DESIGNER DISCUSSIONS

**Episode 14
Why You Should
Incorporate Renderings
Into Your Design Process**

Maria: [00:00]

Hi. Welcome to Designer Discussions today. We are going to talk about how better presentations and better visuals can up level even the most seasoned interior design business.

Intro: [00:20]

Welcome to the Designer Discussions podcast. Tune in each week where we discuss marketing, branding, PR and business advice for design professionals.

Jason: [00:25]

So we are happy to have everyone here today. And we are going today by Jenna of the E-Design Tribe. How are you doing today, Jenna?

Jenna: [00:32]

I'm good. How are you?

Jason: [00:34]

I'm doing good. So if you could just let our audience know just a little bit about who you are in your E-Design Tribe and what they provide for the design community?

Jenna: [00:44]

Sure. So I started the E-Design Tribe as a Facebook group back in 2018 because as a practicing designer since 2015, entirely virtual. At that point, it got a little lonely. So I wanted to reach out to other designers. They were reaching out to me through social media, asking me questions about how I created my graphics and run my business. And I was like, this is the natural next step. So I created this Facebook group and everything just went from that Facebook group. I looked for the problems that other designers were having in addition to the issues that I was having in my design business. And from that came software and education. So first came e design. You. Technically, it wasn't called e design. You when it first launched, it was one course, and it basically said, here's what I do and how I do it. And this is what made me successful as a virtual designer as an independent virtual designer, because I was working for some of the other firms, which I learned a lot. But ultimately, you don't make a lot of money. So going out on my own is what other designers were interested in learning.

Jenna: [02:31]

So they could implement these things for themselves as well. So it started with one course, and then it just turned into E-Design U. And E-Design U now has, I'd say, probably about 15 different courses, not all instructed by me, but other professionals in the space of virtual design. And we've added a whole extension for virtual assistants now, too, because there's a lot of designers that are looking to add higher quality level of graphics, renders and whatever else to their presentations to be able to earn more money and kind of stay with that standard that is now in the market. And so we have this new we call them designer VAS because they're designer first, typically. So they have that knowledge and that background and they create not only renders, but they do blogs, and they do shoppable content and the marketing assets for other designers. So that is a component that the E-Design Tribe community has kind of came full circle and that you have education, you have the E-Design platform tools, and you have a way to connect the DBAs with designers that are looking to have to outsource some of their services.

Jason: [03:11]

I know last year was an extreme growth for you with everything that happened with the Coronavirus. And also, can you just talk just a little bit about what happened when you have began this community and how you've seen the growth happen over all of the years and in particular with what happened last year with Kobe.

Jenna: [03:30]

So I started the community in 2018, and it did quickly grow. Word of mouth. I've never done any ads or anything for this community. It's just people saying, hey, have you checked out the E-Design Tribe when Corona hit? Everybody was like, oh, no, I have to go virtual or you have to do some form of virtual where maybe I go out for one site visit, but then I do the rest from home. We do things over presentations online, over the phone, Zoom, whatever that might be. And so designers looking for that alternative and the education behind it to do it.

Jenna: [04:07]

Well, that's when everybody started flooding into E-Design tribes. The platform grew 300% over the year before. We also just kept adding more and more tools based on what designers were needing for the demand. So, yeah, it really took off all of a sudden.

Maria: [04:29]

I'm super excited to talk with you about it, too, because I found out doing a landscape design at my own house. We asked for something small, and we were like, we just want something little. We just want this little thing. We just need to fix the problem we have with a small thing. And she came back with this awesome rendering, and we were like, oh, my God, that's four times what we wanted to pay, but it's totally worth it. And we did it. It's not a conversation about budget at that point. It's making a decision to increase your budget to increase the value of your product.

Jenna: [05:09]

Exactly. You don't have a lot of back and forth with. Would this look good? Like, you can't tell from a 2D concept board. You can tell when it's in your actual space and it's been rendered in there, then you have to have it.

Maria: [05:26]

I always found whenever I have friends or clients who say they're having a lot of anxiety or they can't sleep because they can't determine or make a decision about something that once they see it in their space, then they have enough information that the comfort level that they can make. The decision to say yes or no is completely different than if it was like a 2D board versus seeing a rendering or even just seeing like, a rug in the space. Pillows in the space. The ability to decide yes or no once something is in the space is completely different. And we've been doing that for years, right. We've been taking on loan accessories, paintings, area rugs, and we've been bringing them into people's homes because we know once we get them in the door and they can try out one or two items inside their house. You're going to get a guaranteed solid.

Maria: [06:17]

Yes.And they're going to pay for it, and they're not going to let it leave the house. And I'm Super excited to see how these renderings that you're providing through designers are impacting their businesses.

