

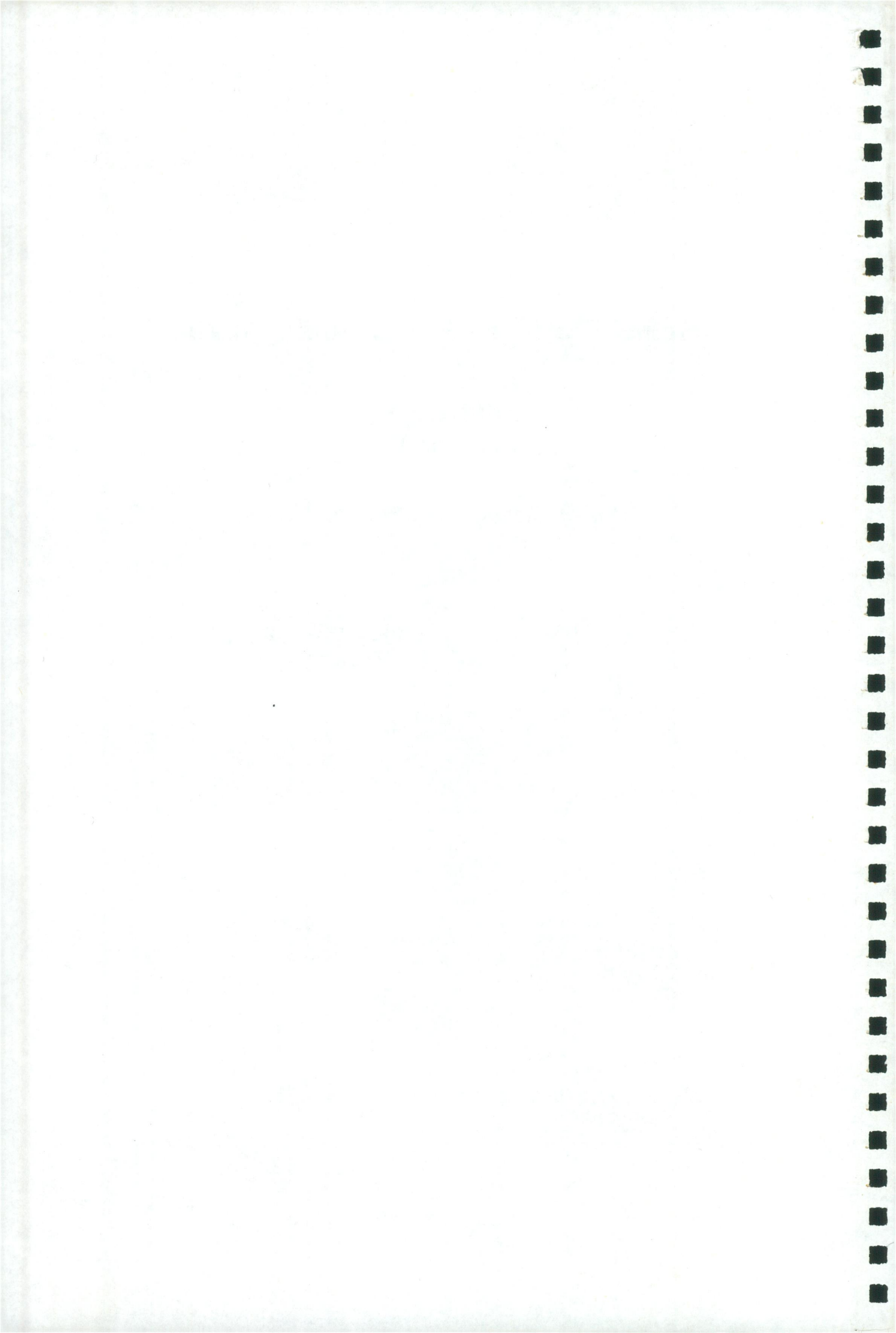
National College of Art and Design

**Craft Design
(Ceramics)**

“The Marketable Status of Craft”

by

Heather-Victoria Bourke



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(Ceramics)**

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Heather-Victoria Bourke

Submitted to the Faculty of History of Art and Design
and Complementary Studies
in candidacy for the
Degree of Bachelor of Design, 1998

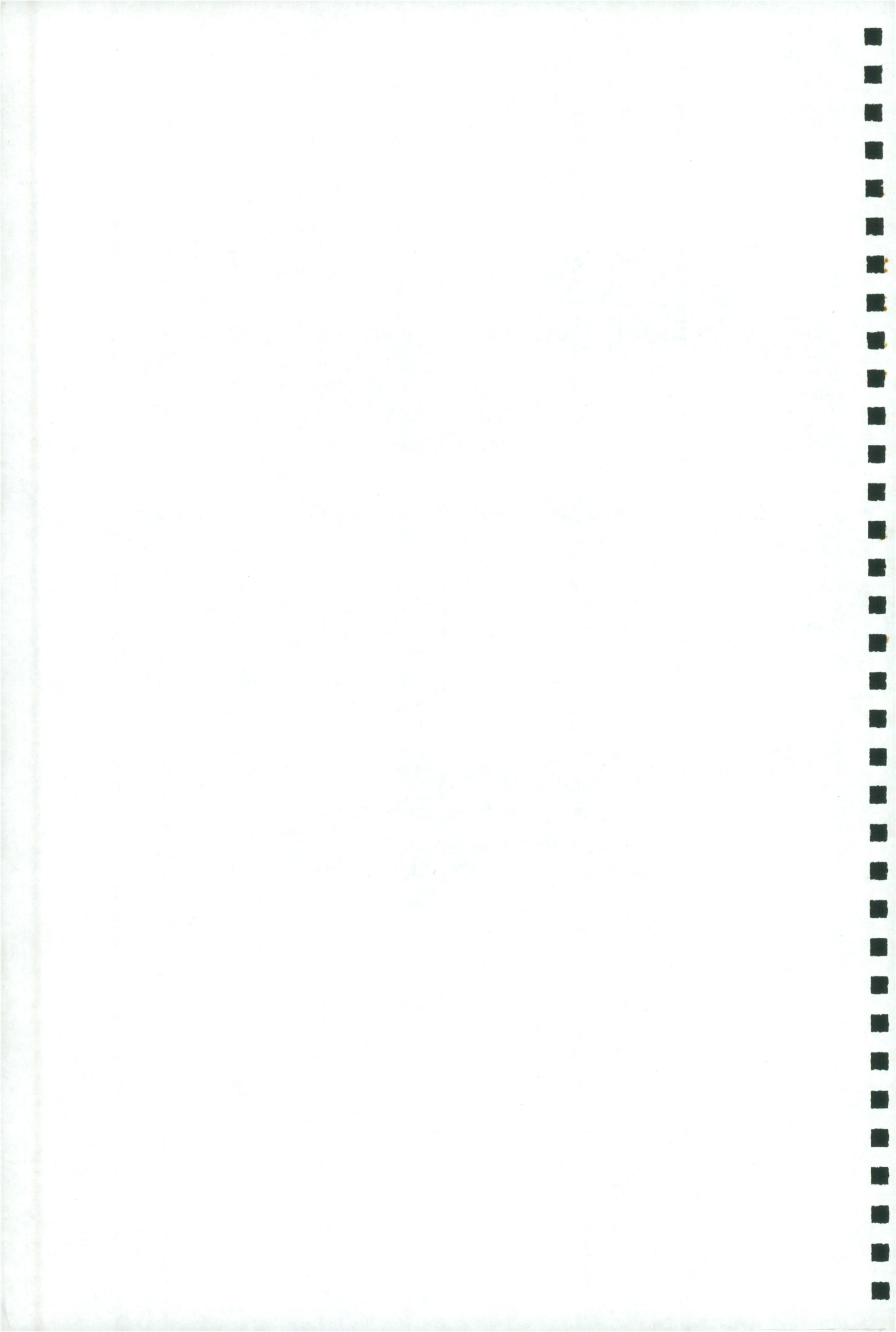
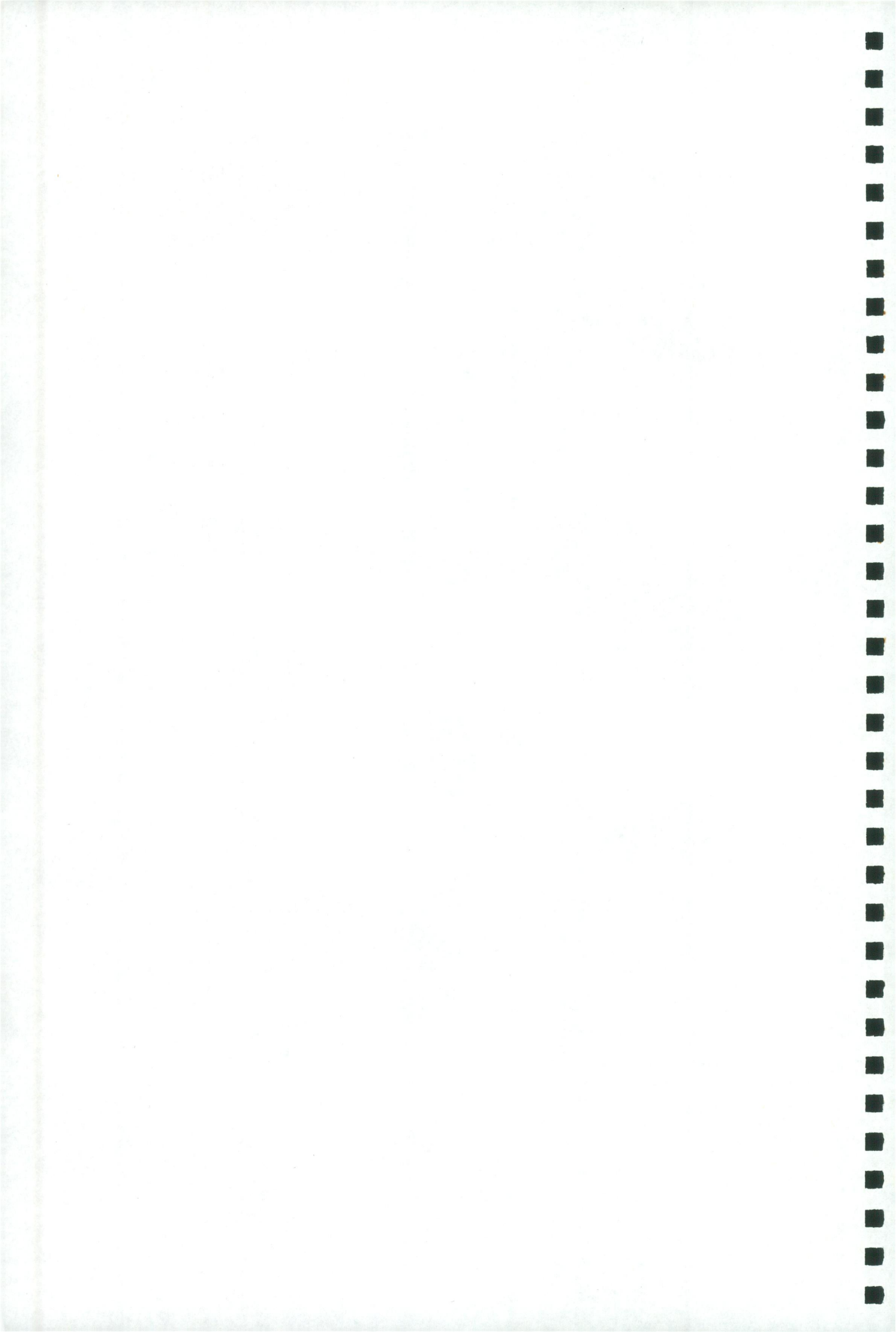


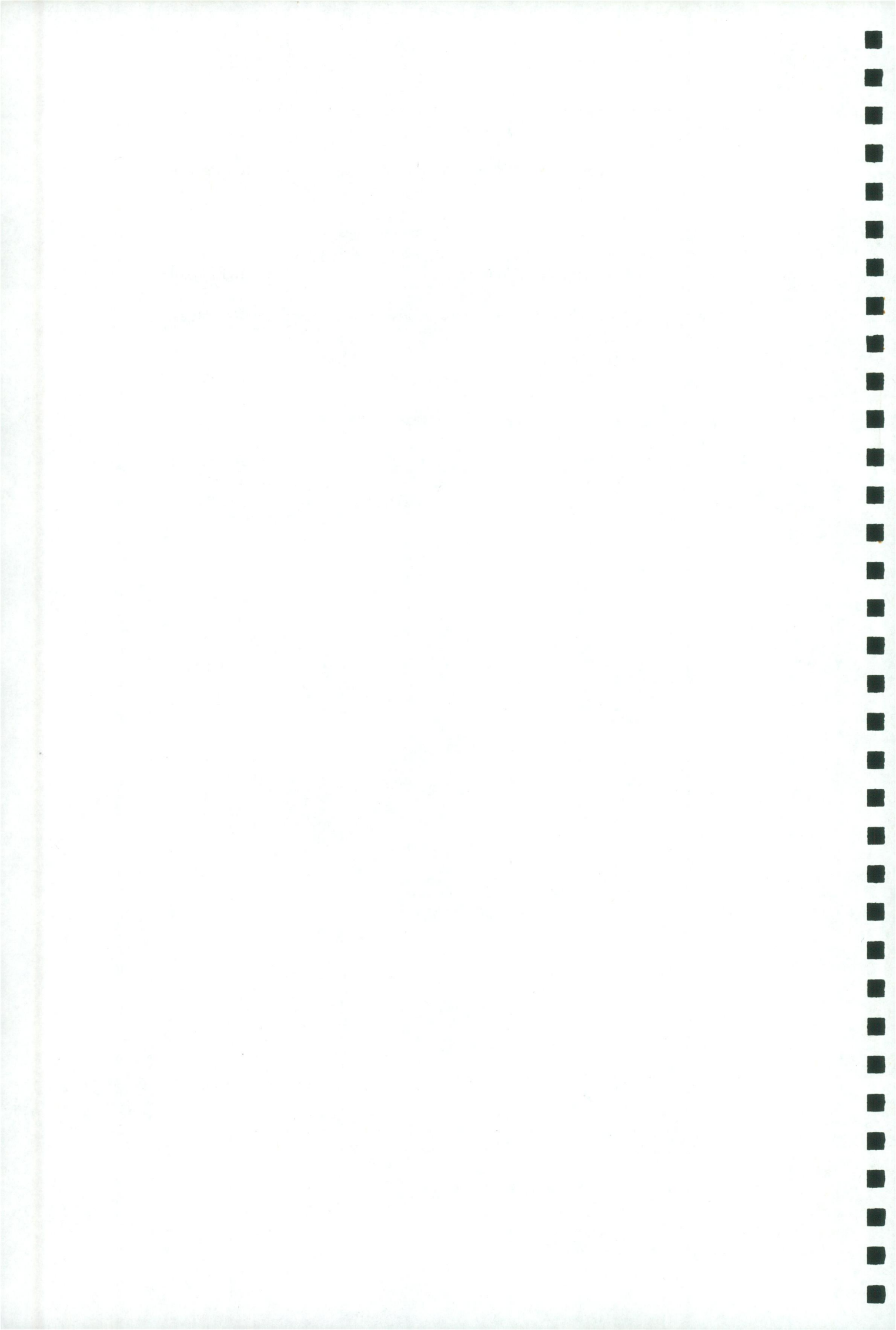
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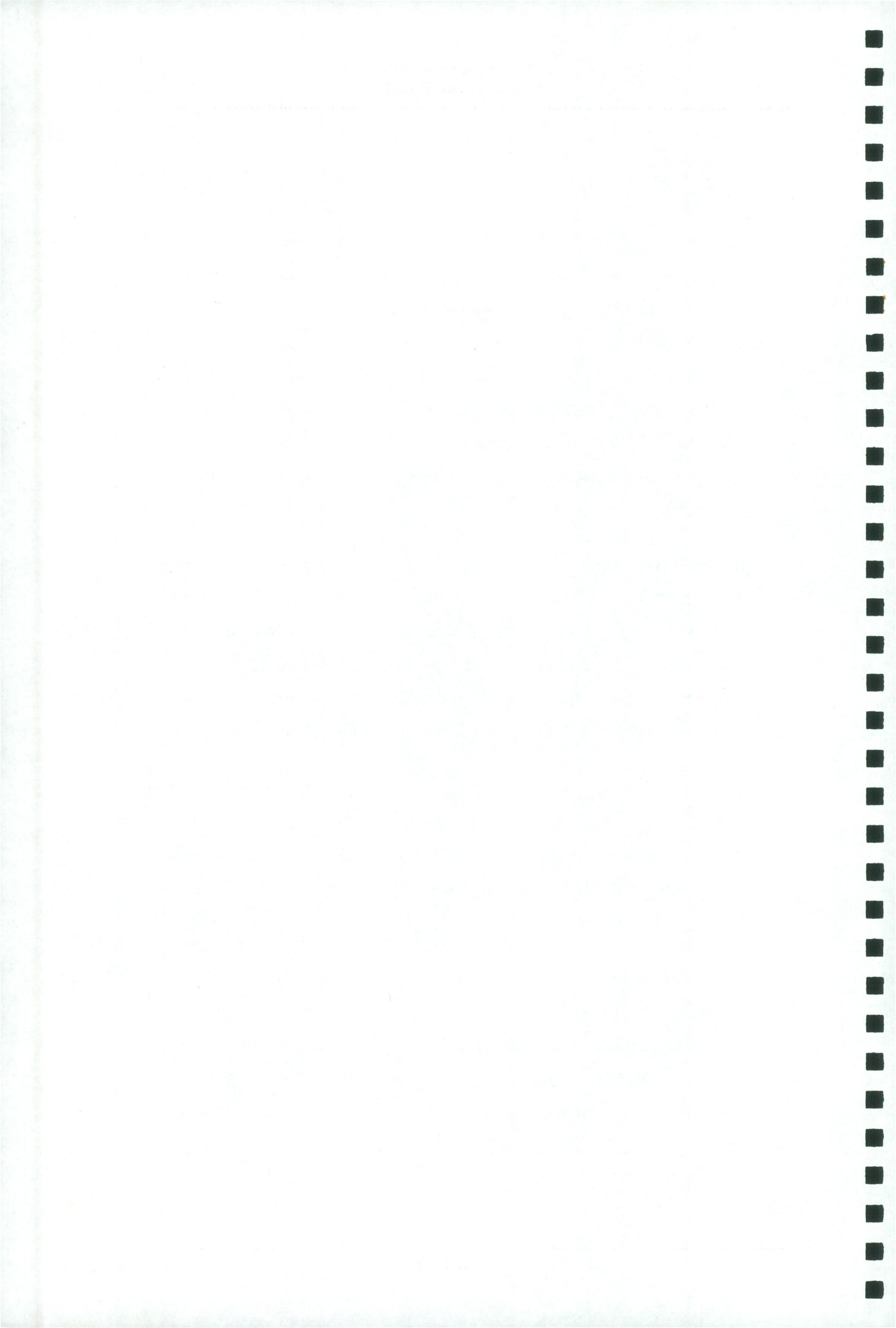
Introduction

In my thesis I shall be discussing the status of craft, focusing on the difficulties of marketing and promoting a largely undefined commodity. Due to the multiplicity of the term craft, no general definition may be applied to craft merchandise in a retail environment. As a result numerous ways of marketing craft have developed in an attempt to match craft products with public perception. Within my first chapter I shall be investigating how the historical role experienced by the crafts has shaped contemporary public perception. Although craft has endured working relationships both industry and the art world, it is long since it has been fully embraced by either. This has led to further puzzlement in evaluating the crafts with a marketplace.

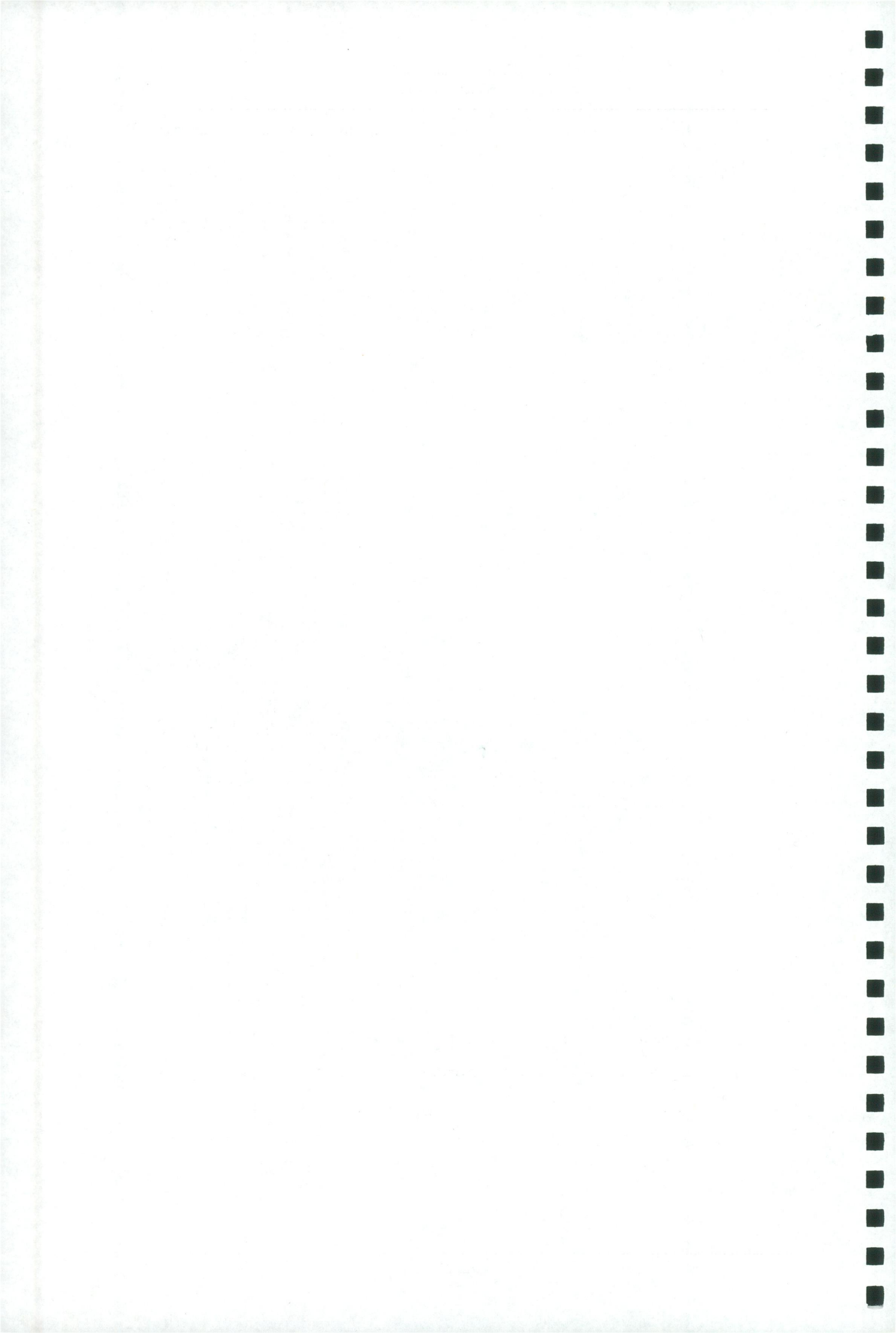
In recent years there has been much talk of the "crisis of identity" experienced by the crafts. Though this has further confused public perception it has left the questions "*what is craft?*" and "*who says so?*" unanswered. The answers to these questions are defined by personal experience of the crafts. This is an experience which is generally limited to retail contexts. Within a consuming society, it is the retail outlet which has become the public's defining body.

Chapter two examines three international promotional bodies for the crafts. Two are examples of the major retail outlets for craft - the craft fair and shop/gallery - the third is Craft Magazine, aimed at craftworkers to create greater market awareness.

Having gained an insight to the foreign craft community, I shall be examining the Crafts Council of Ireland's promotion and marketing techniques. This semi-state body is employed to promote and advertise the industry. The Crafts Council provides Showcase, a major trade fair, a shop/gallery (currently relocating), and various training schemes, all in an effort to facilitate the craft industry.



How effective are these activities at reaching the mass market or even a market share?



Chapter 1 - The Historical Status of Craft

Until the 18th century there was a close relationship between the arts. No distinctions were made between the various arts, and craftspeople enjoyed the same status and shared the same patrons as sculptors and painters.

As part of wider movement during the 18th century a deliberate separation of the arts took place in Italy. Groups of painters and sculptors decided that the essence of their work was very different from that of craftspeople. They believed that their art was the "product of personal intellectual knowledge, as opposed to art which is 'applied' to ideas which have been handed down by masters," as stated by P. Greenhalgh in his essay The History of Craft.

(Ref: Dormer 1997, Pg 20)

In the eyes of the patrons (then the art-buying public), this division improved the *status* of *fine artists*, leaving craftspeople questioning their role in the art world for the first time. However, the division did not apply in the studio as this new breed of fine artists were still trained in the crafts.

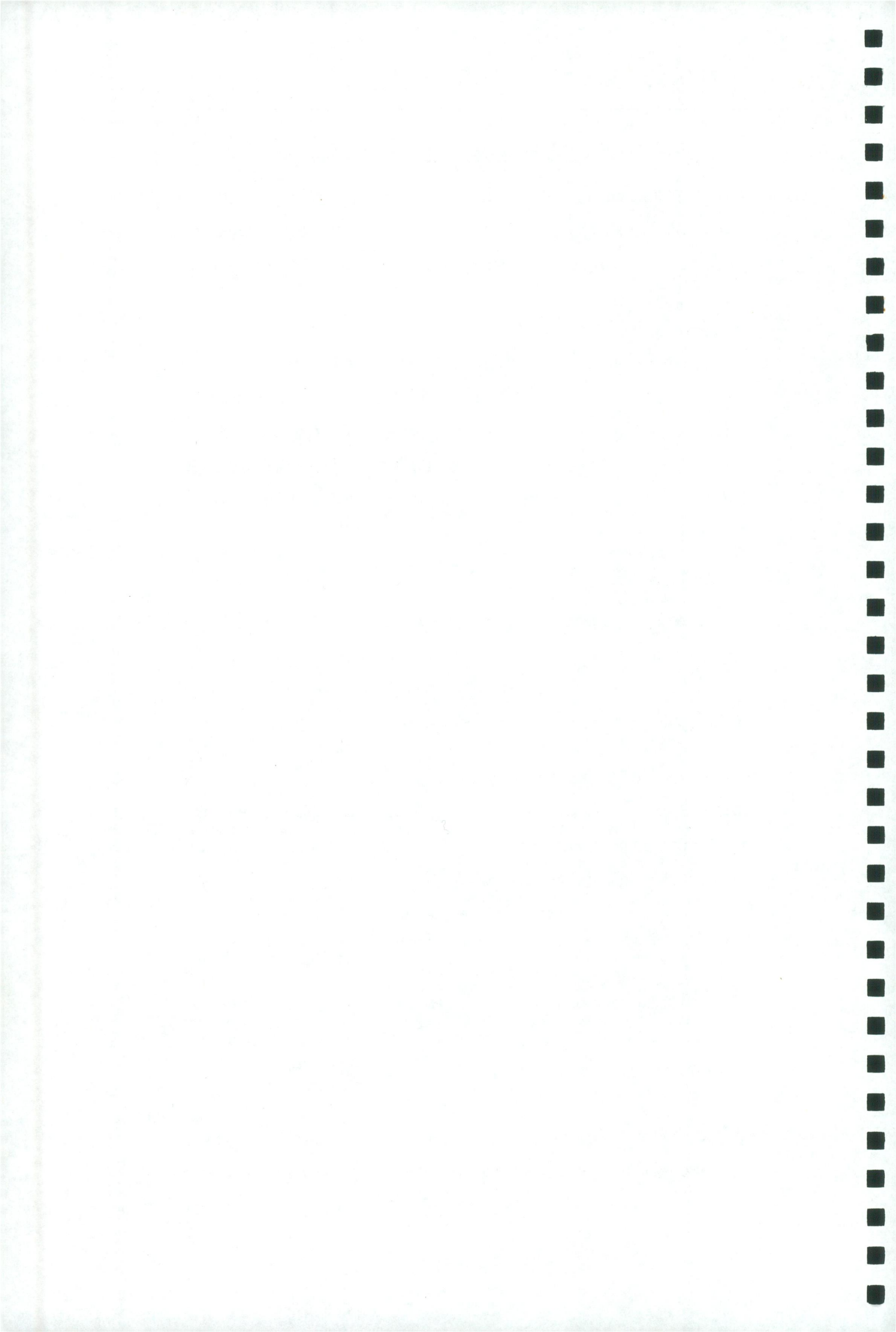
The practice of training young artists in the crafts was deemed to instil discipline rather like musicians practising scales and technical exercises at the piano. Perhaps it was this practice which has left craft with a reputation of being a boring and demanding hobby:

"...craft in art collapsed. Craft just seemed so *tedious* because it was almost inelegant in its demands."

