

Fall 1993

## Ballast Quarterly Review, v09n1, Autumn 1993

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M O D E R N E S  
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N E U S T I T T  
G A S S E 3 2

**COVER** Detail of a poster by Josef Hoffman (1905).  
**BELOW** Metamorphosis of Mozart into saxophone by student Dan Schrad (1993) □



**VIRGINIA WOOLF** If people are highly successful in their professions they lose their senses. Sight goes. They have no time to look at pictures. Sound goes. They have no time to listen to music. Speech goes. They have no time for conversation. They lose their sense of proportion—the relations between one thing and another. Humanity goes □

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**BALLAST Quarterly Review**  
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**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. We do *not* accept phone orders □

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**I FEEL VERY STRANGE** these days. I've often thought of my brain as being like one of those ants' nests under glass you can buy at Harrods, with my thoughts scurrying along the brain's corridors. Now Gerhardt has poked his stick in, and the whole nest is in an uproar.

**JOAN WYNHAM**, *Love Lessons: A Wartime Journal* (London: Fontana, 1986), pp. 30-31 □





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ONE DAY [German Dadaist Kurt] Schwitters decided he wanted to meet [German artist] 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 [Walter] 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.

HANS RICHTER, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art* (New York: McGraw-Hill, n.d.), p. 145 □

ADA BEDDINGTON  
LEVERSON Thou canst  
not serve both cod  
and salmon □



ANON Two farmers  
each claimed  
ownership of a  
certain cow. While  
one pulled on its  
head and the other  
pulled on its tail, the  
cow was milked by a  
lawyer □

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED Anatole Broyard, *Kafka Was the Rage: A Greenwich Village Memoir* (New York: Carol Southern Books, 1993). ISBN 0-517-59618-0. This engaging and often amusing memoir takes place in 1946, and, if the account is accurate, what was all the rage back then in Greenwich Village was still fashionable twenty years later. Broyard was a writer for *The New York Times* until his death from prostate cancer in 1992. The first part of the book is about his life with an eccentric young painter named Sheri Donatti (a protégé of Anais Nin), who collided with Auden sans knickers; the second part is post-Sheri. Along the way, Broyard was a student of Erich Fromm, Gregory Bateson, Karen Horney, and Meyer Shapiro; underwent psychoanalysis with Ernest Schachtel; and met such rising writers as Dylan Thomas, Delmore Schwartz, and Dwight MacDonald. Of particular interest are Broyard's startling comparisons, which border on surrealist verse □





**GERMAINE GREER**  
Freud is the father of  
psychoanalysis. It had  
no mother □



All Nude Live  
Advertising. Ad  
Infinitum. Renoir,  
Degas, Rodin &  
Rabinowitz. Gesund-  
heit! Bark Like a Dog  
Design. Noah's Art.  
Drawn Conclusions.  
Draw the Line Studio.  
Designosaurus Rex.

**MARTIN FOX**, "And  
What's Your Name?"  
[unusual names of  
graphic design firms],  
*AIGA Journal of Graphic  
Design*, vol 7 no 2, 1989,  
p. 4 □

**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** Dean Phillip Lem, *Graphics Master 5* (from  
Dean Lem Associates, 1526 Pontius Avenue, Suite C, Post Office Box  
25920, Los Angeles, CA 90025, or phone 310/575-4060). ISBN 0-  
914218-08-5 or [student edition] 0-914218-09-3. This volume is bound  
like a typical book but is more like a package of tools for graphic  
designers, a portable case of essentials like the bag that a doctor  
would carry around in making house calls. We bought a copy of the  
first edition in 1974, before the computer revolution, and now, four  
revised editions later, it continues to be one of the finest, most  
concise technical references for all phases of print production,  
including typesetting, copyfitting, color separation, paper selection,  
printing inks, binding, and so on □

