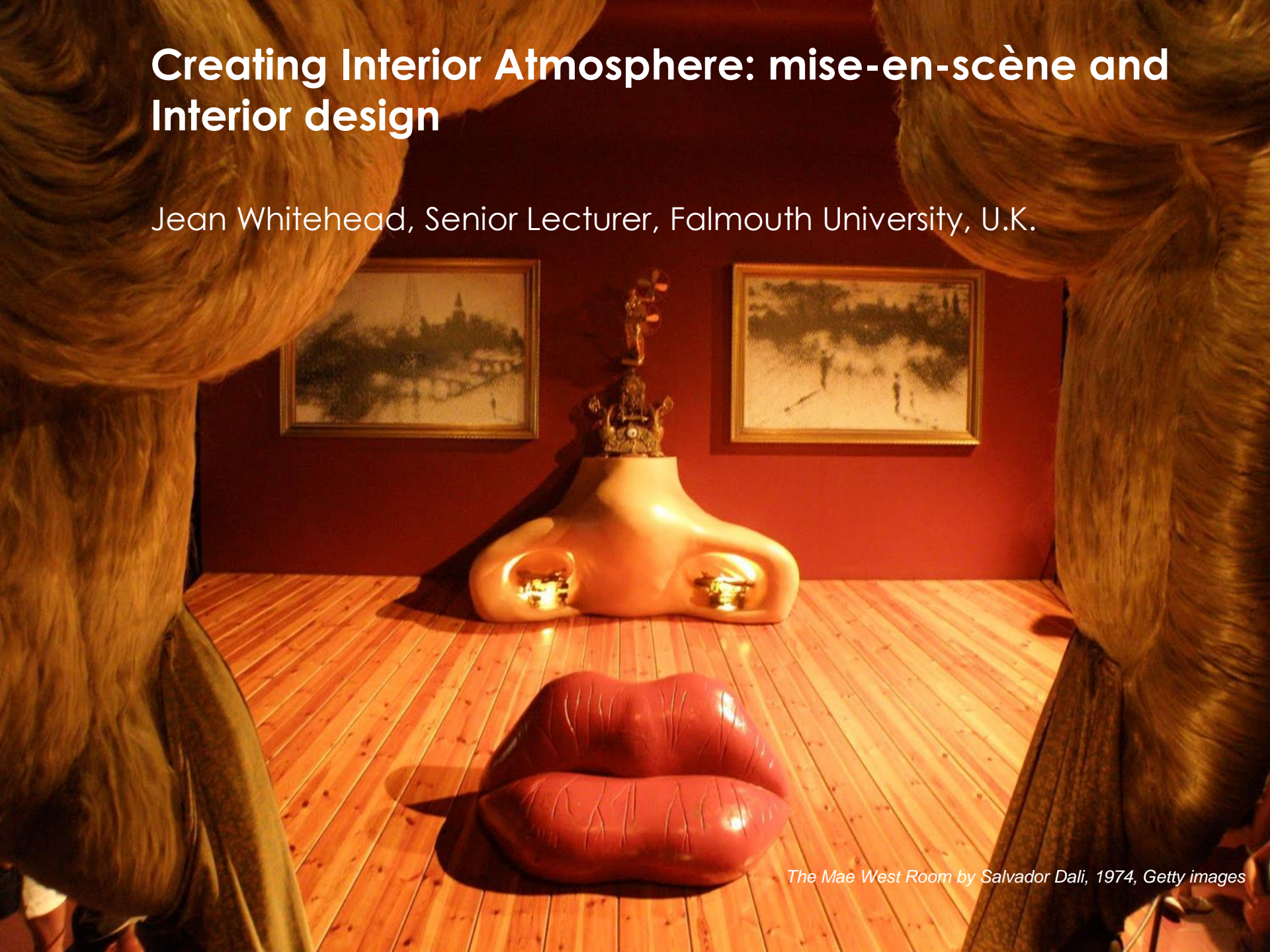


Creating Interior Atmosphere: mise-en-scène and Interior design

Jean Whitehead, Senior Lecturer, Falmouth University, U.K.



The Mae West Room by Salvador Dalí, 1974, Getty images

Lecture content

- Introduction, an interdisciplinary approach
- Decorative theories, interior atmosphere
- Filmic Space, introducing mise-en-scène
- What's in a room? Interior ingredients...

