

Reviews

Design Education for the Middle Years, A Teachers' Guide

D.M. Shaw and J.M. Reeve
Hodder and Stoughton Educational, 1978, £4.95

The authors adopt the broad concept of 'design education' as an alternative perspective to the more conventional divisions of art, home economics and craft, design and technology. The design concept is used as a unifying factor for an interdisciplinary framework for the materials subjects which can extend from their 'core' role to other areas of the curriculum. The role of design education, largely based in the author's conception on the perspective of the design/problem solving process, is seen as a central feature of the general education of pupils. This is a point of view which clearly needs crusaders and one must applaud the publication of the book as a contribution to the cause. The design/problem solving approach is supported by case-study examples which relate the concept to practical pupil projects. It would be a boon to innovation in the middle years of schooling, and to the creative development of pupils, if this was adopted as a widespread approach to the materials subjects. The underlying intent of the book is to relate aims and objectives of design in education to meaningful pupil activities. In the context of the debate about purpose, planning and practices in schools, Shaw and Reeve offer an honest approach to curriculum planning, with constructive advice to teachers.

There is a distinct 'planning by objectives' bias to curriculum design with prescriptions for 'sequence' and 'structure' leading pupils towards 'ultimate objectives' which some teachers will find hard to adopt. The limitations of the approach are not clearly acknowledged, though they become apparent when, with some courage, the authors tackle the difficult area of assessing pupil performance as well as offering methods of recording course-coverage and realisation of course-objectives.

Some parts of the book are a little over-prescriptive in tone, others a little over-ambitious for practical teaching situations, but with sensitivity and adaptation teachers will find the book a valuable stimulus and support to which they can turn for guidance relating to many parts of their work. Furthermore, they can do this in the confidence that there is sound educational thinking behind the work which makes it very much more meaningful than the all too common 'tips for teachers' publications. In attempting to guide teachers of children in the middle years of schooling a balance has to be struck between providing for the needs of a wide range of subject expertise, from the specialist working in modern workshop provision, to the non-specialist working in a conventional junior school classroom. That balance has been struck, provided teachers are willing to adopt and adapt, and the book has much to offer to all teachers who are concerned to provide children with experience in design education.

Les Tickle

Educagao Visual I and II

Betamio de Almeida et al,
Lisbon: Didactica Editora, 1977

The intention behind these two books is to provide a general understanding of 'visual education', including visual problems, visual communication, and visual arts. This is to serve as an introduction to, and provide the bases for, the broad field of design. They are orientated to general secondary education, and attempt to cover a very wide range of topics in a general, direct and simple way, without going deeply into any single one. Special emphasis is given to introducing a terminology for the area.

The first book is concerned with form, especially aspects such as inter-relations, formal elements, representation, figure, form and function, visual perception, and ending with two chapters, one concerned with visual signs and the other with visual communication.

The second book is more technical in orientation: it is concerned with form, objects and function; with techniques and methods of representation. The book is divided into chapters which attempt to deal with elements of form (volume, texture, structure, etc.); with function; with areas such as ergonomics and anthropometrics; the representation of form; norms; the relations between form and objects. The last section attends to the artistic and craft cultural heritage of Portugal.

The books are text books, and are didactic in approach and tone. Surprisingly, there is no bibliography; no further references are provided to the areas which have been introduced to the student. Presumably this signifies that the books are intended as a support for teacher-directed activities. The text is in Portuguese.

Phil Roberts

What Is a Designer: Things, Places, Messages

Norman Potter
Hyphen Press, 1980, £4.50 (paper), £9.75 (cloth)

Designing a Present

Norman Potter
Hyphen Press, 1980, £1.50

What is a designer: things, places, messages is a fully revised and extended version of the book first published in 1969. It is intended for, particularly, those who study and practise architecture and design, and '... also Open University students and perhaps for individuals out of step with the education system'. It comprises 27 sections arranged in three parts.

The first part (sections 1-9) is in the form of short chapters on topics such as 'What is a designer?' 'Is a designer an artist?' 'What is good design?'. All of these are extremely good reading, and 'Reading for design' particularly so perhaps.

