

Reviews

An Italic Calligraphy Handbook

Carolyn Knudsen Adams
Thornons Publishing Group, Rochester,
Vermont, £4.99 paperback

There are many good books on calligraphy on the market for interested readers, amateur scribes and teachers to refer to. Some are obviously much better than others. Some have texts which inspire, others are enriched with choice visual materials in black and white and/or colour depending upon the monetary limitations imposed by respective publishers. This book lacks inspiration and might even be said to be a trifle boring.

The author — a teacher and calligrapher — gives us a brief historical background of the Italic style of writing which is of some passing interest; and this opening section is followed by one dealing with materials. She then goes on to deal with the Italic letter forms themselves in a somewhat wordy fashion when, in my view, it would have helped to have the text more lavishly supported by actual illustrations of letters. However, she does give a fairly balanced indication of letter construction and stroke sequence, and tries hard to help left-handed calligraphers.

When the author analyses italic letters — which should be free-flowing, almost spontaneously-produced forms resulting from the delightful use of the edged pen — she makes it appear that they are tight and stilted, mechanical in the extreme. This is made worse by her use of heavy, mechanically-contrived geometric illustrations. It is therefore somewhat surprising to move on to the next section dealing with capital letters to find that these are dealt with in a much livelier way: one that, at last, makes the reader want to take-up a pen and have a try.

The section on design and layout is of minimum quality. It has little impact on the reader and its supporting visuals are weak.

It may be gathered from what I have written that I find this book of little consequence and, at a cost of £4.99, far too expensive. Those interested in learning more about Italic writing would be well advised to seek other sources.

John Lancaster

Design and British Industry

Richard Stewart
John Murray, £19.95

A refreshing approach to a history of the designed world, Richard Stewart takes the reader from *The Great Exhibition* of the Victorian era through to the 1980's. It is refreshing inasmuch as it does not dwell upon the aspect already adequately covered in other publications, rather it recognises and discusses succinctly the various design movements between the 1850's and the 1980's. As the title implies, the emphasis is towards industrial design, recognising that engineers, inventors and innovators are also a part of the *designer* fraternity alongside the aestheticians.

The book presents an illustrated commentary on the relationships between British industry and *design institutions* during the period and acknowledges the artistic, technological, political and fashionable influences with clarity, acting as a starting point for more in-depth enquiry. Areas of British design which have not, to date, received the approbation of the historians with any force, such as *Utility*, *The Festival of Britain* and *The Council of Industrial Design/Design Council* are given credit for their contribution — as are commercial and promotional ideologies. The latter two are suitably represented through Stewart's explanations of *Publicity and Propaganda*, *Design Exhibition Centres* and *Engineering, Innovation and Education*, all of which acknowledge the importance of the role played by *The Design Council*.

The brief section about *Design in General Education* could, however, make any self-respecting design educationalist shudder — to suggest that design should be lodged within the narrow confines of any specific subject would surely be a cause for concerned debate, but perhaps this is Mr Stewart's intention?

A pity the pictorial comment did not relate a little more directly to the text, the interesting and, in some cases, rarely seen black and white photographs appeared to compete with rather than compliment the main *story line*.

The overall impression is that this *John Murray* publication is a welcome addition to the list of art and design history resources, fulfilling a need whilst providing a starting point for further enquiry. The content already mentioned, combined with an optimistic closing section about the state of play and hopes for the future, as well as a useful bibliography, indicates its potential to those studying design-related activities for secondary and further education levels.

John H. Carswell

Design Graphics

David Fair and Marilyn Kenny
Hodder and Stoughton, £3.95

We must need a lot of help in developing graphical skills and expertise in schools if the number of books dealing with this fundamental design skill are to be believed. Surely the potential market is approaching exhaustion! All this aside it is interesting to see how expectations have changed from our being happy with 'neat' sketches and working drawings to the need for professional 'client' graphics: not a bad thing provided it is kept in 'perspective'!

Fair and Kenny have collaborated to produce a book which will assist in the selection and use of various graphic techniques and use of media. In so far as it goes, the book is sound and pitched at a sensible level. Colour, where used, relates specifically to graphic technique, and is not used to enhance 'readability'.

A complaint that I have about some books of this type is that they appear to suggest that every drawing should be worked to a presentation finish; this book almost avoids this, but not quite. 'Doodling' is a vital part of the generation of ideas and as such deserves more of a mention than it usually gets.

