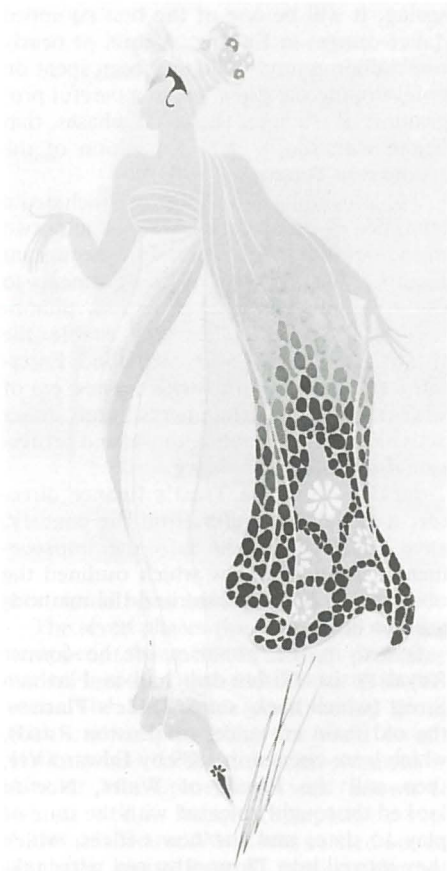


Autolycus

The Bidding is with you

The auction of selected theatre designs in aid of the Theatre Design Course took place in the Olivier Theatre on December 4, bringing the latest exhibition of works to an end. It began at Riverside Studios in early November and moved to the Lyttelton Foyer in the National Theatre on November 30. Among the works to go under Sotheby's hammer were designs by Hugh Casson, Gordon Craig, Erte, Jay Hutchinson Scott, Lesley Hurry, Derek Jarman, Ralph Koltai, John Piper, Patrick Procktor, Bill Tidy and Albert Rothenstein. The flurry of activity marks a significant renewal and sense of purpose for this valuable course. Perhaps one should even say, this invaluable course.



The Theatre Design Course started life as the Sadler's Wells Design Course, later becoming the design course at English National Opera. For 15 years it has trained ten young artists as designers in the theatre. Under the direction of Margaret Harris and Hayden Griffin it has provided practical experience and workshop opportunities for students of all backgrounds: from fine art, other branches of the visual arts, or simply theatre workers who wish to adapt their talents to theatre design. The year's work-in centred around six projects, of which four are usually plays, one opera and one dance. Each project is under the direction of an experienced professional, who is 'aware of the current developments in the theatre'.

The course is now based at Riverside Studios, still under Margaret Harris' supervision, and invitations are now being sent out to private individuals and organisations, who might wish to support a student for a full year; or perhaps a term's course of lectures; or in exhibitions, design materials or furniture. Friends of the Theatre Design Course are being recruited as well as in-



dividuals who wish to be known as Benefactors to the course. The full range of the curriculum takes in costume design; various aspects of costume in relation to character; the history of the stage; lighting; interpretation of the texts; practical make-up; prop-making, construction and scene painting (in nearby workshops and studios). At least one production per student is expected (either at a drama school, TIE company or fringe theatre) which, though carried out on a limited budget, translates theory into practice – often the hardest part of a design brief.

A course leaflet states: 'Theatre designers must be creative artists whose work evolves out of a text or score. They must be skilled technicians and craftsmen, able to collaborate with many people involved in production. The final responsibility of the designer, is to create the visual realisation of the production.' To this end, each student works on an individual design for costumes and sets, making scale models, technical plans and working drawings, (practical) costume designs, and details and designs for the principal props, from conception right up to the final stage when they are ready to go into production.

Despite periodic funding difficulties, there is no question as to the course's unique role and surprising effectiveness.

Ask anyone who has been on it, taught its students or seen one of its exhibitions. It must continue. And long may it thrive in its new home: a fitting arts-centre, whose multi-discipline activities with a strong bias to the visual arts provides the perfect balance and outlook it requires.

Open plan for Council house

The Arts Council is, by the terms of its own charter, a stimulating, but frequently stormy place. And quite rightly so. Recently a fresher wind has been detected than the usual duststorms, squalls and general turbulence. It is a wind of change, no less.

A significant shift of emphasis has resulted: a greater awareness of activities in different departments, within the organisation; and a greater openness towards the outside world, too. It stems from a meeting held in the gracious surroundings of Leeds Castle, Kent, in May 1981, when senior officers and members of the Arts Council sat down to take a 'longer-term' look at their work than is normally possible at their regular monthly meetings. The outcome of Leeds Castle, was outlined by Dr Richard Hoggart, vice-chairman of the Arts Council in a report this autumn, which may be summarised as follows.



Dr Richard Hoggart vice-chairman of the Arts Council – 'not enough conversation across artistic boundaries'.

The Council was 'invited' to take a 'more synoptic' (ie general) view of the arts, to regard the various art forms as less rigidly confined to their own compartments than they often seem and so to look for greater collaboration among its own departments. Not that the Council is much different from society as a whole, he added, which tends to compartmentalise and pigeonhole for sheer