

Winter 1992

Ballast Quarterly Review, v08n2, Winter 1992

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BALLAST QUARTERLY REVIEW

QUARTERLY REVIEW

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Volume 8 Number 2

Winter 1992

Frank Crow:
Roses are red,
violets are blue,
I'm a schizophrenic,
and so am I ✻

A spin-off from my long and deep association with artists is that whenever I come up against a tough, virtually unsolvable problem in my own work and am really stymied, I turn to the artists. There isn't much they haven't thought about or tried to do, few problems they haven't tried to solve or shed some light on.

Edward T. Hall, *An Anthropology of Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), p. 60 ✻



Paul Fix: The only reason people get lost in thought is because it's unfamiliar territory ✻

BALLAST Quarterly Review
Volume 8, Number 2, Winter 1992.
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founder, editor, art director. This issue
was designed by Larc Gnuj.

BALLAST is an acronym 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 Wyndham Lewis, the Vorticist artist and writer. **BALLAST** is chiefly a pastiche of astonishing passages from books, magazines, diaries and other publications. 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 a 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, antique and/or unusual stamps are preferred. (At the moment we are particularly interested in the dung beetle commemorative stamp—just ask for it at your post office window.) We do *not* accept phone orders ✻

Tom Lehrer: I wish people who have trouble communicating would just shut up ✻



In Marine Corps boot camp in the late 1960s, we were completely cut off from the world. No radio or newspapers. No word from, no contact with people outside. Intimidated by maniacal screams and grotesque beatings, we learned to remain awake even while sleeping. The moments when one could pretend to relax were in the darkest hours of the night, when, against regulations, inaudible rumors were floated around. I can especially remember one night when someone whispered from across the barracks, "De Gaulle is dead. General de Gaulle died today." It was the first news from the outside. I wasn't particularly interested in the aging French President, but when I heard that rumor in that context, it was as if one of my parents had died. Suddenly, all of my feelings escaped. Stock-still and dead silent, I cried uncontrollably, then slowly drifted into sleep. Weeks later, when boot camp had ended, I learned that the rumor was merely a hoax. De Gaulle was still alive and well.

Anon, from the editor's journal ✱



Richard Stern arrived and told us some juicy anecdotes about two Rumanian "princesses" ninety years old whom he had met in Venice. One of them, drinking her coffee, brought the cup too close to her face—and, Stern went on, the nose, probably restored with a wax cast, began to melt and finally fell into the coffee...

Mircea Eliade, *Journal II 1957-1967* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 270 ✱

We had a horse and buggy, cow, chickens, apple trees, a walnut grove, a superior privy with three seats of different heights and sizes of apertures.

Roger G. Barker (American psychologist, recalling his childhood in Plover, Iowa), in Gardner Lindzey, ed., *A History of Psychology in Autobiography*. Volume VIII. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989), p. 4 ✱

Ogden Nash:
The Bronx?
No thonx ✱



J.E. Morpurgo: God would not have invented the automobile if he had intended me to walk ✽

Bonbonnières

Dog
Dog
Monkey
Dog

Horse
Leopard
Leopard
Cat

Cat
Boar
Boar
Boar

Dog
Dog
Dog

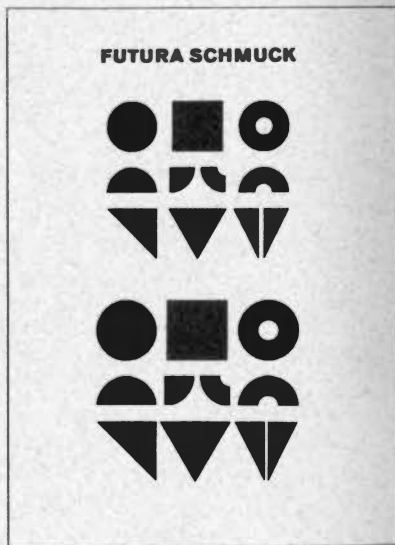
Found poem taken from the objects listing of a major American museum, submitted by Anthony Batchelor, a reader from Cincinnati ✽

At dinner, Claude Lévi-Strauss—very charming toward me. But we didn't talk much. Only in the taxi did I realize I'd taken Lévi-Strauss's raincoat by mistake.

