

Taste

Stephen Bayley
The Boilerhouse, Victoria & Albert Museum £5.00

Stephen Bayley is the Director of the Boilerhouse Project and it was he that recently organised the exhibition there entitled 'Taste: An exhibition about values in design'. This publication complements the exhibition material and aims to portray, in guidebook form, the essential ingredients of the show. It comprises a lengthy introduction by Bayley, with accompanying black and white photographs, which take up appropriately half the guide, and an anthology of essays edited and selected by Bayley on the subject of Taste.

The volume is presented in a pleasing format, and is conveniently pocket sized. Bayley wishes to demonstrate the relationship of Taste to design.

He starts by delineating the linguistic derivation of the word taste (good taast, meaning 'sound understanding', early 15th century English) through to its shifting emphasis becoming:

just another word for choice, whether that choice is to discriminate between flavours in the mouth or objects before the eye (p.13).

He, unfortunately, does not make the most out of these very important and fundamental definitions. Both 'sound understanding' and 'discrimination' play vital roles in any discourse about Taste and neither is sufficiently amplified by Bayley.

He continues by developing a structure which does recognise that,

Taste is not free of associations . . . and nor are we when we exercise it (p.14).

He does this by considering as separate, what he terms, amalgams of 'influences from differing times and places'. These he heads as 'The Antique Ideal', 'Mass Consumption', 'A New Way', 'The Romance of the Machine', 'Pluralism', and 'Kitsch'. There follow within each section, examples of informed 'Tastes', and a selection of 'Tastemakers'.

Historical research is obviously Bayley's 'forte', and he provides illuminating and amusing material in these sections. Although there is no justification given for identifying the six sections, or for what constitutes the individuals displayed within, his writing is concise and clear. It is, for instance, fascinating to read his account of John Cheere, the 18th century popularist of the art of the ancient world and his sculpture yards thus employed, at Hyde Park Corner. Equally interesting is Bayley's tribute to the influential writer Elizabeth David and her contribution to the discrimination both 'between flavours in the mouth and objects before the eye', when one realises that her book 'Mediterranean Food' was first published in 1950.

Once Bayley emerges out of the historical accounts into the realms of design theory and design philosophy then he ceases to be so comfortable and clear a writer.

In the concluding remarks of his introduction he claims that the principles of design are:

in fact, the Rules of Taste (p.31). and he lists four qualities which he dubiously extracts from his main historical account, as emerging as being common to successive generations. Without any explanations or definition he lists them thus:

- *an intelligibility in their form, so that you can understand their purpose,
- *a coherence and harmony between the form at the details,
- *an appropriate choice of materials to the function,
- *an intelligent equation between construction and purpose, so that the available technology is exploited to the full (p.31).

He then adds that these (principles), each is controlled by the elements of refinement restraint and sensitive discrimination (p.31).

One senses that Bayley might know what he means but that all the reader is able to extract is a confusion over what constitutes, principles, rules and qualities. What he has lost sight of is what Kant reminds us of,

even though there are no rules for taste, I can still give grounds for my aesthetic judgment (Scruton Kant 1983, p.85).

It is important that we separate out the notion of 'sound understanding' from 'discrimination between'. And in order to separate design from taste we need to be able to have a clear idea of what Bayley means by design. Whilst attempting to clarify Taste from Design he is effectively confusing our understanding of both.

To return to Kant again;

We see in objects the formal unity that we discover in ourselves. This is the origin of our pleasure, and the basis of our 'common sense' beauty. And it is 'only under the presupposition . . . of such a common sense that we are able to lay down a judgment of taste (Scruton, p.87).

