

Introduction: Professionalization as a Focus in Interior Design History

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In the industrialized West, the design of the interior has been conceptualized as a domestic and amateur phenomenon, and the domestic interior has been conceptualized as a feminine realm. This introductory article aims to overcome the tendency to conflate the interior, the domestic, the amateur and the feminine in three ways. Firstly, it engages with a broad definition of the interior, encompassing professional and amateur spaces in both domestic and extra-domestic contexts. Secondly, it examines processes of professionalization which, from 1870 to 1970, moved the practice and product of interior design beyond its amateur origins. Thirdly, the association of femininity and domesticity so fundamental to Western patriarchal society is here replaced with a concern for the professional practice of women, and men, as gendered subjects. These points are addressed in turn in the three parts of the article. This article argues for analysis of the historical processes by which professional status is conferred upon the act of designing. Professionalization is an extremely useful and revealing focus for understanding the genesis, characteristics and significance of interior design and design and its histories more broadly.

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I. Contexts and Definitions: Professional/Domestic/Amateur/Feminine

‘Professionalizing Interior Design 1870–1970’ goes beyond analysis of designers, whether professional or amateur, and their work; it holds up for examination the processes of professionalization in order better to understand design, its objects, processes and histories.

A number of factors make interiors particularly difficult to analyse. They are rarely designed by one person for one person. They are composed of a wide variety of objects. Both interiors and the objects they contain are subject to continual use and modification (with a few exceptions). Historical records for interiors are difficult to retrieve, especially for the period prior to the invention of photography (and the interior is difficult to capture photographically). Interiors are not mobile, so they present particular problems of display. Above all, many interiors are private, posing additional challenges to the scholar. Notwithstanding these difficulties, the history of interior design has

proved to be an enduring concern for design reformers, interior decorators, connoisseurs, curators, design historians and scholars in a range of related disciplines.

‘Professionalization’ here refers to the process of developing an activity into a generally recognized profession, through the setting up of professional organizations, the articulation and monitoring of standards and codes of conduct, the institution of clear educational routes and means of assessment, networking and gate keeping. There exist more general senses of professionalism as the opposite of amateur, and as a paid activity, neither of which is sufficient to indicate a professionalized field. To professionalize, interior design has needed to shift its emphasis from taste to skill, and interior designers have necessarily asserted their expertise and authority, often working as advisers and practitioners.

Polemics on contemporary design by designers and design reformers, from Gottfried Semper and Christopher Dresser onwards, provide much valuable information about the history of the interior, as do advice

books published by paid interior decorators from the middle of the nineteenth century.¹ In Britain, the 1876 publication of Agnes and Rhoda Garrett's *Suggestions for House Decoration in Painting, Woodwork and Furniture* asserted the cousins' aspiration to be seen as professional decorators, just as the authorship of the book required them to adopt the mantle of expertise and authority necessary to the advice writer.² In America, Candace Wheeler's two-part article 'Interior Decoration as a Profession for Women' appeared in *The Outlook* in 1895, and her *Principles of Home Decoration with Practical Examples* was published in 1903.³ Notable among early twentieth-century examples are Elsie de Wolfe's *The House in Good Taste* (1913) and Dorothy Draper's *Decorating Is Fun! How to Be Your Own Decorator* of 1939.⁴ Following the Second World War, interior design had been approached within architectural history or from a connoisseurial perspective by historians and curators of the decorative arts, in stylistic histories of upper-class and upper-middle-class domestic interiors.

In reviewing the development of the literature of interior design for this journal, Paula Baxter noted both expansion and greater sophistication from 1961 to 1991, as spending on the home increased and formal interior design courses were set up at various levels, requiring textbooks and reference sources.⁵ Baxter acknowledged the development of design history in producing more historically contextualized accounts of designers and firms, distinguished from the existing output of decorative arts specialists.⁶ In the UK, a new prominence for design and decoration within mainstream media and popular culture, stimulated by an ill-fated property boom, increased the market for histories of styles, decorating advice and information on preservation and restoration.⁷ Some of these sources treat interior design history as a research resource for the creation of historic interiors, rather than analysing it as representative of issues of power and patronage, modernity, identity formation and the processes of professionalization. Baxter recognized the bibliographic impact of celebrity interior designers: 'individuals who had, by [1980] developed a social cachet normally reserved for fashion designers'.⁸ The origins of a connection between interior and fashion design are explored in Penny Sparke's contribution to this special issue. Not all interior designers enjoyed such status and women working in design professions experienced difficulties, addressed

in the 1986 resource book by design historians Judy Attfield and Tag Gronberg.⁹ The theme of the professionalization of interior design in relation to women's role in society and an emergent feminism builds on earlier design historical work promoting the contributions of women, both in the form of generally applicable theoretical or survey texts¹⁰ and in specific studies of professionalization.¹¹ Earlier texts to have surveyed the work of women interior designers include Isabelle Anscombe's chapter 'The Heyday of the Decorators', and Pat Kirkham, Penny Sparke and Judith B. Gura's "'A Woman's Place ...'? Women Interior Designers'.¹² Monographs profiling individual women designers including studies of, for example, Dorothy Draper, Elsie de Wolfe and Nancy Lancaster.¹³

