

Reviewer's Bookwatch: August 2023
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Margaret Lane's Bookshelf

Designing-Women's Lives: Transforming Place and Self **Toby Israel**

Synopsis: With the publication of "Designing-Women's Lives: Transforming Place and Self ", environmental psychologist Toby Israel calls for a place-making revolution based on women's culturally nurtured "feeling" sensibility.

Women too often have had to repress that sensibility in order to become designers. Now, rather than struggle to fit-in, women can break new ground by using Toby Israel's 'Design Psychology' as the foundation for creating emotionally satisfying place.

To encourage such a heart/mind shift, the author discusses how she took architecture Gold Medalist Denise Scott Brown and interior design legend Margo Grant Walsh through a series of Design Psychology exercises.

The process revealed ways these renowned women unconsciously embedded their heroic struggles as minority females in their designs: Grant Walsh's journey from her Chippewa childhood home with only one green couch to her plush NYC residence reflected her embrace of her Native American + designing-woman's identity. Scott Brown grew up in a more privileged South African household, yet she translated the oppression she witnessed during Apartheid and the bias she experienced as a Jewish woman into the inclusive approach to architecture that made her famous.

Interweaving such designing-women's stories, feminist design thinking and her personal vignettes, Toby Israel inspires her readers to "design from within" in their personal psychology as a form of personal liberation. Project case studies further demonstrate how Design Psychology helped women create a nurturing (even transformative) home during life-passages such as partnering or grieving. Such case studies provide inspiring examples of how color, shape, texture, space layout, and special objects can be catalysts for such personal evolution.

Critique: Beautifully illustrated throughout with numerous full color photographs, "Designing-Women's Lives: Transforming Place and Self" will be of particular interest to readers concerned with the subjects of Architectural Criticism, Popular Psychology, Women's Intellectual Creativity. Insightful, iconoclastic, exceptionally well written, organized and presented, "Designing-Women's Lives: Transforming Place and Self " is a prized pick for personal, professional, community, college, and university collections and supplemental curriculum studies lists.

Editorial Note: Toby Israel (<http://www.designpsychology.net/index.html>) is the founder of Design Psychology, a field that's gained international attention in the LA, NY and Financial Times, CBS Sunday Morning, and NPR's "Talk of the Nation." Trained as an environmental psychologist, she is a multi-disciplinary design, psychology, arts, and education professional who applies scholarship to the "real-world" practice of place-making.

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Reviewer