The second part (sections 10-21) is categorised as Reference. 'How is design work done?' and 'Communication for designers' are the two key sections; 'Reports and report writing' contains advice excellent for anyone. The Booklist has, from the point of view of a teacher in general education and in this field, omissions: which is not a criticism of the book, simply an observation from a particular category of reader. The third part (sections 22-27) is Appendices, including 'Advice for Beginners', 'Questioning design', and 'Matchbox Maxims'. The retention of 'Conference Report 1968' is questionable, but most are excellent value. A book to look forward to, from the point of view of tertiary-level curriculum development – and which is promised – is the writing up of the Bristol experiment, concerning two phases of the Construction School originally in the West of England College of Art: it is tantalisingly briefly treated here.

In fact, it is hardly appropriate to consider this book as an artefact. The clue to its nature and to its reading is provided by two of Potter's introductory comments: 'my remarks were always addressed to students of all ages and continue to be', and '... the book should find many uses as a working tool; not least, I hope, as an informed provocation – to people to think for themselves'. It is *not*, for those working in general education, about those curricular developments over the past few years which have been tagged 'design education', and nor was it intended to be. For anyone deeply involved in those developments, there would be large omissions: of the contributions, for instance, of this journal, of the work of teachers who constitute NADE, of some key spokesmen, of sources. Rather, to read this book is to be engaged immediately in a conversation, a conversation which is witty, humane, allusive, sharp, pertinent, and partial. A far wider readership than the one suggested could enjoy taking part in the conversation; but, for the teacher especially, all kinds of ideas and issues are raised and illuminated: for instance, on the necessity for institutions to become communities, on the 'Black Paper people', on the nature of teaching. The questions and the issues are raised sharply, and suggestively expressed in an allusive style. The attraction is that they leave the reader to engage in them further. *What is a designer* is a superb read.

Accompanying the book is a pamphlet, *Designing a present*, which offers a personal view of some 'interesting design work then and now'. There is an excellent, and illustrated, essay by Potter, and the contributors are among leading designers in Britain. They were asked to nominate two designs of the 1970s that had given them special pleasure. **The guests' contributions are brief, but nevertheless interesting.** The idea is a good one, though it is

perhaps a pity that one or two 'non-designers' were not contributors: it's a little too predictable. But Potter's essay is not, and it is well worth having, principally for that.

Phil Roberts

A Sense of What is Real

Philip Pacey
Brentham Press, 1980, £3.50

In essence the text is based upon a series of lectures given by the author to students of art and design at St. Albans School of Art in 1973-4 – obviously in the Art History/Complementary Studies area – and result from his own questioning of existentialism. He makes reference to numerous works of art and literature, and is quite clear that his intention is to stimulate further thought and to promote an interest in studying the subject further.

The book is very well written. Pacey is a highly intelligent scholar with an excellent command of written scholarship at his finger tips: an expertise that assists him to make his ideas and arguments lucid to the reader. He uses poetry quite liberally, and I soon found myself enjoying this facet and his references to well-known poets and scholars. Indeed, his use of such illustrative material tends to add poignant richness of both ideas and language, and it was a richness that I certainly enjoyed as one might enjoy a symphony or an exhibition of paintings.

I confess that the subject is not mine. However, I can recommend this book as a work of sincere scholarship for young art students who need to pursue their ideas and arguments in realms other than in materials; for art teachers and lecturers; and indeed, for readers with more general interests. It will stimulate their thinking, raising it to a more highly-tuned intellectual plane, adding depth and richness to what might otherwise become a mundane existence.

John Lancaster

Design Education at Secondary Level

A Design Council Report, 1980, £1.50

This report is the product of the Working Party on Secondary Education which was set up by the Education Advisory Committee to the Design Council in 1978. An earlier *Consultative Report on Design Education at Secondary Level* was circulated by the Design Council to a large number of organisations and individuals, and many of the comments and suggestions received as a result of that consultative document have been incorporated in this final report.

The report is presented under the following headings:

1. Introduction
2. The meaning of the word 'design'
3. The aims of design education in secondary schools
4. The development of design activities in school
5. Requirements for future design courses in secondary education
6. Examinations and assessment
7. Design education and the community
8. Implementation
9. Summary of recommendations.

