

# CHAPTER 1

## Finding Your Place in Interior Design

Interior design is a profession, a career, a vocation, and a lifestyle. It is not just a job. To practice it successfully, it is important to have a clear idea of what interior design involves, as well as an appreciation of its demands. It is just as important to know whether you have the combination of personal attributes and interests that a professional interior designer needs.

### WHAT IT TAKES TO BE AN INTERIOR DESIGNER

Design expertise comes from exposure and experience, a combination of academic study and on-the-job learning. Every one of your experiences contributes to your design vocabulary. Design education stresses problem solving. The four to six years you spend in the formal study of interior design gives you the informational tools to use in your work, problem-solving skills being perhaps the most valuable tool of all. Interior design demands a tremendous amount of ongoing research. To be a responsible designer, you must study new technologies; new product specifications; new laws and regulations; and changes in building, fire, and safety codes. With each new project there is more to study and learn. Your education never ends. Learning is part of the designer's lifestyle.

Interior design work, by nature, requires that those who practice it learn to temper their innate idealism with the practical demands of reality. You design for real

people in the real world. In every design project you undertake, you must be willing to strike a balance between what you envision as “the ideal” and what you can achieve within the project’s practical constraints.

Interior design is creative work, and it attracts talented, creative people. In fact, without talent, you cannot go far in this field. Your challenge is to direct and focus your creativity. You will have no problem coming up with new ideas, but it is often difficult to determine which should have priority.

The days of sitting at a drafting table and drawing pretty pictures are over—if they ever existed. Designers have to make things happen. Social contacts are important in acquiring new projects. You must like people and be able to get along with all kinds of people and inspire their confidence. Take the personal inventory below to help determine whether you have what it takes to be an interior designer.

### ***Personal Inventory for Prospective Interior Designers***

1. How important is interior design to me?
2. What kind of lifestyle do I want to have?
3. Do I have the innate creative abilities to become a successful designer?
4. Am I willing to spend the time and money required for the necessary formal training?
5. How much time do I want to devote to my work?
6. In general, do I like the people in the field enough to work with them?
7. Do I have the personality to work with any kind of client?
8. Do I enjoy planning and organizing?
9. Am I self-disciplined?
10. Am I self-motivated?
11. Do I have better-than-average physical and emotional stamina?

An interior design career depends on organization. From beginning to end, every project involves myriad details; keeping on top of things is absolutely critical. Even if your firm has someone on staff whose job it is to expedite the projects, you will always have to deal with mountains of details.

Interior design demands high energy and passion. It is almost never a nine-to-five business; on occasion, it is a 24-hour-a-day profession. Interior designers need physical and emotional stamina to fuel their long hours and to cope with pressures of completing a job on schedule and to their client’s satisfaction.

Most extremely successful designers—those with annual personal incomes of \$200,000 to millions per year—are addicted to interior design. They live it, eat it, and sleep it. It is a passion they cannot live without. But design addiction can also be destructive, and the most successful designers are those who have managed to merge good business practices with their positive “addiction.”

This book is about how you can integrate your love for the creative parts of interior design—and the way of life that comes with your career—with good business practices. It is about success with profitability.

## **FIVE TRADITIONAL DESIGNER-CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS**

Today's world is different. It requires designers to specialize in subjects they have never heard of before or needed. The field is ever-changing and requires a creative mind as well as an understanding of business to properly position oneself in a profitable way. As you look through the traditional and basic ways to practice, you will find you will incorporate a number of them or grow from one to another. It is wise to look at the traditional standards to see the possibilities.

Designers may fill many different roles in their relationship with clients; the business structure established will reflect the roles accordingly. Traditional roles that designers have held in the past include pure designer, agent, merchant, employee, and contractor.

### **Pure Designer**

In this capacity, the interior designer provides only professional design services: drawings, documents, and purchasing specifications for all required interior elements and furnishings. The scope of the work usually includes the preparation of the entire interior plan.

### **Agent**

The designer can act as an agent on the client's behalf, placing the client's orders with manufacturers and showrooms. The monies go through the designer's firm or under his or her name. The designer is responsible for managing the project. In some cases, the contracts are written so that the designer does not assume responsibility for the merchandise and materials and the work performed.

### **Merchant**

Many design firms will procure and sell merchandise. The designer becomes a merchant when selling merchandise. In some smaller communities, there is no choice for the designer but to act as a source of materials and to see them appropriately installed. The design firm may also charge a fee for the design of the space.

### **Employee**

Some designers are employed by retail stores, where they are usually paid salary plus commission. When the client purchases items from that store, the designer's services may be included or offered at an extra fee. More and more often, firms of this type are charging some fee in addition to the retail or list price of items, depending on the individual financial structure of the company and its location.

Designers often work for companies that manufacture products for interior projects. They may assist in designing or selling these products. Since many products are unusual, a designer's input is often required to demonstrate the purpose and relationship of these products to the market of today.

## **Contractor**

The designer may act as a contractor by employing the workers required to do construction, hang paper, finish surfaces, handle drapery and window treatments, and so on. In some states, the designer will have to carry a contractor's license to provide these services. In many instances, the craftspeople are directly employed by the design firm; in others, they work on a freelance or contractual basis.

## **WORKING STYLES**

The arts tend to attract people who like to work alone, but interior design forces people to work together. This makes interior design almost as much a social science as an art.

Interior design touches many other disciplines. You will have constant interaction with all types of tradespeople, as well as with artisans from many different craft groups. A coordinated effort is essential to success.

### **Working Alone**

If you work as an independent designer, you can do whatever you want at whatever speed you choose. If you want to work only one day a week, you can. If your forte is specialized work, perhaps you will need to work alone. If you are certain you have mastered your art to the point that you can perform every task within your specialty, and have the personality to work alone, an independent practice may be for you.

### **Apprenticeship**

The value of an apprenticeship cannot be overestimated. Working with a firm or directly under a person of great talent can be a designer's way to the top. When designers see something done, they can usually replicate it. Often designers are limited in their career because they did not take the time to serve an apprenticeship or residency before beginning their own partnership or firm.

### **Teamwork**

The trend now is to work in groups or teams. Designers who practice in groups do so because they see this as a better way to accomplish their goals. The group may not be part of a corporate structure, where all the designers work for the same firm, but design teams and design partnerships are working successfully, and there will be more of them in the future.

Interior designers are also realizing that by working together, as attorneys and physicians often do, they can share a business manager, an expeditor, an accountant, an insurance consultant, legal services, and other professional management personnel. This gives them a better managed and more profitable firm, with opportunities for better retirement plans and many of the perks that are possible only in a team arrangement.

When designers work with other designers, they have the opportunity to test each other's designs to determine what will work. When three other people look at a design and all say, "I don't see any problems," obviously the chance of producing it successfully is much greater than if the design is done in isolation. This kind of trial process is important to quality design.

Increasingly, clients want one firm to control the entire project, even though their project may be complex enough to require several disciplines. Therefore, they tend to hire firms that can do it all. Obviously, a designer can team with other design professionals. Multidisciplinary design teams of architects, landscape architects, interior designers, and engineers have an advantage in bidding for larger projects. Clients usually prefer teams that have experience working together.

Government regulations require more recordkeeping than ever before. The nature of the work has changed, and clients are more likely to sue if the unforeseen occurs. Therefore, we need to become more professional and efficient and develop and maintain high administrative and production standards. We need access to more sophisticated tools, such as computerized equipment, which a small office may not be able to afford. But by working together, designers can afford this kind of equipment and enjoy the extra bonuses of other designers' professional knowledge, as well as the stimulation of their company.

