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Interior Britishness – The Taste and Class in *The Great Interior Design Challenge*

Abstract. This paper looks at British home décor to analyse its distinct features from the perspective of a specific national identity. It also examines the impact of the upper class' taste dictating the norms for the rest of society despite having a different cultural capital. The BBC programme, *The Great Interior Design Challenge,* is examined as a good example of the British tendency to seek advice from authorities in a field who are the arbiters of taste. The specific competitive scheme and aim of this TV programme present a telling body of information to examine which features are favoured among the winners and which are condemned in failed projects. As a result, the programme captures and reflects the preferred national British taste. The concepts and prescriptions of cultural capital as well as media and authorities as the source of taste are visible in this society. The members of the lower social classes, being instructed by the professionals, strive to follow the upper-class' taste. However, their choices are determined by the education they received and people by whom they are surrounded. The upper classes are more accustomed to art due to their families' art collections and art education, so their taste is more sophisticated and informed. Moreover, the study of the programme pays attention to the presence of certain distinctive national features of British society visible in its home décor.

Keywords: taste, home décor, cultural capital

1. Introduction

A famous British proverb says: "My home is my castle". Its simplicity captures a complex and history-based attitude towards homes and houses in general, including their décor and design and the value of a house as the signifier of status. Britain's hierarchical society and its reflection in British taste and values can be observed in British

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houses since the upper class' taste dictates the norms for the rest of the society. This is despite different cultural capital as it is analysed in the example from the television programme, *The Great Interior Design Challenge*. The question is, whether or not this "challenge" actually exists, or it is just the fulfilment of the desires of the authorities in the field – the judges in the programme. In this article, I will examine the source and principles of taste in the contemporary British perception of home décor and its manifestations of Britishness and British national features reflected in interior design.

2. The taste and social class – cultural capital

The concept of taste is an inseparable element of the social structure as well as the key element of every individual identity. On the one hand, as Stephen Bayley in his book *Taste* (1991) suggests: "[B]y making statements about your taste you expose body and soul to terrible scrutiny". On the other hand, "Taste is a merciless betrayer of social and cultural attitudes" (5). In other words, an expression of one's preferences is not entirely individual and self-determined. It is also dictated by the present trends, but even more so by one's class identity. As Jukka Gronow in his book *The Sociology of Taste* (1997) says: "The roles of fashion and taste are central to our understanding of the social dynamics in any modern society" (2); it is not possible to examine the concept of taste itself in isolation from social circumstances: "Instead of arguing for or defending a universal human sense of beauty it has been almost a commonplace in sociology to presume that taste is socially determined. Different socio-economic groups or classes have different tastes" (x). Understood as a class-based social marker, taste has played a significant role in class differentiation: "Taste and class are almost inseparable. The greater part of the economic activity in the West is devoted either to the pursuit of taste or the disguise of class" (Bayley 1991, 27). By its nature, taste helps to establish one's place within the class or aspire to the desired higher social status. Pierre Bourdieu in his book *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1979) also claims that taste defines one's class identity:

> Taste is a practical mastery of distributions which makes it possible to sense or intuit what is likely (or unlikely) to befall – and therefore to befit – an individual occupying a given position in social space. It functions as a sort of social orientation, a "sense of one's place", guiding the occupants of a given place in social space towards the social positions adjusted to their properties, and towards the practices or goods which befit the occupants of that position. (466)

Bourdieu is also the author of the term "cultural capital", which describes the fact that individual aesthetic choices and cultural practices are determined by cultural and social backgrounds (1–2, 11–12).

Taste is not simply about accepting one's class status. Taste is also connected with class mobility, especially the social uplift and of "imitating social superiors" (Gronow

