

# INTERIOR PROJECT CANVAS

A Systems-Based Framework for Alignment, Collaboration, and Decision-Making in Interior Architecture and Spatial Design



## Vision and Experience

What should this space feel like for the people inside it? What atmosphere, emotion, and quality of life should it create — and what must it never become?

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INTENTION



## People and Use

Who will live, work, or gather in this space? Map every person, their real patterns of use, their daily rhythms, and what the space must genuinely enable for each of them.

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HUMAN



## Spatial Conditions

What does the space currently offer? Document its geometry, structure, light, regulation, and elements of existing value. What is fixed, what is open, and what needs further investigation?

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PLACE



## Design Direction

What spatial references, material qualities, and design language will carry the vision into form? What creative standard will every future decision be measured against?

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FORM



## Scope and Priorities

What is included in this project, and what is intentionally outside it? If choices must be made, what gets priority?

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BOUNDARY



## Budget and Timing

What is the total investment and how is it distributed? What are the key milestones and non-negotiable completion points?

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RESOURCE



## Stakeholders and Decisions

Who is involved, who decides, and who must be kept informed? How will decisions be made when views differ?

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AUTHORITY



## Delivery and Watchpoints

What team, process, and partners are needed? What dependencies, considerations, or open questions should be monitored to keep delivery on track?

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DELIVERY



## Project Context

With the full canvas complete, reflect on the project as a whole. What type of project is this, what has been established, and what are the clear next steps?

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OVERVIEW

Complete the canvas left to right, top row then bottom row.  
Each block builds on the last. The sequence tells the full project story.

# GUIDED COMPLETION SEQUENCE

<p><b>01</b> 👁️</p> <p><b>Vision and Experience</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>PURPOSE</b> Establish the emotional and experiential ambition of the project. Define what the space must feel like for the people inside it.</p> <p><b>WHY IT COMES FIRST</b> Every decision that follows — who uses the space, what it looks like, what it costs — should serve this vision. Beginning here ensures the project is anchored in human experience, not budget or assumptions.</p> <hr/> <p><b>WHAT IT UNLOCKS</b> <i>A shared emotional brief that aligns all parties before a single spatial decision is made.</i></p>	<p><b>02</b> 👤</p> <p><b>People and Use</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>PURPOSE</b> Map every person who will use the space and understand how they actually live or work in it — not how they imagine they do.</p> <p><b>WHY IT COMES NEXT</b> The spatial programme must follow human need. Understanding who uses the space, when, and in what modes is the foundation for every spatial and material decision that comes after.</p> <hr/> <p><b>WHAT IT UNLOCKS</b> <i>A human programme that reveals requirements no aesthetic conversation could surface alone.</i></p>	<p><b>03</b> 🏠</p> <p><b>Spatial Conditions</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>PURPOSE</b> Ground the vision and human programme in the physical reality of the space — its geometry, structure, light, regulation, and existing qualities worth keeping.</p> <p><b>WHY IT COMES NEXT</b> The space is the territory within which the vision must be realised. Understanding its possibilities and constraints before developing scope or direction prevents designing toward what the space cannot deliver.</p> <hr/> <p><b>WHAT IT UNLOCKS</b> <i>A clear map of what the project can physically and legally achieve, including what still needs investigation.</i></p>	<p><b>04</b> 📐</p> <p><b>Design Direction</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>PURPOSE</b> Translate the vision into a concrete creative language — spatial references, material qualities, and an aesthetic standard that will guide every design decision ahead.</p> <p><b>WHY IT COMES NEXT</b> Design direction can only be responsibly established once the experiential vision, the users, and the space are all understood. Direction arrived at earlier risks serving the wrong brief entirely.</p> <hr/> <p><b>WHAT IT UNLOCKS</b> <i>A jointly agreed evaluative standard — replacing subjective preference with a shared creative reference.</i></p>	<p><b>05</b> 🎯</p> <p><b>Scope and Priorities</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>PURPOSE</b> Define precisely what this project includes and, just as importantly, what it does not. Establish the priority order that will guide decisions when trade-offs are needed.</p> <p><b>WHY IT COMES NEXT</b> Scope only becomes meaningful once the human programme, the space, and the creative direction are clear. Scope defined before these blocks is guesswork — and often the source of costly mid-project change.</p> <hr/> <p><b>WHAT IT UNLOCKS</b> <i>A clear, shared boundary for the project that every future change can be consciously measured against.</i></p>	<p><b>06</b> 💰</p> <p><b>Budget and Timing</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>PURPOSE</b> Establish the total investment, distribute it meaningfully across categories, and set the timeline with clear milestones and a realistic contingency allowance.</p> <p><b>WHY IT COMES NEXT</b> Budget distribution is only meaningful once scope is defined. This sequence prevents the common failure of committing resources before knowing what the project actually involves.</p> <hr/> <p><b>WHAT IT UNLOCKS</b> <i>A financially grounded plan that reveals the project's real constraints and makes priorities transparent.</i></p>	<p><b>07</b> 📋</p> <p><b>Stakeholders and Decisions</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>PURPOSE</b> Map everyone with a legitimate interest in the project. Establish who makes which decisions, who must be consulted, and how differing views will be resolved constructively.</p> <p><b>WHY IT COMES NEXT</b> Once scope and resources are defined, the authority over those parameters must be clear. Stakeholder clarity grounded in real project parameters prevents authority conflicts emerging mid-project.</p> <hr/> <p><b>WHAT IT UNLOCKS</b> <i>A governance structure that makes decision authority visible before it needs to be exercised.</i></p>	<p><b>08</b> 🛡️</p> <p><b>Delivery and Watchpoints</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>PURPOSE</b> Map the team, partners, and processes needed to deliver the project. Identify key dependencies, open questions, and considerations to monitor so delivery stays on track.</p> <p><b>WHY IT COMES NEXT</b> Delivery planning is most productive once the full project is defined. Only then can the conditions for successful delivery be mapped with real accuracy and genuine foresight.</p> <hr/> <p><b>WHAT IT UNLOCKS</b> <i>A forward-looking delivery plan that positions the designer as a strategic and proactive partner.</i></p>	<p><b>09</b> 📍</p> <p><b>Project Context</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>PURPOSE</b> With all eight blocks complete, step back and reflect on the project as a coherent whole. Confirm its type, its stage, what has been established, and what the clear next steps are.</p> <p><b>WHY IT COMES LAST</b> Context is most meaningful as a conclusion, not a starting point. Having completed the canvas, the team can now articulate the project with genuine clarity — and use this block to brief the next phase with confidence.</p> <hr/> <p><b>WHAT IT UNLOCKS</b> <i>A holistic overview and a clear brief for what happens next — the natural handoff into design development.</i></p>
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# FACILITATION GUIDE

