

A GUIDE TO CAREERS IN DESIGN



> Becoming an  
**INTERIOR DESIGNER**

SECOND EDITION

Christine M. Piotrowski, FASID, IIDA



› **Becoming an**  
**INTERIOR**  
**DESIGNER**



➤ **Becoming an**  
**INTERIOR**  
**DESIGNER**

**A Guide to Careers in Design**

Second Edition

**CHRISTINE M. PIOTROWSKI, FASID, IIDA**



WILEY

John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

This book is printed on acid-free paper. ☺

Copyright © 2009 by Christine M. Piotrowski. All rights reserved.

Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey.

Published simultaneously in Canada.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without either the prior written permission of the Publisher, or authorization through payment of the appropriate per-copy fee to the Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, (978) 750-8400, fax (978) 646-8600, or on the web at [www.copyright.com](http://www.copyright.com). Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, (201) 748-6011, fax (201) 748-6008, or online at [www.wiley.com/go/permissions](http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions).

**Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty:** While the publisher and the author have used their best efforts in preparing this book, they make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this book and specifically disclaim any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales representatives or written sales materials. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for your situation. You should consult with a professional where appropriate. Neither the publisher nor the author shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages.

For general information about our other products and services, please contact our Customer Care Department within the United States at (800) 762-2974, outside the United States at (317) 572-3993 or fax (317) 572-4002.

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. Some content that appears in print may not be available in electronic books. For more information about Wiley products, visit our Web site at [www.wiley.com](http://www.wiley.com).

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Piotrowski, Christine M., 1947-  
Becoming an interior designer: a guide to careers in design / Christine Piotrowski.—2nd ed.  
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-470-11423-0 (pbk.)

1. Interior decoration—Vocational guidance. I. Title.

NK2116.P56 2009

747.092—dc22

2008018564

Printed in the United States of America.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

#### DISCLAIMER

This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is sold with the understanding that the publisher and the author are not engaged in rendering professional services. If professional advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional should be sought.

All photographs, documents, and forms are proprietary to the organization, design firm, designer, or author. None of the figures in this text may be reproduced without the expressed written permission of the appropriate copyright holder.

*To Martha and Casmier, looking down from above.*

*With love,*

*Christine*

*A truly committed decision is  
the force that changes your life.*

---

ANONYMOUS



# CONTENTS

<b>PREFACE</b>	IX	The Importance of Internships	77
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b>	XII	Two-Year Associate Degree	78
<b>1 An Introduction to the Interior Design Profession</b>	1	Postgraduate Education in Interior Design	80
-----		NCIDQ Examination	82
What Do Interior Designers Do?	2	Continuing Education	84
<i>What Do Interior Designers Do?</i>	3	How Important Is Interior Design Education in Today's Industry?	92
Is Interior Design for You?	11	<b>3 Where the Jobs Are</b>	99
History	17	-----	
Sustainable Design	21	Career Decisions	103
<i>What Do You Feel Is the Impact of Sustainable Design on the Profession?</i>	27	Independent Design Firms	107
Professional Associations	32	<i>What Motivated You to Start Your Own Design Firm?</i>	110
Interior Design Registration and Licensing	36	Architectural Offices	112
<i>How Important Is Certification by Examination and Licensing of Interior Designers Today?</i>	38	Furniture Retailers	116
Why Did You Become an Interior Designer?	42	Office Furnishings Dealers	119
<b>2 Educational Preparation</b>	55	Interior Design on a Global Stage	121
-----		Facility Planning and Design	124
High School Preparation	59	Sole Practitioner Work Environments	124
Choosing an Educational Program	62	Job-Seeking Tools	130
<i>How Did You Choose Which School to Attend to Obtain Your Education in Interior Design?</i>	63	<i>Can You Describe the Optimum Portfolio for a Job Applicant?</i>	134
Four-Year Educational Preparation	72	<i>What Do You Look for in Hiring a New Designer?</i>	139
		What Do You Enjoy Most About Working in the Firm You Are in Right Now?	143

<b>4 Design Specialties</b>	149	<b>6 Interior Design as a Business</b>	253
Residential Design	150	Business Formations	255
Aging in Place	153	<i>What Motivated You to Start Your Design Firm?</i>	257
Commercial	156	Marketing Methods	260
Sustainable Design	158	Contracts	264
<i>What Do You Feel Is the Impact of Sustainable Design or Design for Seniors on the Profession?</i>	160	Interior Design Revenue	270
Corporate and Professional Offices	166	Legal Issues	272
Hospitality	174	<i>How Important Is Certification by Examination and Licensing of Interior Designers Today?</i>	275
Entertainment and Recreation	180	What Is the Greatest Business Challenge for Interior Design Firms?	278
Retail Facilities	183	<b>7 The Future</b>	285
Healthcare	186	What Do You See as the Future for the Interior Design Profession?	285
Senior Living	192	<b>INTERIOR DESIGN RESOURCES</b>	297
Institutional	195	<b>CIDA-ACCREDITED INTERIOR DESIGN PROGRAMS IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA</b>	299
Restoration and Adaptive Use	201	<b>INTERIOR DESIGN REFERENCES</b>	310
Related Career Options	202	<b>INTERIOR DESIGNERS</b>	312
What Advice Would You Give Someone Who Wants to Be an Interior Designer?	212	<b>INDEX</b>	317
<b>5 The Design Process</b>	223		
Project Development	224		
Programming	230		
Schematic Design	232		
Design Development	235		
Contract Documents	239		
Contract Administration	241		
Project Management	244		
Working Relationships	246		
What Is the Single Most Important Skill an Interior Designer Needs to Be Successful?	247		

## PREFACE

The profession of interior design has received a lot of media attention over the years. Network television has portrayed interior designers as characters in major shows and featured them as experts on cable's various home decorating programs. Movies have even included interior designers or decorators as part of the cast. You have no doubt looked at one or more of the magazines related to interior design on the newsstands. The media attention, of course, doesn't necessarily help someone learn all that is involved in pursuing this profession.

