

About Design

Ken Baynes

London: Design Council Publications. £3.65

Ken Baynes is an important figure in the world of design education; he has played a major role in many of the significant developments of the past decade. As Research Fellow at the Royal College of Art he has been the main architect of the Royal College of Art Research Project. But it is not only the standing of the author but also the content of this book, in part a preview of the findings of the Royal College of Art Project, that makes it worthy of close attention.

The theme is design in general education in which design is seen as a subject area that can bring together the sciences, arts and social sciences — not through integration but through an enhanced consideration of the way in which man adapts his environment to meet his needs. The aim of the book is to bridge the gap between practical design activity in the schools and the work of practising designers in society.

The book falls into several sections. It commences with a brief review of design education which is useful not only for its historical commentary but also in perceptive comments on the dangers of design courses:

'That design studies themselves become a new orthodoxy, a fixed subject in the curriculum, replete with complex mechanism of examinations and 'right' answers'.

That teachers may miss the principal chance offered by design studies, which is a fresh relationship with the pupils. Design studies can never involve 'exercise' the answers to which are known by the teacher and not to the children. There are no known answers in this sense, only answers to be evaluated, with the

teacher becoming one of a team of research workers: guiding and leading perhaps, but not dictating'.

Baynes is also clear on the confusion that results from the multitude of competing arguments in favour of design education writing:

'Paradoxically, the study of design in schools is in danger of being sunk under the various advantages it is supposed to offer!'

This chapter is followed by a lengthy section entitled *What is Design?*, that rehearses the familiar struggle to achieve definition. Even Baynes cannot avoid many of the well worn and inconclusive contributions that exist but he does at least make it more interesting than many writers and the illustrations, often quirky and idiosyncratic, help a great deal.

The book really takes off, however, in the chapters on the nature of design in the community and in the schools. In both the discussion is pervaded by Baynes's view of design — a view which clearly springs from the ideas he developed in the well known *Art and Society* series published for the Welsh Arts Council. They are well illustrated in the style that will be familiar to readers of the series. The two chapters are followed by one entitled *Self-Help* in which a number of school projects — notably the *Front Door Project* at Pimlico School (described in *Studies in Design Education and Craft* 9.1) — provide a very good example of just what contribution design may make to general education.

Yet implicit in the discussion of these three chapters one finds the central dilemma of design education. It is nothing less than the old agony of the individual versus society. The concept of design that comes out again and again in the book is that of the individual striving to make his own personal adaptation to the environment and to his needs. Often, as the illustrations poignantly

show, these adaptations are not only personal but also idiosyncratic and almost anarchic. Certainly they are often glaringly incompatible with the adaptations of others in a manner that is pinpointed in the cover illustration of the book which pictures two semis, isolated by urban redevelopment, adapted by their owners in strikingly conflicting styles. Yet the book, like most other texts in design education, has many sections that take a very different view. We are reminded of the hazards of growth, 'trivial consumption' and 'heedless greed'. Pictures alert us to the fact that one person's adaptation to the environment may be defined as 'rape' by others. Underlying such illustrations is a strong argument for some kind of social control whether exercised through education or some other means.

How can design in general help us to resolve the difficulties that the book so effectively portrays? One turns expectantly to the final chapter on the future of design for some indication. Perhaps it is too much to expect Baynes to give us a wholly new lead: his message here remains clouded. We are offered inscrutable truths such as design is a way of 'experiencing an indispensable part of life's meaning and content'. We are told to keep an eye on Rachel Carson, Buckminster Fuller, Victor Papanek and Ivan Illich. We are told of the attractions of alternative societies with alternative technologies. Perhaps most hopefully, we are reminded of the enhanced political consciousness to which design education can give rise. Baynes sketches out one possible aspect of this:

'A more effective vision would be the creation of a new mind of 'design centre'. This would not be a place where people went only to see displays of what they might buy. It would be a place principally to engage directly in designing and making. In the centre people would be able to obtain free advice on ecology, planning, do-it-yourself and resistance to

official vandalism. They would be able to practice any craft from macramé to cooking, or from stained glass to gardening. There would be a technological workshop, an energy resources centre, a consumer advice bureau and, very important, a forum where the constituents of 'them' and 'us' could meet together on an equal footing to thrash out a new kind of creative approach to the environment'.

