

Words and pictures on how to make twinkles  
in the eye and colours agree in the dark. Thoughts  
on mindscaping, moonlighting and daydreams.  
Have you seen a purple cow? When less can be  
more than enough. *The art of looking sideways.*  
To gaze is to think. Are you left-eyed? Living out  
loud. Buy junk, sell antiques. The Golden Mean.  
Standing ideas on their heads. To look is to listen.  
Insights on the mind's eye. Every status has its  
symbol. 'Do androids dream of electric sheep?'  
Why feel blue? Triumphs of imagination such  
as the person you love is 72.8% water. Do not  
adjust your mind, there's a fault in reality. Teach  
yourself ignorance. The belly-button problem.

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# The Art of Looking Sideways

*Alan Fletcher*

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## **The Art of Looking Sideways** Alan Fletcher

*The Art of Looking Sideways* is a primer in visual intelligence, an exploration of the workings of the eye, the hand, the brain and the imagination. It is an inexhaustible mine of anecdotes, quotations, images, curious facts and useless information, oddities, serious science, jokes and memories, all concerned with the interplay between the verbal and the visual, and the limitless resources of the human mind. Loosely arranged in 72 chapters, all this material is presented in a wonderfully inventive series of pages that are themselves masterly demonstrations of the expressive use of type, space, color and imagery.

This book does not set out to teach lessons, but it is full of wisdom and insight collected from all over the world. Describing himself as a visual jackdaw, master designer Alan Fletcher has distilled a lifetime of experience and reflection into a brilliantly witty and inimitable exploration of such subjects as perception, color, pattern, proportion, paradox, illusion, language, alphabets, words, letters, ideas, creativity, culture, style, aesthetics and value.

*The Art of Looking Sideways* is the ultimate guide to visual awareness, a magical compilation that will entertain and inspire all those who enjoy the interplay between word and image, and who relish the odd and the unexpected.

## **The Art of Looking Sideways Details**

Date : Published July 20th 2001 by Phaidon Press (first published July 17th 2001)

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Author : Alan Fletcher

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## From Reader Review The Art of Looking Sideways for online ebook

### **Shahina says**

Every time I open this book I feel awed and inspired. And it makes me incredibly happy. Love it.

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### **Andee says**

Glad I borrowed it from the library. This book I taught me that an awful lot of people can be hoodwinked into paying \$49 for a book filled with random thoughts. Not that this amazes me, after all people let themselves be convinced that paying thousands for a blob of blue paint in the middle of an otherwise blank canvas means they possess a deeper than normal understanding and appreciation of "real" art. It's sorta pretentious if you ask me, and the silent implication is there that if you give it a bad review then you clearly do not "get it". I get it...great marketing of interesting thought fragments... still not worth the \$49 cover price. I am a practical woman, I have a mason jar filled with my own thought fragments and I grab one out of the jar to help inspire myself into a new direction when I get into an artistic slump. The advantage of this? It saves me \$49 and it keeps my coffee table free for other things.

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### **Sam says**

This book is arguably the greatest coffee table book of all time --- but really so much more. There is so much in here, I've spent hours upon hours flipping through this, looking, reading, and still I haven't come close to taking it all in. Very hard to describe, but a sort of everything book that can be opened to any page at any time and consumed however you please.

A great gift for anyone you know with a brain.

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### **Amy Palmer says**

In short a good book that is overpriced.

It has a lot in it, it is very big. However I found it a little pointless at first not knowing what really to do with it. Being a Graphic Design Student I was told that this is a must have, however I'd say it's OK. That's it.

It has 72 chapters with a few quotes, images and titles like "Colour," "Noise," "Chance," "Camouflage,".

The images are interesting and quotes can be inspiring however this book is so hard to get a solid reference as some quotes are not fletchers. It is very random and a little overwhelming.

It's a book that I look at and just feel confused, it is too many things that are not explained well enough and very hard to use. Impossible to read, this is a book you flick through and watch.

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**Esmira Serova says**

Well, saying it's the best book in the world might be emotional, but it's definitely a book you don't need to be in the mood for, you can open it any moment any day and spend some quality time, learning or being entertained. Take it to a desert island and you'll never get bored. More than that, you can fight off wild animals with it, because it's quite big and heavy.

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**Nathalie says**

This is so heavy I'm going to get Popeye arms...

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**Pamela says**

I love this book. LOVE it. LOVE IT! Great for everything from pondering to inspiration, you can start wherever you like in this enormous tome and always find something interesting within a few pages. From the content to the design, this one is a keeper I go back to again and again.

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**Apryl Anderson says**

A line that takes itself for a walk and arrives as a book. I wish I'd thought of it first.

Whenever I'm feeling mundane or stuck-in-a-rut, this is the book to reach for. It doesn't take long until my brain is over-stimulated by it, so this book is useful to generate ideas. I keep my journal handy, because something always sprouts... maybe someday you'll be discussing the tattered pages of my imagination all printed and bound... come to think of it, I'll be kind to you and publish my pensées and doodles in several volumes, because this isn't the type of book you can read in bath or bed--the likelihood of either dropping an overlarge volume in the water or on your head as you drift off in relaxing meditation are too real and too grave.

14 more words for a super review, so I'm going for it: I like this book a lot, but it's too heavy.

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**Carlos says**

Bottomless source of inspiration.

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**Karen says**

a gigantic coffee-table book, this is one of the greatest purchases i've ever made. opens your eyes to a whole new world with great quotes, anecdotes and more. a must-have for anyone remotely interested in design or art. alan fletcher is one of the greatest designers/thinkers of the last century.

