

# Professionalization Process of Interior Design

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**Abstract**—Interior design, whether it is professional or non-professional, remains an unavoidable part of human life, which is closely linked with human life, but also has closely association with human activities in the indoor. Then what changes have happened to the place where people live in? This paper draws forth the relevant factors of the development process of interior design by means of the research of the historical context of interior design.

**Keywords**—interior decoration; female designers; interior design; professional training colleges and universities

## I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of “design” in the West dated from the Renaissance, which mainly referred to the pattern of manifestation of visual arts, such as preliminary sketch and painting. Francesco Lancillotti, a 15th century theorist, summed up the four elements of painting: design, color, composition and creation. Cennini said that the foundation of painting derived from design, and Vasari called “creation” and “design” the father and mother of “all arts”.... Interior design and decoration not only satisfy the requirements of visual arts, but also maintain the rationality of technology and materials, and make up color tune coordination with space in addition to paying attention to aesthetic value. Interior design remains an interdisciplinary subject in the 20th century, which is closely linked with human life and concerns to the designs in different fields. Meanwhile, the professionalization process of interior design is slower than other design fields. Prior to becoming an independent profession, it was replaced by architects, carpenters, artists and household-goods retailers, and the predecessor of interior design was interior decoration, which was only after World War II that it was rectified the name.

## II. EARLY PROFESSIONAL PROCESS OF INTERIOR DESIGN

### A. Historical Course of Interior Decoration Industry

From the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century, the interior styles in Europe are very different. The arts and handicraft movement, the aesthetic movement, the revival of Queen Anne and the art nouveau are all unstoppable. The decorative world in the late 19th century was still dominated by male architects or artists. In 1880, the British handicraft movement guided women to participate in design, and an increasing number of people participated in interior design and decoration. Middle-class women had a

platform to display their design ability because they had received sound education before, and set about creating and designing a domestic environment that was suitable for their hobbies. Thanks to these conditions, the interior decoration industry had gradually developed. Unique aesthetics and exquisite touch are the unique essence of women.

On the eve of World War I, professional decorators merged in a true sense, and the war resulted in a large number of middle-class women losing their jobs and income. In the context of social economic recession, a large number of people chose to leave their employment and return to their families. They were educated and made great efforts to get rid of the constraint of gender and hierarchy. Along with industrial progress, it also promoted the emancipation of women, which provided them with a special domain - family environment. Women are naturally connected with their families, which are the most familiar places for people. Family environment is different from the openness of public space, which extremely reflects the private space of individuals and families. In the traditional values, the focus of the life of women is family, and most of their activities are mainly concentrated in the family's living space. Therefore, the participation of women in interior design activities is a matter of course.

### B. Professionalization Steps of Interior Decoration

The job of early interior designer was to select wall colors, furniture, other curtains and other decorations for customers, which were more suitable for customers' living environment. These occupations asked for practitioners to possess a wealth of professional knowledge and experience, and to possess a certain aesthetics and high taste. Early interior designers were separated from other art-related industries, such as craftsmen, artists and furniture distributors. Their previous skills had laid a solid foundation for them to become interior designers. The official agency of decoration industry has been widely recognized by the public through the establishment of industry organizations, registration, professional training and establishment of industry standards. It not only establishes trust between designers and customers, but also modifies the concept of interior design practitioners: from focusing on design taste and personality to focusing on technology and system, thereby gradually establishing the authority of interior design profession.

Professional training is an important step in the professionalization of decoration industry. Professional

decorators can choose something for customers and put forward aesthetic suggestions to lead the trend, and also design dwelling space that is suitable for their household lifestyle. They also boost their professionalism and rich practical experience through continuous practice. In the early 19th century, the United States established a professional artistic designing school, which was founded in the middle of the 19th century. All designs were male-dominated and not opened to women. In 1904, Frank Alvah Parsons (1866-1930), an American design educator, first opened an interior decoration course at the New York College of Art and Applied Arts. In 1924, Sherrill Whiton (1887-1961) opened the New York Interior School and composed the relevant decorative teaching program. A large number of decorators adopted the apprenticeship model of apprenticeship system, which was the same as the traditional education model of craftsmen, architects, lawyers and so on.

Establishing industry organization is another important step for the professionalization of interior design. This measure gives play to a powerful strength in promoting the development of the industry. Early interior design industry associations mainly focused on local characteristics, and continued to develop and participated in the participation and management of all levels. In 1925, the decorative art exhibition in Paris produced astonishing results in Europe and the United States. American department stores became the show windows to display the modern design, which promoted public recognition about modern design and stimulated people's consumption. In the 1920s and 1930s, a large number of decoration industry organizations were established, such as the American association of decorative artists and craftsmen in 1928. The American association of interior designer was founded in 1931 and renamed as the association of interior designer. In 1922, McLaren and Harold Eberlein (1875-1942) co-authored the course plan of

decorative courses. The four-year course of this semester provided the necessary professional knowledge for interior designers. In 1929, McLaren also published a book on the outline of professional career of women - successful practice guideline, where she advocated adopting art schools to provide decorative courses. In the late 1930s, she put forward the importance of combining teaching with practice, and actively encouraged education and teaching to cooperate closely with the association of decorator.

