

Where Interior Architecture and Design Belongs

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## **Introduction**

As a human activity, interior design is older than architecture. as a coherent profession identified by the label interior design, it was born yesterday (Gueft,1992,p.21). At the 1931 conference that produced the American Institute of Interior Decorators (AIID), its future first president, William R.Moore, drafted a definition of the profession which, though simpler than the one ASID now uses, is absolutely consistent at that time, he labeled the interior designer an interior decorator and named the society accordingly (Gueft,1992,p.21).

An interior- the proximate environment- is not only space to shape, enclose, plan, organize, light, and ventilate, but to furnish and adorn, providing an arena for arts without number (Gueft,1992,p.21). Over time, many of these arts have preempted attention, especially where the shaping and organization of the space were fixed by tradition. that is why there are more histories of the decorative arts than of interior design. That is why there are more historic. (Gueft,1992,p.21).

As interior designers, we are creatively working to curate a space that evokes a specific concept or emotion (The art and science of interior design,2023, [www.alderandtweed.com](http://www.alderandtweed.com)). Designing a beautiful space is so much more than placing throw pillows and accessorizing, it is an intricate balance of creativity and mathematical proportion that produces a breathtaking space (The art and science of interior design,2023, [www.alderandtweed.com](http://www.alderandtweed.com)).

Some individuals believe that interior design belongs to science, as we can find in the quote of Sullivan's famous axiom, "form follows function," other individuals believe that interior design belongs to art, as we can find in the quote "Art for art's sake" in the aesthetic movement. The following article illustrates and analyzes the above-mentioned attitudes.

## **Interior design as a science**

The scientific community was never particularly interested in the design world. But in the second half of the 20th century, it was recognised that science had a communication problem (Bringing Design to Science,2017,www.borism.medium.com). In 1985, the Royal Society published a highly influential report with the title The Public Understanding of Science (Bringing Design to Science,2017,www.borism.medium.com). The report recognises the importance of communicating the results of scientific research to a wider public (Bringing Design to Science,2017,www.borism.medium.com). While mentioning the term “design” just occasionally, the report has strong implications for the relationship between design and science (Bringing Design to Science,2017,www.borism.medium.com).

The responsibilities for design are fairly obvious (Bringing Design to Science,2017,www.borism.medium.com). Communicating the history, the process and the results of science to a wider public is an immense design challenge. In this context, design offers great powers and possibilities (Bringing Design to Science,2017,www.borism.medium.com). Be it the creation of a museum exhibit, the design of an information graphic or the interactive simulation of an experiment, design can convey scientific insights in an intelligent, informative and delightful way (Bringing Design to Science,2017,www.borism.medium.com). In order to achieve this, the designer has to work closely with scientists and communicators and convey the right message and the right amount of complexity (Bringing Design to Science,2017,www.borism.medium.com).

This is all good and well. But I think design can do more (Bringing Design to Science,2017,www.borism.medium.com). I believe design can make contributions to the scientific progress itself (Bringing Design to Science,2017,www.borism.medium.com). Design can and should be part of science (Bringing Design to Science,2017,www.borism.medium.com). Instead

of bringing science to design, I would suggest to bring design to science (Bringing Design to Science,2017, [www.borism.medium.com](http://www.borism.medium.com)).

A researcher at the Minneapolis architecture office of the design and engineering firm HDR (How Interior Designers See Science in Lights and Colors,2017, [www.insidescience.org](http://www.insidescience.org)). One of the earliest studies to demonstrate this was conducted in the 1980s by Roger Ulrich (How Interior Designers See Science in Lights and Colors,2017, [www.insidescience.org](http://www.insidescience.org)). Ulrich compared the recovery of surgery patients who had views of natural scenery to the recovery of patients in similar conditions whose rooms faced a brick wall (How Interior Designers See Science in Lights and Colors,2017, [www.insidescience.org](http://www.insidescience.org)). Ulrich studied nine years of hospital records and showed that in comparison with the wall-view group, the patients with the tree view had shorter postoperative hospital stays, had fewer negative evaluative comments from nurses, took fewer moderately strong and strong medications, and had slightly lower scores for minor postsurgical complications (How Interior Designers See Science in Lights and Colors,2017, [www.insidescience.org](http://www.insidescience.org)). That study has been replicated time and again. (How Interior Designers See Science in Lights and Colors,2017, [www.insidescience.org](http://www.insidescience.org)).

