

WRAPPING - AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Introduction

A "wrapping" workshop was run in the Leiden Botanic Garden at the Utrecht Congress. The workshop was based on a project developed for teachers by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, in conjunction with the Design Museum of London.

By training teachers to adopt a definition of design and technology which had the broadest cultural framework, the workshop sought to address the issues surrounding the fact that objects in the museum had developed in the Western World in isolation to the materials and processes from which they were originally conceived.



*Basket made from leaf.
Reproduced courtesy of the British Museum.*

Workshop structure

The structure for the workshop involved an introductory talk with slides and handling objects, followed by practical work and ended with a discussion and summary. The workshop was planned with the view to using natural forms and materials as a starting point.

The framework for the project was defined with the following aims.

1. To form a working partnership between an art based museum and a botanic garden.
2. To encourage an informed interest in other cultures, with an awareness of the contrasting opportunities and constraints that people face living in different places under varied physical and human conditions.
3. To encourage tactile and experimental work with plants.

Within this framework, the main objectives were to expand the profile of plants as a source for design and technology by looking at: plant adaptations to the environment, traditional forms of packaging using natural materials and shelters in varied landscapes using local flora.

The workshops encourage the development of the following skills:

- identification and analysis of problems
- researching (classifying, evaluating, formulating)
- recording (drawing, observing, writing)
- planning (analysing, co-ordinating, managing)
- creativity (flexibility, imagination, initiative).

Conclusion

The role of plants in native peoples material culture is often overlooked or considered secondary to the importance of plants as foods and medicines. "Wrapping" is a lively stimulating workshop which generates fundamental questions encouraging children to examine issues about cultures' relationships with nature.

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