Ballast Quarterly Review

Fall 1989

Ballast Quarterly Review, v05n1, Fall 1989

The Art Academy of Cincinnati

Copyright ©1989 The Art Academy of Cincinnati. The copyright holder has granted permission for posting.

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.uni.edu/ballast

Part of the Arts and Humanities Commons

Recommended Citation

This Periodical is brought to you for free and open access by UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Ballast Quarterly Review by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uni.edu.
BALLAST (a distant allusion to BLAST) is an acronym for Books Art Language Logic Ambiguity Science and Teaching. It is a journal devoted to wit, the contents of which are intended to be insightful, amusing or thought-provoking. Its purposes are educational, apolitical and noncommercial. It does not carry paid advertisements, nor is it supposed to be purchased or sold. It is published every three months, more or less, beginning in October and ending in June. There is no charge for subscriptions as such, and (to the extent that finances allow) the journal will gladly be mailed to persons who send in their mailing address and (to assist in our various costs) two first class U.S. postage stamps for each issue. In other words, to receive BALLAST for one year (a series of four issues), we ask that each reader contribute a total of eight first class U.S. postage stamps. When subscribing, please send good-looking or unusual stamps. We do not accept phone orders. All subscriptions (including gift subscriptions) must be mailed to:

BALLAST Quarterly Review
Attn: Reader Service Knave
The Art Academy of Cincinnati
Eden Park
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

BALLAST is published in a limited edition and back issues are not available. However, the magazine may be xeroxed to provide others with copies, but the copies must never be altered or sold.

Readers are hereby encouraged to suggest offbeat examples of verbal and visual insight of the sort that the journal might publish. Original material must be explicitly labeled as such. Material which is not original must clearly make note of its author and source. All contributions are unpaid, and unsolicited material will not be returned unless it is accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

BALLAST Quarterly Review. Volume 5, Number 1, Autumn 1989. Edited by Roy R. Behrens. This issue was designed by Ann Elizabeth Small. Copyright 1989 by the Art Academy of Cincinnati.
Catherine Lampert: Are the models before you, in front of you physically in front of the easel where you are painting, rather than to one side?

Frank Auerbach: I just don’t know. I move my easel about a bit. There is no set pattern, but I notice that towards the end of the painting I tend to shove the thing across the room. I’m not certain of this, I don’t know what I do. There’s a line in Eliot about “to be conscious is not to be in time”; if one’s really working one hasn’t got any consciousness left for self-consciousness.


Highly recommended: Edward M. Gottschall, *Typographic Communications Today* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 249 pp., illus. Large format, with hundreds of well-chosen illustrations (many in color), every aspect of this book (layout, printing, paper, text) is excellent. To our knowledge, there is no finer book about the history, theory and practice of typographic design. In the author’s words (Editor of *U&lc* magazine and Vice Chairman of the International Typeface Corporation), “It aims to open eyes and minds to the potential power of typography when skillfully handled, and to do so by examining the roots of contemporary typographic design and the work of outstanding typographic designers all over the world.”

B.F. Skinner (Notebooks): In looking at a menu, ask not what will taste good but what will feel good an hour or so from now.
How to remember the spectrum (Red orange yellow green blue indigo violet):

Richard Of York
Greatly Battled In
Vain. As learned by
Anthony Batchelor, a
reader from
Cincinnati, born in
Yorkshire, England.

If you graduated from medical school today, the chances are nearly 100 percent that you would be employed as a doctor, if you wished, several years from now. If you graduated from law school, nearly 90 percent; if you graduated from a writing school or art school, even with an advanced degree in, say, fiction writing or painting, the chances are less than 1 percent that you would be living off your work as a fiction writer or painter several years hence. Surviving as a full-time writer or artist, apart from inheritance or other jobs, is a feat comparable to becoming a general in the army or the president of a corporation.

My father invented a submarine just before the First World War which had the world's record for staying underwater, and he dramatized this by making an experimental trip on Friday the thirteenth, with a crew of thirteen, staying underwater for thirteen hours. But it never entered his mind that the value of staying underneath water lay in being invisible to people above. Because his engine ran on gasoline it left bubbles on the surface of the water. So his sub wasn't used in the war, and Dad went bankrupt.


Mary noticed that the Japanese dogs have Oriental faces; so do, she says, Eskimo dogs. Is this the result of selective breeding? Julian Huxley, in New Bottles for New Wine, has a photo of the Heike crab, which developed a distinct samurai face on its shell because the specimens showing the face were consistently thrown back into the water by superstitious fishermen. Thus, by selection, the face was bred in. Did something similar happen to dogs among Mongols? Or is the Oriental dog face more nearly the original one, and is it we who bred a Western look into our dogs?

