

Summer 1995

## Ballast Quarterly Review, v10n4, Summer 1995

Roy R. Behrens  
University of Northern Iowa, sassoonorlater@gmail.com

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ballast

su m e r e d i t i o n

One day she told me the story of her early life. Her first love affair took place when she was around eighteen. The young man was a year or two older and the procedure they adopted was to take off their clothes and, quite naked, climb two adjacent poplar trees. When they were as high as they could get they would make them swing till their branches touched. They themselves never do so.

Gerald Brenan,  
*Personal Record 1920-1972* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), pp. 94-95.

*Ballast Quarterly Review*. Volume 10 Number 4 Summer 1995. Copyright © 1995 by Roy R. Behrens, founder, editor, art director. This issue was designed by Steven E. Sprague, graphic design student, University of Northern Iowa.

*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.*

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**When Charles Eames designs his chair, he does not design just a chair. He designs a way of sitting down. In other words, he designs a function, not for a function.**

Ettore Sottsass, Jr., quoted in Barbara Radice, *Memphis: Research, Experiences, Results, Failures and Successes of New Design* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1995), p. 143.

On one occasion [during childhood] after we had been talking about cannibalism I heard my people say to each other: "When is that Eton boy coming?" and I thought they meant a boy who had been eaten. When he turned up, and was a perfectly ordinary boy, it caused me the most profound disenchantment. But that was not the worst. The worst instance was when I heard them say to each other, "When is that Lyon coming?" And I said, "Is there a lion coming?" "Oh yes," they said, "and you'll see him in the drawing-room and it'll be quite safe." And then they came and said, "The young Lyon has come," and they ushered me into the drawing-room and it was a completely conventional young man whose name was Lyon. I burst into tears and wept the whole of the rest of the day, and the poor young man couldn't imagine why.

Bertrand Russell in Barry Feinberg, editor, *The Collected Stories of Bertrand Russell* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), p. 268.

Right:  
typographic  
face  
by  
UNI  
design  
student,  
Megan  
Daniels



What is more intriguing than a spot on the bathroom floor which, as you sit emptying your bowels, assumes a hundred different forms, figures, shapes? Often I found myself on my knees studying a stain on the floor—studying it to detect all that was hidden at first sight.

Henry Miller, *To Paint Is To Love Again* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1968), p. 7.

Right:  
Self  
promotional  
logo  
by  
Rebecca  
Rieck,  
UNI  
graduate

**Recommended:** *Who's Who in Graphic Design* (Zurich, Switzerland: Benteli-Werd Verlag, 1994). ISBN 3-85932-135-8. This book consists of brief biographical articles on about 300 contemporary graphic designers, typographers and illustrators from 46 countries, accompanied by 1500 beautifully reproduced examples of their work, the majority in color. Organized by country, each section is introduced by a critic or designer of the same nationality. The value of and need for a book of this kind are undeniable. What is baffling, however, are the number and magnitude of its omissions. In the American section, for example, where are (to name a few) Charles Spencer Anderson, April Greiman, Henrik Drescher, Malcolm Gear, Gary Kelley, Alan Cober, Brad Holland, Janet Woolley, Sue Coe, Rudy Vanderlans and Suzanna Licko? The result is a strangely distorted report. We are told at the outset that this is a list of those who responded by deadline to an invitation to submit current work, but if one were assembling a reference book on 20th-century architecture, would Michael Graves and Frank Gehry be omitted if they did not submit work in time for consideration, or even if they did not care to be included? For the series to remain credible, the process of choosing the entries must change before the next edition, which is expected to appear in three years.



The house [of Sir Edmund and Lady Gosse] was ruled in part by Parker, the parlour-maid, a very famous character, and still more by Buchanan, a large black and white cat. Buchanan had apparently entered the house from some unknown place, and had taken over the charge of it. He would not come down to meals until the whole family was assembled in the dining-room, and, this being done, he insisted upon Sir Edmund mounting the stairs and ringing the dinnerbell. Buchanan would then walk downstairs, in a dignified way, and eat his dinner with the rest of the family. When teatime came, Buchanan refused, firmly, and without showing any signs of yielding, to drink his cream unless Lady Gosse, kneeling, held the saucer for him. If, as occasionally happened, he was indignant for some reason or another, he would leave the room, and an awed silence would fall. I remember one occasion when I was dining at the house and Buchanan left the room after dinner in a marked manner, Sir Edmund and Lady Gosse discussing, in a frightened whisper, all possible causes which could have given Buchanan offense.