The second half of this guidebook comprises pieces by fourteen writers, from the French architect Blondel writing in 1771 on Bad Taste, to the commercial artist Boyd Harte writing in 1983 on the Tyranny of Taste. All fourteen writers are all, or have been, professionally involved in design and/or professional writing. Perhaps not surprisingly architects outnumber any other category. The sheer variety of writing styles is refreshing. Contributions from Herbert Read and Nikolaus Pevsner add substance and quality to an uneven collection. Reads' contribution dates from 1934 'Art and Industry' and mentions Taste not once throughout yet his views reflect on the impact of the machine through a concern for coherence and discernment. Pevsner, writing in 1937, adroitly demonstrates many of the prejudices inherent in the English manufacturing system. He finds that public taste is 'blank', as they take consistently what is offered by the manufacturer. He adds that it is the business of the manufacturer to form as well as to supply the market. Is this the case today I wonder?

There is a gem of a piece by a contemporary of Dickens, Henry Morley, entitled 'A House Full of Horrors' which follows the hero, Mr Crumpets ('an inhabitant of the new suburb, Brixton'), visit to Henry Coles' Museum at Marlborough House designed to give lessons in taste by exposing items whose designs relied upon 'false principles'. Crumpet undergoes a distressing time realising that everything around him, even his own clothes, now offend his 'new-found sensibilities'. A humorous and poignant piece.

There is a thoughtful article by John Pile, taken from *Industrial Design 1977* about the state of the American professional home-grown image (equally relevant to our own situation?). In addition there are contributions included from Sherban Cantacuzino and John Blake which are noteworthy. The remaining contributions by Charles Eastlake, Adolf Loos, Paul Reilly, T.H. Robsjohn-Gibbins Jules Lubbock and James Woudhuysen are variable in quality and intelligibility.

A guidebook should enable the reader to survey a given territory, gain insight into selected and meritorious items, and to provide cultural and social cues for practice, survival and enjoyment. 'Taste' is a contentious and emotive subject, and to some extent Bayley has recognised the importance it has as a cultural phenomenon, however restricted and elitist his orientation is. Yet, as a guidebook, this volume fails *precisely* where a guidebook should be clear, in defining its territory.

Being an adjunct to an exhibition this volume has not been given the care and attention such a permanent and easily obtainable communication item should have been given. Whilst any exhibition temporarily gains attention, a publication is not *transient*, and is not just available to be viewed at, say, one London venue for a few months. What has been produced is a volume for a separate professional design elite. It neither addresses the notion of 'Taste' sufficiently clearly, nor makes a contribution to our understanding of the role of design and the function of taste for those involved in general design practice or training.

There is, in my view, room for a major study to be devoted to the issue of 'Taste'. As Pevsner implied in 1937, we need to spend time considering all the issues. Taste plays a vital part in much of the work we do with children and students. Everyday we and they are involved in making judgments, identifying alternatives, selecting choices. We need to know more about the way in which such decisions are possible *at all*, so that we can provide the educational mechanisms for those both in general education and those in professional design training. We need, for example, to know what views the anthropologist holds about Taste; and the manufacturer, and the philosopher. It is worth reminding ourselves of what Suzanne Langer said in 1953;

We are not so much afflicted with bad taste, as with *no* taste. People tolerate the good and the

bad, because they do not see the abstracted expressive form, the symbol of feeling at all (Langer, S., *Feeling & Form*, 1953, p.54).

Stephen R. Blundell

Design and Technology

A. Yarwood and A.H. Orme
Hodder and Stoughton £4.95

Mr Yarwood is well known for his books dealing with a wide spectrum of CDT activities. The latest book, written in collaboration with A.H. Orme appears at first glance to be a little forbidding in its presentation, with a large amount of written text, but on closer inspection this appears not to be too excessive as the text is well supported with line diagrams and photographs. The projects included demonstrate the range of the book and appear to be consistent with good practice.

I was pleased to see that the authors begin the design process with a 'situation' rather than the sudden appearance of 'design brief'. One of the aims of Design Education is surely to encourage pupils to recognise a situation which needs the attention of the designer and to encourage an appropriate response to the identified situation.

I did find myself wondering who the book was aimed at, and came to the conclusion that it was intended as a reference book for teachers, although I cannot be certain that my conclusion is correct. The preface and language used suggests that it is intended for teachers, whilst some of the content appears to be aimed at children. Greater clarity here would obviously be helpful. In this connection some of the language used might cause some difficulty if the book is used by children. For example 'Spur Gears will transmit rotary drive from one shaft parallel to another' — page 69.

