Current Issues in Interior Architecture and Design

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Edited by

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and İlknur Uygun

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Interior design is constantly evolving, shaped by the way we repurpose spaces, integrate new technologies, and respond to cultural and environmental challenges. *Current Issues in Interiors* brings together a collection of thought-provoking chapters that emerged from the **Current Issues in Interiors (CII) Symposium**, organized by the **Department of Interior Architecture and Environmental Design, Faculty of Architecture at Yaşar University**. What began as symposium papers has been refined into in-depth studies, offering fresh perspectives on the pressing issues and innovations shaping interior architecture today.

This book is structured around three thematic tracks, each guided by an expert editor, allowing readers to explore the field from different angles.

The **first track, "Adaptive Reuse for Interiors,"** edited by **Ebru Karabağ**, delves into the creative ways we can transform existing structures while preserving their history and meaning. From converting a middle school into affordable housing to reimagining abandoned ruins, the chapters in this section highlight how adaptive reuse can be both a practical solution and a way to breathe new life into forgotten spaces. These studies challenge us to see buildings not just as static structures, but as opportunities for renewal and reinvention.

The **second track, "Design, Culture, Environment, and Behavior,"** edited by **Gülnur Ballice**, shifts the focus to the human experience of interiors. How do spaces shape our emotions, behaviors, and interactions? This section explores alternative approaches to interior design education, humor-centered design, and the powerful role of storytelling in shaping our environments. It invites us to rethink how we teach, design, and inhabit spaces, encouraging a more holistic and culturally informed approach to interior architecture.

The **third track, "Environmental Systems and Technology,"** edited by **İlknur Uygun**, takes a deep dive into the technical and environmental aspects of interior design. As sustainability becomes more urgent, this section examines how lighting, acoustics, and materials can be optimized to create healthier, more efficient spaces. From strategies for controlling daylight in library reading rooms to the role of biophilic design in hotels, these chapters showcase the importance of blending innovation with sustainability in the built environment.

Together, these three tracks paint a rich and multifaceted picture of contemporary interior design. This book is more than just a collection of research—it's a conversation about where the field is headed and how we can approach design in more thoughtful, innovative, and sustainable ways.

As part of the ongoing work at the **Department of Interior Architecture and Environmental Design, Faculty of Architecture at Yaşar University**, this book reflects a commitment to pushing boundaries, fostering new ideas, and inspiring both scholars and practitioners. We hope it sparks new discussions, challenges perspectives, and serves as a valuable resource for anyone passionate about the future of interior design.

Ebru Karabağ, Gülnur Ballice and İlknur Uygun

TRACK 1

ADAPTIVE REUSE FOR INTERIORS

CHAPTER 1

INTERIOR REUSE: THEORY, PEDAGOGY AND PRACTICE OF KEEPING IT ALL TOGETHER

CAROLA EBERT

In interior discourse, the past decades have seen the parallel rise of adaptive reuse and the 'coming of age' of 'interiors' as a discipline with a distinct body of knowledge. However, international interior discourse contains diverging statements about the relationship between these parallel developments and their terminology.[1]

This text first addresses overlaps and differences between adaptive reuse theory and international interior terminology. Drawing on the understanding of interiors as composite assemblages of building parts (Brooker 2018; Hollis 2010), and as occupied composite hollows filled with many objects (Ebert 2024b), it enquires what adaptive reuse means for interiors—as interior spaces and as discipline—, it then references different interior approaches to reuse, and finally it proposes 'interior reuse' as subject-specific form of adaptive reuse. This usage differs from Imma Forino's notion of interior reuse (Forino 2025).[2] Here, interior reuse does not describe a specific approach to architectural alteration but refers to the reuse of interior spaces and, in particular, to reuse within and for

[1] This text draws on the author's work as Professor of Interior Design and History and Theory of Architecture and Design at Berlin International University of Applied Sciences, Germany. Previous presentations and publications have touched on the relationship between disciplinary development and interior terminology (Ebert 2024b) and discussed related aspects of interior reuse pedagogy (Ebert 2024c; Ebert and Goodwin 2025).

[2] Forino uses the term interior reuse to describe reuse approaches to theory and practice by renowned architects in post-war Italy. She portrays as interior reuse as an interior-oriented approach to altering architecture and the built urban fabric.

interiors as a discipline that spans interior architecture, interior design and interior decoration.

The text subsequently discusses examples of a subject-specific pedagogic approach to reuse in interior education, illustrated by student works from Berlin International University of Applied Sciences' (BI) interior MA programmes and their educational context. This section investigates pedagogic approaches in support of the understanding, critical reflection and practical execution of interior reuse. Finally, the exploration of interior reuse concludes with an exploration of reuse contexts in professional practice—illustrating systemic obstacles to reuse practice for interiors as a profession via three German example projects.

The text thus highlights the difficulty of 'keeping the interior together' in reuse theory, education and practice. In summary, the theoretical formation of interior reuse and the analysis of its specific pedagogic requirements and professional complexity through the particular lens of reuse as the most pressing issue of today provide new perspectives on the ongoing discussion of interior disciplinary identity.