This book is about the profession of interior design and the professional interior designer. If you are a student in high school or a postsecondary student who is considering interior design as a career, this book helps you understand what the profession entails. Maybe you have lost interest in your current career and are looking for a way to express your creative side. This book can assist you in understanding how interior design may help you achieve that goal. It will not, however, explain how to establish a practice or actually teach you how to do interior design.

The interior design profession has two broad segments of specialization. Residential interior design, primarily the design of private residences, is the area most familiar to the public. Commercial interior design is the other large segment of the profession. This specialty involves the interior design of businesses such as offices, hotels, stores, restaurants—even airports, sports stadiums, and prisons. Within each of these broad areas, designers might focus on one or more subareas—condominiums and retail stores, for example.

The profession has changed significantly over the last 45 years or so. Here are just some of the ways in which it is different: building and safety codes are emphasized; sustainable design in both residential and commercial interior design has gained importance; the growing complexity of projects and the design process means interior designers must be better educated and trained; licensing and legal responsibilities focus added attention on project management and contract administration; and the aging population has brought an increased awareness of the design of spaces for seniors.

These challenges and others have brought about critical changes in the profession through greater educational preparation, increased technical skills, broader knowledge requirements, and the measurement of professional competency via testing. Thus, today's professional interior designer works in a profession raised to a higher level than that of the stereotypical decorator. Interior design in the 21st century is much more than selecting colors and arranging furniture.

Helping you understand this exciting creative profession and career is the purpose of this second edition. This award-winning book has been revised and updated to include new information on sustainable design, aging in place, and interior design on the global stage, as well as other topics and comments from dozens of additional practitioners at many levels in their career. Numerous new designer profiles with examples of their project work have been added throughout the book.

Additional highlights to the second edition begin in Chapter 1, which provides an overview of the profession of interior design with a brief look at its history and such considerations as licensing, and other general topics. A new section discusses the role of interior designers and poses the question “What do interior designers do?” to dozens of practitioners. Chapter 2 describes the educational requirements of interior designers. A section has been added concerning high school preparation to help younger potential practitioners understand what can be done at that level. Chapter 3 looks at the various environments in which interior designers work. For example, some designers work by themselves from home offices, while others work as team members in large design firms—and everything in between. Note that all the information on job seeking such as résumés and portfolios has been moved to this chapter. Chapter 4 offers insights into the opportunities for various specializations in the field through interviews with practitioners currently working in them. This chapter also includes additional information and comments from designers about the importance of sustainable design and design for seniors. Chapter 5 describes the activities that occur between the inception of a project and its completion. It also discusses working relationships with allied professionals and the project management process. Chapter 6 presents an overview of the business side of the profession. This chapter briefly discusses how interior designers find clients through marketing activities, the importance of contracts in defining proposed services, and how interior designers earn revenue. Chapter 7 is a compilation of comments from practitioners on what they feel is the future of the interior design profession.

Indeed, I think you will find what practitioners have to say interesting and exciting. Included are quotes and commentaries by nearly 100 professionals who are practicing interior design or have been involved in this exciting profession in other ways. Interior designers in many specialties and career stages have provided insights to help you discover what this profession is like. Their responses to questions and points of view comprise a special feature found within and at the end of each chapter. This feature is unique among career books and will help you understand what interior design is like from people doing professional work every day.

The initials that follow the names of many interior designers represent the appellations of professional organizations and are included because attaining professional association membership is an important milestone for professional interior designers, as it is with any design professional. The following list provides a key to identifying these organizations:

<b>AIA—American Institute of Architects</b>	<b>IFMA—International Facility Management Association</b>
<b>ARIDO—Association of Registered Interior Designers of Ontario</b>	<b>IIDA—International Interior Design Association</b>
<b>ASID—American Society of Interior Designers</b>	<b>ISP—Institute of Store Planners</b>
<b>CAPS—Certified Aging in Place Specialist</b>	<b>LEED-AP—Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design—Accredited Professional</b>
<b>CID—Certified Interior Designer</b>	<b>NCARB—National Council of Architectural Registration Boards</b>
<b>CMG—Color Marketing Group</b>	<b>NKBA—National Kitchen and Bath Association</b>
<b>IDC—Interior Designers of Canada</b>	<b>RIBA—Royal Institute of British Architects</b>
<b>IDEC—Interior Design Educators Council</b>	<b>RID—Registered Interior Designer</b>
<b>IES—Illuminating Engineers Society</b>	<b>USGBC—United States Green Building Council</b>
<b>IFDA—International Furnishings and Design Association</b>	

If an appellation begins with *F*, as in FASID, the member has earned a fellowship, which is the highest national honor of his or her association. Also note that some designers are required to place their state code before the CID or RID designations. An example is KYCID for Kentucky Certified Interior Designer.

Updated selected references in “Interior Design References” at the end of the book provide further reading on the topics covered in this book. “Interior Designers” in these back pages provides contact information for the various professional organizations and designers mentioned in the text.

