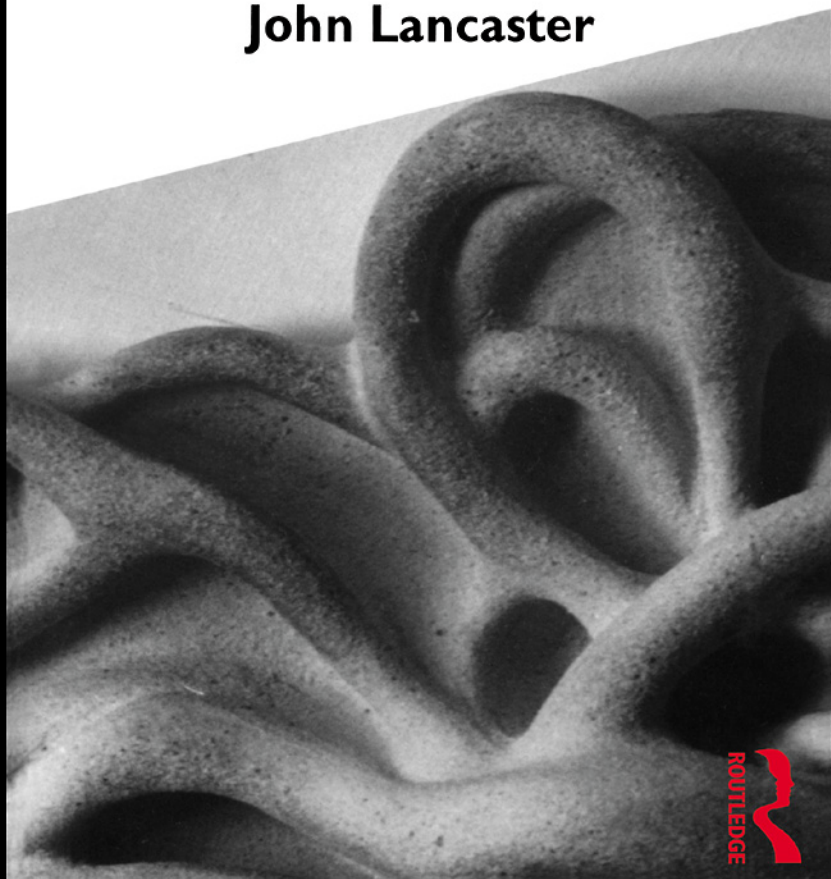


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**art**  
**IN THE**  
**PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**John Lancaster**



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# ART IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

JOHN LANCASTER

John Lancaster is an experienced teacher and educator of teachers. He was, until recently, head of art teacher training at Bristol Polytechnic, and is still a practising artist, lecturer and consultant. He is a fellow of the National Society for Education in Art and Design (NSEAD) and has written or edited eleven books on art.

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JOHN LANCASTER



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# Contents

Figures	vii
Plates	viii
Series Editor's Preface	x
Acknowledgements	xi
Introduction	1
<b>1 Art in the primary school</b>	<b>3</b>
What do we mean by art, craft, design and appreciation?	3
The role of art in developing children's creativity and aestheticism	6
The purpose of art in primary education	9
Basic art teaching aims	15
<b>2 The framework for planning art activities</b>	<b>18</b>
The planning of suitable art activities in the primary school context	18
The kinds of materials which may be used	21
What art experiences do children need to have?	25
Problem-solving activities	29
Stimulus from the world around us	38
<b>3 Planning what to teach</b>	<b>42</b>
The balance between 2D and 3D work	42
Planning for schemes and lessons	48
Drawing—a key element in art	49
Historical and cultural inspirations	60
<b>4 Organizing art within the primary curriculum</b>	<b>67</b>
Separate art: the value of pure art experience	67
Linking art: topic and interest work across subjects	68
The case for an art co-ordinator	79
The value of collections of resource materials	80

