19).

This study is intended as an inquiry into the ontology of interior design by investigating its relationship with other disciplines (specifically architecture, and to a lesser extent interior decoration). It was stated at the outset that the dissertation will be presented as a normative position; as such it should make statements about 'what ought to be'. It was established in Chapter 1 that architectural theory is concerned with the ontological question, *what is architecture?*; and the utopian question, *what ought to be?*<sup>1</sup> This study, therefore, falls within the realm of architectural theory. As normative theory this dissertation does not address what the built environment or the design process should be; it rather addresses what the relationship between interior design and architecture should be.

Lang includes the concept of 'value laden statements' in his description, and introduces subjectivity as a valid component of normative positions. Both the research methods and the meta-theory employed in this study make allowances for subjectivity; it places more importance on *doxa* than *episteme*. Large components of this dissertation are qualitative and reliant on value judgements, not quantitative or factual statements. The pursuit of a normative position is a political act. It involves active participation in the discourse (Johnson, 1994:29). In Rowe's words:

*All positions, of course, can be seen as ideological or biased to some degree. They clearly favor one set of circumstances over others. If they are to be coherent, all must contain some line of argument. And if they are to hold designers' attention, all are required to sustain claims of legitimacy and centrality* (Rowe, 1987:121).

Rowe (1987:147-8) states that normative positions should address the important issues of the moment and comprehensively address and define the realm of design. The timeliness of normative positions has a poignant resonance with the construct of 'temporality' in interior design's ontology. It was established in the introductory chapter that this dissertation's realm of enquiry addresses a timely problem. As far as addressing what design is, this study is an investigation of the ontology of interior design. It does not indicate clear boundaries for the profession, but it defines the discipline broadly. However, much remains unsaid.

Theoretical positions offer at least a tacit assumption of intertemporal transcendence (Rowe 1987:149). If 'temporal' is understood to mean both 'worldly' and 'timely', then theoretical positions form part of a larger body that includes, or refers to, theories of other disciplines, or other times. Since interior design is a young discipline, this intertemporal nature is evident, which means that the theory refers to other, older, disciplines (i.e. architecture). The theory forms part of a larger body of architectural theory. Theory should be fundamental and transcend the current time, and its completeness must embrace theoretical aspects which it does not directly address. This is considered a continuation of tacit knowledge which forms part of the architectural urcorpus, or the universal body of theory for which there is consent. I do not wish to question the contents of the urcorpus. Theory is concerned with "that

<sup>1</sup> Refer to page 14.

which lies outside the urcorpus of knowledge” (Rowe, 1987:148). Insofar as this dissertation falls within the realm of architectural theory, the urcorpus can remain unsaid.

In addition to its generality (articulated as having found consensus and being intertemporal), normative theory provides ‘direction’ (Rowe, 1987:149), or becomes a ‘prescription’ (Lang, 1987:13) for action. There is a connection between design thinking, theoretical pronouncements and the products of practice (Rowe, 1987:149). In opposition, it can be stated that theory is a discourse that mediates (Johnson, 1994:29). This dissertation fulfils both roles. In summary, I quote Rowe:

*Theory is assumed to be about general principles with applicability beyond specific cases, and, whether it comes by way of systematic speculation and codification or by way of more indirect experience, to be well substantiated. To the extent that it has a community of subscribers, theory represents a corpus of principles that are agreed upon and therefore worthy of emulation (Rowe, 1987:115).*

Once the *status quo* has been stated in a negative light, and a normative position has been proposed, this study may be considered as normative theory.

### 4.3 THE *STATUS QUO*: THE CONSOLIDATED RESEARCH FINDINGS

The preceding chapters conducted research on the current relationship between interior design and architecture; the consolidated research findings will depict this relationship. The section is organised according to hypotheses (chapters were numbered to correspond with hypotheses). Headings of the first order are indicated in italics.

#### First Hypothesis: ‘Interior design as architecture’s ‘Other’

The first subproblem investigated interior design’s ontology with reference to architecture. The chapter was presented as object-relations oriented criticism and followed a subversive strategy. The Manichean dialectic was employed to place interior design in opposition to architecture to enable me to temporarily disengage the disciplines from each other.

The chapter investigated *the experience of abjection* as a process whereby the ‘Same’/‘Other’ conceptual pair gain individual identities. In contrast with conventional writings on the abject, I depicted abjection in a positive light as the process whereby the ‘Same’/‘Other’ conceptual pair separate and gain autonomous identities, i.e. it is a form of creation.