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A **BUILDING COMMITTEE** from a  
Lutheran church came to see [Frank  
Lloyd] Wright; they discussed a  
program and went away, being told  
to come back in two weeks. When  
the two weeks were about up, Gene  
[Masselink, Wright's secretary]  
suggested to Wright they call off the  
visit to see the plans—they hadn't  
been started—at the last minute.  
[Instead] Mr. Wright had the plans  
for an abandoned job, a small  
shopping center, brought out of the  
vault, and he changed the titles on  
the areas: the bank became the  
sanctuary, the supermarket became  
the Fellowship hall, the stores were  
entitled classrooms, and on and on.  
The Lutheran title was inscribed  
just as the Lutherans arrived, and  
Mr. Wright showed them the  
drawings, with accustomed gusto  
and aplomb. After he finished his  
talk, the pastor said: "Let us pray,"  
and went on, as heads were  
lowered: "Lord, we thank thee for  
leading us to a great architect, who  
has designed in your honor a great  
edifice we will use and enjoy.  
Amen." Heads were raised; the  
clients departed; end of story! The  
building never got built.

**EDGAR TAFEL**, *About Wright: An Album  
of Recollections by Those Who Knew Frank  
Lloyd Wright* (New York: John Wiley,  
1993), p. 69 □





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**THE LAST TIME** I saw him [British sculptor Henry Moore] I cherish. He talked about his new grandson and showed us drawings in a studio he had just built to extend his work-day. We sat with a drink in the sunny living room he had added to the house which, when he moved to it during the war, had been a broken-down farmworker's cottage. I knew my man, and I asked him, "Now that you're eighty, you must know the secret of life. What is the secret of life?" With anyone else the answer would have begun with an ironic laugh, but Henry Moore answered me straight: "The secret of life is to have a task, something you devote your entire life to, something you bring everything to every minute of the day for your whole life. And the most important thing is—it must be something you cannot possibly do!"

**DONALD HALL**, *Life Work* (Boston: Beacon, 1993), pp. 53-54 □

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**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** Ellen Lupton, *Mechanical Brides: Women and Machines from Home to Office* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1993). ISBN 1-878271-97-0. This 65-page book was published in connection with an exhibition (through 4 January) of the same title at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York. In four brief illustrated chapters, it considers the influence of industrial design (particularly washing machines, electric irons, telephones, and typewriters) on the development of "women's work," and the emergence of different cultural roles for American men and women. While the entire book is instructive, we were especially delighted to find a 3-page chronology on "Women, Work, and Technology" from 1805 to the present □

**GEORGE MILLER** The trouble with eating Italian food is that five or six days later you're hungry again □



**WHEN EISENSTEIN'S** FILM *Potemkin* was first shown in Germany it was accompanied with a strongly percussive music by Arthur Honegger. The humorist Hans Reimann took a recording from a schmaltzy Viennese waltz and carved with a needle some heavy scratches across it. When played, it produced a rhythmical pattern of violent crashes called by Reimann "Johann Strauss and the Battleship Potemkin."

Contributed by **RUDOLF ARNHEIM**, a reader from Ann Arbor, Michigan □



**BARNETT NEWMAN**

Aesthetics is for the  
artist like ornithology  
is for the birds □



**FRED ALLEN** You can  
take all the sincerity in  
Hollywood, place it in  
the navel of a fruit fly  
and still have room  
enough for three  
caraway seeds and a  
producer's heart □

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FOR WHITE AMERICAN MALES the emphasis [in shaking hands] is on a firm strong handshake with direct and unblinking eye contact. One must demonstrate mutual respect, equality of status (for the moment at least), strength, sincerity, and dependability. With the Navajo the handshake is different. While it is a greeting in the true sense of the word, the emphasis is on proper feelings rather than image. One does *not* look the other in the eye (to do so signals anger or displeasure). All that is necessary is to hold the other human being in one's peripheral visual field while grasping his hand gently, so as not to disturb the natural flow of feeling between his state of being and yours. These handshakes could be protracted because the Navajo, as I have said, like to ease into things and are jarred by abrupt transitions.

