

Interior Design Styles Explained

Contemporary, Traditional, French Country, Transitional....the list goes on. Many of our clients face a challenge in understanding “the design world” vocabulary and defining their own personal interior design style. With so many design styles – including Eclectic, a blend of several styles it can be a significant challenge many of our clients face is a lack of understanding or vocabulary to describe and define their personal interior design style. With an abundance of unique design styles, it can be unnerving to figure out which style will work best in their home. And, like the Eclectic style, merging several styles is often the perfect final look.

As a starting point, I will outline some of the most popular style to provide a basis from which you can explore your aesthetic further.

Bohemian

If you like it, add it to your room. That is the essence of Bohemian Design. There are no rules. You can pick up a sofa on the curb, toss a silk scarf over the back and hang the Sonneman Grapes 24 Light LED Round Multipoint Pendant over it.

This is a carefree Interior Design Style. Often you will see floor pillows, vintage furniture, sustainable trade fabrics and rugs that are globally inspired, flea market finds, and nana’s 19th century buffet repurposed as kitchen cabinets.

Many think the Bohemian style is cluttered and infested with hanging strips of beads in doorways. These images you see on TV and elsewhere can give the Bohemian Interior Design style a bad rap. Bohemian design, when put together with a thoughtful eye will be a beautiful comfortable space where you are surrounded by things you love.



Coastal/Tropical

Coastal, Tropical, Hamptons Interior Design styles, no matter the name all have that easy breezy feel we associate with beaches, summer sun and entertaining. The tropical theme and colors carry through the space and imprint that beachy feel on everything from fabrics, décor items with themes such as seashells, driftwood, and shellfish in warm wood hues, soft corals and of course blues and greens.

Furnishings are often white or neutral with accent chairs in bold blue and white stripes, all designed to create a relaxed environment set against a backdrop of painted white trim, moldings and other millwork.



Contemporary



Many people understandably use the words Modern design and Contemporary design interchangeably as they both seem to refer to something modern. However there are several distinct differences. The main defining variation is that modern interior design is a 20th century style with a strict interpretation of aesthetics.

Contemporary design is a more immediate design style. Contemporary Interior Design is more reflective of what is happening in the world right now; are fashion designers using more fluid lines? Concurrently architects may also use fluid lines and contemporary furniture designers will also use more fluid curved lines. In Modern design there will never be a change reflective of the now; the style will always have the clean sleek lines that define the Modern style.

French country

A comfy “put your feet up” style that invokes the smells of fresh pastry and other delicacies. Earthy colors along with ornamental worn furnishings create a warm atmosphere.



Walls are often whitewashed giving the illusion of old painted stone, brick and wood. Stunning colors are brought into this design style with natural materials such as vegetable dyed fabrics, collections of Faience pottery, wire and enamel bowls of eggs, fruit and flowers.

Recently iterations of the French Country style have become popular as “Farmhouse Glam” where the look is virtually identical to French Country with the addition of exposed natural or painted shiplap as a wall covering. (In older homes

in the southern USA shiplap is the horizontal stripes of wood approximately 6” to 8” wide that was part of the internal wall structure.)

Hollywood glam

Overstated and opulent, think drama, velvet tufted furnishings and rich colours; reds, rich blue, turquoise and regal purple. Trim it all in a smart metallic tying back the drapes, as book-ends as a bowl filled with vintage carpet balls.

Hollywood glam or Hollywood Regency Interior Design style is a luxurious dramatic style that makes a statement on its’ marble floors and Persian rugs.



Industrial

Drawn from the inspiration of the industrial loft or warehouse, Industrial Interior Design style has a feeling of exposed ductwork, exposed brick, barnboard type wood finishes, high ceilings, exposed Iron grid beams, and décor objects with real or artificially applied rust.

