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Studio 7.5: Every Molecule Counts

Germany has a reputation for successfully balancing efficiency into the design as well as the manufacture of contemporary furnishings. officeinsight contributor Peter Carey travels to Berlin to visit **Studio 7.5**, headquartered in a former fabric dyeing mill along the bank of the winding river Spree. The firm's repertoire includes the **Mirra** and **Mirra 2** chairs for **Herman Miller**, along with the **Setu** chair and the soon to be released **Metaform Portfolio** reconfigurable workstation.

Momentum Gains Momentum

By leveraging their technical expertise and the latest technology, **Momentum Group** has been building a solid reputation as a company that could deliver significant results through technology. Momentum's most recent technological development takes on a longstanding problem for many in the industry: the wild goose chase associated with picking a fabric that meets all the requirements of the project at hand. Officeinsight reviews Momentum's new 5 Clicks app, now available for free download at the Apple App Store for both iPhone and iPad.
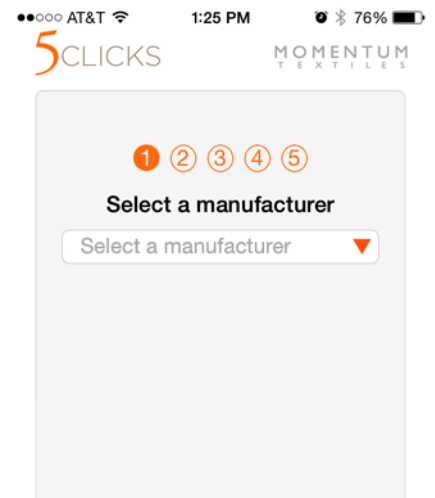
Design + Economy = Our Future: IFI Regional Design Symposium

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"SCHOOLS ... ARE NOT ... PLACES OF EDUCATION ..., BUT RATHER PRISONS AND TURNKEYS IN WHICH CHILDREN ARE KEPT TO PREVENT THEM DISTURBING ... THEIR PARENTS."
—GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

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Design + Economy = Our Future: IFI Regional Design Symposium

by Mallory Jindra

Design can be many, many great things. Guardian of a sustainable environment, ingenious creator of efficiency, refuge for creative thought and practical knowledge application; the ultimate problem solver. The design work that rises to the occasion in addressing one or more of these concerns appears often as glimmers of excellence mixed in with standard caliber work of all types. We celebrate these instances whenever they happen to occur. But what if there was a way to ensure that a high quality of design thought, action, and analysis was applied and understood by governments and the public on all local, regional, national and international levels?

This past spring, the **International Federation of Interior Architects/ Designers (IFI)** conducted a **Regional Design Symposium** titled **Design + Economy = Our Future**. The two-day

think tank set about formulating a "consensual design policy statement" that "will be further evolved to formulate a design policy intended to aid the improvement of both life quality and economic development in our cities, nation and region." The program, hosted by Steelcase at the **Steelcase Worklife Center** in New York City

consisted of a workshop, panel discussions and plenary sessions, all aimed at exploring the symbiotic relationship between design and economic growth in the 21st Century.

Facilitated by **Shashi Caan**, IFI president and principal at The Collective, and **Michael Thomson**, independent design strategist, consultant,

Shashi Caan

Michael Thomson

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and director of Design Connect, the symposium gathered 80 participants, all leaders in their respective fields, including architecture, design, education, media, governmental agencies, real estate and development, industry and manufacturing, as well as 10 students selected from three leading graduate programs. The symposium's goal of capturing an "opportunity to carve out a leadership role in integrated design policy development for the U.S. and the Americas region" is a lofty one. IFI believes itself to be the instrument by which to accomplish it.

"The design policy issue is more well-known in some countries, but it's new across the world," said Ms. Caan. "This symposium was specifically designed to influence policy directly. We know that the international discussion on this topic is very fractured, but our organization has the ability to be advocacy-focused in an international scope. If governments know what we do, then we can influence wellbeing everywhere. If people understand what we do, the discipline becomes important, and policy is easier to achieve."

The success of a workshop, often defined through tangible outcomes, depends on its structure and participants' requirements. A dissection of the structured way IFI organized this symposium elicits a vote in its favor. At the symposium, Mr. Thompson first briefed participants in an orientation that outlined four central aspects of design policy:

>Creates a focus for design as a strategic force for good

>Builds shared language and purpose in non-design and design audiences alike

>Shapes design-led visions and aspirations for business and society

>Identifies gaps and challenges, attracts resources and stimulates coordinated action

In preparation for their workshop sessions panel discussions throughout the symposium addressed the relationship and potential between design / economy / policy on the national and regional level, state/city level, and city/local level, each providing participants with an overview and guiding framework as to how to shape design policies thinking.