Where this book is very good is in its treatment of drawing, modelling, colouring and rendering techniques, with clear and well presented examples of numerous applications of techniques. It is also clear that there is a degree of realism on the part of the authors in that they avoid the more expensive techniques. Many teachers will find that this book will teach not only their

pupils, but they themselves as well. Although I began by commenting on the number of books of this type currently in print, I consider this to be one of the best I have seen.

D.R. Jones

GCSE Craft, Design and Technology

Richard Kimbell, John Plater and Tristram Shepard
Thames Hutchinson, £4.25

Readers will be familiar with the Thames TV CDT programmes, and, no doubt have made use of them. This book uses much of the information presented in the series together with further additional material and continues the previously high standard of design education thinking.

The book deals, as one might expect, with the three areas of CDT currently being examined at GCSE level, Design and Communication, Design and Realisation, and Technology, and, most importantly in my view, avoids the all too common pitfall of failing to show the unity of CDT as an educational experience. It is clear throughout the book that the authors and contributors are fully in agreement as to the centrality of 'design' in what we do. Thus, from the outset, design is treated as a wide-ranging activity and included is all that one would expect concerning the nature of Design as a basic human activity.

The main body of content is, however, concerned with the three examination 'subjects' but never at any stage does one get the impression that pupils might lose touch with the fact that they are involved in 'design'.

Throughout the book is superbly illustrated with line drawings, photographs and so on. What a pity it is that publishers still seem to be reluctant to use colour throughout books. The written material is clear and easily read.

In all I found the book to be well conceived, thoughtfully presented and likely to be of very considerable value in the teaching of CDT.

D.R. Jones

Problem Solving in Science and Technology

David Rowlands
Hutchinson Teachers Guide: £9.95;
Pupils' Work Packs 1, 2, 3: £19.95 each
(copyright free)

David Roberts' book *Problem Solving in Science and Technology* includes 144 problem solving exercises grouped within 9 topics, for selection and integration into established schemes of work, primarily for pupils aged 11 to 14 years. Each exercise is presented in an attractive, interesting, concise worksheet. A Teachers' Manual available with the collection of exercises, contains much material of value to the teacher with regard to:

- each exercise individually
- selection and application of the exercise, and
- tuition in problem solving

Many of the exercises are essentially adaptations of laboratory tests where full and clear instructions would normally be given to the pupils in advance of testing as to exactly how to proceed. In the exercises in this book, the author states the basic problem and encourages the pupils to determine (subsequent to 'relevant' tuition) what tests may be relevant and how to undertake them — sometimes also recommending that the pupil determine what equipment, instruments, etc. would be needed.

Requiring the pupils to decide what to do should issue a stimulating and welcome challenge to them to use their initiative to constructively apply investigation, imagination and ingenuity, whilst eliminating the blandness and boredom of undertaking traditional prestructured laboratory work.

Whilst the worksheets admirably present commencing conditions and objective(s), the Teachers' Manual would be enhanced if it included more guidance towards helping pupils to determine potential ways for achieving the objective. For example, consider exercise 2.7 'A Difficult Choice'. The worksheet as presented to the pupils, states 'There are three colourless liquids, each sealed in small bottle. Only one is water. How could you prove which one is

the water? P.S. You are not allowed to open the bottles'. The author states in the Manual (p.43) 'If . . . (the exercise) follows on from work on melting points, then it can be a valuable consolidation exercise'. (p.13) 'Most people could cope with such an exercise if given appropriate hints and help at the start of the exercise'. The author leaves it to the experience and discretion of the individual teacher to decide what and how far hints and help should be given and when. Whilst appropriately experienced teachers can no doubt cope adequately with this situation, it would be helpful to both teachers and pupils if more concrete guidance was provided. For example, in 'A Difficult Choice', after leaving the pupils for a period of time to struggle with the problem, the teacher could, if and as the need arises, encourage them to:

- name properties applicable to liquids, e.g. volume, weight, density, viscosity, boiling temperature, freezing temperature, etc.
- consider how these properties may vary from one liquid and condition to another
- decide which of these properties should be considered (with due regard to specific conditions, test equipment, implications and effects of carrying out the test, safety, etc) in order to find which bottle contains the water.

Notwithstanding the above suggestion, the author has presented a wide choice of problems from which the individual teacher may select according to his/her needs. The worksheets are to the point and include interesting and often entertaining, well presented sketches. This work makes a valuable contribution towards implementing problem solving within the school in a way that should be motivating and constructive for the pupils and interesting and rewarding for the teacher.

