

# THESIS

## **Chinese Design Through the Gaze of Architectural Digest**

A longitudinal content analysis on the Western perspective of Chinese Design within the interiors of the elite

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## ABSTRACT

Chinese Design has a long-lasting relationship with the West, and it was particularly popular in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe. Chinoiserie is a European style born from this popularity, and Chinese Design has many forms including pre-modern, contemporary, and imitation, next to chinoiserie. The Literature review has shown that the varied forms of Chinese Design are present in the interiors of the elite, but the majority of the academic literature is written from an art history perspective and mostly focuses on the 16<sup>th</sup> till early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, the topics of Chinese Design and elite interiors, is barely present in the cultural sociology field. Thus, this study conducted a longitudinal content analysis with a data sample from Architectural Digest, an interior decorating magazine, containing 5 ads and 66 articles that range from 1927 till 2024. The aim was to discover if there were trends visible in the writing of Chinese Design from a Western perspective, and to analyze if other non-design topics are related to Chinese Design within interiors. This study analyzed the data from a consumption sociology vantage, which became the main lens, and which showcased four main perspectives on consumption: enjoyment, spending, identity and education. In addition, this study also included a global cultural taste and cosmopolitanism review. Last, Orientalism and Exoticism were also considered. The findings show that pre-modern Chinese Design is often admired among the elite and that collecting as a hobby is often the case for these Chinese Design admirers. Furthermore, Chinese Design is still present in the interiors of the elite, and these elites are often presented as cosmopolitans. Politics were omnipresent in the findings, but they were directed to societies and economies that differed from capitalism. Chinese Design was highly respected, in fact, this study considers to have found a form of an interior design canon for the elite, in which Chinese Design and Western Design are equally important.

**KEYWORDS:** *Chinese Design, Interior design, Architectural Digest, Consumption, Decorating Magazines*

**Word count:** 20985

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# 1. Introduction

China as a country and culture has undergone a continuous admiration from the West (Mayer, 2011; Christie, 2015; Van Noord & Weststeijn, 2015). This admiration is visually present when looking at Chinese art, artefacts and design in luxury interiors throughout the world, sold at auctions and used as inspiration for interior and fashion design (Glaister, 2023; Ling, 2023; Sotheby's, 2024). It even resulted in a stand-alone European style coined 'chinoiserie', born from a consumption need in the West to procure Chinese art, artefacts and designs in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Honour, 1961). As this consumption need was so strong that European craftspeople began imitating oriental wares meant for home decoration (Honour, 1961, p. 44). In fact, Chinese Design in its various forms has been present in the interiors of the Western elite these past 500 years (Yoshihara, 2003; Bellemare, 2014; Bertram, 2021).

Fasenfest describes the fascination of China due to it being a country and culture that seems "both seemingly impenetrable yet everywhere in the world", while sharing a fascination that starts from Marco Polo's travels to current newspaper articles representing it as a "symbol of the unknown that should be feared" (2017, p. VII). Hufnagel, Von Nordheim and Müller (2022) confirm this viewpoint by Fasenfest, as they conducted a communication study which showcased a negative trend in the framing of China in German newspapers from 2000-2019. In addition, Chinese artefacts have also been negatively associated with art and design in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century, including accusations of illicit counterfeiting and imitations (Lin, 2011). Ironically, it was the West that started the imitation with great commercial success these past centuries, and up till today, still does so when rehashing chinoiserie (Chinoiserie, 2024).

Researching Chinese Design could potentially show if this negative framing found in politics, world views and societal perspectives has a correlation within interior architecture and design when referring to 'Made in China' luxury goods, and Chinese inspired art, interiors and designs. On the other hand, art and design have also been linked to the philosophy of art, which also feeds the possibility that Chinese Design, from Bell's Significant form (1999), will just be admired due to its aesthetics. This raises the possibility that its admiration will decline, or increase based on frivolous trends such as fashion. Meanwhile, Van den Braembussche, does give a more connected perspective on art admiration, in which society also plays a role (2009, p. 9). Furthermore, the majority of academic research on Chinese themed interiors is from an art historic perspective and not from a cultural sociology

discipline. Therefore, it would be valuable to research if trends can be found in how the West refers to both original Chinese and China inspired art, artefacts and designs. This led to the following research question: **What are the trends in writing about Chinese Design in the Western interior architecture and design world?**

The literature indicated that a qualitative approach might be more valuable as a method due to the explorative nature of this study, so this study will conduct a longitudinal content analysis to discover what the trends are in writing through the gaze of *Architectural Digest*, a decorating magazine. In addition, China as a country and culture has a long-lasting relationship with the West, which influences the Chinese Design reception both from an artistic, societal and consumptive perspective. The found literature brings to light that Chinese Design consists of pre-modern, modern and contemporary design, and all three will be considered. Furthermore, interior architecture and design is also a relatively new field, and Chinese Design in interiors is particularly unexplored from a cultural sociology vantage, as the academic literature mostly focuses on art historic appreciation in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, with a dash of early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

From a cultural sociological perspective, both orientalism and “the Other”, have a strong presence in the social sciences, making Critical Theory dominant in the found literature. Yet, having this as a main scope in this explorative study would be too limited, for Critical Theory focuses mostly on unequal power and leaves little room for other possible trends. Nevertheless, orientalism and the Other will be included in this study, and so will globalization and cosmopolitanism; two scopes that are often associated with Critical Theory but which offer a more open perspective compared to orientalism and the Other.

The literature review paved the way and consumption will be the main lens for this study, for it is most fitting to analyze a publication that informs the reader about the interior architecture and design, and which will comprise Enjoyment, Spending, Education and Identity as separate possible consumption patterns to be found in the sampled data.

## **2. Literature Review**

This literature review will start with a historic lens on the reception of China as a country and culture by the West and explain why this is relevant to Chinese Design, while also taking into consideration aestheticism and art philosophy. It will then delve deeper into the interior architecture and design world, delimitating the research scope of this study to Architectural Digest (AD). Moreover, the sociology of (global) consumption will form the theoretical backbone of this study. However, in addition to this, Critical Theory will be included when studying the reception of Chinese Culture in the West within this literature review.

### **2.1. Chinese Reception in the Western World**

The Dutch sinologist Barend Ter Haar (2009, p. 76) explains that Chinese goods were already consumed in Europe and the mediterranean for two millenia. Nevertheless, direct trade between China and the West was still not the case as trade was mostly conducted through the Middle East. Historian Patricia Buckley Ebrey (1996, p. 194-195) gives an account on the first time China and the West mingled culturally, which happened in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century thanks to the Mongols who welcomed the arrival of merchants from distant lands. From all these cultural and trade exchanges, Marco Polo was the most (in)famous (Buckley Ebrey, 1996 p. 195; Ter Haar, 2009). His travels during the early Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) influenced the view of ‘Cathay’ within Europe, and to an extent, his view became dominant and started the mystique and fantasy surrounding China in the Middle Ages up to Modern Times.

#### **2.1.1. Pre-Modern Chinese Design Reception**

At the end of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), the tribute system, which was originally meant to secure foreign peace, was adjusted to permit more open trade, just around the time that Jesuit mission’s started getting a foot in China (1600’s), though with limited religious conversion rates (Ter Haar, 2009, p. 342). Nevertheless, the well documented and shared missions rekindled the interest in China that Marco Polo had ignited.

British art historian, Hugh Honour (1961, p. 40) describes in his book *Chinoiserie, The Vision of Cathay*, how in the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> century Chinese goods arrived in Europe, and while primarly loved for curiosity’s sake, they were subsequently wanted for their aesthetic value. Later on, this want for Chinese goods turned into a frenzy among the growing

consumers, that consisted by and large of the aristocracy, the gentry and other elites. As trade was limited and mostly via long ship journeys, this frenzy for Chinese goods took another turn in Europe: the creation of Chinese imitations by European craftspeople (1961, p. 44). At first, the imitation was to satisfy Chinese design demands, but slowly the Chinese designs started to alter, catering to European tastes in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This Chinese influenced design led to the birth of a specific design style coined chinoiserie, that was well received during the Baroque (1600s), specifically during the reign of Louis XIV, and subsequently adapted within the rococo style movement in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Purdy, 2020, p. 108). The peak of chinoiserie was around 1750, and it included architecture, interior design, garments, and more (Honour, 1961, p. 87). More importantly, Honour (1961, p. 1) considers chinoiserie to be a European (interior) design style on its own, and not an imitation, providing the reader with a Western perspective on how European craftspeople have interpreted Chinese Design influences. In doing so, Honour (1961, p. 33) makes use of oriental, exoticism and Far East when referring to China in an art historical narrative, but he clearly distinguishes them as part of the mystique surrounding China.

The American art historian, Alpheus Hyatt Mayor clarifies that admiration for Chinese design came from the French monarchy in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, as tastemakers. The reasoning is that the absolute royal rule in France “respected the stylized and exquisitely finished art of the vast and ancient kingdoms whose court ceremonial was more elaborate than that of Versailles” (1941, p. 112). L. Porter (2002, p. 396) even explains that Chinese products and their design imitations, were considered class distinction for their luxurious connotations within the social elites, before spreading among a broader social market that was fueled by “ambitions of social mobility” in the 18<sup>th</sup> century of Britain. This ambition of social mobility was extremely prevalent in the colonies. Robert A. Leath (1999, p. 54) showcases how the demand by colonial Brits for Chinese designs surpassed what was available, and though Chinoiserie is considered a pan-European style, the European colonies also started producing local imitations due to high consumptive demand. During this time, craftspeople and architects did travel, and according to historian Aldous Bertram (2013, p. 76) there was even a historical dispute if the English garden was inspired by Chinese designs recorded in travellogs to China. Imitation or not, chinoiserie proved to be sensitive to fashion, as it lost popularity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Its decline was partially linked to the reasons of its emergence, namely the admiration by the French court, and the fall (guillotine) of this court at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Purdy, 2020, p. 109). The enlightenment period that emerged from the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century

paved the way for a new *directoire*-style, that was the exact opposite of rococo, and which drew inspiration from ancient Greece, Rome and Egypt. Purdy (2020, p. 109) does however emphasize that chinoiserie “embodies quite visibly the early modern tendency to borrow, reproduce, and transfer images and texts from one material or medium to another”. Moreover, the allure “of luxury goods is usually linked to the difficulty of their acquisition” (Purdy, 2020, p. 110).

China’s reluctance to open the direct trade eventually led to (trade) wars, which they lost, and which forced them to accept open trade (Ter Haar, 2009, p. 416). Thus, the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw a decay of power of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912), both nationally and internationally, that included the loss of territories. The last dynasty did not survive a revolution in 1911 and abdicated in 1912, creating the Republic of China (RoC) in 1912 (Schoppa, 2000, p. 56). Chinese Design was relatively absent in 19<sup>th</sup> century interiors of the Western elites, but literature showed that some royals were late adapters of the style (Honour, 1961, p. 183).

Fashion or not, the aesthetic focus on Chinese Design can be attributed to the “Significant Form” first signaled by Clive Bell in his publication *Art* in 1914 (Bell, 1999). Bell’s theory is famous for having separated form over representation, meaning a viewer of art or artefact can appreciate “relations and combinations of lines and colors” without understanding the representation or the meaning of these visual elements (1999, p. 339). He continues with: “What quality is common to Sta. Sophia and the windows at Chartres, Mexican sculpture, Persian bowl, Chinese carpets, Giotto’s frescoes at Padua, and the masterpieces of Poussin, Piero della Francesca, and Cézanne? Only one answer seems possible – significant form.” (Clive Bell, 1999, p. 339). A valuable analysis for this study, as Europeans clearly reacted to the aesthetics of the imported Chinese goods without necessarily understanding the usage or meaning of these items, and later even appropriated them as chinoiserie.

### **2.1.2. Modern Chinese Design Reception**

Chinoiserie did have a strong resurgence in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century of the United States, and this stylistic resurgence was inspired by a newfound admiration for the American colonies in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Yoshihara, 2003; Fahden Briceño, 2008). The rarity of these Chinese designs, particularly Chinese wallpaper from the 18<sup>th</sup> century did not stop early 20<sup>th</sup> century American decorators and collectors to consider them a necessity in the colonial

revival interior. Fahden Briceño starts by explaining that both Europe and the USA lived a late 19<sup>th</sup> century 'Japonism', and that "the Other" was to an extent domesticated, and even "made palatable, in the American home" (2008, p. 14). He continues by explaining that the 19<sup>th</sup> century collecting habits of the American elites foreshadowed future patron relationships in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and later, even "served as emulated models of Asian consumption for middle class women" (p. 18). Overall, Fahden Briceño (2008) manages to position a love of Chinese Design as something valuable among the American elite, and briefly links American politics to Chinese Design, for China became a republic in 1912 and this was favorable for the early 20<sup>th</sup> century USA.

The first years of the republic brought some peace and economic growth, while the USA experienced a resurgence of chinoiserie admiration in the 1920's and 1930's, putting Chinese Design back into the Western interiors of the elite. However, the Republic of China (RoC) suffered a Japanese invasion from 1937-1945, followed by civil wars until the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established in 1949 (Naughton, 2007). The RoC continued separately in Taiwan, and the USA kept relations with the RoC. Nevertheless, admiration for chinoiserie did not survive the WW2, and to an extent, the PRC did not warrant excessive trade or diplomatic relations with the West. Meanwhile, relationships between the RoC, Hong Kong and Macau, with the West, grew steadily in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The relationship between the PRC in the West was heated in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1974) – which included three years of destruction of feudal or bourgeois properties – much was destroyed including Chinese art, artefacts, and more (Schoppa, 2000, p. 120-127). To an extent it also prevented new art or design to flourish as this could be wrongly attributed to a bourgeois occupation. The economic reforms and China's eagerness for trade, led to the Open Door-Policy, instated in 1978 and led by Deng Xiaoping, which reopened the relationship with the West. Alas, the 1989 student protests and the government's reaction to them did not facilitate these foreign relations, and while the Open-Door-Policy was growing, the 1980's and 1990's also showed a reluctant art scene. However, towards the millennium this started changing as different art media, including film, started getting traction within the Western world (Schoppa, 2000, p. 150).

Schoppa (2000, p. 151) does make clear that the art scene within China is related to the government's acceptance or restrictions of art that is entangled with critique, as Chinese contemporary art often touches on societal topics. Considering this, the impact of censorship

might be something that will show up when researching Chinese Design in Western elite interiors from the 2000s onwards.

