

Reviews

Welsh Crafts

Mary Eirwen Jones

London: Batsford £4.95

Welsh Crafts deals with work in textiles, stone, wood, leather, grass (thatch and corn dollies), metal, pottery and decorative arts. Each chapter introduces one or two working craftsmen and their products followed by a history of the craft and its place in the former rural economy of Wales.

This is a conventional enough approach but it has its problems. It is difficult to understand why only five craft centres are mentioned; the Wales Tourist Board publication *Crafts and Rural Industries* mentions 60 shops and centres where at least 50 per cent of the stock is made in Wales. The same selectivity is apparent in the choice of craftsmen; for example, only four potters are mentioned although 47 are shown in *Crafts and Rural Industries* and that is far from being a comprehensive list.

It may be unfair to expect it from this book but what is needed is an analysis of the present importance of craftwork in Wales. What is understood by craftwork now includes (1) agricultural and domestic crafts which all but died in the face of mechanization and the increased prosperity of the farming community, (2) indigenous art traditions, exemplified most typically in Wales by the unique carved love-spoons, and (3) modern industries such as those supported by CoSIRA and which are essentially branches of the fashion, jewellery or furniture trades with a high quality product produced in low volume.

There is no real possibility of reviving traditional craft skills except where there is a readily marketable product. So blacksmiths who can branch out into ornamental work may survive but hedgers with no saleable product cannot. The traditional arts can survive only by adapting their product to the economics of the craft shop – 90 per cent of sales are for 'souvenir' items costing less than £1.50. Modern rural industries which can find their main market outside the craftshops are in the same position as any other business venture. It is not possible to talk seriously about the future development of craftwork in Wales unless these distinctions are understood.

The suggestion that 'whole belts of the Welsh countryside' should be re-populated by urban craft workers would be met with horrified opposition by people in the Welsh speaking areas. The attraction of cottage self-sufficiency has drawn English settlers into almost every village in Wales and they are not always met with an unqualified welcome. Indeed the memory of one set of incomers of this type who kept goats in the garden and an LSD factory in the cellar has re-awakened local suspicions of this life-style.

The book is written in an unpretentious style without too much talk of the craftsmen's 'ethnic philosophy'. A couple of small points might be noted. Sir Henry Jones' village is Llangermw and

the slate industry is in North-West not North-East Wales. There ought to be a bibliography as well as the index.

If I were a tourist I think I would rather pay 25p for *Crafts and Rural Industries* and supplement it with one or two of the equally authoritative booklets published by the Welsh Folk Museum at St. Fagin's on the crafts in which I was particularly interested. It is a book which could find a place in the library or as a gift for someone interested in an introduction to the history and present development of crafts in Wales.

Roy Nash

A Source Book of Picture Making

Henry Pluckrose

London: Evans Brothers £4.95

This is the age of Do It Yourself, and Be Your Own ... (Gardener, Lawyer, Doctor ...), of Instant ... (Coffee, Justice, Music, Art). It is an age of grass roots movements, participation, devolution, and, remembering that in the past many people have been inhibited and cozened by dense clouds of mystique or humbug, the changes are welcome. However, they are not without their dangers. I am sure my family would prefer me not to practice do-it-yourself surgery on them, whilst many people have unhappily experienced instant Heads of State. In education the effect of these movements may be more subtle, but there are indications that the specialist with a thorough knowledge of his subject is losing ground to the generalist, the do-it-yourself artist or designer. In art and design education one is aware that novelty has become an important criterion by which children's work is judged, particularly in the primary school. If it appears to be different, then it must be creative, therefore it is good.

In his preface Mr. Pluckrose disclaims this approach: 'It is here, I believe, that we reach the deep divide in current educational practice. Some teachers are still looking for instant tips ... The fact that the process is not deepening the children's awareness of the real nature of the material is ignored'. But, his book is what the title indicates 'A Source Book of Picture Making'. As such it will prove to be a useful aide-memoire or stimulous to a lot of teachers. It encompasses brief descriptions of one hundred and seventy nine different ways of making pictures. These include the use of fabrics, resist techniques, scraping, rubbing, printing, and so on in addition to the traditional methods. Each entry lists the materials required, describes a method for their use, and suggests suitable applications. For example, painting in oils (No. 31), devotes approximately ninety words to the method, which is limited to painting with a palette knife.

