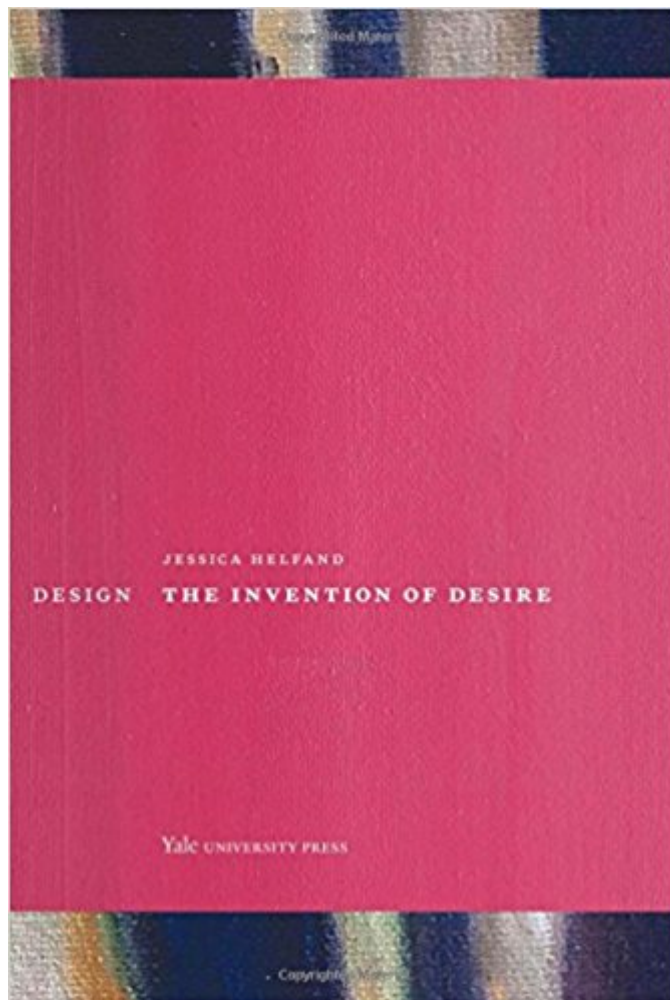


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Design: The Invention Of Desire



Synopsis

A compelling defense for the importance of design and how it shapes our behavior, our emotions, and our lives. Design has always prided itself on being relevant to the world it serves, but interest in design was once limited to a small community of design professionals. Today, books on “design thinking” are best sellers, and computer and Web-based tools have expanded the definition of who practices design. Looking at objects, letterforms, experiences, and even theatrical performances, award-winning author Jessica Helfand asserts that understanding design’s purpose is more crucial than ever. Design is meaningful not because it is pretty but because it is an intrinsically humanist discipline, tethered to the very core of why we exist. For example, as designers collaborate with developing nations on everything from more affordable lawn mowers to cleaner drinking water, they must take into consideration the full range of a given community’s complex social needs. Advancing a conversation that is unfolding around the globe, Helfand offers an eye-opening look at how designed things make us feel as well as how—and why—they motivate our behavior.

Book Information

Hardcover: 228 pages

Publisher: Yale University Press (May 24, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0300205090

ISBN-13: 978-0300205091

Product Dimensions: 6.8 x 1.1 x 9.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 4 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #140,136 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #48 in [Books > Arts &](#)

[Photography > Decorative Arts & Design > Design History & Criticism](#) #113 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Aesthetics](#)

Customer Reviews

“Jessica Helfand makes the case for design not as a skill or an industry but as an exploration of our humanity. She designs in order to see, and this smart and beautiful book looks inward as well as out.”
—James Gleick
“In an age marked by speed, impatience, and the giddy pursuit of objects, both actual and virtual, Jessica Helfand’s *Invention of Desire* demands our attention. In her text she deftly explores the essences rather than

surfaces of design, in particular the ethical responsibilities that attend every created thing. Punctuated by beautiful images made from histological samples of tissues, organs, bones, and nerves, this book insists on what is often forgotten: the shared human experience and its meaning for the world of design.

•Siri Hustvedt

“Jessica Helfand looks at design as a deeply emotional experience, as a live wire on sensations, as an expression of what it means to be alive. This is truly intelligent writing.

•Stefan Sagmeister

“In her extraordinary new paintings, Jessica Helfand finds the sweet spot between scientific certainty and formal abstraction. She invites us to consider the body, the self, and the mesmerizing biological wonders that unite us as a species. This is a remarkable body of work.

•Laurie Simmons

“Compassion. Solitude. Memory. These are just a few of the topics explored in Jessica Helfand’s glorious book. Deeply philosophical and humanistic, it is a beautifully articulated meditation of what it means to design and what it means to be alive.

•Maira Kalman

Design is an intrinsically humanist discipline, tethered to the very core of why we exist. It frames our conception of power, informs our belief about personal dignity, piques our curiosity about fiction and fantasy; highlights our yearning for romance and beauty; and engages our eternal appetite for narrative. Design matters because of the why, not the what: the sentiment, not the acquisition. Design matters because people matter, and the purpose of this book is to examine precisely this proposition: to consider the conscience-driven rules of human engagement within which design must operate. This is a book about design as it relates to human beings. Because that is what matters most of all.

I have read Jessica’s book three times now and I’m about to dive in for the fourth time. She provides such wonderful insight. I marvel at her observations. I especially love her question “Why is human-centered design a new thing? Who were we designing for before?” Makes me laugh because I’m an avid listener of her podcast The Observatory and I try to imagine her voice as I read it. Jessica is an absolute design scholar who provides critical insights to things we have overlooked. Love her insights and her work.

I am not a big fan of reading, so I was less than thrilled that this entire book was part of my graduate class’s reading for the quarter. One of three books. I was pleasantly surprised at how easy it was to understand and how the story was told. Regular anecdotes to keep it casual and bits of humor to

keep me reading. The author does a good job of sounding smart without making you feel stupid. I recommend.

Great book for Graduate courses.

I just finished reading Ms. Helfand's book, and it's lovely to hold, the design is beautiful, the paintings add another dimension to the text, and writing is exquisite. Reading about the highs and lows of life and design, Ms. Helfand's writing made me feel like I was in a boat on the ocean moving up and down through the waves. So good.

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