From film to interior design, considering mise-en-scène

INTRODUCTION

Future Perspectives on Interior Design

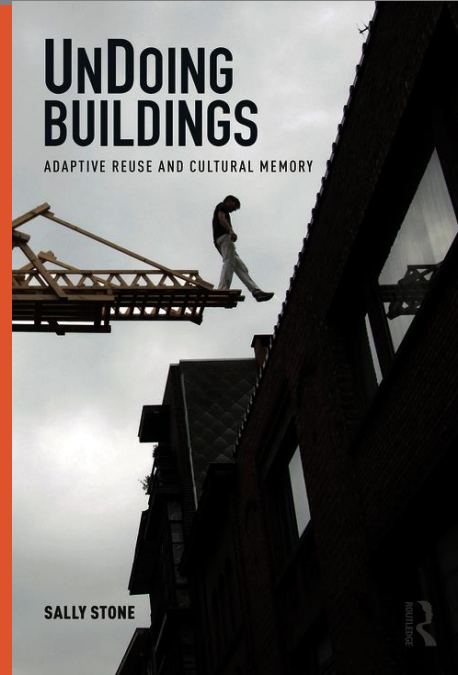
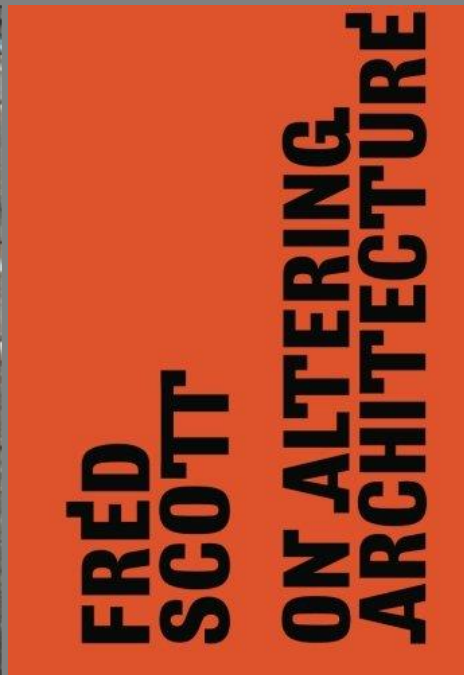
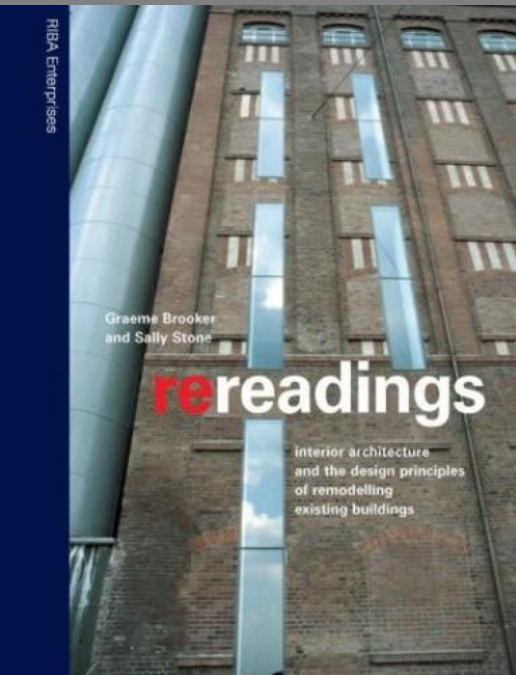
From film to interior design, considering mise-en-scène

By consciously borrowing from cinematic theory and theatrical traditions of space this interdisciplinary approach to interior design seeks to re-evaluate interior decoration theoretically.

‘Mise-en-scène’ and ‘staged space’ helps to frame an approach that proffers an alternative reading of the discipline.

Keywords: interdisciplinary, future perspectives, interior design, staged space, filmic space, atmosphere, mise-en-scène

Theories of the decorative versus the architectural...



What is interior decoration and where has it gone?

Bloomsbury UK web site

Interior Architecture = 168 results
Interior Design 310 results
Interior Decoration 3 results
Source : Bloomsbury

RIBA UK web Site

Interior Architecture = 36 results
Interior Design 133 results
Interior Decoration 3 results
Source: RIBA bookshop

Laurence King UK web site

Interior Architecture = 14
Interior Design 40
Interior Decoration 4
Source : Laurence King

