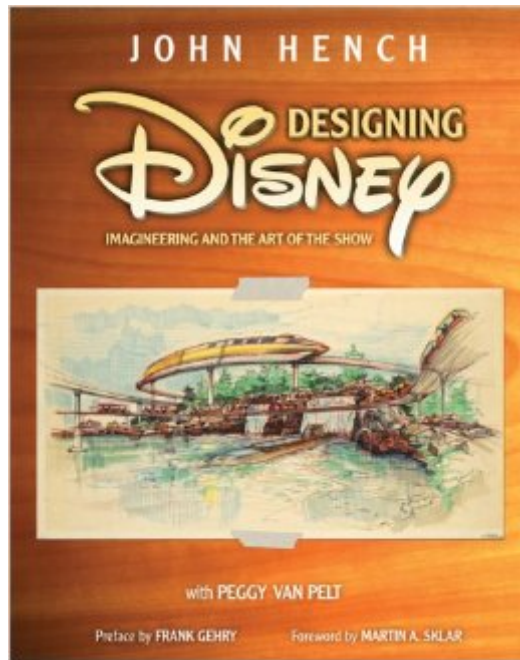


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# Designing Disney (A Walt Disney Imagineering Book)



## Synopsis

Designing Disney sets into history and puts into context the extraordinary contributions of the late John Hench, who, at the age of 94, still came into his office at Imagineering each day. His principles of theme park design, character design, and use of color made him a legendary figure, not only for Disney fans but also for students and aficionados of architecture, engineering, and design. Designing Disney reveals the magic behind John's great discoveries and documents his groundbreaking in several key areas: • Design Philosophy • examines the values, attitudes, aesthetics, and logic that went into the original concepts for Disney theme parks. In • The Art of the Show • and • The Art of Color, • Hench reveals the essence of what makes the parks work so well. And in • The Art of Character, • he lets the reader in on the how and why of the Disney characters' inherent popularity; their timeless human traits, archetypal shape and gestures that suggest these qualities graphically, and their emotional resonance in our lives.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is a pleasant little book authored by one of the original Imagineers, John Hench. We are treated to an inside look at the designing of the Disney parks, with an emphasis on the original Disneyland, although pretty much every park, including Animal Kingdom and DCA, gets some

mention. There are plenty of color illustrations, mostly concept paintings and sketches, many of which I hadn't seen before. This is not a book for the casual Disney fan, but if your interest in Disneyland borders on the obsessive, there are lots of nifty facts and anecdotes to be found here. For example, when Space Mountain was being built, the author insisted the enormous steel T-beams be mounted backwards, to provide a smooth surface to project show effects; the Snow White wishing well was built next to Sleeping Beauty's Castle solely for the purpose of keeping guests from tossing coins in the nearby lake and waterfall; and a pond was built next to the long gone House of the Future to serve as a water supply for the attractions cooling system. If minutiae like that is your bag, this is the book for you. It makes a nice companion piece to the book "Walt Disney's Imagineering."

This book is the Disney version of being John Malkovich. More than ANY living person, John Hench, knows Walt's history, philosophy and design theories. In fact, John Hench IS the artist behind much of the how and why of designing Disney theme parks from Disneyland (1955) to Disney's California Adventure (2002). More than just a book of inside trivia on why and how certain attractions look and work this is the observations of human behavior and understanding of all of us that Walt (and Hench) had, and used, to create these magically places we all love. As an Disney Imagineer I was fortunate to have known and worked with John Hench and co-author, Peggy Van Pelt. Herein they tell the real story behind how Disney's magic comes into being. As great as their words, John and Peggy have included lots and lots of John's stunning artwork--much of it never before published or shown outside the Disney archives. Walt (and John Hench's) philosophy in this compact and rich book is applicable across the corporate spectrum. This book should set side-by-side with the larger (though less revealing) "Imagineering: A Behind the Dreams Look..." John Hench once told me, "I make all decisions with my heart." This book is for the heart and your head (left and right hemispheres) will enjoy it as well.

For most Disneyland guests, the nuts-and-bolts details behind the many attractions will ruin their illusions. Most people who are shown the tricks behind stage magic cannot get over feeling cheated. If you had to watch the process of making sausages from birth of the meat animal (pig or whatever) to the grilling of your breakfast in the restaurant kitchen, odds are that you'd enjoy your oatmeal instead. But I enjoy seeing projects grow from project to fruition. John Hench's "Designing Disney: Imagineering and the Art of the Show" is an insiders peek at the Disney theme parks and cruise line. Concept art is directed at a specific audience. Usually the task for concept art is to sell

the idea to the "suits"--who are a very different audience than Disneyland guests. It's been said that executives consider everyone else subhuman--especially their customers and subordinate employees--so what "sells" a concept to a panel of executives will leave the end customer unimpressed. Once the project gets the go-ahead, changes will happen. "No plan survives contact with reality!" At Disneyland, "finished attractions" will continually be changed due to economics or guest feedback until the attraction is replaced. The Disneyland Monorail is a fine example of this. On pages 26 and 27 and on page 33 monorail concept art differs significantly from today's Disneyland Monorail. John Hench wrote about how this occurred. Many ideas don't make it to the concept stage. Disneyland was very much the experimental community during the 1950's and 1960's. The Enchanted Tiki Room was originally conceived of as a dinner show. Around 1960, the South Pacific was considered romantic and adventurous. Today, the Enchanted Tiki Room is considered ho-hum boring by most--but just try to rid Disneyland of it! My visits to Disneyland are incomplete if I cannot see the Tiki Birds at least once! Hench wrote about the central theme of the park attractions, how "show" was the focus. Some of the rides and attractions at Disneyland (Disney's California Adventure is a worse offender) are just rides or exhibits. They have little if any tie-in, no synergy, with the rest of the park. Walt Disney told stories with his park attractions. The "nuts and bolts" of telling stories with a walk-in theater and live actors is explained in simple terms. No math! Imagine equations for the curve radii and bank on Big Thunder Mountain Railroad! Color, character, form, space, and time are some of the elements used to tell the story. I like the panoramic photos of Main Street, Disneyland on pages 68 through 71. Disney theme parks keep changing. I like to see how the park has changed over time. Hench explained why these changes occurred. This book is a nice addition to my Disney library.

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