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*Dear students*

If you have a good eye for colour or strong colour memory, like working with people and have decorated your home or have had other hands-on experience... than you might like to become an Interior decorator. If you think you are interested in becoming an interior decorator, the information below will help you understand how to become a decorator and what it takes to be a successful one. Note that an interior decorator is not an interior designer. These are two different fields requiring different degrees and certification. More about this on page 3&4.

*- Martina*

### **BECOMING AN INTERIOR DECORATOR**

Interior decorators plan and implement decoration schemes for homes, offices, shops and professional rooms. Decorators consider the use to which the area will be put, as well as the budget and the taste of the client.

Interior decorators advise clients on the selection of colour schemes, layout, lighting, furniture, floor coverings, curtains, paint, wallpaper and hardware products (e.g. curtain fittings). After visiting clients' premises to observe and study existing conditions and to take measurements, they provide sketched designs, specifications and cost estimates to clients for their approval. Once an agreement has been reached, they supervise and coordinate the installation and arrangement of furniture and furnishings.

They may be involved in direct selling if working in a retail shop. Decorators in shops also advise buyers and executives on style and colour trends in interior furnishings.

Interior decorators use colours harmoniously and effectively, while working with architects, interior designers and homeowners to provide expert advice on the variation and effect of using colours and shades. Clients depend on interior decorators to make their homes and offices as pleasant as possible and might even give them the freedom to plan the entire layout of the decor of a high-rise building or hotel. This would include furnishings, curtains, paint and the other colour touches needed to enhance each room.

When working with architects and given the task of decorating a residential home, for example, an interior decorator is given a copy of the blueprints and consults the owners of the property before studying the structure and deciding on a plan of action. Factors that would have to be taken into consideration would be the size of the rooms, the desired effects and the cost of all the decorating materials. Thus, knowledge of what wallpapers, paints and wall and ceiling finishes are available is essential in order to procure the necessary materials and to decide on the quantities required. If furnishings are needed, the interior decorator would visit retail or wholesale stores with the client and suggest suitable furniture, curtaining, carpets and so on.

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## **BECOMING AN INTERIOR DECORATOR CONTINUE ..**

Some interior decorators design furniture to be used in various settings. A few decorators work on stage sets to be used in film or television studios; these designers are known as set designers or set decorators.

This career requires a definite artistic talent. It is never easy to choose furnishings, colour and decorating aids for other people. A flair for colour, initiative and a knowledge of technical matters relating to bricks, tiles, undercoats, types of paint and so on are necessary to be successful in interior decorating.

Interior decorators sometimes have to work extended or irregular hours to meet clients' needs. Working conditions may involve quite a lot of travelling and shopping as well as time spent in the office designing decors. This is a people-orientated career and prospective candidates need to be prepared to spend time with clients and be able to change or alter ideas until solutions are found that are mutually satisfying to all parties.

Interior decorators work in a variety of work settings. They may work in their offices or in the homes and offices of their clients. They may also work in stores and showrooms where furniture and other accessories are sold. A few work in television or motion picture studios or in theatres.

### **Satisfying Aspects**

- working in a field that allows one to use one's artistic and creative talents
- the opportunity to see one's plans through to completion
- working with people
- good salary, when one becomes established in this field

### **Demanding aspects**

- working irregular hours, weekends and evenings to meet clients' needs
- revising plans when clients change their minds
- the keen competition in this field
- over-demanding clients

### **Requirements**

- artistic, creative and imaginative
- good sense of colour and colour vision
- able to promote ideas
- awareness of fashion trends
- able to get on with a variety of people
- good business sense
- able to accept criticism
- patient and flexible
- lots of initiative
- eye for line, form and design

## BECOMING AN INTERIOR DESIGNER

The study of Interior Design involves a sound knowledge of architectural structure, space planning, building materials and finishes, surfaces, lighting, soft furnishings, furniture and the decorative aspects of interior accessories. Interior designers work on the interiors of offices, hotels, homes, boutiques, banks, restaurants and more. They often work in association with architects in planning, designing and finishing the interiors of new buildings or renovated ones.