1. The introduction to the report places it in the context of the two earlier reports published by the Design Council;

(a) Engineering Design Education (1976) from a committee chaired by Dr. Alex Moulton, which whilst making no detailed comment on design courses, emphasised the importance of a good grounding in mathematics and physics and the encouragement of practical creative ability, imagination and ingenuity.

(b) Industrial Design Education in the U.K. (1977) from a committee chaired by Mr. David Carter, which recommended structured design courses at secondary level both for general education and to give students an insight into design as a career.

The object of this current report *Design Education at Secondary Level* is then stated as:

'to identify the principles on which good design education in schools should be based'.

2. The meaning of the word 'design' is explored in section two, and whilst it was noted that its application was extremely broad – from textile design to television stage set design; from product design to silversmithing or systems design – nevertheless some common elements exist. 'To design is always to prescribe some form, structure, pattern or arrangement for a proposed thing, system or event. A design is always an integrated whole, a balanced prescription – a product of judgement and invention as well as knowledge and skill'.

The fundamental character of design – the process of seeking a match between a set of requirements and a way of meeting them – requires the exercise of a range of abilities that are fundamental to our general living, whatever our role in life.

3. In our advanced industrial society, where people produce and use an immense variety of manufactured products, the experience of designing should be a necessary part of everyone's education. Familiarity with the creation and properties of man made things and systems is crucial to both the layman and the specialist. The first aim of design education is to provide all children up to the age of 16 with this experience. The second aim is to provide a suitable foundation for those who may be concerned with design in their careers. It is

anticipated that this will lead to some specialisation in the sixth form.

4. The development of design education has come about through the work of a variety of agencies, probably the most important being the enthusiastic teacher innovating in his own courses. Art, Craft, Design and Technology and Home Economics teachers may have developed different emphases in their design work, but clear common aims have gradually emerged relating to the experience of examining a problem, proposing solutions, and evaluating the product.

Additional impetus and much positive direction has been given to the developments by the research projects undertaken by the Schools Council and the DES; by the development of external examinations with a strong emphasis on design strategies; by the stimulation of project work aimed at design prizes at local and national level; and by many other influences.

Ideally the proper implementation of the developing ideals requires the introduction of a new subject to the curriculum, but an acceptable alternative is to develop design courses through the Art, CDT, and HE departments. The unifying influence of design in these areas has frequently led to the emergence of design faculties.

5. Every child should receive a balanced education, and for children up to the age of 16+ this implies a wide ranging course in design.

Whilst the report does not comment on specific courses it does propose a range of criteria that any design course should satisfy. These criteria cover Sensitivity – Skills – Problem Solving – Knowledge – Communication – Comprehensiveness and Coherence – and Responsibility.

Beyond 16+ when career preparation begins to assume rather more importance design courses should be aimed at helping students to discover their own creative abilities and this may therefore result in a more specialised or tailored approach. Whatever the form of the course, it should satisfy the criteria listed above and additionally those of Planning – Search – Evaluation – and Integration. It is strongly recommended that in courses beyond 16+ each student should be required to undertake at least one major project that requires planning – realisation – testing – and the presentation of a report, as this is the best medium for experiencing the challenge of solving problems.

Many problems will have to be overcome before these aims are fully realised and probably the most significant are the attitude of parents and teachers, the availability of teachers of design, the facilities in school and acceptability of design courses for employment and entry to further and higher education.

6. Despite the inherent difficulties of assessing or examining design work there are at least three good reasons why it must be assessed.

1. It gives pupils a means of gauging their own efforts.

2. It gives pupils an awareness of their ability to take up future courses/careers in design.

3. It gives external agencies (employers, colleges etc.) nationally respected information about design ability.

By the nature of the subject it is essential that examinations require students not simply to solve a design problem but to realize it in practice. Only in this way can the creative application of knowledge, decision making, skill in execution, and communication of ideas be fairly examined.

The case for breadth in an examination syllabus is justified in terms of the provision of a liberal education, in the 6th form however, whichever area of design a candidate has pursued in depth it is intellectual rigour that must be sought.