Attention to the history of the interior since 1990 forms part of a context in which gender, consumption and domesticity have functioned as overarching themes bringing together scholars from a range of fields, including women's and gender studies, social and cultural history, the sociology of culture, area studies including American studies and others, as well as art and design history, material culture studies, ethnography and anthropology.¹⁴ This introductory article cites some of the most useful recent work. Each of the articles in this special issue makes a clear contribution to the literature of interior design by building on existing studies of professional design and holding up for detailed examination the precise *processes* by which professionalism occurred from 1870 to 1970. During this period, women practitioners played a significant role in the development of interior design beyond its amateur origins. Considered together, the articles in this special issue chart a remarkably continuous process of professionalization across three continents over a century, with 1870 presenting a cogent starting point owing to the widening influence of the design reformers of the mid-nineteenth century. As the case studies presented in this special issue show, several factors contributed to professionalization: the maturation of manufacturing industries and processes of industrialization including the division of labour and the rise of the USA as a leading manufacturing nation, the legacy and spreading influences of the nineteenth-century design reformers in promoting design, the establishment and international impact of design education initiatives such as the South Kensington system and, later, the

Bauhaus; the continuity of some Arts and Crafts movement philosophies within modernist design practice and theory; greater interdependence between member of societies organised along increasingly specialized lines, the development of psychoanalysis and its influence on marketing and advertising, to name only the most obvious aspects of modernity, modernization and Modernism relevant to professionalization in design.

The articles in this special issue were—with one exception—delivered as papers at a conference, ‘The Professionalization of Decoration, Design and the Modern Interior, 1870 to the Present’, hosted by the Modern Interiors Research Centre at Kingston University in 2006.¹⁵ The conference indicated the importance of the disappearance of boundaries for understanding the professionalization of interior design, be they between fields of design practice or nations and regions.¹⁶ John N. Turpin considered the career of Dorothy Draper as a designer of commercial interiors, rather than domestic ones, as did Bobbye Tigerman for the case of Florence Knoll.¹⁷ Sarah Teasley, Judith B. Gura and George Verghese discussed the development of the interior design profession in Japan, New York and Sydney, respectively. This special issue develops a comparative framework in case studies from three continents, including analyses of Australia, Austria-Hungary, the USA and France. The articles published here that derive from the conference are accompanied by another that brings the selection up to the 1970s. Informed by mid-nineteenth-century design reformers, who promoted the importance of good design and in so doing habilitated its producers, the period 1870–1970 saw the emergence and growth of professional interior decoration and—following a reappraisal of the role of the decorative within modernist design discourse, and greater identification with other design fields—interior design. This period shaped the assumptions with which the contemporary field still grapples, including ideas about gender, nation and relations with neighbouring fields of practice such as architecture. As practising architect, Joel Sanders, has argued of the relationship between architecture and interior design ‘... the supposed incompatibility between these two rival but nevertheless overlapping design practices evokes deeper cultural conflicts that are themselves bolstered and sustained by profound social anxieties about gender

and sexuality’.¹⁸ The historical case studies presented in this special issue address such contemporary debates, and illuminate past concerns.

Domestic/commercial/amateur/professional: an holistic definition of the interior

Understanding of the interior is largely associated with homes, perhaps because those are the spaces we furnish and inhabit most intimately. The majority of interior design for domestic environments is performed by amateurs, as consumers decorate their homes, albeit drawing on commoditized advice and using a range of designed components. The characteristics of domestic interiors are taken as symbols of the people who inhabit them. The home facilitates withdrawal from the public world; it offers a secluded place for introversion, reverie and recuperation. Sociologist Erving Goffman pointed, influentially, to the home’s role in accommodating the ‘backstage’ preparations necessary for the next public performance.¹⁹ In this way, the home may be viewed as the epitome of interiority, based around changing concepts of relative privacy, intimacy, identity and, particularly, gender.²⁰

Over the last twenty-five years, the interior has been understood within a continuing preoccupation with issues of domesticity, which has extended across the humanities into literary studies, social and cultural history, cultural geography, American studies and other area studies, art and design history and architectural history.²¹ In Britain, this academic concern informed the work of the Arts and Humanities Research Council Centre for the Study of the Domestic Interior, which placed the domestic interior at the centre of design history and related fields.²² Within the pages of this journal, a valuable body of writing has addressed the domestic interior.²³ And the journal *Home Cultures* has explored the domestic in a variety of studies more or less informed by anthropology.²⁴

While the domestic interior has been an enormously rich locus for social and cultural analysis, the interior cannot be equated solely with the domestic. Interior design is the professional activity of constructing the homes, workplaces, institutions, retail and leisure environments which constitute the insides of the built environment, and a variety of non-domestic interiors condition our experiences in public and commercial spaces. Some of the most discussed interior design exists in these contexts, such as the airplane interiors

by Gaby Schreiber (1957–63), Dorothy Draper (1958) and Kelly Hoppen (2000), the retail environments designed for Joseph by Eva Jiricna (1988) and for Jigsaw by John Pawson (1996) and Nigel Coates (1988–96) and hotel interiors designed by Philippe Starck for Ian Schrager (1988) to name but a few.²⁵ To varying degrees, non-domestic interiors such as hotel rooms and interior elements such as reclining airline seats and shop changing rooms are interesting for their peculiarly ambiguous nature as *both* public sphere and loci of interiority. The concept of a distinction between public and private spheres has been central to women's history and labour history, as discussed further below.

This special issue regards the interior as something which may be designed by architects and interior designers, or by amateurs who are often the inhabitants of the spaces they assemble. Applying an holistic definition of the interior fosters studies that illuminate the breadth and diversity of such spaces while also recognizing that certain functions, such as shelter and design for need (whatever that need may be and however successfully met) are characteristics common to all interior spaces. The authors, and editors, of the articles presented here have provided an inclusive understanding of the interior as something which encompasses diverse spaces from home, work, office, retail, entertainment and transport interiors. This broad definition is necessary to fully explore the professional activities of the practitioners examined, from embroiderers in Austria-Hungary and architects in Australia, both operating in the late nineteenth century, to haute couturiers and decorators in fin-de-siècle France and USA, to the design and organizational work of a leading interior decorator and the commercial consultancy of a leading weaver, in early- and mid-twentieth-century USA, respectively.