Technology also permits designers to work where they want to work: at home, in the mountains, at the beach, or in any other locations where they feel most creative. Technology enables us to communicate, to share projects or administrative needs with others in any part of the country. I often work with specialists in other states, yet we work so closely, you would think we're in same office. Technology is a great research tool and a wonderful storage system; but, more important, it enables us to work with people who otherwise would be too far away. We can now design our companies to suit the type of work we are doing. Technology helps us to grow, and the opportunities are increasing constantly.

The key to developing a successful firm is to understand your firm's best capabilities, to realize its strengths and uniqueness, then seek work that is appropriate to your team. In certain circumstances, some functions might easily be filled by consultants, but the key areas of your firm should be managed by the principals. This gives you the type of control and positioning you need. Review your market. Understand the needs and the social dynamics of the community in which you are working. These two relationships put together will help you formulate a working structure within which you can develop new business in a natural and profitable way.

### **Design Associate**

At one time, people became design associates because they didn't have funding to go off on their own or were not ready to start their own company. Today, many interior designers who have been practicing independently are associating with larger firms because the profitability is so much greater. In some interesting arrangements, profits are shared between the management company and the associate designer. In this

way the associate is responsible for writing the orders to handle all the design issues. In some instances, the designers provide their own marketing and bring in their own jobs; in other cases, the firms bring them in.

Designers can work as hard as they want to. If the work or project is highly profitable, they profit accordingly. If they elect to do a project for little markup, perhaps as a marketing effort, this is also acceptable. Of course, certain overhead requirements must be met. If designers decide to take time off—for example, to study—this is their decision, because they are paid only for performance.

Experienced designers have found that being a design associate is one of the most profitable and most pleasurable ways to work. Let someone else handle the business problems; designers want to design. Also, if clients know there is a well-managed business and purchasing division, they are less likely to question pricing, billing, and other contract issues. In addition to high-quality management, the larger company atmosphere can also provide designers with the tools they could not afford on their own—high-tech environment, library, consultants, support staff, network of communication with other designers, and so forth.

This arrangement also permits the designer to work as an independent contractor. Designers cover all of their own expenses and are responsible for their own design work, but the managing company handles the actual processing of the project. The gross profits are usually split at different levels, depending on the varied responsibilities and levels of performance.

Today, we can arrange to work on the projects and parts of projects that use our best talents. There's no point in designers spending 75 to 90 percent of their day doing tasks they are not good at. Even when you practice alone, you don't have to do it all. You can have the best bookkeeper, the best specification writer, and the best lighting designer. You can build a team of professionals you can call on, and use the software programs they suggest. Whatever you need, it's there.

### **Design/Build Team**

One of the major trends in our field is design/build, in which a team works together to produce a project. In this case, the designer may partner with an architect, civil engineer, contractor, and various other vendors to build a complete project with efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

## **SPECIALIZATION AND SPECIALTIES**

At one time there were basically two specialties in interior design, residential and contract. Today there are many. Successful designers today generally specialize in a very small area. Thanks to technology, they are able to work easily throughout the world, assisting other designers, architects, and professionals.

Many designers will combine two or three specialties but usually have one as their lead. Then, as the market interest in the lead area fades, they can shift their pri-

mary focus to another of their specialties. It is fascinating to see how our background directs us to a specialty and positions us to meet many special needs.

This is definitely a time for specialization. Designers with the greatest name recognition and financial success are those who have specialized. (This could lead you to wonder if being multifaceted in accomplishments and abilities hurts more than it helps.) A review of design publications of the past 10 years shows that less-qualified design firms can and did take the market share from “better” firms just because they were very clear in stating that, for example, they only “do” offices, or medical facilities, or restaurants.

Specialization most often leads to better profit. Specialists know their work; it is easy because they have done it many times. The basics stay the same. You can vary certain facets of the design, but you do not have to relearn 80 percent of the process. This lowers the risk of error and speeds up design production.

In the past, interior design was a broad-based service profession—blanketing residential, contract, and industrial work. In the next decade, however, interior design will become more specialized than it has been, and some of the best and most interesting jobs will probably be in the specialties. The following sections offer brief looks at more than 100 areas of specialization.

Client demand can cause you to change your area of expertise. A designer in Ohio who specialized in education interiors found over time that although she had become a specialist and did some of the most up-to-date and innovative designs for education, the demand was no longer there. She was forced to change her orientation and began designing psychological and psychiatric spaces, working with many therapists to develop spaces to support their therapies. When interest in this dwindled, she found herself specializing in interiors that supported profit-making endeavors—professional services, manufacturing, general business, and spaces with a marketing or production component. In each circumstance, she was able to use some of what she had learned in the previous specialty. Still, she had to study, bring in many consultants, and do a lot of traveling to meet with other specialists in the course of mastering new areas.

Changes can be expensive, but they are often the best thing that can happen to creative people. Boredom is one of their greatest problems, so having a specialty developed out of another specialty is really the most productive and profitable way of making a change.

### **Acoustic Design**

Hearing is one of the five senses, so sound is an integral part of every environment. As space becomes more expensive and people live and work more closely together, quiet has become a luxury. Specialists in acoustic design consult on projects ranging from concert halls, conference rooms, open offices, and restaurants to residential design. Controlling sound has become a science. In open landscape offices, there are sound-breaking panels and sound maskers. Teleconferencing rooms need the sound to be contained. In contrast, restaurants need a certain amount of noise to sell

food. In any space, from residential to the most technologically demanding commercial environments, there are sounds we want to hear and sounds we don't want to hear.

### **Adaptive Reuse**

Reusing old buildings for new purposes is a growing trend as the composition of cities changes and there is greater concern for ecology and protecting available resources. Factory lofts are converted into shopping malls and residential use. It is not always practical to maintain an older commercial structure as commercial real estate. For example, turning the Chrysler Building into a residential condominium building is being seriously considered. The building's construction will not accommodate the way computers are used today in business. Workstations can only be functional within so many feet of the main terminal. This makes many major landmark buildings obsolete as office space, while their location and the quality of construction argue that the building should be reused.

### **Administrative Headquarters Design**

Every major company or organization has an administration building with needs and demands that require design. The demands change as the products change, and interior designers are called in to streamline and develop spaces to support workflow. At one time, designers just designed offices, but today social environments are also important. Sometimes, more important decisions are made over a cup of coffee than in the boardroom.

### **Airplane Design**

This is a unique specialty. Airplanes range from a standard passenger carrier to a flying conference room or living space. Designers must consider design elements in terms of weight, fire safety, and psychological and environmental effects.

### **Amusement Park Design**

Designers work on theme parks, developing the visual components that enhance rides and exhibits. These can incorporate animated figures and appeal to all the senses, even that of smell. These designers may develop unique signage for the park, design the fixtures, or be involved with the service areas: food service, restrooms, and souvenir shops. Park design has this in common with museums and community buildings. Safety, effectiveness, and efficiency are important. Profitability is determined by the effectiveness of the fantasy, and everything has to work so that the fantasy is maintained. Designing traffic patterns to keep people moving is an art in itself.

With the high level of technology available today, the amusement park experience has gone beyond anything anyone could have imagined. These designers are not just artistic; they are also very skilled in scientific thinking and computer knowledge and capabilities.



### **Apartment, Condominium, and Co-Op Design**

With more multiple-housing developments in every part of the country, this specialty presents major opportunities. Some interior designers do only apartment layouts; others do only lobbies and corridors. Still others are responsible for the social rooms, which include function rooms, social areas, televideo conference centers, computer rooms, office and secretarial areas, and athletic areas.

### **Aquarium Design**

This specialty is not limited to aquatic parks. There are designers who do large aquarium designs for homes, offices, and other businesses. There is a restaurant where one enters by walking over a sizable aquarium. Aquariums as a design element serve several purposes. Medical evidence suggests that gazing at an aquarium reduces blood pressure; and there is a social push toward using natural, earth-friendly materials in public spaces.