The acceptability of 'A' levels for Further and Higher Education is still causing some problems, but in the view of the report an 'A' level in design that satisfies the criteria in section 5 should be equally acceptable to universities with any other 'A' level for general entry requirements, and for design based undergraduate courses it should be a preferred entry qualification. To meet the requirements of advanced study and to combine the qualities of breadth with specialisation in depth, 'A' level courses in design should have a common core with additional options to cover the variety of specialism. This would allow schools to develop particular interests.

7. As well as preparing young children for their adult life, secondary education must take proper account of the needs of the community as a whole. As a nation Britain must export manufactured goods to pay for essential imports and it follows that there is a relationship between the national standard of product design and the nations economic performance. This point has been emphasised by the Finiston Report *Engineering our Future*. Good product design requires good designers and it is initially in schools that designers can recognise their aptitudes.

In a more general sense however design is of major importance to the community, for improvements to the overall quality of life require the whole community to be aware of good design and possess sufficient sensibility to choose in a discriminating manner. In a world that is changing as fast as our own, design awareness enables individuals to respond intelligently and cope with the changes.

8. Before the developments envisaged in this report can be realised, many bodies must be convinced of the arguments. Head teachers; curriculum planners; teachers; LEA's, advisers; examination boards; institutes of further and higher education; the professions and employers. The momentum for change can be generated through press and television publicity – provision of teaching materials – publication of examples of good practice – courses and seminars – the further development of examinations – and exhibitions and information on successes and evidence of acceptability.

The report recommends the establishment of a national body (under the aegis of the Design Council) to bring together the many interests in design education and application to life and work.

9. The report concludes with a survey of recommendations and three appendices dealing respectively with; two students views of design courses – Design syllabuses at 'A' level – and the European context of design education.

Richard Kimbell

American Porcelain: New Expressions in an Ancient Art

Lloyd E. Herman
Oregon, Timber Press, 1981, \$14.95

This volume is not exactly a catalogue but has been published to coincide with an exhibition organised by the Renwick Gallery in the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, which will subsequently tour the States until 1984.

A sixteen-page introduction gives a brief (should one say 'potted?') history of porcelain manufacture in general and in the U.S.A. in particular with its nostalgic attachment to the traditions of the European and oriental past. Following this, the work of one hundred and eight selected contemporary American potters working in porcelain is featured. Each is given a page, and each page contains a small photograph of the artist, a brief Who's Who type biography, a statement by the artist about his or her own work of up to six hundred words (though some are much shorter and a few declined to say anything) and a photograph of a work or small group of works. About a quarter of these photographs are in colour and all are informatively captioned including dimensions in inches and centimetres. In this respect the book does resemble a scholarly exhibition catalogue.

From the earliest times, of course, porcelain has been used for making sculptural and decorative objects as well as high-quality functional vessels and the majority of the potters working in the medium today seem to be interested in its non-utilitarian potential unless the selection for this exhibition has been unrepresentative. They are producing work that is sometimes beautiful, often ingenious and occasionally humorous and a moderate chauvinism constrains me to not the frequent influence of British potters on much of the best of it. Some few of the potters seem perversely intent on concealing rather than exploiting the unique combination of porcelain, its density, translucency, crisp white refinement and resonance which one would expect to give the medium its particular appeal to an artist. Perhaps the haptic shock of picking up what appears to be a ballet shoe or an assemblage of tin cans and finding it heavy and cold as glass is the effect they

were after and a small photograph fails to suggest it very readily. At any rate it is as well to remember that porcelain has proved as suitable for sanitary ware and electrical insulation as for a Sung bowl or a Kändler shepherdess.

Michael Paffard

The Mud-Pie Dilemma: A Master Potter's Struggle to Make Art and Ends Meet

John Nance
Oregon, Timber Press, 1981, \$15.95

The master potter in this story is Tim Coleman who works at Canby, Oregon, an immensely talented and energetic young artist whose technical virtuosity is best seen in his enormous pieces of thrown porcelain with ultra-thin walls. Originally trained as a painter, he regards his pots as 'a kind of round canvas' and has to restrain himself from the temptation to decorate too much. When he started out in the late sixties there were probably no more than fifteen or twenty potters making a living from their work in Oregon: a decade later, the number had risen to around two thousand.

