

another in the AVA Academia series...

# The Fundamentals of Interior Design

Simon Dodsworth

**The Fundamentals of Interior Design**  
**Simon Dodsworth**

**An AVA Book**

Published by AVA Publishing SA  
Rue des Fontenailles 16  
Case Postale  
1000 Lausanne 6  
Switzerland  
Tel: +41 786 005 109  
Email: enquires@avabooks.ch

Distributed by Thames & Hudson (ex-North America)  
8ra High Holborn  
London WC1V 7QX  
United Kingdom  
Tel: +44 20 7845 5000  
Fax: +44 20 7845 5055  
Email: sales@thameshudson.co.uk  
www.thamesandhudson.com

Distributed in the USA & Canada by:  
Ingram Publisher Services Inc.  
1 Ingram Blvd.  
La Vergne, TN 37086  
USA  
Telephone: +1 866 400 5351  
Fax: +1 800 838 1149  
Email: customer.service@ingrampublisher-services.com

English Language Support Office  
AVA Publishing (UK) Ltd  
Tel: +44 1903 204 455  
Email: enquires@avabooks.ch

Copyright © AVA Publishing SA 2009

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without permission of the copyright holder.

ISBN 978-2-940373-92-5

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Design by Borries Schwesinger

Cover photograph by Warren Smith, courtesy of Getty Images

Production by AVA Book Production Pte. Ltd., Singapore  
Tel: +65 6334 8173  
Fax: +65 6334 0752  
Email: production@avabooks.com.sg

All reasonable attempts have been made to trace, clear and credit the copyright holders of the images reproduced in this book. However, if any credits have been inadvertently omitted, the publisher will endeavour to incorporate amendments in future editions.

# The Fundamentals of Interior Design

Simon Dodsworth

# Contents

How to get the most out of this book 6

Introduction 8

1

## **The design process** 12

The design process  
in action 14

Professional practice 24

2

## **Understanding the project** 26

The client 28

The briefing 30

Design analysis 32

Building and site  
research 38

3

## **Understanding the space** 46

Understanding  
spatial relationships 48

A typology  
of technical drawing 56

4

## **Understanding building structures** 64

Building construction  
principles 66

Materials  
for construction 70

Mechanical  
and electrical systems 76

---

# 5

---

## **Organising the space** 78

Design development 80

Human dimensions  
and scale 86

Proportioning systems 92

Ordering systems 96

Inclusive design 102

---

# 6

---

## **The human interface** 104

Materials and finishes 106

The decorative scheme 114

Acoustics 122

Furniture 126

Colour 130

Light 138

---

# 7

---

## **Sustainable design** 142

Climate change 144

Energy-saving strategies  
and services 146

Sustainability  
and material use 148

---

# 8

---

## **Communicating design** 150

Telling the story 152

Presentation drawings 154

Presentation boards 162

Multimedia  
presentations 168

---

Sources of inspiration 170

Index 172

Image sources 174

Acknowledgements 176

Working with ethics 177

# How to get the most out of this book

## Navigation

All chapter titles of the book are shown at the top left of every spread. The chapter you are currently in is highlighted in bold. All subsections of the current chapter are shown at the top right of every spread. The subsection you are currently in is also highlighted in bold.

The design process	Understanding the project	Understanding the space	Understanding building structure	Opening the space	The human practice	Sustainable design	Communicating design	The design process in action	Professional practice
<b>The design process in action</b>								<b>Analysis</b>	
<p><b>14</b> In the following description of the major parts of the design process, the comments made earlier about its flexibility should be borne in mind; any or all of the actions described here could be adapted to suit individual projects. It will also become clear that the job of a designer actually involves a great deal of general administration work in addition to the design element of a project. When working as part of a large practice, this may not be especially apparent, as job roles will probably be tightly defined. In smaller companies, however, the designer may find themselves deeply involved in all aspects of the process.</p>								<p>Analysis is relevant at two related but distinct parts of the project cycle. In the very earliest stages, before in-depth design work takes place, the designer will need to assess the scale and complexity of the project work to be undertaken. This will allow preliminary estimates to be made of the time and resources needed to complete the project, and these will in turn provide a foundation upon which the designer can base a fee proposal. Part of the work at this stage will involve determining the scope of the project and the likely format and content of the presentation, as this will control, to a large degree, the amount of drawings and visuals that are prepared, all of which take time that will need to be charged to the client.</p> <p>Following this and once the client has agreed to the proposed design work being undertaken to reach the first presentation stage, the designer can take an in-depth brief from the client. Initial examination of the brief, allied to a general understanding of the project, will give the designer a starting point for further research. All of this work will lead to the second tranche of analysis, in which the designer is aiming to edit, distil and ultimately make sense of all the information that has been gathered. Some of the information will relate to the practical aspects of the brief, some to the aesthetic, some of which could be contradictory in nature. Over time, the designer will become used to setting priorities and reaching a comfortable compromise with regard to conflicting information. It is very rare to find a project that does not need some element of compromise to succeed, but there is never one single way to deal with it. Each project must be looked at on its own merits, and decisions reached that reflect the unique nature of that project.</p> <p>Once analysis is complete, conclusions regarding style and content of the project can be summarised by creating a concept. This will then be used to generate ideas and drive the project. Different methods of analysis and concept styles are looked at in greater detail in the next chapter.</p>	
									