I hope you will find this second edition of *Becoming an Interior Designer* a valuable source for learning about the exciting career of professional interior designer. This creative, multidisciplinary profession is a satisfying way to express your talent while providing functional and aesthetic solutions to a client’s projects. Because the field offers so many avenues of work, you can find a niche that is stimulating and satisfying to you as it has been for the thousands who have come before you. These are exciting times for the interior design profession. I welcome you to it!

—Christine M. Piotrowski, FASID, IIDA

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the many interior designers, educators, and other design professionals who have contributed material to this book. Many of them I have known for many years. They graciously shared their insights, experiences, and passions about the profession as well as their project photos and drawings for this book. All these professionals are listed at the back of the book under “Interior Designers.”

I also want to thank several people at John Wiley & Sons for their assistance and guidance. Of course, special thanks go to my editor, John Czarnecki, for patiently seeing this book to completion. I want to acknowledge Raheli Millman and Sadie Abuhoff for their assistance on the second edition and Lauren Olesky for her assistance on the first. Lastly, I want to thank my long-time friend Amanda Miller for encouraging me to do this book in the first place.

1

# An Introduction to the Interior Design Profession

---

We spend over 90 percent of our day in interior spaces. Despite this, most people take interiors for granted, barely noticing the furniture, colors, textures, and other elements—let alone the form of the space—of which they are made. Sometimes, of course, the design of the interior does catch our attention. Maybe it's the pulsing excitement of a casino, the rich paneling of an expensive restaurant, or the soothing background of a religious facility.

As you are reading this book, you obviously have an interest in interiors and interior design. It might be because you have always enjoyed rearranging the furniture in your home. Maybe you like to draw imaginative floor plans for houses. It could be that a relative or friend is a contractor and you have been involved in the actual construction of a building in some way. Perhaps you saw a program on television and it inspired you to learn more about the profession.

The interior design profession is a lot more than what you see portrayed on various television programs. The profession of interior design has been defined by educators and professionals. This widely accepted definition is provided to help you understand what the profession is all about:

Interior design is a multi-faceted profession in which creative and technical solutions are applied within a structure to achieve a built interior environment. These solutions are functional, enhance the quality of life and culture of the occupants, and are aesthetically attractive. Designs are created in response to and coordinated with the building shell, and acknowledge the physical location and social context of the project. Designs must adhere to code and regulatory requirements and encourage the principles of environmental sustainability. The interior design process follows a systematic and coordinated methodology, including research, analysis and integration of knowledge into the creative process, whereby the needs and resources of the client are satisfied to produce an interior space that fulfills the project goals.<sup>1</sup>

Professional interior designers are not interior decorators and interior decorators are not professional interior designers, although the public generally does not see any difference. “Interior design is *not* the same as decoration. Decoration is the furnishing or adorning a space with fashionable or beautiful things. Decoration, although a valuable and important element of an interior, is not solely concerned with human interaction or human behavior. Interior design is *all* about human behavior and human interaction.”<sup>2</sup>

Although a professional interior designer might provide interior decoration services, an interior decorator does not have the education and experience to perform the many other services of a professional interior designer. A decorator is primarily concerned with the aesthetic embellishment of the interior and rarely has the expertise, for example, to produce the necessary drawings for the construction of nonload-bearing walls and certain mechanical systems that are routinely produced by a professional interior designer.

## What Do Interior Designers Do?

Interior design professionals provide the owners of homes and many kinds of businesses with functionally successful and aesthetically attractive interior spaces. An interior designer might specialize in working with private residences or with commercial interiors such as hotels, hospitals, retail stores, offices, and dozens of other private and public facilities. In many ways, the interior design profession benefits society by focusing on how space—and interior environment—should look and function.

The professional interior designer uses his or her educational preparation and training to consider how the design affects the health, safety, and welfare of occupants. Many projects today include careful consideration of sustainable design in the selection of furniture and materials used in the interior. Planning the arrangement of partition walls, selection of furniture, and specifying aesthetic embellishments for the space are all tasks the designer uses to bring the interior to life. A set of functional and aesthetic requirements expressed by the client becomes reality.

In planning a residence or any type of commercial interior, the professional interior designer engages in many tasks using a wide variety of skills and knowledge gained through education and practice. The professional interior designer must consider building and life safety codes, address environmental issues, and understand the basic construction and mechanical systems of buildings. He or she must effectively communicate design concepts through precisely scaled drawings and other documents used in the industry. Another critical responsibility concerns how to manage all the tasks that must be accomplished to complete a project as large as a 1,000-room casino hotel or as small as someone’s home. The interior designer must also have the business skills to complete projects within budget for the client while making a profit for the design firm. And, of course, the interior designer selects colors, materials, and products so that what is supposed to actually occur in the spaces can.

This book helps you see clearly what the profession is about and what the real work of interior



designers is like in the 21st century. It includes comments from professional interior designers in many specialties, sizes of companies, and areas of the country. These responses are presented to help you get an idea of what working professionals think about the profession. I posed the question “What do interior designers do?” to many of the designers whose work or other comments are in this book. “Problem solving” is a common response, but many other tasks and responsibilities are also mentioned.

### *What Do Interior Designers Do?*

› Residential interior designers support their clients in realizing their dreams and creating a home for their family and friends. We research, design, document, and specify the interior architectural finishes, millwork, plumbing, lighting, cabinetry, and interior design details and work closely with the project team (client, architect, and contractor) to implement them. Second, we bring together the complete vision for the project through the design, research, and implementation of the interior furnishings—from all the furniture to the artwork and accessories.

*Annette Stelmack, Allied Member ASID*

› Create environments that support the human condition in whatever activities it chooses, including living, sleeping, working, playing, eating, shopping, healing, or praying. These environments must be safe, accessible, sustainable, and, in many cases, beautiful. But, most importantly they must be functional for the person(s) inhabiting them.

