



Reviews

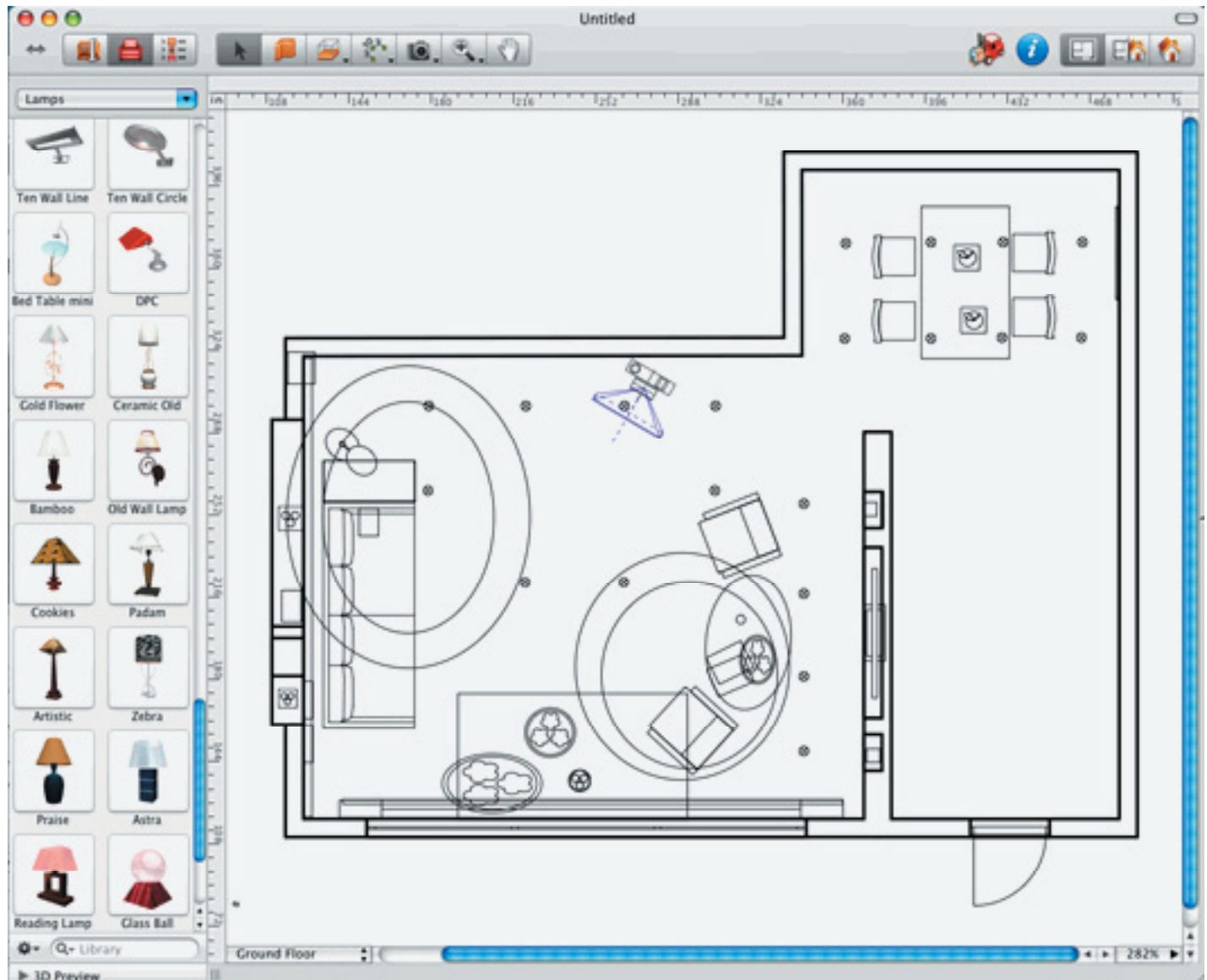


Live Interior 3D Pro

by Ron Davenport

When I took architecture classes, we had to establish vanishing points, horizons, and the height of the viewer. We used pushpins and string to transfer locations of objects onto the drawing. T-squares have been replaced by computer graphics and static interior views are now 3D. What is new is creating a path in the drawing to simulate a person walking through a room with a video camera and looking at the viewfinder display. It has been several years since I reviewed programs that allowed a person shopping for new kitchen cabinets to see how they would look in their kitchen using a simulation. Things have really improved but it does take a lot more time to get as detailed as Live Interior 3D allows.

The view of the same room would be different depending on the distance of your eye from the floor. If you were sitting, you would see more ceiling than floor and furniture would be above and below your line of sight. If you were descending on a staircase you would see only the floor and look down on furniture. If you were entering from an adjacent room you would have another view altogether. Live Interior allows you to



The 2D view looks down on the room. The purple triangle is the location and direction of the viewer. Along the left is part of the Library's lighting options. The toolbars along the top let you draw your walls, add ceilings, locate camera locations and paths, etc.



