

Winter 1990

## Ballast Quarterly Review, v06n2, Winter 1990

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### Recommended Citation

Behrens, Roy R., "Ballast Quarterly Review, v06n2, Winter 1990" (1990). *Ballast Quarterly Review*. 21.  
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# BALLAST

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VOLUME 6 NO 2 WINTER 1990

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BOOKS ART LANGUAGE LOGIC  
AMBIGUITY SCIENCE AND TEACHING

**Ballast Quarterly Review, Volume 6 Number 2, Winter 1990.** Originator, choreographer, research custodian, erudition supervisor, redundancy guard, machine facilitator, spelling patrolman and lick lackey: Roy R. Behrens. Copyright © 1990 by Roy R. Behrens.

**BALLAST** is an acronym (Isn't everything?) for Books Art Language Logic Ambiguity Science and Teaching, as well as a distant allusion to **BLAST**, the short-lived publication founded during World War I by the Vorticist artist and writer P. Wyndham Lewis. **BALLAST** originated in 1985 in Big Sur, California, found itself in Eureka, then Boise, Idaho, then Singapore -- now Iowa. Initially it was a protest against festoonery, torpidity and recidivism among visual artists, especially pantographers, miniaturists and tall stoneware ceramicists. Its editor having slid into the deep tureen of middle age, it is now chiefly a Mulligan's stew of aphorisms, anecdotes and antidotes. Put differently, it is a journal devoted to wit, the contents of which are intended to be insightful, amusing or thought-provoking.

The purposes of **BALLAST** 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 two first class U.S. postage stamps for each issue. In other words, to receive **BALLAST** for one year (four issues), we ask that each reader contribute a total of eight genuine unused U.S. postage stamps, interesting or not. Do not send postage meter slips. When subscribing, good-looking or unusual stamps are preferred (I like Ike). We do not accept phone orders.

**Cover illustration:**  
Pencil drawing by Gary Kelley, an extraordinary illustrator, whose studio is in Cedar Falls, Iowa. This year in the Society of Illustrators' 32nd annual show, he won four medals (two gold and two silver), the most received in a single year by any illustrator in the history of the Society. For more information, see *Step-By-Step Graphics*, vol 6 no 6, September/October 1990, pp. 40-51.



Carnival stuntman whom [Iowa painter] Byron Burford banged the drum for used to swallow live rats and ping-pong balls, upchucking whichever ones the crowd asked for. Stunned the rats with cigar smoke before he swallowed them.

Edward Hoagland, "Learning to Eat Soup" in *Our Private Lives: Journals, Notebooks and Diaries*, edited by Daniel Halpern (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), p. 233.



Left Typographic composition by Shelley Brant

One morning [shortly after their wedding], my wife Barbaranne used one of our coffee cups to hold the maple syrup she had heated for our pancakes. Noticing that her cup of black, unsweetened coffee and the cup of heated syrup were virtually indistinguishable, I effected a hasty switch while she was off fetching the pancakes. I only wish I could have a photograph of her expression as she took her first sip of what she supposed was her coffee.

Roger N. Shepard, *Mind Sights* (New York: W. H. Freeman, 1990), p. 24.

At the first [fox hunt] kill at which I was present I had to be "bloodied." The severed head of the fox was wiped across my face till it was completely smeared with blood, and I was told what a fine huntsman I should make. I do not remember the blood, nor the joking huntsmen; only the plumed breath of the horses, the jingle of their harness, the beads of dew and the white gossamer on the tangled hedge beside us.

Herbert Read, *The Contrary Experience* (New York: Horizon Press, 1963), p. 35.

**Highly recommended:** *Aberrations: An Essay on the Legend of Forms* by Jurgis Baltrusaitis. Richard Miller, trans. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989). An illustrated treatise on "depraved perspectives," aberrant ways of regarding reality by which we are able to see things "other than as they are": Animals whose features resemble those of human beings; stones on which nature appears to have drawn; the plant-like excesses of Gothic architecture; and gardens and lands of illusion.

Right Typographic composition by Linda Mitchell. Far right Original proposal for Futura typeface by Paul Renner, as reproduced in Alexander Lawson, *Anatomy of a Typeface* (Boston: David R. Godine, Publisher, 1990), p. 341.



**Did you know?** That the parents of the American illustrator Rockwell Kent were introduced in 1880 when both attended a demonstration of the incandescent light by Thomas A. Edison.