Such a prospect may still seem remote. But even though remote it possibly represents as clear a picture as possible of at least one of the possible consequences of the argument for design in general education that this book advocates.

John Eggleston

Art from Scrap Materials

Robin Capon

London: Batsford. £2.75

It is suggested on the dust cover of this book that Robin Capon 'describes the disciplines which can transmute rubbish into Art'. Discipline in this context must involve the mind and the hand but there is actually very little description of the use of either. Robin Capon himself writes that work can be produced 'in the manner of Brancusi', or 'similar to Barbara Hepworth'. However any discipline of mind, any thought or understanding of such work is rarely mentioned. If these comparisons are to be made then more comments such as those on Joe Tilson would have been valuable; otherwise these claims seem to be superficial and pretentious.

Technical description is equally superficial much of the time and is certainly erratic in amount and value. The section on welding and soldering gives a full page of detailed instruction and then concludes 'such tech-

niques can only be learned from an expert and under supervision'. Why then give these instructions? Strangely the page on mobiles gives no instructions at all and neither does the page on glass, except to say that the use of glass is 'hazardous' but that 'glass from bottles can produce effective results'. These last two pages each contain one illustration and only six lines of type, leaving plenty of space here for instructions that would have been useful.

Robin Capon suggests, 'The book contains some new ways of looking at scrap and common rubbish'. This statement is as exaggerated as the statement on the dust cover and if these were the aims of the author and publisher then they certainly have not been realised. This book would be interesting and in some ways stimulating for home or club activities, as a book for Art teachers it could not be recommended as all the things will have been seen and used many times before and the really crucial problem of how to use them in a creative way is certainly not tackled.

Mary Birch

Cardboard

Gunter Kalberer

London: Batsford. £2.50

This little book fascinated me because of its simple pragmatism, especially in these days of economic stringencies. Why? As a teacher of art I can appreciate that many students in colleges, pupils in schools and specialist art teachers have little cash to spare for buying art materials, and are being forced increasingly to rely on 'junk' materials. If so, then this book will be useful to them.

The author is concerned with a readily available material — *cardboard* — and having discussed 'Materials and Tools', he makes

various suggestions about the use of old cardboard boxes and cartons which are to be found as rubbish in every kitchen or shop in the land, and wisely uses a variety of photographs to show what can be done with them. His ideas include: large constructions done by groups of children based on 'bridge-constructions', 'castles', 'caves', 'walls', 'figures', 'cars' or other vehicles, to mention but a few. But he goes on to be a little more ingenious by introducing the reader to 'puppetry', 'flying machines', 'games' and 'furniture' which demand a fair degree of manipulative skill in their folded construction. Indeed, some of the illustrations of folded and prefabricated structures obviously demonstrate a high level of involvement in their making and it appears to me that this would captivate the interests of adolescent pupils.

His developments lead quite naturally into a consideration of architectural structures, and this is where comparisons might have been made with large office blocks, factories and school buildings or could have had illustrations of some of our bridges interleaved as illustrations. However, the lack of this aspect does not detract from what should certainly be a most useful book. I can recommend it to teachers and students without any hesitation and even think that members of the general public would find it a joy to read.

John Lancaster

Collagraph Printing

Mary Ann Wenniger

London: Pitman Publishing £7.50

I must admit that until I read this book I had never come across the term *Collagraph*, although I have employed similar techniques

to those outlined by the author with my students for some considerable time. So the actual processes, materials and creative delights of this aspect of print making were not entirely new. 'But', you could be forgiven for asking, 'What is a collagraph?'

Mary Wenniger, the American author of the book who is a practising printmaker herself, commences by explaining this. I quote:

'The *collagraph plate* is a collage of different materials that are glued to a block such as wood or masonite. This block, or plate, is then inked, wiped and printed on damp paper to create a variety of tones, lines, shapes and embossments. To print with this plate, you use an etching press which is made of a flat bed and two rollers, something like the old fashioned washing machine wringer. The impression created on the paper by this process is called the collagraph print'. (page 8).