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1997, 11). Gronow claim**s**: "Modern consumers are, to use the phrase coined by Vance Packard, 'status seekers'"(11). In other words, the upper classes, who are often the most affluent consumers, are those who dictate the norms of the tasteful and tasteless, and the rest are struggling, with their lower incomes and budgets, to follow this elusive model and fabricate a higher status; as Gronow once again notices: "the lower classes imitate the models of the higher echelons of society" (11). Gronow adds that "there was a historical stage of mass production and marketing which produced mainly kitsch, cheap imitations of finer models that carried easily recognizable signs of culture which could be identified as part of the lifestyle of 'high society' or the social nobility" (11). This desire to imitate the higher class encouraged the lower class to implement traces of it. The privilege of higher classes having the right to decide whether something was tasteful may be perceived as a sign of false and unfounded pride rather than of truly and naturally better judgement. Steven Bayley summarises this attitude by saying: "This word [taste] … was hijacked and its meaning inflated by an influential elite who uses the expression 'good taste' simply to validate their personal aesthetic preferences while demonstrating their vulgar presumption of social and cultural superiority. The very idea of the good taste is insidious" (3). This insidiousness creates very dangerous social divisions and an elitist attitude with the presumption of a natural, innate better judgement of a certain group of people which should be accepted as the only legitimate one by the rest of the society. Similarly, Ruth Madigan and Moira Munro believe this presumption to be an "ideological justification": "The assumption of class superiority is embedded in the notion of 'good taste'. The search for objective criteria of what continues 'good taste' or 'good design' readily operates as an ideological justification for the cultural preferences of the dominant class" (42). Those preferences are imposed on the rest of the society in such a way that it follows them eagerly. Gronow adds: "Legitimate taste pretends to be the universally valid and disinterested good taste, whereas in reality, it is nothing more than the taste of one particular class, the ruling class" (4). Lack of inherent connection between the ruling class taste and "good taste" is significant. Gronow suggests that "good taste" was not inherited through the privilege of birth and social origins, but rather that it could be acquired through education (11). Moreover,, the decision between aesthetically tasteful and tasteless was connected to the moral distinction between right and wrong and therefore a sign of one's values and status as a gentleman; hence "[w]hat was tasteful was both decent and virtuous too" (12). However, since one's education also depends on the class of origin, it automatically determines one's aesthetic judgement reflective of class position, as Bourdieu put in in his cultural capital term (Bourdieu 1979, 1–2, 11–12)

Consequently, it is impossible to examine the British taste without looking at its strong class-system dependence. As Kate Fox suggests:

> [Y]our home is not just your territory, it is your primary expression of your identity … We all see the arrangement, furnishing and decorating of our homes as an expression of our unique personal taste and artistic flair … [yet] the way in which we arrange, furnish and decorate our homes is

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> largely determined by social class. In fact home is more … the embodiment of his privacy rules, it is also his [the owner's] identity, his main status-indicator and his prime obsession. (187–9)

Fox also admits: "What is distinctive about the English class system is … the degree to which our class … determines our taste, behaviour and judgements" (554). The British, being so class-oriented, repeat the patterns and norms of their own class, sometimes almost subconsciously. That is why the décor in British homes can be immediately recognized, differentiated, and prescribed to a certain class despite certain individual elements being provided by the owners.

The British upper class' taste needs to be discussed as the class of taste-makers. What should be mentioned is that: "Members of the upper class associate together easily because they have the same tastes, attitudes and inclinations formed by being brought up in the same kinds of family and going to the same kinds of school and university" (Abercrombie et al. 1995, 194). Although the quotation comes from a book written at the end of the previous century, it illustrates the universal tendency of the members of one class to connect due to the same cultural capital. The upper classes are not only rich consumers of art but also educated connoisseurs, aware of what they own and what pieces of art to collect. Regarding their home décor and home attitude, the upper class and upper-middle class tend to have rather shabby and disorganised houses, maintained like that in a sort of proud and nonchalant way which the lower-middle class could not dare – the "matching" of furniture as well as having sets of accessories is rejected by the upper class, who are proud of their eclectic collections of antiques inherited over time. They also paradoxically avoid brand-new, expensive furniture, claiming they are kitschy and lacking the nobility of patina. Having to buy one's own furniture instead of inheriting it is considered shameful (Fox 2014, 189–191). The middle and working classes prefer to have fitted carpets while the upper class would rather have bare floorboards covered with old Persian carpets to expose a noble material-like wood. The central part of the lower classes' living rooms is an enormous TV and often a small collection of objects (spoons, glass animals, etc.) while the upper classes, on the other hand, have a TV set hidden in the back room because vulgar, direct ostentation had become associated with bad taste already in the Victorian period (190).