*An ontology of interior design* was established to investigate interior design’s modes of production. Interior design is a space making discipline that responds to found space, and must be contained in some way. It was indicated that interior design is a young discipline that has its origins both from within architecture and from without (as a women’s profession based in the applied arts and homemaking).

It was postulated that interior design and architecture hold *contested identities* and that, due to the disciplines’ similarity and difference, it is difficult to determine whether they are separate professions. To insist on differentiation I have indicated instances where architectural critics either ignore the interior realm or where the interior realm is seen as a form of defilement. Architecture was essentialised as a utopian discipline which seeks enduring habitation, or a form of permanence. Interior design was contrasted as a temporal and experiential discipline which in its act of alteration illustrates the failure of architecture. The section introduced the notion that architecture is a weak discipline and that its professional status is undermined by interior design in a competitive market.

It was concluded that, despite large similarities, the beings of architecture and interior design hold differing views. Architecture is inclusive and considers the design of interiors to

fall within the architectural realm, while interior design is exclusive and presents itself as a distinct discipline of alteration.

### Second Hypothesis: 'Professional marginalisation'

The second subproblem considered the marginalisation of interior design in the architectural profession. Following the ontological differences that were established, it was hypothesised that architecture must marginalise interior design to protect its own professional status. The chapter considered professionalisation theory and offered critical commentary on the disciplines' professional status.

The theory of *professionalisation* indicated that an occupation must acquire and control a discrete, autonomous field of expertise to enable it to establish a monopoly of services. When another discipline has a similar body of knowledge, title or practice it will be a threat to the identity and monopoly of the profession in question.

*Architecture's incomplete professionalisation* was demonstrated by indicating that the profession fails to protect both its title and its practice. Unlike other professions, architecture is unable to protect its practice. Furthermore, the architectural profession encourages the emergence of other disciplines on the margins of its broad body of knowledge, leading to specialisation and downward delegation which establishes a hierarchy in the built environment professions.

To explore the ways in which *the marginalisation of interior design* is achieved I referred to two critical case studies. The first indicated that the architectural profession in the United States actively opposes the licensing efforts of interior designers. The second considered the failed attempts by the architectural profession in South Africa to monopolise interior design services through legislation. The case studies illustrated the active and passive marginalisation of interior design by the architectural profession.

It was concluded that although architecture is an old discipline, it has only recently been professionalised; as such it is a young, indeterminate profession which is facing societal pressure to deprofessionalise as it struggles to maintain its social utility. Under these circumstances architecture must marginalise the peripheral architectural disciplines to protect its own professional status.

### Third Hypothesis: Professional embarrassment

The third subproblem investigated interior design's embarrassment over its decorative aspects. The subproblem was considered in such a manner as to oppose the paradoxes that might arise from cross-reference to architecture. To achieve this, interior design's relationship with itself was studied.

The ontological function of *embarrassment* was investigated. It was established from post-colonial philosophy that identity formation based on the ontologically opposed pair may lead to a situation where signs of similarity may lead to the experience of embarrassment. Embarrassment is an emotion that is experienced when an ontological crisis occurs, primarily when one is perceived for what one is not.

Interior designers may feel personally embarrassed when their discipline is essentialised as interior decoration; the conventional reaction is to state that '*interior decoration is not interior design*'. This aspect was explored in two ways: firstly, I investigated the essentialist depictions of interior design on television. Interior design is reluctant to be defined as interior decoration because decoration's residential connotations undermine interior design's corporate and commercial aspirations. Secondly, the act of decoration as a valuable mode of cultural production was defended. Decoration was indicated as not merely mimetic, but as an essential aspect of interior design.

I furthermore indicated that due to the process of professionalisation and its own embarrassment, interior design underwent two periods of title change. The first (from 'interior

decoration' to 'interior design') occurred in the period after the Second World War, when the discipline emerged as interior designers received formal education and accepted more commercial commissions. The second period of title change (from 'interior design' to 'interior architecture') is contemporaneous to my study. It is clear from the process of essentialising interior design as decoration that the first period of title change was unsuccessful.

It was concluded that due to the embarrassment over its decorative aspects interior design may be undergoing a second round of title change which will permanently establish a dialectic relationship with architecture. Furthermore, 'downward' delegation may eliminate decoration from its practice, which will impoverish the discipline.