Adaptive Reuse and Interior Architecture

"Certainly, there are many terms to describe the process [of adaptive reuse]; Graeme Brooker and Sally Stone's ReReadings described it as interior architecture…." (Stone 2023, 478)

As this exemplary quote shows, adaptive reuse in the English language is often primarily connected to interior architecture. This close connection eclipses the fact that the interior discipline contains three subdisciplines—interior decoration, interior design and interior architecture. Similar to other languages and cultural contexts, these three terms distinguish interior decoration—interior practices concerned more with loose furniture, ornament, objects and soft furnishings (Brooker and Stone 2013, xiii))—from interior design—practices focusing on in-built furniture and the character of an interior space, its volumetric and atmosphere (xiii-xv)) and all those from interior architecture—a building oriented interior practice encompassing structural, technical, and space-planning issues (xv).

In terms of disciplinary history, the three Anglophone subdisciplines have a particular relationship (Figure 1-1), as in the Anglo-Saxon sphere, the interior discipline changed its nomenclature during its development from early interior *decorators* in the late 19th century via the mid-20th century establishment of interior *design* to more contemporary debates about interior *architecture* (Cys 2013). Ingrained in this development is first a growing professionalisation from the 1900s onwards, followed by

the establishment of specific educational programs in the middle of the 20th century, and an increased level of academisation since the millennium (Somers 2017, 41). Particularly worth noting here are attempts to reconceptualise the interior discipline as interior architecture—as a bridge between architecture and interior design—since the 1990s, and the way in which several Anglophone authors relate it to the reuse of buildings.

Fig. 1-1 Diagram of the development of the interior subdisciplines and nomenclature in Anglophone interior discourse—highlighting interior architecture as most recent and introduced in parallel to the rise of adaptive reuse. Created by the author.

In his 1990s publication, US architect and educator John Kurtich introduced *Interior Architecture* as "a new profession", "the link between art, architecture, and interior design", and linked to the "adaptive reuse of buildings, historic or otherwise" (Kurtich and Eakin 1996, vi–vii). The publication became seminal for the English-language understanding of interior architecture as new practice for the 21st century, and one closely related to adaptive reuse.

In English-language discourse, the term interior architecture thus has taken on late 20th-/early 21st-century connotations of working with and altering existing buildings. It thus does not come as a surprise that various Anglophone sources relate adaptive reuse specifically to interior architecture. Beyond the reference to UK authors Graeme Brooker and Sally Stone's early publication (2004) at the beginning of this section, Brooker for example later highlights "reuse and appropriation as primary elements in the production of interior architecture" (2018, 352), whereas Ed Hollis uses interior architecture and architectural alteration almost synonymously (2018, 9).

This raises the question what the equation of interior architecture—as one of the three interior subdisciplines—with adaptive reuse means for interiors as a discipline the context of adaptive reuse discourse. Two perspectives seem pertinent here. Firstly, when looking beyond the English-speaking domain, the three subdisciplines' relationship to each other differs from that described for the Anglophone sphere. In many

Northern and Central European countries—like Norway, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, France, Switzerland, Germany or the Netherlands—interior architecture is, historically, the only, or most established of the interior subdisciplines. In the multilingual environment of continental Europe, the term interior architecture became well-established after World War II, as part of the rise of the modern movement (Somers 2017, 63–67) and is rarely inherently linked to adaptive reuse.

Within the Anglophone sphere, the push for interior architecture also resulted in controversy and a resistance towards the term in favour of interior design. Several authors side against interior architecture as they either see the name change imbued with an embarrassment over interior design's more decorative aspects and its gender issues (Königk 2011), or because for them it is just a "Game Of Words" (Havenhand 2023)—an attempt to circumnavigate the issues of the marginalisation of interior design among the built environment professions (Havenhand 2004; 2019). In this sense—rather than 'keeping interiors together'—, the equation of interior architecture with adaptive reuse seems to have a divisive impact.

Interiors in Adaptive Reuse Theory

When discussing interior reuse, the double-meaning of interiors as spaces and as a discipline continuously reverberates in the background. In the context of interior disciplinary identity in relation to adaptive reuse discourse, this text asks what it means for interiors as a comparatively young discipline to operate within the interdisciplinary discourse of adaptive reuse (among other, 'older' and more established disciplines like architecture, conservation, heritage studies, urbanism, etc.); and in particular how specifically interior notions of adaptive reuse may be defined.

Given the above-mentioned marginalisation of the interior discipline, the way interior practices are often overlooked or judged against the standards of architecture (Vandevoort 2025), and/or simply the friction that Hollis has called "the old professional turf war between interiors and architecture" (2018, 9), one might argue that the interior disciplines' interdisciplinary relationships tend to not operate on equal footing. Adaptive reuse as such may be recognised "as an interdisciplinary task" (Plevoets and Van Cleempoel 2011, 162), yet this text argues that interdisciplinary discourse still includes traces of disciplinary marginalisation. Adaptive reuse is largely seen as "as an urban, architectural, and conservation strategy" (Plevoets and Van Cleempoel 2019, 1), and thus implicitly carries a bias in favour of these disciplines.

