

## *Some things have changed... while others appear to have remained the same*

Our new section in this edition titled **Book Reviews**, opens with a review of Peter Dormer's *Design since 1945*. Dormer's introductory chapter outlines how the 'job of designer' and the design profession have emerged and changed since the Second World War. This development is echoed by the comparison which can be made between graphic design then and now, based on the contents of a little book which crossed the editor's desk recently.

Published in 1948 and titled *Forty-two careers for South Africans*, a section in the book on the commercial artist describes the occupation and offers some pointers and advice to young aspirants. Apprenticeship is suggested as the ideal way of receiving formal training. Minimum requirements for admission to training were drawing skills and a Junior Certificate. While matriculation was not insisted upon, it lessened apprenticeship from six years to five.

During the period of training apprentices attended classes three times a week. Curriculum content included

...free-hand drawing, lettering, figure drawing from plaster casts and...anatomy in addition to the commercial art classes.

Even during apprenticeship commercial art could be considered a well paid profession, according to the author. Once apprenticeship had been served, the minimum starting salary was £36 6s a month. Those with special talent could soon be '...commanding a very high salary in the top flight of commercial artists.' Working time was 43 hours a week, although there was '...some talk of reducing this to forty hours.' Qualified commercial artists should not experience any difficulty in finding work. Three employment alternatives are mentioned, namely newspapers, advertising firms and freelance work. The author comments that:

At present very few manufacturers or merchants in South Africa employ their own artists, but there are some who do, and they may be more as the country expands.

The lack of manufacturers' involvement, albeit in industrial design, was it seems unchanged by 1965. A second interesting item to cross the editor's desk is an article *Ontwerpkuns nog stiefkind* published in *Die Vaderland* of 29 October 1965, which

speculates on the reasons for the lack of understanding and poor acceptance of industrial design in South Africa. This, even though industrial design had been accepted internationally and held in equal esteem with architecture and engineering professions for 30 years.

The article quotes from a speech delivered at a business conference in Johannesburg by Mr V C Wood, then director of the Foundation for Education, Science and Technology. Mr Wood stated that there were few factors influencing economic growth in South Africa that were so poorly understood as was industrial design. The tragedy was that people who should have the greatest use and acceptance of industrial design, namely manufacturers and managers in industry, appeared to have the least understanding of all. For mysterious reasons it also appeared that industrial design never entered the thinking of economists, resulting in an enormous gap in the Republic's economic planning.

The author goes on to describe the misconceptions held about the nature and functions of industrial design, its economic contribution and its value to both domestic and export markets. This all still has a familiar ring in 1994, doesn't it!