Prof. Arnold Friedmann: Improving Life by Meaningful Design

Prof. Arnold Friedmann
(photo: private)

Introduction

Arnold Friedmann, born 1925 in Nuremberg, set for himself and his students most ambitious goals: The professionalization of interior design education and the humanization of the working environment, respectively the personalization of living spaces to enhance the quality of life by good design, according to his opinion that *our ordinary spaces are much more important than the kind pictured in an architectural or design magazine*.

As an instrument to achieve these aims, Prof. Friedmann dedicated most of his professional activities to education, trying to imbue his students with a strong sense of commitment to design and to quality. Through the publication of his *Critical Study of Interior Design Education* in 1968, he became a major moving force in the field of design education. He also has been concerned with the development of theoretical approaches to design, including interior design criticism and behavioral research.

In view of this broad approach, for Prof. Friedmann life and work are confluent streams interacting as causes and consequences for each other, also in his own biography: A forced emigrant from Germany who came to the U.S.A. via Eretz Israel and lifetime traveler in Europe, the Middle East and the Orient, he has got a wide scope of interests such as music, drama and literature, but above all stand art, architecture and design:

Design is a state of mind and a lifestyle as well as a profession.

Curriculum vitae Prof. Arnold Friedmann

1925	born in Nuremberg
1938	emigration from Germany to Palestine
1943 - 1946	service with the British Army in Palestine, Egypt and Cyprus, finally as Sergeant
1947	emigration from Palestine to the United States (naturalized in 1955), attended Brooklyn Museum of Art School, New York
1947 - 1949	worked as a cabinetmaker and furniture designer in New York
1949	married Susanne Kirsch (two sons)
1949 - 1953	studied art and interior design at Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY: BFA (honors)
1954 - 1960	studied art education and design at Pratt Institute and New York University: MS
1954 - 1972	taught at Pratt Institute, Department of Interior Design, Evening Department of Foundation Art, Department of Art Education. Professor of Design (tenured), Associate Chairman Department of Interior Design (Acting Chairman since 1969). Head, Department of Environmental Design, Pratt Institute, 1970. At the same time freelancing as interior designer and furniture designer in New York. Practice included design of offices, showrooms, restaurants, stores, residential work and general consulting work.
1962	co-founder of the Interior Design Educators Council
1964	Visiting Professor, Southern Illinois University
1969 - 1972	additionally Chairman of Interior and Environmental Design Department, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY
1972 - 1973	Head, Department of Textiles Clothing and Environmental Arts, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
1973 - 1990	Professor of Design (tenured), University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Director, Design Program, Art Department; Graduate Program Director, Design. Adjunct Professor, Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning. Service on many University of Massachusetts Committees (Chair), Departmental Committees including Chairmanship of Personnel Committee for four years. Special courses taught included: Graduate Seminar: Environment, Behavior, and Design Evaluation; “Architecture Now” (a seminar co-taught in Art His-

	tory program).
1975 - 1977	vice-president Danco Design Associates, Northampton, MA
1976	Ph.D. in environmental behavior and design, Union Graduate School, Cincinnati, OH
1979	recipient Design Project Fellowship, National Endowment for the Arts Honorary Member, American Society of Interior Designers
1980	recipient Distinguished Teacher Award, University of Massachusetts
since 1980	partner, Amherst Design Associates, Amherst, MA (Formerly Werbe / Friedmann)
1983	Exchange Professor, Glasgow School of Art, Scotland (January)
1984	Visiting Professor, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Melbourne, Australia (August)
1984 - 1990	Associate Dean, Humanities and Fine Arts, University of Massachusetts
1985	Honorary Fellow, Design Institute of Australia
1989	recipient of IKEA Award, Amsterdam
1990	Professor Emeritus, University of Massachusetts
1990 - 1992	senior design consultant to O'Connell Engineering and Financial
1991	six essays on architecture and furniture design for "Contemporary Masterworks" (St. James 1991) and a chapter "Philosophical Framework" for ASID Professional Manual
1992	lecture at Arizona State University on Theory and Philosophy presentation at A.I.A. Interior Committee Washington DC. meeting
1993	presentation at A.I.A. / ASID symposium in Manchester, NH
until 1994	continued part-time professional practice through Amherst Design Associates (last major projects for Phoenix Mutual Life - consulting work)
2004	Resident Director for University of Massachusetts Program in Baden-Württemberg
2006	New England Honoree at IIDA (International Interior Design Association) Conference, and made Honorary Member
2006 - 2007	President, College Learning in Retirement
2008	continued teaching one course each semester, including Furniture Design, Senior Theses projects, and currently a Graduate seminar on Environment, Behavior and Design Evaluation. Consultant designer for University division

