

# ARE YOU AN UNDISCOVERED INTERIOR DESIGNER?

PART5

Styles, Periods

&

Design History



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## Styles, Periods and Design History. Are you an Undiscovered Interior Designer? - Part 5

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## Styles, Periods and Design History



This topic covers the varying [styles and themes](#) that have evolved over the recorded history of design. It covers the classics from Egyptian, Greek and Roman proportion types of construction and decoration to modern classics such as Art Deco and Art Nouveau and completes your education of the different forms of decoration and how they have evolved and what has influenced interior design over the centuries.

With this knowledge you are able to identify different existing themes so that you are able to complement existing design, design to a traditional system or design with eclectic flair. Eventually as you develop your own sense of what is correct and what is not, you begin to create your own original designs. By studying the classics and the differing styles and periods you learn what the people who originally developed those styles understood and applied to their designs. It is similar to the foundation of a building. The more solid or well-constructed it is the better to build upon and so it is with design education.

The more you learn about existing systems and styles the better you are able to design yourself because you have an increased knowledge of what works and what doesn't.

This invariably increases your design efficiency (making you faster and better than your competitors) as you are not continually on a learning curve through the whole process. For example [how to use period influences in decorating your home](#) (or someone else's)

So the topic covers

- The ability to define the different periods in history
- The ability to define the different styles

- The ability to define colloquial styles
- The ability to define contemporary styles and retro
- The ability to combine different styles and periods to create an eclectic style
- The ability to define individual styles - personal taste
- The ability to discuss using this information as reference for design

## Decorating Styles

If you met a new person at a paint store and you were asked to describe your decorating style, how would you describe it? Would you understand the question? Would you know how to explain yourself? It isn't hard to define your style. Everyone is an individual and no two individuals would have every room in their homes looking the same. However, a group of individuals may prefer a specific.....[read more](#)

## What is Style?

That gets your attention straight away, firstly because you want to make sure that you have it, secondly you want to make sure you keep it.

What is style really? Something we naturally have, something we crave or something that is achievable by following instructions?

Style in relation to interior design can mean many things but overall it sums up the ability to be able to create an interior that is "good taste" flows within the home, is harmonious, well balanced, comfortable, practical, aesthetically pleasing to the eye and an overall creation that is memorable.....[more](#)

## American Colonial Style



American Colonial homes in North America were similar to 18th Century European Country houses.

This was due to the early settlers immigrating with their previous countries decoration ideas.

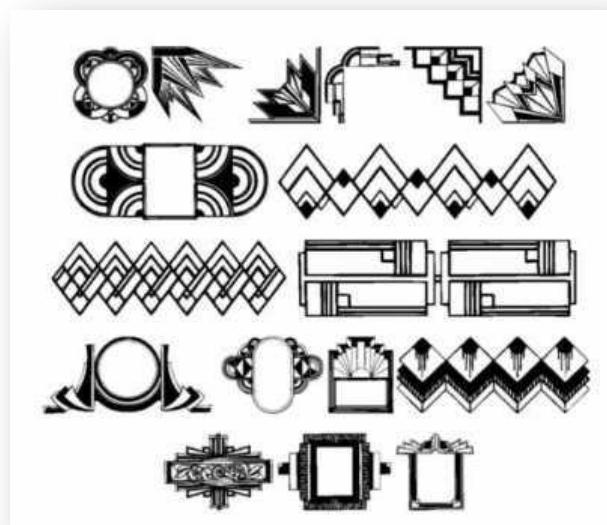
Their style was different in the fact that they simplified the look and made things .....[read more](#)

## Art Deco

Art Deco began in Europe, particularly Paris, in the early years of the 20th century but took off after World War I.

Unlike many design movements, mass production meant it wasn't just for the elite.

Art Deco rejected many traditional classical influences in favor of more streamlined, geometric forms, making use of..... [Read more](#)



## Art Nouveau

Art Nouveau exploded onto the design scene in Paris and London at the turn of the twentieth century.

It was the first original style that took inspiration from its surroundings, not history.

The late Victorians found this flamboyant and away-from-the-norm design rather shocking, and it was a.....[read more](#)



## Shaker Style

The Shakers were a religious sect founded in England in the late 1700's. The Shakers' design philosophy is one of necessity and usefulness. Once these elements are achieved, they believed in beauty. They were strong believers of common ownership and communal living and were persecuted for their beliefs.



