

Fall 1987

## Ballast Quarterly Review, v03n1, Autumn 1987

The Art Academy of Cincinnati

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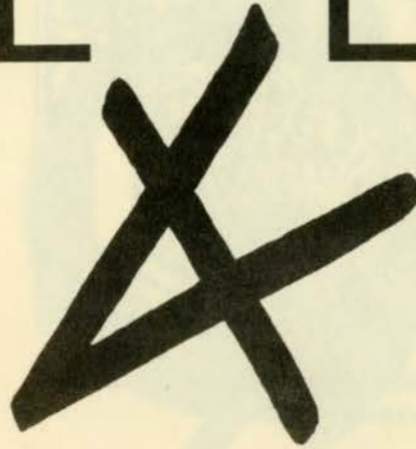
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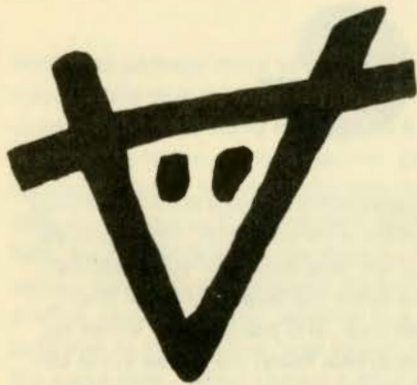


The first letter of the Phoenician alphabet, meaning ox.

The truer a work of art is, the more it has a style. Which is strange, because style is not the truth of appearances, and yet the heads which I find most like those of people one sees in the street are the least realistic head. For me, the greatest inventiveness leads to the greatest likeness. ■

Alberto Giacometti, quoted in James Lord, *Giacometti: A Biography* (New York: Farrar-Straus, 1985). Suggested by Joseph Podlesnik, a reader from Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

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An early pictograph of the American Indian representing an ox.

Some diaries are best read as they were written: one day at a time. They should be set down on the night table and consumed slowly. Certain lives, usually quiet ones, seem meant to be slipped into for only a few minutes a day, like a footbath. ■

Thomas Mallon, *A Book of One's Own: People and Their Diaries* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 11.

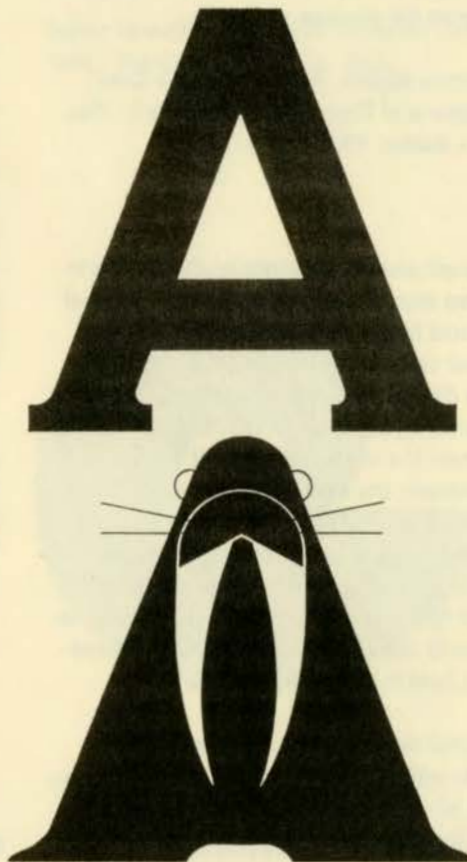
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Mr. Magoo bids the normally sighted, or the smug spectacle-wearers, laugh at uncorrected myopia. He shakes hands with a bear he takes to be Dr. Milmos, thinks a skyscraper scaffolding a restaurant, believes the seabed to be a motorway, but he always comes through unscathed and disabused. My adventures have been less sensational. I once entered a bank in Stratford-on-Avon and ordered a drink. I have waved back at people waving at someone else. There was an electric skysign in All Saints, Manchester, which said UPHOLSTERED FURNITURE and I read as UPROARIOUSLY FUNNY. In the army I failed to salute officers and, fiercely rebuked, then saluted privates. I have spoken to women in the streets I thought I knew and thus got to know them... The myopic eye is not lazy: it is too busy creating meanings out of vague donnees. Compensation for lifelong myopia comes in old age: presbyopia supervenes on the condition and cancels it. I am forced now into perfect sight and I am not sure I like it. ■

Anthony Burgess, *Little Wilson and Big God: The Autobiography* (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1986), pp. 69-70.

