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Designing Design



Synopsis

Representing a new generation of designers in Japan, Kenya Hara (born 1958) pays tribute to his mentors, using long overlooked Japanese icons and images in much of his work. In *Designing Design*, he impresses upon the reader the importance of "emptiness" in both the visual and philosophical traditions of Japan, and its application to design, made visible by means of numerous examples from his own work: Hara for instance designed the opening and closing ceremony programs for the Nagano Winter Olympic games 1998. In 2001, he enrolled as a board member for the Japanese label MUJI and has considerably moulded the identity of this successful corporation as communication and design advisor ever since. Kenya Hara, among the leading design personalities in Japan, has also called attention to himself with exhibitions such as *Re-Design: the Daily products of the 21st Century* of 2000.

Book Information

Paperback: 472 pages

Publisher: Lars Muller; 4th ed. edition (March 20, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 3037784504

ISBN-13: 978-3037784501

Product Dimensions: 6.6 x 1.4 x 9.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.8 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (20 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #43,620 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #36 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Decorative Arts & Design > Industrial & Product Design](#) #210 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Graphic Design > Techniques](#)

Customer Reviews

DESIGNING DESIGN is quite possibly the most beautiful book on design ever published. Not only is the content illuminating and intelligent, allowing the world to gain an appreciation for one of the truly unique voices in the design field - that voice being the Japanese master Kenya Hara - but also in keeping with the subject, the book itself is a paramount of elegance, simplicity and superb creative force. This is a white book, a volume of information and illustration that embraces the purity of white as the matrix upon which everything blossoms and emerges. In an introductory essay by John Maeda the author states `Kenya Hara is a complex man. He views the world through his many lenses of seeing, tasting, smelling, erasing, evaporating, and all the forms of construction and

deconstruction.' And after those appropriate words this pristine book opens into the genius that is Kenya Hara. 'Verbalizing design is another act of design....To understand something is not to be able to define it or describe it. Instead, taking something that we think we already know and making it unknown thrills us afresh with its reality and deepens our understanding of it.' What follows on the pages are images of page design, paper, bowls of white cabbage leaves, signs, images of Swatch watches that come down through projected air onto any surface presented, unique signage for public spaces, soft ice cream shapes, furniture, spaces, lamps, posters - any object that requires rendering is treated and discussed in concept and philosophy by a man of great wisdom as well as endless creativity. The illustrations accompanying the text are clean and as well placed on the page as any creation by Hara. This is a seemingly endless array of fascinating subjects.

This is an extraordinarily beautiful book in which scores of works by graphic designers are presented, commended upon and sometimes explained by famed Japanese graphic designer Kenya Hara. There is no way I can do justice to either the beauty of this book or to the insightful text by Hara or to the range of design displayed. You have to see the book yourself to really appreciate the fact that, of all the gorgeous designs presented within--and there are scores of them--none is more gorgeous than the book itself. I think anybody in the book business might want to take this book in hand and peruse it as an example of what can be done in book design. There are hundreds of strikingly beautiful illustrations: color photos, photos done in brown light, in black and white, in tones of gray, in green and blue and many other colors, and in white. There are drawings and photos of drawings, and photos of objects artfully placed upon the page. From commercial products such as a cute and clever paper roach trap, to a power outlet with curves that looks somehow like a stylized mother and child, to a road designed like a river, to cultivated landscapes and hotel exteriors, the designs are exquisite and the presentation most appealing. In looking at the illustrations, one is struck with the modernity but one senses in the background the influence of ancient traditions: the clean lines of sculptured rock gardens, perhaps, the mannered elegance of the Japanese tea ceremony, the power and simplicity of the watercourse way of the Tao and--most amusingly--the impishness of Zen. Hara begins with "re-design." Design artists are commissioned to redesign some "daily products of the 21st century"--toilet paper, matches, the roach motel, exit stamps, diapers, tea bags, and macaroni.

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