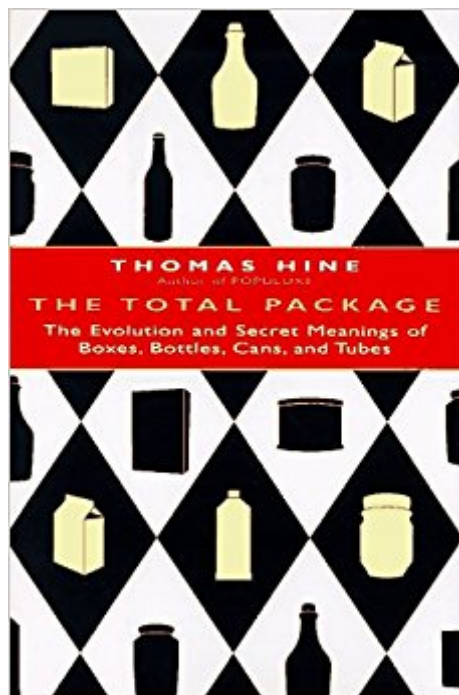




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# The Total Package: The Evolution And Secret Meanings Of Boxes, Bottles, Cans, And Tubes



## Synopsis

By the author of Populuxe. This text explains how manufacturers play with the consumer's mind in an attempt to sell day-to-day products such as soap and breakfast cereal, each product sitting on a supermarket shelf having been carefully designed to promote instant desirability.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 304 pages

Publisher: Little Brown & Co (T); 1 edition (April 1995)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0316364800

ISBN-13: 978-0316364805

Product Dimensions: 1.2 x 6.5 x 9.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds

Average Customer Review: 3.5 out of 5 stars 2 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #146,716 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #5 in Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Industrial, Manufacturing & Operational Systems > Industrial Design > Packaging #31 in Books > Arts & Photography > Graphic Design > Commercial > Advertising #854 in Books > Humor & Entertainment > Pop Culture > General

## Customer Reviews

In our mass-market economy and lives, it's a truism that what we consume is frequently determined more by packaging than content. This book is an eye-opening and fact-filled exploration of the economic history and marketing logic of packaging, from the sublime to the ridiculous. A penetrating examination of the unexpected meanings hidden in the most familiar boxes, bottles, cans, and tubes. Recommended.

In this wise survey, Philadelphia Inquirer design critic Hine (Populuxe) describes and decodes the history and effects of packages, "an inescapable part of modern life." He reflects on packages in nature (the orange, the egg) and tracks the growth of modern packaging from 17th-century London (elixirs, etc.) through the first practical folding box (Brooklyn, 1879) and other advances in technology and transportation. Urbanization produced the Uneeda biscuit and Campbell's soup, as well as the supermarket. Hine broadens his lens to cover the "contemporary packaged landscape" of drive-ins and malls and intriguingly tracks the psychology and international cultural differences behind package research. A final chapter considers "empties": the question of garbage

and its future. We all know what's in a box of Tide, but read on to find out why the box is orange and its lettering is blue. Illustrations not seen by PW. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Hine, as he demonstrated in "Populuxe" which is a bit of a classic at this point, has a good feel for an uncommon general topic. What he kind of lacks is intense depth and profound insight, and I don't think he sees that as his job, and thank-you to him. He generally conveys (and well) his delight in the interesting details about a subject. Placed alongside a lot of the overwrought and highly judgemental contemporary books on cultural subjects, Hine's efforts might seem featherweight. Then again, beside some French-critical-theory-driven Inquisition of Minutiae (Lisa Mahar's troglodytic, "American Signs," trundles into view in my mind's eye) Hobbes's "Leviathan" has an almost "Dick and Jane" delicacy. So, if you're doing research into your college paper proving why Western Consumer Culture stinks this be a bad book for you. If you're like me and enjoy good books on subjects like this you'll probably be glad you spent the bucks. I just wish Hine would stop feeling obliged to work in (as he does here toward the end, and even at the tail of "Populuxe") a gratuitous bit of social relevancy. It drops the upbeat tone of the book a notch--that's why four instead of five stars.

Maybe I expected too much, but promised more than delivered. Informative, but felt as though could have been more so. Still, for this niche, it's probably the only game in town. Worth a go if you can make the time

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