Mircea Eliade, *Journal IV* 1979-1985 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 19 ✽



ABOVE Thomas Theodor Heine, satirical cartoon from *Simplicissimus* (circa 1922) showing German architect Walter Gropius "removing the last ornaments of his family," that is, snipping off their ears, including the ears of the family pooch. As director of the Bauhaus, Gropius was linked with the maxim "less is more," sans serif typefaces, and the elimination of architectural ornament, a philosophy not recommended for those with castration anxiety, since the German word for printer's ornament is *schmuck*, Yiddish for the male reproductive organ. Witness the printer's ornaments for Paul Renner's typeface Futura (BELOW) ✽



Long ago we hired a new immigrant to help with the housework in our house in a suburb of New York City. She soon learned to answer the phone, too. One day the phone rang, and I heard her answer, "Yes...yes...it sure is," and then hang up. Moments later it rang again, and the same sequence occurred. When it happened a third time, "Yes...yes...it sure is," and she hung up, I couldn't contain my curiosity. I asked her what the calling party had said. She told me "Is this the Wertheimer residence?, so I answered yes; then he asked whether Professor Wertheimer is at home, and I said yes; then he said 'Long distance from Washington.' And I said it sure is."

Michael Wertheimer (pretending to speak as his father, Gestalt psychologist Max Wertheimer), in Gregory A. Kimble, Michael Wertheimer, and Charlotte White, eds., *Portraits of Pioneers in Psychology* (Washington, DC, and Hillsdale, NJ: American Psychological Association and Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1991), pp. 195-196 ✱

John Ruskin: Hundreds of people can talk for one who can think, but thousands can think for one who can see ✱

Edward Marsh
[Dialogue between a military officer and a fresh recruit in *Ambrosia and Small Beer*]:

M.O.: How are your bowels working?

R.: Haven't been issued any, sir.

M.O.: I mean, are you constipated?

R.: No sir, I volunteered.

M.O.: Heavens man, don't you know the King's English?

R.: No sir, is he? ✱

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED Lewis Blackwell, *Twentieth-Century Type* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1992). This is a remarkably beautiful book (400 illustrations, 350 in color), certainly one of the finest we've seen on typographic design. Organized by decades from 1890 to the present, it's a painstaking verbal and visual review of the history of modern type design, layout, communications technology, and aesthetics. We were especially delighted to find a number of stunning historic examples, rarely reproduced in books, including an annotated drawing for Edward Johnston's London Underground typeface, and unforgettable spreads from *Le-Dantyu as a Beacon* by Ilia Zdanevich and *Mise en Page* by Albert Tolmer. There is also an excellent section on the description and classification of typefaces ✱



HIGHLY RECOMMENDED Otto L. Bettmann, *Bettmann: The Picture Man* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1992). As we grew up in the 1950s, the phrase "the Bettmann Archive" became emblazoned on our brain, because it appeared beneath the illustrations in virtually all of the books that we read. This is the delightful autobiography of the Archive's founder, 89 years old this year, now Curator of Rare Books at the Florida Atlantic University Library at Boca Raton. The text is congenial and enchanting, and we were especially entertained by the playful and somewhat incongruous mix of text and images ✖



H.L. Mencken (*Minority Report*): It is impossible to imagine a universe run by a wise, just and omnipotent God, but it is quite easy to imagine it run by a board of gods ✖

In attempting to describe the experience of listening to [Niels] Bohr in public, I am reminded of a story about the violinist Eugene Ysaye, who at one time had a member of a royal family as his pupil. Another musician of great renown (to whom I owe this tale) once asked Ysaye how this pupil was doing. Whereupon Ysaye lifted his hands heavenwards and sighed: "Ah, her royal highness, she plays divinely bad."

