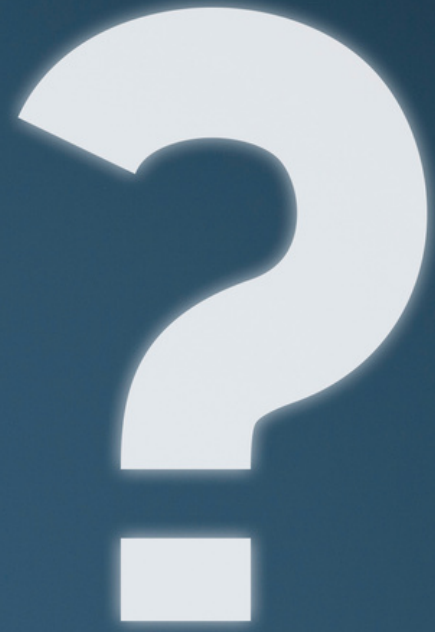

Understanding Services in
**INTERIOR
DESIGN**





Misconceptions are rife

Having departed the corporate design world, and upon entering the arena of running my own business (meeting the home-owning public)... I have discovered that amongst the general population, there are a lot of misconceptions and misunderstandings around Interior Design "and what that is, or means" to the average person (at least in the little piece of England that I call home).

When socially meeting new people and revealing my profession, the conversation often probes deeper as my partner-in-conversation works to uncover what service an Interior Designer provides. It seems, a lot of people have a misconception that Interior Design begins and ends with picking pillows and choosing paint colours at WAY too high a price. Never knowing how in-depth a conversation they are looking to have on this, I usually sweep a quick response off and we brush by the nuances of Interior Design and leave it for clients who are actually invested in design services. But, my less polite self really wants the opportunity to "take them to Church" when I get flippant comments about being an expert in perfectly karate chopped cushions. What the less informed don't know is that there is so much more to what Interior Design encompasses than the final touch of a puffed up pillow!

Interior Design is just a header or "wrapper" that covers many different subtitles and specialties. These specialisms can be as nuanced as solely designing window treatments or bathrooms... to as varied as full construction drawings and structural alterations of an entire building, taking the design all the way through to a fully furnished turnkey result.



As someone who has emigrated from outside the UK, my observation is that Interior Design is a service that is much newer to the "middle class population", than it is to other Western countries.

Coming from North America (Canada to be specific), Interior Design is something that I have been familiar with as a service from a very early age. My Mom (who was a primary school teacher) had even considered becoming an Interior Designer when she was a young person. She has a nice sense of pattern and furniture arrangement, but because she lacked formal training, she didn't have the confidence in her decisions to go ahead without the support of a design professional. When my parents built their dream house; she sought the advice of an Interior Designer to initiate her design ambitions. In doing so, I saw first-hand what the Interior Design profession offered clients and the many services they can hold expertise in.

Interior Design in Canada, and in particular within my home province of Ontario is a very well-established profession which is strictly regulated by the government. I feel I can hear you say "What could be regulated about fluffing pillows and picking paint colours". I'm rolling my eyes, but I'll try not to take offence and endeavour to take this opportunity to hash out the specialisms within the generic term of Interior Design.

Over the course of this little article, let's talk about Interior Architecture, Interior Design, Interior Decorating and Interior Styling.

Confusion around Interior Design exists partly because terms can have double meanings in the U.K. To begin with, a Decorator in England is usually a trade person who executes wall repair, residential painting and perhaps some wallpapering services. However, the term "Interior Decorator" refers to a service whereby someone pulls together a schematic design and colour scheme and furnishes a room cohesively. Because "Decorator" is a common term with a varied definition ...the term referring to an Interior Decorator has crossed over into "Interior stylist" which has bridged yet another crossover term, thus confusing what it means when someone refers to a stylist.

So here is our Interior Design clarification dilemma. Because there is no distinguishing verbiage, and an overlap of service terms, there is ongoing confusion within the general public. When dealing with a large Corporate Interior Design studio these specificities may matter less because there will undoubtedly be someone within the organization that covers all nuances. But, with a smaller studio it would be easier for everyone if the industry had more clarity - a public service announcement of sorts.

To date, the default has been to wrap all of these uncertainties into one big Interior Design label, neatly placing the areas of confusion into one banner, and not establishing a clear definition of what each service provides, and where one begins and another one ends.

Not by coincidence, this has had a direct knock-on effect when it comes to pricing – to which there is a very broad scale. *That's perhaps a subject for a different blog.*

Why isn't it clear?

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Interior Decorator



So let's dive into some sub-headers and start in more detail with Interior Decorating. Interior Decorating is about the surface decoration. It takes the physical room as it is and works with fabric, lighting, colour, texture and pattern to enhance and develop a cohesive look. In this context an Interior Decorator is someone who is comfortable with colour theory (light, colour, texture, pattern, line, proportion, rhythm, harmony, balance, etc.), working with hues to manipulate the cast of light from natural or unnatural sources for the right tone or colour value in a space. An Interior Décor services will provide you with some inspiration, paint colours, furnishings and also typically advise on window treatments and soft accessories. This service brings together a unified statement from the walls through to furniture, accent rugs and pillows. Interior Décor is about dressing an existing space, but crucially, not modifying the room itself. Interior Decorators are generally less technically able than Interior Designers and do not get involved with bespoke furniture, kitchen or bathroom design. As an analogy, **this type of design work is like a make-up artist and not a plastic surgeon.** A make-up artist picks the right foundation for your skin tone and adds blush to contour your cheeks and lipstick to enhance your lips. They are **looking to accentuate your existing features and to make the most of the best assets you have.** With a make-up artist, your face is physically unchanged, but you look radiant, fresh, alive. You are pulled together. This is the task of Interior Decorating.