### **2.1.3. Contemporary Chinese Design Reception**

Art Historian David Clarke (2019, p. 2) does give an interesting view on the art, architecture and design scene since China became a republic, and it confirms Schoppa's statement on Chinese art and design to be tangled with politics, though he nuances this by explaining that Chinese art and design has been prevalent since 1912. Be it as it may, not all art and design has gotten traction in the West, and the subjects and artistic medium are often dependent on the age and era of the artist, while the level of critique to government varies through time. Clarke provides the example of the more existential question and legitimization of Chinese art and design in correspondance to Western (Post)Modernism, which serves to clarify that not all Chinese art is directly linked to governmental or societal critique. The summer Olympic games in 2008, the World Fair in Shanghai in 2010 and the Metropolitan Museum exhibition *China: Through the Looking Glass* in 2015, did show a strong Chinese presence in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in which Chinese culture and design are applauded by the West, though, not always without critique (Chen, 2012; Samsioe, 2016).

Meanwhile, the book *Essensualism* by Charlotte Fiell, Peter Fiell and Jiang Qiong Er, explains how the Chinese art and design scene received admiration from auctions houses and foreign buyers, besides the rich Chinese diaspora (2022). Especially, as in 2014 contemporary Chinese art broke records in Western auction houses (2022, p. 31). In addition, the many art experts and academics that wrote in *Essensualism* coined this new art and design as 'New Chinese' (2022, p.10). In addition, Betram (2021, p. 43) confirms that original chinoiserie and contemporary forms of chinoiserie, are still prevalent in the interiors of the Western elites.

The above gives the impression that current Chinese Design will often be entangled with critique, both from the Chinese government, Western society and media, and the artists themselves, limiting its exposure. But Chinese Design is still prevalent in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and taking into account the growing art sales and auctions, with increasing sale prices as seen in the 2010s, the assumption would be that New Chinese will continue to flourish. So, considering this mix of admiration and co-playing aspects, another perspective is needed to analyze Chinese design in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Art philosopher Van den Braembusche (2009, p. 9) proposed an updated diagram to analyse art from different philosophical perspectives, and which could be applicable to

contemporary Chinese Design as well. This diagram looks not only at the artist and the work of art, or the relationship between audience and the work of art, it also looks at socio-historical context in which an art work emerged. This socio-historic context can provide a more nuanced analysis that gives societal developments a more central role, as this study tries to by approaching the Western reception of Chinese Design from a sociological perspective.

#### **2.1.4. Counterfeits and “Made in China” perceptions**

Two main points still need to be discussed that might also influence the view from the West towards Chinese Design, and which are relevant to the interior architecture and design world this study is focusing on. As the literature has also shown that China is being considered a threat to the West, and not only from an art and design perspective.

The Open-Door-Policy paved the way for production of goods by Western brands being outsourced to the PRC, and the PRC itself started opening up to foreign Western brands who were interested in the local Chinese market. At some point, demand for Western goods grew while prices were too steep for local buyers. Yet, the allure of Western goods did not dwindle within China, and this strong consumptive need opened up a demand in the market that could be answered with the imitation of Western goods.

The Anthropologist Yi-Chieh Jessica Lin (2011, p. 1) showcases a 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century perspective on design imitation, in which at times the imitations even influence the original Western brand’s design. To an extent Lin (2011) romanticizes counterfeits, as this also led to new forms of design thanks to cross-contamination between original consumer brand products and rough imitations. But considering chinoiserie was a reaction to consumptive needs, leading to an independent style that evolved from baroque into rococo, then Lin’s perspective on counterfeits culture is maybe more accurate than romantic, and to an extent also a new perspective on Chinese Design in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Daniel C.K. Chow (2000, p. 1) however, gives a more critical opinion on the matter, in which he explains how counterfeits were first a local issue in the PRC, but became a global issue once these counterfeits started being exported. Chow (2000, p. 9) continues that counterfeiting even influenced trade negotiations between the USA and China in the early 1990’s.

In addition to counterfeits, the “Made in China” stamp also garnered a negative association in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century; the culprit being “bad quality”. Schniederjans et al. (2004, p. 8) analyzed consumer perceptions on the product quality of Made in China, and found them wanting. The negativity surrounding the quality did not

falter, as Schniederjans et al. (2011, p. 52) revisited the topic and conducted a new study 7 years later showing that American consumers were still negative about their perceptions. Exemplary is the labeling of Apple products with “Designed in California, Assembled in China”. China did go into another direction in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, shifting their focus on more advanced production of electronic goods (Wei, Xie & Zhang, 2017, p. 49; Liu, 2016, p. 53). Recently, the shift for electronic, software and digital goods has also garnered problems, only this time, the quality itself or quality perception have not been the reasoning; the suspicion of espionage or trade advantage are now to blame (Van Os & Kole, 2020, p. 26; Hooijmaaijers, 2021, p. 11).

In conclusion, Chinese Design is tied to China’s historic relationship to the West, including trends in appreciation and craze consumption. Much has also been documented on the relationship between the West and Chinese Design in the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup> century. But it seems less research has been conducted in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century, at least from a Western interior architecture and design perspective, but also from a cultural sociology discipline when it comes to interior design in general. Chinese Design entails art, artefacts and products made in China, but it also entails items inspired by Original Chinese Design. Chinoiserie, that often refers to European made furniture and decorative pieces that contain (altered) Chinese elements during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, also falls within Chinese Design. In addition, Chinese Design can also refer to an “inspired-by chinoiserie” style design but made in more modern or contemporary times. So, to summarize, everything purposely made to resemble Chinese or imitate genuine Chinese, as well as art and design pieces made by Chinese artisans and artists, will constitute as Chinese Design for this study.

## **2.2. Interior Architecture and Design**

The literature review on the reception of China in the West shows that Chinese Design can be found in art, architecture, decorative arts, fashion and more. So how does the West look at interior architecture and design in general?

Architecture is not the same as interior architecture, just like design is not interior architecture. The definition of architecture, at least from a Western perspective, has shifted from skill (Classic Greece) to mechanical art (medieval Europe), to the art of design (Italian Renaissance), and since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, to architecture as a fine art (Parcell, 2012, p. 8). Parcell has difficulty framing architecture as one specific discipline, as the meaning has evolved in time, been disputed, and often leaves out the builder and the dweller, limiting

architecture to “the designer is a creator... the building is an aesthetic object” (2012, p.11). But architecture is more than just these definitions. To paraphrase the architecture historian, Jeremy Melvin (2005, p. 6), architecture is present all around us and it influences either subtly or very deeply when experiencing the built environment. Melvin continues by saying that architecture originally was limited to the geography of the building site, unintentionally forming a style or design, due to weather and available materials. Throughout history, some of these styles started to travel to new destinations.

Interior Architecture is “the way in which people perceive and experience a built space – from one room to another, or rather, from one interior to another, whether it be *in* private or *in* public, *in* a home or *in* a town square” (Leveratto, 2020, p. 17). Contrary to architecture, interior architecture was not a clearly defined practice (or art form), but since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century it did start getting recognition, although the “deliberate transformation of an inhabited space” does date back to prehistoric times (Leveratto, 2020, p. 24). According to Leveratto, around the 1800s the interior designer was a decorator<sup>1</sup> in charge of “furnishing the domestic interior” and can be seen as someone who chose what went where instead of a designer for the interior space or the decorative arts (2020, p. 26-27).

Leveratto (2020, p. 29-30) explains that at the time the tasks associated to an architect started to change, thus creating a new separate field of interior architecture. In addition, tasks regarding the interior, started to grow as there was a growing bourgeoisie and increased mass-production of furnishing goods. Throughout the last two centuries, the tasks associated to an interior designer have been sharpened and limited as the term architecture or design can have different connotations and even restrictions in its usage. In some countries, the profession of architect and interior architect is protected, while interior designer or decorator is not (“De Wet Op de Architectentitel,” n.d.). Leveratto also clearly separates both: interior design relates to “organizing and planning process with regards to an object or space”, while interior architecture “refers instead to the definition and control of the quality of a built environment that are typical of architectural design” (2020, p. 30).

Nowadays, architecture includes separate fields that encompass the (exterior) built design, the interior built design and the landscape. The exterior built design to an extent also influences the interior built design (e.g. pillars and constructive elements that cannot be changed easily due to carrying weight of the roof, and floors). All three fields can be studied

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<sup>1</sup> Decorator is a somewhat controversial term in the (interior) architecture world. Fahden Breciño (2008, p. 10) explains that “interior designer” is the term now commonly used, but “decorator” was used among professionals in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

separately, but they share a basis. While interior furnishings, textiles, furniture, even (fine) art, all fall within the (decorative or fine) arts and are often studied at art or craft schools, they form part of what an interior architecture or interior designer and decorator can use for the “deliberate transformation of an inhabited space” (Leveratto, 2020, p. 24).

For practical matters and to create focus, this study will mostly focus on interiors in general and consider architecture and landscape only in reference to the interiors. This delimitation makes the choice for AD an ideal data forest, as it writes from a Western interior architecture and design angle. In addition, Chinese Design, which encompasses art, artefacts and decorative pieces and furniture, has been omnipresent in the elite interiors of the West, at least since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This makes for an interesting research field for the arts and culture studies, as most of the found literature on Chinese Design are only written from an art history perspective and often focused on chinoiserie.

## **2.3. Consumption**

This section will delve into the reasoning for having a sociology consumption perspective added to the mix when analyzing Chinese Design in Western interiors, and it will also discuss collecting as a consumptive act.

### **2.3.1. Spending, Enjoyment, Education and Identity**

Sharon Zukin and Jennifer Smith Maguire (2004, p. 174) see consumption as an overlapping topic and therefore find it difficult to assign the subject on consumption to one academic discipline or one specific theoretical framework. To add to this, Zukin and Maguire clarify that consumption has become an institutional field, meaning “a set of interconnected economic and cultural institutions centered on the production of commodities for individual demand” (2004, p. 175). Yet, the topic of consumption was often ignored in academia, due to it being taken for granted, but also, for it being considered a gendered (female) affair (2004, p. 175). In addition, consumption can be taught, as the consumer needs to be reminded to consume again and again, creating a consumer culture (2004, p. 177).

According to sociologist John Storey, consumption goes beyond just mere economics, since it has meaning and because it is through consumption how “most of us intervene in culture” (Storey, 2023, p.2). However, the meaning of consumption has evolved, particularly in the sociological discourse, as consumption goes beyond the purchase moment. Storey provides the example of buying a print at a thriftshop to consume it everyday by looking at it,

making consumption cultural (2023, p. 8). Douglas J. Goodman also states that consumption is not only about expenditure, it is culture too, and he refers to this as a “system of meaning” (2007, p. 335). Douglas (2007, p. 336) adds that in Western societies, identity and social status are linked to consumption and that the act of consuming becomes a form of self-expression.

Consumption also includes the act of reading a magazine, and to an extent, reading decorating magazines<sup>2</sup> can also be seen as cultural education, since consumption is a cultural act (Lara Lackey, 2005, p. 323). The reasoning behind this, is that decorating magazines offer indepth information on art, architecture, interiors and design, as well as historic design styles. Yet, a decorating magazine also includes ads, promotions and provides the reader with contacts, bridging the consumer with the wider network of (interior) architecture, art and design professionals. Lastly, a decorating magazine can also be a reminder for consumers to consume again as mentioned by Zukin and Maguire (2004, p. 177).

Sociologist Volker Kirchberg discusses the perspective of “conspicuous consumption to the neo-bohemian life styles” while “updating ideal types of cultural consumption for the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (2012, p.189). Within his article, the dominant views of the upper social classes on consumption of Thornstein Veblen (1899), David Riesman (1950) and David Brooks (2000) are presented and compared. Kirchberg’s comparison shows how the upper class consumption habits has shifted from a leisure class around 1900, to an outer-directed character in the 1950’s, into bohos (bourgeois bohemians) at the end of the millenium. Veblen presents “conspicuous consumption” as an activity that is not vital to one’s survival, and which can be “prestige consumption” or “ostentatious consumption” (1899; in Kirchberg, 2012, p. 190-192). Veblen also links these consumption forms to the “leisure class”, and to an extent this leisure class is comparable to the upper classes that consumed Chinese Design in the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, rendering a new perspective on consumption of cultural goods for social status within the USA in the late 19<sup>th</sup> early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Kirchberg presents the view of Riesman’s outer-driven character, which is formed by “the consumption of arts and culture”, with the distiction that the focus lies on non-material consumption, including reading (1950; in Kirchberg, 2012, p. 192-195). Half a century later, Brooks sees that toward the turn of the second millenium a shift has taken place from a “ruling hereditary class” to a more distinct meritocracy class, in which education is the defining factor and not conspicuous consumption anymore (2000; in Kirchberg, 2012, p. 195-

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<sup>2</sup> Literature often mentions decoration magazines, the old term to refer to interior architecture and design. Though, decoration is still used in the professional field and in academia.

200). Kirchberg however draws comparisons between all three, as all outings of class distinction are still forms of consumption.

Therefore, It would be interesting to see if the consumption of Chinese Design within interiors has similar shifts in consumption. For consuming Chinese Design has been a fixed element of the Western elite since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and to analyze this behaviour in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century, AD as an American decorating magazine could be a viable way to access interiors that include Chinese Design and are written from a Western eye. Plus, as Lackey mentioned, the act of reading a magazine is also consumption in addition to purchasing interior furnishings, art, furniture, etc. For this reason AD will be a valuable choice as a decorating magazine, due to its long publishing of interior architecture and design.

### **2.3.2. Collectors and their collections**

*Interpreting Objects and Collections* was originally published in 1994 and looks at collectors and their collections. This section will highlight three chapters that provide valuable frames to analyze Chinese Design through the AD gaze.

Susan M. Pearce gives various definitions of what constitutes a collection according to different academics, but overall collecting is generally associated to objects that form a series or category, and which together form a representative group (1994, p. 157). Chinese Design has been associated with a possession craze as mentioned earlier, but according to Pearce, ‘collecting’ and ‘possessing’, as well as ‘accumulating’, are distinctive activities, as collecting could entail “order and possibility of completion”, and “a collection is not a collection until someone thinks of it in those terms”, while accumulating can be also be tied to hoarding, which is never considered collecting (1994, p. 158). The creation of a collection is done by “intentional selection, acquisition and disposal”, and both the act of collecting and the collection itself is tied to self-identity (Pearce, 1994, p. 159). In the end, Pearce summarizes that “collecting is too complex and too human an activity” to be framed by definitions (1994, p. 159).

While Pearce (1994) discussed collecting more openly regarding the objects collected, Frederick Baekeland (1994) makes the distinction between an accumulator versus a collector even bigger than Pearce proposed, as he focuses on fine art collecting and the psychological aspects of it. According to Baekeland “the collector says he buys art because it gives him pleasure... and instead of secreting his collection, he usually likes to exhibit it" (1994, p. 206). Baekeland does agree with Pearce on that self-definition is part of the collecting act, and to an

extent, this ties with the aforementioned identity consumption in the previous sub-chapter. Baekeland continues by associating the collecting habits with connoisseurship, as “both in the East and West owning works of art has always been thought to imply education, cultivation and refinement” (1994, p. 206). Moreover, Baekeland discusses how gendered collecting is, something which Pearce also mentioned, and he separates interior decorations from fine art collections.

