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# Book Reviews

## **Essential Woodworker — Skills, Tools & Materials**

Robert Wearing  
*Batsford, £14.95*

For many readers of *Design and Technology Teaching* this book will be a trip down memory lane. Here we are back in the world of home-made scratch stocks, wooden smoothing planes, diminishing dove tails and traditional carcass constructions. There is not a power tool to be seen anywhere. The author owes his allegiance to Edward Barnsley and Cecil Gough at Loughborough College and uncompromisingly presents traditional excellences in hand wood working. It is a first glance surprising that such a book can be newly published in 1988. Perhaps its appearance is a harbinger of the craft renaissance skilfully perceived by the publishers even though largely dismissed by the educational establishment. Indeed its appearance only just predates the final abandonment of craft from the subject categorisations of the National Curriculum!

*John Eggleston*

## **Power Tool Woodworking**

Gorden Warr  
*Batsford, £12.99*

This volume is the very antithesis of the Wearing volume. Gorden Warr is a hand power tool enthusiast and has culled the very latest catalogues to give us a presentation of every device which will allow us to use power tools to drill, bore, saw, joint and otherwise change the shape of wood. It is indeed a useful volume and many schools will find the information helpful in extending the range of possibilities for power tools that are already available in the schools. A particular feature of the book is its sharp eye for safety; all too often underestimated in handbooks such as this but of special importance for a volume to be of relevance to schools.

*John Eggleston*

## **Air Brushing Automobiles — Tips, Techniques and Projects**

Nancy Duin  
*Studio Vista, £14.95*

One of the growth areas in Design and Technology is the use of air brush techniques and, for many pupils, there is no subject for such techniques as attractive as modern motor cars. In this volume Nancy Duin gives full range to the potential and in a series of striking illustrations presents possibilities which will delight the hearts of many of pupils and teachers. She ranges from vintage styling to through state-of-the-art motors and includes an inspired range of designer fantasies. Her guide to 'How to do it' is perceptive and excellently explained. Many schools will welcome this volume; it will give immensely enhanced scope to their air brush enthusiasts.

*Steve Sayer*

## **Chair Seating — Techniques in Cane, Rush, Willow and Cords**

Kay Johnston, Olivia Elton Barratt, Mary Butcher  
*Dryad Press, £14.95*

This is another volume in the new run of books on craft techniques being published by the renaissance Dryad Company. Although a far cry from the traditional Dryad Handbooks, the quality of production has been maintained in this ambitious, encyclopaedic volume which features the design and construction of a wide range of traditional chairs and stools. Well illustrated and carefully written this is a comprehensive and highly efficient do it yourself volume. It is likely to be of particular assistance to those who are faced with often tiresome task of reseating chairs and stools!

*Steve Sayer*

## **Authentic Craftsmanship in Interior Design**

J Ronald Reed and Stephenie Culp  
*Simon & Schuster, £12.95*

The object of this beautifully illustrated and attractively bound book is to bring back craftsmanship into the interior design of every home. It is divided into chapters on the various decorative media — metal, paint, stone and marble, tile, brick, wood, plaster and glass. Each chapter contains a brief history of the crafts, the medium and the basis of the craftsman's task. It then goes into detail about processes and techniques and is intended not so much as a do-it-yourself volume but rather to alert the reader to strategies for identifying and obtaining the best possible work and to ensure good craftsmanship.

There is however a major problem in recommending this volume to schools and colleges. Almost all of the illustrations portray interiors of a standard of affluence that will only be familiar to few, if any, modern day students. The illustrations are of spacious rooms, grand fireplaces, sweeping staircases and lengthy interior vistas. It is all reminiscence of a rather up market editions of *House and Garden* or *Ideal Home*. Perhaps the Los Angeles homes occupied by the authors are uniformly magnificent; for those of us who live in other parts the vision is breathtaking but improbable.

