

Book Review

Designing Exhibitions

Private Paris

Interior Design

Aging In a Technological Society

Designing Exhibitions, Giles Velarde.
New York: Whitney Library of Design/
Watson-Guptill Publications, 1988,
192 pages, 136 illustrations, (\$27.50)

Reviewed by Lisa Fontaine and Jennifer Mumford, Iowa State University, Ames Iowa.

In a perfect world, every design student would have an opportunity to study closely with a master in the field - one whose expertise included an ability to teach others. This master/apprentice relationship would enhance the student's understanding of both the theory and practice of the profession through the shared knowledge of the master.

Such is the relationship established between Giles Velarde and readers of his book, *Designing Exhibitions*. Written with an obvious love for sharing information, this book provides the reader with a fundamental understanding of the general principles of exhibition design. Velarde articulates each phase of assembling an exhibition: planning, writing, supervising, executing, and evaluating. His discussion concentrates on the essential components of site, structure, design, graphics, etc., and provides valuable insights into each of these considerations.

While not the first to write on this subject, Velarde has addressed essential questions that have been neglected in existing writings: When is a three dimensional format the most appropriate means of visual communication?, and What are the characteristics of an exhibition that make it different from a book or commercial? This type of inquiry encourages problem-seeking analysis. Velarde's approach will no doubt be applauded by design educators who know only too well the tendency of students to move immediately into design sketches before clarifying project goals. Although asking the right questions is a crucial first step in dealing with the complexities inherent to exhibition design, solving the problem in response to vital inquiries is most difficult, and requires a vast range of skills and sensitivities. Velarde believes that the exhibition designer must possess an interdisciplinary attitude, in order to apply knowledge from the fields of psychology, architecture, interior design,

theatre, graphics, and structural engineering. He points to the fact that there is presently no degree program available for this type of specialized study, and in response presents a curriculum for future development. His proposal is valid, though limited. While emphasizing technical skills and broad-based education, he fails to incorporate history and research disciplines. The absence of these scholarly concerns which are necessary to the evolution of any design discipline, raises a question as to the book's completeness as a text. There is no mention of existing research regarding visitor behavior in exhibition spaces¹, and the bibliography is inadequate for any reader wishing to pursue further study.

Velarde's main focus is exhibition production. While concentrating on the techniques of planning, supervising, and assembling, he remains decidedly vague when referring to the creative process in exhibition design. His conviction that 'creativity cannot be taught' does not dismiss the need for any meaningful discussion of the why and how of design. At the very least, students should be encouraged to explore varied problem-solving methodologies.

Because the author is British, he often uses terminology which may seem foreign to an American reader. This is of minor concern; the text is clear and understandable, including a glossary to define new or unusual terms. However some issues of great interest to the American exhibit designer are overlooked. There is a lack of information on traveling exhibitions, and the pre-fabricated systems so often implemented. Little attention is given to crate construction, shipping, storage and other travel concerns. Interactive displays are discussed briefly, but without consideration for their tremendous educational potential, focusing more on technique than examining the learning process.

Designing Exhibitions is presently the most complete book on the subject, and provides an excellent overview of the field. Perhaps the approach was not intended to be scholarly, offering a general text which would not overwhelm the student with complex terminology or concepts. However, it leaves the more advanced or inquisitive reader at a loss for more information.

The master/apprentice relationship could be further nurtured through more advanced writings by this author.

Endnote

¹The quarterly journal, *Visitor Behavior, A Publication for Exhibition-Type Facilities*, edited by Steve Bitgood, (Psychology Institute, Jacksonville State University, Alabama.) reviews current research on the subject.

Private Paris, Marie-France Boyer. New York: Abbeville Press, 1988, 184 pages, photographs by Philippe Girardeau, (\$50.00).

Reviewed by Charlotte Martin, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Marie-France Boyer is a journalist and native Parisian. She is a correspondent for *The World of Interiors* and writes about decorating for various European and French magazines. Philippe Girardeau is a free-lance photographer, primarily of decor and the countryside. Originally published as *Habiter Paris*, this volume was translated from French to English by Anthony Roberts.

Francophiles will relish page after page of delightful design surprises. The choice of types of apartments and houses consists of a vast range of styles and tastes, from ultra-contemporary to classic traditional. The owners include carpenters, upholsterers, chairmakers, and printers, as well as writers, historians, sculptors, painters, art dealers, actors, playwrights, and cosmetic manufacturers. From the humblest to the poshest; from Montmartre to the Isle de le Citie; from the Gardens of Luxembourg to the Faubourg St. Germain, and many arrondissements in between; the fabulous French sense of design emerges.