An independent role of the interior disciplines seems difficult to discern. The ambiguous role of interior architecture in Anglophone interior discourse further adds division among them, and also blurs their boundary towards architecture and architectural alteration.

Searching for specifically interior notions of adaptive reuse, the research summarised here identified three different areas: interior conservation, an interior approach to adaptive reuse, and interior reuse as a composite interior practice.

Interior Conservation

Adaptive reuse poses a challenge for existing interiors—especially when dealing with furniture or interiors designed as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. With regards to the conservation of interiors, Norwegian interiorist Ellen Klingenberg described disciplinary difficulties in exchanges with heritage and conservation specialists and how non-architectural aspects are harder to safeguard like this:

> I try to focus on … the question how conservationists deal with the interior. … they never discuss the interior as something to conserve. They conserve the buildings, they talk about materials, …. So … what happens when you take out all loose furniture to preserve the building then you have said nothing about the use of that building and the life that went on in that building. (Somers 2017, 153)

Bie Plevoets shares similar concerns in her study of the decomposition of Jules Wabbes' interiors of the Belgian *Generale Bank* (Brussels, 1968-1971, disassembled by Rotor DC 2014-15):

> Today, most countries have regulations to protect significant historic buildings and interiors and prevent them from demolition. However, in the case of interiors designed as an ensemble or *gesamtkunstwerk*, which include both immovable and movable elements, protection and preservation processes are more challenging …. (Plevoets 2022, 116)

The focus on interiors as *Gesamtkunstwerk* and on the importance of loose furniture and their relationship to immovable elements highlights the roles of interior decoration and interior design with regards to interior conservation.

An Interior Approach to Adaptive Reuse

A specifically interior approach to adaptive reuse is defined by Plevoets and Koenraad Van Cleempoel in *Adaptive Reuse of the Built Heritage:*

Concepts and Cases of an Emerging Discipline (2019). They build on prior research into different disciplinary and conceptual approaches (Plevoets and Van Cleempoel 2011) and add a new, interior, approach:

> Interior approach
> An increased interest in adaptive reuse has been raised by scholars working in the field of interior architecture and interior design in the last decade. Examples are Graeme Brooker (2009), Sally Stone (Brooker & Stone, 2004; Stone & Brooker 2018), Littlefield and Lewis (2007), Ed Hollis (2009), Ellen Klingenberg (2012), Liliane Wong (2017). In *What Is Interior Design?* Brooker and Stone state:
>
> > Interior architecture, interior design, interior decoration, and building reuse are very closely linked subjects, all of which deal, in varying degrees, with the transformation of a given space, whether that is the crumbling ruin of an ancient building or the drawn parameters of a new building proposal. (2010, p. 6)
>
> Common in their approach is their strong focus on the 'soft values' of the building, which include its immaterial aspects, atmosphere, and narratives, and a more 'poëtic' approach towards building adaptation. … (Plevoets and Van Cleempoel 2019, 19–20)

These notions of 'soft values', 'atmosphere' and 'immaterial aspects' resonate most strongly with the definitions of interior design and interior decoration cited earlier. Interestingly, they don't seem to include the more structural interventions and the remodelling of existing buildings by which interior architecture was characterised at the beginning (Figure 1-2).

Fig. 1-2 Diagram of the interior subdisciplines in relation to their characteristics mentioned in adaptive reuse literature; highlighting interior decoration and interior design, as particularly relevant to the 'interior approach'. Created by the author.

Interior Reuse

This text, therefore, suggests interior reuse as a third term, drawing on the notion of interior as a heterogeneous assemblage, as an occupied composite situated hollow (Ebert 2024b, 84). Interior reuse builds on contemporary theoretical positions towards interior disciplinary identity. These include an understanding of interiors as "temporary arrangements"

and “assemblages of elements collected from many times and places” (Hollis 2010, 105; 108) as much as the conceptualisation of the interior as a “spatial composite construct. … an amalgam of matter that incorporates and is fabricated from a number of ideas and adapted elements” (Brooker 2018, 356). For Brooker there is a close relationship between the idea of the composite and the interior discipline’s ambiguous nature—conceptually and as actual spatial compositions. He highlights that “the substance of [interiors’] spatial, disciplinary, and professional ambiguity, manifests itself primarily as a composite construct – a history, a theory, a space that is built from a number of differing ideas, objects edifices, and other appropriated elements.” (Brooker 2018, 351)

If interiors—as designed spaces and as an idea of interior practice—are understood as such composite constructs, interior reuse implies a composite practice of dis/assemblage (Ebert 2024a), which relies on *all* the different materials, objects and immaterial aspects brought together in the process of creating an interior. Interior reuse addresses the composition, and reuse, of objects and materials on different levels, including, but not solely focussed on the building envelope and its encompassing structure.

