People call themselves poets and painters, and seek help for their failures, as I might come to a psychiatrist to discover the causes of my vaulter's block or to find out why I can't get anywhere in nuclear physics. Indeed, regularly people push through the turnstiles of the critic's day who feel very strongly the need to pass as poets, to be called "creative," to fit themselves into a certain social niche, acquire an identity the way one acquires plants there's no time to tend or goldfish that can’t be kept alive, and their problems are important and interesting and genuine enough; but they are not the problems of poets as poets, any more than the child who tiptoes to school on the tops of fences has the steelworker's nerves or nervousness or rightly deserves his wage.


During the most austere phase of Analytical Cubism, when he and Braque were working in closely related styles, Picasso one day went to look at his friend's latest work. Suddenly, he became aware that there was a squirrel in the picture, and pointed it out to Braque, who was rather abashed at this discovery. The next day Braque showed him the picture again, after reworking it to get rid of the squirrel, but Picasso insisted that he still saw it, and it took another reworking to banish the animal for good.


There was a man whose chatter certain circumstances made it necessary for me to listen to. At every opportunity he was ready with a little philosophical lecture, a very tiresome harangue. Almost in despair, I suddenly discovered that he perspired copiously when talking. I saw the pearls of sweat gather on his brow, unite to form a stream, glide down his nose, and hang at the extreme point of his nose in a drop-shaped body. From the moment of making this discovery, all was changed. I even took pleasure in inciting him to begin his philosophical instruction, merely to observe the perspiration on his brow and at the end of his nose.


ne day Schwitters decided he wanted to meet George Grosz. George Grosz was decidedly surly; the hatred in his pictures often overflowed into his private life. But Schwitters was not one to be put off. He wanted to meet Grosz, so Mehring took him up to Grosz's flat. Schwitters rang the bell and Grosz opened the door.

"Good morning, Herr Grosz. My name is Schwitters."

"I am not Grosz," answered the other and slammed the door. There was nothing to be done.

Half way down the stairs, Schwitters stopped suddenly and said, "Just a moment."

Up the stairs he went, and once more rang Grosz's bell. Grosz, enraged by this continual jangling, opened the door, but before he could say a word, Schwitters said "I am not Schwitters, either." And went downstairs again. Finis. They never met again.


This issue is dedicated to

Liam Hudson

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fter dinner, Duchamp would take the bus to Nice to play at a chess circle and return late with Lydie (his first wife) lying awake waiting for him. Even so, he did not go to bed immediately, but set up the chess pieces to study the position of a game he had been playing. First thing in the morning when he arose, he went to the chessboard to make a move he had thought out during the night. But the piece could not be moved—during the night Lydie had arisen and glued down all the pieces... A few months later Duchamp and Lydie divorced, and he returned to the States.


The three panels of the rounded triptych (shown below) indicate three domains of creativity which shade into each other without sharp boundaries: Humour, Discovery, and Art... Each horizontal line across the triptych stands for a pattern of creative activity which is represented on all three panels; for instance: comic comparison—objective analogy—poetic image. The first is intended to make us laugh; the second to make us understand; the third to make us marvel. The logical pattern of the creative process is the same in all three cases; it consists in the discovery of hidden similarities.


Before hearing this lecture I was confused about this subject. Having heard it, I am still confused, but on a higher plane.


If lawyers are disbarred and clergymen defrocked, doesn't it follow that electricians can be delighted; musicians denoted; cowboys deranged; models deposed; tree surgeons debarked and dry cleaners depressed?

Virginia Ostman.

28 WHAT A LIFE!
A lenient and generous teacher, the Doctor took us often to the Crystal Palace or to the Zoo.

I was at this time a handsome boy of fourteen.

Here are few better examples of purposeful visual invention than the collage novel What a Life! by E.V. Lucas and George Morrow (London: Methuen & Co., 1911; unabridged republication, with an introduction by John Ashbery, NY: Dover Publications, 1975). Lucas was a well-known British writer and an editor of Punch. The authors cut out steel engravings from a British mail order catalog (Whiteley's), arranged them in a halfway-reasonable way, and then wrote a story which does but does not fit the plates. Shown here (above) are two pages from the book in which the Crystal Palace (site of the great design exposition of 1851) is talked about as if it were a bird cage while an animal at the zoo is represented by an electric iron, and the game of leapfrog is illustrated by a coat hanger. These are pretended confusions of course in which two different genera are treated or pictured or spoken about as if they were the same thing.

