

First Year Foundation Course

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Students embarking on this course inevitably have a diverse background and as a result, their experience of craft subjects varies accordingly. Some may have concentrated on academic subjects to the virtual exclusion of practical work, whilst others will have achieved varying levels of craft skills. These skills range from the barely competent, to a very high level of attainment in one or other or both of the main material areas.

The varied experience and different levels of attainment – noticeable in any one year group – are often reinforced by the diverse approach to the teaching of craft in schools. In addition, these differences are frequently consolidated by the adoption of syllabuses designed to achieve maximum success in external examinations. The resulting tendency to teach only that which is measurable, i.e. examinable, ignores what may be described as “the desirable residues”, in educational terms, of craft experience. Consequently – and regretfully – the tutors in this department have concluded that the majority of the annual intake of students have severe limitations in terms of aesthetic understanding. The neglect, or at the least the underdevelopment of visual awareness and imagination and the lack of sensitivity towards material and form preclude the possibility of a commonly understood starting point, when preparing students for a career in handicraft teaching.

As a result of these observations a “Foundation Course” has been evolved within the department which provides a stimulating starting point for all students whatever their previous experience. It is directed towards a stage of personal development whereby, at the end of the first year, the students should:—

- (a) be able to communicate effectively, in both visual and verbal terms, their **own** ideas in relation to craft education,
- (b) have mastered the basic skills necessary to manipulate a wide range of materials, supported by the appropriate technology,
- (c) be aware of the relationships between form, materials and means,
- (d) understand the fundamentals of design planning and its application in solving problems of an aesthetic, functional and mechanical nature,
- (e) have a fair appreciation of the historical antecedents of craftwork and the related areas of study,
- (f) have begun to develop a positive, yet personal, philosophy of craft education supporting such desirable characteristics as resourcefulness, versatility, sensitivity, integrity and so on.

During the first year students spend some 500 hours of contact time in the Handicraft Department and many more hours are spent in supporting study outside their



Fig. 1

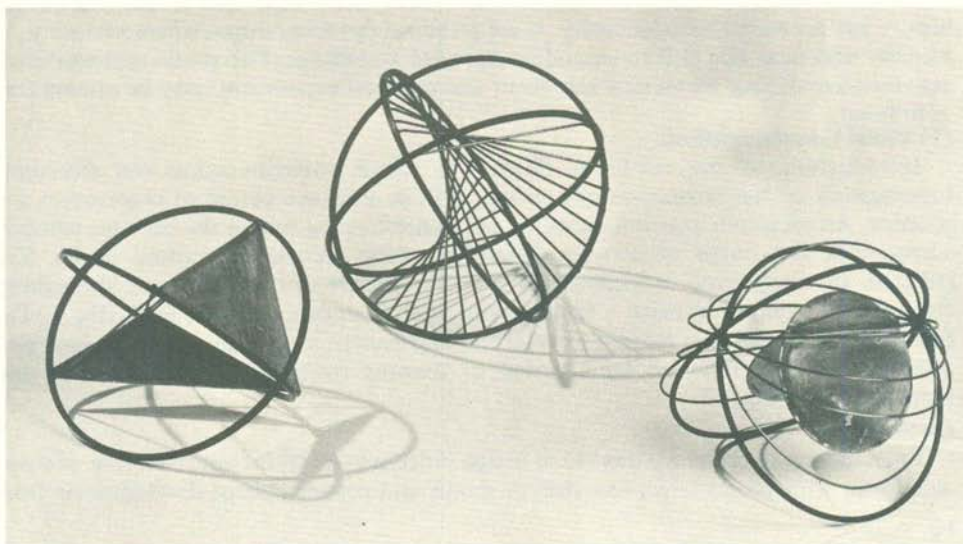


Fig. 2

“timetabled” time. An indication of how this time is used by the department follows in the description of the course content. It should be noted, however, that the programme is not a prescriptive plan and is varied from time to time in the light of the discovered needs of the students concerned. There is inevitably – and desirably – some overlap of the various areas of study and the tutors most closely concerned with the “First Year” groups normally work in a team teaching situation. One member of staff in the department acts as the Year Group Tutor; his role is that of exercising pastoral care, attending to the administration and to the organisational needs of the group.