**EDWARD T. HALL**, *An Anthropology of Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), pp. 105-106 □

**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** Ellen Lupton and J. Abbott Miller, editors, *The ABC's of ▲■●: The Bauhaus and Design Theory* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1991). ISBN 1-878271-42-3. In 1923 at the Bauhaus, the painter Wassily Kandinsky circulated a questionnaire or "psychological test" in which each participant was asked to match the three primary colors (red, yellow, and blue) with three geometric shapes—the ▲, the ■, and the ●. He concluded that most people associated the triangle with yellow, the square with blue, and the circle with red. Kandinsky's experiment is just one example in this book of ten illustrated essays (originally published as the catalog for an exhibition at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum) about the continuing search for fundamentals, the ABC's or building blocks of design education "from preschool to post-modernism," including a wonderful article on German educator Friedrich Froebel, who founded *kindergarten* ("child garden"), and whose geometric blocks (called "gifts") provided early training for Kandinsky, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Le Corbusier. While this may be the briefest book on the Bauhaus, we also regard it as one of the best □





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HE [SITTING BULL] 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.

EVAN S. CONNELL, *Son of the Morning Star: Custer and the Little Bighorn* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984), pp. 227-228 □

RUSSELL BAKER In America, it is sport that is the opiate of the masses □



**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** Paul Rand, *Design, Form and Chaos* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993). ISBN 0-300-05553-6. As inarticulate, insular, and uninteresting as graphic designers frequently are, we have been as much influenced by the writings of a few (Tschichold, Moholy-Nagy, Kepes, Rand, Glaser) as by their work as designers, and this is a classic example of why. As logo designer for ABC, Westinghouse, IBM, NeXT, and other projects, Paul Rand's contribution to the profession of "graphic design" (a term which he himself disdains) is beyond dispute, but his impact is equally traceable to the persuasive clarity of his writing, as shown by this latest collection of essays, his third and what many appear to regard as his most contentious production. Masterfully choreographed by the aging and somewhat cantankerous Rand (now preparing a fourth book), it is a performance that can't be ignored, one way or another □

GERTRUDE STEIN sometimes wrote parked in her Ford at a busy intersection in Paris where French law required all drivers to squeeze their klaxons as they approached cross-streets—because, as she said, the clangor took the top of her mind away.

DONALD HALL, *Life Work* (Boston: Beacon, 1993), pp. 58-59 □





What's the difference between photographers and whooping cough? One makes facsimiles and the other makes sick families □



**ANON** After four martinis, my husband turns into a disgusting beast. And after the fifth, I pass out altogether □

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**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.

"Yes," I answered.

"What you been doin'?" he went on.

"Working," 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!"

**SUSANAH MAYBERRY**, *My Amiable Uncle: Recollections about Booth Tarkington* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1983), p. 4 □

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**IT IS OUR PARENTS**, normally, who not only teach us our family history but who set us straight on our own childhood recollections, telling us that this cannot have happened the way we think it did and that that, on the other hand, did occur, just as we remember it, in such and such a summer when So-and-So was our nurse. My own son, Reuel, for instance, used to be convinced that Mussolini had been thrown off a bus in North Truro, on Cape Cod, during the war. This memory goes back to one morning in 1943 when, as a young child, he was waiting with his father and me beside the road in Wellfleet to put a departing guest on the bus to Hyannis. The bus came through, and the bus driver leaned down to shout the latest piece of news: "They've thrown Mussolini out." Today, Reuel knows that Mussolini was never ejected from a Massachusetts bus, and he also knows how he got that impression.

**MARY MCCARTHY**, *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1957), p. 5 □

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**BELOW** Typographic detail from a poster by Oskar Kokoschka (1908) as reproduced in Walter Tracy, *Letters of Credit: A View of Type Design* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1986), p. 164 □

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



**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** Donald Hall, *Life Work* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993). ISBN 0-8070-7054-8. In the opening sentence, this extraordinarily productive poet and essayist says, "I've never worked a day in my life." Of course what he means is that, unlike his farming ancestors, he has never worked with his hands. But physical or not, the key to contentment in working, he writes, is *absorbedness*. Then follow pages of wonderful tales about the author's ancestors, the family farm, his work habits, his marriage, baseball, and various talks with his friends. Halfway through the book—absorbed by this—we are told that the author has suddenly learned that he has liver cancer □