They later immigrated to America and led peaceful lives of abstinence and celibacy. Because of their celibate beliefs, the Shaker community is slow to grow and the only way they can survive is by conversion.....[more](#)

## Biedermeier Style

Throughout the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century this style was fashionable in Germany and Austria and to a lesser extent Scandinavia. It was contemporary with the French Empire Style, with its classical shapes and solidity. The main differences in furniture were that it was more practical, less pretentious, the use of pale timber with detailed ebony inlay and only minimal amounts of carved and gilded decoration. The interior decoration followed the same unpretentious theme; the floor was kept simple, usually bare floorboards or parquet (light timber) and the wall simply painted in bright or pale single colors.



Biedermeier decoration and furniture can be recognized by its key factors – clarity, proportion and restraint. Decorative materials were marble and sandstone used for ornamentation. The dominating colors for the style were clair bois (pale wood) and black ebony inlay. As mentioned this was used for furniture but could also be seen on skirting boards, doors or other small areas. Airy light colors prevailed but vibrant contrasting colors to the pale timber could also be seen. Soft simple natural fabrics were used for drapery. Understated neo classical detail was simply columns, pilasters and urns. Again simple lines for chair legs, straight or sabre.

If you are interested in this topic, further reading is available from <http://styles-and-periods.interiordezine.com>

## Period Decoration

Just as certain music and aromas invoke warm memories of good and loving times, a person can be fond of a certain time in history. This doesn't mean if you are a Revolutionary War buff that you would go around dressed in a uniform or wig from that era, it just means that this period brings you pleasant and happy thoughts. You can use pieces of different period influences in.....[more](#)

### Edwardian

The Edwardian era saw the beginning of a new century with a new king and a new style of interior design.

The heavy, dark, cluttered look of the Victorian era was gone, and in its place, something much.....[more](#)



### French Empire Style

Throughout the early 19th Century the French Empire Style evolved from the court of Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte.

It used heavy classical designs and geometric form whilst retaining an air of fineness along with soft draped fabrics and highly polished veneers.

Strong colors were prevalent in interiors introduced when the French gentry ....[more](#)



## Georgian

The Georgian period is often divided into early, mid and late Georgian period. The three phases are a continuation of each other as the style changed and took shape as the century moved on lighter colors and decoration prevailed.

Entertaining was popular and interiors were all the rage due to the availability of print books showing design and architectural examples providing an [.....more](#)



## Gothic

Gothic period design was influenced by Roman and Medieval architecture. Its initial design period was c.1150 to 1550, but saw a revival in the 19th century by the Victorians.

Gothic design was the first true ecclesiastical style and was symbolic of the triumph of the Catholic church over paganism in Europe. The new age of soaring cathedrals meant the initiation of new methods of building, to [.....more](#)



## Victorian

Victorian period design was based on imitation and reproduction, made easier by the induction of mass production.

Many different styles were revived, and often more than one influence featured on a single piece. The **Victorian era** saw a great change in the middle-class home, as goods became more available for the general population, and pride in the home emerged.....[more](#)



## History of Furniture

Furniture history is a fascinating subject. Just seeing how the range of styles of furniture grew with the increased knowledge of the craftsmen making it and the increased again as new materials and techniques became available to use.

Furniture style was dictated by the ruling monarch of the country and the conditions of the era and availability of construction materials and tools to work with. Furniture design was also influenced by the knowledge of the designers or craftsmen, overseas trade or incentives and the economic conditions of the country.

This topic requires that you have an understanding and memory retention of furniture history. Of course the reason for knowing this history is so that you as a skilled designer can apply it to the appropriate situation, identify pieces for your interiors and if need be, create that particular theme for the style.



With an understanding of this subject you are also able to see how and why types of furniture have developed over the centuries and apply it to your thinking in modern design techniques, as well as have that ability to put together an eclectic interior, traditional interior or modern look and be able to justify it with firm reasoning and design resolve.

To see learn more about the different styles covered below simply follow these links at the end of each subject:

## Louis 14th

The craftsmen of France were far more advanced than the English, therefore the English craftsmen took their furniture design inspiration from.....[more](#)



## Louis 15th

The son of Louis 14th was only five years old when his father died and too young to take the reign. The Duke on Orleans was appointed Regent and took control until his death in 1723.

Changes happened in this time and the extravagant grandeur of the court was ....[more](#)



## Louis 16th

The reaction against the work of the 18th century as well as the continued financial difficulties of his predecessor created a new style of furniture.