From film to interior design, considering mise-en-scène

DECORATIVE THEORIES

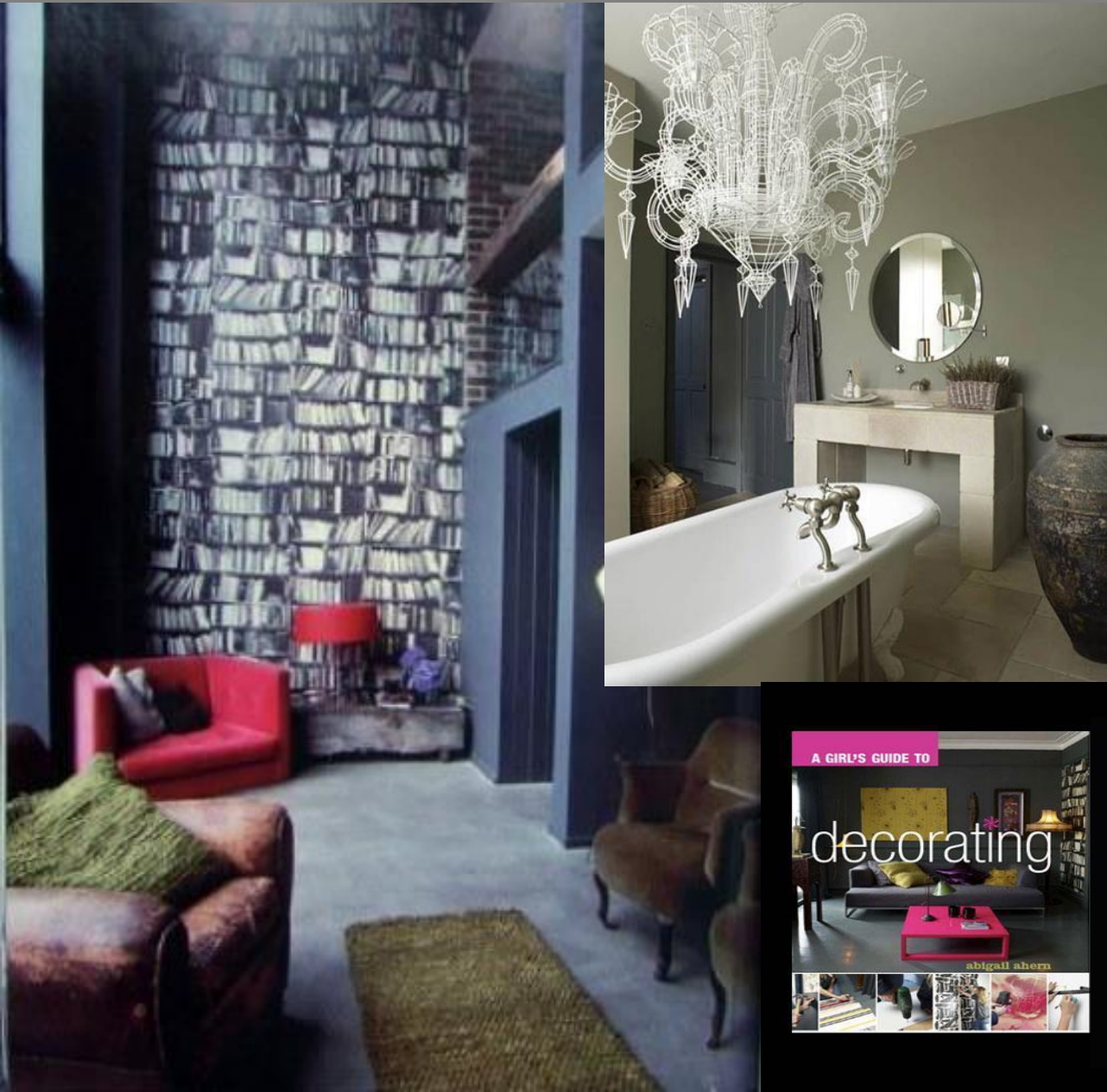
interior decoration

noun

- 1. interior design.*
- 2. materials used to decorate an interior (surface finish).*

<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/interior-decoration?s=t>

what is Interior Decoration? Individual expression



A stylist's approach:

'I love old Hollywood glamour, I love glamorous interiors...but then I always want to make it a bit edgy and throw some rock and roll vibe in there.'

Abigail Ahern

the desire to decorate – the collective experience



A collective approach:

'in the beginning it was all white, then everyone started drawing on the walls, and then everything was covered. It was like a disease.'

Fort Thunder commune, Rhode island, USA/1995

Post-consumer waste becomes interior decoration

The desire to decorate - Interior assemblage

Assemblage – ‘A process comparable to collage in which the art object is built up from 3-dimensional found materials.’ Read [1945], 1994:24

The artistic approach:

Schwitters's saw the poetics in the cast offs and the unwanted and used these to create a three dimensional architectural assemblage

*1923-39 (destroyed 1943)
Merzbau, or the Cathedral of Erotic Misery, Kurt Schwitters
Image courtesy of DACS 2007*



