

## Designer Concepts of Eco Interior and Russian Wicker Furniture

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### Abstract

*The study is devoted to the modern eco-style and the use of Russian wicker furniture made of natural and ecological materials – vines in interior design. The subject of research is the design concepts in the interior eco-style design and artistic furniture from natural and ecological materials. The research topic is the relationship between folk furniture art and modern interior design, which can be considered as the basis for creating original furniture products from ecological raw materials for equipping interior space. The study applied a stylistic analysis in relation to the eco-style, project activities with the practice of interior design, furniture design, and art history analysis, considering the history of Russian wicker furniture production. The analysis of the history of folk furniture design from the creativity of Russian folk craftsmen – woven weavers to modern interior designers and the conceptual connection of furniture products and interior eco-style decoration items was carried out. The motives of the appeal to the creation of wicker furniture products of professional furniture designers are shown. The results of the study fill in underdeveloped areas in the design of modern interior space and the use of Russian wicker furniture in the interior design, made in the eco-style.*

**Key-words:** Art Design, Eco-Style, Eco-Design, Design Concept, Furniture Design, Interior Design, Basket Weaving, Art Products From Vine, Russian Wicker Furniture, Art Products from Natural and Ecological Materials.

### 1. Introduction

Currently, the concept of interior design has become widespread. It is focused on the design of the living environment and furniture products using environmentally friendly, natural materials, instead of plastics and artificial materials that are used in the manufacture of furniture, furnishings, and decoration of eco-style interiors (11, 12, 29). At this stage, design work with the inclusion of furniture products, made by folk craftsmen – wicker weavers, is increasingly popular (1, 2, 3, 4, 13, 14, 19). Changes have also taken place in the field of furniture design, especially since furniture made

from **ecological** materials – vine or rattan, is an integral part of the subject environment, namely, interior, living space, is closely related to a person and their inhabited space (5, 6, 7, 8, 20, 31). In this regard, the problem of the creative concept of furniture and interior designer has acquired particular importance, which determined the semantic direction of the design of furniture products, its goals, and objectives (11, 15). One of the creative concepts has become the concept of eco-design (18). Eco-style is focused on the creation of design objects using natural and ecological materials and the inclusion of furniture products made from natural raw materials, which, in addition to utilitarian use, perform an aesthetic function, are both interior items and pieces of furniture art (27, 30).

The purpose of this study is to identify the peculiarities of the links between folk, peasant, furniture art with the creative practice of design of modern, wicker products from ecological raw materials, vines, and the use of a utilitarian object as a work of art in eco-style interior design (17, 24, 25, 30). The research topic is creative concepts in the design of furniture products, which interpreted wicker furniture as an object of art in the interior space, and the activity of a woven weaver or designer as an artistic activity (9, 16). This topic has recently attracted constant interest in furniture designers and interior designers who design the eco-style interior space of living spaces (20, 30). Therefore, it seems relevant for further studies and additions in the problem of creative concepts of links of folk furniture art of masters – wicker weavers and furniture and interior space designers (5, 6, 30). Existing studies consider the differences between handicraft production of wicker furniture products and author's design, the problems of cooperation between a furniture designer and a master manufacturer – a woven weaver, and the transformation of household furniture products into pieces of furniture art (9, 10, 21, 23, 26, 27, 29, 30).

The study hypothesizes that there is a connection between Russian folk art and eco-style interior design and the presentation of wicker products as pieces of furniture art.

## **2. Methods**

The study examines the relationship between the design of interior space and furniture production, art history and stylistic analysis of the work of folk, peasant craftsmen – Russian wicker weavers from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and modern furniture and eco-style designers (1, 2, 3, 4, 15, 19, 22, 23, 24, 30).

In the study, the term eco-style or “eco furniture” is used due to the use of furniture products and objects of the interior space made of natural, environmentally friendly materials and the eco-style design of the interior space, which became an alternative to standard solutions using in interior

decoration of natural materials (30). The goal of eco interior design and furniture is to counteract the processes of unification and standardization of furniture production, the massive use of artificial and synthetic materials in the manufacture of furniture and interior decoration – plastic, resins, instead of ecological materials – vines and rattan, wood and glass, textiles, natural stone and ceramics (12).

