



SHUNDRA HARRIS, RID, ASID, NCIDQ
Founder and Principal Designer at Shundra Harris Interiors

Founder and Principal, Shundra Harris is a professional member of ASID, NCIDQ Certified and Registered Interior Designer whose pursuit of thoughtful and intelligent design for all people and all spaces has made her a national leader in design.

Shundra Harris' story summarizes her design sensibility. Living on purpose meant making a significant shift from a well-established career as a computer engineer to the passionate dream of becoming an interior designer. She could no longer suppress her inherent creativity and talent, which, combined with engineering, planning, and design skills, boosted her design capabilities. She's since worked with great commercial and residential design and architecture firms.

However, entrepreneurially bound, Shundra founded her design firm and has been blessed to serve diverse residential and commercial clients, providing them with innovative and insightful design solutions. Shundra's career has been "a mind-blowing step-ordered journey" that has offered boundless opportunities for leadership.

Shundra Harris Interiors is recognized for delivering uniquely integrated interior design solutions that uplift the essential human experience to live, work, and play well, creating an eclectic array of projects that promote an elevated existence; a life designed for purpose with an unapologetic balance.

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

A: I am so honored and consider it a blessing to work as a residential and commercial interior designer. I work where I'm called and led — Atlanta, Dallas, and other cities, but mainly in the greater Houston, Texas area.

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

A: As a second-career student, I knew that I would sit for the NCIDQ Exam as soon as I learned of it in my first year of design school. I emerged from a career in engineering and taking the NCIDQ Exam directly correlated with ensuring that I was a technically sound designer who was not only educated but confirmed by examination. I took the exam when it was still offered over a two-day period, Fundamental and Professional multiple-choice questions on one day and the Practicum on the next day.

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

A: The first time I took the exam, I studied for the

multiple-choice sections. I did not dedicate much time to the Practicum until after I failed it on the first try. Prior to the second attempt, I took a six-week prep course with a local architecture firm. They used a Practicum study guide to teach us how to take the exam and meet the exam requirements.

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

A: The practice of interior design has literally blown my mind. I was not prepared in school to take the route of owning an interior design firm. However, I did receive a solid design education that taught me how to research and seek the knowledge I needed to conquer my goals and dreams. My work has exceeded all my expectations and has allowed me to release those expectations that limited my thinking and desire for more. As my thoughts and perceptions expanded, so did my career and greater accomplishments in the design industry.

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

A: I would offer to never put yourself in a box. I am a walking testimony to the myriad of ways this career in design can manifest itself. I see myself as a solutionist, a problem solver in this design industry. I have been blessed to work on so many different types of projects and meet so many great friends, colleagues, and mentors.

I would also tell students to align themselves with persons who can not only mentor them but also hold them accountable to their dreams and goals. This is a fast-paced industry and there are many shiny paths that can derail you.

And lastly, ensure that their design work starts with vision and is centered around people. As the world with all its inconsistencies, injustices, special needs and socio-economic issues continues to shift, designers are the thought-leaders and have a front-line view that will and can affect change in the lives of people.

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

A: I knew I wanted to be established as a registered interior designer in my state. Taking the NCIDQ Exam also legitimized my education. I believe that good education is always tested... how else do you know you've learned what was taught? NCIDQ was the path I knew I would take and was determined to achieve.

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

A: I have been hired by clients who sought a Registered Interior Designer. Without NCIDQ Certification, I would not be able to be registered. I get the opportunity to share my NCIDQ story with students all the time and I have shared with them that I am a professional ASID member because at the root, I took the NCIDQ Examination. I have served on the ASID National Board as Chair of the Chapter Support Team. I have had the opportunity to participate in a full-circle moment by volunteering to write and review questions for the NCIDQ Exam. I have also taught on the collegiate level in the School of Architecture in a state university because of the NCIDQ Examination and ultimate registration in my state.

Q: Have you/are you interested in pursuing any other credentials/certifications or licensure/registration/certification in a jurisdiction?

A: If the need arose, I would take part in any certification that I needed to further my career in interior design. I believe, there are no limitations in this field. I am currently teaching continued education classes that are required to maintain our registration and memberships in the field.

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

A: The industry could be intentional about addressing the disparity, removing the veil, and sharing in open dialogues with diverse individuals about their respective needs, as there are no broad stroke answers to individual needs. In addition, recognizing there is a gap and providing ways (like this approach) where diverse individual's whose excellent work and contributions to interior design are highlighted are a great way to begin closing the gap.

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

A: One common misconception people have is that things will work themselves out. Any and everything worth obtaining requires diligent work and work ethic. Another misconception is because we sometimes see ourselves as "good people", and yet remain silent, we don't see ourselves as part the problem. I believe that silence is the act of complicity in and of all things that does not better humanity. Empathy is the path to healing and when we can put ourselves in another's place, employ empathy, then we can begin to communicate with our heart and souls and really feel and hear the heart of another. Change happens with acknowledgement and healing.

Q: Anything else you'd like to share?

A: This is a great opportunity to first be sought out and then seen by my peers as someone whose voice matters. Thank you.