the desire to decorate – faux expressions



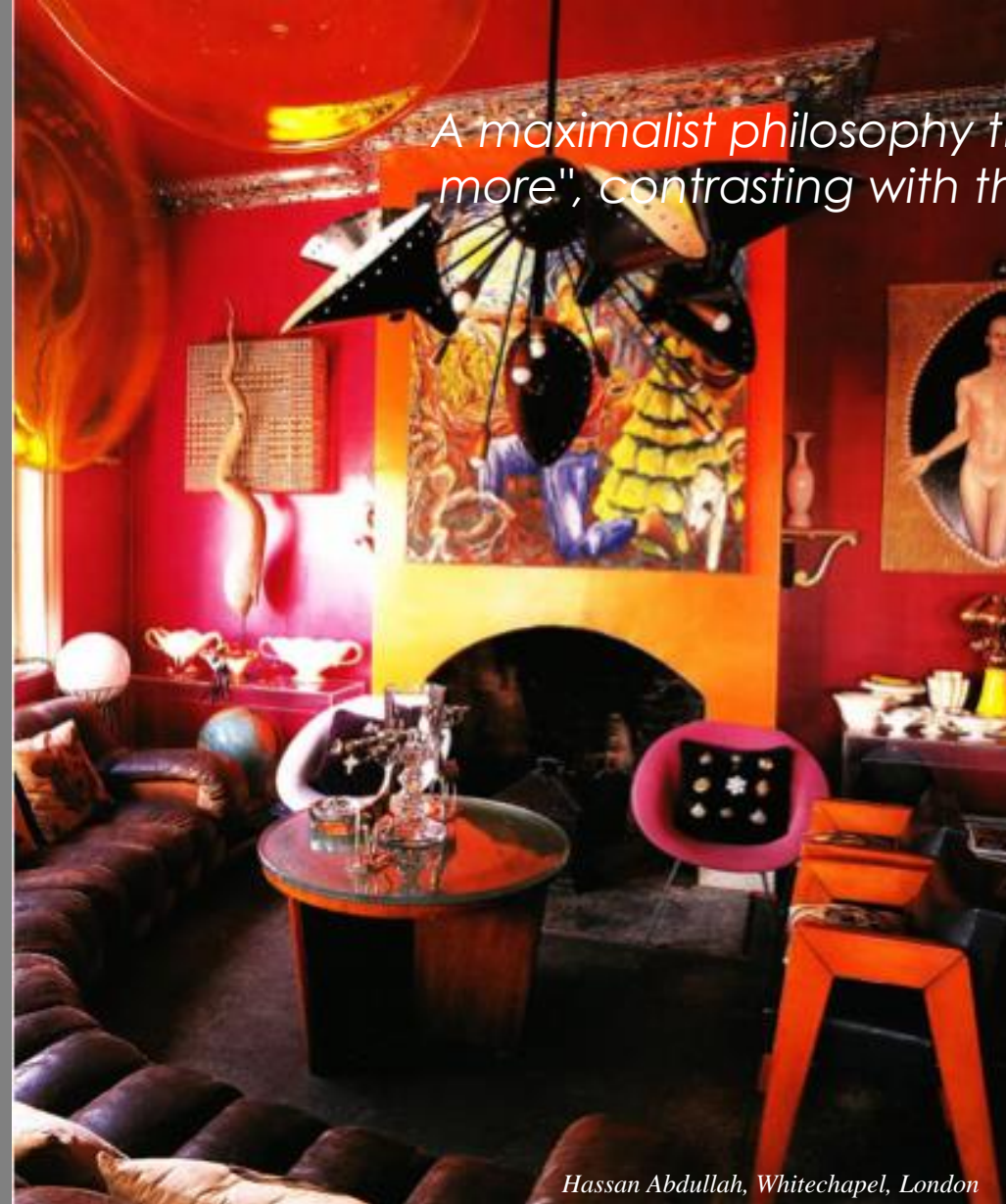
The theatrical approach:

'To Reno Dakota, all the world's a potential stage including his own home...his decorating style, which he called **DECAY DECOR DAKOTA** is a complex study in faux finishing.'

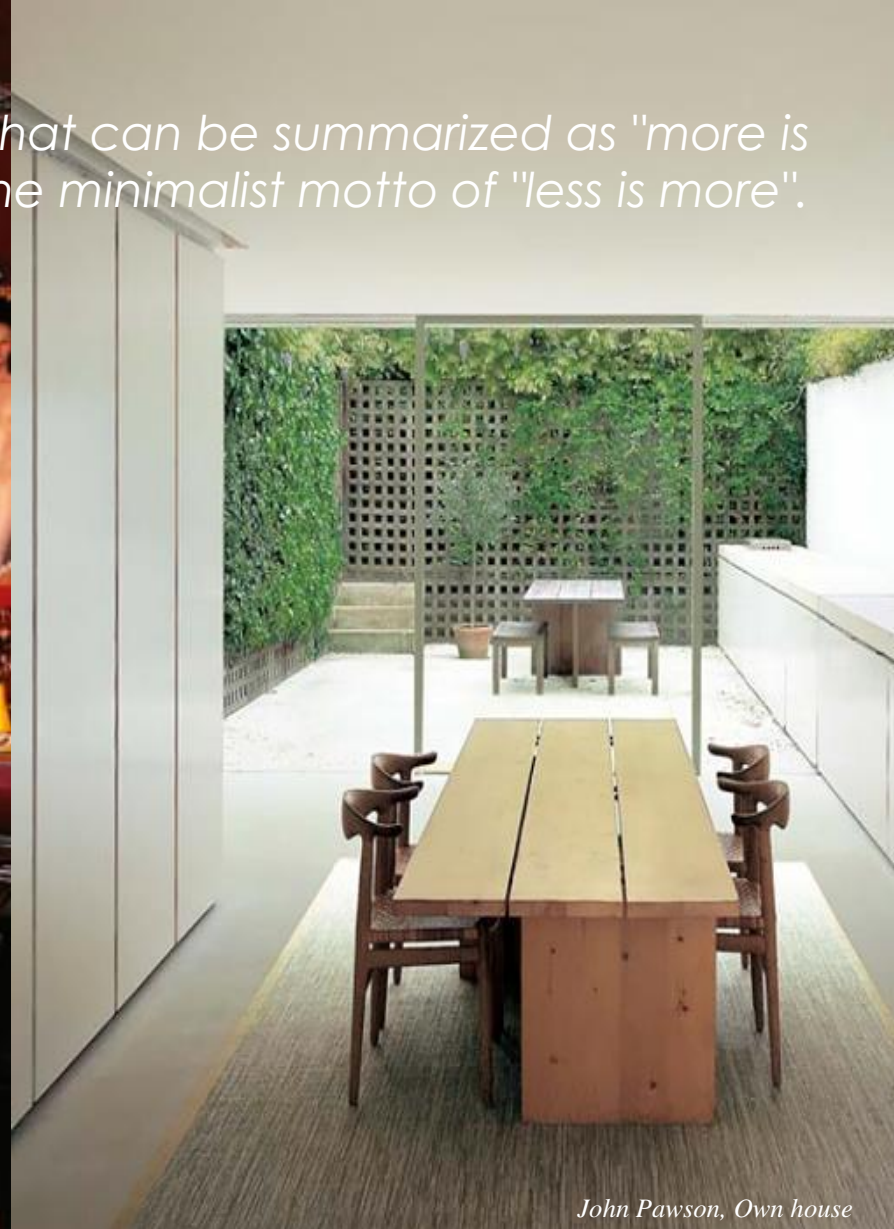
Reno Dakotas apartment, East Village, NYC, 1983 onwards

