



Smithsonian Associates

Lunchtime with a Curator: Decorative Arts Design Series
From “Designing Women” to “Fixer Upper”

Elizabeth Lay Little and Benjamin Bowery

Monday, June 24, 2024 - 12:00 p.m. to 1:15 p.m. ET

Recommended Further Reading

A Field Guide to American Houses: The Definitive Guide to Identifying and Understanding America’s Domestic Architecture

Virginia Savage McAlester, 2015

Gilded: How Newport Became America’s Richest Resort

Deborah Davis, 2011

The Decoration of Houses

Edith Wharton and Ogden Codman, 2017

The Importance of Being Furnished

R. Tripp Evans, 2024

The House in Good Taste

Elsie de Wolfe, 1913

Elsie de Wolfe: A Decorative Life

Nina Campbell, 1992

Decorating is Fun!: How to be Your Own Decorator

Dorothy Draper, 2016

In the Pink: Dorothy Draper – America’s Most Fabulous Decorator

Carleton Varney, 2012

Sister Paris: The Life of the Legendary American Interior Designer

Apple Parish Barlett and Susan Bartlett Crater, 2012

Guide to Easier Living

Mary and Russel Wright, 1950

Damsels of Design: Women Pioneers in the Automotive Industry, 1939-1959

Constance Smith, 2018

Designers Addressed Today

Jules Allard	Elsie de Wolfe	Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky
Candace Wheeler	Frances Elkins	Florence Knoll
Edith Wharton	Dorothy Draper	Mary and Russel Wright
Ogden Codman	Sister Parish	Charles and Ray Eames
Louis Comfort Tiffany	Albert Hadley	Suzanne Vanderbilt

Final Thoughts and Themes

The Democratization of Design

- Who defines taste?
- Who has access to “good design?” Has this changed?
- What spaces are worthy of “good design?”
- New spaces, products, and information opening up to the middle class

Cultural Intermediaries

- How has the role of a tastemaker evolved in the 20th century?
- The “Celebrity Designer:” personality and taste as a commodity

“Designing Women”

- Professionalization: do we talk about interior design as a serious art? As a serious business? What role has gender played in this?
- Gendered Work: women designing gendered spaces; what projects are viewed “appropriate” for women to work on

Contact Me for Questions!

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