

GET IN THE MOOD

BY DR DAVID BARLEX

Getting things to look right, match the market they are aimed at and making aesthetic design decisions can be quite a challenge for pupils. Dr David Barlex shows us how mood and image boards can help provide a starting point for such design activity.

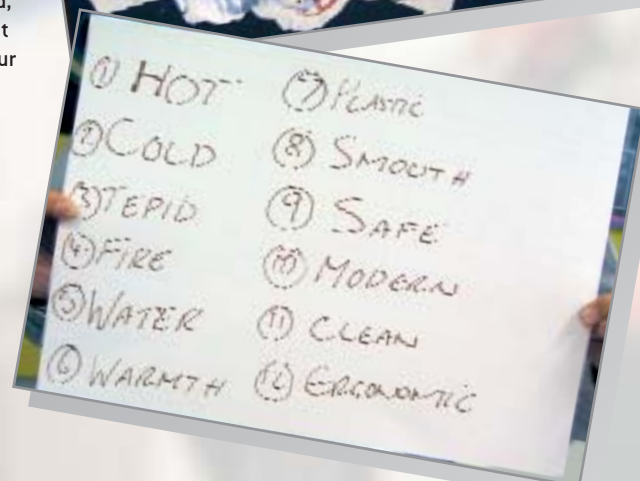
Starting Points for Design Decisions

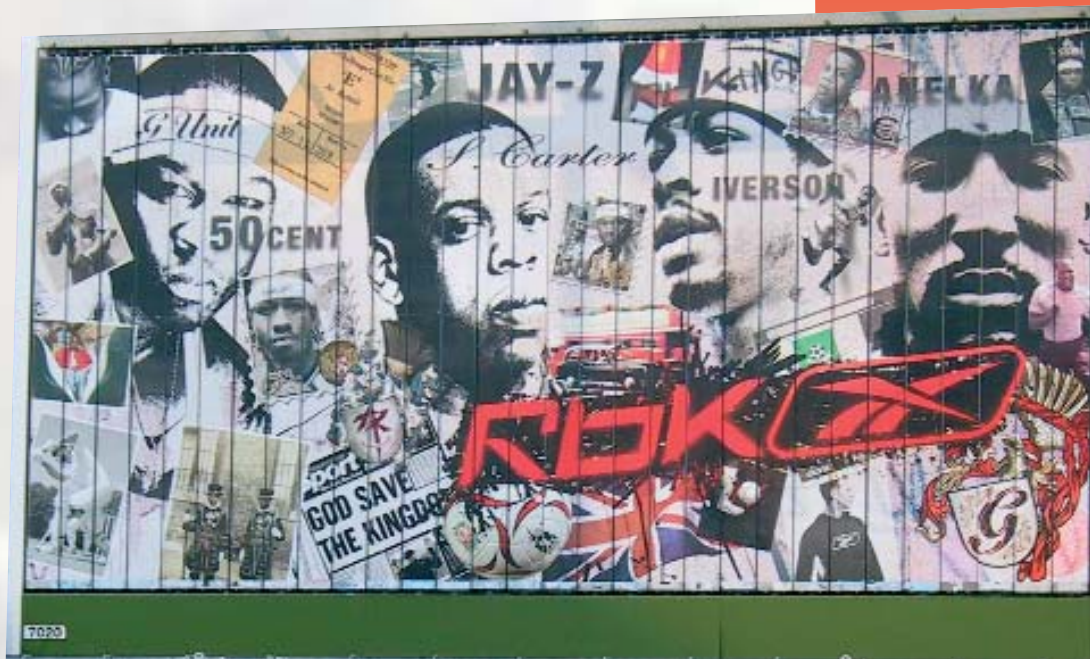
It is the look of products that provides their immediate appeal. How can you help your pupils make sensible and justifiable decisions about the appearance of the products they design? This is a difficult area as their tastes may well be different from yours. The important factor in this though is not your taste as the teacher, nor the taste of the pupil designing but the taste of the person who will use the product that the pupil is designing. Many pupils in Key Stage 1 and certainly in Key Stage 2 are designing and making simple products for people other than themselves. At Key Stage 3 and beyond pupils are designing more sophisticated products with consumer groups and markets in mind rather than individuals. So an interesting question to ask is what tools are available to help them relate the appearance of their design to the aesthetic tastes of the consumer group they are designing for.