James Clifford provides another valuable focus on collecting by discussing collections based on different cultures, and according to him “in the West, ... collecting has been a strategy for the deployment of a possessive self, culture and authenticity” (1994, p. 262). Clifford (1994, p. 265) explains that non-Western art or artefacts, has only been recently considered beautiful in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, while before they were valued for other reasons, such as curiosity. This matches Honour’s (1961) chinoiserie development and Clifford continues by presenting a framework on how to analyze authenticity, which can be used when researching art. This system “classifies objects and assigned them relative value”, and it divides masterpiece from an artefact, authentic from inauthentic, making it possible to distinguish what art is from non-culture and non-art (Clifford, 1994, p. 263). Clifford considers both artefacts and masterpieces (fine arts), as art, making it possible to analyze Chinese Design from different vantages.

## **2.4. Globalization and cosmopolitanism**

There is a difference when looking at globalization from a historical point of view, to a sociological perspective. Global consumption and global trade have been present in the consumption of Chinese Design by the West, and when researching a decorating magazine focused on the consumption of (interior) architecture and design, it is necessary to review globalization – and while at it, also cosmopolitanism and consumer culture - considering the elite and probable conspicuous consumption that might be associated to interior design within AD. For redesigning and furnishing ones home with (rare, luxury) goods, might not be considered an existential act to most.

### **2.4.1. Global Consumer Culture**

Globalization as a term is highly contested, both within and outside of the academic world, as one’s view on globalization is also influenced by political views, possibly making the

consumption of Chinese Design a political act (Ritzer, 2007). George Ritzer makes an attempt to summarize all the distinct views on globalization and manages to pinpoint the following elements that pertain to it: accelerating processing speeds, occupation of world spaces, that “lead to increasing integration and interconnectivity” (2007, p. 1). Ritzer continues that within the academic world of globalization, both globophilia and globophobia are present, and the latter is most often the case. In addition, much of the literature sees globalization as a capitalist endeavour, meaning that consumption made possible by global interconnectivity might be tainted for leftists perspectives (Ritzer, 2007). AD with its international publishing and sales, would probably fall within the globophilia camp.

John Tomlinson describes globalization as “a complex, acceleration, integrating process of global connectivity”, which is similar to Ritzer’s aforementioned pointers (2017, p. 352). Yet, Tomlinson also adds that globalization affects culture, and he even goes as far that both culture and globalization affect each other (Tomlinson, p. 355). Tomlinson tries to convey a nuanced approach to globalization, but still compares it to “a single place”, which is the aim of religious conversion (Roland Roberson, 1992; in Tomlinson, 2017). Tomlinson also mentions deterritorialization, “the loss of the ‘natural’ relation of culture to geographical and social territories” (Nestor García Canclini, 1995; in Tomlinson, 2017, p. 359).

Douglas J. Goodman delves into the lifestyle of Western societies while looking at globalization and consumer culture. Homogenization is the “trend towards sameness”, a “reduction in diversity of culture around the world” (Goodman, 2017, p. 337). While heterogeneity - were sameness is not the aim - can foster glocalization: the act of heterogeneous reception that adapts standardized global products. Yet, global consumerism can also entail the transformation of other cultures into commodities, according to Goodman (2017, p. 342). This begs the question if AD transforms Chinese Designs into commodities, or do they assign it more cultural values?

According to Douglas (2017) there are four different theoretical approaches that intertwine consumer culture and globalization: 1. Culture-Ideology of Consumerism (Leslie Sklair, 1991; in Goodman, 2017, p. 344), 2. Hybridity (Néstor García Canclini, 2001; in Goodman, 2017, p. 345), 3. McWorld (Benjamin Barber, 1995; in Goodman, 2017, p. 345) and 4. Globalization of Nothing (George Ritzer, 2004; In Goodman, 2017, p. 346). The first sees only consumers and not citizens, while focusing primarily on consumption, however, AD might see citizens and nations, making this theoretical approach inadequate. The second is a hybridity which sees consumers as citizens and vice versa. In addition, consumption is seen as something good, even “for thinking”. McWorld, the third theoretical approach, is rather

negative on consumption, and sees only homogenization as the outcome. While the fourth, Globalization of Nothing is even more critical, as it believes in a sameness mentioned earlier by Goodman. All these perspectives are relatively negative, and agree with Ritzer's (2007) previous comment on anti-capitalist views, moreover, globalization could lead to a standardized taste among consumers. For this reason, this study will analyze if there are traces of this global consumer taste present in the writing about Chinese Design.

#### **2.4.2. Cosmopolitan by choice or need**

Cosmopolitanism seems to also suffer from a negative association among the academic literature, although its meaning and connotations have changed through time (Barbalet, 2014, p. 199). Calhoun (2008, p. 430) exemplifies this by sharing a historical example that to call someone a "cosmopolitan" would be considered an insult from the 1920s onwards, and particularly in the 1960s when the Cold War was raging, while in the 1990s it would be perceived as a compliment. Cosmopolitanism has seen different meanings, but for this research the meaning will be the following:

"Cosmopolitanism in a stricter sense includes a stance toward diversity itself, toward the coexistence of cultures in the individual experience. A more genuine cosmopolitanism is first of all an orientation, a willingness to engage with the Other. It is an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrasts rather uniformity. To become acquainted with more cultures is to turn into an aficionado, to view them as art works."  
Ulf Hannerz (1990, p.239)

Ulf Hannerz (1990) provides a description that fits perfectly well with this study, as it looks at how culture, and being exposed to it, can lead to a form of cultural acceptance and even admiration, befitting the possible way in how the Westerner can experience Chinese Design, or how AD views Chinese Design. Hannerz, also makes a distinction between the different forms of cosmopolitanism, including individuals that become cosmopolitan due to their work, and those that undergo this change by their own choice, relating both possibilities to transnationalism.

Hannerz also clarifies that cosmopolitanism is more of choice, as the cosmopolitan can transcend to locals, understand the environment, make a distinction between genuine locals, transient locals, but also between migrant workers, tourists, and business travellers, of which the latter are not considered cosmopolitans. Hannerz continues by saying that once the individual has become a cosmopolitan, this transformation marks them, for when they return

“home”, they become a new species within their original hometown. More importantly, cosmopolitans can travel, roam and relocate by their own choice, separating cosmopolitanism from refugees and immigrants, who are limited in mobility.

Chinese Design can therefore be intertwined with a global consumer culture that is capitalistic to the core, making it a commodity instead of a cultural representation. In addition, the consumer of Chinese Design can also be a cosmopolitan, possibly making Chinese Design associated to a certain group of elites that have transcended territorial boundaries. Moreover, this study can potentially reveal if cosmopolitanism is something associated with Chinese Design, and discover how and when it applied to the Western interior and design world of AD. In spite of what preceded, Covid-19 and the resurgence of nationalistic consumption and Western politics in the 2020s, could potentially show another narrative that is not so global or cosmopolitan, and which distinguishes itself from non-USA cultures and styles.

In short, consumption, and especially consumer culture and globalization have shown to be a valuable framework to analyze Chinese Design in an internationally and consumer-oriented Western medium as AD.

## **2.5. Critical Theory**

David Fasenfest, a German American sociologist, alludes to the Chinese mystique from a critical social sciences viewpoint (2017, p. VII-X). Fasenfest is not alone, as in contemporary literature the Critical Theory (CT) paradigm has become dominant both in the humanities and social sciences.

The academic couple Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln (1994, p. 109) explain that CT takes into consideration the relationship of the object or group with the researcher, meaning they both intertwine. Moreover, values relating to “social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 109) are shaped. In sum, there is reason to believe that historically a certain object, occurrence, group, etc., may have been wronged, and that with new knowledge this can be corrected, or at least, put to discussion. Ruth Mayer exemplifies this by discussing an “orientalist fantasy” in which she critiques a 19<sup>th</sup> century letter exchange through a 21<sup>st</sup> century review, adding deeper layers to what might have just been a silly conversation (2011, p. 9). Nevertheless, orientalism, exoticism and Far East, all mentioned by Honour, Bertram, and Fasenfest, fall within the CT paradigm, and need a more thorough analysis.

### 2.5.1. China seen as Oriental, Exotic and Far East

Within the literature, all these literal and figurative distances from the West, have created an (un)intended mystique surrounding China, that fuels exoticism. A good example of exoticism is how the art historian José Luis Sancho (2014, p. 124) discusses the foreign design goal of the royal palace of Madrid, in which Chinese elements were included to elevate the level of exoticism. Bertram (2021, p. 15) showcases this desire for exoticism in his book *Dragons & Pagoda* while referencing historical design elements of chinoiserie through image and text.

Edward Said (1978) did shake the academic world with his *Orientalism*. In the introduction he states that the Orient is a Western construction. What the Orient entails, also depends on which Western country or region you look from (1978, p. 9). For Europe, the Orient is the Middle East, while for the USA, the orient equals the Far East (China, Japan). Sociologist Jane Hiddleston discusses Said and his take on orientalism in *Understanding Postcolonialism* (2009). Within this analysis, orientalism goes beyond an innocent European fantasy. In fact, it is something that has a long standing within both theory and practice, and demonstrates the Western superiority, showcasing unequal power. Important to mention though is that Said discusses orientalism in a general way, including the Middle East, and South East Asia, and as seen from a Westerners point of view. Meanwhile historical records and even descriptions of Chinese products as presented by Honour or Bertram, may also refer to *oriental* when meaning China or Chinese. This is imperative when studying Chinese designs in Western interiors, as AD can refer to Chinese or East Asian designs when using ‘oriental’ in their articles.

Aynur Erdogan (2018) does provide an alternative approach on what orientalism is in her dissertation. She compares the Islam scholar Bernard Lewis with Said, and their opposing views on orientalism (Erdogan, 2018, p. 27). She agrees that the Orient is often something constructed, but the reasoning behind it is less about power. She also connects East, with its variations of Near, Middle and Far. Making it clear, that Far East, is beyond what is considered the Middle East from a European perspective, and sets this within a Roman historic viewpoint. Compared to Said and other scholars, Erdogan does make a point about separating the various forms of the East from the Orient, although she does also explain that this previous interchangeability and open interpretation of the Orient, was due to the Cold War (2018, p. 38). This only emphasizes the importance of giving the right connotation to the word Orient, particularly when studying Chinese Design from an American perspective.

### 2.5.2. China seen as The Other

All these elements, Oriental, Far East or Exotic, create a distinction between the West versus the East. Berkley Hudson and Carol Schwalbe (2020, p. 36) researched how different academics have approached their methods when it comes to the study of magazines, and among the many topics magazine studies broach, one stood out: “Magazines’ Construction of the “The Other”” (Hudson & Schwalbe, 2020, p. 40). Where they showcase several framing studies on how the West portrays a certain culture or group through a content analysis. This falls in line with the Critical Theory paradigm, for the framing of Chinese designs within AD can be seen as The Other from a Western perspective. Thus, everything non-American, can be seen as “The Other”, but it is still unclear if this possible “otherness” is bad or good within the world of interior architecture and design.

CT will not be ignored within this research, but it will for certain not be the aim. As CT would be too narrow-minded (limited) in analyzing Chinese Design through a Western interior architecture and design magazine. As the writer may have used positive characterizations, fitting within the norms of the time of publishing, that are now deemed outdated or offensive. For a magazine driven by consumption, enthralling readers to buy or ‘invest’ in certain pieces or styles, the goal is to talk well of its designs and not shame them. For this reason, the need of a more suitable framework than Critical Theory is paved, one that would fit better when analyzing interiors of the elite, making the various forms of consumption more fitting, and especially more atuned to the publishing of attractively presented interiors.

## 3. Method and Research Design

### 3.1. Research Question

According to the literature discussed, researching Chinese Design from a Western perspective can often lead to exoticism, oriental or Far East framing. In addition, imitation and (cultural) consumption can also play a role when writing and incorporating Chinese Design within the interior architecture and design world. But this is only an academic guess, as this research will hopefully lead to understanding the overall viewpoint of consuming Chinese Design in elite interiors from a Western perspective.

To a certain extent this study is explorative in nature, but as the aim is to study a long period of interiors containing Chinese Design, a comparison between the decades is possible too. Plus, considering the literature thus far, it can be expected that the data found shows a different framing through time. What that is, is what this study hopes to find through the following research question: **What are the trends in writing about Chinese Design in the Western interior architecture and design world?**

### 3.2. Content Analysis

According to Matthews and Ross (2010, p.395), a content analysis can determine trends and changes over time, especially in literature. Moreover, it can also be useful to discover changes in public opinion. This analysis method was employed by Fiona Clark and Deborah Illman (2006, p. 501) when they conducted a longitudinal research on the science section of the New York Times. Yoo Jin Kwon (2013) also applied a qualitative content analysis to research framing theory within *Cosmopolitan*, *Glamour* and *Seventeen*. To expand a bit more on this, Hufnagel, Von Nordheim and Müller (2022, p. 413) did show a negative trend on how China was perceived within newspapers in Germany while conducting a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative analysis. For this reason, a content analysis can provide a valuable research method for this study, as the aim is to discover possible trends in writing about Chinese Design while trying to contextualize them within the period of publishing.

The literature discussed in the previous chapter revealed among many findings, that the consumption of decorating magazines, can be both an education endeavor for the reader, as well as a purchase conducting medium. Moreover, the content of decorating magazines can include interior architecture and design while they mention Chinese Design from a Western

perspective, and this to an extent argues in favor of using magazine articles as the basis for this study. It could be possible that the interior architecture and design world is influenced by external (political) trends, and if not, then maybe this field is more autonomous and focused on design. Though, it can be expected that a decorating magazine is less focused on geopolitical subjects compared to a newspaper and therefore less likely to provide a negative framing as seen in the found literature of this study.

AD forms a great data geography for this study, so an analysis and history research has been conducted to confirm its choice.

### **3.3. The History of Architectural Digest**

This study will dive into the archives of Architectural Digest (AD), an interior architecture and design magazine, which publishes since 1920, and is owned by Condé Nast (About AD, 2024).

Historically, the beginning of the magazine is mostly focused on local California architecture and catering to professionals as a trade magazine (Brasfield, 1929, p. 3). The magazine started adapting as the readership changed from solely tradespeople to a more general architectural design inclined reader, which also requested more houses from different parts of the country (Brasfield, 1941, p. 3). In the 1950's, AD ventures into new publishing subjects as "AD goes into the hands of those interested in beautiful home interiors in every corner of the world" (Brasfield, 1952, p. 3). The magazine changes hands in 1966, when Cleon T. Knapp, buys the magazine, and just before the magazine's "golden anniversary", Knapp makes an interesting point in his foreword that after WWII the "public had a growing awareness and appreciation of the room interiors", which his maternal grandfather, John C. Brasfield, knew how to tap into by altering "editorial emphasis and presented home interiors in greater detail" (1968, p. 3). Knapp also points out how the magazine started with very little detail on published pictures, and how that clearly has changed. The 1960's and early 1970's is a period of unusual rapid change in terms of leadership, until Paige Rense becomes Editor-in-Chief from 1975, and stays with AD until 2010 (Luckel, 2021).