Often you will see hanging / dangling light fixtures, functional furniture with a sense of space between furniture groupings. If you think of open concept with abstract art, black and white photography and color interjected from vintage signs, enamel

desks, painted or vintage metal kitchen cabinets balancing the neutrals of the natural wood , brick and iron beamed ceilings you will have the concept of the Industrial Design style.

Mid-Century Modern

Think of the sets from “Leave it to Beaver”, “Get Smart”, “Bewitched” and other favorite relics from the 1940’s to the 1960’s and you have a good idea of the Mid-Century Modern design style. You can see the resurgence of the style now on shows like “Mad Men”.

There is a nostalgic feeling that goes with the style, whether a complete room or a few pieces thrown in for fun and an excitement to draw the eye...Arne Jacobsen's highly distinctive Egg chairs are a perfect example of the period’s organic shapes, functionality and fuss-free style that would work well mixed into a Transitional living room.



Minimalist

Minimalist design has become more popular in recent years. In the most basic you take the Modern Interior Design aesthetic and pair it down. Colours tend to be white or light neutrals. There is nothing excessive in décor, window coverings or linens. There is no room for flamboyance in a Minimalist design where everything is functional, simple and has clean lines.

Modern

Modern clean, streamlined, and crisp lines combined with a monochromatic colour scheme defines modern décor. Add that to the use of materials such as metal, glass, steel and leather and you have a general idea of the modern home. Simplicity, uncluttered and this sleekness in every element from furnishings through to soft elements such as window coverings, bed linens, and artwork complete the Modern design.



Rustic

Rustic Interior Design style is an interesting interpretation of style. It can be a very modern upscale room with a wood plank ceiling and beams through to rough shiplap walls, wood floors and recycled / upscaled furnishings. It is a very hard style to define, and like our tagline, “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder”. When someone tells me they are looking for a rustic interior I have to ask 5 more questions to determine their personal interpretation of rustic.





Scandinavian

When you consider the simplicity and understated functionality in Ikea furnishings you get an idea of the Scandinavian Interior Design aesthetic. Ikea, and now new entrants to the market are built on the demonstrated simplicity of life overall in Scandinavian countries.

Furniture that look and feel like works of art are often multi-function pieces. While there are some sculptural influences, furnishings tend to be white and formed from pressed-wood, enamel, steel, wide blonde blank flooring, bright plastics. One of the most popular items on my Pinterest board right now is an asymmetrical cutting board made from natural wood with matte aluminum handles and leather ties. A perfect example of Scandinavian design.

Traditional

The depth and layering of colors and fabrics of Traditional Interior Design is what makes it stand out. With European roots the furniture is often darker, there are classic details and luxurious fabrics such as silk, brocades and velvets.

You will also find many layers and textures, a variety of decor items, artwork and attention to detail with millwork, window coverings. There are no defined shapes to the furnishings, there can be swooping lines in a sofa paired with a rectangle end table and oval coffee table.



Many of today's millennials find the Traditional style fussy and outdated with its absence of clean lines and uncluttered feel.

Traditional design style offers classic details, sumptuous furnishings, and an abundance of accessories. It is rooted in European sensibilities. Traditional homes often feature dark, finished wood, rich colour palettes, and a variety of textures and curved lines. Furnishings have elaborate and ornate details and fabrics, like velvet, silk and brocade, which may include a variety of patterns and textures.

There's depth, layering and dimensionality within most traditional designs.

Transitional

Transitional Interior Design refers to a mash-up of Traditional and Modern design. If you think of it in practical application, you have a beautiful glass desk beside an antique oak file cabinet. The chair is wood and leather, area rug looks like modern art on the floor. A sleek neutral love seat with chrome legs, wood stump end tables and glass and wood coffee table.

There should be a sense of balance between the two design styles, not as indulgent as full on Traditional Design but not the sleekness of modern, leaving a space that is light and airy, neutral colour palette to show off well chosen furnishings that can stand on their own in small grouping or left as a full cohesive room.

