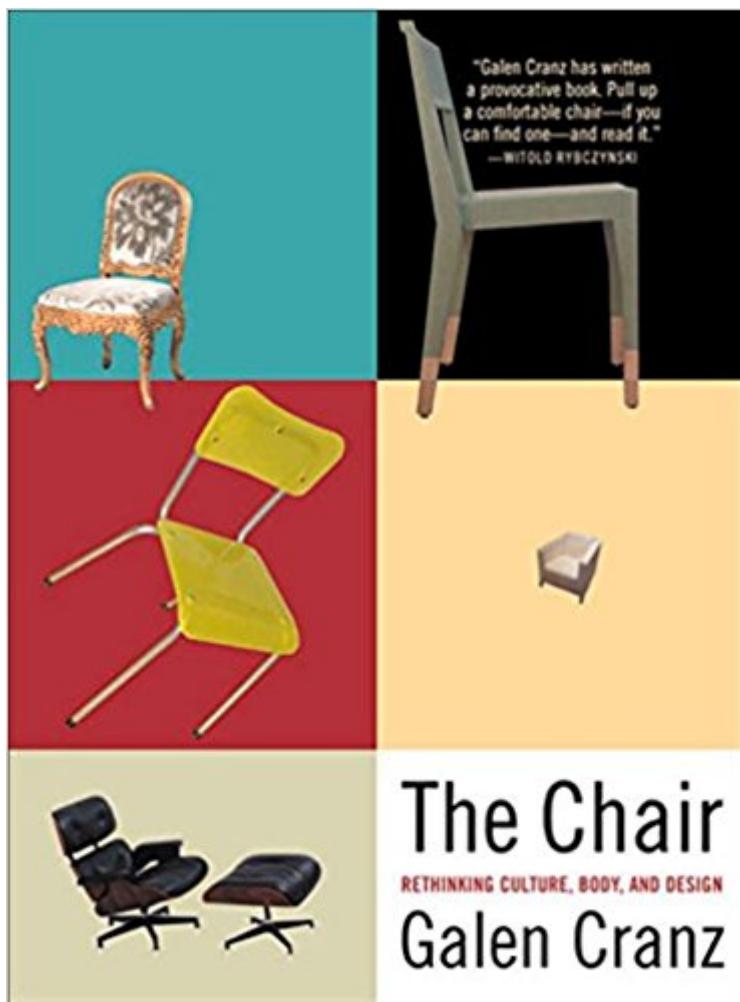


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# The Chair: Rethinking Culture, Body, And Design



## Synopsis

"Engaged in fascinating and useful multidisciplinary research, Cranz is an avatar for body-friendly design. . . . Read [The Chair] and cheer."--Elizabeth Zimmer, Village Voice Perhaps no other object of our daily environment has had the enduring cultural significance of the ever-present chair, unconsciously yet forcefully shaping the physical and social dimensions of our lives. With over ninety illustrations, this book traces the history of the chair as we know it from its crudest beginnings up through the modern office variety. Drawing on anecdotes, literary references, and famous designs, Galen Cranz documents our ongoing love affair with the chair and how its evolution has been governed not by a quest for comfort or practicality, but by the designation of status. Relating much of the modern era's rampant back pain to an increasingly sedentary lifestyle spent in traditional seating, Cranz goes beyond traditional ergonomic theory to formulate new design principles that challenge the way we think and live. A farsighted and innovative approach to our most intimate habitat, this book offers guidelines that will assist readers in choosing a chair-and designing a lifestyle-that truly suits our bodies. Praise for *The Chair*: " [A] concise, multidisciplinary gem." Publishers Weekly "Cranz is no sedentary historian. The Chair is a call to action." Jonathan Levi, Los Angeles Times "Galen Cranz has written a provocative book. Pull up a comfortable chair-if you can find one-and read it." Witold Rybczynski 90 illustrations

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Cranz is no sedentary historian. The Chair is a call to action. -- Jonathan Levi, Los Angeles

TimesGalen Cranz has written a provocative book. Pull up a comfortable chair--if you can find one--and read it. -- Witold Rybczynski

Galen Cranz is professor of architecture at the University of California at Berkeley.

