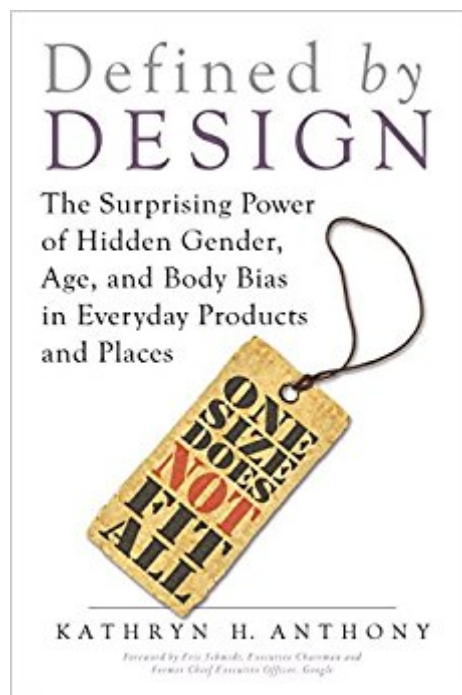


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# Defined By Design: The Surprising Power Of Hidden Gender, Age, And Body Bias In Everyday Products And Places



## Synopsis

This wide-ranging overview of design in everyday life demonstrates how design shapes our lives in ways most of us would never imagine. The author, a leading expert in social and psychological issues in design, uncovers the gender, age, and body biases inherent in the designs of common products and living spaces that we all routinely use. From the schools our children attend and the buildings we work in to ill-fitting clothes and one-size-fits-all seating in public transportation, restaurants, and movie theaters, we are surrounded by an artificial environment that can affect our comfort, our self-image, and even our health. Anthony points out the flaws and disadvantages of certain fashions, children's toys, high-tech gadgets, packaging, public transportation, public restrooms, neighborhood layouts, classrooms, workplaces, hospitals, and more. In an increasingly diverse populace where many body types, age groups, and cultures interact, she argues that it's time our environments caught up. This fascinating book--full of aha moments--will teach readers to recognize the hidden biases in certain products and places and to work for more intelligent and healthy design in all areas of life.

## Book Information

Paperback: 320 pages

Publisher: Prometheus Books (March 14, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1633882837

ISBN-13: 978-1633882836

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 0.9 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 6 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #100,268 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #71 in [Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Crafts & Hobbies > Decorating](#) #72 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Decorative Arts & Design > Industrial & Product Design](#) #140 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Architecture > Buildings](#)

## Customer Reviews

“An eye-opening, comprehensive account of how the design of everyday objects impacts our lives and our health—from cell phones to car seats, from shoes to restrooms, from homes to healthcare. Kathryn H. Anthony has written an immensely readable book that will cause you to look more closely at what you use, buy, and encounter each day, and to become more

informed and critical consumers. — Clare Cooper Marcus, Professor Emerita, Departments of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, University of California, Berkeley — “How do items designed for —œnormal— people — usually an average-sized white male — work for everyone else? In this original and provocative work, Kathryn H. Anthony questions dozens of products used regularly in the course of work and leisure. She wonders who designed the glass and transparent floors in the Acropolis Museum in Athens, Greece, which allow visitors to look up and under the skirts of women and girls; or who designed the hard, plastic packaging that cuts the hands of many. Anthony demonstrates how the design of many objects promotes rather than inhibits human inequality — and, remarkably, she also proposes some solutions. Her message to readers: Take power back into the hands of consumers and demand changes! — Diane Ghirardo, Distinguished Professor, University of Southern California School of Architecture — “Defined by Design analyzes how and where Americans struggle with bad design every day. Whether you are tall or short, young or old, male or female, able or disabled, Anthony advocates smarter, healthier, user-friendly design at every scale — from the body to the room, the building, and the city. Her book is recommended reading for industrial designers, architects, planners, and public officials. — Dolores Hayden, professor of architecture and urbanism, Yale University, and author of *Redesigning the American Dream: Gender, Housing, and Family Life* — “Anthony’s book changes how we look at our everyday world, from killer furniture and footwear injuries to airless schools and uncomfortable restaurants. She shows how the design of things makes our lives easier — or harder — and why one size doesn’t fit all. — Despina Stratigakos, professor of architecture, University at Buffalo — “Finally, someone other than me, a small woman, understands that one size doesn’t fit all. Anthony gives a comprehensive look at gender, body, and age biases built into all types of consumer products and buildings, describing the harm that they cause. She goes even further by challenging us with a call to action, supporting products and legislation that are gender, body, and age neutral. A thoughtful read for those pursuing product and architecture development. — Beth Brykman, author of *The Best of Both Worlds: How Mothers Can Find Full-Time Satisfaction in Part-Time Work* — “Poorly designed places and objects disadvantage us in myriad but often invisible ways. — Design deficiencies of restrooms, vehicles, offices, and healthcare and learning environments take a toll on our mental and physical well-being — even more so for vulnerable groups like women, children, the elderly, and the disabled. Kathryn Anthony is an internationally renowned scholar in environmental psychology and design research. Her book illuminates the

countless ways that people are constrained by poor design. It will go a long way toward raising awareness of these issues among architects, urban planners, lay citizens, and elected officials. The findings. . . are based on rigorous research and have immediate relevance for improving the relationships between people and their physical surroundings and the quality of their everyday lives.

