

**The Global Influence on Interior Design
and the Impact on a
Family and Consumer Sciences Professional**



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Abstract

Global influences on design are not new, but have been felt for centuries. This paper will review three such influences and make suggestions for how current and future design professionals can prepare for globalization. Emphasis will be on a strong foundation in historical design knowledge, recognition of globalization trends, and teaching tools to help future professionals transfer knowledge to real life.

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The global society of our world today is a part of everyone's lives. Whether or not you are a casual observer or a global businessperson, it is easy to see the effects of globalization. One of the most interesting areas to see the global effects is in design. The editor of *DÉCOR* magazine is quoted as saying the following:

Global politics notwithstanding, great design transcends geographic borders, so now is not the time to be timid about getting away and bringing back bits from abroad. Traveling with an open mind, a keen eye, and a willing wallet is the easiest way to give your rooms a lived-in, many-layered, culture-conscious look. (Russell, 2002, p.18)

The global influences are seen in almost every aspect of interior design. Although most people only see the resulting design feature, global design has roots in many years of historical reference.

The purpose of this paper is to show the impact of global influence on interior design and why it is essential for family and consumer sciences professionals to recognize these influences and be prepared to interact as successful business people in a global society. How can we help current and future professionals be more prepared for these challenges? There are three ways experts suggest. Presenting a strong foundation in historical design knowledge will aid professionals in seeing future trends and preparing for their adoption. Secondly, designers need to recognize population, production and decor trends and their relation to the market (Kermi, 2002). Thirdly, use a variety of teaching tools to help future professionals transfer knowledge to real-life situations (Sundeth, 1999). By combining these strategies professionals can receive the benefits for current and future professional development.

Perhaps one of the best ways to understand how cultures work is by studying history. "History repeats itself" is apropos when discussing design trends. Trends do go in and out very quickly, but the basis generally has a historical reference. Recognizing these trends in a design career is important to the success of a business. This quote taken from the book *World Furniture* represents this idea.

It is within the framework of broad stylistic changes through the centuries that national cultures must be considered. Ideas have constantly flowed from country to country and from East to West. Fashions have spread in a number of ways: as a sequel to military conquest, in movement of craftsmen from one land to another, in the general use of engraved designs, and by the traffic in furniture itself as a part of international trade. (Hayward, 1965, p. 6)

So even within the small area of furniture design, global trends can be seen. It is impossible today to look through a design magazine and not recognize the international influence throughout the photographed spaces. There are many examples of these influences, but for reference purposes three will be examined: Chinoiserie, Blue and White, and the trend in Toile de Jouy.

The explorer Marco Polo introduced the West to the exotic styles of the Far East with his descriptive accounts of foreign travels. Now it is assumed that Marco Polo's imagination was responsible for the huge wave of everything Chinese. During the 1600s exotic designs and furnishings arrived in Europe. Style features closely associated with Chinoiserie (lacquer, fretting, oriental motifs, and pagodas) were imitated by the English designers. Perhaps the oriental Chinoiserie style became the most influential in the 1700s with the French Rococo style. The Chinoiserie style spilled over into dramas, ballets, and art. French artists made way for the Chinoiserie influence in the 1800s with reproductions of the original works. Their designs "covered chairs and walls from manors in Sweden and Russian palaces to British country homes and Spanish villas" (Clark, 2002, p. 48). During this time the famous furniture maker, Chippendale, was developing and producing Chinoiserie furnishings. In the Victorian era, Chinoiserie took a break because of political influences attributed to George IV. But then in 1920s and 1930s, the Art Deco movement in movies embraced the Chinoiserie style on screen. Today the influence is seen in fabrics that are inspired by the same French Rococo artists. Designs by some of the most influential textile producers like Scalamandre, Schumacher, and Brunschwig & Fils are today showing the Oriental flare (Clark, 2002). The article "China Syndrome" in *Traditional Home* gave some guidelines for recognizing Chinoiserie. First look for "exotic details" such as lattice and fretwork. Another clue would be "Fanciful creatures" such as dragons, butterflies, monkeys, and elephants. "Exotic costumes" in the traditional wear of an oriental subject also give away the Oriental style. Lastly "whimsical props" such as fans, musical instruments and exotic architecture create an Oriental flare to a space. By looking at this small piece of design history it allows us to see some of the global influences on interior design.



