

hospitality design

september 2014 hospitalitydesign.com

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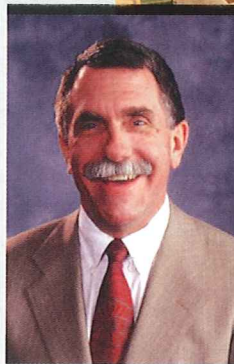
Lee Cagley

Iowa State University College of Design

“The Iowa State University interior design program actually uses hospitality design as a touchstone for all the various subspecialties of interior design we teach,” explains Lee Cagley, who is a professor and department chair of the university’s interior design program as well as principal of Las Vegas-based firm Lee Cagley Design. “This is because hospitality design forces the student to achieve maximum results with minimal space and create the perception of a complete lifestyle within a tightly prescribed area.”

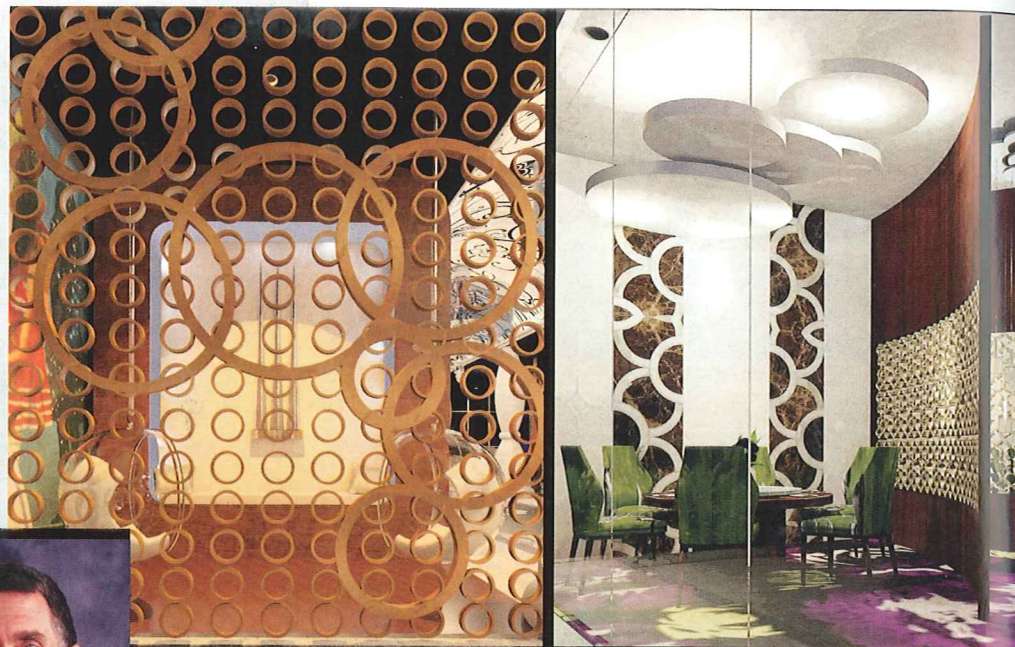
The program offers both undergraduate and graduate degrees in interior design with a wide range of curricula. Last fall’s graduate studio in advanced experimental interior design provided students the opportunity to create a hotel property in the existing footprint of an abandoned development project in Las Vegas. The \$4.5 billion project, which was slated to become the mixed-use Echelon resort complex, would have included five hotels but was halted when the economy faltered. “The 10 students were granted access to the resort’s existing drawings and kept the foundations and structures as they currently exist for the proposed Mondrian and Delano hotels on the southeast corner of that vast site,” Cagley explains.

The students’ task was to design a boutique, self-contained, small-scale resort in that footprint that was “as forward-thinking and eco-responsible as possible, given the demands of designing specifically for the future of the Las Vegas market,” Cagley says. But their working method was a bit unorthodox. After touring the property, groups returned to campus to charette the project for two weeks, breaking the spaces into



10 distinct areas, each assigned to a different student. Once assigned, students were not allowed to look at what the others were doing until the final critique at the end of the course. The “exquisite corpse” method of non-collaboration only allowed them to discuss and negotiate the boundaries between the spaces they were designing—for example, one student’s storefront that abutted another’s hallway—but not to share any other information. They were allowed to choose any color schemes and spatial organizational principles that they felt matched with the name they had chosen for the property—Carbon, referencing the mutability of the element and its essentialness to life.

“When, on the final critique, the various 10 parts of the hotel were revealed and assembled, everyone was shocked at how beautiful the property turned out,” Cagley says, “and how much coherence had arisen from seeming chaos.”



The Iowa State student concept Carbon boutique hotel and casino: a promenade seating area, VIP gaming dining complex, casino center bar, and private dining space.