Color influences our manner of handling physical objects. On chilly days I reach for my red corduroy shirt. At the American Federation of Arts they used to stain their packing cases in pastel colors, baby blue or pink, to make sure that the freight handlers would treat them with care.


If you see two men coming towards you, and it turns out to be one, it's Mies. Bauhaus student joke, referring to the rotund shape of Mies van der Rohe, who believed that "less is more," quoted in Elaine S. Hochman, *Architects of Fortune* (NY: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989).

Thoroughly unprepared we take the step into the afternoon of life; worse still, we take this step with the false assumption that our truths and ideals will serve us as hitherto. But we cannot live the afternoon of life according to the program of life's morning; for what was great in the morning will be little at evening, and what in the morning was true will at evening have become a lie.

For five months during his first winter in London, [Thomas] Carlyle had been working on his history of the French Revolution. He wrote in a state of semi-possession. He read obsessively, filled his mind with the subject, then wrote it out in a dash, destroying his notes as he went along. There were, of course, no typewriters, no carbon papers, and no Xerox machines...When Carlyle finished the first volume of his ambitious work, he sent the manuscript to John Stuart Mill for comment.

On March 6, 1835, Mill arrived in the Carlyle’s parlor white-faced and in a state of horrible agitation...Mill's maid, cleaning up, seeing the pile of papers in his parlor, had taken them for scrap and burned the lot. The first volume of the French Revolution was entirely gone.

Cogito ergo spud. I think therefore I yam.

Did you know? That the American poet Langston Hughes initially received national attention in 1925 while working as a busboy at the Wardman Park Hotel in New York. Having seen a photograph of Vachel Lindsay in the newspaper, Hughes recognized the famous poet in the hotel dining room. He passed three of his poems to Lindsay at his table, who announced at a reading the following day that he had "discovered" a young Black poet, which launched Hughes' career as a writer. Six years later, ill and impoverished, Lindsay committed suicide by drinking Lysol.

For example, in a restaurant (we even know its name: the Osteria del Moro), April 24, 1604, Caravaggio is served a plate of artichokes. He asks the waiter whether they have been cooked in oil or butter—and gets sass: "Smell them and find out." Speaking to the West's greatest artist of the paroxysmal moment, the cameriere has sasses the wrong man. In one flash of fury, as if in a Caravaggio, the plate, artichokes and all, is flung at the offender. Flung: We seem to glimpse every detail illuminated in one strobe of violence before the darkness closes again.

Highly recommended: My Life as a Dog, a film by Lasse Hallstrom (Svensk Filmindustri Production, 1987). Available at major video rental stores. A tragically funny and eloquent view of growing up in Sweden. Suggested by Stephen Samerjan (arf! arf!) and Gordon Mennenga, readers from Milwaukee and Iowa City respectively.

I had met Einstein before my talk, first through Paul Oppenheim, in whose house we were staying. And although I was reluctant to take up Einstein's time, he made me come again. Altogether I met him three times. The main topic of our conversation was indeterminism. I tried to persuade him to give up his determinism, which amounted to the view that the world was a four-dimensional Parmenidean block universe in which change was a human illusion, or very nearly so. (He agreed that this had been his view, and while discussing it I called him "Parmenides.")


Robert Bloch (author of Psycho): I have the heart of a small boy. I keep it in a jar on my desk.

Tommy Cooper: Last night I dreamed I ate a ten-pound marshmallow, and when I woke up the pillow was gone.
His socks compelled one's attention without losing one's respect.

Saki ('Ministers of Grace'). Suggested by Anne Miotke, a reader from Cincinnati.

Thomas Perry (Mystery Lovers' Book of Quotations): God, in his bounty and generosity, always creates more horses' asses than there are horses to attach them to.


Early one morning during this period he [Booth Tarkington] went for a walk after an unusually long writing session. He met the milkman coming up the walk and stopped to talk:

"You been up all night?" he [the milkman] asked.


"What you been doin'?

"Writing," said I.

"Workin'!" said he. "What at?"

"Writing," said I.

"How long?" said he.

"Since yesterday noon," said I.

"About sixteen hours."

"My God," said he. "You must have lots of time to waste!"

