

*Scandinavian Design. Alternative Histories.*

Kjetil Fallan (Editor), London-New York: Berg Publishers, 2012, 306 pp.

#### PORTRAYING THE NORDIC DESIGN FROM AN INSIDE POINT OF VIEW

Aida Puente Toraño\*  
University of Oviedo

*Scandinavian Design. Alternative Histories* is a rather technical but an easy-to-read academic work, focusing mainly on the often ignored complexity of the theme, introducing various fresh perspectives to the subject. The authors try to provide the reader with a radically different vision, constructed by clarifying many of the persistent myths of Scandinavian design.

The book is an introduction to multiple histories of design. The whole idea is based in the capacity of design studies to be continually in process of change or debate. The monograph is composed of thirteen articles, distributed into three parts, which are headlined: “Networks”, “Appropriations” and “Mediations”. These rather abstract themes have quite a heterogeneous collection of articles under them.

The work contains illustrations, mainly black and white photographs and designs. The bibliography is enormous and certainly offers a valuable resource for a researcher interested of the theme. At the end of the book is placed an index by name and in alphabetical order, which is most useful to find specific subjects.

The authors are well-known in the field of Scandinavian design studies, including experts from various areas, such as interior design and decoration, furniture, textiles or market's and consumers profiles. All of them have several contributions in international publications such as the *Journal of Design History*, *Scandinavian Journal of Design History* and *Design Issues*.

The first part, “Networks”, starts with a review of the historiography, and it seems to be directed to researchers interested in the most recent contributions in the area. It focuses mostly on the consumer point of view and tries to explain the paralleled birth of the Scandinavian design with the modernity and the idea of the Welfare State. It is a particularly important matter in the examples of Sweden and Finland. This part also includes an example of the Finnish studies related to design. Finland, a fellow Nordic country is included under the concept of “Scandinavia” due to its important role in the history of the Scandinavian

design movement. In her article Leena Svinhufvud, curator at Helsinki's Design Museum, portrays the role of industry in the manufacturing of textiles during the interwar period (1918–1939).

The second part named “Appropriations” focuses on decoration, especially on furniture and interior design. The chapter of Christina Zetterlund refers to “ideology and design”, yet the text mainly moves in the sphere of domesticity, as the following chapters, eight and nine. The last article of the chapter, by Hans-Christian Jensen, deals most clearly with the themes of the book: Scandinavian design related to the modernization processes in the Nordic countries.

In the third part of the book the article of Marlene Breunig offers an interpretation of the market strategies to exhibit the products of design furniture and Pekka Korvenmaa examines the design of the 1960s and 1970s in Finland. Kjetil Fallan highlighted the importance of the Seventies and Eighties in globalization of the Scandinavian design.

The Scandinavian design is one of the most successful exports of the Nordic countries. The book offers an excellent chance to learn more about the Scandinavian design world, closely related to the characteristics of the Nordic society and their sociopolitical concept of everyday life: the ideology that partly inspired the Nordic design to form its principles of manufacturing honest and quality objects with a non-elitist but a refined notion of comfort.

The objective of the work is to go beyond the stereotypes of Nordic design, with the intention to show the complexity of the phenomenon. The whole work represents a new approach, even if some of the material was previously published. The book is well-coordinated and, in my opinion, works as a fine collection of articles. Even the cover, designed by William Joseph, gives a sense of careful consideration. Elegant in its simplicity, with a friendly surface and a dignified appearance, it draws from the ideals of Scandinavian design.

Fecha de recepción: 7 de noviembre de 2012

Fecha de revisión: 20 de noviembre de 2012

Fecha de aceptación: 3 de diciembre de 2012