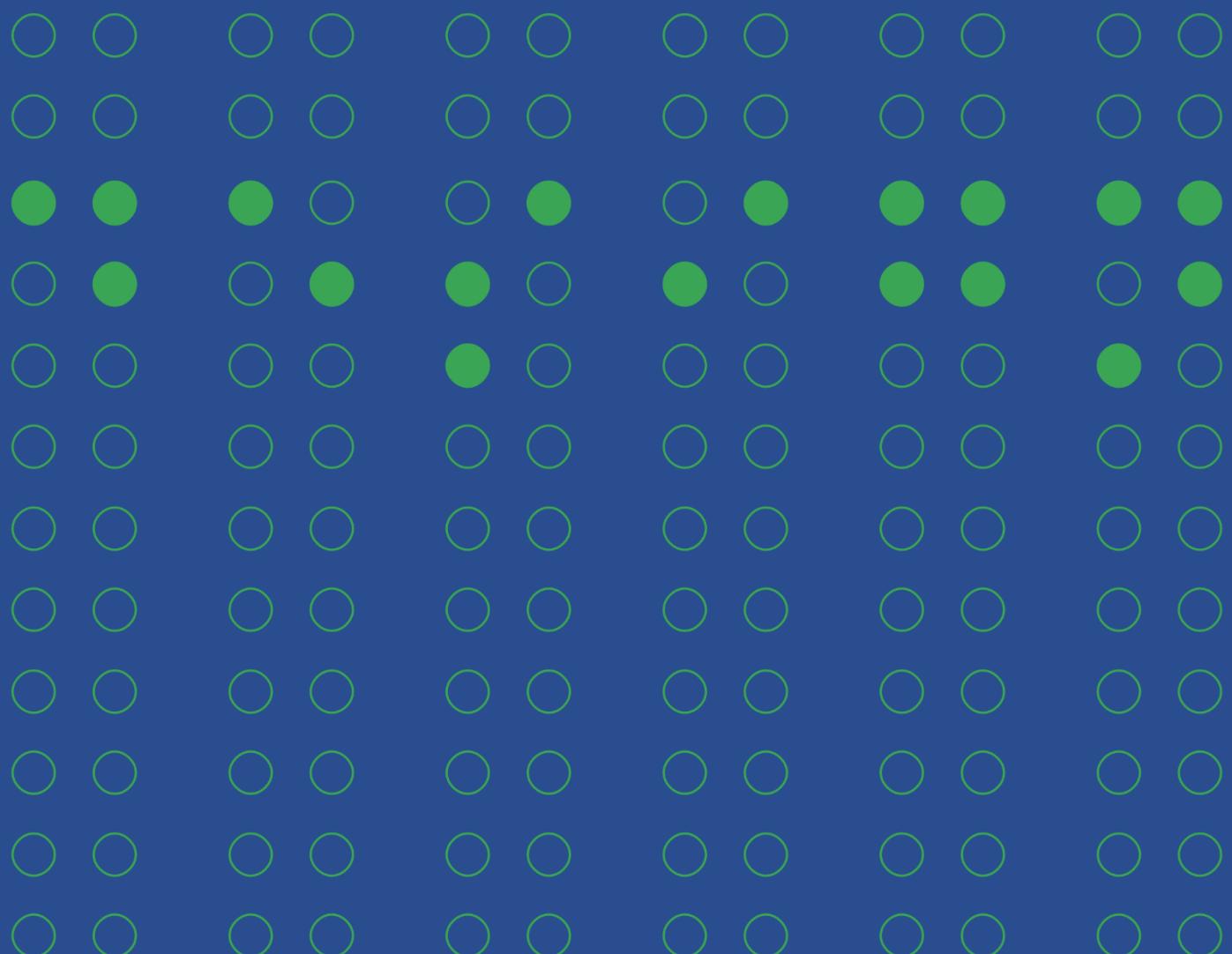


Reading People, Before Shaping Space

module one
of the Decoding Design series



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“Great design begins with insight into human experience, not with arranging objects. When perception, function, and meaning align, spaces gain coherence, purpose, and the power to transform those who inhabit them.”

Design is not concerned with objects, but with people. Every space communicates with its inhabitants, shaping perception, emotion, and behavior – often before any conscious interpretation occurs. When designers begin with form or material alone, spaces may appear resolved yet remain disconnected from human experience.

True design begins by understanding how biology, psychology, culture, and lived experience shape perception and sensibility. By attuning to these forces, the designer aligns form, function, and meaning, creating environments that are coherent, purposeful, and capable of genuine transformation.

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1. Decoding Client Preferences

When a client says, “*I like this*” or “*I don’t like this*”, it is easy to take it personally. Many designers fall into this trap, equating approval with skill. In reality, a client’s reaction is **deeply rooted in their being**.

a) Subjectivity is Rooted in Being

A client’s likes and dislikes are not random. They arise from the interaction of their **senses – sight, hearing, touch, smell – with their psychological and physiological makeup**. Modern science, including epigenetics, confirms that humans can inherit subtle aversions or affinities toward sensory stimuli. In other words, what pleases or irritates a client may reflect patterns shaped across generations.

Understanding this allows the designer to detach personal emotion from the client’s reaction. Approval or disapproval is rarely a judgment of skill – it is a reflection of the client’s unique constitution.

b) Cultural and Experiential Context Matters

Visual perception is also shaped by culture, upbringing, and experience. The differences in styles across interior design and architecture reflect **heritage, tradition, and social context**.

A designer must account for the client’s:

- Cultural background
- Family influences
- Current material and spiritual state

Presenting a design through the lens of the client’s being transforms a subjective response into a **dialogue of understanding**, rather than a test of taste.

Research in sensory psychology shows that people’s reactions to colors, textures, and spatial arrangements are influenced not only by personal experience but also by inherited and early-life sensitivities (Hurlbert & Ling, 2007). This scientific insight reinforces why a client’s ‘like’ or ‘dislike’ is rarely a judgment of design skill, but a reflection of their unique constitution.