Conversation between American writer Booth Tarkington and an Indianapolis milkman, c. 1900, reported in Susanah Mayberry, My Amiable Uncle: Recollections about Booth Tarkington (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1983), p. 4.
Delay is natural to a writer. He is like a surfer—he bides his time, waits for the perfect wave on which to ride in. Delay is instinctive with him. He waits for the surge (of emotion? of strength? of courage?) that will carry him along...I am apt to let something simmer for a while in my mind before trying to put it into words. I walk around, straightening pictures on the wall, rugs on the floor—as though not until everything in the world was lined up and perfectly true could anybody reasonably expect me to set a word down on paper.


Sandy is to be married. I saw him yesterday. I found him with a clothespin on his nose to which he had fastened a piece of cotton as he has a cold and couldn't take the time off for his hands to wipe his nose. He had bread and salami attached to his Bulletin Board by strings. When he wanted either he cut off a hunk.


Frank Buckland and his father once visited a foreign cathedral "...where was exhibited a martyr's blood—dark spots on the pavement ever fresh and ineradicable." Dr. Buckland dropped to his knees and touched the spots with his tongue. "I can tell you what it is; it is bat's urine."

He once described the artist as a man standing in a crowd above the heads of which there are thick clouds. But above the artist's head there is a tiny hole through which he can look all the way up to the blue zenith and to God. The people about him, who cannot see through the hole, of course deny his report and call him crazy.


As Frank [Buckland] was buying a ticket at the railway station, Jacko [his pet monkey] popped out his head from the bag in which he was carried, much to the surprise of the booking clerk, who rapidly regained his presence of mind, however, and reminded Frank that a ticket was required for a dog. No amount of remonstrance, no display of the entire animal, would convince the clerk that it was a monkey and not a dog. At last, in good humored exasperation, Frank produced a tortoise from another pocket, and asked what he proposed to charge for that. After consulting his superior the man replied with a grave but determined manner: "No charge for them, sir; them be insects."

The family home of Rock Hill was littered with snakes, especially cobras. The immediate garden was not so dangerous, but one step further and you would see several. The chickens that my father kept in later years were an even greater magnet. The snakes came for the eggs. The only deterrent my father discovered was ping-pong balls. He had crates of ping-pong balls shipped to Rock Hill and distributed them among the eggs. The snake would swallow the ball whole and be unable to digest it.


My dentist tells me that sometimes when he runs into another person while trying to get through a door, he finds himself saying "Open, please!" instead of "Excuse me!"


Moholy was a friend of mine. As a matter of fact, I met him in 1938 in Chicago, and he is the guy who got me on the trail of reading. He said to me, "Do you read?" Just out of the blue. And I said, "No." And he said, "Pity." That's all he said. Unlike me. I sound like a guy trying to get everybody to join every library in the country. But he just said "pity," and that was enough.

During a weekly gathering with friends for exchanges of thought, we came across Kandinsky's book, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*. Coincidentally, I saw the first proclamation of a new art school at Weimar, called Bauhaus, and was told an interesting rumor about it by [the architect Emanuel] Mangold: "During entrance examinations, the applicant is locked up in a dark room. Thunder and lightning are let loose to get him into a state of agitation. His being admitted depends upon how well he expresses his experience by drawing and painting."


Recommended: Walter Askin, *Another Art Book to Cross Off Your List* (1984), published by Nose Press, P.O. Box 50381, Pasadena, CA 91105. $9.95 postpaid. Outrageous drawings and ludicrous puns by a California State University art professor, described as having come to art "via a series of subterfuges and coyote-like meanderings, holds the world record for breaking the picture plane more than 293 times in a 24 hour period...He was a four-letter man in high school--screen printing, bronze sculpture, oil painting, and figure drawing. (His school did not field a team in watercolor)...When his noodles are not on the side burner, he is especially proud of not being an Italian neo-expressionist."

Suggested by Beauvais Lyons, a reader from Knoxville, Tennessee.
I'm gradually learning how to take care of myself. It has taken a long time. It seems to me that when I die, I'll be in perfect condition.


At one of the annual conventions of the American Society for Aesthetics much confusion arose when the Society for Anesthetics met at the same time in the same hotel.


Recommended: Fiora MacCarthy, Eric Gill: A Lover's Quest for Art and God (NY: E.P. Dutton, 1989), 338 pp., illus. A life of the father of Gill Sans typeface ("the greatest English artist-craftsman of the 20th century") in which it is shown that earlier biographies have been more or less sans Gill in the sense that they did not provide an account of his sexual exploration of virtually all kinds.