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## 2024 IDEC AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

### **BEST PRESENTATION:**

#### **Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL)**

Felicia Francine Dean, University of Tennessee

*The Politics of Seating: Furniture Design as a Spatial Artifact for Teaching Students Inclusion and Equity within Interiors.*

#### **Scholarship of Design Research (SODR)**

Dr. Chunyao Liu, Arizona State University, and Dr. Erin Cunningham, University of Florida

*Furniture, Advertising, and Decolonization: The Evolution of Furniture Design in Shanghai, China (1912-1949)*

#### **Scholarship of Design Practice (SODP)**

Amanda Gale, Associate Professor, University of North Carolina, Greensboro

*Multi-Sensory Environments in Higher Education: Opportunities to Build Resiliency*

#### **Creative Scholarship:**

Rene King, Assistant Professor, Columbia College Chicago

*Beacon: Artifacts to Engage Community*

Annie Coggan, Associate Professor Pratt Institute School of Design

*Embodying History; through the work of furniture designer Robert Manwaring*

#### **Poster:**

Anna Bazhaw Hyscher, Oklahoma State University

*Examining the relationships between Indigenous identity, cultural reclamation, and the built environment*

# Furniture, Advertising, and Decolonization: The Evolution of Furniture Design in Shanghai, China (1912-1949)

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## ABSTRACT

This paper uses furniture advertisements to explore interactions between Eastern and Western design forms in semi-colonial Shanghai during the Republic of China (1912-1949). It argues that furniture design and advertising provided a significant site for East-West cultural exchange, hybridization, and decolonization.

The study analyzes over 700 historic furniture advertisements from influential Shanghai newspapers between 1912 and 1949, a period marked, alternatively, by semi-colonization, anti-imperialism, and a search for local identity. Through a thematic analysis of this textual and visual information, this paper identifies three distinct trends in furniture design, representing “cross-cultural hybridization” (Tai, 2009). The first trend (1910s) celebrated Western design, which was introduced to Shanghai during its colonization in the late Qing Dynasty (1845-1912) but rendered it in traditional Chinese materials and construction techniques. The second trend (late 1910s to late 1920s), which aligned with the anti-imperial sentiment of Shanghai society after the founding of the Republic of China, celebrated local craftsmanship, referencing traditional Chinese furniture design, and highlighted local production. These two trends led to the creation of a truly integrative third trend, the “Modeng” style, which blended Eastern and Western design elements and became a hallmark of Shanghai design and culture after the 1930s.

Research on Chinese furniture typically focuses on material characteristics, artistic styles, and manufacturing techniques without delving into the complexity of cultural exchange; the evolution of Chinese furniture is construed as a simple, one-sided process of westernization. In contrast, this study follows in the footsteps of design scholars who examine the socio-cultural implications of furniture consumption in the 20th century, including Meltem Gurel’s examination of modern furniture and Western identity in Turkey, and Charlotte Benton’s exploration of the fusion of modern furniture design and local craftsmanship in Japan (Gurel, 2009; Brenton, 1998). This study brings this

examination of cultural exchange to a Shanghai context, looking at how the development of furniture design in Shanghai represented a complex hybridity rather than a passive reaction to Western cultural influences. Importantly, it highlights how local furniture manufacturers' efforts to promote the unique cultural identity of Shanghai through a synthesis of global cultural influences provides a microcosm of the city's decolonization process.

By examining the evolution of furniture advertisements through the lens of cultural interactions, this study provides a deeper understanding of how the Shanghai furniture industry interacted with Western influences, reflecting efforts to negotiate, resist, and integrate global cultural influences in Shanghai. It provides interior designers and scholars with valuable insight into the significance of furniture design as a site for examining cross-cultural interactions, shedding light on the contribution of the furniture industry to the process of decolonization in Shanghai, China.

## REFERENCES

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