The author says: 'The method described is meant to serve only as an introduction to the medium'. That modest amount of explanation is fairly typical.

Included also is the following advice: 'Brushes, knife and palette should be cleaned with linseed oil or a proprietary paintbrush cleaner at the end of each painting session. Remember to ensure that aprons are always worn'. In my experience a brush cleaned only in linseed oil will harden, whilst the cheapest, most effective cleansing agents are turpentine followed by soap and water. Some proprietary paintbrush cleaners might be dangerous in the hands of young children.

Similarly, No. 155, Printing with a Plaster Block, does not describe the preparation of the plaster block adequately, nor does it warn those unfamiliar with the properties of plaster of the danger of disposing of waste through the normal drains.

It could be argued that the intention of the book is to encourage teachers and children to experiment with new media and methods, and that too much elaboration upon the technical snags, difficulties, and dangers would put them off. There is some force in that. Alternatively, meeting snags unexpectedly could be off-putting too. Returning to No. 155: 'Method: The bottom is torn from a cardboard box so that a frame is formed. This is placed on a slab of glass which has been cleaned with a wad of cotton wool soaked in methylated spirit. The plaster is mixed with water until a thick cream is formed and poured into the cardboard frame. Leave to set'. One can imagine the luckless child whose clothes are ruined because the plaster leaked from the bottom of the torn cardboard frame.

This is a book of ideas. It has little to say about skill or judgement. Most of the methods described will present no serious problems, but the teacher using it would be well advised to try them personally before presenting them to children. The practice is not always as simple as it might appear. Given the child's capacity to invent, developing imaginatively from the resources available, the contents of this book, when used intelligently by the teacher, will widen the range of experience available to many children. But, as Mr. Pluckrose makes clear in his preface, these are the means only. Their educative value lies not in their multiplicity, but in providing choice wide enough for each child to find a medium appropriate to his/her own personality which he can then exploit as a vehicle for conceptual and aesthetic development.

R. Hart

Approaches to Drawing

Leo Walmsley

London: Evans Brothers £2.75.

Once upon a time psychologists not only told us that our I.Q. was measurable and predictable but also that some of us were born with special abilities — and others were not. One of these special abilities was drawing — one either could or could not, and thousands of children and their teachers accepted the 'inevitability' of an unalterable endowment.

Much has changed since this era of certainty and the author of *Approaches to Drawing* is one of the pioneers who believes that there are few, if any, of us who cannot learn to draw. In this book Walmsley justifies his belief and sets out a rationale and a methodology that offers real promise to the non-drawer. Moreover the suggestions he offers are ones that most learners will find intriguing and attractive. For the art teacher who shares Walmsley's belief — and one hopes the majority now do so — the book will offer substantial assistance and encouragement in putting belief into practice. Indeed the book goes a long way to being a 'self instruction' guide that is suitable for many secondary school students.

John Eggleston

Moulded and Slip Cast Pottery and Ceramics

David Cowley

London: Batsford £5.50

The author, who teaches at Whitelands College, Putney, has already produced for the same publisher *Working with Clay and Plaster*. In this new volume his declared emphasis is on the creative possibilities of press moulding and slip casting as techniques which artist-potters have tended to associate only with industrial mass production. Of course making a mould is a creative act, as he says in his introduction, and cast or moulded units can be arranged in highly individual patterns or used as the sub-structure for creative development by other techniques.

The book's text and diagrams provide no more than a generally clear and straightforward description of the processes involved in making one and two piece plaster and bisque models for press-moulding and slip casting. It is the black and white photographs, occupying some 50 of the 120 pages, which are left to carry the author's message. This being the case, it is a great pity that they are not helpfully captioned: unidentifiable goings-on in the studio are labelled 'Barry Summe School', 'Eltham Green School', etc., and we are only given the names of the students responsible for the numerous pictured

ceramic objects – many of them interesting and good to look at – when we need to be told how each was made, glazed and fired. This seriously detracts from the usefulness of the book.