A system of continuous assessment is used to evaluate the progress of each student, the results of which are communicated directly and privately to him or her. Students then have the opportunity to comment on the effectiveness of their course, to criticise any aspect of the programme and to make suggestions which might improve either content direction or presentation.

The study programme which the students follow is designed to inculcate an attitude of mind which is receptive to what is regarded as progressive thinking and teaching in this subject area. The kinds of problems encountered and the resulting learning situations that occur have made different, perhaps rather heavier, demands on the students than they were accustomed to, or indeed expected on such a course. It would be over-optimistic to claim outstanding success. The course of which the “Foundation” is only the beginning, makes very heavy demands on the time as well as the physical and mental energy of the students. Inevitably some fall by the wayside before the end of the first year. However, the general response from the students indicates positive interest and enthusiasm for their Foundation Course as currently presented.

During this first year, the students undertake a series of exercises in both a studio and workshop situation, these being mutually supportive and leading, we trust, to a considered “blurring” of the boundaries between the various aspects of their work. (Fig 1 & 2.) Weekly lectures devoted to the related technology and to the craft/social history are presented more formally, as are technical demonstrations, where necessary, to increase understanding and to extend background knowledge. The studio and workshop activities, combining theoretical statement and practical experiment, may be summarized as follows:

(1) Visual Communication.

Introduction to the need for fluency in visual communication and recording. Investigation of the techniques of drawing, with an intensive period of observation and practice. An emphasis is placed on seeing and understanding and on the need for personal competence in a range of drawing techniques, with exercises in various media. The students are encouraged to explore and to make free use of the media, and throughout the year are required to make a visual record of all Foundation Course work. (Fig.3.) The principles of perspective, leading to technical illustration, receive short but concentrated attention and are followed by a period of drawing for graphic communication and representation. (Fig. 4.)

(2) Shape

Introduction to the visual aspects of design processes and to the consideration of shape and form, with programmed exercises in simple and complex shape developments from

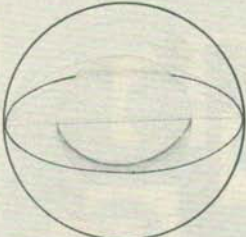

PROJECT	SPACE FRAME	PROCESS
<p>First form spherical space frame using balsa wood circles of 1/4" welding rod. These can be brazed in any position, keeping in mind the idea of a sphere.</p> <p>When the frame is complete then using 1/8" welding rod the shape has to be modified with respect to the sphere. Onto the 1/8" rod tin plate can be used to form solid areas.</p> <p>Both the 1/8" rod and the tin plate should be positioned with regard to the sphere.</p>		<p>The first process is to form the "welding rod into a circle using the rotator. This gives an accurate circle without bending the rod.</p> <p>When the ends have been squared up then the circle can be brazed together.</p>  <p>The circles can now be joined and formed into a sphere.</p> <p>When the sphere is formed then the 1/8" brass welding rod can be set soldered on. Finally tin plate can be added to form solid areas.</p>

Fig. 3

[illegible]