It would be interesting to take a group of the most eminent philosophers from the best universities, shut them up in a hot room with Moroccan dervishes or Haitian Voodooists and measure, with a stopwatch, the strength of their psychological resistance to the effects of rhythmic-sound. Would the Logical Positivists be able to hold out longer than the Subjective Idealists? Would the Marxists prove tougher than the Thomists or the Vedantists? What a fascinating, what a fruitful field for experiment! Meanwhile, all we can safely predict is that, if exposed long enough to the tom-toms and the singing, every one of our philosophers would end by capering and howling with the savages.

Aldous Huxley, *The Devils of Loudun* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1952).



Left:  
Julie A. Robben, Cincinnati, Ohio 1987.





Geoffroy Tory, capital from a series of crible initials, c. 1526.

Teaching is something you have to do as part of your practice. To me, it's an appropriate way to express ideas and to deal with the realm of ideas. I never questioned the fact that if you are good at what you do, teaching is one of the best ways of using your time. Since I started in practice, I never thought of not teaching, and I still don't. Teaching is something I couldn't imagine giving up. It's all about ideas. It's all about invention. It's all about pressing beyond acceptable professional standards. ■

Milton Glaser, "Turning Forty" in *How* magazine, vol 2 no 2 (January/February 1987), p. 23.

# ΘΙΚΛΜΝΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨ

Father used to say, "I shall not leave you much money, but I will teach you every job, then you can always get work." He showed us every job in the garden and on the farm, including how to get stone in the quarry and trim it to build stone walls, and how to put a roof on a shed... He also taught us how to lay hedges. When I was a boy, for some reason I never wanted to play games with the others, but always to stroll around The Tump and the woods with the dog, and look at the sheep and the plants and the trees. ■

Fred Boughton, quoted by John Burnett, editor, *Destiny Obscure* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1984), pp. 235-236.

My father never kept a diary, but he never threw away a canceled check, either. When he died a few years ago I came across thousands of them in perfect order in a series of shoeboxes. Amidst stacks of others that took the family from the children's milk through his own bifocals, I found the one that paid the doctor who delivered me. My father knew they didn't audit you for 1951 in 1980; he kept those checks for another reason. ■

Thomas Mallon, *A Book of One's Own: People and Their Diaries* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), p. xv.

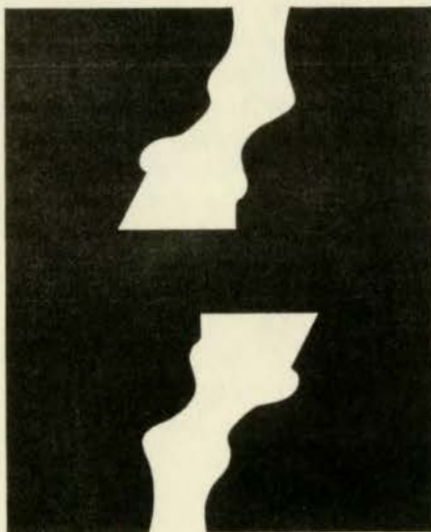
A pupil should be taught what it means to know something, and not to know it; what should be the design and end of study; what valor, temperance, and justice are; the difference between ambition and greed, loyalty and servitude, liberty and license; the marks of true and solid contentment; the extent to which we should fear disgrace, affliction, and death; the true springs of our actions and the reasons for our varied thoughts and desires. Our first lessons, I think, should teach us how to rule our behavior and understanding, how to live and die well. ■

Michel de Montaigne, in Marvin Lowenthal, editor, *The Autobiography of Michel de Montaigne* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1935).



My grandparents' geese were in the cellar where the wine was kept. The faucet on one of the wine kegs was open and the geese drank the wine. They got drunk, keeled over, and passed out! When my grandparents found the geese in the cellar, passed out, they thought they had died of something. They couldn't eat them because they might have died of something awful, so they plucked them all to use the feather for feather beds. And then the geese woke up! They woke up and made a whole lot of noise. My grandparents had to keep them tied on a string to the house for the rest of the summer until their feathers grew back, so they wouldn't wander too far and get cold. ■

Deborah Saperstone, quoted in Steven J. Zeitlin, Amy J. Kotkin, and Holly Cutting Baker, *A Celebration of American Family Folklore* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), p. 125.