Michael Paffard

Painting

John Lancaster

Knight Books (Hodder and Stoughton) £2.95

Strange though it seems in a society where art has for a long time been part of the school curriculum, many people contrive to reach adulthood with little or no knowledge of even the simplest art skills. John Lancaster has addressed himself to this relatively deprived audience in his book *Painting*, one of a series of Teach Yourself books recently published by Hodder and Stoughton.

Considering the polyglot nature of those who might be drawn to read the book, some shifts of focus are inevitable as first one, then another group is addressed. Lancaster's main target, however, is the mature adult, as yet unwise in the ways of art, yet capable of grasping, without close direction, the techniques and interpretive strategies of the painter.

For those readers, there develops a sense of being in direct communication with the author: a sense fostered by Lancaster's frequent use of the first person, and by many references to incidents from the author's own experience as a painter which illustrate points made in the text. This informality is engaging, untinged by pedantry, and serves to link reader and author in the role of fellow explorers.

The emphasis is almost entirely on simple processes and inexpensive materials. Summer camp organizers, particularly, will value a chapter given over to the manufacture of colours, literally from the ground up. And even those with a taste for the theatrical, imagining themselves armed with a huge palette of seasoned mahogany and brushes hand-crafted from premium hog-hair, must admit that, after all, Lancaster's advice to buy paper plates for colour mixing, and a limited number of brushes is the most sensible way to begin. A basic vocabulary for painting is outlined (thus saving embarrassment when buying supplies) and hints are included on such everyday matters as creating textures and experimenting with mark-making.

Of course, one would always like to have more information than is presented in books of this type, on various kinds of pigment and their characteristics, but this is an introductory text and certain economies have to be observed. For in-depth instruction on acrylic painting, read Russell Woody; for the finer points of water-colour, John Pike or Adrian Hill are possibilities. Lancaster's audience has little need for such detail; indeed, one might wonder why an

extensive account of stretching a canvas has been included, when simple methods of preparing surfaces for painting are sufficient.

The novice painter is often as concerned with the question 'What shall I paint?' as with 'How shall I paint it?' Lancaster devotes a chapter to sources of inspiration, stressing the importance of looking closely even at the most commonplace objects in order to appreciate their particularity. Looking beyond the act of painting, he shows how the selective observation of phenomena leads to what in the end we recognize as individual style. The development of this theme is easy and unforced, and makes the next stage, that of progressive abstraction of elements and ideas, comprehensible and reasonable.

Another frequent preoccupation of the novice painter who reads a text on art is with the relative proficiency of the works used to illustrate it, since these often serve as yardsticks against which to measure his own efforts. We know that X was painted by a high school student, and Y by a professional artist is of no small importance to him.

In this case, the illustrations are of excellent quality, and plentiful. If sometimes they are not as fully documented as one would like, and if, in one or two cases, irrelevant background material has not been cropped out, that does not seriously detract from their value as illustrative material.

One of the final chapters deals with setting up a studio, a word which Lancaster defines as any space where the painter can set up a micro-environment conducive to producing works of modest size in congenial surroundings. The person who has only a bed-sitting room to work in is just as much in the author's mind as is the fortunate reader who has access to a loft over the garage.

Altogether, John Lancaster has put together a book which will encourage the most timid and self-conscious aspirant to buy a few inexpensive materials and make a start. It's mission is to convince an unskilled audience that painting is neither an arcane nor a formidable activity. I predict that it will be successful in its aim.

R.N. MacGregor

Design Resource Sheets

Set 1: Form and Decoration

Set 2: Creatures

Set 3: Structures and Sections

R.N. Billington and J.R. Jeffrey

Longman Group, London 1978. £3.00 each set

I have found these sheets very stimulating and intriguing, equally for knowledge of their sources and means of development as for their purely visual

fascination. It was long after my original study of the sheets, with the receipt of publicity material from the publishers, that my feeling of a Victorian origin was confirmed. They are in fact reproduced from black and white engravings taken from nineteenth-century history encyclopaedias. They are clearly presented in an absolutely modern format.