John Nance, the author of this book, is, on his own admission, neither potter, artist, craftsman, critic nor connoisseur but a journalist and photographer and, on the evidence of this book, excellent at both. For over three months in 1977 he haunted the Colemans' studio and home while they were preparing work for an exhibition in Seattle. He was fascinated by the whole process by which a potter makes and markets his work and supports his family without compromising his integrity as an artist. Should he make straight production pots and go crazy with boredom or make individual pieces for exhibition and go bust? The Coleman solution (husband and wife working together) is to do both as well as giving occasional demonstrations, workshops and seminars. The sheer mental and physical strain and health-hazard of preparing clay and glazes, throwing and decorating pots, loading and unloading kilns week in and week out, the excitements and frustrations and above all the discipline are all vividly conveyed. At the end of the road — satisfaction certainly, but barely enough money to pay the bills and no chance of a vacation, and yet Coleman is arguably the most highly regarded potter in the Pacific North West. So much for the lay public's imagining of the idyllic life.

Nance talked to Coleman's teachers and critics, friends and rivals, admirers and detractors but mainly he listened to the potter talking day by day as he worked, and they seem to have got along well together. The artist's personality comes across strongly with his prodigious nervous energy, his complete dedication to and humility about his

work, his guilt about his family, his depressions and his near-manic clowning. It is a compelling readable and revealing book and the illustrations are excellent. There are sixteen colour plates and twice as many in monochrome as well as small photographs in the margins of the text. A sequence of multi-exposure photographs of Coleman working on the wheel give as good an impression of the throwing process as it is possible to hope for in stills.

Michael Paffard

Woodcarving for Beginners

Art McKellips
Timber Press, Oregon, 1977, \$8.95

The only reason for reviewing this book is to warn everyone to avoid it. The text is written in the false familiar manner of the worst of American promotional material. The level is suitable for those who are advanced enough to read without moving the lips.

Since we might be looking for help with the practice of wood carving rather than a literary work this might avoid censure if the matter were of value. It is not. All the factual information is already available in a more precise form in other books that are better written by more knowledgeable carvers.

The worst aspect of the book is the banality of the work samples illustrated and the poor quality of the illustrations. These are at the lowest level of instruction books akin to a child's first 'colouring book' which they closely resemble. The author has the arrogance to provide patterns so that the reader can copy his efforts. I hope this review will prevent anyone concerned with the development of sensitivity in children being led astray by this worthless book.

Bernard Aylward

Appreciation of Materials and Design

T. Pettit
London: Edward Arnold, 1981, £5.95

It is quite true, as the author of this book says, that there is now a bewildering variety of materials available for school crafts. It is also true that there is a need for concise information that will help pupils (and teachers) select those most suitable for the purpose in hand. There are few books which are written specifically for the changed conditions in spite of the titles which strive to suggest that they

do. Mr. Pettit is to be congratulated on seeing the need and trying to do something about it.

To assemble all useful information on all available materials is a formidable task. Rigorous selection is essential and it is doubtful if any one of us would agree on what should and should not be included. It is not fair to be too critical of a pioneer since it is far easier to criticise something that exists than to originate. Yet one must cast doubts on the value of some of the information given and wonder at the omission of some that would be more useful.

The first task of a designer, when tackling a problem, is to establish what exactly is the purpose of whatever he is asked to design. A little more of this critical attitude might have led to a more satisfactory book. The children need to know what materials are available. Agreed: but why? The only answer can be that they need to be able to select those that serve their purpose. What information do they need in order to make suitable choices? Clearly the need is to know the qualities and limitations of the material so that it can be used successfully.

The weakness of the book is revealed by this line of reasoning. A great deal of the limited space available is taken up by the sort of theory beloved of examiners (because it can be tested easily) and there is little information given as to the way in which materials can be used in the school workshop. This is a pity since the intention of the book is sound and indeed in its present form could be quite a useful volume to have. The publisher must be faulted for the poor quality of the illustrations. Some are very poor indeed and very few have the sparkle necessary to attract attention and arouse interest.

Bernard Aylward

Why It is Like This

Bernard Aylward
Focal Point Audiovisual Limited, 1980

Bernard Aylward has over many years made a unique contribution to the development of design education in secondary schools, and it is significant that he has chosen slide packs rather than a more conventional book form to present his material to teachers and children. The form of presentation, and the title of the series both bear witness to Mr. Aylward's concern for the direct involvement of young children in Design activities.