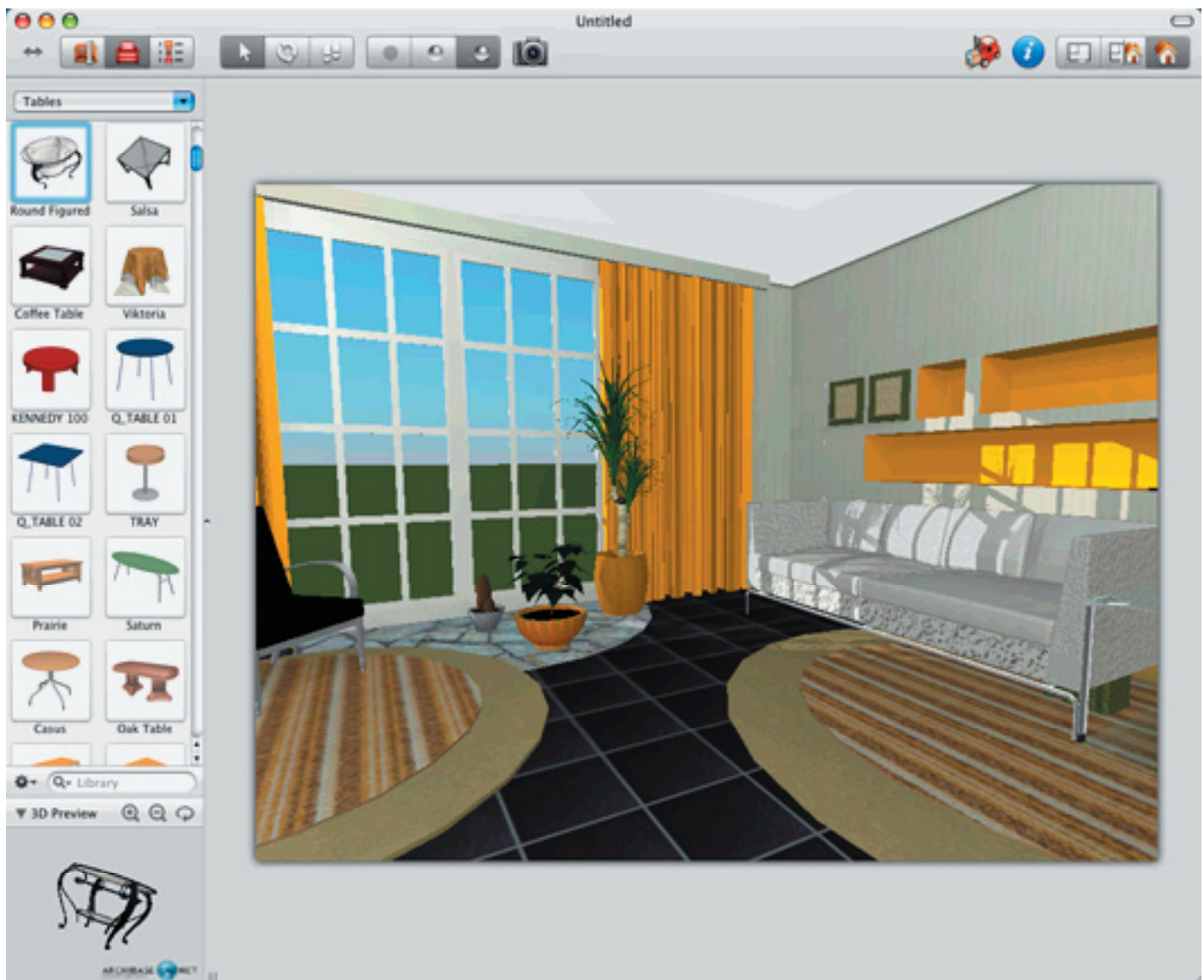
view a room from different heights and locations. Options allow you to place a ceiling at its actual height (think vaulted ceilings or ones that are open with a mezzanine). In a kitchen or bath, skylights or special light fixtures can be displayed with their illumination.

Architects and interior designers begin in the 2-D mode where the room is drawn to scale and cabinets/ furniture is located. To place these in the room, you select them in the "object library" and then specify the width, depth, and height. You then open the "Object's Materials" to select the type of wood or material and its color.

To begin, there is a library of pre-drawn 1, 2, 3 bedroom apt. floor plans along with cottage and studio apt. floor plans. If you choose one of these instead of drawing your own, you can move the walls and make changes. You can import a plan from another program (see compatibility info). Rather than attaching molding to walls later, they can be part of the wall from the beginning. Bay windows, alcoves, and angled walls can be added (curved walls are not supported).

The main use for the Library is to select the type of furniture, cabinets, plants, decorations, fireplaces, lamps, windows, etc. You then set the dimensions and place it on the floor plan of the room. There is a preview window below the Library that allows you to see the item in both 2D and 3D. Using the mouse you can rotate the object to see it from different angles.