Precisely because interior spaces can be conceived of as “a set of relationships between things that exist in time” (Hollis 2010, 113) they can encompass and integrate reuse at multiple levels. Interior reuse thus highlights the nature of interior-focussed designing in general—as part of reusing the existing in various forms, and, generally, as a composite design practice. By assembling built structures, building elements, building materials, lighting fixtures, loose or built-in furniture, atmosphere, lighting, acoustics, ventilation, outside views, etc., interior reuse combines various forms of reuse to form a trans-temporal composition, of which the built envelope is but one part. This implies the integration of reused objects, building elements, lighting fixtures, etc. beyond reusing buildings. The ultimate aim of interior reuse as the practice of dis/assemblage is to bring it all together; to keep it all together.

In *The Fragmented Interior*, Plevoets demonstrates the relevance reused building elements can hold for interiors. She reports how custom-made ceiling panels from the decomposed Generale Bank mentioned above were reused in the design for a pharmacy. These were chosen by the designer “for their high quality and unique characteristics as an alternative to new materials” and for their “beauty and craftsmanship” that were “unique and unavailable in new materials” (2022, 111). These panels imparted a specific character onto the space, and became a driver for the

entire pharmacy interior's design; influencing the ceiling design's shapes, and the material and colour choices for the entire space.

Interior reuse suggests a subject-specific, integrative form of adaptive reuse—forming a composite, trans-temporal interior from a broad variety of fragments, objects and materials. By focusing on loose and built-in furniture, structures, technology and building elements, atmosphere and decoration, it integrates the perspectives and sensibilities of all three subdisciplines. Its practice is distinct from adaptive reuse and architectural, urban, and conservation strategies—that all prioritise the building—, as interior reuse focuses on the interior as composite assemblage.

Interior Reuse Pedagogy

In interior education, interior reuse refers to the discipline-specific analysis and design of interior reuse projects. Going "back and forth" (Brünjes and Ebert 2024; Ebert 2024c) between the reflective modes of analysis and the projective mode of design can pedagogically support interior reuse as a composite practice.

This section looks at the pedagogy of interior reuse via a first-year research seminar course on Berlin International's interior MA programmes.[3] In this seminar, students are asked to analyse and re-present adaptive reuse projects in order to extract a distinct personal re-reading of an often-well known project. Each project is assigned twice in separate parts of the course to encourage (and later elucidate) the individual focus of these re-readings. By going back and forth between analysis/research on the one hand and creative visual output on the other, students explore interior reuse topics within the given examples.

[3] Over the past years, this course was developed and taught together with my esteemed colleague Dr Sait Ali Köknar (Ebert 2024c; Ebert and Goodwin 2025).

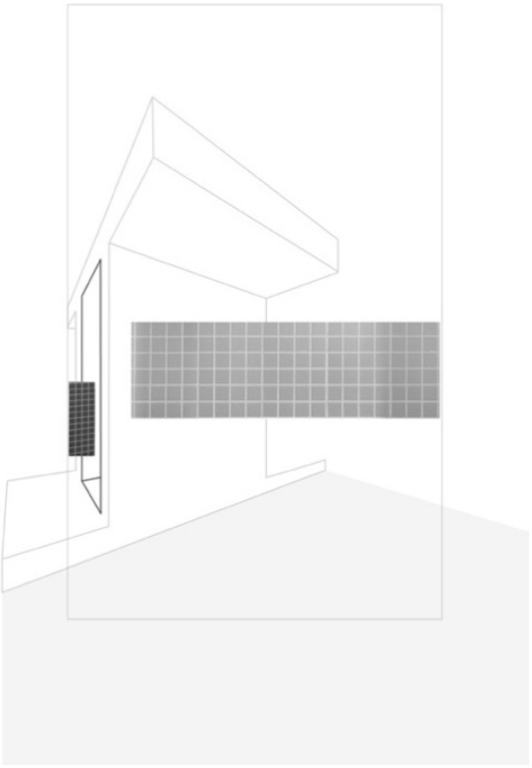

Fig. 1-3 Representation of the materiality and spatial intervention in the *Tres Piezas* apartment by Estudio Gonzalo del Val and Toni Gelabert Arquitectes. Credit: Luna Gilly.

Luna Gilly and Marcia Koch both chose to work on the apartment conversion *Tres Piezas* by Estudio Gonzalo del Val and Toni Gelabert Arquitectes in Madrid, Spain, 2021 (Zapico 2023). The project name refers to the 'three pieces' that shape zones for certain activities and create distinct spaces within the apartment. While Gilly focussed on the spatial and material properties (see Figure 1-3) of one inserted piece—this piece defines bedroom, closet, shower, sink, and (guest) toilet—Koch explored potential interior occupations inside those same spaces (see Figure 1-4). The two re-readings of the same piece each tell a distinct story about this interior project, exposing a particular layer of interior reuse.