The sheets are of thin A3 card, and contained in simple folders on which are printed teachers' notes. There are tables to show what kinds of art, craft or design activity might be stimulated or motivated by particular sheets, with cross-references between the sheets. There are photographs to show projects which the authors have developed in their own classes. The illustrations themselves (of which there are 153) range in size from approximately 55 mm. across, when sheets typically show six illustrations, to the largest ones which almost cover half of a sheet. As visually stimulating material the formalised nature of the engravings is perhaps more effective than the most contrasty black and white photograph.

The sheets would be equally useful as mounted display material or as filed worksheets (though it is a pity to hide them from sight) and I imagine many teachers would develop their own worksheets on similar lines once they had acquired a set of these as their starter. Much as the collators are to be praised for their enterprise in bringing this material for re-publication and for their industry in the preparation of the supplementary material, I have to admit to a slight feeling of reservation; that perhaps too much organisation has been attempted. When I find some of the material leading me to ideas for my personal work in jewellery I find it of no assistance to have this possibility confirmed in the tables.

These sheets will excite all kinds of response, from careful hoarding to eager display. There might be many departments for whom £9 for the three sets will seem extravagant in these hard times but I can foresee that many of the less well-off who accept my recommendation to invest in one set will subsequently find all kinds of excuses for buying the other two.

Dick Sutton

Enamelling on Metal

Oppi. Untracht
Pitman Publishing, London £4.95

The text is precise and easily understood with thorough explanation of each aspect of enamelling. The text and photographs add life to the craft of enamelling and present an overall picture which is accurate and concise. The general mood of the book is one of using traditional techniques in more futuristic applications so that the beginner in the

craft will not be deterred by out of date or staid ideas.

Although some of the illustrations, using artists at work, tend to date the book, they by no means detract from the adventurous approach of the book to show off new methods and objects of enamelled work. With the art viewed not only from the point of view of the small object, such as a cufflink up to the large spacial proportions of the exterior murals, the book opens up to both amateur and professional alike, an opportunity to read and develop using the book as resource material for their own expansion of ideas and methods of working.

For those who are beginning in the craft, this book will give the stimulus and motivation for improvement in their work. Similarly the degree of skill needed will also make established craftsmen sit up and review their approach to work.

The book gives the impression of success skill and achievement which is within the reach of us all and to that end is a must for beginner and professional alike. As a book for reference, which will stimulate the interest and imagination, this book succeeds admirably.

J.N. Atkins

Processes

Jack Bainbridge
Basil Blackwell, Oxford £1.65

Another superbly produced book in the excellent *Land-Marks* series from Blackwell. This is fourth in the sequence – *Resources, Power and Traffic* are already published. *People* and a *Source Book* are yet to come. Each one is printed on a rational A4 size with 64 pages and soft cover; illustrations include both recent photographs and historic engravings, imaginative use is made of colour printing and the cover and frontispiece pictures are invariably delightful and artistically worthy.

Processes is the best yet and consolidates the series so far; colour is discreetly used and there are numerous references in the text to material covered in the earlier books of the series. A variety of industrial processes is traced through historical developments: smelting, casting and forging of metals; lime, brick and pottery kilns, textile, paper, gas and chemical production; an intriguing study of fermentation processes and illicit distilling in the Highlands; and the industrial archaeology of old factories and workshops. As in the other books, examples are taken from all over Britain and a simple map shows location and distribution, making clear that all teachers are within reach of some significant site in the history of technology.

The one thing not made absolutely clear is what (and whom) the books are designed for. During the last 15-20 years we have all seen a variety of initiatives, some lavishly financed and intensively

advertised, others one-man shows that rarely reach the media but enjoy local success, in the field of technology education. One seed that has germinated slowly but strongly is History of Technology; its strength lies in the fact that, unlike craft-based design or engineering, it can be introduced to the inexperienced and uncommitted pupil or student at a stage in his development when interest is likely to be stimulated in the human fundamentals of crafts and design processes. The study of History of Technology means Technology Appreciation for the majority, and on this foundation can be built the vital structure of Engineering education for the numerate minority.

