Reviewers' Perception of the Studio Jury System: How They View its Value in Architecture and Design Education

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Abstract : In architecture and design education, students learn and understand their discipline through lecture courses and within studios. A studio is where the instructor works closely with students to help them understand design by doing design work. The final jury is the culmination of the studio learning experience. It's value and significance are rarely questioned. Students present their work before their peers, instructors, and invited reviewers, known as jurors. These jurors are recognized experts who add a breadth of feedback to students mostly in the form of a verbal critique of the work. Since the design review or jury has been a common element of studio education for centuries, jurors themselves have been instructed in this format. Therefore, they understand its value from both a student and a juror perspective. To better understand how these reviewers see the value of a studio review, a survey was distributed to reviewers at a multi-disciplinary design school within the United States. Five design disciplines were involved in this case study: architecture, graphic design, industrial design, interior design, and landscape architecture. Respondents (n=108) provided written comments about their perceived value of the studio review system. The average respondent was male (64%), between 40-49 years of age, and has attained a master's degree. Qualitative analysis with thematic coding revealed several themes. Reviewers view the final jury as important because it provides a variety of perspectives from unbiased external practitioners and prepares students for similar presentation challenges they will experience in professional practice. They also see it as a way to validate the assessment and evaluation of students by faculty. In addition, they see a personal benefit for themselves and their firm – the ability to network with fellow jurors, professors, and students (i.e., future colleagues). Respondents also provided additional feedback about the jury system and studio education in general. Typical responses included a desire for earlier engagement with students; a better explanation from the instructor about the project parameters, rubrics/grading, and guidelines for juror involvement; a way to balance giving encouraging feedback versus overly critical comments; and providing training for jurors prior to reviews. While this study focused on the studio review, the findings are equally applicable to other disciplines. Suggestions will be provided on how to improve the preparation of guests in the learning process and how their interaction can positively influence student engagement.

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