### **Art Consultant**

Searching out existing art and contracting for the creation of art suitable to a specific interior environment is the function of art consultants, who usually work for the client. They provide the background to support the art investment. The specialist must have an extensive knowledge of fine-art disciplines as well as a practical and artistic understanding of interior design.

### **Art Dealing**

Interior designers with an interest in fine art understand what people enjoy and will buy; they understand the space and know how to place art properly. This is a major asset for an art dealer, because art sells best when it can be envisioned or placed in an interior.

### **Audiovisual Center Design**

Televisions, computers, videocassette recorders, and stereo equipment provide entertainment and worldwide communication for residential and commercial use. They are often clustered in the same area or room. The technical requirements of these devices demand knowledge of electronics, acoustics, and lighting disciplines.

### **Auditorium Design**

This is a fascinating field, and very different from stage design. Acoustics and sight lines in theater design are vital and complex. Productions can be made or destroyed by very small design elements of the house. With today's multimedia opportunities, this field has become very complex.

### **Barrier-Free Design**

Laws require that new commercial and public buildings, and renovations to existing buildings, make the space accessible to those in wheelchairs. Barrier-free design is

increasingly desirable for all spaces. Probably more money has been invested in designing for the physically limited or orthopedically disabled than for any other group. Interior designers specialize in reviewing products and buildings to ensure that standards are met. This specialty is included in almost every project.

### **Bathroom Design**

At one time a neglected and utilitarian room, today the bathroom joins the kitchen as a selling point for houses. Modern bathrooms may include spa-like environments with whirlpool baths, saunas, and hot tubs. Public restrooms and bathrooms for commercial spaces demand state-of-the-art detailing. A new consciousness of human factors has greatly improved aesthetics, safety, and the adaptations needed to make the bathroom barrier-free. International bathing customs have had an influence as well, bringing us the European fixtures, the Oriental soaking tub, saunas, and steam rooms. Environmental concerns have brought new products and codes.

### **Beauty and Barbershop Design**

Beauty and barbershops are often mixed-media salons. The designer may be asked to provide appropriate space for services such as waxing, massage, facials, manicures, and cosmetology, in addition to hair care. State regulations and requirements differ. Interior designers in the beauty field often work with or for suppliers, who may offer complete financing and turnkey projects.

### **CAD Specialist**

A designer who is expert at computer-assisted drafting (CAD) and drawing is increasingly important today. Computers are instrumental in communicating with other design professionals. Designs created with CAD software may be used by the client as a basis for in-house space management. CAD's accuracy and capability to make quick changes is invaluable. Although there are still specialists, CAD has now become a basic tool of most designers.

### **Carpet and Rug Design**

Who should know better how to design carpets and rugs than interior designers, who are responsible for a large volume of floor-covering sales? Interior designers working with textile specialists can develop the most suitable rugs for a given situation. Designing handwoven rugs is very different from designing for the technical demands of Axminster, Wilton, tufted, woven, or printed machines. A designer must either study at a textile-intensive school, such as the Philadelphia Textile School, or work extensively in the carpet field.

### **Ceramic Tile Design**

This field encompasses foreign and domestic sources as well as artist-made and mass-produced tiles. Ceramic tiles are used for high-traffic, functional areas, as well as for decorative effect, including as murals and sculptures.

**Closet Design**

Space is at a premium today, and closet space especially so. Around the country, businesses that do only closets are designing storage components and new ways to store almost every item.

**Code Safety Design Law Specialist**

This person keeps up-to-date information on building, fire, and safety codes in all states. The specialist designer may consult with other designers, contractors, manufacturers, and owners.

**Color Consultation**

Color and its effects on people is a recognized science with well-documented results. Color is the most noticed of all the design elements. This specialty is used by all the design disciplines, as well as marketing firms, corporations, governments, and medical practices—anywhere encouraging specific reactions is desired.

**Commercial Design**

This specialty designs everything except residences, including retail space, businesses, offices, laboratories, factories, medical facilities, and other commercial space. Most commercial designers specialize further. Within the specialty of design for medicine, there are several subspecialties.

**Computer Office Design**

Designing to accommodate computer use is much in demand. Office requirements of computers have changed dramatically since computers first emerged in the workplace. In some ways, the requirements are less rigorous. In designing offices to accommodate computers, specialists usually work for the computer companies and may travel across the country to explain the requirements and conveniences of combining computer and staff functions.

**Construction Supervision**

Designers supervise, manage, and review the components of a project and advise on decision making. Interior designers are often hired to act as liaisons between the contractor and client. Sometimes they are responsible for hiring other consultants and contractors.

**Corporate Campus Design**

The designer creates a total environment. The corporate campus promotes efficiency and expresses the mission of the company through design tailored to meet the specific needs of that company. Campuses can include administration buildings, training centers, manufacturing or production facilities, and fitness centers. Some demand space that can be leased to support companies.

### **Corporate In-House Design**

The staff interior designer for a corporation is responsible for maintaining the company's design identity. The designer may initiate and complete the design or hire design consultants on major design projects, as well as act as liaison between outside consultants and the firm.

### **Cosmetic Dentistry**

The emergence of cosmetic dentistry has brought new challenges to the design of the dental office. The office must blend the professional medical requirements of dentistry with fashion and beauty to create effective, visually pleasing surroundings. The client who buys cosmetic dentistry services is very conscious of design and detail.

### **Country Club Design**

These spaces combine aspects of residential and commercial design. The buildings must conform to area regulations and codes for fire, safety, labor, and industry. They must encourage proprietary feelings among the membership but also give the staff the tools to run programs with time and financial efficiency. Facilities may include indoor swimming pools, ball courts, gyms, locker rooms, restaurants, and areas for business meetings and socializing.

### **Dental Office Design**

This is a highly engineered segment of the medical field; the design specialist must have an understanding of the mechanics as well as the antiseptic and medical aspects of the discipline. The dental profession has exerted the effort to develop business management techniques and to improve time use to make dentistry more efficient and professional. Space design for dental offices is an integral part of the new dentistry.

### **Design Coordinator**

This person works directly with the client to define the client's wishes and takes the information to a design specialist. The design coordinator must be able to accommodate the artistic attitude and approaches of the design professional and understand and work closely with the client. With today's communication systems, this will become a great specialty because the design coordinator can network with design specialists all over the world. This person is responsible for bringing the specialist and the client together in a productive way. It takes extensive knowledge of the field to be able to create this bond.

### **Design for Children**

Environment affects a child's behavior; there is a body of research indicating that what stimulates a child is not what stimulates an adult. Spaces for children must be adaptable, because children change and grow so rapidly. These spaces include every place a child might use—doctors' offices, libraries, schools, and retail spaces—not just bedrooms.

The children of today are very demanding clients. They are very aware of multi-media experiences and have high expectations. Many children are also well traveled and want to be in spaces that are very special.

### **Design for In-Home Medical Care**

At one time, patients with chronic, debilitating illnesses were confined to hospital wards, but the trend today is toward in-home care. Not only do these patients enjoy the comforts of home, but they also have less risk of acquiring new infections while their immunities are low. This specialty means more than just installing a hospital bed. The residential space must be adapted to meet geriatric, orthopedic, or other medical requirements of both patient and caregivers.

### **Design for Vision or Hearing Impairments**

The number of people affected with vision or hearing impairments grows each year in proportion to the aging of the population. More than 60 percent of people in the workforce today have some hearing loss, and probably a much larger percentage have some vision impairment. People are becoming more aware of the problems, as well as of the increased technology available to resolve them. There are successful applications for every situation, from residences to theaters.

### **Display and Exhibit Design**

Retailers, wholesalers, specialty shops, museums, and all types of public spaces can use display and exhibit design to sell products as well as ideas. These displays may be permanent or built for travel. These exhibits must make an impact but also be easy to set up and take down.