RECOMMENDED

Antaeus, No. 54, Spring 1985, an issue on writers on artists, with essays by Genet on Rembrandt, Sartre on Tintoretto, Mark Strand on Hopper, Guy Davenport on Rousseau, Linda Orr on Michaux, Robert Pinsky on Goya, and so on.


Contrary to my hopes we spoke little, but we devoured each other with our eyes...suddenly I had the whim of trying to appear in his eyes as a kind of dandy of "universal intellectualism." I learned later that the effect I produced was exactly the opposite.

Before leaving I wanted to give him a magazine containing an article I had written on paranoia. I therefore opened the magazine at the page with the title, begging him to read it..."Freud continued to stare at me without paying the slightest attention to my magazine. Trying to interest him, I explained that it was not a Surrealist diversion, but...an ambitiously scientific article, and I repeated the title, pointing to it with my finger. Before his imperturbable indifference my voice became sharper and more insistent. Then, continuing to stare at me with a fixity in which his whole being seemed to converge, Freud exclaimed, addressing Stefan Zweig, "You have never seen a more complete example of a Spaniard. What a fanatic!"

Salvador Dali (describing his first and only meeting with Sigmund Freud, on 1 July 1936, when Freud was in his eighties), quoted in "Freud and Dali: Personal Moments" by Sharon Romm and Joseph William Slap in *American Imago*, vol 10, no 4, Winter 1983, pp. 344-345.

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...He loved to shake hands. Nothing left him more puzzled and aggrieved than a white man who declined the offer. That he should feel baffled when a white man refused to shake hands is easy to understand because he had picked up the habit from them. Thomas Henry Tibbles...remarked that Indians, who never shake hands among themselves, consider this act to be one of the funniest things in the world. Nevertheless, having learned that whites express friendship by seizing each other, they happily do the same.


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1. Work on one thing at a time until finished.
2. Start no more new books, add no more new material to "Black Spring."
3. Don't be nervous. Work calmly, joyously, recklessly on whatever is in hand.
4. Work according to Program and not according to mood. Stop at the appointed time!
5. When you can't create you can work.
6. Cement a little every day, rather than add new fertilizers.
7. Keep human! See people, go places, drink if you feel like it.
8. Don't be a draught-horse! Work with pleasure only.
9. Discard the Program when you feel like it—but go back to it the next day. Concentrate. Narrow down.
10. Forget the books you want to write. Think only of the book you are writing.
11. Write first and always. Painting, music, friends, cinema, all these come afterwards.


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A petunia is a flower like a begonia. A begonia is a meat like a sausage. A sausage-ana-battery is a crime. Monkeys crime trees. Tree's a crowd. A crow crowd in the morning and made a noise. A noise is your face between your eyes. Eyes is the opposite of nays. A colt nays. You go to bed with a colt, and wake up in the morning with a case of double petunia.

Wolfgang Wickler
Mimicry in plants and animals

The cult of the young painter did not hit the art world until the Eighties, because it took ten years for the results of the Sixties to trickle down through art education. The distrust of "elitism," the weakening of academic criteria, the fetichized view of "creativity," the submission to the whims or apostasies of students—these affected art schools just as they affected all other schools. The number of art schools had swollen, whether they were adjuncts to universities or local showplaces. Lavishly endowed with studio space, spray booths, kilns, welding gear, and huge litho presses, these academies proliferated from Maine to Albuquerque, with especially heavy concentrations on the West Coast. Their entrance requirements were not stiff, and the intelligence of their students, as a rule, not high. Their concern was volume. They provided tenure to a large population of FFPAs—Formerly Fairly Famous Artists—who could not support themselves on sales alone and so regarded teaching as a survival chore, which should not consume the energies they needed to muster in their studios. Because the system of apprenticeship and Assistant hood that had enabled teaching studios from Verrocchio's to Thomas Couture's to instruct by hard practice had gone the way of the dodo, they could not bring their own art-making into their teaching. A seminar, a bull session, a pat on the head—but not (or all too rarely) that harsh and fond engagement that distinguishes the true teacher, one of whose marks is the gumption to show an argumentative or narcissistic student that he, or she, is on a wrong track. There was no "right" or "wrong." This was art; everyone did his own thing.