### C. Appearance of Interior Decorator

Since the British art and craft movement in 1880, the environmental design team of residential housings has been dominated by the middle class. Women who have received cultural edification have their own distinctive opinions on interior design. The creation of domestic environment has gradually become a kind of trend, and interior design has gradually developed and expanded under the promotion of industry association. Due to their advantages in dwelling space, the design of decoration circles in this period was mainly female designers. Nancy Deke McClelland, the first generation of American interior decorator, had become an important figure in promoting the professionalization of interior decoration. She compiled decoration courses in 1922, which provided the requisite knowledge framework for decorators in these four-year professional courses, including building walls, windows, lighting, colors, and carpets and so on.

Caroline De Wolf was the first interior decorator, and before that she was an actress. Simple interior decoration style, such as Victorian style guest rooms with white paint, bright colors and printed cotton cloth, fashionable and simple style, was praised by guests and invited to design. High-taste Residence written by her has become an influential book in the interior design industry.



Fig. 1. Interior design works of Caroline De Wolf.

From the early 20th century to the 1960s, interior design reached its peak. During this period, there were a large number of excellent female designers, whose design expressed conspicuous modernist characteristics. Leading figures include Eileen Gray, Charlotte Perriand and Ray Eames. As shown in "Table I". These women designers

broke the traditional design thought and became the mainstay of interior design and architectural design at that time. At the same time, the decoration circles are also booming.

**TABLE I. OUTSTANDING FEMALE DESIGNERS**

<b>Figures</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Years</b>	<b>Profession</b>	<b>Education background</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
Nancy Deke McClelland	The United States	Late 19th century	Interior decorator		In 1922, Nancy Deke McClelland compiled the decoration course, and the four-year professional course provided the practitioner's knowledge framework for decorator.
Candace Wheeler	The United States	Late 19th century	Writer and decorator	In 1877, she founded the New York art decoration society.	As the earliest professional woman in the United States, she published Interior Decoration as a Female Occupation.
Elsie De Wal	The United States	Late 19th century	Interior decorator	He was an actor in his early days.	The founder of American interior decoration
Eileen Gray	Ireland	1878-1976	Interior decorator	London Slade school of art	Lota apartment, Paris
Charlotte Perlihon	France	1903-1999	Furniture designer		Furniture design partner of Corbusier
Lily Reich	Germany	1885-1947	Furniture designer, interior decorator		Furniture design partner of Mies, and one of the women faculty in Bauhaus
Annie Albers	German born American	1899-1994	Textile designer, writer and printmaking worker		Graduated from Bauhaus College and won many awards and five honorary doctorat degrees, her husband, Joseph Albers, is a student and teacher in Bauhaus.

### III. INTERIOR DESIGNERS

#### A. Interior Decoration under the Intervention of Modernism

Modernist ideology developed and expanded in all aspects in the 20th century, from the arts and crafts movement, the new art movement to the modernist movement. The society's attitude towards machine mass production has changed from rejection to acceptance after a difficult journey. The process of industrialization has made many craftsmen, artists, architects and designers get rid of the traditional constraints and begin to pay attention to the functionality and popularity of design.

The professionalization of interior decoration is based on professional skill and service. Modernist style appeared in the architecture and interior design industry in the 1920s. As a result, interior design in the 1950s was rooted in modernist ideals and put forward formal aesthetics. In 1908, Austrian architect Luce proposed that "decoration is evil" that referred to the functionalism of architecture and the rejection of architectural decoration, which was the basic idea of modernist design concept. The unique educational philosophy of Bauhaus, the founder of modern design college, also contains the idea and thought of modernist architecture. The concepts of modernism, modern and modernity are the mechanism of male cultural creation and manipulation. After World War II, interior design catered to the tastes of the rich by creating luxury. At the same time, the design concept that gave priority to decoration for women in the 19th century gradually came to be understood

as the characteristics of amateurism and family. Modernism architects are the tendency of social development, and the power of women cannot compete with men in the field of architecture.

Modernism in the 1950s broke the knowledge system of the past and challenged the status of interior decoration. Modernist architects took over the design of commercial and modern office space, completed the design of open office space in the office, which had a great impact on the interior design circle. With the boost of industry and media, interior decoration was gradually replaced by interior design. For example, in 1931, the American association of interior decoration changed its name to interior design department in the 1970s, the magazine "interior design and decoration", founded in 1937, was renamed as "interior design" in the 1950s, and the magazine "interior decoration" was renamed as "interior design" in 1940. With the influx of a large number of architects, the post-war interior design had close correlation with architecture circle. Due to the continuous emergence of vocational training schools, most universities in the United States offered interior design courses in the 1970s.

After the war, attention was paid to the interior design of common residence, the key word of American interior design was "contemporariness", and Britain did the same thing in the end. At this time, "contemporariness" referred to the open arrangement. By the 1950s, "modern open residence has captured the hearts of Americans". Open residence has become very flexible and inexpensive, and the basic theory of house has begun to uphold expandability rather than

impermeability. In Europe, residential space is very limited, and the open arrangement provides a sense of ventilation, while in the United States with sufficient space, the kitchens and dining rooms are connected to the drawing rooms (See "Fig. 2").