II. Amateur/professional: design and its professional organizations

Design history has considered professional and amateur practice by turns. Early design historians celebrated the work of key modernist professional designers and in so doing established a canon. Since then, the discipline has long been criticized—for example by Clive Dilnot, Adrian Forty, anthropologist Daniel Miller and Philip Pacey—for privileging the work of leading professional designers.²⁶ Pacey has argued instead for fuller attention to be paid to women designers, non-Western de-

sign and children's design. Partly in response to these critiques, a significant body of work has addressed amateur design.²⁷ Criticisms of an emphasis on professional design, and increasing understanding of the importance of amateur practice, do not preclude further work on professional design. That the designers to have attracted most attention from design historians have usually worked in professional contexts does not mean that professionalization has received due attention. Indeed, as Jonathan Woodham has succinctly put it:

Design-historical writing has often obscured much of the wider picture of the professional status of the designer and the role of design in industry through its general focus on successful partnerships between designers and industry.²⁸

This introductory article argues for analysis of the historical processes by which professional status is conferred upon the act of designing. In providing greater understanding of what interior design professionals do, the articles here re-evaluate the work of professional designers left out of the existing canon as a result of their practice as interior designers or their gender as women.

Interior designers actively seeking to professionalize their field or those who simply wished to work as professionals, engaged with a wider context of debates and value judgements through which work in general has been accorded professional status. The period from 1870 to 1970 was crucial to the development of professionalization across a wide spectrum of work, as professionalization is attendant upon industrialization, specialization, the division of labour and interdependence:

By the 1880s, doctors, lawyers, architects, and other practitioners of white-collar occupations had come together to organize nationwide professional associations, establish uniform standards, set qualifications for entry into their respective fields, and coordinate training.²⁹

Professionalization represents the institutionalization of trust and reputation for the benefit of practitioners, their colleagues and clients. It has been the subject of useful general analysis by sociologists and historians.³⁰ The professionalization of individual fields has been explored, to varying degrees. Following the example set by medicine, law and architecture, Jill Seddon has suggested that the 'prerequisites for the establishment of a profession', meaning specifically, a design profession, are 'recognised training; registration and regulation; the founding of professional

associations; participation in official and government bodies; and a means of indicating public recognition. [... and] the production of a recognizable body of work, identifiable with a single individual.³¹ Seddon notes that registration and dedicated qualifications have never been mandatory for practising designers, and the lack of a defined professional framework (such as might include a marriage bar, for example) worked in favour of women designers, in early twentieth-century Britain. Professional organizations have been crucial to professionalization in Britain, the USA and other countries in which they emerged, through a selective application process and monitored membership; the articulation and promotion of professional standards and codes of conduct; conferences and training events for continuing professional development and networking opportunities; publication of journals and books as a mouthpiece for organization views, a showcase for the work of members and as educational material; accreditation of education and training; the development of public education and understanding of the profession; and representation of member's interests in commercial, government and international contexts.

Early design organizations

Engineering undertook an organized and self-conscious step towards professionalization relatively early, and therefore became an exemplar for industrial design and other design fields. The example of engineering makes clear the way in which professionalization is contingent upon industrialization. In Britain, the Institution of Civil Engineers was founded in 1818 and published its charter in 1828. For the US case, Ruth Schwartz Cowan discusses the Franklin Institute as a failed predecessor to later groups such as the American Society of Civil Engineers, formed in 1852.³² The American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical and Petroleum Engineers was founded in 1871 and the American Society of Mechanical Engineers formed in 1880. The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers launched in 1963 with the merger of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers, formed in 1884 and the Institute of Radio Engineers, 1912. These and other engineering groups founded the Engineers' Council for Professional Development in 1932 to validate degrees and publish educational materials.³³ The history of engineering was broached by Edwin Layton Jr.'s *The*

Revolt of the Engineers (1971), which prompted historical studies of the various engineering sub-disciplines, and subsequently the associated professional groups have produced centennial histories.³⁴

While in some ways the professionalization of interior design was roughly contemporaneous with other design fields, interior design was comparatively late in achieving its own professional organizations. Prior to this, some general design organizations represented interior designers alongside other designers. Woodham lists some European portmanteau design organizations founded in the nineteenth century, including the Swedish Society of Industrial Design (Svenska Slödförningen), established in 1845; the Finnish Society of Crafts and Design (1879) and the Hungarian Decorative Arts Society (Magyar Iparművészeti Társulat) formed in 1885.³⁵ Longstanding debates about the role of the designer within society had emerged in Britain with the developing awareness of the output and effects of industrialization. Design reformers A. W. Pugin, John Ruskin, William Morris, and the Art Workers' Guild (founded 1884) and the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society (formed in 1888), had sought to promote design and designers. Stefan Muthesius has discussed the definition of interior design in late-nineteenth-century Munich in relation to the development of a 'vernacularized old German, Bavarian or Alpine world' with reference to the writings of Georg Hirth and Viennese reformer Jacob von Falke's *Die Kunst im Hause* of 1871.³⁶ Falke is an important figure in Rebecca Houze's analysis for this special issue, 'At the Forefront of the Newly Emerging Profession? Ethnography, Education, and the Exhibition of Women's Needlework in Austria-Hungary in the Late Nineteenth Century'. Houze interrogates hierarchies of practice by showing how a stereotypically amateur, decorative, feminine pursuit—embroidery—was a fulcrum for debates about the interior, the design profession and the negotiation of national identity in nineteenth-century Austria-Hungary.

