

## 18 Advice for beginners

- 1 Question every brief and *rewrite* it to be sufficiently clear, full, and definite. If you must make certain assumptions of your own, state them. Get agreement for your final version. Then proceed. Fail to do this and you will fail in understanding design.
- 2 Attitude: if you climb on top of a job, trying to master it, the work will suffocate. *Let it take you, play with it, search for its own life.*
- 3 Don't be conned into thinking that only new materials or processes are worth investigating. Every material available is strictly contemporary.
- 4 Out of every job that seems an indistinct mess, try to rescue one small part that is clear, simple, definite, and very well made or done.
- 5 In many studio projects there is an academic reality – work for you and your tutor – and an 'as-if' reality – work on the job itself. Should you separate them? How?
- 6 If you are miserably dissatisfied with your work on a job, make your answer to it a detailed self-criticism (a graphic project). Is this an academic reality?
- 7 Every student understandably begins by striving after originality. After five years work he is delighted if he can attend to a simple job with scruple and insight (unless he is about to launch a successful career as a carrion artist). It helps, at least, to know that.
- 8 Always show discarded alternatives in support of your work. If you get stuck, develop these alternatives as far as you can.

9 If the world is crowded with inessential rubbish, is there a case for seeing what you can do with the cheapest, most simple and most ordinary materials?

10 In the first year remember that you will reject everything before you can complete it, because your values will change so fast. Can you turn this fact to positive account in the way you design? How?

11 Conceive the visible outcome of your work – including notes – as a totality; try to present a running sequential account of your thinking from beginning to end (using diagrams) for someone who doesn't know you or the problem.

12 Use colours freely in a layout pad; if you are beginning, don't sit facing tracts of empty white paper. Study the exact and detailed nature of all given factors in a job, work outwards from them.

13 If you think someone in your group has a better design concept for a job than you have, why not accept and develop it in your own way? The end-result will be very different, and a comparison valuable. You may have the best approach to the next job. Work towards objective standards.

14 In the way of samples or materials or catalogues, collect everything you like or that for some unknown reason holds your attention; not what you ought to like. Information ought to keep pace with your ability to use it.

15 If you must flip through photographs of other people's work, try this: write a short critical commentary on just one photograph, compare notes with someone. You may be surprised at what the eye and intelligence gain from *focus*.

16 Before deciding that Le Corbusier or Frank Lloyd Wright are thankfully the last of the monumental masons, hitch across Europe or America and see for yourself. On the way, get right off the beaten track and study all the most humble of human artefacts.

## 19 Questioning design

1 Have you considered the fine distinctions that make human faces recognizable? – the elements are as much alike, and related, as you would get from a problem analysis. So are you just beginning? How do you see a face?

2 Compare gasometers, pylons, cooling towers, street lighting. What is it about cluster high-lighting that makes the rest look sentimental?

3 If you go into a furniture shop, examine the backs and insides and know before leaving how it is (or could be) made.

4 Is a road a shallow kinetic relief? Paved with what intentions?

5 What makes a good street bollard? Geometry, surface, height, spacing, inference, articulation with the ground?

6 On what principles is a street decently furnished? What are the material ingredients?

7 Look at a car and de-gloss it in your mind's eye; what of its form is shine? What about reflection in a glass building? Compare the cut-off of high-rise buildings, vertically and horizontally. Are some visually better than others? If so, why?

8 Is a matchbox fine-tolerance cabinetmaking? Why does it work so well? When should a drawer be a tray?

9 In typography, can you see a Marxist concern for the just allocation of spaces? Or a Freudian concern with motivation and impulse? Where and how in the history of the modern movement?