*John Eggleston*

## **A tool for Learning — Some functions of art in the primary school**

Maurice Rubens and Mary Newland  
*Direct Experience, £4.90*

This small book is dedicated to John Friend, the founding Principal of Bretton Hall College of Education, who died in 1988 at the age of 86. John Friend will be fondly remembered by generations of teachers as man of vision and humanity who did so much to promote the values of the arts in education. The authors echo some of John Friend's beliefs in education and the arts in this book which

is based on the authors' long experience in primary schools and in-service teacher education.

In many ways the book reflects the approaches to teaching and to art in schools which were being strongly urged in the 1960s and one reads it with a sense of *deja vu*. The book re-emphasises that art has an important role in the primary school curriculum but, although it is replete with assertions about the values of art, it falls short of providing real evidence to justify that importance nor does it give any clear guidance on how art may be developed in the primary school. The book is underpinned by an adherence to developmental stage theory and the idea of the teacher's task as being, "as always, to assist the learner's autonomous development". In this sense, it is difficult to concur with the authors' belief that "this approach radically challenges a whole range of established ideas and attitudes to Art in education". However, the book lists many interesting points of ideas about art for children or teachers but, unfortunately, it does not pursue lines of possible development. It also identifies many pertinent questions but, again unfortunately, it does not provide ways of seeking or using the answers. Many issues of very high importance in contemporary art education, such as meeting the needs of the multi-cultural society and developing children's critical abilities in art, are not addressed. The book, therefore, cannot be regarded as a manifesto for art education at the present time nor could it be used as a guide to curriculum development.

The book is nicely produced and has many illustrations, some in colour, but often it is not clear how they relate to the text. Although each section has its own heading, the text is rather difficult to follow as there is no obvious structure to its organisation. A large part of the text consists of series of short statements, many of which do not appear to be connected either to each other or to the section heading. Some of these statements are truisms, such as "looking encourages concentration", whereas others are assertions, such as "Fantasy takes on meaning in the light of underlying truth and belief". Rarely are these explained, extended or put into context. On almost every page is a quotation or pithy saying by a well known artist, writer or educator and, whilst these are invariably interesting, informative or amusing in themselves, they do not appear to be related to the text in any direct way. The brief "Historical Perspective" is markedly

over-generalised and includes the inaccurate statement that "The first Art and Design colleges, set up on 1851 Exhibition profits were called Drawing Schools". As a matter of fact, the first School of Design was established in 1837 and was the forerunner of many schools set up to train artists and designers in the following years. In contrast, the Drawing Schools were established over the same period with the primary intention of training the public in matters of good taste.

Although the book is intended to have a practical focus, the references to practice shift between descriptions of activities provided for children in school and those for teachers on in-service courses and sometimes it is difficult to know which is which. The few examples of actual practice described in the text, such as the one on printmaking, would be very difficult to implement from the information given.

Although it contains many quotable statements, it is not likely that the book will be of much help to primary school teachers looking for clear guidance on how to provide children with art experiences nor will it be of much help to the few art specialist primary school teachers who want to develop their work further. However, despite some of its shortcomings as an art education text, the book has other values. For the most part, the book reflects the authors' own wide experiences in education and illustrates their caring attitude towards both children and teachers. It also reflects a genuine concern for art in primary schools and, particularly, emphasises the importance of observation and drawing in all aspects of the curriculum.

*Brian Allison*

**"SKILLS" — Video series for CDT**  
Winter Greene Sanmar  
*Demonstrated by Nick Bee*

This series of video productions deals with basic skills commonly found in the more traditional aspects of CDT. Promotional material supplied with the two videos sent to me suggests that further material will shortly be available dealing with bending acrylic and hand screw-cutting, etc. The intention is that each video allows pupils to receive support without recourse to teacher advice, thus removing unnecessary delay in their work. It would have been useful if the producers of the material had supplied me with a full list of future productions as this would have enabled a more critical approach to the review.

The two programmes deal with basic wood working skills in marking out, a corner butt joint, a corner rebate joint, housing joint, and cross-halving joint. Each video has ample breaks between the different programmes and each programme lasts approximately 30-40 minutes.