## *Contents*

<b>5</b>	<b>Art in school</b>	82
	Art in the classroom environment	82
	Using classroom space	86
	Equipment, materials and storage	90
	Displaying work	91
	Assessment	94
<b>6</b>	<b>Art outside the classroom</b>	100
	Exhibitions around the school	100
	Encouraging work at home	105
	Art and design in the everyday world	105
	Using art galleries	108
	Artists in residence	110
<b>7</b>	<b>Some ideas</b>	112
	A painting scheme for top juniors	112
	Using 'the school' as a starting point for work in art and/or as an integrated project idea	117
	A school newspaper (an integrated project)	117
	Simple print-making	119
	Four starting points	123
<b>8</b>	<b>Project work based upon heraldry</b>	125
	Some ideas for projects on heraldry	127
<b>9</b>	<b>Two case studies</b>	130
	Case study 1	131
	Case study 2	136
	Brief glossary of terms	140
	Bibliography	141
	Index	146

# Figures

1	Chart showing how curriculum art work increases a child's aesthetic understanding and capabilities	10
2	Interrelated aspects of art education	29
3	A record card	43
4	A teacher's planning sheet	51
5	Flow chart of a topic based on an Elizabethan village	61
6	'Art' as the central force in a project	68
7	'Water'—an integrated project topic	72
8	'Machines'—a topic idea	76
9	(a) Art activities classroom plan	87
	(b) Modified art activities plan	87
10	Art activities experienced—a record	95
11	Marking children's work—version A	98
12	Using the 'school' as a starting point for work in art or as an integrated project idea	116
13	Heraldry in project work inspires an endless variety of ideas	126
14	The study of armorial flags as a stimulus to art work	128



# Plates

1	Freely interpreted drawings and paintings by older junior school pupils	5
2	A young pre-school child drawing	7
3	A young child painting freely at an easel	12
4	A young artist painting in a vigorous way	20
5	Time and care spent displaying work well gives the children a real sense of achievement	26
6	Simple exercises in weaving	30
7	Simple clay tiles suspended from a classroom ceiling to form a mobile	31
8	Using the computer monitor screen as a substitute for artwork	33
9	Art has a part to play in nature study work	39
10	Looking closely at the lines, shapes and patterns in pieces of wood	40
11	An eight-year old pupil's work resulting from cutting up a photocopy of a photomicrograph	44
12	Children's landscape paintings	45
13	The construction of models requires a high degree of skill and good eye, brain and hand co-ordination	46
14	Constructional apparatus is used extensively in the infant sector	47
15	Working with plaster of Paris	49
16	Intertwining rolls of clay can create effective abstract patterns	50
17	A boy trying to obtain a likeness of himself by copying the image of his face in a mirror	53
18	A rubbing of the skeleton of a fish	56
19	The use of a cardboard mount as an aid in sketching the landscape	58

20	The use of a photograph of a 'frosty cabbage' to stimulate art work	59
21	Compass-made patterns	62
22	A painted pattern done by a six-year-old pupil	63
23	A model made after a visit to see old sailing ships in an industrial museum, showing the children's fascination with masts and rigging	64
24	(a) A dockland scene which vibrates with interest and could inspire much creative work in art	65
	(b) A street scene which might lead children to make models, signs, pictures, drawings and prints	65
25	A quayside scene, incredibly rich in visual imagery	70
26	Pendulum painting machine art	75
27	Old knarled roots or parts of trees can look like natural sculptures	83
28	Mirrored plastic sheeting used to produce the most incredible visual effects from quite mundane objects	84
29	Classroom organization with neatly labelled storage drawers can facilitate the learning operation	85
30	An interesting, well-designed display which invites closer inspection	92
31	A display done by reception class pupils with no help from their teacher	93
32	The geometric façades of buildings offer inspiration for art and craft work in the classroom	106
33	A print done by a top junior pupil who lives in an industrial area of a large city in the Midlands	107
34	Bicycles could pose complicated problems for children to solve in drawing, painting, collage or sculpture	108
35	A metal cover showing pattern and lettering suitable for rubbings	109

## Series Editor's Preface

After a decade of declining rolls, the number of children in primary schools is once again rising in most countries in the western world. The rise brings in its train an urgent demand for new teachers and ministries. School authorities and training institutions are turning to university graduates, offering one-year or other shortened courses rather than the conventional three- or four-year training course.