*Lisa Whited, IIDA, ASID, Maine Certified Designer*

› Interior designers create interior environments that are functional, aesthetically pleasing, and enhance the quality of life and culture of the users of the space. In doing so, they have an obligation to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public.

*Jan Bast, FASID, IIDA, IDEC*

› We influence life patterns by creating healthy and safe environments.

*Patricia McLaughlin, ASID, RID*

› Interior designers solve problems. Our clients come to us with questions, wants, and needs and through design development we answer those questions and provide solutions for those wants and needs—all while protecting the health, welfare, and safety of the public through our knowledge of local and national building codes.

*Kristin King, ASID*

› Interior designers plan and design interior spaces. Interior designers understand how people move through, live and work in, and experience interior space. We consider the specific experiences and functions the space or project must support from the point of view of the user. Our unique understanding of psychological and human factors as well as formal design principles, materials, codes and regulations, and the means and methods of construction inform our diagnosis of user needs and the development of design concepts.

*Beth Harmon-Vaughn, FIIDA, Associate, AIA, LEED-AP*

› They use their creative skills and expertise to create spaces that improve people’s environments and make life better. More pragmatically, interior designers gather and analyze information, produce drawings, manage consultant teams, and oversee construction projects.

*David Hanson, IDC, RID, IIDA*



Private residence:  
kitchen remodel. Sally  
Howard D'Angelo, ASID,  
S. H. Designs, Windham,  
New Hampshire.

PHOTOGRAPH: BILL FISH

› Good question. Interior design is sometimes described as problem solving, but our work is really focused on helping our clients prepare for a future they can imagine but not fully predict. We develop an image that transforms their vision to reality. The vision is from the client's thoughts and business goals.

We take our client's ideas, expressed in business terms, and give them form, make them reality. That reality is something they could have never imagined themselves and when it is right and becomes their vision, we have succeeded with the magic of design. To do so, designers have to understand their aspirations, not merely their needs.

*Rita Carson Guest, FASID*

› Interior designers are problem solvers who must be able to develop a design that fits the client's criteria and budgets. They must be able to take that design concept and make it reality by preparing the necessary drawings, renderings, details, construction documents, specifications, budgets along with the most important part, which is

creativity and visualization. They also must be very strong in communication and, most important, in being listeners.

*Lisa Slayman, ASID, IIDA*

› Depending upon the project, interior designers investigate existing conditions; research work habits and management philosophies; incorporate work and life culture of space users or clients; explore potential solutions that meet functional and aesthetic goals; conform to code and legal constraints; prepare graphic and written materials that communicate the solutions to a wide variety of people—clients, lenders, committees, other design professionals, code officials, and the building industry; and continue building their knowledge.

*Katherine Ankersen, IDEC, NCARB Certified*

› An interior designer serves many roles. A designer is a mentor to clients and others in the profession. We serve as project managers coordinating many trades and making sure that not only we are doing our job correctly, but that

others are as well. We inspire interiors as well as lives with our work. Sometimes we do the dirty work that no one else wants to do, but in the end the smile on a client's face and the satisfaction that comes from a completed project makes all the project's challenges worth the time and effort.

**Shannon Ferguson, IIDA**

› We are professionals that offer our clients creative solutions in order for the spaces in which they live, work, play, and heal to function better and be more aesthetically pleasing.

**Robert Wright, FASID**

› We do everything for a space: we think through how the space functions based on who is occupying that particular space, how they are going to live there, work there, and function, and design around those parameters. We coordinate colors, furnishings, fabrics, and everything that goes into the environment.

**Laurie Smith, ASID**

› Interior designers design and create interior spaces, whether residential, commercial, or hospitality. The role of the interior designer is to understand the client's vision and goals for the project and interpret them in the design.

**Trisha Wilson, ASID**

› Good designers provide problem resolution through good design.

**Patricia Rowen, ASID, CAPS**

› Every decision an interior designer makes, in one way or another, involves life safety and quality of life. Some of those decisions include specifying furniture, fabric, and carpeting that comply with fire codes, complying with other applicable building codes, designing ergonomic work spaces, planning spaces that provide proper

means of egress, and providing solutions for the handicapped and other persons with special needs.

*Universal design* and *green design* are buzz words right now but they have always been and will continue to always be a part of every project. In addition to all of this, we manage projects, with budget, time, and safety in mind.

**Donna Vining, FASID, IIDA, RID, CAPS**

› If they are good at what they do, they create environments that unfold really *meaningful* experiences for their guests.

**Bruce Brigham, FASID, ISP, IES**

› Interior designers take a client's programmatic needs for a space and combine them with creativity and technical expertise to arrive at a customized space unique to their client.

**Maryanne Hewitt, IIDA**

› Interior design is a service industry. A designer must enjoy working with and helping people. Some of the aspects of commercial interior design include research, psychology, art, color, graphics, design, ergonomics, efficiency, and workflow.

**Mary Knopf, ASID, IIDA, LEED-AP**

› They are problem solvers. They need to be able to translate someone else's idea into a new reality. They need to be able to pick up all the puzzle pieces and reconstruct them into another solution—different from what the box said.

**Linda Isley, IIDA, CID**

› In three words: plan, coordinate, and execute. An interior designer is responsible for distilling the client's thoughts, desires, and budget to create a design plan for the project. The designer then coordinates all the elements within the plan and finally is the moving force for the plan's execution.

**Greta Guelich, ASID**

› Interior designers shape the human experience by creating the spaces in which we interact and live.