Friedow points to a unique challenge of doing science on interior design: Researchers have to first build something, then test it and compare it with a control building, which requires time and money (How Interior Designers See Science in Lights and Colors,2017, [www.insidescience.org](http://www.insidescience.org)). It helps when clients allow researchers to come back and study a specific part of a design, she said. “It’s also hard to separate variables -- that’s one of the challenges, because there are so many things that impact patient outcomes” (How Interior Designers See Science in Lights and Colors,2017, [www.insidescience.org](http://www.insidescience.org)).

## Analyze

That said, it is true that there are also very scientific aspects of interior design (The Art and Science Interior Design,2015, [www.nainteriors.com](http://www.nainteriors.com)). Certain elements are grounded in math, for instance (The Art and Science Interior Design,2015, [www.nainteriors.com](http://www.nainteriors.com)). These can get extraordinarily technical. Room measurements, geometry and color balance can be very precise. (The Art and Science Interior Design,2015, [www.nainteriors.com](http://www.nainteriors.com)). If you are not skilled at these basic concepts it can be difficult to achieve the look and feel you want in a space (The Art and Science Interior Design,2015, [www.nainteriors.com](http://www.nainteriors.com)).

Now, I agree, there are rules in interior design; but they should never be followed for their own sake. They are merely the path we take to arrive at our end goal (The Art and Science Interior Design,2015, [www.nainteriors.com](http://www.nainteriors.com)). They're tools we use to create the outcome we're looking for (The Art and Science Interior Design,2015, [www.nainteriors.com](http://www.nainteriors.com)).

An example of this is geometry (The Art and Science Interior Design,2015, [www.nainteriors.com](http://www.nainteriors.com)). You do not want everything in your space to be squared off, right angles because it has the tendency to look too edgy and harsh (The Art and Science Interior Design,2015, [www.nainteriors.com](http://www.nainteriors.com)). Another example is scale and space planning—how to integrate furniture into a particular space (The Art and Science Interior Design,2015, [www.nainteriors.com](http://www.nainteriors.com)). It is important to consider the proper height, width and depth of furnishings and draperies to ensure the overall design of the room looks proportional (The Art and Science Interior Design,2015, [www.nainteriors.com](http://www.nainteriors.com)). These are the foundational elements you have to consider when designing a room—the “science” of design(The Art and Science Interior Design,2015, [www.nainteriors.com](http://www.nainteriors.com)).

Another example is lighting. Sometimes the colors in a room are too “cool” (The Art and Science Interior Design,2015, [www.nainteriors.com](http://www.nainteriors.com)). Simply changing the light bulbs from CFLs to incandescent bulbs (or my favorite, GE Reveal bulbs) will completely change the way we perceive the color temperature of the furnishings and décor in the room (The Art and Science Interior Design,2015, [www.nainteriors.com](http://www.nainteriors.com)).

The following citations from *Designerly Ways of Knowing* (Nigel Cross, 2007) have perfectly stated how design is different from science in terms of its methods and focuses:

“The scientific method is a pattern of problem-solving behavior employed in finding out the nature of what exists, whereas the design method is a pattern of behavior employed in inventing things of value which do not yet exist. Science is analytic; design is constructive.” Gregory, 1966 (Good Design is Science, not Art,2021, [www.uxdesign.cc](http://www.uxdesign.cc)).

“The natural sciences are concerned with how things are...Design, on the other hand, is concerned with how things ought to be.” Simon, 1969 (Good Design is Science, not Art,2021, [www.uxdesign.cc](http://www.uxdesign.cc)).

“To base design theory on inappropriate paradigms of logic and science is to make a bad mistake. Logic has interests in abstract forms. Science investigates extant forms. Design initiates novel forms.” March, 1976 (Good Design is Science, not Art,2021, [www.uxdesign.cc](http://www.uxdesign.cc)).