Such students know that they are keenly sought. Not only does the shortened course make them more immediately available to schools, but also their expertise is highly appropriate to the widespread demand for real subject specialism to be available in the primary school curriculum.

But the translation of degree-level study into effective primary teaching is a difficult task—particularly in the short postgraduate course. This series is designed to help students to make the transition more readily. Each volume helps the reader to see the similarities between study at school and university and goes on, with advice, example and explanation, to show how subject knowledge can be structured and presented effectively in a primary school curriculum. Above all, the series aims to help beginning graduate teachers to transmit the enthusiasm that has led them to become specialists to new generations of young people.

John Eggleston

# Acknowledgements

In writing this book I have received help and encouragement from a number of sources. My thanks must go, therefore, to the NSEAD (National Society for Education in Art and Design) at Corsham—in particular to John Steers (General Secretary) and to the members of the Working Party who worked with me in the planning of the Society's book on the teaching of art in primary schools (Lancaster 1987), some of whose illustrative material may have spilled over into this one -especially to Ray Haslam, Bob Clement, and Liz Cotton; to Mavis Eccles, former headteacher, for her inspiration and help over a number of years; to Peter Coleman, formerly Director of Education in the County of Avon, who gave me permission to visit schools; to Kate Tambling, John Parry, Margaret Harvey, Sheila Biggs and Stuart Greenwood for helpful photographs taken in their schools; to Mary Brown, former headteacher in Leicestershire, her staff and children in Melton Mowbray, who also gave me valuable assistance; to former students and colleagues at the College of St Paul and Mary, Cheltenham and the University of Bristol; to Professor John Eggleston; to Janet, a recognized authority on early childhood education, for inspiration; to Joan Gaunt, a highly valued mentor; and finally, to our primary children—those aesthetically educated citizens, parents and teachers of tomorrow—to whom I dedicate this small contribution of mine.

John Lancaster



# Introduction

This book is for students who are training to be primary teachers and those classroom teachers who lack experience, or who are not greatly skilled, in teaching art. Students on one-year postgraduate teacher education courses have to adapt quickly to more generalized ways of learning that are quite different from their in-depth degree studies, while having to come to terms with a child-centred learning orientation covering curriculum planning, teaching-learning philosophies and classroom strategies as well as the interrelationship of subject areas across the broad primary curriculum. This can be a confusing and daunting task—albeit an exciting and rewarding one—which is given a sense of reality in periods of practical teaching out in the schools.

I shall be attempting, in this book, to provide a general framework within which teachers can plan classroom activities in art of sound pedagogical value. This will be pragmatic with respect to:

- art teaching philosophies and aims
- basic practical 2D and 3D art and design work of relevance to primary school children
- the kinds of materials suitable for such work
- the way art work can be presented through display
- how art can be assessed
- what art experiences children should have had prior to their secondary schooling ('bench marks of achievement')
- the role of art in cross-curricular work
- out-of-school resources
- cultural and art historical studies

Some case-study examples are used in the text and photographs, where relevant, illustrate children's work or show them doing art. In itself a book is obviously no substitute for classroom

experience and can only serve as a complementary resource. It might offer a few ideas and suggestions or even provide a few stimuli or thought-provoking philosophies, but the classroom is really the ‘open book’ in which lively young humans mingle with an exciting eagerness in what, for them and their teacher, is an educational adventure. It is the workshop where children are developing educated minds and articulated skills.

Artists, designers and craftspeople find that ‘making’ things with materials is always adventurous and this is what sets art aside as an aspect of the academic curriculum. But it doesn’t stop there, for art is an activity which can then be carried on by interested adults throughout their lives. The very act of creating two-dimensional visual imagery and three-dimensional objects—things which did not exist before—is tremendously exciting, giving the creator a real sense of achievement and well-being. Of course, other subject specialists might argue that this also applies to their disciplines, just as much as it does to art. I would hope that they would feel as passionate as I do about my own subject and would welcome their arguments.

