

Design Ah!

Design Ah! (NHK, Japan) is an aesthetically captivating program showing why design is fascinating and fun through short segments without any off-commentary or host. Beginning with food design the program shows how color and shape can work together (cf. screenshot 1). Lessons in perspective are then shown when 12 people come together to draw a motorcycle from different angles (cf. screenshot 2). The program shows other short segments that include the visual and functionality of both circles and rectangles in a musical piece (cf. screenshot 3), an animation of a deck of cards separating themselves into groups of elements (cf. screenshot 4), and a visual piece showing ways a person can sit in a chair (cf. screenshot 5). Other lessons, such as movement design, are shown through animation when a passenger is seen having issues getting onto a subway train due to lack of instruction. It is then shown how a few lines can bring order to the chaos (cf. screenshot 6). Then a humorous segment shows and gives commentary on a teacup's perspective on a person making tea (cf. screenshot 7). The show ends with an interview with professional industrial designer Fumie Shibata speaking about her designs and advice she has for other designers (cf. screenshot 8).

Design Ah! was one of the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONALE 2012 finalists in the 7-11 Non-Fiction category. It received the "Theme Prize" 2012.

International experts' opinions

International experts shared their opinions about *Design Ah!* during the discussion sessions at the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONALE 2012. Many experts felt the program was aesthetically pleasing, well designed, and beautifully put together. They spoke about the how its composition implicitly reinforced its lesson.

"I was in awe about the implicit instruction that was there. Everything was designed so carefully. The sound, the layout – in so many different ways. So there was some explicit instruction, particularly when it came to the rather simple idea that lines could transform human experience. Which was explicitly a sharp way of looking at design, but the entire thing was so carefully designed. I thought it was just beautiful." (male expert, USA)

Many of the comments made by experts reflected their appreciation of the overall composition. They commented on the brilliance of the overall design and how it was put together. Many described the inspiration that it gave themselves and others. They spoke about how it gave children a chance to explore design for themselves.

"*Design Ah!* seemed to be to me an extraordinary use of the medium, a really almost revolutionary use of television." (male expert, USA)

"I was drawn into a new universe and I was thinking about shape and color combinations and there were so many things happening in my mind." (female expert, Germany)

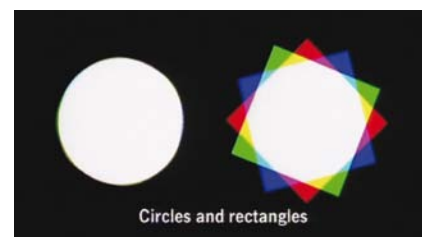
"I thought it was a fantastic way to put children really in the center, not children in the picture, but the child that is sitting in front of the television, to give the child the chance to explore for themselves, what they see and discover things." (female expert, Germany)



Ill. 1: Color and layout is shown in food



Ill. 2: The group sits down to draw the motorcycle



Ill. 3: Circles and rectangles are sung in regard to their functionality



Ill. 4: Cards separate into suits



Ill. 5: The man displays several ways to interact with a chair



Ill. 6: The red guy is more relaxed now that there is order



Ill. 7: The teacup is about to experience a little hot water



Ill. 8: Fumie Shibata speaks about design

“I really liked *Design Ah!* It’s stunning, it’s a piece of art.” (female expert, Korea)

“It’s so relieving to see *Design Ah!* where you get so inspired and you learn so much about design without no one telling you, ‘Well, design is when you...’ – that was really relieving.” (male expert, Denmark)

However, the international experts addressed issues about whether their target audience would enjoy watching this program. They felt as if the child would lose interest after 15 minutes because they believe the program to be emotionally disconnecting. Others did not believe that the program would even work in their country due to its pace.

“This program is not targeted to excite children but to show design for what it is and it actually is a challenge for us to see if it will prove interesting for children.” (female expert, Japan)

“In the beginning, I didn’t see anything related to children. I only saw nice pictures.” (male expert, Germany)

“I think a kid needs to be involved emotionally with a program, have a sense of adventure or something, some kind of connection. I don’t see a kid connecting with *Design Ah!*” (female expert, Chile)

Some experts suggested that the program was not just for children, but also for adults.

“What I think about those shows is that they are not exactly for children. They are for a whole audience and this is very rare to see.” (female expert, Brazil)

Kathryn Tullis (Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, USA)

Screenshots from *Design Ah!* © NHK, Japan

Target Audience 6.82	Idea 8.27	Script 7.69	Realization 8.31
Average Score per Category by experts’ voters at PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONALE 2012			

Winner of PRIX JEUNESSE 2012 “Theme Prize”