Many designers use image boards. These show images of the sorts of things that a consumer group already likes and uses. This may include pictures of places and activities as well as products. In this way they can build up a picture of how a consumer might use the product they are designing and how it will fit into their lifestyle. They may even draw pictures of typical consumers using the product in their everyday life. In this way, the product is designed to appeal to one or more consumer groups.

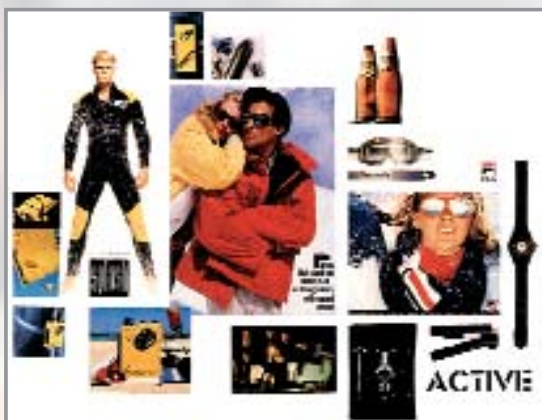
Your pupils can produce an image board simply by cutting out pictures from magazines and catalogues or grabbing them from websites. It is important to choose the images with some care and not to overfill the board. It is often useful for pupils to carry out this activity in groups so that they can discuss why they are selecting certain images and rejecting others. A class of 20 pupils working in groups of four can easily produce one image board each in less than a single lesson. This gives time for a class discussion about each image board, the choice of images and what they tell us about the target consumer group. It is important that this is not an academic exercise and that you encourage your pupils to use the image boards in deciding what the products they design will look like as well as building up their design vocabulary.

Pupils can develop their design sketches working next to the image board so that it provides a constant reference. They can even trace shapes from the board to incorporate into their designs. When the sketches are finished that can be compared with the board to see if they 'capture' what the image board is saying about the consumer's preferences. One way of doing this is to place the sketch in the image board to see if it fits or blends in. If it stands out or looks odd then some reworking is probably necessary. Finally the finished product can be placed on or alongside the board and evaluated for its likely aesthetic appeal with regard to the image board.





This recent advertising hoarding clearly shows the way products and corporate organisations can use image boards to advantage and is an interesting and provocative example being used for advertising to a particular consumer group.



Designers also use stimulus boards. A stimulus board is a collection of images, which a designer can use to provide inspiration for ideas. The images can be taken from a variety of groups such as:

- » Natural forms
- » Geometric forms
- » Art or design of others

It's a straightforward matter to give the class a theme e.g. natural form and provide a wide range of images related to this theme and ask pupils working in groups to develop stimulus boards which they find appealing. In this way they can begin to understand and articulate their own visual tastes. This is an important part of learning to appreciate others' tastes. You can ask your pupils to use the images on a particular theme in developing designs in response to an image board for a particular consumer group



↑ **What age group and life style are these boards capturing?**

If the use of image and stimulus boards is to help your pupils it is important that they can incorporate their visual messages into their final design. In some cases this will show itself in their choice of surface decoration, in other cases in the shape and form of the final design. Products in which pupils have real control over these design elements in both the designing and making are not that common. However products, which utilise the TEP PODs approach to enclosures of working parts are eminently suitable for this. The pupil has complete control of the shape and size of flange surrounding the pod if not the form of the pod itself. The pupil can also make decisions about the surface decoration of the enclosure. Here pupils can take almost complete ownership of the aesthetic appeal of their work.