

NEURODIVERSITY: BUILDING COMMUNITY AND RETHINKING THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

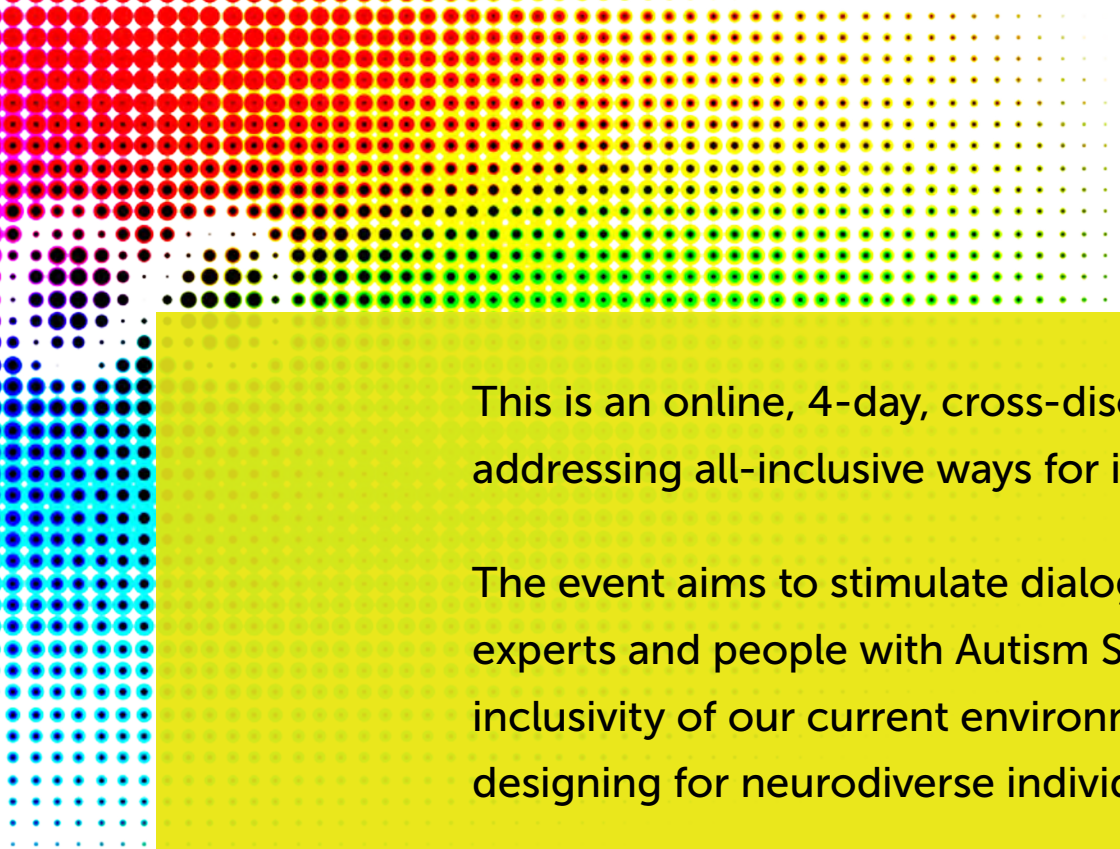
A free, online, 4-day symposium presented by the
College of Architecture and the Built Environment in collaboration
with Jefferson Center for Autism and Neurodiversity

SEPTEMBER 11 – 14, 2020

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Jefferson
Thomas Jefferson University



This is an online, 4-day, cross-disciplinary event of critical interactions addressing all-inclusive ways for inhabiting and perceiving our environments.

The event aims to stimulate dialogue amongst designers, medical field experts and people with Autism Spectrum Disorder in regard to the inclusivity of our current environments and with particular focus on designing for neurodiverse individuals and those with ASD.

The format for the event is conversational, featuring pairings of speakers from the design fields with speakers from the medical fields as well as speakers with ASD and their caregivers. An In Dialogue session in which speakers and design students are engaged in moderated discussions follows each pairing as well as Q&A sessions open to the general audience. A round table discussion with speakers from all four days will conclude the event on Monday September 14th.

SCHEDULE

	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
	NEURODIVERSITY: FOUNDATION	DESIGN FRAMEWORKS: EVALUATION STRATEGIES	SENSORY ERGODESIGN: THE HUMAN BODY AS A CATALYST	INCLUSIVE FUTURES
9:00 – 9:10 AM	<p>Remarks Mark Tykocinski</p> <p>Welcome & Introductions Severino Alfonso, Wendy Ross & Loukia Tsafoulia</p>	<p>Welcome & Introductions Severino Alfonso, Wendy Ross & Loukia Tsafoulia</p>	<p>Welcome & Introductions Severino Alfonso, Wendy Ross & Loukia Tsafoulia</p>	<p>Remarks Stephen K. Klasko</p> <p>Welcome & Introductions Severino Alfonso, Wendy Ross & Loukia Tsafoulia</p>
9:10 – 10:00 AM	<p>Building a Foundation for Autism Wendy J. Ross</p> <p>4 A's of Autism: Awareness to Acceptance to Appreciation to Action as a Pathway to Fulfilling and Productive Lives Stephen Mark Shore</p>	<p>Enabling Architecture: ASPECTSS and the Built Environment from an Autistic Lens Magda Mostafa</p>	<p>Creating Sensory Friendly Spaces: Tips from an Occupational Therapist Jamie Bassman</p>	<p>9:10 - 9:20 am Remarks Barbara Klinkhammer</p> <p>9:20 - 10:00 am Building Inclusivity into Everyday Life Christopher Banks</p>
10:00 – 10:50 AM	<p>Dialectical Design Thinking. Towards Space Inclusivity Severino Alfonso & Loukia Tsafoulia</p> <p>The Other, Binary Thinking, A True Spectrum: My Autism Diagnosis Story Rachel Updegrove</p>	<p>Building Autism Accepting Environments Adam Harris</p>	<p>The Orchid, the Dandelion and the Slide: Exploring autism and architecture's need for sensorial agency Sean Ahlquist</p>	<p>President and Parent: Neurodiversity is always on my mind Bruce A. Meyer</p>
10:50 – 11:10 AM	In Dialogue	In Dialogue	In Dialogue	In Dialogue
11:10 – 11:30 AM	Break	Break	Break	Break



FRIDAY

SATURDAY

SUNDAY

MONDAY

11:30 AM – 12:20 PM

Transitioning from School to Adult Life as an Autistic Person
Caroline Borgia

Cannabinoid Based Medicine in the treatment of Symptoms Associated with Autism Spectrum Disorder
Erica Daniels

GET Café: the journey from concept to cappuccino to competitive jobs

Brooke Goodspeed

I'm Not Disabled ... You Are
Lonnie Smith

Everyday Strategies: Autism and the Things it Teaches from A Family Perspective
Sabra Townsend

Reflecting on the ADA and Those Left Behind
Eron Friedlander

Through Autistic Eyes
Brian Foti, Alex Le Pape & Gregory Tino

What's Next? Building Independence in the Home, on the Job, and on the Go!
Amy McCann

12:20 – 1:10 PM

Body Politics: Social Equity and Public Space
Joel Sanders

The Person-Space Dialogue: Towards a unified language
Itai Palti

Round-Table Discussion: Future and Conclusions
Discussion with the event speakers moderated by Severino Alfonso, Wendy Ross & Loukia Tsafoulia

1:10 – 1:30 PM

In Dialogue

In Dialogue

In Dialogue

1:30 – 2:00 PM

Break

Break

2:00 – 2:50 PM

Direct In Vivo Evaluation of the Autism Accessibility of Architectural Spaces Through the Lived Experience of People on the Spectrum
Joseph McCleery

Launch Pad: Design to Empower Everyday Superheroes
Jennifer Cook O'Toole

2:50 – 3:40 PM

DEAFSPACE: Insights on the Power of Participatory Design and Community Building
Hansel Bauman

Joyful not Painful: Designing for All Learners
Verona Carpenter Architects, Jennifer Carpenter & Irina Verona

3:40 – 4:00 PM

In Dialogue

In Dialogue

FRIDAY

// SEPTEMBER 11TH

NEURODIVERSITY: FOUNDATION

Background in autism and experimental learning processes in design and space interaction.