The design became more refined, most of the shape work was removed and with the Queen's influence, (Marie Antoinette), who preferred the simpler forms a new style was developed.

The major characteristics of Louis 16th furniture are the....[more](#)



## Evolution of English Furniture (Tudor to gothic)

Throughout the history of furniture, the changing styles have arrived by the conditions ruling at any one time. These conditions may have been the result of:

- The limits of knowledge, wood expansion and contraction
- The limits of equipment, only tools and saws
- The availability of timber, local supply, only solid timber
- Economic conditions

Henry VII, came to the throne following the war of the roses in 1485, and was the first Tudor monarch. During this time Britain had found peace and order not previously known.



Henry VIII succeeded his father in 1509, and inherited his accumulated treasures. He continued to change the Gothic style by keeping up his father's interest in foreign artists and craftsmen. More economical printing materials were available which allowed for pattern books from the continent....[more](#)

## Elizabethan

Renaissance ideas were entering Britain during this period. Oak was still the main timber used. Strap work carving was popular and cut directly into solid timber furniture.

Furniture legs were mainly bulbous – carved at the top.

### Elizabethan Furniture Characteristics:

- Heavy bulbous tables – bulbous turning often with much carved ornament such as gadrooning, nailing and acanthus leaves.
- Tables with 4 or 6 bulbous legs with stretcher rails at the bottom as a footrest to keep feet off the floor rushes.
- Melon bulb turning.
- Inlaid fruitwood.....[read more](#)



## Jacobean

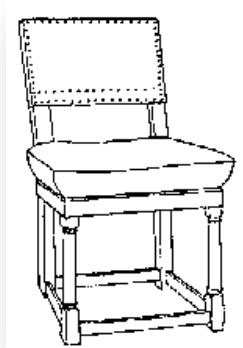
Oak was still the timber used during the reigns of James I and Charles I. The furniture retained many [Elizabethan](#) characteristics but the ornament gradually became less prominent.

The ornamentation became smaller, lighter with flatter carving, and carpets were now being introduced.

- Gate Leg Table – circular, elliptical and rectangular tables made their appearance.
- Bulbous became oval and left plain before disappearing altogether.
- Chest of drawers developed with geometrically.....[read more](#)



The changing of women's fashion, in particular their dresses, led to  
....[read more](#)



***Farthingdale Chair c 1620***

## Commonwealth

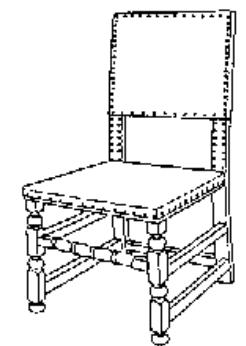
Puritan Cromwell's overthrew the monarchy, which saw the strict abolition of all frivolity.

The Puritan scorned even the subdued richness of the [Jacobians](#). Therefore function prevailed over decoration. Any moldings were applied rather than carved.....[read more](#)



### **Cromwellian Chair c. 1655**

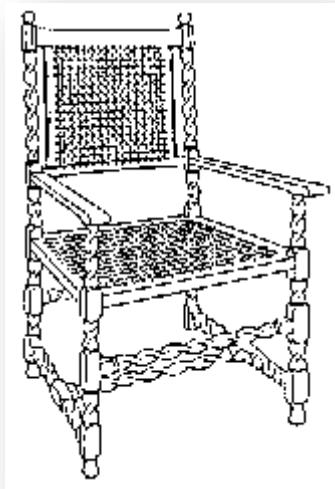
- Leather was used to replace rich velvet and tapestries.
- Stuffed seats and backs were far too luxurious to be permitted.
- Slung seats and backs were used.
- Open slat chair backs.



## **Restoration**

### **Restoration Furniture Period Features**

- Walnut veneer replaced solid oak timber.
- Chair frames were sometimes gilded or silvered.
- Upholstery and silk fringes became fashionable.
- The wing chair was introduced, upholstered stools and benches in elaborate design were popular.
- The first bookcase made an appearance. Books were previously kept in a chest or cupboard.
- Visible Drawers.
- Wardrobes were used to hold rich and varied clothes.
- The Flemish S scroll.
- Octagonal shape.....[read more](#)



## **William and Mary**

This period was named after the marriage of the English Mary Stuart, the daughter of James II to the Dutch William of Orange.

