DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

**arts &
media**

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INTRODUCTION

Within this folder is a discussion document produced as part of the process of putting together a national strategy for the arts and media. It does not form part of the strategy. Neither does it express any sort of 'official' view. It was written in order to focus discussion and stimulate ideas.

WHY?

The arts and media in Britain are in renaissance. Over the last decade, they have shown a confidence and diversity never seen before. In quality of work and audience demand, the arts and media have never looked healthier or more central to people's lives. More than ever before, the arts are a source of civic pride as well as personal enrichment.

The arts and media in Britain are in crisis. Scarcely a day goes by without press stories of theatres facing closure, grants being cut or audiences declining; of a lack of good innovative work in all art forms; of the absence of a sense of direction, purpose and adventure.

These views may not be incompatible, and each has some truth. What is beyond doubt is that ideas of what is art have expanded; that demand has rightly grown for access to the arts, film and broadcasting to be the right of all rather than the privilege of the few; and that resources, both public and private, have struggled to keep up. Growth in the variety of the arts contains its own problems. So how can the stategic injection of public money, and the growth of partnership with the private sector, encourage new developments? What should the priorities be? How do we make sure that the opportunity to enjoy the arts is spread ever more widely throughout society?

This is where the national arts and media strategy comes in. In 1990, the Minister for the Arts asked the arts and media funding bodies (the Arts Council of Great Britain, the British Film Institute, the Crafts Council and the Regional Arts Associations/ Regional Arts Boards) to prepare a national strategy. One of its purposes is to provide the basic framework for their work. The Scottish and Welsh Arts Councils are conducting parallel exercises; and the local authorities and museums funding bodies are also associated with the strategy.

A further purpose is to consider whether the public money spent on the arts and media has been used to best effect, and how those responsible can do better in the future. It is important that all those with experience of and a passion for the arts and media provide support, assistance and advice to get the strategy right. Most important, it must be seen as a strategy for the arts and media, not for the bureaucrats.

HOW?

The paper in this folder is part of this process. It is one of a series of discussion documents; each is available free on request. Responses to them will be collated by the National Arts and Media Strategy Unit. Arising from this, a draft of the strategy will be prepared by Spring 1992. This too will be available for comment. The final version of the national arts and media strategy will be completed by Summer 1992. The hope is that the resulting document will be slim, challenging and readable - and that it will provide a mission statement for the arts and media over the next decade, as well as setting out clear goals and targets.

The national arts and media strategy will not write a single novel, put on a single play or make a single film. What it can help bring about , if the funding bodies receive the help of those who care about the arts and media, is the maximum opportunity for such creativity to flourish and for it to enrich the lives of ever more people. Your contribution to this process will be valuable and valued. Please send your views on this discussion document to the address below, to arrive by 30 November 1991.

For further information on the national arts and media strategy, please contact:

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DESIGN

Helen Rees

NATIONAL ARTS AND MEDIA STRATEGY: DISCUSSION DOCUMENT ON DESIGN

This paper has been written in order to generate discussion and debate. It is not a chapter of the national arts and media strategy or a definitive statement. The views it expresses are those of its author, Helen Rees.

We should like to hear what **you** believe may be the key issues relating to design over the next few years. With the paper as background, we should welcome views on all or any of the following questions, as well as on any other matters connected with design on which you wish to comment.

The paper

1. Does the paper raise and deal adequately with the key issues? If not, where and how could it do better?

Principles and developments

2. Do you share Helen Rees' view as to the crucial **aesthetic** signficance of design? Is this significance underrated? If so, what have been the practical effects of this?

3. Do you share Helen Rees' view as to the crucial **economic and commercial** significance of design? Is this also underrated? If so, what have been the practical effects of this?

4. Helen Rees writes that "public policy for design is now in a state of chaos". Do you agree? Does it matter, and if so, why and how?

5. If, as is often stated, we live in an age of increasing specialisation, is it any longer possible to integrate all the aspects and functions of design? Would the sort of institutional measures proposed by Helen Rees (summarised on page 15 of her paper) have this effect?