The desire to decorate, stylistic and thematic interiors - Maximalism versus minimalism

A maximalist philosophy that can be summarized as "more is more", contrasting with the minimalist motto of "less is more".



Hassan Abdullah, Whitechapel, London



John Pawson, Own house

Decorative

Atmospheric

What is interior atmosphere?

Atmosphere

noun

1. The pervading tone or mood of a place, situation, or creative work:

2. the hotel has won commendations for its friendly, welcoming atmosphere.

Oxford dictionary, n.d.

What is interior atmosphere?

Atmosphere is capable of 'unify[ing] a diversity of impressions in a single emotive state.'

Gernot Böhme

Atmosphere as 'spatialised feelings.'

Tonino Griffero

'Magic of the real world.'

Peter Zumthor

'I consider the works as sort of 'phenomena-producers', like machines, or stage sets producing a certain thing in a more or less illusory way.'

(Eliasson, cited in Bimbaum, 2001: 14)

**The decorative
versus the
atmospheric**

From film to interior design, considering mise-en-scène

INTRODUCING MISE-EN-SCÈNE

Introducing mise-en-scène - Staged space

Jean Whitehead

CREATING INTERIOR ATMOSPHERE

Mise-en-scène and Interior Design



Film interiors + atmosphere + interior mise en scene

'In discussing the decorated interior, it is no coincidence that the French word decor has dual meaning and translates as both stage scenery and interior decoration.'

Rugoff, 2010:11 cited in Whitehead, 2018: 28

Introducing mise-en-scène - Staged space



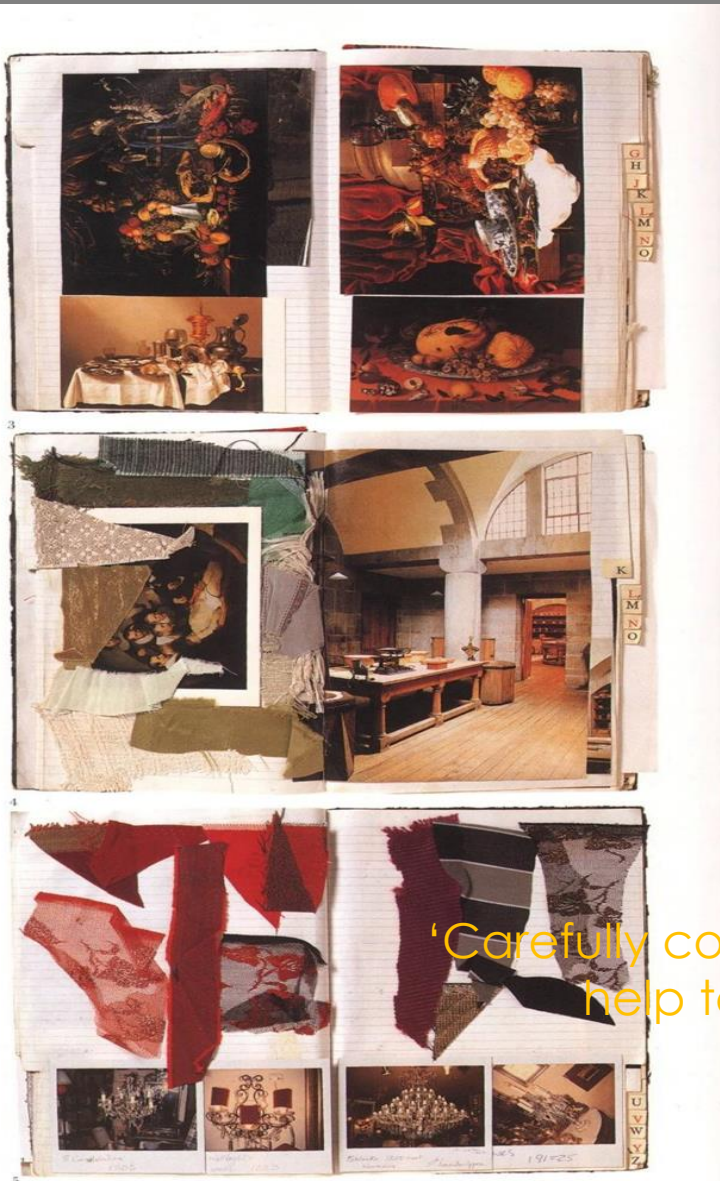
What about interior decoration's affiliation to the **stage set**?