Discovery questions for architects, designers, consultants, and facilitators.

## 01 Vision and Experience

### OBJECTIVE

Translate the client's emotional intention into precise, shared language before that language becomes spatial form.

### KEY QUESTIONS

- | *Tell me about a space you've been in that felt right. What produced that feeling?*
- | *What should a guest feel within the first ten seconds of entering?*
- | *What should this space never feel like?*

### DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Use positive and negative definition together. Ask clients for spaces they love and spaces they avoid — the contrast reveals the brief more precisely than description alone.

### THINGS TO OBSERVE

Watch for emotional language that diverges between stakeholders. Two people using the same word differently have an unresolved creative disagreement that the design must resolve early.

Watch out: Accepting vague emotional vocabulary without unpacking it. "Warm", "calm", and "creative" mean different things to everyone in the room.

## 04 Design Direction

### OBJECTIVE

Translate the emotional vision into spatial, material, and typological references. Establish the design language as a shared evaluative standard for all future decisions.

### KEY QUESTIONS

- | *Which precedent spaces share qualities with what we're aiming to create?*
- | *What material qualities feel right, and which feel misaligned?*
- | *What should the completed space communicate on first encounter?*

### DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Ask the client to bring three images that resonate — without explaining why — then ask them to explain. The explanation reveals the design language far more precisely than any abstract description.

### THINGS TO OBSERVE

Watch for references that appear to contradict each other. Contradictions signal a creative tension the design must resolve intentionally, not conceal with a compromise.

Watch out: Arriving at design direction before blocks 1–3 are complete. Creative direction without grounding in human need and spatial reality is aesthetic imposition.

## 07 Stakeholders and Decisions

### OBJECTIVE

Map every party with a legitimate interest. Establish who makes which decisions, who must be consulted, and how different views will be resolved productively.

### KEY QUESTIONS

- | *Who is not in this room but has a meaningful stake in this project?*
- | *Who holds authority to change direction or approve expenditure?*
- | *How will the team reach a decision when views differ?*

### DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Ask who would be most surprised if the project moved in an unexpected direction. That person is a stakeholder who hasn't been mapped yet — and their surprise, discovered late, is avoidable.

### THINGS TO OBSERVE

Note hesitation around naming the decision-making structure. Reluctance here often signals an unresolved authority question that will surface — less conveniently — during the project itself.

Watch out: Assuming the person who commissioned the project is the only decision-maker. Interior projects are almost always multi-stakeholder by nature.

## 02 People and Use

### OBJECTIVE

Map the full range of people who will use the space, their actual use patterns, and the temporal rhythms that shape spatial requirements.

