

**DESIGN HISTORY: REGIONAL MEETING
NENE COLLEGE NORTHAMPTON
FRIDAY 20th MAY 1994**

ABSTRACTS

JOHN HEWITT

Recent Developments in Design History

The paper will survey recent aspects of the development of the discipline.

ANDREW MacKAY

Curating the 'national' Shoe Collection

In this paper I will begin by defining the role of Museums, why they exist, who they are for and how they are created.

I will then turn my attention to the Boot and shoe Collection and explain the pros and cons of maintaining a nationally important collection in a provincial town like Northampton. I will illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of the collection and describe the range of artefacts we collect. I will select a few significant items from the collection and talk about how we go about marketing and documenting their history for future generations.

Finally, I will end by explaining the way in which we are attempting to make the collection more accessible and describe some of the methods we are employing to achieve this aim.

MERVYN ROMANS

Other Histories of Art & Design Education in Britain

Knowledge of the history of art and design education in Britain is largely founded upon five books, the first of which was written in the early sixties and the most recent nearly twenty years ago. These books provide a substantially corroborative account of the origins and development of art and design education in this country through a chronological narrative, suggesting to the unwary reader that its history is unproblematic. This paper questions the veracity of that perception.

By examining the methodologies used by the authors of these books, the intention is to reveal their limitations as history. It will also indicate the curious reluctance of historians of the subject over the past thirty years to embrace theoretical perspectives. In offering two examples of how these histories have at best provided a partial reading of the history of art and design education and at worst, misrepresented, the paper will point to the need for a re-examination of the historical evidence with a fresh agenda.

JANE PAVITT

Aspects of the History of the Decorative Arts

With the diversity of degree courses in the Histories of Art and Design and the increasingly complex level of engagement with the designed object by historians, the need for subject specialisation has become apparent. At undergraduate level, I would highlight three areas of study that are the most common; the history of fine art and sculpture; design histories, which tend to focus on the mass produced object; and craft histories, which focus on justifications for the hand made in this century and the last.

There are also various modes of analysis which have underpinned much of the historical and critical work produced in the last decade or so; socio-economic histories of manufacture and consumption, anthropological approaches (or material culture) as well as semiological analyses.

However, the study of the designed object has tended to be informed by a rather polarised debate - one which has centred on the handcrafted object versus the machine produced, the luxury market versus mass consumption. Both modernist and 20th century craft ideologies have located these debates within a moral framework. The decorative arts have regularly been placed on the periphery of design study and decorative arts practice considered only in relation to mass production or 'intellectual' craft activity.

This paper seeks to provide a framework for the study of the decorative arts and decoration; one that does more than 'borrow' from existing art and design methodologies. It also discusses some of the implications of such specialist histories for current practice.

MAXINE COPELAND

Rationalism vs Rationalisation: the Parisian Building Site in the 1870's

- part of P.M.D.

Sociy Economic

In a period of economic instability it was natural to attempt to cut costs in architectural schemes. What measures were applied and how did they affect the appearance of the buildings? A contrast emerges between the rational use of materials proposed by E.E. Viollet-le-Duc and the rationalisation of the building process commonly applied by building contractors.

According to Viollet-le-Duc, inadequate practical knowledge amongst architects combined with on-site building practices to produce inflated costs. He advocated greater control through design; more detailed specification of materials; the use of smaller and cheaper forms of masonry; and architectural features designed to fit within stone courses or blocks. Such ideas were most frequently applied in smaller public buildings, especially the **mairies d'arrondissement** and primary schools, although in some cases, savings were more apparent than real.

Building contractors resisted these economies, however. In the construction of **immeubles de rapport** (purpose-built apartment blocks), which formed the largest share of the building market, they were freer to make savings in other ways: through advantageous business groupings; by re-organising the supply of materials; and by streamlining on-site building practices. The finished **immeuble** might thus cost less and yet still resemble its neighbours.

WILL HOON

Furry Dice and Football Shirts: The Role of Purchase at the Manchester United 'Superstore'

This paper sets out to discuss the goods and environment of the official Manchester United club shop - the 'Superstore'. Colours, names, events and motifs all collide in the extravagant profusion of goods that is the 'Superstore', creating an Aladdin's cave of club related wares - from the sub-hooligan 'United Casualwear' range of clothing to the 'Red Devil' babygrow. The paper will explore how the club, through its range of merchandise, addresses both its past, present and (forever bright) future.

FIONA HACKNEY

Re-assessing British Women's Magazines 1919-1939

Women's magazines, along with a wide range of magazines aimed at teenage girls and young women, have never had a good press. Dismissed by 'serious' journalists and considered unsuitable for academic study, it is an area of publishing which has been largely ignored and about which a good deal of prejudice still exists; they are light weight and ephemeral; old fashioned and sentimental; promote an outmoded brand of traditional femininity and, after all, why study something we already know so well? For my own part, it is the very familiarity of women's magazines, their ubiquity, which makes them both a significant and a tantalising object of study. The intention of my research is to unravel something of the meaning these magazines had (and still have) for women and, through an exploration of their use and role, to achieve greater insight into women's everyday lives - their experiences, but also, their hopes and dreams.

I decided to focus on the inter-war period, partly because it has been passed over in the majority of existing studies being generally viewed by feminist historians, such as Cynthia White, as a time of return to the traditional role of housewife and values of the home. White holds the magazines primarily responsible for this. However, it was also a period in which the number of women in full time work actually grew and when a majority of women, both at work and in the home, increasingly had access to new forms of leisure and pleasure such as; cheap, manufactured goods (clothing, make-up, household products); opportunities for sports and activities (especially tennis); radio, cinema and dancing. The magazines, of which at least thirty new titles appeared aimed specifically at women, were equally a product of this new social and economic context and the representations of femininity they contain must be assessed in this light. Combining historical research with methodologies from cultural studies, I intend to relate the representations of femininity and domesticity in the magazines to reader's experiences (using oral history) and contextualise these within existing conditions in the publishing industry, in order to re-assess the magazines' role in women's lives.

VICKI THOMAS

Some Reflections on the connections of History and Practice

Reflections on ten years working as a Consultant in industry; can lessons be learned by the design historian by participation? How is a knowledge of the past used? Can our understanding of the design process in the past be improved by an analysis of the present?

DEREK ATTENBURROW

A Practical Investigation of Recycling

In design and manufacture the issue of recycling, secondary use and utilisation of sustainable resources is the subject of current debate. However, much remains uninvestigated or purely theoretical. At present there seems to be a gap between technical and professional debate and consumer advice. This work would seek to apply some of the theoretical questions and hypotheses posed.

The project is cross-faculty in nature incorporating technical and aesthetic design in a manufacturing or craft context.

Part of the work will investigate and identify possible recycling points and secondary use in industrial manufacture and reclamation. This is underway using a questionnaire and industrial support from the Timber Packaging and Pallet Confederation TIMCON.

Account will also be taken of the testing of researched 'green design' specifications through the design of furniture to be manufactured from pallet timber; design and manufacture in the third world; some surprising facts about recycling; examples of how legislation is focusing the need for green design; and examples of pallet furniture designs.

JUDY GLASMAN

The Osborne Robinson Poster Collection

The paper will undertake a series of investigations of the poster collection at Nene, looking at the 'fit' of these explanations with the collection itself. The paper takes account of the nature of the collector, the poster market and the poster history 'canon'. As part of the investigation the paper recognises the process of ordering and cataloguing and suggests that there is a connection between systems of access and the scholarship that can take place. The paper marks a first step in setting out frameworks of understanding.