



# Interior Design and Decoration

By Stanley Abercrombie, Sherrill Whiton

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With the Sixth Edition of *Interior Design and Decoration*, Stanley Abercrombie continues the revival of this time-tested and well-respected text—first published in 1937—to make it meet the needs of today’s teachers and students. In his second revision of Sherrill Whiton’s classic text, Abercrombie presents the full history of interior design—during all periods and throughout all regions—in a manner that facilitates easy comparisons among different times, places, and styles.

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## **Editorial Review**

From the Back Cover

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## **Sherrill Whiton and his Book**

It has been said that the modern profession of interior design was established by Edith Wharton and Elsie de Wolfe. It might also be said that the modern discipline of interior design was established by Frank Alvah Parsons, for whom the Parsons School of Design was named, and Sherrill Whiton. (In both cases, admittedly, the claims oversimplify a complex history.)

Augustus Sherrill Whiton, the author of the original text on which the present book is based, was the founder and first president of the New York School of Interior Design. One might imagine that his text had been developed for the school, but the genesis of the text actually preceded the school (and, by three years, Parsons's own textbook, now long out of print). Whiton was born in New York in 1887, the son of Louis Claude Whiton, a lawyer, and the former Harriet Bell. He earned a degree in architecture at Columbia University, then went to Paris for the study at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts that was every architecture students goal at the time. While in Paris, he married Claire Henriette Bouché. Her family was French, but had moved to New York in the 1870s, and Claire's father, Henri Bouché, was a designer employed by Tiffany & Co.

Back in New York and finding the field of architecture in a slow period, Whiton conceived and wrote a series of Home Study Catalogues in the Decorative Arts. The first catalogue was published in 1916 and was followed by several others. During the next years, Whiton's home study readers frequently stopped at his office on East 40th Street, many of them hoping to find classes being taught there. Finally, in 1924, Whiton opened what was at first called the New York School of Interior Decoration. Its first home was in a building on the southwest corner of Madison Avenue and 57th Street, where the IBM headquarters now stands.

The home study manuals were assembled in book form and published by Lippincott in 1937 as *Elements of Interior Decoration*. The book was reissued in 1944. New editions in 1951, 1957, and 1963 were retitled *Elements of interior Design and Decoration*, the last of these being published after Whiton's death in 1961. Whiton was succeeded as both the director of the school and the reviser of the textbook by his son, Sherrill ("Pete") Whiton, Jr. After the latter's early and sudden death in 1972, his revision, titled simply *Interior Design and Decoration*, was also published posthumously. In the late 1980s, Arthur Satz, then president of the New York School of Interior Design, and design writer Nick Polites began a thorough revision, which was to be based on new chapters contributed by a variety of scholarly experts, but that work was never completed.

Preparing the present revision has brought heightened respect for Sherrill Whiton's pioneering accomplishment, and it is presented with admiration and gratitude for his work. I also thank the late architect and author Paul Heyer, who, while president of the New York School of Interior Design, first suggested that I undertake the book's revision, and Inge Heckel, Paul's successor, who has been an enthusiastic advocate for the project. Among the many scholars whose ideas I have depended upon are Professor Jody Brotherston of Louisiana Tech University, who helped substantially with the chapter on Spanish design, and Dr. David G. De Long of the University of Pennsylvania, who suggested corrections and clarifications for the first five chapters. Later chapters were reviewed by Mary Ann Beecher, Iowa State University; Denise Bertoncino, University of Arkansas; Theodore Drab, University of Oklahoma; Victoria Brinn Feinberg, CSU at Northridge; Abe Kadushin, Eastern Michigan University; Nancy Kwallek, University of Texas, Austin; James Landis, International Academy of Merchandising Design; Maureen Mitton, University of Wisconsin at Stout; Christine Myers, University of Arkansas; Luann Nissen, University of Nevada, Reno; Sharran Parkinson, Ohio University; Nicholas Politis, Fashion Institute of Technology, New York; Susan Ray-Degges, North Dakota State University; Karen Rutherford, Indiana State University; Margaret Segalla, Brooks College, California; Ludwig Villasi, Kansas State; and Crystal Weaver, Savannah College of Art and Design.