(Ref: Dormer, 1997 Pg 3)

The 19th century was a period of revival. Mainstream design embraced Baroque, Rococo, Gothic Renaissance and even Celtic influences. However, there no reconciliation between art and industry.

The issue of the separation between art and industry came about with the Industrial Revolution. William Morris (Plate 1) questioned the quality of



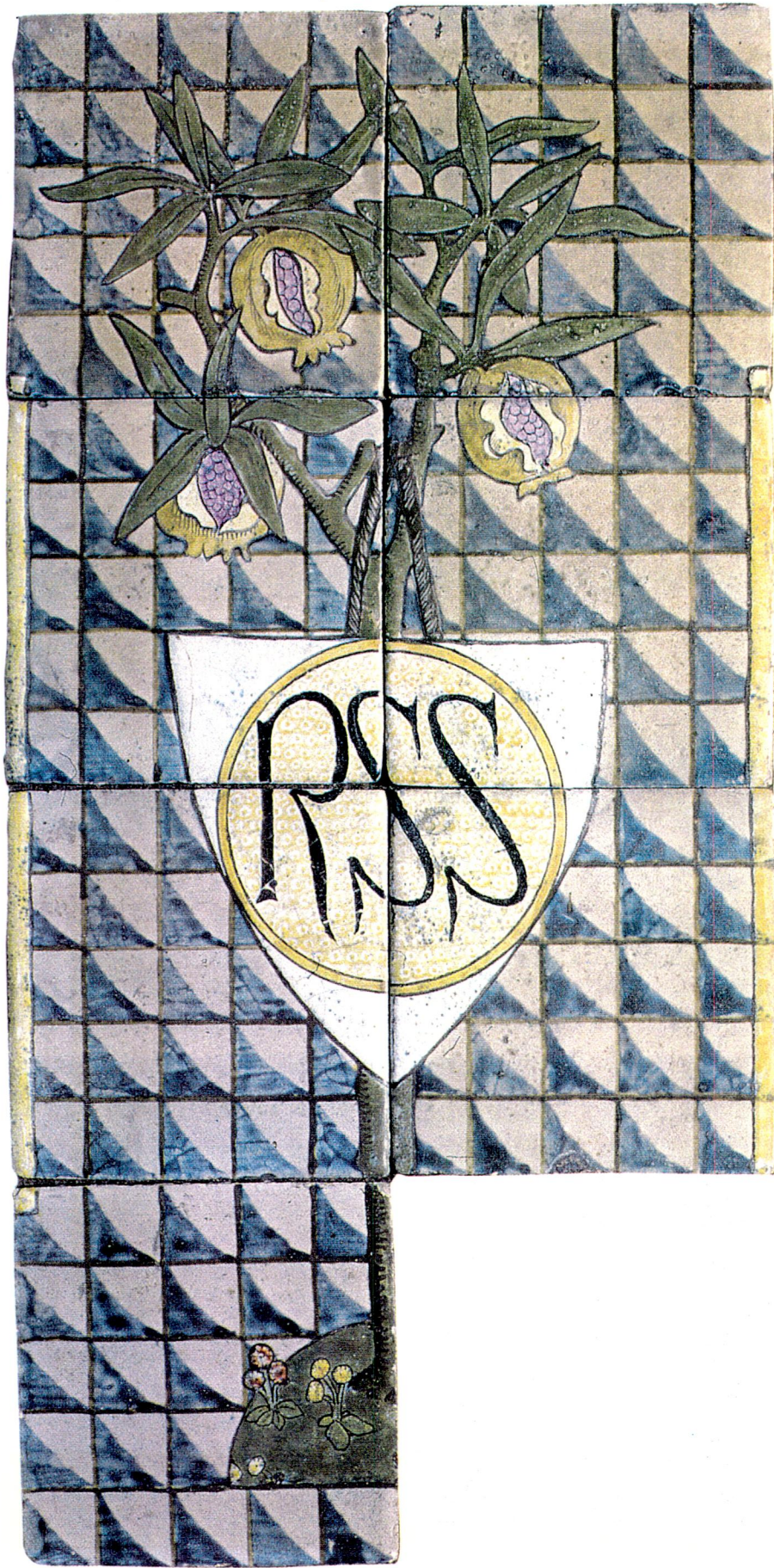
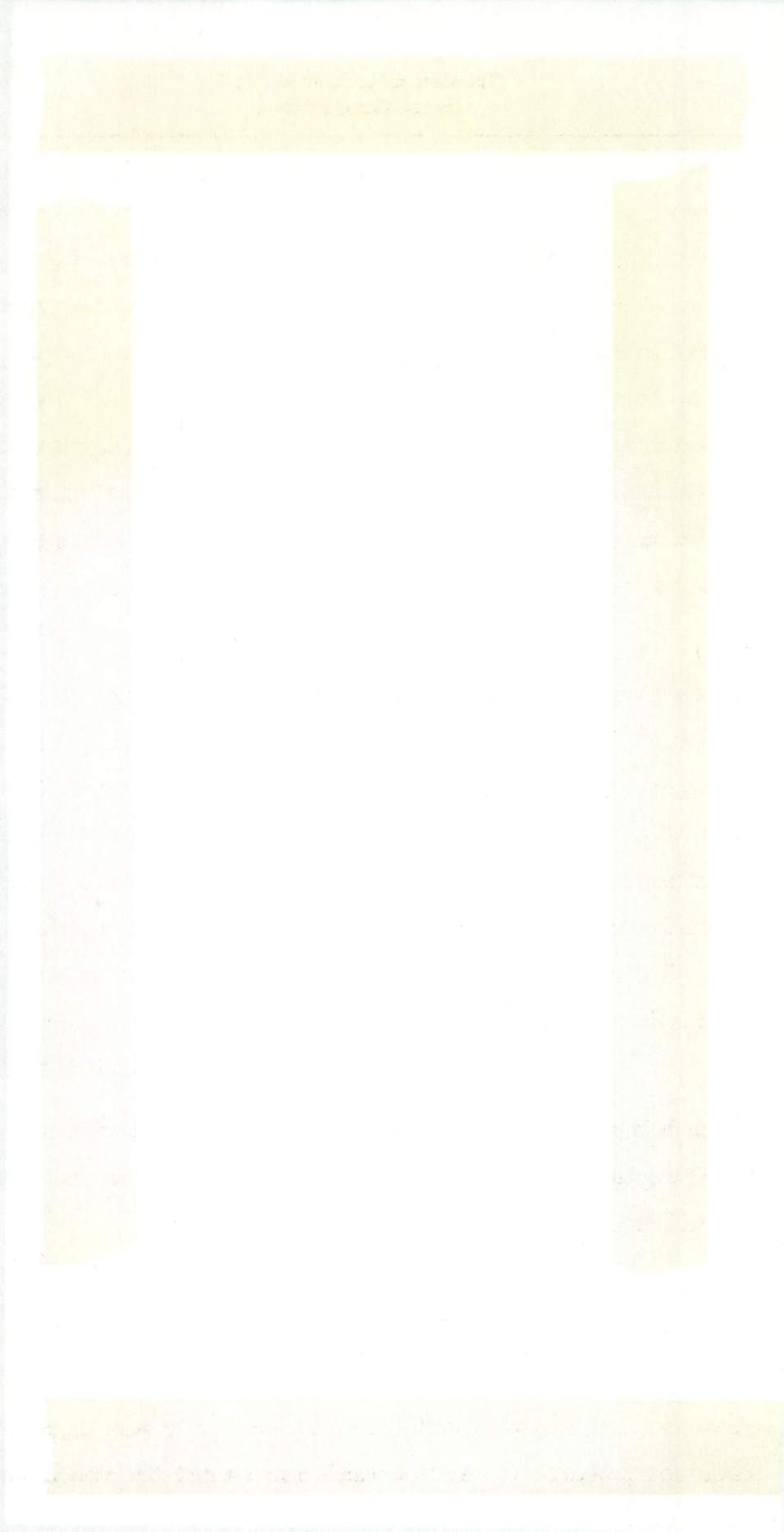


Plate 1: Example of William Morris tile design



new products being supplied by untrained workers in huge factories. It was clear that a crafts revival was needed. The void which the Industrial Revolution had created was filled by the Arts and Crafts Movement. Although Morris asked: "What business have we with art unless we can all share it?" it is doubtful that he made crafts accessible to average consumers. Due to monetary value the status of the crafts was still dubious - only affordable to the upper middle classes and beyond due to the time and effort involved in the creative process. It was Morris' attack on the "spiritual and creative consequences" of the division of labour that left marks on industry's design history.

(Ref: Woodham Smith, 1997)

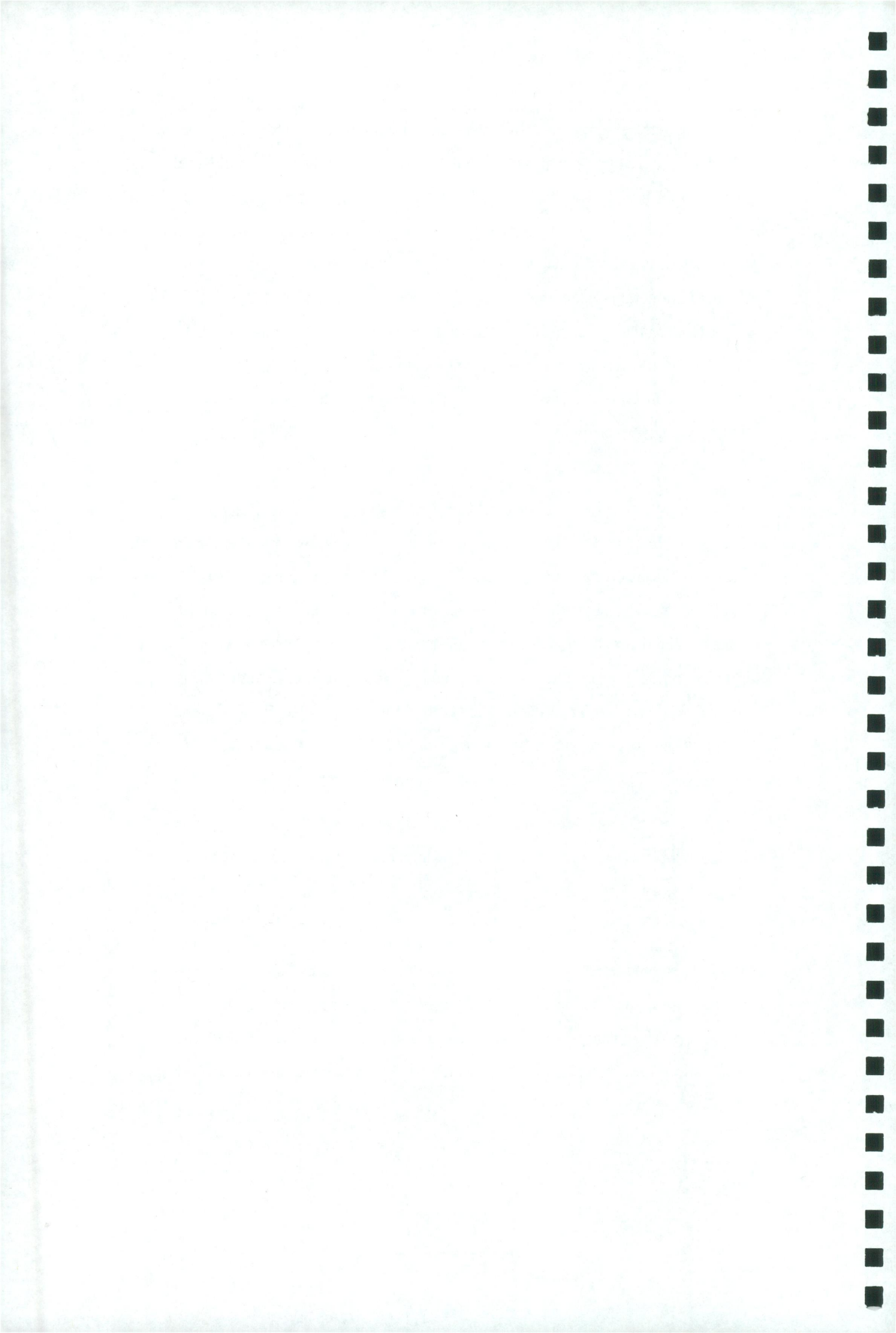
Between World War I and World War II, a change in attitude affected the status of crafts and its future role, there came an acknowledgement of a closer relationship between the arts. In the 1920s the Bauhaus, (Plate 2) explored new design through craftsmanship. The crafts provided an "experimental arena" in which new possibilities were explored - avenues previously denied by the "structure and outlook of the manufacturing industry", thus creating a new role for craft. Craft was now often viewed as useful in the development of type forms suitable for mass-production.

(Ref: Woodham Smith, 1997 Pg 183)

Although in general, craftsmanship at the Bauhaus is acknowledged, it is also downplayed as though "it were an intellectually inconvenient fact of design history."

(Ref: Dormer, 1997 Pg18)

What happened after World War II amounted to somewhat of an anti-climax - the phenomenon of the *studio crafts* which was to become the real creation of low status for craft, satisfying only those who enjoyed the production process. It was this which also created the association of craftworkers with hobbyists.



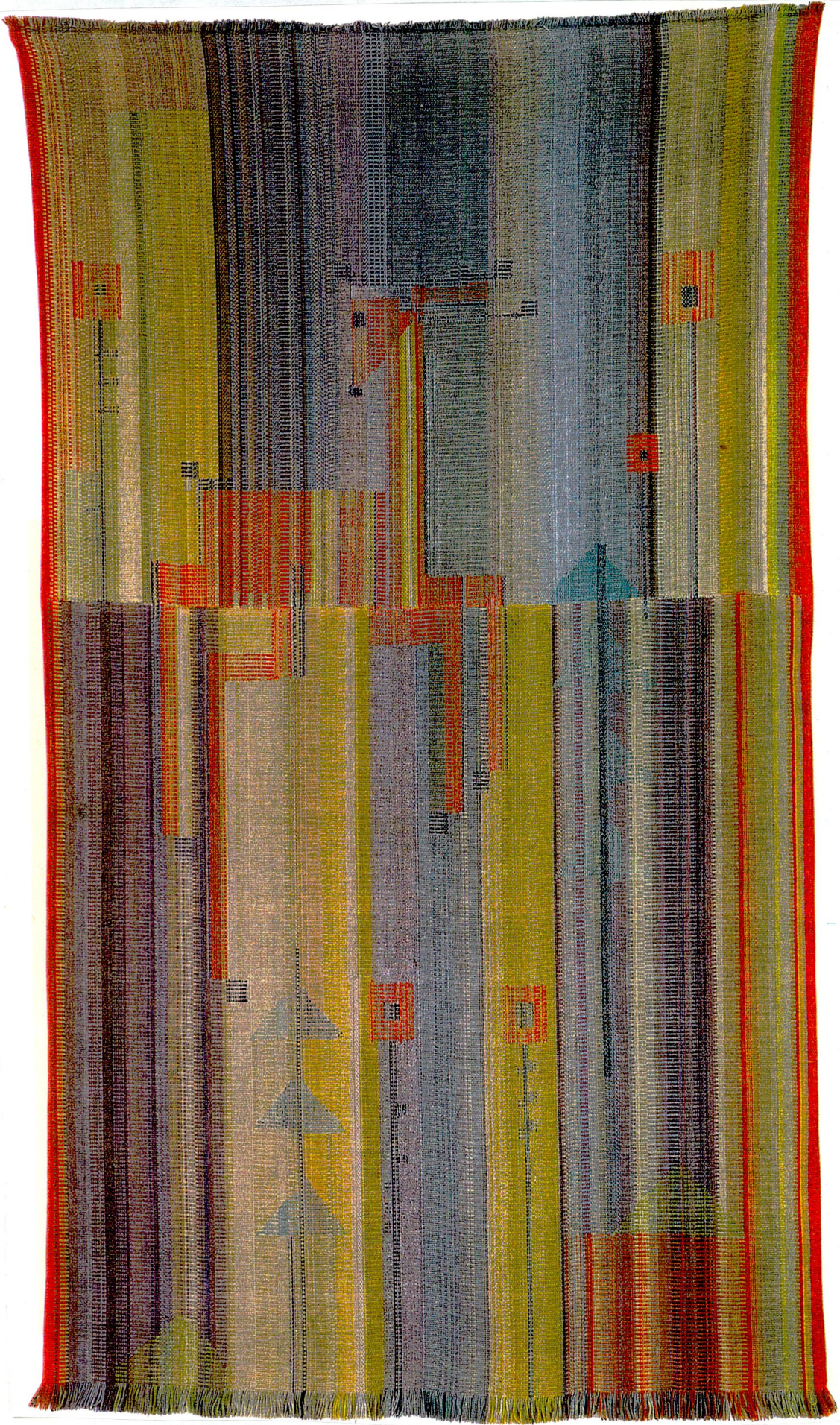
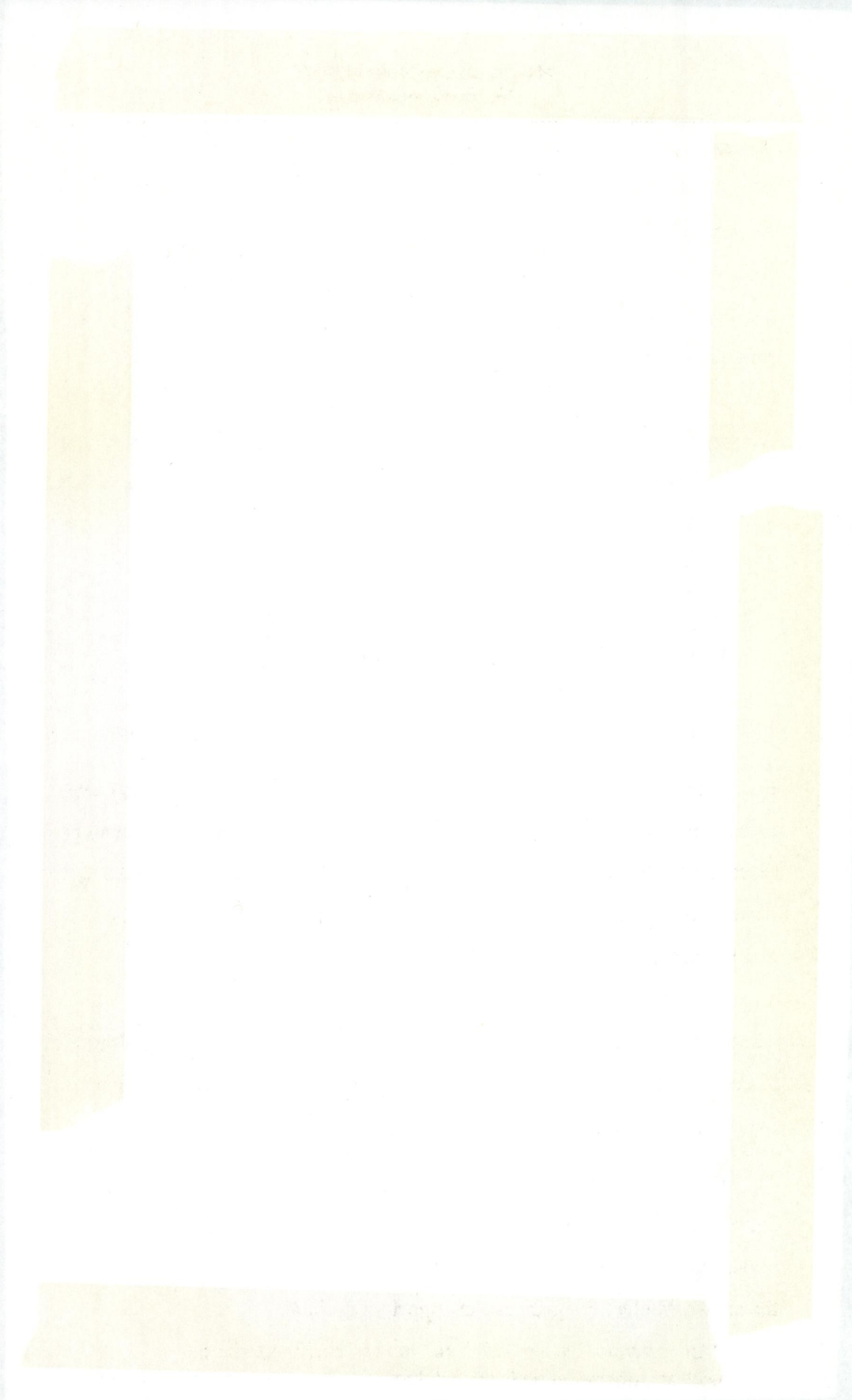


Plate 2: A typical example of the type of textiles produced at the Bauhaus, designed to adapt to the manufacturing industry.



Between 1895 and 1925 the Irish Arts and Crafts Society held exhibitions to herald twentieth century design. The 'arts and crafts' and 'fine art' elements of these exhibitions mirrored that of the English Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society. Craft was now identified as being luxury items with the emphasis on enamels and stained glass and the exclusion of functional mass produced items.

It was at this time too that Thomas Bodkin, the former director of the National Gallery of Ireland wrote his report highlighting the role which crafts in Ireland had attempted to play:

"There has never been a sustained alliance between the arts and industry in Ireland; and little has been done in the last fifty years to promote such a desirable aim, beyond the efforts made for over thirty years by the Arts and Crafts Society."

uf

The consequence of Bodkin's report was to generate design awareness.

For many post-modernists, the organisation of large-scale industry was seen as a barrier to individual expression and creativity. The late 20th century inherited the tension which had constantly resurfaced since the Industrial Revolution - that tension between the limitations of mass production and artistic merit.

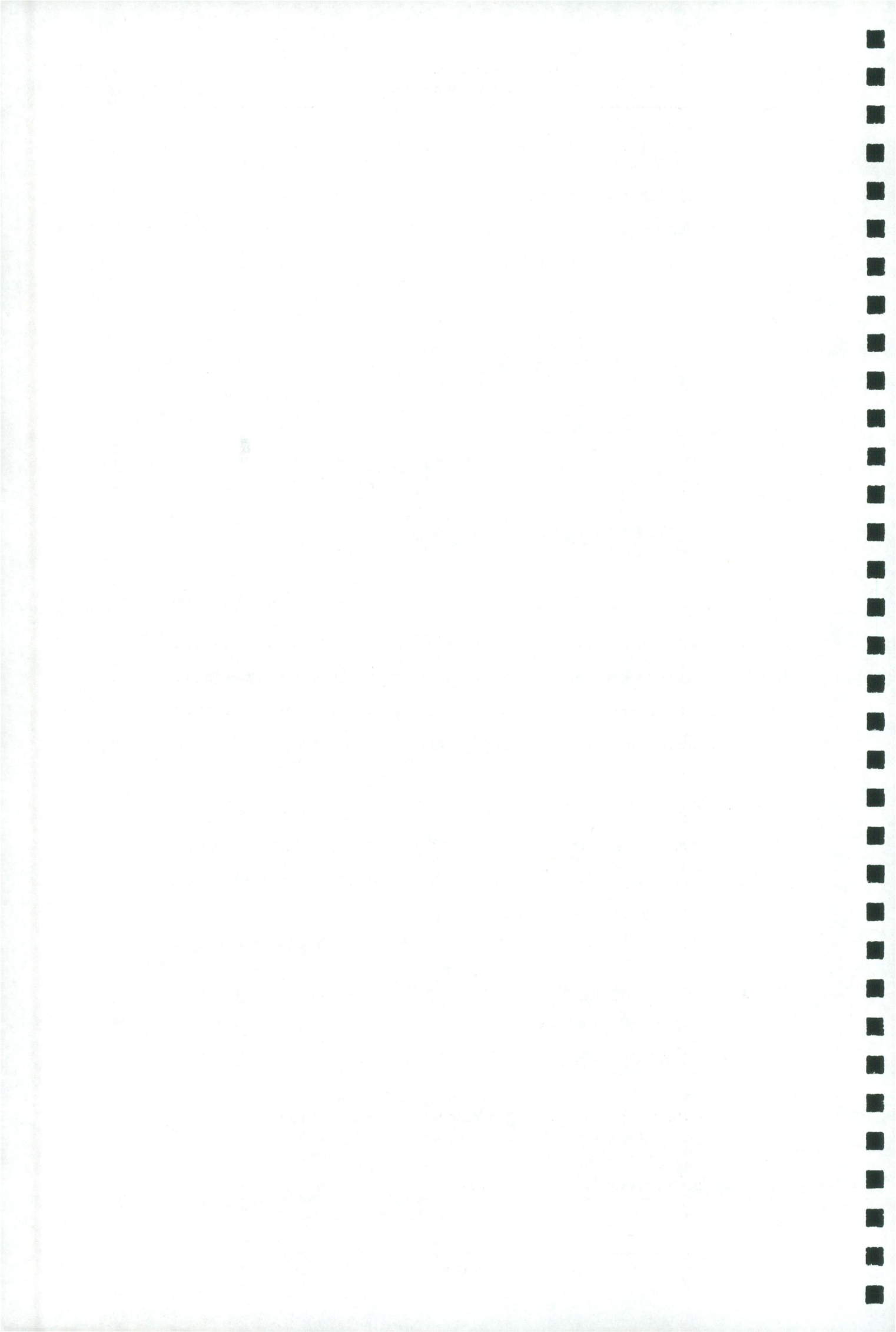
There was now a separation between "having ideas" and "making objects". There was also a belief that "creativity" could move on or become separated from a knowledge of how to make things.