### **Energy Conservation Design**

An energy specialist advises on energy-efficient products and space planning for better use of energy. This may include solar design, adapting existing structures or developing new ones, or simply finding new uses for traditional products and appropriate uses for new ones.

### **Ergonomic Design**

Ergonomic design is the science that relates people to the way they use things. It is an engineering science based on the physical needs of the human body. Factors considered are the measurements of the human body, human sensory capacities, comfort, body functions, safety, and emotional satisfaction.

### **Estate Manager**

With the investment that owners make, they need a knowledgeable person to secure their investments and properly manage all activities of the property. A trained designer is usually part of the design team, acting as the owner's representative in procurement and handling issues with contractors and artisans.

After working on the property, estate managers are qualified to update and maintain the property, furnishings, art objects, and so on; prepare operations manuals; establish budgets; and handle all financial issues relating to the property.

Estate managers hire and train appropriate staff, oversee inventories, and do party planning. This position requires a person of background and sophistication.

### **Facility Management**

The person or department responsible for the physical management of a facility coordinates purchasing, repairs, and maintenance. Facility managers plan and act as liaisons between the firm's executives and the consulting designers, architects, and engineers.

### **Factory and Production Consulting**

This specialty includes traffic control and design to improve safety and to increase productivity. (See *Ergonomic Design*, page 13.) The emphasis is on keeping the environment stimulating so that workers stay alert, are productive, and are able to handle the machinery and equipment safely.

### **Faux Finishes and Stenciling**

Faux finishes and stenciling have become vital and growing decorative elements since the 1980s. A fine arts or interior design degree is not essential for this type of work, but either helps in translating the client's desires into reality. Tools to create faux-finishing effects are available at every hardware store and in most hardware departments. Though books on these subjects are many—making the art understandable and desirable to the general public—most clients would rather hire a specialist than attempt faux finishing themselves.

### **Feng Shui**

The ancient Chinese art of placement is considered the mother of natural sciences. Harmony and balance are the goals. A feng shui practitioner serves in the multiple roles of healer, psychologist, therapist, cleric, business consultant, financial advisor, and matchmaker. The concepts are drawn from Tibetan, Chinese Buddhist, and folk wisdom.

### **Forensic Consulting**

This specialty was created by the litigious times we live in. When a product is made or used incorrectly and results in injury or death, a forensic designer may be consulted by attorneys. In addition to expertise in ergonomics and product construction, the forensic designer must also be familiar with court terminology and the correct way to testify. This field requires not only training but a special personality that holds up well under pressure.

### **Funeral Home Design**

The funeral home must comfort and support people at an emotionally vulnerable time. It includes personal meeting areas for family viewing and chapel spaces that must be visually pleasing as well as practical. There are presentation and financial aspects to consider, as well as the appropriate physical supports for heavy objects and space for behind-the-scenes management.

### **Furniture Design**

Interior and industrial design must be blended for good product design. The interior designer knows where the furniture goes and how it is used; the industrial-furniture designer knows construction techniques.

### **Furniture Manager**

This is a person who handles all the purchasing documents, usually for a commercial project. The furniture manager handles all the bidding through to the final installation and is very much like a project manager on a construction project. This is a role many interior designers are very qualified to handle.

### **Geriatric Design**

As our society grays, design for the mature market gains in recognition as a specialty. Retirement centers, nursing homes, even condominiums are designed to meet the physical, psychological, and cultural needs of older people. It's not just a case of dealing with illness and infirmity; rather, it means acknowledging the pleasures of life and the opportunities still available. Older people are no longer simply old; they act, hence like to be treated, as if they were young.

### **Graphic Design**

These specialists can develop a corporate image or design graphics that define the space or movement of people through public-use facilities. A graphic designer develops the logos and icons used on everything from business cards and stationery to Web sites and Web pages.

### **Greenhouse Design**

At one time, greenhouses were simply for plants. Now they are incorporated into residential and commercial spaces that also accommodate people. Depending on the climate, greenhouse design can involve controlling temperature, light, and humidity. Insulating elements and the design atmosphere are other factors. Manufacturers consult interior designers on the design of greenhouse components; some designers have made this their specialty.

### **Hard-Surface Flooring Design**

Designing this type of flooring product demands knowledge of color trends, as well as a working knowledge of the properties of wood, ceramics, marble, vinyl, and

other appropriate materials. In fact, there are so many hard-surfaced floors and flooring products that each one of them requires specialists.

### **Hardware Design**

The work of interior and industrial designers enhances the functional and decorative effects of knobs, hinges, and handles, the hardware for use in buildings and on furniture. The demand is increasing for beautifully sculptured, handsomely crafted hardware.

### **Health and Fitness Club Design**

Personal fitness became important in the 1980s. Health clubs are not just places to exercise but meeting spots for people with similar goals and interests. Athletic, aerobic, and recreational facilities of all sorts are proliferating. Keeping the facilities safe, convenient, and appropriate to their specific sports is involved enough that some designers have made it their specialty. Health and fitness club design has some aspects in common with country club design. As trends change, these spaces must be redesigned to meet the new needs.

### **Historic Preservation and Adaptive Reuse**

Historic preservation demands technical and scientific knowledge and an ability and willingness to research small details. What were the colors, materials, and wallcoverings in use when the building was created? What hardware is appropriate? How historically accurate does the client want the building to be? Some people want the interiors to be absolutely authentic and will, for example, hide the electricity or do without it. They want everything exactly as it used to be, with no substitutions or modifications.

Technology has given designers the means to determine what the original colors were (and they are often garish when compared to the more subtle ones we are accustomed to seeing today). It is now possible to assign precise dates to furniture. The body of knowledge continues to grow.

### **Home Office Design**

The home office is a space tailored to the way an individual works. Working with people who have been in the corporate scene for many years and who now want home offices can be exciting. The office may be small—and be incorporated into part of an apartment or bedroom—or it may be larger than any executive office in a corporate building. Quite often, the office contains all the bells and whistles of a commercial space, along with all the comforts of home, plus a few indulgences as well.

### **Home Theater Design**

Home theater design is in great demand. This area of work demands extensive technical, audio, and visual knowledge. Home theater rooms require knowledge of many different aspects of design. Not only do these rooms need to be very luxurious and



comfortable, but the client also expects their sound to be perfect and the pictures to be crisp and clear. In this room, the client expects to be able to access any cable or satellite system with the push of a button. This has become one of the highest-budget rooms of the residence.

### **Hospital Design**

Today, some areas in a hospital have such complex technical requirements that hospital designers with a particular specialty have international practices. Specialties proliferate: Some designers do only emergency rooms and intensive care units, while others design patient and visitor areas; some designers combine both.

Hospitals are changing dramatically and quickly to support new systems of medicine, causing hospital designers to put aside most of their traditional systems and work with System Technology, a new and very demanding set of guidelines. Fortunately, as a result, hospitals are much more user-friendly. Insurance and legal requirements, along with cost-effectiveness, place demands and constraints on the design. It is highly unlikely that a specialist in hospital design would also work on a nursing home project; the demands are very different.

### **Hospitality Design**

This field can range from the bed-and-breakfast to a large conference center. Some conference centers are practically cities in themselves. Hospitality design encompasses luxury spaces for community and celebration, as well as functional accommodations. Designers may specialize in restaurant dining halls, training centers and convention spaces, guest rooms, lobbies, and corridors.

### **Houseboat Design**

Houseboats are, in essence, both residential and commercial structures. There is a tremendous amount of technical engineering required to keep them afloat, as well as to meet health and safety requirements. Houseboats can be three, four, or five stories high and provide sizable living and workspaces.