### The status quo

In summary, the *status quo* can be described as a situation where the architectural disciplines have attained incomplete professional status. The stages of professionalisation may be arranged on a continuum from no professional status (e.g. interior decoration), through embryonic professionalism (e.g. interior design), to mature but incomplete professionalism since no service monopoly is established (e.g. architecture). The situation is made more complex because the relationship between the disciplines is not formalised, while there are overlapping areas in their bodies of knowledge. Due to competition (both economic and to gain control of a distinct field of knowledge) the disciplines have an abject relationship, which may be described as a relationship where the endeavour to gain separate, discrete identities is characterised by 'downward' delegation, specialisation and differentiation. This leads to the impoverishment of the disciplines, the establishment of hierarchies, and marginalisation which may find expression in title change. The *status quo* has been described as such:

*Architecture has been the creative constraint for interior design to emerge as a distinct profession during the twentieth century (Attiwill, 2007:64).*

It is a primary argument of this dissertation that the situation described is unsatisfactory. The *status quo* can be summarised as a situation where the existence of a dialectic opposite pair ('interior design' : 'architecture') is the main obstacle in the establishment of a discrete identity for interior design.

## 4.4 A NORMATIVE POSITION FOR INTERIOR DESIGN

*Perhaps insisting that the rights of 'concrete others' be taken into account in any universalizing agenda by god-architect, be (s)he (fe)male or not, or at the very least obliging her/him not to ignore the detail and minutiae of life that make it meaningful to most people, will be a sufficiently radical act to realign the profession (Johnson, 1994:172).*

To create a normative position, a counter-proposal to the *status quo* must be stated. The position must be comprehensive, appropriate and convincing. If these criteria are met the normative position will have a high probability of being judged as 'good' and will find consensus, which will be manifested as a group of followers. It is beyond the possibility of this dissertation to test if the normative position meets these criteria.

The practical application of the theory I have constructed in this dissertation would manifest in a formal professional relationship between interior design and architecture, i.e. in the way that the practice of these disciplines are regulated. In this way the differences between the disciplines should be embraced to establish projects of collaboration. This would offer productive potential to the built environment. Positive collaboration is impossible if one discipline is regarded as inferior to another.

A counter-proposal to the *status quo* would contain a situation where the disciplines under discussion (interior design and architecture) have a formal relationship, with discrete autonomous identities, fields of expertise and service monopolies. This is only possible in a

situation where architecture and interior design are considered disciplines of the architectural profession.<sup>1</sup>

To achieve this, the process of abjection must be completed, at which point the 'impossible object' or 'abject' will collapse into the object. The abject achieves autonomy from the subject and emerges with a distinct identity. Kristeva (1982:210) describes this as "the sublime point at which the abject collapses in a burst of beauty that overwhelms us".

The following three actions are proposed. They are ordered and respond to the subproblems:

### i) Deconstruct the ontological pair

This action responds to the first subproblem which concluded that interior design and architecture are locked in an ontological pair. Interior design is locked in two ontological pairs: 'interior design' : 'architecture'; and 'interior design' : 'interior decoration'. Although this dissertation investigates both, the main investigation is focussed on the relationship between interior design and architecture. This section will therefore deal primarily with the 'interior design' : 'architecture' ontological pair.

As far as the definition of architectural work ('the design of interventions in the environment for which documentation is produced') is concerned, interior design is an architectural discipline. The tension between the disciplines emerges from this fact.

In response to the 'interior design' : 'architecture' pair there are typically two reactions, both of which support the ontological pair and which prohibit the abject from collapsing, thus prohibiting interior design from gaining an independent, non-supplemental identity.

The first response, as discussed in Chapter 3, is what Havenhand (2004: 35) describes as an attempt to correct the inherent perceived inferiority of interior design to architecture. In this attempt interior design emulates architecture and places emphasis on points of similarity. The discipline might even attempt title change and call itself 'interior architecture'. Havenhand (2004:34-35) argues that this position does not dislodge the connection of interior design with the supplemental; furthermore, it may lead to the de-emphasis of aspects of differentiation, especially the decorative aspects of the discipline. This may leave the discipline impoverished.

The second response was purposefully employed as a tactic in Chapter 1. In this case, the Manichean dialectic is used to differentiate the disciplines by placing emphasis on points of variation. Representations are created through the juxtaposition of two essentialist entities. The dangers of this tactic was dealt with in Chapter 3. Firstly, the two essential entities become inseparable and define what is significant about each other dialectically. Here, a distorted sense of the 'Other' may lead to a distorted sense of the self. The ontologically opposed pair also leads to a situation where points of similarity become embarrassing. In this case, aspects of similarity will be de-emphasised, which may also leave the discipline impoverished.