(Ref: Dormer, 1997 Pg 18)

Despite craftpeoples' continuing creativity, this distinction is now ingrained in our culture. By the twentieth century a number of theories emerged from the art world identifying art as the opposite to utility:

"An artwork is an artwork in as much as it is useless...operating under this dubious premise may have led in part to the belief that a hand-crafted object might be guaranteed a fine art status by virtue of being non-functional."

(Ref: Wilson 1997)



Following Ireland's economic stagnation in the 1950s, coupled with an inevitable decline in population, the 1960s saw economies recognising the diversity of consumers and have acknowledged the breaking-up of market interests. They have become more willing to make a place for more unique and also varied forms of production, including craft. These sentiments are echoed by the Design Reform Movement which began here in the 1950s.

Ireland's industrialisation and its entry into the Common Market forced the pace of education and Irish design. The modernisation of Irish society during the 1960s, when the country first experienced international concepts, including those of art and design, had a marked effect on design history. The media became generally more open to new ideas.

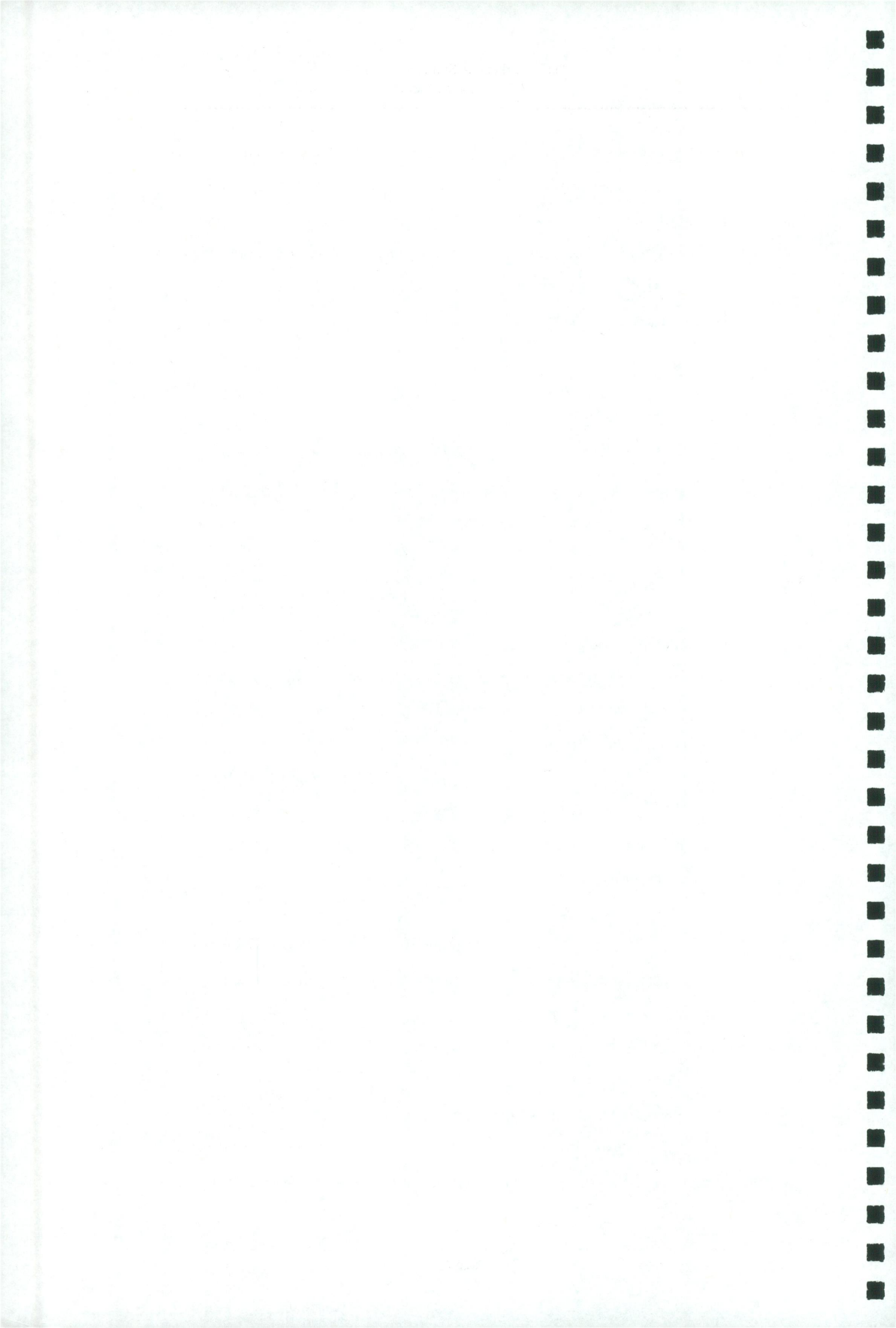
A crisis in Irish design was identified. The Kilkenny Design Workshops was established in 1965, to combat this problem. Under the influence of immigrant Dutch designers, they used craft skills to experiment with and explore materials, surfaces and forms was implemented. This awareness of craft later triggered the establishment of the Crafts Council of Ireland at the Royal Dublin Society in 1971.

(Ref. Woodham Smith 1997 Pg 254)

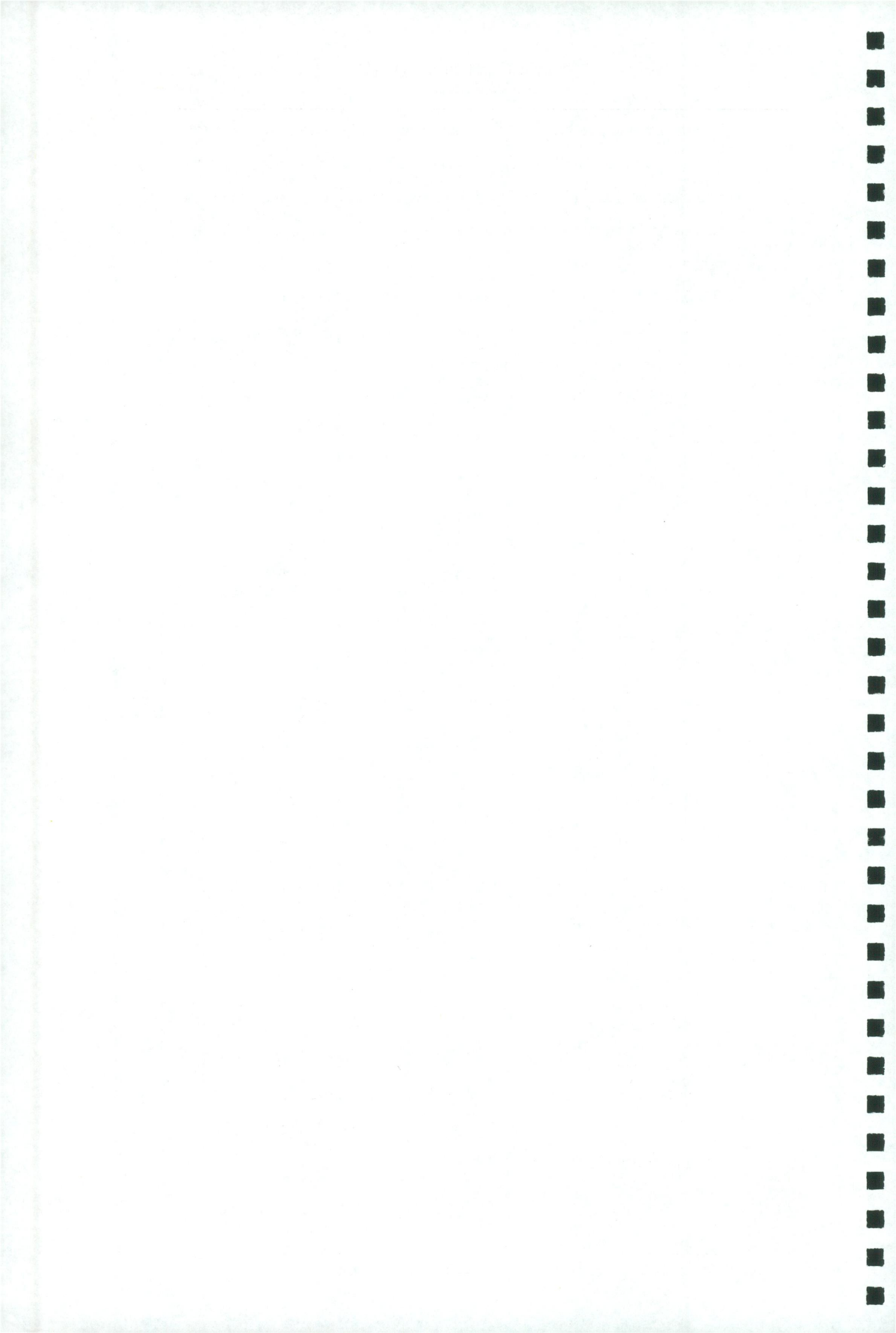
The NCAD Act of 1971 opened the way for a new college department for Industrial Design which paralleled the new product design push at Kilkenny Design Workshops.

Many courses in crafts design in Regional Technical Colleges around the country were submitted for validation to the National Council for Education Awards. These new craft courses, supported by EEC funds, echoed the spreading demand for craft education throughout the country.

In the 1980s, the Industrial Development Authority began to give aid to craftspeople to set up their own businesses with many independent craftspeople setting up, particularly in the south and west of Ireland. These



developments allowed craft to fill the gap which had occurred in the market of the modern consumer society. By choosing not to fully embrace craft, industry and art had left craft isolated. However bad quality and the lack of good design in manufactured functional goods created a need for crafted merchandise. All this has shaped the contemporary public perception of craft within the marketplace. Yet, for the public there still remains the question of how to evaluate craft, and for the industry, how to engineer positive images for craft in the market.



Chapter 2 - The Public Perception of Craft in the Market Place

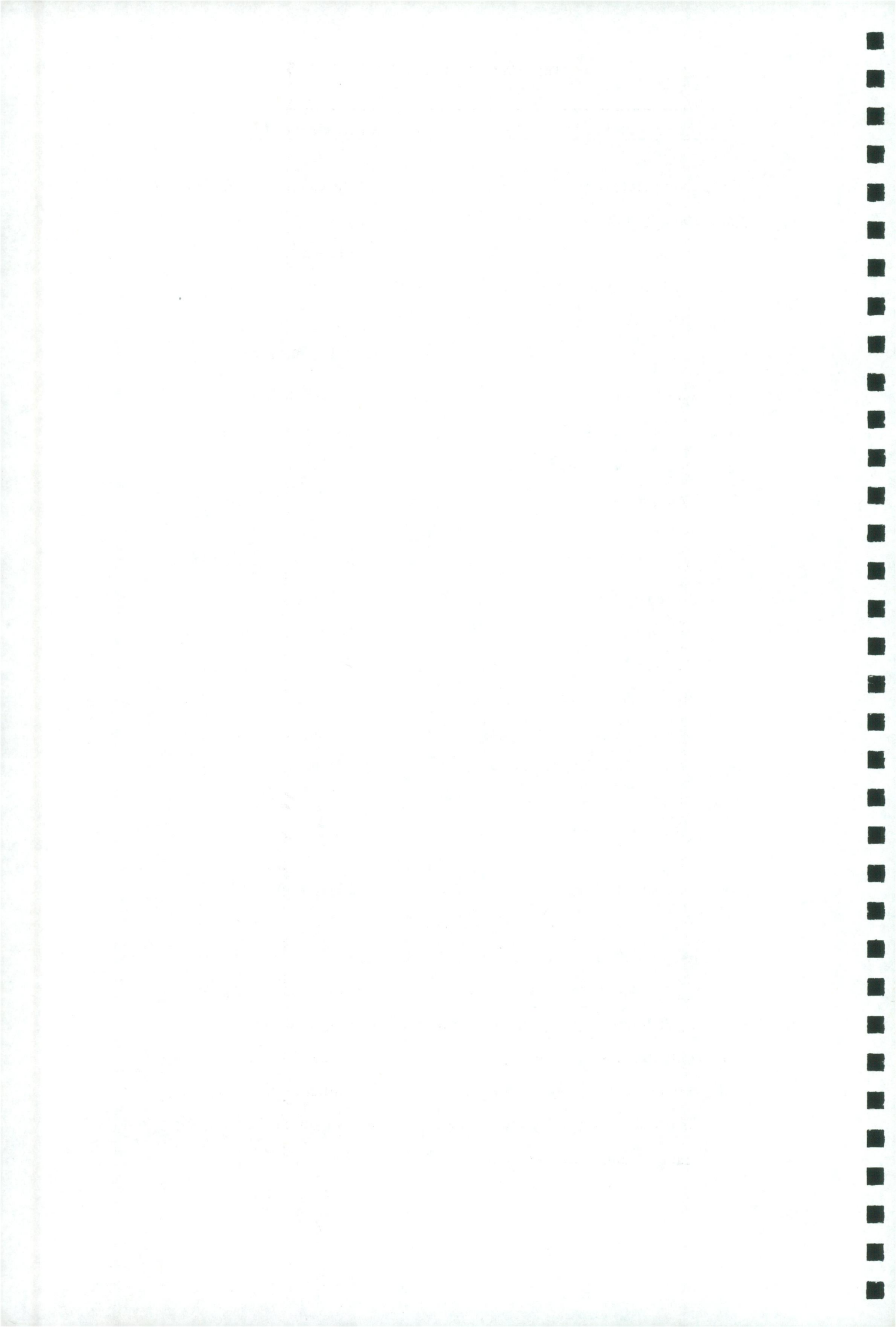
The public perception of craft today is shaped by their experience of it in a retail context, and the media that promotes it. "Each venue will directly or indirectly shape the craft object through marketing." However, is marketing being used to enhance a modern image for both craft and craftpeople, or does it reinforce damaging misconceptions?

(Ref: Dormer 1997, Pg 94)

The majority of consumers that are not involved in the craft world experience a much wider diversity of goods. What is presented as high quality is associated with manufactured goods. Additionally the public association of craft with leisure activity, has led to the limited view that an object is not craft unless it is either irregular or rustic.

By matching products to the consumer associations, the craft object is successfully marketed when placed in this context. A good example of this is way in which nearly all Irish knitwear is advertised in mystic fashion, modelled by *flame haired lassies* in gale force winds (Plate 3). The craftsman is then identified as a developer of rural economies - an indigenous minority supporting an alternative lifestyle in modern society, whose alternative values may be supported by consumerism, with products that are distinctly anti-consumerism.

Retailers, using marketing that glorifies this idea of tradition and heritage with craft as cultural markers, will have resulting sales, but are they challenging the modern craftsman's self-image? It is a fact that knitwear is the leading seller in the Irish craft market. By obscuring them in the retail context, all focus is put on the craft object. The craft object is now a commodity in competition with brand names. In this situation it is irrelevant that the object is the produce of an artisan, creating difficulty in pricing. It is for this reason that many craftspeople are now so unenthusiastic about entering into dealings with the public.



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Plate 3: A typical example of Irish knitwear advertising



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L Morgan-O'Connor states in the *Editorial from New England Wildlife Artists Quarterly* in his article "Selling Art without selling out in today's world",

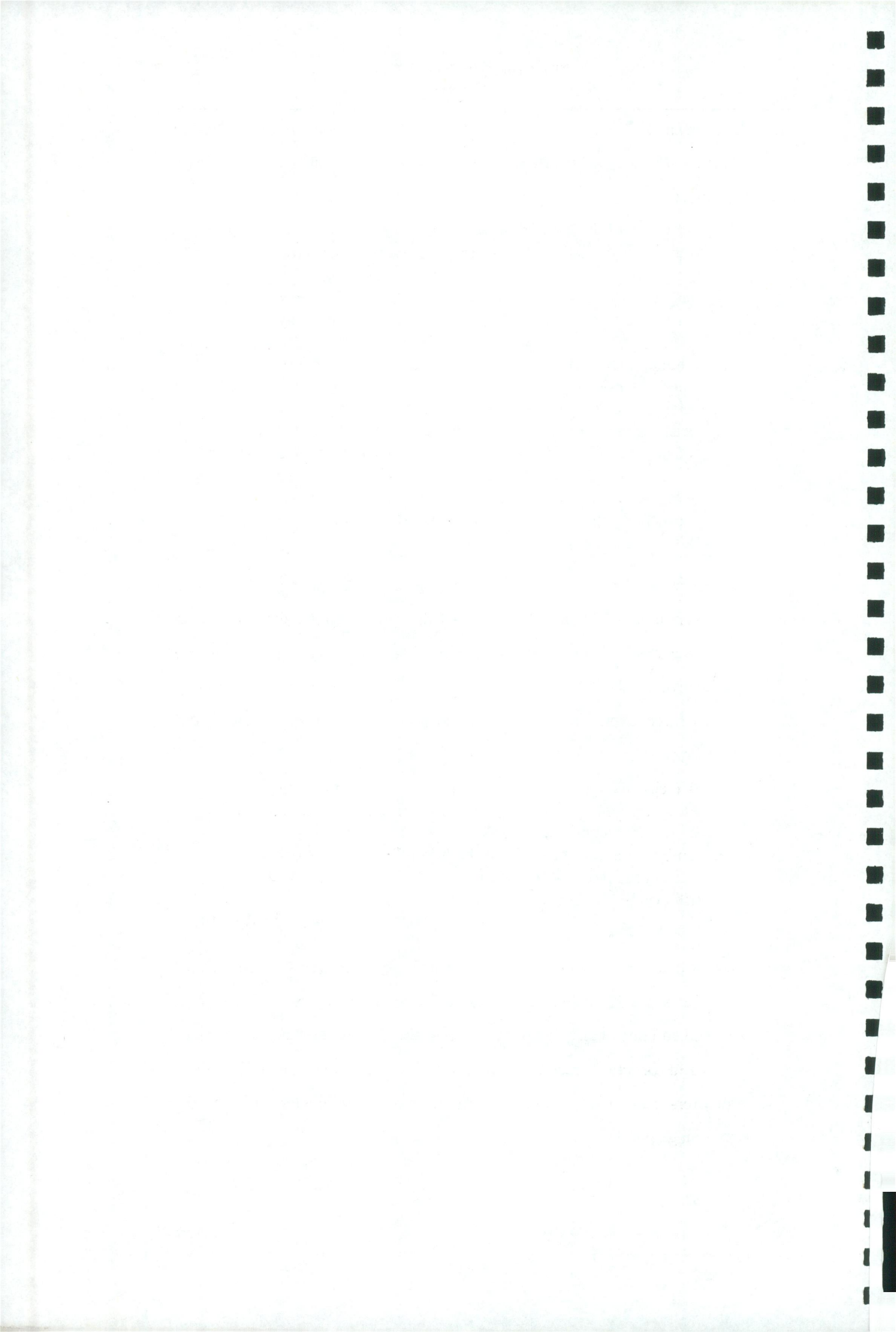
"We live in an industrial society that has a monetary standard for measuring success and worth, and little idea of the value of art. The average artist is left with the dismal task of mass producing art (if you can't beat 'em join 'em) and struggling with a generally dispassionate public about the value of owning an original piece of art work by an artist who is not working out of a painting mill in China. ...The industrial machine has done its dirty best to devalue the individual artist. It has created a sense of insecurity among buyers and lovers of art to the point where they buy for the name and not for the art in a miss guided belief that their purchase must appreciate in value (like a stock certificate) which brings us back to the monetary standard for success."

No other art form has suffered as badly in this respect as the Crafts. However, it must be said that not all Crafts are unsuited to this type of heritage marketing. It is the multiplicity of the term *craft* that means one perspective can never apply generally. It is the limited language of tourist art presented over a scenic background that has led to misgivings about *High Craft*.

"Unless we as artists, make a concerted effort to educate people about the value of original works, about the documentation of local scenes and moments in time, about the value of the transmission of current ideas in the fabric of history, then these things will eventually fade in importance."

(Ref.Morgan,O Connor.WWW 1997)

The motivation of all consumers are similar, to buy items that they feel create a sense of individuality. Even though the values and meanings attached to craft objects are very different for the insiders and outsiders of the world of craft, the motivation remains the same. Therefore, craft promoters have the advantage of using the many images of craft for common gain.

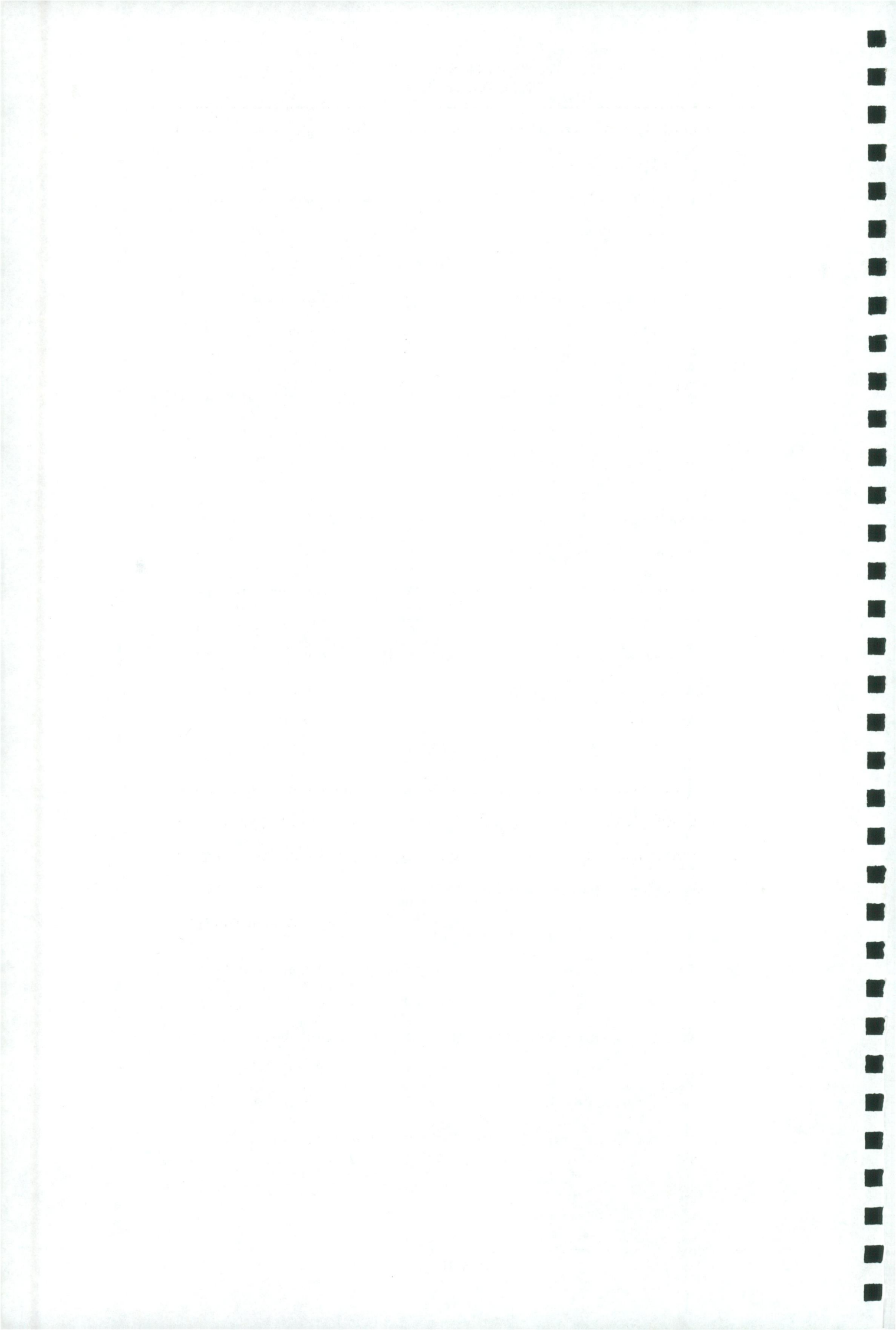


In modern society, consumerism teaches us to use objects as tools of identity, to create distinctive environments. It allows differentiation within what are largely uniform living environments. There is discomfort between the ideal of individuality and the commercial in the market. Craft provides an opportunity for the public to embrace what is both unique and special, and also to express their dissatisfaction with mass produced items. Craft can adapt both rapidly and successfully to the conflicting needs of today's buyer, who seeks the personal in a society largely organised around mass-production. However today's practitioner of craft is in a position of contradiction - although they are admired by the consumer, they are not *as* admired as *artists*. The ordinary consumer is puzzled by the value of crafts.

It was Peter Dormer, in his essay "*The Salon de Refuse*" who stated that the "*is it art*" question is actually a practical one of status that concerns money. After all anything that is *art* is potentially more valuable than a thing without that status. It is truly an argument of "cultural politics and behind them is an art world economy". It is this which has had a tremendous effect on craft in the last seventy years. It left open ground for further debate such as "why does art need craft?" The idea that art should exist without craft, and that craft gets in the way of creativity has led to a separate evolution of the crafts as an art form. Possibly the most illustrative example of this is ceramic sculpture: "The term Ceramic Sculpture is a product of debates about the relative status of Craft and Fine Art activities and the problem of mutual definition."