Having given us this simple, concise definition she then enlarges on it in a very nicely produced book employing a minimum of text with a large number of excellent supporting illustrations. These range, on the one hand, from boldly designed images of a semi-abstract nature, to extremely delicate prints such as 'White Rock Boat House' (page 113) which results from a built-up acrylic ground. There are also many splendid photographs of equipment and stages of production complementing the text and captions, and these certainly help the reader to better understand the actual print making processes.

I was delighted with the book. It has been extremely well produced and should offer new ideas and stimuli to artists, students and teachers of graphics. The author and publishers are to be congratulated on an extremely fine production and they deserve good sales and reviews.

John Lancaster

Glazes for the Craft Potter

Harry Fraser

London: Pitman Publishing. £2.95

Harry Fraser's authoritative book on glaze technology, first published in 1973 and revised and reprinted in 1974, has now made a welcome appearance in paperback format. Potters and teachers who have hitherto consulted it in the reference library should now be able to add it to the bookshelf in their studios where it rightly belongs. Even better would have been a ring-binding like a laboratory manual so that it would lie open on a bench and a plastic jacket or wallet to keep it clean and prolong its life. It should be a standard reference work for many years to come.

Michael Paffard

Imaginative Pottery

David Harvey

London: Pitman Publishing. £3.95

David Harvey's book is addressed to the enthusiastic amateur but could certainly have an important message for craft teachers as well. The emphasis throughout is on enterprise in finding and preparing one's own materials and improvising or making one's own equipment including a simple electric kiln. The object of this do-it-yourself approach is not just thrift: it is to develop a real understanding of clay and fire and their interaction and an imaginative absorption in a process of observation, invention and experiment. This experience of the process is ultimately more rewarding and important than finished products. The author writes in

his concluding section, 'The pressure of achievement may hinder the enjoyment of this experience; or there may evolve a tendency to play safe and shelter within the security of the tried and proven formulas for results, but such results have their own price'. This is wise and well said.

The text is well written and illustrated and packed with information and sensible advice. It contains a good non-technical accounts of the geology of clay and the behaviour of basic glaze materials in firing as will be found anywhere. The book's most interesting and unusual feature, however, is the eight 'case histories' of building and firing different kinds of kiln with step-by-step accounts of trial, error and subsequent modification. Children were involved as eager partners throughout. The kilns range from simple sawdust and clamp types to oil and coke fired raku kilns. Perhaps the chapter on 'The Stoneware Range' could have been omitted from a book of this size and character and expanded into a subsequent volume for the more experienced amateur but the book is a worthwhile and welcome addition to the library.

Michael Paffard

Monoprint Techniques

Frederick Palmer

London: Batsford. £2.95

Difficult to write a boring book about a technique as fascinating as monoprint and Mr. Palmer hasn't. It's lively, informative and well illustrated; but why no colour at all at nearly £3 is a mystery. It's also very open ended in character and should lead the reader on to make his own discoveries in the medium. The photographs which demonstrate the techniques are models of clarity.

One of the most valuable things in the book is its reference to the use of monoprint in the fine arts. Without thinking too deeply about it I had supposed it to be a comparatively modern creative process. Surprising then, to see examples from the renaissance and to find it being used, and used beautifully by Blake and Degas.

I am becoming increasingly suspicious of the term 'experimental' in relation to the graphic arts and there is to my mind too much of that superficially attractive but ultimately unrewarding, playing about with textures in the book. It's visually seductive of course, but how rarely do we see students actually employ these surfaces when they start to work creatively.

I won't end on that rather grumpy note. The book will prove a valuable addition to the art department bookshelf and should, on its own, stimulate and guide expression in this germinal technique.