### **Interior Design as an art**

The Art. Within the design community, interior design is widely regarded as an artform (The art and science of interior design,2023, [www.alderandtweed.com](http://www.alderandtweed.com)). Like a painter, interior designers draw inspiration from outside sources, such as nature, people, and even pieces of written literature (The art and science of interior design,2023, [www.alderandtweed.com](http://www.alderandtweed.com)). Using this inspiration,

they are able to create a space that beautifully represents the individuality of their client and accentuates the artistry of design itself (The art and science of interior design,2023, [www.alderandtweed.com](http://www.alderandtweed.com)). Often, our interior designers strive to construct a space that evokes a positive emotion (The art and science of interior design,2023, [www.alderandtweed.com](http://www.alderandtweed.com)). With this goal in mind, they choose colors, materials, and shapes that propel the design towards its full potential (The art and science of interior design,2023, [www.alderandtweed.com](http://www.alderandtweed.com)). This creative process is what makes each home beautifully original; this is the process that makes being an interior designer so fulfilling (The art and science of interior design,2023, [www.alderandtweed.com](http://www.alderandtweed.com)).

Because interior design follows the same rules as art, it is important to keep in mind that there is no right or wrong (The Art and Science Interior Design,2015, [www.nainteriors.com](http://www.nainteriors.com)). A space must be functional. It must serve its purpose. But fundamentally, what makes one space “beautiful” and another “ugly” is simply a matter of opinion. (The Art and Science Interior Design,2015, [www.nainteriors.com](http://www.nainteriors.com)).

A space will look great to some and maybe only “so-so” to others. (The Art and Science Interior Design,2015, [www.nainteriors.com](http://www.nainteriors.com)). However, that’s also the beauty of interior design—it affords each person the ability to be unique. (The Art and Science Interior Design,2015, [www.nainteriors.com](http://www.nainteriors.com)). Because every space can be completely different, we’re allowed to be who we are and live how we want. Each design is as unique as our distinct personality. (The Art and Science Interior Design,2015, [www.nainteriors.com](http://www.nainteriors.com)). These are foundational elements. They’re objective. They’re scientific. However, outside of these, design is subjective—it’s art. And that’s important for us to remember. (The Art and Science Interior Design,2015, [www.nainteriors.com](http://www.nainteriors.com)).

Because after all, who’s “right”? Rembrandt or Picasso? Monet or da Vinci?

Design is beauty. Beauty is art. Art is opinion. And opinion is individual. (The Art and Science Interior Design,2015, [www.nainteriors.com](http://www.nainteriors.com)).

And that's a wonderful thing—because that allows us to express our own unique personality and individuality. (The Art and Science Interior Design,2015, [www.nainteriors.com](http://www.nainteriors.com)). Here's to your masterpiece!

## **Analyze**

When we treat design as though it is art, we do ourselves a disservice for a few reasons (Good Design is Science, not Art,2021, [www.uxdesign.cc](http://www.uxdesign.cc)). First, treating design like art propagates the fallacious notion that good design is subjective (Good Design is Science, not Art,2021, [www.uxdesign.cc](http://www.uxdesign.cc)). As I'll discuss later, good design is objective; it possesses measurable criteria that we can use to assess its value (Good Design is Science, not Art,2021, [www.uxdesign.cc](http://www.uxdesign.cc)).

You do not need Picasso-level intrinsic artistic talent to master digital product design (Good Design is Science, not Art,2021, [www.uxdesign.cc](http://www.uxdesign.cc)). Good design can absolutely be taught and teaching good design comprises a large part of my goal for this article (Good Design is Science, not Art,2021, [www.uxdesign.cc](http://www.uxdesign.cc)).

In fact, learning constitutes the only way a designer can get good (Good Design is Science, not Art,2021, [www.uxdesign.cc](http://www.uxdesign.cc)). When digital product designers treat their work as though it is art, we snub the countless hours we have spent studying, practicing, and failing as we worked our tails off to obtain our skills. Do not discredit your struggle by allowing your work to coalesce into a subjective art form. Treat your design work like the objective science it is. (Good Design is Science, not Art,2021, [www.uxdesign.cc](http://www.uxdesign.cc)).

