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Department of Architecture, Interior Design and Lighting

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The Master of Fine Arts Lighting Design Program

Mission and Philosophy

Formal education in Lighting Design was founded at Parson's in the early 1970s, when the late James Nuckolls began a class in Architectural Lighting Design, then a relatively young profession. Today's Master's program educates students from around the world who come to Parsons to take advantage of its distinguished history, and its location in New York City - the largest lighting design community in the world. Working closely with interior design and architecture students, the lighting design students learn to envision architectural space and exterior environments "in light" both as the condition through which visual information is registered (light, shadow, form, color, composition, etc.), tasks are accomplished and human behavioral issues are analyzed. While technical evaluation is central to lighting design education, Parsons distinguished faculty, its focus on aesthetic design considerations, human factors and sustainable design practices make Parsons unique internationally among other institutions.

Curriculum

The two-year, full-time Master of Fine Arts degree program educates lighting designers by offering strong foundations in the intellectual, aesthetic and technical components of lighting design. The curriculum reflects the concern that human physiological and psychological needs are central to all lighting design projects and encourages students to understand critical values associated with their engagement in the built and natural environments. Lighting students share electives and interdisciplinary projects with students in the architecture and interior design programs, instilling in the students skills in collaborative design processes.

Facilities

Students in the department of Architecture, Interior Design and Lighting share common studio space, equipped with wireless digital technology in addition to a computer lab with 60 dedicated stations. Other shared facilities where this cross-disciplinary nature of working is encouraged includes the model shop with power tools and laser cutters, a materials library, lighting resource library housing reference materials including past student thesis projects and a lighting laboratory where lighting experiments are conducted by all students in the entire department. Here students conduct research, explore material and technological relationships and test applications. Students learn current digital technologies that lend opportunity to quantitatively analysis in conjunction with more tangible analog methods of physical mock-ups. Students build and simulate in real scale lighting conditions that can be seen and felt in relation to the body.

Student Demographics

The two year MFA Lighting Program annually admits a maximum of 24 students, 48 in the total program. Currently there are 45 students with professional experience and undergraduate studies in architecture, interior design, engineering, theater, film, product design, environmental studies, furniture, fine arts, literature, communications, music, journalism, economics and psychology. This diverse academic and professional background is further complimented culturally. Of the 45 students currently in the Lighting Program, they represent 13 different countries making it the most internationally diverse program within Parsons.

Events and Industry Partners

By virtue of its location in the heart of New York City and long history in progressive thinking in lighting education, Parsons has established noteworthy relationships with several allies in lighting, architecture and the arts and collaborated with these partners in public programming; advancing educational opportunities with light.

- International Association of Lighting Designers (IALD) has consistently supported our students to attend their annual meeting and conference and invested significantly through scholarship programs.
- Illuminating Engineering Society of New York (IESNY) has supported our students through sponsorship to events and scholarship programs.
- Parsons co-hosts annually the Winners Circle Event with IESNY where Lumen Awardees present their winning projects in a conversational manner at Parsons.
- Parsons co-hosted a series of exhibit and lecture events with the Austrian Cultural Forum 2005 showcasing the Kunsthau Bregenz designed by Peter Zumthor.
- Parsons co-hosted a one day conference with the Museum of Art and Design titled “Speed of Light” which included lectures by academics, historians, scientists, artists and theorists.
- Parsons co-hosts on an on-going basis the annual A/L Light and Architecture Design Awards with Architectural Lighting Magazine which is formatted as an educational platform of dialogue between professionals, academics and students.
- Parsons is developing a special seminar with other global academics for Lightfair 2007 in order to share knowledge about the state of lighting education
- Parsons is currently co-developing with Lightfair International a new educational track solely focused on academic institutions and scholarly initiatives within lighting, tentatively scheduled to be initiated for 2008.

Faculty and Guest Critics.

The lighting design community in New York comprises an extraordinary pool of design and academic talent. Many of these individuals divide their time between professional practice and a more academically inclined pursuit through teaching at Parsons. These individuals teach, mentor,

and lecture on the tangible and theoretical complexities involving light and lighting. Additionally, a pool of professionals' regularly visits the studio to offer critical review of design projects.

Kimberly Ackert, Craig Bernecker, Stephen Bernstein, Howard Brandston, Philip Ciadella James Conti, Renee Cooley, Jessica Corr, Jean Gardner, Alexa Griffith, Stephen Horner, Barbara Horton, Nelson Jenkins, Anita Jorgensen, Jungsoo Kim, Pamela Kladzyk, Chou Lien, Mark Loeffler, Margaret Maille, Paul Marantz, Joanna Merwood, Derek Porter, Enrique Peiniger, Robert Prouse, Caroline Razook, Nathalie Rozot, Doug Russell, Christine Sciulli, Leni Schwendinger, Amy Sharp, Joel Siegel, David Singer, Jean Sundin, Matthew Tanteri, Thomas Thompson, Linnaea Tillett, Attila Uysal, James Yorgey.

Department of Architecture, Interior Design, and Lighting (AIDL)

The Department of Architecture, Interior Design, and Lighting represents a bold initiative at Parsons The New School for Design to take a leading role in establishing new curricular relationships between these disciplines. With a faculty drawn from all three professional communities in New York City, the Department's unprecedented inter-disciplinary design education distinguishes Parsons among schools offering study of these independent disciplines. Some 220 students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels examine the designed environment in all of its complex forms, multiple scales, and diverse social practices, from landscape to furniture, cities to performance spaces. Adept in digital design, hand drawing, lighting and materials technologies, history and cultural theory, students acquire a keen grasp of how subtle variations of space, form, texture, color and light affect the end user. Additionally, sustainable design techniques and socially responsible design practices are fundamental to each class as our students form philosophical perspectives toward their professions. This interdisciplinary training, intellectual study and technical expertise provide a range of career opportunities in the design world.

Parsons The New School for Design and the New School University

Parsons The New School for Design is one of eight divisions that comprise the New School University, educating a diverse body of undergraduate and graduate students to become leaders in design in order to bring actual, positive change to the world. Students gain a global perspective in design excellence, and form a critical understanding of how design and art interact with the broader forces of society, culture, and the economy. Here pioneering uses of technology and curricular innovation are embraced by Parsons' distinguished faculty to prepare students for professional practice, instilling within them socially responsible values critical to the future of mankind.