What I do know from my experience as a teacher and an artist is that the whole realm of art, design and craft is like a banqueting table which provides a nourishing feast—a feast to be savoured, to be enjoyed and to be digested at leisure. It has been said that we are what we eat; if, therefore, we provide a rich aesthetic feast for young children, we will be providing them with the ingredients for a more fulfilling, visually-related aestheticism and an educated cultural intellect which will help them to balance the overall educational provision which it is the responsibility of schools to administer. Children, however must be happy. They must enjoy their learning. As teachers, let us give them respect, while sharing their happiness and pleasure in ‘caring’ learning environments which throb with visual interest and excitement.

# Art in the primary school

## **What do we mean by art, craft, design and appreciation?**

Some educationalists look at art, craft, and design as three distinct subjects, and in the past many teachers taught ‘art’ and then they taught ‘craft’. It is questionable as to what they thought of as ‘design’—which is a fundamental component of both art and craft—although this aspect is considered today to be some kind of new subject which must be taught as a discrete discipline. In this book I intend to place these three aspects together under the umbrella of ‘art’ so that it is easier for me to write about and, I trust, easier for my readers to understand. I shall, of course, refer to all three individually from time to time, and the fourth aspect, ‘appreciation’, will also be discussed.

Let me begin by looking at ‘art’, ‘craft’, ‘design’ and ‘appreciation’ as four distinct aspects of the subject. Three of these obviously involve the direct use of materials in classroom situations where children participate actively in artistic production, i.e. in the making of art (whether this be in the form of paintings, prints, patterns, models, posters, pottery, or video films). In my opinion, the fourth aspect, appreciation, grows best from the children’s experience of doing art work and therefore it, too, can be said to depend upon the manipulation of materials and the knowledge gained through artistic production. This is a disputable concept about which I shall say more shortly; some educationalists would disagree with this idea, insisting that children can be taught how to ‘appreciate’ art—whether in an historical or modern context -without actually doing it themselves. What is important, however, is that you, the teacher working in school now, will need to consider this problem and resolve it in your own way.

What do we mean by the terms art, craft, design and appreciation? Are they one and the same thing? Are they interrelated? I suggest that they need to be thought about and propose the following definitions as starting points:



- 1 The term 'art' covers that area of inventiveness with art and craft materials through which self-expressed emotions, ideas and feelings resulting from the visual interpretation of environmental experiences are communicated, while depending upon acquired craftsmanship and artistry.
- 2 Craft, on the other hand, embraces the acquirement and utilization of manual skills in the manipulation of two- and three-dimensional materials, hand-tools, and/or mechanical equipment. It provides artists, designers and craftspersons with the means of artistry, or what is known quite simply as making art.
- 3 Artistry depends upon the imaginative or inventive use of knowledgeable and skilful making and designing, and therefore the design aspect is the knowledgeable area in which inventiveness germinates and develops into recognizable artistic form.

Teachers must recognize that these aspects are interdependent. They simply cannot exist in isolation but rely upon good hand, eye, and brain co-ordination; in other words, they spring from an harmonious relationship. Some years ago schoolchildren 'did some art', perhaps a drawing or a painting, and then they 'did some craft'—perhaps making a raffia mat. If they had an interested teacher they might then do 'some design work'—which might have consisted of making a stencil pattern on the cover of an exercise book. It is important today to ensure that they receive a much broader range of practical experiences in a curriculum which gives them a wider educational grounding.

- 4 The appreciation aspect tends to be separated from the other aspects. I cannot understand why this is so, unless it stems from teacher uncertainty, for it, too, results best from artistic practice and must be aided by empirical knowledge gained through such experience. It is the thoughtful, critical area in which children make value judgements and assessments of works of art, craft, and design in relation to both their historical and cultural context, and the meaningful place of art in the lives of people world-wide.

As I have already stated, some people—amongst them art critics—seem able to 'appreciate' art without having made it. I would argue that this is not really possible and that their appreciation and criticism cannot be total. Is it possible to appreciate how paint has been laid on a canvas if one has never had the experience of doing it? Can I appreciate the feelings which an astronaut has in stepping on to the