### 3. Results

eco-style (from Greek, *eikos* – house, habitat) is an “ecological style”, the design of the interior space that creates a feeling of freshness, tranquility, natural harmony and unity with nature, free space filled with light, made in colors of natural shades and using natural ecological materials is the main feature of the style (12, 30).

The reason for the emergence of eco-style at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the need of people who are tired of environmental problems to create an ecological world in their own interior space using natural materials that are used in the manufacture of furniture and the decoration of living interiors.

This style is based on the idea of modern interior styles in combination with natural surfaces and with modern technologies used for processing wood, stone, clay, and natural fabrics. The advantage of eco-style is that it easily fits into all stylistic directions of modern interior design – “loft”, “high-tech”, “minimalism” or any other. High technologies and electronics in combination with natural materials create a comfortable modern interior, striving to recreate the natural environment and unite with nature (7, 12, 16, 17, 18, 30).

The first founders of eco-style are considered to be Scandinavian designers who combined natural environment, naturalness and environmental friendliness of materials, and innovative designer furniture products and decorative items made of natural materials complemented the living interior distinguished by their uniqueness and individuality.

Due to the borrowing of decorative forms, design methods from other styles, such as “loft” and “high-tech”, although they are considered modern, we cannot call this eco-style unique, but today it is one of the most popular modern styles.

Naturally, the appeal to nature has been encountered before in other styles. The most vividly natural theme is reflected in the “modern” style. But if “modern” is based on elements of classical styles, then eco-style is based on modern ones, not disdaining the presence of modern technology and electronics, which are not a natural environment (16).

The “country” style is also referred to as the eco-style, in which there is a large number of decorative elements, wood carvings, lace, and paintings, but it must be remembered that the eco-style reflects the modern interior, its minimalism, simplicity, and functionality, therefore, a large number of decorative elements is the main mistake in representing eco-style in the form of “country” (20).

The connection with the natural landscape, for example, buildings with trees growing through the roofs, one can see in the design work of Alvar Aalto. There, he reveals the meaning of the eco interior design, contained in the name itself – this is an attempt to recreate the natural environment in human habitats, where the interior, made in this vein, is in optimal harmony with the environment and is interesting because it is dictated by nature itself (12).

It is the natural color scheme in which the interior design will be made that is the main feature of designing living space in the eco-style. The color scheme should contain natural colors, delicate pastel tones, shades, and textures that are harmoniously combined, such as, green and all its shades of natural vegetation are reminiscent of the freshness of foliage; sky blue and light blue fill the space with air and coolness; woody colors – brown and beige, sand and yellow, gray, white (in contrast to black or dark wood), stone colors, soil and water (12). The presence of natural, ecological, and harmless materials should be mandatory when developing an eco-style interior design: coniferous and deciduous wood, bamboo, cork agglomerate, natural and artificial stone, forged or bent metal, polished or frosted glass, textured leather, natural cotton, and linen, chamotte clay and ceramics, paper wallpapers and natural textiles, i.e. any natural materials associated with the word “nature” can be used to furnish an interior (30). Natural materials such as reed or other deciduous wallpapers made of plant materials or river stones, which can be used as wall cladding, are perfect for interior decoration. It is not necessary to overload these natural textures with various patterns, reliefs, bright colors, and original designs. The walls in the eco-style are most often painted in a light color: white, milky, or beige, then as an accent, one of the walls is trimmed with wood, bamboo, stone, ceramic tiles, or plain paper wallpaper with a slightly noticeable plant pattern or without a pattern.

When designing an eco-style interior space, ceramic matte tiles, monochromatic or with an ornamented plant texture, finishing natural stone – flagstone, quarry, or white textured plaster are used. Natural stone and wood parquet with various compositional patterns or terracotta tiles in natural shades are in demand for the design of eco-style floor coverings. An excellent solution for interior ceiling design is the use of wood panels or a combination of wood beams with an expressive texture pattern and a light whitewashed ceiling. Entrance and interior doors can be made of solid hardwood and coniferous wood or veneered with valuable wood materials. One of the most significant

advantages of an eco-style interior design can rightfully be considered the illumination of the interior space – large windows guarantee that fresh air will always circulate in the rooms, and the inhabitants of the house will enjoy the abundance of daylight and soft sunlight (12, 16, 17, 18, 20, 30).

