

Igor Siddiqui

IIDA Educator of the Year 2022

Award Acceptance Speech

I encountered the field of interiors through architecture, and entered academia through practice. As an aspiring architect in New York more than two decades ago, I learned that the wildest aspects of the city revealed themselves not through extravagant architectural forms, but rather by what happened inside buildings. Inspired by Rem Koolhaas's *Delirious New York*, I developed a curiosity about the endless possibilities embedded in the world of interiors and a deep interest in the people for and by whom these spaces are made. The making aspect of design – the construction of experience through tangible means and methods that include materials, fabrication, detailing, and assembly of parts -- has been a major preoccupation in my design practice as well as teaching throughout my entire career thus far.

As a full-time faculty member at The University of Texas at Austin for the last 13 years – an institution that has provided the support for my creative and intellectual development without which I would not be here today – I have brought my interest, knowledge, and personal perspective on design to the many students whom I have had the privilege to teach. Throughout this time, we have made so many things together – wearable architectures, robotic paintings, edible plastics, furry table legs, participatory curtains, sculptural exercise devices, parametric stools, as well as countless models, mockups, dioramas, and prototypes – things that are designed to populate our physical world and, more importantly, to inspire a sense of possibility. Through this kind of work, students are encouraged to tap deeply into their intellect and imagination, but also get their hands dirty, get to know the tools that are available to them, lean into what they already know how to do, and learn new ways of translating abstract ideas into tangible outcomes.

As a pedagogic process, hands-on making provides an effective link between students and the world around them, from the scale of their bodies to that of our planet. Design's role in choreographing our engagement with the physical world, at a time when so much in our lives has increasingly become virtual, has never been more critical. In fact, perhaps more so than ever, the role of design education today is to connect students to the world in as many ways as we can. The International Interior Design Association provides students with a crucial connection with the profession beyond the physical and intellectual boundaries of the university campus. IIDA is an organization that illuminates new paths for our students, builds new bridges for them, and opens new doors. Thanks to the diligent work of regional and national chapters, our students are able to get a sense of what it is like to "be out there, doing it" by networking, meeting new role models, and engaging with the exciting opportunities afforded by the industry.

Through my work as an educator, my overarching goal is to help students understand the value of the built environment and to help them discover their own agency in shaping it in their own way and for the better. I would like to thank IIDA for this award and for all that you do; to UT Austin for being such an extraordinary academic home base; and most of all to all my students, past and present, who not only bring pedagogy to life, but also always connect me to the world beyond the one that I already know.