I did find the general presentation lacking in impact and suggest that some of the instructional diagrams need to be larger if the information is to be easily extracted by children.

I feel that this book has a contribution to make, if only as a teacher reference book. It could also be of use to older pupils as a reference book for technological activities associated with examination projects.

David Jones

Animal Forms

Collected and arranged by Nigel Billington & John Jeffery
Longmans £5.95

Not all Art Rooms and Workshops are situated in idyllic scenery with easy access to Nature. Many are in urban districts without stimulating views from the windows and have to rely on natural forms imported by teachers and students from visits to the coast, country or scrap yard. A friendly museum is a cherished benefactor to the fortunate though most teachers will make extensive use of slides and books collected before the cutbacks. So in these lean times careful thought has to go into selecting those books which will be most valuable.

A possibly useful collection of slightly stylised nineteenth century engravings of insects, fish, crustacea and reptiles has been published in book form as well as separate resource sheets. These delight the eye in emphasising the pattern qualities of the natural objects rather than their form and give more intimate details of some skeletons and internal organs. Thus indicating that the viscera of the Goat Moth (not often seen) has an intriguing layout and pattern which could interest a designer and fire the imagination of both mentor and student.

Some examples of how to use the resource materials are given in the introduction together with ways of interpreting and stylising the images, taking them through several stages until the final object is reached. There is a list of suitable media on the back cover of the book, to which many more could have been added. Here lies a danger in that some may take the written word and illustration as gospel and follow the examples and instructions without striking out on their own individual ways and styles of interpretation.

There are two points worth considering here: First that the book might encourage hard-pressed teachers not to question the fact that they are working from two-dimensional artwork representing three-dimensional objects to create another in three-dimensions. Secondly, that the drawings are stylised in such a way as to edit out some qualities of the original and emphasise others. Whilst there is nothing inherently bad or wrong in this electivity it should be used by the sensitive teacher who is also aware of the need to encourage children to make their own selections from nature and not to rely on other artists observations. In a well planned syllabus with plenty of variety and possibly the back-up of a Museum Loan scheme for original specimens this book could be an asset to a teachers' resources as well as being an enjoyable collection of carefully presented prints.

Lesley Lord

Technical Graphics Book 1

A. Bedford and K. Pyne
John Murray £3.95

This book provides a good illustration of the problems which beset that area of design now called Technical Graphics. It certainly achieves what it set out to do which is to provide a basis for further work whilst at the same time presenting most of the generally accepted content of technical graphics courses in schools. Where to my mind it falls down is in its treatment of Design as a peripheral to drawing — the drawing being the dominant feature and secondly in its rather unimaginative presentation once one gets past the cover.

I would not dispute the necessity for geometrical knowledge, or more important, the ability to apply that knowledge however, it does seem to me that the authors have only one foot in the traditionalist TD camp and another elsewhere!

Despite this I am certain that the book, and its companion volumes, will find a place in many schools.

David Jones

(Editor's Note: Book 2 is published on 1 June 1985).

Screwcutting in the Lathe

Martin Cleeve
Argus Books £4.95

This book is outstanding both in content, which is comprehensive and authoritative, and in its readability. It deals in depth with all screwcutting techniques appropriate to small scale engineering, together with numerous helpful workshop hints which can only be proposed by someone with a lifetime of experience. Diagrams, photographs and calculations are clear and of great help in the reading of the book which is organised in such a way as to make the extraction of information simple. There is so much that is helpful in this book that it becomes unnecessary to say any more than 'if it concerns screwcutting, then it is in this book'. This is definitely a book for the A level student of engineering.