Edward Phelps

Screen Printing A Contemporary Guide to the Technique of Screen Printing for Artists, Designers and Craftsmen

J.L. Biegeleisen

London: Evans Brothers

I read Mr. Biegeleisen's book from the point of view of an amateur who is inclined to panic when confronted with clogged screens and 'bleeding' prints. The book's logical and sequential approach could undoubtedly be of assistance.

There is an extremely useful chapter on inks and other screenprinting media which gives an up to date guide to some of the new innovations in this field. This is followed by

'Mixing and Matching Colours' and then the book proceeds to the printing process itself.

It all adds up to a useful handbook for any practising screen painter or for anyone interested in becoming engaged with the craft. Compared with many other books on the same theme it must surely rate high. The complicated techniques are here simplified to such an extent that there seems little left to go wrong. The concluding chapter entitled 'What do you do if' is a model of concise explanation.

The colour reproductions are perhaps disappointingly sparse but this deficiency is more than compensated for by the generous number of well drawn diagrams and clear and precise text.

All in all a good buy!

Edward Phelps

Potters on Pottery

Elizabeth Cameron and Phillippa Lewis (eds.)

London: Evans Brothers. £6.50

Seventeen potters are featured in this interesting and attractive book which breaks new ground. They all work in Britain, range in age from Michael Cardew (b. 1901) and David Leach (b. 1910) to Svend Bayer (b. 1946) and Roger Michell (b. 1947) and not surprisingly represent widely divergent philosophies and styles of work.

The plan of the book is succinctly outlined in the introduction: 'Each section is the result of one or two tape recorded discussions which were then pieced together ... We generally asked about their beginnings as potters, the sources which influence their work, and their technical methods ... The text is therefore a combination of subjects brought up by us and any which the potters themselves felt inclined to

introduce ... the potters have seen and approved the text ...' This gives us something like two thousand words from each artist and about ten black and white photographs of his or her work which any reader, depending on his interests, is likely to find enough from some and tantalisingly too little from others. It would be an eclectic taste indeed that could relish equally the fungoid forms of Alan and Ruth Barrett-Danes, the whimsical walking tableware of Danka Napiorkowska, the neo-Sung pots of Yeap Poh Chap and the traditionally robust and functional pots of Cardew, Casson and Bayer.

Despite their common origin in tape recorded conversations, the pieces read very differently too. Some like David Leach's are brief autobiographies with a clear chronological thread; others, like Elizabeth Fritsch's, are thoughtful and apparently polished essays on their way of working; others again are much more fragmentary and off-the-clay-stained-cuff: Cardew reminisces about working with Shoji Hamada and tells us that the African Porcupine is much larger than the American but neglects to say which produces the best quills for feathering trailed slip. Casson, the Tele-potter, must have been talking with his hands when he tried to explain his word 'resonance' for the quality of a fine pot. Some of the potters came to clay almost by chance from painting, print-making, calligraphy and even, in one case, from playing the harp. A common preoccupation of those potters who make their living from the contents of their kilns rather than from teaching us how to avoid falling into the temptation of their own successes by mass-producing their popular designs. It all makes for an interesting pot-pourri and effectively illustrates the variety and vitality of contemporary pottery for which Britain is justly noted internationally.

There are eight good colour plates as well as the black and white illustrations. There are one or two inaccuracies in the captions

and most could be more informative and include an indication of scale. The book ends with brief, severely factual Who's Who-type biographies of the potters included. Those not already mentioned are Alan Caiger-Smith, Ian Godfrey, Mo Jupp, Bryan Newman, Siddig A. El'Nigoumi, Mary Rogers, Peter Starkey and Geoffrey Swindell.

Michael Paffard

Pottery Decoration

Thomas Shafer

London: Pitman Publishing. £8.50
New York: Watson-Guptill

This 160 page book is for the practising potter rather than the connoisseur or collector though the 33 colour plates and 200 black and white illustrations will give pleasure to anyone who cares for pots. As with previous books on ceramics from the same publishers, it is beautifully produced but rather expensive though the text, this time, lives up to the promise of the pictures. The balance and good sense of the author's opening sentences inform the book throughout: 'Although sometimes thought of as unnecessary or superfluous added element, decoration can form an integral part of a pot, equal in importance to the form itself in the total esthetic statement. An essential quality of successful decoration is appropriateness, a special affinity for the form which it enriches. Good decoration need not be subordinate to the form but should enhance it. This may be accomplished in many ways ranging from subtle echoing of the form to bold contrast with it. Unusual, audacious, even incongruous decoration can be exciting when it is done with the assurance and authority which gives it a feeling of rightness', however unexpected'.