Next, we will look at Blue and White and its link to the historical oriental trade. Known universally as simply Blue and White, this china was developed in the Orient as early as 1279. It was exported in the 14th century to Europe and has been popular ever since. The "cobalt pigment caught on in China as much for its practicality as for its beauty. The extremely high temperatures needed to fire hard-paste porcelain, which was invented during the Tang Dynasty (618-906), resulted in many lost pieces. Achieving color consistency was difficult—until the introduction of cobalt" (Ward, 2000, p. 195). Blue became popular because of its reliability in the firing process. The Europeans relied on imports of this amazing china because they did not realize the formula of porcelain production until the 18th century. Some of the imitators until the 18th century porcelain production were delftware and salt-glazed stoneware. The British are closely associated with Blue and White. In the 18th and 19th century the British china maker, Josiah Spode, began transfer



Blue and White Ginger Jar
Chinese Qing Dynasty
Yongzhen Period (1723-1735)

printing in traditional English scenes. Today Blue and White is just as popular. Collectors seek pieces from \$100 or less to the largest sum paid of \$3 million for a 15th century article (Ward, 2000).



With the basis of Oriental-style and Blue and White china, the examination of the rediscovery of Toile de Jouy is a natural conclusion to this example of global influence in interior design. Taken from the Chinoiserie pattern styles and the classical scenes on Blue and White china is the discovery of Toile de Jouy. During the Rococo period when Chinoiserie was all the rage in France, Toile first became popular. The Manufacture Royale de Jouy near Versailles first manufactured Toile in 1760. It combined the frilly look of the period with the pastoral landscapes painted by some of the most influential painters of the time, for example Jean-Baptiste Pillement. The movement to Toile de Jouy fame was greatly aided by one of the most prominent people of the time, Marie Antoinette. Her great enthusiasm for the pattern made it a favorite (Smith, 2002). Currently this pattern is seen everywhere from clothing to furnishings.



When choosing the preceding examples of global influence it was essential to show how global design historically travels from place to place. These historical examples demonstrate the effect of being part of a global society. Ideas do not need to travel in the physical form. They will travel from place to place and be influential in every area. From the three examples of historical global influence it can be seen how one idea affected a multitude of areas. The idea of world travel to far away places was captured in furniture, decorative items, architectural details, fabric, china, and even in society functions such as a drama production. There are many other historical examples besides Oriental exploration that could demonstrate how global influence travels, but the idea with all examples would have the same conclusion—universal influence has been a part of our world for centuries.

Today the speed of adoption of these influences has changed substantially. Technological advances in the Internet, global travel, and communication have made it possible “to span the globe almost instantaneously” (Sosnowchik, 2000, p.1). This phenomenon is a given in today’s society, and it is essential to learn how to make it work for the benefit of the professional. The January 2001 issue of *Interiors* talked about the need for professionals to embrace the future of global technology in order to compete in the new international marketplace. One of the biggest lessons to be learned is how to integrate with other manufacturers and producers to offer products to a global market. Today it is almost a necessary requirement of any interior design professional to integrate past and present to participate in global merchandising.

The second area that is necessary for global development of family and consumer sciences professionals in interior design is demographic trend recognition. Recognizing trends is an important part of being prepared for the future. The American