'It is the art of the stage set which rids atmospheres of the odour of the irrational: here it is a question of producing atmospheres' ... (of) 'manipulating material conditions, of things, apparatus, sound and light.'

Böhme, 2013

'to setting the conditions', referred to as 'generators'

Introducing mise-en-scène - Staged space



Illusory interiors:
Scenography, art direction and production design are all concerned with a film's visual identity, its illusory atmosphere, its narrative.

'Carefully constructed man-made sets or adapted locations help to set the tone of a film by spatially reinforcing its narrative or characterisation.'

Introducing mise-en-scène - Staged space



What about the interior and **mise-en-scène**?

'A you would expect from the term's theatrical origins, mise-en-scène includes those aspects of film that overlap with the art of the theatre: setting, lighting, costume, and behaviour of the figures. In controlling the mise-en-scène, the director stages the event for the camera.'

Bordwell and Thompson [1979] 2001:156

Image courtesy of <http://georgehurrell.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/hurrell-on-movie-set-wm.jpg>

Mise-en-scène literally translates as 'putting into the scene.'

Mise-en-scène

CINEMATIC INTERIORS – NARRATIVE AND SETTING

Cinematic interiors – narrative and setting



Cinematic pioneer and theatrical illusionist Georges Méliès

Méliès moved from simple recordings of his stage shows to fantasy epics. These "trick films" combined fantastic yarns, intricate painted sets, and elaborate costumes with special effects such as slow motion, dissolves, and superimpositions.



Theatrical scenery is inevitably a 'tableau' that uses a combination of painted scenography, acoustics, costumes and special effects

A Trip to the Moon, 1902 director Georges Méliès

Cinematic interiors – narrative and setting



German Expressionism

Cinematic representation of an altered mental state
'psychological' interiors. The sets became non realistic, geometrically distorted, exaggerated by painted lights and shadows.

The sets become characters in their own right and contribute towards the mise-en-scène

The Cabinet of Dr Caligari, director Robert Weine, 1920

Cinematic interiors – narrative and setting



'Taken in its broadest sense, the film set is a discrete but ever-present character, the director's most faithful accomplice. It is simply a question of finding for each film the setting best calculated to situate the action geographically, socially, and dramatically.'

Barsacq, [1970] 1776: 122

The Cabinet of Dr Caligari, 1919, director Robert Wiene, Getty Images

Cinematic interiors - narrative and setting



'His cinematic environments, because of their sectional 'dollhouse' quality and their 'planimetric staging' immortalise the interior as a recurring motif or habitual presence.'

Bordwell 2015: 238 cited in Whitehead, 2018: 25

Cinematic interiors - narrative and setting

'Slow horizontal tracking shots reveal these coloured spaces as a painted frieze.'

Whitehead 2017: 143



[Image from diomedia](#)