Professionalizing design in Britain 1915–51

Following early twentieth-century professional organizations launched in Poland, the Netherlands and Denmark, representation for designers in the UK was one aim of the Design and Industries Association, which formed in 1915.³⁷ Design promotion was furthered by state involvement in the form of the British Institute of Industrial Art (1920–33)³⁸ and the Council for Arts

and Industry (CAI) which campaigned for better pay for designers following its establishment in 1933.³⁹ Elizabeth Denby's work for the CAI forms an exception to the general tendency observed by Seddon that:

The drive towards 'professionalisation' excluded women from the public face of design in that they did not achieve the highest positions within government or professional bodies, nor did they occupy gatekeeping roles within training or education.⁴⁰

The work of fostering a professional identity for designers was difficult and not entirely successful at this time, as Woodham notes:

... the widely felt uncertainty of terms commonly used in the interwar years such as 'commercial art' or 'graphic design,' 'industrial art' or 'industrial design' reflected the inability of designers to establish a clearcut professional identity or status.⁴¹

The Society of Industrial Artists was founded in 1930 and changed its name to the Society of Industrial Artists and Designers in 1960 and the Chartered Society of Designers (CSD) in 1986, following the granting of a Royal Charter in 1976 for work in establishing the profession of design.⁴² Interior designers are represented in a CSD discipline group. In 1936, the Royal Designers for Industry scheme was set up.⁴³ Following the Second World War, the professionalization of design was the object of concerted effort from government and design organizations, in Britain (the Council of Industrial Design (COID) was founded in 1944, and renamed the Design Council in 1972) and in Poland, West Germany, the USSR, France, Ireland, Sweden, Japan, Korea, Taiwan and Singapore.⁴⁴ COID promoted design during a period of restrictions imposed by rationing. Following the Second World War, COID organized its own exhibitions, notably 'Britain Can Make It' of 1946, featuring a display explaining the work of the industrial designer.⁴⁵ COID produced travelling displays and contributed to the 'Daily Herald Modern Homes Exhibition' of the same year and the 'Building Exhibition' of 1950.⁴⁶ COID's *Design* magazine appeared in 1949, with showcases of good design akin to the 'Design Index' displayed at the Design Centre in London. Contemporary design was further promoted at the 1951 Festival of Britain:

To many, the Festival represented the culmination of achievement; designers had achieved a public profile and

recognition by the state. From the perspective of many male designers with successful careers established by 1951, it could be argued that design had achieved the status of a profession.⁴⁷

Seddon notes, however, that the same did not apply to women designers and that the 'clubby' professional networks between designers and their peers and their clients 'did not appear to work to the benefit of women'.⁴⁸

Professionalizing design in the USA

British histories of design have recognized the influence of the American consultant designer of the 1930s upon ideas about design professions and designers in the UK and beyond.⁴⁹ The US industrial design profession gained recognition from the mid-1920s.⁵⁰ Following the establishment of the National Alliance of Art and Industry, the American Union of Decorative Artists and Craftsmen (AUDAC) was founded in 1928 on the basis of an interest in modern design influenced by the International Exposition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts in Paris in 1925 and an Exposition of Art in Trade staged in New York by Macy's in 1927.⁵¹ The latter was one of a series of exhibitions of modern design staged by US department stores to stimulate the acceptance of contemporary design in the US market. Following the 1929 crash, many industries suffered, but interest in industrial design was fuelled by the depression and a need to gain market advantage.⁵² In the 1920s and 1930s, US consultant designers promoted themselves and their profession simultaneously in order to secure contracts. Jeffrey L. Meikle has shown how US consultant designers such as Raymond Loewy, Walter Dorwin Teague, Henry Dreyfuss, Harold Van Doren and Norman Bel Geddes promoted industrial design as a creditable profession, beyond mere styling, in the minds of the manufacturers, potential clients and consumers.⁵³ Norman Bel Geddes was especially creative in using his public relations department to work on promoting his design expertise in oblique ways at crucial points in the procurement process, at a time when 'Admen considered industrial design as a subsidiary of advertising'.⁵⁴ AUDAC closed in 1932. The next year, the National Recovery Administration's (NRA) drive to stamp out design piracy prompted the setting up of the National Furniture Designer's Council (NFDC), but the NRA's closure

as unconstitutional in 1934 closed the NFDC too. The following year the Federal Art Project National Index of Design was launched and ran until the USA's entry into the Second World War.⁵⁵ As well as furthering public understanding of design, it provided employment for commercial designers. Also in 1935, the Works Progress Administration funded the Design Laboratory, a Bauhaus-influenced educational institution led by Gilbert Rohde. Government cuts closed the school within a year but several higher education institutions went on to develop industrial design courses in the 1930s.⁵⁶ The American Designers Institute (ADI) was founded in 1938 and produced a code of ethics intended to protect both designers and consumers.

A hiatus in the professionalization of non-military design accompanied US involvement in the Second World War. Meikle points out that 'with the post-war return of prosperity, industrial design became institutionalized'.⁵⁷ In 1951, ADI incorporated the Chicago Society of Industrial Designers (CSID) and became the Industrial Designers Institute (IDI). In 1955, the Society of Industrial Designers (SID), formed in 1944, was renamed the American Society of Industrial Design (ASID). The Industrial Design Education Association launched in 1957 to represent the interests of design educators, and merged with IDI and ASID in 1965 to produce the Industrial Designers Society of America (IDSA).⁵⁸ IDSA's first president was Henry Dreyfuss. The work of these various professional organizations in promoting the status of design as a profession was furthered in the USA by the exhibition of an elite and European-influenced model of good design at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), and in the UK through government intervention in design in the form of exhibitions and the compilation of canons of design.⁵⁹ Edgar J. Kauffman Jr. hosted a 'Conference on Industrial Design: a New Profession' in 1946 with SID. The journal and magazine literature was influential in forming both public ideas of designers and designer's own ideas of their profession; Meikle avers that 'the success of *Industrial Design* [an offshoot of *Interiors* magazine] certified that the profession had come of age'.⁶⁰