In 1979, the New York Times gives a valuable perspective on AD, in which AD is compared to Better Homes & Gardens, and House Beautiful (respectively, two different interior decorating magazines). It seems these magazines "appeal to mass audiences", while AD subscribers are among the "wealthiest people in the country" (Kleinfeld, 1979, section D, p. 1). Kleinfield also shares how readers are "collecting... and anything else that relates to

discretionary income”, giving a clear impression AD seeks to serve an elite readership (1979, section D, p. 1). Knapp testifies to this, and Paige Rense even provides an example on how AD selects (and rejects) advertisers. She continues that advertisers need to only offer relevant services, as an ad that promotes rug stain removal tips with their products is irrelevant to readers that have staff who take care of these things. A few years earlier, a prominent interior designer even publicly separates wealthy “checkbook” buyers from an “educated collector”, making clear that money does not entail good taste, and only educated clients will be assisted (Hail, 1972). These elitest opinions, start to disappear as the readership keeps growing and less affluent readers start subscribing towards then end of the millennium.

In 1993, Condé Nast buys the magazine and moves the offices from LA to NYC, keeping Paige Rense as Editor-in-Chief. Rense’s “reign” was a very successful period in terms of subscriptions, especially considering how the magazine stayed afloat compared to competitors (Luckel, 2021). Maybe the reasoning behind this success has been the heavy use of celebrities, which started when the magazine was headquartered in LA, something which Luckel considers “a keen foresight as to the coming acceleration of celebrity culture” (2021, para. 2).

This historic analysis of AD is relevant to this study as the magazine has had over century of publishing, surviving world events such as WOII and the Cold War, while writing about (inter)national interior architecture and design. AD’s history has pointed out the importance of consumption from its readers and how a local consumer culture and subsequent global consumer readership are still consuming its contents. AD is also focused on being an aspirational platform for interior architecture and design lovers alike.

So, would it be possible to align or discover geopolitical trends, when it comes to Chinese Design being written in AD? Considering AD is American, and created for the purpose of consumption, its sole existence could be designated as capitalist, even more so when researching Chinese Design, which involves some form of global connection between East and West. Furthermore, AD has had a long history of change in how they frame their magazine. Table 3.3. shows these self-imposed frames, and considering this, it is not entirely unexpected if the magazine’s framing indirectly influences the findings of this study, as Kwon (2013) showed how different frames shaped the trend and style information within the sampled magazines of her research.

*Table 3.3. The changes in subtitles AD has used throughout time.*

<b>Year</b>	<b>AD subtitle change</b>
1922	The Architectural Digest, Southern California Edition
1923	The Architectural Digest, California Home Edition
1925	A Pictorial Digest of the Best California Architecture
1927	A Pictorial Digest of California's Best Architecture. Established 1920
1941	A Pictorial Digest of Outstanding Architecture, Interior Decoration and Landscaping. Established 1920
1960	A Pictorial Digest of Outstanding Architecture, Interior Design and Landscaping
1965	The Quality Publication of Home Design Which Pictorially Features Outstanding Interiors, Fine Furnishings, Architecture and Landscaping
1968	The Quality Guide to Home Decorating Ideas
1970	The Home as a Work of Art
1971	The Connoisseur's Magazine of Fine Interior Design
1976	The International Magazine of Fine Interior Design
1996	The International Magazine of Interior Design and Architecture
2001	The International Magazine of Interior Design
2006	The International Magazine of Design
2010	The International Design Authority

### **3.4. AD data sample**

AD has several editions, but the USA edition is the only edition published since 1920. The other AD geographical editions start from 1981 (Italy), 1997 (Germany), and 2000 onwards. The USA edition, just like the other geographical editions, showcase houses around the globe. In addition, the USA edition is the only AD edition with a working digital archive behind a paid wall, making the data easily available for this study. Plus, the digital archive makes searches for Chinese Design more efficient and precise, facilitating the narrowed scope of this study.

According to Matthews and Ross (2010, p.396) the steps to follow when conducting a content analysis, is to specify the categories, then generate a sample coding scheme, do a pretest before, then purifying the coding scheme, and finally really start collecting data. The literature review provided this study with a start on what to maybe expect in terms of possible associations when it comes to Chinese Design and Western interior architecture and design

world, nevertheless a small pretest was conducted to verify if the research design would work out for all the intended data.

### **3.4.1. Sample period**

A historic sample was selected from 1920-2024 to conduct a longitudinal qualitative content analysis on articles and ads featured in the print edition containing Chinese Design. Within their online database, AD offers thousands of search results when using ‘China’ or ‘Chinese’ as search topics, although “china” often refers to porcelain in the USA, making it an unsuitable search term. ‘Chinese’ was the best search term to gather most articles. Fair warning, the AD archive has shown some limitations for it is not complete. To start with, their online archive with digitalized magazine editions starts from 1922, instead of 1920, which is the year that AD started publishing. Moreover, the archive has some gaps, especially between the 1920’s till the mid 1960’s. They also warn you: “The AD Archive is constantly being improved, so you may encounter a technical hiccup here and there” (AD Archive, n.d.).

This study decided to use AD as the decades after 1960 seem to be complete. In addition, the AD archive offered search options that facilitated the study, as the AD archive offers to research articles, pictures, or ads. However, the search engine does not provide the option to eliminate duplicates, meaning the pictures that show up as search results are also the pictures within articles or ads. So, the decision was made to only focus on ads or articles, that correspond to the used search topics. In the end, a total of 66 articles and 5 ads were selected from varied periods, with the intent to compare all decades.

### **3.4.2. Sampling method**

To obtain theoretical saturation from the intended 124 years that this study wished to analysis, a random selection would not have assured a fair distribution of each decade. Plus, certain magazine volumes might be important to include, for example the China Olympics editions of August 2008; the only AD cover with China on it! For these reasons, it was decided that each decade would be represented, even if the selection was not entirely randomized. So, a non-probability sampling was used that started from the 1920s onwards (Taherdoost, 2016, p. 20). This study also used a purposive (or judgmental) sampling, which according to Maxwell (1996; in Taherdoost, 2016, p. 22) is a method when deliberate selections are made as they may contain valuable information. And according to Taherdoost (2016, p. 23) this method is ideal for exploratory research design.

The AD archive was practical, in the sense that the main article text was already selected and shared in a separate webpage, together with the original digital magazine pages. The “page details” however, needed to be extracted by opening the digital pages and manually selecting the relevant text. Both texts were then added to a document folder within atlas.ti, including the magazine page screenshots, to facilitate reading afterwards. The images, helped in understanding the text, but this study focuses on the written parts over de visuals. In appendices A you will an entire overview of all the articles included in this study.

### 3.5. Operationalization

The topics researched in this study include Chinese Design within the Western interior architecture and design world, as well as consumption, global consumer taste and cosmopolitanism, in addition to Critical Theory. This chapter will therefore define what will be researched and in which form.

Table 3.5.1. Operationalization of Chinese Design and its respective characteristics.

CHINESE DESIGN							
Design Art Style	Original Chinese Design		Chinoiserie Style <small>(CD inspired, but generally meant for non-Chinese consumers)</small>			Chinese Design Imitation	Pan (South) East Asia Design <small>(non-Chinese design)</small>
Period	Pre-modern Chinese Design <1950	New Chinese Design >1950	17 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup> century	19 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> century	21 <sup>st</sup> century	Anytime	
Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Made in China and/or by Chinese craftspeople, artisans, and artists</li> <li>Most often intended for Chinese consumers</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Made in China but intended for export</li> <li>Made in Europe or the colonies but crafted with CD elements</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Made anywhere by anyone (nationality and location unimportant)</li> </ul>	

To operationalize Chinese Design, the literature gave distinctive ways, and the term “original Chinese” was formed for the purpose of this study, indicating art and design that was often meant for Chinese consumers, made in China, particularly during the imperial dynasties. “Chinoiserie”, is another research term, and consists of art and design that was made both in and out of China but in the Euro-Chinese style. There is also contemporary chinoiserie, that is inspired by 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century style. In addition, the literature also pointed out to ‘New Chinese’, as coined within the book *Essensualism*, which this study will use

to reference all Chinese art and design that is not imperial and made from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by referring to it as New Chinese Design. Table 3.5.1 shows the different Chinese Design constructs which will be researched within this study. The Asian style is also taken into consideration, as the literature pointed out that Chinese Design is often mixed with non-Chinese. Imitation, of original Chinese Design is also a possibility and considered.

The literature review also discussed that Chinese Design can be seen as “Significant Form”, meaning the aesthetical appearance might be the reason why people appreciate the artefact or design (Bell, 1999). To research this, careful attention will be given on how dwellers or designers of the published interiors discuss the Chinese Design present in the space. Will it be for aesthetics, or for other meanings? The study hopes to find if and how this evolves over time, and if this correspond to significant form, or another lens.

Consumption has many interpretations within the literature, but following the discussed literature, consumption was divided into four sub-themes: educational consumption, enjoyment consumption, identity consumption, and purchasing consumption. The education focus is to see if over time AD teaches the reader about art history, interiors styles, and to an extent informs and educates the reader. Purchasing, was assigned to texts that refer more to the buying aspect, or which promotes buying, and which places Chinese Design as a commodity. Enjoyment, is when Chinese Design is being associated to pleasure by its aesthetics or meaning, giving it a cultural value instead of a commodity focus. Identity is when Chinese Design is being consumed for status and character defining qualities by the designer or owner. Identity does have a two-way approach, if the owner assigns it cultural value (beyond its worth or uniqueness) then it's not about status, but if status is brought up then identity becomes a commodity consumption.

The literature review also showed that globalization and cosmopolitanism are probably present as Chinese Design has seen a great global mobility, and the 20<sup>th</sup> and especially 21<sup>st</sup> century have been characterized as interconnected centuries. For this reason, globalization will be considered when Chinese Design is presented as a standardized taste, appearing in the same manner within interiors as a form of elitest consumer culture.

Cosmopolitanism is less often associated to material objects but more to lifestyles, for this reason, this study analyzed the lifestyles of the designers and dwellers, with the hopes to discover if and how cosmopolitanism plays a role in how the West experience and write about Chinese Design in their interiors. In table 3.5.2. you will find a structuring of consumption, cosmopolitanism, globalization when looking at Chinese Design.

Table 3.5.2. Chinese Design compared to other main literary findings.

CONSUMPTION of CHINESE DESIGN				
Chinese Design	Consumption	Cultural value vs Commodity	Global Consumer Culture	Cosmopolitanism
Original (traditional or New Chinese D) vs Chinoiserie vs Pan Asian Design vs Imitation	Purchase	a commodity	Standardized taste (homogeneity)	Cosmopolitan By Choice
	Enjoyment	Cultural Value		
	Identity	Self expression: cultural value	vs	or
		Social Status: Commodity		
	Education	Cultural value	Different taste (heterogeneity)	By Need

### 3.6. Analysis steps

The initial sampling of the coding process was conducted with 54 articles and 5 ads, providing initially 160 individual codes. Some codes were in vivo; others were deduced from literature, while others were formed during the coding process (inductive). The second coding process resulted in a total of 344 individual codes and 535 quotations. After this round, a duplicate file was made in atlas.ti as to keep the raw data findings intact. Afterwards in the duplicate project file, the codes were scrutinized, meaning double codes in different spelling (some Pinyin while other where Wide Gilles), but also synonyms, were merged, resulting in 299 individual codes. Since the first reading, more literature was reviewed to deepen the understanding of the findings, resulting in more data that added up to a total of 71 samples, and 603 quotations to achieve theoretical saturation.

Many of the articles used in the sample, included relevant and irrelevant passages regarding Chinese Design, as some articles of the chosen Data set also wrote passages discussing other design elements not related to Chinese Design, or they discussed spaces that did not include Chinese Design. All articles were read from head to toe, and one article was deleted from the data, as this article did not deliver any codes in the first and second reading. Having an original raw results project file, secured this risk. Also, all data was grouped into their respective decade, and initially analyses were made through the word frequency tool. In the end, “concepts”, which is another analysis tool on atlas.ti was used. As this tool considered words such as “Hong Kong” or “Louis XIV” as one concept instead of two separate words.

Concepts was also the reason behind deleting irrelevant paragraphs in the sampled data to generate more related word concepts to Chinese Design. In the end, the most valuable analysis tool within atlast.ti was the “code-document analysis”, in which specific code groups or individual codes were compared to data groups containing a decade of samples.

### **3.7. Ethics**

This study accessed the AD archive by a paid subscription and did not ask permission to conduct research. The reasoning for not asking prior permission to research the content of the magazine is due to the Fair Use permitted to academic research and for non-commercial activities in the USA. The published pages that were selected in the sample have only been used as research material. The images have not been made public and the full list of published articles and ads extracted from AD have been only stored in the researcher’s computer and atlas.ti project. Condé Nast is the owner of the magazine, and it is assumed that all pictures and text are owned by AD. The article list shared as Appendix A includes the names of writers involved in the editorial, some spaces are left blank when missing.

Regarding the objectivity of this study, it is valuable to mention that the researcher has been an avid fan of AD since his teens, moreover, the researcher studied sinology at some point during his academic journey. Chinese Design and AD have been present in his life prior to starting this research. In fact, his mother used to buy a lot of chinoiserie and original Chinese Design, so this study feels like playing a “home-field-advantage game”. To complicate matters even more, the researcher has also obtained a degree in interior design, making this research topic very personal. Nevertheless, this study focuses on written text published by AD, and the analysis is conducted on data extracted from all decades since AD started publishing images and text on interior architecture and design. No interviews were held in which the objectivity of this research could be skewed. Plus, an arts and culture researcher with no prior knowledge of Chinese culture, or without previous interior design knowledge, should be able to understand the chosen data sample. Moreover, all steps during this study have been documented and explained. All forms of personal interpretations have been substantiated by academic literature, and all results are traceable. Another researcher conducting this study, should encounter similar findings based on the found literature, method and research design.

## 4. Findings

This study aimed to compare if there were trends through time-when discussing Chinese Design through a Western interior architecture and design gaze, and the analysis revealed that the main themes are Pre-Modern Chinese Design, and Collecting, in addition to Identity Consumption and Eclectic Decoration. These findings gave answer to the following research question, and which this chapter will delve deeper into: **What are the trends in writing about Chinese Design in the Western interior architecture and design world?**

Within AD it becomes clear that both fine art, decorative arts, in addition to architecture form together their own canon of what constitutes a complete interior, and this includes pre-modern Chinese Design, mostly obtained through collecting habits. Furthermore, Chinese Design is often associated with the identity of the home dweller. Plus, Chinese Design is frequently mixed with other styles and periods, particularly with antique (French) European furniture. This mixing of culture, art and furniture is considered an eclectic decoration style. Plus, Chinese Design is found in the elite interiors of cosmopolitans.

