

# M<sup>2</sup>

# INTERIOR DESIGN 4

RESIDENTIAL  
RETAIL  
DINING  
PUBLIC

## M<sup>2</sup> Interior Design 4

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Sponsored by: Design 360° – Concept and Design Magazine

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Cover projects by Roberto Murgia + Studiofase + Carmine

Concas, Ippolito Fleitz Group, Naruse Inokuma Architects,

JAKOB+MACFARLANE, Atelier Heiss Architekten, Creneau

International, 3GATTI, Nendo.

Published by: Sandu Publishing Co., Limited

Size: 285×286 mm

First Edition: 2012

ISBN 978-988-15703-8-3

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Printed and bound in China

## Preface

# Interior Design Today

by Helen Hughes, Senior Designer,  
from SHH

As global awareness of the scarcity of resources continues to grow, designers are creating new trends in response to this mindset, including new forms of luxury, expressed through unostentatious aesthetics, simple forms, well-crafted details and material quality. Consumers, meanwhile, are reacting to the current global financial crisis by seeking a balance between tradition and innovation, with heightened interest in materiality, longevity and timelessness. Designers are now seeking to produce designs of permanent value, where enduring quality wins out over flamboyant, but throw-away, design.

Explorations into emerging technologies, both by designers and manufacturers, are looking at how new forms and possibilities can be applied to traditional materials. Eco-aware, energy-efficient environments and products are also growing in strength of design, which is to be applauded, whilst the desire for more permanence finds designers creating their own sense of sustainability by looking at ways to display the quality of hand-crafting as a statement of luxury.

Increased consumer awareness of global and local issues has also created a new demand for transparency, as well as proof of provenance and quality. As customers demand more responsibility from brands, the labels we work with increasingly tell us the story of their products and list their sustainable credentials.

Where interior environments are integral to brand expression, the key to success is attention to detail, achieved by breathing the tools of design into the whole concept. From high street to higher end chains, branding forms the basis for levels of continuity and consistency that inspires customer loyalty and familiarity. But, within that, we are also seeing a greater number of chains who are expressing a desire for their environments to be more flexible. Learning from the independents, these companies are creating less rigid branding formulae, that allow for layers of interpretation that seek to localize sites, preferring to seek points of difference and convey an atmosphere of one-off, individual stores, often by utilising site-specific indicators for inspiration.

The counterpoint to this is that core brand values need to be stronger, so that an overall brand ethos can be successfully blended with one-off and localize elements. This move is also being driven by consumer insights, where a dislike of aggressive marketing ploys is meeting a thirst for bespoke and personalize products and environments.

At SHH, outside of the functional and logistical aspects of our clients' briefs, the environments themselves - their location, history and purpose - all provide a wealth of inspiration for design. Through site-specific, research-based design, we aim to seek unique solutions for each client by relating the interior to the original building and seeking deeper connections that can be translated into new interior environments, breathing new life into existing spaces and enabling a far more authentic experience.

Creating distinct environments with underlying connectivity to both site and offer allows us to build on the growing desire for added flexibility in branded design, as well as supporting our aim of promoting the timelessness of good design. Through enduring, robust solutions that fully support our clients' visions and aspirations, we maximise the unique potential of each space to provide appropriate backdrops, from which our clients can sell their respective products and services.

Being aware of global and local trends and new approaches is vital in delivering the best possible solutions that will allow our clients to remain competitive in the market place. Our role is to promote our clients' vision and to contribute to the success of their businesses by creating the best possible environments for their brands.

Whilst we are very operations-focused, logistical concerns never get in the way of our creativity and are always integrated seamlessly into the final interior design solution.

# The Answer of Space

By Francesc Rifé, Francesc Rifé Studio

Space talks in various levels: about itself, shapes, textures, materials, utilities... even about ourselves, because our elections define us: the slightest detail tells the others about our influences and preferences. When designing a space, we must bear in mind that it will become a part of something, a place to live, to work and to show. An empty room is full of expectations; some of them related to usefulness, others with taste. Design is a conversation between space and yourself, it questions you, it always demands an answer, differentiates in every case, and is always meaningful to all elements. Chillida once said, "My sculptures draw spaces, thanks to them you see emptiness clearly, they are a frame for the void". I play. I take concrete, I make it light; I transform rooms with hidden doors or with a game of shadows; I build atmospheres, rooms that never bore and change at the light of dawn. It's a trick for the eye which shows who you really are at any moment, because your stance evolves with you.

In music, silence is a value, it allows you to appraise the cadence, and it is an element that allows you to really understand the previous phrase. In space, we need a rest to perceive what the materials tell us, to pause to appreciate the touch of wood or the smell of metal. Eventually, we perceive everything as a whole, as the melody of a story we wanted to express with variations and rhythm, a melody that lays in the coherence that guides you once you draw. Desire shapes emptiness, we fall in love with the fragility of a lamp that appears from nowhere. Some structures challenge us with their impossible forms and instinct tells us "that's too much" or "you only have to listen and provide in an harmonious way". As a designer, we need to follow the concept, because there is always a concept that will guide us when we feel we don't have the answer, a sense of rightness difficult to explain.

You have to be brave and respectful to that voice that maybe will change everything. Sometimes you must discard pieces you really fancy because it doesn't fit. Keep the idea in mind that designers should give room to variation, find a balance and communicate it to your team, who will translate it as well without losing continuity.

And when it's finished, go through it and recover the melody that was before in your head repeating like an echo by space. Your answer.

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**Vladimir Radutny + Paul Tebben / STUDIO IDE Architects**  
Planted Environment

This ground level space inscribes the functions of living, entertaining and yoga into a traditional three-storey suburban home.

The clients, having lived and traveled in the eastern world, aspired to transplant the character of Southeast Asian living into their existing home. Rather than forcing the marriage between these two dissimilar architectural languages, the choice to disconnect each from the other created a world within a world. The fluid arrangement of spaces and the tectonic assembly of materials are in contrast to the rest of the house, thus providing a greater sense of transition from the everyday indoor environment. The conventional language of privacy enclosures is replaced with screening elements, typically found in the Eastern world. The partial height screens provide substantial visual privacy yet allow for light and air to permeate through the resultant voids.

Drawing on the horizontality within the dense lamination of Baltic birch plywood, the walls are assembled to appear woven. Each of 5,000 rectangular pieces of plywood is placed individually, not unlike the tedious assembly of the hand crafted water hyacinth furniture acquired by the client during their travels in Asia. The ceiling soffit adds an organizational framework between the vertical variation in the ceiling height and the overall plan. Its geometry is derived from the boundaries of existing infrastructural elements and runs counter to the direction of the spatial flow.

**Area:** 139.35 sqm  
**Photography:** Nathan Kirkman  
Photography & STUDIO IDE Architects  
**Location:** Chicago, USA  
Residential