Fig. 4

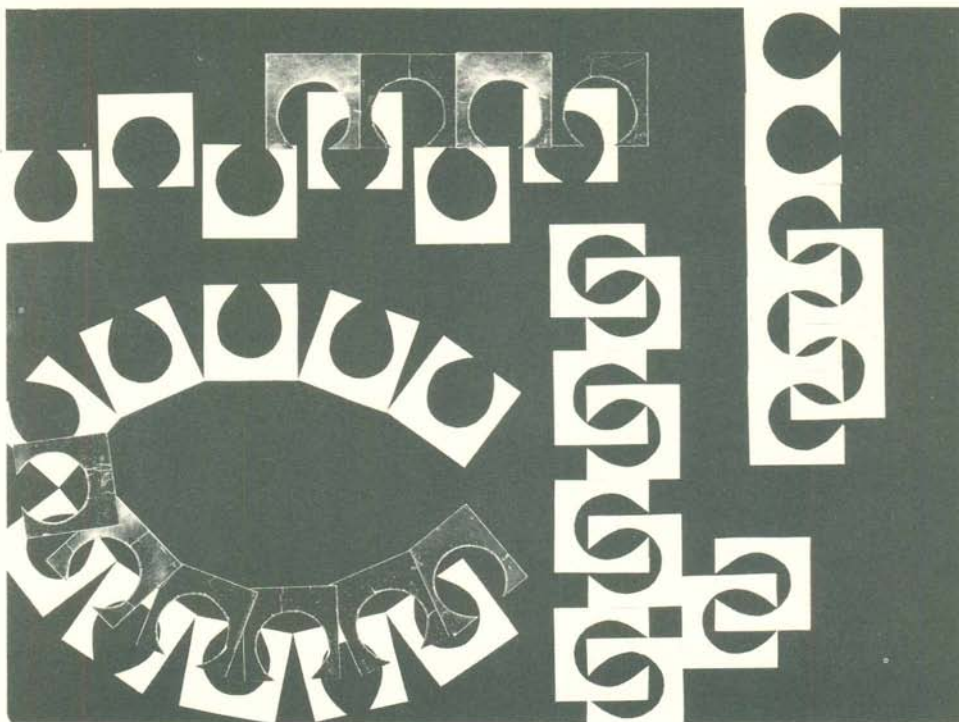


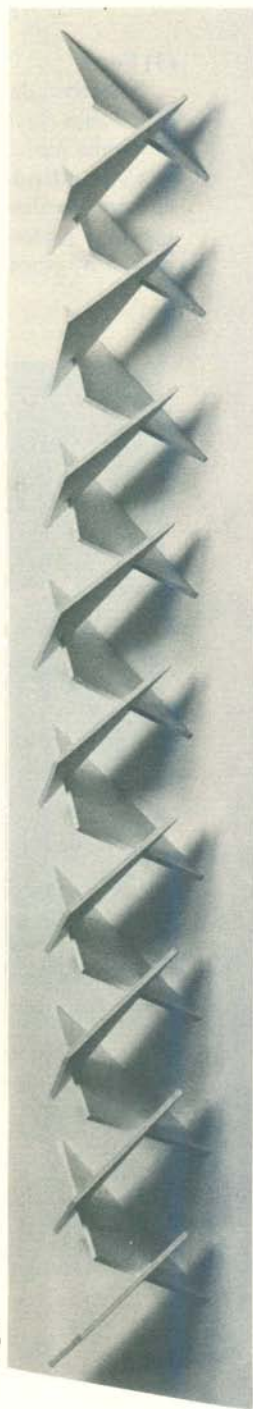
Fig. 5

basic sources. (Photo 5). The practical experiments are carried out in simple and easy manipulated materials (photo 5a) — paper and card — and exercises are set up to include stage by stage consideration, with understanding of the potential of shape development. Through the introduction to the language of shape, the students are expected to begin the development of a vocabulary which will support work in marking and cutting relevant to decisions on shape arrangement. Subsequent work in wood and metal, treated two-dimensionally, uses the same vocabulary extended by considerations of proportion and manipulation. (Fig. 6.)



Photo 5A

Fig. 6



(3) Form

Selective development from structured exercises in shape to experiments in non-functional three-dimensional form, exploring straight and curved constructional potential in simple materials, with further development into wood and metal. (Fig.7). The practical work is intended to support the student's understanding and personal response to form and to sensitise his use of materials. The techniques necessary to manipulate the more resistant materials are identified and applied in the context of experiment as the part played by emotion in the creative process is recognised.

