

CRAFTS COUNSELLOR

This piece embodies the unfair assumption that the Crafts Council is concerned with leading the public away from errors of taste; that it possesses wisdom that needs disseminating. The Crafts Council used to be called "The Crafts Advisory Committee" which, looked at a certain way, sounds even more judgemental and authoritarian. I grew up in the second half of the twentieth century when for many designers "Victorian" was a synonym for "fussy, sentimental, vulgar and wrong". The Crafts Counsellor seems to share that moralistic point of view, frowning on the loveable donkiform salt and pepper set, becoming less displeased as the uncalled-for encrustations are shed. He is happiest when it has fully morphed into a simple honest vessel.

Making the eight stages from donkey to simple honest vessel was fun; the middle stage is a teapot, still with vestigial ears, tail, and, on its lid, small reminders of the



lids of the salt and pepper pots.

Coin-operated machines have attractions for automaton makers. The cost is spread over many small contributions and the machines can be made to pay for themselves rather than depending on one big buyer. There is usually a timed period given in exchange for the money with the opportunity to witness a little narrative. It's also good that, having paid a small sum, the audience usually stays to watch what they're getting for their investment.

In my art education, I was overseen by two of the most celebrated advocates of “Basic Design” in the 1960s, Harry Thubron and Tom Hudson. Nigel Gosling wrote of them in the Observer, ‘ if anything can cure British painting of its endemic weaknesses-anecdotalism and whimsy- this training will do it’. It didn’t cure me. I still tend towards the donkiform end of the spectrum.