9:00 – 9:10 AM

REMARKS

Mark L. Tykocinski

// BIO

Mark L. Tykocinski, MD, is the Provost at Thomas Jefferson University and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs at Thomas Jefferson University, The Anthony F. and Gertrude M. DePalma Dean, Sidney Kimmel Medical College of Thomas Jefferson University. Dr. Tykocinski serves Provost, Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, Thomas Jefferson University, and the Anthony F. and Gertrude M. DePalma Dean of Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University. Before joining Jefferson in 2008, he was Professor and Chair of the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine. His research contributions have been in the fields of molecular and cellular immunology, for which he holds a series of research patents. He serves as SAB Chair for KAHR-Medical, the Israeli biotech company he founded in 2007 for fusion protein pharmaceuticals. He earned a BA in biology magna cum laude from Yale University and his MD from New York University.

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Severino Alfonso, Wendy Ross & Loukia Tsafoulia

9:10 – 10:00 AM

BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR AUTISM

Wendy J. Ross

Every building deserves a solid foundation and we are hoping that today's foundation will be no different. Today's sessions will introduce the topic of autism. It will describe some of the diagnostic components of autism as well as provide an overview of some interventions and therapies for it. The session will particularly focus on aspects of autism that might present as strengths and challenges in participating in community settings. During today's sessions, you will hear from a developmental and behavioral pediatrician, and more importantly, you will hear from those affected by autism and their loved ones.

// BIO

Wendy J. Ross, MD, is a developmental and behavioral pediatrician and the inaugural director of Jefferson's Center for Autism and Neurodiversity, which merges her love of clinical medicine with her community inclusion programs. Dr. Ross created the first Autism Airport Inclusion Program with mock flights, upon which Senator Lautenberg based legislation. She additionally has pioneered programs at museums, sporting events, and other settings. In 2014, Dr. Ross was recognized internationally as a top 10 CNN hero. She attended the Humanities

and Medicine program at Mt Sinai School of Medicine in New York, where she graduated in the AOA honor society. She completed a pediatrics residency at Yale and a fellowship in Developmental Pediatrics at Harvard.

4 A'S OF AUTISM: AWARENESS TO ACCEPTANCE TO APPRECIATION TO ACTION AS A PATHWAY TO FULFILLING AND PRODUCTIVE LIVES

Stephen Mark Shore

We are transitioning from "awareness" to "acceptance" and headed to "appreciation" as society takes "action" in valuing individuals on the autism spectrum for whom they are. Examples of people, organizations, and entire countries at each stage of development will be presented.

An autobiographical structure combining experiences of people on the autism spectrum, in making fulfilling and productive lives for autistic individuals the rule rather than the exception will be used to charge participants to reframe their thinking away from deficit, disorder, and deficit towards seeking abilities based on individual strengths. The session ends with generalizing focus on strengths-based thinking to the rest of humanity – and finally, to the audience themselves.

By examining how deficits and challenges so pervasively attributed to autism and other disabilities can be reframed as strengths, this presentation offers practical solutions for considering these characteristics as potential springboards to success in education, employment, self-advocacy, and meaningful engagement in the community for leading fulfilling and productive lives.

// BIO

Stephen Mark Shore, EdD, is a Clinical Assistant Professor of Special Education at Adelphi University. Diagnosed with "Atypical Development and strong autistic tendencies", non speaking until age 4, and recommended for institutionalization, Dr. Shore is now a professor at Adelphi University focusing on matching best practice to the needs of people with autism. In addition to working with children, Stephen is internationally renowned for presentations, consultations and writings on lifespan issues pertinent to education, relationships, employment, advocacy, and disclosure. A board member of Autism Speaks and the Organization for Autism Research, president emeritus of the Asperger Autism Network, and advisory board member of the Autism Society, Dr. Shore serves on the boards several other autism organizations.

10:00 – 10:50 AM
DIALECTICAL DESIGN
THINKING. TOWARDS SPACE
INCLUSIVITY

Severino Alfonso & Loukia Tsafoulia

The talk provides context about the history of cross-disciplinary efforts within the design field and the criticality of interactions addressing all-inclusive ways for inhabiting and perceiving our environments. The presentation focuses on two interconnected lines of thought. First, we reflect on the design field's porosity towards a wide range of forces, opening it to multidisciplinary horizons, especially

in the context of pedagogical and academic practices. We provide a brief lineage of the architectural education's practice of absorbing and "importing" methods, theories, and discourses. Second, we put forth a series of propositions that designers can incorporate to advance the design of inclusive environments. Among these are, to provide sensory interaction within responsive environments focusing on the human body/environment relations. To lessen the protagonism of the leading designer, thus favoring a more community-driven conversation in the design processes. To allow the critical evaluation and integration of "non-standard" design principles. There has been a lot of work done -both scholarly and applied- around issues of accessibility, but often, these are seen through the narrow lenses of standardization. The presentation poses the importance of personal design, authorship, and active participation of different people within enabling environments.

// BIOS

Severino Alfonso and **Loukia Tsafoulia** are registered architects, educators and researchers. They are the founders of PLB studio, an architecture and research practice and Assistant Professors at the College of Architecture and the Built Environment, Thomas Jefferson University where they have founded the Synesthetic Research and Design Lab. They hold a Post-Professional MS in Advanced Architectural Design from the Graduate School of Planning and Preservation, Columbia University. They have taught at Barnard + Columbia Architecture, Pratt Institute, Parsons School of Design, New York Institute of Technology, the Spitzer School of Architecture at The City College of New York and at the New York City College of Technology. Their design work has been exhibited in international design venues and they have lectured in academic institutions in the US East Coast, Madrid and various cities in China. Their research is positioned at the intersection of responsive environments, digital tech-

nologies and the computational theory of design in the 1950s–1970s in Europe and North America.

Severino also holds two MS in Urban Design and Advanced Architecture from the school of architecture in Madrid (ETSAM) where he is currently a PhD candidate. He has worked with international architectural studios such as Carme Pinos, Angel Fernandez Alba and Federico Soriano in Spain, Lomar Arkitekt in Sweden and Per-forma Studio, KDF Architecture and Natalie Jeremijenko in the United States.

Loukia received her professional degree in Architecture Engineering from the National Polytechnic School of Athens where she is a PhD candidate. She is co editor of the book publication titled *Transient Spaces*, exploring the impact of mass migration on cities around the world. She has worked with Studio Dror and LEESER Architecture in New York and with K+T Architecture as well as the NTU Urban Environment Lab in Athens.