The academic respectability of History of Technology is shown in the number of examination syllabuses now requiring studies in this area, and in the growing number of students being attracted to them: many syllabuses in History at O-level call for serious study of technological evolution in a local, national or international context, and of its social origins and consequences. Craft studies at O and A-level need it; new and revised syllabuses in A-level General Studies call for a grasp of the essential processes in Technology and, in Further Education, the OND in Technology requires substantial study and research experience of industries when in the stage of simple technology.

Early technology is simple, and only on a comprehension of simple concepts can one build a teaching structure for advanced crafts and engineering. Bainbridge's *Land-Marks* series is one of the few serious attempts to produce pupils' text-and-ideas books suitable for a wide range of ages and abilities; they are beautifully produced, and any teacher of History, Crafts, Technology or General Studies not yet committed to their use should certainly give them a trial.

Michael Sayer

Artists and People

Su Braden
Routledge and Kegan Paul, London £2.95

Su Braden was asked by the Gulbenkian Foundation to report on Community Arts ventures throughout the country, particularly on artists in residence in schools, in the period between 1974 and 1976. She visited 42 artists and groups and records the fruits of her interviews.

For anyone who knows nothing about community arts – and many people are still not clear what the term itself means – the book will provide a useful source of information, covering not only artists in schools but also in new towns and community settings like Craigmillar on the outskirts of Edinburgh.

Ms. Braden explicitly rejects the role of critic. She is not concerned to assess the success or failure of the activities she describes or often reports in the words of the artists themselves. Indeed, almost the only time she allows herself a critical comment, is when she admits that a May-day community celebration organised by two of the best community artists in the country 'had little more panache in production than a good church fête'. The absence of critical evaluation will seem to many a weakness in the book, since the aim of community artists should surely be to stimulate *worthwhile* artistic activity among those not attracted by conventional arts, and not simply to encourage any form of artistic activity, however poor. However, Ms. Braden's reply to that objection is to reject the whole traditional process of evaluation and to appeal to new and unclearly formulated alternative criteria. In this, she is not alone, for recently community theatre representatives told the Arts Council that they refused to be judged by conventional aesthetic standards, and wished assessment to take account of their involvement with their audiences. Similarly, Ms. Braden borrows from a Marxist critic, the idea that the emphasis should be not on *content* and form in art, but on *context* and form. Community artists (she argues) must not seek to impose an alien culture on the working class, they must respond to the working class environment and make art which speaks to the condition and problems of the working class. She is therefore strongly opposed to the policies of the Arts Council and the Regional Arts Associations which she sees mainly as being composed of at best well-meaning cultural missionaries, and at worst 'cultural imperialists' whose work is 'socially divisive and even oppressive'. They are concerned with the cultural heritage, and this is irrelevant to the needs of the working class which is alienated and 'disenfranchised' by it. Ms. Braden is particularly scornful of encouraging the appreciation of art, seeing it as a passive middle class mode as opposed to the creative working class mode of community arts. Hence she says of two experiments which she most admires (Craigmillar and Glenrothes) that they 'have nothing to do with *appreciation* and everything to do with *social action*'. It is not surprising that she has no time at all for artists in residence at universities which are dismissed as élitist institutions concerned with excellence, and cut off from society.

It will be clear that Ms. Braden's book is heavily ideological. Indeed her main theoretical chapter begins unsurprisingly with a quotation of revealed truth from Marx and Engels and ends just a little surprisingly with a call to artists to develop a new vocabulary to communicate with the working class because 'the revolutionary struggle ... is fought between capitalism and the proletariat'. At one point the author realises that some readers might suspect that her approach is politically motivated, but explains that the motivation comes from the

projects that she is describing and not from herself. This is surely disingenuous – it seems to come from *both*. If the ideology of the book is Marxist, it is a very vulgar marxism and its rejection of traditional culture would not have been endorsed by Marx himself.

