

Reviews

Beginning Graphical Communication

M. Jordan, B. Hawtin and A. Neil.
Longman £3.50

In the past few years there has been growing discontent for traditional technical drawing courses in schools. Many teachers feeling that the teaching of drawing should include many more aspects than engineering and building drawing exclusively. There has been an expansion in the aspects covered and along with this increased diversity has come an increase in the methods and techniques of presentation. This interest has naturally led to the publication of a number of books incorporating in their titles the term 'Graphic Communication'. Unfortunately on examination many of these contain the same old familiar prescriptive exercises with only slight change in emphasis.

'Beginning Graphical Communication' is not one of these books and anyone looking for fully dimensioned exercises will be very disappointed. Instead many chapters consist of an explanation of the subject matter followed by suggested alternative projects and activities. Indeed for many teachers one asset of this book is the wide variety of tasks which pupils can be given to choose from.

The book's cover, in particular its colouring, gives a striking impression of vitality and clearness which I believe will be effective in encouraging pupil's interest although I am disappointed that colour has not been used within the book. The layout of the pages, containing numerous diagrams with the writing between them, shows immediately that this is no 'border and box' Technical Drawing book and additionally helps the reader to relate the information easily to the diagrams.

As its title suggests the book is written as the basis of a course for lower secondary school pupils and after a short introduction to graphic communication deals with the basic uses of drawing instruments. This I found the most unsuccessful part of the book mainly because of the manner in which it is written. The authors have adopted a stage by stage approach which I am sure most first year pupils would find tedious and time consuming. This part covers the use of pencils, drawing board, etc. and whilst containing useful information could be taught in a practical way by a teacher more effectively and quicker. Most teachers using this book will probably skip through this section using only the diagrams as additional input.

The next chapter deals with the graphic elements of 'point line and shape', explaining that a line is 'any mark you make which is not a point!' before leading to the first main thematic area of symbols and pictographs.

Mapping is the next main area. Unfamiliar to many CDT teachers it is essential part of graphic communication and the guidelines offered in the book concerning scale, topography, contours and statistical mapping would be helpful to teachers

who are at present unsure of ways in which to introduce it to pupils.

Rather surprisingly the next chapter deals with freehand sketching. Considering the fact that pupils will have been using this technique in the preceding work it appears to be a little misplaced. This work then leads into concise but detailed chapters on spatial representation:- orthographic, isometric and perspective. Although there is considerable detail in the work explained I feel that in practice teachers will need to amplify this with more projects on spatial reasoning.

A chapter on 'further graphical elements' proposing to deal with tone, texture and colour is unsuccessful. Only one method of shading is presented and there would appear to be no attempt to combine tone and texture together. The section on colour is very superficial dealing only with emotional reactions to colour and there is no mention of colouring techniques. This book, however is the same as many others in this respect for although colour is such an important part of the visual language the additional cost of producing books illustrating its use has the effect of persuading publishers and authors it is not really needed. Surely there must be a market for a well illustrated book including ways of using colour-wash, pencil crayons, air brush etc. with respect to graphic communication and aimed at the work of school children?

The last four chapters deal with flow charts and statistical diagrams. The drawing and use of these is outlined in a most satisfactory way although I would like to see a section illustrating how statistical diagrams are often drawn to misrepresent information. If the book is placing emphasis 'on the relevance of graphic communication to daily living' as the preface informs us, then it is necessary for pupils to know how to draw and also to know in what ways visual messages can be distorted.

Although this book does not include all aspects of graphical communication it does, when compared with other books, outline in an admirable manner many of the newer areas and would therefore form the basis of some work in the lower school. Certainly for Technical Drawing teachers 'beginning graphical communication' themselves it is my opinion the book will prove to be worthwhile. There are many aspects that recommend this book for class use but failing the resources to do this I am convinced that a copy in the department's library would prove beneficial to both staff and pupils.

John Lees.

Art Related Topics

Bob Nunn and Chris Locke
Longmans £6.90

ART RELATED TOPICS has been written on the premise that DATEC Art and Design students in particular are likely to be deficient in the field of complementary studies and therefore in need of a publication that covers the sort of ground generally considered essential in order to produce students with a well-rounded and informed view of art and design practice.

In pursuit of this aim this book packs an amazing amount of pertinent topics (for example the psychology of perception, how to 'control' an interview, images and imagery) into its 140 pages and is a model of how to present information to a teenage readership without adopting a condescending tone.

Given such a catch-all approach a lesser book could well have fallen foul of the 'rag-bag syndrome' however it is to the joint authors credit that this publication possess, at all times, a tangible unity of purpose.

The authors, in a early chapter on study technique, provide advice on how to 'skim' books for information and thus run the risk of having this done to their own effort. Such a fate is unlikely thanks to an engaging style that will ensure that the contents are studied from cover to cover.