I wish to offer the following alternative to contribute to the collapse of the abject, which will leave interior design and architecture with independent and autonomous, albeit complementary and overlapping, identities. Interior design should develop a body of theory which is neither dependent on emulation nor on dialectic emphasis on points of difference, in order for interior design to reach a theoretical position where the discipline can act as itself, regardless of difference or similarity. The concept of liberal-pluralism allows scope for such a position. The ontological pair must be deconstructed; in other words, the dependent

<sup>1</sup> The German titles for the architectural disciplines, used by the Federal Chamber of German Architects (*Bundesarchitektenkammer/BAK*) – *Hochbauarchitektur*, *Landschaftsarchitektur*, *Innenarchitektur*, and *Stadtplanung* (BAK, 2009) – offer a persuasive precedent.

relationship must be broken. This will be achieved in a response where interior design neither emulates, nor differentiates itself from, architecture.

If interior design does not emulate architecture, the discipline will be enabled to disengage from architecture and embrace its aspects of specialisation (e.g. decoration, smallness of scale, temporality, the importance of 'the image', 'vision and touch', etc.).

If interior design does not try to differentiate itself from architecture by means of the ontologically opposed pair, it will enable the discipline to engage with architecture and celebrate points of similarity (e.g. its studio education, its answering of the normative question, what ought to be?, the design process, communication conventions, etc.).

The deconstruction of the ontological pair requires a combined response that must be applied with circumspection and care. This response is reliant on elements from the two responses that reinforce the ontological pair. It would therefore require constant vigilance and balance to prevent the over-application of one method which will reinforce the ontological pair. It is in the nature of the disciplines that the boundary between them is indeterminate. If it was easy to differentiate the disciplines and establish a clearly defined professional boundary, the research question addressed in this dissertation would be irrelevant. The boundary, however, offers opportunities for creative excellence:

*In architecture, the boundary or margin is metaphorically the location of competition; spheres of creative influence meet, clash, and are adjudicated there* (Johnson, 1994:389).

This dissertation investigates the effects of the 'spheres of creative influence' meeting and clashing. It offers adequate adjudication to resolve the issue.

## ii) Professionalise the discipline of interior design

This action responds to the second subproblem which concluded that architecture must marginalise interior design to protect its own professional status. The research for this study was conducted and presented in South Africa, in a legislative environment that does not recognise or regulate interior design as a profession. As an interior designer and educator who strongly believes in the value of the discipline, this has greatly influenced my motivations for undertaking this study. My subjective involvement in the subject matter is a weakness of the study; however, subjective involvement is a prerequisite for heuristic enquiry.

On its own merits, the South African interior design industry is not a major contributor to the country's gross domestic product, development or employment prospects. Research conducted by the South African Bureau of Standards Design Institute (SABS Design Institute) (2008) reveals that the interior design industry consists of 183 practices which employ between 838 and 1045 people, and earn a total annual revenue of ZAR 246 – ZAR 307million (SABS, 2008:45-46).<sup>1</sup> Even if its indirect contributions are included (e.g. the annual cost of materials specified, or the indirect contributions via its retail and commercial clients) it would be far-fetched to argue that interior design is a major contributor to the South African economy. Despite its pecuniary weakness, it would be unfair to ignore or dismiss the discipline. Interior design is a valid mode of cultural production and expression, It is also the only design discipline that deals primarily with the design of interventions in existing structures.

With the exception of the Department of Architecture at the University of Pretoria the interior design profession in South Africa is traditionally not aligned with the built environment professions. The SABS Design Institute defines a designer as:

*Any person and/or organisation functioning within the disciplines of communication design (excluding advertising), motion graphics, animation and new media design, industrial*

<sup>1</sup> The study allowed for an 11% margin of error for interior design.

*design (including glasses and ceramics), interior design and multidisciplinary design (i.e. eventing, and architects working as furniture designers) (SABS, 2008:10).*

The built environment professions are listed by the CBE as: architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, project and construction management, property valuation, and quantity surveying (South Africa, 2000a:3).<sup>1</sup>

Following the research and arguments of this study, the Department of Architecture (2009) submitted a proposal to the South African Council for the Architectural Profession to establish 'interior architecture' as a discipline within the architectural profession (*Proposal for the creation of the discipline 'Interior Architecture' within the architectural profession*)<sup>2</sup>. In its title the proposal contradicts this dissertation; this was a pragmatic and political act. It is also an act of pre-emptive compromise, a skill I value in the design disciplines (since design problems are so often contradictory, complex and even *wicked*).<sup>3</sup> The Department accepted the architectural profession's career cycle (education, experience, examination and continual practice development) and proposed three registration categories: Professional Interior Architect, Professional Senior Interior Designer, and Professional Interior Designer.<sup>4</sup>

