
ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

Judith Gura, Design Expert and NYSID Professor, Has Died

Gura was knowledgeable about everything from the Art Deco period to New York's interior landmarks

Madeleine Luckel



Judith Gura Photo: Courtesy of the New York School of Interior Design

Judith Gura, a well-known editorial and educational expert within the design world, died last night at age 85. The valued New York School of Interior Design lecturer was perhaps most widely known thanks to the exhibitions, books, and articles she helped produce. A contributor to *AD*, Gura taught readers about a variety of topics, from what it takes for an interior to earn landmark status, to decorators' growing interest in textile art. Most recently, her 2019 feature for *AD PRO* examined collectible design's continuing ascent, and how exactly designers should approach a market dominated by the likes of Les Lalanne.

After earning her Bachelor of Arts from Cornell University, Gura went on to receive her master's degree from the Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design & Culture. From 1998 through 2005, she served as associate professor of design history at New York's Pratt Institute. It was during that time, and specifically in the year 2000, that Gura started working at the New York School of Interior Design. Serving as a coordinator for the school's design history program and a consultant for exhibitions and public programs, she ultimately lectured on a range of topics—from the Art Deco period to Scandinavian design to design theory to female designers—for roughly 20 years.

The NYSID exhibitions she helped create, such as shows on Larsen Textiles and Angelo Donghia, built upon Gura's previous museum experience. In 2004, she served as a curatorial advisor on the National Museum of Women in the Arts' "Nordic Cool" exhibition, while in 2004 she helped bring to fruition the Brooklyn Museum's "Vital Forms: American Art in the Atomic Age, 1940–1960." Gura lectured everywhere from Sotheby's to the Skyscraper Museum to American institutions such as the John F. Kennedy Center and the New York Public Library. A writer of articles and reviews for *Interior Design*, *Art & Auction*, and *The Magazine Antiques*, Gura published numerous books, including *Design After Modernism: Interiors and Furniture, 1970-2010* and a *Guide to Period Styles for Interiors*.

"Judith Gura has been a part of [our] community for twenty years, so to say that she will be missed is an understatement," David Sprouls, president of NYSID, commented to AD PRO. "However, her legacy lives on through the work of the many, many practicing designers that she taught in her design history courses at the college. And the greater community will continue to benefit from her numerous books and articles she wrote on the history of design. Her impact has and will continue to be significant. We at NYSID have been lucky to count her as a teacher, colleague, and a friend."

AD's decorative arts editor, Mitchell Owens, perhaps summed up Gura's life and legacy in his own eloquent Instagram tribute: "Her tastes were modern and adventuresome—and she was especially eloquent on the topic of women in design after World War II—but her mind was open to things baroque, things obscure, and things bizarre," Owens wrote of the historian. "Strangely, though, when we occasioned to dine, usually at Le Veau d'Or, Judith and I rarely talked about design. Instead, we talked about our husbands and our children, favorite movies, travels, and cooking. She loved food, and she knew about wine. When talk veered to book projects (she produced numerous, including the terrific *Post Modern Design Complete* and *Interior Landmarks: Treasures of New York*), she was perceptive, canny, and encouraging, as interested in helping me clarify a knotty confusion as she was in gently identifying a textual weakness and suggesting ways to improve it."