A. Charlton.

Handbook for Art & Design Students

Robin Jesson.
Longmans £5.50

This is a good book. It has been conceived on a simple format and is quite pragmatic so that young students of art and design will find it most helpful as a source of reference and interest in the subject.

There are *four* broad chapters: ranging from general considerations with respect to art and design, the specialisms of the subject – or what might have been noted as the 'sub-disciplines' - and on to visual research and lists of invaluable information for students.

It is interesting to see how books of this kind are proliferating in the 1980s, and how they have down-to-earth quality rather than being based upon philosophical concerns. This is in contrast to many publications in the 1960s and 1970s, and appears to mirror 'core' curriculum ideas at secondary level. Nevertheless, it is apparent that there is a real need on the part of young people for reference literature of this kind to which they can turn quickly for information which will be helpful in their years as students.

I would certainly recommend this publication for use in secondary schools, for teenages, too, should

find it a fascinating work. It goes without saying that art and design students should add it to their booklists, but I would also like to see CDT/Design pupils and students using it wisely. The book itself is a convenient size for ease of daily handling; is nicely designed and contains some pleasant illustrations.

John Lancaster

Drawing and Cognition Descriptive and Experimental Studies of Graphic Production Processes.

Peter Van Sommers
Cambridge University Press £27.50

This account of well designed and articulated methodology will be of value to all those wishing to understand the ways in which drawings are executed. Describing research work conducted mainly in Australia, it comprises a lucid description of the complex factors influencing the drawing production of ordinary people. As such it makes a valuable contribution to the general understanding of the way drawing skills are developed.

The book is a record of a series of experiments to determine the specific effects of the various factors that influence the production of drawings. The restrictions of the anatomy of the person drawing on stroke making, the geometric and semantic constraints of the image, the development of executive strategies in consecutive image making and the influence of pragmatic factors on drawing production are all investigated.

In cross-referencing to other forms of communication, notably musical scoring and, particularly language, the author both gives a wider significance to his findings and supports his initial hypothesis that one should consider 'language and graphics as layered systems wherein each action is or can be simultaneously structured or constrained at a great variety of levels'. His book provides a very readable appraisal of the constraints and the structure of these various levels.

The complexity and detail with which the subject is explored will limit the potential readership. It is certainly not a book for browsers, the author keeps all his more general observations close to the accounts of the evidence from which they are drawn. The inclusion of a glossary of terms may have helped to make the information in the book more available to a wider readership than the psychologists for whom it is primarily intended. However, while Mr. Van Sommer's book may be of more relevance to those with a theoretical interest in drawing production, it does have many useful insights to offer to art teachers in general.

Pamela M Schenk,

The Student's Guide to Western Calligraphy an Illustrated Survey

Joyce Irene Whalley
Shambhala Books £12.95

Books on lettering and calligraphy have simply flooded the book market in the last year or two and I wonder when it will all end. There was a time - and I think of my own students days as an art student in Leeds - when it seemed possible to see every publication on the subject on *one* library or bookshop shelf. If that is an exaggeration then I make no apologies, for as post-war students we certainly felt that we had little in the form of resource material to support our studies. Today's students have, in contrast, a feast to gorge upon and if they are not careful they can easily suffer from an overdose of mental indigestion.

This is a splendid publication and the author is to be congratulated on putting together a scholarly document. I am delighted, speaking personally, that she used her position as Assistant Keeper of the V & A Library so profitably, for she was in a strong position to refer to materials direct; but I am disappointed that the publisher has priced the book so. At £12.95 it is an expensive item, and the fact that it is in soft covers doesn't help for this will limit its use in libraries.

The book itself is, in the words of the author '...primarily a picture book...' and in this lies its appeal. We are all so accustomed to the visual image, today, whether this is in magazines on the cinema screen or on the television, that we are quite visually-aware, and it is good to have another visual stimulus such as this. This book, however, is well-conceived and quite scholarly in its conception. It lays the historical development of lettering before us so that we are able to compare different letter forms at a glance, and give us an enticing invitation to see what the scribes injected into the writing of manuscripts so that we might be stimulated to go to museums to see some for ourselves.

I would describe this work as a 'visual compendium' of lettering. It delights me, but then I am a calligrapher who is easily excited by the sensuous nature of pen-made imagery, and my only regret is that its reproductive quality is rather mediocre.

John Lancaster.

Source Directory for Authentic Indian, Eskimo and Aleut Arts and Crafts

Indian Arts & Crafts Board
US Dept. of Interior, *Gratis*

Reflecting the growing number of businesses in the arts and crafts field owned and operated by Indians, Eskimos and Aleuts, the *Source Directory* lists 223 enterprises located throughout the United States, from Alaska to Florida, from California to New England.

