

Design Transformations

Filiz Klassen, newly tenured assistant professor in Ryerson's School of Interior Design, is changing design approaches, both in her teaching and in her research.

"I emphasize educational projects that encourage students to engage in critical debate about the interaction of design disciplines," says Klassen. In her recent paper "*Tangible to Intangible*", she explains how she integrated her design investigations during the building of Toronto's Strachan House, a special needs housing project, into her studio teaching at Ryerson.

Klassen says she prefers this real-world teaching approach because it encourages a less prescriptive and a more collaborative studio atmosphere. She hopes this expanded outlook will broaden students' imagination and help them see the activity of building in cultural terms, rather than as the mere product of physical and commercial activity.

Klassen's own research is culturally focused, making built environments sustainable and transformable. Contrary to the popular trend of disposability – we've all seen the IKEA commercial in which the rejected lamp is put to the curb

– Klassen is making furnishings and surroundings adaptable to the changing needs of the people who use them.

"Think about how much we build and how much we demolish," she says. "It's all about built environments not fitting into what the user needs." She offers the example of the changing needs of a single person who then marries, and then has a family. "How would you make the most out of a built space without constantly going through renovations and generating waste? Consider houses or schools – they are very inflexible. Environments should be able to adapt and transform over time as our needs change."

Klassen's theoretical designs and prototypes make everything transformable – from small furnishings to walls and major structures. "This approach is more environmentally sensitive," she says. "It generates less waste because you are constantly reusing what you have and adapting it to change – rather than demolishing it."

Visit Klassen's web site, Shades of Green, at www.ryerson.ca/~fklassen

Digital Posterity

So much of our modern world is documented digitally. Photographs, texts, images – our records of science, history, culture are, more and more, becoming digital. But digital records are manipulated with ease. Hardware and software rapidly become obsolete. These combined factors present a challenge to the preservation and trustworthiness of our society's memory.

In 1995, Terry Cook, former senior archival manager of the National Archives of Canada, warned of the threat of digital amnesia. In MIT's *Technological Review*, he documented a heart-stopping example of the problem: In the early 1990s Ontario Hydro needed to replace a worn-out part on a nuclear reactor. But the digital records detailing how to replace it had vanished. And that was just the tip of the iceberg: many documents, which existed only digitally, were haphazardly managed, in a new computer network, by under-trained staff.

An international group of scholars and archivists are addressing this threat to digital records, including Ryerson Professors **Marta Braun**, **Michael Murphy**,

and **Perry Schneiderman**. The five-year project began in 2002. Called InterPARES 2, it is the second phase of InterPARES work that began in 1991 to find methods of preserving digital records and to ensure their authenticity and reliability.

Directed by Dr. Luciani Duranti, Professor and Chair of the Master's Archival Studies program at UBC's School of Library, Archival and Information Studies, the project brings together over 100 researchers representing the major cultural and legal traditions of the world, with expertise in archival science, law, information studies, computer science and engineering, library science, geography, media studies, theatre, music, dance and photography. Funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) among others, the project is attracting attention from both the private and public sector, including the medical and pharmaceutical community, and NASA.

Additional information is available at www.interpares.org