The object environment in the eco-style interior should maintain a sense of natural touch, whether it be wooden saltcellars and wicker baskets, or a decorative composition of dried flowers and fresh flowers, or decorative green glass vases and chamotte candlesticks, or peasant textiles made of patchwork and linen, or bunches of dry grass with wildflowers and onions or garlic – all this gives a special comfort in the eco-style. Kitchen items in the interior are simple, monochromatic, pastel colors, without complex decorative details, the ornament can be made in a folk style, and the products themselves are made of matte, fireclay ceramics or colored glass, textured wood and forged metal, and tablecloths and napkins from folk textiles or flax. eco-style fabrics traditionally symbolized rural life, for example, curtains made of gunny or mats, gray unbleached canvas or natural unpainted linen and chintz fabrics, wicker blinds – mats or patchwork floor rugs – are considered to be highly sophisticated (30).

An eco-style interior assumes the presence of only necessary furniture and decorative items that do not overload it but complement it with ease of perception and simplicity, sophistication, and originality, presenting them as works of furniture and decorative – applied art in design modern interior. eco-style furniture is always made only from natural materials – an array of coniferous and deciduous wood, natural stone, or marble. When making soft parts of furniture products, pure cotton or linen, decorative textiles, or patchwork fabrics are used (30).

Elegant, lightweight, durable, and delicate, wicker furniture made of natural, ecological, and plant materials is ideal for a modern eco-style interior – open terraces, loggias, sanatoriums, cafes, summer cottages, recreation rooms, and living rooms. For example, vines created by the hands of high-class craftsmen, revive any interior and satisfy the most refined taste.

Wicker furniture in the eco-style interior in combination with natural materials – glass, metal, ceramics, and textiles, made in the best Russian wicker weaving traditions, not only complement each other and look good but also decorate the living environment of a modern person very sensitive to the works of famous folk crafts (1, 2, 3). Wicker furniture of fine, artistic work differ from other works of decorative and applied art in durability, hygiene, and warmth of the work of wicker weavers invested in them, as they give their creations uniqueness, originality, and sophistication, as genuine works of furniture art (5, 6). Wicker furniture has always attracted attention with its lightness, simplicity, grace, and charm of the vine from which it was made not only in Russia but also in Western Europe.

The art of weaving from a vine is one of the oldest human crafts. Even in the Stone Age, not knowing the metal ax, knife, or sewing machine, man perfectly mastered the weaving of baskets, vessels, mats, hunting and fishing tools. The most ancient examples were found during excavations by archaeologists in Egypt and the Middle East. In the tomb of Pharaoh Tutankhamun, for example, two wicker chairs were discovered, which have been preserved so well that they could still be decorated in a modern interior. According to ancient manuscripts, in ancient Rome wicker furniture was also known, and patricians reclined on beds woven from a vine. One piece of furniture that dates back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD is kept in the famous Trevi Museum in Italy. The popularity of wickerwork was so great that the motifs and individual elements of the weaving technique were imitated in porcelain. Vine weaving is older than pottery, and the cross weaving used in the manufacture of wickerwork, in principle, served as the basis for the emergence of weaving techniques, and it led to the appearance of lace products (7, 10, 12, 16, 25, 26).

Wicker furniture products were especially widespread in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. During this period, wicker furniture and household items, manufactured in the workshops of the Champagne province in France by the Tyrotena furniture company, were very popular. Products made from willow vines were coated with various colored, natural dyes, gold leaf, and silver (28). Weaving was becoming a fashion, spreading in all countries, and tens of thousands of people were engaged in weaving in West Prussia and Bavaria. In England, the designers of one of the famous art schools J. Fletcher and C. Crumpton developed new collections of wicker furniture for the exhibition, and, having gained recognition and popularity, their products became the standard of quality and beauty. Weaving products from natural raw materials are popular all over the world. In India, Australia, or South America, one can see women's weaving of handbags, baskets, wallets. In Southeast Asia, China, on the famous oriental bases, a variety of food flaunts, effectively stacked in all kinds of original wicker baskets (21). Models of French fashion designer Pierre Cardin sometimes show off braided accessories that subtly emphasize this style. European craftsmen traditionally weave mainly from willow vines and have achieved complete perfection in this business. In Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, they mainly weave in villages where plantations of various types of willow grow. In Yugoslavia, beautiful furniture is woven under production conditions; in France, products are distinguished by a variety and originality of design; the national symbol of the Gallic rooster is woven everywhere, the quality of weaving is often given secondary importance, whereas German products, on the contrary, are distinguished by the thoroughness of work, strict forms, and clear selection material. In England, as well as in many other Western countries, master weavers widely