THE OTHER, BINARY
THINKING, A TRUE SPECTRUM:
MY AUTISM DIAGNOSIS STORY

Rachel Updegrave

"I was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, at 23, almost a year ago; and for 23 years I wondered why I was so different from everyone else. I constantly looked for feedback on how to fit in, to make things better, to keep my friends, to be normal.

During my time at Jefferson as an architecture student, I explored narrative, unique individuals and their stories, in order to find ways to translate their stories into designs or another form of communication. Always feeling like an "other" or outsider, reading, researching, and listening felt like the only right way to possibly design for someone that is not myself. Being on the spectrum, while I desired a binary and explicit world

to understand, I found the “other” to be where I fit in the most. I use my differences and experiences of “othering”, to see that every individual is unique and their own experiences are valid. Every experience and “other” exists within its context. In order to design, we must listen to the whole spectrum of narratives.”

// BIO

Rachel Updegrave is a Jefferson CABA alumni (B.Arch '19) and currently works at HERA Laboratory Planners. Before her sophomore year of college, she was diagnosed with severe OCD, and was recently diagnosed with Autism. In college, she struggled to relate to people and coped by reading and listening to others' stories. Stories led her to co-found the Jefferson's East Falls chapter of Active Minds, a mental health advocacy group run by students, for students. In 2019, she facilitated “The Spatial Implications of Othering: Mental Health and the Built Environment,” a round-table discussion at the Society of College and University Planners Mid-Atlantic Symposium. She openly shares her journey, so no one feels alone.

10:50 – 11:10 AM IN DIALOGUE

Curated questions from Interior Design 7 studio course students and open for Q&A to the audience

11:30 AM – 1:10 PM COMMUNITY BASED RESEARCH / HEARING FROM PEOPLE WITH ASD AND THEIR CAREGIVERS

TRANSITIONING FROM SCHOOL TO ADULT LIFE AS AN AUTISTIC PERSON

Caroline Borgia

As a young adult woman who has grown up on the spectrum, I will be sharing my perspectives including the advantages and challenges that autism has conferred upon me. I will also spend some time discussing my preferences in the built environment.

// BIO

Caroline Borgia is a 2019 graduate of Lower Merion High School, registered to begin at Drexel University in September 2020. Caroline is autistic and has engaged in activities during her gap year that inform, educate, and advocate on behalf of the disabled, focusing on autism. As a member of H-CAN's disability advocacy group and on her own, she has presented to groups at area universities and high schools, on various disability-related topics. She has also been working with Dr. Wendy Ross on various inclusion projects. Caroline hopes to be a voice for those who do not yet have one. Additionally, Caroline has been working at GET Cafe, a coffee shop that employs and trains disabled individuals for jobs both at GET and out in their communities.

CANNABINOID BASED MEDICINE IN THE TREATMENT OF SYMPTOMS ASSOCIATED WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

Erica Daniels

Is Cannabinoid Based Medicine the missing piece in the treatment of autism spectrum disorder? We do know that cannabinoid medicine is a safe and effective tool in the autism toolbox that providers want to know more about.

Many families are choosing to use cannabinoid medicine to treat the symptoms of their child's autism without their pediatricians and specialists officially onboard. families.

This presentation explores the use of cannabinoid medicine as a treatment for

symptoms associated with autism spectrum disorder. Introduction of cannabinoids, terpenes, consumption methods and dosing considerations being used already within the autism patient population. Our local organization, Hope Grows for Autism, focuses on research, education and caregiver support pertaining to autism and cannabis medicine.

// BIO

Erica Daniels is the author of *Cooking with Leo: An Allergen-Free Autism Family Cookbook*, founder of Hope Grows for Autism, a nonprofit aimed at improving the lives of families affected by autism through research education and advocacy of cannabinoid-based medicine and serves as an Autism Advisor providing strategic consultation and solutions to healthcare professionals, product manufacturers and universities to empower them in making data-backed business & healthcare decisions involving autism. Most importantly, Erica is the mother of a child with severe autism who is determined to give her son and family the highest quality of life possible.

GET CAFÉ: THE JOURNEY FROM CONCEPT TO CAPPUCCINO TO COMPETITIVE JOBS

Brooke Goodspeed

How can we develop new and modify existing employment spaces to accommodate the neurodiverse individual? This question has influenced the build out and evolution of GET Café, a full-service coffee shop and café in Narberth, PA. This presentation will walk audience members through the processes of design innovation and universal design as they were used in the construction of GET Café. A virtual tour of our café and multisensory spaces will be included. We can have Great Expectations Together to make employment spaces work for all individuals!

// BIO

Brooke Goodspeed is a parent advocate and entrepreneur in the neurodiversity space. Her professional background in nursing has influenced her approach to tackling community inclusion as a social determinant of health. In 2015, Ms. Goodspeed opened the doors of a small community center with a mission for the social inclusion for individuals of all ages and abilities. Today, GETincluded, Inc. operates as a nonprofit organization with a goal of improving employment outcomes for neurodiverse individuals. Built using the guiding principles of universal design and accessibility, GET Café is GETincluded's full-service coffee shop and café that employs 28 neurodiverse individuals in a competitive and integrated setting.

I'M NOT DISABLED ... YOU ARE

Lonnie Smith

According to the CDC autism affects an estimated 1 in 54 children in the United States. In 1908 the word "autism" was first used by Psychiatrist Eugene Bleuler to mean morbid self-admiration and withdrawal within self. Today the word autism highlights the perception of what a person can't do so the diagnosis automatically embeds low self-esteem in the soul of an individual who is simply different. This negative perception creates mental roadblocks while initiating achievements limits which society reinforces. Its clear to me that if the world continuously says you can't, most likely you'll begin to believe it. The Autisarians have declared war on the negative perception of autism, the battle to create a world where being different is the new normal has begun.

// BIO

Lonnie Smith is the founder and Director of the Autisarian Non-profit and co-owner of the Holodoc Virtual Reality Tech Center. He is an Air Force veteran with a degree in web design and coding, but most importantly he

is the proud father of two boys who were diagnosed autistic. For over 30 years he has fought many battles in a private war against autism, but now that he has found soldiers with the same goals and passion he is confident we can end the war.

EVERYDAY STRATEGIES: AUTISM AND THE THINGS IT TEACHES FROM A FAMILY PERSPECTIVE

Sabra Townsend

Besides a healthy dose of faith in whomever you place your belief and a whacky sense of humor for the challenges that this world brings, I believe that having a few practical tips will help everyone make it through the day successfully. Transitions are a fact of life; we move from place to place and task to task. While routines can be helpful, changes are also needed to move throughout our busy lives. The tips and suggestions presented today have been used by me and many other families who have shared their ideas. We will discuss useful everyday strategies that we have learned from our experience with autism as we travel along our family's journey.

// BIO

Sabra Townsend left the corporate engineering sector after her son (now 22 yrs. old) was born with a physical disability, then later diagnosed with Autism. With professional experience that varies from human factors engineering at the Federal Aviation Administration to community coordinating at the Philadelphia Dept. of Public Health, Ms. Townsend has presented at numerous conferences and panel discussions in the United States. Currently serving as the Director of Operations for the Jefferson Center for Autism and Neurodiversity in Philadelphia, Ms. Townsend is a graduate of Lehigh University with a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering.

