

Opening Doors

ASID has identified four issues central to our vision of lasting success: legislation, design for aging, continuing education and sustainability. Over the next several months, I'll use this column as a point of discussion about these issues, starting with legislation.



AFTER MUCH RESEARCH and consideration, ASID has clarified its position, eschewing restrictions on the use of the title “interior designer.”

For the record: ASID provides support for state legislation that enables all interior designers to practice to the full extent of their capabilities. ASID supports legislation that recognizes “registered” and “certified” designers while also allowing all designers to use the title interior designer.

This is a complex and controversial issue mainly because of misperceptions about our intent. So, together with Bruce Goff, ASID, co-chair of the legislative and codes council, we want to explain the Society's position and what we hope to gain for our members and the public as a result.

For many years, some of our legislative efforts have been directed toward title acts; that is, state laws that outline who may use a title such as “interior designer” based on education, examination and experience criteria. The goal was legal recognition and professional legitimacy, given the dramatic change in our profession over the last two decades. The result, however, has become a tangle of rules that are as likely to hamstring a designer's ability to work as they are to facilitate it.

Today, some regulations prohibit interior designers in architectural firms from becoming a partner because they are not “registered design professionals.” Some states can levy fines if an interior designer so much as sketches a renovation concept. These laws not only limit our ability to practice, but give clients legal reasons to withhold payment if the laws are violated, even when the client asked for and received interior design services.

In addition to these practical considerations, there are philosophical reasons to switch gears. The notion of saying who can or cannot call themselves a

designer focuses on shutting people out rather than letting them in. In today's open-source, blurred-boundary environment, we see openness and collaboration as the best way to build value for our profession and our clients. That's why the legislative agenda for ASID today focuses on providing clear choices—for designers and the public.

We are not interested in regulating interior design. Our goal is to open doors for the profession, and to clarify choices for designers and clients as to paths they can take to fulfill their professional goals and design needs. Achieving this goal must occur on a state level. The legal framework varies significantly from state to state, and as such, any proposed legislation must be carefully crafted.

We urge you to get engaged in the legislative dialogue taking place in your chapters and in your state. If you have further questions regarding the focus of the Society's legislative position, our government and public affairs staff are ready to help. They can be contacted at gpa@asid.org, or you can visit the ASID Web site at www.asid.org. **i**

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AMERICAN SOCIETY OF
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