

DOCOMOMO ISC/Interior Design

Constitution of a Docomomo ISC on Interior Design

Introduction

It is fundamental to expand and deepen inside Docomomo International Organization the study, discussion and dissemination of *Interior Design* in order to create a discourse on this topic which transcends traditional boundaries and develops a plural perspective, either thematical, chronological or geographical.

This ISC would focus on Interior Design, an issue of major relevance for the Modern Movement and Modern Living. Interior Design gives us important spatial, ideological and aesthetic information necessary for a full awareness and experiencing of Modernity. The Modern Movement considered Interior Design as being in close relation with architecture and the other arts. This implied the demand for a new aesthetics in response to new technology and a need for a total work that embraces all the expressions into a *unitary* (and also utopian) environment for humanity. The Modern Interiors' identity is characterized by a strong and coherent style which results from a unity between architecture, furniture, design, decorative arts, utilitarian objects, equipment, textiles and light.

In the last ten years the study of Interior Design has been marked by an increasing interest in recent literature that focusses on interior spaces from all parts of the world. It summons architecture, design, fine arts and anthropology/sociology in an interdisciplinary approach, and this despite the fact that Interior Design or Interior Architecture is still often neglected. The subject clearly needs a more in-depth and wide ranging consideration in order to improve its appreciation, understanding and preservation. Questions like modernity, privacy, efficiency, economy, comfort, utility, and beauty in daily life or consumption need to be discussed. Product and Graphic Design, new materials and techniques, equipments and devices also have to be considered. Modern Interiors engage these and many other issues, demanding a multidisciplinary study to stress Modernity's encounter with the realm of the interior and to acknowledge the importance of its conservation.

Moreover, as it is subject to constant renewal and replacement, Interior Design represents the more ephemeral side of architectonic creation. Though considered as banal it is often most closely related to what makes up our everyday lives. The interior is more than a set of objects and yet it is permanently in danger of extinction. Paradoxically – or maybe not – interiors are also exemplary material for understanding the cultural condition and 'language' of a period. More than in any other singular expression, it is in interiors and their combination of artistic contributions that we can best perceive the expression of a given period.

The transformation of the Modern artifact – often democratic and utile – throughout its history is now part of the Modern heritage, and this justifies a multi-faceted approach and a ISC inside Docomomo specially dedicated to it.

Considering the growing interest of the art market in Modern Design and Furniture it is crucial to document, archive and disseminate original drawings, writings and ideas of the authors, as well as to follow up the authenticity of new editions and to supervise copying policies.

Docomomo International is the right organization to have an ISC on Modern Interior Design, as it is a major player in the realm of preservation of that specific period, and in the broader field of Modern architectural culture. Also because of the professionals, academics and institutions represented in it, its interdisciplinary dimension and its main goals expressed in the Eindhoven Statement, namely:

- a) Identify and promote the surveying of the works of the Modern Movement which will include a general register, drawings, photographs and manuscript archives;
- b) Foster and disseminate the development of appropriate techniques and methods of conservation;
- c) Oppose destruction and disfigurement of significant works;
- d) Explore and develop the knowledge of the Modern Movement.

Two-Year Working Plan

We propose to **contribute** to the main goals of Docomomo by adopting the **specific point of view of Interior Design**:

- with technical knowledge and principles to the restoration and preservation strategies in design products, equipments and environments;
- to investigate, develop and evaluate new approaches to the history, museum studies and museology of Modern interior design;
- to submit an application to European Organization (<http://www.europeana.eu/>) in order to develop a European Database of Modern Design (extending, in a second phase, to a worldwide level);
- to create a virtual museum of Modern design for exhibitions, archive of technical drawings and documentation and publication of academic essays;
- to certify the authorship and authenticity of the multiple copies and reproductions of design pieces available nowadays.

The ideas and intentions behind the ISC Interior Design already produced one major international initiative. Docomomo Belgium (Zsuzsanna Böröcz) and Docomomo Portugal (Bárbara Coutinho) have together organized a session for the S21 *The Modern Interior. Toward a re-evaluation in the context of adaptive reuse* which gained much interest. The key-note text lays out the most relevant issues of the subject.

To increase efficacy we intend to enlarge our network, starting by building partnerships with the following institutions and experts:

In the previous two years **Docomomo Belgium activities** have been focusing on Interior Design subjects which from now on will continue under the new ISC Interior Design (see www.docomomo.be)

- High standard series of lectures by academics in Brussels, Ghent, Antwerp in English, Dutch and French on *Modern interior design/design seen from a heritage perspective*
- Guided tours for professionals and exhibition visits with extensive explanation on the topics
- A fully informed website
- Application for a subvention (at the Flemish Government) to be able to enlarge the range and purview of Docomomo Belgium (in cooperation with the Art & Design Museum Atomium Brussels)

Docomomo Portugal has also made major efforts to bring attention to Interior Design

- Docomomo Journals 46 and 47 were published on Interior Design with Bárbara Coutinho as invited editor: *Designing Modern Lives* (with contribution of Marc Dubois president of Docomomo Belgium) and *Global Design* (with one of the essays by Bárbara Coutinho)
- Several guided tours for professionals to important interior design spaces in Portugal.

Founding Members

- Bárbara Coutinho PhD candidate

Instituto Superior Técnico – Universidade de Lisboa

MUDE – Museu do Design e da Moda, Coleção Francisco Capelo (Portugal) (www.mude.pt)

Docomomo Portugal

C.V.: Art and design historian (NOVA University), holds a Master degree in contemporary art with a study about the work and thought of the Portuguese modernist architect Carlos Ramos, and holds a post-graduate degree in art history education. Invited assistant professor at Técnico – University of Lisbon, teaching architecture theory and history. Founder director and programmer of MUDE – Design and Fashion Museum in Lisbon. Currently conducting her doctoral thesis on the exhibition space in the 21st century. Curator and researcher. During the last years have been focusing attention on Portuguese and international design.

- Zsuzsanna Böröcz PhD

Faculty of Architecture KU Leuven

Faculty of Design Sciences University of Antwerp

Docomomo Belgium

CV.: Zsuzsanna Böröcz is art and architecture historian (KU Leuven). She obtained her Ph.D. from the KU Leuven in 2004 with a comparative and contextual study on post-WWII architectural stained-glass windows. Since then she has been teaching art, design and interior architecture theory and history, curating exhibitions, and working on research projects accompanied by publications. She has a special interest in Belgian architectural historiography (see *Imag(in)ing architecture : iconography in nineteenth-century architectural publications*, Zsuzsanna Böröcz, Luc Verpoest (eds.), Leuven: ACCO, 2008.), interiors of 20th-century Modern churches and craftsmanship in the context of interior design. Currently, she teaches at the KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture and the University of Antwerp Faculty of Design Sciences. She is the vice-president of Docomomo Belgium.