This certainty has not been shared by all fields of design, however. Ellen Mazur Thomson has examined the professionalization of graphic design in the USA prior to William Addison Dwiggins's 1922

coinage of the term 'graphic design'.⁶¹ She notes that sociological work on professions has established a tripartite process by which professional status is achieved: education, self-imposed standards and professional gate-keeping organizations. While graphic design has not achieved consensus on the education needed to work as a graphic design professional, the latter two requirements are met by the American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA), formed in 1914.⁶² Notwithstanding the combined efforts of commercial artists, typographers, printers and photographers and AIGA:

By 1920 members of graphic design associations had achieved a sense of professional solidarity and pride, but they continued to grapple with problems of status. Graphic design, like other applied and popular arts, held an ambiguous place in the American cultural hierarchy.⁶³

Since 1963, graphic designers in the USA and elsewhere have been represented by the International Council of Graphic Design Associations (ICOGRADA), a meta-organization founded in 1963. In 2003, ICOGRADA merged with the International Council for Societies of Industrial Design, founded in 1957, to form the International Design Alliance (IDA). IDA has worked with the International Federation of Interior Designers (IFI) to debate design and globalization.⁶⁴ While graphic designers today enjoy the infrastructure of professionalization, the status of the field is still in question as untrained consumers use desk-top publishing and home computing software to practice as amateur graphic designers.

Interior design professional organizations

While many of the organizations mentioned above included interior design within their remit, specific representation and professionalization for interior design followed after that of other design fields. Rowan Roenisch and Hazel Conway have suggested that this might be because interior design 'relates to so many different areas' of design, and encompasses the work of 'architects, engineers, builders, joiners, plasterers, textile designers, fine artists and furniture designers'.⁶⁵ Interior design has historically occupied a marginal place within the cultural hierarchy, as a feminized sphere of activity, playing a secondary role in relation to architecture. As discussed above this special issue applies a broad definition of interior design to facilitate examination of these interdisciplinary connections. Tracey Avery's 'Acknowledging Regional Interior

Design? Developing Design Practices for Australian Interiors, 1880–1900’ explores the intersections of architecture and interior design in a developing market. Australia’s professionalizing infrastructure is shown to have been distinct from inherited colonial models. Penny Sparke’s ‘Interior Decoration and Haute Couture: Links Between the Developments of the Two Professions in France and the USA in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries—a Historiographical Analysis’ presents a comparative examination of the development of interior design and fashion design as highly interrelated professional disciplines. In pursuing professional status, however, interior design has played down its interdisciplinarity and emphasized its specificity. In her article for this special issue, ‘Nancy Vincent McClelland (1877–1959): Professionalizing Interior Decoration in the Early Twentieth Century’, Bridget May makes clear that: ‘a formal definition of the professional that covers knowledge required and areas for service is a way to establish boundaries and jurisdictions for professional expertise and services’. Elsewhere Sparke has noted that interior design expanded as a specialized area of professional design in the period following the Second World War, along with the fashion, graphics and automotive design fields:

Rooted within the ideology of modernism, the newly defined interior design profession broke away from the older, pre-modern, discipline of interior decoration, which had been tainted by links with amateurism, femininity and domesticity, and linked itself more strongly with architecture and the language of modernity [...] By that period, most interior designers were trained first as architects and, in the spirit of the modernist idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, saw the interior as a natural extension of their work.⁶⁶

In 1931, The American Institute of Interior Decorators (AIID) was founded, and renamed the American Institute of Decorators (AID) in 1936. It was later renamed the American Institute of Interior Designers. Bridget May illuminates Nancy McClelland’s important role in achieving professional status before what we now recognize as the infrastructure of professionalization was instituted. McClelland was a founding member of AIID and its first female president (1941–4). She thereby helped to define the profession of interior design. This is remarkable given Seddon’s findings for Britain:

Analysis of women’s membership of, and participation in, the major institutions, from training through to professional

practice, has demonstrated that they did not achieve key roles in the shaping of their profession.⁶⁷

McClelland’s success in professionalizing interior design was not matched by equivalent roles for women in other design fields.

The Finnish Association of Interior Architects (SIO) was founded in 1949.⁶⁸ In 1957, the US National Society of Interior Designers (NSID) was launched. In the UK, the Interior Decorators & Designers Association was established in 1966. The Council for Interior Design Accreditation (formerly known as the Foundation for Interior Design Education Research) was founded in 1970 to accredit US interior design education. In 1972, the National Council for Interior Design Qualification (NCIDQ) was founded by AID and NSID, prior to their 1975 merger (to produce the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID)). Today, ASID members must ‘have a combination of accredited design education and/or full-time work experience and pass a two-day accreditation examination administered by the NCIDQ’.⁶⁹ Interior design education is also monitored by the Interior Design Educators Council, which makes available the Interior Design Body of Knowledge.⁷⁰ The US interior design organizations have sought legal protection for American interior design expertise: state legislation was first introduced in Alabama in 1982. The International Interior Design Association (IIDA) was founded in 1994. In 2002, the UK Interior Decorators & Designers Association merged with the UK chapter of the International Interior Design Association to form the British Interior Design Association, an associate member of the International Federation of Interior Architects & Designers (IFI). Global networking and worldwide representation for interior designers is provided by the IIDA, which was the result of a merger between the Institute of Business Designers, the International Society of Interior Designers and the Council of Federal Interior Designers in 1994.