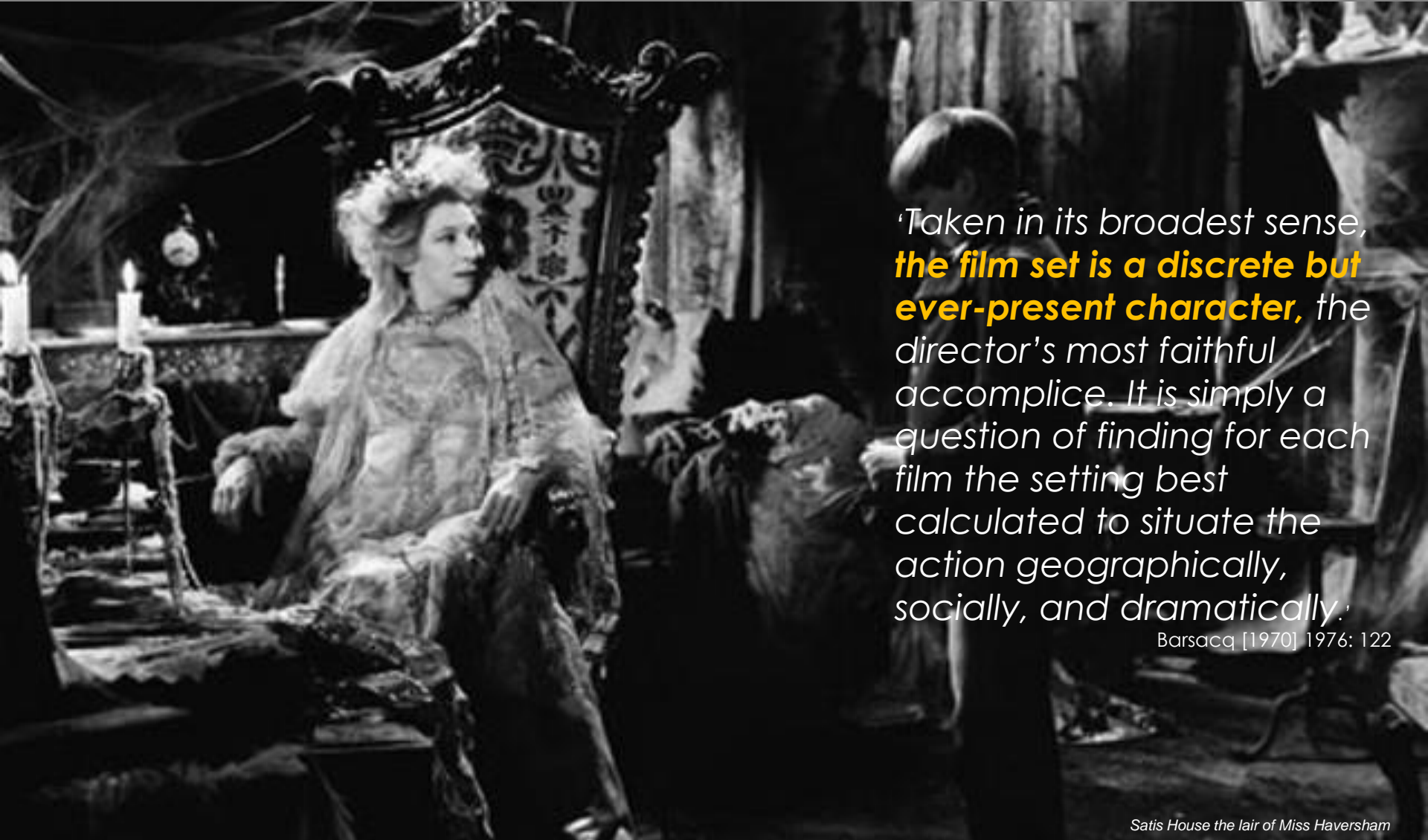
Peter Greenaway The Cook, the Thief, his Wife and her Lover



Interior mise-en-scene as 'staged space'

*'Staged space quickly transcends its physical setting through the arrangement of its 'setting' the interplay of props, the use of colour and materials , through to the application of light and shadow, all of which holistically combine to tell a story. This is in essence an **interior assemblage** – elements that have been brought together or composed **in the creation of a specific interior scene.**'*

Understanding interior mise-en-scène – the set as a character



‘Taken in its broadest sense, **the film set is a discrete but ever-present character**, the director’s most faithful accomplice. It is simply a question of finding for each film the setting best calculated to situate the action geographically, socially, and dramatically.’

Barsacq [1970] 1976: 122

Satis House the lair of Miss Havesham

Great Expectations, 1946, director David Lean

Understanding interior mise-en-scène – the set as a character

Mise-en-scene is used in film studies in the discussion of visual style. For the student of film a useful definition might be the contents of the frame and the way they are organised.''What are the contents of the frame? They include lighting, costume, decor, properties and the actors themselves.'

John Gibbs



Dracula's castle

Understanding interior mise-en-scène – the physical & psychological setting

In films interiors and buildings become settings that have psychological meaning, they act as 'metaphors' for the character or the story to create visually complex atmospheres.

*The constructed mise en scene communicates the intended sense of time and space as required for the story through the design of a **physical setting**. This setting is then enhanced through the use of elements that enrich the film **psychologically**.*

These two elements together create a rich atmosphere – a mix of the physical and the actual, the psychological or interpreted. Both contribute to the mise-en-scene and how the story is told.

Understanding interior mise-en-scène – the set as a character



Mise-en-scène is essentially the art of 'presenting' and by this means it successfully projects an 'expressive' visual coherence to its audience.

A Clockwork Orange, 1971, director Stanley Kubrick, Getty Images



'Staged space'

In essence staged space is concerned with the assemblage of key interior ingredients that work together to holistically construct a specific scene. It has physical, psychological and narrative properties.

The Actress stage set, 1928 Canadian actress Norma Shearer on the set of *The Actress* (aka *Trelawney of the Wells*), directed by Sidney Franklin, Getty Images

Developing interior mise-en-scène

The **psychological mise-en-scène** – In contrast this includes elements that work with the setting and aim to enhance a specific ‘mood’ whilst at the same time hoping to elicit a particular emotional response.

Typical interior elements - *this is concerned with how lighting, colour, scale and composition are used to enhance the setting and impact upon our ‘reading’ and ‘perception’ of the space.*

From film to interior design, considering mise-en-scène

WHAT'S IN A ROOM? INTERIOR INGREDIENTS...

An interior mise-en-scène toolkit :

What are the ingredients that inform an interior mise-en-scène?

Or the deployment of temporary interior ingredients or 'props' that set the 'scene' and create a certain mood or ambience.