I learnt that the dancing bears that were led about Europe were trained by being caged on an iron plate under which a fire was kindled, while the trainer played his simple wooden flute. By degrees the animal associated the sound with the pain, and the two became one in its mind and so when the flute was played the bear danced and suffered. I learnt that the outward results are not very different. The animal trained by love may, because it is not afraid, one day turn on its trainer. The animal that has been whipped into submission, burnt into it with hot irons, may one day overcome its fear and kill its trainer.

Stuart Cloete, *A Victorian Son* (New York: John Day Company, 1972), p. 137.



I neglected my appearance. I took long, lonely walks. Barbers standing in their doorways on the Bowery would beckon to me, trying to persuade me to submit to a haircut. Jeeringly they would say "For nothing." Smart-alecky kids would stop me in my most withdrawn moments and ask, "Hey, where's the nearest barber shop?" Bewildered, I would look around to find one, much to their amusement.

Raphael Soyer, *Diary of an Artist* (Washington, D.C.: New Republic Books, 1977), p. 208.

a a a a b b b b c  
 d d e f g g h i j  
 k l m n o o o p p  
 q q r r s t u v  
 w x x y z  
 A A A A c k B

...Robert Frost's overquoted justification of form (free verse as tennis "without a net") sounds too inorganic. A net, unlike the throb of lung or loin, is not part of our living protoplasm. Worse, the net metaphor treats form as separable from content. But artistic creativity is not an either-or between content and form. Nor is it mechanical compromise (50-50 or 80-20) between these alternatives. The achieved poem or other art work is both alternatives full and both at the same instant. To be 100 percent form, yet 100 percent content, is an unmathematical miracle: its parts are greater than the sum of its wholes. Meanwhile the sterile formalists discredit form by playing the net without the tennis.

Peter Viereck, "Strict Wildness: The Biology of Poetry" in *Poets and Writers Magazine* (May/June 1988), pp. 10-11.

The Lion called the Sheep to ask if his breathe smelt. She said, Ay, and he bit off her head for a fool. He called the Wolf; he said No, and was torn to pieces as a flatterer. He called the Fox, who said he had a cold, and could not smell.

Aesop, quoted in Louis Kronenberger, *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral* (New York: Viking, 1972), p. 66.



Above Pencil drawing by Gary Kelley

One evening a young man named Ivan Ivanovich Pozniakov came to our house and did a drawing of our father from life. That one could draw a living person was a sudden revelation to me. I stopped drawing for several days, then asked my father to pose for me as he had for Ivan Ivanovich. When the drawing was praised, my elation was boundless.

Raphael Soyer, *Diary of an Artist* (Washington, D.C.: New Republic Books, 1977), p. 181.

**Recommended:** *Mind Sights: Original Visual Illusions, Ambiguities, and Other Anomalies, With a Commentary on the Play of Mind in Perception and Art*, by Roger N. Shepard (New York: W.H. Freeman, 1990) ISBN 0-7167-2133-3. Elusive observations and pictorial conundrums, reminiscent of the work of M.C. Escher and Rene Magritte, by a prominent psychologist.



Wyndham Lewis ...used to come and sit and measure pictures. I cannot say that he actually measured with a measuring-rod but he gave all the effect of being in the act of taking very careful measurements of the canvas, the lines within the canvas and everything that might be of use. Gertrude Stein rather liked him. She particularly liked him one day when he came and told all about his quarrel with Roger Fry. They told exactly the same story only it was different, very different.

Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), pp. 122-123.

**Recommended:** *Genius: The History of an Idea* edited by Penelope Murray (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989). ISBN 0-631-15785-9. Twelve engaging essays by various scholars regarding the concept of "genius" in relation to musical invention, artistic creation, mathematics, mental disorder and so on.

**Recommended:** *World Literary Anecdotes* [ISBN 0-8160-2248-8] and *American Literary Anecdotes* [0-8160-1599-6] by Robert Hendrickson (New York: Facts on File, 1990). Two of a series of three books (the third, unseen, is *British Literary Anecdotes*) of stories, quotations and curious facts about dead poets and other literati.

**Highly recommended:** *Low Budget/High Quality Design: The Art of Inexpensive Visual Communication* by Steven Heller and Anne Fink (New York: Watson Guptill, 1990). ISBN 0-8230-2880-1. Full-color reproductions and brief descriptions of about eighty examples of well-designed but inexpensive publications (including BALLAST). Heller is Senior Art Director at the *New York Times* and co-author (with Seymour Chwast) of *Graphic Style: From Victorian to Postmodern* (New York: Watson Guptill, 1989) [ISBN 0-8109-1033-0], undoubtedly one of our favorite books on design history.

