



Design Your Life: The Pleasures and Perils of Everyday Things

Ellen Lupton , Julia Lupton

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Design Your Life is a series of irreverent and realistic snapshots about objects and how we interact with them. By leading design thinker Ellen Lupton and her twin sister Julia Lupton, it shows how design is about much more than what's bought at high-end stores or the modern look at IKEA. Design is *critical thinking*: a way to look at the world and wonder why things work, and why they don't.

Illustrated with original paintings of objects both ordinary and odd, *Design Your Life* casts a sharp eye on everything from roller bags, bras, toilet paper, and stuffed animals to parenting, piles, porches, and potted plants. Using humor and insight Ellen and Julia explore the practical side of everyday design, looking at how it impacts your life in unexpected ways and what you can do about it. Speaking to the popular interest in design as well as people's desire to make their own way through a mass-produced world, this thoughtful book takes a fresh and humorous approach to make some serious points about the impact of design on our lives.

Find out what's wrong with the bras, pillows, potted plants, and the other hopeless stuff you use, buy, clean, water, or put away everyday. Discover how to secretly control the actions of those around you by choosing and placing objects carefully. Find out how roller bags are threatening civilization, and how the layout of your own house might be making you miserable. Use the tools of self-publishing to take the power of branding into your own hands.

Taking a fresh, funny look at parenthood, housekeeping, entertaining, time management, crafting, and more, *Design Your Life* shows you how to evaluate the things you use, and how to recognize forms of order that secretly inhabit the messes of daily life, be it a cluttered room or a busy schedule. Use this book to gain control over your environment and tap into the power of design to communicate with friends, family, and the world.

Design Your Life: The Pleasures and Perils of Everyday Things Details

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Loraine says

I enjoy this type of book as a diversion when my main read is a bit heavy. It is my chick-lit, my guilty pleasure. This title did all I expected from it but added almost nothing to my life. In a cookbook you expect at least one good recipe that you will use and incorporate into your life. In the same way, if this book had given me just one good idea to add beauty or function to my life I would have rated it higher.

Kate says

What a nifty little grab-bag!

Some entries are purely amusing, one outstanding example being the modern version of the Victorian "Language of Flowers" (a great big hit when I shared it with my friends at the art museum.) A few kid/family-oriented essays (not my favorite parts but possibly yours.)

Other essays are usefully instructive in the areas of home decor and graphic design (blogs, effective use of PowerPoint, even how to write your own manifesto.)

And the entire book is illustrated with many delightful, colorful drawings and paintings.

This would be a pleasant gift for a friend--or for yourself.

Sally says

one reviewer states "the chapter on 'piles' is worth the cost alone." I've got piles around my house.... ;)

Julie G says

Writing

Very well done from a writing standpoint. I found the short chapters to be very readable and understandable, even to someone as ignorant about the world of design as myself. I feel like both experts and neophytes can get something from this book, though, particularly because it is so cleverly done and so funny. The author makes her subject, everyday items, interesting and appealing, and presents her design information in a way that's easily accessible to all readers.

Entertainment Value

As you can tell from my assessment of the writing, I thoroughly enjoyed this book. I'm interested in design, but have no knowledge, skills, or experience to base that interest on. I was pleased with how easy it was to read this book and how I was able to grasp the concepts being presented, particularly as they were presented in a manner that was really enjoyable to read.

Overall

I thoroughly enjoyed my read and recommend it to anyone who has an interest in design. It's definitely not going to appeal to everyone though - it's exactly what it says it is: a book about the design, function, and use of everyday objects. A great read with very nice illustrations, but will appeal to a limited audience.

Lorraine says

I loved this book. It's a rarity and it's creative. Well, it should be. It's called Design Your Life and the authors' (two of them and they are twin sisters) assertion is that design is creativity.

Things I particularly liked.

- No matter how perfect the bra fits and no matter how much you pay for it, none of them are perfect. Reason? Bras are symmetrical and breasts are not. Bras stay the same all month; breasts do not.
- It's great to have a clean up frenzy and get your working space in order. However, the key to designing a system that works is not to clean it for a day or a month, but to make it work everyday for you. Develop a pattern that works and it will stay that way.
- Many of us like to think that we are good at multitasking—me included. However, regardless of age or ability, the truth is humans can only focus on one activity at a time. Anything else that is going on is subconscious and automatic. A tech person described it as “continuous partial attention.” Point taken.
- There is an archeology to signage and there really are good ways to tape a sign to a wall without ruining the wall. And there is an art/creativity to where a sign should be posted and how to make it draw the attention it needs.
- I started playing words for rice (freerice.com). It's an Internet vocabulary game run by the U.N. For each word you get right, the UN donates 20 grains of rice to needy populations around the world. It's a great way to test your vocabulary and increase it. Suggestions for new ways to giving (p. 121).
- No one seems to want to replace toilet paper when it runs out. Solution: get an open-ended holder with a upturned finial that allows you to slip in a new roll with one hand.
- The Power Point section is a must-read for all those thousands of people who have no idea what a Power Point presentation should look like, nor do they understand its purpose.