Julie A. Robben, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1987.



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ΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨ



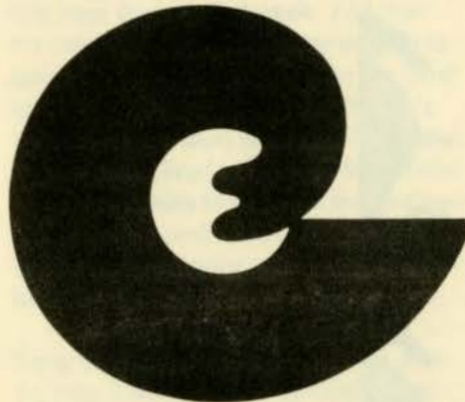
Julie A. Robben, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1987.

What was perhaps more extraordinary about Austin was that he would never speak a word if he could write it. We lived in the same house, a very little one, yet he would always communicate with me by note if I was not in the same room with him. He had dozens of letter-books. He seized upon every opportunity for writing a letter, and every letter, whether to a publisher or to a cobbler, was written with the same care. When closing a letter to some insignificant person about the veriest trifle, he would say "And that's literature." I have never seen him happier than when he had to answer an unpleasant letter. Before he sat down, I would hear him bubbling and chortling for quite a time. "Now for it," he would say at last; "I'm going to flick that gentleman with my satire." "I cultivate the gentle art of making enemies," he would say. "A friend is necessary, one friend-- but an enemy is more necessary. An enemy keeps one alert." I do believe he made enemies, or fancied he made them, for the sole pleasure of being able to "flick them with his satire." ■

John Holden (describing Baron Corvo, alias Fr. Austin), in A.J.A. Symons, *The Quest for Corvo* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1966), p. 96.

Einstein's space is no closer to reality than Van Gogh's sky... The scientist's discoveries impose his own order on chaos, as the composer or painter imposes his; an order that always refers to limited aspects of reality, and is biased by the observer's frame of reference, which differs from period to period, as a Rembrandt nude differs from a nude by Monet. ■

Arthur Koestler, *The Act of Creation* (New York: MacMillan, 1964), p. 252.



Paula A. Laib, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1987.

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One day they had been altering a certain conduit pertaining to a cistern and there issued from it a great scorpion unperceived by them, which crept down from the cistern to the ground, and slunk away beneath a bench. I saw it, and ran up to it, and laid my hands upon it. It was so big that when I had it in my little hands, it put out its tail on one side, and on the other thrust forth both its claws. They relate that I ran in high joy to my grandfather, crying out: "Look, grandpa, at my pretty little crab." When he recognized that the creature was a scorpion he was on the point of falling dead for the great fear he had and anxiety about me. He coaxed and entreated me to give it to him; but the more he begged, the tighter I clasped it, crying and saying I would not give it to anyone. My father, who was also in the house, ran up when he heard my screams, and in his stupefaction could not think how to prevent the venomous animal from killing me. Just then his eyes chanced to fall upon a pair of scissors; and so, while soothing and caressing me, he cut its tail and pincers. ■

Benevenuto Cellini (Italian Renaissance sculptor and metalsmith), *The Autobiography of Benevenuto Cellini* (New York: Modern Library, n.d.), pp. 8-9.

I think contemporary fiction is divided between those who are still writing performatively and those who are not. Writing for voice, in which you imagine a performance in the auditory sense going on, is traditional and old-fashioned and dying. The new mode is not performative and not auditory. It's destined for the printed page, and you are really supposed to read it the way they teach you to read in speed reading. You are supposed to crisscross the page with your eye, getting references and gists; you are supposed to see it flowing on the page, and not sound it in the head. If you do sound it, it is so bad you can hardly proceed... By the mouth for the ear: that's the way I'd like to write. I can still admire the other-- the way I admire surgeons, broncobusters, and tight ends. As writing, it is that foreign to me. ■

William H. Gass, interviewed in Tom LeClair and Larry McCaffery, editors, *Anything Can Happen* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), p. 158.