• Dan Stokols, PhD, Chancellor and Professor Emeritus and Research Professor, School of Social Ecology, University of California-Irvine

“Based on keen insight and concrete evidence, *Defined by Design* opens our eyes to the fit/misfit design of things and spaces that we encounter in our daily lives. With many illustrative examples, it is so lucid and clear that every reader will be able to understand the concept of affordance—a fundamental linkage between human behavior and the environment—which is important both for experts to design better and for laymen to use better.

• Ryuzo Ohno, DEng/Arch, Professor Emeritus, Tokyo Institute of Technology

“Lethal cribs, painful shoes, lecture podiums that eclipse wheelchair users—we are surrounded by things that just don’t work for us. This book exhorts us to wake up and push back on thoughtless, ineffectual, and dangerous design. Read it and take action!

• Maggie Jackson, author of *Distracted: The Erosion of the Attention and the Coming Dark Age*

Kathryn H. Anthony, Ph.D., has been teaching in architecture and design and serving on design juries for over thirty years. She is professor and past chair of the Design Program Faculty at the School of Architecture, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she also serves on the faculty of the Department of Gender and Women’s Studies and the Department of Landscape Architecture. She is the author of over 100 publications including the award-winning book, *Designing for Diversity: Gender, Race, and Ethnicity in the Architectural Profession*. She holds the lifetime title of Distinguished Professor of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA). Her research and publications have received awards from the ACSA, the American Institute of Architects (AIA), and the Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA). Dr. Anthony has been a spokesperson about design issues on ABC World News with Diane Sawyer, National Public Radio (NPR), CNN.com, the Chicago Tribune, the Economist, the Guardian, the Los Angeles Times, the New York Times, Time.com, the Wall Street Journal, and the Washington Post. She has testified before the US Congress about gender issues in design.

Thoroughly researched, succinctly presented, and enjoyable to read, *Defined by*

Design Thinking is a collection of opportunities to innovate. Dr. Anthony offers design examples challenging everyone from international designers to home caregivers to take action and make the world a better place. More than just a book about "things" and how they could be improved, *Defined by Design* encourages readers to think outside their own skin and experience designed places and things through others' perspectives. Always thought provoking, each design example leaves the reader pondering multiple "what if" scenarios. The book is an ideal launching point for further discussion in group contexts of college courses, professional design teams, hospitality providers, retail sales staff, health care professionals, or any collective of people who seek to serve their community, enhance quality of life, and design to make a difference.

I love the way Anthony delves into the histories of "why" so many everyday things are the way they are. You can't improve the future without knowing the why of the past and this book is a terrific compendium. So very interesting for anyone who wonders at the details which create our current lifestyles and asks "How did we get here?" Anthony makes the observation that design is everywhere and this book entertainingly points out by example a designer's responsibilities. It's far too easy to approach a design problem first hand and assume that every user will see a situation the same way you did. This book implores us all, designers and non, to see the world through another's eyes.

This was a fascinating read. The author examines the way that the design of fashion items, other products we use, and the built environment can exclude or even harm certain genders, ages, or body types. This was a real eye-opening look at the often unintended effects of design on the consumer; clearly the author has spent a lifetime observing and studying this phenomenon. I found myself checking my own expectations about things like department-store layout and speakers' podia, topics I had never really considered before even though I am a user of both. What made this book really valuable to me were the numerous examples and stories of GOOD design, as well as the final chapter, "A Call To Action", in which the author offers up the notion that all of us can help improve the design of our environments by recognizing that which disadvantages us and by bringing it to the attention of those who can help to remedy it. She even provides concrete language for advocating for these changes. This is a book I will be gifting to many others.

The book is an intriguing and conversational look at ways that everyday products and places

disadvantage and affect certain portions of the population. There is guaranteed to be at least one issue I'm sure each reader can relate to, whether a man, a woman, a parent, a caregiver, an office worker, a shopper, etc. The wide variety of this study includes everything from children's toys, to fireman's quarters, to cars, to healthcare design and to restrooms. A real page turner, the author presents fascinating stories and interesting facts and figures about poorly executed designs that have major impact in the environment. In addition, the book details the history of many controversial issues and the ways they are addressed across cultures around the world. In each chapter, the author also highlights important current trends that designers can learn from. It is a great book to help people understand how to critically analyze their environments and begin to implement change to design healthier, more productive environments and products.

Fascinating read for product designers, architects and anyone who is looking to improve design thinking and how they see the world. From toilets to abortion centers to iPhone, after reading this book, you will start to see a difference in how you look at products and facilities. Equally fascinating you will see how design differ in different cultures. One example that struck out for me was that of how the prevailing medical facilities system has By Design put doctors working at Planned Parenthood at risk. As a Product Manager for one of the leading productivity suites, it is very essential for me to deliver Universal Accessibility. I am happy to attest that read this book has added some rather critical dimensions to my product design checklist. Certainly something that will help me become a better PM and the products me and my colleagues build much more accessible.

A very timely book. Its important to understand the why/history of all sorts of design elements and how such affects us; negatively at times. By understanding and learning to recognize such, will help/encourage all stakeholders to improve the design. The diversity(in all facets) present in the world, that will only continue to increase, challenges/requires that design of all types find ways to be more wholly inclusive.

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