



Decoding Design: Understanding and Using Symbols in Visual Communication

Maggie Macnab

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Revealing how common symbols resonate at a gut level, this book examines the basic shapes that have found their way into human design since the very earliest times. The author deconstructs famous logos and designs that use symbols, patterns and shapes to convey meaning.

Decoding Design: Understanding and Using Symbols in Visual Communication Details

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Author : Maggie Macnab

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Neil says

I think this quote from early on in the book explains it well,

"In the same way breathing is an unconscious action, patterns are so pervasive we don't notice most of them. Likewise we cannot exist without them and we use them subliminally and constantly."

Symbology and semiotics are crucial in design - more importantly the ability to understand what we are trying to communicate and then clearly encode within the design - so that the users, customers and audience can easily understand and make the most of them.

I feel that a lot of 'failed' design, is simply the designer's inability to perform this encoding properly.

I heard Maggie talking on DesignMatters and then set about tracking the book down (at a reasonable price - it's out of print).

After reading the book , I immediately thought, damn - I wish I had had this book 25 years ago. I then thought; this topic and this knowledge is obviously needed, why is Maggie the only one to have written about it.

Personally, I think this book should be required reading on EVERY design course - so, it's tragic that it's "out of print". There is an eBook, but then you miss the great interactive cover.

Samee says

Maggie Macnab was my logo design teacher. I can't wait to delve deeper into her book!

Toby says

One of the most thought-provoking design books I've ever read. It really descends into the insights of why certain images appeal to us on a primordial level.

Christine says

I'm currently working on a more comprehensive review of this book, but this is the bottom line: If you are a practicing artist, designer or craftsman--read this book. If you have friends that fall into these categories--buy

this book for them. Many design books are pure fluff or puff pieces for their 'celebrity' subjects. This book has all the great photos, illustrations and examples of a well produced, showy design book, but more impressively, the text is highly engaging and thought-provoking. It has inspired me to try new things in my work as well as elucidated some things that were already happening--just at that slightly unconscious level. This is not only a good read, but a reference book that actually lives up to that ideal.

Rock says

Good overview and guide to identifying basic design principles and the messages they convey. I refer to it often. Should be on any designer's bookshelf.

Sellyndavies says

A design book that reads like liturgy. Explores universal symbols. Totally kicks ass as a design resource, and is also a fine example of print design at its best.

Yvonne Chow says

how to understand the math, science, and universal meanings behind symbols. contains logo case studies

Ian says

There are parts of this book that are shamefully mystical for being essentially a modernist textbook. However, this was my first introduction to the numerology of forms, and it's extremely easy to understand, enjoy, and even utilize in your own creative work, applied across almost all creative disciplines. Easy to recommend.