(Ref: Wilson 1997)

Craft can therefore be seen to be compromising between exceptionally priced or even priceless *high art* (which few buy) and its complete opposite - the mass produced repetitious pieces (which the majority buy). Craft has an advantage over many mass produced items in that it has the ability to be expressive in terms of subject matter, function and tradition. With this in mind the retail environment can promote *high craft* as distinctive



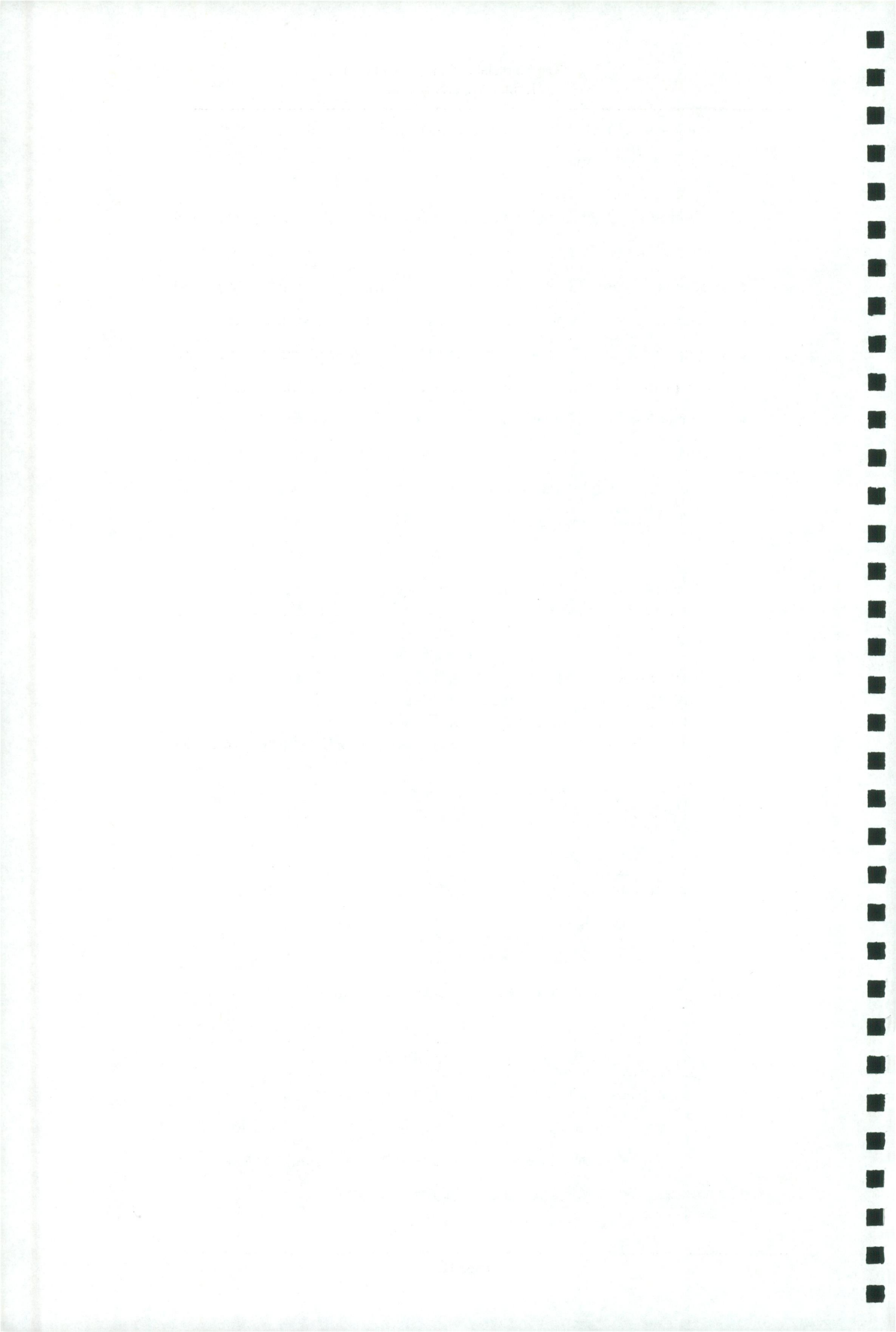
collectibles or object d'art, and the consumer is given the opportunity to form association through direct experience.

These items are sophisticated and skilled in terms of both the labouring process and materials. Through market research the modern craftperson is able to manipulate the variables of their products, creating customised items. Craftworkers through purist condemnation of en vogue marketable design in favour of orthodox forms and processes of working, believe it to be an inept mediation which fails to preserve age-old crafts or to adopt self-worth or expression. However it may be argued that due to crafts original functionality and tradeable value, that there has never existed a craft which was not influenced by either purchaser or market trends. Even as fine craftworkers in the middle ages were influenced by patrons.

"Today's artist must contend with critics, publishers, government funding and market forces; a patronage system by another name. The outcome is the same. In both cases the artist must endure an internal struggle between being true to one's self and one's art, and making a living. Any compromise at all always feels the same. It's an uncomfortable feeling."

(Ref: Morgan, O Connor WWW 1997)

With all this in mind it is clear that the retail environment has become the defining body for the image of craft and that various marketing techniques may be regarded as appropriate. Returning to the question, "is marketing being used to enhance a modern image for both craft and craftspeople, or does it reinforce damaging misconceptions?", the debate about the relationship between craft and modern marketing surfaces. Before looking at the situation at home, perhaps the larger international picture must be examined. Having chosen three examples of international promotion and marketing a picture of the current climate of the craft community develops. The following case studies include examples from each of the major market venues, the craft fair and the retail outlet. There is also the inclusion of an analysis of a promotional literature directed to the craft community with the perspective on educating them about the market place.



Contemporary Ceramics

The retail outlet of the Craft Potters Association.

Recently an article "*Facing the 21st Century*", praising the efforts of the Craft Potters Association to promote and market ceramics on the British market, was published. Not only did the article discuss the ongoing promotional efforts of the Crafts Potter Association through media and education, but also their ongoing awareness of display to market the work of their members within their shop and gallery, Contemporary Ceramics, Marshall Street, London.

In 1958, with the recognition of the need for a professionally run organisation aware of the problems within the ceramics craft and capable of campaigning on its behalf, the Crafts Potter Association was established. Its members had always been aware of the need to be forward thinking, knowing that it was necessary to make both the public and potters more aware of its existence awareness. Through successfully selling members work they have undoubtedly achieved this. Due to the introduction of selective membership process in 1961, they managed to raise standards. Supportive of this decision was Bernard Leech (Plate 4) who accepted the offer of membership having previously declined it in 1958. Unfortunately the sales techniques should have been an ongoing concern, but this was not the case.

Having received a grant from the Art Council, National Lottery Fund, the CPA decided to examine their role in changing times. They thought it necessary to destroy the reputation of only being concerned with promoting functional domestic pottery. "Contemporary Ceramics" had really been their vehicle for achieving their objectives of raising awareness and selling members' work. The refurbishment was to be the latest signpost on the ongoing initiative of modernisation. With the help of £100,000 they created a more inviting and "customer friendly" shopping environment. The interior of the shop (Plate 5), which had not been changed for fourteen years, was

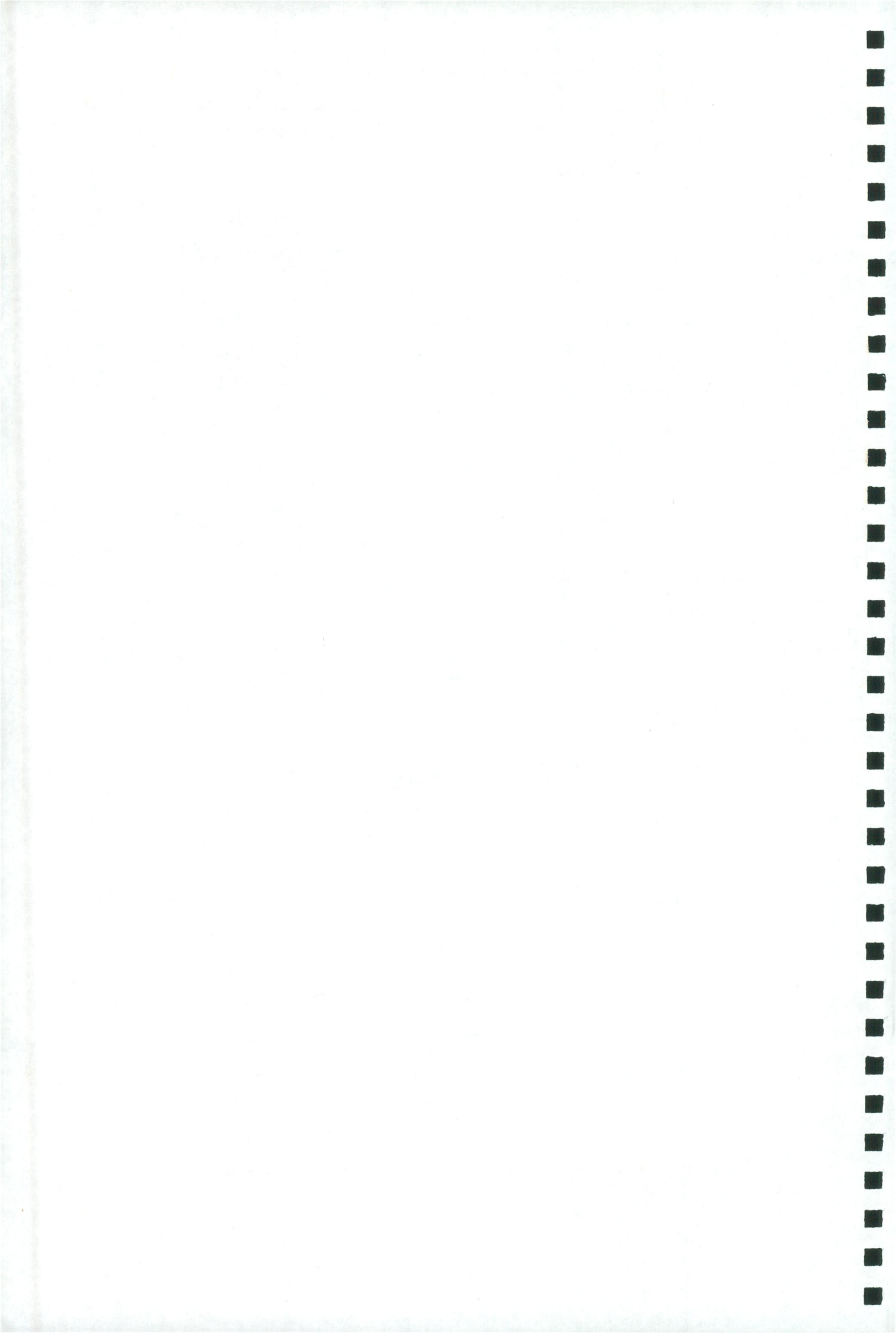




Plate 4: This stoneware vase is a typical example of the work being produced by Bernard Leech in 1958

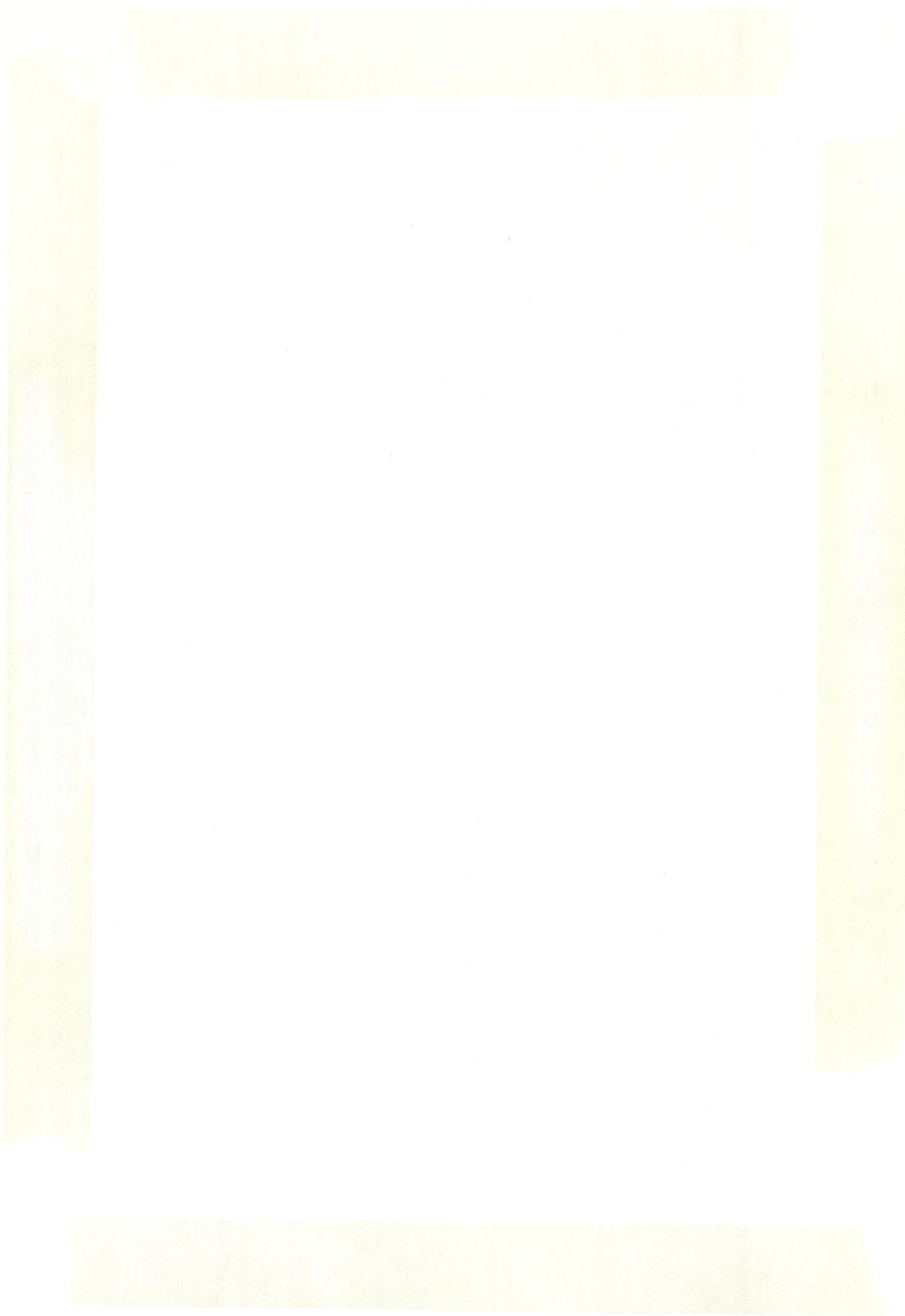




Plate 5: Interior of CPA displaying new presentation and lighting techniques



opened up and generally lightened to enhance a display of the 1990s. Establishing this they believed that they could "...display the pots better and make them look as if they really are worth spending money on. The customers love it..." After all, they are representing a variety of pots of nearly one hundred potters and covering the whole spectrum of contemporary ceramics.

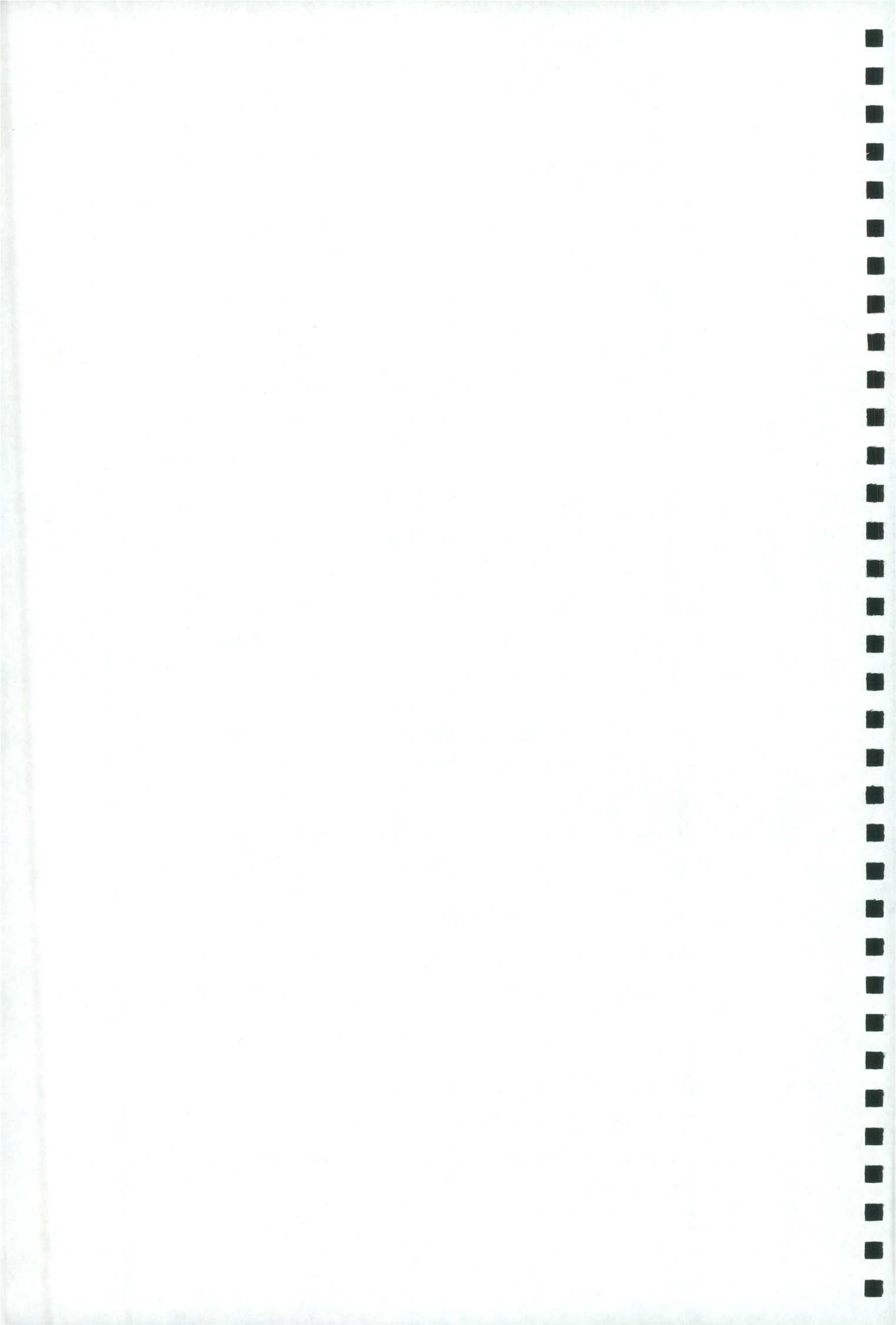
All it took was market awareness. By simply moving the entrance to the corner of the building, meeting both converging streets, they drew customers into the shop (Plate 6). This was their most significant change. Working on a good customer base, including clients from the US[?]

Their story highlights the need for craft businesses to constantly be aware of their target market. For the CPA this is only a fraction of their dedication to marketing and promotion of ceramics. In 1970 they began to publish "Ceramic Review" which now has world-wide readership, aimed at the public and potters alike. This was to be followed by a series of influential books, including their directory of members.

Educational and social initiatives are broadening constantly. Programmes of lectures, seminars and workshops visits grow ever increasingly popular. Stating: "The CPA has done more than any other organisation including the Crafts Council, in educating a wide spectrum of the public about studio pottery and in bringing the craft to the notice of more people..."

The CPA therefore has good reason to be proud of itself. Too often the promotion of the crafts suffers. This is surprising, considering that both sales and status can be increased, through the use of marketing techniques.

Through self examination the CPA is now trying to come to terms with an identifiable problem. In the hard sell of modern business, it becomes increasingly difficult for any association to continue on a purely voluntary basis. They realise there is a position for a paid official to take responsibility for public relations, advertising and marketing. In the one



 THE
CRAFT
POTTERS
ASSOCIATION

contemporary
ceramics



contemporary
ceramics



Plate 6: Exterior of the new CPA shop/gallery, Contemporary Ceramics

Vertical strip of yellowed paper on the left side of the page.

Horizontal strip of yellowed paper at the top of the page.

Horizontal strip of yellowed paper at the bottom of the page.

Vertical strip of yellowed paper on the right side of the page.



area of criticism, they are striving to find somebody responsible for overseeing that the policies which the Council has initiated are implemented.

This illustrates the fact that there is a British awareness of the crisis of identity within craft, and how one organisation has allowed marketing to provide an interpretation to validate craft within a consumer society. Marketing has the ability to provide numerous interpretations of craft, this may increase consumer *puzzlement*, or further divide *high* and *low* craft. However, it is also an opportunity to nurture any given image for craft in the market place for public scrutiny. Another piece of literature was also published this year in Britain, which reinforced this feeling. Peter Dormer's book the 'Culture of Craft', was a collection of essays involved in the debate.

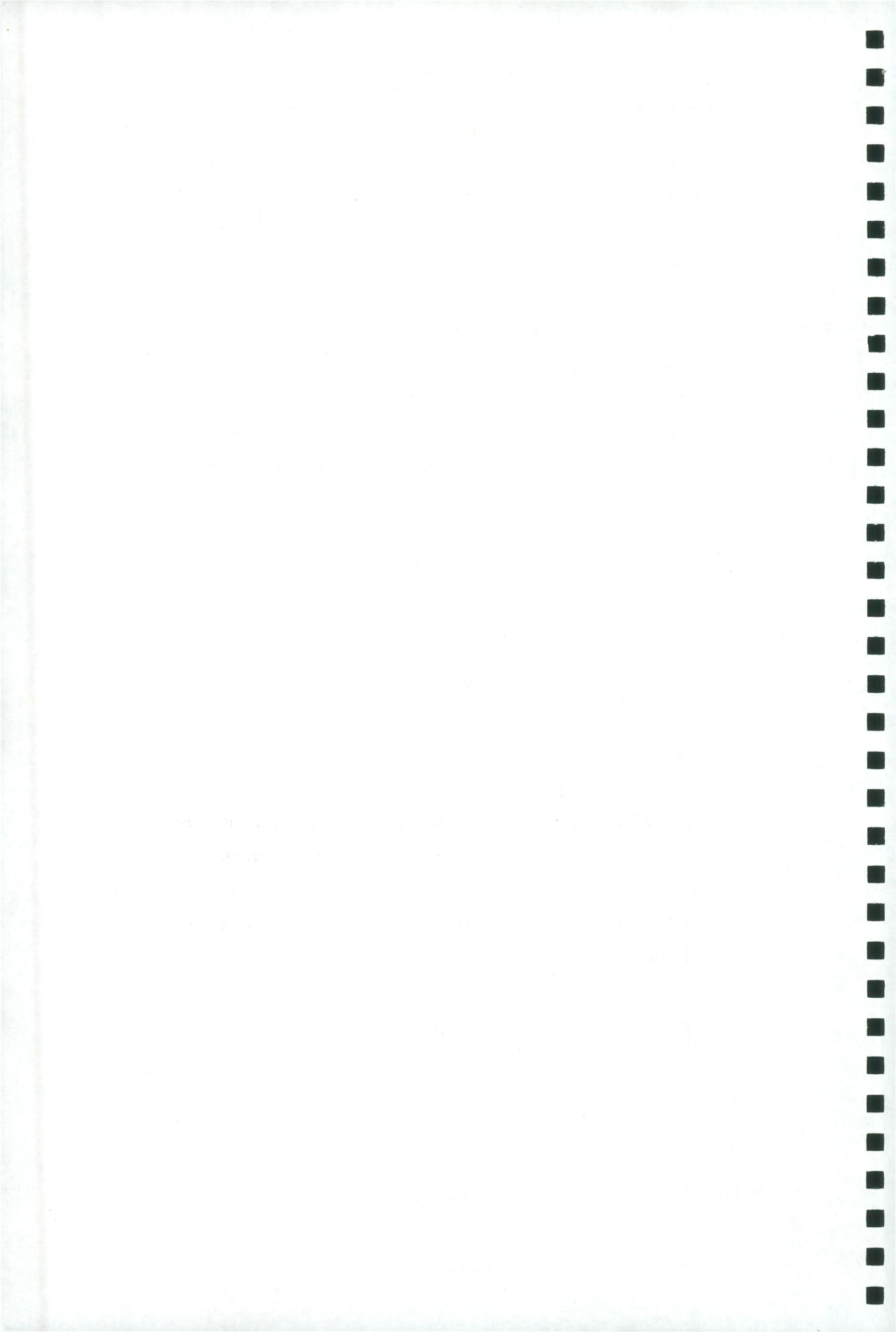
One of a Kind Canadian Craft Show and Sale

Gloria Hickey's essay examined Canada's most successful craft fair, the "One of a Kind Canadian Craft Show and Sale" in her essay, "*Craft within a Consuming Society.*" She discovered extensive market research results in better sales each year.

(Ref: Dormer 1997 Pg 83)

Through extensive advertising within the media they have found it more productive to promote the shopping experience, rather than craft with the consumer public. To learn more about their consumers they conduct studies each year to allow them to provide the customers with what they want. Their telephone surveys allow them to create an accurate shopper profile, according to age, family status, income and purchase level. All this allows them to provide an appropriate 'mix' for the following year.

This information contributes to their understanding of the consumer's expectations, so discovering that the English speaking public had misconceptions about craft, associating it with 'self-sufficiency', 'country craft' and 'thrift'. French-speaking Canadians however had a wider



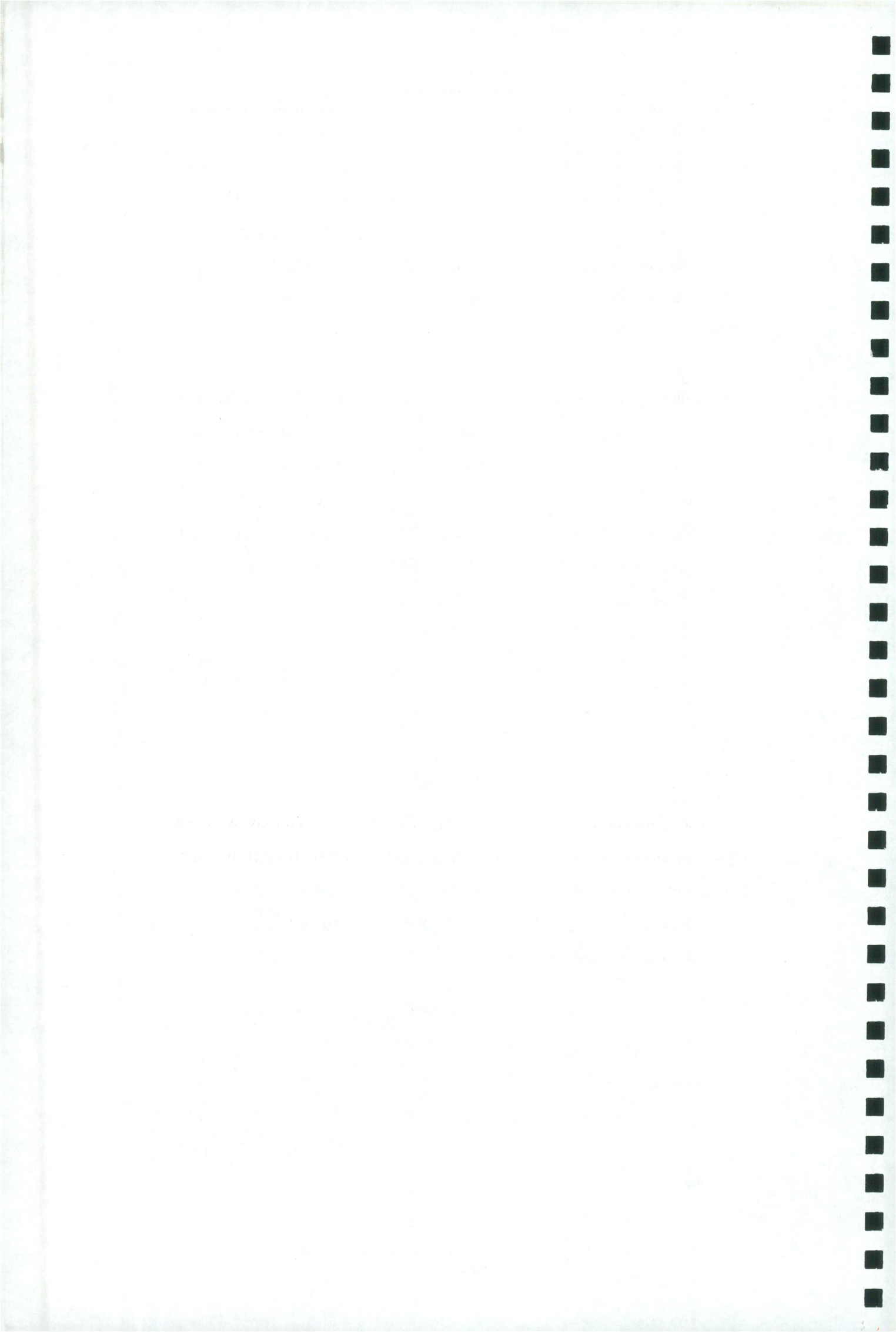
understanding of the crafts, realising that it was not necessarily 'primitive' or 'domestic'. It was they who identified their presence as 'visiting' rather than 'shopping'. There was a general theme of 'meet the artisan'. The problem of evaluating the crafts resurfaces as both sectors felt that high prices did not meet their expectations of craft. So it was necessary, to provide a 'something for everyone's purse' price range - from \$10 to \$1,000.