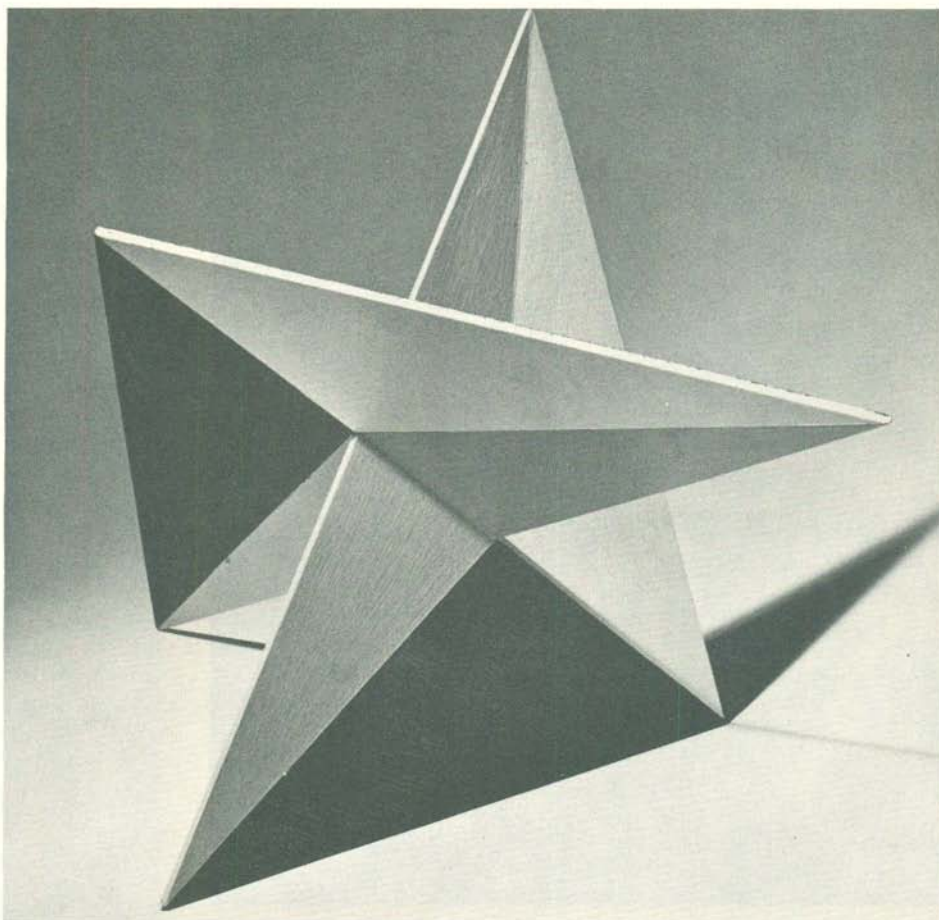


Fig. 7

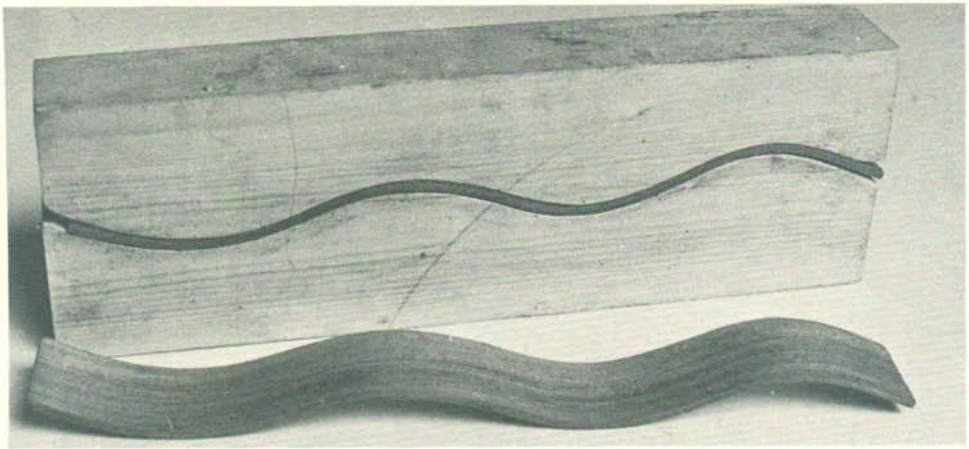


Fig. 7A

(4) Form Extensions

The construction and examination of basic forms, spatial investigations, multiple developments, relationships and surface treatments. The introduction and practice in the use of colour, tone and texture.

