way. For example, he points out that “bobos” are often supportive of environmental causes and of those living in developing countries, but they also drive gas-guzzling Sports Utility Vehicles and are enthusiastic consumers of products that are often manufactured using low-wage or even exploitative labor in the Third World. The picture Brooks paints of the educated class, seemingly without fully realizing its implications, is of a very shallow, greedy, self-satisfied upper-middle class hooked on consumption—be it expensive household gadgets or holidays to far-flung places. It would have been a much better book if one or two chapters had been added that dealt with these contradictions. Hints of critique were peppered through the book. For example, Brooks describes attitudes to pleasure and leisure. Leisure activities of the “bobo” class, he says, often tend to focus on cultural enrichment through such things as museum attendance, exotic travel, and eco-holidays, and physical activities such as mountain biking and mountain climbing. He notes that such activities, and the accoutrements that accompany them, are selected according to their perceived exclusivity. He paints a picture of people caught up in consumerism, egotism, ambition, and selfishness, but lacking any strong commitment to an ideology or possessing any deep spiritual or moral convictions. He suggests that if you follow such a lifestyle “you may be responsible and healthy, but you will also be shallow and inconsequential.” The failing of the book is that the author recognizes the superficiality and self-seeking nature of the “bobo” lifestyle—but seems to accept it with some degree of satisfaction. The book is still well worth reading for its observational acumen, but the reader will have to look further afield for any significant critical analysis.

**Bruce Hanington**

*Designing Pleasurable Products: An Introduction to the New Human Factors* by Patrick W. Jordan

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Claiming to introduce the “New Human Factors” is a bold statement, but in the case of *Designing Pleasurable Products* it is an accurate one, reflecting a critical shift in thinking currently taking place in design and human factors. This much-anticipated text by Patrick Jordan is an instrumental piece in a flurry of activity promoting a holistic perspective of user research within design. In addition to the company it now keeps with several published articles on the topic, *Designing Pleasurable Products* occurs amid recent conferences acknowledging the limitations of past models of usability.

Recognizing that the human response to products and systems comprised of more than physical fit and information processing, advocates of the new human factors promote the inclusion of an emotional component in design. Consensus on terminology in this area has yet to emerge, but it could be argued that the now familiar mantra of “useful, usable, desirable” originally set us on this course. Experience design includes in its mission the need to address emotion and pleasure within created interactions. And participation by members from both design and human factors communities at the International Conference on Affective Human Factors Design (CAHD), held in June of 2001, has lent credibility to the more complete range of issues that need to be addressed by the two professions.

*Designing Pleasurable Products* may be considered a front-runner in articulating the need to humanize user research in the design process. The central premise of the book is that traditional concerns for physical measurement and information processing are critical issues, but represent only part of pleasurable product interactions. Jordan borrows as a framework from Canadian anthropologist Lionel Tiger (*The Pursuit of Pleasure*), a structure for thinking about human characteristics and product features from a more holistic perspective. The “four pleasures”—physio, psycho, socio, and ideo—are proposed as a tool for analyzing people and products, representing physical, psychological, sociological, and ideological aspects of interaction respectively. Pleasure is further distinguished between “need pleasures,” fulfilled by eliminating a state of discontentment, and “pleasures of appreciation,” accrued because of inherent positive worth found in things or activities. Product features are broken into “formal” and “experiential” properties to define objective and subjective aspects of design.

The bulk of the book is devoted to examples of pleasure with products and characteristics of people,
presented using the four pleasures framework. The reader is taken on a whirlwind tour of products to illustrate the multitude of concerns that can be addressed by design: for example, the tactile sensation and response of a laptop keyboard (physio), the status of owning a Starke juicer (socio), appropriate sound levels in domestic appliances and the right level of challenge in game design (psycho), and the communicative function of aesthetics corresponding to individual values (ideo). Similarly, people are described by their physical attributes and abilities, their sociological status, self-image and lifestyle, psychological traits or personality, confidence, skills and knowledge, and ideological beliefs, values, and aspirations. The four pleasures structure is then applied to a case study for creating a “Product Benefits Specification” and evaluating product pleasurability. The final chapter of the book offers a description of empirical and non-empirical research methods and applied examples.

Designing Pleasurable Products is successful in building a convincing argument for the much-needed change in how we address the human element in design, and providing a framework useful to this end. However, if anything, the examples used tend to understate the case. The emphasis in many descriptions regresses to analyses in traditional terms of ergonomics and usability, directly contradicting the holistic premise of the book. Reviewing the safety features of household products or the understandability of graphic labeling, for instance, seems only to confirm the relevance of well-established concerns. While I completely agree that these are crucial aspects of design, I was left searching for a more substantial and non-empirical research methods and applied examples.

In instances where constructs of pleasure are identified, a more elaborate discussion is warranted. For example, references to “giving aesthetic pleasure,” and “attractiveness” are vague notions at best, and still beg the burning questions of how these aspects are defined, and by whom. Similarly, descriptions of product designs as “feminine,” “timeless and sophisticated,” and manufactured from “noble materials” are open to controversial interpretations, yet are delivered here with an assumption of consensus.

The discussion that these terms should inspire cuts to the very heart of the challenge of designing for pleasure, namely, that the subjective nature of emotional response is inherently difficult to predict, and therefore to design for in the artifacts we create. This also underscores the concern expressed by many human factors professionals, and a difference yet to be reconciled between that profession and design: While designers may have a slightly longer history of addressing emotion by intuition, there are few prescriptive methods, or tools for evaluation, to adequately measure successful design interventions in this realm.

To that end, the final chapter of the book could be more explicit in describing research methods specifically appropriate to the pleasure-based approach, including those involving users early in the process to guide and inspire design decisions. While a number of innovative methods such as experience diaries and participative creation are discussed alongside the more traditional questionnaires and interviews, a critique emphasizing the relative benefits of each for use in designing pleasurable products would further promote the unique aspects of the approach, while providing insight into appropriate methodological choices.

A validated “Pleasure Questionnaire” included in the methods chapter is an example of this direct connection, yet knowing how the instrument dimensions were evolved would give us even more insight into the nebulous process of defining and assessing pleasure. Applications such as the “Product Personality Assignment” and “Mental Mapping,” also discussed in the chapter, attribute personalities or human characteristics to products. These examples are both fun and imaginative, and therefore have an intimate, and self-evident, connection to pleasure-based methods.

As a matter of book design, the presentation of Designing Pleasurable Products would correspond more to its title with improvements to the quality and choice of graphic images, consisting primarily of black and white snapshot photos, some of which are repeated throughout the text. Enhancing the visual composition may be a difficult case to argue in the world of textbook publishing, but the added design appeal of the book would certainly make the price tag more pleasurable!

In the end, Designing Pleasurable Products is perhaps more successful in what it has to say than in how it is said. Nonetheless, it is a landmark book in a discussion that is long overdue. Whether the terms are emotion, pleasure, or affect, a meeting point of concerns has been identified between design and human factors, two disciplines with common professional interests that cannot be ignored. We can now look hopefully to the future for a more comprehensive understanding of human issues to be addressed by both professions, and further references to illuminate the topic.