Peter C. Millray

Technical Drawing. An Usborne Guide

Susan Peach; edited by T. Potter
Usborne, £5.50

My first impressions were thought provoking indeed. A flick through the pages portrays that which one associates with this publisher:—

interesting, varied, colourful, informative, but can it seriously be regarded as a practical aid to the attainment of the skills and techniques outlined?

There are sections on getting started, stages in design, sketching, *models*, *modelling tips*, orthographic projection, architectural, isometric and perspective drawing, *rendering techniques*, using photographs, *finishing touches*, how a designer works, equipment, *tips*, conventions, model plans, and glossary. Those in italics were particularly informative.

Pupils/students would certainly 'gain' from viewing this book, which with its attractive cover, is likely to be popular (hard-backed).

I must confess that a title 'Graphical Communication' or 'Technical Illustration' would have been a more appropriate title in my opinion.

Overall, certainly a recommended buy — as a reference/library book.

Keith Vickers

TVEI and Secondary Education: a critical appraisal

Denis Gleeson
Open University Press, £8.95 (pb), £25 (hb)

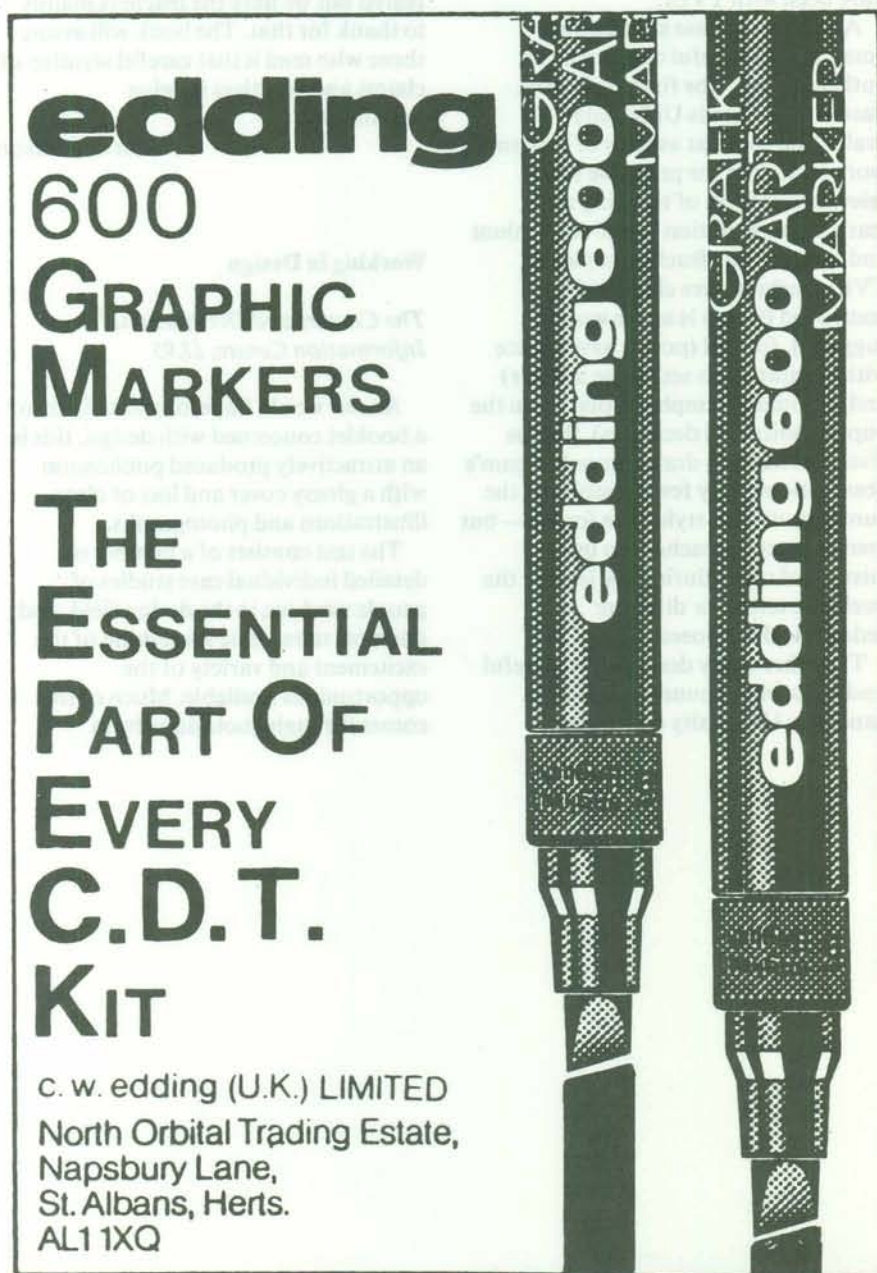
TVEI is here to stay for the next decade for all pupils in the 14-18 range; it is therefore timely to have an informed and critical perspective. This collection of essays and case studies is informed in as much as it is written by national and local evaluators and might go some way to balancing the rather optimistic and propagandist image of TVEI that the MSC promotes with Eastern European subtlety.