A continuing theme in the history of the professionalization of the design disciplines is a tension between the pursuit of aesthetic excellence and the commercial imperative. In this special issue another case study of a US female practitioner who pioneered her own path of professionalization is Regina Lee Blaszczyk’s ‘Designing Synthetics, Promoting Brands: Dorothy Liebes, DuPont Fibers, and

Post-war American Interiors'. Blaszczyk considers Liebes's creative consultancy for DuPont; she employed synthetics in the manufacture of soft furnishings and textile art as a way of marketing DuPont Fibers. Liebes was successful in weaving, corporate consultancy and marketing: she marketed her expertise as an interior design tastemaker to both customers and corporations alike. Blaszczyk demonstrates that the history of interior design has some common ground with business history in exploring the relationship between the creative economy and other economic sectors.

Professionalizing interior design: national and international contexts

This account of the development of professional organizations as evidence of an increasing process of professionalization has dealt primarily with the UK and the USA, to complement and extend the geographical coverage of the following articles, which explore France, the USA, Austria-Hungary and Australia. Each of the articles shows how interior design has been fundamental in negotiating national identities. For the Western countries discussed here, building a nation encompassed both the literal construction of the built environment and building the infrastructures of industrialization and of professionalization. Here, Rebecca Houze's paper explores the anxiety about national identity in the dual nation of Austria-Hungary, in which it was hoped that education and embroidery would ameliorate social conditions. Tracey Avery's article examines an illuminating early case study of the ways in which colonial identity was considered and articulated through design practices and designed spaces in almost literally building a nation. In Australia, interior design represented an evolving nationhood both informed by and distinguished from British foundations. This case study raises questions both in terms of what was distinctive about the professionalization of interior design in the Australian case and about the globalization of design history. Bridget May and Regina Lee Blaszczyk each shed light on the ways in which interior design has developed and achieved commercial success in twentieth-century America. Both McClelland and Liebes helped to shape American taste and forged a modern aesthetic for American consumers. Penny Sparke's article, like those by Rebecca Houze and

Tracey Avery, deals with the interplay between two nations but whereas Houze's article explores the negotiation of dual nationhood, and Avery's contribution considers a colonial relation between two countries, Sparke maps this national comparison onto the relationships between two fields of design, interior design and fashion design. She presents a comparative analysis of two very different countries, one the home of couture and considered across the world as the centre of fashion and the other at the vanguard of clothing and furnishing the mass market. Sparke points to the trans-Atlantic style of 'Old French' and a shared, upper-class understanding of good taste which transcended regions. The global perspective taken by the five contributions to this special issue on the development of one design profession goes beyond the analysis of style, although of course style, too, can be subject to illuminating critiques, for example, in Daniel J. Sherman's account 'Post-Colonial Chic'.⁷¹ The articles here inform understanding of the professionalization of interior design on three continents, Europe, North America and Australia, and show convergence as well as divergence, common to many industrialized Westernized countries, inviting further study of the processes of professionalization in non-Western countries.

In recent decades, debates about the professional status of the designer have been informed by the introduction of digital photographic and design software for home computing and professional applications alike. These are seen by some to reduce the creative input of the designer while facilitating amateur involvement in design. Amateur design practice has also been showcased in popular media coverage of home design and interior decoration.⁷² At the same time, a broader realignment of relationships between the professional and the public has meant that authority and expertise are commodified and do not garner automatic credence.

Notwithstanding the sometimes divisive nature of debate channelled through the professional design organizations, they have worked to promote design. In so doing, they have formed a figure of the designer which is upheld by the professional designers it represents and consumed by the public. However successful the promotion of design and the designer is seen to have been, the figure of the designer has rarely encompassed women. Women have not found it easy to enter design practice, and this has been more acute where issues of

professionalization, and its key channel, the professional organization, are concerned. The articles in this special issue each challenge existing understanding of professionalization and provide an enriched understanding of what constitutes interior design, neither of which has always been present in existing accounts.

III. Women's work: separate spheres and the professionalization of interior design

In opening her article 'Mentioned, but Denied Significance: Women Designers and the Professionalization of Design in Britain, c. 1920–1951', Jill Seddon observes that:

It has been argued that professionalism can create a 'neutral' environment, where women escape from determinants of gender and class; in practice, however, this rarely seems to have been the case. In analysing the attitudes of the design 'profession' to its female members, categories devised in relation to 'male-stream scholarship', 'Exclusion, Pseudo-Inclusion and Alienation', have provided valuable insights. [...] the second, 'pseudo-inclusion', which 'appears to take women into account, but then marginalises them', most closely fitting those institutions associated with design.⁷³

Women entering professional fields engaged a wider system for the conferment of status and reward, geared not to them but to men. In discussing the teaching profession at the turn of the century, Samuel Haber has written 'the influx of a significant number of women into any profession sorely endangered its elevated status'.⁷⁴ Analysis of women's work not only increases our understanding of women's history, women's contributions to society and women's achievements but also increases understanding of professionalization and the professions, labour history and design history more generally. Ellen Mazur Thomson has noted: 'A comprehensive history of women in graphic design would right the old imbalance. It would also provide a more realistic view of the context in which graphic design began'.⁷⁵ The articles in this special issue challenge understanding of interior design, what it means to be a design professional, the nature of the design professions and the processes of professionalization. While these processes of professionalization have been gendered male, along with the professional sphere more generally (in the manner of the much-debated ideology of separate

spheres), women have had to negotiate a particular set of vantage points within this process, as these case studies show. It is *because* professionalization has been gendered male that the specific case studies in which women have successfully marshalled these conditions to secure a place within the design professions are important and particularly revealing. The articles in this special issue show that women have been instrumental in the processes of defining and professionalizing interior design.