The context of my reading this book is probably important to my review.Through the [...] I am studying Chairs for the next two years. I'm doing this because I wanted to study something simple, tangible, and ubiquitous. At the beginning of my study, this description seemed to fit chairs. Currently I'm a couple of months into my study and very much have an amateur's perspective on the content and style of Cranz's work.I really enjoyed reading the book. I particularly enjoyed the content surrounding the history of chairs. I found myself taking notes but I soon stopped because I was essentially copying what Cranz wrote, word for word. There is a lot of material referenced in there (extensive footnotes and bibliography) that I will look back on for my continued studies.I read the 2nd half of the book considerably more quickly than I read the first part. I think this was A. because I was frustrated by how long it was taking me to take notes AND read the book, but B. I sensed that I would be reading considerably more about ergonomics and the implications of our chair use down the line, so I didn't want to spend too much time memorizing all of the little details of Cranz's opinion. I also got the sense that a lot of the 2nd half was laced with her opinion. That's fine as long as you accept it for what it is. Her opinion may very well be accurate, but I'll have to read a bunch more to verify.In short, I thought this book was a nice, comprehensive, thought-provoking primer to learning more about chairs. It has certainly shaped the beginning of my studies in that I'm now interested both in "chairs as objects of design" and "chairs as potentially dangerous constructs". Anyone is welcome to follow me as I continue my study at [...]One random thing: I enjoyed some of the random quotes at the beginnings of different chapters.

Fascinating book. The historical section is truly great. It's very interesting to know how and why the chair mindset entered our collective brain. The design bits are quite interesting, as well. I find that my chair-sitting activities are far less unpleasant now. After that, things get a bit questionable. The later parts of the book offer ideas on how to free yourself from the horrors of chair sitting. At home, these suggestions work, but I know of ZERO industries where some of these ideas would work. Finding ways to avoid chairs is one thing, but there are limits. The one useful workplace application of the "chair free zone" philosophy is standing desks. I swear by the concept, and most folks who have used mine now have one in their office. It may not be a perfect book, but there are many good

points, so I highly recommend it. It certainly gets a person thinking about something they have probably never thought about before.

This was a really cool book! I discovered the title while doing a search for "active sitting," and Ms. Cranz provides an incredibly detailed history of the chair in Western culture, its ergonomic shortcomings, and some potential remedies for the problems that arise from working and learning in environments that demand long periods of chair-sitting.

I was under the impression that sitting on a recliner was for sloths, and rockers were for grandmas. Cranz offers excellent insights into seating using the Alexander Technique as well.

Purchased as a gift, recipient was very pleased.

Interesting read for furniture-design fans.

it's a book i needed for studio and it got here in a timely fashion.

This book is more about the institution of sitting than a piece of furniture. I found especially interesting the author's explanation that a practice we take for granted as natural is really culturally derived. For the most part, only people from Western cultures sat in chairs, until those cultures came in contact with the West and adopted (or were forced to adopt) western practices. Chinese people traditionally sat on stools or benches, Africans sat on stools or squatted, Native Americans sat on the floor, the Japanese and South Asians sat on the floor. Other cultures make use of a variety of resting postures productively, but Western culture has insisted that sitting in a chair is the only posture in which to properly study, work, eat, and interact with people. The author writes that children do not naturally sit in chairs. Young children much prefer sitting on the floor, crawl, kneel, stand, or any posture other than sitting in chairs. They have to be forced to sit in chairs before they become accustomed to it. And sitting in chairs is bad for their development and health. Upon further reflection, I am coming to regard sitting in chairs in the workplace as a practice of oppression. Instead of acknowledging that human beings need a variety of postures in order to remain healthy and productive, we have forced this notion that only a certain number of postures are "professional." Women, especially, are limited in the kinds of postures that are considered acceptable. Forcing employees into one constricted posture all day is to regard them as machines instead of human

beings. While those in the executive office are allowed more comfortable chairs with a greater range of motion, room in their office to stretch, or even a couch to lounge in. Being able to move has become a status symbol instead of a basic human right. In ancient times Kings and heads of households sat in chairs as a symbol of authority. Today, working in more comfortable positions is a luxury reserved for the elite. And for those who come from cultures in which chair sitting is not the norm, forget diversity in the workplace, conformity at all costs! This book asks us to question this norm and challenge conventional wisdom. Office workers, STAND UP to defy the tyranny of the chair!

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