Can you count?  
 Can you stand?  
 Can you con-stant-I?  
 Can you nople?  
 Can you pople?  
 Can you  
 CONSTANTINOPLE?

Anon, children's rhyme quoted in Carl Withers, editor, *A Rocket in My Pocket: The Rhymes and Chants of Young Americans* (New York: Henry Holt, 1948), p. 101.





Above Pencil drawing by Osie L. Johnson, Jr. Right Typographic composition by Mary E. Fellmeyer

### Remarks regarding William Blake:

*Edith Sitwell:* Of course he was cracked, but that is how the light came in.

*Arthur Symonds:* Where other poets use reality as a spring-board into space, he uses it as a foothold on his return from flight.

*George Richmond:* He died on Sunday Night at 6 O'clock in a most glorious manner. He said He was going to that Country he had all His life wished to see & expressed Himself Happy hoping for Salvation through Jesus Christ. Just before he died his Countenance became fair. His eyes Brighten'd and he burst out singing of the things he saw in Heaven.

**John Singer Sargent** [advice to a young painter]: Begin with Frans Hals, copy and study Frans Hals, after that go to Madrid and copy Velasquez, leave Velasquez, till you have got all you can out of Frans Hals.



Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein-Augustenburg was unfortunate enough to lose an eye in a shooting accident. When conversation flagged at a dinner-party, as happened so often when he was the host, he would bid the footman bring a tray containing his collection of glass eyes, which he would exhibit to his embarrassed guests, explaining at great length the peculiarities of each one -- "and this one, you see, is blood-shot, I wear it when I have a cold."

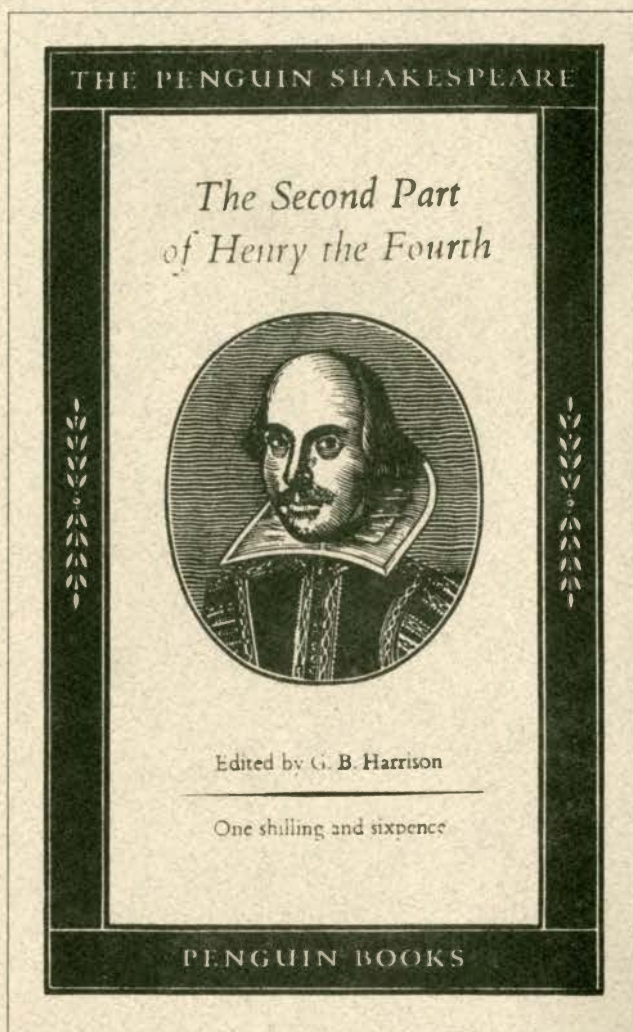
Georgina Battiscombe, *Queen Alexandra*, quoted in Louis Kronenberger, *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral* (New York: Viking, 1972), pp. 247-248.

G.C. Argan tells me that upon arriving at a railway station in India, he was informed that the train he intended to take would be twenty-two hours late. But if you like, they told him, you can take yesterday's train, which we expect to arrive any minute now!

Rudolf Arnheim, *Parables of Sun Light* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 175.



Below Cover design by Jan Tschichold for The Penguin Shakespeare, 1947, as reproduced in Ruari McLean, *Jan Tschichold: Typographer* (Boston: David R. Godine, Publisher, 1975), p. 90.



