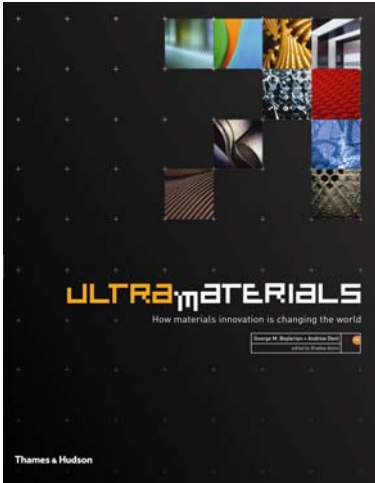


**Ultra Materials : How Materials Innovation is Changing the World** / George M. Beylerian and Andrew Dent.--New York, NY: Thames & Hudson, Inc., dist. by W. W. Norton, November 2007.--288 p.: ill.--ISBN-13: 978-0-500-51382-8: \$75.00.



*Ultra Materials* is a fascinating book. It is not overly technical, nor does it cover any particular designer or material in great depth; nonetheless, it is an excellent survey of recent developments in the field of materials, with the exclusion of natural materials. The authors include numerous design fields— architecture, industrial design, and fashion—as well as hundreds of materials and numerous innovative projects and designers. No particular interview or section has any more depth than an entry in an encyclopedia, but taken together the whole of the book provides a broad overview of the current state of materials, in general, and highlights the most innovative designers and the most unique materials.

*Ultra Materials* is divided into two principal sections. The first, slightly more than the first half of the book, is a series of essays on developments in materials, innovative products and buildings, and interviews with designers that include descriptions of their work and discussions of how they make decisions about materials. The second is primarily a directory of some of the most interesting new materials, though it is not presented as an exhaustive list. Each material is illustrated by one photograph and described in one or two paragraphs. The second section also contains additional resources: an interesting glossary, and directories of designers, design publications, material organizations, competitions, and fellowships. The illustrations in both sections are excellent; brilliant photographs of astonishing materials, unique products, and extraordinary buildings.

Author George Beylerian is the founder of Material ConneXion, and Andrew Dent directs Material ConneXion's research into new products. They bring an enormous expertise and broad knowledge about all areas of the materials field. While they mention their company, the book is not a commercial for Material ConneXion, except for the mystifying numbers after each material description in the second section. These seem to be the "MC index number" from the Material ConneXion database, but the numbers do not seem to be explained anywhere in the book.

*Ultra Materials* is a book to pique a student's curiosity or inspire a more seasoned designer to try new things. I would strongly recommend this book for any undergraduate program in architecture, design, or art, and I am sure graduate students and faculty in these areas will also find enough of the new and unusual to interest them as well.

Karen DeWitt, Head, Design Library, North Carolina State University, karen\_dewitt@ncsu.edu

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