Ms. Braden has only one specific reference to education in the book and in it she rightly stresses the close links that should exist between education and arts policy. This link was stressed by myself some years ago, and very emphatically by Lord Redcliffe Maud in his Report two years ago. Ms. Braden wrongly argues that the Arts Council does not see this connection. She will presumably be rather surprised that we have just appointed an art-education Liaison Officer. In fact it is she who should, according to her general theory, reject education in the arts as an instrument of establishment indoctrination with bourgeois artistic values and with a heavy emphasis on the appreciation of the established arts. She certainly rejects any attempt to bring Shakespeare and Bach to working people arguing that both are quite irrelevant to their needs.

At best Ms. Braden sees community arts in a dialectical conflict with 'high art' which would benefit high art; but she is much more attracted by the 'revolutionary implications' of community arts and ends by seeing the future of the arts in the community arts area with the Royal Opera House and the National Theatre as museums of the old bourgeois arts.

Ms. Braden's book should be eye-opening to educationists who are unaware of the ideological thrust behind much contemporary arts activity. To a lapsed educationist like myself, who is now an Arts Council administrator, it is less surprising and a little saddening. For it makes it just a little more difficult to argue against people like Roy Fuller, who left the Arts Council because he thought we were soft on community arts, that it is possible to believe that the community arts team in Telford new town has a valuable part to play in the country's artistic economy, along with the Royal Opera House and the National Theatre.

Roy Shaw

Make Your Own Musical Instrument

Stuart Dalby
Batsford, London £3.95

This is a book intended for those interested in venturing into the making of musical instruments in elementary form using inexpensive, readily available materials and simple technical resources. It contains a variety of examples from the main instrument families; pipe, stringed, tuned and untuned percussion.

A number of the designs provided in the volume are based on well tried patterns and may be easily produced with the assistance of the instruction and illustration which accompany them. Some other instrument forms that the author suggest are thought likely to be less successful in the outcome because of attempts to over simplify their construction. An example is the bamboo cane harp which lacks the precise tuning facility vital to any worthwhile stringed instrument and appears to offer little possibility of attaining and sustaining even a reasonable degree of pitch accuracy. Similarly, one would have reservation about the guitar made from an old drawer. Considering the wide variety of forms and materials in which this furniture component is produced it could hardly be relied upon to provide in every instance a suitable basis for a musical instrument. A simple pinned and glued wooden sound box of appropriate dimensions would be an easily made and more dependable alternative and well worth the extra effort involved in the making.

To summarise, this is a publication suited especially to the beginner. In it he will find useful guidance for the making of a range of simple instruments based on established forms, but he may also discover pursuit of a few of the ideas it contains to be less than rewarding in terms of achieving effective musical performance.

Eric Decorte

Design in General Education

John Harahan
Design Council £8.20, paperback £4.20

There are still very few books that record the progress made in design education and to that small number this one is a welcome addition. Quite apart from any merit the book has it is good to see the result of a secondment to the RCA research unit and it is hoped this will encourage others to apply for that experience. That it is Design Council who by publishing it again underline their commitment to supporting design as part of general education is another cause for satisfaction.

There can be few teachers left who would baldly state, as some did a few years ago, that children cannot design. Unfortunately there are still many who although unable to refute the logical case for design education still hesitate to commit themselves to what appears to be a perilous and uncharted way. If only they could visit schools, as John Harahan did, and see the success with which design ideas can enliven teaching they would gain courage to try. Failing that they really ought to get hold of this book and read how a variety of teachers developed a variety of courses.

The book contains eight accounts by teachers of design work in their schools. The examples have

been well chosen since they cover different subject areas, different age ranges and different social conditions. The authors also look at their work from different points of view. Phil Roberts, for example, gives an insight into the nature of learning and how design thinking can foster 'learning situation'. No one who is professionally concerned with children learning dare ignore the thinking behind this contribution. By contrast Anne Constable, to take another example, gives a straight forward account of what her children actually did in a design orientated course. Her account of how simple basic activities like making a milk shake or a victoria sponge can illuminate and reinforce ideas about what we are and how we live is excellent and should particularly appeal to the hesitant.

I am sure some teachers still wonder, in such a variety of activities, what is the essential element that distinguishes design education. Without making any dogmatic statement this book does give a lead. In every example teachers have been exploring ways in which their own particular knowledge and expertise can be used in order to help children understand and come to terms with their world.

