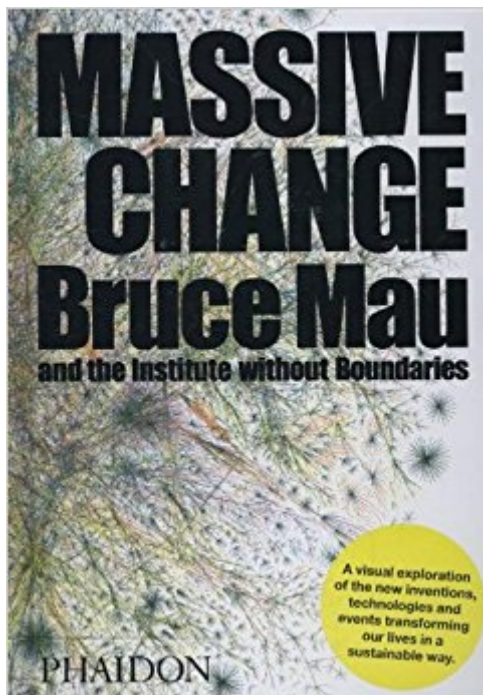


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Massive Change



Synopsis

Massive Change is a modern, illustrated primer on the new inventions, technologies, and events that are affecting the human race worldwide. This book is part of a broader research project by Bruce Mau Design, intended to provoke debate and discussion about the future of design culture - defined generally as the 'familiar objects and techniques that are transforming our lives'. Through an original selection of essays, interviews and provocative imagery aimed at a broad audience, Massive Change explores the changing forces of design in the contemporary world and, from this angle, expands the definition of design to include the built environment, transportation technologies, revolutionary materials, energy and information systems, and living organisms. The book is divided into 11 heavily illustrated sections, covering major areas of change in contemporary society - urbanism and architecture, health and living, wealth and politics and the military. Each section intersperses intriguing documentary images with a general introductory essay, extended captions and interviews with leading thinkers, including engineers, designers, philosophers, scientists, architects, artists, and writers. In its totality, this volume embodies a graphic timeline of significant inventions and world events from 10,000 BC to the present, in a sweeping and scintillating intellectual tour de force.

Book Information

Hardcover: 240 pages

Publisher: Phaidon Press; y First printing edition (October 1, 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0714844012

ISBN-13: 978-0714844015

Product Dimensions: 7.1 x 1.2 x 10 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.1 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 11 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #290,996 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #179 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Architecture > Criticism](#) #372 in [Books > Science & Math > Technology > Social Aspects](#) #859 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Graphic Design > Techniques](#)

Customer Reviews

Utopianism is not dead; it has migrated from politics to materialism. This book, says Canadian industrial designer Mau (who founded Toronto City College's Institute Without Borders), is "not about the world of design; it's about the design of the world." In a form that is part Apple ad, part

Powerpoint presentation and part architectural pastiche. In Rem Koolhaas, Mau's volume brings together designs and theories (mostly Western) and photographers (global) that "tap into global commons," "distribute capacity" and "embrace paradox": superstrong fibers modeled on gecko hairs; "sustainable business" that embraces corporate accountability; the "redesigning" of Third World property law; genetic engineering, macro- and microimaging technologies; virtual reality technology that allows collaboration over large distances; a "cyberneticized" military that paradoxically has more nonviolent options. All of these ideas (some of which are now reality) are here in words and pictures, often further explained through q&a's with leading researchers. The result reads, intentionally, like a friendly corporate prospectus or catalogue, except that the "product" on offer is a radically hopeful vision of the future. With 250 color and 50 b&w photos in a fractally chaotic layout, and a text that speaks in affirmative sound bites, this book offers a vision of the world in a package designed to get readers excited about stoves that burn peanut shells, superlight gels that can protect flowers from flame, and plants and microbes that turn open sewers into water supplies. It succeeds beautifully. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

