

Printing with the handpress 'pleases eye and mind and hand'

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First, a sense of context

Some time ago, while watching television, I was privileged to hear a compere on a magic show describe an escapologist's activity as an Art Form. However dubious the privilege (all information is privileged information) it is a fact that a great many activities are these days regarded, for practical purposes, as 'arts'. A recent issue of the QE II Arts Council magazine *Action* gave notice of Arts Council grants to persons in such fields as weaving, film, sculpture, photography, modern dance, glass-making, literature, music, Maori carving, pottery, willow furniture making, and the theatre arts.¹ Looking at that list, it's clear that any definitive concept of 'fine arts' would seriously inhibit the wide range of arts-funding possibilities to which the Arts Council at this time, and rightly, extends. Among the activities currently regarded as 'arts', one that is generally absent from Arts Council funding programmes, however, is printing.

Printing in this country is generally a *trade*, with apprenticeship training geared strictly to commercial procedures. In the matter of book production, with which I am here concerned, each aspect of the business is separated off from the others both in training and in commercial practice. We have typesetters, compositors, printers, binders, and designers; but there's no provision for thorough training of a person in all aspects of book production, just as there is no provision for a person to practise all these procedures in the commercial arena. On the other hand, it is certain that under the present system one can become a very fine typesetter, or printer, compositor, binder or designer; and within the trade there are many people who are properly respected as such.

Whatever can be positively said about current book publishing procedure, one sorry aspect of it to my mind is the public anonymity of the designer (in most cases), the typesetter, the printer, and the binder, in relation to specific books. These people are of course known *in the trade*, and they should be; but they are not known *outside the trade*, and they should be. By opening a book published by almost any New Zealand publisher, I can learn the