



CAMIA BROWN, NCIDQ, ASID, IIDA, MWBE
Principal at Camia Brown Interiors

Camia Brown is a Georgia native and a graduate from Georgia Southern University with a Bachelors of Science in Interior Design and a Bachelors of Arts in Spanish. Her love for travel and culture has been instrumental in the development of her design aesthetic. She began her design career working in Costa Rica on relief and development projects, which then led her to New York City where she continued her philanthropic efforts through design and construction for victims of Hurricane Sandy. Camia has honed her craft working for high-end designers and architects in Costa Rica, Spain, and NYC. She lives by the motto that everyone should have access to beautifully designed spaces, regardless of budget and it should be creative, resourceful, and timeless.

Q: Brief intro/What type of work do you do/ where do you work?

A: Residential and commercial interior design.

Q: When did you decide to take the NCIDQ Exam? How did you decide what order to take them in?

A: Initially, I took them in spring of 2018 and I decided to take all three at once. I figured since I was going to be studying, I should go ahead and take them all. There's so much overlap between them that I felt I was doing myself a disservice by playing it safe. I like to go hard so I pushed myself to do it. I was also curious about IDPX and PRAC so I didn't want to wait and take them each one at a time, but you have to know what works best for you. I had the time to commit so I did.

Q: Did you fail any exams/retake any? How did you stay motivated through that process?

A: Yes, I did. I failed the IDPX once and PRAC twice. I just kept telling myself to keep going because eventually I was going to pass. Each time I thought OMG are you serious?! I really didn't want to study again because I thought I knew enough to pass and I also felt so confident after each exam, but you truly never know. It was so hard, but I truly had to encourage myself and think beyond my current state and remind myself that the reward was going to be greater than the sacrifice, so I kept studying and kept at it.

Q: How long did you study for the exams? What did you use to study?

A: The first time around I started studying for the exams in January 2018. The exams were in April

so I paced myself and I felt like 3.5 months was sufficient for me. I didn't want to get burnt out. I used a ton of books from the list CIDQ has on the website, Ballast book practice exams, flashcards I purchased from Amazon, and some online sources as well (Facebook groups, quizlet, and the CIDQ quiz that was on the website was super helpful). I found community and had a study buddy too! Studying with someone was so helpful.

Q: Has the practice of interior design lived up to your expectations that you had as a student? Any surprises or disappointments?

A: Wow great question, to be honest, yes it has. I went to a great university, Georgia Southern University, that really prioritize form and function over digital renderings and "cute spaces," so I felt very prepared entering the workforce as a designer.

Q: What advice would you give to current students that you wished you had received?

A: I would tell them to please, please, please, pay attention to what you're learning in school. Whatever you don't feel confident in, learn it now, because we are in a unique field in that exactly what we learn in school is exactly what you will do in the real world, so don't take this time for granted. Also, work on your public speaking and get comfortable defending and explaining your design intent, you'll be doing it for the rest of your career. Lastly, I would say take the NCIDQ Exams now while you're still in study mode. I know you may not want to, but trust me, once you're

making money and have a life it'll be so much harder to revert back, just keep going.

Q: Why did you become NCIDQ Certified/why was it important to you?

A: I knew one day I was going to have my own creative studio and I wanted to know as much as I could about my profession. I never wanted to be in a room or in my own office and not be able to relate to other designers who are certified. It's a huge accomplishment. Not many designers get their certification, let alone black ones, so I wanted to represent my profession and other black designers well.

Q: How has having an NCIDQ Certificate benefited you and your career?

A: I refer to it as a little extra sauce. It's allowed me to make more money, prove to others I'm a competent designer who knows a lot and does more than pick out fabrics and pillows, and I feel extremely proud of myself for accomplishing it. It was so hard but so worth it!

Q: Have you/are you interested in pursuing any other credentials/certifications or licensure/registration/certification in a jurisdiction? If so, please provide those details.

A: I am interested in obtaining my LEED GA certification but I'm currently actively learning how to run my own business and be a boss so I'm stretched at capacity at the moment.

Q: What could the industry do to overcome obstacles from diverse individuals being represented and having equal opportunity?

A: Just do it. I think we have to talk less about inclusion and diversity and start actually doing it. Embrace, engage, and promote. There needs to be more accountability and more people of color in leadership, on guest panels, and embraced in spaces where diverse individuals are not present. I get so many invites to listen or join or go to events where there's not diversity in leadership and it saddens me. Individuals of the majority have to also recognize and acknowledge their privilege and speak up too.

Q: What are common misconceptions people have? How can we combat these misconceptions and communicate more effectively?

A: One major misconception is that interior designers and decorators are the same, no disrespect, but we're different. I believe social media and the internet has helped and hurt us as the industry is more accessible now. People see a pretty space and now believe that they can do what we do without a degree or formal training. To combat this, I talk to people and show them the nitty gritty of what I do and I explain in great detail that it's more than just sourcing furniture and paint for the walls. I speak about ergonomics and anthropometrics and their eyes start getting big...lol. Once I start explaining they begin to "get it." It's exhausting, but I know it's for the best. I plant my design education seeds and I see them grow in my own community and amongst others.

Q: Anything else you'd like to share?

A: I appreciate CIDQ's efforts to be more inclusive. I hope one day we won't have to make extra efforts to be more inclusive that the world would be "diverse and embrace its beauty" but until then please keep at it, it's the only way to continue to make progress!