

Editorial

A recurring feature of *Studies in Design Education and Craft* is the lively, informed and articulate controversy that not only characterises design education but regularly revitalises it. The articles published in this issue are all concerned with one of the central issues in the controversy – the conflict between emphases on creativity and emphases on craft skills. In particular this issue may be seen in the provocative yet highly important contributions by Ashton, Grady and Pugh. Pugh, in a hard-hitting review of the Art College and Polytechnic scene directs himself to the great divide in art education. “There are fundamental, underlying contradictions at work in art education. On the one hand we have the Art Department which is rigid in traditions such as the perpetuation of old “skills”, techniques and crafts, with an ostrich headed attitude towards the real problem of visual education; and on the other we have an attempted up-dating of the syllabus by emulating the trendy art gallery scene, turning the students into confused mimetics; they will be searching with the wrong equipment for that elusive “recognition”. Under this second category art, as such, is treated as being far too precious a subject to withstand any analysis; the artist (or embryo artist) is seduced into thinking that he never really has to justify what he does: the die is cast for another aspect of the mystique.”

The voices from the schools are somewhat less certain. Ashton sees craft and design as fundamentally different in nature. For him the design process is central, concerning the exploration, refinement, manipulation and communication of ideas based on aesthetic responses to all kinds of experiences. Craft, however, is a lesser activity concerning the solution of problems arising from some part of the design process. “Skills, materials, tools, techniques, machines only assume importance in relation to the degree to which they facilitate the design realisation, and also in terms of the pleasure derived from them during design realisation, but I repeat, they must remain subordinate.” Grady, on the other hand, speaking for many teachers, expresses great disquiet at such subordination of craft. “Too much emphasis has been and is being placed on design. Craft, particularly craftsmanship, is in the process of being relegated to a secondary or supporting role. The extension of this, of course, is that a concentration on design can easily be diverted into a predominantly “art” approach... words expressing vague meanings like “technology” and “design” are replacing words having definite meanings.”

Perhaps it is not too difficult to allay some of the fears of those who see the diminution of craft skills. On all sides there is evidence of a renewed interest in this field of human endeavour. In this issue a sensitive, even inspiring, account of a fundamental and unmistakable craft experience by Barras indicates not only the necessity of craft skills but also the fascination they exercise in their own right. In many areas of society the renaissance of interest in craft skills is greatly in evidence. Well attended craft courses and summer schools, the growing influence of the Crafts Council, the spate of craft publications and the enthusiasm to buy the products of craftsmen are regularly to be seen. But the question remains – is there a real conflict of interest between skills and creativity? The accounts of the work taking place in the schools at Pocklington and Millfield suggest that such a conflict, if it exists, is unnecessary. In particular the work at Millfield shows that, by facing the issue, at least one school has found, with the aid of

educational technology, that a more effective approach may be made to the teaching of craft skills that advances rather than impedes the creative development of the pupils.

Technology too forms the basis of an illuminating article by Robson which develops the link between microscopy and visual art – a link that is also, in a somewhat different way, emphasised by Barras. Subsequently Stewart presents the results of an important comparison between visualisation through drawing and visualisation through model making.

Elsewhere in this issue the overflowing sections on book reviews and notes of new developments represent the ever widening development of the design field and provide further evidence not only of the creative conflict taking place but also of the capacity of design education to develop solutions from this conflict.

In the Autumn 1972 issue of *Studies in Design Education and Craft* the possibility of increasing the number of issues to three per year was mentioned. The Editorial Board have given careful consideration to this possibility and in doing so it has become clear that this would substantially increase the cost of publishing and would make an increase in the subscription price inevitable. Accordingly it was felt that a better service would be provided to readers if, for the time being, the subscription was held constant and the number of issues remained at two per year. However it was agreed to further increase the size of issues and the present *Studies in Design Education and Craft* is a first indication of the implementation of this policy. With the next issue, which marks the commencement of Volume 6, significant changes in style will be introduced that will offer a further improvement in the presentation of *Studies in Design Education and Craft* to its readers – a readership now rapidly approaching 3,000.

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