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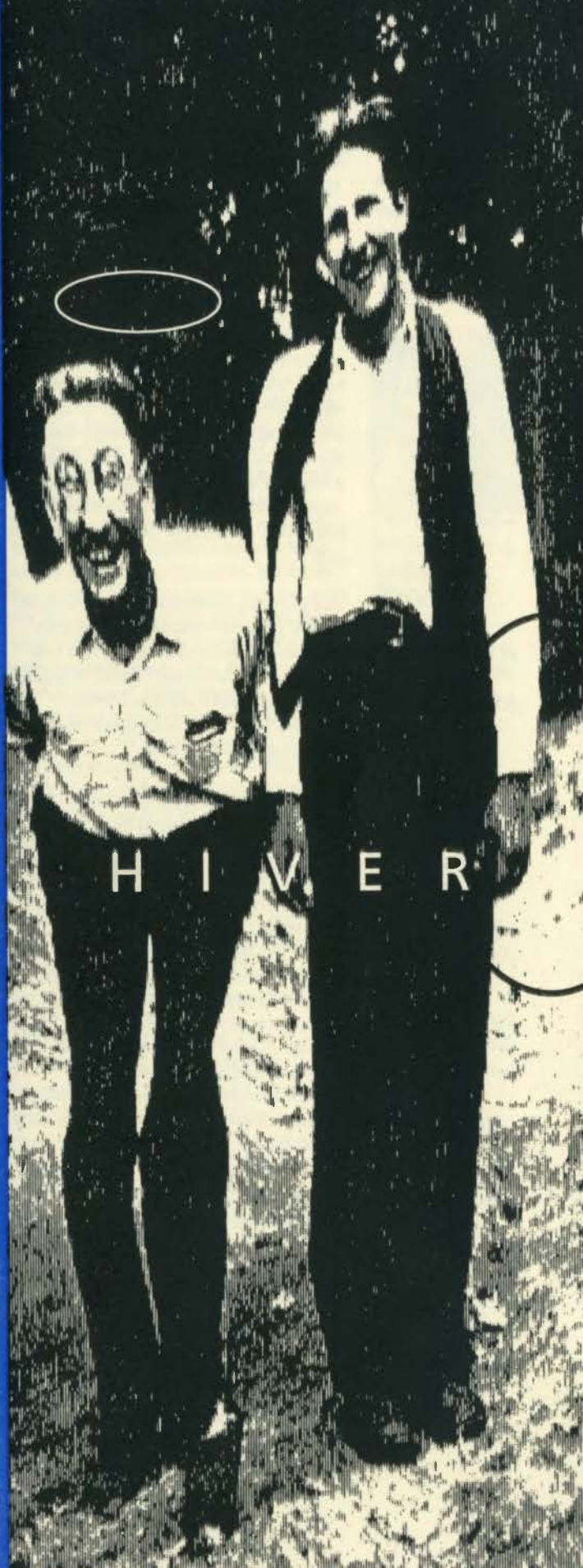
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BALLAST QUARTERLY REVIEW VOLUME ELEVEN NUMBER TWO WINTER 1995



H I V E R

ANON
Cogito ergo
spud: I think
therefore
I yam.

ROBERT
HUGHES
Painters,
dancers, actors
are tough as
weeds and can
grow in cracks
in concrete.

There was
great art,
drama, writing
and scholar-
ship in America
before 1965,
when the
endowments
were founded.
Dedicated peo-
ple create
ingenious
strategies for
survival them-
selves.

GERALD
BRENNAN
A lady he had
the feeling of
having met
before came
up to him in
the street. "I'm
sorry," he said.
"I know your
name but I'm
bad at remem-
bering faces."

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1995 by Roy R. Behrens, editor, publish-
er and art director.

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 found-
ed during World War I by Wyndham
Lewis, the Vorticist artist and writer.
Ballast is mainly a pastiche of astonish-
ing passages from books, magazines,
diaries and other writings. Put differ-
ently, it is a journal devoted to wit, the
contents of which are intended to be
insightful, amusing or thought provok-
ing.

