

# Reviews

## A Compendium of Craft Books

The enthusiasm for active participation in the crafts throughout the Western World is strong and persistent; what is more it is economically successful. The evidence is convincing. Hard headed publishers, now guided by their accountants, are producing an ever growing spate of highly specialised craft books that are expensively produced with extensive colour sections, excellent photographs and diagrams and sophisticated binding. Typical prices range around £10 to £20 and more and the titles very rarely appear at reduced prices in the bargain bookshops.

Many possible explanations exist for the explosion in both supply and demand. The increasing search and capability for active and creative leisure is a well known phenomenon; the growing numbers of affluent senior citizens is almost certainly another. The pioneering work of the Crafts Council has been of importance. But the achievement of the schools in fostering an enthusiasm for three dimensional work has unquestionably had a major influence too.

Yet the books now appearing are a far cry from those we used to use in woodwork, metalwork and needlework. They are usually aimed at an adult readership which has already achieved a consciousness of taste and style and wishes to be able to express it at or near professional levels. For these reasons the product as much as the process is the objective. This contrasts ever more strikingly with school texts, particularly those in Design and Technology where it is the process rather than the product which is the key to learning and understanding and where the skill and sophistication of fabrication, though important, is only one objective amongst many and often not the most important one.

This is not say that current *genre* of craft books are of no interest to schools — far from it. They provide a fascinating and encouraging range of targets to aim for, mapping out the ground ahead and offering a standard against which to judge the present achievement. They offer guidance in technique and taste and style in areas which may not always be available from

the staff of any one school. No school library should be without a well stocked section on crafts to augment and complement its design and technology section.

The new cache of craft books amply justifies these arguments. It is dominated by the Batsford publishing company who are setting an impeccable and highly impressive standard for others to follow. Their books are uniformly high in quality of text and illustration yet happily diverse and even idiosyncratic in their approaches, style and format.

There are two outstanding books on Lace Making starting with *Zelee Lace* by Agnes Stevens with Ivy Richardson (Dyrad Press — £9.95) and *Duchesse Lace* by Jane Newble-de Graaf (Batsford — £10.95).

Both illustrate the superb expressive opportunities that can be achieved in lace making using traditional techniques, particularly from the Flemish schools, but yet adapting them to modern clothing and lifestyles. The examples of the use of lace to make pieces of costume jewellery are particularly interesting.

There is a set of outstanding books on embroidery, again opening up vistas in this very traditional area of craft work that will be unfamiliar to many readers. In *Machine Embroidery* by Valerie Campbell-Harding and Pamela Watts (Batsford — £17.99) there is a fascinating set of examples whereby modern sewing machines can produce works of art that match and even surpass those achieved by more traditional hand stitching and scissors.

More modest but still outstanding are the three Batsford embroidery paperbacks, *Ecclesiastical Embroidery* by Beryl Dean, *Dictionary of Canvas Work and Stitches* by Mary Rhodes and *Design for Embroidery from Traditional English Sources* by Constance Howard (each book priced £8.95). All three offer an immense range of new opportunities for work that will appeal strongly to present day students and capture their enthusiasm for an area of craft skill that they might have otherwise dismissed.

Dorothy Tucker's book on *Applique* (Batsford — £14.95) again opens up a range of new vistas — particularly in her sensitive use of multi-layered

approaches. Valerie Campbell-Harding's, *Strip Patchwork* (Batsford — £7.95) also takes us light years beyond the patchwork quilt and opens up a sophisticated world of contemporary art and skilled technology.

*Quilting Technique, Design and Application* by Eirian Short (Batsford — £7.95) again achieves the same miracle. Essentially quilting, which is the sewing together of layers of cloth and wadding, has simplistic and largely uninspiring connotations of warmth and economy. But Eirian Short demonstrates that here too is a form of modern art that is exciting and innovative. Perhaps it is no coincidence that Eirian Short is not only an embroider but also a sculptor.

Ann Colesman's book on *Quilting: New Dimensions* again looks at quilting techniques and presents a range of witty and inventive ideas. A further book on quilting *Contemporary British Quilt Art* by Christine Nelson (Dyrad Press — £10.95) presents some of the leading British quilters illustrating their work effectively and sensitively.

Weaving too is yet another of the traditional crafts that has been transmogrified and Anne Sutton and Diane Sheehan's *Ideas in Weaving* (Batsford — £17.95) presents the range of expressive techniques that are available to the imaginative user of textiles. A particular strength of the books is the multicultural dimension; she draws her examples of functional and fine art weaving from a diverse range of cultures.