The Letters and Diaries of OSKAR SCHLEMMER
Selected and edited by TUT SCHLEMMER
Translated from the German by EKLEA WINSTON

W

inner of the 1982 Drue Heinz Literature Prize was Dancing for Men, eleven short stories by Robley Wilson, Jr. (NY: Ecco Press, 1985). His previous volumes of stories include The Pleasures of Manhood (1977) and Living Alone (1978). Wilson's works have been described as "highly realistic, utterly convincing dreams." That is especially apparent in "Iris," a story which has just appeared in the Indiana Review (Spring 1985, pp. 7-13), a story which starts in the following way:

When Iris woke up one Sunday morning and recognized that Robert was dead, she passed the rest of the day in silence, absorbed in the problem of how to explain to him what she knew he would refuse to believe.

The inaugural issue of BALLAST is dedicated to the work of Liam Hudson, a contemporary British psychologist, teacher, and the author of Contrary Imaginations (1966), Frames of Mind (1968), The Cult of the Fact (1972), Human Beings (1975), and Bodies of Knowledge (1982). Readers can meet him less formally in an interview which is contained in David Bohm and Physicists Talk About Their Work (NY: Taplinger, 1977), pp. 145-169. Among his most recent writings is a provocative essay, "Texts, Signs, Artefacts," which has been included in W.R. Crozier and A.J. Chapman, eds., Cognitive Processes in the Perception of Art (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1984), pp. 65-70. The following is a brief passage from that essay.

The simplest prejudice of all, the basic currency of judgment in the academy at large, is the distinction with which I began: that between the "hard" and the "soft." Either, this distinction says, we are trying to do science or we are engaged in something quite different: politics, therapy, journalism, self-expression. The arts in particular are seen as peripheral, or—even worse—as "fun," that is to say, as a simple emotional release that receives little professionally academic attention because it deserves none. Yet the briefest glance shows that poems, novels, paintings, photographs, plays, films of any quality are rarely fun, either for artist or for spectator; what is more, they are at least as carefully poised, as subtly calculated in their effects, as any other genre of intellectual activity. Many take months, years, to put together, and at least as long to assimilate in any but a superficial way.

When they (the American Siamese twins Violet and Daisy Hilton) died of the Hong Kong flu in 1969, they were working in a supermarket near Charlotte, North Carolina, as a double checkout girl—one bagging, no doubt, as the other rang up the bill on the cash register.


W

he Russians had lured us into a trap. I had actually set eyes on the Russian machine guns before I felt a dull blow on my temple. The sun and the moon were both shining at once and my head ached like mad. What on earth was I to do with this scent of flowers? Some flower—I couldn't remember its name however I racked my brains. And all that yelling round me and the moaning of the wounded, which seemed to fill the whole forest—that must have been what brought me round. Good Lord, they must be in agony! Then I became absorbed by the fact that I couldn't control the cavalry boot with the leg in it, which was moving about too far away, although it belonged to me...Over on the grass there were two captains in Russian uniform dancing a ballet, running up and kissing each other on the cheeks like two young girls. That would have been against regulations in our army. I had a tiny round hole in my head, My horse, lying on top of me, had lashed out one last time before dying, and that had brought me to my senses. I tried to say something, but my mouth was still with blood, which was beginning to congeal. The shadow of all round me were growing huger and huger, and I wanted to ask how it was that the sun and moon were both shining simultaneously. I wanted to point at the sky, but my arm wouldn't move.

Oskar Kokoschka (the Austrian artist and writer, recalling the day he was wounded during World War I), quoted in Peter Vansittart, ed., Voices From the Great War (NY: Avon Books, 1984).

Because of my work with colour, I began to notice butterflies. There is nothing so brilliant or as changing and shifting as the iridescence and the pigmented colour of the butterfly's wing. I began to keep a visual record. The diary itself, on which most of this book is based, developed over the years from the time when I first made notes about these colours. I started in 1966, producing really a loose notation—flashes of colour mostly, flowers, grasses and butterflies. As an adult watching as the result of a visual training, the more I drew, the more I wanted to know, so a written account of what I saw began to take place very naturally at the sides of the drawings.

B

Before leaving Basle for England in 1526 and wishing to leave proof of his skill, the artist Hans Holbein the Younger painted a fly on a portrait he had just completed. The purchaser of the portrait, trying to remove the insect with a brush, discovered the jest. The story spread, and arrangements were set in motion to retain this virtuoso in the country. The painter therefore had to leave town in great secrecy.