### KEY QUESTIONS

- | *Who uses this space beyond the primary client?*
- | *How does actual daily use differ from aspirational use?*
- | *When is the space at peak occupancy, and when is it at rest?*

### DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Ask the client to walk you through a typical Tuesday. Then a Saturday. Then a special occasion. The differences reveal the full spatial programme.

### THINGS TO OBSERVE

Note differences between how different occupants describe the same space. Divergence signals unresolved need the design must address rather than assume away.

Watch out: Designing for a single, idealised user. The space will be used by many people in many different modes and moods.

## 05 Scope and Priorities

### OBJECTIVE

Produce an explicit, shared statement of what is included, what is intentionally excluded, and the priority order for when trade-offs must be made.

### KEY QUESTIONS

- | *What is definitively part of this project, and what is definitively not?*
- | *Who procures furniture — and who specifies it?*
- | *If scope had to reduce by 20%, what would remain?*

### DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Ask each stakeholder to write their three non-negotiables independently, then compare. Divergence in the answers surfaces a scope disagreement before it becomes a project conflict.

### THINGS TO OBSERVE

Note elements described enthusiastically that have not been formally included. Enthusiasm without inclusion is the earliest form of scope expansion.

Watch out: Defining only what's included. Naming what is explicitly out of scope is equally important — and often more clarifying.

## 08 Delivery and Watchpoints

### OBJECTIVE

Map the team and partners needed to deliver, and identify the key dependencies, open questions, and considerations to monitor proactively throughout the project.

### KEY QUESTIONS

- | *Which specialists or contractors need to be engaged, and by when?*
- | *What dependencies — on approvals, lead times, or third parties — affect the timeline?*
- | *What single factor, if not managed well, would most affect a successful outcome?*

### DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Ask the team to imagine the project at a successful completion. What had to go right to get there? Working backwards from success often identifies the critical path more clearly than working forward from the plan.

### THINGS TO OBSERVE

Watch for open questions that all parties are aware of but none has named. Unacknowledged dependencies are not managed dependencies — they are deferred decisions.

Watch out: Treating delivery planning as the final administrative step. Done well, it positions the designer as a proactive strategic partner, not just a creative service provider.

## 03 Spatial Conditions

### OBJECTIVE

Document what the space offers and what it constrains: geometry, structure, regulation, environmental performance, and existing elements of value.

### KEY QUESTIONS

- | *What are the load-bearing elements? Which walls cannot change?*
- | *What planning or heritage conditions apply?*
- | *How does the space perform for daylight, acoustics, and thermal comfort?*

### DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Walk the space together where possible. Ask: what do you find difficult about being in this space as it is now? Conditions experienced together are more immediately legible than conditions described in abstract.

### THINGS TO OBSERVE

Identify what is not yet known and flag it clearly. Unknown conditions are among the most common sources of cost surprises in interior projects.

Watch out: Treating spatial conditions as data-gathering rather than opportunity-mapping. Every constraint also defines a creative territory.

## 06 Budget and Timing

### OBJECTIVE

Establish a total investment figure, distribute it across categories, set the timeline with milestones, and include a realistic contingency provision.

### KEY QUESTIONS

- | *What proportion is allocated to construction vs. designed elements?*
- | *Is the completion date truly fixed, or is it a target?*
- | *What contingency has been set aside, and what would trigger it?*

### DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Walk the client through a typical budget distribution for this project type. Clients who understand where the investment goes make far better allocation decisions than those who hold an undifferentiated total.

### THINGS TO OBSERVE

Watch for a budget presented confidently but without contingency. A budget without a reserve is an optimistic forecast, not a workable financial plan.

Watch out: Avoiding the budget conversation because it feels uncomfortable. Deferred financial clarity becomes mid-project pressure for everyone involved.

## 09 Project Context

### OBJECTIVE

With the canvas complete, step back and articulate the project as a whole — its type, its stage, what has been agreed, and what comes next. This block serves as the handoff brief.

### KEY QUESTIONS

- | *What kind of project is this, now that we have mapped it fully?*
- | *What has been agreed and documented in this session?*
- | *What are the clear, agreed next steps for all parties?*

### DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Ask each person in the room to describe the project in one sentence. If the answers differ, the canvas has revealed a gap worth resolving here rather than later. If they align, it confirms genuine shared understanding has been reached.

### THINGS TO OBSERVE

Notice whether the energy in the room has shifted from exploratory to aligned. A good canvas session ends with the team feeling clear, not just informed — and this block captures that clarity in writing.

Watch out: Treating this block as an opening frame rather than a closing reflection. Its power comes from being completed last, when everything else is already in view.

# EXAMPLE APPLICATION

WORKSHOP OUTPUT

Berlin Altbau Apartment Renovation, Prenzlauer Berg



## Vision and Experience

**Intended feeling:** A considered, lived-in place rather than a designed object. Calm without being cold, warm without being decorative. The apartment should feel as though someone thoughtful and deliberate lives here.