6. What have been the most exciting developments in the field of design over the past five years, in Great Britain or elsewhere? What may be possible exciting areas for development over the next five?

Public funding

7. Do you agree with the paper that the arts funding system (including the Arts Council and Crafts Council) does not at present accept design "as part of our visual culture". What might it mean in **practice** if this were reversed?

8. Is the public money currently spent on design spent to best effect? If not, how could it be improved?

9. If there were a significant increase (say, 30% in real terms) in the amount of public money spent on design, what should be the priority areas for these additional resources? What effects might this have?

Design in society

10. Is there an appropriate relationship between the funded visual arts and crafts sectors and the commerical design world? How would you like to see this relationship develop over the next ten years?

11. What are likely to be the key effects on design in this country of international developments within Europe and elsewhere?

12. Are levels of 'design literacy' related to education and social class? If so, how might the adverse effects of this be countered?

13. What will be the main issues over the next ten years in relation to issues of design and the amateur, cultural diversity, women, and disability?

14. What are the key issues in design education (including schools, further and higher education, and informal education), and how might they develop over the next ten years?

Management, training and resources

15. What are the major needs in terms of physical infrastructure (such as buildings and equipment) if design is to achieve its full potential? How are these needs likely to change over the next ten years?

16. What will be the major issues in the areas of training and management for design professionals and design consumers over the next ten years?

NATIONAL ARTS AND MEDIA STRATEGY UNIT
AUGUST 1991

NATIONAL ARTS AND MEDIA STRATEGY

DISCUSSION DOCUMENT ON DESIGN

HELEN REES

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1. Introduction
Design: the cultural imperative

As Britain enters the final decade of the 20th century, the most crucial cultural debate of our time is concerned with the quality of our environment and of the way we live, in public and in private. Design is central to this concern, just as it was in the middle of the nineteenth century, when Prince Albert and Henry Cole established the South Kensington Museums as a resource for both the public and the professions.

Government has repeatedly acknowledged the need for a national commitment to design education which is relevant to the cultural and economic needs of contemporary society. The same strand of argument runs from 1836 to the present day:

> "Yet, to us, a peculiarly manufacturing nation, the connection between arts and manufactures is most important... since it is admitted that the cultivation of the more exalted branches of design tends to advance the humblest pursuits of industry. (Museums) should... contain the most approved modern specimens, foreign as well as domestic, which our extensive commerce would readily convey to us from the most distant quarters of the globe."

> Page v, *Report of the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures,* published 1836

And over one hundred and fifty years later:

> "The success of our business, industrial and professional enterprises depends increasingly on the way products and services combine functional and aesthetic requirements to satisfy the needs of the international community... The needs of the international marketplace require products and services that are seen to be visually effective... If companies are to continue to be run by managers with financial training, it will be increasingly important for them to learn the aesthetic and functional requirements of design at an early age."

> Paragraph 3.15, page 9, *Interim Report of the National Curriculum Art Working Group,* published January 1991.

Yet it is not an overstatement to say that public policy for design is now in a state of chaos. The design institutions speak with an incoherent voice to government, while the Department of Trade and Industry - the major Whitehall department which acknowledges responsibility for design - is inevitably only concerned with the contribution of design to the industrial policy of the day.

Design continues to be regarded as peripheral to the major cultural debates - even the commissioning of this paper was an afterthought in the process of setting up the National Arts and Media Strategy. The most pervasive forms of public visual culture are habitually excluded from the forms of public subvention. Design lies outside official concern for "the arts", which are narrowly defined so as to isolate them - as if by an invisible *cordon sanitaire* - from the taint of commerce.

The conflation of "the arts" with culture produces confusion at every level - semantic, philosophical and practical. One effect is that culture is promoted and patronised as if it were something quite separate from economic activity - and vice versa.

In turn, design has suffered from the limits of government support which has concentrated on its contribution to national economic performance - at the expense of a wider cultural perspective.