use high-quality material brought from Southeast Asia in their work. In these countries, rattan is a popular natural material – a material that is the peeled and dried stems of the tropical plant *Calamus rotang*. Long and thin like lace, noble shades, and wood grain, it allows creating very beautiful pieces.

The time of the formation of Russian applied art has its roots in the depths of centuries. Analysis of archaeological and written sources shows, in particular, the existence in Russia of numerous crafts, distinguished by a high technical and artistic level of products. In the 9<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> centuries in the cities of Kievan Rus and Novgorod, there were about two hundred crafts, and later, in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries – even in Moscow principality, among the forty artisan specialties, there were a significant number of basket weavers (1, 2, 3, 4, 28). It is assumed that basket weaving originated in the regions of rivers and lakes and served initially for the needs of fishing, fishermen made creel, nerets, trammel net, and other fishing gear. Gradually, vine weaving covered almost the entire territory of European Russia. The largest centers of weaving were concentrated in Moscow, Tver, Kostroma, Ivanovo, Vladimir, Yaroslavl, Nizhny Novgorod, Smolensk, Vyatka, Kazan, Orenburg, Perm, Ufa, Kiev, Podolsk, Volyn, Chernigov, and Kharkov provinces. The history of the development of basket weaving is very interesting and unique. The originality is explained by several prerequisites, from ancient times, which contributed to the development of weaving from a willow twig in Russia.

To make wicker art products, a plant, ecological material is used – a willow twig. Willow is one of the valuable, widespread tree and shrub species of the temperate and cold zones of the globe, which has versatile, universal application in the national economy. The green willow met a person at birth – cradles for a child, rattles, and simple toys were made from it. It is also a medicinal plant, its bark is a wonderful tanning material, and the fiber was used to make sackcloth, ropes, and mats. The flowering of willow begins much earlier than that of other plants, therefore it is a valuable honey plant (5, 6, 13, 15). It is widely used to fix sands, precipices, and landslides. Finally, it gives an excellent material, valuable for weaving – a rod or, as it is also called, a vine. Craftsmen used strips of willow bark for weaving to make dishes, shoes, howling ropes, and fetters for horses, and weaved small rugs from fiber. In the peasant economy, willow wood was used for a wide variety of needs. In the steppe regions of Russia, baths, barns, and even dwelling houses were built from willow ridges. Troughs, watering holes were hollowed out of large trunks, rivets for cooper's utensils, light shovels for bread and snow were hewn out. Light and warm hives were made from the willow boards. Willow wood is well cut with various cutting tools. Therefore, craftsmen made turning and carved dishes

from it. After lying in the water for a long time, the wood turns into a gray-violet color with pink and blue hues. The wood of a living tree also stains purple if the roots and the lower part of the trunk are under water for a long time. The natural color of willow wood gives a beautiful appearance to the finished product (22, 24, 25).

