

## TWO FACES OF AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRY

In one sense the Third Australian Industries Fair at Melbourne's Exhibitions Building (until March 20) looks much the same as any other exhibition. It is very difficult for any show to look different under that great grey dome with its paintings of disrobed Victorian ladies and gentlemen struggling with torn sheets among the clouds.

But this one, organised by the Victorian Chamber of Manufacturers, looks different because we are a little older than last time. Nowadays we are looking at our industry in a different way. And all the pride and concern, doubt and hope for our industry seem to be displayed here among the fairy floss and kangaroo paw bottle-opener souvenirs.

Here, under one roof, it can be Truly Said - to borrow the style of the official catalogue - that Australian Industry is "On Parade" in one magnificent Shop Window.

Everything from massive die casting and moulding and stamping machinery, to precision measuring instruments, to mirrors sandblasted with ballet girls and yachts in full sail.

Only a year or so ago there were some people - knockers, ratbags and other assorted trouble-makers - who complained that the growth of Australian Industry was really the

growth of foreign industry in Australia. There were others of similar ilk who said that Australian products would never sell overseas in the desired quantities unless they were designed and presented originally and well. And even foreign-designed goods made under licence here started below par in the international market while Australian goods as a whole had an uncooth image.

Today some respectable people have joined these ranks and are concerned about both these aspects of industry. Many industrial leaders have made clear that they recognize the necessity of good design. But there are others who still have not budged from innocent practices and amateurish habits picked up in the backyard days of Australian manufacture.

The Third Australian Industries Fair reflects the dichotomy as in a double exposure. Here are the two industrial Australias crowding one on top of the other, the old and the new, the worldly-wise and the backyarders. The difference between good and bad design is not the only issue. The most violent contrasts here are between design and thoughtless, unawakened, lack of design.

It all begins with the poster for the fair which is on display in the streets. In the international tradition, posters for industrial fairs are simple, strong, dynamic - often the result of a competition between star designers and usually the most striking examples of advertising art.



The poster for this fair, even if judged on a far lower standard - even on the most ordinary local standard - is an uninspiring thing. It lacks the essential quality of poster design, of any design: an idea. It is unsigned and seems to have been a group effort. Perhaps it was designed in committee, each member contributing a new colour and a different type face. It gives no indication that anyone responsible was aware of the new revolution in design.

And yet, inside the show, it is clear that the revolution is here. Not at first glance. Scattered over the vast exhibition floor are all the old familiar trellises and tangles of signs and colours and those madly incongruous notes. What, for instance, is a stand for that estimable club, the Diners', doing at an Australian Industrial show?

But in the middle of it all, standing solid as Ayres Rock, are the displays of some of the heavy exhibitions: A.P.M., B.H.P., A.C.I., The Gas Corporation and the Victorian Railways. And every one of them is designed. Nothing to set the Yarra on fire, perhaps, but consciously, professionally, capably designed. Some keen mind devised each one on the basis of an original and imaginative idea. And this is Australian industry's greatest need; more important ultimately than foreign capital or imported know-how.

The A.C.I. stand reflects perfectly with almost equal strength both sides of the picture. As we know from their television commercials and newspaper advertisements this company has some stylish advice in design. The stand itself is a striking sort of commercial cathedral of archways. One half of the products shown are those beautiful, sensible, useful containers in which good things come. Milk bottles, jars, scientific and industrial flasks. All this is first rate.

Another section of the stand displays consumer glassware, nice things for the home, stemware and such. Almost invariably these attempt to be pretty, and are merely fussy with ladylike curves and too many ornaments and lashings of gilt. I doubt if even their own mothers at A.C.I. would take their party dress seriously in comparison with the simple dignity of the better household glassware from Scandinavia, or the U.S.A. Indeed it is not this gimmicky, ingratiating glassware that A.C.I. chooses to illustrate on the front of its smart hand-out pamphlet. Rightly it chooses the more serious, solid and yet humble bottles and flasks.

How can Australian industry present two such different faces? Why do so many of the better-looking products that proudly wear the made-in-Australia boomerang label have that confession of colonialism in small type underneath:



Under license (...John Doe Inc., Seattle, or Birmingham).

It is partly because our industrialists do not make sufficient use of our trained Industrial Designers. And it is partly because we have not enough trained Industrial Designers.

And then, upstairs at the Exhibition Building, hope rises again.

"Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world, stimulating progress, giving birth to evolution."

Albert Einstein wrote those words, and they are reproduced large and clear on numerous placards in an exhibit called "Art and Design - Education for Industry", presented by Victoria's senior technical schools and designed and erected by the Industrial Design Students at the Royal Melbourne Technical College.

Tucked away on a side gallery, it could not be called the most heavily patronised exhibit. But it shows fresh and delightful design in a wide range of small products: fabrics packages, labels, ceramics, all done with style and ideas and brilliant - in both senses - colour. This we must believe, is Australian Industry tomorrow.