3. Home through the eyes of Britons – aesthetics and national identity

In Great Britain, much significance has been attached to aesthetics and national taste. The idea of Britishness[1] – a cultural and national identity – and the pride connected with it, are highly visible in the media's promotion of British culture. It is partly con-

[1] By using the term "Britishness" in this text I will mean mostly Englishness. Some of my sources use both of these two terms, therefore for the sake of clarity and consistency, I will be using one term although I am aware of the complicated historical and cultural situation.

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nected with the glorious past of its colonial empire, but also with its strong economy today. Certainly, Anglomania, visible in popular culture around the world, is something of which the British people are highly aware and proud. This includes the notion of British design and aesthetics generally.

The character and importance of taste as part of British identity were highlighted already in the 19th century by a famous British artist, designer, writer and activist, William Morris (1834–1896), whose postulate was to invite beauty and aesthetics into the sphere of everyday life and make regular tools and interiors decorative. In his book *Useful Work Versus Useless Toil,* he claimed: "We must begin to build up the ornamental part of life – its pleasures, bodily and mental, scientific and artistic, social and individual" (Morris 1919, 13). He also believed that the way to make any work attractive was by creating "pleasant surroundings" (16). One of his most famous quotes, taken from his lecture titled *The Beauty of Life* is the following motto: "Have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful" (108). These claims gave a strong basis for the British national sense of tastefulness. National pride is a significant aspect of British aesthetics and home décor, starting with William Morris, who promoted taking inspiration from the domestic culture and English nature, and visible in recurring trends in British home design drawing from the past.

Contemporary British society is significantly impacted by globalisation and multiculturalism, yet there are certain features which have stayed untouched as pillars for the present British national identity (Storry, Childs 2002, 5–6). The most important of them is individualism, the key legacy of the Reformation where "the individual retains his or her right to a personal view … Consequently, people resent attempts to manipulate and orchestrate their private views. They want to accord themselves and others freedom" (Storry, Childs 2002, 12). British individualism evokes such features of this nation as dissent, scepticism, and inflexibility, setting, rather than following trends, and praising individuality and eccentricity over herd instinct (Storry, Childs 2002, 21). In July 2005, *The Daily Telegraph* published ten core values of British identity. These included: personal freedom, the right to private property, history and, most importantly, British character – people who are stubborn, stoical, and indignant with injustice (House of Lords 2008, 3–4). All of these features make the Britons as unique and distinctive as their home décor, aesthetics, and attitudes towards home. As Dominic Bradbury said in his article "What Makes British Interior Design Special?": "One of the main features of British design is that it mixes old and new, tradition and modernity. Quirkiness, comfort and cosiness are key qualities of the British home". This may be understood as the illustration of the national features in the design, such as personal freedom (allowing for "quirkiness") or preferring introducing tradition and history into the décor.

Individualism is a key feature having a major impact on the aesthetic character of the house. For example, Britons place much value on the individualised look of "the outside appearance of their houses, as you can see by the expensive and often regrettable refacing and refenestration of terrace houses and inter-war semi-detached ones

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when they change hand" (Esher 1991, 8). This attitude may reflect the role of the house as a statement of individuality because, in contrast to anonymous streets, it restores the unique features of the owner (Rosner 2005, 147). Another very interesting and important aspect of British individualism and uniqueness is a DIY (Do It Yourself) obsession. Kate Fox, in her book notes: "We are a nation of nest-builders. Almost the entire population is involved in DIY, at least to some degree. In a survey conducted by some of my colleagues a while ago, only 2% of English males and 12% of females said that they never did any DIY" (Fox 2014, 187). The reason for DIY is to add a personal touch, and highlight a unique presence of the residents seen as distinct individuals, not a uniform collective: "This is clearly understood as an unwritten rule of home ownership, and a central element of the moving-in ritual, often involving the destruction of any evidence of the previous owner's territorial making" (Fox 2014, 188).

When it comes to being instructed by the authorities in the field, which in this case is the field of home décor, in spite of the valued individuality, *The Aesthetic Movement*, which occurred in the 1870s, should be mentioned. Its role was to provide the British with the appropriate aesthetic advice and instructions from artists and architects, as well as popular writers on domestic subjects. Those recommendations involved colour choice, and provided the aesthetic "symbols" such as peacocks' feathers, oriental fans, palms, books and paintings (Pevsner 56). The most important legacy of the movement is the need to create and preserve the character of the building in a holistic manner by being consistent about the choice of style in the exterior detail and interior decoration of the building.