Jenna: [06:28]

Well, it's becoming the standard now, unfortunately, but fortunately, it kind of happened with the big Box virtual design companies, where they set this precedent and then us as designers never have the tools or we have the tools. And it took forever to render just to process a render took hours, let alone build that render. So now through different platforms and through design platform. But our rendering software is cloud based, and most designers can figure it out with minimum amount of background using other software. So it's changing the game for practicing designers to keep up with what Big Box has basically degraded for so long.

Jason: [07:16]

Now, taking back that power then I know you had talked about this is just not for virtual designers, but it's also for designers in general. Can you speak just a little bit on that?

Jenna: [07:27]

Yeah, sure. Like I said with the pandemic, a lot of people were trying to figure out how can I convey my design plan without having to go into my client's house? And that is where if you don't create the graphics and you're an established designer and you do what you do and you've done it successfully for a long time. Now, you kind of have to pivot a little bit. But you do have that collateral where you do have the beautiful renders to back it up so that you can sell that design plan without sitting with your client in the same room.

Jenna: [08:03]

So a lot of that came back to E-Design. And I just want to clarify, e design is electronic design. Email is very similar, right? It's electronic mail, so it doesn't necessarily mean you're sitting behind a computer and you're never talking to a client. It just means you're communicating electronically with that client. So I think there's been a stigma for so long that you design is cheap. E-Design is just misunderstood. It's a form of communication, creating better graphics equates to a higher service level, basically. So you can charge more for your services if your graphics and presentation tools are up to par, basically to be able to do that.

Maria: [08:47]

Okay. So they're seeing themselves as being able to build more and kind of be more successful. Right?

Jenna: [08:56]

And it's not just for E-Designers. I want to make sure that that is clear that practicing in person designers also need renders and other graphics as well to present their concept and their ideas.

Jason: [09:10]

And that's one thing that I've been following you for a while that you speak a lot about is to help in raise the notoriety of e-design and then the platform and also the end user what to expect and like you said, it's not just a cheap design. It's just a form of communication. So can you explain just a little bit about some of the designers that are on your platform and then benefits of it?

Jenna: [09:34]

Yeah. They're from all walks of life. And it's so cool to see we have people that are color certified and doing things like that. Designers that are just bloggers. And I don't want to say just, but they don't take one on one clients, and they do, like home decor blog. And they make passive income like that. There's home stagers. There's realtor firms that have also kind of stepped into this game, too. There's traditional interior designers, there's DVAs, and then you have the designers that work only virtually, or they do hybrid where you have something local and you do, like a site visit and then you're there for the install. But everything else is an electronic communication.

Maria: [10:20]

So, Jenna, what kind of barrier to entry is there with E-Design? Is it hard to learn? Do you have resources to help people go from their traditional design business to having an e design part of their business?

Jenna: [10:37]

So I get a lot of emails about this, and a lot of them are actually looking for mentorship. A lot of established designers have actually, we've had a conversation for an hour and we're like, what is the game plan here? How can you get more virtual with your business, but also with your digital marketing, too, using the technology that we have through the E-Design platform and also through the E-Design U with the schooling. So they're coming to me and they're saying, I've been a designer for 15-20 years, but things are changing, and I want to see what I can do.

Jenna: [11:17]

If you've never used a software before, if you're new to this whole thing, it's going to take some time. I'm not going to lie and say that it's super easy for everybody. But it is one of the easiest programs out there right now. And we have so much training, just self paced, and then a forum for all of our designers to come together and connect and learn from each other and outsource that task. So if you have been an established designer for a long period of time, you try it. You want to get into the rendering game. It is not for you. And you feel like you're wasting so much of your valuable time where you could be designing and meeting with clients, outsource that there's so many talented designers that just do renders for you. And that's what our ecosystem is all about.

Maria: [12:04]

Yeah, that's really awesome, because I do feel like a lot of the designers that have been in the industry for 20 years are the creative directors of their design businesses, and that there's so much of the computer work that needs to happen as well. But they just don't have either the time or the resources to do it. And that's excellent. That this is a place where they can find people who are qualified and capable of taking on those types of tasks for them. That's a great resource.

Jenna: [12:32]

Thank you.

Mirjam: [12:33]

I have a question for you, Jenna, actually. So for me, as a PR person. Obviously, I'm a big fan of great photography. But we all know that that's not always affordable, and you have to wait until the very end until you can get it. So be curious to understand from your perspective, like what's the relationship between renderings and photography to a point, because I see more and more designers promote their projects with renderings, especially on social media. And I do think it works well. And I sometimes do recommend using renderings for approaching the media first, to just give them an idea of what the project looks like. But I'm curious, what would you think about that and what you see with your clients? Do they still photograph their projects when they're executed? Or do they just use the vendor?

