Chapter 1
Designing Interiors: A Guide for Contemporary Interiors Landscape Design

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ABSTRACT

The chapter illustrates a possible procedure to follow every time an interior project, either concerning an interior space or urban interior, must be undertaken. The procedure starts from the overview of the theme in every component, both functional and cultural, to achieve the development of the research and the elaboration of the layout, meant as an answer, mostly conceptual, to the questions risen by the theme. The master plan of the space is following, to reach the writing of the project and the necessary check of its suitability to the starting theme.

INTRODUCTION

There are many different ways that a space can be designed to meet the living needs of contemporary life. Here, “living” is used in the most general and fullest sense i.e., the activity based on the relationship between humans and their built environment, be it residence, work, study, or culture, etc. The following is a theoretical reflection about the re-development of existing spaces. First, various changes in the way we live worldwide are considered, especially in industrialised countries. Then a process that spans from research to design is proposed, to identify those actions required to reach an innovative response to the problem at hand (without being naive). Of course, no process can guarantee a successful result. However, the one proposed here has proven to be quite effective through years of teaching. It asserts a distinction - and not just a semantic one - between interior design and interior architecture, while also recognising that they come from a shared tradition and have a common field of application. Their differences can be found in the different phases of the design process and the attention each one gives to certain aspects over others. Certain examples have been selected to demonstrate their respective uniqueness and originality.
BACKGROUND

Studies that deal with interior design generally treat the topic in one of the following ways: from a historical perspective (Sparke, 2008; Ottolini, 2015), by documenting interior projects and examples (Brooker, Stone, 2010) and through the history of certain types of environments (Forino, 2011). There are also manuals (Canepa, Vaudetti, 2010; Vaudetti, Canepa, Musso, 2014) that are intended to provide interior designers or exhibition designers with guidance regarding the sizing of spaces, use of materials and technology, and the relevant codes and regulations.

However, the ideas covered in this chapter serve an entirely different purpose. They outline the underlying approaches to the interior design process, including research, needs analysis, innovative responses, and verification through their application to actual sites. The possible outcome of this exercise is the adoption of an installation-like approach that does not sacrifice in-depth research, meaning and identity, but rather embraces them as a priority.

FROM THEME TO DESIGN CONCEPT

In principle, there is always a theme that exists even before the site. A theme refers to one of the infinite interior design issues so frequently found when working on residential, work-related, cultural, free-time, and micro-urban spaces, as well as on more rarefied spaces. Each theme presents its own uniqueness and complexity. In each case, the theme is not limited to a single function or functions. It always has a broader quality that has to be cultivated and interpreted. Designing a home, for example, does not just mean organising the rooms for each activity (eating, sleeping, meeting, socialising, bathing, etc.). It also means providing a response to a remote and deeply rooted need (and one that changes over time) related to the fundamental rituals and practices of human life. So, when addressing a theme, the first step has to be trying to understand its deeper meaning and then translate it into an initial idea that has a programmatic value. It is important to understand the underlying nature of an issue and attempt a preliminary speculation prior to forming a physical response.

“Speculation” means starting down a different path rather than assuming that a certain prescribed series of moves will ensure the best result. The latter is a misguided approach that some of the design world seems to fall for. Instead, speculation belongs to what semiotic theorists call the abductive method, “Abduction, like induction, does not contain innate logical correctness and requires external validation over time. Peirce sometimes called abduction hypotheses (and sometimes presumptive inferences). In today’s terms, this is exactly the conclusion that abduction represents: a speculation about reality that requires validation through experimentation” (Truzzi, 1983, p.85). Science also calls this the method of trial and error. Over the last 30 years, there have been major changes to the idea of what constitutes science. A series of studies have reassessed the methodological value of chance and related ideas (Feyerabend, 1979). Karl Popper spoke about scientific hypotheses as speculations to be corroborated or falsified through experimentation. All this has important implications for the role of method in design. The ambition of being able to apply scientific and rational methods to the design process and ensuring an effective result was pursued in the 1970s (Rosselli, 1973) and has remained just that: an ambition. In fact, what started as something neat and tidy has ended up casting doubt on the veracity of the systemic approach, leading to the emergence of an aporia (or impasse) which surrounds the issue whether decisions are more or less rational. Basically, rather than chasing improbable models equipped with an assumed high
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