One of the most important developments taking place in education is the replacement of rote learning of an established body of knowledge by methods whereby children are encouraged to learn how to cope with situations not previously encountered. That this attitude necessitates them also learning some established facts should not of course be forgotten. Teachers in many subject areas are involved in this change but it is particularly appropriate to the activity of designing since this is concerned with affecting change. A designers attitude to the world is not to seek the assurance of certainty but to accept the inevitability of change but the possibility, to some degree, of controlling it. This is the support that a careful reading of this book offers to the bewildered.

The rewards of accepting this attitude to both children and teachers are clearly illustrated in this book by the enthusiasm with which they talk about their work. The cover picture which typifies the happy involvement of children in design activity is well chosen. John Harahan's book is thoroughly recommended and should be read by all who are involved in education.

Bernard Aylward

Painting Without A Brush

Roy Sparkes
Batsford, London £3.95

This is a readable and informative little book, and although it is directed mainly at teachers and children I feel that many amateur painters will

enjoy it and find it useful. The author has already published two other books for this publisher and has developed a pleasant and easy style which makes it enjoyable to read.

He is at pains to inform his readers that children should be taught a variety of techniques and this is good. For too long art education has suffered from a lack of direction and many teachers seem to have been frightened to *actually teach*, instead they have allowed their pupils to indulge in expressive work but have not provided them with the means to do this, except to give them some materials. Roy Sparkes has a direct and pragmatic approach. He makes no excuses for this and explains succinctly a number of basic painting techniques which he maintains children should acquire so that they are then better able to pursue their work, rather than being confined to using brushes as they often are in the school situation, and which will support their enthusiasm.

The book is well illustrated, although printing costs have obviously curtailed the use of colour, and educational references are employed with discretion. The bibliography, separated as it is into five distinct sections: 1. *Practical work-references*, 2. *Art Education*, 3. *Appreciation*, 4. *Suggestions for film strips* and 5. *Visual Aids* (based no doubt on Professional Course material from a college of education), is sound and should be helpful to both students in training and to teachers in the schools.

I can recommend this book for it increases the repertoire and will be useful as a teaching aid.

John Lancaster

Building Craft Equipment

A. Jay and Carol W. Abrams
Pitman, London £6.50

Between the hard covers we are led, chapter by chapter, through twenty pieces of craft equipment, from the relatively simple 'light box', to the more complex 'potters wheel'. Each chapter begins with a visionary insight that tells how the authors discovered the fascination of each piece. We are led down the lanes with the compelling potency of a fairy tale. Indeed the opening chapter, you've guessed it, begins, 'Once upon a time . . .'. No sooner are we down that lane than we are rudely expected to consider different materials, size adjustments, and the merits of a screw rather than a bolt. Freehand illustrations are conjured up giving us, once again, glimpses into those visionary worlds, the illustrations are always decoratively marked and carefully shaded.

The lure of the fairy story is apposite, as the authors would like us to 'use the book as a catalogue of ideas', read it at our fireside, or mull over the 'tested craft pieces' in our workshops. They don't claim to present us with a technical book, or a book

which adds to the 'mystique' of making things. Rather the ethos is that of a second generation 'Whole Earth Catalogue'; its hardback covers making it more durable, its specific subject matter being more concentrated and in focus. It tries to convey the pleasure in creating craft equipment that become 'personalised tools', suggesting that this is all too rare in our industrialised world.

The aim, to create 'personalised tools' is obsessional. Perhaps the American context is to blame. The authors, we are told, are 'educators and highly experienced craft people', who also happen to be members of the Woodstock Artists Association, address New York State. The book appears as a dream world vision of self-sufficient craft joinery for all. The potters wheel of the last chapter is presented as an easy piece to build. One really wonders whether many of these pieces were made just for the sake of creating 'personalised tools'.

Information essential for the proper functioning of the equipment is missing. The importance of achieving right-angled corners and correct screen tensioning on the screen printing equipment, for instance. Almost each piece of equipment begins with a basic constructed rectangle. Often no reasons are given for the jointing used in a particular case. Some of the pieces just lack sufficient rigidity, it is held together by two screws 'driven in tightly' to the 'butt end of the piece'; yes, the edge of a piece of plywood! I guess that Americans just don't ever wriggle around on their Art Horses!