1:10 – 1:30 PM IN DIALOGUE

Curated questions from Interior Design 7 studio course students and open for Q&A to the audience

SATURDAY

// SEPTEMBER 12TH

DESIGN FRAMEWORKS: EVALUATION STRATEGIES

Framing design for those with autism and other differences.
Introduction to experimental strategies to measure outcomes.

9:00 – 9:10 AM

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Severino Alfonso, Wendy Ross &
Loukia Tsafoulia

9:10 – 10:00 AM

ENABLING ARCHITECTURE: ASPECTSS AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT FROM AN AUTISTIC LENS

Magda Mostafa

Previous research into the interplay between the built environment and the experiences of those on the autism spectrum sheds light on its important role in the behavior and consequently the access of individuals on the spectrum to spaces. Almost all man-made sensory input is born as a designer's decision and manifested in the built environment. Built environment matters- when designed thoughtfully it has been shown to promote positive and conducive behaviors such as increased attention and ability to focus as well as reduced behavioral challenges that are an indicator of sensory overload in autistic individuals. Thoughtful built environments have the potential to mitigate and manage sensory overload in the autistic world. Much of our world however does not provide this thoughtfulness.

We also have a moral obligation not to limit our thinking to the basic utilitarian threshold of access to basic functions, but should aspire to the right to delight and joy in a space. An autistic person has just as much the right to not only feel safe, healthy and included in the world, but also the right to pleasure in all the amenities and services their communities present.

// BIO

Magda Mostafa is an Associate Professor of Design in the Architecture Department of AUC, where she leads Design Studio II, which focuses on the vocabulary of contemporary Egyptian architecture. She is also the Co-Director of the UNESCO-UIA Education Commission and Validation Council, which is a global think-tank tasked with setting architectural education policy and practices as well as upholding threshold standards of excellence. She is a Design Associate at the Cairo-based practice, Progressive Architects where she specializes in autism inclusive design. She is the author of the Autism ASPECTSS™ design guidelines, the world's first research-based design framework for autism worldwide. She has recently joined the New York-based think-tank and inclusive practice MIXDesign as a member of their MIX Neurodiversity Initiative and as part of their team as an autism expert (<https://www.mixdesign.online>).

10.00 – 10:50 AM

BUILDING AUTISM ACCEPTING ENVIRONMENTS

Adam Harris

Accessibility is a much discussed concept. Laws across the world require public spaces and places to be accessible for people with disabilities. However the concept of accessibility is rarely explored in the context of autism. Too often the challenges a person experiences from the built environment and interacting with those in it are attributed to the person rather than design and how things works. Designing our world to be more structured, clear, predictable and accepting empowers autistic people and creates better operational environments for all. Autism-friendly design requires placing the experience of autistic people at the centre of the process, embedding autistic thinking into the universal design process and allowing for specific supports and adaptations for individuals. It also requires changing attitudes as well as buildings. In my talk I will explore how this is possible and our experiences of creating autism-friendly services, operating environments and whole communities in Ireland"

//BIO

Adam Harris is a 25-year-old social entrepreneur, Autism advocate, and Founder-CEO of AsIAm.ie, an organization

committed to building a more Autism-friendly society in Ireland. Adam established AslAm.ie based on his own experiences of growing up with Aspergers Syndrome, a condition on the Autism Spectrum. Today Adam addresses Autism issues in the media and at conferences, national and international. A Social Entrepreneurs Ireland Awardee, Adam also sits on the Board of Specialisterne Ireland and the NCSE Consultative Forum.

**10:50 – 11:15 AM
IN DIALOGUE**

Curated questions from Interior Design 7 studio course students and open for Q&A to the audience.

**11:30 AM – 12:20 PM
REFLECTING ON THE ADA AND
THOSE LEFT BEHIND**

Eron Friedlaender

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 has been foundational in raising social awareness of the accessibility needs of the millions of people in the United States living with disabilities. Resulting policies and building codes since the Act's adoption have allowed a previously marginalized and isolated population to engage in their communities and remain independent and included. However, many unmet accommodations remain for people across the spectrum of neurodiversity, namely those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD); we have yet to fully recognize the essential needs of those with social, sensory and cognitive vulnerabilities within the built environment. We must challenge the Americans with Disabilities Design Guide to incorporate evidence-based recommendations to reflect a broader range and depth of disability priorities. Such efforts rely on engaging city planners, architects, designers, educators, public health advocates and thought leaders

to consider broader definitions of vulnerable populations and those deserving of consideration in all community spaces, whether currently standing or yet to be imagined.

// BIO

Eron Friedlaender, MD, MPH is a Professor of Clinical Pediatrics at the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine and an attending physician in the Division of Emergency Medicine at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Her research has centered on how conditions in the built environment relate to injury risk as well as documenting ways in which individuals with autism are vulnerable within health care systems. She leads program development supported by ongoing research initiatives to shape a comprehensive approach to the care of children with autism and related developmental disabilities within the hospital environment. Much of this work centers on translating successful interventions for children with autism within educational systems to health care settings. Eron has experience in qualitative research methodology in injury-related investigation as well as in directing needs assessments of individuals with social disabilities and among health care providers.

**12:20 – 1:10 PM
BODY POLITICS: SOCIAL
EQUITY AND INCLUSIVE
PUBLIC SPACE**

Joel Sanders

Joel Sanders, founder of MIXdesign, an inclusive design think tank and consultancy, will discuss how MIXdesign is considering the spatial implications of neurodiversity as a part of MIXdesign's mission to make public spaces safe and accessible for all people regardless of age, race, gender, religion, and ability. MIXdesign employs a cross-disciplinary approach that draws from the input of experts representing public health,

humanities and design, as well engagement practices that draw from the lived experience of "non-compliant bodies". Sanders will share how looking through the lens of neurodiversity contributes to MIXdesign's current initiative to design innovative post-pandemic spaces that accommodate all bodies in ways that explore social equity, health and well-being. MIXdesign is a branch of New York-based JSA, led by Joel Sanders, Professor at Yale School of Architecture.

// BIO

Joel Sanders, FAIA is the founder of MIXdesign, an inclusive design think tank, and consultancy that is a branch of his New York-based, LGBTBE-certified architecture studio JSA (Joel Sanders Architect). MIXdesign is dedicated to making everyday building types like restrooms, art museums, and university campuses accessible and welcoming to people of different ages, genders, abilities, cultural identities, and religions. MIXdesign initiatives include Stalled!, an AIA award-winning project that responds to national controversies surrounding transgender access to public restrooms. In addition to being Principal of JSA/MIXdesign, Sanders is Professor at Yale School of Architecture, where he directs the M.Arch II program.

**1:10 – 1:30 PM
IN DIALOGUE**

Curated questions from Interior Design 7 studio course students and open for Q&A to the audience.