**Spatial references:** A Scandinavian mountain cabin (stone, timber, natural light). A studio apartment in a Japanese design journal (economy of means). A Berlin bookshop in Mitte (layered, quiet, unhurried).

**What it must not become:** Lifestyle-brand minimal. Grey and glass. A feature-wall interior. Statement lighting as decoration.

**Emotional test:** Coming home lowers their nervous systems. Working here feels focused and productive — never like being in an office.

VISION PRECISE AND SHARED



## People and Use

**Primary occupants:** Couple, mid-thirties. Both work from home 3–4 days per week in different fields (architecture + editorial). Need separate, focused work zones that feel domestic, not corporate.

**Daily patterns:** Mornings are independent. Evenings are shared. Friday evenings regularly host 4–8 people for informal dinner. Weekend mornings: slow, extended time in the kitchen.

**Occasional users:** Parents visit twice yearly for 5–7 days — guest sleeping accommodation needed. Bicycle storage for two bikes required indoors.

**Pets:** One medium-sized dog. All flooring and upholstery must be genuinely durable.

HUMAN PROGRAMME COMPLETE



## Spatial Conditions

**Geometry:** 95 sqm, 3.2m ceiling height. South and east facing. Four rooms plus entrance hall, kitchen, and bathroom. Original 1908 room sequence preserved.

**Structure:** All interior walls non-load-bearing except the central longitudinal wall — can receive openings but cannot be removed. Kitchen-living wall: full or partial removal possible.

**Existing value:** Original parquet throughout (restore, not replace). Stucco ceiling in main room (preserve). Original casement door frame in entrance hall (restore and celebrate).

**Environment:** South rooms: summer overheating — external blinds required. East rooms: excellent morning light. Acoustic separation between rooms currently poor.

CONDITIONS MAPPED



## Design Direction

**Material palette:** Natural oak (oiled, not lacquered). Raw plaster walls (not painted smooth). Honed limestone in bathroom. Exposed brick in kitchen alcove. Blackened steel for all built-in frames and handles.

**Creative language:** Materials earn their presence by performing before they decorate. The Altbau history is honoured, not concealed or ironised. Nothing in the space is there purely for effect.

**Sustainability:** All materials carry environmental certification. No VOC finishes. Existing elements retained wherever structurally viable. Local craftspeople and suppliers actively sought throughout.

DIRECTION SET



## Scope and Priorities

**Included:** Kitchen and bathroom renovation. Kitchen-living wall opening. Acoustic partition. Parquet restoration. All built-in storage. Lighting design and installation. Loose furniture specification. External blinds to south facade.

**Excluded:** AV systems (client-direct). Art and plants. Window replacement (heritage restriction).

**Priority order:** 1. Kitchen + bathroom. 2. Built-in storage. 3. Acoustic partition. 4. Loose furniture.

BOUNDED



## Budget and Timing

**Total investment:** 85,000 EUR

**Distribution:** Construction 42k / Kitchen 14k / Bathroom 9k / Flooring 5k / Furniture + lighting 8k / Designer fee 6k / Contingency 8.5k (10%).

**Timeline:** February start, July completion (6 months). Non-negotiable: complete before August travel.

**Milestones:** Contractor appointed week 4. Kitchen ordered week 6.

RESOURCED



## Stakeholders and Decisions

**Decision-makers:** Both partners, equal authority. Joint approval required for all decisions above 500 EUR. Either may approve below this threshold independently.

**Hausverwaltung:** Must approve all structural work applications. Designer engages directly under written client authorisation.

**Adjacent owner:** Written advance notice with construction schedule and direct contact details before works begin.

**Differing views:** Escalated to a joint session within 5 working days.

AGREED



## Delivery and Watchpoints

**Team:** General contractor (to be tendered), parquet specialist, structural engineer for wall opening, acoustic consultant.

**Watchpoint — pre-works:** Asbestos survey required before any opening works in original 1908 plaster.

**Watchpoint — approvals:** Hausverwaltung pre-application meeting scheduled in month one to confirm structural consent timeline.

**Watchpoint — procurement:** Kitchen lead times identified from two qualified suppliers in advance to protect the week 6 order milestone.

ON TRACK



## Project Context

**Project type:** Full renovation of an occupied Altbau apartment, long-term lease. Denkmalschutz applies to facade and staircase only; interior is unrestricted.

**What has been established:** Vision, programme, spatial parameters, creative direction, scope, budget, stakeholders, and delivery plan are all agreed and documented.

**Next steps:** Contractor tender. Structural engineer briefed. Kitchen suppliers contacted. Design development commences.

READY