The subjects covered range from national and local policy implementation to some convincing case

studies on reform of teaching and learning styles, work experience, equal opportunities (gender) and 16-18 developments. Having said this, some essays suffer from a certain contrariness; interventions by the MSC are sometimes welcomed, sometimes not. The MSC's exhortations to encourage pupil participation through more control of their learning processes, we are given to understand, divests the teachers of their curriculum responsibilities and renders them mere 'operatives' (Sykes and Taylor). Whereas

on matters of equal opportunities (gender) the MSC is criticised for not taking a more assertive role; '... it (TVEI) needs to address the psychological, social and political perceptions of teachers . . . The odd workshop or conference on equal opportunities is clearly inadequate'. (Millman and Weiner).

There are thorough and analytic essays on the origins, historical context and implications of the launch of TVEI, perhaps the most important, for those still unfamiliar with the new climate, is



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by Harland who provides a very convincing examination of the method of funding and control of the initiative by the MSC: 'categorical funding'. She points out the paradox of the apparent diversity of local projects and the creative responses of their teachers with the MSC's elaborate mechanisms of control; 'bid, contract, funding, monitoring and evaluation . . .' The form of this funding seems here to stay in the educational sphere — it remains to be seen whether the MSC, DES or other paymasters, will continue to be as encouragingly flexible as they appear to have been with TVEI.

Amongst the case studies, two emerge, with helpful clarity and an authentic ring. The first, by Barnes based on the Leeds University evaluation looks at aspects of classroom work including the principle of relevance, reform of teaching and learning, negotiation of the curriculum and integration. Teaching styles of TVEI teachers were classified as controlled (which is as the word suggests), framed (pupils have choice within parameters set by the teacher) and negotiated (emphasis placed on the pupils choice and decisions). Barnes gives illustrations drawn from his team's observations, very few examples of the pure 'negotiated' style were found — but then in practice teachers do use a mixture of styles during the lesson, the week, the term, for different pedagogical purposes.

The other study deserving of careful reading is from Saunders using the Lancaster University evaluation,

investigated pupils perceptions of work experience. 90% of the responses in his sample said they found work experience enjoyable and for many, he suggests, this was probably because it was so different from ordinary school experience. Sadly most of the work experience programmes were isolated from the mainstream curriculum both at preparation stage and at debriefing — a challenge that yet has to be faced.

The common theme in the book is that TVEI is certainly not marginal and probably not as bad as many of the commentators might have originally feared but we have the teachers mainly to thank for that. The book will assure those who read it that careful scrutiny of claims and practices is being maintained.

Martin Merson

Working in Design

The Careers and Occupational Information Centre, £1.95

As one would hopefully anticipate of a booklet concerned with design, this is an attractively produced publication with a glossy cover and lots of clean illustrations and photographs.

The text consists of a number of detailed individual case studies of people working in the design field, and attempts to recreate something of the excitement and variety of the opportunities available. Much of this comes through quotations from

interviews with practising designers, and does provide a realistic picture, although one perhaps somewhat lacking in the problems and disappointments that they might have encountered.

The booklet also contains advice for students thinking of a career in design work, and a useful list of addresses from which further information can be obtained.

The target readership for the booklet is anyone aged 14 and upwards who has an interest in finding out more about work and careers in design. However, although the publication will be visually attractive to school students, it is unlikely that many of them will read the text in any detail, preferring instead to skip through. While the authors have attempted to make the text readable, it is rather long (27 A4 pages), and the content is sometimes too detailed and the language rather complex for many 14 year olds.

The booklet could be of use to students presently undertaking Art course in college but much of the content will already be familiar to many of them.

The publication is in fact likely to be of greatest benefit as a reference source for School Art & Design teachers, who will be able to obtain a general and up-to-date picture of trends in design based work. It could also be useful to careers teachers and careers officers, who would not only be able to adopt it as an information source, but might also consider using it with individual students during interview sessions.

S.J. Hodge