2:00 – 2:50 PM

DIRECT IN VIVO EVALUATION OF THE AUTISM ACCESSIBILITY OF ARCHITECTURAL SPACES THROUGH THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF PEOPLE ON THE SPECTRUM

Joseph McCleery

It is critically important that public spaces and everyday building types be accessible to all. Significant societal progress has been made toward making spaces accessible for individuals with physical disabilities and, more recently, also to individuals of different ages, genders, races, cultures, and religions. However, social efforts to ensure equal accessibility for neurodiverse populations are relatively less far along. Here, I present methods and procedures designed to effectively measure the lived experiences of individuals with autism as they move through various architectural environments. These include semi-structured interviews, direct behavioral and observational measures, and technology-based mapping and tracking of both the movement and visual experiences of those with autism through different environments. The goal of this project is to ground autism accessibility theory and practice in objectively measured differences in the lived experiences of people with autism in more versus less accessible environments. This approach has significant potential to rapidly improve the identification and documentation of the accessibility needs of neurodiverse individuals, ultimately paving the way for removal of access barriers and ensuring architectural spaces are safe and accessible for all.

// BIO

Joseph McCleery, PhD is an Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology and Academic Director, Kinney Center for Autism Education and Support, Saint Joseph's University. His research focuses along three

themes. The first theme involves examining the mechanisms of social processing in infants, children, and adults with autism. The second concerns examining genetic impacts on brain functioning, through the study of the relationships of normal genetic variation and rare genetic syndromes with brain and behavioral functioning. The third theme involves evaluating behavioral and cognitive-behavioral interventions for individuals with ASD. His research and ideas have been published in leading journals in the fields of Clinical Psychology, Psychiatry, and Neuroscience; and his research has been supported by the NIH, the M.I.N.D. Institute, the ESRC, and the Leverhulme Trust, among others.

2:50 – 3:40 PM

DEAFSPACE: INSIGHTS ON THE POWER OF PARTICIPATORY DESIGN AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

Hansel Bauman

This presentation explores the intersection of social connection; spatial occupation and cultural agency through the lens of Deaf experiences calling attention to the formative role architecture plays in community building across the spectrum of human diversity. Deaf people inhabit a rich sensory world acted upon by dynamic spatial conditions within the visual field of sign language communication and the visu-haptic means for sensing activities and presence of others for safety and wellbeing. Common conditions of poor sightlines; bad lighting and discordant interiors; poor acoustics and background vibrations exemplify barriers that impact visual communication, social engagement and spatial awareness. While disabling, communal solutions to these kinds of environmental barriers are the grassroots origins of DeafSpace—the architectural expression of Deaf experiences. This presentation chronicles

the pioneering work of Gallaudet University's DeafSpace Project, an inclusive research and design initiative that codified long-held DeafSpace cultural traditions into a set of architectural design guidelines in 2010. Novel design insights and user-driven research methodologies and building project case studies are presented demonstrating the creative capacity and cultural agency inherent to authentic user-driven participatory design.

// BIO

Hansel Bauman is a recognized pioneer in the field of Deaf Architecture. He is currently a co-director at MIXdesign, a cross-disciplinary think tank and design consultancy for inclusive design. Previously, he served for ten years as the campus architect and adjunct faculty at Gallaudet University where, in 2006, he established the DeafSpace Project exploring architecture and Deaf experiences for which he received the International Association of Universal Design, Gold Award in 2015. He lectures internationally with work featured at the Cooper Hewitt Museum in New York and the Smithsonian History Museum in Washington D.C. and in major publications such as *Metropolis*, and *The Economist*. He serves on the ANSI Accessibility Standards Committee and recently advised the US Green Building Council on new LEED Pilot Credits for Inclusive Design.

3:40 – 4:00 PM
IN DIALOGUE

Curated questions from Interior Design 7 studio course students and open for Q&A to the audience.

SUNDAY

// SEPTEMBER 13TH

SENSORY ERGODESIGN: THE HUMAN BODY AS A CATALYST

Building our environments sensorial agency

9:00 – 9:10 AM

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

**Severino Alfonso, Wendy Ross &
Loukia Tsafoulia**

9:10 – 10:00 AM

CREATING SENSORY FRIENDLY SPACES: TIPS FROM AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

Jaime Bassman

Occupational therapists focus on the unique interplay between the person, the task and the environment- particularly physical and sensory features of the environment. There is a unique role OT's can play in collaborating with design professionals. Information will be provided about the seven different sensory systems, and how Autistic people process sensory information in unique and individual ways. Before successfully creating built environments that are accessible to Autistic individuals, it will be important to understand to create a sensory access checklist and consult with a variety of neurodiverse users.

// BIO

Jaime Bassman, MS, OTR/L is a pediatric occupational therapist with almost two decades of experience working in early intervention, preschool and school-based settings, including autistic support and emotional support programs. She is cur-

rently an infant toddler early intervention therapist with Ken Crest Services in Chester, Delaware and Montgomery Counties. Jaime is also a clinical consultant and trainer for the Whole Community Inclusion initiative of Jewish Learning Venture, working with educators to create sensory friendly environments.

10:00 – 10:50 AM

THE ORCHID, THE DANDELION AND THE SLIDE: EXPLORING AUTISM AND ARCHITECTURE'S NEED FOR SENSORIAL AGENCY

Sean Ahlquist

Ara is a charismatic 11-year-old girl with autism spectrum disorder. Among the developmental impacts of her autism, she is a non-verbal communicator. Her neurological make-up inhibits the proper signaling and articulation of muscles that are required to shape sounds into words, sentences and conversations. But, by other means, she is a tireless and expressive communicator. Her neurodiversity generates a creativity that transforms her environment – the objects, technologies, activities and parties within it – into a multi-modal, ingenious and ad-hoc social language.

But architecture often lacks the ability to facilitate such an individualized creativity – one that harkens autism's mantra that the character of one individual with autism is a

unique character relevant only to themselves. Architecture operates in shared languages of material, forms and organizations to project purpose and provoke impression. But, in Ara's case, she is the generator of a shared language. Anything counter to that becomes an impedance, an exclusion of her will to situate herself. This talk will speak towards breaking architecture's inherent fixities in expression, through interrogating its very means of materialization. Facilitating agency, for those such as Ara, to actively transform their circumstances turns architecture into a malleable engine for communication.

// BIO

Sean Ahlquist is an Associate Professor of Architecture at the University of Michigan – Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning. He directs the Lab for Socio-Material Architectures, developing research which spans computational design thinking, advanced material research and the ramifications of novel sensorial systems on human behavior. Through intense interdisciplinary work ranging from structural engineering to behavioral sciences, Ahlquist seeks to address issues of physical ability and neurodiversity, particularly in the realm of autism spectrum disorder, to create architectures highly responsive to the individual capacities that help activate inclusive experiences within complex social environments. This on-going work has received the 2020 Award of Excellence for Innovative Research from the Association for Computer-Aided Design in Architecture (ACADIA).

10:50 – 11:15 AM
IN DIALOGUE

Curated questions from Interior Design 7 studio course students and open for Q&A to the audience.

11:30 AM – 12:20 PM
THROUGH AUTISTIC EYES

Brian Foti, Alex La Pape, & Gregory Tino

In “Through Autistic Eyes,” three non-speaking autistic adults will share their perspective on some common – though not universal – challenges autistics frequently experience when navigating built environments. They will offer insight into heightened sensory perception, motor challenges related to apraxia, impulse control and self-regulation, and the compounding role of anxiety. They will share their preliminary thoughts on implications for both design and getting input from autistics and will be delighted to discuss these implications further with the group.

