

# Standards Essays

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## What is Creativity?

Creativity is an underlying concept throughout the Standards used for evaluating interior design programs. Learning experiences that incorporate creativity are addressed specifically in Standard 4; however, one might also consider the concepts related to creativity as a measure of success throughout the review of student work.

Creativity can be subject to interpretation. For that reason, creativity needs to be defined in greater detail and with more practical purpose in order to be used as a measure of success. What is involved in creativity and how can its aspects be applied in evaluating student work?

Creativity is made up of a number of different dimensions. Based upon a framework of Paul E. Torrance: fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration are frequently used as dimensions of creativity.

- **Fluency** relates to the number of ideas,
- **Flexibility** refers to different approaches or perspectives of an idea,
- **Originality** is often related to uniqueness, and
- **Elaboration** is the enrichment of detail or a layering of ideas within a form or project.

The following concepts, which are more explicit, may help provide greater perspective, as well as additional vocabulary, in evaluating creativity of student work.

- **Innovation.** If design solutions are innovative, they offer imaginative characteristics. If within a program, or within particular courses, the students' solutions are unique and vary greatly from one another, it might be said that the program encourages innovative solutions to design problems. On the other hand, if all, or most, of the students' design solutions are similar and the solutions show little imagination, they are not innovative. Within a particular course or for a particular assignment, this may be explained if the project is more limiting; throughout an entire program it may indicate a lack of one aspect of creativity.
- **Elaboration.** Another function of creativity involves the elaboration of ideas. In looking at student projects, team members may find that the students' ideas are good but that they are not developed enough. They may be lacking in detail or enrichment. In this case, the weakness in the creativity of the projects, or design solutions, is due to insufficient elaboration, or broadening, of ideas or concepts. On the other hand, well-developed solutions, rich in detail, are one indication of creative strength.
- **Flexibility.** If all of a students', or a group of students', design solutions respond to differing problems the same, or are presented in the same or a similar way, the students are showing a lack of flexibility, or resourcefulness. It is interesting to note that students sometimes attribute sameness of response to differing problems as the consistent application of a personal style.

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One concern with the comment that the student work lacks creativity is that the team may actually be referring to aesthetic quality or stylistic quality rather than creativity per se. If what is really meant is that the work lacks aesthetic sensitivity or stylistic quality, then the following might be helpful in describing these qualities:

- **Aesthetic quality.** The combination of textures, line, shapes, spaces, and the depth and complexity of colors in a design project determines the degree to which it is aesthetic. If student projects show well-developed and sensitive use of these elements, this is indicative of aesthetic quality, which is sometimes misinterpreted as creativity. While one might include aesthetic sensibility when speaking of elaboration or enrichment of original compositions, these elements should not be confused with each other.
- **Stylistic quality.** When one speaks of the style seen in a project or series of projects, one is talking about some recognizable coherence or integrity in presentation, or commonality in approach. Such style may belong to an individual, a group (i.e. everyone in a particular program), or it may belong to a particular historical period, or some trend in the current market. A student may show individual style, or may make imaginative use of established styles. Either suggests creativity of style and might be mentioned in conjunction with a comment related to innovation or originality. As an individual's style develops over a long period of time, it may be unfair to expect a student to have established an individual style while in school. But a team should consider whether or not a program encourages this individual development.

Because of the complex nature of a concept like creativity, it is not always easy to understand or even to quantify. Yet, creativity is an integral part of interior design. Therefore, as evaluators of interior design education, it is important that we try to clearly communicate the ways in which a program succeeds or fails to instill this quality in its students. Approaching creativity as being made up of a series of more concrete aspects will help us to do this and perhaps help to educate programs at the same time.

— This discussion of creativity was written by  
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Updated February 2003, September 2009

## What is Global Perspective?

### **Understanding the role of a “Global Perspective” in the education of interior design students.**

In CIDA’s Glossary, “global perspective” is defined as “viewing design with awareness and respect for cultural and social differences of people; understanding issues that affect the sustainability of the planet; understanding the implications of conducting the practice of design within a world market.”

Globalization is a term that has many definitions. Some focus on the flow of goods and services across national boundaries, others are concerned with the connectivity of people and ideas. Our current times have been called the “era of globalization.”

What does this mean for interior design programs and their students? What is the appropriate amount of information for professional level programs and where is this information best presented? The answers may be sought in a close look at the definition.

CIDA’s definition has three distinct parts that can be addressed individually. The first - “viewing design with awareness and respect for cultural and social differences of people” – might be seen as a logical extension of the programming phase of design during which the collection of information about a problem requires a designer to understand the culture in which the client operates. Working in a global market requires the development of good research skills that will enable an interior designer to draw on accurate sources of information to understand social and business cultures different from their own.

The second part - “understanding issues that affect the sustainability of the planet” - recognizes the responsibility that designers have for their decisions regarding processes and materials. These decisions have wide ranging implications extending beyond national boundaries. Understanding the entire lifecycle of materials is only one facet of this responsibility, which also includes building and environmental systems, and products. CIDA has expanded its expectations regarding the components of sustainable design and more guidelines for implementation are provided below under “What is Sustainability.”

The third part of CIDA’s definition – “understanding the implications of conducting the practice of design within a world market” – asks interior designers to consider their role in the design and building process and how it is affected by the interconnectedness of people, place, and information. This third facet takes into account the other two and asks for an understanding of how this knowledge might be applied in practice.

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Using the definition as a guide, programs can place the elements into many different courses and learning experiences. Research skills and programming might be taught in a specific course, but are also a part of every studio to some extent. Issues of individual and group behavior should be expanded beyond those of one particular culture. Information about business practices is also sometimes consolidated but becomes a component of many other technical and design courses. And the issues of global perspective, like universal design, can be woven throughout the curriculum.

