

Book design, visual analysis on "the art of looking sideways"

[Art & Culture](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The above quote was used by The Daily Telegraph to describe Alan Gerard Fletcher on his obituary. Fletcher was a well-known British graphic designer who was awarded the Prince Philip Prize for Designer of the Year, and was elected the President of the Designers and Art Directors Association in 1973 and was also elected as the International President of the Alliance Graphique Internationale from 1982 to 1985.

He wrote a number of books, but his master piece, which was written on the topic of graphic designing and visual thinking and took him nearly 18 years to finish is the book under consideration known as " The Art of Looking Sideways".

In the words of the reviewers at the Library Journal, " this book will delight anyone who enjoys unexpected visual and verbal play, cultural and historical observations and insights, and staggering amounts of trivia and anecdotes" (The Art of Looking Sideways by Alan Fletcher, p. 1).

The book is very extra ordinary and one of its kind, and the author has succeeded in presenting a nearly beyond description mixture of tales, citations, illustrations, and strange realities that presents the reader with an astonishingly warped visualization of the pandemonium of modern life(Alan Fletcher, p. 1).

Book Design and Visual Analysis

" Graphic designers (presumably with the support of publishers) seem to have embraced the principle that size matters. First there was Life Style, Bruce Mau's cinder-block-size illustrated meditation/portfolio. And now, at

more than a thousand pages and weighing in at slightly less than a large infant, we have Alan Fletcher's *The Art of Looking Sideways*".

The book is based on about seventy two chapters, which have titles like Culture, Improvisation, Colour, Ideas and the likes. Comprised of nearly more than a thousand, the book is a brilliant treatise on visual thinking, one that exemplifies the sense of play and the extended frame of reference of the designer.

A number of designers as well students of design usually go through the pages of this book in order to grasp ideas, while others go through the book in order to enjoy the gently challenging mind-teasers the book has to offer.

Putting together the most determined of sets for his work, aligned with a background encircling art, drawing and literature from pre-history to the current day, Fletcher has put forward a persuasive case for the role that graphic designs play in the course of civilization.

The book is very visual. It has more illustrations than text. According to sources, " Sideways isn't so much a book you read; rather, it's an experience you savor over time. If it were a bottle of wine, you'd want to sip it gradually, over a period of years. Gulping is completely out of the question.

On every page, you'll find a juicy little nugget" (Buchsbaum, p. 1). The design of the book is rather very creative. With every turn of the page there is something new present there waiting for you to go through. The Art can easily amuse and enthuse all of the people who like the interaction amid word and image, and also those who appreciate the odd and the unpredicted.

The book is nothing to read, but it can rather be taken as a visual experience by the reader, where a new image, with a new twist is waiting for the reader. The front and the back cover of the book can be taken into consideration to understand what to expect inside the book, but even that might not be much help.

Through the visuals, the author or lets say the designer has put forward some pieces of information, which we would in general consider useless and ignore.

All of the visuals and the illustrations that have been presented by the author barely have any connection with each other. Even on opposite pages, the reader would find pictures that are completely opposite each other.

For example, presented on page number 162, is a picture of a water color of flowers along with a short note about The Academia in Venice and the art that are exhibited in its galleries and right next to it on the opposite page paragraph by Philip Roth, which also has quotes from Nietzsche, Baudelaire, Wilde, Paul Auster, Napoleon Bonaparte and many others, as well as a concise description of the word " moperly" intermingled within it.

Now both of these pictures have no relation what so ever amongst themselves, which shows the broad horizon of the images that the author had. The pictures can be said to be very random and are very stimulating, which would challenge the viewer into seeing and thinking from a completely different perception, which is sideways.

The design of the book consists of all kinds of visual stimuli, which makes the viewer look at ordinary everyday things with a completely new perception. In

<https://assignbuster.com/book-design-visual-analysis-on-the-art-of-looking-sideways/>

the words of the author of the book, " I am intrigued by apparently useless information, such as 8% of the population is left-handed; giraffes only sleep five minutes every 24 hours; Italians kiss twice, the Swiss three times; is a zebra a white animal with black stripes or vice versa; and, are you left or right eyed?

This book is everything I was never taught at school. It has no thesis, is neither a whodunit nor a how-to-do-it, and has no beginning, middle or end. It is a book for visually curious people, full of things to make you think twice" (The Creative Life, p. 1).