David Jones

Understanding Industry

Alasdair Hogarth
Edward Arnold £2.25

Case in Hand

Alun Phillips and Geoffrey Stuttard
Cambridge University Press £2.95

Good Practice in Industrial Education

Gordon J.H. Vincent
Staffordshire Education Authority £2.50

Whilst the advent of TVEI highlights the current attempts by Central Government to give technical and vocational education a more prominent place in the secondary school curriculum, it is important to recognise that this particular development is just one in a series of initiatives which have been implemented in the last few years. Indeed all three of the above are indicative of this fact.

The first, *Understanding Industry*, consists of 15 units designed to be used either as a self-contained but progressive programme or as discrete units in a variety of situations. Although wide ranging in practice, the topics can be broadly subdivided into four broad areas. Chapters 1-4 provide a predominantly historical look at the growth of industry in the UK as a prelude to an indepth study of selected aspects of present day industry e.g. 'The Structures of the Firm', or 'methods of Production'. Chapters 11 and 13 which review 'Sources of Power' and 'The new Technology are then followed by a look at Trade Unions and two final chapters on money matters.

Although there is no direct indication of the target population in mind, *Understanding Industry* is clearly a student reader, probably aimed at the more able school leaver, but the text also suggests that pupils who work through the whole programme should produce an associated workbook. Thus each chapter concludes with a number of often quite demanding questions and suggestions for follow up activities many of which will require the teachers help. Without actually using the text with a group of students it is difficult to be as objective as one would wish about its likely impact; but any school leavers and some FE students also, who succeed in working through the majority of the 15 units should, particularly if given opportunities for appropriate experimental learning, develop a better understanding of our industrial society. Additionally, as the author himself hints in his exceptionally brief Teachers notes, this book is a useful source of ideas for use in a variety of contexts by teachers, be they in the secondary or further education sector.

The other two texts are both linked to the Schools Council Industry Project launched in 1977. *Case in Hand*, written as a joint project between the Schools Council Project and the Society of

Industrial Tutors, is based on a set of 22 case studies in industrial relations, plus a series of 'days in the life' of industrial characters. Most of the case studies are supported by lists of issues and questions together with extra material and supplementary information and in addition there is an introductory chapter aimed directly at teachers and others, which outlines the use of case studies. The presentation is not only lucid and challenging but also up to date as instanced by the unit on Youth Training and unemployment. Furthermore, although aimed at adult education workers and Trade Unionists as well as teachers, *Case in Hand* succeeds in providing examinations which should appeal to older pupils in secondary schools as well as FE students. The authors are to be congratulated on producing a text that provides teachers with a library of case studies in Industrial relations, as well as a wealth of supplementary information and useful additional reading material.

In contrast to the two texts above, '*Good Practice in Industrial Education*' is a compilation of evaluation reports describing what has been achieved by one of the 36 local authorities which are part of the Schools Council Industry Project network coupled with a brief overview chapter by the Projects research director. As indicated by the compiler who has obviously played a vital role in fostering the various activities, no attempt has been made to produce a house style, and thus what we have are some 30 accounts of good practice. In its totality, his compendium makes exciting reading indicative of what can be achieved in a spirit of partnership when there is someone present to provide appropriate leadership and back up with one exception, the activities are all related to developments in the secondary sector.

Additionally they span a wide range of broad subject areas and a variety of approaches. Thus an active involvement within the mass media, be it a local newspaper or local radio, can both enhance pupils understanding of production methods and stimulate creative writing. Similarly a detailed study of a local factory can make GCE O level and CSE courses in British Industrial Society come alive in a setting which provides a common frame of reference for teachers and pupils. Indeed this need to ensure that a particular activity is integrated into the total curriculum is a message that comes through very strongly in the report, as instanced in the two comprehensive accounts of work experience.

Without a doubt this is a report which teachers will find invaluable firstly because it illustrates what can be achieved in Industrial Education in a situation where there is a true partnership between schools and industry. What is even more remarkable is that such achievement need not be restricted to pupils in the secondary age range. What better way is there of evaluating the success of the 'We make kettles' venture than to note that as a consequence of this experience the parents of the youngsters in this particular primary school commented on 'being able to discuss their

occupations with their children for the first time'. Secondly as indicated by Ian Jamieson, the research director of SCIP, the report also highlights the stumbling block, and difficulties which can arise. Staffordshire LEA and its schools-industry liaison officer are to be congratulated on their initiative in making this valuable compilation available at such a moderate price.