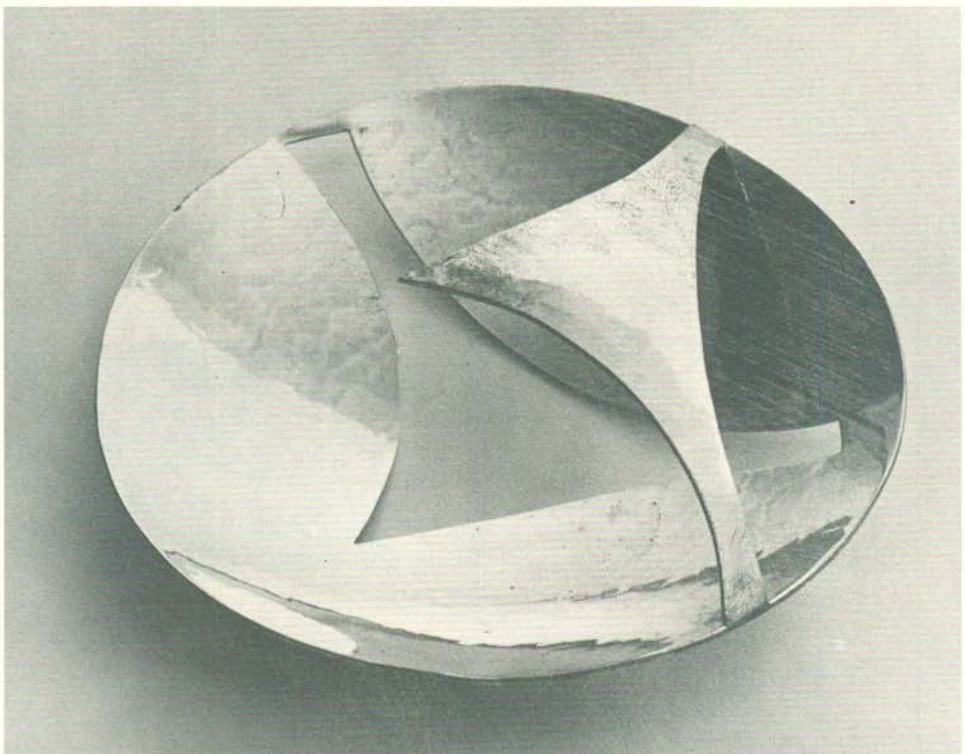


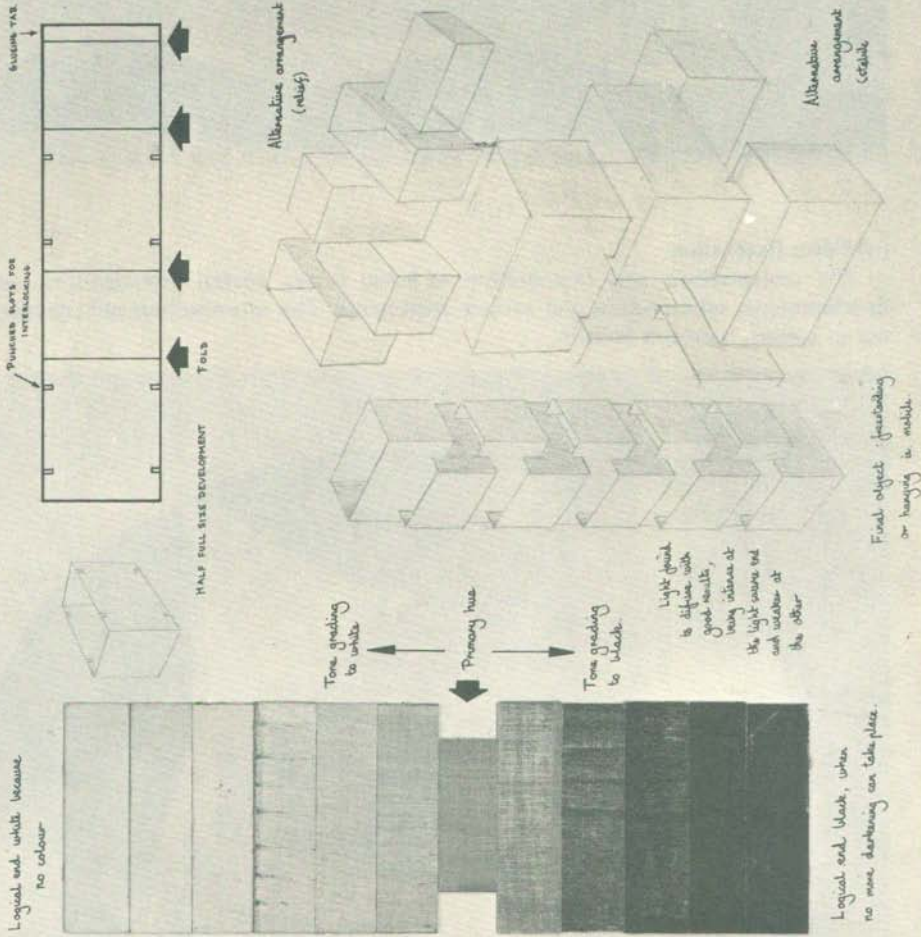
Fig. 8

COLOUR : Tone

Process

What is being done here is basically one stage in the investigation of colour. Colour theory can be taught but fuller understanding can only be gained by using it. The examination was done by means of unit structure. Thus the finished product was looked in two ways. First it was structurally looked and secondly, in terms of colour by tone gradings. To a white base was added a little pigment, thoroughly mixed and printed (using a cotton ¹⁶openly screen). Nine pigment was added to get the darker colour. Saturation point was reached before white was obtained so black was used for the last two or three runs. The printed card was made up into rectangular pieces which were put together by means of punch holes. By interlocking in the way the structure becomes stronger, more useful and more of a unit.

Observations And Conclusions



Educational Values

The exercise is valuable in many ways all of which widen the scope of the craft student of any age. The different ways in which the prime interlocking object. It also shows how interlocking can strengthen a structure to a surprising extent. The exercise has a sound geometrical and then technical, drawing background. It involves precision in marking out, cutting out and folding. In terms of colour it shows how interlocking a simple arrangement can be interlocking makes many folds to which are added the different facts of tone and shadow. Put the structural and colour values together and the result is the exposure to use colour in designing. Each has a place in the classroom. When thinking about a large house the child or student will have a wider scope on which to draw. It will prepare the designer for putting a structural part or joint on a piece of furniture. In conclusion the exercise increases the size of the craftsman's repertoire.