								<p>By following a structure design process and by carefully considering the needs of their client, Project Orange have created a calm and reflective interior for this house in Suffolk, England.</p>	

## Subsection opener

All chapters consists of a number of subsections. Each subsection opens with a brief introductory text in bold.

## Body copy

The body copy is broken down by a number of headings.

## Image captions

Each image is displayed with an accompanying caption to supply contextual information and help connect the visuals with those concepts discussed in the body copy.

## Chapter opener

Each chapter opens with a brief introduction.

# 1 The design process

The design process is a term that covers a set of operations which, when carefully undertaken by the designer, result in a thoroughly considered and well-crafted design solution that meets the needs of the client. The process is not exclusive to interior design and, in one form or another, applies to all fields of design.

Design might be seen as a largely linear activity, with a start point (at which the client makes first contact with the designer) and an end point, when the project has been implemented (that is, constructed or built). However, the reality is that within the process many of the individual tasks are interrelated and highly dependent upon one another, so changes to one element of a design solution will often require that earlier parts of the process are revisited and revised as appropriate.

You should try to see the design process as a malleable one where the different tasks are adaptable to the unique nature of each project. The design process is not a standard 'one size fits all' solution, and you will need to develop your understanding of it so that you can see how it might be used to meet the needs of individual projects that you work on.

## Thinking points

Thinking points present in-depth views and practical tips relating to the key concepts of the chapters of consideration. They are set in black boxes.

### Evaluation

It is healthy for a designer to constantly question the chain of decisions that have been taken to that point, and to maintain a well-critical attitude towards everything throughout the life of a project. Before reaching the implementation stage, reviewing work that has already been done can be a healthy way to work.

From the client's point of view, the design process is usually considered complete after the implementation stage, but the designer should also evaluate the project in an effort to learn from it. A time of reflection will be valuable immediately after the design has been delivered, as lessons learned during the process will still be fresh in the mind, and it is good practice to re-visit the project after an appropriate period has elapsed (say six months or a year), as lessons which become apparent only after a space has been occupied and a functional can be learned. While it may or may not be possible to rectify any shortcomings that are identified on an individual project at this stage, the knowledge acquired can be fed into subsequent projects.

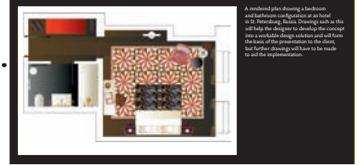
Whatever the extent of the work undertaken to try to visualise the finished outcome of the project during the design development, there will be some instances where you can only properly judge some of your aesthetic decisions as the project is implemented. Although it may be possible to make changes at this stage, there will almost certainly be cost implications. It may be more appropriate to simply learn the lesson for next time, but take no action at all.

### Thinking point

#### The importance of drawing

Drawing is an activity that you may well not have thought of as being part of the design process. However, drawing is design thinking in visual form, and it is important that you don't think of it as a separate activity. Drawing is a way of thinking that you can use to explore ideas, to test them, to refine them, and to communicate them. It is a way of thinking that you can use to explore ideas, to test them, to refine them, and to communicate them. It is a way of thinking that you can use to explore ideas, to test them, to refine them, and to communicate them.

This sketchbook shows rough ideas that have been captured on paper. It is a sketchbook that has been used as a tool, and it is a sketchbook that has been used as a tool. It is a sketchbook that has been used as a tool, and it is a sketchbook that has been used as a tool. It is a sketchbook that has been used as a tool, and it is a sketchbook that has been used as a tool.



## Case studies

Case studies give detailed, step-by-step explanations of real-life design processes. They are set in yellow boxes.

### Case study

#### Presenting ideas

Design student Daniela La Cruz has just completed the design of a gallery at the V&A Museum in London. She had a long and interesting design process, and she has a lot of ideas to present to her client. She has a lot of ideas to present to her client, and she has a lot of ideas to present to her client.