Happily in all their outpouring Batsford have not forgotten the younger readers and in the *Children's Book of Pottery* by Christine Rowe (Batsford — £8.95) there is a particularly attractive introduction to pottery for young people in which fun rather than frustration is the dominant theme. Yet it is a real guide to learning and the check lists for readers to assess their progress are an attractive and useful feature. This is a book which will not only inspire pupils at school but which may be used by some of the very young as a direct guide to learning the craft.

To have achieved all this and much more in two months of publication is an impressive achievement for Batsford; craft workers will congratulate them on

their initiative and wish them success in their enterprise. Their very considerable investment deserves its undoubted financial as well as its educational reward.

John Eggleston

### Design and Designing

By I. Burden, J. Morrison and J. Twyford  
Longman, £6.95

The first impressions of this book are of visual excitement, each page motivating the reader further into the world of design and designing.

Section one leads the reader through a historical perspective, the balance of text and pictures giving a social insight often lacking in design textbooks. Design awareness is dealt with more formally but in no way detracts from the message. The third part of section one expresses thoughts and feelings about design and again the reader is transported through a wonderland of ideas once again expressed through a balance of text and visual stimulus.

Section two deals with the practicalities of designing and invites the reader into a matrix of designing methodology and the means of communicating the ideas on the designer.

In conclusion this is one of the most visual and stimulating book to emerge for teachers of Design and Technology and one that should be part of any resource library in schools. It is one of the few books available which I would advise the purchase of 'Class sets' as opposed to single resource copies.

Jeff Hardman

### The Establishment and Management of Wildflower Meadows

Nature Conservancy Council,  
(Northminster House, Peterborough,  
PE1 1UA), £4.80

Re-creation of the colourful wildflower meadows of yesteryear can never occur overnight, but research funded by the

Nature Conservancy Council (NCC) shows how it can be achieved — with a little effort and plenty of patience.

The latest findings are explained in a new book, *The establishment and management of wildflower meadows*, published in May 1989. It is the latest in a series covering the findings of research commissioned by the NCC from scientists of the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology at Monks Wood Experimental Station, near Huntingdon.

Newly-created wildflower meadows are no substitute for the few surviving old meadows managed in the traditional way, the publication points out.

However, the techniques now exist for complementing these priceless remnants with new grasslands full of once-familiar flowers with evocative names like cowslips, lady's bedstraw, ragged-robin and oxeye daisies.

The book also discusses the need for flower-rich grasslands and concludes with listings of meadow plants, together with their preferred soils and sowing rates.

Derek Wells

**Telephone Boxes** by Gavin Stamp  
**Shop Fronts** by Alan Powers  
**Troughs & Drinking Fountains** by Philip Davies

Chatto & Windus, £4.99 each

These three beautifully produced volumes mark the beginning of a new series Chatto Curiosities by Chatto & Windus. They appear to be intended as both gift and reference books but, more importantly, they constitute a real attempt to draw attention to neglected aspects of architectural and social history.

Gavin Stamp who is Chairman of the 30s Society has been running a personal campaign to save the traditional telephone box from extinction. He believes that the boxes designed by Gilbert Scott were one of the finest pieces of industrial design ever produced and argues that their present destruction is an act of wanton vandalism. Many readers of *Studies in Design Education Craft & Technology* will find his argument, supported with excellent

photographs and diagrams, to be very persuasive.

*Troughs & Drinking Fountains* concentrates largely on the fountains, pumps and wells throughout Britain which, until comparatively recent times, provided a basic essential for towns and villages throughout the country. Incidentally the illustrations and the text tell us much about the social concerns of former generations. The preservation of these artefacts by local councils is seen as an essential task in order to ensure that a vital part of our national heritage is not lost.

*Shop Fronts* charts the history of their design and Alan Powers illustrates the individual and collective importance of this highly specialised architectural form. Readers who have devised courses based upon Eileen Adams Shop Front Project (featured in *Best of Craft Design and Technology*, pp.88-93) will find this a particularly valuable book to take their pupils on to further analyses of the street scene.

More titles follow in the next year: books on Pillar Boxes, Fanlights, Heraldic beasts, Doors and Railings. Design and Technology departments and school libraries should try hard to attain a complete set of these books; they are invaluable for pupil browsing or for more serious study and will offer more understanding and enlightenment than many more earnest and self-conscious design texts and manuals.

In conclusion one wonders if the publishers will be bold enough to tackle a volume on that other great Victorian conurbation to our streets — the public convenience?