**RECOMMENDED** Brenda Webster and Judith Emlyn Johnson, editors, *Hungry for Light: The Journal of Ethel Schwabacher* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993). ISBN 0-253-36367-5. In the 1950s and early 60s, New York painter Schwabacher was closely associated with the Abstract Expressionists, particularly Arshile Gorky, who committed suicide in 1948. She wrote an illuminating biography of Gorky in 1957, but the quality of her own paintings is arguable. Webster is her daughter, and this is the annotated text of the journal she kept from 1967 to 1980, during which she grappled with psychoanalysis, toyed with suicide (which she had already attempted in 1952, in response to the premature death of her lawyer husband and publishers' rejections of her Gorky manuscript), and suffered progressively from severe arthritis. There is no shortage of painful detail for psychoanalysts, but, for the rest of us, it is an agonizing book with which it is hard to be patient □





**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**

William Irvine with illustrations by Steven Guarnaccia, *Madam I'm Adam and Other Palindromes* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1987), ISBN 0-684-18850-3, and *If I Had a Hi-Fi and Other Palindromes* (New York: Dell, 1992), ISBN 0-440-21142-5. Irvine is a New York writer who collects and invents palindromes—words or sayings that read the same backward as forward, as do such astonishing phrases as *Eros? Sidney, my end is sore; Senile felines; and Camus sees sumac.* Unaccompanied, palindromes are themselves hilarious, but Irvine's are even more rollicking when illustrated by Guarnaccia's delightfully droll line drawings. If one needs fine but low-priced gifts, here they are □



ABOVE Logo by Ladislav Sutnar for Sweet's industrial catalogs □



ABOVE Drawing by Steven Guarnaccia for the palindrome *Tuna nut* □

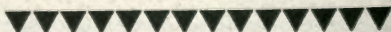
Is the much-used metaphor of faeces hitting a ventilator at high speed based on a real-life episode?

I don't know, but I do know that if the Rev Spooner had been asked "What happens when the fat hits the shin?" he would have replied: "You get a shaft of wit!"—*John Dee, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire.*

Almost. It is a garbled report of an occasion when a follower of the Sex Pistols assaulted Sid Vicious one night. In fact, the fan hit the shit.—*Tim Haigh, London.*

Excerpted from a column in a recent issue of the *Guardian*, suggested by ANTHONY BATCHELOR, a reader from Cincinnati, Ohio □

MEG GREENFIELD It's not just that individuals all seem to get their fifteen minutes of celebrity in this country; everything gets only fifteen minutes □



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**YOU ARE LIKE** a little boy, Ramsey. Or no, I am forgetting that only silly men like to be told they are like little boys. Very well, you are like a man of fifty whose bottled-up feelings have burst their bottle, and splashed glass and acid everywhere. That is why I called you a little boy, for which I apologize; but you have not the art of dealing with such a situation as a man of fifty, so you are thrown back to being like a little boy.

**ROBERTSON DAVIES**, *Fifth Business* (New York: Viking, 1970).  
Suggested by Greg Hofmann, a reader from Peoria, Illinois □



Collage/Andrew Farrell

**IN HER AUTOBIOGRAPHY**, Edith Wharton describes her early passion for story-telling and her desire to write: My first attempt (at the age of 11) was a novel, which began: "Oh, how do you do, Mrs. Brown?" said Mrs. Tompkins. "If only I had known you were going to call I should have tidied up the drawing-room." Timorously I submitted this to my mother, and never shall I forget the sudden drop of my creative frenzy when she returned it with the icy comment: "Drawing rooms are always tidy."

From the introduction to **EDITH WHARTON**, *A Backward Glance* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons/Macmillan Publishing, 1964), p. 73.  
Suggested by Carol Stevens, a reader from New York City □

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**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** Renée Riese Hubert, *Surrealism and the Book* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). ISBN 0-520-08089-0. Dada was the cocoon from which emerged the moth of Surrealism. What had been deliberate nonsense in Dada made perfect unintended sense (the logic of the dream) in Surrealism, whose 19th-century forebears included Arthur Rimbaud, Lewis Carroll, and, in particular, Isidore Ducasse (Comte de Lautréamont), who coughed up the abstruse but indelible phrase "the fortuitous encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissecting table." This book is a thorough, ambitious account of the writing or illustration of books by Surrealist artists and writers, including such famous participants as Max Ernst (who produced "collage novels"), Man Ray (who made "photo-poems"), René Magritte, and Salvador Dalí □

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**JANE BRENNER** A young boy was asked by an adult which he liked better, television or radio, and he promptly replied, "Radio, the pictures are better."

**FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT** Television is chewing gum for the eyes.

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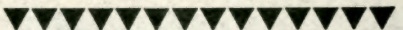
**A TREE IN THE WOODS** will always move towards the light. And an artist also develops towards the light, towards people who favor him. He will notice that, unexpectedly perhaps, this or that innovation really makes an impression and he will go on in that direction. I do not want to give the impression that artists are all opportunists. But up to a point everyone wants to please.

**E.H. GOMBRICH**, in Gombrich and Didier Eribon, *Looking for Answers: Conversations on Art and Science* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1993), p. 167 □

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**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** Fred Miller Robinson, *The Man in the Bowler Hat: His History and Iconography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993). ISBN 0-8078-2073-3. Remember Charlie Chaplin's hat? or those in the paintings of Magritte? or the flying derbies conspicuously suspended from fishing lines in Hans Richter's film *Ghosts Before Breakfast*? This is a cultural history of the bowler (so-named because it was made by British hatmakers named Bowler about 1850), in which we are led down a marvelous trail of allusions in the paintings of Georges Seurat, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and Georges Grosz; the writings of Samuel Beckett (everyone wears a bowler in *Waiting for Godot*), Bertolt Brecht, and Milan Kundera; and especially in the comedies of Laurel and Hardy, Chaplin, and others □

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Collage/Karla Oler

I AM a poet.  
I am very fond of bananas.

I am bananas.  
I am very fond of a poet.

I am a poet of bananas.  
I am very fond,

A fond poet of 'I am, I am' —  
Very bananas,

Fond of 'Am I bananas,  
Am I?' — a very poet.

Bananas of a poet!  
Am I fond?' Am I very?

Poet bananas! I am.  
I am fond of a 'very'.

I am of very fond bananas.  
Am I a poet?

**THE TATE** Gallery yesterday announced that it had paid £1 million for a Giorgio de Chirico masterpiece, *The Uncertainty of the Poet*. It depicts a torso and a bunch of bananas.

*Guardian*, 2 April 1985

"The Uncertainty of a Poet" by WENDY COPE in her *Serious Concerns* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), p. 33. Suggested by Charles Moorman, a reader from Fayetteville, Arkansas □





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**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** Barbara A. Chernow and George A. Vallaski, editors, *The Columbia Encyclopedia*. 5th edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993). ISBN 0-395-62438-X. This is the new 3,000-page edition of a highly regarded reference work first published in 1935. There are few illustrations, but in all other respects it is very likely the finest, most affordable one-volume encyclopedia available, especially for adult writers and researchers. Having frequently used an earlier edition, we have always been impressed by the balance, conciseness, and accuracy of its entries, of which there are 50,000 in the new edition. Not least, it should be applauded for providing what others so rarely include, a pronunciation guide □



Collage/John Dopta

**WHEN WRITING** a letter, think that the recipient will make it into a hanging scroll.

**THE PROPER MANNER** of calligraphy is nothing other than not being careless, but in this way one's writing will simply be sluggish and stiff. One should go beyond this and depart from the norm. This principle applies to all things.

**SENILITY** is when one goes about doing only that towards which he is most inclined.

Excerpts from YAMAMOTO TSUNETOMO, *The Book of the Samurai* (New York: Kodansha International, 1979). Suggested by Greg Hofmann, a reader from Peoria, Illinois □



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The Mozart metamorphosis and design history collages are by graphic design students in the Department of Art, University of Northern Iowa □

**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** Whitney Chadwick and Isabelle de Courtivron, editors, *Significant Others: Creativity and Intimate Partnerships* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1993). ISBN 0-500-01566-X. The purpose of this book is to show that, contrary to popular belief, artistic originality is not always (or perhaps not even usually) the product of solitary gifted individuals but that it may spring from the synergy of intimate companionships (not necessarily male and female), including Lee Krasner and Jackson Pollock, Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West, Anais Nin and Henry Miller, Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg, Kay Sage and Yves Tanguy, and others, as described in thirteen essays, each focusing on a different couple and each by a different author □





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