The program divided participants into 10 core groups, three of which formed the steering committee, outreach committee, and planning committee. The symposium charged six groups with investigating and generating material regarding design policy

An evening discussion on day 1 addressed the relationship and potential between design/economy/policy at the state/city level, featuring Barbara Lampen (left), president of the New York Convention Center Development Corporation and Director of Design & Construction at the Empire State Development Corporation, and Susan Szenasy (right), Publisher/Editor in Chief, Metropolis Magazine.

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Workshop session

A second panel discussion, addressing the relationship and potential between design/economy/policy on the city and local level, was moderated by John Czarnecki, Editor in Chief, Contract Magazine. Participants included David J. Burney, FAIA, Former Commissioner, NYC Department of Design & Construction and Associate Professor, Pratt Institute School of Architecture, whose Center for Active Design supports public health through design; Sean Black, Senior Vice President, Jones Lang LaSalle, a tenant advocate and real estate expert; Chris Garvin, AIA, LEED AP, Partner, Terrapin Bright Green and Sr Associate, COOKFOX Architects, his expertise includes high-performance design at both the building and community scale; and Joel Towers, Executive Dean, Parsons The New School for Design, who has developed university-wide initiatives in urban design and environmental studies as well as plans for future trans-disciplinary graduate programs.

Presenting work

in the categories of Innovation, Public Sector, Business + Economy, Education, Health + Wellbeing, and Society. Lastly, the Policy Statement Group researched policy in preparation for their task of generating the design policy outcome statement at the conclusion of the second day, including the key findings from each of the other groups.

In their workshop sessions, each of the seven investigative groups produced five key challenges, up to eight recommendations for actions and up to five recommendations for next steps. Each group was required to provide a single sentence summary of the group discussion.

While some differentiation existed among the groups' findings, more noteworthy were the similarities. Almost all of the groups pointed to a lack of public awareness, inclusion and education in the design process, and to a lack of research based metrics relative to the value of design drivers.

"This matter aspires to reach far beyond the expert and design aware community," said Ms. Caan. "It broadens the conversation and spotlights communities and areas critically affected and necessary to now be addressed."

The Education group called for the incorporation of design/culture/arts into primary education as a means to improve design literacy, while the Health + Wellbeing group recommended the integration of health and wellbeing design thinking into the k-12 curricula.

The Education group articulated the challenge in its category of shifting from a results driven society (fear of failing/risk averse society, short term results, buying not making, teaching to the test) to a process driven society (reducing fear of failure, long-term results, understanding consequences, rewarding and encouraging "making" as part of process, not just buying). As a solution, it recommended the cross-pollination of specific design organizations and teaching organizations.

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The Business + Economy group's suggestion that design ought to have a seat at board level within industries and companies (CEO/CCO/CDO/CIO) is something we are already seeing at a few companies ahead of the curve, while its promotion of design centered incentive programs, such as grants, tax breaks and sponsored pro bono work, will take more than a little muscle. The Public Sector group called for the design community to look beyond the public sector to NGOs and private sectors for monitoring and evaluation processes, putting design influence over public design matters into the hands of groups that are perhaps more able to contribute to design advocacy measures.

The members of the Policy Statement group, keeping in mind the goal of building something that would allow for adaptability, applicability and interpretation, crafted the following design policy statement:

Redefine design as a cross collaboration of all disciplines and leverage their knowledge to create an innovation coalition.

Establish a vision of a prosperous global community demonstrating the value of design through storytelling and measured economic, social and environmental impact.

Harness the value of design as essential to health and wellbeing and embed this intrinsic expectation of the value of design through education across society. This will ensure that all designers and design professions are active participants and leaders in activities and discussions that shape our future.

"We want to influence the creation of interior and built environments seen through the eyes of one individual on a human scale," said Ms. Caan. "We want to put in place new kinds of spaces for our new generations, and we have the ability to guide the right kind of focus to policy goals."

The symposium's next steps are admittedly very general in both language and scope. The responsibility to move forward any sort of specific agenda will rest with IFI and each of the 80 participants.

"From an IFI perspective, the first next step is to disseminate the info and to encourage other such programs in nations across the world," said Ms. Caan. "I know that several programs are in the early stages of planning. For our nation and within the in US, it is important for design leaders to coalesce to define a workable agenda with an articulation of the initiatives, a timeline and actionable steps that will allow us, from bottom up, to cause general public awareness and, top down, to influence the necessary governmental players for our desired results."

It's difficult to say how this effort will progress in the next year, few years, or the next decade. Making time for defining further action in the design strategy for city, state, regional and national growth will be an imprecise and laborious task. Progress has already been made with the inclusion of certain active design, sustainability, and health and wellbeing design principles into official city building codes. But this did not happen suddenly and without years of research-based advocacy. Enacting design policy in any sort of united effort starts with discussions and workshops such as this – ones that encourage research and collaboration among industries. As the great American entrepreneur and speaker Jim Rohn said, if you really want to do something, you'll find a way. If you don't, you'll find an excuse." ∎

Members of the Policy Statement Group presenting the final policy statement on Day 2

Symposium participants on the outdoor terrace of Steelcase Worklife Center overlooking Central Park