### 4.1. Chinese Design considered essential

This study analyzed if and how Original Chinese Design (both Pre-Modern as well as New Chinese Design), in addition to Imitations, Chinoiserie and “Asian” were present. In general, the samples from AD showed that the found literature on Chinese Design was correct in identifying all these different forms of Chinese Design, and the findings also made clear that AD as an USA interior architecture and design platform is indeed knowledgeable regarding the differences, though the accuracy of defining the Chinese Design forms explicitly to the reader, varies over time. Particularly the last two decades show a downward trend on being specific about what kind of Chinese Design they are referring to; making main text and picture descriptions less detailed from the 2010s onwards when discussing Chinese Design.

Original traditional Chinese Design seems to get the most attention. Even the 21<sup>st</sup> century owners and designers like using old 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century wall coverings. Collecting Original Chinese seems to be a hobby of many since the magazine started including in-depth stories (from the 1960's). However, the term collecting is more often replaced with buying towards the end of the millennium, and from the 2000s collecting shows up less and is less often assigned to younger dwellers. Moreover, buying is associated with the acquisition of

Chinese antiques (pre-modern) and antique chinoiserie, and less often with New Chinese Design or contemporary chinoiserie.

Elements that are valued regarding Chinese Designs is handcrafts and oldness among pre-modern Chinese. Regarding Chinoiserie, the scenery and aesthetics are more valued than the age, and with New Chinese Design, the market value or popularity (demand) of the designer/artist marks the admiration. The writing about Chinese Design has also changed, as there is far more information in the 1970's, 1980's, even early 2000's. This study wonders if this has to do with available online sources, and the magazine being less important as an educator in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Maybe we can speak of an AD before and after the internet?

In general, designers in the 1970's and 1980's often make fun of 19<sup>th</sup> century, as if it has less value, but this changes more in the 2000s as the 19<sup>th</sup> century gets more respect once its older. Moreover, AD generally has writers and interviewees that can be considered experts, and they clearly distinguish Original from Chinoiserie, while later they clearly know what New Chinese Design. This finding begs for more research on how Connoisseurship, from an art historic perspective plays a role in Chinese Design as the literature did not delve into this topic. Yet, Ebitz (1988) and Smith et al. (2013) give a deeper understanding to the skill of art history, which is relevant as AD considers itself the “Connoisseurship of Fine Interior Design” at some point in its history (see Table 3.3). This finding will be discussed more in-depth in the subsequent chapters. Last, unexpected but worth pointing out, was how often feng shui is mentioned. Especially when presenting homes in Asia (Singapore, Hong Kong, Mainland China, Taiwan, etc.).

#### **4.1.1. Pre-Modern Original Chinese is most valued**

Pre-Modern Chinese Design was one of the identified Chinese Design forms that could possibly come out as a result, and though the focus of this study is qualitative, it is noteworthy to point out how present pre-modern Chinese Design is in the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. A stark contrast with the following two decades: the 2010s and 2020s, in which Pre-Modern barely shows up in the content analysis. These findings showcase a decline in pre-modern Chinese Design, and though the number of samples are less in the 2010s and onwards, the difference is still astounding compared to the previous decades. The theme, pre-modern Chinese, consists of a total of 21 individual codes and they all relate to the pre-modern times (so before 1900s). See Table 4.1.1. for an overview on the frequency of the theme mentions these past decades and see Appendix B for an overview of the codes.

Table 4.1.1. How often forms of Chinese Design are mentioned in the sampled articles.

Theme	1920s 1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s	2020s	Totals
<b>Pre-Modern Chinese</b>	2	4	35	23	21	18	1	4	108
<b>Chinoiserie</b>	2	0	8	6	3	1	5	1	26
<b>New Chinese Design</b>	0	0	0	1	0	8	1	0	10
<b>Imitation</b>	1	0	1	4	1	4	1	0	12
Totals	5	4	44	34	25	31	8	5	156

In the literature review the significant form by Bell (1999) was discussed as an approach to design admiration and this is often tied to chinoiserie. In addition, it is important to mention that between 2010-2014 there were no written articles containing Chinese Design in the archive. This is also very peculiar, as it might imply that the popularity of pre-modern Chinese Design corresponds with Paige Rense’s tenure at AD as Editor-in-Chief. Valentino Caravani, the designer, appears respectively in 1981, 1988 and 2003, and all three times pre-modern Chinese Design and chinoiserie is amply discussed. The first time AD mentions China, Chinese, or any form of Chinese Design, in the 2010s decade is in 2015, the year that the Met gala opened the famous exposition “*China: Through the Looking Glass*”. Proclaiming a causal relation between Paige Rense and Chinese Design is a stretch too far, but it is peculiar, nonetheless.

The main codes within the Pre-Modern theme are Ming, 18<sup>th</sup> Century reference, 19<sup>th</sup> century reference, and Qing. Regarding Ming, this translates to 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and even 17<sup>th</sup> century, though AD does not always specify which century the artefact pertains to, only that it falls somewhere between 1368-1644 as this is the Ming Dynastic reign. 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century relate to the Qing Dynasty, but they can also relate to pan-European Chinoiserie artefacts made in these periods, or artefacts that are not Chinese, only Chinese inspired. Worthy to mention, AD did often make a distinction between Ming-Style, as in inspired by the Ming period, and Ming artefacts. *In a House Called Lin Yin Tai*, Nigel Cameron mentions the following: “...Ming Dynasty style cabinets of great elegance. Indeed they used to be rare Ming, until they found their way to an American museum and were replaced by exact replicas made in the furniture workshops” (1980, p. 147). This shows an in-depth understanding of imitations and original artefacts.

Finally, the infamous (fine) art canon is applicable to Chinese Design, as it seems that original Chinese Design, even dating back to Chinoiserie times, is often present in houses that also contain French antiques. It might be applicable to other European antiques, but AD

often points out how certain 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century furniture piece is mixed with a pre-modern Chinese Design artefact. Valentine Lawford explains in *Antiques Dealers' Treasure Enclave*, how “a twelfth-century Chinese stone Buddha sits cross-legged in meditation on a gilt wood Régence side table, surrounded by a Ch'ien Lung altar garniture, with blanc de Chine flasks and K'ang His blue and white porcelain on Louis XV gilt brackets on the wall behind” (1976, p. 91). We could therefore state that Chinese Design is as a form of interior design canon for the elite, as it is omnipresent in elitest dwellings, making Chinese Design in general, not an acquired taste by the elite, but equally appreciated and equally displayed in their interiors compared to Western Design. For the Western interior architecture and design world these past 500 years has not entirely abandoned Chinese Design in their interiors. The frequency and the amount of pre-modern Chinese Design only vary over time.

In *Atop Hong Kong Victoria Peak*, Irene Berger paraphrases the homeowner with the following: “Old spirit came in what Susan Burns calls her “unpretty” Han, Song and early Ming Dynasty statuary and ceramics” (1993, p. 79). What the literature review lacks, is a deeper understanding since when and how pre-1400 artefacts started becoming part of the interior canon of the elite. As AD does show these pieces, but the literature is mute on this happening.

#### **4.1.2. Chinoiserie is always differentiated**

As expected from the literature review, chinoiserie is part of the Chinese Design presented and discussed within the interiors of the Western elite. In the previous chapter, original pre-modern Chinese Design was discussed, and though chinoiserie falls partially within this period, chinoiserie is often differentiated from Original. This train of thought falls within the literature review, where it was stated that chinoiserie is not Chinese, at least, it is considered a distinctive style, meant for European consumers. Moreover, it is from a Chinese perspective also not considered a pure Chinese Design. So even though some pieces were made in China, or during the pre-Modern times, chinoiserie was often separated from original design within AD. The “Chinese manner” or “Chinese style”, however, were seen as separate findings, as chinoiserie or chinoiserie style, was not made explicit within these texts. In addition, imitation and counterfeits, are also a different theme group in the findings, and not related to chinoiserie. Robert O'Byrne shares in *Coming Home* how “At far left is an 18<sup>th</sup> century chinoiserie leather screen that is English or Dutch in origin” (2015, p. 142). All this shows that

AD does separate all these forms of Chinese Design, and clearly distinguishes chinoiserie from original Chinese Design, and also distinguishes it from imitation.

There is a great presence in the 1970s and 1980s of chinoiserie in the Western elite interiors. This fondness does not entirely disappear, but chinoiserie is less often discussed in the subsequent decades, showing a declining trend in the amount of chinoiserie present in the interiors. To an extent this also coincides with pre-modern Chinese Design, but the causal relation, if it is present, is not clear. Bertram (2021) did mention that chinoiserie as an interior design style, is more inclusive than exclusive, meaning a Chinese themed interior can contain chinoiserie, pre-modern Chinese design, as well as reproductions. To an extent this can be compared to the significant form, as chinoiserie and original Chinese Design in general did show up often hand-in-hand. But if the intent was a more Chinese or Asian feel, the representation of the concerning design, art and artefacts is then more important than the aesthetics, as they represent something, contradicting Bell's (1999) theory.

#### **4.1.3. New Chinese Design not as popular**

Surprisingly was the lack of New Chinese Design within the AD sample. In fact, New Chinese Design did not even show a growing trend, as the literature had predicted, on the contrary, it sees a brief appearance in the 2000s and then disappears. The book *Essensualism* by Fiell et al. (2022) gave another impression when mentioning all the auctions and value increasing numbers related to New Chinese Design. Considering the articles that make part of the AD sample, Chinese Design has not entirely disappeared, it is just less popular from the 2000s onwards. But when comparing New Chinese Design to pre-modern Chinese Design, it is clear the interiors of the Western elite have a predilection for more traditional and classic Chinese Design or Chinoiserie, compared to contemporary art and design.

Even more surprising was the lack of New Chinese Design present in the interiors of PRC, RoC, and Hong Kong citizens in the 1990s, 2000 and 2010, as this also contradicts the literature. For the literature pointed out that the auctions and sales of contemporary Chinese art and design, is often related to Chinese buyers both within PRC, RoC, Hong Kong, and Macao, and outside, as the Chinese diaspora is well represented at auctions and galleries. Moreover, both AD and Chinese dwellers within the magazine, mention the penchant for all things new, and often portray Western Modern (mid-century) or contemporary designs. One article, containing the house of a famous Christie's Asian expert, particularly famous for the New Chinese Design auctions in the 2010s, did not include New Chinese Design or pre-modern Chinese Design in her house (Derek Blasberg, 2017). Ironically, the article

mentioned the influence of Japanese Zen. Mind you, this was regarding the weekend retreat home of her family in the outskirts of New York City.

Thus, New Chinese Design is not as well received among the dwellers that AD showcases in their editorials. But maybe, this is also related to the lesser amount of articles in general about Chinese Design in the 2010's and 2020s, so it having less New Chinese Design represented in AD, might not mean there is less of it, or that the trend is downward, it is just less explicitly mentioned in the magazine, as this study only analyzes the text and not the images.

#### **4.1.4. The importance of mixing styles and feng shui**

Asian and non-Chinese Design also showed up in relation to Chinese Design within this study. The literature review did warn about his phenomenon, and Chinese Design is indeed not always the only Asian culture present in the interiors of the elite. But this might be due to mixing cultures and styles, to which some refer as eclecticism, which is an interior decorating style. In *Westport Reoriented* “Britt covered a set of oval-back chairs in red velvet “to give the space a bit of color,” he says. Two Rajasthani statues stand guard over the eclectic mixture of Chinese tables, European chairs, 18<sup>th</sup> century engravings and a dhurrie rug” (Andrea Truppin, 2000, p. 92). This example shows that interiors mix different Asian cultures with European, forming an eclectic interior. Moreover, rooms in AD are seldom entirely Chinese or Asian in style.

Feng shui was a theme this study did not anticipate, which makes for an interesting find, as feng shui was a topic not only among East-Asian dwellers, but also among Westerners living in Asia. In *Taiwan Reenvisioned* the owner discussed the importance of feng shui within the rooms, and how structural elements sometimes need to be modified:

““You've probably heard this before, but Chinese care about feng shui,” Tseng declares, pointing out a white, surfboard like object above his bed that he explains is hiding an air-conditioning unit. “One of the things you have to be most cautious about is bed location. The trouble was there was a structural beam over where we wanted to put my bed, and you must never put your bed directly under a beam, unless you want to have bad dreams and bad luck as well. So we put the air conditioner up there and covered it with the surfboard design. You know, there are some people who even obsess about the direction of their bed, but I figured enough was enough—I didn't want to go overboard,” he says with a laugh. “Although this whole house is maybe a little bit overboard.”” (Steve M.L. Aronson, 2008, p. 204).

This quote, both discusses the importance and usage of feng shui by a Taiwanese dweller who relocated to a suburb outside of Taipei. Meanwhile in Hong Kong, Susan Burnes shares the following in *Atop Hong Kong Victoria Peak*: “If you've lived in this part of the world long enough, as we have, you respect the tradition of consulting a fêng shui man... Everyone brings in a master, whether they're building an office tower or decorating a home” (Irene Borger, 1993, p. 73). Thus, Feng Shui is also present among the houses of Western dwellers in Asia. In addition, Feng Shui is often explained to the AD reader, so this will also be covered a bit more on the Education Consumption chapter, but relevant to Chinese Design is the importance of feng shui in the interiors and buildings of the elite.

Feng shui shows a downward trend in the 2010s and 2020s which corroborates with the downward trend of Chinese Design in general among the AD articles. Eclectic Mix theme is however very present, and it seems there was a peak around the 2000s. According to designer Sandra Nunnerly in *Eastern Philosophy* “The mantel, for instance, acquires a sculptural quality when it is paired with a crisp 1940s mirror and a cluster of 1940s French vases. “Rooms that are all one thing or another,” she says firmly, “are dead” (Michael Frank, 2004, p. 183).

Regarding the styling in general, pre-modern Chinese Design is often mixed with French antiques. But the styling of Chinese Design can also be the main focal point, as several AD articles showed a trend in how some designers actually toned down the rest of the interior to accentuate Chinese Design. Designer Thomas Britt “chose white and simple colors for the living room so that one is never distracted from the Oriental art” in *East By Far East* (Brooks Peters, 1991, p. 119). Meanwhile, designer Philippe B. Oates shares that “the living room’s west end is without a major piece of furniture so as not to inhibit the view of the framed Chinese scrolls” in *James Galanos in Palm Springs* (Peter Halderman, 1997, p. 207). However, this explicit trend of toning down the interiors disappears in the 2010s and 2020s.

## **4.2. Consumption of Chinese Design**

The literature review showed that there are several ways to look at consumption, including enjoyment of Chinese Design, identity thanks to Chinese Design, purchasing of Chinese Design and Education of Chinese Design. All four have been found in this study, and all four will be discussed separately.