However different the background in the two cases, these are the words which best characterize the situation. Bohr was divinely bad as a public speaker...The main reason was that he was in deep thought as he spoke. I remember how that day he had finished part of the argument, then said "And...and...", then was silent for at most a second, then said, "But...", and continued. Between the "and" and the "but" the next point had gone through his mind. However, he simply forgot to say it out loud and went on somewhere further down his road.

Abraham Pais, Niels Bohr's Times: In Physics, Philosophy, and Polity (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 11 ✖



S.J. Perelman (*Westward Ho!*): I suggested that she take a trip round the world. "Oh, I know," returned the lady, yawning with ennui, "but there's so many other places I want to see first."

Last night's dream: I leave home with the manuscript of a study on which I had worked several months, to make a photocopy of it. I come to a strange garden or park in the vicinity of the office where the manuscript is to be photocopied. A well-dressed man is there, with many small animals around him. I don't know why, but I fold the manuscript and press it together, reducing it to the size of a sandwich, and try, for fun, to threaten a little rat with it. But the animal takes hold of the packet with his mouth and won't let go. Although he isn't biting or chewing it, I observe that the manuscript is getting smaller. Impossible to pull it out of the rat's mouth. I have nothing handy with which to hit it. Alarmed, I beg the elegant gentleman, who is standing directly in front of me, to stab the rat. He replies that *here* he does not have the right to fire a revolver. I watch desperately as my manuscript disappears. Very soon there is nothing left in my hand but a narrow strip of paper, a few millimeters wide. Only then does the rat let loose of it—and he goes away.

Mircea Eliade, *Journal IV, 1979-1985* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 22 ✕

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED
Jan Tschichold, *The Form of the Book: Essays on the Morality of Good Design* (Point Roberts, Washington: Hartley and Marks, 1991). Perhaps no modern designer is more revered than this articulate German typographer, who initiated the "New Typography" movement in 1928 (sans serif type and asymmetrical layouts), then returned to classical principles as design director of Penguin Books in the 1940s. This is a sensitive, elegant book, typeset in Sabon (which Tschichold designed), with a layout based on Tschichold's own. It is a new, important work in the sense that of 23 essays, only two have been published in English before ✕

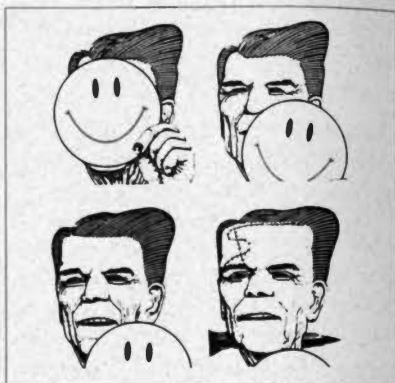


HIGHLY RECOMMENDED
Lori Siebert and Lisa Ballard, *Making a Good Layout* (Cincinnati: North Light Books, 1992).

Written and produced by two young, very capable women designers, this book is a simple but consummate guide to "understanding and using basic principles of design and layout." One reason it works so well is that it exemplifies its own recommendations—

it is evident that the authors' own principles of "making a good layout" (function, organization, and attractiveness) have been used in the process of making a good book.

Another strength is the quality and appropriateness of the examples of professional graphic design, including newsletters, posters, ads, letterheads, brochures, logos, and packaging. Clear and direct yet delightful to read, this would be an excellent textbook in advanced high school courses or beginning design courses for college students ✱



ABOVE Carl Smool, illustration detail from a presidential campaign poster by Working Artists for a Democratic Alternative (Seattle, 1984). Reproduced in Karrie Jacobs and Steven Heller, *Angry Graphics: Protest Posters of the Reagan/Bush Era* (Peregrine Smith Books, Gibbs-Smith Publisher, Salt Lake City, 1992) ✱

Like Alfred Stieglitz, he [Lewis Mumford] loved to watch the clouds "at every moment of the day, and in every mood." On days when the cloud formations were especially striking he would call the whole family outside to observe them, and sometimes, like an ancient Roman, he'd search for signs and portents. One afternoon he was sitting outdoors looking at the clouds when he saw a formation of them forming a profile of his head. He excitedly called to [his wife] Sophia to look and tell him what she saw. Pointing to the right part of the sky, she exclaimed, with a smile, "Why it's your head!" "That's a good augury," he told her confidently.