To evaluate student understanding one would look for input in the form of project descriptions, research assignments, and lecture topics across technical and design courses. Exposure to professionals with global design experience may enrich student understanding. Outcomes can be seen in concept statements for design solutions, student-selected research topics, and “capstone projects”.

### References and where to learn more:

- Czinkota, Michael R., and Iikka A. Ronkainen. *Best Practices in International Business*. Orlando: Harcourt Brace & Co., 2000.
- Friedman, Thomas L. *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999.
- Friedman, Thomas L. *The World is Flat: a brief history of the twenty-first century*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005.
- Held, David, and Anthony McGrew, Editors, *The Global Transformations Reader, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2002.
- Scholte, Jan Aart. *Globalization: a critical introduction*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 2000.

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January 2006, Updated September 2009

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## What Is Sustainability?

The definition of sustainability in CIDA's Glossary begins with a broad statement: "Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" and, embracing the specific role of the built environment, concludes with "consideration of the entire life cycle of the building and its components in regard to economics, environmental impacts, and performance."

Green design, as the discipline has come to be known, encompasses the rapidly expanding body of knowledge that determines if a building and its interior spaces are responsive to sustainability's requisites. Standard 2 strengthened the indicators to include environmental ethics, a value system supporting adoption of ecologically responsible behaviors and practices, and clarified the importance of a global approach to problem solving. Interior spaces are not separate and apart from the buildings that house them and the land that they sit on and the planet they inhabit. Interior designers have traditionally divorced themselves from the issues of land use and water and energy consumption. Even the use of materials and the interplay of conditions that define the indoor environment have been confined within the walls, but green interior design doesn't stop at the walls. The emerging paradigm requires holistic thinking as members of not only a larger team, but of a larger world. The approaching and mostly ignored worldwide water shortages and increasingly apparent climate changes will have significant impact; however, the designers' influence over these issues—how materials, land, water and energy are used—is not insignificant.

The US Green Building Council states that the built environment is growing globally at a rate that is three times faster than the growth rate of the population and that buildings have a huge impact, consuming between 30% to 40% of all energy used, adding 30% to 40% of atmospheric emissions and using up to 30% of all raw materials. Further it estimates that one third of all buildings have serious indoor air quality problems making them unhealthy environments for occupants and expensive for business. Poor indoor air quality in the U.S. has resulted in an annual loss of \$15 billion in worker productivity. Even small improvements in indoor environmental quality can mean regaining millions in lost revenue.

To remain competitive in this new reality, interior design practitioners must not only understand and practice the theories and principles of sustainability and demonstrate the knowledge and skills to apply them to their work, as stipulated in Standard 3, but embrace a different mindset – one that is able to look at systems in a more complex and interrelated manner. Through a concept known as integrated design, interior designers have increased opportunities to participate in all aspects of building design. According to architect Bill Reed, the age of disconnected and isolated specialization is dead. The industrial age has been an era in which humankind has generated so much information that no one person can hold it all, even in his or her specific area of expertise. It has become necessary for a new model – where integrated design is a collaborative approach in which the team players - the client, architect, interior designer, engineer, landscape architect, etc. move from being "experts" to "co-learners."

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Standard 6 requires this sort of systems thinking. Traditionally the design and specification of HVAC systems has been the purview of the mechanical engineer. However, the interior designer has a contribution to make as well, as illustrated by this case in point. Some conventional systems do not adequately measure the amount of outdoor air that's being delivered or the CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations. Too much CO<sub>2</sub> causes building occupants to become sleepy, especially in meeting and conference rooms where large groups of people congregate. Adding carbon dioxide sensors positioned in the breathing zones, not near the air handlers where they are often placed, can make all the difference in the way the occupants behave.

This example demonstrates the added value of the holistic and integrated interior design education. Additional information is plentiful and quite varied and is listed here by category:

## The Global Perspective

Anderson, Ray, *Mid-Course Correction*. The Peregrinzilla Press, 1998.

Benyus, Janine, *Biomimicry: Innovation Inspired by Nature*. William Morrow, 1997.

Hawken, Paul, Amory Lovins and Hunter Lovins. *Natural Capitalism*. Little Brown & Company, 1999.

McDonough, William, *The Hannover Principles Design for Sustainability*. Papercraft, 1992.

## Green Design

McDonough, William and Michael Braungart, *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*. North Point Press, 2002.

Mendler, Sandra and William Odell, *The HOK Guidebook to Sustainable Design*. Wiley & Sons, 2005 (second edition).

Pilatowicz, Grazyna, *Eco-Interiors: A Guide to Environmentally Conscious Interior Design*. Wiley & Sons, 1995 (may be out of print).

Spiegel, Ross and Dru Meadows, *Green Building Materials: A Guide to Product Selection and Specification*. Wiley & Sons, 1999. (Second Edition due early 2006).

Zeither, Laura, *The Ecology of Architecture*. Whitney, 1996.

## Web Resources

ASID Sustainable Design Information Center:

<http://asid.org/resource/Sustainable+Design+Information+Center.htm>

Carnegie Mellon University Center for Building Performance and Diagnostics:

<http://cbpd.arc.cmu.edu/bidtrial>

Environmental Building News and Green Spec: [www.buildinggreen.com](http://www.buildinggreen.com)

Interior Design Magazine/The Green Zone: [www.interiordesign.net/greenzone](http://www.interiordesign.net/greenzone)

The US Green Building Council: [www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org)

Whole Building Design Guidelines: [www.wbdg.org](http://www.wbdg.org)

— This discussion of sustainability was written by  
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January 2006, updated September 2009