The absence of a clear understanding of the relationship between *design* and *culture* has a number of consequences:

*   it reinforces the privileged status of the pure (art) in comparison with the applied (design)

*   it restricts what is both taught and recognised as "art", resulting in an enervated and divisive visual economy

*   it fails to acknowledge the fact that the majority of people make cultural choices in the marketplace (rather than via subsidised arts)

*   it diminishes our relationship with our material culture, and fails to empower people to understand and to influence their physical environment.

This is not to say that as separate categories "art" and "design" have no value. But the idea that art thrives exclusively in a context which is *anti-commercial* is not only evidently untrue, it creates a simplistic and false dichotomy between art and design.

One consequence of this is discrimination against artists who engage in different kinds of practice - concurrently or at different times of their lives. Too many fine art students are still encouraged to believe that being a commercial artist is selling out. They are rarely reminded that Kandinsky designed posters for a chocolate company or that Magritte worked for a perfume manufacturer. On a more idealistic plane, the great 20th century movements - such as Constructivism, De Stijl, and the Bauhaus - whose aim was to create visual harmony in tune with a new social order, all recognised the limitations of applying 19th century categories to the real world of the 20th century.

Objects and buildings help us define a sense of identity - both as individuals and as a society. Similarly, the way in which we construct images of ourselves - and of other people - is central to our culture.

People need to be able to exercise their judgement in order to decode the complex symbols around them, as active citizens, rather than as passive consumers. In the words of Stuart Hall: "The notion that some narrow range of activities and forms constitute the real culture of the people, and all the other things that people do to express themselves is not culture, is one of the major ways in which the powerless have been excluded from power."

For too long, our national promotion of culture has been tacitly defined in terms of the subsidised arts. But in an age of *commodity aesthetics* the conventional museum or art gallery can no longer claim a monopoly on visual literacy. Attendance at "arts" events is still confined to relatively small audiences; discrimination in the marketplace is not. As a result, our understanding of what constitutes our culture is in danger of being diminished and impoverished by the very people who seek to preserve the "best" in "the arts".

The answer is not to regard design as quasi-art - in the way in which the Crafts Council promotes British craft - but rather to recognise and appreciate the singular effect of design on all our lives. The problem of public policy for design is a symptom of a broader crisis in the values of our visual culture. Greater understanding and appreciation of our visual economy will be encouraged by integration and connection, not through the artificial distinctions of the post-war quangos for art, craft and design.

2.   Design and its institutions: A brief history

One of the outcomes of the 1836 Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee "to inquire into the best means of extending a knowledge of the arts and principles of design among the people... of the country" was the formation of the Normal School of Design (which later evolved into the Royal College of Art). The School was established under the auspices of the Board of Trade in 1837, and by 1846 eleven branch schools were in operation. Their stated aim was twofold: to produce a generation of competent design technicians of value to industry and thereby raise the level of public taste. The techniques of fine art teaching were explicitly excluded for fear that students would pursue "that which is more accredited and honoured". The programme at the Normal School was intended to deter the number of "unsuccessful aspirants after the higher branches of the Arts", which left the Royal Academy with a monopoly on fine art teaching.

Yet very soon a conflict broke out around the question which still plagues design education today: should the schools simply provide a training in wealth creation - or should they teach design as an adjunct of fine art, which was deemed to be both morally and culturally uplifting? In other words, was design simply at the service of commerce or should it have a broader social purpose? The answer was a typical British fudge: an attempt to accommodate both views.

Since 1836 a succession of design initiatives have been sponsored by government - with greater or lesser success. The first and most spectacular was the Great Exhibition of 1851, an attempt to teach the general public a lesson in design on a lavish scale. The Great Exhibition was an extraordinary success: it not only set the style for the World's Fairs and Expos of future generations, but was also the catalyst for the creation of a new kind of museum. Funded from part of the proceeds from the Great Exhibition, the Museum of Manufactures opened in Marlborough House, Pall Mall the following year. It subsequently evolved into the Museum of Ornamental Art, later known as the South Kensington Museums, on the site of Exhibition Road and was finally split into the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Science Museum in 1899.

Since that time, public education in and official promotion of design have rested on an uncertain alliance between aesthetics and trade. Lord Gorrell's report of 1932 called for "a special building for exhibitions of industrial art" and resulted in the creation of the Council for Art and Industry in 1934. An echo of the 19th century, the Council simultaneously stressed the commercial importance of design and its ability to improve the quality of life for the individual and for society.

