Design Basics for Creative Results

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This is an intensely colourful and well-presented book, written by someone who knows the Graphic Design industry from the inside. It's a coffee table book of design ideas intended for students of graphic design who want to see examples of good ideas in practice. And there are many of them.

The biographical notes highlight Peterson's prestigious pedigree in the field of graphic design. His illustrious background would appear to put him well up in the expert field and someone who knows his subject and who is well respected in his field.

Each chapter looks at a particular example of the designers' art and explores each of the effects in detail and demonstrates how each can used to present a message. Peterson uses his own experience and the work of others to highlight good graphic design. Clear illustrations of the various techniques described appear throughout each chapter and each is carefully analysed using both good and poor examples to make his point. There are exercises to try that are intended to develop the reader's own technique and to help them to produce their own award-winning designs. The chapters cover such areas as format, type, shape, texture, balance and contrast, the use of colour and value. Peterson considers the psychology of why the designs work, or not, and offers a rationale to help students of design create in an informed and deliberate manner.

The book is aimed at students of graphic design, perhaps at college, or those who are attempting to make a living from commercial graphic art. Having said this I think that there is something for anyone who has an interest in why images used in advertising have an impact on us and what it is that makes us sit up and notice a message. For teachers it is a book that you can dip into and pick up new ideas to enliven the subject and to help your students choose an approach that works. Reading this book makes you realise how much thought goes into a good piece of graphic design before any ink reaches the paper.

It is not the sort of book to buy in bulk, but to have one copy lying around that can be browsed by interested students could be useful. They will find the images fascinating and if they read the captions and apply the techniques shown I am sure it will be beneficial to their work. It is a book that will help you to give advice as to how a student can improve.

The book's format reminds me of a children's Christmas annual. It is about the same size, hard backed and about the same number of pages. However both the printing and the paper used is of a very high quality. The book is made to last. Obviously it uses American English and phrases but it is readable. Peterson's light-hearted style engages his audience.

It is not normally the kind of book I would buy for classroom use although I've ordered similar from catalogues for the library in the past but have only glanced at them once they've arrived. This book though is well worth taking the time to work through and certainly worth making it available to students. At a cost of just short of £22 my initial reaction was that it is too expensive but having looked at the price of A' level texts and considering their production quality I don't think this is too bad for a book of such quality.