4. British taste challenged – *The Great Interior Design Challenge*

The Great Interior Design Challenge is a British TV programme which consists of four series and was first broadcast on BBC 2 on 20th January 20, 2014. It was produced by *Studio Lambert*, by executive producers Tanya Shaw and Alannah Richardson. The presenter was Tom Dyckhoff – the British historian of architecture, design, and cities. The programme presents a competition between British amateur interior designers, whose tasks are judged by the jury which consists of professionals in this field – Daniel Hopwood – architect, president of the British Institute of Interior Design and founder of the *Studio Hopwood* – a London interior design and architecture company, and Sophie Robinson – British interior stylist and designer (in the last series replaced by Kelly Hoppen – also a British interior designer).

The participants come from the working, lower-middle, and upper-middle classes, and a wide range of professions, and it is specified in that order to illustrate that design is accessible for everyone. For example, there are: Martin (a civil service manager who won the finale), Fiona (a college lecturer who got to the finale), Scott (an oil rig draughtsman), Michael (an actor), Anne (a school teacher), Lacey (a librarian), Christine (a costume designer), Luke (a photographer), Jane (a B&B owner), Louise

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(a hairdresser) and many more. They have to redecorate one room, each from different epochs, and of a different character for their clients. Their clients' satisfaction, the cohesion with the exterior of the buildings, as well as the creativity and originality of the redecorations are assessed by the jury, which gives the final verdict. The participants have only three days to complete the task and a limited budget which calls for their creativity, time management skills, and most importantly – a significant number of DIY skills and economic solutions, which cannot result in a kitschy or clichéd look.

In this paper, I will concentrate on the second series of the programme, which I believe, because of its diversity, best illustrates the concept of taste in British décor. This type of programme – in which amateurs are judged by the specialists – favours certain features to nominate the winners, while other features are condemned in the losers' work. This way, the programme becomes a cultural power discourse, promoting the taste to be accepted and adopted by the general public, but, truly, dictated by the authorities in the field.

As I mentioned previously, the British tend to like being instructed in the matter of taste in home décor, and in *The Great Interior Design Challenge,* the participants are also being advised by the judges. The instructions are inserted into the script very often and sometimes they are very detailed, such as the one Sophie –one of the judges– gives about making cushion pads: "Why not grab an old duvet or an old pillow and make your own cushion pads. A bit of old sheet or calico and you can whizz it up to any shape" (S2E5 28:11–28:17[2]). Giving tips and tricks in home décor seems to be directed also at the viewers. The popularity of home décor programmes in Great Britain is followed by its impact on the social taste nationwide. Eagerness to accept and follow the instructions can be noticed in the historic information in episode eight. It refers to William Hesketh Lever (1851–1925) who was a British soup factory owner who, in 1888, built Port Sunlight – a beautiful and aesthetically pleasing village for his workers. Tom Dyckhoff, at the beginning of the episode, provides information about Lever's attitude towards the working class: "Some factory owners were both financially astute and enlightened believing that a happy workforce was also a more productive workforce" (S2E8 2:41–2:49). This "enlightened" factory owner was also a taste authority for his time: "Lever didn't just stop at providing accommodation for his workforce. Lever even gave tips on interior design … he gave advice on the correct length of curtains, the height of dado rails and the colour of wallpaper" (S2E8 34:22–35:02). The word "correct" is very important in this context. This striving for having a "correct" home décor occurs in British culture, despite encouragement towards individuality and freedom of expression, for example, by striving to follow "the good taste" dictated by the upper class or, in the past, norms set by *The Aesthetic Movement* as it was previously discussed. For this reason, it can be assumed that British society is especially prone to dictate the norms of "correct" good taste. The jury provides hints and tips about interior design and it is preferable for the participants to follow them. Daniel, one of the judges, clearly explains the reason for

[2] The symbol S2E… I will use in the text, stands for S2-Season 2, E-its Episode number.

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one of the participants' failures: "He wouldn't listen to the hints about the colours and he insisted on going his way and what happened? He didn't win" (S2E8 56:43–56:50). It is paradoxical then that the judges praise individuality and courage: "You've got to have conviction and you've got to go all the way" (S2E5 32:08–32:10) and at the same time expect the participants to respect the rules set by the authorities. The participants who follow these rules are more likely to win.