	of Information Technologies. Also doing a fair amount of volunteer work, including various activities for New England Organ Bank and similar groups publicizing organ transplantation. Member of Friends Board of Directors for Fine Arts Center as well as member of Advisory Committee. Taking on volunteer work for the Center.

Works

- Corporate offices and showroom in New York, for Henri Polak Diamond Corporation, 1974.
- Cooperative residential apartment in New York, for Mr. Milton Gelfand, 1974.
- House interiors in Mamaroneck, New York, for Mr. and Mrs. S. Singer, 1975.
- Psychiatric practice offices in New York, for Dr. Harold Kaplan, 1976.
- Factory workspaces and cafeterias in Greenfield, MA, for TRW-Greenfield Tap and Die Corporation, 1980.
- YMCA Health Club in Greenfield, MA, for the Young Men's Christian Association, 1981.
- Engineering firm office in Greenfield, MA, for Douglas G. Peterson and Associates, 1983.

- National corporate headquarters in Holyoake, MA, for the American Pad and Paper Company, 1984.
- Executive offices and library in Springfield, MA, for the Basketball Hall of Fame, 1984.
- Admissions and waiting-room additions in Northampton, MA, for the Cooley Dickinson Hospital, 1985.
- Medical offices in Springfield, MA, for Dr. Kenneth Frankel, 1987.
- YMCA hotel guestrooms, lobby and public facilities in Springfield, MA, for the Young Men's Christian Association, 1985 - 1989.

An Interview with Prof. Arnold Friedmann (April 2008)

Q: Do you think that your personal background - being born in Germany, having lived in Eretz Israel before going to the U.S.A. - has influenced your work?

A: *Yes, indeed. Emigration without money made it impossible for me to continue school. Hence I apprenticed as a cabinetmaker, which led me to my interest in interior architecture and to the United States for college and my professional education.*

Q: What were the most characteristic differences in interior design education before and after the professionalization you initialized by your thesis?

A: *I found that much of interior design education was essentially interior decorating and was taught by incompetent faculty in schools of home economics.*

Q: Since your beginnings in this field until today, how has the evaluation of interior design by the society changed?

A: *I think that my study helped to raise the level of interior design education and raised expectations and standards. Hence interior design has become accepted as a real profession. The bodies established to administer personal qualification examinations and a program to evaluate and accredit interior design programs at universities and schools of art have led to the acceptance of the profession alongside architecture and landscape architecture.*

Q: Is design today widely reduced to its aesthetic aspects, i.e. the look?

A: *No. Design - at least the professional design that I stand for - is based on the solution of problems, function ,and an attempt to provide supportive environments for every project. If all those criteria are met the chances are that aesthetic success will follow. Of course there must be a conscious effort to create beautiful and artistic spaces, and today "green" environments wherever possible as well.*

Q: Can a gas guzzling SUV have a "good design"?

A: *To me a beautiful SUV is an oxymoron.*

Q: One of the focuses during your active career has been designing the environment of mentally retarded people. Could you please summarize the essential targets of this work and the means to achieve them?

A: *I became interested in the design for mentally challenged people due to a major research project I was conducting with governmental funds. The tradition of institutions for handi-*

capped and mentally retarded people had always been disastrous, ugly, decrepit, and depressing spaces. Hence it became clear to me that a better and more supportive environment will contribute to the improvement and quality of their life. Better design for institutionalized residents was not a cure in itself. But it facilitated some improvement in their ability to cope with the daily challenges of life.

Q: What's your favorite color?

A: White.

Q: As a former cabinetmaker probably your favorite material is wood?

A: Yes, I love wood. But only if it is produced as a renewable resource.

