

Linda Keane is an architect, filmmaker, and urbanist. Ms. Keane currently teaches design and theory in the department of Architecture, Interior Architecture and Designed Objects, at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC). She and Mark Keane are partners in STUDIO 1032, a practice exploring possibilities for architecture and urbanism. She lectures nationwide on Animated Architecture and is active in design education programs for children.

Jessie Marks:Before we get into your current project, NEXT, I'd like to hear about your background and approaches you take in spreading design awareness with students of varying age, education and experience.

Linda Keane: My partner and I teach design at the college level, and through our children's schools, we've become involved in K-12 as well. Through mixing talks with hands-on and collaborative design projects, we approach a range of connected scales-- architecture, neighborhoods (urban design), landscape architecture and interiority.

We also create hand-drawn animated shorts. These films are shown internationally at film festivals, conferences, in galleries, museums, and on public television and were awarded a PBS Emmy. They are included in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and J. Paul Getty Program for Art on Film, [Architecture On Screen](#), and [A+A Architecturanimation](#).

We've also created posters celebrating the work of architect Frank Lloyd Wright. They emphasize Wright's use of geometry, his key projects, design principles, and theories. On the reverse you find a template for a cutout model of Wright's Jacobs I. Usonian House. The study of architecture and design is accumulative, composed of layers of knowledge. We are interested in approaching architecture this way, through a mix of activities.

In 1997, we received a National Endowment Design Education Grant and Graham Foundation Grant and produced *Architecture, an Interactive Introduction*, a book and CD. We combined short and fun clips from our animated films with interactive text, slides, and digital graphics on CD; it is a friendly introduction to architecture and is distributed internationally in Spanish and English.

JM: So tell me, what is NEXT?

LK: For this project, we were looking for something bigger, a program that could link schools to each other and that could connect our graduate and pre-college students.

NEXT is a long-distance, Web-based project using technology-dialogued learning to foster an appreciation of and citizenship toward our built environment. It is a 24/7 after school program (meaning it is always available) connecting traditional and underserved middle school students and their families with trained design mentors (architects, professors, art and design teachers, teaching assistants) in weekly distance education programming.

JM: What brought you to (the idea for) NEXT?

LK: In traditional K-12 education, students' exposure to art is very limited and architecture (is) practically nonexistent. This is unfortunate because architecture and design create a variety of opportunities for layering ways of thinking. To name a few, there are the formal aspects of design composition (how it looks), complex problem solving based on human interactions (how it works), and basic vocabulary describing the activity of design (how it is communicated). We wanted to expose design theories and methodologies, and develop the need for problem solving and critical thinking.

JM: To show that design matters?

LK: Yes, if the public were even ten percent more invested in design issues, they would be better citizens of the environment.

JM: How is NEXT structured?

LK: Presently, it is two-year pilot study with 7 and 8 graders in Racine, WI. The project, in its entirety, is aimed at K-12. NEXT introduces students to four major fields of design: Information Design, Object Design, Experience Design, and Environmental Design. The pilot study targets the apprentice, the middle of three ranges of design students (the novice, the apprentice, and the young designer). Using an interdisciplinary approach, students cross-over information from Fine Arts, Social Studies, Physics, Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, Language Arts, Music, and Ethics with hands-on projects.

Fun Design Related WEB-Sites:

Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum:
<http://www.ndm.si.edu>

Design Boom:
<http://www.designboom.com/eng/>

Core 77:<http://www.core77.com/>

Metropolis Magazine:
<http://www.metropolismag.com>

The Metropolitan Museum of Art:
<http://www.metmuseum.org/>

J. Paul Getty Program for Art on Film:
<http://www.artfilm.org/>

JM: Tell me more about these projects

LK: Each NEXT activity is based on intention, definition, exploration, planning, production, and evaluation. Each activity addresses one of nine scales global, regional, urban, neighborhood, building, room, furniture, object, or pattern. NEXT students will navigate in 3-D in the website, but will be asked to do real things in the real world, making connections back and forth between the virtual and the physical. Students will then submit work on the web and will be critiqued by SAIC and University Wisconsin-Milwaukee graduate students. A chat room, messaging system, bulletin boards and ready access to NEXT staff will provide continuous design dialogue.

JM: Linda, all this work you and your partner are doing is great! It not only teaches students complex ways of solving problems (which is useful in everything they do), but also empowers them to know that their thoughts and ideas do matter. Future generations will be looking to them to solve problems in our built environment.