This is a fun program for amateurs to play around with, but it is definitely oriented to the professional. You can get as detailed as you want by specifying moldings, window styles, types of lamps, styles of chairs, etc. I'm sure that the more detailed you make a room, the more you will want to add to it. The program seems daunting at first but it becomes addictive like a video game once you have the hang of it. The ability to easily switch from 2D to 3D means you get the instant satisfaction seeing what you have accomplished with each added item. And at anytime you can move the viewer's location for a different perspective.



Working in 3D lets you see how it will look. Along the left side it shows you part of the Table Library. At the bottom is a mini-3D display of any selected item so you can rotate it with the mouse. The toolbar along the top now has lighting, and direction controls to rotate the view to any spot in the room. Notice the wall recesses, floor coverings, and the windows.



On the Toolbar is Text Annotation so that you can name the manufacturer, retail seller, price, etc. The tools are conveniently laid out as buttons, icons, and on the pull down menus. If you begin with basic shapes when learning the program, you can then go back and customize to your heart's content.

I am going to quote from other reviews because I can't improve on their comments and in some cases they reviewed previous versions and in other cases they have a newer Mac and were able to test features that I could not.

The MacUser review provides these details:

"You also need to note that because drawing is non-modal, moving the arrow out of the drawing area causes the current wall to scroll off to infinity.

Once a plan has been drawn, the space can be carpeted, color added to the walls and populated with furniture. This can be imported either from Live Interior 3D Pro's own extensive library or from Google's 3D Warehouse. Click on Download Model and the application will display a clock showing the download time and a list of materials being imported.

You can also add your own custom objects from Google SketchUp or 3DS Max, and edit objects directly in SketchUp. You can either move the object around on plan updates in the 3D window (2D and 3D can be displayed side by side), or you can move it directly in the 3D view.

The 3D rendering has been improved in this version. Real-time reflections are now supported, something that's quite impressive when you see it. Lighting has also been greatly improved, and you can now set the sun's position by the time of day. The setting of the model's latitude by a simple slider should, however, be replaced with something a little more accurate.

Also in this version is support for multistorey designs. This includes a stair designer that lets you set stair type, rise and going, and handrail height. It also features a facility for designing floor openings. Handling multi-storey buildings is well implemented: each storey sits on its own drawing sheet and these can be accessed from the Inspector palette. As an aside, the way it lets you rifle through a stack of drawings is rather neat.

Another new addition is a wall designer, which allows for the creation of custom alcoves, openings and panels - although there's no support for drawing curved walls yet. The Walk tool has been supplemented by a head-up display, which appears when you place the mouse at the bottom of the 3D window. This gives much easier and more convenient control of the viewing position. Completed projects can be exported as stills at high-resolution or as QuickTime movies in up to HDTV resolution. Another impressive feature is the ability to export as QTVR — these files can get the project over in a file far smaller than a .mov."

Archintosh's positive review of Live Interior 3D Pro says this:

"3D Pro is now capable of supporting multi-storey interiors. So we'll take a look at that. Additionally, our Pro and Standard version of Live Interiors supports the creation of camera paths for shooting QuickTime videos of your interior designs...and, it can also produce panoramic QuickTimeVR movies.

Drawing walls in Live Interiors 3D is very easy. There are several really nice touches in this program. For instance when you click the wall tool the Inspector palette provides you the ability to set up profiles for crown and base mouldings, making these apart of the wall assembly rather than separate elements added to the rooms later. This saves time. A series of master walls gives the user the key walls they will need for exterior walls, including various thicknesses used in common construction.

Now in Live Interiors 3D (Standard and Pro) you have the ability to add a storey below or above the current storey you are working on. You can add not just one but several stories (Pro), creating multi-story apartments or homes. And with the stair tool you can link these stories together."

(I recommend that interested people read the [Archintosh's review](#) in its entirety to get more specifics as they more extensively tested this version and version 1. They had a newer Mac than I am using and it really speeded up the rendering.)

The [Top10 Reviews](#) web site lists comparisons of competing products and gives Interior Design 3D the highest rating.

Belight Software's [Sample QuickTime movies](#) demonstrate the "walk through" in rooms. If you select the first room at the top left, notice the reflection of the walls on the polished floor. Even if you are not interested in purchasing the program, I think you will enjoy playing these movies and they might give you ideas for creating your own movies.

The Skinny

Requires: Mac OS X 10.4.8 or later. Minimal screen resolution 1024x768.

Company: [BeLight Software](#)

Street Price: Standard: \$49.95 **User Group special price:** \$42.45, Pro: \$129.95 **User Group special price:** \$110.45. **SMMUG members - go to our "Member's Only" web page to access the link to BeLight Software's User Group specials web page.)**

A comparison between the Standard and Pro versions can be found at [BeLight Software's web site](#).

Available Demo