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not carry advertisements, nor is it sup-
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price for the first time in ten years. We
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but henceforth all renewals, new sub-
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subject to the current rate.

GROUCHO MARX
I never forget a face, but in your
case I'll make an exception.

Rudolf Arnheim, professor emeritus of the psychology of art at Harvard University, is famous for his writings on the application of Gestalt perceptual psychology to the theoretical study of art. Of his dozen or so books, among the most familiar are *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye*; *Film as Art*; *Visual Thinking*; and (our favorite) *Parables of Sun Light: Observations on Psychology, the Arts, and the Rest*. Recently, two of his former students, José Sanchez-H. and Tina Michelle Datsko, have produced a one-hour video entitled *Rudolf Arnheim: A Life in the Arts*, in which the 91-year-old German scholar talks about growing up in Berlin, his training with the Gestalt psychologists and his immigration to the U.S. in 1940; then lectures on the content of one of his recent books, *The Power of the Center*. Filmed at his lakeside summer home in Michigan (where he is shown at work on his woodcarvings), this is the only video on Arnheim's life and work. Copies are now available to individuals for \$79.95 and to institutions for \$169.95, plus \$7.00 for shipping and handling (add \$2.00 for each additional tape). Send payment to Gypsycat Productions, 550 Orange Avenue, Suite 339, Long Beach, CA 90802, or call 310 495-1307.



RUDOLF
ARNHEIM
(*Parables of
Sun Light*)

During Mary's absence I have taken over the duty of watering plants in the apartment, and I find that the dislike I had for one of them because of its ailing appearance is changing to affection...

I am reminded of my lifelong conviction that a powerful means of arousing love for someone or something is to do things for that person or object.

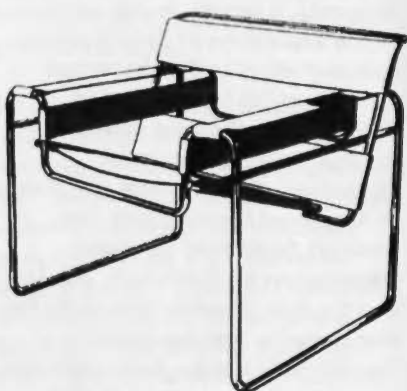
The Pentagon is reminding members of the military that they are prohibited from active participation in groups that advocate violence.

News item from the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. Suggested by Walter Hamady, as reported in *The Progressive*.

WARREN
BENNIS
(*The Prairie Rambler*) The factory of the future will have only two employees, a man and a dog. The man will be there to feed the dog. The dog will be there to keep the man from touching the equipment.

The manager of an ice cream store was suspended after refusing a customer's request to write "Happy Birthday" in Spanish on a cake... Anna Dicklaw had gone to the Carvel store Saturday to get an ice cream cake with a Spanish "Happy Birthday" greeting for her eighty-year-old father. Dicklow said she offered to spell it out for store manager Fred Craig or write it herself on the frosting, but Craig said: "Nope. This is America and I'll only write it in English."

An Associated Press news story suggested by Walter Hamady, as reported in *The Progressive*.



A few years ago, at an unsuspecting thrift shop in Iowa, we paid five dollars for two mint-condition Harry Bertoia diamond chairs (c1952), now worth about \$500 each. At nearly the same time, we paid two dollars for a Herman A. Sperlich health chair (c1938). Only recently have we identified the latter, thanks to a large (84 x 119cm), beautiful full-color poster of the VITRA DESIGN MUSEUM COLLECTION of 224 famous chairs, arranged chronologically from 1820 to 1993. (It even lists the Barwa chair, co-designed in 1947 by our former colleague, Jack Waldheim.) Located near Basel, Switzerland, in a building designed by Frank Gehry, this same museum also produces collectible miniature models of chairs from the history of design, including C.R. Mackintosh's Hill House bedroom chair, Josef Hoffmann's Sitzmaschine and Cabaret Fledermaus chairs, Gerrit Rietveld's Zig-Zag chair, Mies van der Rohe's MR chair, Marcel Breuer's Wassily chair (pictured above) and so on. Each about five or six inches tall, these miniatures are crafted with such detail that they are virtually identical to the originals. In this country, to obtain the chair poster (\$25 postpaid) or a price list for the miniature chairs, call 1-800-713-5060, fax 713-681-5034, or write to The Training Consortium, 10555 NW Freeway, Suite 215, Houston TX 77092. Suggested by Barbara Caron.