### 4.2.1. Consumption as Enjoyment

The owner of Chinese Design can consume daily the joy of sitting in a certain chair or admiring a scroll painting, meaning enjoyment as consumption can be repetitive. One astounding finding is that the dwellers within AD enjoy using pre-modern artefacts in their day-to-day life. For example, AD explicitly discusses how the designer and dweller enjoys his 18<sup>th</sup> century Chinese chairs: “they’re very comfortable – they sort of grab you” in *Juan Pablo Molyneux* (Steven M.L. Aronson, 2001, p. 223). Another AD home dweller discusses his 18<sup>th</sup> century low dinner table he uses to entertain: “I often have dinner served on the eighteenth-century Chinese lacquered table...people seem to have festive felling about visiting a bachelor’s apartment. I think part of it is the informality” (Anthony Hail, 1972, p. 42). While one family even uses Ming porcelain as dinner ware, as ““transitional” porcelains of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) are not merely for display, but are used for dining” according to Joanna Shaw-Eagle in *The Collectors: Treasures from the East* (1984, p. 134).

Enjoyment was mostly recognized if the act of consuming, and also using, brought joy to the person when it came to Chinese Design in general. One article implicitly touched upon significant form while emphasizing the joy of Chinese Design: “you do not need to know the history of snuff in China to appreciate the beauty of the bottles” in *Collecting Snuff Bottles* (Harriet E. Huntington, 1972, p. 39). In *Collecting Chinese Art* AD mentions how Frank Lloyd Wright “was also an enthusiast of Oriental art which he collected for his personal enjoyment as well as for architectural inspiration” (Edward Lee Cave, 1972, p. 88). Meanwhile, in *Antiques Calligraphy: The Artistry of the Written Word* it is discussed how this art form goes beyond the aesthetics: “Calligraphy is also decoration; it is heightened aesthetic communication that extends meaning beyond linguistic intent.” (Marilyn W. Fu, 1980, p. 90).

Valentino Caravagini has three features between 1981 and 2003, showcasing his enjoyment. In *Revisits Valentino*, the designer shares: “Each of my houses has a different personality... This one is most influenced by my love of China” (Holly Brubach, 2003, p. 312). Also noteworthy, AD dedicated several in-depth articles on Chinese art forms, antiques and design in the 1970s through the early 2000s, and although the peak was clearly in the 1970s, its presence shows that Chinese Design can be related to enjoyment consumption.

### 4.2.2. Identity through self-expression and social status

It is only fair to admit that this study expected to see social status as a major trend when it comes to Chinese Design, but the opposite was the result. Social status directly related to

Chinese Design was not made explicit, yet if we consider the homes portrayed in AD and the home dweller's lifestyle, then it could be considered that Chinese Design is implicitly status driven. More often Chinese art was part of the person's personality, and thanks to their collecting habits, which are anything but humble or modest. Many dwellers and designers shared having lived in Asia, something which they considered part of their identity. In sum, identity is often related to Chinese Design, and while social status is implied, self-expression is shared openly and very much explicitly. The following quote exemplifies this in *Eastern Philosophy*: "We wanted the apartment to reflect our years in the East," says the wife. "The aesthetic is very meaningful to us. There's a subtlety and a cleanliness to Asian furniture, ceramics and art that we grew accustomed to in Hong Kong and hoped to integrate into our home in New York." (Michael Frank, 2004, p. 178, 181). The peak of Chinese Design as identity is around the 2000s, but still present in the 2020s, which only shows how this consumption perspective relates to Chinese Design in the Western interior architecture and design world.

#### **4.2.3. Purchasing, acquiring, buying and shopping**

AD as a decorating magazine – presenting interiors of the elite worldwide – does not hide their intention of selling or promoting the act of shopping. Moreover, in the found literature it was discussed that consumption can be taught and sometimes even needs reminding, and this is the case within AD, as shopping in general increases over time. Meanwhile when it comes to shopping Chinese Design, the trend is downward. The ads alone testify to the this, but within this study, the research was mostly done on articles containing Chinese Design, and there is a clear trend visible in which explicit shopping gets traction along the years, especially after Paige Rense's tenure, but explicit Chinese shopping is less visible.

AD being a decorating magazine targeting and showcasing houses of the elite, did not warrant for a strong presence of explicit shopping, and compared to other themes, this is relatively small in the found sample, as in the 1980s-2010s shopping of Chinese Design was less explicit. Interesting is the peak being the 1970s, but this is also the decade AD published several articles unrelated to houses, that taught and explained Chinese Design. However, it is not certain if the act of buying Chinese Design has decreased over time, it is just clear AD gives it less importance in their main text as they write less about it within their featured articles.

AD does start adding specific shopping examples next to the featured rooms. Figure 1 demonstrates how AD makes complimentary suggestions that are ads, which they refer as “Design Notes”, and these included several types of purchases, such as antiques, paints, porcelain, contemporary lamps, etc. It is important to highlight, that they also include unique items being sold at auction or shops, so compared to a general curated shopping list found in other magazines, the for sale items AD proposes, are pieces in the same style but not necessarily the exact same product; they just match the featured interior.



Figure 1. The final two pages that include home pictures, and possible “buy the look” products if the reader wants to emulate the featured home. *Harmonic Convergence* in July 2018 AD edition, written by Dan Shaw.

Shopping is often mentioned by the designers, less so by the owners, and other words and associations are tied to the act of purchasing such as ‘acquiring’, ‘bought at action’, or ‘sold at antique shop’, giving a different connotation to purchasing Chinese Design, especially in the previous millennium. Such an example is Nigel Cameron who mentions how the owner in *A House Called Lin Yin Tai* “features a Western arrangement of Oriental art and objects acquired during the owner’s wide-ranging travels” (1980, p. 140). While designer Thomas Britt “who roams the world in search of furniture and objects d’art for his projects, believes in “appropriate” design” according to Andrea Trupping in *Westport Reoriented* (2000, p. 91). AD does also offer advice through professionals on how to shop:

“Finding real treasure in Beijing requires the help of such experts; there's no equivalent of Hong Kong's Hollywood Road here, and the novice buyer must beware of fakes. It's a good idea to take an interpreter with you (not all dealers speak English fluently), and be prepared to pay with cash or traveler's checks, or— for a more expensive item—a wire transaction (not all merchants accept credit cards). They can, however, arrange shipment, although for large items this will only be to the port of arrival. You will need to get an expediter to get your purchases through United States Customs and delivered to your door.” Amanda Vaill in *Made In China* (2002, p. 46).

AD does not shy away from being upfront about spending, especially in *Discovering Hong Kong*, Annette Tapert starts her article with: “What does interior designer Joanne de Guardiola do when she visits Hong Kong? She does what millions of other tourists do—she shops” (1999, p. 66). Yet, the article goes on and explains how to shop antiques and to an extent teaches you, which will be discussed hereafter. But owners are less often associated to spending. So, to end this sub-chapter, an exemplary quote showcases how homeowners buy within AD, in which author Aileen Mehle writes the following regarding the owner in *Neoclassical Overtones*: “One of the first antiques Georgette Mosbacher bought with McMaster is the nineteenth-century Queen Anne-style chinoiserie bureau-cabinet in the guest bedroom.” (1989, p. 263).

#### **4.2.4. Education of Chinese Design**

Lackey (2004) had shown in the literature review that decorating magazines can also be considered educational, as they inform the reader of art, history, design, and to an extent can be seen as art education. Well, AD actually did not disappoint on that respect, in fact, they were strong on educational content of Chinese Design, but only in the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. There is also a clear peak in the 1970s which corresponds with purchase consumption, and identity, making the 1970's a very strong decade regarding consumption in all its myriad ways. In *Collecting Snuff Bottles*, the author writes the following:

“Because most of the bottles were given as presents, many of them bear good luck signs or symbols wishing long life, many sons, prosperity and happiness. The symbols for long life were pine trees, a crane, deer or peach. The peach is usually held in the hand of the god of longevity. If you see a bottle decorated with a sacred fungus plant [it looks like a mushroom] you should know it means a wish for long life.” (Harriet E. Huntington, 1972, p. 44).

This quote exemplifies how in-depth AD went about art historical elements, and even though the article gives advice to the reader on how to acquire these bottles, they share lots of (art) historical elements that educate the reader. In *Welcome to Beekman Place*, the designer mentions that “The mural...features irregularly shaped rocks like the scholar's rocks that Chinese literati used for meditation.”, and this quote teaches the reader the significance about a certain depiction and what it represents within Chinese culture (Phyllis Rose, 1992, p. 171). One of the earliest data articles that explicitly teaches Chinese Design, was actually an ad from 1939, where they promote a Chinese inspired wallpaper: "Toile de Chine is a modern interpretation of the Chinese influence which has been important in Occidental decoration since the early 18th Century. Because contemporary colors have been used, this wallpaper lends itself to many types of rooms.” (p. 139). Interesting enough, this ad also explains why it is not a copy, and this small finding begs for more research as it quite astonishing to see how much information is shared regarding one wallpaper option on a full ad page.

The 1970s was also the decade in which AD proclaimed itself as: “The Connoisseur’s Magazine of Fine Interior Design” from 1970-1975, as shown in table 3.3 within the method chapter. Connoisseurship was analyzed in this study when it was explicitly mentioned that a certain person or expert was knowledgeable about a certain field, and also when art historians were given a platform in the magazine. This delimitation follows the David Ebitz academic article *Connoisseurship as Practive*, where a connoisseur is a studied and trained person, or as Ebitz put it himself: “connoisseurship is the craft of art history” (1988, p. 207). Ebitz, however, is negative as he considers it to be in decline, and his statement actually follows through in AD, as you discover a decline of experts sharing in-depth knowledge on art and design within the magazine. In *Asian Mystique*, a professional couple share how they became connoisseurs:

“The Kellers... are intrepid, and early in their travels might buy antiques with little knowledge of their authenticity Their seventh-century Korean stoneware collection—“interesting because it's so architectural”—was started when Dale Keller paid one dollar in Korea for a chalice he thought was beautiful. He took it, wrapped in newspaper, to the director of Korea's National Museum, who could tell by touching it that the piece was authentic. Later, pottery expert Bernard Leach taught them to validate a ceramic piece by “touching it, listening to it and even licking it to determine the hardness of the material. Highly fired objects like Korean pottery absorb almost no moisture,” explains Dale Keller. “If it's terra-cotta, you get a big wet spot.” Although they still use such humble tests on the things they collect, the Kellers sometimes travel with a sophisticated ultraviolet “black light” about the size of a hair dryer that allows them to see “every nick that has

been filled in on a piece.” (Louise Bernikow, 1987, p. 98, 100).

Connoisseurship is more present in the 1980s and particularly in the 1990s and 2000s, which does not correlate with the self-proclaimed title of “Connoisseurship” by AD, but this might only be case in relation to Chinese Design, and maybe not representative among other topics of AD. Nevertheless, Smith, Derbyshire and Oakley (2013, p. 281) state the importance of connoisseurship to the decorative arts, particularly for the conservation of pieces, which makes it a relevant topic when studying Chinese Design, and which needs more study.

#### **4.2.5. Collecting Chinese Design**

Halbertsma mentions that “the collection, presentation and representation of cultural artifacts and description of cultural practices have long been part of Western strategies designed to chart the world, to bring it literally within arm’s reach” (2011, p. 5). This act of collecting, is related to the craze in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century Honour (1961) and Bertram (2021) mention in their books. Nowadays, collecting is still present in AD, and often, homeowners are presented as collectors. Their entire identity is linked to their hobby of collecting and topic of their collection.

The previous four sub-chapters on consumption actually relate deeply to collecting habits, as a collector acquires pieces, enjoys their collection, identifies as a collector and to its collection topic, and is often a connoisseur, or seeks out connoisseurs to assist them. In a *Hong Kong Cottage in the Sky*, owner James Julius Kiilough III shares his “family were all collectors. I was first attracted to Chinese porcelain and urged my mother to buy a pair of flambé Sung Dynasty vases when I was sixteen” (1974, p. 15). This quote shows his pedigree of collectors, and how the act of collecting forms part of his identity. Buying is discussed, but on Song period vases that were at least 800 years old at the time, and to an extent this quote also touches on education, and enjoyment. The description by Halbertsma can thus be applied to Chinese Design within AD. In addition, homeowners that have Chinese Design, have often lived outside of USA and/or Europe. And their houses are oftentimes a small representation of their lives, plus by letting AD publish their homes, they to an extent share their “Theatrum Mundi” with others (Halbertsma, 2011, p.5).

### 4.3. Cosmopolitanism and the standardized taste

AD does not always use the word ‘cosmopolitan’ or ‘global citizen’; they more often just describe the world traveling of the individual homeowner and their travel customs. They once referred to a person as a Globe-Trotter, but more often they give a narrative cv (he/she moved there, lived there, or has a house here, and her, and here). It seems cosmopolitanism is considered normal, actually, no one was presented as a non-travelled individual. In sum, being a cosmopolitanism is part of the deal.

When referring to houses and design, AD sometimes points out if it is local or foreign to the location. In addition, they are not afraid of referencing colonial, especially not between 1920-2010. Houses are often eclectic in taste. Moreover, Chinese Designs is not the only style in a house or room (rarely), and as mentioned before, Chinese Design is often combined and mixed with other cultures, time periods and styles. A globalized taste, or standardized taste is sometimes criticized by designers or owners within AD, and they do not refer to this standardization as a ‘global taste’, instead they refer to it as a ‘standard safe-taste’. In 2016, one famous designer even mocked interiors inspired by “trendy hotels”, clearly critiquing a global taste that is not original. In *Rebel With A Cause* Mattia Bonetti reflects on his taste versus the standardized taste:

“I don't have good taste, and I don't pretend to,” the Swiss-born, Paris-based designer of madly inventive, wildly hued furnishings observes before going on to passionately denounce beige color schemes and residential interiors that are inspired by trendy hotels. “I have my taste, that's it.” (Mitchell Owens, 2016, p. 82)

Nevertheless, Chinese Design might not be executed the same way among the elites, but it is often a fixed “ingredient” in an elitest interior.

