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Make It New: The History Of Silicon Valley Design



Barry M. Katz



Synopsis

California's Silicon Valley is home to the greatest concentration of designers in the world: corporate design offices at flagship technology companies and volunteers at nonprofit NGOs; global design consultancies and boutique studios; research laboratories and academic design programs. Together they form the interconnected network that is Silicon Valley. Apple products are famously "designed in California", but, as Barry Katz shows in this first-ever, extensively illustrated history, the role of design in Silicon Valley began decades before Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak dreamed up Apple in a garage. Offering a thoroughly original view of the subject, Katz tells how design helped transform Silicon Valley into the most powerful engine of innovation in the world. From Hewlett-Packard and Ampex in the 1950s to Google and Facebook today, design has provided the bridge between research and development, art and engineering, technical performance and human behavior. Katz traces the origins of all of the leading consultancies - including IDEO, frog, and Lunar - and shows the process by which some of the world's most influential companies came to place design at the center of their business strategies. At the same time, universities, foundations, and even governments have learned to apply "design thinking" to their missions. Drawing on unprecedented access to a vast array of primary sources and interviews with nearly every influential design leader - including Douglas Engelbart, Steve Jobs, and Don Norman - Katz reveals design to be the missing link in Silicon Valley's ecosystem of innovation.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 8 hours 27 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Gildan Media, LLC

Audible.com Release Date: October 30, 2015

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B017BQ7JD6

Best Sellers Rank: #83 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Arts & Entertainment > Design

#542 in Books > Arts & Photography > Decorative Arts & Design > Design History & Criticism

#731 in Books > Business & Money > Industries > Computers & Technology

Customer Reviews

Most people know about Silicon Valley's success and some have heard about the part design played in its rise but its history has never been fully documented until now. Barry Katz reveals what it actually took for design to evolve from a subservient position to engineering and marketing into a core competency for innovative companies designing products that people actually want to buy. "Design Thinking" is now a recognized strategy and a methodology to frame ANY problem from a design perspective and the credit goes to those design pioneers who fought the good fight...

Lots of great nuggets in here, and reminders of how many pioneers we owe a debt of gratitude. But a little mixed up organizationally, leaves a lot out, and is a little too much like a laundry list of people and accomplishments. But important history to know; I'm glad someone started to capture.

Barry Katz does a wonderful job in laying out the history of design of Silicon Valley. He defines design as an interdisciplinary effort by engineers and artists who focus on not what products they should make but on how consumers use products. The eclectic mix of perspectives of early industrial designers such as Henry Dreyfuss and contemporary figures as Steve Jobs is an interesting approach in defining global impact of Silicon Valley. Silicon Valley is also where engineers realized what make good products great is beyond mere ergonomics to include human factors from theories rooted in social sciences. This book is a must read for those interested in the beginnings of Bay Area design firms, the d.school at Stanford and how individuals of diverse disciplines --not just limited to computer science- as one might believe when hearing the term 'Silicon Valley'-- contribute to writing its history.

Barry Katz is the most knowable person I know on the topic of design history and philosophy. I immensely enjoyed reading "Make it New" over Easter. It seems very well researched and comprehensive with an excellent balance of broad overview and illustrative examples, as well as, enlightening gold nuggets. The fact that Barry has live in Silicon Valley for decades where he has consulted in and taught design history means that he actually know many of the personalities he describes. Finally, his poised writing style makes the book a pleasure to read for its crisp language and to the point style. I highly recommend this book to any business professional, creative, tech person, - he or she being student, novice, or expert. -
Sincerely, Soren

So much of the reading material about innovation in Silicon Valley is understandably facing perpetually forward. Reading Prof. Katz book opened my mind to the understanding and admiration of the hundreds of lives and events that have been woven together throughout the history of the region by shedding light on the role that designers, financiers and engineers have played TOGETHER in creating the fertile soil from which the world's biggest innovation engine sprouted. Thank you Prof. Katz for your dedication to be a chronicler of human's creativity during these incredibly fast paced times.

Really deep insights into all of the relevant design history here in the valley. Love the way he frames the book considering the vast amounts of information he had to parse.

i read Barry Katz' "Make It New" this weekend. it's the history of design in Silicon Valley and shows how designs started as improvements to functionally at HP and evolved at Apple into overall design not just of the computer's case but the entire product, the product line, all products, and the company itself. if you care about design or corporate strategy, you must read this book. it shows how Silicon Valley design is becoming global design. the author is a professor of design at Stanford and has been deeply involved in SV design. i've lived and worked 20 years in Silicon Valley; the book had lots of details about SV that i didn't know. it was published by MIT Press and came out this past Sept.

The uncanny thing that Katz manages to do over and over again in Make It New is collapse the past, present, and future of design in Silicon Valley and make it feel like the challenges of a Carl Clement or a Bill Moggridge are structurally the same as designers face today, with the kind of historical mechanics and déjà vu feeling of an eternal return. Full disclosure: I am a software designer in the Bay Area, and I can't imagine anyone writing a more valuable book to simultaneously normalize and exalt the experience of being a team player in this heady aesthetic, cultural, and economic foment. When I read, for example, that Moggridge ran an "informance" on Bastille Day in 1992 at an Interval Research offsite retreat which explored "a rapidly unfolding geopolitical crisis in the Middle East as played out in real time on an interactive Video Wall" I felt like I was stepping into a river of discovery that stretches across space and time. By wading into this river, which is a daily occurrence for anyone doing software / hardware design, we're buoyed by

collective flow of creativity that runs through the design communities that now flourish in the Valley of Heart Delight, as the Silicon Valley was once known. But the lessons of Make It New reach beyond the design community and the Bay Area, for that matter. And if there was one takeaway that businesses should make standard operating procedure the world over, this quote sums it up: "What we did at Interval, Liddle said, 'was to introduce design ideas at the earliest stage of the product development process, rather than bring them in for an inspirational jolt at the beginning or cosmetic refinement at the end.'" I can hear designers from the global community saying: "Make it so."

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