From the viewpoint of this study, the Department in which I operate's proposal can be criticised thus: firstly, on the surface, it seems that we condone the second course of title change, despite my own arguments against it. Secondly, although we do not use the word 'decoration', it seems that we are active agents in the establishment and maintenance of the decoration : design : architecture hierarchy. Thirdly, the proposal calls on the architectural profession to regulate the practice of interior design. This links the disciplines in an ontological pair and seems counterintuitive, since this dissertation has argued that the architectural profession, actively and passively, marginalises interior design to protect its own professional status.

From this study's viewpoint I will defend the Department's proposal:

- The proposal condones title change

The proposal does not condone title change; it considers 'interior design' and 'interior architecture' to be a single discipline. Based on Wilensky's theory it was indicated in Chapter 2 that title change is a typical step towards professionalisation; in this process the change in title serves to reduce identification with previously less professional occupations (e.g. title change from 'interior decoration' to 'interior design').

1 In the realm of inquiry (the ontology of interior design) I am in a unique position. I conduct research on a 'design' discipline within a school for the 'built environment'. Coincidentally, this illustrates interior design's interdisciplinary nature.

2 Refer to Appendix A, page 73.

3 The proposal does not advance this dissertation's aim to disengage interior design from architecture but both was written with the ambition to contribute to the possibility of professional registration for interior designers in South Africa, refer to page 8. Within the South African social political situation, and within the realm of professionalism discussed in this dissertation (refer to pages 21-28), the opportunity to establish interior design as an architectural discipline is an intellectual compromise I am willing to make. The contradictions between this dissertation and our proposal may indicate the ambiguity resulting from a postmodern, liberal-pluralist, heuristic enquiry; contradictions are also always evident between a design problem and its solution. This does not mean to say that all things are valid, or that either option is false.

4 The first version of the proposal suggested the titles: Professional Interior Architect, Professional Interior Designer, and Professional Interior Architectural Technologist. Since submitting the proposal to SACAP I have consulted with Amanda Breytenbach, FADA, University of Johannesburg, who proposed that the title 'Interior Architectural Technologist' be substituted with 'Interior Design Technologist'. Objections to the title 'Interior Architectural Technologist' were also raised at the IID's Education Committee meeting held on 5 May 2009. Following internal consultation in the Department the final list of registration categories was agreed upon with the IID on 24 July 2009 (Professional Interior Architect, Professional Senior Interior Designer, and Professional Interior Designer).

I have stated that our proposal was a pre-emptive compromise. The title 'architect' is protected under South African legislation; the title ('professional interior architect') was aligned with legislation and the architectural profession's career cycle. The title was not employed in the typical manner in that it does not seek to reduce identification with a 'less professional occupation' (i.e. 'interior design'). The Department's proposal recognizes interior design as a profession; if the proposal promoted title change the title 'interior designer' would not be used. Alternatively, it would be easy to find a label which supports title change (e.g. *senior interior architectural technologist*).

- The proposal promotes the decoration : design : architecture hierarchy

The proposal does not promote the decoration : design : architecture hierarchy. Firstly, the proposal acknowledges the contributions of decoration to the built environment but argues that the occupation of interior decoration is a purely creative occupation and that free access to it should not be limited (this follows similar arguments against the regulation of interior decoration, by e.g. Carpenter (2007)). The act of decoration is a valid mode of production for interior design.

Secondly, a pragmatic decision was taken to align the title 'professional interior architect' with 'professional architect'. This is primarily used as a device to indicate a minimum period of study (five years), and to establish the requirement that interior installations of a highly technical nature with a public health and safety concern, or work in sensitive environments, be limited to persons with adequate education and experience. A secondary strategy is to appropriate the title ('architect') in order to deconstruct it in future from a non-dialectic point of view.

The title 'professional interior designer' is aligned to international requirements and usage. It is expected that most registered professionals will practise under this title.

It is an unfortunate, but unavoidable, by-product of the pre-emptive compromise that a pecking-order of 'downward' delegation may emerge. However, as it was argued in Chapter 3 regarding essentialism, consciousness of downward delegation may mitigate its effects.