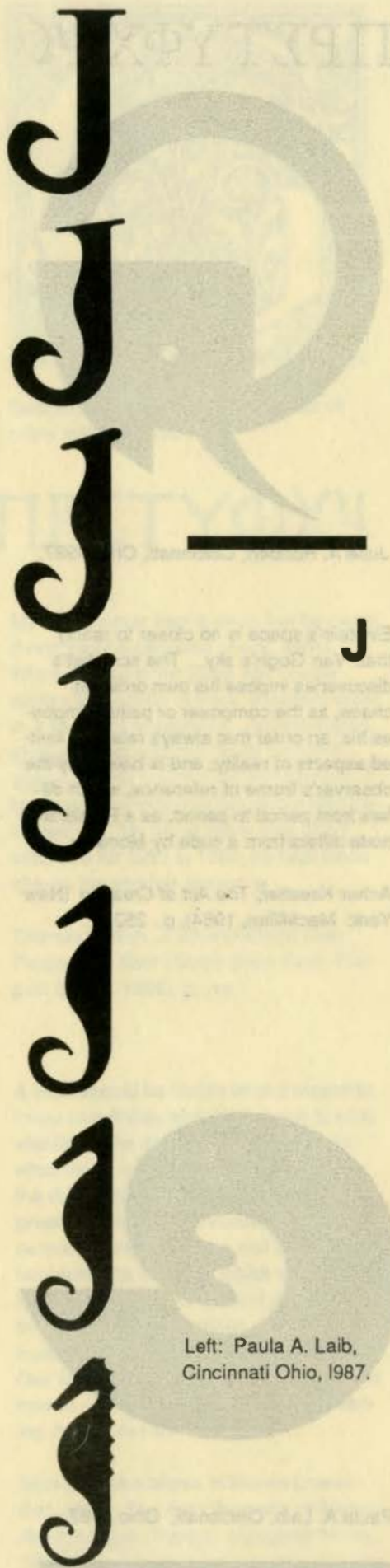
My last abortive American project was the time Woody Allen proposed that I play myself in *Annie Hall*. He offered me thirty thousand dollars for two days' work, but since the shooting schedule conflicted with my trip to New York, I declined, albeit not without some hesitation. (Marshall McLuhan wound up doing the self-portrait in my place, in the foyer of a movie theatre.) ■

Luis Bunuel, *My Last Sigh* (New York: Vintage, 1984), p. 194.

## ar de sedri hominibz

It would be interesting if some real authority investigated carefully the part which memory plays in painting. We look at the object with an intent regard, then at the palette, and thirdly at the canvas. The canvas receives a message dispatched usually a few seconds before from the natural object. But it has come through a post-office en route. It has been turned from light into paint. It reaches the canvas a cryptogram. Not until it has been placed in its correct relations to everything else that is on the canvas can it be deciphered, is its meaning apparent, is it translated once again from mere pigment into light. And the light this time is not of Nature but of Art. ■

Winston Churchill, *Amid These Storms* (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1972), p. 316.



Left: Paula A. Laib, Cincinnati Ohio, 1987.

All that summer I used to put on a second petticoat (our librarian wouldn't let you past the front door if she could see through you), ride my bicycle up the hill and "through the Capitol" (shortcut) to the library with my two read books in the basket (two was the limit you could take out at one time when you were a child and also as long as you lived), and tiptoe in ("Silence") and exchange them for two more in two minutes. Selection was no object. I coasted the two new books home, jumped out of my petticoat, read (I suppose I ate and bathed and answered questions put to me), then in all hope put my petticoat back on and rode those two books back to the library to get my next two. The librarian was the lady in town who wanted to be it. She called me by my full name and said, "Does your mother know where you are? You know good and well the fixed rule of this library: Nobody is going to come running back here with any book on the same day they took it out. Get both those things out of here and don't come back til tomorrow. And I can practically see through you." ■

Eudora Welty, "A Sweet Devouring" in *The Eye of the Storm: Selected Essays and Reviews* (New York: Vintage, 1979), p. 281.

A few months later, I made *Un Chien Andalou*, which came from an encounter between two dreams. When I arrived to spend a few days at Dali's house... I told him about a dream I'd had in which a long, tapering cloud sliced the moon in half, like a razor blade slicing through an eye. Dali immediately told me that he'd seen a hand crawling with ants in a dream he'd had the previous night. "And what if we started right there and made a film?" he wondered aloud. Despite my hesitation, we soon found ourselves hard at work, and in less than a week we had a script. Our only rule was very simple: No idea or image that might lend itself to a rational explanation of any kind would be accepted. We had to open all doors to the irrational and keep only those images that surprised us, without trying to explain why. ■

Luis Bunuel, *My Last Sigh* (New York: Vintage, 1984), pp. 103-104.