The set of slide packs that comprise this series have a clearly stated purpose; 'to arouse interest and stimulate further investigations' into the subject matter, and 'to act as starting points for work in design'. The packs each contain twenty good quality colour slides and a small leaflet that introduces the pack and provides explanatory notes about each of the slides. The purpose of each pack is individually clarified in the leaflets, pack

No. 2 aiming to '... review the whole subject of metals and the way man uses them' whilst pack No. 8 attempts '... to show connections between function; structure; environment; and the conditions in which the thing illustrated grew and was made'. This concern for the inter-relationship of design and the environment is clearly evidenced throughout the whole series.

Loosely speaking one can divide the series into two, packs 1-5 dealing with materials, and packs 6-9 focussing on decorative or aesthetic qualities, and the way the material is presented suggests very strongly that it is aimed at young children (possibly 1st or 2nd year) who are making their first tentative steps into the world of materials and design. In this context the slides will undoubtedly provoke interest and serve as a focus for discussions led by the teacher. Packs of resource material of this sort for design education are in painfully short supply and work of good quality that can help to fill this void will be welcomed by teachers who have previously had to compile their own material.

The one shortcoming in this series is brought about almost inevitably by the scale of the task being undertaken, for to review the whole subject of metals and the way man has used them, in twenty slides, will obviously result in a very broad coverage at a shallow level. The pack is therefore dependent for its success on the teacher being able to expand on the points made and possibly even supplementing relevant parts with slides and supporting material of his own. This is in itself not a failing, for the opportunity to personalise the packs could be a positive advantage both to the teacher and to the child, but as the packs are designed on the premise that they will stimulate further work by the child it would have been very helpful if each leaflet had suggested sources of further information to which the teacher might direct the children.

Despite this criticism, the packs are good value at £5.75, and if in these difficult financial times a department is unable to buy the whole series I would recommend starting with Nos. 5 and 6 which are particularly interesting and thought provoking.

Richard Kimbell

David Jones adds:

My impression is that these slides will form an extremely useful addition to the visual material available to design teachers, in particular to Art and CDT teachers.

I have used these slides in teaching pupils throughout the school, including sixth form students, and have found that whilst the commentary is useful, the slides themselves suggest a wide range of 'talking points' at all age levels.

Some of the slides could be clearer and the type used in the commentary is difficult to read in a darkened room. Nevertheless I wholeheartedly recommend the publication.

David Jones

Work and the Community

London: Bedford Square Press, 1980, £2.75

By August 1980 more than two million people were unemployed in Britain. Joblessness on this scale has not been since the 1930s. Few foresaw it. Many believe that worse is in store.

Strategies likely to achieve any substantial impact on this worsening situation will have to be sought primarily in the realm of economic policy. But until such strategies are developed, implemented and become effective, unemployment will have damaging social consequences which are cause for grave concern. The misery of idleness, the impoverishment of families, and the loss of confidence and self-respect are worrying enough. Still more disturbing is the growing evidence that problems such as physical and mental disease, baby battering, suicide and serious crime increase as unemployment rises.

Work and the Community reviews current government programmes for the temporary relief

of unemployment – the Manpower Services Commission's YOP and STEP. YOP, it argues, should be continued and expanded with a guaranteed place for all school-leavers. And for the adult long-term unemployed, whose numbers are rapidly rising, new programmes are urgently needed.

Such programmes need to be firmly based within those local communities hardest hit by unemployment. The report recommends that MSC programmes should go beyond simply training people for established industry and commerce. They should encourage and support a wide range of schemes for local work and employment which benefit local communities and are controlled by them.

Until now little has been done to tap the latent energy of local organisations and community groups. Consistent support from government could reap substantial benefits which far outweigh their costs.

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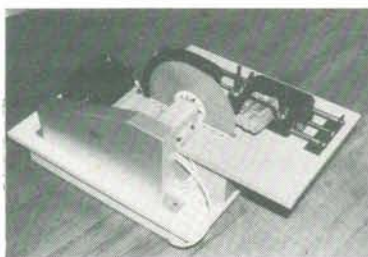


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