Iolo Roberts

Starting Technology

G. Mills and J. Aitken
Holmes McDougall £3.95

This text offers many good ideas and ways of developing technology in the curriculum, for children in the primary and middle school age range. The material is well presented and is produced in the form of spirit masters, enabling the teacher to easily reproduce classroom material. Much of the work will involve children in practical activity using card, pipecleaners, string, wire etc.

The work encourages an investigational and design approach on the part of the child and enables them to learn through their practical experience. It is also easily used by the teacher with little or no technological background and should prove to be a welcome addition to most primary and lower middle school classrooms.

Keith Simmonds

Drawing and Painting: A Complete Study Course

Elva Bett
Lansdowne-Rigby £12.95

This is a splendidly-comprehensive book on the fascinating subject of drawing and painting which should be extremely helpful to aspiring artists. It is structured throughout within a simple but useful format, and the many illustrations illuminate points which the author makes with sensitivity and understanding. It is a pity that colour could not have been employed much more — especially as that is the very essence of painting, indeed its life-blood — but one understands the financial constraints placed upon publishers today and cannot express a harsh judgement in this respect.

The author is a practising artist herself and is well known as such in her native New Zealand. She has done much good work in the visual arts in that country, having taught university and adult students and as a director of art gallery provision, and this publication should enhance her reputation further. Indeed, she has brought a tremendous range of

practical expertise to her writing and has made an excellent contribution to the field.

The form which her book takes is to set out twelve monthly sets of art lessons which the reader may simply refer to or use on a weekly timetable in pursuing practical studies. It is always difficult to work to a formula like this without a teacher on hand to express opinions and criticism, and I must confess that it scares me a little. But this kind of approach always did and, presumably, always will. How could it be bettered? This is a question I would ask and it is difficult to come-up with a ready answer.

Elva Bett must be congratulated. She has produced a compendium of ideas, suggestions, plans and skills which should offer starting points for students, amateurs and even some professional painters. Her book should find a ready and eager market and can be recommended warmly.

John Lancaster

Earthworks as Sculpture

Peter Jobling
Focal Points Audio Visual £7.00 + VAT

There are a great number of slide books around nowadays. They range from prestigious, well-bound collections with plentiful documentation to tatty offset sheets accompanying an easily-cracked transparent folder. It is a relief to report the Peter Jobling's *Earthworks as Sculpture*, published in 1981 by Focal Point Audio-Visual Ltd., 251 Copnor Rd., Portsmouth, Hants., is neatly bound and has an unexceptional notebook accurately typed with an electric typewriter and offset printer. In this pack one gets 20 reasonable looking transparencies in card mounts, for '£7.00 plus p. & p. and VAT'. This is relatively inexpensive nowadays.

The author cheerfully admits that his 'interest is in landscape or EARTHWORKS which have the qualities of sculpture but began as something else'. Help! so this slide book with ancient earthworks or landscapes as objects trouvés because they 'possess Sculptural qualities'. One doesn't see why this journal should review it, but let us give the whole thing a fair examination. The slides cover a Cornish clay waste dump, prehistoric, Roman and medieval monuments as well as a modern motorway cutting, topiary called 'green megaliths', an 18-century view of Whitby Harbour.

How does the structure of the argument go? Some bits are reasonable but an archaeologist cannot but be irritated by a mention of a Neolithic passage grave, Bryn Celli Ddu as being 'composed of tall stones, as though Stonehenge had been three-quarters buried'. This causes the mind to boggle but the next sentence: 'There is a suggestion here that death is a rebirth into the afterlife' causes one's boggle to start minding.

*An Introduction to Graphic Design is available from: Roger Standen, General Inspector, Education Department, Town Hall, Widmore Road, Bromley, Kent.