Donald L. Miller, *Lewis Mumford: A Life* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992), pp. 380-381 ✱



A friend and former professor, a Chinese emigrant whose English is usually flawless, got a splinter in his foot while walking barefoot on the boardwalk in Atlantic City. Rushing to a nearby first aid station, he arrived to find a gray-haired nurse whose nameplate indicated that she was unmarried. In an inadvertent slip of the tongue, he pointed to his injury and said, "I would like to have the spinster removed."

Anon, from the editor's journal.

When we first met, Bucky [R. Buckminster Fuller, architect and philosopher] was not yet famous. I found him to be gregarious, loquacious, rotund, and energetic. He had been so nearsighted as a child that anything more than a few feet away was out of his range. A fire engine would go by on the street and his playmates would talk about it. Since Bucky couldn't see the fire engine himself, but only heard it, he would make up the missing reality. He didn't know this was happening until someone found out he couldn't see and got him glasses. Until then they thought he was confabulating, which caused no end of trouble in his life. When he told me that story I couldn't help but think how much of life is that way; only a few of us know that we can't "see" and fill in the missing parts from our own experience and our own imagination.

Edward T. Hall, *An Anthropology of Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), p. 189 ✕

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED Donald L. Miller, *Lewis Mumford: A Life* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992). The hardbound edition of this book was published in 1989, the year before its subject died. Mumford was never easy to characterize. He was a sociologist, but also an architectural historian, and because of his writings on cities, probably most people think of him as "the father of urban planning." He was a great friend and supporter of Frank Lloyd Wright, until America's entry into World War II, when Wright (an isolationist), replying to an angry attack by Mumford, referred to him as an "amateur essayist on culture." That and a cargo of stories about the ups and downs of Mumford's public career and personal life (often surprisingly personal) are contained in this complex but readable book ✕



Rudolf Arnheim

(Parables of Sun Light):

One does not grow old gradually. Rather, one stays in an age-group for some time and then shifts to the next ✖

Joseph Podlesnik [in a

letter to BALLAST]:

Saw Woody Allen, rumples, trotting out of a taxi on 72nd and Fifth ✖

BELOW Extemporaneous photograph by Gary Kelley of American artist Georgia O'Keeffe (second from right) crossing 59th Street at 5th Avenue near the Plaza Hotel in Manhattan, circa 1985 ✖



W

hile Georgia Lloyd-Jones and her family were dashing about their leaking living rooms with pots and pans during a downpour in Tulsa, Okla., she made a wry observation about the house her husband's cousin, Frank Lloyd Wright, had designed for them in 1929. "Well," she said, "this is what we get for leaving a work of art out in the rain." Her less equable husband later called his architect long distance. "Damn it, Frank," he shouted, "it's leaking on my desk!" Wright calmly replied, "Richard, why don't you move your desk?"

Thomas S. Hines, "The Wright Stuff" in *The New York Times Book Review* (13 December 1992), p. 9 ✖

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED Carol Strickland and John Boswell, *The Annotated Mona Lisa: A Crash Course in Art History From Prehistoric to Post-Modern* (Kansas City: Andrews and McMeel, 1992). Art historians would probably object to this book, as it tends toward the cocky and artfully glib. In brief, it's a sort of TV version of Janson's art history text, an attempt to provide mainstream cultural literacy to a culture of distracted illiterates. We ended up liking it nevertheless, largely because of the various charts and sidebars. Too bad there isn't a similar book about design history such as *The Annotated Shaker Chair* or *The Annotated For the Voice* ✖