Importantly their marketing strategies were also introspective. Rather than try to 're-engineer' the image of craft, they enforced professional appearance. Applications for stall-holdings were either accepted or rejected on the basis of products, stall presentations and professional conduct. This illustrates that it is imperative that the modern craftsperson maintains a professional persona in the marketplace. Unfortunately this is not always the case. Although, they have the ability to produce high quality marketable commodities, few are trained or even familiar with market etiquette. There has come about a trend within craft media to force an awareness of this problem.

The Craft Report

America's November issue of "The Craft Report" dealt entirely with the marketing of craft goods, with the perspective of educating their craftpeople readers. It included articles such as "*Target Your Market*", "*Crafts and Catalogues...a Viable Option...*" and most interestingly "*The Artist's Statement - Your Secret Weapon*".

Several articles advised readers on general business related issues. These included establishing small businesses, financial support, and the importance of location to find a market, all of which could be applied to any business. Yet they illustrate a growing awareness of the need for the craftsperson to wear many hats, and be responsible for additional positions in their own business.

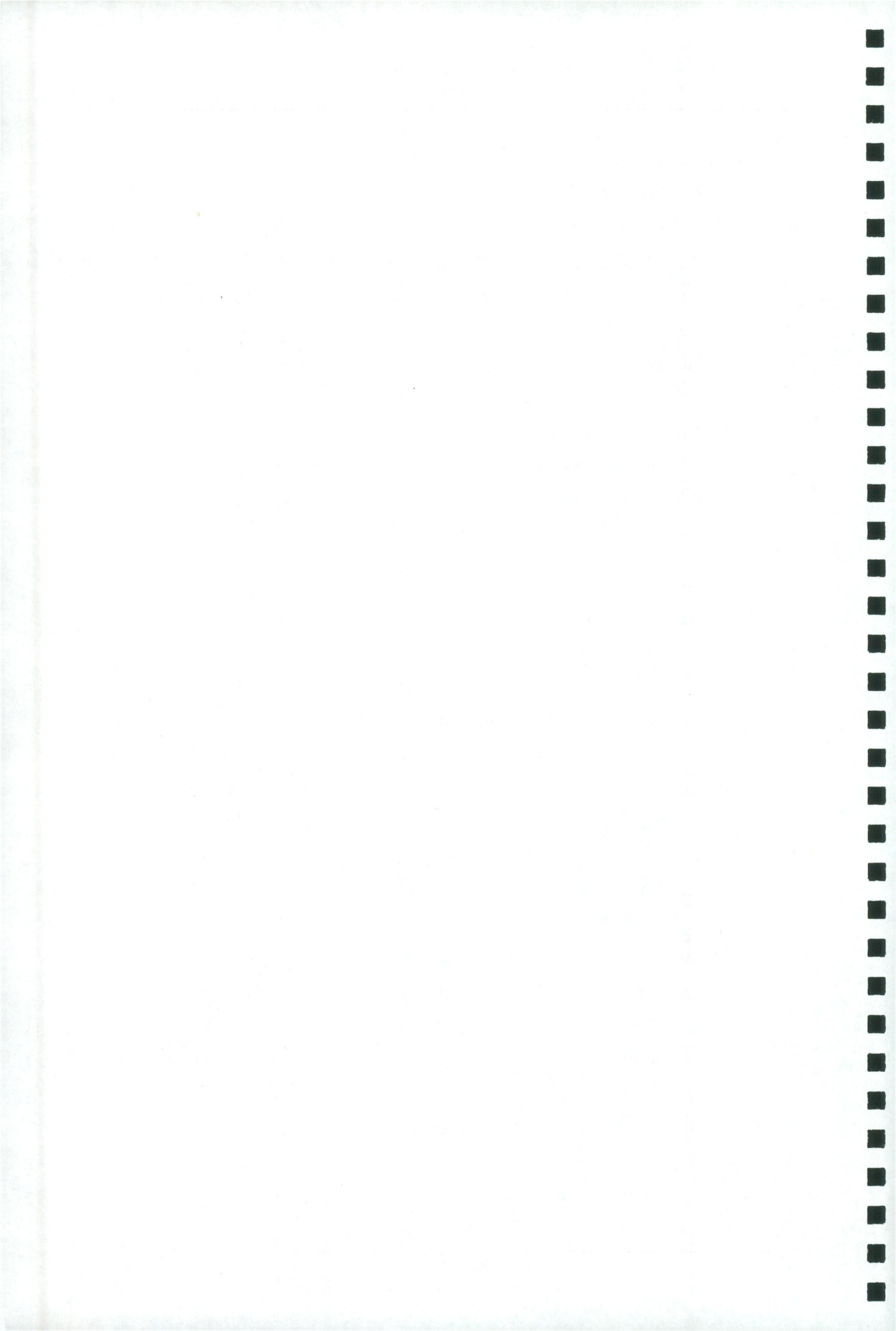


They stress the need for a good marketing plan, stating that "if you're in business, you need a marketing plan" - reinforcing this, it is explained: "In trying to run all aspects of the business - creating, selling, billing etc - marketing often gets pushed aside." For too long, bad business advice has prevented craftspeople achieving a professional status. It is pointless trying to create high quality craft objects without creating an outlet for them. It is important to remember that the crafts are an original tradable commodity - "Remember: You can't hit a target if there's no target." Although economics and craft have not always been comfortable companions in modern business, by asking the craftperson what they expect to achieve, they become more appreciative of marketing tactics that may compliment their products. "After all, you can't market effectively unless you know your market, your customers and your competition."

There is another article, a discussion about in 'ins and outs' of one of America's most popular forms of purchasing. The catalogue shopping experience is an American phenomenon, but whether it is compatible with craft marketing makes for a topical debate.

There is always unease when trying to sell something as tactile as craft, by such two-dimensional means. The images can portray varying levels of justice to the items. Even so, the attractiveness of selling by this means is increased by the thoughts of increased profits.

With this type of selling, a semi-production process is essential. Therefore, making it completely incompatible to one of a kind articles. The investigation into such areas, for the benefit of the readers, recognises viable ways of marketing craft goods, effectively raising standards. However the reverse opinion is also voiced: "...it's basically free advertising. It allows more people the opportunity to see your work; it's exposure." Again recognising the public's experience of crafts in a retail context shapes their perception. Also the recognised association of craft



with modern marketing strategies creates a competitive existence for this merchandise.

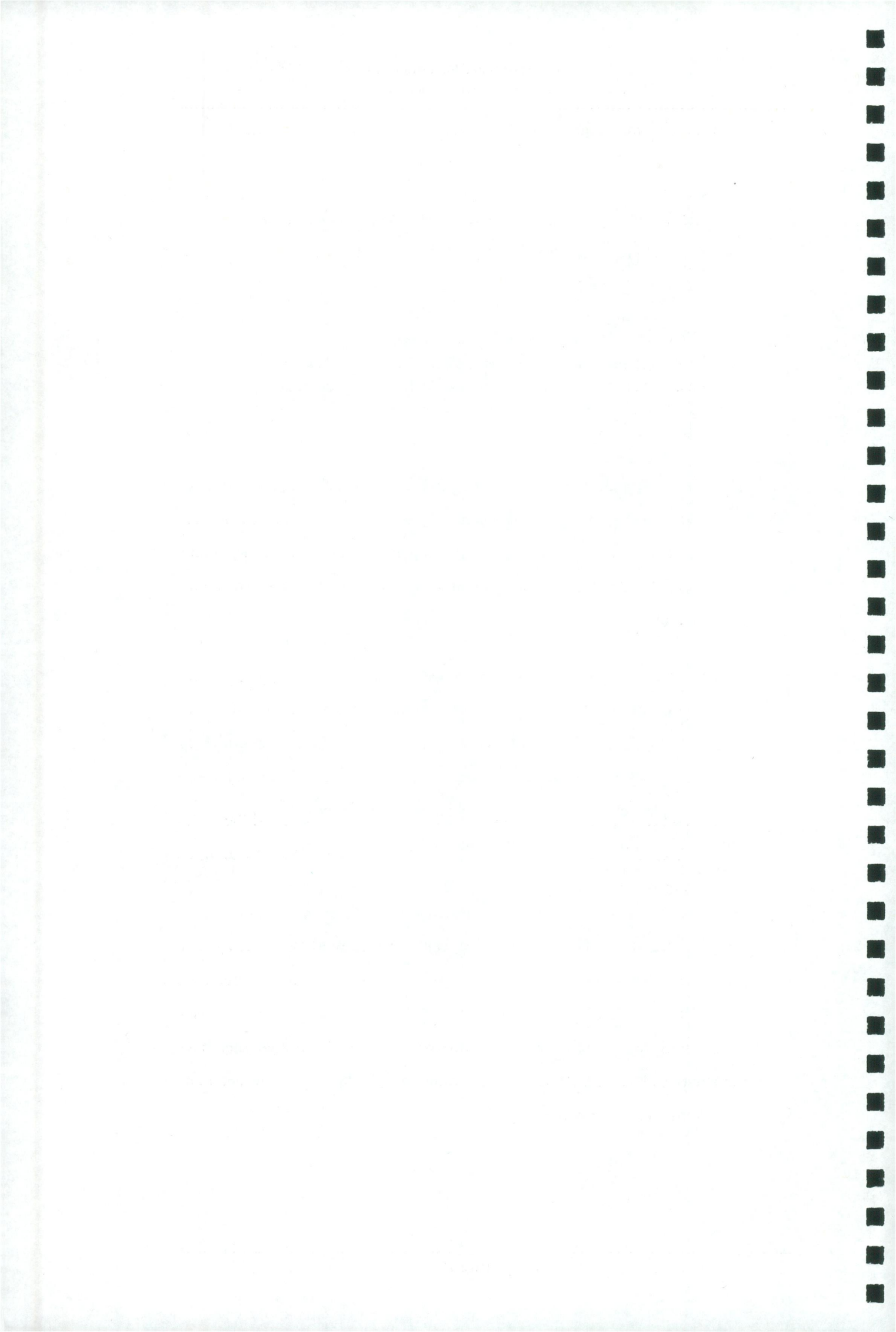
It is the knowledge that unfortunately so few craftspeople have a valid business background, which allows Craft Report to spell out, the factors involved in marketing.

"Advertising allowances can be either a percentage of sales or an amount per item. Many artisans have not built this into their pricing structure." This explanatory fashion continues later when stating their opinion that "For studio artists, catalogues haven't seemed cost-effective, if even feasible."

There are two additional essays designed to benefit the reader's marketing skills. One of these is *United We Stand, Divided We Fall*, an essay by Patti Dowse, illustrating the advantages of group marketing. The essay, under the section "craft basics", clearly identifies that promotion and marketing are essential.

The idea of 'group marketing' means that there is no excuse not to market your goods. It is an essential exercise if craftspeople are to communicate positive images for craft. By dividing, the time, money and effort of showing work between the group, individual risk is dramatically reduced - "For example, several people can combine what might have been marginally successful studio sales into a small hotel show."

Dowse also states that it is not just increased profits that is the advantage of group marketing: "The publicity they can generate working together, and the more prominent location that they can collectively afford creates a whole that is greater than the sum of parts." Exaggerating the point, she states that if the group operates as a non-profit organisation, they then have the ability to re-invest the money into printing, advertising, space rental and other show related expenses.



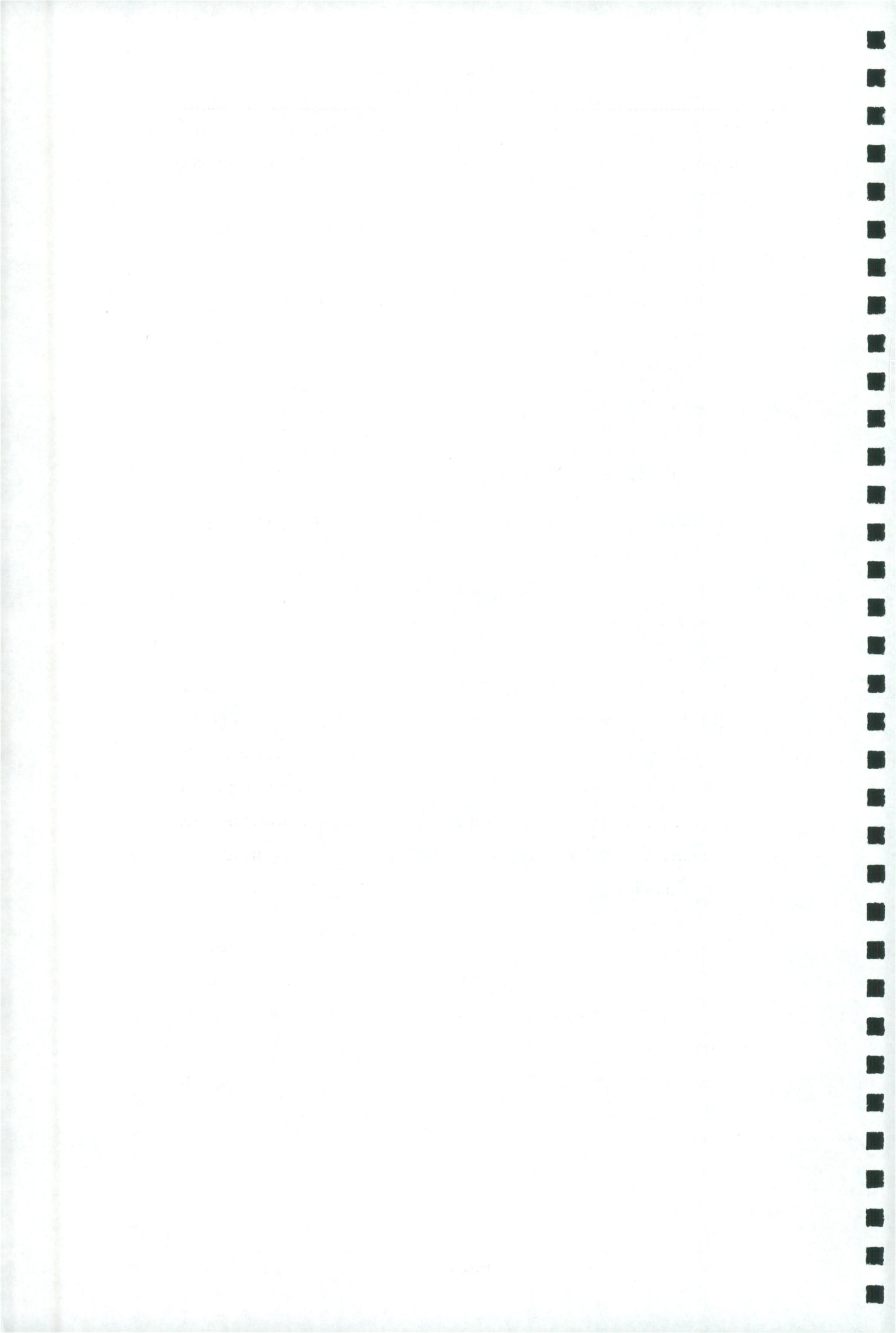
Patti Dowse, who is a freelance writer, also owns a craft business. By using craftspeople who are not only involved in making processes but also business initiatives, "*The Craft Report*" can supply relevant information for its readers. The readers are on the same level as the writers, who can give practical advice on attainable means of marketing. This is obvious in Dowse's essay, which takes the tone of 'informative handbook' in its advice to first-time exhibitors:

"The potential for creating a competitive presence in the market by combining resources offers small businesses some great opportunities...joining with others spreads the risks out, so the effects of one bad show, or advertisement are not so disastrous, and less time and energy can be spent on marketing."

The textbook tone within the articles was continued and exaggerated by Ivan Barnett's writings. His article "*Your Secret Weapon - The Artist's Statement*" takes a commercial look at what he describes as "being invited into the artist's psyche."

Initially taking a historical perspective he states that the artist's statement is a relatively new concept. A concept which gained a trade value during the business driven 1980s when sophisticated exhibitors recognised the purchasing affect it could have. The fact that such promoters began to use marketing techniques in relation to artistic practices in itself raised the status of the merchandise, developing as a commodity. Yet it was also treading on the ground of inappropriate intervention.

Through the article he continues to compare marketing techniques to artistic endeavours. He equates the "artist's statement" to the common retail strategy called "Point of Purchase". In fact, as one glances over the article, one can not help becoming suspicious of the impersonal manner he suggests a statement should be composed. The issue of inappropriate market intervention evolves.



In his "dos" and "don'ts" he seems to categorise craftspeople with *used car salesmen*, reminding them to "be honest" above all. He seems to suggest the craftsperson should maintain a different persona for each retail venue:

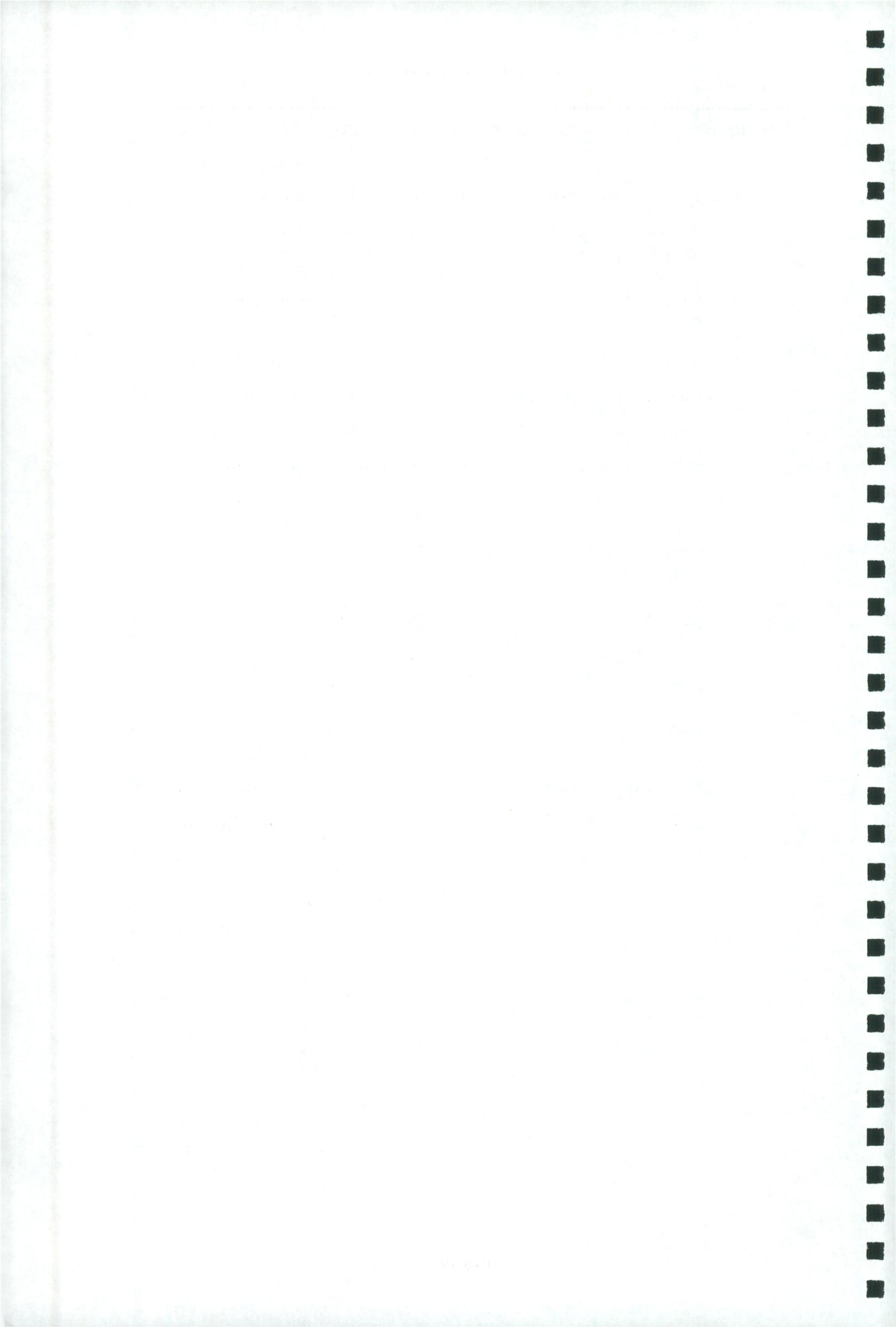
"You are expected to be commercially savvy in the mainstream markets, but at the craft fair, you are expected to be more of the creative, "right brain" type, the double standard, while still knowing about your business."

Without trying to romanticise the profession it is true to say that many craftpeople live for their work, and perhaps it is this lifestyle that is taken for granted. Yet one cannot help agreeing with Barnett's final conclusions that the consuming public do expect point of purchase literature with every sale:

"Your artist statement is a part of this phenomena 'your story' as a craft artist can be one of the most effective selling tools you have."

He urges craftspeople not to underestimate the value of their abilities to create and to use every marketing ploy available to them to achieve maximum reward.

Through this examination it is possible to gain an understanding for the place of craft on the international scene. How is the Irish craft community learning from this, or ^{has it} even initiated its own marketing innovations? By examination of the Crafts Council of Ireland, who by its own admissions, identifies promotion and marketing of the Craft industry as one of its main functions, perhaps an insight of our own market place can be ascertained.



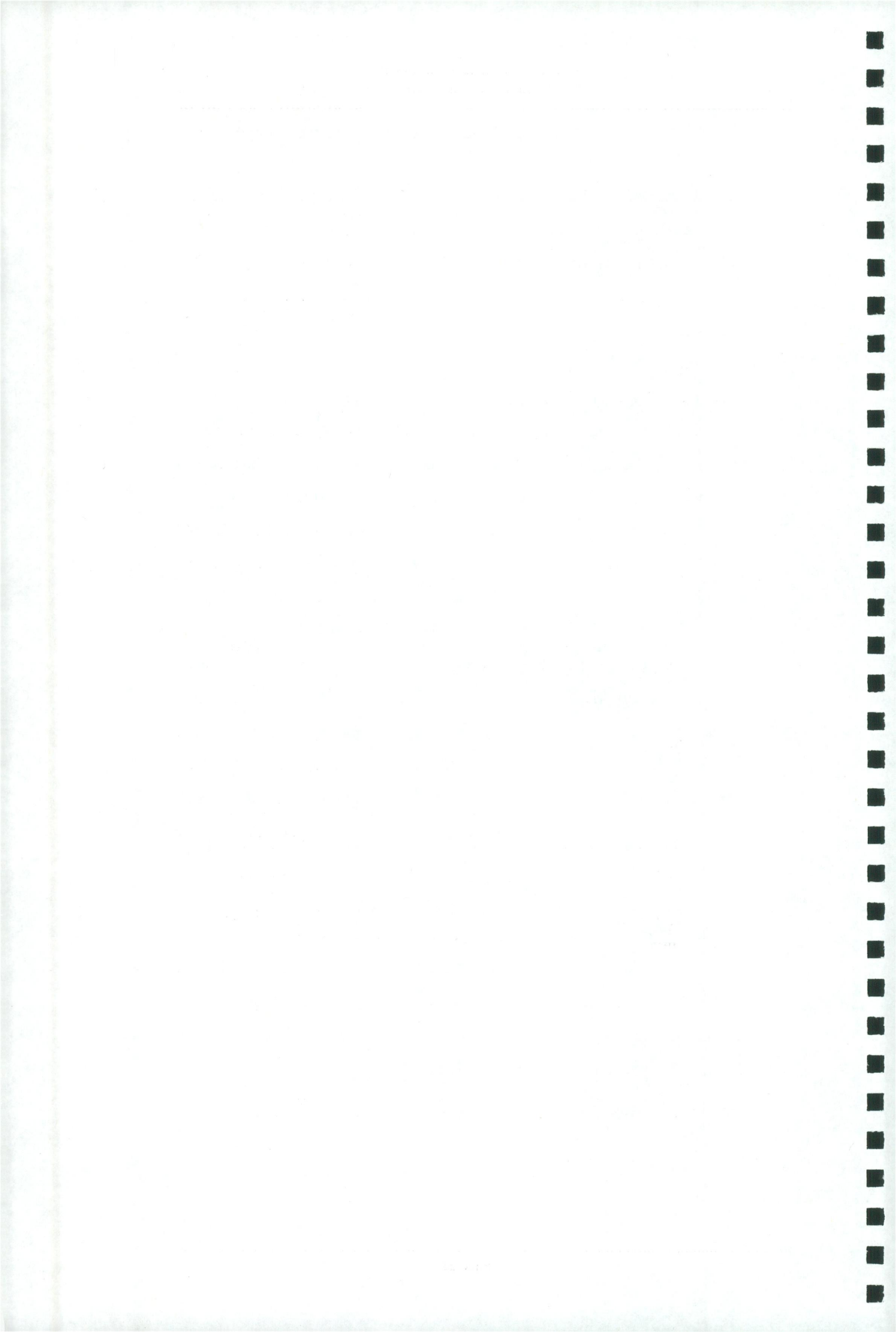
Chapter 3 - Crafts Council of Ireland: A Case Study

Ireland was the 1st European country to establish a state design service, Kilkenny Design Workshop, in 1965. Its legacy was the Crafts Council of Ireland, which operates as the national design and economic development agency for craft industries in the Republic of Ireland, entering its 21st year of existence.

Through its experience the Crafts Council now traces its progress from its "first co-operative grouping of traditional craft organisations to this year's major policy theme of product and market development." This is evidence that there has been a change in perspective within a consumer society. The Council also identifies "assisting the industry in promotion and marketing" as one of its main activities, but what influence have their promotional activities had on the retail sales figures or on the image of crafts in Ireland?

The Crafts Council operates on funding from Forbairt, (Ireland's industrial development authority), and the European Union. Its existence is designed to protect and create employment within the industry, and to increase income through sales of craft work. The Craft Council stated in 1997, that they had devised "an integrated approach to securing the future of the craft industry." These are admirable sentiments, yet the specifics of their implementation are vague.

In their policy statement of 1997 the Crafts Council stated that "commitment to quality in design, production and marketing is the key to the long term prosperity of the craft industry in an ever changing market." By maintaining expansion of this market share, the Craft Council can develop an opportunity to portray a positive image of the industry to the public.



Showcase

The major forum provided by the Craft Council to retain market share is the annual Showcase held in January, at the Royal Dublin Society (R.D.S.), Dublin (Plate 7).