At Prentice Hall, I thank publisher Bud Therien, who gave his support to Interior Design as fine art; assistant editor Kimberly Chastain, who has been patient and helpful; Gerald Lombardi, whose fearless (and sometimes ferocious!) suggestions for cutting brought the book down to size; Karen Pugliano, tireless picture researcher who searched far and wide to find the wanted illustration at every point; and Louise Rothman, who somehow kept track of all of the pieces and saw the book through the production process. I am particularly grateful to photographer Peter Paige, Upper Saddle River, NJ, and the Chicago photography studio of Hedrich-Blessing for their skill and generosity.

## **To the Instructor: How the Book Has Been Changed**

In many schools of interior design, Sherrill Whiton's book has been known for generations as "the bible," and tampering with the bible, I realize, is heresy. Trying to avert the academic equivalent of being burned at the stake, therefore, I would like to explain what changes have been made.

### **Covering the Years Between 1974 and 2000**

With a quarter century having passed since the Whiton book was last readied for publication, it is obvious that new material was needed to cover the interior design developments of that period. Those developments have been many. Stylistically, they include neo-ornamentalism, postmodernism, and deconstructionism, to name only three. Technically, they include new composite materials, new acoustic controls, and new lighting types. The profession itself has new organizations, new certification laws, and new developments in design school accreditation. And the practicing designer faces new fire-safety and abrasion-resistance requirements for furniture and fabrics, new accommodations for universal access, and new issues of environmentalism. This revision attempts to cover all these developments and more.

### **Reorganizing the Material**

Another change is that the contents are being presented in a different order. In previous editions of the Whiton book, two long sections, "Period Decoration and Furniture" and "Contemporary Design," together comprising more than two-thirds of the book, chronologically related the history of interior design from antiquity to the present, with the last chapter of the first section giving separately the history of painting and sculpture, retracing the chronology. The sections that followed, "The Basic Interior" and "Selection, Arrangement, and Harmony" (this last section divided in the 1974 edition into "Design Materials and

Accessories," and "Interior Planning") gave detailed information about the component materials and techniques developed during that history. In the present edition, the histories of interior design and the fine arts are given together, and the information about materials and techniques has been integrated with those histories, featured along with the accounts of the periods when they were first developed or became important.

A final chapter in the 1974 edition, "SocioPsychological Aspects of Interior Design," has been omitted, even its author, my respected colleague Ann Ferebee, now considering it outdated. That does not mean, of course, that interior design does not continue to have social and psychological implications, and references to those implications will be found throughout the book.

The organization of the various chapters necessarily varies from one to another, but some attempt has been made at standardization. Chapters generally begin with some consideration of design determinants. Sometimes, as in the case of Egypt, these determinants are predominantly geographical; often, as in the case of India, they are primarily religious; and, increasingly as we approach modern times, they are technological. Also near the beginning of each chapter is a historical summary outlining key periods, dynasties, rulers, or events. After these sketches of design determinants and chronologies, artistic accomplishments are reviewed. In most cases, these are in the order of decreasing scale—architecture first, then interior design, then furniture design, and finally decorative arts and decorative details. A summarizing review of common characteristics closes each chapter.

## **Broadening the Scope**

The scope of Whiton's original text focused on design in the Western tradition, and that focus still remains. Some enlargements of sections within that tradition have been made, however, and some further ventures into cultures outside that tradition. For example, descriptions of the design of Crete and Persia, each formerly limited to a paragraph between Whiton's chapters on Egypt and Greece, have now been expanded. A former section titled "Miscellaneous Styles and Arts" has been broken apart, its major components now enlarged and placed chronologically within the world picture, resulting in, for example, new chapters on the design of Japan, India, and Islamic design.

The motivation for these expansions has not been a desire for "political correctness," legitimate as that may be, but a realistic acknowledgment of the increasing internationalism of today's interior design practice and of today's interior design. The designer of the coming decades will want to be prepared to work globally and will want a broad knowledge of the styles and techniques of many different times, locations, and civilizations.

## **Becoming More Visual**

In a textbook on interior design and the decorative arts, a picture may be worth much more than a thousand words. In this revision, the number of color images has been greatly increased, and those images have been distributed more evenly throughout the book. Among the black and white illustrations, the meticulous line drawings by Gilbert Werle, a f...

## **Users Review**

**From reader reviews:**

**George Green:**

Nowadays reading books be than want or need but also get a life style. This reading routine give you lot of

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