Edith Sitwell, *Taken Care Of: The Autobiography of Edith Sitwell* (New York: Atheneum, 1965), p. 107.

What's important about drawing is drawing, the doing it right or wrong, good or bad, finished or unfinished. The effort, in other words. Them as wants perfect horses, perfect nudes, perfect architecture, let them go to those as makes 'em. There are thousands of masters in each department: some for horses, some for apples, some for cows and sheep, some for snow and mountains, some for odaliskes, some for battle scenes, some for sail boats, some for still lifes, some for stormy weather, and some just for chiaroscuro or what have you. Nearly every painter I have known who had a skill in some particular direction has confessed to me that he later came to regard this skill as a weakness, a danger, that he had to unlearn what he knew or thought he knew.

Henry Miller, *To Paint Is To Love Again* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1968), pp. 5-7

A moment of complete happiness never occurs in the creation of a work of art. The promise of it is felt in the act of creation, but disappears toward the completion of the work. For it is then that the painter realizes that it is only a picture he is painting. Until then he had almost dared to hope that the picture might spring to life.

Lucian Freud, quoted in E.H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 94.  
Suggested by Joseph Podlesnik.

**Highly Recommended:** *Miles Beller and Jerry Leibowitz, Hey Skinny: Great Advertisements from the Golden Age of Comic Books* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1995). ISBN 0-8118-0828-9. Remember those bizarre but irresistible full-page ads that appeared in comic books? *Pimples Dry Up in 3 Days or Your Money Back. Exciting Ant Farm. Stop "Bed Wetting." World's Tiniest Dog Now Yours at Almost No Cost. Play Piano the First Day or Don't Pay. I bought a cubic inch of land in the Klondike, raised sea monkeys, and scored big on the "Draw Me" art instruction test. For anyone who grew up in the 1940s and 50s, this is a nostalgic return to the dreams of a collective adolescence.*

Many years ago, when I lived in New Zealand, I had a friend, old Dr. Farr, an emeritus professor of physics, a famous student of geomagnetism, and known for his ready wit. When he was almost 80 years old he was still interested in the students in his old physics department and often talked to them in the street. One day a student was clearly embarrassed and, when asked "What's wrong with you?," stammered: "Excuse me, Dr. Farr, but your hat is on the wrong way round!" Like a shot came back the reply: "How do you know which way I am going?"

Karl L. Popper, *Knowledge and the Body-Mind Problem* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 6. Suggested by Joseph Podlesnik.

Arise Evans had a fungous nose, and said, it was revealed to him that the King's hand would cure him, and at the first coming of King Charles II into St. James Park, he kissed the King's hand, and rubbed his nose with it; which disturbed the King, but cured him.

John Aubrey, *Brief Lives and Other Selected Writings* (New York: Scribner, 1949).

The exposure [of graphic designer Alvin Lustig] to [Frank Lloyd] Wright at Taliesin was short-lived. He was soon chafing under the strictures of doing things the Wright way. An anecdote from his Taliesin visit has him being shown into a room and instructed to wait there for Wright. As he glanced around, Lustig noticed that there was a blue vase against a blue wall and a white vase against a white wall. He exchanged the blue vase and the white vase. Wright entered the room, and as he spoke his first words to Lustig, replaced the blue vase against the blue wall and the white vase against the white wall.

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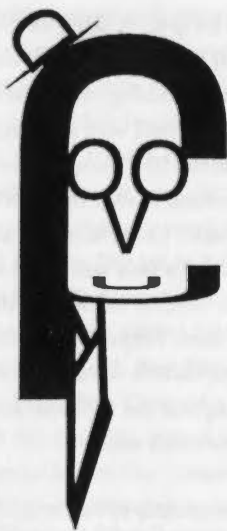
R. Roger Remington and Barbara J. Hodik, *Nine Pioneers in American Graphic Design* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), p. 124.