[Sir William Harvey] was ever afraid of becoming blind: early one morning, for he always rose early, his house-keeper coming into his chamber to call him, opened the window shutters, told him the hour, and asked him if he would not rise. Upon which he asked if she had opened the shutters; she replied yes -- then shut them again -- she did so -- then open them again. But still the effect was the same to him, for he had awakened stone blind. Upon which he told her to fetch him a bottle, (which she herself had observed to stand on a shelf in his chamber for a long time), out of which he drank a large draught, and it being a strong poison, which it is supposed he had long before prepared and set there for this purpose, he expired within three hours later.

Edward Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent*.

Want a penny?  
Haven't got any.

Want a nickel?  
Buy a pickle.

Want a dime?  
Some other time.

Want a quarter?  
Jump in the water.

Want a dollar?  
Sit on the roof and holler.

Stay mad, stay mad,  
Be my little dishrag.

Anon, children's rhyme quoted in Carl Withers, editor, *A Rocket in My Pocket* (New York: Henry Holt, 1948), pp. 123-124.

[e.e. cummings and his wife Marion] were leaving a swanky uptown New Year's Eve party and realized they didn't have enough money to take the subway home to Greenwich Village. Cummings was usually poor, but it never would have occurred to him to worry about it until they said their good-byes and stepped into the mirrored elevator. Cummings and Marion were dressed in their shabby but superb evening clothes, looking like a couple of immortals with their tall bodies and their perfect bones, and they found themselves in the elevator with a portly Brooks Brothers type.

"Excuse me," Cummings said as the elevator started down. "Would you care to step on my hat?" With a regal sweep he placed his hat on the floor. The portly fellow was willing enough. Cumming's demeanor made everything seem possible.

"I'm afraid it will cost you five dollars," Cummings added, using his aristocratic accent to suggest it was a bit painful for two gentlemen to discuss money. The man stepped on Cumming's hat and paid his fee from a fat roll of banknotes. Cummings and Marion went home in a taxi.

Susan Cheever, *Home Before Dark* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984), pp. 59-60.



I may say that only three times in my life have I met a genius and each time a bell within me rang and I was not mistaken, and I may say in each case it was before there was any general recognition of the quality of genius in them. The three geniuses of whom I wish to speak are Gertrude Stein, Pablo Picasso and Alfred Whitehead. I have met important people, I have met several great people but I have known three first class geniuses and in each case on sight within me something rang.

Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), p. 5.

I think the thoughts and prejudices of our family have been profoundly influenced by what they ate and drank in childhood. My father never touched alcohol except as a priest at the altar, and he ate only the smallest quantities of meat and fish. He never even — to our astonishment as we grew into boyhood — had more than one egg at a meal! His chief food was bread and butter, varied by bread and treacle, for he never mingled these luxuries, or by bread and Dundee Marmalade. His sole drink except water, which he did not enjoy, was tea. All eleven of us, while I was at Cambridge, and all ten of us today are still regarded by our friends as peasant-like and even cattle-like, in the delight with which we willingly devour slice after slice of thick-cut bread, enriched by jam, honey or marmalade.

John Cowper Powys, *Autobiography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1934), p. 16.

# Highly recommended:

*Jan Tschichold: Typographer* by Ruari McLean (Boston: David R. Godine, Publisher, 1990). ISBN 0-87923-841-0. This is the softbound edition of the best book about the life, writings and typographic creations of Tschichold (pronounced *Chick-hold*), one of the most influential and inspiring graphic designers of this century.

*Anatomy of a Typeface* by Alexander Lawson (Boston: David R. Godine, Publisher, 1990). ISBN 0-87923-332-X. A comprehensive study of the origin and development of type families, both modern and traditional, compiled by a typography professor, published by one of the country's finest book companies.

*Hybrid Imagery: The Fusion of Technology and Graphic Design* by April Greiman (New York: Watson-Guptill, 1990). ISBN 0-8230-2518-7. A manifesto for the eye, with side notes on the way she works, by an ingenious and gifted practitioner of "Postmodern" or "New Wave" design.