This off-beat, fun book with GREAT illustrations is a real treat. Thank you Cheryl, for introducing it to me. Can't see how a person couldn't enjoy it. Of course if you lack creativity and aren't interested in improving yours, forget it.

Jisel says

I read this book because I thought it would tell me how to design my life, which is something I'm very much

in need of. I was imagining a Marie Kondesque book, except I'd be learning to better curate my life by gaining a greater appreciation for my possessions, instead of throwing them all away. Now that I've had a year to recoup all the stuff that didn't spark joy at the specific moment I was struck by the life-changing magic of tidying up, I wanted a book that would tell me how my possessions could better enrich my life.

This book was written by a pair of sisters and started off as a blog. Once I figured that out, everything made much more sense. The book talks about the functionality of objects in our day-to-day lives, architectural fashions, decorating, entertaining, blogging and branding. The book is at turns interesting and funny, and, occasionally, dull. It did a delightful job of lulling me to sleep for several nights in a row, but not in a bad way. It just turns out that I'm not very interested in objects or interior design or dinner parties. Plus, I found the writing quite relaxing in a pleasant, meditative kind of way.

Even though this book didn't end up changing my life, I did learn a few interesting things. For example, if you're stacking a bunch of books on your dining room table, maybe it makes sense to turn that room into a library. That's revolutionary! (seriously...not sarcastically). I would never think to use a room for an alternative purpose. I'm a house traditionalist. But it did make me think about how I fill different spaces in my house. I throw my mail on a coffee table by my bed...maybe I could put a bin there! I throw library books on the floor next to my couch. Another bin! I throw dirty clothes on my bathroom floor. ANOTHER BIN! What I need is a trip to Target.

I also learned/enjoyed the following:

...porches were brought back to the suburbs as a way to foster community and encourage social interactions among neighbors, but unfortunately, the movement mostly failed because most porches are too narrow to foster lounging.

...I want a husband pillow. They sound very comfortable.

...I read the best description of why I hate shape-wear. Of shape-wear, the authors write: "Conflict erupts where Lycra meets unbridled flab." I've always felt this way.

...a "clutter magnet" is, for example, when one dirty cup "quickly attracts bad company." I think I have a clutter magnet problem.

Michelle Kai ling says

This is not at all an in depth theoretical commentary of how design effects our lives. It's a very casual light read, that shows both Ellen and Julia Lupton's witty and quirky humour as they discuss a myriad of design thoughts and failures. They do bring up interesting historical references that I hadn't really thought of, something like the evolution of table shapes and how it effects us socially in this day and age.

Overall, an entertaining read. There were a few pages I uncontrollably cackled out loud while reading this on the subway.

Lori Paximadis says

I adored this book. It was witty and irreverent and insightful, all in one pretty little package.

Anna says

A hit or miss. While I appreciated the historical knowledge the twin sisters disseminated in tidbits, the bright drawings and satire, and an occasional shift in thinking about objects and the house as a social space, I found the humor slipshod - perhaps even cheap. If anything, the book gives a whimsical look into the face of frantic overdrive that has occupied American hearts and therefore homes (though that's something I was hoping to for a moment escape) and is also contemporaneous in that it can't seem to get enough of political leakage (even if, to be fair, life is politics)... Nevertheless, I was with the book when it had me thinking about curtains and culinary technologies, piles and chair arrangements, but wanted off the train when it spiraled into business cards and PowerPoints. I didn't come for that. And I wouldn't come for more. The mark of proof? I take nothing, not a grain, of this book with my consciousness as I plan for and try to design a new recent life and home. No new set of eyes here; and not my helping of humor. But, perhaps yours!

Nora says

Fun book. I love that the authors talk about design as critical thinking - yes!!! Reads like a blog, which makes sense because it was adapted from a blog, but I think the content would benefit from extension into a long form.

Jessica says

Interesting concept and really practical advice for organizing your life based on simple design concepts. Some quirky elements and fun illustrations make it a more stimulating read than say "Real Simple" magazine. The chapter on "piles" is worth the cost alone.

Tony Tran says

Good points and written well with dash of humour to boot. (Plus great paintings)

Diana Glycer says

A series of essays on design, beauty, pop culture, productivity, and the art of everyday life. A large format, glossy book, just the thing to dip into again and again for fun observations, clever writing, startling observations that elevate the ordinary. Recommended.

Sabiel says

The illustrations are beautiful, and the writing is pithy and astute, yet I feel like this mother-daughter team should have reached out of their bubble a tad more for this book to take off and fulfill its potential.

Bruce Green says

Author Ellen Lupton says "design is thinking materialized in objects and environments, inscribed in patterns of use, and addressed by analysis and planning." Despite that rigorous description, the book takes a decidedly humorous approach in analyzing how we interact with our designed world. It's full of practical suggestions for dealing with packaging and furniture arrangement as well as flower arrangement and buffet spreads. I laughed out loud at the essay on how many hotels use signage to show off their awareness of ecology (pg 62). It's rare that I get a hearty laugh from reading a design book and for that alone I give this one 5 stars.