*Darcie Miller, NKBA, CMG, ASID Industry Partner*

› The easy answer is we create environments that are not only lovely to look at, but are also functional. But actually we are also therapists, accountants, researchers, organizers, shoppers, and sometimes even movers to realize our concept. The interior designer often becomes a family's most trusted friend as major moves, new additions to the family, new hobbies, or any other family change that affects the interior are discussed with the designer—and often we are the first to know.

*Susan Norman, IIDA*

› Interior designers in the corporate world understand corporate culture, how people work, and what corporations need to attract and retain

personnel. Interior designers study the workplace and create environmental solutions that are productive and fitting for the users.

*Colleen McCafferty, IFMA, USGBC, LEED-CI*

› In the course of my 25-plus-year career, I have worked on a variety of projects from small to very large residential projects, hospitals, and healthcare facilities—which are like little cities—numerous corporate offices, a funeral home, a fire/police station, and a yacht. The scope of work has always been varied within each project. Some include all aspects, from initial client contact and proposals, through schematics and budgeting; design development with space planning, furniture arrangement, selection, specifying, and scheduling; finish selection and scheduling; lighting, artwork, and accessory selection and placement; bid documentation and processing; installation; and working with all types of industry professionals, trades, and vendors. I have experienced the retail setting, design studio, architectural firm, and consulting as an independent designer. I have attended multiple trade shows and markets, traveled the world, and met many people in the process. The body of knowledge reflected in the Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA) Standards is very real in its expectations of what interior designers do.

*Carol Morrow, Ph.D., ASID, IIDA, IDEC*

› They solve problems (whether they are spatial, organizational, programmatic, or aesthetic) that affect people's health, safety, and welfare.

Healthcare: rotunda with mural of Hygeia and Panacea (Greek goddesses of prevention and treatment), Scripps Breast Care Center, La Jolla, California. Interior architecture and design: Jain Malkin, Inc., San Diego, California.

PHOTOGRAPH: GLENN CORMIER



Some are great technicians; some are great designers; some are great teachers; and a rare few are two or all of these. Some work in large offices; some are sole practitioners. Many work in the residential realm while a large number work in the commercial setting (that includes healthcare, hospitality, retail, or corporate work). Nevertheless all collaborate with other design professionals—including engineers and architects, building service/construction experts, and vendors/suppliers of all types.

*David Stone, IIDA, LEED-AP*

› A good interior designer will listen to the client's needs and try to fulfill them to the best of his or her ability—keeping in mind, of course, function and good design.

*Debra Himes, ASID, IIDA*

› Interior designers help the client improve their space, taking into account the client's needs and culture. The nature of projects vary so much that it is difficult to say.

*Jane Coit, Associate Member IIDA*

› Interior designers incorporate a broad range of skills to plan space that is both functional and aesthetically pleasing. Interior designers must juggle the needs of the client within the constraints of issues such as temporary or leased space, tight budgets, and differing aesthetic tastes. Interior designers provide a specialized knowledge base that includes understanding design elements and principles, space planning, life safety issues, codes, and contract documents.

*Laura Busse, IIDA, KYCID*

› Interior designers create meaningful, aesthetically pleasing environments to enhance the intended human activity within the environment.

*Suzan Globus, FASID, LEED-AP*

› The answer quite honestly depends upon whom and when you ask the question. There are many interior designers who focus upon schematic design and design development phases of work, yet there are many interior designers that place their primary attention upon marketing, branding, or the management of design. Many interior designers work collaboratively with a range of professionals and utilize a range of skills on a daily basis, from computer modeling and rendering skills to sketching or rendering perspective drawings by hand.

Many interior designers select fixtures, furniture, and equipment for their current projects and in the course of doing so, compose and complete material boards. Material boards are used to visualize the range of colors, materials, and furnishings for a project. On the other end of the spectrum, interior designers are immersed in creating interior architecture—often working in collaborative professional environments integrating programmatic, structural, material, and lighting aspects into built form. This is the current professional model in Europe. Regardless of where one finds or sees oneself in the spectrum, most interior designers address design from the perspective of the human body—its size, scale, societal and cultural norms, experiential aspects, and so on.

*James Postell, Associate Professor,  
University of Cincinnati*

› Through research, development, and implementation, interior designers improve the quality of life, increase productivity, and protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public.

*Keith Miller, ASID*

› As Nancy Blossom's research shows, some are tastemakers, some are place makers, others are trendsetters. With all respect to Robert Ivy, when

we are at the top of our game, we design holistic spaces that address the spiritual, functional, and life safety needs of our clients. We don't just deal with the finishes and contents of the spaces between the exterior walls. Interior designers need to have an understanding of the context within which they work and understand how their decisions affect structure, site, and infrastructure. All of us deal with the health, safety, and welfare of the public in some way or another through the decisions we make in service to our clients. Even the selection of a simple item like a piece of furniture can have psychological and physiological, as well as code implications. The piece may not project the image that the client wants, it may not support the body properly, and its materials may produce toxic gases in a fire. This, in addition to the larger implications of the interior planning, should give an indication of how far reaching a designer's decisions can be.

*Robert J. Krikac, IDEC*

› Work with clients to create an environment that reinforces and supports their business.

*Nila Leiserowitz, FASID, Associate AIA*

› Create functional, secure living, and working environments that support health, safety, and welfare issues while also raising the quality and enjoyment of life.

*Michael Thomas, FASID, CAPS*

› The interior designer is the bridge between the physical environment and the human in space. Our distinction in the building practice is the wish and capability to help people become more human. And our success is the ability to make these positive connections.