- The proposal is counterintuitive

The proposal was intuitively guided by the position of the Programme for Interior Architecture within the Department of Architecture. The proposal acknowledges the impossibility of establishing a clear boundary between the architectural disciplines; provision should be made for overlap, flux and collaboration. This establishes healthy competition between the disciplines to exploit the creative potential of the boundary.

In Chapter 2 I discussed two critical case studies to investigate the marginalisation that architecture exerts on interior design. In the United States, after nearly twenty years of lobbying, the interior design profession is still not able to professionalise. Interior design's main opponent in its pursuit is the architectural profession, borne of the economic competition between the disciplines.

In South Africa, interior design's efforts to professionalise are still embryonic and, combined with the interior design industry's relatively small economic role, the discipline does not offer significant economic competition to the architectural profession. In addition, the democratic dispensation places emphasis on the notion of inclusivity which inhibits overt discrimination and exclusion. In this environment the architectural profession does not actively marginalise interior design; however, it did exert some pressure to monopolise architectural services (including interior design).

The proposal is a political act to align interior design with the architectural profession, but in establishing a parallel stream of professional categories it is possible for the discipline to retain autonomy. It is further expected that the inclusion of interior design within the architectural profession will be mutually beneficial and enrich both disciplines.

The ontological pair was sufficiently critically analysed in this dissertation to be disregarded in this case.

It is with a sense of irony that I state: *Allowing interior design to professionalise as an architectural discipline will strengthen the architectural profession.*

### iii) Avoid title change

This action is a response to the third subproblem, which identified title change as a step that will lead to delegation and which may in turn eliminate decoration from the discipline's practice. I dealt extensively with the causes and effects of a second course of title change ('interior design' to 'interior architecture') in Chapter 3. It is not necessary to repeat it here.

However, 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.<sup>1</sup>

Attempts to change the title should be resisted.

The three actions proposed will be synthesised into a proposal for the architectural discipline and will be presented in the Recapitulation.<sup>2</sup>

## 4.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter, the final in the dissertation, was presented as a normative position for interior design.

The chapter instituted a précis of normative theory based on the works of Rowe, Lang and Johnson. In summary, normative theory deals with general principles that are applicable beyond specific cases; it should be general, substantiated, and it must find consensus through independent assent.

The chapter consolidated the research findings by presenting a negative depiction of the *status quo*.

A viable alternative to the status quo (i.e. a *normative position*) was proposed for interior design. The position was presented as a call for action and is summed up as follows: i) deconstruct the ontological pair; ii) avoid title change; and iii) professionalise the discipline of interior design. The Department of Architecture's proposal in this regard to SACAP was investigated and defended from this study's position.

As far as the normative position for interior design was formulated through heuristic research in response to the *status quo*, the hypothesis is supported.

1 Refer to 'An ontology of interior design', pages 11-15; and pages 50 - 51.

2 Refer to Box 2, page 62.

# RECAPITULATION

## THE RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS

## INTRODUCTION

The main research problem contained in this study involved the investigation of the ontology of interior design by considering the marginalisation of the discipline within the architectural profession. In addition, the main hypothesis asserted that interior design has an abject relationship with architecture which leads to its legal and professional marginalisation.<sup>1</sup>

To adequately respond to the main research problem the following questions must be answered:

- What is interior design?
- How can the relationship between interior design and architecture be resolved?

This chapter will conclude by answering these questions concisely. The answers will be presented as a concise identity for interior design and a proposal for the architectural profession. They will be boxed and may be considered as research contributions of this dissertation. The dissertation's findings were collated in Chapter 4; it is not necessary to repeat them here.<sup>2</sup> Finally, the dissertation's other research contributions and proposals for further research will be listed.

## WHAT IS INTERIOR DESIGN? – A CONCISE IDENTITY

An ontology for interior design was established early in this dissertation.<sup>3</sup> The *being* of interior design was elaborated upon through the personification of the discipline and the subsequent deconstruction of the dialectic relationship it has with architecture.

The relationship with architecture was studied as a primary characteristic of the being of interior design. This relationship was considered problematic since it limits the autonomy of each of the disciplines. It was stated in the introductory chapter that Sibley (1998) argues that marginal groups may create spaces of exclusion to reach a form of autonomy.<sup>4</sup> In order to remove realms of exclusion while promoting a sense of autonomy, the relationship was deconstructed and the contradiction removed. It is now possible to describe interior design without reference to architecture.