The standard of production is high, with good use made of still shots and close-up shots.

My main concern lies not with the quality of production of the material but with the content of the programmes. There is no doubt in my mind that instructional videos, especially inter-active videos, will play an increasingly important role in Design and Technology. My view would be that there are areas of our work which need this approach *much more* than that which appears to be covered by this series. However, this is a personal view-point and no doubt some will disagree.

No information was supplied as to costs involved but clearly for this series to be useful easy access will be necessary to video-recorder and television.

I did have one small concern regarding safety; the sanding disc shown is un-guarded, a surprising error I feel, when safety receives fairly constant reinforcement throughout all the programmes. All the demonstrations are very competent and clear and I am sure that many teachers will find them useful.  
*David Jones*

**Starting Embroidery**  
Jenny Bullen  
*Batsford, £9.95*

This book is aimed at embroiderers who have previously worked with kits or designs from charts. The intended readers are therefore embroiderers who have little or no experience of creating designs themselves or using free forms of stitches and other techniques.

For those taking the first steps into experimentation with hand embroidery, this book provides brief descriptions of a number of basic techniques. The chapter entitled "Making stitches work" introduces seven basic stitches and suggests starting points for designs, the use of restricted colour schemes, the application of fabric dyes to the background, and a free approach to the working of the stitchery.

Following this there are chapters introducing shadow work, quilting,

applique, canvas work and counted thread embroidery. In each case the traditional or basic technique is described, then ideas are proffered for ways of developing a more creative form of embroidery through the use of a variety of materials such as unusual yarns, ribbon, lurex thread, fabric paints, spray paint, and frayed and burnt fabrics. Patchwork and machine embroidery have been purposely excluded as they are beyond the scope of this publication. The book ends with a chapter on finishing off the work with instructions on stretching, mounting, framing, and making and using cords, edgings and tassels.

Throughout the book the techniques are explained clearly and simply. Most of the instructional diagrams are very clear whilst the colour illustrations, though few, illustrate the effects which can be achieved by experimenting with a few basic techniques used imaginatively. However, there are some glaring errors in the illustrations and captions relating to stitch techniques. Figures 12, 14 and 18 have errors in one or both which make the instructions impossible for a beginner to follow, whilst the photograph in figure 52 is on its side. The stiches are unlabelled so that the caption identifying the range of stiches shown bears no relationship to the photograph.

Many people using such a book will already be familiar with basic embroidery techniques used in the production of kits. For this group of readers the book provides some useful ideas about methods of using materials and techniques more creatively. The information given is limited and doesn't go into great depth, which is probably a good approach for beginners feeling nervous and unsure of their work. Several other good books on the market will provide further information concerning more innovative techniques and approaches to designing for use as the embroiderer gains confidence and becomes more adventurous. However, those totally new to embroidery will find that the errors in the stitch diagrams will leave them bewildered. Such readers would do better to refer to one of the excellent stitch dictionaries which are on the market. It is unfortunate that such careless errors have been overlooked in the proof-reading. Confusing instructions such as these could easily sap the confidence of a beginner and discourage them from progressing further.

As an introduction to experimentation with a variety of embroidery and colouring techniques this book provides a useful, though limited, starting point.

Readers are encouraged to take a fresh look at the material available to them. Sources of ideas for designs are suggested and readers are encouraged to collect photographs, take rubbings and make sketches. However, the emphasis is very much upon techniques and the effects which can be achieved by using them creatively. Whilst this is an important area to be covered in the teaching of creative approaches to embroidery, the book fails to address the other very important consideration for its targeted readership. That is, the development of original designs from the source material collected, a process which those inexperienced and untrained in art tend to find particularly difficult.