In 1904 Freud was consulted by a young poet and university student, Bruno Goetz, who suffered from persistent headaches. After an hour's discussion, in which it emerged that Goetz spent what little money he had on books, Freud gave him a sealed envelope, containing a prescription, and also warned him that psychoanalysis might not be good for poetry. When Goetz opened the envelope, he found both diagnosis and cure: the headaches were caused by hunger, and money was enclosed to spend on food.

D. J. ENRIGHT *Interplay: A Kind of Commonplace Book* (Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 87.

**HIGHLY
RECOMMENDED**

William H. Pritchard, *English Papers: A Teaching Life* (St. Paul, MN: Graywolf Press, 1995). ISBN 1-55597-234-9. The author is a well-known literary critic who entered Amherst College as an undergraduate in 1949, returned there to teach in 1957, and is now the Henry Clay Folger Professor of English.

While we recall the late 1960s as a rich, stimulating period in our own education, he sees it as largely a harrowing time, when student preoccupation with political and social turmoil in the Real World (the Cuban missile crisis, the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War) did irreparable harm to the unwavering "disinterested intellectualism" of the Ivory Tower. Three decades later, adrift in the rapid, continued decline of all institutions of higher learning, it is difficult not to feel empathy toward this detailed and somber memoir of the drift of universities from citadels of esoteric inquiry to prosaic job training institutes.

**MICHAEL
THOMAS**
(*New York Observer*) The upper crust is a lot of crumbs held together by dough.

**HENRY
MILLER**
Sometimes the wrong thing turns out to be the right thing; sometimes a setback is as good, or better, than a push. We seldom realize how much the negative serves to induce the positive, the bad the good.

One magician to another: Who was that lady I sawed with you last night?

We were surprised to learn, in a recent issue of *The New York Times Book Review* (26 November 1995, p. 4), that the author of the song "Strange Fruit," which was precipitated by one of the many lynchings of African-Americans in this country, was not Billie Holiday, whose recording made it so famous. Rather, it was written by a Jewish-American named Abel Meeropol (1903-1987), whose pen name was Lewis Allan. Moreover, it was Meeropol who adopted the children of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg (whom he never knew) when they were executed for espionage in 1953.

RIGHT
World War II
bathroom tissue,
from *The*
Columbia
Chronicles of
American Life
1910-1992.



HIGHLY RECOMMENDED Lois Gordon and Alan Gordon, *The Columbia Chronicles of American Life 1910-1992* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995). ISBN 0-231-08100-6. This book is pretty hard to beat if you're looking for a fact-filled, illustrated chronology of American culture in this century. You can't open a page without discovering something or being surprised by the things that occurred concurrently. For example, in the year that Frank Lloyd Wright's servant set fire to Taliesin, Louis Sullivan designed the Merchants' National Bank in Grinnell, Iowa; Edgar Rice Burroughs published *Tarzan of the Apes*; Charles Ives wrote *Three Places in New England*; *The Perils of Pauline* was filmed; Ambrose Bierce died; James Joyce published *Dubliners*; the Panama Canal opened; and Caravaggio's *The Cheats* sold for only \$50. It was 1914, the year that World War I began. For each year, you can also find prices of products, historic quotes, advertisements, popular song titles, sports, scientific discoveries, and much more.