Fig. 9

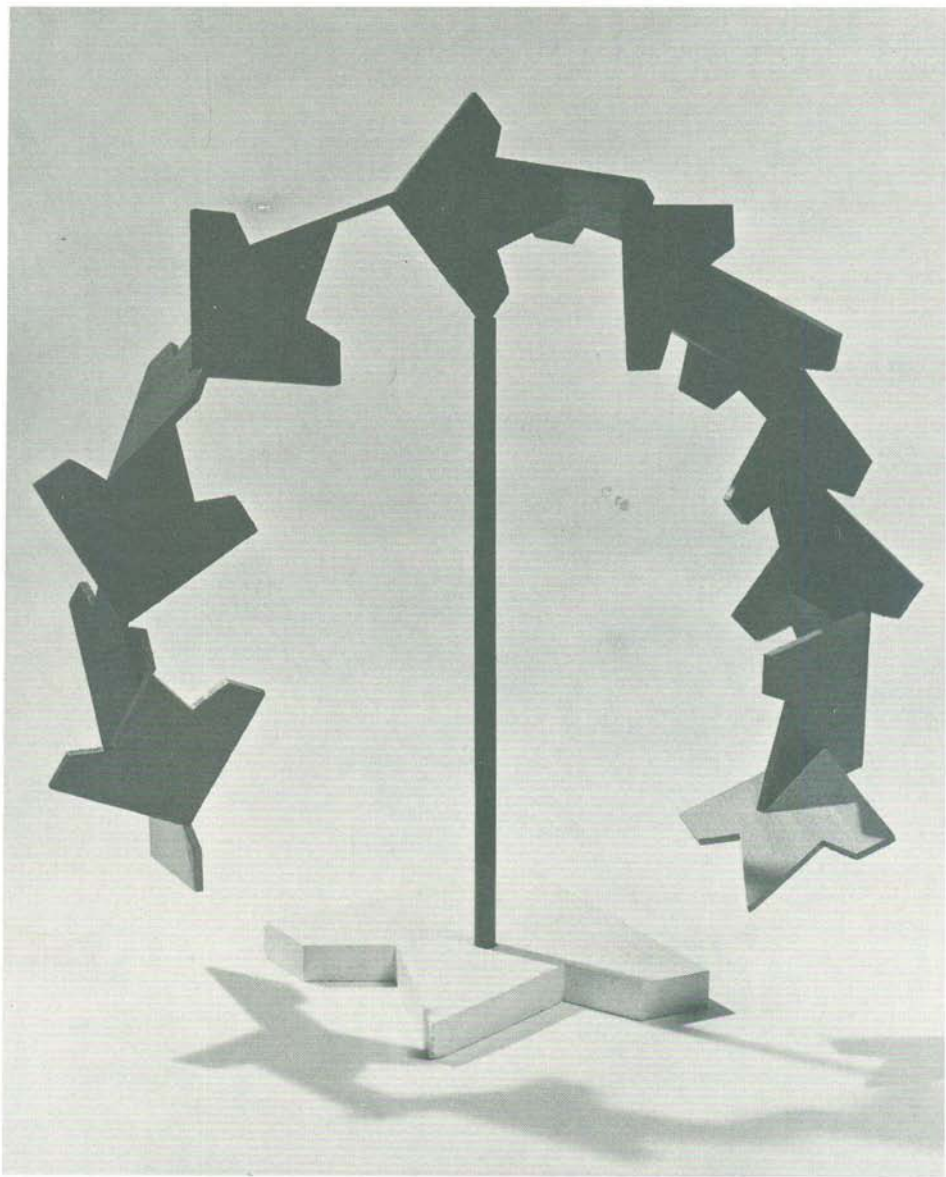


Fig. 9a

NICOLA ASHLEY

SILVER CASTING

PROBLEM

Taking one of the natural forms in the basic shape, develop this into a suitable design for a silver casting using the lost wax method.