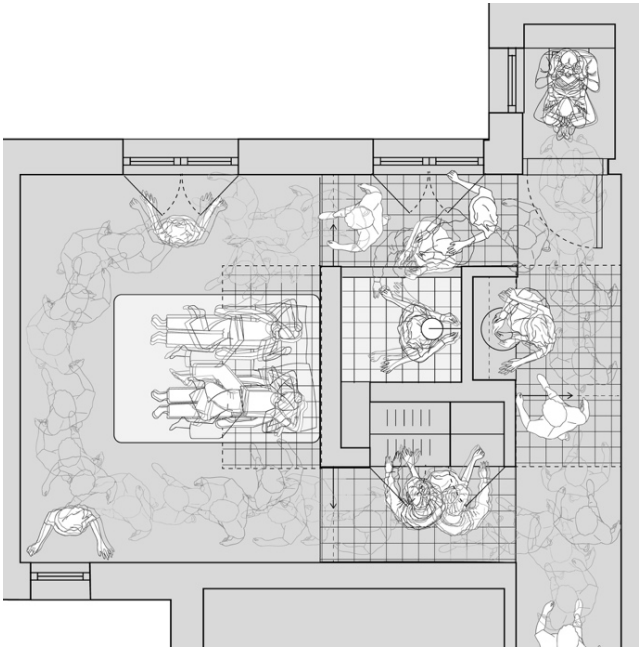

Fig. 1-4 Interior occupation in the *Tres Piezas* apartment by Estudio Gonzalo del Val and Toni Gelabert Arquitectes. Credit: Marcia Koch.

Marcia Koch's work highlights the notion of the interior as occupied. Brooker sees occupation as "inevitable" from the perspective of the interior discipline (2018, 354), while he finds adaptive reuse literature to display "a theoretical shortcoming" in the general absence of the user (353). Ro Spankie and Ana Araujo further suggest that not designers, but users create an interior, in their day-to-day rituals of occupying interior spaces (Spankie and Araujo 2009, 2).

When looking at *Croft Lodge Studio* by Kate Darby and David Connor in Herefordshire, UK, 2017 (Mairs 2017), Tihana Milosevic was intrigued by the atmospheric complexity of the existing surfaces. In her re-presentations of the project, Milosevic first took the rich surfaces of the historic building apart from the black-and-white simplicity of the new additions and dis/assembled photographs of different spaces throughout the building (Figure 1-5).

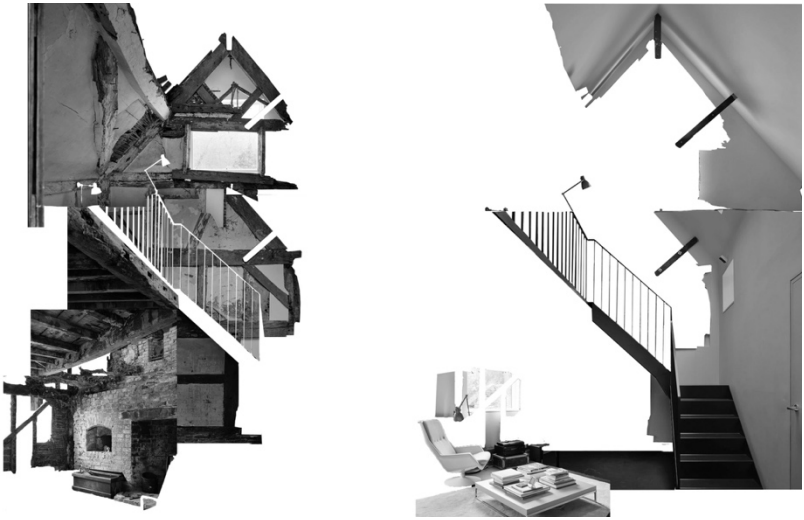

Fig. 1-5 Dis/assemblage of *Croft Lodge* by Kate Darby Architects and David Connor Design; existing vs. new insertions. Original photographs: Courtesy of Kate Darby and David Connor. Credit: Tihana Milosevic.

In a second step, Milosevic added additional temporal layers from historic paintings onto interior photographs of the project (Figure 1-6). She thus extended the idea of the visual palimpsest that she had identified in her analysis of Darby and Connor's project and was able to visualise her interest in interior occupation and historic layering in one representation.

Her work presented here highlights the notion of the interior as not only occupied, but also full of all the things that come with occupation but are rarely found in the interior photographs, which—in the manner of architectural photography—are largely presented "denuded of that 'great range of objects'" (Hollis 2018, 7).

Fig. 1-6 Palimpsest montage of *Croft Lodge*'s studio space; an added layer references historic occupation. Montage with photograph by James Morris (Mairs 2017), Courtesy of Kate Darby and David Connor, and parts of the painting *Horse Stable with Travellers* by Philips Wouwerman (Lempertz 2020). Credit: Tihana Milosevic.

Simonida Galović investigated Witherford Watson Mann's iconic *Astley Castle*, Warwickshire, UK, 2012 (Fox 2025). Looking through different disciplinary lenses (Figure 1-7) she took photographs of the fully furnished interiors (left) apart and separated remnants of the existing castle (centre left) from spatially constructed interventions (centre right) and interior furnishing and decoration (right).

