

History of Interior Design

History of Interior Design – Study Notes

1. Foundations & Early Influences

Period	Key Characteristics	Representative Examples
Prehistoric (c. 30,000 – 3,000 BC)	Functional shelters; use of natural materials; symbolic cave paintings.	Lascaux cave (France).
Ancient Civilizations	Interior spaces expressed power, religion, and social hierarchy.	• Egypt – tomb chambers, hieroglyphic wall décor. • Mesopotamia – mud-brick homes with reed mats. • Indus Valley – organized floor plans, courtyards.
Classical Antiquity (c. 800 BC – 500 AD)	Emphasis on proportion, symmetry, and order; use of columns, mosaics, frescoes.	• Greek – peristyle houses, painted walls. • Roman – atrium, impluvium, elaborate frescoes (Pompeii).

2. Middle Ages to Renaissance (500 – 1600)

Era	Design Trends	Notable Innovations
Medieval (500 – 1400)	Dark, utilitarian interiors; heavy wood beams; tapestries for insulation & storytelling.	Gothic vaulted ceilings; stained-glass windows.
Renaissance (1400 – 1600)	Revival of classical proportion; harmonious rooms; frescoed ceilings; decorative plasterwork.	<i>Vitruvian</i> principles applied to interior layout; <i>quadratura</i> illusion painting.
Key Figures	Filippo Brunelleschi, Leon Battista Alberti – treatises on proportion and space.	

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3. Baroque, Rococo & Neoclassicism (1600-1800)

Style	Visual Language	Typical Elements
Baroque (c. 1600-1750)	Drama, movement, rich color, contrast of light & shadow.	Ornate plaster, gilded mouldings, grand staircases.
Rococo (c. 1720-1780)	Lightness, asymmetry, pastel palette, playful motifs.	Curvilinear furniture, elaborate mirrors, decorative panels.
Neoclassicism (c. 1750-1850)	Return to Greco-Roman restraint; symmetry, muted tones.	Columned rooms, plaster friezes, marble fireplaces.
Influential Designers	André-Charles Boulle (marquetry), Robert Adam (integrated interiors).	

4. 19th-Century Transformations

Movement	Socio-Economic Context	Design Impact
Industrial Revolution	Mass production of furniture, new materials (cast iron, steel).	Affordable, standardized interiors; rise of middle-class homes.
Victorian (1837-1901)	Eclectic historicism; moral symbolism.	Heavy drapery, patterned wallpapers, ornate woodwork.
Arts & Crafts (1860-1910)	Reaction against industrial excess; emphasis on craftsmanship.	Simple forms, natural materials, built-in furniture (William Morris).
Art Nouveau (1890-1910)	Organic, flowing lines; integration of art and architecture.	Whiplash curves, stained glass, custom metalwork (Victor Horta).

5. Early 20th Century – Modernism