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### **Ampat Varghese says**

When I was teaching art and design, this book became the 'benchmark' (just kidding) for the logbooks and journals the students were supposed to keep. And then, amazed at the content of many of the journals that were emerging, I would tell those students that one day they would be able to bring out their own versions of "The Art of Looking Sideways". And I really look forward to that, because 99.9 per cent of my students were Indian and there needs to be a book of this sort coming out of India with its special visual thinking, processes, imagery and effect.

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### **Chris says**

Quotes, anecdotes, fine and applied arts of all kinds. British visual designer Alan Fletcher gathers together 534 pages of fascinating imagery and exposition. A little treasure box of a book that explores, in a "jackdaw" manner, curious phenomenon and interesting facts.

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### **Deb says**

This is one of my favorite books ever. Fletcher does an amazing job of merging ideas, images, design, art, found objects...you get the idea. I suggest reading it sideways--not from beginning to end, but jumping around to whatever captures your attention.

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### **Dimitris Hall says**

Above: a photograph of my own copy of The Art of Looking Sideways.

This book is a valuable collection of experiences, quotes, designer-gasms, observations and insights into life, the aesthetic, artistic and general human experience, by late master graphic designer Alan Fletcher.

I got it more than a year ago like new (yes, it took me this long to go through its 1000+ pages reading/enjoying on and off) for around €30. Most of that must have been the shipping costs: when it arrived I really couldn't believe the sheer mass of it. I tried to scan some of it, once; the results: my current profile picture, and a scanner which since then has been occasionally malfunctioning, the book's weight having left a permanent scar in its life of digitisation. This is actually the only reason I haven't been lugging it around more often, showing it to each and every one of my friends -- artistically inclined or no.

This book is so thick with inspiration it's almost impossible to deal with: you can't open it randomly to catch

the creative spark (supposedly Alan Fletcher's point in making it) *without wanting to read it all*. Though I suppose this mindless and distracted consumption is a personal demon I have to deal with!

Anyway. I'll make this short and to the point: **this treasure chest of a book is one of my most prized and proud possessions** -- and believe you me, as a rule I *don't* take particular pride anymore in owning things.

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### **flannery says**

High-brow magic eye for "creative types." Chapters like imagination, ideas, inspiration. Some interesting things in here, like learning that anteaters don't dream, and other, pretty pedestrian stuff formatted to look like it's anything worthwhile. Paul McCartney wrote "Yellow Submarine" right before he went to bed, really, who would have guessed. I don't know. I feel like shit like this just flatters the idea that every one of us is a genius when really what it's doing is over-explaining the whole creative process and cramming a lot of out of context things into one feel good instant gratification coffee table book. It's like tumblr for grown-ups. It's a TED talk in print. I'm not trying to be overly cynical here; I think everyone has something of interest to do, make, or say. But that's only liberated through commitment and hard work and practice, not through catchphrases. Give me a 19th century tome on what-the-fuck ever over this garbage any day.

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### **Kintan says**

One of the best coffee table books (one of three on our coffee table today) - that inspires you to question why things work a certain way.

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### **Juhi Jhaveri says**

Aca-MAzing!

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### **Tomas Ramanauskas says**

The most important non-fictional book in my life. The source of many ideas I had throughout the years.

Overflowing with ideas, hints, anecdotes, stories, observations, filtered by a very sharp eye of design genius Alan Fletcher.

Remember reading a few pages from it daily for months, turning it into adorable routine.

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## Frank Calberg says

The book is made in a highly creative way. For example, several different colours are used as page background throughout the book. Also, letters have many different sizes. A large variety of images throughout the book contribute to making the user experience beautiful.

Some extracts I found useful.

Who are we?

- Page 8: Results of gene analysis show we all descend from one African Eve. It is highly probable that you and your neighbour share an ancestor who lived within the last 500 years.
- Page 113: If you cannot tell whether you are communicating with a machine or a person, you have to accept it's a person. Alternative test: If you cannot imagine wondering if it loves you, one of you is not human.
- Page 129: Some differences between machines and humans: Humans can smile or nod when reflecting on information, whereas computers can blink. Humans can look at everything at once, whereas a machine scans everything bit by bit. The more humans know, the faster we work. Whereas the more computers know, the slower they get.
- Page 391: Languages are charged with symbolic values. For reasons known only to himself, Charles V of Germany spoke French to men, Italian to women, German to horses and Spanish to God.

Page 491: Italo Calvino: Who are we, who is each one of us, if not a combinatoria of experiences, information, books we have read, things imagined? Each life is an encyclopedia, a library, an inventory of objects, a series of styles, and everything can be constantly shuffled and reordered in every way conceivable.

How can we change education? How do we learn better and think more creatively?

- Page 140: We need to realize that, paradoxically, education is more backward looking than forward looking. Schools allocate more value to logic and analytical skills than to creative thinking.
- Page 91: We are drowning in information, while starving for wisdom. Therefore, the world will be run by synthesizers, people who put together the right information at the right time, think critically and make important choices wisely. Because the mind thinks with ideas, not information, we need to get better at how to use information, not just acquire it.
- Page 30: To work creatively, do, for example, this: Challenge assumptions, be receptive to new ideas, recognize similarities or differences, make unlikely connections, take risks, build on ideas to make better ideas, look at things in new ways, take advantage of the unexpected.

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## Adan says

Holy crap.

This book is mindblowing. I had to forcibly remove me from the store where first I was lucky enough to lay eyes upon this astounding thing.

It's not tidy, but that's okay. It's a not-at-all-completely-random collection of thoughts and sketches from a very thoughtful person, a visual person who can also wield the words. It's as inspirational as *The Engineer's Illustrated Thesaurus*, but in a wildly different way. Between the two of them there's no limit to creative possibility.

