SESSION 7 SUMMARY:
EXPANDING THE DEFINITION OF PRACTICE

Prepared by Carmen Chee and Erik Biggs
Hi everyone! My name is Carmen. I'm an architectural designer at Trivers and I've been practicing for a little over a year. I received my undergraduate degree in architecture from the Georgia Institute of Technology and graduated from WashU with my MArch in May of 2020. I've also been involved with Design as Protest, a collective of BIPOC designers advocating for design justice in the built environment and architectural profession. When I'm not doing either of those things you can probably find me at the Tower Grove Park tennis courts! Looking forward to meeting all of you and being the first class of the STL CKLDP!

Erik is a licensed architect with over 10 years design experience. His projects range from civic and cultural institutions to retail and medical. He holds a Master in Architecture from the University of Kansas and was participant of the Studio 804 program. Erik currently serves on the Board of Directors for AIA St. Louis and as Secretary on the Board of Directors for AIA Missouri. Previously he has served as Director on the Board of Association of Preservation Technology – Central Plains and Chair of Young Architects Forum St. Louis. As a St. Louis City resident, he has a passion for historic St. Louis architecture and preservation. In his free time he volunteers for Rebuilding Together Build Days and as a Speaker Facilitator at TEDx St. Louis.

Christina is driven to discover ways that architecture can have a positive impact on communities through adaptive reuse and urban design. Her curiosity about the details of buildings and how they come together physically, economically, and socially fuels her passion for architecture and her desire to create beautiful, sustainable places that enrich people’s lives. Her project experience includes higher education, corporate and non-profit work acting both in the project designer and project architect roles. Very community-minded, she serves on AIA committees including the Young Architects Forum, and with Urban Harvest to educate and engage the community around health and equity.

Abigail is an architect from Peoria, IL. In 2017, she graduated from Drury University in Springfield, MO with a Master of Architecture. She received her architectural license in 2020 after powering through the AREs. Abigail has worked her entire professional career at M+H Architects in St. Louis, Missouri. She shares her 60 year old home with her partner and 2 rescue dogs, Mikey and Maison. Outside of her 9-5 job, Abigail enjoys reading and reviewing books, knitting, and enjoying all the craft beer that STL has to offer. To keep involved in the STL architectural community, Abigail is the current acting Chair for the Young Architects Forum St. Louis and enjoys encouraging other recent graduates to become involved.
Agenda:

Session #7 - Expanding the Definition of Practice
April 1st, 2022 - The Resource Center @ AIA St. Louis (911 Washington Ave)

12:00- 12:30
Lunch Reception and Welcome

12:30-1:15
Speaker: Ricardo J. Rodríguez De Santiago, Assoc. AIA, LEED-AP BD+C

1:15-3:00
Practice Innovation Exploration

3:00-3:45
Speaker: Evelyn Lee, FAIA

3:45 - 4:15
Speaker: Tomislav Žigo, AIA, LEED AP

4:15 - 5:00
Practice Innovations Team Presentation and Dialogue
Ricardo J. Rodríguez

5:00-6:00
Happy Hour at Rosalita’s Cantina (1235 Washington Ave)
Session 7: Expanding the Definition of Practice, was organized by the Christopher Kelley Leadership Development Program Steering Committee and was held at the AIA Resource Center.

The session’s topic ‘Expanding the Definition of Practice’ can interpreted in two ways: 1) going beyond and outside of the practice of architecture or 2) discussing innovations and advances within the field. While speakers may have practiced in the past as architects or are in a related field like construction and digital technology, none were currently practicing architects in the traditional sense - which in the theme of the session fits perfectly.

Scholars were asked to step outside of the regular bounds of practice to consider ways that the profession can be challenged. How can we innovate the profession? What role does digital technology and research have in practice and how can we better implement exploratory practices? Why does it seem that other fields move at a much faster pace? What does the design firm of the future look like and what services does it provide? All were questions explored in this session.
Ricardo J. Rodriguez De Santiago presenting to scholars via Zoom.