5 x key ingredients:

The interior Scenery, Interior Props, Special Effects, Light and Shadow, Colour

What's in a room? Mise-en-scène ingredients



What if the **interior 'setting'** is conceived as a scenic backdrop, a physical 'skin' that can be endlessly manipulated and transformed expressively.

The famous miniature family theatre, owned by Mr Stanley Lupino, the well known comedian, 1940, Getty Images

Interior Scenery and mise-en-scène



Surface + layered + manipulated or three dimensional interior settings or scenic backdrops

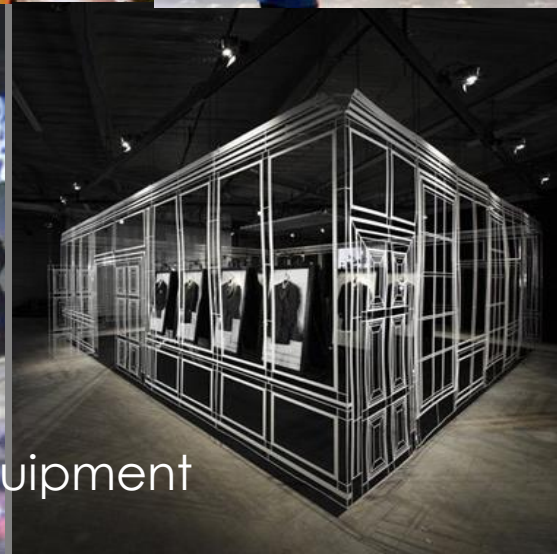
What's in a room? Mise-en-scène ingredients



What if accessories, furniture, fixtures and equipment, in essence 'interior props' could be utilised to enhance and give meaning to the interior setting.

Props, sets and props waiting to be loaded for a journey to York, 1947, Getty Images

Interior Prop's and mise-en-scène



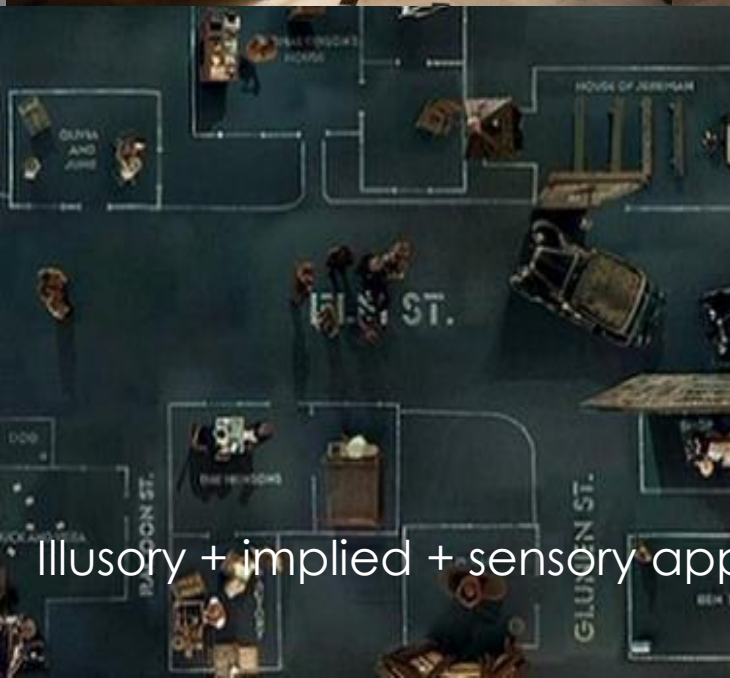
What's in a room? Mise-en-scène ingredients



What if an interior mise-en-scène could exploit 'special effects' in the creation of environments that deliberately play with our perception of space.

Flying Ladies, 13th December 1932: Four of Daly's chorus girls are hoisted aloft on 'invisible' wires during a rehearsal for the pantomime 'Mother Goose'. Getty Images

Spatial perception and mise-en-scène



Illusory + implied + sensory approaches to space, the use of scale

What's in a room? Mise-en-scène ingredients



What if **light and shadow** had the potential to taint psychologically any interior mise-en-scène.

Studio Portrait , Swedish American actress Greta Garbo (1905 – 1990) as Irene Guarri during filming of the romantic drama 'The Kiss', directed by Jacques Feyder. Getty images

Light & Shadow and mise-en-scène



Natural (day) + artificial (electric) + candlelight + digital light

What's in a room? Mise-en-scène ingredients



What if an interior
mise-en-scène
could exploit
colours
psychological
aspect or
tendencies.

*Painting fifteen miles of scenery for London pantomime,
1932, Getty Images*

Colour and mise-en-scène



Colour + pattern + graphics

This approach aims to proffer:

- A timely scholarly reappraisal of 'decorating' as an area of expertise within Interior Design.
- A revised and expanded definition of the decorative interior that encompasses mise-en-scène, spectacle, staging, ambiance, perception and its impact upon the human experience in its theoretical reimagining of the subject.
- An exploration of 'what is' . . . an interior mise-en-scène through its physical, psychological and narrative qualities.
- Applied knowledge of how to 'analyse' and then 'create' a specific mood in interior design through the use of key design ingredients.



The end

Thank you