As the site requires a lot of space, the design team has to think about how to use the space effectively. They have a lot of ideas to present to their client, and they have a lot of ideas to present to their client. They have a lot of ideas to present to their client, and they have a lot of ideas to present to their client.

### The design process

#### The design process

The design process is a series of steps that lead from a client's brief to a final design solution. It involves a lot of communication and collaboration between the designer and the client. The design process is a series of steps that lead from a client's brief to a final design solution.



As part of the process, the designer has to think about how to present their ideas to the client. They have a lot of ideas to present to their client, and they have a lot of ideas to present to their client. They have a lot of ideas to present to their client, and they have a lot of ideas to present to their client.

Presenting ideas is a key part of the design process. It involves a lot of communication and collaboration between the designer and the client. They have a lot of ideas to present to their client, and they have a lot of ideas to present to their client. They have a lot of ideas to present to their client, and they have a lot of ideas to present to their client.

# Introduction

## What is interior design?

To be creative is part of the human psyche. It is one of those traits that set us apart from other animal species, and we have practised it for millennia. Even when our prime need was to find food and shelter, we felt a desire to leave our mark on the environments that we inhabited. Whether this was to satisfy some deep spiritual calling or a method of passing on vital knowledge to fellow group members, or whether it was simply a way for an individual to satisfy an urge to leave his mark for future generations, we will never know. For just as long, people have turned inquisitive minds to ways of solving problems and dealing with the issues that have faced them in the struggle to survive: problems such as how to work more efficiently, how to live more comfortably and how to be safe from danger.

Today, these primitive and fundamental indicators of human nature may be expressed in more sophisticated and developed ways, but the primal simplicity of our human desire to make a 'better' and more comfortable world for ourselves is evidenced through, amongst other things, how we organise the spaces that we inhabit, and the aesthetic that we make for them.

As we have become more affluent and blessed with more leisure time, style has become more important to us and is something with which we want to imbue our homes. But 'style' is a very personal notion, so why should anyone look to employ someone else, an interior designer, to tell them what is right? Why, for that matter, should you as a designer presume to impose your ideas upon a space that isn't your own? The answer is this; interior design is about so much more than 'what looks right'. It is about taking a holistic view of the way that individuals use and enjoy the spaces that they inhabit. It is about finding and creating a cohesive answer to a set of problems and dressing the solution so as to unify and strengthen our experience of the space. Many people understand this and that they do not have the necessary skills to tackle the job themselves. And so there is the need for professional interior designers.

Good interior design adds a new dimension to a space. It can increase our efficiency in the way we go about our daily lives and it adds depth, understanding and meaning to the built environment. Thoughtful and well-crafted design makes a space easier to understand and experiencing such a space lifts the spirit, too. It is, therefore, not just about the aesthetic; it is a practical and philosophical discipline. Beautiful spaces betray a logical and rational questioning of the status quo and can be an honest attempt to find new and exciting ways to lead our lives.

There is often some confusion between the terms 'interior architecture', 'interior design' and 'interior decoration'. What is the distinction between the different professions? In truth, the distinctions are not absolute. Where boundaries are drawn depends upon several factors. In a professional sense, it may well come down to a matter of which country the designer is working in (or perhaps more properly, which regulatory system the designer is working under). Though not definitive, the explanations below give an indication of the different roles and responsibilities of those whose work involves the design of habitable space.

Architects use planes (walls, floors, ceilings) to define the volumes (spaces) that combine to make up a building. They are trained to design structures from scratch. They will take intellectual and practical considerations into account, and the building design will be informed by its location. Some architects will limit their involvement in this, while others will also plan furniture layouts in detail and create decorative schemes.

Interior architects are generally concerned with taking existing structures and reforming them to suit new functions. They will pay a great deal of regard to the previous life of a building, and usually allow this knowledge to provide some connection between the fabric of the building and the newly created interior.

Interior decorators generally work with existing spaces that do not require physical alteration. Through the use of colour, light and surface finish, they will transform the look of a space, perhaps making it suitable to function in a different way from that for which it was originally designed, but with very little or no change to the structure of the building.

Interior designers span the ground between interior architects and interior decorators. The scope of the projects undertaken will vary from the purely decorative, to ones where a great deal of structural change is required to meet the brief. An interior designer will competently handle the space planning and creation of decorative schemes at the same time as considering major structural changes.

None of these professionals will necessarily be experts in all aspects of a project, and will call on other specialists (such as structural engineers or lighting designers) to help fully realise their ideas.