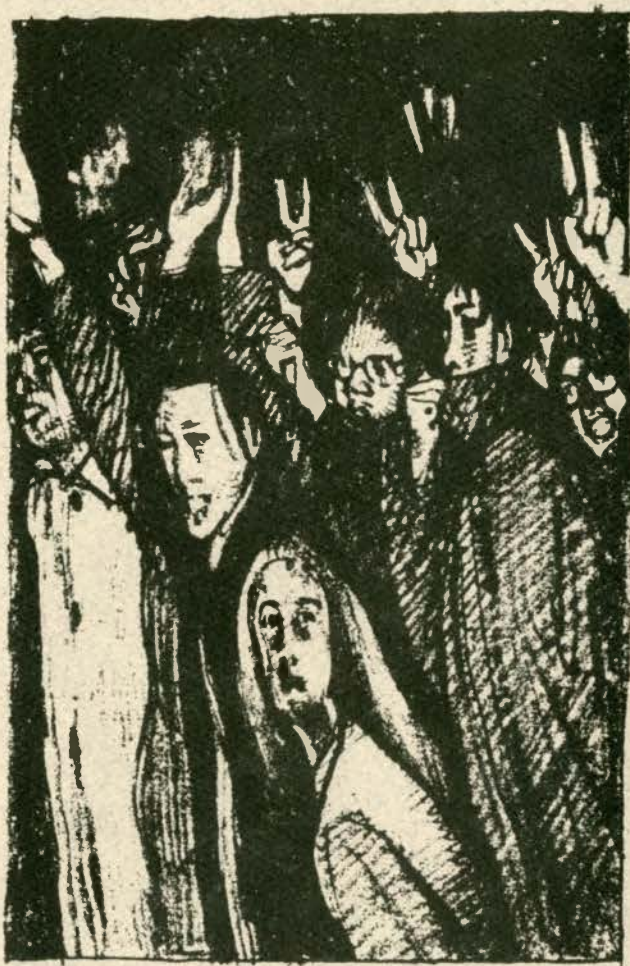
Above Pencil drawing by Gary Kelley.

**Highly recommended:** *Working With Style: Traditional and Modern Approaches to Layout and Typography* by Suzanne West (New York: Watson-Guptill, 1990). ISBN 0-8230-5872-7. This is an overview of the organizing principles – or "game rules" – of two styles of graphic design: the traditional, inherited from the Renaissance; and the modern, associated with 20th century German-Swiss typography. As example, the design of the first half is traditional, the second modern. Elegantly written, beautifully presented, with exemplary layouts and templates on a Macintosh floppy disc.



**Recommended:** *First Glance: Childhood Creations of the Famous* by Tuli Kupferberg and Sylvia Topp (Maplewood, New Jersey: Hammond Incorporated, 1978).

**Bill Vaughn (*Half the Battle*):** Maybe the answer to Selective Service is to start everyone off in the army and draft them for civilian life as needed.



Above Pencil drawing by Gary Kelley.

...while my sister was still downstairs one evening, I used her rug to noiselessly slide every article of furniture and every appurtenance (including drapes, pictures, clothing, and the rug itself) from her bedroom, down the hall, and into another room, so that when she went up for bed, she confronted a completely bare room.

Roger N. Shepard [describing his early interest in practical jokes], *Mind Sights* (New York: W.H. Freeman, 1990) p. 21.

# T E R L Y R E V I E W

**BALLAST** is published in Iowa, in a region increasingly listed among the most desirable places in which to live. All subscriptions, including gift subscriptions (great idea!), must be mailed to:

BALLAST Quarterly Review  
Attn: Subscription Acolyte  
2210 Thunder Ridge Boulevard  
Suite 12-B  
Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613

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**BALLAST** doesn't have a budget really. For five years, it has operated at a loss. Even if we obtained stamps from everyone to whom we send the magazine, we would still lose about 13 cents per copy just on printing costs, without beginning to account for research, typesetting, paste-up, correspondence and so on. The losses are currently offset by donations from enlightened subscribers and generous deductions from the Subscription Acolyte's paycheck. If anyone is foolishly philanthropic (foolish because such contributions are probably not tax deductible), we will sometimes accept a check (made payable to Roy R. Behrens), a page of freshly minted stamps, two round-trip tickets to the Virgin Islands, a snow blower, and gift certificates for any food other than pizza.

We are grateful for all of the mail we've received since the last issue.

**Albert Einstein:**  
If A equals  
success, then the  
formula is A  
equals X plus Y  
plus Z. X is work.  
Y is play. Z is  
keep your mouth  
shut.

Note: Illustrations on pages 1, 2, 6 and 7 were produced by graphic design students in the Department of Art, University of Northern Iowa, during October 1990.



**Ballast Quarterly Review**

2210 Thunder Ridge Boulevard

Suite 12-B

Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613

**FIRST CLASS**