Jenna: [13:29]

And that's a great question. I love that question. So a lot of designers, I think it depends on where you are in your business. Do you have the designers that are full service? They're there doing the install. They're there every step of the way, but they do supplement their design plan and the concept with the renders, so they might share those online. They'll probably outsource if this is the type of designer client, they'll probably outsource that and share the render online, give credit to the DVA for making it for them, and then they will get it professionally photographed, because a lot of the time they're sharing that in other public spaces. But for the designers that are fairly new to their business, they might not be able to, first of all, get into that client's house if they live in California and you're in Florida, so that will never happen. And they weren't there to implement it. So we know sometimes the design concept goes off the rails when they check out home goods and decide not to order where you've been ordering. So you might not want to put your name on that. But you do want to share your work so that you can get the new clients based off of recent projects that you've done and you're sharing kind of those little antidotes about the concept and where everything came from on your social media accounts.

Jenna: [14:53]

So when you're doing that, you're getting new clients, but also that's kind of the end for you. You're not going to get the final look. That is the final look. And in my eyes, if it's a great render and you did your best work, that's a portfolio piece that is a website banner piece. That is something that you should be proud of. And it kind of these days is supplementing the in home final look for the photography. I just can't get it.

Maria: [15:27]

So, Jenna, based on what the price is to have a space professionally photographed and how much it's costing to have a rendering done. Would you say that they are similar or is one significantly higher than the other?

Jenna: [15:44]

Depends on your area. I know a lot of designers that are kind of just starting out and they want the final photography look. They'll go for maybe a student, maybe somebody that's a real estate photographer or something. That's a lower rate. Those are some weird angles, and they always leave the lights on. But those are some things that designers do to cut the cost of the final look. Right? But if you're creating your own render and you're charging your client for that render, it's kind of a two for one deal, you get it out of there. You're not paying twice. But if it is a photography worthy space, you should really put the money into the investment in addition to the renders. And this just totally depends on who the designer is and what their end goal is. Do they want to be published with this project, or is this really a portfolio piece where they can show their process so they can say, Look, here's how we started with concept. We ended up with render. This is what the client did to it if they want to include that. But I look at every single project as a marketing tool, if that's been agreed upon in the contract, but I look at it as a marketing tool to get new clients. That is your word of mouth. That is what sells your services. And lately, Renders has been where it's at, because like I said, that is the new standard people need to see, or they feel that they need to see what their space is going to look like.

Jenna: [17:22]

And I think as designers as kind of a tangent, we have to prepare them for the fact that this is a render. It looks so close to the actual space. However, it is not real life, and there might be some little discrepancies when you actually get things into this space. And that might be a finish that doesn't look the same as on the computer. Maybe. I don't know what else. Sometimes as render artists, we use similar pieces that might have a slight detail that's not exactly like the base of a coffee table or something like that, but we get so close to it. There might be little discrepancies like that, but it also cuts down the cost of the render, because the render artist doesn't have to remodel every single piece and they can get something that's super similar looking to the item and then actually specify the real item.

Maria: [18:21]

When I got out of College, I went and worked for an online furniture company. It was one of the first ones to ever launch back in 1999, and they put a lot of money and time into doing vignette and staged rooms to be able to sell the furniture. And after they released their first couple of sets of rooms that looked like a Pottery Barn catalog because this was back in 1999, they found out that 90% of their sales came from the furniture that was located in rooms and shown together as a package than the items that were in the doom scroll on the website. So they started investing more money and time into having designers come in and answer questions and do online design consultations for people via email with here's a paint color. I'd recommend this side table and this lamp from our website as well to go along with it. And this is back a long time ago. Now we're talking 22 years, and we're now just seeing Etsy is creating their virtual rooms with their products in it to try to increase the sales of product. And I don't know what their business model is, but they probably are charging the people who own the products for the renderings, but they're starting to see that even having those products staged and put into rooms is the reason why they can sell more of a product, and that's the importance of design.

Maria: [19:52]

I like to look at it like technology can show you more of the thing you like. But designers make you fall in love with the one item you need. I am a big proponent for designers to understand that about what we do for work and why we do what we do, that we aren't out there to just promote a whole bunch of things. We're out there to craft a love story where people fall in love with their homes and people fall in love with all the little details that are needed to put together those spaces. And so whenever we talk about different platforms and different technology to make that happen, the more resources that we can have through designers that are designer made, the better it is going to be for your business, and the better it's going to be for the whole industry. And so I'm Super excited to have you on here because I believe 100% of what you're doing, because you are crafting the tools that are needed for industry. Thank you.