HIGHLY RECOMMENDED Paula Scher, *The Graphic Design Portfolio: How to Make a Good One* (New York: Watson Guptill, 1992). Scher is a leading New York graphic designer and partner in a prominent firm called Pentagram. This book came from a Senior Portfolio course she taught for eight years at the School of Visual Arts, a task that was always a challenge because (as all teachers eventually learn) "many of the students entering the senior-year program do not yet possess the design skills needed to complete the pieces for their portfolios. In attempting to address this deficiency, I have learned that the maturation processes of young designers can differ dramatically. Some designers don't find their own creative voice until relatively late in their schooling, while others find it early but don't grow much afterwards. Every student is different." As indicated by that sampling, this is an insightful, behind-the-scenes look at the anguish as well as the ecstasy of teaching design, of value to teachers and students as well; an important contribution to design education ✖

Can this be true? Violet and Daisy Hilton, as everyone knows, were Siamese twins, joined at the hip. We've featured them in earlier issues of BALLAST because, according to Leslie Fiedler (*Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self*), "when they 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." However, we were not aware that, according to Mark Sloan (*Hoaxes, Humbugs and Spectacles*), "at the height of their extraordinary career they lived in a house in San Antonio, Texas, designed for them by Frank Lloyd Wright" ✖

Like to design type. Like to jiggle type around and see what comes out. Like to design ornament. Like paper. Like ink on paper. Like bright colors. Handicapped by clock.

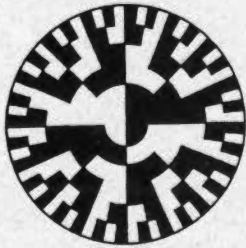
W.A. Dwiggins (American typographer, illustrator, and book designer), quoted in Allan Haley, *Typographic Milestones* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1992), p. 90 ✖



HIGHLY RECOMMENDED Charlotte Hill and William Wallace, eds., *Erotica: An Illustrated Anthology of Sexual Art and Literature* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 1992). Beautifully printed, but very naughty stuff throughout. Definitely *not* for the fainthearted. The text consists of ribald works by 26 writers, amplified by hundreds of explicit drawings, paintings, sculpture, and prints (again, the Japanese win out), some comical if not always highly regarded as art ✖



Rudolf Arnheim (*Parables of Sun Light*): The initials "OK" were the signature of Oskar Kokoschka. Every time I use the two letters to mark my approval of one of my editor's changes on the galleys of my next book, I sneakily credit myself with the small creative act of impersonating one of my favorite painters ✖



In meeting Julian Huxley I learned some interesting details. At the age of seventeen, as I already knew, [his brother] Aldous went through a brief period of blindness. He learned the alphabet for the blind very rapidly. And he didn't seem depressed. It's a great advantage to be able to read that way, he used to say. When it's cold in your bedroom, you can do it under the covers.

Mircea Eliade, *Journal II 1957-1969* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 75 ✖

Wallace Stevens (*Variations on a Summer Day*): The moon follows the sun like a French translation of a Russian poet ✖



In short, my dear Sir, we must take the world, and the things in it, as they are; it is a dirty world, but, like France, has a vast number of good things in it.

Philip Thicknesse, *A Year's Journey Through France and Spain* (1789)

It was the Chermayeffs [Serge and Barbara] who brought the Hungarian artist Moholy-Nagy to the Dairy House [home of the British painter Edward Wadsworth and his wife Fanny]. He was a dynamic little man who had been in charge of the Bauhaus metalwork shop from 1932 and was then living at Farm Walk in North London before leaving for America. At some time in his life he had lost a lower tooth which had not been replaced, and Barbara [Wadsworths' daughter] remembers being repelled by the way the tooth immediately above had developed into a veritable fang which hung down on the left-hand side of his mouth into the cavity below.