*Linda Sorrento, ASID, IIDA, LEED-AP*

› The interior designer must have a holistic view of any project undertaken. This view comes into play when you see the integration of all the facets and requirements of the project.

An interior designer must have practical and technical expertise, as well as an understanding of the aesthetics, of all elements that make up the interior environment. The designer must understand how people use and respond to these elements. It is not a matter of understanding the individual elements in an interior, but the elements as they interact with each other.

We live, work, and play in a three-dimensional world—spending on average about 80 percent of our time each day indoors.

Interior design deals with the human-built environment. . . . It touches all that we do in both our personal and professional lives. What we see and touch—the environment that surrounds us and how that makes us feel—is most often noticed, and is a direct result of interior design or a lack thereof.

Interior design affects people's lives to a greater degree than any other profession. It affects how we live and move and feel in the built environment—the very quality of our lives.

*Linda Elliott Smith, FASID*

› They are problem solvers foremost. They assess and identify the design problem and they develop the design solution through critical thinking.

*Robin Wagner, ASID, IDEC*

› Interior designers perform a wide range of tasks, so every day is different. From the obvious, like space planning and color selections, to the not so obvious, like personal counseling to late-night photo shoots, there is always something new to do as an interior designer.

*Lindsay Sholdar, ASID*

› First, what I don't do: I don't design anything alone. I illustrate planning concepts with well-developed graphic representations and discuss how these concepts may improve the performance in an office.

*Lisa Henry, ASID*

› Interior designers design interior environments that affect the human experience, to establish a clear understanding of place. That is, they create an identity or image for a commercial or private building, to elicit a personal response such as to relax, entertain, have fun, buy product, heal, learn, teach, impress, and so on, or to support a particular task, that is, to create an efficient and ergonomically correct work environment.

*Rosalyn Cama, FASID*

› In my world, they act as psychiatrists and problem solvers. People need help figuring out how to make their lifestyles fit their residences—and the same goes for their commercial spaces. A designer needs to listen to their clients, their needs, and how they and their families or coworkers use the given spaces. Designs need to provide comfort and functionality—and it is a designer's job to integrate both. Additionally, I feel that my job is to truly make my clients' lives easier. Most people don't want to think about the process of creating the design whether on paper or in true action. I have found that many clients also do not want any part of the construction/deconstruction process either. Therefore, a designer can also take on the role of "go-between" or project manager (to use a more commonly understood phrase).

*Marilizabeth Polizzi, Allied Member ASID*

› There are a broad range of skills involved in interior design. A designer or firm may specialize in a small segment or cover all the tasks involved. We typically clarify a program defining the

constraints and goals for the project, offer and refine creative solutions for the interior space and associated details, make selections for finishes and furnishings, document our findings, create budgets, contract labor, make purchases, and manage the implementation of the project.

*Sally Howard D'Angelo, ASID, AIA Affiliate*

› For my practice, I spend a great deal of time as a client advocate. I help clients sort through the choices that appear overwhelming, to reach a solution that is practical, interesting, and aesthetically pleasing. I want to find solutions to the problems at hand, whether the problems are large or small. If the problems or things that annoy the user have not been dealt with, the project is not a success. Masking something that is not functioning well by making it pretty is not effective design. Another definition of what designers (at least for myself) do is about 5 percent actual design work and 95 percent project administration and oversight.

*Sharmin Pool-Bak, ASID, CAPS, LEED-AP*

› The NCIDQ (National Council for Interior Design Qualification) definition is the best example to me of what interior designers do. However, I believe one of the best definitions is in an article by Jill Pable at Florida State University (and her colleague) that discusses the difference between "filled and fulfilling spaces." I believe that interior designers do not fill, but design and create "fulfilling spaces" based on client needs and desires within a given budget and timeline.

*Stephanie Clemons, Ph.D., ASID, FIDEC*

› Analyze client needs, educate clients, use acquired knowledge to provide solutions that support clients' needs, productivity, strategic plan, and corporate brand.

*Terri Maurer, FASID*

› Interior designers are problem solvers. They provide solutions by addressing such issues as spatial planning, acoustics, and lighting. In addition to creating a functional space, a designer strives to provide an aesthetically pleasing environment for their client.

*Teresa Ridlon, Allied Member ASID*

› If they are doing what I feel they *should* be doing, they work as part of a team with the clients to design spaces that will help the clients lead healthier, happier, safer lives. This goal should be the same whether designing residential or nonresidential spaces. That is the short definition.

*Drue Lawlor, FASID*

› We help create the environments where people live, work, and play.

*Melinda Sechrist, FASID*

› Interior design projects are the design and renovation of interior space within buildings. The interior designer's role is to lead the design process for interior design projects. Interior designers listen to their clients during the programming phase. They bring new research to the design solutions. They create design solutions that meet their clients' needs and exceed their expectations. They document projects for building permit application. They observe construction. Interior designers collaborate with other disciplines throughout the entire project (architects, engineers, lighting designers, vendors, and contractors).

*Rachelle Schoessler Lynn, CID, ASID, LEED-AP, Allied Member AIA*

› Interior designers protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public while creating environments that are appropriate and enjoyable to the occupants of a space.

*Alexis B. Bounds, Allied Member ASID*

› Interior designers create a functioning environment that is aesthetically inspiring. This environment is specific to the client's goals and adheres to all applicable life, health, and safety codes. Green and universal design should be strongly considered.

*Carolyn Ann Ames, Allied Member ASID*

› When it comes right down to it, we're advocates for the end users of a space. We put ourselves in the homeowner's, student's, patient's, customer's, visitor's, or worker's place and create spaces that are safe, comfortable, beautiful, functional, and inviting. Unlike what's shown on TV design shows, design is much more than aesthetics—it's about making better interiors for all of us to inhabit.