Weaving products have always been distinguished by beauty and grace. The masters of Russian villages, where tens of thousands of people were engaged in the craft, were famous for their particularly solid and skillful products, and for many of them, it was ancillary, while the main occupation was agriculture. The development of crafts was facilitated by the organization of schools in which weaving was taught. In the 90s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, at the paper mills of the Voznesenskaya Manufactory, one of the first schools for teaching wickerwork was opened at the expense of the famous philanthropist S.G. Morozov, which was located 25 km from the Pushkino station of the Yaroslavl railway. One of the largest centers of weaving was the village of Bolshiye Vyazemy, Zvenigorodsky district, Moscow province (28). The craft was in the form of family production, in which all members of the family participated, including children (1, 2, 3, 4, 5). Its birth was facilitated by the local landowner, Prince D.V. Golitsyn, who introduced weaving from peeled twigs in his estate and then in the village of Bolshie Vyazemy (6, 14). Researchers of those years noted that the basket craft was very widespread in the country, but far unevenly throughout the territory. In one village, peasants of only a few households could do it, and only in rare cases did it cover almost all of the local population. After the 15<sup>th</sup> Moscow All-Russian Art and Industry Exhibition in 1892, a Handicraft Museum was opened in Moscow, which collected the best samples of furniture and household utensils (1). Moreover, schools and workshops were opened, with experienced instructors who taught handicraftsmen improved weaving techniques, the latest drawings and models, familiarized themselves with modern market demands, the development of fashionable products according to Russian samples and manuals supplied by the Moscow Handicraft Museum, as well as in albums and books published in London, Vienna, Paris, Cologne, New York and other cities of the world. All this allowed to significantly improve the technique and technology of manufacturing products and appearance.

In the age of supertechnology and supermaterials, weaving products are made in the Moscow region by the skillful hands of the masters of Dorokhovskaya, Ruzskaya furniture factories, industrial and commercial firms “Abris” (Kirovo, Chepetsk), “Loza – Mebel” (Moscow), etc., and their wickerwork has perfectly proven itself on the verandas of mansions and summer cottages throughout Russia, tennis courts, bistros and summer cafes in Germany, Turkey, Singapore and have become



especially fashionable in modern interiors. Moreover, as a rule, they recreate the nostalgic atmosphere of comfort and well-being of the noble estates of the past century, and the golden lace of the willow vine, enchant with their rhythms, and take away the stresses of the current century (30).

The technology for making wicker products has been improved for millennia. From generation to generation, grandfather to father, father to son, the techniques and methods of weaving, the secrets of making individual products, which in their appearance and decoration were often at the level of works of art and rightfully belonged to the works of decorative and applied products, were passed on. Craftsmen have appeared who can satisfy the most demanding client. They create, using simple materials and affordable ways of processing them, highly artistic items of wicker furniture, vividly reflecting the national features of life and artistic tastes of the peoples of various regions of Russia. Wickerwork was produced for both the rich and the poor, with a correspondingly high and low cost. The basis for the decoration and ornamentation of the appearance of wicker products was based on traditional folk motifs – fabulous images of birds – peafowl, which have a well-known symbolic meaning – an idea not only of the beauty of the surrounding nature (1, 2, 3, 4). The basis of the compositional structure of patterns with birds was ornamental symmetric compositions of birds with a lush comb in the form of flowers, according to the old custom, it was perceived by Russians as a spring awakening of nature, its flowering, a blooming garden, paradise (26). The fabulous peafowls are majestic and proud, but also benevolent, are considered a symbol of the rebirth of life, kindness, and love, bringing, according to beliefs, the owner of the house peace, happiness, and well-being of family life. They are full of vitality and restrained inner tension. It is the symmetry that is one of the forms of the harmonic structure of the pattern that emphasizes the stability, calmness, poise, and completeness of the composition. When developing sketches, working drawings, units, and parts, the tasks were set to make simple products, but differing in lightness, grace in shape, decorative finish, and subtlety of work, like lace, each detail should serve the general idea. Various types of weaving were used, their combinations and especially the combination of solid with openwork, because the same type of openwork, depending on the combination with other types of weaving, as well as the shape of the product and material, is perceived differently.

Wicker furniture is wonderful for the plasticity of the material itself, the rhythm of the pattern of various weaves, the variety of shapes, proportions, the uniqueness of simple grace – the results of centuries of creative research, modest craft work and, of course, the master's love for his work. Hand-made wicker products made from natural materials in the eco-style interior are part of the subject

environment, emphasize the status of the owner and add value to furniture products, complement the interior, make it unique and colorful, and reflect the lifestyle and individuality of a person.

