

follow. A formal introduction could have provided a useful context for these articles by pointing out some of the recurring themes (design thinking, responsive/adaptive design, energy, remediation, etc.) and showing how the different essays engaged those themes. Although the individual essays in this volume have much to offer, readers must be prepared to find their own way through the book.

***The Japanese House: Material Culture in the Modern Home* by Inge Daniels**

Oxford and New York: Berg, 2010. 320 pages. 120 color plates, references, glossary, index. Paper, US\$34.95.

Reviewed by Sarah Teasley

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While the image of “the Japanese house” may have changed somewhat over time, one fact remains: we seem to have no problem accepting the concept that there is a standard “Japanese house” whose aesthetic, furnishings and construction are shared by all Japanese. In her eagerly awaited book, anthropologist Inge Daniels quietly and effectively explodes this myth by closely detailing the heterogeneous living habits and interiors of thirty households in the Kansai area in western Japan. Daniels’ ability to modulate between close ethnography and much larger discussions about family, gender and age in contemporary Japanese society tacitly prove her point that any culture of living can only be understood as a composite of minutely observed local practices. Her achievement, however, is not simply to put the hoary myth of homogeneous Zen minimalism to rest once and for all. Rather, *The Japanese House: Material Culture in the Modern Home* both presents a convincing, if sometimes fragmentary, picture of social attitudes in contemporary Japan through the lens of the home and – perhaps of most interest to readers of *Design and Culture* – offers researchers and students a highly useful and translatable model for performing an ethnography of the home.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Daniels’ ultimate interest is neither housing nor design, but contemporary Japanese social attitudes, particularly those concerning the relationship between individual desires and a strongly felt compunction to conform to expected social norms. However, the book’s carefully articulated research methodology and insistence on seeing the home as a dynamic system of interactions in which the everyday use of objects is itself a design practice offer much for designers, design historians and other design professionals. Daniels, a lecturer in social anthropology at the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Oxford, collected her data

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by living in five households for periods of several weeks during her fieldwork in 2003, and by conducting repeated visits to twenty-five other households during this period. She supplemented the immersive research with interviews of housing industry professionals, an extensive survey of current Japanese and western-language academic writing on housing in Japan, a study of extant anthropological work on the home, and analyses of advertisements and other popular media representations of the home.

All the book's chapters are composed of short sections on specific, relatively discrete sub-topics ("storage strategies," "neighbourhood participation," "male minimalist design"), whose key themes are drawn together in thoughtful chapter conclusions. The first chapter presents a historiography and surveys Japanese housing in the modern period as a backdrop for discussing occupants' attitudes towards specific rooms. Chapters two and three look at the relationship between the home and the outside – external social ties in chapter two and religious practices and spiritual beliefs in chapter three. Chapter four, "Tatami Tastes," deals more explicitly with design, exploring such issues as occupants' agency in shaping their living environment, gendered decorating habits, and the impact of gender and age on attitudes towards traditional aesthetics. Chapters five and six, on the collection, storage, display, circulation and disposal of objects, use interactions with objects explicitly as their interpretive framework. And throughout the book, stand-alone text-and-image essays, combining photography from British photographer Susan Edwards with Daniels' commentary on topics like women and their kimonos and household slippers, provide a refreshing counterpoint to the more formal anthropological study.

As the book's subtitle suggests, Daniels is interested not only in how people move through the spaces they inhabit, but also in how they interact with each other through objects, and how this interaction with objects creates the spaces in which we live. While she does not go so far as to invoke Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory (ANT), Daniels demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the role of objects in daily life and affords considerable agency to a house's residents as its designers. (This basic stance – that domestic interiors are dynamic spaces constantly in design and redesign, as its occupants collect, discard and move objects about – reflects Daniels' training in the Department of Anthropology at University College London during a time when professors and peers, including Daniel Miller, Alison J. Clarke and Victor Buchli, were exploring similar questions and methodologies.)

At a time when ethnography is again gaining traction as a design method (see also Clarke's edited volume *Design Anthropology*, published in 2010 by Springer), Daniels' refusal to separate interior space and the objects with which we furnish it from the social interactions that take place within these environments (and the attitudes towards social roles created through these interactions) makes *The*

Japanese House an important model for designers and design historians seeking ways to analyze other spaces. Since the research took place entirely in one region of Japan, I would have liked Daniels to address the possible regional specificity of some of her informants' habits and attitudes in her conclusions. Similarly, although she does address class in her discussions of alcove decoration in chapter four and gift-giving in chapter six, I would have welcomed elsewhere in the text a more explicit discussion of the impact of class on dwelling habits and relationships to community, gender roles and objects. But these quibbles also demonstrate how *The Japanese House* embodies – and for the most part successfully negotiates – a fundamental issue for any researcher or designer working with/in culture today: how to translate between the specific and the general, knowing that accurate, ethical research must pay attention to the specific, but that such work will only be effective if it also addresses the general. For showing how to move gracefully between the small details and the larger picture, and for proving conclusively that “the Japanese house” is always a composite vessel composed of interactions, *The Japanese House* should be widely read and loudly applauded.

***Graphic Women: Life Narrative & Contemporary Comics* by Hillary L. Chute**

New York: Columbia University Press, 2010. 297 pages. 26 color plates, 65 halftones, references, index. Paper, US\$26.50.

Reviewed by Maud Lavin

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In *Graphic Women*, Hillary Chute, Assistant Professor of English at the University of Chicago, interrogates five artists' autobiographical graphic novels for their plumbing of memory, trauma and desire. Chute rolls out as well their stylistic innovations in combining word and image to tell stories, all of which are at the same time absorbing and almost impossible to engage with due to their disturbing subject matter. Despite *Graphic Women's* carefully analytic tone, it is an engrossing cover-to-cover read, one that pushes the reader to think about the narrative possibilities of mixing word and image and how to use this mix to visualize the seemingly unvisualizable (in these instances, trauma). After a useful historical and contextual introduction to women's graphic novels, Chute presents chapter by chapter the work of Aline Kominsky-Crumb (for example, in *Love That Bunch*), Phoebe Gloeckner (*A Child's Life and Other Stories*), Lynda Barry

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