Sustainable design specialist, Jonathan Chapman, presents a compelling examination of society’s relationship with things, and the motivations of the designers who create them, in *Meaningful Stuff: Design that Lasts*, part of the Design Thinking, Design Theory series from the MIT Press. Addressing current and future designers, Chapman’s work is approachable and understandable for the design-oriented non-fiction reader as well as undergraduate students. The physical design of the book is simple and striking, with a dust jacket that illustrates the central motif running throughout the work. The paper is high quality and will withstand the curious designer’s return to this book again and again. The work includes bibliographic notes organized by chapter and an alphabetical index. It does not include illustrations or reproductions.

Setting the scene for a dialogue on sustainable design, Chapman is quick to point out that behind every designed product there is a whole world of raw materials and inputs that warrant consideration, especially from a human rights standpoint. Chapman urges designers to consider the lifecycle of what they design and strive to develop products that can have multiple value points in a circular economy. In order to make designs that will last, designers need to focus on the interaction between the user and the
designed object or product. The author poses the question to future designers, how do you cultivate meaningful interactions?

Chapman compellingly questions the current focus of design on seamless integration and positive emotion, encouraging a more nuanced understanding of what it means to successfully engage a user through a designed product. What would it look like to involve the user in the co-production of a product? What if an object could evolve with the user over time? How do designers make objects that can be repaired and maintained throughout their lifetime? The author is critical of innovation for innovation’s sake and encourages designers and users alike to consider the ways in which design and purchase decisions can create or destroy our collective future.

Artfully weaving together the numerous threads of conversation around sustainable design, Chapman posits a larger framework focused on meaningful design. Beginning with a centering of design within the current consumption mindset, Chapman guides the reader through the many iterations and considerations addressed by researchers thinking about sustainable design. One of the highlights of this book is the author’s knowledge of the subject and their ability to bring relevant examples to the fore. This work does not exist in a world of pure theory and ideology, rather it provides a tangible call to action and a commission to designers to design intentionally and to make meaning with their designs.