Fig. 2. SOM Office Building.

### B. Case Analysis of Modernism

Le Corbusier serves as an architect with most influences and creative spirits in the 20th century, who advocated mechanical aesthetics. Modern architecture should satisfy the demands of modern democratic society and emphasize the sense of order in spatial arrangement. Le Corbusier has designed a large number of houses throughout his life. The New Spiritual Hall is an anti-mainstream pioneer residential experiment for Le Corbusier, which has L-shaped plane, geometric shape and no any decoration, and has completely different focuses from the interior design in the 19th century (See "Fig. 3").



Fig. 3. Le Corbusier's "New Spirit Hall".

Mies van der Rohe was one of the pioneers of the modernist movement. He was influenced by the theory of Schenkel who was a German architect in the 19th century when he worked in office in Behrens. His achievement was to develop the concise style by means of probing and adopting steel frame structure and glass. This kind of style is

based on compact structure and geometric space form, abandons all additional decoration, and allows the texture of the material itself to reflect the decoration, thus enriching the space through textures and line of different materials (See "Fig. 4").



Fig. 4. Mies' German Hall.

### C. Professional Training Colleges and Universities

The Royal College of France established an architectural school at research conference in the 17th century, which marked the emergence of professional interior design and the emergence of the education and training of architects. In the early 19th century, the school was placed under the name of the College of Fine Arts in Paris, whose teaching system began to spread all over the world, and this school established its leading position in the modern architectural system. The first architectural college in the United States was founded in 1861, that is, the renowned School of Architecture of MIT. The second college of architecture in the United States is Cornell University, founded in 1865. These universities initially refused to accept girls. But in 1871, the Cornell University and University of Illinois began to accept female students. Although MIT accepted them later, the University of Pennsylvania accepted female students after World War II in 1883.

Since the 20th century, numerous art and design institutes in Europe and the United States have offered interior design courses. Bauhaus Design College, founded in 1919, was the first comprehensive design institute in Germany. Prior to the emergence of Bauhaus, the design institute focused on and laid particular stress on the teaching of artistic skills. Bauhaus' ideal was to modify the previous education model and encourage the exchange of forms and arts in all kinds. As a member of the German Manufacturers Alliance, Walter Gropius, the founder of Bauhaus, incorporated architecture, design, craftsmanship, painting and sculpture into the overall teaching system of the college. Bauhaus College established the department of architectural design and the department of interior design in 1927 and 1930 respectively. These complete disciplines made Bauhaus a fashion-forward European design school. The Ulm Design College was re-established after the end of World War II. The setting of basic courses in Bauhaus College was widely different from

that in Ulm Design College. The educational philosophy of Ulm Design College was not only regarded as the ideal idealism of young people, but also possessed intense heroism, and they had the courage to fight against the Nazi Party. The female students in the interior design project of Ulm were almost identical to the male students in the course of interior design and architecture.

**IV. CONCLUSION**

In the author's opinion, it serves as a very useful method to research the interior design and its development and changes through history for discussing the living pattern and design focus of the past and modern people. Four factors can be found to promote the development of interior design by means of discussion. The first factor is the continuous weakening of women's social status and the continuous rising of men's social status, which is a factor that leads to interior decoration turning to interior design. The inherent advantages of men in physiology determine the rationality of thinking, and there are many differences in the way of thinking and aesthetic angle between men and women. Social environment and traditional culture distinguish men and women, which results in differences between men and women in empirical world, aesthetics, and personal needs and so on. According to the following data, it can be seen that men's cerebral function is more specific, while women tend to consider many-sided things and not focus enough on one thing.

TABLE II. COMPARISON OF BRAIN FUNCTION OF MALE AND FEMALE

	<b>Right-handed</b>	<b>Left-handed</b>	<b>Balancer of left and right hand</b>
Male	80%	9%	11%
Female	66%	2%	32%

The second factor is that social change drives the development of interior design. With the end of World War I, women's social status has been steadily retreating from their operating posts and turning to family work, thus reaching a certain climax of development. With the end of World War II, mechanization swarmed into people's lives on a large scale, so that a majority of designers no longer pandered to the taste of the rich class to design some extravagant lifestyle, but continuously innovated thinking in interior design.

The third factor is the criticism of interior decoration by the intervention of modernism. Whether it is Luce who first proposed decoration as evil, or the negation of decoration by Cobusier and some modernist masters, they all had played a role in promoting interior design.

The fourth factor is the continuous development of education system, which also elevates the development of interior design. The emergence of Bauhaus has broken the previous design institute's features that lay the emphasis on the teaching of artistic skills, and on the exchange and innovation of shape and art. Very few female students have also disavowed the amateurism and feminization feature of decoration to a certain degree, which makes interior design more partial to rationality and creative power, which can be

shown from the works of the masters of modernism. Therefore, the author deems that the above four factors drive the development history of interior design.

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