#### 4.3.1. Chinese Design is a global taste among the elites

Following the critique regarding consumer culture and a standardized global taste, we could assume that AD will showcase a certain standardized equivalent of the McWorld taste among the elite interiors. Such as an ‘Hermès-monde’, and to an extent, that is the case, as Chinese Design is omnipresent among the interiors of the elite of AD, well, at least in certain decades of the AD publishing history. Yet, I wouldn't apply or go as far as to call it standardized, meaning Chinese Design is present in the interiors, but the execution varies,

and the objects portrayed are not standard, as they are often unique. Adding to that, this study discusses also a canon of interior design for the elite, in which Chinese Design is present and part of the elite interiors for these past 500 years. In that respect, the taste or penchant for pre-modern Chinese Design is an elitest standardized taste, but visually it looks different among the houses AD discusses, and maybe that has to do more with the field of interior architecture and design. For Chinese Design is varied, and the way designers apply it in houses is often different, as the furniture of the elite are not standard and generally have unique upholstery compared to commercial store items. Also, AD showcased many houses that contained antiques, and these are not serried productions, on the contrary, they are often museum pieces. Also, AD mentions often how some home dwellers, out of their goodness or by need, donated pieces to museums. For example, in *The Old and New Harmoniously Joined*, designer François Catroux explains how the dwellers of a New York City pied-à-terre have dealt with their antiques, including French chinoiserie:

“Indeed, the owners once had one of the largest and most impeccable collections of French eighteenth-century furniture in existence. “The kings of France would have been quite comfortable in most of their rooms,” says Mr. McCarty in explanation. But both he and M. Aaron feel that such collections are unrealistic today and that the maintenance of antiques of that caliber is overwhelming. “You become custodians of your possessions. It requires almost constant maintenance and three resident curators. Everything has to be humidified, and restorers must be on hand”. (Mary Merris, 1980, p. 138)

The article by Mary Merris, shares how “the owners have donated antiques to Versailles and to the Louvre, and they still own many fine pieces” (1980, p. 137). Yet the article also discusses how they still mix and match pre-modern Chinese with French antiques together with more modern or contemporary pieces, which is the eclectic style this study has previously mentioned, and which seems related to Chinese Design. In that sense, eclecticism could be considered “the standardized taste” when it comes to Chinese Design in relation to elitest interiors. But it will not be executed the same, and designers, just like the homeowners, do not want that either. So, the Ikea equivalent of an Hermès-monde does not work with Chinese Design nor with antiques, fine art or artefacts.

The 2010s and 2020s did show some inclination of standardization for chinoiserie, in fact, wallpaper brands have started to call their designs as “export” referencing chinoiserie exported wares from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. As these are not hand painted but machine-made wallpaper, albeit still extremely expensive and labour intensive to apply to walls, this

newfound popularity for chinoiserie on walls in the new millennium could be considered standardized. Especially if it starts dripping down to more commercial items. But the literature did warn about this, as in the past, elites have set the style direction and consumers with more limited budgets tend to look at examples above their discretionary spending. Moreover, the “Style Notes” as seen in figure 1, show a certain form of ‘buy the look’, but as AD also share antiques or items with “price upon request”, they still expect the reader to be part of the elite when showcasing a Georgian mantelpiece with the price tag of US\$132.000.-. Though maybe, the less affluent reader can buy a little bit of paint to emulate the presented interiors, as shown in the same pages of the mantelpiece. Nevertheless, Chinese Design as defined within this study, refers to several design forms that are not known to be numerous, and considering the literature reviewed auction houses, galleries, selling original designs, it could be stated that Chinese Design is not a mainstream or mass Western interior architecture and design activity, but when referring to the elite interiors, it is mainstream, and still present in today’s elite interiors published by AD.

#### **4.3.2. Cosmopolitans by choice or by need**

In the decades 1970, 1980 and 1990 the theme cosmopolitan is dominant and as we saw in the literature, there are two forms – cosmopolitan by choice or by need – and both types are present in AD. Meanwhile, the subsequent decades also show relations to cosmopolitanism and Chinese Design, albeit less often.

These transnationals by choice often own properties worldwide, and some seem to not work at all, while they just enjoy a cosmopolitan lifestyle directed by social seasons. In *Buenos Aires Alchemy*, Aileen Mehle shares an example of cosmopolitans by choice that are independently wealthy, and who live and travel by choice: ““We transfer our base from Europe to Argentina from November till April,” says Jean-Pierre Marcie-Rivière, with his wife, Rosemarie, in the sitting room of their Buenos Aires pied-à-terre”” (1989, p. 221). It is worth mentioning how the featured pied-à-terre is only their second house in Argentina, for “what would they do on those occasions when they wanted to spend a few nights in town doing the opera, the theater or a dinner party? Where would they stay?” (Aileen Mehle, 1989, p. 221). But more exemplary is the way how Mehle introduced this couple:

“Rosemarie and Jean-Pierre Marcie-Rivière, one of the most cultivated couples in the international set, are noted not only for their individual taste and highly personal style but for the luxury, refinement and eclectic beauty of their various houses in France, Switzerland, Greece,

Argentina—and who knows where next? They are forever on the lookout for an inviting tree to build a nest in.” (1989, p. 221)

AD has plenty examples of cosmopolitanism, and the following showcases a “by need” in *Impact Statement*:

“For Mota, who splits his time between New York City, Lisbon, and the Dominican Republic, the apartment is a downsize that was necessitated when he realized that his business travels made his former, more spacious abode in Chelsea impractical. What he lost in scale, though, he has more than made up for in atmosphere. If anything, his new address is even more madcap in spirit.” (Sam Cochran, 2023, p. 42)

In this quote, it is made clear the homedweller, is “forced” to travel and live in different continents due to his job. AD has plenty more examples, though some jobs are less related to business, and more to family obligations, for Lord Oxmantown returned from Beijing once his dad sadly inherited him the earldom: “Ireland's Birr Castle gets a dose of international chic when a globe-trotting aristocrat and his young family leave their beloved Beijing to return to the family estate” (Robert O’Byrne, 2015, p. 135). Interesting here, is how AD even confirms the literature’s point on how cosmopolitans, once they return to their native home, they are seen differently for now they bring “a dose of international chic” in *Coming Home*.

Thus, cosmopolitanism influences the way elite home dwellers decorate, present and experience their homes. Chinese Design is part of this visual narrative, but as mentioned before, it might be more a result from cosmopolitanism than from self-expressionism; a question which this study cannot directly answer. In fact, it might be possible that cosmopolitanism is more associated to AD in general than related with the consumers of Chinese Design.

#### **4.4. Politics and Critical Theory**

Critical Theory (CT) was expected and is present in the sample by AD, as Chinese Design is often associated with orientalism, exotic and the Far East, but the way in which it is discussed does not entirely match the expected associations from CT. In truth, Chinese Design has shown an “otherness” similar to occidental countries, making everything non-USA actually “the Other”. In addition, it seems world moments or relevant political changes

do not always deter AD from publishing Chinese Design, as many of the published houses in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s contained Chinese Design. Politics do play a role, but in an entirely different way than expected as Chinese Design really contradicts this academic tendency found in the literature, that often discusses the unequal power and mean stereotypes associated with orientalism, exotic and the Far East. Economies and societies can be negatively discussed in AD, and even looked down upon, but Chinese Design is not part of this critique, nor is it seen as less valuable than French, English, or American-made furniture.

#### **4.4.1. In the end it is all about politics**

Politics or USA relations with PRC, did not deter AD from publishing Chinese Design, nor did the Cold War, nor the Cultural Revolution, nor the student protests in 1989. AD does talk politics, but in reference to the people, societies, politicians, and countries; design is just not part of the deal. One could even go as far and say that design is above politics and thus free of influence, but that would be too naïve as in between the lines there is critique and backhanded compliments. For example, towards the end of the cultural revolution AD mentions the following when discussing *Collecting Chinese Art*: “Recent political events notwithstanding, interest in Chinese culture could not have remained dormant for long, its art is far too important” (Edward Lee Cave, 1972, p. 48). Here AD separates the art from the society as it is too valuable, suggesting a “hate the sin, love the sinner”. Yet, the article discusses mostly the art, the aesthetics, but also the importance and significance for the Western art world. In that respect, the value of Chinese Design is not entirely commodity driven, in fact, it has cultural value to the West.

AD, however, does not shy away, for Wang Tih-wu, owner and businessman shares the following in *The Exotic Pavilions of South Garden*: “In Taiwan we are said to have created economic miracles... We are also said to have created political miracles in the decades since the government settled in Taiwan in 1949” (Jeffrey Simpson, 1988, p. 76. 1988). These comments by Wang are political, especially when he mentions the year 1949. AD goes further as in *Shanghai St. Regis* author Michael Webb writes the following:

“If Chairman Mao could see what is happening in Shanghai today, his well-preserved body would spin in its casket. For this great trading city, once known as the Paris of the East, has returned to its capitalist roots and is busily reinventing itself. The Jin Mao Tower—a silvery pagoda whose name signifies “great wealth”—rises 1,400 feet over the new financial district of Pudong. Freeways speed you through tunnels under the river and high above bustling streets. The banks and trading

houses of the legendary Bund have been refurbished, along with the Peace Hotel, built in the 1920s as the Cathay, where Noël Coward wrote *Private Lives* in four days while recovering from a bout of the flu. Elegantly dressed crowds flock to the new French-designed opera house across the street from People's Square, where Red Guards denounced the “poisonous weeds” of Western culture only 30 years ago.” (2002, p.162).

The above comment is far from diplomatic and rejoices openly on capitalism, it even makes fun of previously used terms against Western influence.

One unexpected trend is Hong Kong being so well represented in the articles, while this was not expected from the found literature review. For it seems Hong Kong is relevant when discussing Chinese Design. Moreover, the adagium “in the end it is all about politics” is very befitting to the results found in the AD sample, as politics play a role when discussing interior architecture and design. Yet, Hong Kong was also the capitalist gateway to China, and interestingly enough they barely mention the British aspect. Also, Hong Kong is still presented after 1997, as AD still publishes articles of houses in Hong Kong in the new millennium showing continuous relation with this city, at least till the 2010s.

#### **4.4.2. All non-USA design is considered “exotic”**

Orientalism, exotic and the Far East are omnipresent in AD. Yet the way in how these terms were used, was not always in accordance to the literature. For exotic might be considered “the Other”, but AD considers many different regions, cultures and countries as the Other. To an extent, Chinese Design is no different to this otherness explained in the literature, only the unequal power and demeanor referring to “the Other” is often absent when discussing Chinese Design. The rule, generally, is that all design presented in AD is applauded and considered in high regard within the magazine. Chinese Design gets a podium within AD, experts applaud its uniqueness, craft, value, and yes, they also give it at times associations to exotic, and Far East. But the way how they refer to European craft is also mystified, presented differently, particularly compared to American products, making everything non-USA exotic, and the other.

Oriental also has another connotation than the one discussed by Said (1978), as oriental is indeed never seen as the Middel East within the AD sample. Oriental was often interchangeable with Asia, a geographical setting. The language is not prerogative, but it is clear the association with Oriental is non-existent in the 2010s and 2020s. Reasons or corrections are not given, it is simply exchanged with Asian. The sub-chapter on politics, did

however show all the negative and prerogative associations the West has against other economical systems different than capitalism. Also, America as a country is often portrayed as the very best, though not always. Yet, this disbalance is not present when it comes to Chinese Design. For example, in an ad from 1956, the following is shared: “This magnificent scenic wallpaper was made at the suggestion of a famous Oriental architect who recognized the need for a scenic of this type and character in today's Far Eastern trend in interior decoration.” (Stockwell Wallpaper, 1956, p. 145. In fact, in *Nob Hill Exuberance*, one can exchange Oriental with Asian, and the original connotation would not change:

“My clients are both from the East Coast and had not been exposed to good Oriental design—much like myself before I moved to San Francisco some four years ago. In this city there is much more awareness of, and access to, fine pieces from the Orient. My clients quickly recognized the beauty of the pieces and selected an eighteenth-century Japanese butterfly-and-lotus stand, a Korean-inspired altar table, and a figurative Chinese door panel that is a lighthearted contradiction to the contemporary abstract art. The Oriental condiment box on the bookcase in the living room inspired the color of the library's lacquered walls, and the chintz upholstery in that room is also chinoiserie in feeling.” (Cameron Curtis McKinley, 1983, p. 105).

Chuck Winslow, the designer in *Nob Hill Exuberance*, sees it as deficit that his clients “had not been exposed to good Oriental art” (1983, p. 145). This quote also shows that the designer separates all the different Oriental countries, while showing a great deal of admiration. The last sentence even indicates the designer’s knowledge on chinoiserie. Plus, Oriental is almost always written with a capital letter denoting a region. Thus, Oriental has the same association as European.

## 5. Conclusion and Discussion

Chinese Design is present in the interiors of the elite, and it is a topic vastly discussed in its varying forms of original pre-modern, chinoiserie, New Chinese Design, in addition to imitation, while also being associated to other non-design topics, such as culture and politics. In fact, Chinese Design lends itself to broach political viewpoints, economic policies, and other sensitive subjects not commonly expected in a decorating magazine. AD as a sample pool for Chinese Design has been very valuable, though at times, the question arises if what is being discovered is more related to AD itself than Chinese Design, as the magazine has a predilection for showcasing houses whose owners' collecting habits portray a varied collection of art, antiques, and contemporary designs, not only pertaining to Chinese Design.

All the above tries to answer the explorative research question: What are the trends in writing about Chinese Design in the Western interior architecture and design world?

The main topics associated with Chinese Design from a Western perspective are: Pre-Modern Chinese, be it through collecting, purchasing, enjoyment or education, as well as identity through self-expression (and to a lesser extent, also social status, as this is only implied but rarely made explicit). Moreover, it is often by an eclectic style that Chinese Design is used as decoration. At times it is paired with 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century French furniture, and this mixture of antique European and original pre-modern, or chinoiserie, constitutes an interior canon of the elite. Though nowadays the pre-modern Chinese Design is mixed with contemporary non-Chinese design, such as European mid-century furniture, and less so, with European antiques.

The usual suspects of oriental, exotic and the Far East, are accordingly present, only not in the way the literature suggested. Chinese Design is considered “the Other”, but so are French antiques. Also, Chinese Design is equally valuable, as all things non-American are found to be “the Other” within the chosen sample from AD; making the “the Other” anyone but USA and often more valuable for its rarity, and old age. New Chinese Design was clearly less in vogue compared to pre-modern China, and considering the number of times ‘old’, ‘ancient’, ‘antique’, were associated to Chinese Design, it is clear AD values its age. Thus, the literature was also incorrect in terms of New Chinese Design, as the astonishing auction sale prices haven't really made it into the magazine.

The realization after conducting this study, is that the topic of Chinese Design from a sociological perspective is only the tip of the iceberg. Considering that there are more themes

and topics related to Chinese Design than discussed within this study, so both Chinese Design and AD beg more for more research.

There were several possible research paths and unexpected discoveries made while analyzing Chinese Design from a Western interior architecture and design perspective. The decorative arts have a presence within academia but mostly limited to art history. This study touched upon the decorative arts indirectly, as it considered all forms of art and design, including architecture, as Chinese Design. It could be valuable to maybe separate these topics more thoroughly in a future study, and to see if there are differences between decorative or fine arts, but also between interior design or architecture, in addition to landscape.

Meanwhile, the topic of collecting turned out to be a major theme within this study, and though it was discussed, the discoveries need a more thorough literature review, especially when looking at connoisseurship. The sample and found literature, gives the impression that both are in decline, but it is still a speculation, as this might only be the case in regard to Chinese Design.

