



COMMENT
By Lynda Relph-Knight
Editor

A focus on craft skills is central to the pleasure and prosperity of design

We can rely on the creative community to pull good things out of a bad situation. It's what makes design such an attractive industry for non-designers such as myself. And the approach to design education is no exception.

As the UK education system goes into meltdown, savvy college heads are tempering cuts in resources by, say, strengthening their management teams – note the Royal College of Art's new deanships (DW 18 May) – or forging partnerships with industry.

Meanwhile, industry activists such as D&AD chairman Dick Powell and Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design director Jeremy Myerson are using the situation to question the way colleges deliver design education. That approach is the basis of an investigation by the Design Commission, which comprises politicians and industry representatives (www.designweek.co.uk, 10 March).

What all such initiatives need to consider is what

Even practitioners in technology-driven subjects like interaction design call for more focus on drawing

groups want of graduates, often perceived to be at odds with what colleges provide. Most maintain the proliferation of specialist courses set up to boost student numbers in happier times wasn't a good move, particularly where the emphasis has been on teaching technology at the expense of traditional skills. Even practitioners in technology-driven subjects like interaction design call for more focus on drawing, modelling and typography.

This thinking was reinforced at a round table discussion Design Week set up last month with software company Adobe Systems Europe (see pages 17-20). Leading lights in interaction agreed that good ideas and craft skills are fundamental to their work – and are what they look for in interviewees for creative jobs. Separately, Conran Singh director Daljit Singh said this week that he still draws and that it is essential to his thinking.

So whatever the outcome of the education debacle, for design it should signal a return to basics. Without craft skills at its heart, design loses quality and richness – and it is altogether less enjoyable for designers of all disciplines.

Photo: Carl Garcia, startcreative.com



Packaging

'Just right' level of femininity sought for Tesco's Libbi range

By Tom Banks

We Are Him & Her has redesigned Tesco's feminine hygiene range Libbi, applying what it calls a 'contemporary and efficacious' design as an alternative to the floral imagery common in the sector.

The consultancy, which joined the Tesco design roster last year, was approached directly for this project and asked to redesign the whole category, consisting of 31 products.

We Are Him & Her creative partner Ruth Galloway says, 'Feminine care is currently ruled by the same brand leaders and there is a lot of generic imagery. We wanted to make it more future-facing, contemporary and premium, but in a way that people would feel comfortable putting it on a shelf or in their handbag.'

The range has also been renamed Libbi, uniting two product types previously branded as Tesco's own products.

'We did a round of naming exercises to find something that would communicate femininity without being polarising – it couldn't be patronising, or overtly feminine, or aiming too much at one age group,' says Galloway.

'So much is already registered within feminine healthcare, but this wasn't. It's memorable, and the letters also have a nice form.'

An existing purple colour palette has been extended with pink and white highlights and a patterned graphic system has been introduced to help customers navigate the range.

Libbi rolls out in Tesco stores nationwide from the middle of the month.



Branding

Curious gives Essex law firm a boost with businesslike, but 'anti-boring' identity



Curious has created a new identity for Essex-based law firm BTMK.

The consultancy was appointed directly to the work about three months ago, according to Curious strategy director John Hall.

The consultancy says the aim of the work was to reflect the Southend-based firm's 'anti-boring lawyer stance'. Hall says, 'They have a personality as a firm which is quite different from most others.'

The consultancy says it has aimed to use a 'plain-speaking' language in copy, along with 'understated playfulness' in the typography.

Curious says it has aimed to 'create the right

balance between the firm's position as a serious player in the market, while tonally expressing its commercially minded character.'

Curious has created the main BTMK identity, alongside collateral including a brand book, a website, printed material and signage for the firm's new premises, which it is moving into today.

Hall says Curious will continue to work on developing further collateral for the company as the brand rolls out.

Godfrey Mather, chief executive of BTMK, says, 'Curious understood exactly how we wanted to present ourselves. It's made BTMK come to life.'