The 117 illustrations in the Directory show that the businesses offer a great diversity of handcrafted products, in styles and media ranging from the most traditional to highly experimental, all reflecting distinctive Indian, Eskimo and Aleut creativity and expression. Products listed include a variety of jewellery items in precious metals and stones, along with custom-designed garments and fashion accessories. A wide range of practical and decorative items for home use include rugs, quilts, pottery, basketry, metalwork, beadwork, paintings, fine prints, sculpture, carvings and figurines in various media. Traditional items include drums and other musical instruments, masks, feather headdresses, decorated dance costumes, and dolls in native dress. Among more unique items are full-scale painted tipi covers and objects decorated with porcupine quillwork.

Businesses appearing in the Directory are artist and craftsman cooperatives, tribal arts and crafts enterprises, as well as numerous businesses and galleries privately owned and operated by Indian and Eskimo individuals, designer-craftsmen and artists. Also included are several non-profit organisations working directly with native groups to develop products and markets.

Entries in the Directory give names and addresses of the businesses, telephone numbers, business hours, outline major products handled by each business, and indicate if mail orders are accepted.

As most of the listed sources maintain retail shops, the Directory also will be of special interest to tourists and travellers throughout the United States. For the travellers' convenience, businesses are listed alphabetically by state.

Single copies of the *Source Directory* are distributed free upon request to: Indian Arts and Crafts Board, US Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

Marianne Straub
Mary Schoeser

Misha Black
Avril Blake
The Design Council, £8.95 and £7.50 respectively

Two new publications have just been added to The Design Council's monographs on modern British designers. *Marianne Straub* by Mary Schoeser and *Misha Black* by Avril Blake now join the earlier books in the series on Ernest Race, Ettore Sottsass and Gordon Russell.

The publication of *Marianne Straub* has been timed to coincide with the opening of an exhibition at the Royal Society of Arts in London organised to celebrate her 50 years as a fabric designer, and also to mark her 75th birthday. Although she helped shape public taste and set standards for commercial textile design and production for at least 40 years, Marianne Straub herself remains largely unknown outside her specialist field. And this is despite the fact that her fabrics were used for such prestigious projects as refurbishing the Queen Mary and the QE2.

Mary Schoeser, draws on a wide range of personal memoirs and archive material describing how flexibility was the keynote to the designer's career. Marianne Straub proved herself unusually adept at responding to changes in fashion and also at synthesising the often diverse needs of client and manufacturer. Flexibility underlies her philosophy of teaching too, and the book shows how her influence has been crucial to many students during her 30 years of active involvement in education.

Like Marianne Straub, whose native country was Switzerland, Misha Black was also born abroad. He came to England shortly before the Bolshevik revolution, in his native Russia.

Avril Blake's study focuses on the philosophy and career of this designer whose influence pervades the whole course of industrial design this century. In the 1930s, Misha Black joined forces with Milner Gray in a partnership which continued for over 40 years. He was a founder member of the Design Research Unit and was appointed to the co-ordinating committee for the Festival of Britain — from which his Regatta Restaurant is still widely celebrated. Throughout the 1950s and 60s Misha Black's involvement with teaching increased as he came to be seen as a spokesman for the Modern Movement.

The monograph follows Misha Black's achievements and reputation, often using his own words in extracts from his diaries, published papers and speeches. It is fully illustrated with examples of his design work ranging from saucepan lids to heavy locomotives.

Kim Greer

'Working in Crafts' — A National Survey
Crafts Council £7.50

'Working in Crafts', a national survey commissioned and published by the Crafts Council, provides answers to questions such as: How many people in England and Wales make their living from Crafts? Is craft practice a predominantly rural occupation? What kind of income does a self-employed craftsman generate? Is the supposition that more women than men work in crafts correct?

The survey was commissioned by the Council in 1981 in order to provide previously unavailable statistical information on crafts activity in England and Wales, which will provide a base for future policy making and direction of resources. The research was carried out by independent consultants, Paul Filmer and Alex Bruce, and the findings are available as a paperbound report, illustrated with photographs by Ed Barber. A leaflet giving a summary of the principal findings is also available.

L. Sayer

Directory of Design Expertise
Design Council £5.50

The second, and much larger, Directory of Design Expertise, published in March by The Design Council, is intended to provide businessmen, manufacturers, architects and other employers of designers with a guide to approximately 600 British design practices and engineering consultancies.

The Directory is compiled on a 'paid entry' basis and is divided into five sections:

- engineering design and technical expertise
- industrial design
- interior design
- graphic design

and a new addition; fashion and textiles.

Information in each section is further divided into a large number of specialist fields, with details displayed in a simple grid system indicating which consultancies offer which services and areas of expertise required. Basic information is provided about each design group and many entries include a more detailed description of specialist skills and facilities offered.

The Directory is a starting point for any company with a design problem or simply as a source of general information on designers.

R. Smith