Showcase is Ireland's largest trade fair, the cost of which is estimated at £750,000, with expected orders for 1998 cautiously estimated around the £25 million mark. However, Cyril Forbes, chairman, optimistically, stated in the Sunday Times, 24/12/97, that he expects figures to pass £25m, possibly reaching £28.5m. From these figures alone it is clear that *Showcase* truly is 'big business'.

At *Showcase*, an individual craft business may generate up to 50% of their annual orders. The Craft Council has undertaken research to identify the destination of this indigenous produce. The publication of this research allows craftspeople to understand their market place, aiding the product design and development process.

For instance, approximately 1,000 of the 7,000 buyers that attended *Showcase '95* were foreign. *Showcase* is co-ordinated by 'Eurofairs', the company responsible for design management and administration. Eurofairs undertakes the market research at *Showcase* for the benefit of the Crafts Council. Their preliminary research at *Showcase '97* showed buyer attendance to be up by 6% on 1996. They also revealed that the majority of foreign buyers came from the United States, European mainland, Japan, Australia and the United Kingdom. The attendance of these buyers had been seen as a significant increase, especially from Northern Ireland. At *Showcase* events in recent years over half the orders placed have been destined to foreign retail outlets. In 1995, from the £23 million overall sales £13 million was generated through export sales (Plate 8).

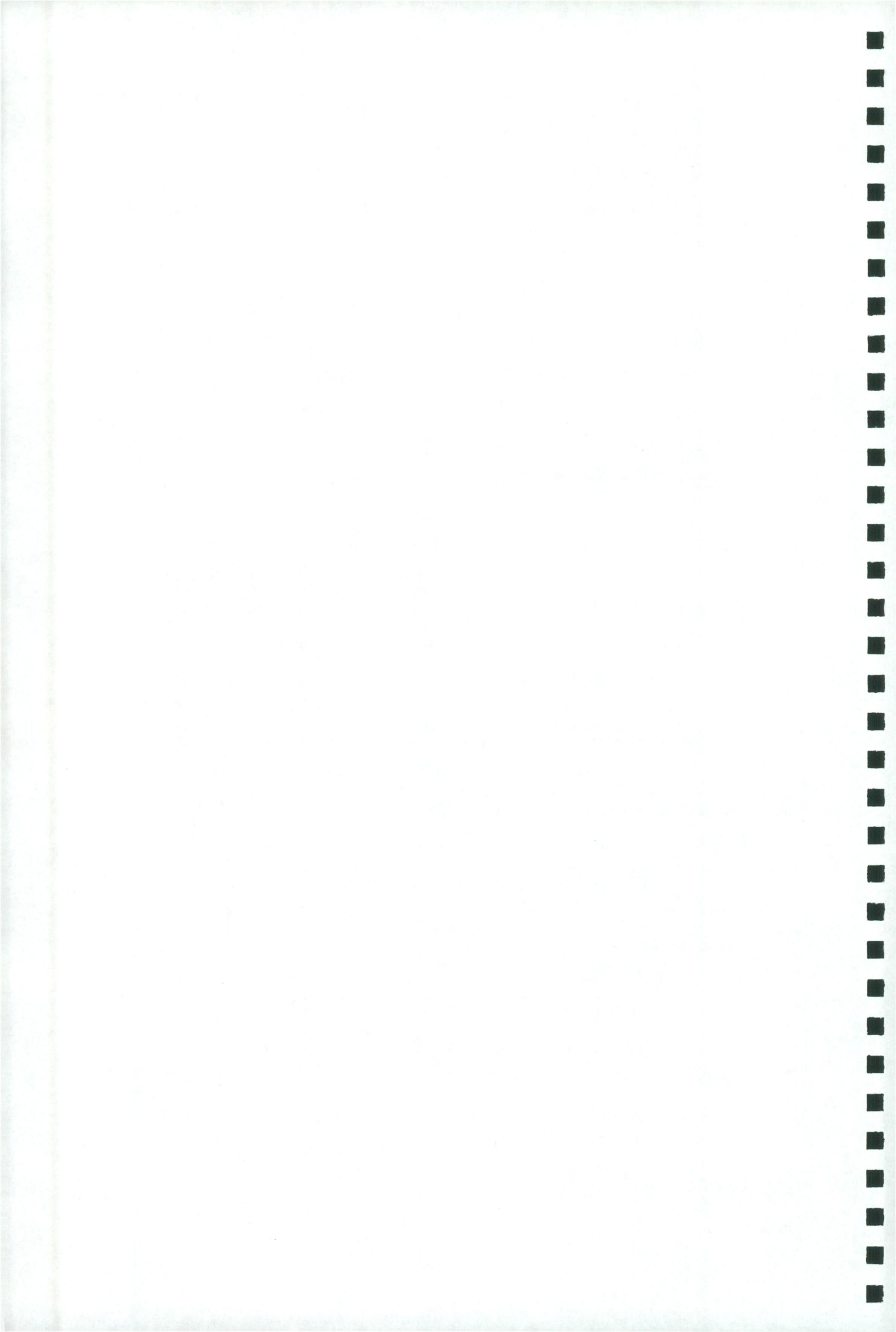
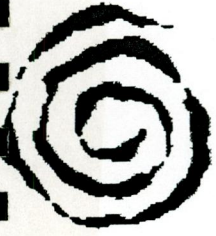




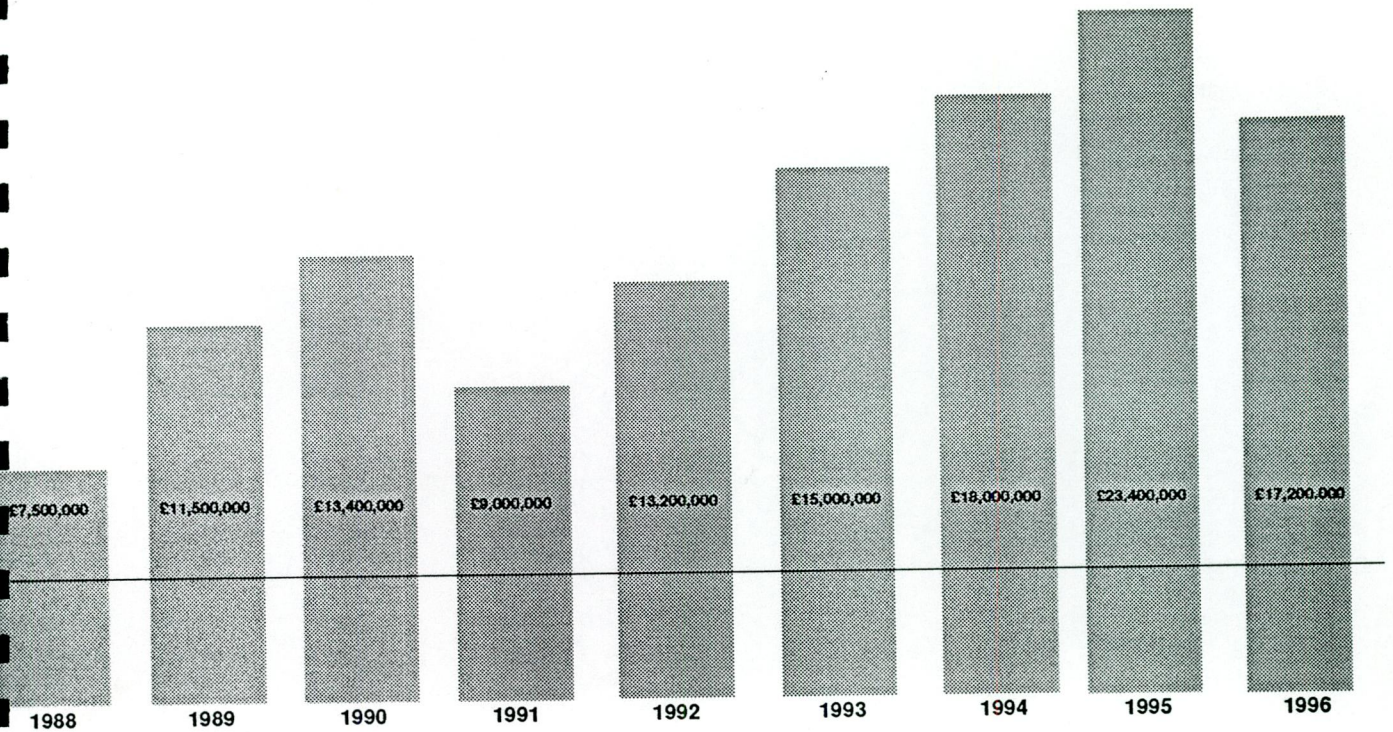
Plate 7: Showcase Ireland 1998, RDS, Dublin





Statistics from "Showcase Dublin"

Sales figures from 1988 to 1996



"Showcase '96"

Total Sales: £17,200,000

New Jobs: Exceeded 636.

Buyer attendance 1993 : 4265
Buyer attendance 1994 : 7000
Buyer attendance 1995 : 8200
Buyer attendance 1996 : 8400

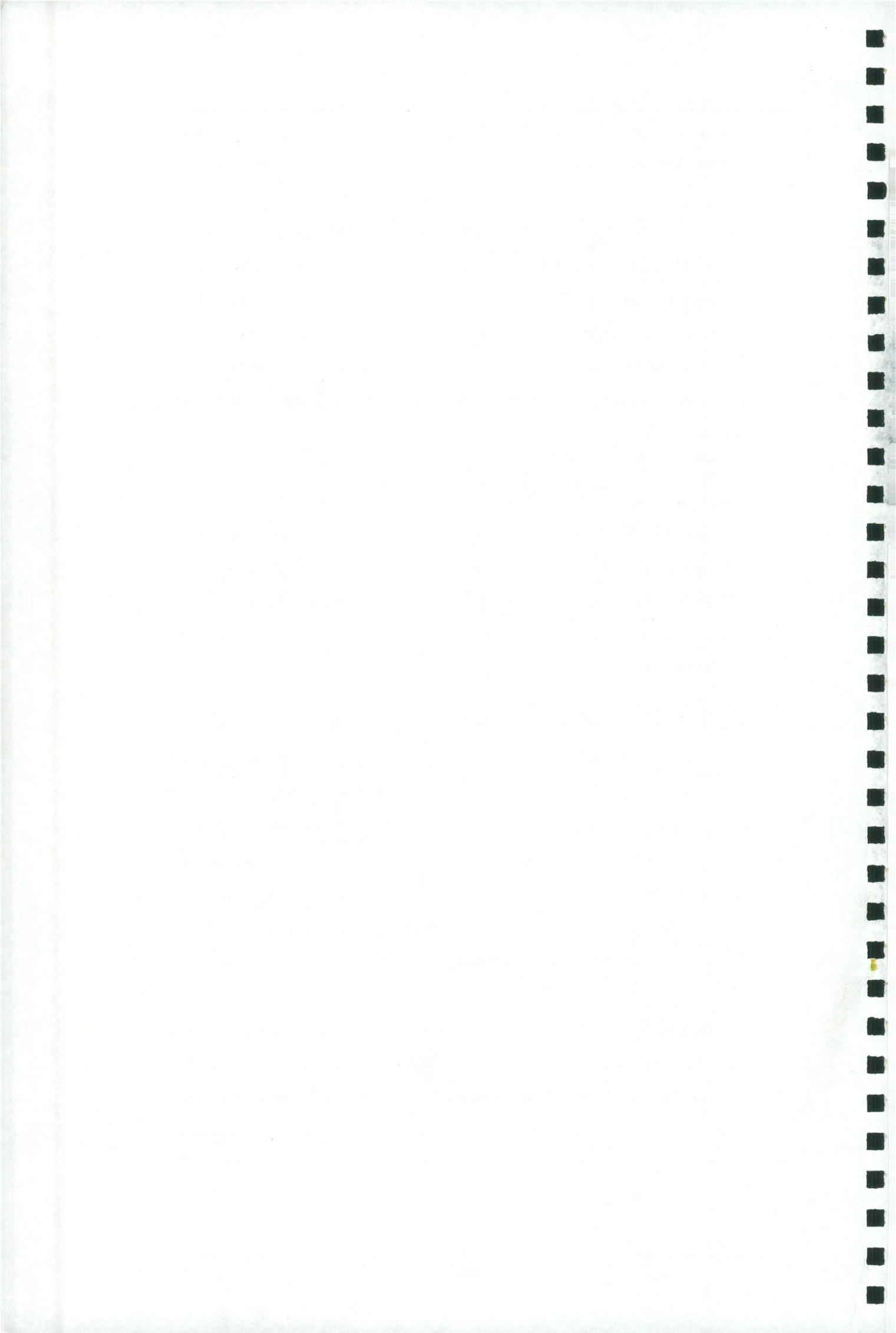


The vast range of products at *Showcase*, echoes the range of suppliers coming from many different backgrounds, from High Craft, to industrial manufacture, ethnic product to global design. This illustrates a previous point about the multiplicity of the term craft, and extent of the craft market. The words craft industry are often used as a convenience. The many diverse sectors which make up the industry have very different requirements in their marketing and in their cycle of product development. Yet it is still the Crafts Council's responsibility to formulate policies which meet the range of demands. Fortunately the Craft Council seem to have created the right 'market mix'.

Showcase forum is basically divided into four sections to allow craft suppliers to exhibit with like-minded peers. The first would be 'Craft Village'. This sector consists of various high quality studio craft produce, all of which is supplied by craftworkers registered with the Craft Council. These stalls carry the quality logo of Craft Council, who think of this area as their own.

An associated area to this would be 'New Faces'. All first time exhibitors have been juried for product quality and design innovation. These exhibitors may progress to show in the 'Village' in following *Showcase* events. A prime example of this would be Alan Ardif, the quirky jewellery designer who won the Forbairt New Product at *Showcase* Award in 1997, who went on to prime, coveted position in the Craft Village in 1998. Although delighted with the award he felt disappointed that there was not "greater P.R. uptake" on his achievement.

The next sector consists of small craft companies exhibiting in the balcony area, their *low status* stock would be less expensive, yet lacking in the superior quality of the industrially manufactured goods in the final sector. This final sector encompasses the widest field including prestige manufactured products such as Waterford Glass, the produce of the Irish Knitwear Exported Guild or even the merchandise from such companies as



Claddagh Records. All the sectors: “... are equally important employers and we help the smaller companies who often do not have backup support.”

However, every *Showcase* exhibitor is under contract to exhibit only products made within the European Union, and under obligation to inform the Crafts Council or Eurofairs of any foreign products. Important shifts towards the single market have encouraged a freer flow of goods into Ireland, meaning that indigenous produce is facing increased competition from Europe. However it is the entrant of goods from the third world market that threatens to endanger our economy.

One might imagine craft workers exhibiting in the ‘Craft Village’ would be apprehensive of exhibiting in the company of such large industrial manufacturers as Royal Tara and Waterford Crystal, or even the overtly commercial Baby Elegance, producers of baby accessories, bibs and hats, etc., which all proudly carry slogans such ‘Smile if you’re Irish’ or ‘I got Irish roots’. However, the general opinion expressed was that one cannot afford to be condescending within the market place. All producers at *Showcase* are fulfilling a gap in the market and the needs of the mass market do not detract from the market share gained by the producers of high craft merchandise. For example, the demands of the Irish American community for items that they feel associates them with their heritage, are no less important than a purchase that one might associate with the High Craft sector. One craftworker stated: “You can’t give someone cream, if they want milk, the trade fair has to provide for all forms of craft.”

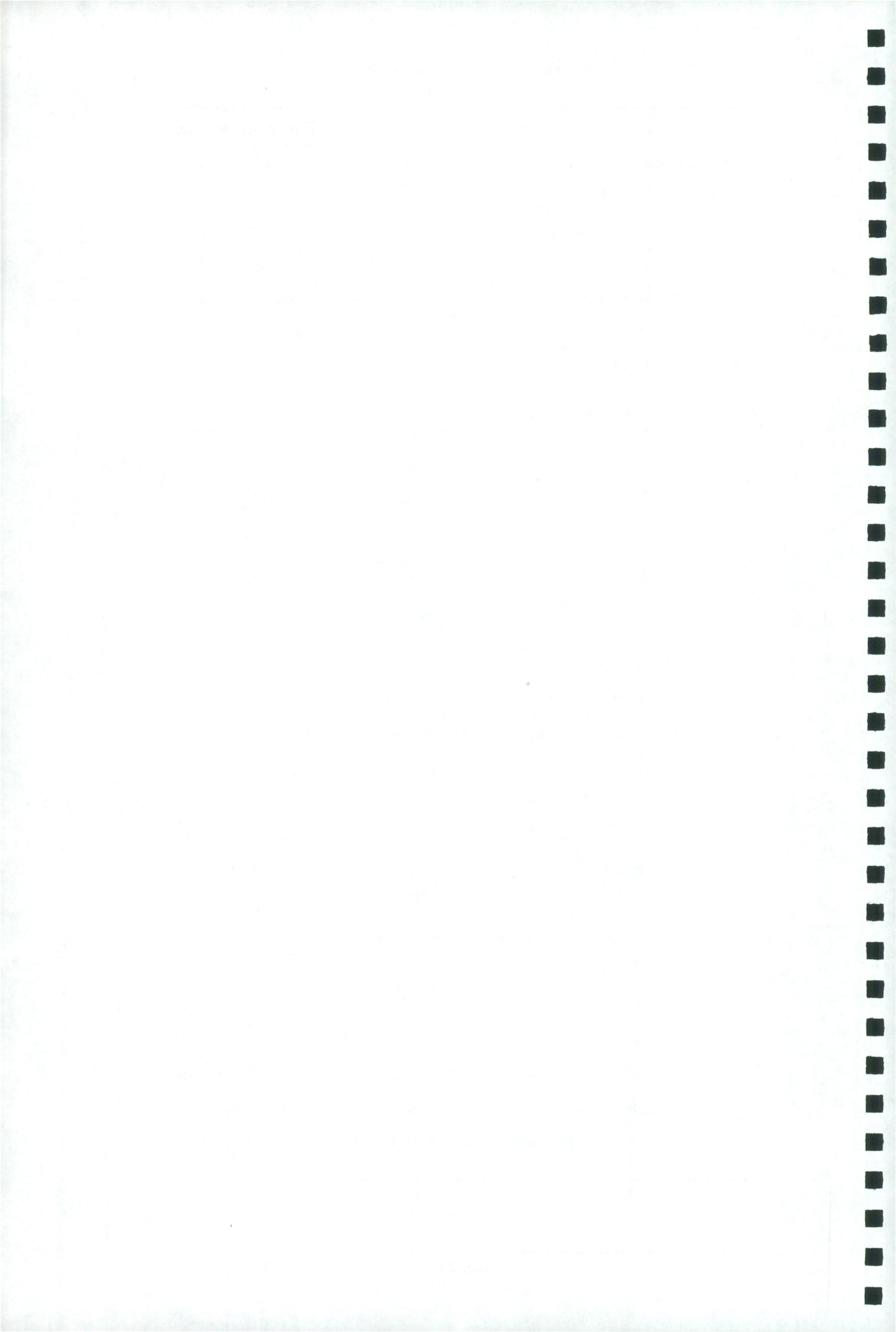
The term ‘craft’ is as vast as it’s numerous associations in the market place. Therefore such a tradefair must use the many images of crafts to its advantage. One should not necessarily accentuate the differing sectors of the industry, there are common difficulties experienced by all manufactures, particularly in making the case of their economic importance to the larger state support agencies.

Showcase '97 saw an all time high of 607 indigenous craft people, designers, manufacturers and industries. 230 of which were subsidised by the Crafts Council ranging from Craft Village, the balcony, the tent and New Faces. The Crafts Council newsletter issued after *Showcase* dissected many relevant marketing practices. Yet the publication was not afraid to identify mistakes and highlight possible solutions, underlining commitment to product development. Through interviews with both buyers and exhibitors a detailed analysis was collated.

One American buyer Paul Carey, from Irish Design Centre, Pittsburgh commented that though plenty of business took place, there had been "little product development" and described the event as a "routine year." "You normally see less design innovation the year after a good year - the craftspeople are too busy filling orders to be able to spend much time on new product development."

The issue identified trends in product design, and enforced the necessity for buyers to associate a products with retail outlets. The apparent disinterest of young craftworkers to create 'ethnic produce' that focus on traditional themes of heritage, means that such craftspeople need to place their produce within a relevant outlet; that is, allow a product to match consumer associations within the market place, not become obscured by the retail environment. The fact that a sector of the craft community have reacted to a new demand from the public for a particular type of craft merchandise identifies a current market awareness and a changing image for a new breed of craft worker and produce.

"Whether it be for reasons of fashion or personal taste is still to be established, but the influences of abroad and a shrinking global village cannot be ignored in the work of younger crafts people..." was the Crafts Council's understanding. Swaying interest in the production of work which needs a *strong Celtic stamp* to be validated, echoes a positive change in



direction from the clichés of tourist art. This should be used to the advantage of retail outlets. Kathy Ford, chief buyer with Simon Pearce Emporia, U.S. shared her views in this publication.

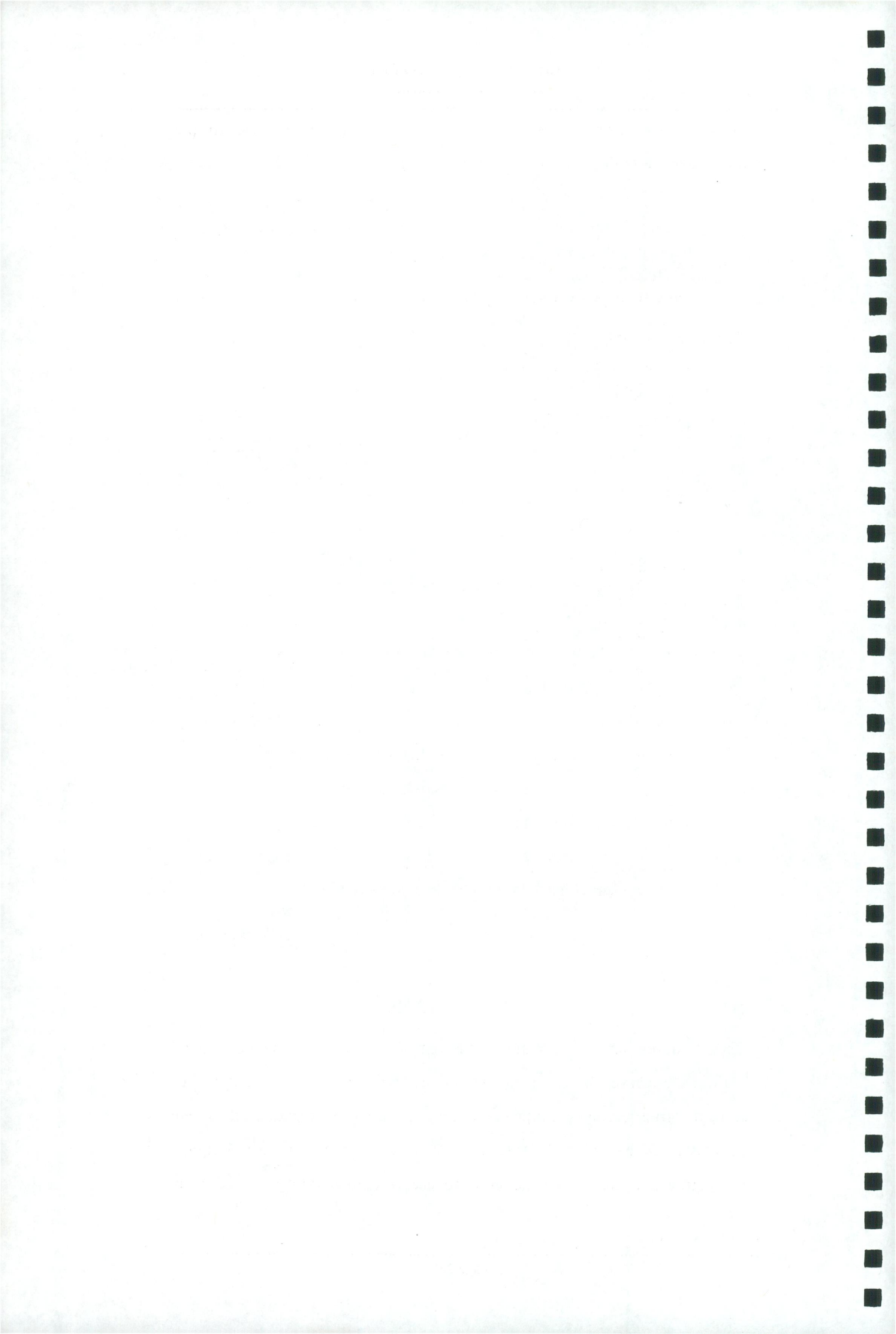
"I was delighted to visit New Faces, and found the area a wonderful addition to the show. The Simon Pearce stores stock a variety of products, about half of which would be Irish in origin, but our purchases are based very much on a design criteria..."

As a development of this a few exhibitors that year had produced prototypes of display and point of sale material. This is a practice that caught on, and used to great advantage at *Showcase '98*. The manipulation of such marketing techniques become a self-financing service.

The variety of presentation and display at both *Showcase '97* and *'98* have been a credit to the exhibiting craftspeople. Appropriate display is of key importance. It does not necessarily have to be elaborate or expensive. A good example of this would be one of the New Faces exhibitors in 1997. Deidre Rogers covered her space in brown paper adorned with her trademark glassware design. The construction of own specially made glass shelves, on which she displayed her work, also provoked interest from buyers, architects and designers seeking similar commissioned pieces. Clear evidence that good display pays. The importance of these practices may only become obvious within the retail environment, when the craft object is in clear competition with similar brand name commodities.