### **Human Factors**

Human factors deal with all types of personal performance in work or personal spaces. Designers who specialize in this field often consult with owners and other design specialists to incorporate human concerns in standard and special-needs spaces.

### **Interior Landscaping**

Plants add a natural quality to even the most static environment. This field requires knowledge of landscaping and botany to place plants where they are suitable. It may include contracting to provide maintenance and design changes for seasonal updates and plant health. Whereas greenhouses are primarily used to keep plants healthy and growing, interior “plantscaping” is an increasingly important component of a building’s atmosphere. Design factors include temperature, light, and humidity control.

### **Journalism**

Through writing, designers can expand the design field, making our work more understandable to people inside and outside the field. Designers can educate through columns and articles on design for newspapers and magazines, and more recently, on television as well. Writing is a special skill, as is the ability to relate on camera. Some people with design education have chosen design journalism but only after intensive efforts to learn these additional skills. If these skills do not come easily, designers who need to produce books and articles would do well to collaborate with a writer. This may be a more effective use of their time.

### **Kennel Design**

In the competitive world of breeding pedigreed pets, space design for each species is a serious business. The designer must understand animals and their needs. In kennels, there are areas for grooming and training, food preparation and nutrition, as well as testing. Maintenance and health care are a prime concern.

### **Kitchen Design**

The kitchen is often one of the most expensive parts of the house. Some equipment is unabashedly new. There are also historic designs infused with new technology. Scientific and artistic detail goes into the design and planning of components for residential and personal-use kitchens. The designer must have a complete knowledge of currently available products as well as the dietary requirements of the users.

The National Kitchen and Bath Association (NKBA) has created a curriculum that is offered by numerous design schools throughout the country. This program accredits designers in kitchen design.

### **Law Office Design**

Law offices have many features in common with residences. A designer who is skilled in residential work will be excellent at designing them. Image, cost, and work efficiency are important considerations. An environment that supports legal professionals, visiting clients, and consultants provides visual and acoustical privacy. Law offices now incorporate highly technical equipment, as well as areas for specialized personal interaction.

### **Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)**

Clients not only are looking for long-lasting products but are concerned about buildings that will last many years. They want buildings to have flexibility so they aren't just suitable for today's purpose but for long-standing and environmentally friendly use. A sustainability or LEED person has to be knowledgeable in LEED and qualified as a LEED specialist. This individual must understand flexibility of use in building design.

### **Library Design**

Libraries are individual and specialized, catering to local needs. A library in a county seat will be different from one on Wall Street. Libraries need space planning and

marketing, with special attention to lighting and acoustics. Many libraries have exhibit areas or function rooms. They are true multimedia environments—lending books, videocassettes, art, and music. Electrical demands have increased greatly with the advent of computers, which are used for card catalogs, periodical indexes, and subject-dedicated databases. Spaces for extensive personal libraries are enjoying a comeback. Personal libraries are no longer just for English country homes.

### **Licensing**

Many designers license their names to a product line. The designer can style or develop the product or merely endorse it. This is a growing field, encompassing wallcoverings, upholstery textiles, bed linens, tabletop china, and just about everything that can be used in interior spaces. Today, very fine designers design for inexpensive merchandise. Licensing fees are based on volume, and work on easily available consumer goods becomes very lucrative. Although some licensors are used principally for their names, most designers contribute to the design of products for widely divergent markets.

### **Lighting Design**

Lighting, both natural and artificial, is a strong and important element, used for design, drama, ecology, and, of course, function. Scale, structure, engineering, and knowledge of the end use are critical components of good fixture design, as are the technical requirements and codes for specific projects.

### **Lighting Fixture Design**

In any space, the human eye goes to the windows and the lighting fixtures. Scale, structure, engineering, and knowledge of the end use are critical components of good fixture design.

### **Liturgical Design**

Churches, synagogues, and mosques are not just monuments but living centers that actively serve the community. Some offer recreation areas for children. These buildings are used for social events, theater productions, educational lectures, and community activities. Of course, each religion has its own design requirements, so the designer must know and understand the specific liturgy.

### **Manufacturer In-House Design**

Manufacturers have staff designers who work not on design but on merchandising. To promote sales, many contract office furniture manufacturers offer interior design services at little or no cost to the end user. Designers, especially interior designers, work directly for manufacturers to help align products to the needs of today's design public.

### **Manufacturer Representation**

This sales position is the link between the manufacturer and interior designer. Some of the best manufacturers' representatives are former interior designers or dealers.

They understand the product, know how to sell it, and appreciate what interior designers want. Within assigned territories, manufacturers' reps call on designers, providing catalogs, assisting in specification preparation, and writing purchase orders.

### **Marine Design**

This specialty requires extensive knowledge of fire codes, marine standards and regulations, weights, and materials. Many products must be made specifically for marine use. Marine design encompasses all sizes of ships and boats, from working boats to cruise liners with the size and complexity of small villages. The design demands range from stripped-down—where every inch must have more than one use—to extravagant, with swimming pools, shops, ballrooms, and health spas. The designer deals with physical, psychological, and ergonomic issues as well. There are fewer restrictions—sometimes none at all—on smaller craft for personal use.

### **Marketing**

Marketing specialists work in many parts of the market, including with the end user as well as designers. They develop and position design firms with appropriate clients. Some designers are better at design work than selling, so the need for and value of this specialty is well recognized and compensated.

### **Medical Center Design**

Hospitals, clinics, rehabilitative-care centers, and nursing homes have requirements so specific and technologically complex that only a specialist could keep up with the constant changes in standards, codes, and equipment. This specialty includes emergency rooms, intensive-care units, lobbies, and administrative support. Examples of special-needs campuses are: medical complexes dedicated to heart care, birthing and women's care, and orthopedics.

Hospitals in many cities are being redesigned, and some doctors are designing centers to fit their own specialties. The medical field is changing so rapidly that some facilities are not even completed before major changes must be made. Outpatient care has expanded so dramatically that it has changed the profile of every medical institution. Medicine is advancing dramatically, so we can look forward to much more work in this area.

### **Medical Office Design**

Every medical specialty requires special equipment, as well as appropriate space planning, traffic patterns, and storage management. Today's specialties use such an intensive array of high-tech equipment that offices require total replanning every few years. A complete understanding of the medical procedures and equipment, legal aspects, codes, and aseptic demands is needed. There are extreme challenges in this area, because the equipment in even the largest office is very imposing, and because the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) introduced regulations that force many offices to make major changes.

### **Medical Spa Specialist**

Medical spas encompass plastic surgeons, dermatologists, and all types of skin treatments. These facilities require a considerable amount of equipment. The knowledge of both the processes used as well as the necessary equipment is essential for this design specialty. The medical spa may also include cosmetic dentistry, antiaging systems, hydrotherapy, and many other forms of massage and exercise treatments.

### **Model Home Furnishing**

Model home furnishing may be handled by an independent designer who may also specify the architectural details of the interior to be purchased and installed by another contractor, or by companies dedicated to furnishing model homes. There are also companies that will “grant” all of the furniture, accessories, and appointments to builders for their use for several months or a year. At the end of that period, the companies retrieve the furniture to reuse in another project.

Model home design can be a promotional tool for design firms. In some areas, interior designers pay contractors or developers for the privilege of working on their models. The work may encompass all the interior architectural details, lighting, fixture specifications, and hard and soft furnishings. The furnishings are often sold with the home. In other instances, contractors consider this same work part of the presentation of the home and will hire designers, or lease furnishings, or both.

### **Modular Prefabricated Design**

This area of the building industry is growing rapidly. It is cost-effective to build standard components in a factory-controlled situation. A high level of quality with skilled engineering can be accomplished by prefabricated design. Understanding requirements of building and delivery is critical. It's not just price, but quality, that is relevant here. It's more feasible to construct a much-better product under controlled conditions. Factory-built housing or modular complexes for other purposes also come with guarantees, something not available in on-site construction.