The Council for Industrial Design (COID) was founded in 1944, an early infant of the official division of visual culture into the neat new quangos. Its remit was to "promote by all practical means the improvement of design in the products of British industry" and the COID quickly played its part in putting the country back on its feet through exhibitions such as "Britain Can Make It" staged at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1946. One hundred years after the Great Exhibition, design once again played a major role in the Festival of Britain of 1951. And five years later the Design Council opened its own showroom to promote the endeavours of "UK Limited" at 28 Haymarket, London.

The Festival of Britain marked the heyday of the COID as a catalyst to industry. Renamed the Design Council in 1960, it continued to campaign for the economic and social benefits of "good design" throughout the 1960s and 70s, running a range of schemes directed at both producers and consumers. The aesthetic style most admired by the educated officials in charge at 28 Haymarket was a British variation on Scandinavian modernism, best applied to tableware, appliances and furniture. The Director, Gordon Russell, soon discovered how resistant the British were to his brand of proselytising: manufacturers resisted any idea of official control, designers found

the Design Centre selection timid and unadventurous, while retailers disliked any suggestion that their judgement was being challenged.

Throughout this history, politicians have repeatedly turned to design as a factor in the drive for exports - and, increasingly, the resistance to imports. In 1982, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher held a "Design Seminar" at 10 Downing Street with the aim of putting the value of design on the industrial agenda for the 1980s, a cause successfully championed by John Butcher MP, junior Minister at the Department of Trade & Industry.

The flagship policy following the seminar at No 10 was the Design Initiative - a scheme to support the use of design in industry through a programme of funded consultancies. Typical of the bullish rhetoric which fuelled official enthusiasm was John Butcher's comment in the Design Council's magazine that design was for Britain a "competitive weapon... in an industrial and economic war" (Design, 1987).

Over the next five years government channelled a threefold increase in funding into design via the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) - from just over £4m in 1982 to nearly £14m in 1988. During the same period, direct funding from the DTI to the Design Council rose by nearly 40%.

At the same time, the Design Council was sharpening its focus on industry and education - rather than the public who had once visited the Design Centre in their droves. By now the idea of the Design Council as an arbiter of public taste had been replaced by the Design Council as industrial agitator. In the words of Ivor Owen, the current Director, "The British public no longer needs educating. They know all about good design; that's why they buy German cars, Italian washing machines and Japanese hi-fi".

At the beginning of 1991, the Design Council launched a new strategy for 1990s. Its premise is that it is better to concentrate the efforts of 250 staff and a £6.34m annual grant from the DTI on a number of industrial sectors which are capable of responding to design input: furniture, textiles, building and medical products. The task is formidable by any standards: in 1955 exports out-numbered imports by 2.5-1, in 1988 the trade deficit in manufactured goods reached £17.7 billion.

Meanwhile, by the second half of the 20th century, the Victoria and Albert Museum had long ceased to campaign on behalf of design in contemporary British manufacturing. Inevitably, the educational burden of the institution had shifted away from the present and towards the past under the weight of its historical collections.

However, the opening of the Boilerhouse Project in 1982, as a new space for exhibitions about design in contemporary society, symbolised a desire to reassess the balance within the V&A. But it was one which the Museum was prepared to hand

over to an independent body: the Boilerhouse Project was an independent gallery within the Museum funded and organised by the Conran Foundation.

Between 1982 and 1986 the Boilerhouse Project mounted 24 exhibitions about the history, theory and practice of design, and gained an international reputation for its innovative and accessible programme. Ultimately, the momentum of the Project was lost to the V&A, as the Boilerhouse Project closed in order to transform itself into the Design Museum which opened in 1989.

3.   Design and its institutions: the current scene

Aside from the immediate effects of the current recession, there are more people employed in design and design-related jobs in the UK than ever before. Setting aside designers employed in industry, the design business itself is now a significant industry in its own right. It is estimated that there are over 1,000 independent design practices in the UK, employing more than 100,000 people and with a total annual turnover of £2 billion plus.