// BIOS

Brian Foti is a non-speaking autistic advocate and co-founder of the Inside Voice community of non-speaking autistics, a program of the Springfield PA based non-profit AALIVE (Adults with Autism Living with Independence Value and Esteem). He has presented to educators and legislators on numerous occasions to help advocate for disability rights. He blogs at <https://speakwithoutavoice.wordpress.com>.

Alexandre Le Pape is a young man with ASD. He found his voice through spelling to communicate in 2017 at age 16 and since then has been using it for advocacy. Alex has served as a consultant to inclusion programs with major sports teams in Philadelphia and in the development of an autism friendly healthcare system at Jefferson Health. He has presented at conferences and been interviewed by news networks.

He enjoys book club, film class and just hanging out with his friends at Inside Voice, a community of non-speaking autistics. Learn more about Alex on his blog: <https://musingsofabeginnersmind.com>.

Gregory Tino is a 27 year old man with autism who was able to find his voice in May of 2017 using the Spelling To Communicate Method and has not looked back since. He is a fierce autism advocate and has sat on multiple panels to showcase the S2C method. His plans are to become an author. He has written a children’s book called *The Land Called Boring* (<https://www.blurb.com/b/9545158-the-land-called-boring>) and is currently working on a book of his writings from his blog *The Autistic Mind Finally Speaks* (<https://inautism.wordpress.com>). Gregory works with a job coach at three different jobs, enjoys book club, bike riding, puzzles, and the computer.

12:20 – 1:10 PM
THE PERSON-SPACE DIALOGUE: TOWARDS A UNIFIED LANGUAGE

Itai Palti

Conscious Design proposes that spaces and objects should be in an active and empathic dialogue with people. That dialogue requires a unified language through which both parties are able to express themselves and understand one another. As we work to embed deep inclusion in design, a primary effort is in capturing the diversity of human perception and expression in order to enrich the Person-Space Dialogue. I am joining the conference to learn from speakers with expertise and lived experience, so that we can use science to ask better questions for design.

// BIO

Itai Palti is a practicing architect and researcher focusing on designing with the human experience in mind. He is Director of

Hume, a science-informed architecture and urban design practice backed by research at its Human Metrics Lab. In 2015, Itai founded the Conscious Cities movement; a new field of research and practice for building people-centred environments that are aware and responsive, using data analysis, AI, tech, and science-informed design. The Centre for Conscious Design, which Itai leads, grew out of the movement and is an international grassroots think tank focused on using design to address urban challenges facing society today and in the future.

1:10 – 1:30 PM
IN DIALOGUE

Curated questions from Interior Design 7 studio course students and open for Q&A to the audience.

2:00 – 2:50 PM
LAUNCH PAD: DESIGN TO EMPOWER EVERYDAY SUPERHEROES

Jennifer Cook O’Toole

“In their physical imagining, architectural and interior design should be the ultimate concrete expression of “bottom-up” thinking, the inductive style most native to neurodivergent minds. Form following function, foundations poured before light fixtures chosen. All seems pretty logical. The trouble is that most of the human spectrum works the other way around. Deductive reasoning. Top down. Unintentionally pre-conceived form — “tweaked,” with good intent, by adding “inclusive” accommodations. You might say that, in reality, fluorescent lights are replaced — with pomp and pride — before anyone has noticed that foundation was very, very slanted in the first place. We, on the autism spectrum, start with specific, -facts, and examples, filtered through our unique sensorial and social perceptions. From that swirl of information, we step back,

spot trends, notice patterns, seeing what typical minds do not. Until now. Environmental design should be—can be—the best of bottom-up: unfamiliar experiences truly witnessed and inhabited, translated and constructed. A framework of empowered lives, well-and-richly led by members of the entire human spectrum.”

// BIO

Jennifer Cook (formerly Cook O’Toole) was identified as being on the spectrum in 2011, just after her three children. She is now the author of seven bestselling books—the *Asperkids* collection, *Sisterhood of the Spectrum*, and *Autism in Heels*—which include a *Wall Street Journal* bestseller, a *Publishers Weekly* “Best Book” title winner, and three of *BookAuthority’s* “Best-Selling” and “Top Autism Books of All Time.” Jennifer is the bestselling female author of any single book in the genre, a multi-award-winning international speaker, and the founder of belong, a virtual university of enrichment and community empowering neurodiverse individuals, couples & families worldwide.

2:50 – 3:40 PM
**JOYFUL NOT PAINFUL:
DESIGNING FOR ALL
LEARNERS**

Verona Carpenter Architects

We live in a neurodiverse world, but most schools are not designed for the neurodiverse population they serve. Though some children with special needs are well supported by specialized schools, legions of students with learning differences such as autism—diagnosed and undiagnosed—flounder in spaces that privilege those who can sit still, face forward, and tolerate a bright room. An inhospitable school environment causes mental and physical pain.

Learning is inseparable from the environment in which it takes place, and that environment should make learning possible, and joyful, for all students. And so learning spaces must adapt to the learners—not the other way around.

We will present examples from our research and practice in designing inclusive spaces, exploring the boundaries between materials, objects, rooms and programs to allow for movement and choice in the classroom and to lessen the impact sensory sensitivities. We will examine how adaptive skills training can be supported by the architecture of education, and how to provide spaces for escape without physical separation – all with the goal of unlocking the generative power of difference.

// BIOS

Verona Carpenter Architects is an award-winning architecture practice in Manhattan with expertise in education, workplace, art spaces, and hospitality. Led by Irina Verona and Jennifer Carpenter, the firm designs for resilience with the community of users in mind. The firm was one of five winners of the 2019 international ideas competition for the University of Louisiana at Lafayette learning lab school. Verona Carpenter is committed to improving their communities, providing pro-bono services to non-profit organizations like The Quad Preparatory School, the Museum of Food and Drink, and the Food + Finance High School. VCA was selected to speak on climate action at the 2020 Society for Campus and University Planning regional conference.

Jennifer Carpenter, a principal of the award-winning architecture and interiors firm Verona Carpenter Architects, has practiced in New York for over twenty years. Jennifer is currently in her fifth year on the Board of Directors of the Quad Preparatory School, serving gifted special-needs stu-

dents, and was a founding member of the Museum of Food and Drink. She is a member of the American Institute of Architects where she sits on the NYC Social Sciences and Architecture committee, and she is a LEED accredited professional. She lives in Manhattan with her husband, two sons, and two dogs.

Irina Verona, a principal of the award-winning architecture and interiors firm Verona Carpenter Architects, has practiced in New York for over twenty years. Irina has taught architectural design at the Barnard + Columbia Colleges Architecture Program each year for a decade. She is a founding editor of *Praxis: a Journal of Writing and Building*, exploring the relationship between theory and practice. Irina serves on the board of the Chen Dance Foundation and is active in the New York chapter of the American Institute of Architects. She lives in New York with her husband, two daughters, and a new dog.

3:40 – 4:00 PM
IN DIALOGUE

Curated questions from Interior Design 7 studio course students and open for Q&A to the audience.

MONDAY

// SEPTEMBER 14TH

INCLUSIVE FUTURE

Future direction of inclusive environments, structures, processes, and perspectives for neurodiverse individuals and those with autism.