Modular prefab construction is usually most practical when building a hundred or more similar units. The designer creates a standard, builds a sample, checks all the details, confirms with the client, and analyzes the finished product. When all has been approved, several hundred units are built. These units ship well over water, which can be a construction advantage when placing large complexes on deserted islands, where there are very few construction trades.

### **Mural Painting**

A number of mural artists are interior designers with fine-arts backgrounds. They first paint a miniature for the client, then execute the full-size product on canvas or directly on the wall. This art form has become very prominent. Demand is increasing and spilling over to create a new specialty, that of handpainted walls.

### **Museum Design**

At one time, only people with backgrounds in history or art history worked in museums. Museums today offer many opportunities for interior designers, to design

exhibits, promotions, and community projects. Because the preservation of artifacts is as important as the display, understanding the effects of humidity and lighting on artifacts is important. Interior designers may work directly for museums or be employed by consulting firms that specialize in museum work.

### **Nursing Home Design**

As the levels of health care change, so do the codes, systems, regulations, and requirements. Nursing homes now cater not only to senior citizens but to young people who have short-term needs—those who live alone or have no one to care for them but require care for a limited time. Elements to consider in any design of nursing or convalescent homes include the probable length of the stay and the special equipment that patients will need. Changes in medicine make many facilities obsolete before they are five years old, so it is important to plan for change.

### **Office Design**

While commercial and home offices have elements in common, the home office is usually for one or two people. Commercial office design requires knowledge of high-tech equipment, as well as an understanding of management and office production. The term “commercial office” today may still suggest open-plan offices. However, companies vary; hence they need different types of design. In general, these spaces are designed for large groups of people working together in a cooperative and productive fashion. The space must accommodate many different disciplines with varying needs.

### **Park Design**

Amusement parks, municipal, and other parks need to be safe and efficient, and have effective traffic patterns and management systems. Designers may be called on to develop unique signage or to design fixtures or the service areas: food service, restrooms, and souvenir shops. Some designers work only on theme parks, where the emphasis is on getting people to come back often, especially if the park is for-profit. Parks are also hubs for many other environments, such as residential complexes, or campuses for education, medicine, or business.

### **Passenger Train and Bus Design**

The interiors of passenger trains and buses must be designed for the comfort and safety of the traveler. They also need to be attractive. Passenger trains and buses of today are so different from those of the past. They incorporate much more technology and more pleasant environments.

### **Party and Ball Design**

Designers organize and orchestrate parties and balls for corporations, charities, and other organizations. Entertainment and celebration require an appropriate atmosphere. It is not enough just to put people into a ballroom for so many hours; they

want fantasies brought to life. The competition among charities is intense. The donors have been in every hotel many times. If the designer cannot show them something different, they are not interested.

### **Patio and Outdoor Room Design**

Outdoor rooms are an important part of most buildings. Some can be used year-round, while others can be used only on a more limited basis. These rooms often have serious design considerations because of their structure and use. Interior designers are teaming with landscape architects to create exciting and functional spaces.

### **Photographic Set Design**

This specialty works with manufacturers and advertising agencies to create settings designed to sell products. They maintain an inventory of props and backgrounds, spend weeks creating and building a set, then tear it down immediately after photographing it. Successful photographic set design requires an understanding of what photographs well and what does not, as well as what can be faked.

### **Photography Styling**

Designers team with photographers to make interior spaces work better in photographs. This involves moving furniture to show the room to advantage and accessorizing the space. Very few interior designers and architects understand how to stage their own work for good photography.

### **Plumbing Fixture Design**

To design sinks, lavatories, bathtubs, and spas, the designer must have training and a special interest in sculpture. Sometimes the specialist will be asked to recolor or redesign an existing line, but more often, the project means creating new forms. Fixtures manufacturers may revive the shapes of antique items or items from Asia, reworking them to meet today's plumbing standards. The day of strictly utilitarian bathroom fixtures is gone.

### **Prison Design**

State and local governments are turning to private companies to help in constructing prisons, which are then leased back to the government. Some organizations, such as Volunteers of America, actually operate the prisons. Prison design is a specialty in the midst of change. Social scientists suggest that new prisons should not just house prisoners but help to rehabilitate them.

### **Privacy Design**

Privacy is a major issue in almost every type of environment and design today, from public buildings to private residences. Privacy consultants have a design background, complemented with sound engineering training.

### **Product Design**

Opportunities in the field of product design are as numerous as the products themselves. Designers can make vital contributions in helping manufacturers find and develop products that are wanted, function well, and suit the environments they will be used in. Designers have a hand in almost every product available today.

### **Product Display**

Interior designers have traditionally designed store windows and product displays, but never has this type of design been brought to so refined and sophisticated an art form as recently. This strong merchandising approach often permits unlimited budgets, which encourage a free range of ideas.

### **Product Evaluation**

Hiring designers to evaluate products for design quality, practicality, and marketability is a sound investment for manufacturers.

### **Product Marketing**

Interior designers assist with marketing products by developing ways to use them. They are well qualified to assist in product design development, as a complement to the manufacturer's design staff. Consulting interior designers can help maintain a firm's position in the marketplace.

### **Professional or Promotional Organizations**

Trade and professional organizations often hire interior designers as spokespersons or interpreters to build links between the product group and the designer or client. The designers' skill and knowledge can strengthen the relationship. Designers understand the needs of the end user as well as the multitude of design disciplines involved.

### **Project Management**

Project management can be as simple as handling interior design development for one's own firm or as complex as running a project under a turnkey proposition. It requires complete understanding of various crafts.

### **Proxemics**

Proxemics is the physical, psychological, and cultural impact of space on people. A consultant in this field evaluates any interior space that directs human behavior: educational; medical; business facilities, including work; production; or any space where there is social interaction. Private-use spaces, such as residences, can gain tremendously from this specialty.

### **Psychiatric Care Facility Design**

While many of the codes in the psychiatric care facilities are the same as in other medical facilities, the type of therapy practice determines the design response. Use, practicality, safety, and ease of maintenance are prime concerns.



### **Public Relations**

Interior designers with strong communications skills may choose to draw media attention to the work of other designers rather than run a design practice of their own. Some act as liaison between manufacturers, designers, and end users.

### **Purchasing**

The designer may act as a purchasing agent for large companies, reviewing and testing products, then negotiating and ordering the furnishings. Purchasing agents or procurement companies can get better prices for the individual design firms that use them than they could get on their own.

### **Real Estate Development**

A knowledge of space, its uses, and its potential for change has given many interior designers an edge in real estate sales and development. Some designers assist developers by restructuring and designing buildings for turnkey or development projects. In some states, interior designers need a realtor's license to be recognized and compensated for their contributions; in others, interior designers are part of a real estate development firm.

### **Real Estate Upgrading**

Build a better home, please the client, and sell: These are the objectives in design upgrading for luxury development homes. Many experienced designers have moved into this specialty. There is opportunity for creative design, and it pays very well.

### **Rendering**

CAD can do a lot, but there is nothing like a beautiful hand rendering. Rendering is a special art, requiring knowledge of graphics, fine art, and design. A good presentation is vital: Many design firms, even small ones, hire good renderers, either staff or freelance. Fees can run into the thousands of dollars.

### **Residential Design**

At one time the most prevalent design specialty, residential design can also be the most lucrative. It requires a knowledge of human behavior within living spaces, an understanding of and ability to communicate with people, and a respect for the client. Generally, people hire residential designers whose tastes and communications skills are similar to their own.