Yet it is generally acknowledged that the design community is suffering from a crisis of identity and direction. No doubt this is partly a reflection of the struggle to survive in a harsh financial climate, but the pressures on the design business come from different directions. The rapid market growth of the 1980s, followed by an even faster collapse in demand for the very same design skills, has exposed the cyclical vulnerability of business built on refurbishing and repackaging the High Street. The shockwaves that the crash has sent though the design industry have weakened its confidence in the future, making it less able to respond to the challenges of the 1990s. The new sobriety - characterised, for example, by a consciousness of ecological issues - has provoked a bout of industry introspection, but few signs of real engagement with a wider social, political or cultural agenda.

So how well are designers served by those institutions whose purpose is to articulate their concerns outside their industry, as well as to support their practice? Are they effective as advocates of the design cause - even supposing anyone can agree about what the design cause is?

This section looks at the role and perception of the main design agencies in the UK, including both the professional organisations and those institutions concerned with design promotion and education.

Design Council

The Design Council is dominant among design institutions, not least because it is the only agency supported by an annual grant-in-aid from the Department of Trade & Industry (£6.34m in 1990-1).

The Design Council recently defined its two central objectives as: "to help British manufacturing companies to develop better products through the total design process; and to support and improve education and training in design." (Design Council Update, January 1991).

In recent years the focus of the Council's work has grown closer to the concerns of the DTI, so that now it is primarily perceived as the main instrument of government policy for design. As a result, critical confidence in the independence of the Design Council has been eroded in the belief that it has grown too close to its government paymasters. A recent comment in Blueprint magazine is typical: "The days of the Design Council as public flagship for design are over. Its new role as a kind of instant response unit for the Department of Trade and Industry is just beginning." (Blueprint, March 1991).

In fact, the Design Council is an independent organisation established by Royal Charter which, theoretically, is able to act as a critic of or a catalyst for DTI policy, in the same way as the Arts Council should be able to provide a balanced view of the priorities and activities of the Office of Arts & Libraries. The fact that it does not appear to exercise this freedom may be one reason why the Design Council has lost much credibility among practising designers over the past few years.

Added to this, its exclusive concern with design in industry - rather than with the design industry - has inevitably alienated the independent design business which expanded so rapidly in the 1980s. For example, the Design Council is primarily interested in three-dimensional design, at the expense of graphic design - one of the fastest growing areas of design in the UK, and one which has a major impact on public forms of communication.

The area where the Design Council is singularly effective is as a national forum for the promotion of design education. In addition to publishing two well-read magazines for primary and secondary schools, the Council produces teaching materials and exhibits students' work in The Young Designers Centre at 28 Haymarket. It runs courses and conferences, and draws on the expertise of other educational agencies through a committee structure which acts as a general clearing house, with access to government.

Royal Society of Arts

The Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacturers and Commerce - usually known as the RSA - is the most ancient and well-regarded of the design institutions. The Design Section of the RSA runs a number of programmes, mainly concerned with awards and the recognition of individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to design.

Its single largest scheme is the Student Design Awards (SDA), a respected programme of bursary and travel awards which both rewards students (and colleges)and puts them in touch with sponsor companies. The RSA also houses the Faculty of the Royal Designers for Industry (RDIs), an association (which is limited by numbers) of the British and overseas designers who have achieved the highest standards in their work. Other schemes include the annual presentation of the Benjamin Franklin Medal to an individual who is not a designer, but who has made a singular contribution to design in her/his work, and the Art for Architecture scheme (in conjunction with the Department of the Environment), which encourages collaboration between artists, craftspeople, architects and developers.

The RSA is generally regarded as the body most immediately able to unite the design community under a single banner, and itself has repeatedly advocated the need for a design forum to raise the profile of design issues to government and to the public.

Design Museum

The Design Museum opened in July 1989. Its purpose is to enable everybody to understand and appreciate the effect of design on the products, communications and environments we use.