Of course the work of the great contemporary designers is represented. Jacques Granges, called the decorator of the hour, has two homes; one is his

"Success Home" on the Palais Royal where he has lived from the beginning of his career and spends most of his time. Boyer says this marvelous hide-out on the left bank has the eternal magical quality of Paris. Barbara Wirth's first floor apartment overlooking a courtyard on the Place de Palais Bourbon is filled with fine books, tasteful interiors, and a myriad of bulbs, flowers, and plants, reflecting the botanical hobby of the owner. Also included is the Rue Bonaparte shop and apartment of Madame Madeline Gastaing, who at the age of 94 is considered the high priestess of decoration. She opened her first antiquaire-decorateur shop in 1941 and began an influential revival of nineteenth century period styles.

Historians will thrill to know that Jacques Garcia followed the original Jules Hardouin Mansart inventory while restoring the Hotel de Sagonne. Marie-Helene de Rothchild shares the dining table setting in the Hercules Gallery of the Hotel Lambert by Le Brun, set with a priceless green Sevres porcelain service in preparation for a dinner for the Queen of Denmark. Art lovers will be astonished by the home of sculptor Jean-Pierre Raynaud built entirely of white ceramic tile, including all walls, floors, ceilings, furniture, rugs, and paintings. The owner says, "I believe this is a place of beauty, capable of conveying messages to the human soul."

Singer David Rocheline's home in an old factory is furnished with tongue-in-cheek cheap in which nothing costs more than 150 French francs. Manuel Canovas, the only fabric designer who has shown his work in the Musee de Arts Decoratifs, lives in an apartment near the Eiffel Tower. It is completely furnished with designs of the eighteenth century, which he believes was the zenith of Western culture.

Marie-France Boyer admits to choosing the individuals of this publication because they view their homes and gardens with special fondness and respect. Her understanding of the melange of cultures that makes up the city of Paris is truly remarkable. Her work gives the reader a unique view of some of the most extraordinary private homes of Paris.

***Interior Design*, John F. Pile.** New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1988, 541 pages, (\$49.50).

Reviewed by Ben D. Gunter, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia.

This book is a comprehensive survey of interior design as it presently exists and covers the design process from the inception of a design to its completion. It encompasses both residential and contract design from small living quarters to large-scale public spaces such as offices, health facilities, restaurants, hotels, and store designs. It is not a collection of decorating suggestions for family members or a "how-to-do-it" book.

The author is a practicing independent designer for both private and corporate clients as well as a professor of design at Pratt Institute where he has been teaching interior design and the history of design. In his book he explores the fundamentals of design and the many factors contributing to good design. He also presents a wealth of practical information on materials, furniture, textiles, lighting, and color. Technical matters such as acoustics, HVAC, energy, and plumbing are also addressed. The written content of the book is also complemented by many outstanding colored and black and white photographs displaying work of well-known designers throughout the nation and around the world. Other illustrations include drawings, charts, and renderings.

To complete the survey of interior design, Mr. Pile also includes chapters covering the areas of perspective drawing, business aspects of design and management, history of design including the major design styles from ancient Egyptian to the present, human factors, and the future trends and directions in interior design. A glossary of related terms is also included.

Interior Design is recommended as a valuable source for a prospective design student, a text for a survey course in interior design, and a source or reference for both the design student and professional.

***Aging In a Technological Society*, Gari Lesnoff-Caravaglia.** New York: Human Sciences Press, Inc., 1988, 293 pages.

Reviewed by Bettyann Raschko, Tigard, Oregon.

Dr. Lesnoff-Caravaglia's foresight has produced a timely and needed publication, that translates theory and transfer of knowledge derived from other disciplines into practical applications achievable through technology. It addresses three basic phenomena occurring for the first time in history that will have a profound impact on the aging society: (1) rapid growth of the aging population including the over-eighty group; (2) increased knowledge and in-depth research on the aging process; and (3) the explosion of technology and its application to the aged.

The book contains 23 papers concentrating on the various aspects of technology and its relationship to the aged. The authors of these papers, a diverse group of professionals from governmental agencies, health care programs, industry, and academia, represent the pertinent disciplines of medicine, psychology, gerontology, dentistry, robotics, pharmacology, and rehabilitation. Dr. Lesnoff-Caravaglia has successfully collected and edited these papers to provide essential information for anyone concerned with the medical, social, or economic needs of the elderly.

A basic tenet of the book is that technology can provide lifelong benefits, not only life-prolonging and prosthetic "hightech" advances, but also "lowtech" changes to assist those with lessened abilities perform the common activities of daily living. When designing useful products, whether high or low tech, designers, specialists, and the disabled should consider common human disabilities during the "human-factor" stage of development.