#### **4. Discussion**

First, let us discuss the issue of terminology. As noted above, the problems raised in this study were most often studied in the plane of interaction between the design of a modern eco-style interior space and the use of furniture products made in the style of “eco furniture” in this interior. In the study, the term “eco furniture” and eco-style is used due to the use of wicker furniture and decorative items from natural and ecological raw materials (vines) in the modern interior in the best traditions of Russian folk furniture art by the hands of craftsmen – wicker weavers and the design of the eco-style interior space using natural materials in interior decoration – wood and glass, natural stone and ceramics, metal and textiles instead of artificial and synthetic materials – plastic, resins, adhesives, which are widely used in the manufacture of furniture, construction and finishing works.

Second, the demand for wicker furniture made in the old traditions of wickerwork is increasing. Currently, the construction and design of country cottages, luxury summer cottages, modern interior spaces made in the “folk” style or eco-style provide a wide field of activity for designers who successfully develop exclusive interior design and develop the art of basket weaving forgotten for decades – wicker furniture of traditional Russian crafts.

We would also like to hope that those artistic merits of wicker products of folk art crafts, those traditions of folk art that have come down to us through the centuries, thanks to book sources, the Museum of Folk Art, those people, true creators-artists who still since then, regardless of the difficulties of our time, or the various problems of our life, they are simply devoted to this business – the preservation, revival, and development of folk art crafts as part of the cultural heritage of Russia. The experience of our grandfathers and great-grandfathers will continue, and hand-made furniture products will be in demand in a modern interior if we consider the ecological purity of the material and its use in modern eco-style interior design.

Third, the role of furniture and interior space designers in creating an individual ecological living environment using priceless, natural materials is quite significant. The objects created by craftsmen and artists, having a utilitarian-economic or spiritual-symbolic purpose, attracted people with their emotional beauty, testified to the inherent creativity of man and their connection with nature. Studying those traditions of folk art, such as the forms of products, the material used, the technique of its processing, artistic, plot, and ornamental motives, preserving all the best that was

found by previous generations of craftsmen in weaving furniture products, the craftsmen created their images of symbolic birds, plant and geometric ornaments, brought into the look features that correspond to their individual understanding of the beautiful and inimitable. They combined it with new features of the decorative – applied art of today, since the combination of floral ornaments and pictorial elements in a traditional form, bringing the ideas of goodness, joy, and happiness to our days, give each time new unexpected design solutions in the eco-style interior.

The ecological purity of the material and the quality of wicker furniture make it more and more popular and desirable. It creates a nostalgic atmosphere of coziness and well-being in a modern eco-style interior, and the golden lace of willow vine, permeated with sunlight, enchants with its calm rhythms and takes away stress. It is difficult to overestimate the role of folk art in creating a human environment that is inseparable from his private and public life. It is materiality, belonging to the objective world, and at the same time spirituality that ensure the centuries-old life of this art. Creation of a comfortable, artistic and expressive environment surrounding a person, hand-made, charm of utilitarian and souvenir products of enterprises of folk art crafts oblige the collectives of these enterprises to create products of modern sound, without forgetting the history and traditions characteristic of the place of origin of the craft, techniques of craftsmanship and technology applied arts. This imposes a huge responsibility on the people involved in the design of the environment: architects, designers, artists of monumental and decorative-applied art, and among them are masters of folk art crafts. All these adjustments should be made by artists – creators, true masters of their craft, who know the value of genuine art – designers of the modern trend, which is now called eco-style.

## **5. Conclusion**

In this study:

- the analysis of the creative practice of the design of folk, peasant furniture in the historical perspective was carried out to identify the stages of the formation of the design concept of modern furniture products from the vine and the design of the interior space using natural ecological eco-style materials;
- the reasons for the desire to present wicker furniture, first of all, products from handicraft artisans – wicker weaving, as an object of interior art, and the activities of handicraftsmen and folk craftsmen of wickerwork – as an artistic activity have been investigated;

- analyzed how the presentation of wicker furniture made of natural materials as a piece of furniture art gives it additional symbolic value;
- shows the motives of professional artists' appeal to the creation of furniture products from natural, ecological materials in different periods.

The considered examples from the history of the design of wicker furniture and the design of eco-style interior space allow us to believe that the concept of eco-design has gained recognition in this area of design, and has real prospects for development in the future. The relevance of the concept eco interior design and the design of wicker furniture products from natural, ecological materials suggests various possibilities of applying the main provisions in teaching professional disciplines for interior designers who will work in the interior or furniture industry.

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