Left:  
 Purposed  
 logos  
 for  
 the  
 1995  
 Old Gold  
 Yearbook.  
 UNI  
 student  
 Steven E.  
 Sprague



Right:  
Typographic  
face  
by  
UNI  
student  
Stephanie  
Kaiser



In conclusion, don't waste the julep-making process on people who want to watch ball games on television, rent movies, or listen to music. No. It is always a mistake to be plain-spoken. Eschew electronics. Dim the lights, turn them off and light candles, or sit outside in the evening shadows. Soft light evens up the odds: it makes shy people bolder and bold people kinder to shy people. It invites conversation.

– Gertrude

Stein Julep drinkers are supposed to talk to each other. They are supposed to gossip; wax nostalgic; argue about politics and the best way to cook lamb; lament lost youth and opportunities; do funny imitations of absent friends; flirt openly; show a little cleavage to the vicar; harmonize to “Down by the Old Mill Stream”; describe jumping naked into the fountain at the Peabody Hotel in Memphis and getting kicked out of Ole Miss; admit to a one-night stand with an auto mechanic; light up a cigar and...Well, the party's under way now. So I leave you to your own devices. Should the vicar sleep over, however, don't forget to put out that cigar.

Bonnie Carter on the proper way to enjoy a mint julep in *The Much Ado Notebook #15* (March 1995), published by Charles Moorman, 3450 Finger Road, Fayetteville AR 72701.

**Highly Recommended:** *John Lloyd Wright, My Father Who Is On Earth* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1995). ISBN 0-8093-1749-4. This is an old book in a new and deserving edition. First published in 1946, it is an admiring memoir of Frank Lloyd Wright, kindly and gracefully told by his son, John Lloyd Wright (1892-1972), an architect who invented the toy construction blocks "Lincoln Logs" in 1917. Aside from its pleasant layout, the attraction of this version is largely because of the marginal notes by author and subject: Apprehensive of his reaction, the son sent the father a copy of the first edition, to which Frank Lloyd Wright replied by adding his comments and sending it back. Those comments, along with the author's additional notes and a section on "Special Problems That Befall a Son of a Great Man," make this a lively and interesting book.

A large crown on one of my back teeth feels unstable, but I forget about it. After a private concert chez Mme. Verniaud last month I take my plate from the buffet and sit with Marya Freund (we all wrote songs last fall for her eightieth birthday). I bite into a sandwich and feel what I take to be a snail shell screech between my teeth. Unconsciously I remove the object which I place on the plate of Mme. Freund when her eyes are turned. Three minutes later, my tongue having found a huge hole, I yell, "Mon Dieu, j'ai avalé ma couronne!" and everyone comes running with advice: Eat this, drink that, so that it can go down and come out without injury to the intestines! I sit back, livid, resigned. Five minutes later Mme. Freund screams, "Mais qu'ai-je donc là entre les dents?" and they all come running back as she removes from her mouth my crown covered with spit and crab meat. Again I sit back, pale with humiliation and relief.

**Ned Rorem, *The Paris Diary of Ned Rorem***  
(New York: George Braziller, 1966),  
pp. 166-167.

The life of man from his conception to his death may be compared to the course of a train which, starting at express speed, gradually slows down and stops. In the first few months of his existence he passes through the stages that his ancestors took millions of years to travel: then he explores new territory, after which all his efforts are turned on the last few miles of his course. How far will he get before he is stopped?

**Gerald Brenan, *Thoughts in a Dry Season***  
(Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 1.

A cow does not know how much milk it has until the milkman starts working on it. Then it looks round in surprise and sees the pail full to the brim. In the same way a writer has no idea how much he has to say till his pen draws it out of him. Thoughts will then appear on the paper that he is amazed to find that he possessed.

Gerald Brenan, *Thoughts in a Dry Season* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 117.