The Design Museum is an independent charity, which receives a small pump-priming grant from the Department of Trade & Industry. The Conran Foundation was responsible for the capital costs (£7m) and still makes an annual contribution to the running costs. The shortfall is made up by earned income and commercial sponsorship.

On one level, its educational remit echoes the principles of Henry Cole to found a museum of design as a resource for both the public and the professions, to be a stimulus for both understanding and enjoyment. However, it differs in one fundamental respect: it does not overtly or intentionally prescribe or endorse a single notion of good design - or taste.

The Design Museum is the only gallery in Great Britain devoted to international exhibitions about the past, present, and future of design. Already, it is established as

a resource in design education at all levels, from primary schools to post-graduate research, and also in continuing education. The basis of the Design Museum's educational programme is the development of a critical understanding of the decisions which shape the made world, and of a language with which to articulate our appreciation and evaluation of design in daily life.

Chartered Society of Designers

Last year the Chartered Society of Designers (or CSD) celebrated its 60th anniversary. Founded as the Society for Industrial Artists and Designers (SIAD), this is the professional association for practising, professional designers. The Chairman is generally acknowledged as an authoritative spokesman on issues of concern to the design community.

The Society currently has a membership of approximately 8,000 individuals who benefit from a range of professional services, including access to seminars and activities at its headquarters in Bedford Square, London, and who receive a new quarterly magazine Design Review. Inevitably the fortunes of the Society have been affected by the downturn in the design economy and it remains to be seen whether it will weather the storm in its current form.

Design Business Association

The Design Business Association (DBA) began life under the wing of the Chartered Society of Designers in 1986, specifically to represent the interests of the growing independent design sector. It differs from the CSD in that its members are design companies, not individual designers. Since then its membership has grown to 212 independent firms.

The DBA is a small, energetic organisation, which sustains a close relationship with its membership by offering a range of business services which are clearly defined and are intended to be of real commercial value. It also runs the Design Effectiveness Awards, which are unique among a plethora of awards by virtue of their focus on the contribution of design to commercial performance. Welcomed by many, the Awards (and even the DBA itself) are sometimes criticised for promoting commercial success at the expense of aesthetic value.

4. Design education

The British system for design teaching in further and higher education provokes both admiration and puzzlement among overseas managers, designers and critics. To put it crudely, the mystery is how do we manage to train so many young people as highly creative designers, and yet make so little use of them in manufacturing industry?

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The statistics tell their own story:

* over 300 institutions of further and higher education in the UK run design courses

* together, they offer about 1,000 design/design-related courses

* in total, there are about 50,000 students currently enrolled in design/design-related courses in further and higher education

* each year between 6-7,000 college leavers from design courses seek employment.

Despite the pressures of funding, design education is still big business in this country. In fact, the pressure to provide "vocationally relevant" courses has sometimes given design a boost at the expense of fine art teaching. This has the negative effect of further diminishing an already limited method of vocational, skills-based studio teaching, which prioritises <u>practice</u> at the expense of a broader understanding of the methodology, culture and history of design - let alone, say, art or architecture.

By the same token, <u>fine art</u> students are generally not encouraged to think about the potential for a wider role of art in society - or to break free from the conventions of the art market and public patronage which largely circumscribe the operations of the professional artist.

Today design training is very fragmented: early specialisation in industrial design, graphics, fashion, automotive design, ceramics &c. is hostile to an interdisciplinary approach to practical work, while "cultural" or "complementary" studies are too often regarded as an isolated - and unwelcome - component. As a result, few designers leave college with a confident understanding and appreciation of the <u>culture</u> of their chosen discipline - or the ability to bring this depth to their professional practice. It is this absence of a wider view of design which surprises, say, Italian firms whose recruits from their own architectural schools tend to display rather more intellectual agility.

A broader view

For too long design education has been equated with the training of professionals, rather than with enabling non-designers to understand and negotiate contemporary material culture. The American teacher and critic Victor Margolin commented "Design holds the same promise for critical reflection as art and literature, but has yet to attract widespread attention because practitioners and scholars have not produced a persuasive argument for its centrality to social life."