What draws immediate attention in the programme is a significant amount of historical information inserted into the script. The judges provide plenty of historical information about each type of property and construction. The main presenter,Tom Dyckhoff, who is a historian of architecture, design and cities, comments on the social origins of the building (such as the class of the first owners) as well as sharing his expertise with its architectural details. The vast majority of buildings (to be precise, all of them apart from the ecohouses in S2E7) are historical buildings such as the famous 17th-century cottages in Cotswold (S2E1), Victorian terraced houses in London (S2E3), or 600-year-old mediaeval houses in Suffolk (S2E4). Moreover, the grand finale takes place in the elegant palace in Cumbria (S2E16), so the trophy for the winner is in the shape of the mediaeval castle. It is clear that the producers of this programme highly value British heritage, which constitutes national pride. This claim that history is one of the core British values has already been illustrated by the aforementioned article in *The Daily Telegraph*. Although many owners of the houses which are being redecorated in the programme initially note that they prefer some practical elements of the contemporary looks, they immediately add that: "We'd like the room to be quite modern contemporary, but also at the same time retaining the period features" (S2E15 7:52–7:56). This often presents a challenge for the participants since they have to combine modernity with "the patina of age", adapting elements from the Victorian or Edwardian period, Art Deco, or even the Celtic era. This shows that even though the British value practicality and modernity, they are strongly attached to their heritage. As Bradbury confirms in his article: "The sophistication of British design is rooted in a proud architectural history, from the grand, neoclassical English country house and the Georgian townhouse, to the farmhouse and rustic cottage styles". This nation, with such a rich architectural history, is then proud to highlight such a glorious heritage.

Indeed, this sense of pride may be easily noticed in the judges' and presenter's comments, reoccurring throughout the whole series, admiring the taste and cleverness of the architects in the past. Consequently, since the exteriors tend to be traditional and historic, the renovation scheme should be coherent with the architectural period (as it was advised by *The Aesthetic Movement*). The judges value continuity and the retention of the historical feel, what they call "patina": "[I]t looks super and it's slowly building up a patina of age" (S2E1 5:47–5:50) or, [I]t's got history"(S2E1 27:48). Accordingly, the participants, especially the potential winners, are expected to be fully aware of the importance of the historical value and character of a given building and interior. As a result, the participants are eager to show the elements of historicity: "[T]o … sand the paint down just enough to give it some sense of patina, an antique-y

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feeling" (S2E1 7:53–7:59), [T]o create a sort of distressed aged look" (S2E1 26:55–26:56). However, any intervention should look as authentic as possible or preferably be truly old. When, in episode eleven, Michael uses a modern but stylized clock, he is sharply criticised by the judges for his lack of ingenuity and tastelessness: "There's something that's not a star at all, which I'm really not liking I'm afraid. It's the clock behind you. I think he should have found something old. That is just screaming out, 'Cheap shop bought'. Because it's a reproduction" (S2E11 46:13–46:21). This attitude resembles the tendency of the upper class to highlight the authentic "patina of age" of their possessions. When, in the first episode, Daniel notices that the floor is building up the patina of age, Sophie answers: "And what you think is you don't mind it if it gets a bit grubby – that all adds to it" (S2E1 4:51). The age of the furniture should not be hidden under a paint cover. Sophie remarks: "[T]he puzzle with painted furniture is … always if it's new go for it to your heart's content but if it's old wood, that's got a nice bit of character, it's probably best left" (S2E1 27:20–27:30). This inherited furniture, creating an eclectic look, is something good: "We've inherited various bits of furniture" (S2E4 3:03), "I've built up a bit of a kind of collection of things over quite a long time" (S2E9 18:15–18:16). The designers were incorporating those collections into the schemes, for example, in episode one Francesca framed the old letters and put them on the wall in antique frames and used the old silk to make a cushion. Another upper-class interior feature is doing everything to hide high-tech equipment, like a TV set, in order not to spoil the overall look and character of a room. It is a matter of good taste to have it hidden, as its exposition would be considered a nouveau riche attitude, eager to show off material status through novelty. In the programme, the judges praise hiding the TV set.

