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Design Studies: Theory and Research in Graphic Design

Audrey Bennett

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In an age of globalization and connectivity, the idea of "mainstream culture" has become quaint. Websites, magazines, books, and television have all honed in on ever-diversifying subcultures, hoping to carve out niche audiences that grow savvier and more narrowly sliced by the day. Consequently,the discipline of graphic design has undergone a sea change. Where visual communication was once informed by a designer's creative intuition, the proliferation of specialized audiences now calls for more research-based design processes.

Designers who ignore research run the risk of becoming mere tools for communication rather than bold voices. *Design Studies,* a collection of 27 essays from an international cast of top design researchers, sets out to mend this schism between research and practice. The texts presented here make a strong argument for performing rigorous experimentation and analysis. Each author outlines methods in which research has aided their designwhether by investigating how senior citizensreact to design aesthetics, how hip hop culture can in?uence design, or how design for Third World nations is affected by cultural differences. Contributors also outline inspired ways in which design educators can teach research methods to their students. Finally, *Design Studies* is rounded out by ?ve annotated bibliographies to further aid designers in their research. This comprehensive reader is the de?nitive reference for this new direction in graphic design, and an essential resource for both students and practitioners.

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