Skills Training Programmes

The discussion about the status of the crafts and the public perception of craft in the market place is linked to the profitability of the industry. If this were not true for many craftspeople the opportunity to create craft would be satisfaction enough, but the case remains that the industry must continue to portray positive images for craft to enable craftspeople to maintain a



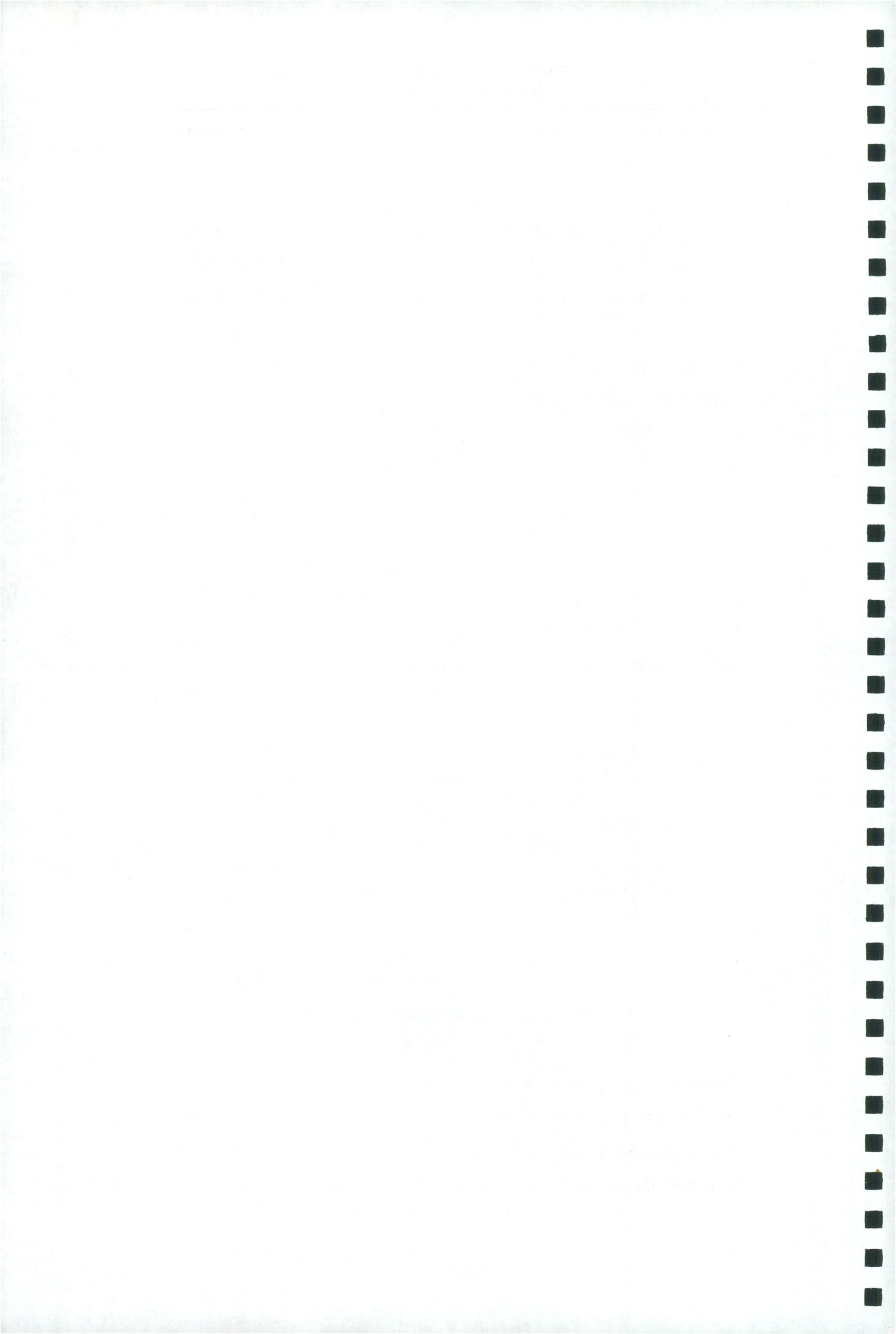
living. Therefore the growth of young craftspeople is of the utmost importance to the growth of the industry.

The Crafts Council has long identified training as an important initiative with which to serve the craft industry. It is true to say that craft education gets more difficult to justify in a climate of economic constraint. That is why it is important that craft education courses can justify themselves in terms of empowering their students with the ability to find employment. If a course is an outdated model of vocational training then it should not be in existence. However, it should be this that closes down courses, not prejudices against craft as viable business. If training courses were to identify demand within the marketplace and then equip their students to cater for such demand, not only would there be greater economic satisfaction there would also be greater sense of purpose for such new craftspeople. This was an issue of great debate at the National Association for College and Higher Education Conference in February 1997. Lecturer, Mick Wilson stated in reference to modern theories of teaching conceptual skills in craft practices:

"Students do not often respond well to an education that enlists them into uncertainty and crisis. It is often hard to motivate productivity when scepticism seems almost universal...conceptual skills developed in the student must necessarily enable him or her to negotiate complexity, ambiguity and conflict...conceptual skills becomes here a species of life-skills applicable to all aspects of contemporary social experience."

(Ref: Wilson 1997)

This is why the Crafts Council training programmes, as opposed to the 'art school' educational programmes, have been so valid in recent years. The Craft Council describes its courses as 'flexible' and 'market responsive'. This awareness of the market has made these training courses successful in terms of placing students with employment. Perhaps even more importantly these courses are creating a generation of craft workers who are prepared to supply the market with high quality goods that are relevant to



contemporary consumers, and not relics of a bygone age for the sake of nostalgia.

Over the past few years, the Crafts Council, a semi-state body, has been re-organised, and a decision has been made to work more closely with Forbairt and county enterprise boards, in an effort to blur the strict distinctions between craft and small manufacturing enterprises. Furthermore, training, particularly in areas such as pottery and jewellery, have been co-ordinating with colleges of art and Vocational Educational Courses programmes.

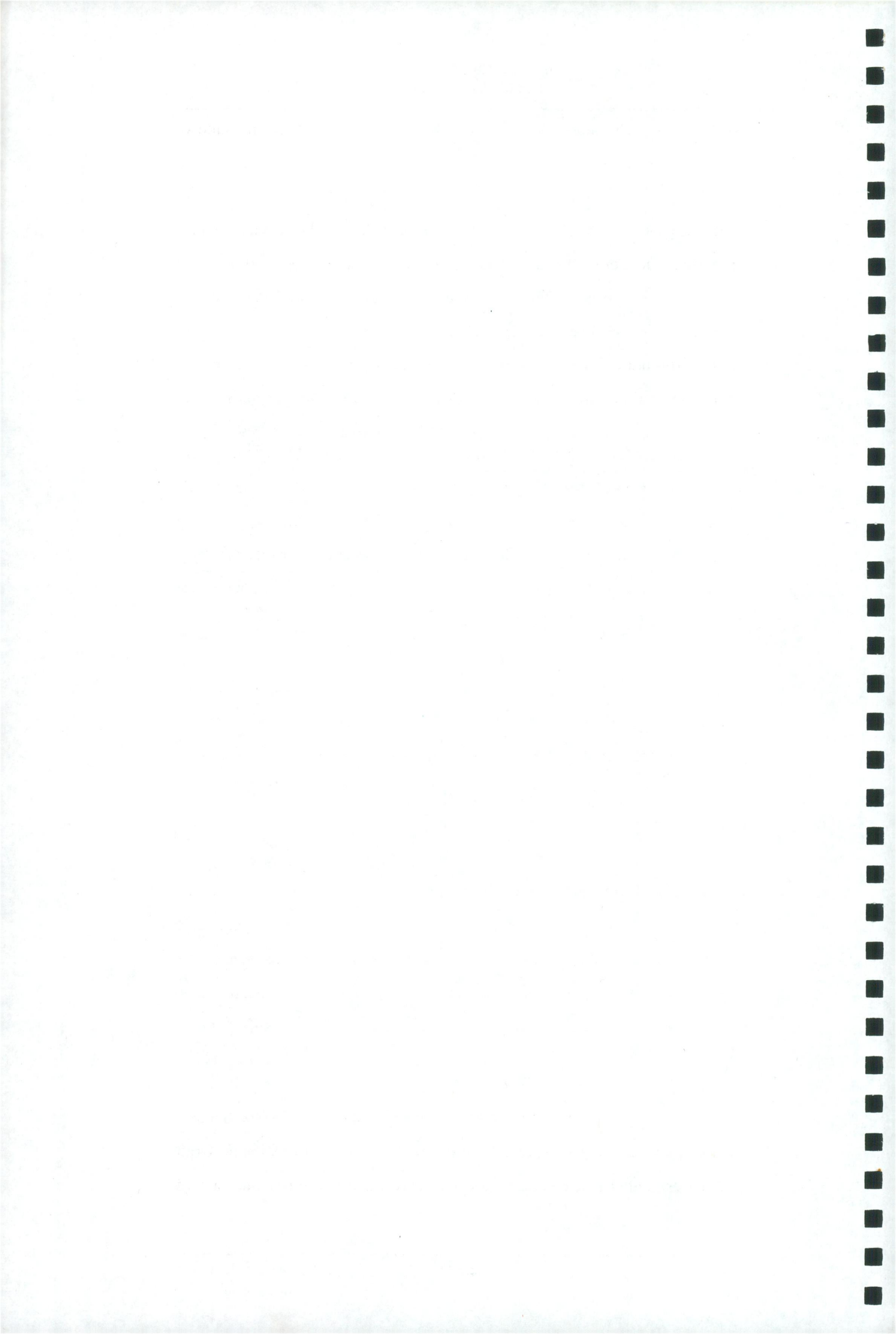
The main training centres are situated in Kilkenny Design Studios, specialising in jewellery, and nearby Thomastown Co. Kilkenny, specialising in pottery. The success of these courses can be demonstrated in a very tangible way, by looking at the employment statistics. Further training, acceptance of graduates in workshops abroad and the level of acceptance of graduates work in retail outlets are all evidence of this.

It is true to say that the Irish jewellery trade was initially sceptical of the *Jewellery Design and Production Skills* course. However, having seen the standard of the training, the Federation of Irish Jewellers and the Jewellers and Metalworkers Guild have applauded the course and fully endorse its continuation.

Last year there was a review of the pottery skills courses which concluded that there is still scope for more potters in this country. In every year since the course started, employment offers in the craft have exceeded numbers graduating. "All those who have completed recent potters courses have secured jobs." (Ref: Flynn

24/12/97)

However, it is not only the provision of employment but the standard of such employment that is of relevance to the workforce. In 1995 the Craft Council estimated that the average net weekly wage was £109 one or two



years after graduating, rising to an average net of £143 per week between two and three years after the course. Given the average age and experience of the trainees it was in line with industrial averages, showing the trade clearly values trainees. "In national terms the 30 full time workers contribute a conservative £500,000 in extra wholesale turnover."

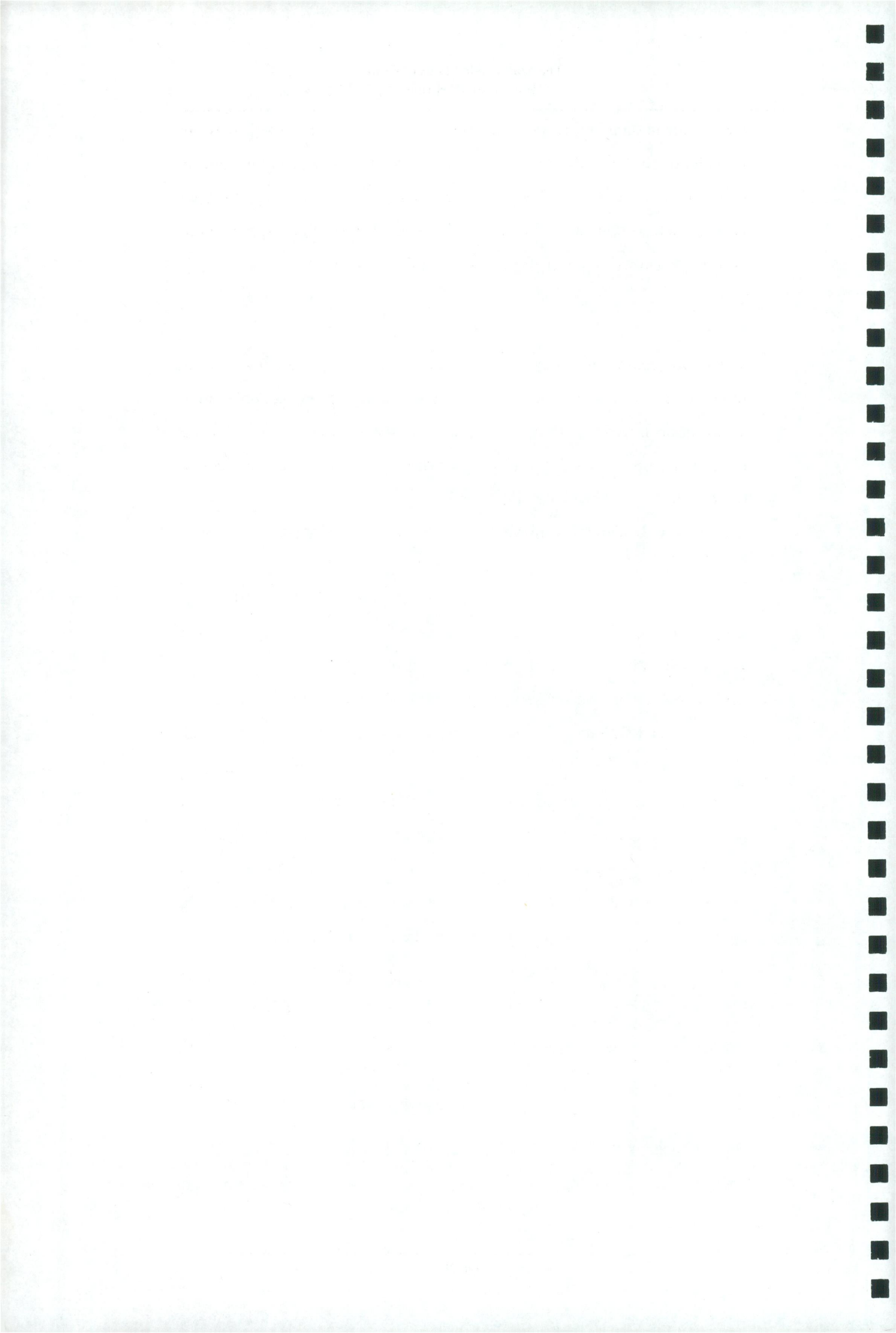
(Ref: Crafts Council Newsletter Vol 20)

These two courses are only a segment of the training programme. In the modern climate, computer aided design courses are becoming imperative. There is an overriding theme of market awareness relating to all further education programmes devised by the Craft Council; with specific focus on display and marketing skills. Illustrating this point was the evolution of the Display for Tradefairs seminar, held in Kilkenny, in 1997; and later a seminar on a subject of ever growing importance - export.

What is obvious, through the examination of the Craft Council training policy is that awareness of the market place is essential. Unfortunately most third level training courses seem to shy away from the intimidating world of business. A focus must be put on the needs of industry and commerce. Training students to create for personal satisfaction does not equip them to cope with the harshness of a business orientated society, nor does it aid crafts within an insular world of contemporary craft, where the word itself carries enough negative associations to hasten its educational decline. Operating in this climate of insecurity the Craft Council should be commended on its ability to look beyond the pretentious values of the *art school* and *art world* and so provide for a new breed of craftworkers with the opportunity to develop productively within their chosen sphere.

Retail Policy of the Crafts Council

Dating back to the September/October 1995 issues of the Craft Council newsletter there was dramatic evidence of craftspeople's dissatisfaction with



the retail policy of Craft Council and the location of its outlet. A letter, written to the Craft Council by a concerned interest group consisting of practising craftworkers, including Geoffrey Healy, Micheal Roche, Anthony O'Brien, Micheal Jackson and Micheal Kennedy, was published that month, clearly defined the opinions of the group, "*Close the Powerscourt Townhouse headquarters.*"

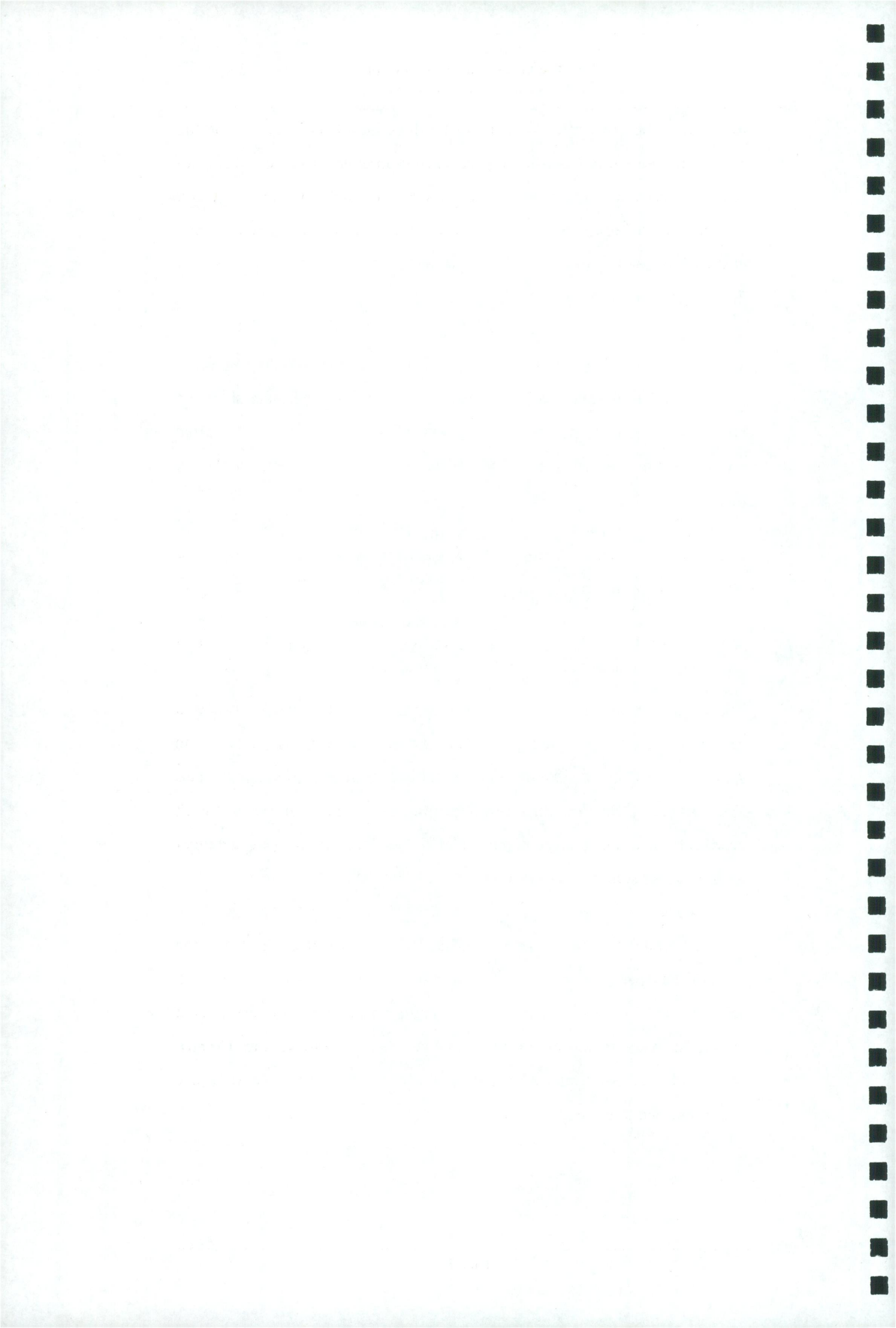
The Powerscourt Townhouse Centre, which was at that time the home of the Craft Council Headquarters, is situated away from the main shopping area, Grafton Street and catered to an elitist upper-class market. Located on the 3rd floor, it displayed no advertising to attract what little passers-by there were.

"An unjustifiable percentage of the Council's budget goes into maintaining a white elephant in the sky. Despite it being there for over ten years, HQ has failed to attract the public, it is simply too far out of the way and on the third floor. The size of the budget that the gallery has been allocated effectively precludes and regional exhibitions from been mounted."

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The letter went on to voice the need for the Craft Council to: "enjoy a higher profile and generate a greater interest in crafts at the same time." In short "... the Council should rethink its policy relating to retailing." This letter validating clear concern relating to the image and marketing of craft products, identified that something had to be done to "...make a bigger impact and be seen by the public..."

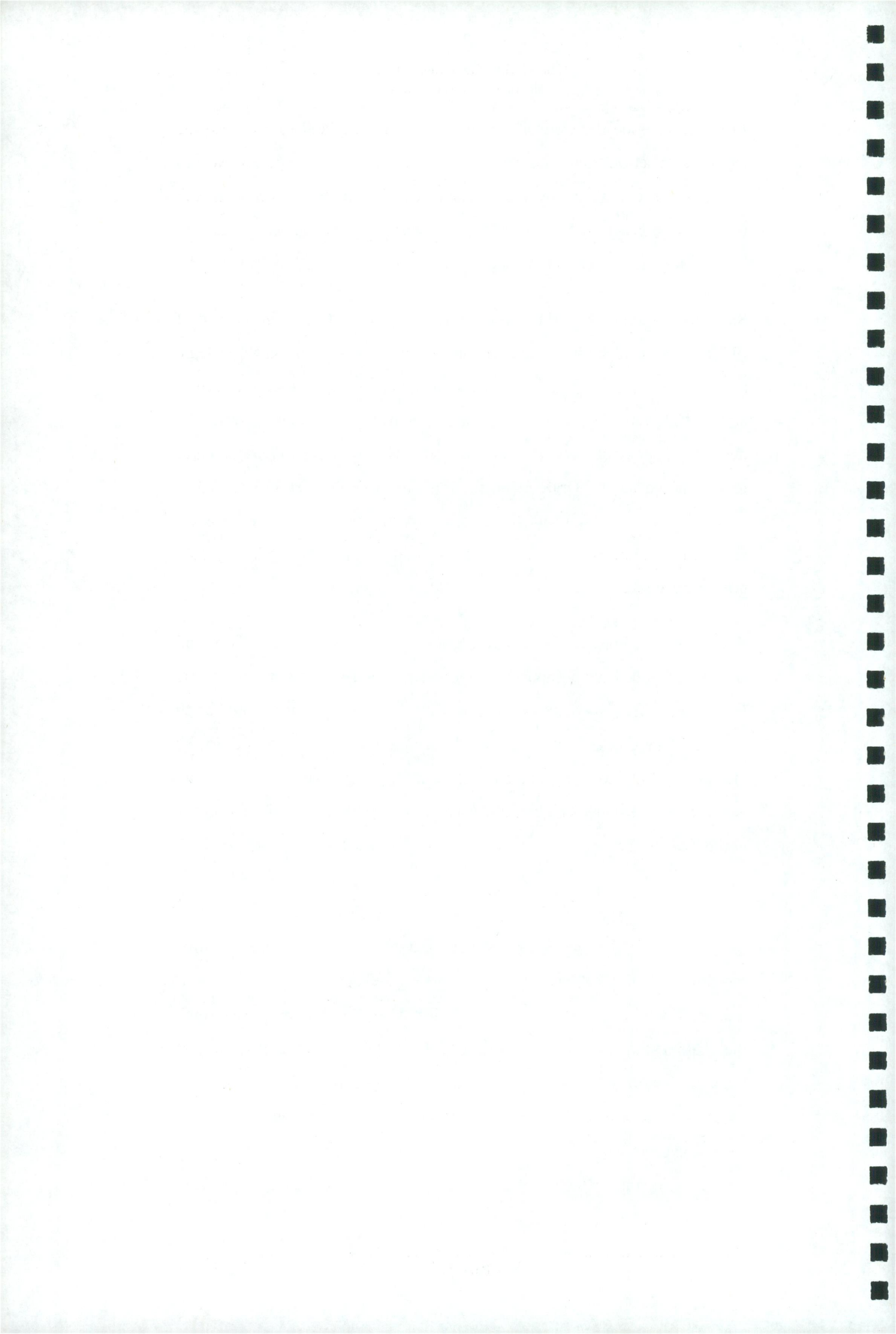
This was underlined by the groups acknowledgement of the fact that: "the Council has been most successful with its training programmes in both Kilkenny and Thomastown and that the Trade Fair remains the single most important wholesaling opportunity of the year; for these the Council deserves full praise. But we believe that for the Council to move on, brave decisions need to be made."



In the same issue the Council stated that it was delighted to publicise the letter: "as a serious and considered contribution to the strategic review was about to be conducted by the Management Committee. Yet it is still unclear whether progress or innovative marketing techniques have been implemented to combat the retail problem.

Since their exodus from the Powerscourt Townhouse Centre in the end of '97 the Craft Council has issued an announcement describing as a "strategic alliance" (*baffling proposal* might be more appropriate) between themselves and the Design Yard. The full page announcement accompanying the newsletter, spoke of the Craft Council's retail Gallery move to Design Yard; to be known as the Craft Council of Ireland's Gallery at Design Yard. Surely if the original problem associated with the retail outlet was its secluded location, then moving to the virtually hidden Design Yard could not be the answer.

The announcement stated the corporate identity of both Design Yard and the Craft Council would appear on the exterior and interior of the Temple Bar Gallery. It all sounds extremely attractive, but the question would be to whom? There is very little that would bring the average consumer to the vicinity of East Essex St, apart from the midnight revellers at either 'Bad Bobs' or the 'Kitchen' night-clubs, who are probably not in the mood for purchasing a custom made dinner service. If this location had provided such a vast customer base for Design Yard, presumably they would not be in the position of looking for tenants for half of their building to halve their rent. However, the location of Design Yard itself has come under scrutiny recently within the media with the designation of Temple Bar as a "*cultural sector*". In the Crafts Council's Newsletter, Vol 18, information regarding the classification of customers was published. This identified that 90% of sales transactions occurred under the £100 price bracket. Particularly successful was the £10-£40 price range showing that the majority of sales were not classified as "*high craft*", illustrating the issues involved in the evaluation of the crafts. This also shows that the associations made with

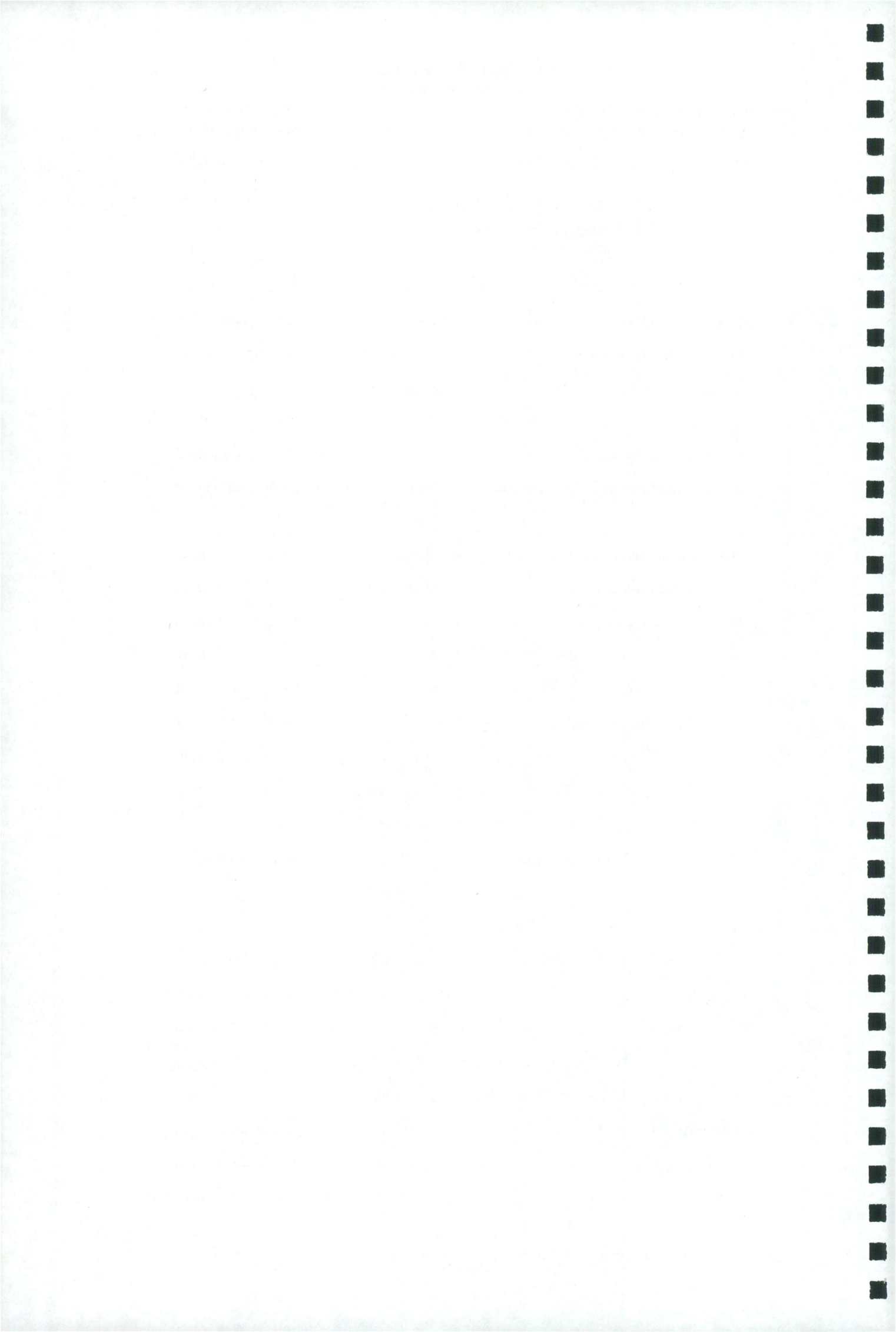


craft have not been engineered to be identified as either sophisticated or elitist. "This will provide a contemporary and innovative gallery environment which is now an absolute necessity in promoting craft to sophisticated consumers."