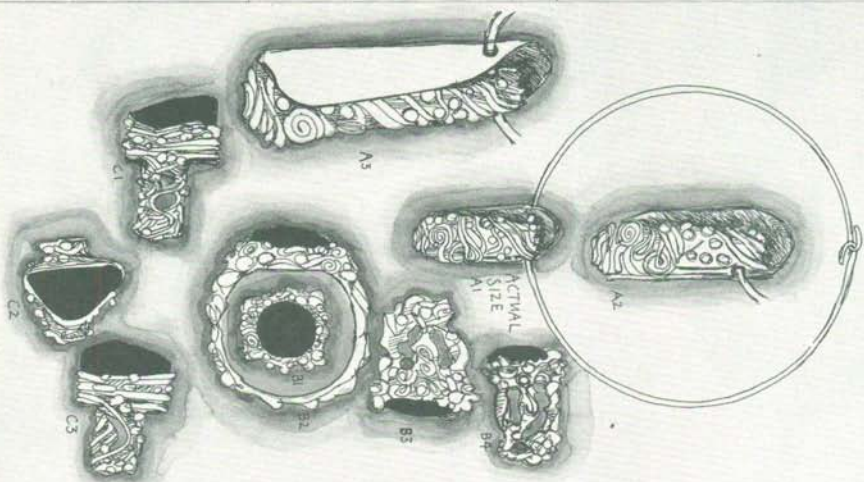
Restrictions: must not be of a size exceeding $45 \times 40 \times 40$ mm. No constraints more than 2 ozs of silver.

EDUCATIONAL VALUE

Introduces the pupil to the lost wax method of casting and again shows the variety of ways in which the wax can be treated. This whole casting exercise is very valuable as an introduction to an important design source, natural forms, & the way they can be introduced.

* Process cont.

being poured into the plaster cast. It was made to step upwards, taken out & run under the top, the plaster being rolled away. The silver object was hammered, polished in acid and tumbled in the finisher for a hour. The 2 rings were developed from the pendant shape & cast as above.



PROCESS

As in the polyethylene/aluminium casting, the shell was used as the basic form. The pendant form^(A1) is taken directly from the shell shape. It was formed in thin wax sheet, decorated with lost wax of varying size, and with bits of wax. When formed it was fixed with wax spurs on to the tin base, the widest end at the bottom.  The consistency of the wax was then the consistency of the plaster, the air was extracted in a vacuum, a canister was laid over the wax object ~~was~~ held in place with plasterine) and it was filled up with the plaster. The air was then extracted again. When the plaster was dry the bottom plate was removed. The canister was heated on a low flame for 1 hour for the wax to run out, and for it to warm the other way up. The silver was weighed out to make the amount of wax. The silver was placed in the casting lost wax casting device, the lost plaster canister was fixed in, the silver was melted and when it was within the ~~the~~ where the ring was spun round, the molten silver *

(5) Visual Awareness.

Development of space perception and visual awareness. Exercises in the identification, selection, observation and recording of design sources from natural and man-made forms. (Fig.10). Examination of observed and recorded source material, development through personalisation and the application through techniques into castings, machined objects and sculptured forms. The students are encouraged to make exhaustive visual and technical scrutiny of the selected forms, including the graphic recording of the whole as well as detailed studies. Propositions for the initiation and the development into various materials, including wood, metal and plastics, are fully examined and their feasibility tested. (Fig.11)



Fig. 11

(5) Technology.

Throughout the year the technical lectures and demonstrations take place, in each case timed to precede or coincide with the needs of the practical exercises and experiments. Essays are set based on the area covered and assessed as part of the continuous programme of assessments.

(6) History.

Craft history and related areas of particular interest to the students in the department are covered by lecturers from the History Department of the College, supported in specialist craft terms by Handicraft lecturers from within the department. In each series of lectures the social, political and economic background is described by the historian, followed by department lectures on architecture, art, tools and machines, transport, silver and glass, furniture and interiors, etc. During the second half of the year students are required to submit a history paper for assessment.

The emphasis on the development of a personal aesthetic through experiments and practical work conceived in liberal terms, allowing as it does for decision making based on observable and/or rational factors, manifests itself strongly in the second year. A vocabulary of visual effect, technical competence and its relationship to design processes are considered of paramount importance and are developed in each student from the onset.