

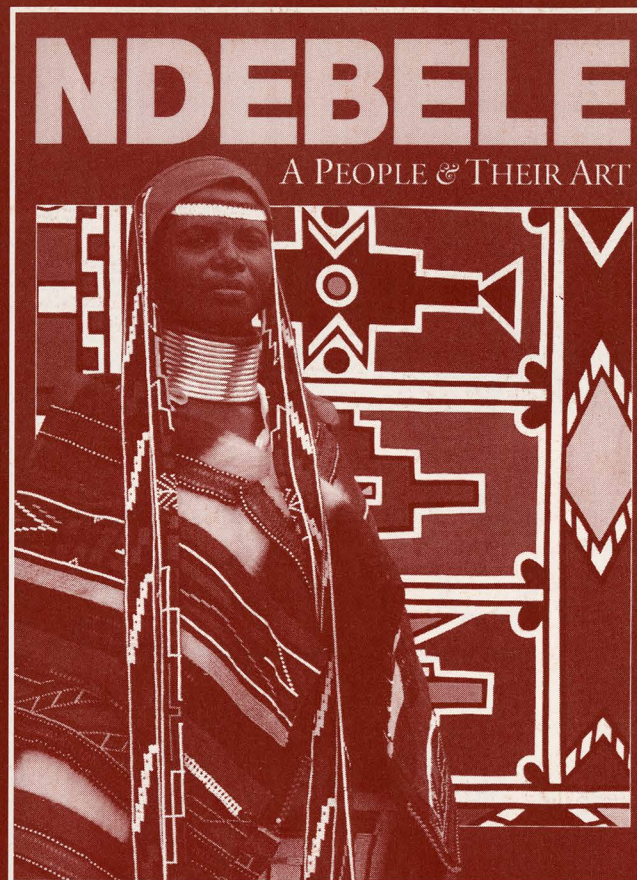
nationally awarded for their work, it is ironic that the work of only one South African designer is featured in this publication.

Although the work of Mark Posnett is highly regarded, it is hardly an indication of the standard of design which has been established on this southern tip of the African continent over the last few decades. Nor does it bear evidence of the cross culturalisation of design ideas which is being established at present.

One would have liked to have seen a more comprehensive representation of the work of South African designers in this prestigious publication. Did the selectors feel that South African design was not up to standard or was there a lack of interest on the part of designers in submitting their work? It would be interesting to hear what graphic designers here have to say with regard to a missed opportunity and the possible chance to have been represented in a publication of this status and magnitude.

It must be stated, however, that this is a pioneering and definitive source book within the international field of graphic design. It is highly recommended as an essential reference for a broad readership. It will enable practitioner, researcher and student alike to form an overall impression of global contemporary graphic design, as well as an understanding of each country and designer's position in this framework.

The publication may be ordered directly from Benteli-Werd Verlags AG, Verena Konzette-Str.11 CH-8021 Zurich FAX +41 (0)1 248 50 39 at sFr.298.- per copy plus sFr.45.- for postage.



Ndebele - A People and their Art

by Ivor Powell. 1995. Cape Town: Struik Publishers, 160 pp., hard cover, illustrated, available in English or German text, R125.

Reviewed by Jeanne van Eeden

African tribal art has been well represented by monographs in recent years, with books such as M H Nooter's *Secrecy: African Art that Conceals and Reveals* (1993) making valuable contributions to the understanding of the ritualistic implications of African art. In *Ndebele - A People and their Art* Powell attempts a contextual examination of the art of the Ndebele against the background of their culture and beliefs. Powell also demonstrates the enormous influence the Ndebele have had on current South African visual style, to the extent that Ndebele imagery has virtually become synonymous with 'the quintessentially African look' (p 138).

In the introductory sections Powell sketches the history of the Ndebele and the development of their distinctive artistic expression against the background of colonial influence and white rule, right up to the 1994 election. Powell shows that the Ndebele have not been immune to urbanization and detribalization. He examines questions of tribal identity and the perpetuation of traditional imagery, which are linked to the Ndebele's belief in a spirit world and their veneration of ancestors. Contrary to Western Modernist ideals of originality and uniqueness, Ndebele art has been informed by the need to uphold traditional images in order to establish cultural continuity and cohesion.

In spite of this, the inevitable predominant influence of urbanization led to stylistic adaptations in Ndebele murals and beadwork, which consequently show the results of 'the interface between African and European cultures' (p 143). It is significant, as Powell points out, that although Ndebele murals date only from the 1940s, they immediately came to signify the traditional Ndebele artform. Wallpainting was linked to commercial considerations and the tourist industry, and picturesque settlements such as KwaMsiza were initiated specifically to function as a 'traditional Ndebele village' (p 52).

In his discussion of murals, homesteads and beadwork Powell shows how notions of perspective, abstraction and representation influenced Ndebele art and its ultimate need to 'mediate between the culturally "inner" world of tradition and the "outer" world of dominant Western technologies' (p 68). Although not everyone may agree with Powell's analogies between Cubism and the Ndebele style, many of his comments are incisive.

In the concluding section of the book Powell contends that the Ndebele style, images and patterns have only been able to survive because they have been able to adapt to changing circumstances. Thus new mural imagery reflects the urban environment of electric lights, aeroplanes, barber shops and contemporary signage. Traditional beadwork and patterns have lately been used to decorate radios and all manner of consumer items. The Ndebele twins Emmly and Martha Masanabo have succeeded in creating a new genre that has led to their frequent inclusion in exhibitions of African art. Similarly, the influence of Ndebele art on contemporary South African design, for example in the Smirnoff advertisement (pp 152-153), is very significant, and shows the cultural intermingling that has become typical of South Africa in recent years.

This book is illustrated with the historic photographs of Constance Stuart Larrabee and Alfred Duggan-Cronin, as well as contemporary photographs by Mark Lewis. The quality of the visual material throughout is excellent, and has been carefully selected to illustrate pertinent points in the text. The text concludes with a useful glossary of Ndebele terms.

Powell comments (p 9) that most of the research sources he used were written in the 1980s and have already become dated due to the rapid pace of socio-political change. Despite this, and the fact that the book does not have academic pretensions, a bibliography would have been useful.

Ndebele - A People and their Art is structured in such a way that it can be dipped into at random without loss of narrative cohesion, and is an ideal book for the general reader who is interested in South African art and design.

i-juse putting the squeeze on graphic design in a new south africa

Number 1. 1995. Durban: Orange Juice Design,
8 pp., soft cover, illustrated.

Reviewed by Marian Sauthoff

The South African design and advertising industries are often criticised for their tendency to turn to glossy international journals for inspiration, ignoring what is happening on their own doorsteps. *i-juse* (roughly translated as 'juice' in Zulu) a new A3 publication, sets out to illustrate the vibrancy of local street communication which uses uniquely expressive forms of art, typography, photography and advertising to get the message across to audiences.

The intention of this 'Afrocentric advertising and design adventure' is to compile a collection of interesting and diverse examples of indigenous expression which will then be published three to four times a year. Distribution will be to a wide readership which will include both international and national corporate organisations, the design industry and design education.

The first issue of *i-juse* brims with local images and content. Examples of signage range from advertising 'veg bunny', a version of the original Durban take-away, and herbalists who 'sort out all the impossibilities', to hand written instructions like 'Please clean coconuts before entering temple'. A double page spread is devoted to examples of superimposed photographs which are hugely popular with township residents. This thriving business, operated by photographers based at taxi ranks, offers consumers customised