This is well said and equally well illustrated graphically.

The author's own penchant, we discover from the illustrations, is for refined but conventional impressed geometric and curvilinear designs. However, the many ways in which pots can be enhanced are all described clearly and economically with some history of their use and detailed practical hints at precisely those points that will be useful in the studio. The book is divided into two main sections, Sculptural Decoration and Colour Decoration and the chapter headings are Decoration in the Forming Process; Carved Decoration; Impressed Decoration; Added Decoration; Slips, Underglaze and Majolica; Low-Fire Glazes and Lusters. On the inexhaustible topic of glazes and complicated processes like silkscreen printing the reader will, of course need to move on from the brief treatment here to more technical and specialist books. Slip formulas, a bibliography and a glossary/index are included. It would have been helpful to European readers if Seger cone numbers had been given alongside the Orton ones.

Michael Paffard

Screen Printing Techniques

Silvie Turner

London: Batsford. £4.95

This is an honest and worthwhile publication and it should be well received in art studies in secondary school and colleges. The book is well written by an author who bases her ideas, theories and suggestions on her practical experience as a printmaker and teacher of the subject, and this gives it a splendid feeling of authenticity.

The layout is pleasing, which makes the book attractive to handle and read, and even

an amateur should have no difficulty at all in understanding and following the instructions. These are lucid and should be seen in relation to the abundance of well-considered illustrations, and if this is done carefully the stages of development from simple beginnings right through to completed and more technically difficult printing will be no trouble.

The lists of books for further reading and suppliers of materials completes what I can only describe as a fine resource document. I recommend it without reservations.

John Lancaster

Developments in Design Education

John Eggleston

London: Open Books. £1.75

One of the nice things about Professor Eggleston is the tremendous enthusiasm which he displays for an interest close to his heart and his new book leaves the reader in no doubt about his feelings for Design Education. Another characteristic is the logic with which he develops an argument. Consequently his new book exudes enthusiasm for his subject matter and his arguments are developed with clarity. It is more than a little disappointing, therefore, that the graphics in the book lack visual impact. This is doubtlessly due to the publishers need to keep costs within bounds.

Most readers will know that John Eggleston was the director of the Keele Project which advocated a totally new approach to traditional craft teaching. A brief resumé of the struggle to introduce practical subjects into the schools of this country and then to clothe them in respectability brings us right up to the present moment and the dichotomy between traditionalism and Design Education. There

is no question in the author's mind (nor the reviewer's!) about the intellectual importance of the design process as he reminds us of the influence of the Bauhaus, consumer's reaction to mass-production, the design experience in schools and its effect on human experience and development.

The chapter on Research and Development makes interesting reading and should prove of value to students and laymen alike, particularly when they realise the sheer breadth of Design Education. There is no better way of realising this than to consider the magnitude of the problem of effectively organising 'design' in a school as John Eggleston shows; unless perhaps, it is to plan the content of a good syllabus.

The chapter on Design Education in Action must surely convince the sceptics that design education can and does work. Reassurance is there for the traditionalist that change can enhance and not devalue his standards: the baby need not be thrown away with the bath water!

The list of publications and index at the back of the book are most valuable.

One would certainly recommend this book as compulsory reading for students of Design and Technology, for Advisers, teachers and those in schools responsible for curriculum development. It might well be that the ideas put forward in this book could make a useful contribution to the Education Debate now taking place in the country. But one thing is certain, the teaching of technical subjects will never be the same again. If the swing of the pendulum ever takes us back again towards traditional teaching, at least its advocates have been forced to review its effectiveness and recognise its shortcomings. Taught well, Design Education has already made its point.

Norman Glover