Throughout the dissertation certain characteristics of this personified discipline became apparent. At the end of the dissertation it is necessary to list these concisely, before removing the personification and defining the discipline abstractly, not as a being, but as a discipline. The characteristics were compiled after a review of the dissertation. They are ordered from the most general to the most specific. Page numbers of their occurrences are indicated as footnotes:

Interior design is a space making discipline<sup>5</sup> in the built environment.<sup>6</sup> It is a method of cultural production<sup>7</sup> and in their working methods interior designers compile drawings and

1 Refer to page 4.

2 Refer to pages 50 - 52.

3 Refer to pages 11 - 15.

4 Refer to page 4.

5 Refer to pages 42, 50, 57.

6 Refer to pages 2, 3, 16, 52, 56.

7 Refer to pages 32, 39 - 41, 45, 51, 54.

construction documents.<sup>1</sup> Interior design works in, or responds to, found space<sup>2</sup> or existing built material;<sup>3</sup> it can therefore be described as a discipline of alteration,<sup>4</sup> adaptation,<sup>5</sup> or adaptive re-use.<sup>6</sup> This confers a temporal aspect on the discipline.<sup>7</sup> Interior design is the design of interior space<sup>8</sup> with a requirement for containment.<sup>9</sup> Finally, the discipline's attentiveness to the client<sup>10</sup> establishes the professional ground.

Its working method, or process, is design, and its products are interior spaces. A definition for interior design is presented in Box 1.

**Interior design is a mode of cultural production which engages in the design of enclosed spaces in existing structures, with emphasis on the design of volume.**

**Box 1:** A definition for interior design.

If a legalistic definition of architecture<sup>11</sup> is considered 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.<sup>12</sup> If this is the case interior design would be an architectural discipline, and would require a formal resolution of the relationship between interior design and architecture.

## HOW CAN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERIOR DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE BE RESOLVED? – A PROPOSAL

The resolution of the relationship between interior design and architecture is dependent on the nature of each as a distinct discipline, or distinct profession. Previous attempts to resolve the matter dealt with it in one of two ways. Interior design was either promoted as a distinct profession separate from architecture, or interior design was equated with architecture. Both

1 Refer to pages 6, 15, 30, 31, 38.

2 Refer to pages 12, 50, 57.

3 Refer to pages 6, 15, 17, 39, 43, 44, 54.

4 Refer to pages 5, 9, 14, 16, 17, 19, 25, 50 - 51,

5 Refer to page 44.

6 Refer to pages 6, 15, 44.

7 Refer to pages 12, 14 - 17, 19, 49.

8 Refer to pages 2, 6, 13, 18, 30, 31, 37 - 39, 41 - 42, 44.

9 Refer to pages 6, 14, 15, 44, 50.

10 Refer to pages 24 - 25, 41.

11 'Architecture is the design of interventions in the environment for which documentation is produced', refer to page 3, *footnote*.

12 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 definition stated in Box 1, since it can purely be used for purposes of legally distinguishing between the disciplines (this may be necessary for work reservation, practice examinations etc.). The definition stated in Box 1 is ontological and allows for the complexity of the discipline's identity, its modes of production and its creative realm.

cases are dependent on a dialectic relationship between interior design and architecture. To date the dialectic has prevented the resolution of the issue. In this dissertation the dialectic relationship was sufficiently deconstructed to enable me to resolve the relationship between interior design and architecture concisely and decisively.

In the Introduction it was stated that:

*... it is not clear if architecture and interior design are distinct professions, or whether they are separate disciplines within the same profession.*<sup>1</sup>

It is important at this time to differentiate between a discipline and a profession.

The nature of professions was deliberated in Chapter 2.<sup>2</sup> It was ascertained in this dissertation that a profession is a full time occupation, for which there exists a discrete, autonomous field of knowledge which enables the profession to eliminate competition for its services. Furthermore, legal protection of the title and practice of the profession are in place.<sup>3</sup> It is a major argument throughout this dissertation that neither interior design nor architecture are able to establish a service monopoly, and there are significant areas of overlap and similarity in their fields of knowledge. The conclusion that architecture and interior design are not distinct professions is therefore inevitable.

In as far as a discipline is a 'branch of learning' it may be argued that interior design and architecture are distinct disciplines. This dissertation established an 'ontology for interior design';<sup>4</sup> furthermore, a 'concise identity' (above) was stated. These pieces of written matter established interior design as a discipline distinct from architecture.

The dialectic deconstruction of the 'interior design' : 'architecture' opposed pair has enabled me to define interior design on its own terms.