T

Those who are appreciative of scientific illustrations will no doubt find pleasure in viewing the exquisite pen and ink drawings by Sabine Bauer in Animal Forms and Patterns: A Study of the Appearance of Animals by Adolf Portman (NY: Schocken Books, 1967). The drawing below is of guenons (a variety of African monkey), rendered and arranged "to show the many variations produced by some few elements of design and colouration."

J

Here then we have the beginnings of an answer to what relations lie at the heart of beauty. "All beauty may be a metaphor be called rhyme." What is rhyme like? Well, let us have an example:

- cat rhymes with mat;
- cat does not rhyme with table;
- cat does not rhyme with cat.

Taking rhyme as the paradigm of beauty, let us turn at once to the fundamental question: Why do we like the relation that rhyme epitomises? What is the biological advantage of seeking out rhyming elements in the environment?

The answer I propose is this: Considered as a biological phenomenon, aesthetic preferences stem from a predisposition among animals and men to seek out experiences through which they may learn to classify the objects in the world around them. Beautiful 'structures' in nature or in art are those which facilitate the task of classification by presenting evidence of the 'taxonomic' relations between things in a way which is informative and easy to grasp.


Percy Hammond (reviewing a musical):

I have knocked everything but the knees of the chorus-girls, and Nature has anticipated me there.


W

It may be considered a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike.

Hermann Goering: When I hear anyone talk of culture I reach for my revolver.

I.J. Good: When I hear the word 'gun' I reach for my revolver.
Lyton Strachey was unfit, but instead of allowing himself to be rejected by the doctors he preferred to appear before a military tribunal as a conscientious objector. He told us of the extraordinary impression that was caused by an air-cushion which he inflated during the proceedings as a protest against the hardness of the benches. Asked by the chairman the usual question: "I understand, Mr. Strachey, that you have a conscientious objection to war?" he replied (in his curious falsetto voice), "Oh no, not at all, only to this war." Better than this was his reply to the chairman's other stock question, which had previously never failed to embarrass the claimant: "Tell me, Mr. Strachey, what would you do if you saw a German soldier trying to violate your sister?" With an air of noble virtue: "I would try to get between them."


The geography of the imagination. Forty essays by Guy Davenport.

He styles I find most useful to study are those of Hugh Kenner, Osip Mandelstam, Samuel Beckett, Wyndham Lewis, Ezra Pound, Charles Doughty. All of these are writers who do not waste a word, who condense, pare down, and proceed with daring synapses. From Victor Shklovsky I saw how narrative can be suggested rather than rendered, and how anything can be made startling by taking it out of "its series." Shklovsky (and other Formalists) felt that art served a purpose by "making the familiar strange," a process of regeneration (of attention, of curiosity, of intelligence) the opposite of narcosis.


He following are variations on an old and admittedly chauvinist joke. Are there other variations, either invented, remembered, or found?

Who was that lady I saw you with last night? That was no lady, that was my wife.

Who was that lady I saw you with last night? That was no lady, that was your wife.

Who was that ladle I saw you with last night? That was no ladle, that was my knife.

What lady did I see you with last evening? That was no ewe, that was a deer.

One magician to another: Who was that lady I sawed with you last night?

Two magicians: Who was that lady I sawed with you last night? That was no saw, that was a chisel.

Two magicians: Who was that lady I sawed with you last night? That was no lady, that was my half sister.

Two musicians: Who was that piccolo I saw you with last night? That was no piccolo, that was my fife.

Two Huckleberry Finn's: Who was that lady Tom saw yer with last night?

Who was that lady I saw you with last night? That was no eyesore, that was a headache.

Who was that lady I saw you outwit?'

Sitting at his cluttered mahogany desk, Wells draped a string from one side to the other, and, in a clothesline effect, pinned the various jokes and "bits of business" on the line, rearranging them as he built the scene. He kept a detailed account of the number of jokes he wrote; he tabulated the laughs per minute of every sketch. Even the malapropisms that salted his comic dialogue were uncovered in the same methodical manner. Wells would take a word and write it on one side of a file card and on the other side list similar sounding words, testing each for its comic possibility.

John Lahr (describing how vaudeville skits were made by burlesque comedian Billy K. Wells, an associate of Bert Lahr, the author's father) in Notes on a Cowardly Lion (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), p. 41.