This analysis led her to further study the relationship between Witherford Watson Mann's project and the furnishing by John Evetts on behalf of the Landmark Trust. Her work highlights the role of soft furnishings and interior decoration in interior photographs of the project. It critically reviews how interior decoration is visually subsumed into the project as such. It suggests that viewing habits may visually eclipse objects in adaptive reuse visualisations, and, in this case, authorship for the entire interior may be attributed to the architects with John Evetts' contribution fading from view.

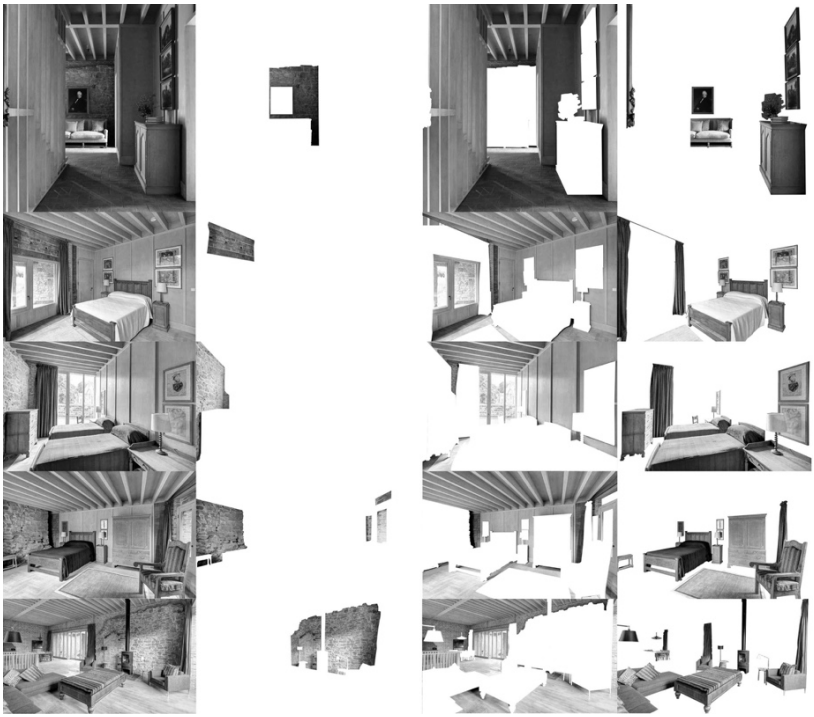

Fig. 1-7 Dis/assemblage of *Astley Castle* interiors by Witherford Watson Mann, furnishing by John Evetts; photograph, structure, interior construction, furnishing (from left to right). Credit: Simonida Galović. Original photographs with permission by Landmark Trust, John Miller Photography.

Her desaturated versions of the Landmark Trust's photographs (Figure 1-8) reverse such seeing habits by, in turn, fading the castle walls and spatial interventions to grey and leaving only furnishings and decorative objects fully saturated. While Witherford Watson Mann's photographic documentation does not use these furnished photographs, such images have been used to portray the project e.g. when it received the Fritz-Höger-Prize 2014 in gold for its use of brickwork (Erich-Mendelsohn-Preis, n.d.).[4] Furnished interiors hold a greater visual appeal, as the portray a sense of use, which 'denuded' architectural photography does not hold.

[4] Since 2023, the prize has been awarded in the name of Erich-Mendelsohn.

Fig. 1-8 Desaturated photograph of furnished *Astley Castle* living room. Credit: Simonida Galović. Original photograph with permission by Landmark Trust, John Miller Photography.

Galović's work brings the complicated position of the interior discipline to the fore that Ehsan Masoud and Parastoo Eshrati have described as "The difficulty of being last" in adaptive reuse projects (Masoud and Eshrati 2025, 87). As the early phases of such projects are mostly led by conservationists and/or architects, interior professionals—only involved in later stages—are often considered less relevant to the process of adaptive reuse by other disciplines (87-88).

Interior Reuse Practice

The discussion of the role of the interior disciplines in adaptive reuse projects asks for a reflection on interior reuse as a form of interior practice. By looking at three different examples from professional practice in Germany, this text aims to highlight certain systemic obstacles to interior reuse practice. In interior practice, reuse can take on many different forms. In terms of the scope of reuse, some of the projects discussed here do not intervene much in the existing building, and may at first glance not appear to be (adaptive) reuse projects. Their relevance lies in the way the designs, the various agents involved, and the context of contracting and procurement

show the difficulty of 'keeping the interior together' within interior reuse practice.

The first example is the interior and architectural renovation of the German embassy in Brazil. It was built by famous German post-war architect Hans Scharoun from 1968-71 in the new capital Brasilia, and it is his only work abroad. The core of the project is the fluid spatial continuum of the reception area with fireplace, the dining space, music room, etc.; shaped as a series of rising plateaus (Hamm 2013, 26). After 35 years in service, the heritage protected building was brought to contemporary building standards from 2005-2007. Works on the structure were commissioned by the Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning [*Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung*] (BBR) on behalf of the German Federal Foreign Office. Bultmann & Team architects headed the building retrofit; interior works were not part of the commission.