*Charrisse Johnston, ASID, LEED-AP, CID*

› Problem solve. We create attractive but functional environments.

*Chris Socci, Allied Member ASID*

› An interior designer is a professional that has the ability through experience and education to create interior environments that serve their end users with functionality and preserve the health, safety, and welfare of the public. Professional interior designers are able to visually enhance spaces. But more importantly, they are able to identify spatial challenges and overcome those obstacles with creative solutions that are developed through researching and observing the physical environments.

*Shannon Mitchener, LEED-AP, Allied Member ASID, Associate IIDA*



## Is Interior Design for You?

Many people think that someone who wants to be an interior designer must be very creative or an artist. It certainly takes creativity to develop plans and design concepts to resolve a client's needs for a professionally designed home environment or commercial space. Few interior designers begin their quest to be part of this profession with innate artistic abilities. These creative or artistic skills are developed through course work and experience, as are the technical skills needed for the development of plans and drawings.

There are many ways to work in the profession as you will see in this book. Not all positions in interior design require a high level of skill in what might be considered artistic endeavors. You may find a place in the profession that uses other skills such as technical mastery of drafting, project organization and management, or the selling skills. The fact that there are many ways in which to work in this profession is an interesting truth for anyone who:

**Enjoys solving problems.**

**Has a concern for details.**

**Observes interiors and tries to figure out how to change them.**

**Can comfortably work with a team.**

**Has creative and artistic abilities and interests.**

If you are interested in interior spaces, find yourself wondering about their design, or can think of ways to make them better, that is a strong first step that shows interest in the profession. Reading books about interior design is, of course, another strong indicator of interest. If you are in high school, you can talk to your guidance counselor or a teacher who teaches interior design, drafting, or art classes. You might also want to talk to an interior designer. Contact the local offices of the professional associations and perhaps they can give you the names of designers who teach interior design at a community college or university. Asking questions of those working in the field is a great way to find out if you are really suited for the profession. This book will give you an overview of the profession. You can also visit Web sites to help you learn more about the profession and career opportunities in interior design, such as [www.careersininteriordesign.com](http://www.careersininteriordesign.com), a joint effort sponsored by professional associations, educators, and testing organizations. The American Society of Interior Designers ([www.asid.org](http://www.asid.org)), International Interior Design Association ([www.iida.org](http://www.iida.org)), and Interior Designers of Canada ([www.interiordesigncanada.org](http://www.interiordesigncanada.org)) are the largest of the professional associations in the United States and Canada and can be contacted for information that can help you decide if becoming a professional interior designer is for you.

## High-End Residential, Construction Remodeling

**DONNA VINING, FASID, IIDA, RID, CAPS  
PRESIDENT, VINING DESIGN ASSOCIATES, INC.  
HOUSTON, TEXAS**



*What has been your greatest challenge as an interior designer?*

› Interpreting clients' wishes and giving them what they want and need.

*How important is interior design education in today's industry?*

› It is monumental. If we are to be a profession, we must have a consistent, quality educational program, ever changing and evolving as today's advances move faster and faster.

*What led you to enter your design specialty?*

› My mother was a huge influence. She was my very own Sister Parish, always decorating our home. When I was a teenager, she opened her own antique shop in a small house on the same property as our home.

*What are your primary responsibilities and duties?*

› Everything. When you are the owner, you have all the financial and managerial type of responsibilities and duties as well as being the lead interior designer. In residential, clients want you, and even though my staff teams on all projects, I am heavily involved in most of them.

*What is the most satisfying part of your job?*

› Hearing the clients say they love our work.

TOP LEFT Private residence: master suite. Donna Vining, FASID, Vining Design Associates, Inc., Houston, Texas.

PHOTOGRAPH: ROB MUIR

LEFT Private residence: living room. Donna Vining, FASID, Vining Design Associates, Inc., Houston, Texas.

PHOTOGRAPH: ROB MUIR

***What is the least satisfying part of your job?***

› Depending on others for my end product—so many people are involved, and it is hard to make things happen just like I want them.

***What is the most important quality or skill of a designer in your specialty?***

› Listening skills and teaching clients what is best for them and their lifestyle.

***What advice would you give someone who wants to be an interior designer?***

› Take business and psychology classes and realize that the actual design portion is a small part of the business.

***Who or what experience has been a major influence on your career?***

› My mother was a huge influence. And once I was in the field, the ability to make things beautiful but always functional and durable.



Private residence: dining room. Donna Vining, FASID, Vining Design Associates, Inc., Houston, Texas.

PHOTOGRAPH: ROB MUIR

## ***Design of Active Living and Aging-in-Place Communities***

**SHANNON FERGUSON, IIDA**  
**PROJECT MANAGER**  
**ID COLLABORATIVE**  
**GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA**

***What led you to enter your design specialty?***

› Fate, I suppose. . . . After graduation I received an internship with a North Carolina design firm. When I started with them, they worked primarily with local clients in the healthcare and medical fields. After my internship, I stayed on with ID Collaborative and, as the years have progressed,

we have become more well-known in the senior living and active living communities. After procuring several large projects over the last few years I have had the privilege of progressing my skills in active-living communities and aging-in-place communities across the eastern and southern regions of the United States.

***What is the most important quality or skill of a designer in your specialty?***

› In my opinion the most important quality of an effective designer is being able to listen to your client's expectations and desires and turn them into reality.