Q: What is the object you like to touch most with your eyes shut?

A: A Brancusi sculpture.

Q: Is there an era you wanted to live in rather than today - design-wise?

A: I think I could have been happy in the 18th century (England or France) but only if I would have been part of the upper class or nobility.

Q: Please, three do-it-yourself tips for people with not much money in a small apartment how they should arrange their furniture and paint the walls to feel comfortable.

A: Don't overcrowd. Keep furniture in scale with the space. If possible, buy one or two "good design" pieces. They will last for many years. Don't listen to furniture salespeople, but follow your own instincts.

Q: Does globalization have an influence on today's design? Are we heading towards a global design?

A: Yes, we are. Globalization is not necessarily bad. There still are - and should be - regional differences which should certainly express the country or region, but some furnishings and materials will most likely be the same, no matter where people live.

Bibliography

a) Publications by Prof. Arnold Friedmann

- *A Critical Study of Interior Design Education.* First comprehensive research on the topic. I.D.E.C., New York 1968.
- *Interior Design: An Introduction to Architectural Interiors.* Professional handbook on the subject of architectural interiors; with John F. Pile and Forrest Wilson. Hardcover & Paperback editions, New York 1970, 1976, 1982, 1983, 2007; published in Japanese 1973.
- *A Study Course for N.S.I.D. Qualifications Examination.* Outline, New York 1973.
- *Interior Design.* 20,000 words article for 1974 Edition of Encyclopaedia Britannica.
- *Commonsense Design: A Complete Guide to Good Interior Design on a Budget.* Hardcover & Paperback editions, New York 1976.
- *Environmental Design Evaluation.* In collaboration with Craig Zimring and Ervin Zube. Hardcover & Paperback editions, New York 1978.
- *Construction Materials for Interior Design: Principles of Structure and Properties of Materials.* By William Rupp, Arnold Friedmann and Philip Farrell. Hardcover & Paperback editions, New York 1989.
- *Contemporary Masterworks:* Six essays on architecture and furniture design. Chicago & London 1991.
- *A.S.I.D. Professional Manual:* Chapter *Philosophical Framework.* 1991.

Additionally over 60 published articles, including articles in *Interiors*, *Interior Design*, *The Designer* and *Journal of Interior Design Education and Research*.

b) Publications about Prof. Arnold Friedmann

- Marjorie Kriebel: Article *Friedmann, Arnold.* In: Ann Lee Morgan (ed.): *Contemporary Designers*. Chicago & London 1984, p. 186 f. (2nd edition 1990).
- Susan Pearson: *At Home: A Question of Balance. Interior designer Arnold Friedmann blends comfort and utility.* In: *NewHome*, Jan. / Feb. 1991, p. 12 - 15.

Also Prof. Friedmann is listed in:

- *Who's Who in the East*
- *Dictionary of International Biography*, London
- *Directory of Environmental Consultants*, St. Louis, MO
- *Contemporary Authors*, Gale Research Co., Detroit, MI
- *APA Listing of Man / Environment Researchers*
- *Who's Who in American Jewry*
- *Who's Who in Interior Design*

Links

- Autobiography *From Nuremberg to Hadley* by Prof. Arnold Friedmann (1997) at: *http://home.comcast.net/~ronfriedmann/Arnold01.htm*

- UMASS Interior Design / Architectural Studies: Architecture+Design program has developed an innovative curriculum with a philosophy of interdisciplinary collaboration, public outreach and research opportunities building on the vision of its founder, Prof. Arnold Friedmann:
  http://www.umass.edu/architecture/about/
- *The Fessler-Friedmann Dictionary of English as a Second Language* by Ron Friedmann (Prof. Friedmann's son) and Family at:
  http://home.comcast.net/~ronfriedmann/FamilyDictionary.htm

  exemplary entry:
  flutchnik: *A small piece of unidentified flotsam. For example, Laurie might say, "Pfui Teufel, look at this flutchnik in my soup." Ron thinks this sounds more like small involuntary movement; a twitch. When you are about to fall asleep, you sometimes experience a flutchnik in the arm or leg.*

Text & graphics: *Gerhard Jochem*

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