A legalistic definition, however, still characterizes interior design as the design of interventions for which documentation is produced (i.e. an *architectural discipline*). In this case it becomes necessary to reorganise the architectural profession as an umbrella profession for a number of related but distinct disciplines or 'branches of learning' (e.g. architecture, interior design, landscape architecture, urban design etc.).<sup>5</sup> This will strengthen the architectural profession and allow it to adequately and in good time establish new architectural disciplines as they emerge.<sup>6</sup>

In this scenario, the profession that was previously known as 'architecture' will be labelled 'the architectural profession'. The activity called architecture, which is the design of interventions in the environment for which documentation is produced, will be an *architectural discipline*.

*Id est* the architectural profession will comprise a number of interrelated but distinct disciplines (e.g. architecture, landscape architecture, interior design, urban design etc.). The disciplines will exist on an equal footing, and collectively their fields of knowledge will comprise one large discrete, autonomous field of knowledge. Although this will not eliminate competition between the architectural disciplines, the architectural profession (as a collective) will finally be able to establish a service monopoly and become fully professionalised. A proposal for the architectural profession is presented in Box 2.

1 Refer to page 5.

2 Refer to pages 21 – 23.

3 Refer to page 23.

4 Refer to pages 11 – 15.

5 I referred to the BAK as a persuasive precedent previously, refer to page 53, *footnote*.

6 The architectural profession's incomplete professionalisation was discussed on pages 23 – 25. The profession's tendency to create architecturally informed disciplines on its periphery is specifically mentioned on page 24.

Establish a single architectural profession to contain the architectural disciplines.

**Box 2:** A proposal for the architectural profession.

At the end of this study I therefore conclude that architecture and interior design are distinct disciplines, but not distinct professions. The autonomy of each is nevertheless preserved.

## THE RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS

The study makes the following contributions:

- Firstly, the study contributes to the current international debate concerning interior design's identity and its relationship with other related disciplines.
- Secondly, the study is conducted from a marginal position and in an interdisciplinary manner (to integrate knowledge from architectural theory, sociology, anthropology and psychoanalysis) to offer an unusual perspective on the research problem.
- Thirdly, the study establishes a comprehensive ontology for interior design.
- Fourthly, it employs Julia Kristeva's construct, the *abject*, in an original manner to comprehend the establishment of professions. This provides a method to disengage from the dialectic Manichean relationship 'interior design' : 'architecture'.
- Fifthly, it offers a viable alternative to the negative and undesirable *status quo*.
- Sixthly, the study establishes a concise, discrete definition for interior design.
- Seventhly, the study proposes a resolution to resolve the dialectic relationship between interior design and architecture by proposing the establishment of a single architectural profession.

## RECOMMENDED FUTURE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study recommends the following research questions:

- Firstly, in the legislative and practice environment of South Africa, what are the professional relationships that exist between the environmental design disciplines? Codify these in terms of policies and legislation to contribute towards the professionalisation of the disciplines concerned.
- Secondly, can the professional, technical and creative capabilities and responsibilities of the environmental design disciplines be determined and formalised to define their monopolies of service?
- Thirdly, considering the ontologies of the environmental design disciplines, what is the nature of distributed design and how can conflict on the design interface be reduced?

- Fourthly, what are the requirements for the horizontal transfer of professionals between the environmental design disciplines?
- Fifthly, what contributions can interior design, in a newly made state suggested in this thesis, and as a discipline primarily concerned with consumption in the commercial sector, make in facilitating the developmental needs of South Africa?
- Sixthly, what is interior design's social responsibility beyond mere pragmatic concerns (e.g. 'inclusive design')?

## CONCLUSION

The dissertation recapitulated by answering two questions, *what is interior design?* and *how can the relationship between interior design and architecture be resolved?* This was presented as a concise identity for interior design and a proposal for the architectural profession. The dissertation concluded that interior design and architecture are distinct disciplines but not distinct professions.

Finally, the study's research contributions were listed, and proposals for future research were presented.

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# APPENDIX A

## PROPOSAL FOR THE CREATION OF THE DISCIPLINE “INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE” WITHIN THE ARCHITECTURAL PROFESSION

The Department of Architecture of the University of Pretoria submitted this proposal to SACAP in 2009 following the research conducted for this study. It is included for information purposes only, and since I am not the sole author it should not be evaluated as part of the dissertation. It should, however, be noted that I played a central role, with my supervisor, Professor KA Bakker, to promote negotiations between SACAP and the IID to establish interior design as an architectural discipline.