

## REVIEW

# WORDS AND PICTURES MAKE A TEASING TOME

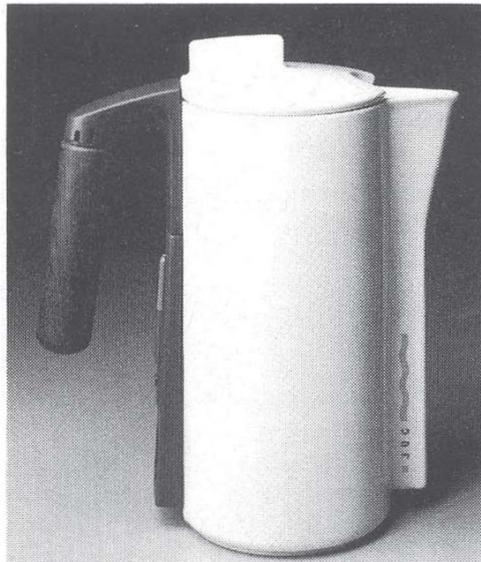
**Adrian Stokes finds a new book on Geoff Hollington offers tantalising hints but few details about the mind behind the work**

I am an admirer of Geoff Hollington. His work always deserves a closer look and I have enormous sympathy with the philosophy behind it and his attitude to the wider role of the designer. So I'm not surprised that *Hollington Industrial Design* has been written. Through his more recent work, Hollington has earned the respect of many people.

As for the book — I must admit to finding it a bit thin, with some important work given scant consideration. I would like to have seen many of his ideas and theories developed further, because they are very current and central to the debate about the most effective way for designers to work.

On a number of occasions in the book, we glimpse Hollington's early frustrations. His comments on early collaborations, and the fact that he finds some of the work which resulted from them ugly, provide a hint of much stronger feelings relating to his early career.

Freedom and confidence are vital for creativity, but throughout the Seventies, financial and partnership constraints of one kind or another made it a peculiarly unproductive period for Hollington. The first time



**Kettle (1986): Aimed to be beautiful and practical**

I sat up and took notice was on seeing the Pel chairs, designed with Michael Glickman in 1979. While Hollington may not feel proud of them now, they are recognisably his; indeed, a certain quirkiness and the product designer's eye for detail can be seen in all his best work. Hollington demonstrates a real gift for creating products which are commercial, but quite different in their visual language to the textbook detailing evident in so much 3D design.

The Enterprise computer designed in 1983, for example, is the most complete and enjoyable piece of technical equipment I have yet seen. This piece, developed mainly by Hollington himself, demonstrates a contradiction. In a career which, to date,

has included many collaborations, he seems to work best alone, interacting with others on his own terms. The early series of alliances and partnerships seemed unhappy, and the record provided by his work plus his own testimony, indicates this was the case. In the work of Hollington Associates — founded in 1980 — it is easy to spot work which is his own.

The Harvey furniture system created in 1982, the chair devised for Syba in 1987, and the Enterprise computer are significant as individual pieces and, having been produced largely under his own control, indicate the conditions under which he is most productive.

Hollington's relationship with Herman Miller has unlocked many self-imposed constraints. The company is a name maker for sure, but Hollington has certainly given as good as he has got. Quite apart from the international recognition, the personal effect on him has been enormous. It has brought him those valuable commodities, freedom and confidence. Freedom from the worry about where the next job is coming from, and to design in the way he wants. Confidence that he has the talent to produce the goods, and the freedom which this self-confidence will give him to call his own shots. But again, the work produced and the issues raised by the relationship are largely unexplored.

Overall, the words which accompany photographs in this book are interesting and honest, and I would have welcomed more of this straightforward approach in the details of Hollington's career and work. The



**Syba chair: Features one-piece seat and back element, and steel skeleton which flexes at hinge points**

final section, in which Hugh Aldersey-Williams provides his own overview of Hollington's work, is pure "pseud's corner". In any case, Hollington has not reached his peak and the best is yet to come. Doubtless his creativity will soon deserve a more thorough analysis.

*Hollington Industrial Design by Hugh Aldersey-Williams, Geoff Hollington and Ralph Caplan (Architecture Design and Technology Press, £15.95).*

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