

Australian — the youthful, flexible, the more impressionable side. In addition, there are the Australian's own qualities — a good sense of colour, a delight in glowing, strong tones, and a very expressive stock of words, which he is not afraid to use in the service of the cause. As a result, we now see plates, almost invariably lacking a certain imagination as regards composition, yet charming us by their excellently modulated text. If the object in question is a design in colour, a poster for instance, then we are often astonished by the powerful, even daring, colour combinations, which, however, always impress us as somehow well blended, owing to the immensely strong and sunny light with which this country is blessed. The Australian landscape, with its absolutely clear air, its sharply defined contours, deep shadows and dazzling light, provides the artist with an endless number of subjects, which seem simply readymade for use as poster. The railway- and transport companies, the shipping lines, and the big travel agencies, whose aim it is to glorify the landscape, show designs of really excellent quality and advertising value, without the least romantic exaggeration of the subject.

There is so far very little understanding for symbolically treated advertising — they are mentally too simple for it to be effective. So they confine themselves in the main to pictorial descriptiveness, in which a somewhat childlike pleasure in endeavouring to reproduce the object as truthfully as possible is unmistakable.

The position of the artist in his relationship to the employer is unfortunately far from ideal and by no means encouraging to free creative art. In this country, where material success is still the main issue, the conception of art as a "breadless occupation" still persists and people are inclined to look down a little on those who practise it. The fact that, in spite of this,

many really good designs are being produced, says much for the Australian commercial artist.

As regards the technical side, the main problem is presented by the resistance of colours to light. Absolutely nothing can resist the enormous power of light in the Australian atmosphere — the strongest blue and the deepest red fade in no time, and up to now no medium has been found to check the much too rapid fading. Most of the materials used are imported — Great Britain, Germany and America supplying the market with colours and highgrade papers. The costs of production — with the exception of highclass letterpress work, which is proportionally rather more expensive than ours — are about the same. Printing plant and offset machinery are chiefly of American, in some cases of German, origin, but are, partly not quite up to date, as the devaluation of the Australian pound and the decline in the number of orders caused by the economic depression, do not justify a thorough modernization at the present moment. Generally speaking, the quality of reproduction is not up to the standard of that in Europe and the United States — but at times local work is seen that is quite excellent. Like the country and its inhabitants, Australian commercial art is still in the initial stage, and it is hard to forecast its ultimate aspect. Should an attempt be made, nevertheless to prophesy, it may be said that, standing as it were between its Anglo-Saxon connections and American influence, this art will use these two contrasting poles as a basis; that it will build on it something that is quite its own — warming the cool English objectivity, toning down the louder aspect of American work, and creating a strong, happy optimistic art, with colours as glowing as those of the country, with lines as straight and clear as Nature creates them there — the whole enlivened by the sunny gaiety inborn to the people of the country. An art that will be bright and clean — not a bad synthesis.