Personalised Craft Tools may indeed be rare in America. I am not convinced that they are so rare in this country. They may not appear to wholly subscribe to the purist aesthetic which permeates the pieces in this book; they may be partly manufactured, partly adapted, rough and ready, sleek and strong; they nonetheless are crafted tools,

Pyrography

The art of woodburning



Bernard Havez
and Jean-Claude Varlet

Pyrography is the burning of material, the fascination and magic of fire.

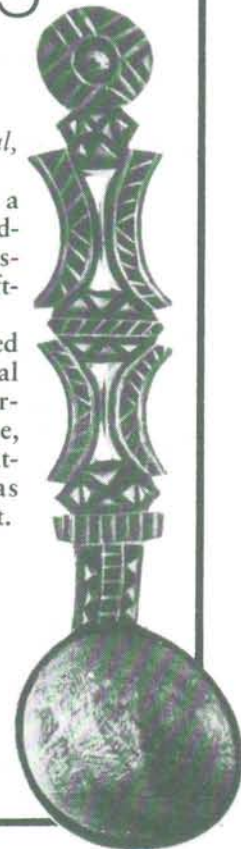
In this book, two authors bring a refreshing new approach to this traditional craft, offering exciting possibilities for today's artists and craftsmen.

The craft is described and illustrated using both modern and historical examples. There is detailed information on the kits and tools available, and the craft is developed using materials other than wood, such as perspex, leather, cork and even velvet.

Illustrated in black and white
and full colour
£4.50 net



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and the achievement from them equally satisfying. We have after all the excellent and successful Marshall Cavendish publications as our guides.

This book obliquely raises issues relating to the role of craft and crafted tools in present society; issues which we rightly ought to consider. I don't think, however, that this book aids our debate. Had the authors concentrated on looking at one piece of craft equipment, say an easel, and led us through varying crafted and manufactured solutions which have been tried and tested, I would have thought more highly of the book.

S.R. Blundell

Pyrography

Bernard Havez and Jean-Claude Varlet
Evans Brothers, London £4.50.

This is an excellent publication which explains in detail the art of burning decoration onto wood, leather, cork and other materials. The book is very well illustrated with page upon page of superb designs taken from examples in numerous countries, and periods of history. The text is clear and concise, with the book relying heavily upon illustrations to demonstrate ideas and techniques.

The authors explain with examples the history and essential characteristics of the woodburning techniques before examining the advantages and disadvantages of modern equipment, and from where it may be obtained. The low voltage machine is recommended for schools as there is insufficient heat reserve in the point of the tool to give a serious burn to a pupil.

There is a short section demonstrating the work of younger children, and the authors show examples of developed colour work using stains, dyes, crayons, felt pens, inks, paints, bleaches, and review the types of finishes obtained with different woods.

The section of the book labelled 'Composition and Design' is a delight in itself, exploring the range of traditional motives and shapes used by artists through to abstract and sculptural forms.

For the older artist and the amateur there is a section on the use of small blow torches and hand tools made from metal shapes.

A section on printing and shaping wood complete the wide area of examples which are explored, and there is a list of suppliers of Pyrography tools and equipment at the end of the book.

The book excited me to the point of wanting to experiment, and certainly interested children of all ages. Pyrography in schools has usually been limited to burning out house names, signs or numbers, but this publication, the first I have found in this area of design, leaves these crude techniques far behind. I would thoroughly recommend the book to any Art, Craft, or Design department.

Paul King

Artists and People

SU BRADEN

This study explores the nature of community art, its relationship to the development of an 'alternative culture' in the 1960s, and specific community arts projects across the country. It concentrates on work in Tower Hamlets in London, Craigmillar in Edinburgh, the various New Town projects and the Gulbenkian artists in residence project. These are examined in detail and the future of community art is carefully assessed.

**Excellent discussion . . . It deserves to be widely read'. Ken Robinson,
*The Times Education Supplement***

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