ALDOUS HUXLEY That men do not learn very much from the lessons of history is the most important of all the lessons that history has to teach.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED Grant Hildebrand, *The Wright Space: Pattern and Meaning in Frank Lloyd Wright's Houses* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994). ISBN 0-295-97108-8. One of several dozen books published in recent years about Wright's architecture, personality and influence, this one is distinctive in several ways: First, analyzing thirty-three Wright houses in light of British geographer Jay Appleton's theory of landscape esthetics (*The Experience of Landscape*), it concludes that Wright's houses rely on the juxtaposition of "prospect" and "refuge," which agrees with a view of esthetics espoused by John Dewey, Nicholas Humphrey, and others. Second, it is greatly enhanced by William Hook's exploded view diagrams of nine key buildings, among them Taliesin East, the Arthur Heurtley House, and Fallingwater.

[Frank Lloyd] Wright is an interesting study of a superstar architect having both right and wrong influence...the very pomposity of his decrees helped inflame a fatal egotism in generations of architects, and his most famous buildings belie his organic ideal. They were so totally designed—down to the screwheads all being aligned horizontally to match his prairie line—that they cannot be changed. To live in one of his houses is to be the curator of a Frank Lloyd Wright museum; don't even think of altering anything the master touched. They are not living homes but petrified art, organic only in idea, stillborn.

STEWART BRAND *How Buildings Learn: What Happens After They're Built* (New York: Viking, 1994), p. 58, as suggested by Charles Moorman in *The Much Ado Notebook*.

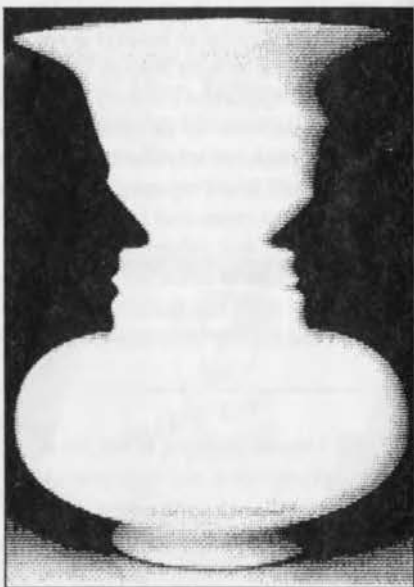
The American Flint (in *The Prairie Rambler*) Ice cream doesn't put on weight right away—it takes a month of sundaes.

[A young painter named José Alberto was visiting the American poet Elizabeth Bishop in Brazil, and in the course of their conversation] something Bishop remembered make her cry. "Don't be upset," she said to Alberto in Portuguese, "I'm crying in English."

STEPHEN YESNER in a letter to James Merrill, as quoted in *Poetry* magazine (September 1995). Suggested by Carol Stevens.

NORM CROSBY When you go into court you are putting your fate into the hands of twelve people who weren't smart enough to get out of jury duty.

RIGHT
A vase which forms the profiles of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip, from *Cognition and the Visual Arts*.



RECOMMENDED Robert L. Solso, *Cognition and the Visual Arts* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995). ISBN 0-262-19346-9. There is a tradition of interest in the interface between psychology and art. The inventive illusions of Adelbert Ames are well-known examples, as are the writings of psychologists Rudolf Arnheim (*Art and Visual Perception*) and Richard L. Gregory (*The Intelligent Eye*), and art historian E.H. Gombrich (*Art and Illusion*). Written by a University of Nevada psychology professor, this book continues that tradition by discussing familiar artistic techniques (linear perspective, closure, figure and ground) in the context of current psychology. Illustrated by 180 black and white diagrams and photographs, it has at least one conspicuous flaw: While it addresses recent discoveries in cognitive psychology, there is no discussion of recent art, although it is likely that art has evolved as dramatically as psychology in the past thirty years.

EDNA ST VINCENT MILLAY It's not true that life is one damn thing after another—it's the same damn thing over and over.