Conveniently overlooking the fact that this type of marketing needs nurturing and clever engineering, the Craft Council has never employed gallery display, more often associated with 'fine art'. In Powerscourt the display could have been better described as collective - a busy assorted arrangement. It did not involve such trapping as individual lighting, for example. So how is it that the Craft Council presumes that consumers shall now associate craft, 'high' or 'low' status - with sophisticated purchasing.

Plans for interior redecoration of their new shop/gallery include a new stairway and specially commissioned display stands and cases being put in place. Through such innovation the Craft Council believes it shall be able to provide an 'increased display area.' This, however, is unlikely unless they are also prepared to employ some sort of 'display magicians', it does not take a measuring tape to calculate the area given to Crafts Council at Design Yard is approximately a quarter of the size of its previous location. It therefore goes to follow that, the display should contain about a quarter of the previous merchandise. Yet the Crafts Council stated that the increase of: "sales of high quality manufactured craft for the benefit of crafts people" was within its three main restructuring objectives.

Perhaps it would be more realistic for the Crafts Council to take some inspiration from the Kilkenny Stores who have developed a display more descriptive of a department store than a gallery. The Kilkenny Stores often involve the craftworkers in the display of their collections, working closely with a in-shop display team, much is learnt about the actual product. This fully integrated approach develops a closer relationship with wholesale and retail customers. The fact that their profits are always healthy demonstrates that this approach works. This approach creates clear comparisons with



mainstream markets and allows craft to compete with brand-name commodities.

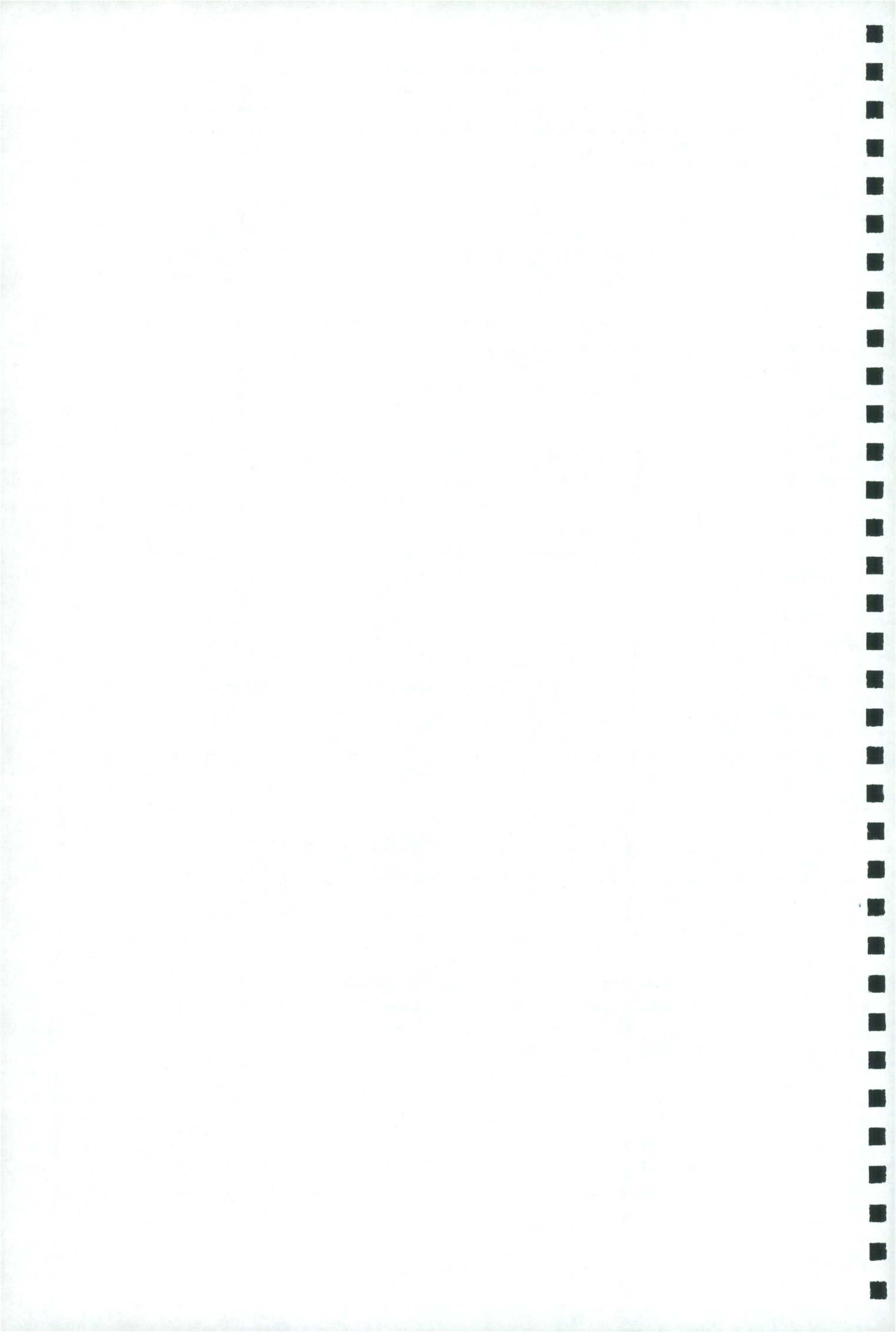
In the new shop at Design Yard, the whole issue of display space has left a question mark over craftworkers producing furniture, who had previously exhibited at the Powerscourt Town Centre. For some suppliers, who had previously displayed at both locations, the only effect the alliance shall have shall be the loss of a craft outlet irrespective of its name, for example, "Forms of Life" or the ceramics of Cormac Boydell.

Whilst the Craft Council reassures itself that the alliance is "a very natural one", being that both organisations, one private and one public, are non-profit making companies, questions about the selection process of merchandise must be answered. There are two very contrasting themes within the trademark bodies of work at the Design Yard and Craft Council. Over the past four years the Design Yard has created an image involving European design awareness, product image is modern, even frivolous at times. The Craft Council has always promoted the important of tradition and heritage in craft products. Only time will tell whether the two bodies or work can exist together harmoniously, without showing obvious signs of contradiction.

Market recognition is such an ever-evolving dilemma for modern craftspeople, underlining manipulation tone in the Crafts Council's analysis of its consumer research. Attempting to validate the new location the Crafts Council states:

"modern Irish buyers are primarily interested in the design and quality of craft goods. The Craft Council's role in the new alliance is to facilitate small companies to meet the increased demands of discerning customers."

This was always the Craft Council role, if the Craft Council was not already performing this duty, then it was a semi-state body that was not executing the tasks it for which it was designed. Yet if the Crafts Council had been



performing such duties correctly then such statements are obviously written to distract from the bizarre choice of the new location.

"Our focus, as the national promotional body for craft, will be enabling small craft manufacturers to develop new innovative products in order to compete more effectively in an increasingly discriminating market."

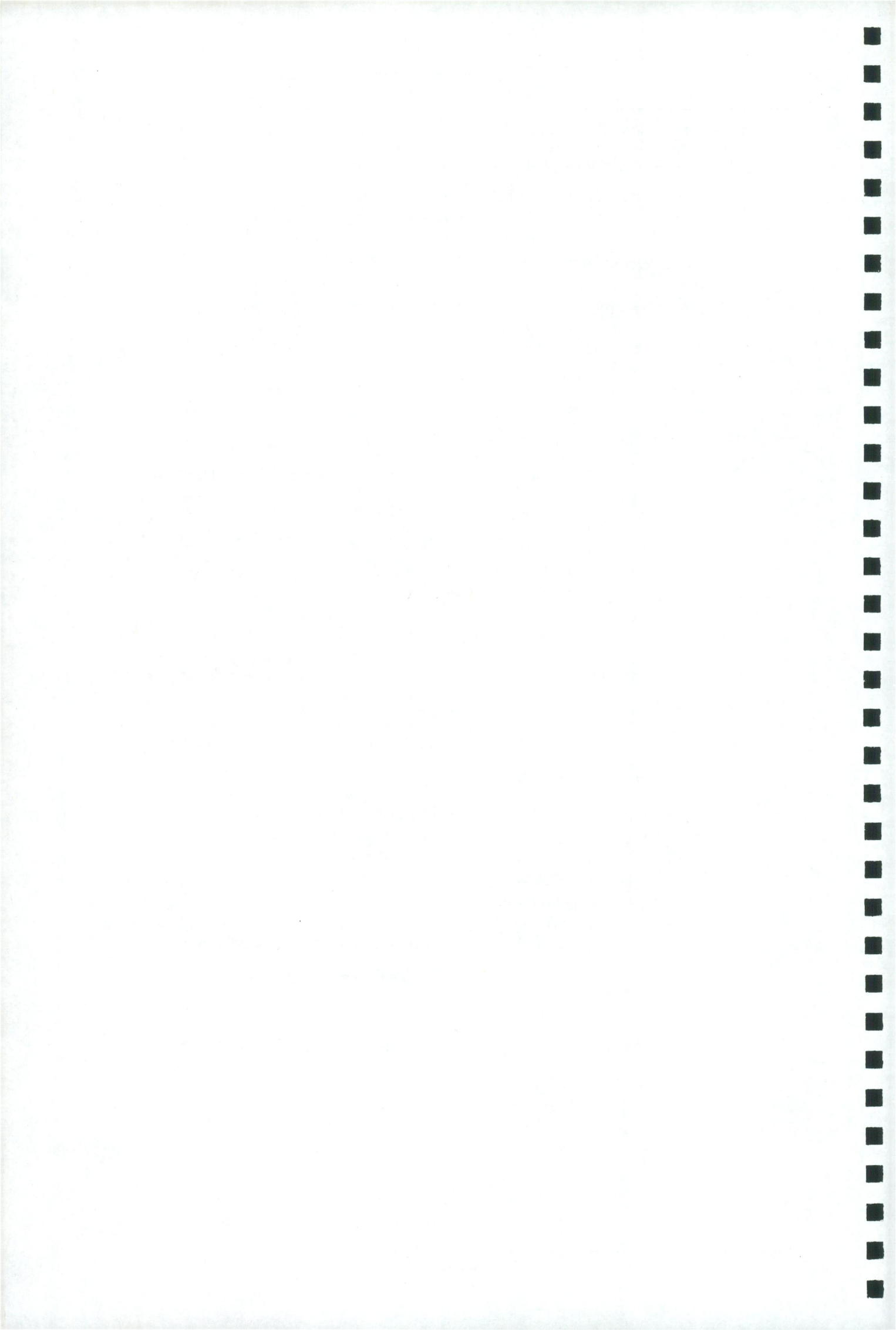
It becomes apparent that such statements, as well as being repetitive in meaning, are actually reassurances, but who are the Craft Council trying to reassure, the craftspeople or themselves?

This chapter clearly shows the image of the craftsperson is changing, and that this has had an obvious effect on the work being produced. These products are more than capable of supplying market demand. Market demand is currently prosperous, that is, particularly within Dublin's retail environment. However it is my feeling that it is not a demand catered for by the Crafts Council.

In the September/October 1996 issue of the Crafts Council's Newsletter, Leslie Reed, Chief Executive, asked the question "How concerned do we need to be about the consumer perception of craft and design?" However, his answer was not as constructive as one may have hoped:

"...the sales in our own gallery are bouyant, no matter what our customers' reasons for buying work. Can we even take advantage of the trend and ensure that yet more crafts are sold no matter what perceptions are influencing consumer buying?"

The problem with this attitude, in my opinion, is that if we do not know why customers *are* buying today, then how can we treat the problem of customers *not* buying tomorrow, should it arise? This then returns us to the question of the public's perception of craft and the need for customer profiling.



Conclusion

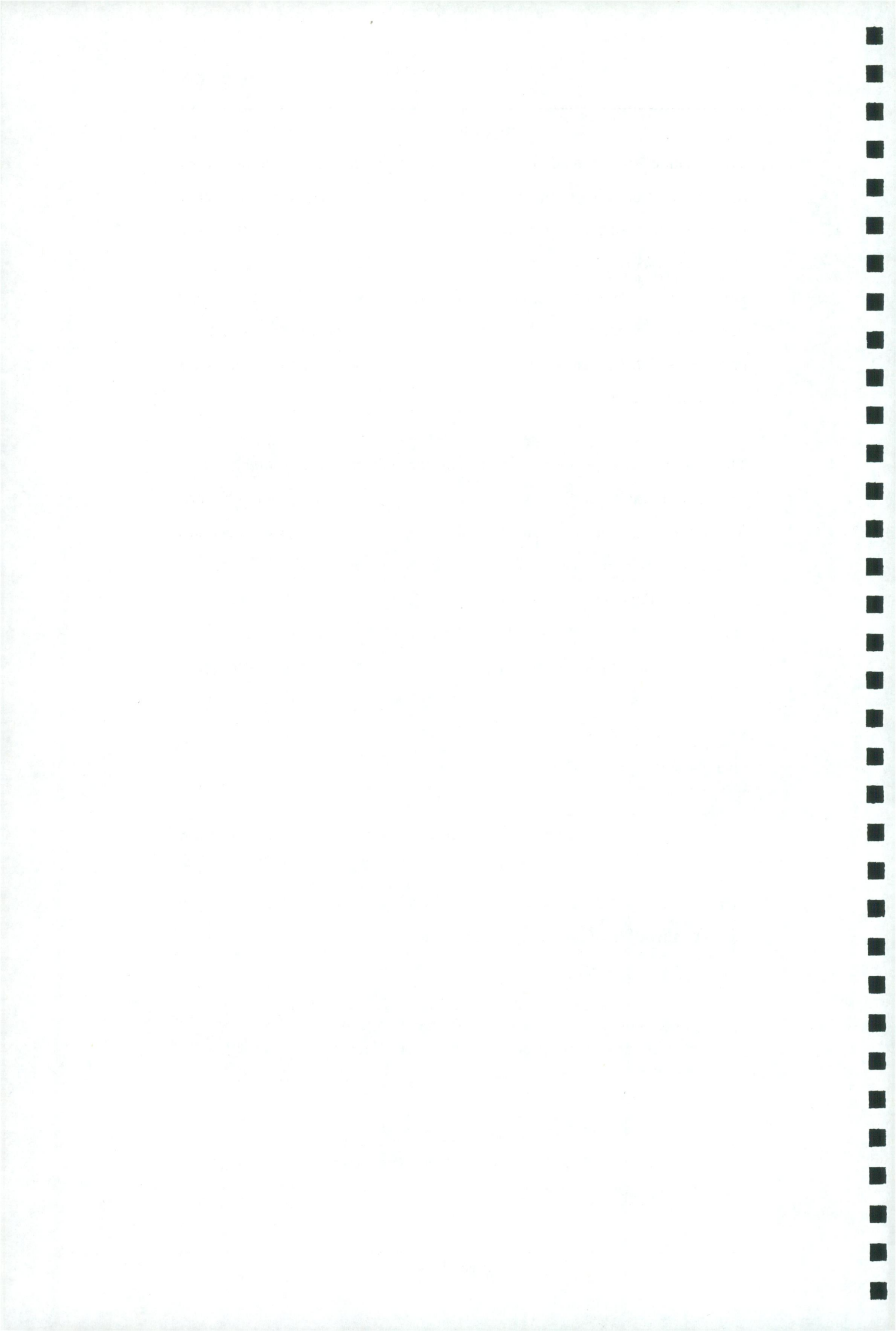
To conclude, the evidence of this body of research shows that the public perception of craft is of utmost importance to the craft industry. A positive image of the craft industry allows its merchandise to compete with similar manufactured products in a retail environment. Therefore, demand for craft merchandise creates an economic need for the industry. The necessity for a positive image goes beyond satisfying the ego of craftworkers - it is an imperative if the industry is to be sustained - therefore aiding the economy and providing employment.

The major areas of manufacturing in the industry are pottery, glass, jewellery, textiles (particularly knitwear), furniture, and general giftware. Irish craft businesses are characteristically small in scale, and are generally geographically widespread. However, taken nationally, the industry is a significant employer. Yet over the last fifteen years, employment in the industry has been resistant to the effects of international recession with a notable increase in its employment levels. A further social advantage is provided by the fact that 50% of this employment is in rural areas in the West of Ireland - areas which traditionally suffer from endemic unemployment and high levels of emigration.

Through media promotion, various interest groups have ensured that the idea of the “cottage industry” is not a universal definition for Irish craft. The Made in Ireland, Gift and Craft Guild was set up to create an awareness of the quality of Irish products available. In an article published in *The Irish Times*, 7 October 1997, their Chairman, Ken Kelly described how:

“Leprechauns, plastic shamrocks and shillelaghs are no longer representative of Irish gifts...Irish companies are stressing that their products are not just for the US market..”

This is extremely important as Irish craft produce is now faced with an influx of foreign produce which is supplied at cut cost. Major entrants to the Irish retailing such as Habitat are perceived as offering good design, in

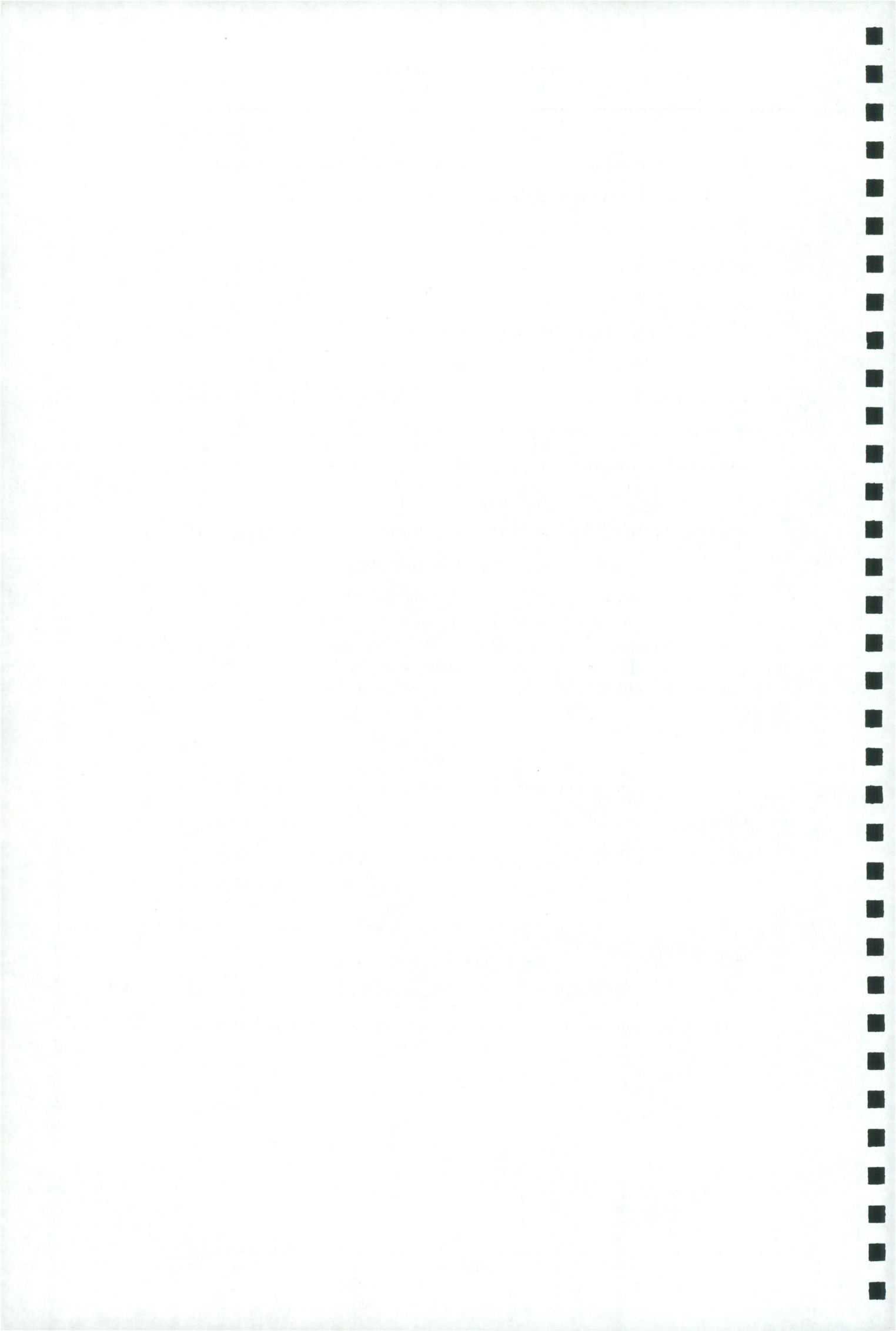


their lifestyle marketing, are all bound to affect the craft economy. Craftspeople must distinguish the positive points of their work over the sea of cheaper mass produced products. Promotion of craft with links to interior design could be the answer, reinforced by television programme devoted to this topic.

In the Crafts Council's Newsletter of January 1997, Dublin-based potter, Anthony O'Brien, who includes commissions for former President Mary Robinson in his portfolio, stated that he believed the challenge in Ireland is to develop more awareness of the difference between good handmade craft and the mass produced item. Consumer education must become a priority. This is an issue which is best addressed through the media. Cyril Forbes, Chairman of the Crafts Council reinforced the modern craftsperson's image in an interview in the *Sunday Tribune* of 24 December 1997.

"The images of craftspeople living on the side of the mountain, knitting and producing the odd leather thong is long gone. They are highly successful, producing top of the range products. You don't see Louis Mulcahy in Dingle around in an ass and cart, or Stephen Pearce in Ballycotton, who is now employing 130 people in various businesses."

It is my opinion that if current trends continue into the new millenium, the future for Irish craft is very promising, provided the industry remains sensitive to market changes. All things Irish are becoming a fashionable trend, pioneered by our entertainment, music and fashion industries. A genuine and profitable opportunity which should be capitalised on by the craft industry. It is also a demanding time for Irish craft industries, governed by strict codes of quality, pricing, image and reputation, whilst facing tough competition from abroad, from manufacturing and from the pressures of modern consumerism.



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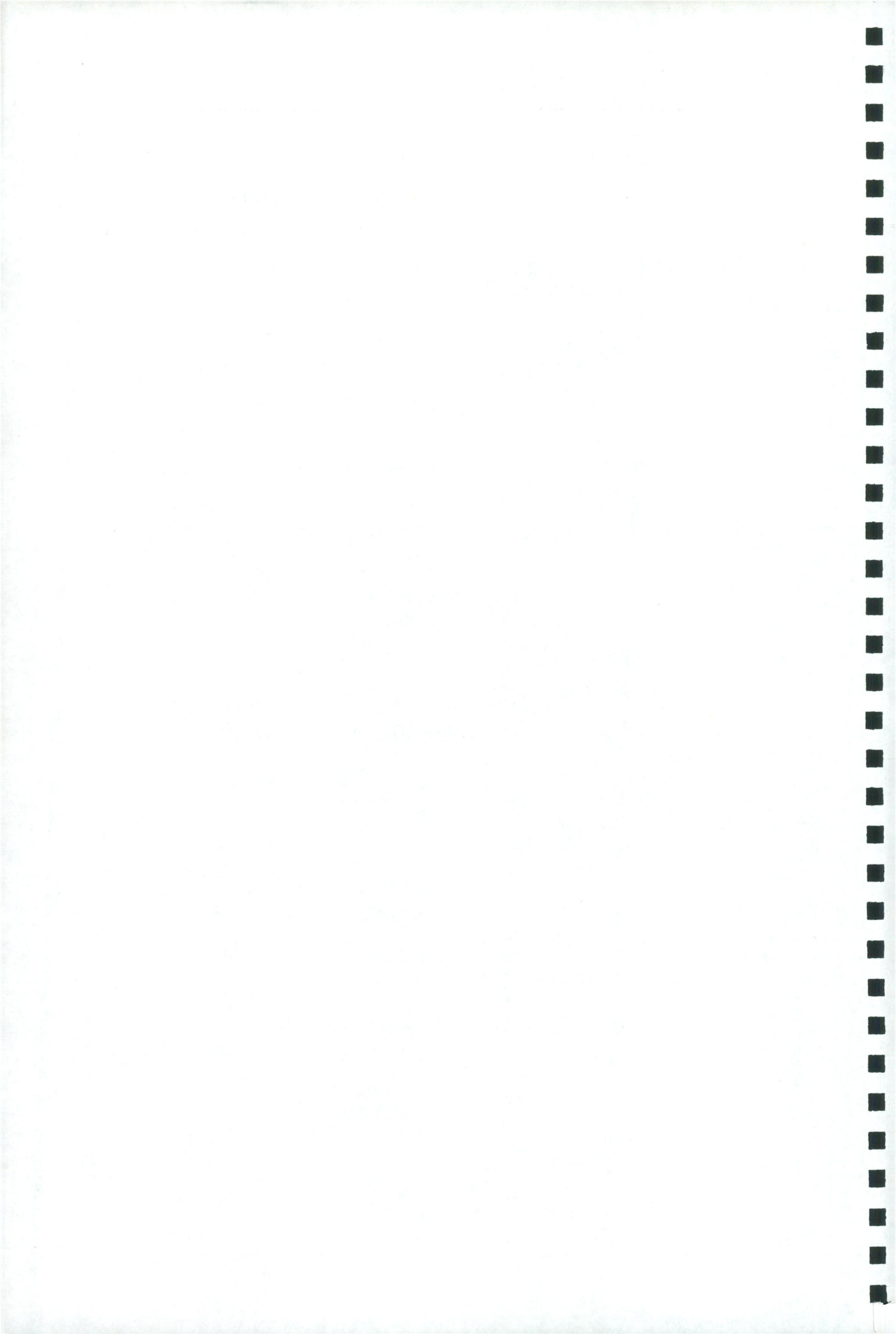
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