

Paul Eshelman

Web Bio

Information

Biography

Biographical Statement

Professor Paul Eshelman was educated in the field of Industrial Design at Kent State University, B.S., 1970, and the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, M.F.A., 1972. After a period of professional design experience as Senior Designer for Amtrak and Designer and Research Associate for Herman Miller Research Corporation, he joined the faculty in the Department of Design and Environmental Analysis at Cornell University in 1978. At Cornell his teaching of interior design and furniture design and his research collectively focus on his interest in design for special populations including people with Alzheimer's disease. He has been recognized for his service to the field of Interior Design by being named a Fellow of the Interior Design Educators Council, an international organization. From 1990 to 1994 he served as the Editor of the *Journal of Interior Design*, the only refereed (peer-review) journal specific to the field of Interior Design. He continues to serve as a reviewer for *JID*.

Professional

Current Professional Activities

Editorial Review Board, *Journal of Interior Design*

Research

Current Research Activities

Many population segments differ from the majority in society due to stage in human development, injury, disease, congenital condition, or genetic abnormalities. These special populations can be relegated to low levels of functionality or can be made highly functional depending in part on the supportiveness of the settings in which these people live. Design is what can make the difference. I am interested in design, both interior and furniture, for special populations. My research seeks understanding of decision making in the process of designing supportive, aesthetically satisfying interiors and furniture for special populations.

My current research activity focuses on people with Alzheimer's disease. In a study entitled, Interior design for stimulating recall of positive memories in people with Alzheimer's disease, with Professor Franklin Becker as co-principal investigator, we have designed, had constructed and installed in a residential care

facility, and have assessed the use of design interventions. These interventions comprise what we term the Family Visit Program and are intended to improve the quality of interactions between residents with Alzheimer's and their loved ones. Findings to date confirm results of work by others, but go further. Two of the interventions, strategies for in-the-moment interaction and the use of photographs from family collections to foster positive conversation, confirm that family visits can be transformed from obligatory tasks to enjoyable experiences for all participants. Where the present study expands upon previous research is in relation to the role of the setting. Two additional interventions, a conversation corner designed to focus attention while comfortably supporting users at an intimate scale and a digital picture frame stand designed for convenient visual access to images, were found to enhance the quality of the visit experience. Study of the Family Visit Program is ongoing.

Extension

Current Extension Activities

The problem-solving nature of the interior design studio makes this type of class a natural vehicle for outreach and service to the community. During fall semesters, Professor Gary Evans and I focus on design for special populations and engage students in our respective courses, DEA 2500/6600, the Environment & Social Behavior, taught by Professor Evans, and DEA 3301, Intermediate Interior Design which I teach, in a collaborative service-learning project. This past fall the population addressed was preschool children attending Head Start. The assignment was to promote children's cognitive and social development through innovative interior design of activity spaces within a local Head Start program. Working in teams, the students designed and constructed full-scale models to convey their ideas for a) improvement of the entrance, sign-in, and transition spaces and b) redesign of the classroom spaces. Administrators from Tompkins Community Action, the host organization, reacted positively to the students' work. Teaching staff and children attending the Head Start program in Dryden, NY, where the full-scale models were installed reacted with enthusiasm to the designs.

Education

Education

M.F.A. 1972 - Industrial Design, University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, Illinois

B.S. 1970 - Industrial Design, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio

Courses

Courses Taught

Spring Semester 2010: DEA 1102, Interior Design Studio II; DEA 4010, Empirical Research; DEA 4300, Furniture as a Social Art

Fall Semester 2010: DEA 3301, Interior Design Studio V; DEA 4020, Supervised Fieldwork

Websites

Administration

Publications

Selected Publications

Eshelman, P. (2003, March). Sara [a furniture piece designed to support expressions of self for nursing home residents with Alzheimer's disease or related dementias, third iteration]. Best in Show Award, Visual Arts Category, Interior Design Educators Council Annual Design Competition. San Diego, CA.

Eshelman, P., Evans, G. W. & Utamura, S. (2003). Housing features as predictors of housing satisfaction among older adults living independently in the community. In J. A. Krout & E. Wethington (Eds.). *Residential choices and experiences of older adults: Pathways to life quality*. (pp. 49-68) New York, NY: Springer Publishing.

Eshelman, P. & Evans, G.W. (2002). Home again: Environmental predictors of place attachment and self-esteem for new retirement community residents. *Journal of Interior Design*. 28(1), 1-9.

Evans, G. W., Kantrowitz, E. & Eshelman, P. (2002). Housing quality and psychological well being among the elderly population. *Journal of Gerontology*, 57B(4), P381-P383.