Separate spheres and women interior designers

The project of writing women into histories of design and its professionalization is part of a wider project of examining women's work, which has been the pre-eminent project of women's history. Professionalization has occurred simultaneously with the growing economic and social presence of women. The woman worker has fairly consistently been, for contemporaries, a locus for anxieties about industrial society. Early histories such as Ivy Pinchbeck's *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution* (1930) 'expanded the definitions of work and industrialization, making them less male-centred'.⁷⁶ Later second-wave feminist 'compensatory history' was informed by the Marxist training that many women historians had undergone and by the ideology of separate spheres—the association of women with the private sphere of the home and of men with the public sphere of work—based on Engel's dissociation of public and private spheres of life.⁷⁷ Separate spheres has been useful both as a way of understanding an ideology of gender operating in the past, and as an analytical tool in twentieth-century history writing. Landmark analyses of separate spheres include Nancy F. Cott's *The Bonds of Womanhood: 'Women's Sphere' in New England, 1780–1835* (1977) and Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall's *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780 to 1850* (1987).⁷⁸

Although separate spheres has been a resilient theme,⁷⁹ it has, however, sometimes been drawn in a heavy-handed way, so the dichotomy has lost credibility as an analytical tool. Scholarship over the past generation has critiqued and problematized relationships between separate spheres, domestic and non-domestic, private and public spaces, including Judy McGaw's 'No Passive Victims, No Separate Spheres' and Amanda Vickery's 'From Golden Age

to Separate Spheres'.⁸⁰ Linda K. Kerber has noted that:

Historians of working women have thus had especially good reason to understand that the language of separate spheres has been a language enabling contemporaries to explain to themselves the social situation—with all its ironies and contradictions—in which they understood themselves to be living. 'Separate spheres' was a trope that hid its instrumentality even from those who employed it; in that sense it was deeply ambiguous. In the ambiguity, perhaps, lay its appeal.⁸¹

Ruth Schwartz Cowan has challenged a lingering tendency to associate women with domestic consumption by showing the home to be a site of production *and* consumption.⁸² Following in Cowan's wake are, for example, Jen Browne's study of 'Decisions in DIY: Women, Home Improvements and Advertising in Post-War Britain'. While 'women were rarely shown actually DIYing [...] which suggests that the product manufacturers behind the advertising saw women's role as primarily designers and decision-makers', 'consumption in this context represented a great deal of work'.⁸³ Although Browne is aware of the amount of work involved, the acts of shopping for materials, designing interior schemes and executing the DIY are nevertheless presented as consumption, not production.

By dispensing with the idea that some spaces are public and some are private, historians are in a better position to examine the complex negotiations of public and private in daily life. Public incursions into the home include the pervasive presence of media objects functioning as mouthpieces of the public sphere, such as television, radio, the Internet and recorded music.⁸⁴ And communications technologies such as telephone, email, Internet chat rooms and webcams make the home itself a kind of public stage. A complexified notion of relationships between public and private is of further use in understanding the history of the domestic interior when we consider the fact that a range of public interiors fulfil their purpose through aping the domestic interior, whether hotels, naval quarters, ocean liners, department store restrooms or corporate dining rooms, not to mention all the room sets staged in retail environments, trade fairs and museums.⁸⁵ Kerber, writing in 1988, notes a trend for taking the word 'sphere' literally by examining 'the physical spaces to which women were assigned, those in which they lived, and

those they chose for themselves'. For example, in examining the development of a 'public female sphere' from 1870 to 1930, Estelle Freedman has revealed that 'feminists had been most successful when they had commanded actual physical space of their own, which they could define and control'.⁸⁶ In addition to the influence women have exercised over their interiors as clients and consumers, women have shaped the built environment as architects and interior designers.⁸⁷ By examining the professional work of women in designing interiors both public and private, the articles in this special issue contribute to the project of enhancing our understanding of separate spheres and refuse a simple association of women with the home. In addition, work which explores the intersections of masculinity, sexuality and interior design has contributed greatly to the process.⁸⁸

Professionalizing domesticity

It is precisely the association of women with the domestic interior that produces such compelling material for gender analyses. As the articles in this special issue clearly show, issues of professional and amateur status in relation to interior design are intrinsically gendered, within a broader gender divide in the history of design. It was possible for women to earn a living through interior design (and interior decoration), when other design professions were closed to them. The professionalization of interior design involves the granting of professional status to an area of activity usually performed by amateurs for their domestic environments, as part of homemaking, alongside domestic cooking, childcare, cleaning and maintenance of the home. The development of an association between women and interior decoration in eighteenth-century Britain has been examined by Charles Saumarez-Smith and the extent to which interiors themselves were gendered in the nineteenth century has been discussed by Juliet Kinchin.⁸⁹ In her essay 'From Cult to Profession: Domestic Women in Search of Equality', Cheryl Robertson describes the ways in which domesticity was professionalized in the USA both through the development of home economics and the emergence of female interior design professionals.⁹⁰ Degree courses in domestic science were offered following the 1862 Morrill Act, which established state land-grant colleges, and the American Home Economics Association was founded in 1908.