John Eggleston

## SIMCAD Computer Aided Design

OWL Micro Systems, PO Box 1,  
Carnoustie, Tayside DD7 6YF, £41  
approx. + VAT

Many computer programs claim to be 'suitable for beginners', 'easy to operate' or in computer jargon 'user friendly'. Often this is simply not the case and is a claim made by programmers whose computer knowledge is so advanced that they cannot adequately appreciate the difficulties experienced by the rank novice. Thankfully this is not the case with SIMCAD. It is a disk based computer aided draughting system 'specifically written to introduce CAD to the complete beginner' and it succeeds admirably in this aim.

The program is menu-driven with input by means of the keyboard whilst the output can be directed to a variety of both printers and plotters. Each menu selection is accompanied by an on-screen prompt which explains clearly what needs to be done. After only a brief introduction I have had first-year CDT classes using the system with very satisfying results. One low-ability fourth-year student produced an accurate working drawing in two lessons; a feat which he could never emulate by hand in the same time or to the same quality. The effects of success like this on self-esteem and pupil motivation are not to be underestimated.

However, the system is not without its faults. Dimensioning can only be labelled horizontally and hatching on sectional views is restricted to square or rectangular areas. The biggest weakness becomes apparent when using SIMCAD on a network. Although each pupil can work separately on a foundation drawing provided by the teacher, each child's final (different) design cannot be saved under an independent file name. Storing work is therefore a problem. To their credit, Owl Micro Systems invite and respond well to such criticism and they are currently working on an improved version of the system called LIBCAD.

SIMCAD will run on the BBC Model B/B+/Master range of microcomputers whilst program storage uses a 40 or 80 track disk drive. Included in the

purchase price is a site licence for 10 back-up copies and an ECONET network version is also provided if required. SIMCAD represents true value for money and its *genuine* 'user friendly' nature makes it an ideal means of introducing CAD into the curriculum.

Marshall Hughes

## Technical Drawing

By Susan Peach, Edited by T. Potter  
Usborne Publishers, £5.50

I never expected to see *Technical Drawing* on the front of newly published books again — where was 'Graphical Communication'? Perhaps the market for the book lay in the High Street, so maybe a return to names more familiar with parents than with their children seemed best — but somehow I do not think so.

Essentially this is a good reference book — two or three copies in the Design Faculty would be valuable indeed. There are sections on getting started, stages in design, sketching, *models, modelling tips*, orthographic projection, architectural, isometric and perspective drawing, *rendering techniques*, using photographs, *finishing touches*, how a professional designer works, equipment, *tips*, conventions, model plans, glossary. Those I have italicised were particularly informative.

Three areas of possible improvement in future editions would be:

1. Placing the sections in future editions in the order that one may use/need them; following the Design Process.
2. The stages in the design section would raise a few eyebrows of those who recommend systematic approaches (as I do). Surely brief, idea, research should be — brief, research, ideas . . .
3. The sketching section (two sides) needs extending and greater guidance given to graded exercises, perhaps using grid paper, crafting etc. A methodology is missing.

But even though, it is a useful, informative and stimulating volume.

Keith Vickers

## ANNOUNCING

**The International Journal of Research in Design and Technology Education.** This will publish articles by leading national and international experts on new research and development in technology and design education. It will feature description and analysis of new curriculum, processes, techniques, resources and equipment. New approaches to evaluation, assessment and examination will receive full coverage as will case studies of educational practice in a range of countries.

The Journal will be edited by Professor John Heywood of the University of Dublin and Professor John Eggleston of Warwick University under the guidance of an international Editorial Board.

The annual subscriptions will be £45 for institutions (Three issues: Autumn, Spring and Summer) and £25 per year (for personal subscribers — Private addresses only).

The first issue will be Autumn 1989.

Subscribers to *Studies in Design Education Craft & Technology* are invited to obtain the new Journal at a special introductory price of £20 per year for orders received by 30 September 1989.

Please send order, together with cheques or official orders to: Barbara Wiggins, 151 Eutruria Road, Stoke-on-Trent ST1 5NS.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS LTD  
Freepost, Unit 34 Engineer Park,  
Factory Road, Sandycroft,  
Deeside, Clwyd CH5 2YZ.  
Telephone: 0244 520228

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

POSITION: \_\_\_\_\_

L.E.A. \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

TEL: \_\_\_\_\_

### NATURE OF ENQUIRY

CATALOGUE	
DESIGN & PLANNING SERVICE	
C.D.T. TROLLEY FOR PRIMARY/SECONDARY SCHOOLS	
REPRESENTATIVE TO CALL	