'Nothing less than a design for life.' (Art Review) 'Massive Change is about everything and everybody ... intelligent, visually provocative ... not just a modern guide to technologies, but also a discussion of how they affect our planet.' (Building Engineer) 'The most unusual design book of the year ... This is in-depth thinking.' (Financial Times) 'With impeccable artistic contributions ... and informed articles, Massive Change muses on the trends that will shape this century.' (Wallpaper*) 'A well-argued, well-illustrated and indeed inspiring book that breaks from the usual mould.' (FX) "Sings like an ode to sustainable development.' (Dazed & Confused) 'GLOBAL WAKE-UP CALL In a back cover tag-line that wouldn't seem out of place on a movie poster, it boldly states that 'Massive Change is not about the world of design; it's about the design of the world.' Amazingly, it manages to live up to his assertion. ... Yes, it's idealistic, but you'll be so engrossed in the texts, images and sheer self-belief that you'll forgive it. ... Enormous in its scope, Massive Change is a wake-up call to everyone concerned with the 'sustainability' of the human race on earth. And it's only 20 quid. Incredible!' (Architectural Review) ' With 250 color and 50 B&W photos in a fractally chaotic layout, and a text that speaks in affirmative sound bites, this book offers a vision of the world in a package designed to get readers excited about stoves that burn peanut shells, superlight gels that can protect flowers from flame, and plants and microbes that turn open sewers into water supplies. It succeeds beautifully.' (Publishers Weekly) 'Bruce Mau is as close as you'll get to a

design-world hero.' (Surface)

Bruce Mau and Warren Berger (Glimmer, Ask Beautiful Questions) have been inspiring me to new levels for the past year. the simple things are making the biggest changes. everyone should read this book - not because they have to read for some kind of assignment,, but because the MUST read it - for the assignment of their lives.... for great wisdom and awe into what we are capable of!

Loved it so much that I gave it to my boss. This triggered a book club to start at work - office happy hour!

great!

Massive Change quickly shows you all the different ways people are solving some of the world's most difficult problems. Bruce clearly communicates that we can design our way to a better world.

I can't stop opening up this book and reading it. It's my daily bible for information. I'm addicted!

Fantastic illustrations throughout! Very inspiring! A classic.

is the ultimate aim of design, according to Bruce Mau. And I agree with him. He cites as examples of design that have attained "design nirvana": ordinary objects and machines -- airplanes, power grids, drugs -- that anonymously allow the modern world to function as one without any of us taking notice of their vital functions...until they fail. In a time when staying optimistic about the world requires (for me) more calories than a workout on the stairmaster, I need all the GOOD NEWS I can get, this book has nothing but. True, the book does have that certain hoaky 'TIME's 30 New Leaders of the New Millenium'-style of presentation: 2 page interviews that cannot really go into any depth about anything; and great ideas that may never see the light of day for reasons beyond anyone's control. But let's let that slide: some of the ideas are already in place. Besides, even a misanthrope like me has to take a break and hope every now and then...Mau (and his team of researchers) addresses here the bigger issue in design: they call it the "design of the world." That is, as opposed to the narrow "world of design" that is so often mired in pathological (head up the colon) narcissism in its inane, frivolous pursuit / fetishism of singular objects. Thus, in keeping with their objective of presenting a wider perspective, Mau and his team wisely steered clear of all "celebrity