### **Resort Design**

Resorts are wonderful vacation places for hosting many types of activities, from the spa-type resort that is very luxurious and indulgent to the experiential resort that boasts everything from extreme sports to "tame" activities, such as music or other specialized interests. Resorts are found all over the country in many environments. They generally have many unique features. Resort designers are often experts in a

particular specialty as well as in hospitality design. They are very aware of the unique issues of designing a space that has both living and activity areas.

### **Restaurant Design**

There is room for design in every restaurant, from the fast-food stands in malls to local eateries to establishments for gracious dining. Knowledge of all design disciplines as well as of food management is essential.

### **Restaurant Kitchen Design**

This requires knowledge of kitchen equipment and the know-how to adapt it to the preferences of individual restaurateurs. Kitchen specialists work independently or for equipment suppliers. Kitchens for country clubs, educational facilities, and large commercial restaurants are typical projects.

### **Retail and Specialty Selling**

Selling is part of every design practice. Some designers have found it more lucrative to own, manage, or work for retail and specialty stores. Designers make good salespeople, especially in design-related areas, because they understand how to use a product and can show clients how. Interior designers may help develop a product mix for a specific store; this often means creating a design package to be sold by other people. It also can mean working with a group of artists to market their work.

### **Retail Store Design**

This popular specialty requires skill in image development, marketing, traffic patterns, and security and concern for financial return on space. Custom fixturing is often part of the design. The designer may customize local spaces for national chains or work with individual store owners.

### **Security Consulting**

Security must be built into every part of a building's design today; it is not just supplementary. Security incorporates many different types of systems, such as screening and the use of other cameras and devices that permit different types of monitoring. Security consultants are now so specialized that some deal only in educational institutions, others within federal and state buildings, others in office buildings, and yet others in residential spaces.

### **Set Design**

Many interior designers started in set design; others expanded their practices to include set design. Although this is a unionized profession, there are still some opportunities. Set design for movies, theater, dance, and opera is a different world. The designer builds for show, not to last. Everything is designed to be seen from a certain perspective. The size and design of the theater—whether it is a proscenium or a theater-in-the-round—affect the placement of furniture and props. The director's vision of the production is critical to the choice of furnishings.

### **Shop-at-Home Services**

At-home shopping is a powerful design field. There are extremely successful firms that specialize in shop-at-home service. Some stock a van or truck with a coordinated line of pictures, accessories, pillows, and draperies. They distribute their products to representatives or franchise owners. Even very sophisticated firms are finding ways to bring products to the home. If designers can show clients a product sample in their own space, very often they can sell it.

### **Shopping Mall Design**

This is large-scale marketing. Each store in a mall must contribute to the total mall concept, which ranges from discount to luxury. Each mall promotes a different lifestyle or environment. Designers may work directly for the mall owners to coordinate all mall activities and designs or with individual retailers and in the common areas. The mall of today must allow space for entertainment and other activities. It must be an experience in itself, not just a place to shop.

### **Showroom Design**

In Manhattan, Rome, Paris, London, and in every small city in the world, showroom designs and presentations account for an amazingly high-dollar figure. The primary job of the showroom is to sell a product. Whether the showroom is beautiful is a question of taste, but whether it works and produces can be measured.

### **Solar Design**

Design for solar buildings is not just about solar collection but a matter of coordinating solar and environmental concerns with human needs. Energy efficiency, sun control, sunlight-resistant materials, and insulation are key.

### **Spa and Skin Clinic Design**

This major trend requires many specific design considerations. Typically included are skin treatments, plastic surgery, dermatology, facials, and all forms of special treatments, ranging from therapeutic massage to cosmetics. The demands of this specialty are so great that many designers are working exclusively in this area.

### **Spaceship and Rocket Design**

This is the ultimate challenge in ergonomic design—every inch must count. Many consumer products have been developed as a result of studies done for spaceship design. Designers who have worked for NASA have taught designers many things that they can use in general work.

### **Stadium and Arena Design**

While architects and engineers are most often involved with shaping these spaces, interior designers are consulted on public areas, private salons, dining areas, kitchens, service areas, and even choice of seating. This specialty has aspects in common with theater, restaurant, and store design. Today's stadiums and arenas are

expensive and luxurious, but they also must incorporate safety and security as primary concerns.

### **Storage Design**

Planned storage is an essential design element. Storage specialists catalog the clients' storables, then plan for growth. Custom storage can range from making tiny drawers to accommodate contact lenses to developing automated filing areas for offices. Good storage means placing things in convenient locations near where they will be used, and putting lesser-used items in less accessible places. Since storage is generally an engineering process within each of design's different disciplines, a designer will usually specialize in a particular aspect of storage design, such as residential, legal offices, medical offices, or other types of commercial space.

### **Tabletop Display Design**

Restaurants and department and specialty stores use tabletop display to sell food and other products. Clients today expect both drama and practicality.

### **Teleconference Center Design**

Teleconference centers exist not only in large corporations but also in community centers and occasionally in apartment complexes. This discipline specifies the shape of the room, lighting, choice and placement of furnishings, and even the teleconference equipment. Sight lines, light and sound control, and audibility are prime concerns.

### **Television Design**

There are presently 43 different television shows featuring interior design. This has become a major entertainment process. Television designers may do all of the preparation as well as the on-camera work. Many of these designers also have a background in theater.

### **Tenant Development Services**

Interior designers work with landlords and developers to coordinate interior spaces for homes, apartments, and commercial offices. They may devise color schemes and layouts or may only ensure that the work of other designers coordinates with what exists in these buildings.

### **Textile Design**

These interior designers have special knowledge of textiles, design rugs, fabrics, and wallcoverings. This combined discipline creates products that are appropriate, distinctive, and easy to use.

### **Training Center Design**

Education takes place in more places than schools. Corporate training centers are found in office buildings; smaller firms use hotel meeting rooms or convention

centers. Special demands include adaptable lighting, accommodating audiovisual equipment, and attention to acoustics and sight lines.

### **Transit Center Design**

Airport, train, and bus terminals have become almost total-living environments for some people. Interior designers are called on to enhance people movement, entertain people, and accommodate their needs with airport shops, small conference areas, VIP clubs, and cocktail lounges. There is not much one cannot do in transit centers these days, from banking to seeing a podiatrist to hiring a secretary. Transit centers have become like cities in the range of services they offer the daily commuter, as well as the traveler who may have a layover of many hours. Chicago's O'Hare Airport has a laser show. Some centers offer college courses; others have educational displays. There is usually a church or chapel. Today's security demands have also changed many facets of transit centers. These areas will continue to reflect a significant demand for innovative design.

### **Turnkey Services**

A team of designers, contractors, and vendors take a project from a client's desire to a completed, move-in, ready-to-use building. The client deals only with one person or firm, agreeing to the terms and costs of the total project. This is a very efficient and cost-effective way of working. All the client needs to do is turn the key and open the door.

### **Underground Habitation Design**

Because the temperature underground is a constant 55 degrees Fahrenheit, underground space has become a practical and appropriate area for living and working. Many computer centers, for example, are located underground. This field of designers is relatively underdeveloped.

### **Universal Design**

Universal design is not just designing for the physically handicapped; it is intended to be useful for all. Spaces are often designed for multiple purposes, so they can function for many different people and reasons. Universal design is becoming standard among many building specifications today to ensure that the structure is user-friendly and convenient for all.

### **Vacation Home Design**

Second homes are big business, but they often must be designed as turnkey projects because the clients are involved elsewhere. This market is growing. For some clients, the vacation home is a place to indulge in an opulence they would not feel comfortable expressing in other areas of their lives.

### **Vastu**

Vastu is an ancient practice from India that has been in use for over 1,000 years. The objective is to achieve harmony, maximize the flow of energy, and make the home a

retreat where people can recuperate from the stresses of the world. This uses a systematic approach to building and design. Practitioners believe that people's homes play an important part in helping them achieve their purpose and goals in life.