The upper-class' reluctance towards the ready-made sets of furniture is also seen in the programme in praising eclecticism in the choice and arrangement of furniture and accessories that mark the qualities of individualism and artistic sensibility. Sophie comments: "There's a real eclectic mix of stuff and it is an art, making this eclectic look hang together" (S2E3 4:46–4:51). Mixing different, often incongruent, pieces is also seen in making the displays, such as the display of memorabilia arranged by Michael in episode fourteen that Sophie finds unique: "The objects that he's chosen and the way he's displayed them, they don't necessarily go together, but the way he's grouped them with the plants and they've got lots of different heights, they're very interesting and humorous, I think they make the space look truly individual" (S2E14 44:16–44:27). Eclecticism is also seen in the mixing of home décor styles. Bradbury in "What Makes British Interior Design Special?" notices: "British designers have a particular talent for creating homes and interiors according to these mores, layered with eclectic ideas and points of inspiration, as well as playful touches and occasional eccentricities". In other words, the British prefer their interiors to be original and to include unexpected touches and style combinations. Similarly, Sophie notes: "I think when it comes to designing the interiors, I'd like to sort of see lots of different styles mixed together" (S2E4 19:10–19:13), and the judges openly encourage the partici-

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pants to be adventurous in their endeavours to blend styles: "You have to try and blend the different looks together" (S2E14 44:06–44:09). This eclectic approach makes the rooms look richly decorated. There are almost no Scandinavian (apart from one interior misinterpreted in episode nine) interiors, clean spaces, or white walls, which negate the British sense of cosiness as well as a homely and atmospheric look. This praise of anti-minimalist clutter seems to be inherited from the Victorians, and it is not only favoured in the programme but also present in the contemporary private spaces. The private houses of the participants presented in a few shots also look eclectic and overcrowded with items – usually their innovative hand-made products.

The typical British interior design feature praised and favoured by the judges is DIY – a signifier of the unique identity of the designer. The judges frequently mention that they prefer designers to shoppers (for example in S2E11 54:27–54:29). The famous British saying is recalled at one point: "one man's trash is another man's treasure" (S2E5 27:02). Finding old pieces of furniture and giving them new life is a passion for many participants. One of them, Kate, recalls: "As I was growing up, I'd go to antiques fairs or junk shops and flea markets and constantly be buying bits and bobs" (S2E4 22:27- 22:34). She adds: "[H]opefully, I'm going to turn a piece of junk into a lovely antique" (S2E4 31:19–31:22). Finding a new usage for a used object, for instance making a lamp from a bowl or table out of a door, is highly praised as extremely creative by "bringing the old up to date" (S2E3 17:57). Handmade items make interiors look original, unique and more elegant: "He's also … dressed the room with handmade items to give an elegant finish" (S2E14 43:15–43:19). However, the judges are strict when assessing the DIY projects, checking the details from the technical and aesthetic sides. Accordingly, many participants lose because of it: "He [Jack] let himself down with the finishing touches. I know he likes being raw but not that raw" (S2E11 57:09–57:14) and "[S]ome of the work was slightly shoddy" (S2E8 54:20). The level of craftsmanship is expected to be immaculate.

However, the most important features which were mentioned in every episode and which ensured Martin's victory are individuality, personal touches, and the so-called "edge" - balancing among styles and a sense of surprise. In order to experiment like this, one needs a truly British character, valued by this nation (together with individuality), as mentioned previously. At the very beginning of the series in episode one, Sophie mentions: "In order to impress us, the designers need to be resourceful, innovative but above all – original" (S2E1 1:19–1:24). The originality and individuality are highlighted throughout the series: "new spin on something" (S2E1 42:04), "My hope is that when I walk into that room I see something just a little bit special"(S2E1 44:07), "own sense of style" (S2E3 46:09), "looking for the unexpected" (S2E3 57:17), "individual twist" (S2E4 19:55), "true individuality" (S2E4 20:31). The judges praise those who leave a personal touch on their items: "Kate won because she did so much. If I stood in that room and looked at any angle, there was a bit of Kate in it" (S2E4 56:19–56:22). "The edge" is also important in the judges' comments: "what I wanna see from her is some edge" (S2E15 3:46–3:47), "I just wonder if it's edgy