designers" -- who are...what, for the most part, essentially nothing more than fussy, uptight, temperamental servant-toadies whose function is to glamorize the imperialism of capitalism, are they not? Instead, they went talking to scientists, science writers, engineers, an economist (Hernando de Soto), a law professor, engineers, et al. And a couple of architects who seem sincere and all, but could have been left out. The people interviewed here, for the most part, have the means and ideas to bring about REAL consequential changes on a global scale: people who don't call themselves designers but whose works are crucial in shaping the world to come for the better. And as the interviewees use the word, 'better' means 'better for EVERYONE' on this planet. And that means seeing Design as 'creatively, compassionately applied-intelligence' to the real problems faced by billions of people who do not live in the well-plugged cities of the world, and do not share even a fraction of what most of us take for granted. Electricity and potable water, for example. We're not talking about a "better" office cubicle or a "better" sofa, cappuccino maker, shoes, etc -- important though they are. The book merely asks that we get a perspective on things. In keeping with the TIME mag format, the book functions as an ad for the people (and their org) who are featured here -- which is fine, since ignoramuses like me can get an overview of who's doing what. But it also a manifesto calling for a bigger idea of 'design': Design as the art of domesticating the full potential of technology to situate ourselves back into the law of ecology by creative cosmopolitanism and ethical pragmatism in our stewardship of the world. If, like me, you agree with Hal Foster's diatribe in his 'Design and Crime' (where he basically accuses the design industry of being complicitly evil for serving a self-serving structure of inequity), then I think this book offers a hopeful view of Design as something REALLY consequential -- as opposed to that arrogated by the frivolous, exclusionary, image-driven, self-important nincumpoops that comprise the field of "high design" today. Highly recommended for 2 kinds of people: One, colonocephalic people who cannot see other people -- only what they have on; and think nothing of killing to have a 'nice pair/set of whatever.' Two, all cool people who dream of a cool world for all.

Bruce Mau's previous book - "Life Style" - was a pivotal publication that had something very fundamental to say about the practice of design. The argument woven into this survey of Bruce Mau Design's portfolio derived its edginess from an underlying, existential dilemma. On the one hand, Mau wanted to do justice to design's capacity to give "style" to sprawling, viral "life" (originally a very Nietzschean concept, later taken up and politicised by Foucault and Deleuze). On the other hand, there was the fear for the domestication of his practice to the status of banal, lifeless purveyor of images and artefacts - global capitalism's lingua franca. This tension between subversion and

acquiescence turned "Life Style" into a poignant testimony. Massive Change is, I am sorry to say, a much less compelling read. It takes its cue from Life Style's key idea - design is able to reformat the very principle of life - but dispels the darker, problematic side of the equation. Indeed, although Mau would like us to believe otherwise, the book's perspective is squarely utopian. In adopting as its motto theme "Now that we can do anything, what will we do?", it echoes the pragmatist voluntarism of the peer-to-peer movement. But the dissonances - P2P's paradoxical (symbiotic/parasitic) relationship with capitalism - have been filtered from the echo. What remains is the suave message that technological progress - shaped and harnessed by design - will be able to solve all our problems if we only want it to. So, although Massive Change promises to bring us a "wildly unexpected view of the future", it really doesn't reach beyond the intellectual horizon of, say, a special issue of Scientific American on "Key Technologies for the 21st Century". The material is conventionally organised in sections that review the state of the art in urban planning, transportation, energy, information, material sciences, military technologies, biotech etc. Only two chapters discuss governance issues ("market economies" and "wealth and politics"). The relatively meager substance comes from short interviews with a series of "experts" in the disciplines surveyed. The selection is very US-centric and contains quite a few usual suspects (Dean Kamen, Stewart Brand, Lawrence Lessig, Jaime Lerner, Hazel Henderson etc). By now we are also well acquainted with Mau's cinematic and fractured style in book design. "Massive Change" doesn't break any new ground compared to previous volumes (not only Life Style but also S,M,L,XL (with Rem Koolhaas) and the Zone series of books). What was once truly refreshing is becoming stale. By the way, the short interviews are printed on glaringly yellow pages, which I find positively ugly. All of this is disappointing. I can think of two explanations for the intellectual and stylistic flaccidity exhibited in this volume. First, we are missing the incisiveness and depth that Mau's sparring partner Sanford Kwinter brought to "Life Style" (In my opinion, Kwinter's three-page lead essay was worth the price of that book). I am not sure what happened between Mau and Kwinter, but the latter is almost completely absent from this volume. Then, although this is not be obvious at first sight, "Massive Change" is not really a Mau book. In fact, it has been largely put together by Jennifer Leonard, one of the students from the inaugural year of the Institute without Boundaries (a newly established postgraduate education programme whereby students spend a full year in the Mau studio). So, although Mau's name figures prominently on the cover, inside we learn that the Institute led the research, development, design and production of Massive Change. I can't recommend this volume. "Massive Change" is a missed opportunity.

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