9:00 – 9:10 AM

REMARKS

Stephen K. Klasko

// BIO

Stephen K. Klasko, MD, MBA, is the President of Thomas Jefferson University and CEO of Jefferson Health. He is an advocate for a transformation of health care and higher education. He has been a pioneer in using technology to build health assurance and equity – especially as we emerge from the Covid-19 crisis. He has led Jefferson to become one of America's fastest growing academic health centers. His new books are *Un-Healthcare: A Manifesto for Health Assurance*, with Hemant Taneja, and *Patient No Longer: Why Healthcare Must Deliver the Care Experience that Consumers Want and Expect*.

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Severino Alfonso, Wendy Ross & Loukia Tsafoulia

9:10 – 9:20 AM

REMARKS

Barbara Klinkhammer

// BIO

An accomplished scholar, design educator, and architect, **Barbara Klinkhammer**,

RA (DEU) Dipl.-Ing., serves as Dean of the College of Architecture and the Built Environment at Thomas Jefferson University. Klinkhammer brings a deep understanding of the contemporary professional design world and a timely vision of the future of design education. She co-leads the Jefferson Institute for Smart and Healthy Cities and actively takes part in the discourse of contemporary architecture through practicing and participation in international design competitions. She has served in leadership and board positions of numerous professional and academic organizations including the ACSA, ARCC and SESA and served as the co-editor of ARRIS. Klinkhammer holds the German equivalent of the Bachelor and Master's degrees in architecture from the RWTH-Aachen and is a registered architect in Germany.

9:20 – 10:00 AM

BUILDING INCLUSIVITY INTO EVERYDAY LIFE

Christopher Banks

Christopher Banks, President & CEO of the Autism Society of America, will discuss sensory considerations and communal supports to create inclusive build environments. The foundational piece of the puzzle is for society to be adaptable and willing to implement simple accommodations.

// BIO

Christopher Banks is the President & CEO at Autism Society of America. He has a comprehensive background in human services and the healthcare arena, where he's had a successful record of increasing fundraising efforts, measurably improving revenue strategies, and being a transformational leader committed to diversity and cultural growth. Most recently, he served as Vice President of Development and Community Engagement at Charles E. Smith Life Communities in Rockville, Maryland; here, he provided leadership in the development, implementation and evaluation of all philanthropic and community engagement efforts. His daily work supported the organization's impact strategy, and aimed to accelerate growth while building strong community partners. A native of Hazlet, NJ, Chris has spent the better part of the last 25 years in New York Metropolitan area, and has two adult children, Patrick and Quinn. He currently lives in Rockville, MD, and joined the Autism Society of America in January 2020.

10.00 – 10:50 AM
**PRESIDENT AND PARENT:
NEURODIVERSITY IS ALWAYS
ON MY MIND**

Bruce A. Meyer

“As a father of seven children and leader of 25,000 employees I am always investigating the unique skills and talents each person possesses. I am a firm believer that the most effective leaders amplify the intrinsic motivations and strengths of their people rather than trying to correct weaknesses and apply extrinsic motivators. Medicine, like Design, is about creating an understandable, engaging and motivating story for each interaction with the patient/family/customer; medically, it is about creating a healing environment that engages patients – from color, to specific texture, to people triggered by a particular sound. As the leader of Jefferson Health, I am constantly thinking about our patients and how we work to meet their needs. We are now in a unique time in our evolution, were with the help of designers, we can create spaces that fit and are customized to a large array of needs. When designers deepen their knowledge on clients with neurodiversity we are all successful. Join me in discussing how my personal experiences have informed my professional thinking and leadership of the largest Health System in the Philadelphia region.”

// BIO

Bruce A. Meyer, MD, MBA, is President of Jefferson Health and Senior Executive Vice President of Thomas Jefferson University, reporting to Stephen K. Klasko, MD, MBA. As Jefferson Health’s clinical leader, Dr. Meyer is leading its transformation into a single, integrated system that delivers safe, reliable and high-quality patient care, as well as convenient access to appointment scheduling at every Jefferson site through virtual and in-person visits. He has authored more

than 70 peer-reviewed publications and won multiple teaching awards while serving as a residency and fellowship program director and academic chair. Dr. Meyer often discusses his personal experience with the healthcare system and is a strong advocate for treating the patient as a whole person, not just treating the disease itself.

10:50 – 11:15 AM
IN DIALOGUE

Curated questions from Interior Design 7 studio course students and open for Q&A to the audience.

11:30 AM – 12:20 PM
**WHAT’S NEXT? BUILDING
INDEPENDENCE IN THE HOME,
ON THE JOB, AND ON THE GO!**

Amy McCann

How do we build independence in the home and prepare for community connections that include vocational opportunities, housing options, and continued social development? The presentation will focus on sharing strategies and tools related to relationship development and skill building within the topics of: Setting High Expectations, Structure and Routine, Supports and Accommodations, Problem Solving, Authentic and Meaningful Experiences, Empowerment and Role Valorization.

Carousel Connections is a program that supports individuals with disabilities as valued and contributing friends, colleagues, and neighbors. Using a skill building model, all facets of community life develop – volunteer and employment opportunities, social and recreational experiences with peers, home life with friends. Throughout the presentation, we will highlight how to:

- Build inter-dependent relationships among participants, families, and community partners focusing on reciprocity.
- Create tools and strategies for “next step” transitions and support the Readiness process across systems (ODP, family, relationships).
- Develop overall Wellness (physical health and emotional) plans.
- Engage participants using a person and family-centered approach.
- Appreciate the strengths, talents, and challenges that we all experience.
- Focus on belonging in neighborhoods and the larger community.

Presenters will include Self Advocates who are involved in a variety of community opportunities and continue to enhance their self-determination process as part of Carousel Connections’ programming.

// BIO

Amy McCann encourages growth opportunities by bridging connections and building relationships, sharing a vision of independence, and promoting models for inclusion and universal design. Carousel Connections is a program that provides training and support for adults with disabilities as they transition to greater levels of independence. As the founding director of Common Space, a non-profit organization that focuses on bridging diversity and crossing boundaries in a shared community space, Amy connects to local organizations and builds partnership opportunities for all. Amy is a facilitator for creating family housing cohorts and is a Community Connector for several Personal Support Networks in the Philadelphia area. As an inclusive educator

and community builder, she focuses on empathy training, building self-regulation strategies, and mindfulness related to how we all learn and work to our best.

12:20 – 1:30 PM

ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSION: FUTURE AND CONCLUSIONS

Moderated by Severino Alfonso, Wendy Ross & Loukia Tsafoulia

Discussion with the event speakers joined by Seb Choe, Lauren S. Henry and Roseann Schaaf.

Seb Choe is Associate Director of MIX-design, an inclusive design think tank and consultancy. Seb coordinates the efforts of in-house staff, institutional partners, research assistants, interns and a network of consultants for MIX research, educational, legal and fundraising initiatives. As the Project Manager for Stalled!, an interdisciplinary initiative for inclusive restrooms, they oversee research and design teams, organize lectures and workshops, and disseminate work through publications in print and online formats including Stalled! Online and Stalled! The Video.

Lauren S. Henry, Sensory Designer and Color Consultant, is a graduate of Syracuse University. She taught K-6 in Washington Metro Area Schools from 2000–2004. Then, she combined her passions for art, kids, psychology and writing, and founded an innovative business: With a Brush of Love. Utilizing a wide variety of techniques, Lauren transforms the lives of children with autism and other special needs through environmental design and optimization. The goal may be to pacify the aggressive, stimulate the withdrawn, or improve focus. Ultimately, this can dramatically increase their ability to thrive scholastically, socially and most importantly, at home.