By looking at the design of the products, systems and communications around us, we can begin to recognise them as manifestations of social values and policies. The

design of our homes, shops, schools and towns is the representation of a complex set of arguments about how life should be lived, and the ability to understand these arguments should not be confined to those who earn their living by promulgating them on behalf of commercial or public patrons.

The position of design in the National Curriculum was an opportunity to establish a clearer understanding of the contribution of design in general education. And its fate has been, in turn, inspiring, frustrating and depressing. The announcement of a new foundation subject called "Design & Technology" stimulated considerable optimism among those - including many designers - who had been calling for a new model of design education to replace the skills-based (and frequently gender-biased) teaching of Craft, Design & Technology (CDT) and Home Economics. The Interim Report of the Working Group (published November 1988) was promising: it advocated the need for children to understand and appreciate the work of others both as an end in itself and as a means of enriching their own work. Unfortunately, by the time the Final Report was published the following summer, the hybrid nature of the curriculum had been repressed and the word "Design" dropped from the title.

Despite having lost the battle for recognition in the name of the course, the design component of the Technology curriculum survived - by and large. But the first year of implementation (key stages 1, 2 and 3 in 1990/1) has been frustrated by a shortage of resources, skills and experience to deliver the new subject.

The Interim Report of the Art Working Group also made welcome acknowledgement of the need to develop an integrated view of visual culture, from both a practical and a critical point of view. It still remains to be seen whether the profile of design will be sustained - or indeed strengthened - when the Final Report is published.

The fact that there will be no single subject entitled "Design" in schools must therefore be grasped as an opportunity to build on an increasing body of successful cross-curricular teaching. Design lends itself to cross-curricular methodology and practice, and can make a valuable contribution to the humanities as well as to science and mathematics.

At best, design teaching in schools:

*   encourages an inductive - rather than a deductive - approach to problem-solving

*   teaches skills of imaging as well as imagining

*   is analytical and predictive

*   lends itself to work in teams.

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Young people are highly discriminating users and producers of design. Design teaching should both draw from and also validate children's experience of material culture. It should enable them to judge and articulate, as well as to imagine and project. But now the danger is that the one subject with the greatest potential to bridge applied science and the humanities will fall between the twin pillars of Technology and Art.

At the same time, we need a more rounded model of design education in further and higher education, which integrates the practical with the theoretical, and the vocational with the cultural.

5.   Design and the Government

The design community does not have a record of effective advocacy to government. For example, it formed a less vocal and less challenging lobby with regard to the National Curriculum than not only technology or art, but also music and classics teachers. It is therefore not surprising that so many design committee meetings are preoccupied with the question as to why this should be so.

In fact, the 'fault' lies with both sides. It is partly a result of the fragmented representation of design through its institutions, and partly a result of a similar lack of coherence in the division of government responsibility for design.

If the design agencies want to influence public policy, they need to speak with a single voice - whenever the occasion demands. They also need to be conscious of the bewildering picture they currently present to the outside world.

The Royal Society of Arts has recognised this problem and is leading a campaign to create a Design Forum - an alliance of the main design institutions which would establish a point of view on key matters of policy. The Design Forum would represent the views of those involved in design practice, promotion and education, and should be actively encouraged by government. The RSA has proposed seven full members of the Forum: the RSA, Design Council, Design Museum, Chartered Society of Designers, Design Business Association, the Faculty of the Royal Designers for Industry and the Department of Trade & Industry.

The task of the Forum would be to develop an agreed joint strategy, which should then be promulgated by all members, with the Design Council playing a leading external role. It would work not only through discussions among the membership, but also through a broadly-based programme of consultations, lectures, seminars and conferences. The commonly agreed objectives derived from this programme would be pursued by each member in its own way, as well as collectively.

The Forum would need to address different government departments at different times and on different issues.

However, the government department with primary responsibility for the promotion of design is the Department of Trade & Industry. The DTI not only has a close relationship with the Design Council, but it also disburses pump-priming and project funding to other agencies, including the Design Museum, the Royal Society of Arts and the Design Business Association.