For the subsequent interior re-design, architects gmp · von Gerkan, Marg und Partner (gmp) were commissioned. gmp specialise in designing large buildings and structures, and, at the time, were building three stadiums for the 2014 football world championship in Brazil. Like many big architecture practices, gmp also have an interior department, which was responsible for the interior design and fittings.

Fig. 1-9 Photograph of gmp's interior design for Hans Scharoun's German embassy and the core space with the music room (*Musikzimmer*) in the front (right and centre), stepping up towards the private area (*Damenzimmer*) and the study

(*Herrenzimmer*) further back (left). Photograph by Leonardo Finotti (Hamm 2013, 52-53). Courtesy of gmp.

Keeping the white marble floor, gmp's re-conception of the main spatial sequence (Figure 1-9) focussed on the creation of subspaces with carpets in different colours and furnishing the space with reconfigurable seating elements (in greige leather rather than the original white fabric). gmp further accentuated some walls with a sand colour coating, added ceiling lights and floor lamps where the pendant and table lights were too dim, and installed art pieces like the square glass art work on the wall of the study at the back of the space (Hamm 2013, 28).

What makes this project relevant here is that it highlights how even in the refurbishment of listed interiors—that means without the programmatic changes and structural interventions of building *reuse*—, 'keeping it all together' is difficult with regards to the interior, as procurement laws and different agents during commissioning and contracting affect professional interior practice.

As mentioned above, commissioning the structural and technical retrofit of the building lay with the Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning. This body is in charge of the construction and upkeep of all German embassy buildings worldwide. Interior aspects like loose furniture, lighting, decoration etc., however, are not part of their responsibilities. Interior designs and interior decoration are commissioned by the embassies themselves; and in this case, too, the commission for the interior design was issued to gmp by the German Ambassador to Brazil (Pfisterer 2025). The re-design of Hans Scharoun's embassy interior thus demonstrates how the split between interior design and decoration on the one hand, and interior architecture on the other (here included in the architectural works) is not solely a terminological distinction in reuse theory, as discussed above, but can be equally pertinent as an endemic aspect of professional interior practice.

Furthermore, more current photographs of the embassy's interior show an effect similar to that highlighted in Galović's visual research. With another modernisation of the listed building imminent, a 2020s interior photograph of the space (from a similar angle as Figure 1-9) is shown on the website of the Federal organisation in charge (Amt für Bundesbau, n.d.). That photograph depicts gmp's interior design—including some new decorative aspects like wall coverings and turquoise cushions not necessarily in line with it—without any reference to any designers beyond Hans Scharoun. At the same time, this photograph, and the general role of embassy as the client, highlights the actual use of the space, as it differs

from standard architectural photography in that it shows such signs of occupation and use.

Another, slightly more complex task is the current historic and structural renovation of *Schloss Bellevue*, the seat of the German Federal President (*Bundespräsident*) in Berlin. Since 1994, the late 18th-century palace has been the principal official residence of the German Head of State.[5] *Schloss Bellevue*'s renovation was commissioned to gmp by the BBR in 2020, after an EU-wide public procurement process. The aim is to modernise and repair the listed historic building and upgrade its technical standards (Der Bundespräsident, n.d.). Of particular interest are, on the one hand, the preservation of historic renovation of the 1930s and the rebuilding of the 1950s (both heritage protected), and, on the other, the upgrade to current technical standards for public buildings of this category—from security aspects and barrier-free access to modern ventilation and energy-saving, flicker-free lighting to match contemporary sustainability requirements as much as present-day expectations applicable to settings for film and photography (Pfisterer 2025).

The complexity of these different aims, combined with the focus on reuse, leads to a situation, in which the architects' commission for a historic and structural renovation includes dealing with a broad range of interior reuse, design, and fitting aspects. gmp associate partner Markus Pfisterer refers to, for example, "the specification of light bulbs and the refurbishment of chandeliers from different centuries," "acoustics and the need for curtains," the installation of "built-in furniture," and the "conservation of historic interiors" (Pfisterer 2025, author's translation). While such interior reuse tasks seem to call for an early involvement of interior specialists, designated interior works will only be commissioned further downstream, in a separate body of works, and—like in the Scharoun example—not by the BBR, but by the user, in this case the Office of the Federal President.

Historic 1950s interiors like Salon II (Figure 1-10) as *Gesamtkunstwerk* of contemporary art works, surfaces, furnishings, lighting and colours are thus dealt with by architects and conservationists who also specify acoustic and lighting requirements, while interior specialists, as described by Masoud and Eshrati (2025), come last. The interior design [*Innenraumgestaltung*] commission will be concerned with, for example, choosing and specifying loose furniture for gmp's newly-created and redesigned spaces in relation to gmp's built-in furniture; and

[5] While often perceived differently, the German head of the government, the Federal Chancellor [*Bundeskanzler:in*], only ranks third in terms of protocol hierarchy.

with choosing and specifying e.g. colours, curtains, lighting, etc. as set out in, and based on, the overall design and requirements resulting from the historical and structural renovation commissioned to gmp architects. gmp on the other hand, when trying to convey a sense of the spaces as occupied interiors, were only allowed to use abstracted clay renders of furniture items, as loose furniture was not part of their commission. Furthermore, gmp in turn were also concerned as to how to 'keep it all together' when handing their design work over to procurement process that would choose an interior practice to be commissioned for further execution and completion of the interior works (Pfisterer 2025).