**Highly Recommended:** *Steven Heller and Seymour Chwast, Jackets Required: An Illustrated History of American Book Jacket Design, 1920-1950* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1995). ISBN 0-8118-0396-1 *If you can't tell a book by its cover, at least you can make a reliable guess about when it was published. This is an astonishing treasury of American illustration, typography and page layout, arranged by category of book and illustrated by 270 full-color reproductions of book jackets ("masterpieces of interpretive packaging") by E. McKnight Kauffer, Rockwell Kent, W.A. Dwiggins, Paul Rand, Alvin Lustig, Lucian Bernhard and about 55 other designers and illustrators, even Grant Wood. A cross-section of historic styles from the first half of the century, it is a compact yet copious tour of one of the most enchanting periods in design history.*

Name any name and then remember everybody you ever knew who bore that name. Are they all alike. I think so.

— Gertrude Stein

There is a disease which attacks marriage as a mildew attacks plants. This is a sullenness or resentment that settles on the feelings and if not arrested will spread through the system and poison its smallest thoughts. Very trivial things can bring it on, but with the passage of time they are apt to accumulate until a long list of petty grievances has been drawn up. The only cure lies in having a quarrel in which everything is brought out and aired, the end coming in reconciliation and bed.

Gerald Brenan, *Thoughts in a Dry Season* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 30.

Years ago I had a call from a Russian professor. He said he was in New York and wanted to meet me to give me a copy of his translation of my *Art and Visual Perception*. I was somewhat surprised. In the usual fashion at the time, we had not been asked for permission to do the translation, nor did we ever receive a penny or rouble of royalty. The book was attractively clothbound, but he apologized: "You must understand, we cannot afford large editions. We printed only 200,000 copies." I almost dropped from my chair. Nothing like it had my American publisher been able to produce.

Some time later, a Yugoslavian friend, who knows my book and also speaks Russian, said to me: "I bet you, there is one of your illustrations they did not copy." Which one? "The map of the London subway system." We looked, and sure enough the plan of the London Transport was missing. But why? My friend explained: "They do not want the Russian public to see that the London subway is larger than the one in Moscow."

Contributed by Rudolf Arnheim, psychologist and art theorist.



Right:  
Logo  
design  
for  
Maze  
Communications  
by  
UNI  
design  
student,  
Jeff  
Freeman

The art educator Henry Schaefer-Simmern [author of *The Unfolding of Artistic Activity*] taught a painting workshop for the elderly. At the first meeting, one lady showed him work she had previously done, telling him, "Professor, there is lots behind my paintings!" "Is that so?" said Schaefer-Simmern and turned one of the paintings around, "I cannot see anything!" That was the first lesson.

Contributed by Rudolf Arnheim, psychologist and art theorist.

**Highly Recommended:** *Barbara Radice, Memphis: Research, Experiences, Results, Failures and Successes of New Design* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1995). ISBN 0-500-27377-4. This is the paperback edition of one of the most important books (first published in 1984) about Memphis, an international association of architects and designers (furniture, fabric, glass and ceramics), led by Ettore Sottsass, with Radice as art director, which began in Milan at the Furniture Fair in 1981. Accompanying the text are 270 color and black and white examples of the outrageously bold creations of a group that adopted its curious name (Egyptian site or Tennessee city?) at an early meeting at Sottsass's house, where the song that repeatedly played in the room was Bob Dylan's "Stuck Inside of Mobile with the Memphis Blues Again."

Then, to start a conversation, I said:

*"I knew your mother."*

His mother was a rather good novelist for whom my firm acted.

*"My mother is a bitch."*

Silence.

But soon after, he went away... Then, and only then, I realized what I ought to have said:

*"I should never have believed that if I hadn't met you."*

David Higham, *Literary Gent* (New York: Coward, McCann and Geohegan, 1978), p. 6.

It is sometimes very hard to tell the difference between history and the smell of skunk.

