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Keith M. Murphy

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Keith M. Murphy : Swedish Design: An Ethnography (Expertise: Cultures and Technologies of Knowledge) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Swedish Design: An Ethnography (Expertise: Cultures and Technologies of Knowledge):

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Swedish designers are noted for producing distinctive and elegant forms; their furniture and household goods have an especially loyal following around the world. Design in Sweden has more than just an aesthetic component, however. Since at least the late nineteenth century, Swedish politicians and social planners have viewed design as a means for advocating and enacting social change and pushing for a more egalitarian social organization. In this book, Keith M. Murphy examines the special relationship between politics and design in Sweden, revealing in particular the cultural meanings this relationship holds for Swedish society. Over the course of fourteen months of research in Stockholm and at other sites, Murphy conducted in-depth interviews with various players involved in the Swedish design industry—designers, design instructors, government officials, artists, and curators—and observed several different design collectives in action. He found that, for Swedes, design is never socially or politically neutral. Even for common objects like furniture and other household goods, design can be labeled responsible, democratic, or ethical descriptors that all neatly resonate with the traditional moral tones of Swedish social democracy. Murphy also considers the example of Ikea and its power to politicize perceptions of the everyday world. More broadly, *Swedish Design* serves as a model for an anthropological approach to the study of design practice, one that accounts for the various ways in which order is purposefully and meaningfully imposed by designers on the domains of human life, and the consequences those impositions have on the social worlds in which they are embedded.

"Keith M. Murphy is an anthropology professor at the University of California, Irvine, and if his field seems far removed from Scandinavian furniture, he approaches the subject in relation to Swedish social welfare programs and democratic socialist ideals. The lamps and tables furnishing our homes and workplaces, in other words, are a 'means for managing well-being in everyday life.'"David Lührssen, *Shepherd Express* (November 2015)"For anyone who has taught the history of 20th-century design and had a student ask, 'How can a chair be political?' this book will help answer that question. It is not a typical design history text—there are no large color images of landmark chairs or textiles and no evolutionary account of historically significant designers. Instead, Murphy (anthropology, UC Irvine) draws out how ordinary objects within the built environment embody Sweden's social democratic ideology: that is, the way Swedes use design to structure the everyday world they live and move about in."M. Frank, *CHOICE* (April 2016)"*Swedish Design: An Ethnography* will be of interest to scholars and graduate students in anthropology, sociology, design studies, and the history of design as well as scholars engaged in design research. Murphy provides the reader with an approach to carrying out anthropology of design, outlining thematic areas for consideration; in so doing, he offers an invaluable resource for researchers and students with interests in design and its wider social political relations, interaction analysis, and anthropological approaches to understanding the relation between the political, design processes and practices." -- Wendy Gunn, *H-Net* (September 2016) "Swedish Design is an acute, revelatory, and wholly original exploration of the cultural life of forms. Attentive to talk, embodied practice, and the broader social geometries that designed forms refract and subtly transform, this is a remarkable account of the literal shaping of cultural experience and identity."Don Brenneis, University of California, Santa Cruz, coeditor of *Annual of Anthropology*About the Author Keith M. Murphy is Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, Irvine. He is coeditor of *Toward an Anthropology of the Will*.