But let's be fair some of the slides are interesting. Thus a very 'natural' landscape in Derbyshire is shown in slide eleven to be partly made by picks, as the marks show.

To whom will this slide book be useful? Not to a teacher of sculpture or crafts, certainly. Perhaps it might be handy for a liberal arts instructor trying to make his charges become interested in landscape or for an end-of-term lecture.

Francis Celona

Design Policy: The Proceedings of an International Conference held at the Royal College of Art, London, 20-23 July 1982.

Design and Society, Design and Industry, Design Theory and Practice, Design Evaluation, Design Education, Design and Information Technology.

Design Council, complete set £45.00

With six substantial volumes of one hundred papers or so the time lapse from 1982 to 1984 is to be expected. Not included in the above list is a slim introductory volume, A Framework for Discussion. As well as containing best wishes from the Prime Minister and the Commonwealth Secretary General it includes Professor Bruce Archer's description of Design Policy in his keynote address. If only the conference had adhered to the aims he expresses it might have been a better conference. Certainly the papers as edited here would have had more relevance. With so many contributions some are bound to be bad, a few good. Since design has become an academically respectable subject with many more people talking about it then seem to practice it the pressure is bound to be on individuals to attend conferences and publish, and, as in other subjects, there will be more than a fair share of banal platitudes. It would be unfair to single these out, but they mar every volume in this set.

I don't think that the practising designer or design teacher will get much direct help from these papers, but indirectly it is important to know what is going on in design research circles. Certainly every educational institution concerned with design and design research should have a complete set in the library. The bibliographies are useful.

The Design Education volume 5 sent me back to the research papers produced by the Royal College Team in 1976-1979. This is still an important document, setting out the points made by Professor Archer and his colleagues in Design Policy rather more clearly. What a pity it is that some contributors did not refresh their memories. They say the same things, but rather less well, than in these earlier papers.

An Introduction to Graphic Design*

J. Park, R. De Silva, F. Thomson and C. Tudor
Bromley Education Department £1.95

Under the guidance of a Local Inspector and a College Tutor, four final year students at the Ravensbourne College of Art and Design in the London Borough of Bromley, ran an enrichment course for sixth formers. The aim was to introduce them to the processes involved in graphic design. The sixth formers were duly 'enriched', and clearly, so were the students in their new, if temporary, roles as teachers of Design.

The result of their experience is produced as a ten, double-sided, sheet pack. The sheets are A4 size, black and white with a broad head-band in red which bears the sheet number. They are all contained in a card folio. Loose sheets are a mixed blessing in school — they need frequent attention to keep intact and in sequence. However, single sheets are often useful to pin-up as illustration. They are also cheaper to produce than a bound book.

The authors make this point on sheet two: 'Graphic design is everywhere. You are very familiar with hoardings, books, newspapers, leaflets and detergent packets but you may not have considered the fact that they have all been designed. That means that somebody, somewhere, brought them into being'.

The same could be said about the teaching they undertook. It was a design situation. We are given no further information about the organisation of the actual lessons, but the fact that when they reorganised the material in the light of experience, they felt able to include examples of the work done as a result of their teaching, shows that it was indeed a successful design exercise.

The topics covered are What is Graphics?; Symbols; Words and Images; The Brief; Instructional Graphics; Use of Colour; Ways of Seeing; Ideas and Thumbnails; Editing; Layout; Finish; Reading List; Projects. What must be borne in mind is not that these sheets say all that there is about these topics; rather that the material has been selected for use in a particular situation. Experts will already have their own methods and materials. However, for many busy teachers in design related subjects this small pack provides information, diagrams and photographs.

Most of the projects on sheet ten are familiar; posters, book jackets, record sleeves and so on. However, some have wider possibilities in an integrated Design Faculty. A project which has awareness of typography as its aim is useful in any area of design. The suggestion, 'Design a carrier bag for a shop of your choice', could be part of a project on packaging involving technical as well as aesthetic problems.

F.B. Maycock