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Lora Wurtz, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1987.

M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

We were stopped in Racine by a policeman, for speeding down main street and failing to signal at a turn. We found no registration, and my driver's license had been left in work clothes. Mr. Wright and Woollcott handled the situation together. Complimenting each other extravagantly, they put on a show that overwhelmed the officer, who soon found out he was in the presence of two great Americans. "Officer," declared Mr. Wright, "this is Alexander Woollcott, the great *New Yorker* writer." Woollcott took his turn. "And Officer, this is Wisconsin's Frank Lloyd Wright, America's foremost architect, no, the world's best architect." Interrupting each other, they bantered back and forth until the policeman was completely confused. We were excused. We got back in the car. Roared Mr. Wright, "Drive on!" I drove on. ■

Edgar Tafel, *Years With Frank Lloyd Wright: Apprentice to Genius* (New York: Dover, 1979), pp. 179-180.

I can't recognize most of my daily doings when they appear in Aristotle. They are decked out or hidden in another cloak for the benefit of schoolmen. God grant they are in the right, but if I were in that business I'd do as much to make art natural as they do to make nature artificial. ■

Michel de Montaigne, in Marvin Lowenthal, editor, *The Autobiography of Michel de Montaigne* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1935).

Every time we came home from the store with a new jar of peanut butter, my dad, when we would go out of the room, would write the initials of the one he thought had been the best that week. And then the next morning, or whenever we'd go to open the peanut butter to put on our toast or something, he'd say, "Oh look what's here!" And he would tell us that it was the little fairy that lived in the light downstairs, whose name was Matilda and that she had done it. That used to make you be good so you could get your name in the peanut butter. ■

Emily Sardonia, quoted in Steven J. Zeitlin, Amy J. Kotlin, and Holly Cutting Baker, *A Celebration of American Family Folklore* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), p. 173.

About a year after my grandfather died I took a trip across the country and stopped in St. Louis to see my grandmother. It turned out that they had a lot of money tucked away here and there—money under the mattress, in different banks, fifties here and there. It all added up to close to one hundred thousand dollars. When I stopped again on the way back, I went into the house and my grandmother says, "Oh, Leslie, I have something for you, upstairs. I had thought about giving it to you on your way across the country." And here I was, old greedy me thinking that maybe she had found a hundred dollar bill under the mattress and was thinking of giving it to me. So I followed her upstairs, toward the bedroom when she all of a sudden makes a cut into the bathroom, and she opens the cabinet and pulls out these two huge bottles of mouthwash and she says, "Your grandfather was going to use these but he didn't get a chance."

Leslie Hall, quoted in Steven J. Zeitlin, Amy J. Kotkin, and Holly Cutting Baker, *A Celebration of American Family Folklore* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), p. 88.

#### Curiosities:

That the inventor of the first aluminum canoe was the father of Lee Bontecou, the American sculptor. That Jean-Paul Sartre was a cousin of Albert Schweitzer. That Hart Crane's father was the originator of Life Saver candies. That Arthur Koestler invented a salad fork that hooks onto the salad bowl, an adjustable picture hanger, and the first Hebrew crossword puzzle. That Francis Galton was a cousin of Charles Darwin. That the French chemist Michel Eugene Chevreul, known by artists for his description of the simultaneous contrast of colors, was the inventor of margarine, and the discoverer of cholesterol. That the wheelbarrow was invented by Pascal. ■

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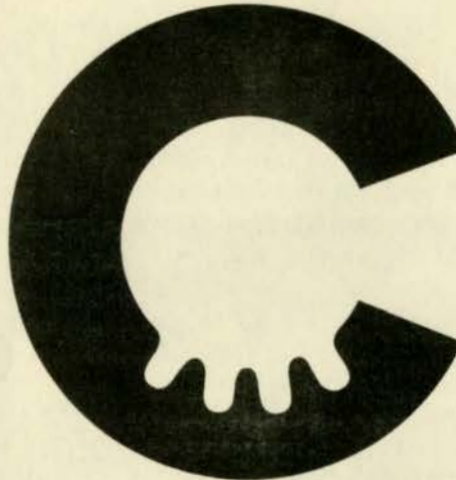
For one project we kept chickens and I found it distressing when brown Betty, who had all the year kept us supplied with eggs, had her neck wrung for us by a next door neighbor so that we could have a good Christmas dinner. When mother started to clean and pluck the bird, she felt too sentimental to carry on. The neighbors decided with us, to change the birds round and this became the practice every Christmas. As Mrs Hardman from next door said, "After you have fed and talked to them for so long, it would be like eating one of your own children." ■

Edith Hall, quoted in John Burnett, editor, *Destiny Obscure* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1984), p. 123.