There is a very short section about designing headed "Design for applique" but other than this, there is little more than a brief reference to printing blocks, tracing paper and templates for use in the design process. As this book is intended for those used to following diagrams and working with kits, a section devoted to designing and developing ideas from sources would have been an invaluable addition to this book. Readers would have been greatly aided in their first steps as designers if discussion of design approaches, such as composition, simplification, repetition, distortion, stylization and abstraction, had been included with good illustrations showing clearly the development from source to finished product. As it is, "Starting Embroidery" provides some good technical advice but a limited amount of guidance about designing. The book therefore fails to provide fully for the needs of its intended readership: "those who wish to begin designing and working their own pieces".

*Moira G Simpson*

### **Santos Statures and Sculptures**

Laurie Beth Kalb

*Los Angeles Craft and Folk Art Museum*

The book, which is a catalogue for an exhibition of contemporary woodcarving from New Mexico, is substantially an essay by Ms Kalb on the nature and development of a traditional art form and makes a substantial contribution to understanding art in contemporary cultures. The catalogue is beautifully illustrated and includes biographies of several important Hispanic artists working in New Mexico. The catalogue is dedicated to Enrique Rendon, one of the outstanding artists in this genre, who died in 1987.

Santos are carved and painted religious images of saints and other religious figures and, throughout the Spanish Colonial era (1700-1860), were typically found in churches or home alters of villagers in New Mexico. In recent years there has been a revival of the practice of carving and painting santos and they are being increasingly recognised as having an important place in contemporary American art. Although they have a unique style, santos can be classed as a form of primitive art which has endured and adapted to changing demands and values.

Drawing upon extensive research, Ms Kalb gives an excellent and well documented account of the history of the making and use of santos in relation to their social and religious contexts and describes the different approaches taken by historians and mainstream artists over time to what has been claimed to be the "most original American folk art". The main part of the text is concerned with an exploration of the wide range of woodcarvings made by contemporary carvers practising in New Mexico, which both in expression and form, are firmly in the santos tradition. The sense of reality, which the author sees as pervading the working processes of the *santeros* as well as the influences on them of patronage, is refreshing.

Apart from the valuable insights into the iconography of a particular art form which the catalogue provides, a main value of the essay is in its placing of the work of ethnic minority artists in contemporary social and cultural as well as artistic contexts. The implications of this contextual relationship go far beyond the particular situation of the New Mexico artists. There is no indication of plans for the exhibition to be shown outside the USA but, nevertheless, the catalogue itself merits wide circulation as it makes a significant contribution to the understanding of art in general as well as specific terms.

*Brian Allison*

### **Compendium of Lettering Workbooks** *Studio Vista, £4.95 each*

I feel it is essential to review these books together for they form a mini series designed to help the reader to improve his or her calligraphic and lettering skills. They are meant, presumably, to complement each other, with outline explanations and set tasks which aid the reader's practical lettering ability. In view of this the series has been lavishly illustrated with black and white drawings

and alphabets which complement their texts well.

The book covers are very attractive and will tempt potential purchasers to pick them up from the bookshop shelf. Once turning the pages, however, I was somewhat disappointed for the reliance upon black and white — albeit to cut down on costly printing costs — gave them a restrictive pragmatism which was anything but exciting. Some of the illustrative material was very nicely done, but in some instances I had the feeling that a photocopier would have produced a better result. The overall result, however, is an acceptable one and the series should help young students to acquire a knowledge of the subject and some essential skills in the production of letter forms and associated techniques.

**Basic Skills** by Anne Trudgill is concerned with writing skills. The author provides plenty of information with respect to the materials and implements required in learning pen lettering. The intention of the book is to get the reader to get involved in a practical way and it should prove successful in this basic aim.

There is a good chapter on *Letterforms*, which covers a range of alphabets; another on *Techniques*, in which aspects such as centering, layout, pasting-up, etc. are explained well; and the last one provides a number of useful *Projects*.