RECOMMENDED Lewis Blackwell and David Carson, *The End of Print: The Graphic Design of David Carson* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1995). ISBN 0-8118-1199-0. If we hurry, David Carson (design director of *Ray Gun* magazine) may still be the "bad boy" of graphic design. Like his forerunners, Neville Brody and *Emigré* magazine's Rudy Vanderlans and Zuzanna Licko, he has co-produced a flashy book which centers on a non-interview in which he is modestly able to say how astonished he is by his own ingenuity. However atypical his design practices, his narcissistic rationale could hardly be more predictable: His work is avant-garde, he says, because he breaks the rules; he even makes positive use of mistakes. He screws up so readily and is otherwise able to violate rules because, while intelligent and resourceful, he is essentially an *enfant sauvage*, a Forrest Gump of graphic design. Like Brody and the others, he is an outsider, having emigrated to design from other disciplines, in his case professional surfing and sociology. That he works with abandon is inevitable, because, unlike educated designers who are blinded by Modernist indoctrination, he follows his raw feelings; and feelings are genuine, learning is not. Titillatio ergo sum, it's simply Cartesian split-brain in reverse. If you can't read something he designed, it's not his responsibility; it's mostly because of the way you've been taught. Carson communicates, David Byrne writes in his introduction, "on a level that bypasses the logical, rational centers of the brain and goes straight to that part that understands without thinking. In this way it works just like music does—slipping in there [here comes an emigration metaphor!] before anyone has a chance to stop it at the border and ask for papers."

O G D E N
N A S H
Parsley
Is gharsley.

R O B E R T
B E N C H L E Y
One, two,
three,
Buckle my
shoe.

[A certain person] couldn't find any religious books in his local bookshop and asked an assistant for help. Showing him "an inconspicuous handful of bibles and prayer books," she explained: "We have had to move them down to the bottom shelf because of Christmas."

D . J .
E N R I G H T
Interplay: A Kind of Commonplace Book (Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 117.

D A V I D
F R O S T
He's turned his
life around. He
used to be
depressed and
miserable.
Now he's mis-
erable and
depressed.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED A major exhibition of the work of Charles Rennie Mackintosh will premiere at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in November 1996, then travel to the Art Institute of Chicago and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. In advance of that, a number of opportune books have appeared about this important turn-of-the-century Scottish architect and designer, of which the following are among the finest:

Alan Crawford, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1995). ISBN 0-500-20283. A deserving addition to Thames and Hudson's superb World of Art series, Crawford's book is of small format and inexpensive. It offers a forceful original text that questions the prevalent "Mackintosh myth," and describes the collaborative role of his wife, Margaret Macdonald. The text is complemented by 167 well-chosen illustrations, 26 in color, including snapshots of the man, architectural drawings and diagrams, photographs of his buildings, architectural interiors and furniture, and his watercolors.



James Steele, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh: Synthesis in Form* (London: Academy Editions, 1994). ISBN 1-85490-383-7. This breathtaking album of photographs of Mackintosh's architectural designs, decorative arts and watercolors is indispensable to anyone seriously interested in the subject, largely because of the stunning detail of its 240 illustrations, the majority in full-color. Especially inspiring are a generous number of large format, atypical photographs of his most celebrated projects, including the exterior of the Willow Tea Rooms, the famous Glasgow School of Art, and spectacular views of Hill House, both inside and out. In addition, the book provides a substantial bibliography of books, articles and exhibition catalogs, and a detailed chronology.

Elizabeth Wilhide, *The Mackintosh Style: Design and Decor* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1995). ISBN 0-8118-1032-1. As the title indicates, the focus of this elegant, lavishly illustrated book is on Mackintosh as a designer of architectural interiors and interior furnishings, including cutlery, stained glass, wallpaper, fabric, and especially his wonderfully curious chairs, often called high-back or "ladderback" chairs. More so than other comparable books, we are provided with the context of Mackintosh's accomplishments, for example, the obvious influence of the Arts and Crafts Movement, Japonisme and the Aesthetic Movement. Finally, for those wishing to experience his architecture first hand or to live with reproductions of his furniture, there are helpful directories of "places to visit" and "sources of Mackintosh designs."

