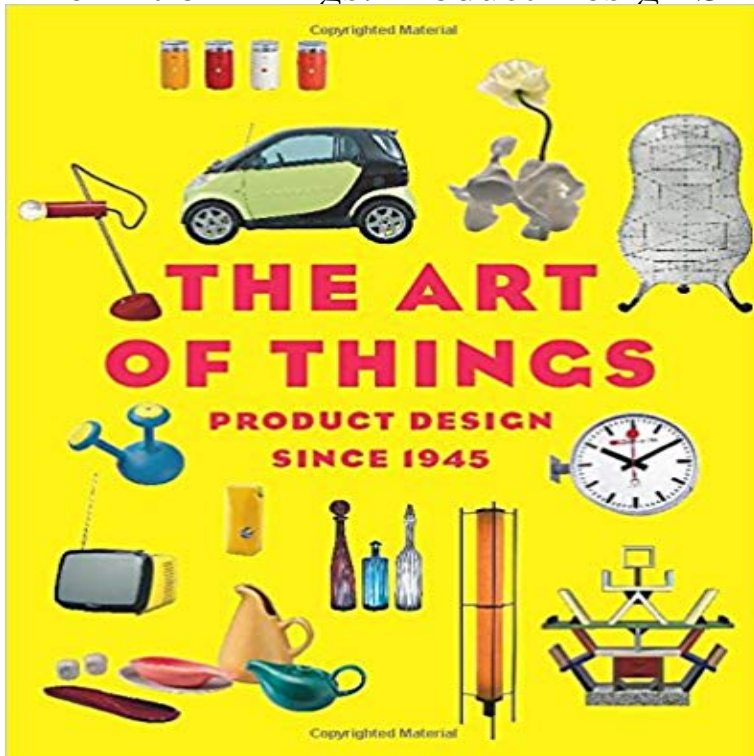


# The Art of Things: Product Design Since 1945



The most ambitious survey of its subject ever published, *The Art of Things* is a monument, and a key, to the objects that surround us. For most of human history, the form of a useful object was determined by its maker, usually a single artisan working within a long cultural tradition. However, the Industrial Revolution saw the development of a curious new profession, that of the designer, whose job it was to decide the appearance and even the functional aspects of goods—whether typewriters or tableware—that would be manufactured by others or, increasingly, by machines. When the so-called consumer society emerged in full force after World War II, designers took center stage; some, like Charles and Ray Eames, became celebrities and icons of the new lifestyles they were helping to create. Within the burgeoning design community, national tendencies emerged: The Germans and the Swiss, heirs to the Bauhaus, favored a modernist aesthetic in which form followed function, and the Scandinavians pioneered a warmer type of functionalism with their distinctive wooden furniture. The U.S. pursued a double strategy, in which home furnishings influenced by European modernism coexisted with frankly exuberant cars and kitchen appliances. Meanwhile, the Japanese consumer electronics companies took an early lead in the branch of industrial design that is perhaps most influential today and is perhaps best represented by the image of Steve Jobs holding aloft an iPhone before an adoring crowd. This splendid hardcover, slipcased volume, itself a striking object, narrates the history of modern design in each of the major industrialized nations in turn. Its engaging text, written by leading historians of design, is accompanied by more than 650 vibrant color plates, illustrating both iconic designs and lesser-known but still influential creations. The most ambitious survey of its subject

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