**Traditional Penmanship** by Anne Trudgill leads on from her first book. Once again it is a workbook that has been written to be used in a practical way. In it the author looks briefly at *historical concerns* and explains what *tools and materials* are needed. She goes on to show a variety of *styles*, with simple instructions in how the various letterforms are made with the pen. This is a useful section and should be helpful to those intent upon developing their competency as calligraphers. In the final section Anne Trudgill deals with design and decoration, aspects which demand much more detail. She also explains some of the basic techniques concerned with *gilding* — a specialised subject in which much more time, effort and explanation are required. It is an area of the subject in which an expert and world authority like Sam Somerville has spent years of experimentation, research and concentrated effort, and cannot be dismissed lightly, as here, in a couple of pages or so. I suppose, though, that if it increases interest in this aspect then it will have been worthwhile.

**Applied Lettering** by George Evans and Christine Cash is one of those

technically-biased books which turn me off. As a calligrapher I enjoy the freedom of the pen gliding over the surface in a controlled yet inventive way so that the graphic imagery produced has an inherent excitement and recognisable dynamism. A book such as this, which I agree many young people must require in developing lettering skills, is too rigid in concept. It makes the business of lettering much more like an engineering exercise with its reliance upon set-squares, rulers, squared grids and the like. However, I must agree that it provides a good introduction for the amateur and must be seen as an essential unit in the series.

**Designing With Letters** by Bruce Robertson completes this mini series. The author looks at ways in which *letters can be used imaginatively* and provides quite a number of different alphabetical forms. He suggests *distorting letters* for effect, looks at the way *space and letters shapes* may be used in designing, composition, hand drawn lettering and transfer types. It is a pity that he places an emphasis upon drawn lettering and type faces for much inventiveness can come from the pen. As the first two books in the series dealt with pen-made letters I would like to have seen at least a section of this final book using pen-made imagery inventively. This suggest to me a lack of cohesiveness in the overall planning. Perhaps each author worked independently when the total package would have benefitted from a better-conceived plan.  
*John Lancaster*

#### **Drawn Thread Embroidery**

Moyra McNeil  
*Batsford, £14.95*  
and

#### **Starting Needlepoint Lace**

Valeries Grimwood  
*Batsford, £10.95*

Moyra McNeil is an enthusiast for preserving needlecrafts as they were originally practised and also for developing them in the modern idiom, for today's purposes and with accessible materials.

In *Drawn Thread Embroidery* she has produced a book which is both a model of clear presentation and practical inspiration as well as a source book in social and cultural aspects of the craft.

The initial sections deal with fabrics, threads and basic techniques. Then there follow chapters on forms of drawn thread embroidery from different cultural origins, Hedebo, Reticella and Hardanger, illustrated with splendid photographs of

historic pieces from Russia, the Ukraine and other European countries. Some of the original work may be viewed at the Victoria and Albert Museum and in the Embroiderer's Guild Collection at Hampton Court. The final chapters suggest ways of experimenting with drawn thread techniques and adapting them for machine work.

The craft of Needlepoint lacemaking has its origins in drawn thread techniques. This relationship and the development of needlepoint lace making is described in Valerie Grimwood's *Starting Needlepoint Lace*. This is a beautifully presented book with excellent diagrams and instructions which will ensure the success of the beginner for whom it is intended. It is however an interesting book to read as well since the practice of lacemaking is interspersed with cultural and historical information.

Although these books are likely to be used primarily by adult students, they could be valuable resource books in the Design-Technology library with the variety of possibilities which will become available for enterprising projects when the new curriculum systems become operational.

*E Wishart*

#### **Binche Lace**

Michael Guisiana with Linda Dunn  
*Batsford, £12.95*

Michael Guisiana is an established exponent of the art of lacemaking. In this book he has presented an essentially practical work on Binche lace, in his words "a book to offer 'how to' knowledge".

The book begins with a photographic record of the fine laces, Flanders, Point de Paris and Valenciennes from which Binche lace has taken its stitches and grounds and these are explained.

The variety in the pattern collection which forms the latter part of the book would make it an interesting addition to the library of lacemakers who are already proficient in the basic techniques. The book must necessarily have a specialist appeal and being so dependent on intricate patterns and diagrams which are clearly produced, it is reasonably priced at £12.95

*E Wishart*