The first speaker for Session 7 was Ricardo J. Rodriguez De Santiago, Assoc. AIA, LEED-AP BD+C. Ricardo was actually in the Inaugural CKLDP cohort in Washington D.C. and has now come full circle to present to us as St. Louis’s first CKLDP class.

Ricardo’s presentation entitled “A History of Heresy” examines the ways that digital technology and innovative, open ways of thinking can transform the architecture profession which has typically been rigid and slow moving. Ricardo describes himself as an “archi-something.” After working for 12 years in private practice, Ricard transitioned to working in digital innovation and is currently working as a Global Senior Digital Insight Strategist. He has spoken at over 35 AEC conferences on digital transformation and digital strategies.

To give us the CliffsNotes, Ricardo says:
1. The current business world is radically changing.
2. Leaders will need to be comfortable with uncertainty.
3. Our unique set of experiences enable us to lead in new ways.
Ricardo does not believe in sacred cows. Nothing should be approached from the usual mindset. The word heretic has a negative connotation. It is someone who goes against something that is generally accepted. As Ricardo tells us, the word heresy is derived from ‘choice.’ Irreverence means to question what has previously been established and to Ricardo, the architecture profession is increasingly dogmatic. However for architects, questioning is natural.

For Ricardo, the disruptor in our profession is digital technology. The architecture profession replicates business models from the 1950’s - is that what we would consider innovative? Ricardo thinks that we should look at business culture and how we operate. We need to build a culture that is open to new ideas and people who are willing to challenge the current paradigm of practice.

In the context of disrupting practice and being open to new ways of thinking, Ricardo has a clear definition of leadership qualities. A leader is someone who can expand the definition of practice to empower people with tools. Leaders fail upwards. Leaders focus of process rather than product. As leaders we often seek out solutions. We look at people that we invest in as a community. Putting investment into action is the trait of a leader. Ricard tells us that while technology should be harnessed to further drive the architecture profession forward, we lead with values and not technology.
Scholars in working groups for the Practice Innovation Exploration exercise.

For the next activity of the session, scholars participated in the Practice Innovation Exploration. In groups of 3, scholars were tasked with answering the question “What will a design firm of the future look like in St. Louis?” Scholars were asked to analyze this question through the lens of ‘The Ten Types of Innovation’ by Doblin.

Often, we think of innovation as new products but this is actually only one way to innovate. Doblin outlines that the 10 types of innovation fall into 3 larger groups: configuration, offering, and experience. Configuration innovations are focused on the business system. These innovations are profit (how you make money), network (how you connect with others to create value), structure (how you organize and align your talents and assets) and process (how you use your signature methods to do your work). Offering innovations are focused on performance. These innovations are product performance (how you develop distinguishing features and functionality) and product system (how you create complementary products and services). Finally, experience innovations are focused on customer facing elements of an enterprise- service (how you support and amplify the value of your offerings), channel (how to deliver offerings to customers and users), brand (how to represent your business and offerings), and customer engagement (how you foster compelling interactions).

Scholars were asked to identify what differentiates their firm from current ones and which innovation their firm is addressing. Scholars had an hour and a half to come up with the ideas for their firms to present to Ricardo later.
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Agenda
March 4, 2022 - Living Learning Center - Tyson Research Center
6750 Tyson Valley Road
Eureka, MO 63025
12:00 – 12:20
Lunch Reception
12:20 – 12:30
Welcome, Session Overview
12:30 – 1:30
Building Tour | Living Learning Center
Dan Hellmuth - Principal | Hellmuth + Bicknese Architects
1:30 – 1:45
Break
1:45 – 2:45
Presentation | Sustainability
Colin Rohlfing - Director of Sustainability | HDR
2:45 – 3:00
Break
3:00 – 4:00
Presentation | Instabilities and Potentialities
Chandler Ahrens - Principal | Open Source Architecture
4:00 – 5:00
Presentation | STL BEPS & Building Energy Exchange Lab
Cara Spencer - Director | Building Energy Lab
5:00 – 6:00
Session Social | Perennial on Lockwood
216 W Lockwood Ave Unit B
Webster Groves, MO 63119
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