The Dutch prince brought with him new ideas of comfort for the ordinary person. The furniture in his reign saw the first beginnings of real comfort. Upholstery became common. The chair backs were shaped slightly to fit the shape of your back and the back legs were splayed out at the bottom to prevent the chair from tipping backward.....[read more](#)



## Queen Anne

The gracious and comfortable furniture from the Dutch influence continued and the English craftsman were developing their own skills. They had learned the foreign techniques and....[read more](#)



Walnut was still the most popular timber being used for furniture making, most of these articles featured cross-grained moldings, rounded friezes and with many veneered surfaces, marquetry was replaced with fine carving. The cross-grained moldings was a feature that was exclusive to walnut work. It was not practical to make short-grained moldings' in the solid, so a thin layer of cross-grained walnut was glued to a long grained backing. Time was then allowed for shrinkage and any splits were then filled in.

## Georgian

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## Mahogany

The importation of Mahogany in the 1720's firstly from Cuba, and later from Honduras generally replaced Walnut as the main timber for furniture making. Mahogany had much better characteristics, it was not attacked by worm, it carved with a crispness (which led to a revival in carving) and it was less likely to shrink and twist.

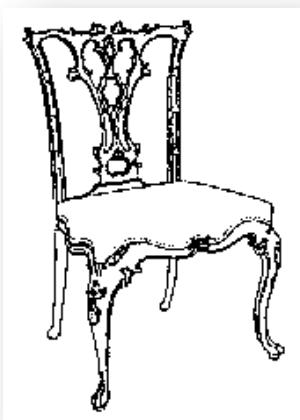
Furniture was now being imported from other countries, China and France.

## Chippendale

This is a term used to describe furniture designed by Thomas Chippendale.

In 1754 he became known worldwide with his book publication “the Gentleman’s and Cabinetmakers’ Director”.

The book was an advertising journal put out by a tradesman aimed at potential customers. Chippendale was a functional designer and never ....[read more](#)



*Chippendale Rococo Chair c. 1750*

- Cupids bow top rails.
- Fretwork, ladder back and ribbon back chairs.
- Piecrust edge tables, tilt top, birdcage gallery, tripod base.
- Claw and ball foot with Acanthus leaf carving on the knee.
- Arm supports set back to accommodate

## Regency

Regency followed a style in France after the coronation of Napoleon as Emperor (Empire Style).

Prince George became Regent from 1811-1820 – this was a period of classical furniture. It was then the fashion to copy actual furniture of the classical Roman and Greek times. If they were not identically copied, they were made as close as possible to the classical decoration forms. Winged Griffins, lions heads, animal legs, Roman Gods: anything that was popular in ancient .....[read more](#)



## Hepplewhite

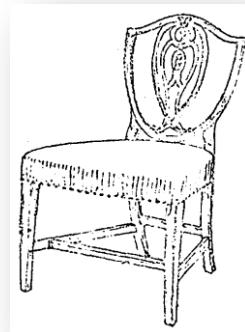
George Hepplewhite owned his own factory and made furniture for Robert [Adam](#).

He had a fondness for the curved line and introduced this into his design wherever possible. Hepplewhite moved away from the ....[read more](#)



### ***Features of Hepplewhite Furniture***

- Used straight tapered legs and also French cabriole leg.
- Used decorations such as wheatears, husks, urns, draped cloth, and Prince of Wales feathers.
- Cylinder fall used on writing table Reeded chair legs, also single corner reed on square legs.
- Modern sideboard with concave ends and bow front center, searing end.
- Chest of drawers with curved base.
- Toilet table (no running water – table to hold basin).....[read more](#)



## Adam

Robert Adam was a Scottish architect. He spent a lot of time studying in Italy.

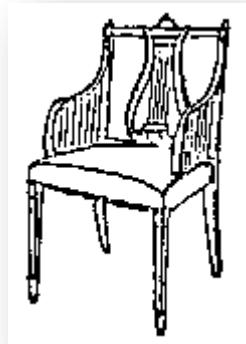
While he was there a large amount of excavation work was taking place, especially around Pompeii. These excavations and findings of the 1750's had a large influence on his work.

When he returned to England he became the Court Architect to George III. There were already changes happening in the Georgian furniture, the flowing....[read more](#)



### **Adam Furniture Characteristics**

- Used other tradesmen to produce his designs.
- Oval and shield back chairs.
- Never used Cabriole legs he preferred to use straight, tapered legs.  
[...read more](#)



### **Sheraton**



Thomas Sheraton was a trained Cabinetmaker and Carver, but was primarily a designer.

