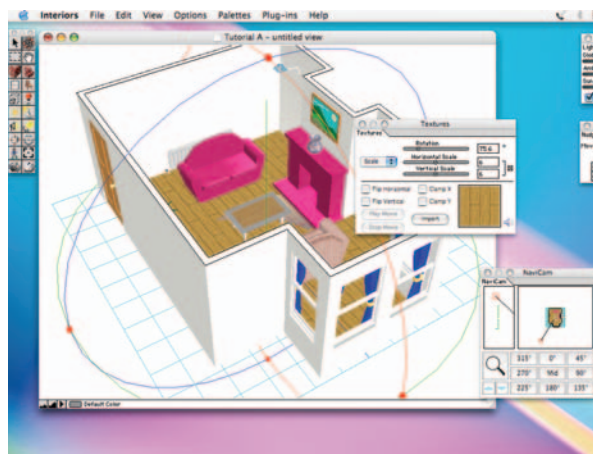


Microspot Interiors offers relatively straightforward modelling tools for budding property developers. Better still, there's not a gratuitous Linda Barker tie-in in sight



Adding a neutral white finish to the walls and some laminate flooring should be just what's required to get those first time buyers fawning over your pad...

Microspot Interiors 3.5.1

Interior design software is in surprisingly short supply on the Mac. Makeover mavens better hope that Microspot's effort is a good 'un ...

If the relentless bombardment of DIY, property, and makeover programs isn't driving you potty, you can count on newspapers to saturate your brain with constant reports about house prices rising and falling. One thing this preoccupation with property has done, however, is made many of us into would-be decorators, interior designers and property developers. Although interior designers are often quick to shove an iMac somewhere into a home, many would be stuck for a starting point if required to actually plan the rooms on a Mac. That's because Microspot's Interiors is a minority of one when it comes to dedicated interior design programs for Mac OS X. Sure, you could use any 3D or CAD package to plan your room layouts, but a dedicated program makes this process much easier and much more accessible for the hopelessly inexperienced 3D modeller.

The concept behind Interiors is simple. You tell the program the dimensions of the room you want to create and it then generates a basic 3D model. Once you've got your walls in place you can pepper your embryonic domicile with doors and windows by dragging and dropping library elements onto screen and repositioning them as required. Viewing the construction at various stages is easy, thanks to the Navicam and Tripod tools that allow you to rotate and spin the room through 360° in any direction. Well, you're actually moving the camera and not the room, but you get the idea. With a basic structure in place you can then start to add splashes of paint to the walls to taste, lay down carpets or flooring and summon furnishings and fittings from the library.

It would be unreasonable to expect Microspot to have included every single variation on each object you might want to include in a room and so you might find some areas of the library lacking. Whether you regard this as a limitation or not depends on how fussy you are about having a totally accurate model to work with.

Expert users can always import their own colours and textures to beef up the supplied arsenal. With the design completed and master builder status assured, it's possible to add all kinds of different lighting effects and position them to add shadows to objects and get a better idea of how your changes will affect the brightness of the room.

Familiar face

The Interiors interface looks like a slightly less polished version of the Photoshop interface, which is actually quite a good thing. Those who are used to tweaking images with Adobe's imaging titan will be immediately at home with having a Toolbox on the left and a series of palettes that can 'dock' together using simple drag and drop routines.

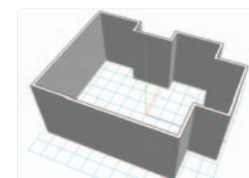
Getting started is reasonably easy, as long as you follow the PDF tutorial that's included. Despite being pitched at users of all skill levels, though, it's fair to say that a degree of graphics software savvy would be beneficial in order to get the most out of the program. Newcomers might struggle with some of the concepts involved, which are rooted in 3D modelling and CAD software. But those who are prepared to invest the time and discipline in mastering the finer points will be impressed with the quality of the designs that can be created.

Ultimately Interiors is an accomplished and flexible package. The one caveat is that it doesn't offer quite the same degree of user-friendliness that many Mac users take for granted from Apple's iApps. Still, at roughly £70, it's impossible to grumble too much about what's on offer, which should give you all the help you need to pop up on one of those TV property programs at some point in the future boasting about how much money you made on your house.

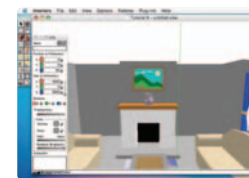
Review

Makeover magic with Microspot

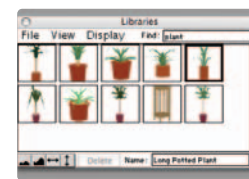
1 Before the fun begins you must construct your room by drawing the walls and then dragging and dropping elements onto your layout plan. It doesn't look like much at the moment, but give it another hour or so and who knows where we'll end up?



2 Things are starting to take shape. Interior's tools allow you to alter the view and get in close to different elements of the room so you can customise the shapes of furnishings and even curtains. We just need some flying ducks for that mantelpiece...



3 Keep your living environment organic by using Interiors' Libraries palette to add plants to your room. By working out where the sunlight falls, you can strategically position them for maximum photosynthesis.



Microspot Interiors 3.5.1

URL: www.microspot.co.uk
SRP: £71.10

What's good: Can achieve impressive results quickly, Photoshop-style user-friendly interface, not the same steep learning curve associated with 3D packages

What's bad: Newcomers may find it tough to get to grips with at times, some of the library elements are a little sparse

Overall 84%