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enough" (S2E15 43:08). The "touch" of the designer must be visible in the "edgy" details: "We are seeing some original design, you know, some quirky little touches. And of this homespun vintage look, it is kind of in" (S2E15 42:57–43:07). This creative approach can be summarized in Sophie's motto: "Innovate, don't imitate" (S2E15 23:06). The participants are blamed for giving up on their imagination and artistic flair. The judges want the designers to be confident and original and go with their convictions rather than for a compromise: "You've got to have conviction and you've got to go all the way and she [Becky] bottled it" (S2E5 32:08–32:12). In other episodes, a lack of self-confidence and original vision are criticised as well: "It's a look that I've seen quite a lot, she [Francesca] very much was concerned about fulfilling the brief but not taking any further than that" (S2E1 55:28–55:34). The projects have to be original, brave, and authentic with an edge, and so many participants lose because their work does not impress the judges as original enough: "I just wonder if it's edgy enough" (S2E15 43:08) is Daniel's comment on Fiona's work, despite the fact that it is full of creative hand-made details which Sophie called just a minute earlier "quirky little touches". Edginess is then a very ambiguous term. Judges want to see as much creativity as possible as Daniel says: "He [Rich] didn't have time to put his creativity and sprinkle some magic onto the project" (S2E6 56:41–56:44). Sophie also dislikes dullness: "She [Honor] is a very competent designer but I was just really looking for that little original twist and it just wasn't quite there for me this time round" (S2E7 57:18–57:22). Kelly also does not get to the finale because, as Daniel says: "We haven't just seen enough of Kelly … we like intense Kelly, not watered down" (S2E15 57:45–57–50). Nonetheless, this creativity is often limited by the judges' preferences, as discussed previously.

The effort to make the interiors both original and unique is connected with adding or highlighting "the character": "We wanted to see a little bit of character" (S2E4 54:30–54:31), "It's this character that Louise wants to bring to her bedroom scheme" (S2E8 22:06–22:08), "[W]e do need to see a bit more richness, another layer of character to put into the scheme" (S2E10 57:04–57:05). This character, which requires the bravery and persistence of the maker, is visible, for example, in the open attitude towards bizarre things in the scheme like the birds' cages and stuffed exotic birds: "What I'm looking for is a little more movement in this room. When he [Michael] suggested using bird cages, I imagined that these things would be slightly on angles as if birds have just escaped from them … it'd have given this room more flair and movement. It looks a little stiff" (S2E14 44:27–44:46) or "I wanted it to be theatrical, I wanted it to have a feeling of edginess, I wanted it to have a sense of surprise in the room" (S2E14 42:16–42:20). Imagination and surprise constitute the strong points of the winner of the season – Martin Holland. Since the beginning, he has been very creative, using such techniques as optical illusions in his interiors. In his final project, he includes a tiny bird cage hanging on a very long and thick chain in the central place of an elegant master bedroom.

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5. Conclusions

To conclude, although the name of the programme includes the word "challenge", it can be observed that the judges rate highly two inherent qualities in the participants: incorporating the resemblances of the past in makeover projects as well as following the judges' authority. Britons want to highlight their individuality, but – to a certain extent – the norms dictated by the authorities in the field are even more important and they need to be respected. That reveals the paradox within British society – the simultaneity of freedom and individuality as the core values and social norms, and opinions that restrict those values. Moreover, although the programme *The Great Interior Design Challenge* attempts to show that everyone has access to design and can become a home decorator, not every sense of taste is favoured because, in fact, the participants who got to the finale represented the higher social status, so preferable cultural capital. As the representatives of the higher classes, they value eclecticism and a sense of surprise in the interiors. Their background shaped them to the extent that they were able to get to the finale and their taste was appreciated. This proves the role of cultural capital in shaping one's sense of tastefulness, as well as imposing the "good taste" of the upper class on the rest of the society.

The uniqueness and values of the British nation such as individualism and British character (being stubborn and stoical) are frequently recurring in the programme as highly desired elements in the home sphere. Homes full of antiques and DIY projects reflect the fact that the British highly value the aesthetic past of their nation and they still follow the rules set a long time ago, such as those put forward by *The Aesthetic Movement*. It is then impossible to examine the present British home décor without looking at the past, due to their nation's strong attachment to its tradition of the beautiful, the tasteful and the valuable. It is seen in the programme as well: taking inspiration from the past, coherence with the historic nature of the building and incorporating antiques into the projects are elements highly praised by the judges. Moreover, as the British nation is hierarchical and "good taste" is imposed by the upper classes, it comes naturally that such features as bare floors, the eclectic collections of antiques, or hidden TV sets are appreciated.

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