Society of Interior Designers says “taking change in stride is easier when you know what to expect. That’s why tracking demographic, construction, and design trends is so essential.” These are the areas experts feel should be watched: “population trends, residential trends, and contract trends (Kermi, 2002, p.1).” In the area of “population trends” the emphasis is on growth of the aging population, people moving globally, and the changing cycle of the family. The “residential trends” specified in the ASID article are that remodeling is becoming more popular and that it is necessary to keep up with population growth. ASID stated that the “contract trends” to look for are restructuring of firms and the influence of a global society. The trends in the contract setting are a result of integrated business practices. Business practices are increasingly more global. Because of technology these “different languages, ideologies, and economic development levels are coming together” (Foney, 1996, p.17). Different situations in the world are opening of markets once closed due to political conflicts. The market in the United States has changed to incorporate a diverse array of products from all parts of the world (Sundseth, 1999). Foreign direct investment has increased the markets available to global merchandisers. Multinational firms are investing in record numbers in underdeveloped countries, which provides benefits to those countries as well as to global sourcing companies based in the United States (Christmann, 2001). Also the more integrated and organizational goal-oriented the firm, the greater the transition into global markets (Newburry, 2001). Companies in this situation are dealing with “vertical integration, mergers, new technologies, diagnosis-related groups, just-in-time distribution, captivated contracts, preferred provider organizations, total quality management, continuous improvement, business re-engineering” (Jarrar, 2001, p.906). To succeed it is increasingly vital that businesses are expert in all areas. This means that it is necessary to learn how to analyze the global market and make timely decisions. “Knowledge is still power, as it has been, but now it is increasingly in the hands of many, not just a few” (Jarrar, 2001, p.912). This preceding quote from *Total Quality Management* represents the fact that basic business is the same, but yet totally different because we are living in a global society. Professionals will need to be able to recognize these trends and be able to integrate them into their future philosophies. Using resources such as ASID, business journals, and family and consumer sciences resources, interior design professionals will be more efficient and up-to-date with the current tendencies of the market. Professionals can use new information to complement their historical knowledge of design. By having a strong background in historical design and being current with the new trends of the modern business society, professionals will be better equipped for the future.

The third way that we can help professionals be ready for the challenges of a global society is through education of future professionals. As family and consumer sciences professionals it is important to learn how to incorporate the global influences into learning tools. By working with the professional community, future professionals can achieve a more integrated outlook (Foney, 1996). Family and consumer sciences have a role to play when integrating the community into the development of the professional. The community, in this given situation, implies the environment used to help students/future professionals gain the needed knowledge for their careers. Students today are naturally influenced by globalization, and this produces a multinational generation. Business leaders are beginning to recognize the need for professionals with a global outlook (Kucko, 2000). These factors have created new requirements for future professionals. Teaching future professionals from an international viewpoint can help them achieve the global perspective needed to operate a multinational firm. “Business and industry issues are increasingly complex due to job performance expectations, diminishing resources, global competition, and ethical considerations” (Frey, 1999, p.53).

This quote justifies the need to teach future professionals in our field how to operate through a global environment.

Given the background presented, it is necessary to define the action steps that need to be taken in order to become a more productive professional in an environment that is globally influenced. Future professionals have an exciting opportunity to operate in a fast-paced, international world. Family and consumer sciences professionals need to “assist students in thinking critically and globally. This type of learning is crucial for students entering careers in global industries requiring complex decision-making” (Frey, 1999, p.54). An action step in this area would be to aid future professionals in learning how to be critical thinkers. An article in the *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences* by Sundeth described a game that had been devised to help students comprehend the intricacy of doing business. This teaching aid makes future professionals become more aware of the implications of global trade. The problems that are encountered in the game have direct relationships to real-life business practices. This exercise allows professionals to gain the important tools, such as critical thinking, that are needed to operate a global business. Not only do future professionals need to learn with a global outlook but current professionals must engage in learning and growing throughout their careers. Businesses that are not continually progressing will be left behind as new waves of technology emerge.

Modernization use to mean 20 to 30 years, but now it means 2 to 3. Now to stay ahead, both designers and manufacturers have to be not only technology experts, but also business strategists, futurists, regulatory/code experts (especially if they work in a global economy), educators of staff and management, marketers, customer service representatives, ethicists, and management consultants. (Rhode, 2001, p. 26)

This quote documents the need to be committed to life-long learning no matter the professional employment. Also this quote implies the need for current professionals to give back and educate future professionals. This “community” trade-off will increase knowledge on both fronts. Professionals can share their experiential knowledge and expertise with future professionals.

In conclusion, it is easy to say that the world is a global marketplace. The world has historically adapted products for interior design from a variety of seemingly exotic far away lands. A strong basis in history makes professionals better prepared to recognize the current trends in the market. The difference between these past views and a current modern view is that we are integrated into a global system through technology, communication, and global travel. So how can we help current and future professionals be more prepared for global challenges? Presenting a strong foundation in historical design knowledge, recognizing population trends, and using production and decor trends and their relation to the market can accomplish this charge (Kermi, 2002). Further, a variety of teaching tools will help future professionals transfer knowledge to real-life situations (Sundeth, 1999).

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