The traditions of feminine accomplishments have eased the entry of women into art and design education generally, and have made interior decoration an often-recommended career for women.⁹¹

Just as facility at the piano keyboard—a traditional amateur accomplishment of middle-class females—could be transposed easily to manipulation of a typewriter keyboard as a paid office clerk, so too other feminine refinements taught in girls' schools and seminaries since the eighteenth century had applications in the workforce. For instance, training in drawing, composition, color harmony, and painting could yield gainful employment in the home-furnishing sector.⁹²

Nonetheless, subsequent employment has often been hard to secure. Seddon cites one example of Jean McIntosh (RIBA), a qualified architect who, upon applying for jobs, was turned down by 160 firms, including the Interior Design Studio at Maples of Tottenham Court Road in London, which enforced 'a definite veto against draughtswomen'.⁹³ Cheryl Robertson discusses Henrietta P. Keith, who advertised her services as an interior decorator in the same magazine for which she wrote as a staff decorator. This magazine was, incidentally, a family concern, published by Max L. Keith, alongside the family's mail-order housing business. Henrietta P. Keith was also author, with Eleanor Allison Cummins, of *Practical Studies in Interior Decoration* (1906).⁹⁴

As either a public vocation or a private avocation, interior decoration allied itself with traditional ideas regarding femininity and domesticity. Advertisements, advice books, and shelter magazines, dating from the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth, are primary sources for chronicling the thoughts and achievements of "decorative" women who domesticated a profession, and, in the process, bridged the gap between work in the home and the "world's work."⁹⁵

To professionalize such an activity is to dissociate it from its amateur and domestic connections through education, the setting of standards and codes of conduct, the granting of degrees and other qualifications and the setting up of trade and professional organizations and related publishing initiatives such as textbooks and trade journals. For some, however, the idea of professionalized domesticity is oxymoronic. Seddon suggests that British designers Jane Drew, Enid Marx and Susie Cooper were each successful at least partly because 'all three broke free from the constraints of designing for the domestic sphere'. Seddon acknowledges that this idea of success derives

from male paradigms, and that women's work was routinely associated with domesticity, such that industrial designer Gaby Schreiber was promoted as 'a housewife herself [who] knows what the housewife wants'.⁹⁶

Women and textiles

As we have noted, interior design encompasses a range of practices and products, and within this special issue textiles have a strong presence and there is a strong identification between women and textiles. The place of textiles in architecture and interior design has been the subject of useful recent attention.⁹⁷ In her article for this special issue, Houze shows how the male-dominated Vienna Secession appropriated the marginal status of interior design and furnishings for their own *avant-garde* ends. This process of hegemony and appropriation is a useful conceptual framework for understanding the professionalization of interior design. The fact that fashion and home decoration have both been viewed as women's work forms part of their association; they are affiliated in the public imagination, and Penny Sparke fleshes out this assumption with some historical detail for France and the USA in her contribution to this special issue. Traditionally feminine areas of activity, and the design practice of women, have been slow in achieving the professional recognition granted to other design fields, as shown for example in the British case of a refusal to award degree status to Fashion at the Royal College of Art, when other courses gained MA degrees following the Robbins Committee recommendations for the expansion of higher education.⁹⁸ For the USA, Blaszczyk shows how Dorothy Liebes was able to create a role for herself at DuPont, a market leader in developing synthetic materials, by exploiting her expertise in the three feminine areas of weaving, fashion and home decoration. She also sold her expertise to the public in the marketing publicity generated around her consultancy. Liebes's knowledge of contemporary trends in interior design and her network were made available for the benefit of the DuPont Corporation and as such she was at the vanguard of both technical experimentation in soft furnishings for the interior and a significant tastemaker. If Liebes had sought to market her expertise in an area of experience not stereotypically associated with women's work then her gender might have worked against her, but as she

presented her expertise in weaving and taste in interior decoration, her gender and her professional expertise were mutually reinforcing.

The accounts of women working in the interior design profession in this special issue show women using the association of femininity with domestic taste to their advantage. Bridget May examines Nancy McClelland's work to both define and enable standards for interior designers as a founding member of the AIID, as well as by pursuing her own professional practice. McClelland and Liebes successfully pursued their own interior design careers *and* shaped the interior design profession by expanding the professional possibilities for women. In their promotion and celebration of the work of two individuals, the articles by Blaszczyk and May fit into a collective project of tracing the introduction of modernist design into the US market through the analysis of key individuals, also exemplified by Penny Sparke's work on Elsie de Wolfe.⁹⁹ An examination of the processes of professionalization clarifies the ways in which women have been treated, or excluded, within the history of design, as well as in that of the design professions.

Conclusion

This introductory article has deconstructed the domestic, amateur and feminine associations of interior design by considering three complex dynamics in turn: domestic/public, amateur/professional and feminine/professional. This introduction and the articles that follow engage a definition of the interior which includes professional, amateur, domestic and non-domestic spaces. While the five contributions present distinct case studies in terms of geography and periodization, collectively the special issue demonstrates that professionalization is an extremely useful and revealing focus for new work in design history. Each paper contributes to existing histories of professionalization, outlined in this introductory article, analyses of figures and practices not previously countenanced in interior design history, whether women embroiderers, male colonial architects or fashion designers. Analysis of professionalization draws the emphasis away from judgements about style in relation to the yardstick of modernism, an enduring preoccupation of design history. In this special issue, design practices and outcomes are considered as representations of

national identity, gender, craft and technology, fashionability and competence. The four major articles provide in-depth analysis of empirical research in original and illuminating ways and Sparke's discussion opens up debate about a vastly under-explored area—the relationship between fashion design and interior design—which has implications for the comparative exploration of other fields of design activity and interdisciplinary approaches. This interdisciplinary concern is echoed in the interplay of craft, technology and marketing at the heart of Blaszczyk's analysis of Dorothy Liebes's consultancy for DuPont. This special issue represents another step on the path to thorough investigation of the history of interior design, distinct from architectural history and subject to the same levels of exploration as the histories of furniture and product design, graphics and fashion design, to which it may be compared. In the articles presented here, a consistent picture emerges about national identity and gender as key issues in the history of the professionalization of interior design. Continuing concerns for globalization and national identity, and gender, as well as the imperative to interrogate issues of sustainability, make interior design history a compelling area of enquiry and a focus on the professionalization of the field is a compelling tool for understanding its genesis, characteristics and significance.

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Notes

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