The classical tradition of striptease...offers a valid metaphor for the activity of reading. The dancer teases the audience, as the text teases its readers, with the promise of an ultimate revelation that is indefinitely postponed. Veil after veil, garment after garment, is removed, but it is the delay in the stripping that makes it exciting, not the stripping itself; because no sooner has one secret been revealed than we lose interest and crave another.

DAVID LODGE *Small World* (New York: Macmillan, 1985).

[In Japan, men and women] were used to sharing the same public baths, both sexes desexualized and unperturbed. The truly Japanese, truly teasing striptease, as opposed to the imported variety, would consist in a girl appearing on the stage totally naked and then, very slowly, putting on one garment after another; when she was fully dressed, in a kimono revealing only the nape of the neck and the ankles, there would be a roll of the drums, a brief climactic pause, and the lights in the theatre would go out.

D. J. ENRIGHT *Interplay: A Kind of Commonplace Book* (Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 178-179.

KENNETH EDWARDS

While directing a play, Sir John Gielgud instructed the cast that all male actors must wear athletic supporters under their leotards, in response to which was asked: "Sir John, does that apply to those who have only the bit parts?"

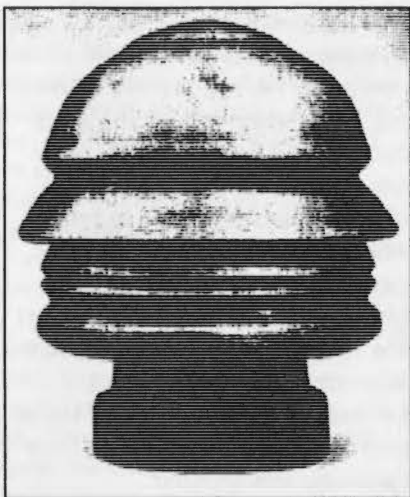
You see, people read to be amused, to pass the time, or to be instructed. Now I never read to pass the time, I never read to be instructed; I read to be taken out of myself, to become ecstatic. I'm always looking for the author who can lift me out of myself.

HENRY MILLER quoted in George Plimpton, *The Writer's Chapbook* (New York: Viking, 1989), p. 14.

GERALD BRENAN

It is often as much what a writer leaves out as what he puts in that matters. Something must be left for the reader to add, for, as Valery said, the writer provides one half and the reader the other.

RIGHT
Renato Bertelli,
*Continuous
Profile of
Mussolini* (1933),
as reproduced in
*Designing
Modernity*.



HIGHLY RECOMMENDED Wendy Kaplan, editor, *Designing Modernity: The Arts of Reform and Persuasion 1885-1945* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1995). ISBN 0-500-23706-9. This large format, magnificent volume is illustrated by 417 examples of historic Modern design, including 300 in color, from the Wolfsonian collection in Miami Beach. Many we have not seen reproduced before, such as Peter Behrens' chairs, Herbert Bayer's advertisement for the "Modell Gropius" Adler car, or Renato Bertelli's bizarre "simultaneous" portrait sculpture of El Duce. An anthology of ten scholarly essays on the ways that design has been used for propaganda and social reform, it was prepared to accompany a current traveling show that continues at the Wolfsonian through April 1996, then moves on to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Seattle Art Museum and Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh.

My own son, Reuel...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 for 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, 1957), p. 5.

The following notes were found by us some months ago in a used copy of *A Death in the Family* by James Agee, purchased at a thrift shop in a small Iowa community. Except for name changes, the text is verbatim.

Dear John,
Think of me today and tonight. Know I love you and I'm thinking of you.
Take care and come back to me safely.
All my love, Karen.

•

John,
You'd better finish up some left-overs before they spoil.
Hamburgers (buns)
Strawberries (w/other fruit mixed in)
Can be put on ice cream, if you want or used for salad.
You could cook up some of those vegetables, like the cauliflower or broccoli or carrots, or eat 'em raw with dip.
How old is that milk? There's more tea, potato salad.
I love you. K.

P.S., Call me at work & say hi. I may get off early.

