



*The following is excerpted from the Commencement Address delivered by Cheryl Durst, Hon. FIIDA, LEED AP, to the graduates of the New York School of Interior Design on May 20, 2011.*

As graduates of this very renowned and venerable institution you've been optimally prepared to enter the world of the business and the practice of design. But is the world prepared for you and what offer? The world we live in adores design, or rather, I suppose it would be more apt and correct to say that the world loves what design represents; beauty, comfort, simplicity, reassurance.

What most people outside of this room, and your realm of experience, miss about design is that it is ultimately about what happens on the receiving end—the user. Design is about how something—a product, or an interior environment works and how it is used or experienced by human beings.

Design is about the heart and about the soul. And the brain. Design as tripartite (art, science, business/heart, soul, brain). Good design is all embracing—for you its practitioner and for those who will benefit from your expertise.

Design makes it possible to fit our environment to our human needs and desires and provides a way for people to construct and interpret their lives in a world that sometimes tilts towards chaos. Design, in all of its incarnations and specialties, is a force that can generate new cultural directions.

The world wants you—designers. It wants how you think –using your left and right brain. The world needs your unique ability to problem solve in multiple dimensions. Business books abound talking about applying “design thinking” to enterprise.

Chaos or brutality can change people. So can living with things that fall apart or create disease. The power and grace of good design can act as an agent of change to the benefit of human life. Design is indeed transformative, its power and you practitioners can guide us in creating the life we can imagine; in shaping a world with less waste and confusion, a world more beautiful, functional, prosperous, interesting and humane.

What you do, what you have done as students and what you will do as practicing designers is amazing and awe-inspiring. You change lives. You elevate the human condition. You hold within your brains and your hands a social force – design is about all humanity not just select segments of it.