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Irving Harper: Works In Paper



Synopsis

An intimate monograph of the professional and personal creations of a midcentury design legend. Irving Harper is the most famous designer you have never heard of. Working as an associate at the office of George Nelson in the 1950s and '60s, Harper was responsible for such icons of midcentury design as the Marshmallow sofa, the Ball clock, and numerous Herman Miller textile designs. Harper's unrecognized contribution to this seminal era of design, and his incredible paper sculptures (made in his spare time to "relieve stress"), are presented for the first time in this book. An essay by design critic Julie Lasky introduces Harper's commercial design work, recognizable designs from graphics to domestic goods to furniture that are still coveted and appreciated today, designed for the offices of Raymond Loewy, George Nelson, and then his own studio Harper + George. The second part of the book documents Harper's extensive paper sculptures, which have never been exhibited. More than three hundred works fill Harper's house and barn in Rye, New York, where this array of fantastical people and animal sculptures was created from modest and inexpensive materials as diverse as spaghetti and toothpicks in addition to paper. Images of Harper's home, filled with furniture and objects of his own design as well as his paper sculptures, offer a rare glimpse into a Modern design enthusiast's paradise. Offering insight into an important era of American design as well as the prolific output of a creative mind, this book promises to be the first to recognize Irving Harper's contribution to the field and will appeal to fans of Modern design.

Book Information

Hardcover: 176 pages

Publisher: Skira Rizzoli (February 12, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0847840018

ISBN-13: 978-0847840014

Product Dimensions: 8.3 x 1.1 x 10.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (18 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #547,164 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #137 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Decorative Arts & Design > Furniture Design](#) #243 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Decorative Arts & Design > Industrial & Product Design](#) #284 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Sculpture > Appreciation](#)

Customer Reviews

The book opens with a brief forward followed by a short, and I must say, cursory essay about Mr. Harper's contributions to mid-century design. Little is offered that cannot be found in a simple Google search. Luckily, the text accounts for only a few early pages. The remainder of the book is devoted to photographs of Mr. Harpers beautiful, sometimes clever, and always inventive works in paper, pasteboard, cardboard, and wood. My suggestion is that you skip the text and get straight to the photographs. True, the pictures are not as lavishly reproduced as one might wish, still, the chance to glimpse such designs (nearly all of them hidden from public view until being gathered together for this book) is a treat not to be missed. Every page brings a smile to your face and more than a few of these projects are likely to cause you to gasp outright at the sheer beauty and the skill that is on view. Paper artists, prop makers, art teachers, designers, and makers of all stripe are likely to find endless inspiration in these pages. This is already a treasured addition to my bookshelf. I am certain to be referring to it many times in the coming years.

Excellent photos and complete overview of Irving Harper's work and his dedicated work to paper sculptures! Nice to get to know him as a person behind this concise work. I re-read this book again and again because I admire his total absorption in his choice of artistic expression. There is no one like him (to my knowledge). I truly admire him.

Well known designer. However, he is virtually unknown for his paper sculpture which apparently has never been sold and seldom on public display. Our hope is that this book will be an encouragement for the collection to stay intact (together) and find a home for permanent public display. The sculpture is too unique and too good for it not to be on public display.

photographs are large full clear images. art works are amazing and the story is beautiful. Recommend for art lovers, designers and those interested in interiors.

I had never heard of Irving Harper before and I was just blown away when I saw his work! It's a very interesting story too.

Absolutely amazing images of Harper's work. I bought this for my granddaughter but will look at this books many times with her.

I was intrigued by Irving Harper's paper work after seeing a magazine article. The work is remarkable, and anyone with an interest in arts and crafts couldn't help but be struck by his playfulness and just plain genius in creating these objects. The quality of the book itself is just 'ok'. It's a hardback, and the paper seems good. The photos seem a little less vibrant than they should, and I came across two printing errors on my first flip-through, so the editing was not as thorough as it should have been. Nevertheless, since this is the only book on Harper's paper sculptures, if you have an interest it's worth the cost.

Wonderfully Interesting book! Great use of paper as a 3-D sculptural material. I saw this on display at Heath Ceramics San Francisco and knew I had to buy it.

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