Barbara Wadsworth, *Edward Wadsworth: A Painter's Life* (England: Michael Russell, 1989), p. 237 ✱

Joel Hildebrand: Very few people do anything creative after the age of thirty-five. The reason is that very few people do anything creative before the age of thirty-five ✱

RECOMMENDED
Allan Haley, *Typographic Milestones* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1992). This is a collection of essays (originally prepared as articles for *U&Ic* magazine) on the lives of 18 typographic innovators (none living), divided into two sections, *Early Giants* (e.g., Garamond, Caslon, Baskerville, and Bodoni) and *Modern Pioneers* (e.g., Goudy, Koch, Cooper, Dwiggins, Warde, and Tschichold). It's a wonderful book for the most part, but the colloquial tone of the text (which sounds artificial) is annoying, as is the lightness of the ink. It ends with a lengthy and valuable list of *Designers and Their Typefaces* ✱



OTHER RECENT REMARKABLE BOOKS

Carla Lind, *The Wright Style* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1992). Unforgettable photographs of about 40 Frank Lloyd Wright houses inside and out, a captivating text, and a catalog of Wright-inspired home furnishings available today ✖

Jill Ker Conway, ed., *Written by Herself: Autobiographies of American Women: An Anthology* (NY: Vintage, 1992). Excerpts from 25 moving autobiographies by 19th and 20th century women, from slaves to scientists to artists to pioneers for women's rights ✖

Barbara Mayer, *In the Arts and Crafts Style* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1992). Incredibly lavish photographs by Rob Gray of collector furniture and present-day room interiors that preserve the turn-of-the-century Arts and Crafts tradition, both British and American. Ends with an extensive list of dealers and manufacturers where furniture can still be obtained ✖

Roy Porter, ed., *The Faber Book of Madness* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991). A huge, fascinating collection of excerpts on virtually every aspect of mental illness—including "Madness and Genius" of course ✖

Mark C. Ebersole, ed., *Hail to Thee, Okoboji U!: A Humor Anthology on Higher Education* (NY: Fordham University Press, 1992). There is no Okoboji U.—it's a school that a clothing store owner made up in Milford, Iowa, then sold tee shirts as a joke. Not very funny? Luckily, the rest of the stuff in this book makes up for it, consisting of classic hilarious bits from Woody Allen, Richard Armour (remember him?), Fran Lebowitz, Ogden Nash, Vladimir Nabokov, and lots of others ✖



If I were obliged, not to define poetry, but to name the class of things to which it belongs, I should call it a secretion; whether a natural secretion, like turpentine in the fir, or a morbid secretion, like the pearl in the oyster... I have seldom written poetry unless I was rather out of health, and the experience, though pleasurable, was generally agitating and exhausting.

A.E. Housman, "The Name and Nature of Poetry" in Brewster Ghiselin, ed., *The Creative Process* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1952) ✖

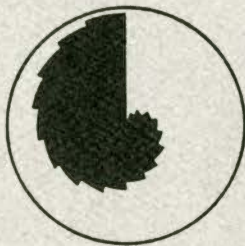


BALLAST is published in Iowa in a region increasingly listed among the most desirable places in which to live (okay, so why not move here soon before we all go stir crazy!). All subscriptions (including gift subscriptions) must be mailed to the following address:

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

BALLAST doesn't have a budget really. For eight years, it has operated at a loss. Even if we demanded stamps from everyone who receives the magazine, we would still lose money on printing, without beginning to cover the costs of inactivity, fatigue, misbehavior, caprice, bewilderment, and inquiry. Such losses are currently offset by donations from enlightened subscribers and generous deductions from the Subscription Schlemiel's paycheck. If anyone is foolishly philanthropic (foolish because such contributions are surely not tax deductible), we will sometimes accept a check (made payable to Roy R. Behrens), suggestions for reducing the rabbit population, or disgusting souvenirs from tropical getaways ✱



Some institutions have lost sight of the original purposes of a university—to provide a broad *universal* understanding of life—and have tended to become training programs for business and the professions, with even their advanced degrees serving primarily as passports for better-paying jobs.

Otto L. Bettmann,
Bettmann: The Picture Man (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1992), p. 15 ✱

NOTE: Circles in this issue are optical illusion discs invented by (in order of appearance) Smith (1860), Helmholtz (1856), Helmholtz (1856), Erb and Dallenback (1939), Brucke (1864), Finnegan and Moore (1895), and Fechner (1838).



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