Fig. 1-10 Listed Salon II at *Schloss Bellevue* with historic 1950s artworks, lighting, flooring, furnishing and inlays on wooden surfaces of the table and the doors. Photograph by Markus Pfisterer. Courtesy of gmp.

The third example is a public building of a more modest scope. *Stadtbibliothek Rheinsberg*, the city library in Rheinsberg, Northern Brandenburg, Germany, is housed in an adaptive reuse project, which comprises of three traditional half-timbered listed houses converted into a civic centre by local architect Peter Köster. The interior project—designed and executed in 2023-24 by c.fischer interior architects, Berlin—re-housed the city library for adults, together with a new space for the children's library in a former horse stable, within that new civic centre. For the project, existing wooden shelves were reused, repaired and re-clad, metal

shelves sanded and repainted, the former library's chairs upholstered (Figure 1-11). In contrast to the auburn screed flooring and in line with the grey of the walls and whitewashed brick walls, all in-built shelves and panels were painted in fjord and sage greens (c.fischer Innenarchitekten, n.d.). Among the results of such careful craft and individual treatment, white acoustic ceiling panels mounted in a rectangular, offset tiling pattern provide an additional layer of contemporary sustainable materials.

Like in previous examples, c.fischer interior architects were also working within the context of an architecture practice's historic and structural reuse project in this one. However, their finished interior project—working both within an adaptive reuse structure *and* with reused building materials and furnishing items—demonstrates how consistently addressing interior reuse's various layers and methods can also manifest more comprehensibly in professional interior practice under certain circumstances; and how it helps keeping it all together.

Fig, 1-11 *Stadtbibliothek Rheinsberg.* Reception area of the city library. Photograph by Florian Kleinefenn. Courtesy of c.fischer Innenarchitekten.

Conclusion

While the past decades saw the parallel rise of adaptive reuse and the 'coming of age' of 'interiors' as a discipline with a distinct body of

knowledge, this text has argued that the role of the interior discipline in adaptive reuse is still neither well-defined nor without its particular difficulties.

In terms of interior identities, the text discussed different definitions of interior architecture, interior design and interior decoration, and especially the close link between interior architecture and adaptive reuse in Anglophone interior discourse since the late 1990s. This connection was found to be difficult from an international perspective, as some countries have been using interior architecture without such connotations. Furthermore, the equation of interior architecture with adaptive reuse comes at the expense of disciplinary unity and of a clear definition of interiors as a distinctive voice within reuse discourse.

Three different interior approaches formed the theoretical discussion in search for a subject-specific form of reuse. The first—the conservation of interiors—proved to be interior-focused, yet also more conservationist rather than reuse-driven. It raises the issue of historic layers of use inscribed in interior spaces and their furnishings, objects and surfaces. In the necessity to be distinct from architectural approaches, the second—the interior approach to adaptive reuse—was found to prioritise interior decoration and interior design. Surprisingly, both approaches largely eclipsed interior architecture, despite its link with adaptive reuse in Anglophone discourse. In search for an interior-specific form of reuse, this text drew on interior theory definitions to support—as the third approach—interior reuse as a composite practice of dis/assemblage based on the composition, and reuse, of various objects and materials on different levels, including the built envelope as one of these.

This focus on interior reuse raises specific pedagogic questions. Visual research by postgraduate students at Berlin International demonstrated how interiors may be comprehended via materials and spatial definition or via occupation; how interiors may be re-read by separating the existing from new interventions or by enhancing the visual layering of different periods; and how dis/assembling disciplinary contributions may support a strategic highlighting of interior aspects. Interior reuse pedagogy thus points towards the necessity to shuttle back-and-forth between analysis and creative activities, as much as an increased interest in representational techniques, which enable students to work with composite, palimpsestuous and dis/assembling practices.

With regards to professional practice, three German projects showed certain systemic obstacles, in which interior reuse is hindered by the separation of different stages of works that are often assigned to different disciplines. Two examples showed how reuse today includes dealing with

interior spaces as a whole, and at the same time with interior components at many different levels—from shelves to chandeliers. However, with the interior discipline suffering from 'the difficulty of being last,' interior reuse as a composite practice, assembling different objects, materials, fittings, atmospheres and notions of occupations also proved to be a challenging approach in many commissions.

The analysis of these four different ways in which interior reuse aims to 'keep the interior together'—in terms of disciplinary identity, within reuse theory, as a pedagogic approach, and in professional practice—provided a particular perspective on the long-term discussion of interior disciplinary identity. It focussed on interior approaches to reuse, and on the specific contribution the interior discipline has to offer to that field.

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