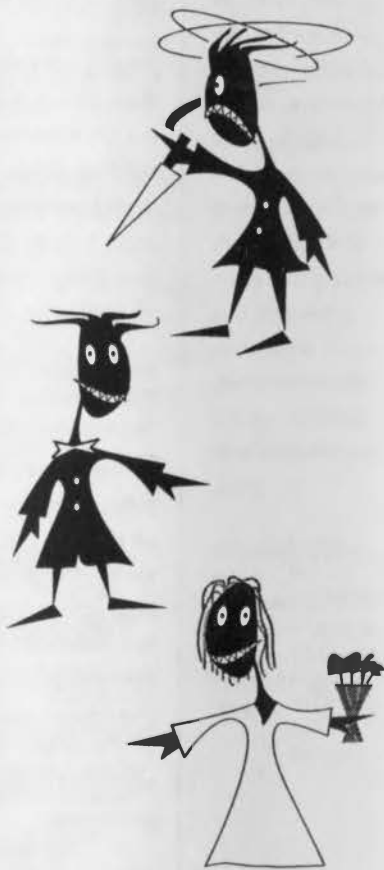
Rebecca West, quoted in Peter Vansittart, *Voices of the Great War* (New York: Avon Books, 1985), p. ix.

She [his mother] fell in love with a young officer. Her stepmother laughed contemptuously: "A mere boy, a mere nobody! You think that's a proper match for you? Her father said: "You'll have to get that out of your head. He's poor and he's much too young for you. No good can come of such a marriage. What you need is a husband, not a playmate." The lieutenant was summoned to see my grandfather. Politely he was given to understand that it would be most undesirable were he to become involved with his superior's daughter. On 18 August there was a parade to celebrate the Emperor's birthday. My grandfather was marching at the head of his company. He saluted, drew his revolver and shot himself. the band stopped playing.

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Ernst Fischer, *An Opposing Man* (London: Allen Lane, 1974).

Right:  
Characters  
for  
comic  
by  
UNI  
student,  
Steven E.  
Sprague



One day Lady Onslow, being desirous of knowing the most remarkable planets and constellations, requested Mr. Harvest, on a fine starlight night, to point them out to her, which he undertook to do; but in the midst of his lecture, having occasion to make water, thought that need not interrupt it, and accordingly directing that operation with one hand, went on in his explanation, pointing out the constellations with the other.

Anon, quoted in Louis Kronenberger, *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral* (New York: Viking, 1972), p. 238.

**Highly Recommended:** *Steven Heller and Louise Fili, Streamline: American Art Deco Graphic Design* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1995). ISBN 0-8118-0662-6. *When something is aerodynamic, it "goes with the flow." With the invention of high-speed travel, increasing emphasis was placed on reducing an object's resistance to air. Streamlining is aerodynamic "styling," giving objects the appearance of sleekness and speed, regardless of whether they actually move, for the purpose of advertising. Streamlining was metaphorically aerodynamic, in the sense that it moved with the flow of the times, embracing both the machine age and modern art. The result is seductive, and this book is an alluring anthology of 200 examples of American "streamline style" graphic design (magazine covers, posters and packaging) from about 1920 until the start of World War II.*

Among painters as among writers there are those who stick to their guns, who follow the scent like bloodhounds, as it were, and there are others who sit like birds of prey on some imaginary limb or ledge, ready to pounce on the happy accident which will lead them to some unknown, undreamed of, destination.

Henry Miller, *To Paint Is To Love Again* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1968), pp. 8-9.

For some years now college students good college students tell me they want not to go on going to college and this has surprised me because we we liked going to college and I asked them why. I said perhaps they had had freedom too soon, that is before they went to college and college was for us freedom physical and mental freedom. Now they they have been free too long and so perhaps college is not where they belong perhaps not.

Gertrude Stein, quoted in Bruce Kellner, editor, *A Gertrude Stein Companion* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), p. 297.

*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* doesn't have a budget really. For nearly ten years, it has operated at a financial loss. Such losses are currently offset by contributions from enlightened subscribers and generous deductions from the Reader Service Dunce's paycheck. If anyone is foolishly philanthropic (foolish because such gifts are surely not tax deductible), we will sometimes accept a check.



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