Interiors Stylist

To take this analogy one step further, Interior Styling is like fashion styling. A fashion stylist sees an average dress which perhaps lacks definition or personality, and sees potential. A fashion stylist knows what accessories they need to add (a great pair of earrings, a belt, high heels and a handbag) to further enhance the basic dressings into something outstanding.

In Interiors, the work is fairly quick, it just takes experience and a good eye to assemble and place the right items. Stylists need to see the potential of the existing furnishings and make them better. A few accents and PRESTO! they've curated the style and finished off the look with savoir faire. In Interior Design, interior styling is all about the details. It's the last flourish that takes a room from good to great. The decorative touches are flexible and removable, easy to update with each season. This specialty is about adding panache to tie the room together. It is the arrangement of decorative items to accentuate a good ensemble.

Interior Stylist are often masters of proportion and composition, building beautiful table settings, mantle scapes, picture arrangements, floral accents and bookcase display. Interior Stylists frequently work for Interiors magazines or sometimes for clients seeking help to sell a home for the best financial return. Interior Stylists sometimes offer seasonal services to homeowners who want to make their home more festive at special occasions (Christmas, Easter or Halloween). Interior Styling is a specialism of itself, but it can also be added to full-service service Interior Design packages after the design concept is installed.



Interior Designer

Moving onto the most used term in Interiors, Interior Design. It's the go-to word for all things that pertain to updating the inside of a space, and from that perspective it makes sense because Interior Designers are hired in almost all industries to improve the interiors of just about anything (offices, hospitals, cars, retail stores, educational facilities, hospitality, jets and yachts to name but a few). There is however one key element to an Interior Design service that is essential and differentiating. **Interior Designers are interested in not only the look of a space, but it's function.**



The result of an Interior Designer's work is not strictly aesthetic and superficial. For instance, an **Interior Designer should encompass skills that look not just at how you dress a room, or how to utilise techniques to make a room feel bigger or brighter,... they should also be looking at how to make the room better and have more function.**

Interior design is about studying how you use a space and how to address the materials and layout to enhance the room for an individual or family. Interior Designers should be considering both the fixed features (character details – crown moulding, skirting board, architrave, flooring, panelling, fireplaces, built-in's) and soft features (paint, wallpaper, furnishings, area rugs, lighting) in conjunction with furniture placement and decorative arrangement to give a very considered outcome that enhances the utility and is unique to the needs of a homeowner. Designers can be hired for Micro projects; a very focused view of a single room; considering its various opportunities and challenges... or they can be more Macro; studying the potential of a group of connecting rooms and making the transitions and aesthetics between them seamless. An Interior Designer will consider the access points, lighting and furniture placement, position of electrics, space utility and transitions alongside all of the decorative and furnishing accents.

Many clients who contact an Interior Designer have the intention of doing up the entire home, but often in stages over time. In these cases, it is usually better to have an Interior designer look at the whole house to develop a considered scheme, even if the workflow will be room by room. This way the result will be wholistic and well considered. Personally, I love the Macro view of homes. This is where I really become passionate about the potential life enhancing properties that great Interior Design can offer.

INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE

Interior Designers who offer Interior Architecture services as part of their service package, are interested in how to get more from the space you already own.

Lifestyles have evolved and the small, separated spaces that are typical of older buildings do not always work for us today. Interior Designers who support the design of structural modifications want to maximize light, traffic flow, functionality and the utility of all spaces so that the square meterage is taken full advantage of and the rooms link and transition seamlessly.

Interior Designers who offer structural modifications as part of their service package consider more than just maximizing the existing, they are looking to unlock the potential of the building;

whether that be opening or closing walls, adjusting hallways and staircases, placing windows or skylights where they are missing, integrating lighting or storage, or finding ways to make a feature of a focal point. When you hire an Interior Designer for this type of service you are someone who recognizes your homes layout is not working for you, and you are willing to take on some refurbishment, and look at the house from a new perspective. This is not (normally) a single room update. All this being said; obviously your chosen designer needs to have some understanding of the structural nature of your home.

So, there you have it. Essentially there are 4 main functions under the umbrella of Interior Design. Designers can provide service in all or some of these specialisms.

Interior Architecture – Considering how to adjust the structure of your home for improved flow, unity and utility. Development of schematic possibilities through to building and structural works often requiring structural calculations and building work.

Interior Designer – Will enhance the features through both fixed feature characteristics and soft furnishings. Interior Designers have CAD design skills and comprehensively develop a space with bespoke elements. They select everything from flooring, window treatments, fabrics, upholstery, tiling, electrical, traffic flow diagrams etc.

Interior Decorator – Development of a room scheme with a specific style through the selection of wall colours, window treatments, soft furnishings and furniture

Interior Styling – The final flourish and decorative accessories that dress a room





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