### Possible career opportunities in Interior Design :

- **Building Finishes** The interior building finishes industry is immense; incorporating goods and labour from both foreign and domestic sources and markets. Some interior designers work closely with manufacturers, artisans, and workrooms around the world to create innovative materials including specialized ceramic and metallic tiles, stone mosaics, laminates, resin mouldings, paints and varnishes, carved wood components and veneers, and other products that will be used to finish walls, countertops, floors, cabinets, ceilings and other interior surfaces.
- **CADD Technician** Good visual presentations are vital to the field of interior design, and so most design firms hire talented illustrators, either as part of the staff or on a freelance basis. Depending on the size of the project and the needs of the design firm, the fees paid for creating illustrations by hand or on the computer can run into thousands of dollars; making this a very lucrative field for individuals talented at drawing interior spaces by hand or electronically.
- **Construction Management** Interior designers work very well as construction managers because they understand just what goes into each project. Often, they are hired to act as coordinator between the contractor and developer. They supervise, manage, and review the components going into a project and advise on decision-making accordingly.
- **Corporate Offices Design** Every major company has an administrative building -- some large, some small -- having varying demands and requiring design. The demands change as the products change, and interior designers are called in to streamline and to develop spaces supporting workflow. At one time, we just designed offices, but today social environments are also important. Sometimes, more important decisions are made over a cup of coffee than in the boardroom.
- **Health Club and Recreational Facility Design** The health clubs of today are not just places to exercise, but meeting spots for people with similar goals and interests. Health club design is growing, in part, because public interest and awareness in preventative approaches to personal health is growing. As a result, facilities that offer the equipment and space for people to participate in all forms of athletics, aerobics, yoga, and other forms of exercise are proliferating rapidly. Keeping these facilities safe, convenient, visually attractive and appropriate to the specific sports involved, has led some interior designers to make this their specialty.
- **Historic Preservation and Rehabilitation** A very technical and scientific specialty, historic preservation and rehabilitation is a growing field because of the current tax abatements and widespread interest in reclaiming the past. If you are working on a project that must be true to its period, you need to become a specialist in that era -- whether it be Victorian, Georgian, Art Deco, or one of the more arcane styles. The research that determines the actual colours, materials, or wall coverings, for example, has attracted many designers.
- **Hotels and Resorts** The hospitality industry is constantly changing and, as a result, interior designers who specialize in hotel design need to be creative, flexible and able to adapt to meet the requirements of a rapidly changing market. Many hotel facilities today are immense; offering travelers convention and exhibit halls, restaurants and dining rooms, training centers, pools & spas, comfortable lobbies and living-rooms, gardens, health clubs, business centers, and educational spaces. Some design firms specialize in hotel lobbies and corridors, others design only dining spaces; others design guest rooms and suites.

## **REQUIREMENTS**

### **Secondary Education**

Possession of at least a **HIGCSE/IGCSE** Grade 12, or equivalent qualification, is required to be admitted to a college, Technikon or university. **UNAM** requires a minimum of 25 points on the UNAM point evaluation scale, as well as passes in five subjects.

### **Recommended subject**

Mathematics and Art (South Africa)

### **Tertiary Education & Training**

A B Arts (Fine Arts) degree can be obtained at most South African universities. A **Nat Dip.:** Interior Décor and Design is offered at some South African technikons.

The department of Visual Arts at UNAM offers a B. A. degree with various majors in Visual Art, which could be an advantage as most of the actual training is gained through in-service training.

In-service training is also possible with practising interior decorators.

Some training in interior decorating is included in Home Economics degrees or diploma courses offered by universities.

### **Personality**

A prospective interior designer should be artistic and creative, have a broad knowledge about the latest fashions and materials and be sensitive to the requirements and preferences of the client.

### **Work Opportunities**

Interior designers are employed by interior decorating firms or they can start their own business.

### **Opportunities For Advancement and Future Prospects:**

The formal courses only provide the basic background for interior decorating and beginners must gain practical experience before they can practise as decorators. With ability and experience, decorators may advance to supervisory positions in large firms or stores. With the necessary funds and experience a decorator may open his or her own business.

There is a considerable need for qualified interior decorators. However, the field is highly competitive and in addition, the demand tends to fluctuate with the economy. Positions are relatively unaffected by technological innovations or changes in social conditions. The economy of the country has an effect on this occupation, and when the economy is in a downturn, fewer clients can afford the services of professional decorators. Job opportunities may be greater in some areas of the country than in others. Most interior decorators work in or around large cities.

## DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN INTERIOR DESIGNER AND INTERIOR DECORATOR

While many people use the terms “interior designer” and “interior decorator” interchangeably, there are key differences between the two.

**Interior Designers** are highly skilled professionals with anywhere between 4-6 years of post-secondary education. They are experienced in understanding human scale, acoustics, lighting, life safety, building code, accessibility, sustainable design, technical construction, and so many other elements that make a space function before it looks ‘pretty’. They are trained to create interior environments that are not only aesthetically beautiful, but are experiential and improve the overall well-being of the user.

**Interior Decorators** are ‘stylists’. Their expertise is in selecting and arranging colour palettes, finishes, paint, furnishings and accessories. Although they are talented in creating beautiful spaces, they are not required to have formal education, as their focus is primarily on aesthetics.



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[www.tucsin.org](http://www.tucsin.org) as well as  
 on Facebook  
 Tel #: 061 224840  
[Williams@tucsin.org](mailto:Williams@tucsin.org)

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