### **Wallcovering Design**

Many interior designers design wallcoverings, drawing on their expertise with color, pattern direction, and scale. The field demands production and design expertise as well as an understanding of current trends.

### **Wall Finishes**

Marbling, fresco, and textured finishes—some of which have not been seen for centuries—are again in demand. This specialty is no longer limited to historic restoration work; commercial and residential clients also request novel wall finishes.

### **Wayfinding**

Wayfinding involves signage, but also many other aspects of the interior design discipline. It means designing a space, building, or complex that is easy for people to move around in. Finding one's way becomes natural rather than complicated and confusing. This specialty first became popular in hospitals, but it is now relevant to almost every large complex. People want to be able to find the things they are interested in easily, whether on a campus, in a conference center or hotel, or in any other complex.

### **Window Treatment Design**

Draperies, shades, louver drapes, valances, cornices, and a broad spectrum of other treatments make up this specialty. Insulation, ventilation, light control, and energy conservation are all part of the specialty of today's window treatment design.

## **FINDING YOUR PLACE**

With a plan, effort, and research, all designers have a reasonable chance to find their career niche within design—whether that means a general practice, specialized work, or working independently or in a firm.

Using this book, you will learn virtually everything you need to know to design your own successful independent career. That said, I admit I have a bias against starting to work independently too soon: It can be very risky, and for that reason, I strongly discourage it. If you want to give yourself the best chance for success in your career, find someone whose work you admire. Find a mentor and learn everything you can from that person. That usually means going into an established firm. But before you invest several years of your life in a firm, invest some time in learning as much as you can about the firm and its principals. Chances are that as a new member of the company, you will not be able to change it to suit yourself; you will have to work the way of the firm.

Find out exactly what kind of work the firm does. Look at its work in trade and design press magazines and books. Talk to the firm's clients; ask staff or contractors who have worked with the firm about the projects they worked on. And approach the firm directly. You do not have to say why you are interested in the firm; you can merely say you would like the opportunity to see more of their work because you admire it. Most design firms are proud of their work and will be happy to show and tell you about their projects. Visiting their installations will tell you quite a lot about the quality of the firm.

Find out as much as you can about the principals within the company—especially the person you have identified as the one you would like to have as your mentor. Know their educational and business backgrounds. Be familiar with their career histories: Where did they start, and how long has it taken them to reach their present status? That information may rest with former employers, clients, and other designers.

An interior design firm works as a team. When selecting a new job relationship, as when choosing a marriage partner, it is important to have a sense of how well the team works. You are going to spend a lot of time with these people, and you are going to share many different experiences and pressures. You want to learn as much as you can to ensure that you will be a complementary member of the team.

If you put the same care into planning your future as you put into your interior designs, you will most likely get what you want from your career. No one can expect to have the perfect job handed to them on a platter. Instead, plan for, plot, and go after the job you want and really should have. Do it in a professional manner, and you will find your place. You will probably also be successful.

I have conducted many seminars in which small groups of designers gather to define their best abilities and to examine what it will take to ensure that they can perform at their highest level. The group synergy, combined with the guidance of a business coach, has helped many individuals attain their twin goals of greater job satisfaction and higher profits.

After one of my lectures, a senior student at the Philadelphia Textile School asked for advice on how to get a job in textile arts in her home state of Colorado. She had found that most of the textile design positions were in the northeastern United States, around New York and Philadelphia. I asked what she meant by “no jobs.” Wasn't there even one company?

Yes, she admitted, there was one firm specializing in fabrics for men's and women's ready-to-wear clothing, but she did not know much about them other than that they had a large factory, had been in the same location a number of years, and had said they had no openings when she had inquired.

The young woman's father was in insurance, so I pointed out that he would know a lot of people in the community and could find out about the major people in that firm—including their educational and work backgrounds. “You want to know about their families,” I counseled, “whether they live within the community or commute from a distance—anything you can find out about how these people relate to this company.”

I suggested that she use her Saturdays and free days to visit apparel specialty stores and department stores in big cities of neighboring states to research this firm. I told her she could talk to the buyers about how they felt about the fabrics made by that particular textile company, and she should create an outline of appropriate questions for every buyer: whether they liked the quality, which colors sold better, which year the line was best. I told her it would take about six months to accumulate the information she needed to put into a professional presentation.

After this was completed, I suggested that she test the presentation, polish it, refine it, and ask her professors to review it. Then, at my urging, she called the president of the firm when she went home for Christmas vacation. She told him she had spent six months doing research on his company, after which she asked for an appointment to review it with him. She got the appointment. He was surprised at her interest in his firm, and he was intrigued by some of the comments she made, which differed from what he had heard from his staff and marketing people. It is hard to know just what impressed him most, but the main thing is that he was impressed by the attention she had given his company. She told him of her textile arts training and that she intended to move back to Colorado and would like to work in his company.

Her tangible interest in his firm convinced the president that he wanted her to work with them. He did not know which job he was going to give her, but she was hired. He told her to come back in June, and he would have something for her then.

## MEASURES OF SUCCESS

How is success measured in the interior design profession? Is a successful interior designer one whose name appears frequently in newspaper columns and in the popular design press? Or is a successful designer one who has achieved a reliable, steady income and some continuing creative satisfaction?

Public success and personal satisfaction go hand in hand. You do not have to be an Elsie de Wolfe or a Syrie Maugham to be successful today, because there are opportunities and alternatives open to you that did not exist when these two grande dames of the industry started their businesses on chutzpah, contacts, and not much else.

The truth is that many designers we see as successful do not take success for granted. In researching *Profitable Career Options for Designers* (1985), I discovered that successful people are always looking ahead to the next project or projects and that their favorite project is the one they are working on at the moment.

Being an interior designer today means making choices, developing an area of expertise, and being receptive to change. This is the mentality of successful designers. They are always looking for ways to improve. None of us should say, "There is only one correct solution, and it is mine." We should go out and find two or three or even a hundred ways of approaching a problem and use the one we feel best answers a client's needs.



Expect and plan for change. Designers are very creative people, and creative people need change. Most designers find they need to change the way they work in some major way at least every five to seven years because they have become bored. When they make these changes, their creativity rises, their excitement is fired up again, and they bring a higher level of performance to the field.

Many designers, successful in running their own businesses, find administration and management not their thing. They know they love to design, work with clients, and sell products. These designers find companies they can associate with in which they have the opportunity to be just designers. It is amazing to see how happy this makes them. Running a business requires you to create opportunities for other people, but it does not often allow for creativity, which is most important to the designer's creative spirit. Starting a business or having your own business may not be something you want to do.

It is not unusual or unexpected for designers to become bored with their work. Profitable businesses develop a good product and then repeat it. This is fine for a while, but as a creative person, you will understandably want to do something else eventually. There are ways to change your career and maintain your joy in your work, as well as to keep your business profitable. Sometimes, you will be able to redesign your career without outside help, but for the most part, it is better to do this as part of a group, with a business consultant as a coach.

## **ETHICS AND STANDARDS**

When we speak of ethics, we quickly look at legal issues. Ethics are the things we cannot see or do as part of our general business practice. Ethics also includes issues of standards. Ethics and standards comprise an issue we must consider in every space we design. Many of us believe that if spaces are designed to be healthy, we will not use the particular materials that make the space unhealthy. There may be nothing wrong with the materials because they are being sold everywhere, but we do not believe they are appropriate based on professional standards and ethics.

We are seeing much more specialization in today's design world. Whether the designer is new to the field or has been in the business for many years, specialists have much more training and expertise in their particular area. Through technology, designers and clients can work with specialists, from all over the world. This brings a wonderful level of design, but does require more extensive coordination. So the position of "design coordinator" becomes key. Design coordinators must know how to get the best out of designers and clients.

The field demands a much higher level of expertise than ever before.