There is no parallel with the principle (or practice) of an 'arms-length' relationship as in the arts. As a result, a range of agencies is <u>contracted</u> to implement aspects of DTI policy for design, and each is inevitably competing with the others for a slice of a finite (and currently diminishing) cake.

Design is part of the Enterprise Initiative section within the DTI, whose overall funding is likely to be trimmed from £60.9m this year to £55.6m in 1993/4. As such, it is just one aspect of DTI's policy for management in industry, which emphasises the value of design to the national economic performance. It is therefore a far from ideal conduit for funding activities as diverse (in size and nature) as museums, training programmes, award schemes etc. etc... In fact, the wonder is that the DTI manages to take as broad a view as it does, especially as this entails a time-consuming degree of hands-on management through official representation on governing boards, councils and committees.

Currently, the DTI is the only home for design, which is generally as dispossessed in Whitehall as it is in the National Curriculum. Other departments such as the Office of Arts & Libraries still appear reluctant to acknowledge design as a cultural force. The Department of the Environment is concerned with the very many aspects of design which have an impact on public life, but fails to articulate these preoccupations in a specific design programme or policy. The Department of Education & Science is, of course, responsible for design education, but again, the approach seems fragmented at different levels.

The picture is confused and the applicant for funding may well be passed from one ministry to the next. Clearly there is, as yet, no mechanism to unite these disparate strands.

Such a mechanism could be created if, instead of being an entirely executive organisation, the Design Council became the central funding conduit for design. There is much to be said - for both funders and clients - for a clear, objective and accessible structure for the disbursement of monies - which the design world badly lacks. In this guise, the newly constituted Design Council could receive funds from different departments - Environment, Education, Trade & Industry and the Office of

Arts & Libraries - and assess applications for funding according to broad, comprehensible criteria.

This would not prohibit support for design from other quarters. For example, sometimes the Arts Council might be a more appropriate source of funds for a project, and the ACGB Visual Arts Panel should be encouraged to take an inclusive, rather than an exclusive, view of visual culture. Similarly, existing museums and galleries need to be encouraged to understand the value and purpose of, say, exhibitions about design.

Design and the political parties

On 23 July 1991 the Labour Party launched the first Design Policy presented by a national political party. Many of the problems identified in this paper are reflected in the policy document, including the need to raise cross-departmental awareness of the importance of design in society and education, as well as in the wealth creation process. Whatever the specifics, the articulation of policy is itself a welcome development in the generation of debate and the identification of critical factors.

Public patronage

One aspect of government influence on design which is frequently overlooked is its power as a public patron. The government spends £37 billion a year and should use that budget to influence standards in design and to inspire its imaginative use by others.

Commentators frequently point to France as an alternative to spending on design in the UK - generally regarded as, at best, safe, but usually worse. But the solution does not rest (only) with a programme of *grands projets*, symbolically important as they are. The intelligent use of design in schools, libraries, hospitals, public sector offices etc. would be transforming: so much remains to be done.

Public art schemes are part of, but not the whole answer. The alliance between art and architecture is frequently fruitful, but it cannot replace the need for commitment to design as an aesthetic and functional priority at every stage of the creation, furnishing and maintenance of a building.

6.   A new agenda for design

(- within the terms of reference and potential to influence of the National Arts and Media Strategy)

*   Government should support the creation of a Design Forum to represent the interests of the design community.

*   The Design Council should be reconstituted as the main funding conduit for public spending on design in a range of contexts - industrial, social, cultural - with adequate levels of support from the Department of Trade & Industry, Department of the Environment, Department of Education & Science, Office of Arts & Libraries, the Welsh and Scottish Offices etc.

*   Design should be accepted as part of our visual culture, and should be recognised as such by the Arts Council of Great Britain and other existing arts bodies.

*   These agencies should work to increase the level of public debate about design, through the encouragement of exhibitions, publications, awards schemes, television programmes, databases etc.

*   A more imaginative approach to the public patronage of design would start with an appraisal of the existing use of design in schools, hospitals, public offices etc - so as to produce guidelines for innovative purchasing.

*   More resources should be earmarked for the development of design in cross-curricular teaching in general education.

*   A new model for an integrated education in design and art at further and higher education should be tested.