Moreover, this study focused on the written words while conducting a longitudinal content analysis, but while researching the AD archive during the selection of the data, it was discovered that Chinese Design was present in the images, but not explicitly in the text. This was particularly the case in the years between 1920s and 1950s, exactly the years in which AD in general did not write much or give details on the pictures. Jan Baetens (2012) wrote an amazing essay in favor of visual culture and visual studies that could serve as another research method for Chinese Design, and which includes more directly the visual presentation this study did not cover. Moreover, this study limited itself to a qualitative content analysis, while a quantitative method could also add more to the topic.

Plus, a discourse analysis could also be valuable as the period studied ranged over a decade, and the feeling is that there is more within the data. For one, many writers of AD gave the impression of being part of the elite, and by chance it was discovered that one of the writers for AD was also a famous columnist, whose second home was featured in the magazine, and whose lifestyle would be considered cosmopolitan by choice (Aileen Mehle, 1992). AD also shared for decades letters from the readers where they published not only compliments but also critiques on certain featured articles. Moreover, these letters also gave an impression, at least in the 1970's and 1980s, that AD was to an extent a magazine read by the same group of people in terms of social class and lifestyle as the ones featured. These letters showcase a way of communicating that felt more intimate than distant, bringing to mind how some celebrities react openly on social media posts of other celebrities. This, of

course, is unrelated to Chinese Design, but AD turned out to be an amazing mine full of culture sociology topics to research.

Moreover, from a communication science perspective, AD offers valuable research material, as the ads often contained trends, and these ads were also very niche to its readers. Furthermore, this study limited itself to published material and did not include social media. This is something which AD has been focusing on, especially since Amy Astley became editor-in-chief. Additionally, celebrity houses have graced the covers, as well as interior designers, fashion designers, and many more public professions. It could be interesting to conduct comparative research on how they present these different occupations throughout their editions.

To conclude this study, it is imperative to mirror the topic, as the starting point of the research was to analyze Chinese Design through a Western gaze. For the opposite can be done, as Kristina Kleutghen (2014) researched “Europerie” in her article *Chinese Occidenterie*, which gave a historic perspective on the consumption of Western goods by the Chinese in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Meanwhile, Lin (2011) touched upon how Western goods were consumed in China in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century and related this to imitation. But no research has been done on elite interiors in China. AD proved to be such a great mine that it would be valuable to research how they write in Mandarin regarding the interiors of the elite. So, what would their Chinese edition that launched in 2011 teach us?

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## Appendix A – List of AD articles and ads

An overview of all the articles from AD used in the sample of this study.

Year	Edition	Author	Pages	Title article / ad
1927	Volume vi Issue 3	-	150	Ad: Wilshire Rug Cleaning Works
1928	Volume vi No. 4	-	82-85	<i>Grauman's Chinese Theatre</i>
1939	Volume x Issue 2	-	139	Ad: Wallpaper
1947	Volume xi Issue 4	-	47-51	<i>Residence of Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Gold Beverly Hills, California</i>
1951	Volume xiii Issue 1	-	4-15	<i>Residence of Mr. and Mrs. Carl Naumann Beverly Hills, California</i>
1951	Volume xiii Issue 1	-	48-53	<i>Residence of Mr. and Mrs. George W. Casey Los Angeles, California</i>
1956	Volume xv No. 2	-	145	Ad: Stockwall Wallpaper
1956	Volume xv No. 2	-	149	Ad: Albert Van Luit & Co.
1958	Volume xv No. 4	-	131-137	<i>"Mosshaven", Country Estate of Mr. and Mrs. Harry S. Moss – Dallas, Texas</i>
1963	Spring Vol. xx No. 1	-	46-53	<i>Residence of Mr. and Mrs. Floyd C. Shank San Francisco, California</i>
1965	Summer Vol. xxii No. 1	-	4-10	<i>An apartment in New York City</i>
1965	Winter Vol. xxii No. 3	-	82-85	<i>Oriental Accents Create a Mood of Serenity</i>
1966	Spring Vol. xxii No. 4	-	100-101	<i>Executive Offices in the Chinese Style</i>
1971	July/August Vol. xxviii No. 1	-	3	Ad: Marbro puts the 18th century in a new light
1971	July/August Vol. xxviii No. 1	Cleon T. Knapp	6-7	<i>Publisher's Pregorative</i>
1971	July/August Vol. xxviii No. 1	-	30-33	<i>Gallery of Landscapes President and Madame Chiang Kai-shek's Formosa Garden</i>
1972	March/April Vol. xxviii No. 5	Harriet E. Huntington	38-44	<i>Collecting Snuff Bottles</i>
1972	May/June Vol. xxviii No. 6	Edward Lee Cave	48-58, 88, 90, 92	<i>Collecting Chinese art</i>
1972	May/June Vol. xxviii No. 6	Anthony Hail	40-47	<i>Anthony Hail's San Francisco Apartment</i>
1973	Jan/Feb Vol. xxiv No. 4	-	74-77	<i>Big Look for a Small Apartment</i>
1973	May/June Vol. xxiv No. 6	Richard H. Rush	28-33, 106, 110, 113 -114	<i>Investing In Antique Furniture</i>
1974	Jan/Feb Vol. xxx No. 4	-	15-21	<i>Hong Kong "Cottage in the Sky"</i>

1976	Jan/Feb Vol. xxxii No. 4	Valentine Lawford	86 -91	<i>Antique Dealer's Treasure Enclave</i>
1980	Jan/Feb Vol. xxxvii No. 1	Mary Merris	132-139	<i>Old and New Harmoniously</i>
1980	April Vol. xxxvii No. 3	Nigel Cameron	140-147	<i>A House Called Lin Yin Tai</i>
1980	May Vol. xxxvii No. 4	Marilyn W. Fu	90-95	<i>Antiques: Calligraphy</i>
1981	August Vol. xxxviii No. 8	Helen Barnes	80-89	<i>Architectural Digest Visits: Valentino</i>
1982	August Vol. xxxix No. 8	Christopher Hemphill	42-49	<i>Oriental Expression</i>
1983	April Vol. xxxix No. 4	Cameron Curtis McKinley	100-105	<i>Nob Hill Exuberance</i>
1984	June Vol. xxxxi No. 6	Joanna Shaw-Eagle	128-135, 162	<i>The Collectors: Treasures from the East The Washington, D.C. Apartment of John W. Gruber</i>
1987	September Vol. xxxxiv No. 9	Louise Bernikow	94-101	<i>An Asian Mystique Dale and Patricia Keller's New York Apartment</i>
1988	January Vol. xxxv No. 1	Jeffrey Simpson	76-83	<i>The Exotic Pavilions of South Garden</i>
1988	September Vol. xxxv No. 9	Charlotte Aillaud	146-150, 246	<i>Valentino in Rome</i>
1988	December Vol. xxxv No. 12	James Reginato	118-125	<i>Connecticut Variations</i>
1989	October Vol. xxxvi No. 10	Aileen Mehle	220-227	<i>Buenos Aires Alchemy</i>
1989	November Vol. xxxvi No. 11	Aileen Mehle	258-263	<i>Neoclassical Overtones</i>
1991	March Vol. xxxviii No. 3	Christopher Buckley	176-181	<i>A Metropolitan Aria</i>
1991	April Vol. xxxviii No. 4	Brooks Peters	116-121	<i>East by Far East Contemporary Orientation on Long Island</i>
1991	August Vol. xxxviii No. 8	Avis Berman	130-135, 152	<i>Antiques: Chinese Provincial Furniture Ink Painting Embellishes a Fine Taiwanese Craft</i>
1992	November Vol. xxxix No. 11	Phyllis Rose	166-172	<i>A Welcome Retreat on Beekman Place</i>
1993	January V. 1 No. 1	Irene Borger	72-79, 160	<i>Atop Hong Kong's Victoria Peak</i>
1994	December Vol. li No. 12	Susan Mary Alsop	126-133, 203	<i>Katherine Graham's Capital Life</i>
1997	April Vol. liv No. 4	Peter Haldeman	206-212, 221	<i>James Galanos in Palm Springs</i>
1998	September Vol. lv No. 9	Patricia McColl	210-215	<i>Alain Demachy</i>

1999	May Vol. lvi No. 5	Annette Tapert	66, 68, 74, 76	<i>Discovering Hong Kong</i>
1999	May Vol. lvi No. 5	Michael Frank	200-207, 234	<i>Material Logic in NYC</i>
2000	July Vol. lvii No. 7	Andrea Truppin	90-97	<i>Westport Reoriented</i>
2001	September Vol. lviii No. 9	Steven M.L. Aronson	216-222, 286	<i>Juan Pablo Molyneux Plumbing the essence of Parisian Style in the French Capital</i>
2002	March Vol. lix No. 3	Michael Frank	104-111, 190	<i>With All Due Respect</i>
2002	May Vol. lix No. 5	Michael Webb	162-165, 249	<i>Shanghai St. Regis</i>
2002	August Vol. lix No. 8	Amanda Vaill	36, 40, 42, 44, 46	<i>Made in China</i>
2003	May Vol. lx No. 5	Holly Brubach	310-315	<i>Revisits Valentino</i>
2004	February Vol. lxi No. 2	Michael Frank	178-185	<i>Eastern Philosophy</i>
2008	August Vol. lxxv No. 8	Amanda Vaill	150-155	<i>Fresh Spin on Luxury A Villa in Sichuan Province is All Polished Elegance</i>
2008	August Vol. lxxv No. 8	Jeffrey Simpson	156-157	<i>Asian Movement A New Era Unfolds as Contemporary Chinese Art Takes the World Stage</i>
2008	August Vol. lxxv No. 8	Hester Diamond	158-162	<i>Mixed Media Eastern and Western Influence Harmonize in Artist Liu Dan's Tranquil Apartment</i>
2008	December Vol. lxxv No. 12	Steven M.L. Aronson	174-180, 204	<i>Taiwan Reenvisioned</i>
2009	May Vol. lxxvi No. 5	Lucy Birmingham	160-197	<i>Reflections of China</i>
2009	August Vol. lxxvi No. 8	Therese Bissell	86-91	<i>Rooted in Tradition The Inspiration is Ancient in a House on the South China Sea</i>
2015	May Vol. lxxii No. 5	Robert O'Byrne	134-145	<i>Coming Home</i>
2016	May Vol. lxxiii No. 5	Alexandra Kotur	112-123	<i>In the Bag</i>
2016	August Vol. lxxiii No. 8	Mitchell Owens	80-89	<i>Rebel with a Cause</i>
2016	October Vol. lxxiii No. 10	Fred A. Bernstein	158-161	<i>Breaking the Mold</i>
2016	November Vol. lxxiii No. 11	Mitchell Owens	77-78, 80	<i>Culture Travels: China Syndrome</i>
2018	July Vol. lxxv No. 7	Dan Shaw	70-79	<i>Harmonic Convergence</i>
2019	January Vol. lxxvi No. 1	Mitchell Owens	122-131	<i>Ranch Dressing</i>

2020	June Vol. lxxvii No. 6	Jane Keltner De Valle	17-18, 20	<i>Discoveries: The Italian Job</i>
2021	December Vol. lxxiii No. 11	Mayer Rus	66-77	<i>Flight of Fancy</i>
2023	January Vol. lxxx No. 1	Mitchell Owens	39, 42, 44	<i>Discoveries: Impact Statement</i>
2024	March Vol. lxxxi No. 3	Andrew Ferren	96-105	<i>Made in Madrid</i>

## Appendix B – List of themes and codes

Themes and relevant codes related to Chinese Design.

Theme Topic	Individual Codes	
Pre-modern Chinese Design	10th century	Kuan-Yin
	12th century	Liao Dynasty
	15th century	Ming
	16th century	Northern Qi period
	17th century	Northern Wei period
	Ch'ien Lung period	Qing
	Early ritual bronzes	Referring to 18th century
	Han period	Six Dynasty
	Imperial reference	Song
	K'ang Hsi period	Tang
	Ku Yueh Hsuan	
Chinoiserie	Antique French chinoiserie	Chippendale association
	Chinoiserie	Contemporary chinoiserie inspiration
	Chinoiserie in feeling	Decorating à la chinois
	Chinoiserie manner	English chinoiserie
	Chinoiserie paintings	European Chinese style
	Chinoiserie screen	Export ware
Imitation	Exact reproduction	Mock-Asian décor
	Fake Oriental art	reproductions
	Ming-Style	
Feng Shui	Feng Shui importance	Feng Shui usage
Eclecticism	Eclectic	Mixing Styles
	Mixing cultures	
Connoisseur	Connoisseurship	Specialists speaking
	Knowledge to collect	

Themes as a single code related to Chinese Design.

Significant Form
New Chinese Design

Theme as a single code related to Consumption.

Enjoyment
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Themes related to consumption.

Theme Topic	Individual Codes	
Purchase	Acquiring antiques	Buying antiques praised
	Antique buying	Buying more to compliment the whole
	Antique buying tips	Purchase
	Antiques shopping	Shopping
	Art & objects acquired	Spend
Identity	Chinese part of their identity	Social Status ID
	Self-expression	
Education	Art education	Historical education
	Art history	
Collecting	Collecting	Craze for things Chinese
	Collection	Years-long accumulation
	Collectors	

Themes related to Cosmopolitanism.

Cosmopolitanism	Cosmopolitan	Globe-Trotting
	Cosmopolitan by Need	Local vs cosmo vs transient
	Cosmopolitan by Choice	Transnational movement
	Cosmopolitan milieu	Transnational society in HK
	Discovered while traveling	

Themes related to Politics, Economics, and USA.

Taiwan	Province of Taiwan	Taipei seat of government
	Republic of China	Taiwan
	Taipei Capital	Taiwan different than mainland China
Hong Kong	Custom made in Hong Kong	Hong Kong barely European
	From Hong Kong	Hong Kong sculptor
	HK is East & West	Newest Hong Kong sculptors
	Hong Kong	
Communism	Censorship	Political events notwithstanding
	Communist Reference	Referring to Cultural Revolution
	Critiquing Chinese Communism	
Capitalism & Pro USA	Capitalism being applauded	President Obama

	CIA	Putting America as leader
	Economic Boom	USA Presidents
	Love for the USA due to living in Hong Kong	USA up to date compared to Asia

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Themes related to Oriental, and Exotic, Far East, etc.

<b>Theme Topic</b>	<b>Individual Codes</b>	
Oriental	Awareness of Oriental Design	Oriental motifs
	Oriental accents	Oriental originals
	Oriental antiques	Oriental sojourn
	Oriental architect	Oriental study
	Oriental art	Oriental style
	Oriental flavor	Orientalia
	Oriental furniture	
Exotic, Far Eastern	Distinct Far Eastern Flavor	Far Eastern Folly
	Exotic	Far Eastern Gaiety
	Exotic Beauty	Paradisially
	Exotic Charm	