*How is your specialty different from other specialties?*

› My specialty is different from others because not only do I deal with people's work environment, but also their living environments. To me a living environment is such a personal space that it can either bring happiness or contribute to sadness and depression. So often you see retirement communities and nursing homes that are depressing and run-down. If you had to live in this every day, I would venture to say that you might be subject to despondency and, in turn, a shortened life span. Therefore, dealing with living environments, especially in the aging population, gives me a responsibility to bring renewed life into the environments that I design.

*What are your primary responsibilities and duties in your position?*

› I serve as a project manager and see projects through from start to finish. Initially, I work with clients to determine their scope of services needed as well as work with them on forming a budget for the project. I work with ID Collaborative's principal on design contracts for projects. Once contracts are approved, I work with the client from schematic design planning into design development through to construction documents and contract administration. Throughout this process, I present interior finish schemes, furnishings, and so on for client approval. We are then able to determine the overall concept for the space, its use, and its character. I work with architects, contractors, and other consultants on all aspects of the project including floor plan layouts, reflected ceiling plans, millwork details, architectural details, building codes, and the like.

Once construction is complete and furnishings are installed, a final punch list is completed with the client and the project is followed through to the very end to be sure the client is satisfied and all work is complete.

*What is the most satisfying part of your job?*

› The most satisfying part of my job is working with the client and assisting them in conceptualizing their thoughts and imaginations and turning them into reality.

*What is the least satisfying part of your job?*

› My least favorite part is the feeling that I have not delivered or captured the true form of the client's concept.

*Who or what experience has been a major influence in your career?*

› My firm as a whole has been a major influence on my career. We have a fantastic group of people who all have different specialties that are remarkable and inspiring to me as a designer.

*What has been your greatest challenge as an interior designer?*

› Education of clients and the community. Many people have a misconception as to what it actually is that interior designers do. After watching all of the shows on Bravo and HGTV, they think that interior designers are flamboyant individuals who swoop into a job, do a quick makeover, and are out of the picture as fast as they came in. These shows do not provide the public with any background information on credentials, requirements for interior design certification, or education, and certainly do not provide the public with an actual picture of what true interior designers do on a daily basis.

## GETTING IN

› Getting a job in interior design today requires an appropriate education and mastering skills from drafting and drawing to effective communication. It involves learning technical areas of construction, mechanical systems, and codes as well as showing that you have the interest and enthusiasm to work in the profession. Getting in also means knowing what kind of job you want and whether you want to work in a residential or commercial specialty. You also need to consider if you would work best in a small studio, a large multidisciplinary firm, or an intermediate-size practice.

When it comes time to research job possibilities, be sure to do your homework on the companies in which you are interested. If you know something about the company before the interview, you will make a far better impression at the interview. Investigate the style and type of interior design work that the firm does by researching trade magazines and local print media. Look for the firm's Web site and carefully examine as much of it as you can. Talk to professors who know something about the company. Your college placement office might be able to help as well.

You can also find out about possible jobs and about a specific company by researching:

- Department of Commerce articles and reports
- Board of Technical Registration
- Local magazines and newspapers
- Yellow Pages directory
- Dun & Bradstreet Reference Book
- Professional association chapters
- Registrar of Contractors
- Family and friends

You may need two or more versions of your résumé, each specific to a type of design work you are interested in obtaining. For example, you should organize your résumé differently when you apply for a position with a firm primarily engaged in residential design work versus one that specializes in hospitality interior design. The résumé also should be somewhat different if you are applying to a large multidisciplinary firm versus a small firm. The same goes for your portfolio. Showing a commercial firm a portfolio of residential projects could be a waste of time all around. Chapter 3 discusses résumés and portfolios in more detail.

Looking for a job in interior design—whether your first one as you finish school or when you move from one firm to another—is a job in itself. It is important that you go about it in a sensible and organized fashion. The more prepared you are, the more homework you do before you even start your search, the greater your chances of gaining that ideal position. Additional information on the topics related to finding a job can be found in Chapter 3.

## Corporate Headquarters, Offices, and Retail Spaces

FREDERICK MESSNER, IIDA  
 PRINCIPAL, PHOENIX DESIGN ONE, INC.  
 TEMPE, ARIZONA

*What has been your greatest challenge as an interior designer?*

› There is a fine balance between the activity of design and the need to handle all the business activities that go into the normal day. They are both necessities and constantly in competition for the ten hours per day we seem to feel are required.

*What led you to enter your design specialty?*

› From a young age, I was always interested in how things go together and in drawing. As I learned more about the tools of our trade, I became more interested in how I could manipulate space to affect people. My interest is in commercial design because I believe it has the potential to have great impact.

*What are your primary responsibilities and duties?*

› Design mentor, financial control, strategic planning for the design firm, human resources, design and project management, marketing, and father confessor.

*What is the most satisfying part of your job?*

› Teaching the many aspects of design as well as practicing the same is the reward that is most enjoyed.

*What is the least satisfying part of your job?*

› The challenge of dissatisfied clients due to any number of reasons is a part of the job that can be, at times, very difficult.

*What is the most important quality or skill of a designer in your specialty?*

› The ability to listen and interpret wants and needs with the best possible solution is the mark of a good commercial designer. In the design of office space, it takes knowledge of competing



TOP LEFT Corporate headquarters: entry.  
 Fred Messner, IIDA, Phoenix Design One, Inc.,  
 Tempe, Arizona.

PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTIAAN BLOK

LEFT Corporate headquarters: reception area.  
 Fred Messner, IIDA, Phoenix Design One, Inc.,  
 Tempe, Arizona.

PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTIAAN BLOK