Sheraton continued to use Mahogany as his timber, but preferred satinwood, rosewood or painted finishes for his lighter drawing room furniture. He had a passion for mechanical parts and designed many types of secretaire or bureau. For example open a top drawer to reveal a writing surface, which ...[read more](#)

### **Victorian**

Victorian furniture is popular today, probably due to its accessibility more than the aesthetics. There was plenty of furniture made due to the change in history of methods of manufacture, the machine had taken over and was able to produce mass amounts of **Victorian furniture** to satisfy the vast demand by the middle class people that desired it.



Furniture history changed forever through the Victorian period. It became desirable to have a home laden with furniture to show your status to your peers. Throughout history Queen Victoria identified herself with the middle class. Therefore the furniture of this period was made for an ever-increasing middle class population..... [Read more](#)

Furniture history is an extensive but deeply interesting and useful subject. As an Interior designer you become an authority on furniture, the development and appropriateness. Your knowledge of antiques can be very profitable!

## American Furniture

When the “Mayflower” landed in America in 1620, furniture was not one of the priorities that the passengers had made. Therefore they arrived without it. As life was not easy on their arrival, furniture was still not a priority; they simply made do and improvised with what they had and what they could find. Shelter was their major priority, making do with tents and makeshift houses.

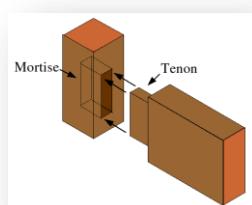
Once they became established and permanent houses were built in settlements, they then required furniture. In the beginning, the tools and timber fashioned the design, it was of crude design and solely functional, constructed from riven timber with the adze. This was known as “Early Colonial” furniture. It was generally made of softer timbers as they were easier to work with, Pine, Birch, Maple and sometimes walnut and cherry. As they were handmade, the design and construction was simple and honest, stool seats and solid timber boards as tabletops with square legs (peg), made from straight-grained logs. These items were strong and functional.

[Read more.....](#)

The early design was influences by the country of origin of the settlers, but a distinctive American style gradually formed. The furniture became more refined with the use of curved scrolls and turned shapes, the cyma curve was introduced and was a very predominant form.

Top rails of furniture were decorated with it, and the turned legs, which now replaced the square legs, were more refined.

The materials available still influenced the style of construction. The mortise and tenon held together with wooden pegs and dove tail joints were the methods used for jointing the furniture as glue, nails and screws used today were not available or even heard of.



The colonial furniture that you see today is manufactured by modern machine methods but based on the popular Early Colonial designs. The cyma recta shapes and “honest” construction have been retained, and incorporated into new pieces of furniture that the early settlers did not

have, but are necessary for us today. Items have been rescaled to suit today's homes, and upholstery for added comfort has been added. Native timbers are still used, but the finishes have changed, originally only scrubbed, today they are stained and polished.

Colonial and Windsor chairs have very similar features, they are of crude design and honestly made products of timber. The American Colonial style had its origins in England but managed to create its own distinctive look. There are many other styles that followed England's lead, American William and Mary, American Queen Anne, American Chippendale style. These styles were developed until the American Revolution ended in 1783. The Federal Style was next, encompassing the decade after 1790, it has its own name but the designs closely followed those of Adam, Hepplewhite and Sheraton.



If you are interested in this topic, further reading is available at

[Eileen Gray Table](#)

[Classic Furniture](#)

[Books](#)

[Bauhaus](#)

[Alvar Aalto Viipuri Stools](#)

[Modern Furniture Timeline](#)

[Frank Lloyd Wright](#)

[Arne Jacobsen Egg Chair](#)

[Charles Eames](#)

[George Nelson Marshmallow Sofa](#)

[Charles Rennie Mackintosh](#)

[Eero Saarinen Tulip Chair](#)

[Jean Prouve Antony Chair](#)

[Gerrit Rietveld Zig Zag Chair](#)

[Le Corbusier](#)

[Marcel Breuer Wassily Chair](#)

[Mies van der Rohe](#)

[Philippe Starck](#)

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## Summary

*This was a selection of information about styles, periods and design history – we hope that you now have some insight into the life of an interior designer. Please take advantage of the other ebooks and ecourses available.*

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