Finally, treating design as though it is art severely limits what you can do with your designs (Good Design is Science, not Art,2021, [www.uxdesign.cc](http://www.uxdesign.cc)). Good design empathizes with its user and creatively solves its users' problems (Good Design is Science, not Art,2021, [www.uxdesign.cc](http://www.uxdesign.cc)). When we treat design as art, we tend to prioritize aesthetics and visuals over usability and problem-solving, which will deliver a severely limited product 11 times out of 10. (Good Design is Science, not Art,2021, [www.uxdesign.cc](http://www.uxdesign.cc)).

However, when it comes to the art consumed by masses, personal taste dominates the market (Good Design is Science, not Art,2021, [www.uxdesign.cc](http://www.uxdesign.cc)). For instance, someone who studied music at an advanced level might be able to explain why Punk Rock is overly simplified and takes less technical proficiency to master than some other genre (Good Design is Science, not Art,2021, [www.uxdesign.cc](http://www.uxdesign.cc)). But at the end of the day, the guys from Green Day comprise some of the wealthiest people on the planet because they created art that millions of people subjectively enjoy (Good Design is Science, not Art,2021, [www.uxdesign.cc](http://www.uxdesign.cc)). Similarly, the art that decorates my apartment I purchased out of subjective affinity (Good Design is Science, not Art,2021, [www.uxdesign.cc](http://www.uxdesign.cc)). There exist no criteria or checklists for proving the quality of the paintings on my walls. I simply like the paintings (Good Design is Science, not Art,2021, [www.uxdesign.cc](http://www.uxdesign.cc)).

Good design differs from art because massively successful designs are objectively good (Good Design is Science, not Art,2021, [www.uxdesign.cc](http://www.uxdesign.cc)).

Design — and especially interaction design — has many qualities, strategies and methodologies that can make substantial contributions to the scientific progress (Bringing Design to Science,2017,[www.borism.medium.com](http://www.borism.medium.com)). This statement is probably surprising — if not irritating — to many people as “design” is still associated with things like marketing, advertising, superficial

aesthetics, luxury, and commercialism (Bringing Design to Science,2017,www.borism.medium.com). While this association is not entirely wrong, it completely ignores the aspects of design that are extremely valuable for science: innovation, user-centeredness, deep aesthetics, problem-solving, contextual awareness (Bringing Design to Science,2017,www.borism.medium.com). Even the intuitive aspects of the design process are not irrational. (Bringing Design to Science,2017,www.borism.medium.com).

## **Conclusion**

Good Design solves problems. Art doesn't (at least not inherently).

Just like science, design seeks to identify — and ultimately solve — problems. The very first step of the scientific method is to identify a problem (Good Design is Science, not Art,2021, www.uxdesign.cc). Your designs should not exist solely for their aesthetic value (Good Design is Science, not Art,2021, www.uxdesign.cc). Art, on the other hand, does not inherently solve problems (Good Design is Science, not Art,2021, www.uxdesign.cc). I know that sometimes art advocates for certain causes, probes us to think deeply about societal injustice, and asks us to question internal biases (Good Design is Science, not Art,2021, www.uxdesign.cc). Good art can identify problems (Good Design is Science, not Art,2021, www.uxdesign.cc). But it doesn't usually offer its audience actionable steps to solve the problems it identifies (Good Design is Science, not Art,2021, www.uxdesign.cc). For both science and design, on the other hand, solving problems is the whole point (Good Design is Science, not Art,2021, www.uxdesign.cc).

Personally, I believe that interior design is Interdisciplinary. A good designer should be flexible enough to learn whatever need on the path to success. For instance, as a designer, if I intend to

design a wooden table, I should know about the instructions for the build. How can I design a special detail for my table if I would not have any knowledge about wood treatment?

Interior design is defined as the professional and comprehensive practice of creating an interior environment that addresses, protects, and responds to human need(s) (What is Interior Design,2023, [www.iida.org](http://www.iida.org)). It is the art, science, and business planning of a creative, technical, sustainable, and functional interior solution that corresponds to the architecture of a space while incorporating process and strategy, a mandate for well-being, safety, and health, with informed decisions about style and aesthetics (What is Interior Design,2023, [www.iida.org](http://www.iida.org)).

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