•

Karen,
I am downstairs
and I love you,
John.

•

John,
The spot on the carpet by the tv is just water...if it's even still there when you get home!
The green beans are cleaned & in the frig, if you want to see them. If you want to eat them, they're good raw in the blue cheese dip, or cooked in a small amount of boiling water (salted). Our first beans!
I love you & I miss you too!
Karen

•

John,
I'll be back as soon after 5:00 as possible. Can't make any promises. I'll make more cookies tonight.
You're wonderful to be in love with. Let's have a good night.
Karen

OTHER RECOMMENDED BOOKS

D. J. ENRIGHT *Interplay: A Kind of Commonplace Book* (Oxford University Press, 1995). ISBN 0-19-282493-7. A sterling example of a "commonplace book," a medley of odd or provocative scraps from reading or other experiences, in this case with wry commentary by an admired British literary figure.

GYÖRGY KEPES *Language of Vision* (New York: Dover Publications, 1995). New paperback edition of a pioneering classic in design education, one of the first to establish the link between art and perceptual psychology, initially published in 1944.

ROGER WALTON, EDITOR *Typographics: The Art of Typography from Digital to Dyeline* (New York: Hearst Books International, 1995). ISBN 0-688-14253-2. The first volume in an anticipated series of well-chosen and beautifully printed treasuries of the finest examples of international avant-garde typography.

DOUGLAS HOFSTADTER *Fluid Concepts and Creative Analogies: Computer Models of the Fundamental Mechanisms of Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1995). ISBN 0-465-05154-5. Chapter 10 ("Letter Spirit: Esthetic Perception and Creative Play") of this new study of analogical thinking by the author of *Godel, Escher and Bach* has direct bearing on the process designers rely on in typographic innovation.

MARK VINZ AND THOM TAMMARO, EDITORS *Imagining Home: Writing from the Midwest* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995). ISBN 0-8166-2780-0. A fascinating anthology of autobiographical essays in which sixteen writers recall their Midwestern origins and the mark that it left on their writings.

I very early understood that the universe is divided between two esthetics: French and German. *Everything* is either French or German. Blue is French, red is German. No is French, yes is German. Cats are French, dogs are German. Night is French, day is German. Women are French, men are German. Cold is French, hot is German. Japanese are French, Chinese are German (although Chinese become French when compared, say, to Negroes, who are German). Gay is French, straight is German (unless it's the other way around). Schubert is French, Berlioz is German. Generalities are French, specifics are German.

NED ROREM *Knowing When to Stop: A Memoir* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), p. 24.

Ballast is published in Iowa, 14 miles from the birthplace of artist Everett Warner, who supervised American naval camouflage during World Wars I and II, and 45 miles from that of artist William Cook, who taught Gertrude Stein to drive forward, but neglected to teach her to drive in reverse.

All subscriptions (including gift subscriptions) must be mailed to the following address:

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Attn: Subscription Czar
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Dysart, Iowa 52224-9767

Ballast is published in a limited edition and back issues are not generally available. However, any issue may be xeroxed to provide copies to others, but the copies must never be altered or sold. Only infrequently do we use unsolicited submissions, but readers are always encouraged to send off-beat material, verbal or visual, 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 submissions are unpaid, and unsolicited material will not be returned unless accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope.

Ballast does not have a budget as such. For more than ten years, it has operated at a financial loss. Such losses are currently offset by contributions from enlightened subscribers and generous deductions from the Subscription Czar's paycheck. If anyone is foolishly philanthropic (foolish because such gifts are surely not tax deductible), we will sometimes accept a check.

WOODY
ALLEN

Why does man kill? He kills for food. And not only food: frequently there must be a beverage.

FRAN
LEBOWITZ

Life is something to do when you can't get to sleep.

J. C. SQUIRE
But I'm not so think as you drunk I am.

Which craft was persecuted by the Puritans of New England?

What was the name of the inventor of the steam engine?

The name of the inventor of the sewing machine is pronounced how?

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