Roseann Schaaf, PhD, OTR/L is the Director of the Jefferson Autism Center of Excellence, Professor of Occupational Therapy and faculty, Vickie and Jack Farber Institute of Neuroscience at Thomas Jefferson University. She is also at Thomas Jefferson University. She is a translational scientist with extensive experience in the study of children with autism other developmental disorders, focusing on how processing and integrating sensory information impacts participation in daily occupations. Dr. Schaaf is the author of 4 books and over 75 publications in peer review journals. She is an internationally known speaker.

ORGANIZERS

Thomas Jefferson University's **College of Architecture and the Built Environment** is educating the next generation of design and construction professionals in architecture, interior design, landscape architecture, historic preservation, construction management, geodesign, sustainable design and real estate development. The College regularly partners with major corporations, local communities and nonprofit organizations to offer you a broad range of real-world projects and networking opportunities to fulfill your passions. Our dynamic approach to education and emphasis on social equity, sustainability and design excellence provides you with a competitive advantage that prepares you to become an innovative leader in an equitable and sustainable future.

The mission of the College is to educate the next generation of design and construction professionals to create an equitable and sustainable future. Our curricula emphasize specialized knowledge unique to each discipline, paired with interdisciplinary collaboration that prepare students for practice in the global market. We improve lives by designing and building a better world.

The **Synesthetic Research and Design Lab** at the College of Architecture and Built Environment – Thomas Jefferson University is directed by Severino Alfonso and Loukia Tsafouli. It serves as a collaborative research and prototyping platform where interactive design and emergent health sciences meet highlighting the recursion between the individual and their environment. The Lab is a newly minted platform that aims to take risks in developing methodologies that engage critically with interactions of humans, objects and environments.

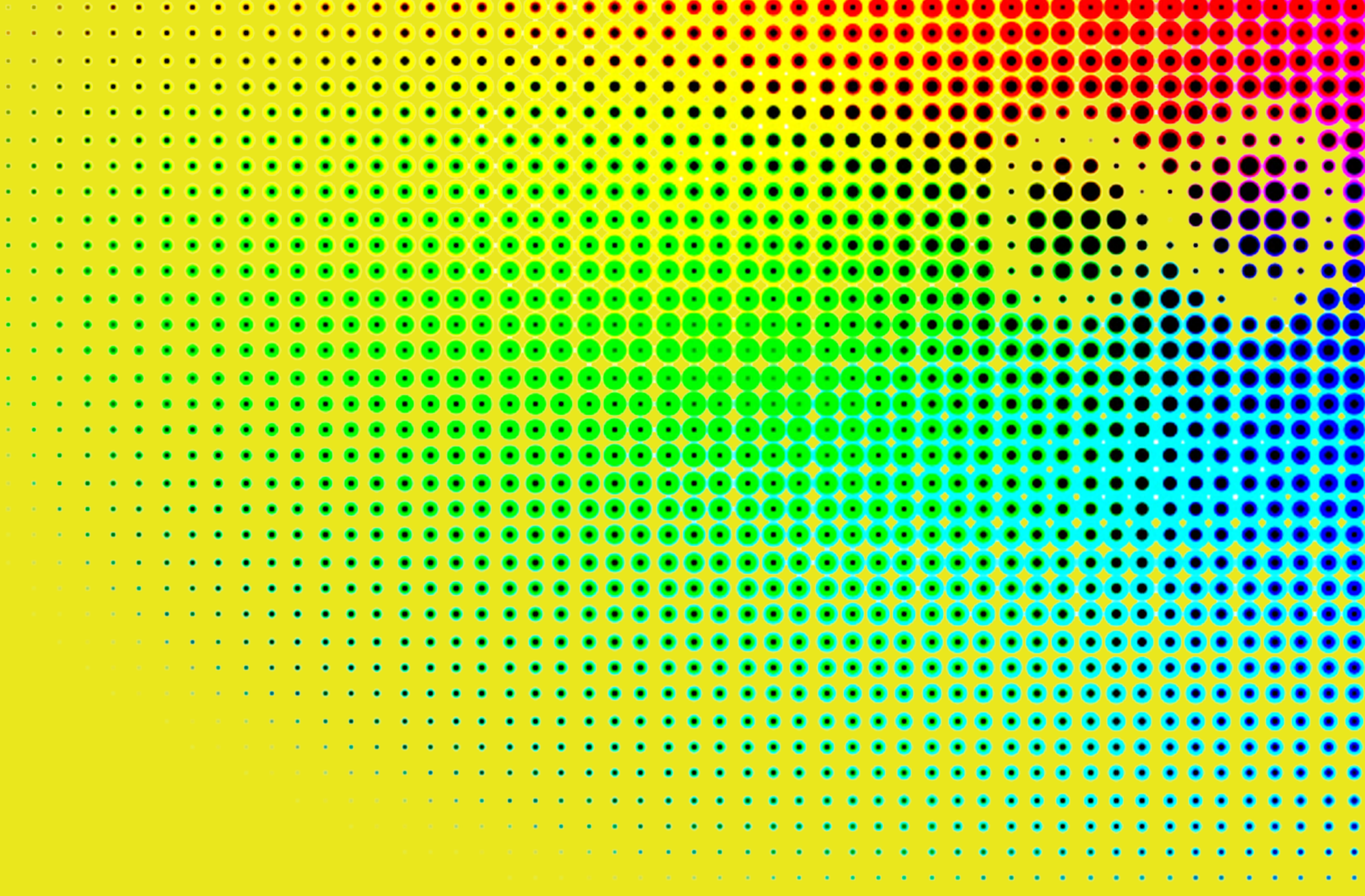
The Lab collaborates with the Center for Autism and Neurodiversity – Jefferson Health in the building of a solid foundation of knowledge, addressing all-inclusive ways for inhabiting and perceiving our environments. This collaboration stimulates dialogues amongst designers, medical field experts and people with Autism Spectrum Disorder in regard to the inclusivity of our current environments and with particular focus on designing for neurodiverse individuals and those with ASD.

The Lab continuously aims to learn from unexpected collaborations, test unconventional ideas, and leverage novel pedagogical explorations to engage with young minds that come from diverse backgrounds and cultivate a collective learning process. The Lab has been awarded a series of grants from Thomas Jefferson University.

The **Center for Autism and Neurodiversity** – Jefferson Health is directed by Wendy J. Ross, MD. The Center drives a collaborative effort among those affected by autism, clinicians, and community partners to create pathways for meaningful interaction and participation throughout the lifespan. The Center takes a novel approach by taking those from differing professional and personal experiences and incubating programmatic conceptual shifts to move the needle from the concept of a 'cure' to creating opportunity for those who think and interact differently, and examining the impact both on those individuals and the world at large throughout the lifespan.

The Center is excited to engage with the Lab in exploring the physical environment and its impact on the population of those affected by autism. This collaboration serves as a catalyst that will open new pathways in how we design spaces. Its goal is to spark enthusiasm, ongoing dialogue and exploration in how we all view the world and our roles within it, emphasizing the value of the integration of multiple perspectives in maximizing possibility for everyone.

The Center continuously strives to learn from multidisciplinary and stakeholder perspectives, pilot new programs, and measure outcomes, in an effort to create optimal endeavors and strategies that can be widely disseminated to enhance opportunity.



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