Jenna: [20:58]

I'm just going to say you hit the nail on the head. Now we need to get the furniture industry up to par, because right now they're coming around slowly being free for the pandemic. That kind of, like forced them that way. But because they don't have the show rooms, they didn't have the markets, they couldn't show the product. And now they're like, Well, how do we reach the designers? 3d models is how you reach the designers. If you create 3D models and sketch up three DS Max other formats, we can use those to sell your product. So we actually have a certified 3D modeler program through E Design U, and that's taught by Sarah Derne, who spearheads the DVA program. So we teach our designers that want to learn this skill how to create 3D models in Sketch up. We can then import those 3D models into our exclusive library on the platform for our designers to drag and drop right into their designs. That is so easy for us, not the firms. It's the furniture stores, wholesale, whatever retail. It doesn't matter that don't have the 3D products.

Jenna: [22:13]

We're not going to source you because we have to take the time to create the 3D model to show our client to sell it. I mean, some will and those that have that skill, but we're talking like, 85% of people don't know how to create a 3D model in SketchUp. I don't spend my time doing that. I hired somebody to do that, but that costs money. So then your fees go higher. If the furniture stores just have them accessible on their website, we can download that in a second and then upload it to our program and sell that product all day long. But they don't. So that is where the disconnect is right now, and that's what we're trying to build with our certified modelers that can do this for an affordable cost. Designers can implement it into basically any render program when it's done through Sketch up, and then they can sell your furniture so easy.

Maria: [23:11]

There are so many ways that businesses can support the designers. They're selling their product. And I don't think that they are fully aware that they are not completely supporting the designers in a way that can benefit them so much more financially. And I think just by coming on the podcast of talking about it and bringing awareness to it is a big thing. And honestly, if we are all completely clear, Miriam, who is a publicist who worked for one of the largest companies in plumbing in the country, said, you mean, the furniture companies are not providing 3D models of their furniture so that you all can sell it easier. And I was like, no.

Jenna: [23:55]

European shock. Furniture is really shocking exactly. I mean, the plumbing and cabinetry because of 2020, they all have 3D models. Sometimes they're kind of hard to find, but they have them. If you have an account with them, and then the European furniture stores are way ahead of the game. So unfortunately, when we're looking for stuff in 3D, sketch up the warehouse libraries that are open to the public, we're searching for European names and hoping that we can find furniture here in the States. That looks like that enough that it passes for that product.

Jenna: [24:34]

The US is so far behind that, hopefully with us all getting the word out saying, make 3D models, we can make them for you that we kind of start a trend here. We need it.

Maria: [24:49]

Maybe it does come with a little bit of numbers saying, look, if these are your products that we have models of that we are putting across through the design community and this is your sales on these items. Is your popularity going up on the items that we have the models of the 3D blocks for you? And maybe if there's some way that over time, those things can be built upon to demonstrate the power of having these tools in the hands of the designers, then there will be more acknowledgment for what it is that we're doing, because once again, you can show products online all day long. Doom scroll all you want. But if they don't fall in love with it, if they don't fall in love with the concept, and if it's not something that they bring into their home, that's going to make them happy, you are not going to sell it, and you're going to be wasting your time. And designers are the cause of being able to make someone fall in love with the product.

Jenna: [25:50]

And we actually can get those stats. So if we have vendors that you upload their 3D models, or maybe they come to us, we outsource that they get the 3D models in return. But we also upload them to our exclusive library. We can figure out how many different designers projects that 3D model was used in, so we have the technology we just need to use it.

Jason: [26:19]

Awesome. Jenna, we appreciate your time today for our listeners out there. If they want to get in contact with you, how do they do?

Jenna: [26:25]

So E-Design Tribe is open to every design professional that is looking to bring some kind of element of virtual design to their business. E design drives on Facebook E-DesigU.com is basically where everything else is. That is for designers. So all the courses are there. There is a platform tab. You can learn more about the platform. And then E-Design Association is our newest professional organization for Edison and continued education. We have weekly seminars there, which guys, I didn't have you on there. We're booking for next year. So we'll talk about that later, but that's where you can reach me. E Design Tribe on Facebook. E-Design you for the platform and education, and then you find Association for our professional community about your VA services.

Maria: [27:19]

The people who are available for VA. How would someone get in touch?

Jenna: [27:24]

Yeah, through E-Design Tribe, you're always welcome to say, hey, I'm searching for whatever. But the Edison Association is to the trade. So if you go to that website, there is a directory. You can search the directory by selecting the to the trade version because it's also consumer facing on our E-Design Tribe website that goes to homeowners and whatnot? But if you're looking for a DVA, go to E-Design Association, click the directory and then you can filter what you're looking for for services.

Maria: [27:56]

We appreciate your time again, and we hope to see everybody here next week on Designer Discussions.

Jenna: [28:01]

Thank you for having me.

Outro: [28:04]

We hope you enjoyed this episode of Designer Discussions. What was your takeaway care to share your thoughts and tag Jason, Maria and Mirjam on social media you can find them on all platforms at DesignerDiscussions.com. Don't forget to like subscribe and leave a review or comment for this episode from wherever you are listening.

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