Every house worth considering as a work of art must have a grammar of its own. "Grammar," in this sense, means the same thing in any construction--whether it be of words or of stone or wood. It is the shape-relationship between the various elements that enter into the constitution of the thing. The "grammar" of the house is its manifest articulation of all its parts. This will be the "speech" it uses. To be achieved, construction must be grammatical. ...When the chosen grammar is adopted (you go almost indefinitely with it into everything you do) walls, ceilings, furniture, etc., become inspired by it. Everything has a related articulation in relation to the whole and all belongs together; looks well together because all together are speaking the same language. If one part of your house spoke Choctaw, another French, another English, and another some sort of gibberish, you would have what you mostly have now--not a very beautiful result. Thus, when you do adopt the "grammar" of your house--it will be the way the house is to be "spoken," "uttered." You must be consistently grammatical for it to be understood as a work of Art. ■

Frank Lloyd Wright, "The Grammar of Architecture" in *Frank Lloyd Wright: Writings and Buildings* (New York: Meridian Books, 1960), pp. 296-297.



Jackie Lammers, Dayton, Ohio, 1987.

A palm-leaf carriage should move slowly, or else it loses its dignity. A wickerwork carriage, on the other hand, should go fast. Hardly has one seen it pass the gate when it is out of sight, and all that remains is the attendants who run after it. At such moments, I enjoy wondering who the passengers may be. But, if a wickerwork carriage moves slowly, one has plenty of time to observe it, and that becomes very dull. ■

Sei Shonagon in Ivan Morris, translator, *The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 52.

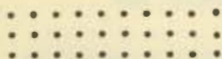
I remember when I was a boy going upon the beach and being charmed with the colors and forms of the shells. I picked up many and put them in my pocket. When I got home I could find nothing that I gathered-- nothing but some dry ugly mussel and snail shells. Thence I learned that Composition was more important than the beauty of individual forms... On the shore they lay wet and social by the sea and under the sky.

Ralph Waldo Emerson (in his journal on 16 May 1834), in William H. Gilman, editor, *Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York: New American Library, 1965), pp. 51-52. ■

She told granny that one day she and some other children were playing in Africa. They sighted a red flag at a distance from them. They became curious as to what the red flag was and ran to it. On approaching they were grabbed by some white men and put on a ship. This ship brought them to Virginia where they were sold. She always hated anything red because that was the color that attracted her from home and people whom she never saw or heard from. She is referred to often saying, "Oh that red rag, that red rag brought me here." ■

American slave descendent, quoted in E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 13.





Jim Wilmik, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1987.

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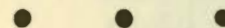
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One has written a letter, taking pains to make it as attractive as possible, and now one impatiently awaits the reply. "Surely the messenger should be back by now," one thinks. Just then he returns; but in his hand he carries, not a reply, but one's own letter, still twisted or knotted as it was sent, but now so dirty and crumpled that even the inkmark on the outside has disappeared. "Not at home," announces the messenger, or else, "They said they were observing a day of abstinence and would not accept it." Oh, how depressing! ■

Sei Shonagon (10th century Japanese court lady) in Ivan Morris, translator, *The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1971), pp. 40-41.



By grammar, he meant: the relationship of the elements to the whole, governed by a regulating system. For the Martin house, Mr. Wright used one kind of brick outside, so he used the same brick on the inside... In keeping with the grammar, the tile on the floor of the exterior porch was the same as the tile on the floor inside. He used only one kind of plaster... and only one kind of wood: oak. The chairs and tables were oak and so was all the wood trim. The total feeling of the house was of one stripe, from the overall plan down to the furniture, the door jambs, and the window frames. ■

Edgar Tafel, *Years with Frank Lloyd Wright: Apprentice to Genius* (New York: Dover, 1979), p. 91.

