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

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I was talking
with a col-
league about a
man about
who both of us
had some
doubts. I said,
"perhaps if
one scratches
the surface,
something
unexpected
will appear."
My colleague
said, "if you
scratch the sur-
face, you will
come out on
the other
side."

Contributed by
RUDOLF
ARNHEIM.

FABULOUS
FURRY
FREAK
BROTHERS
(*The Prairie
Rambler*):
When you're
swimmin' in
the creek / And
an eel bites
your cheek /
That's a
moray!

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© 1996 by Roy R. Behrens, editor, pub-
lisher 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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apolitical and noncommercial. It does
not carry advertisements, nor is it sup-
posed to be purchased or sold. It is pub-
lished approximately every three
months, beginning in October (more or
less) and ending in June.

MILES KINGSTON Man is
the only creature that seems to
have the time and energy to
pump all his sewage out to sea,
and then go swimming in it.

ERIC HEISTACK AND
DANIEL SASS (circa 1954 in
a geology class at Alfred
University, as recalled by poet
Marvin Bell):

When a glacier gets shocks
And drops boulders and rocks,
That's a moraine!

...

By the sand in my socks,
That's not igneous rock,
That's a moraine!

OLIVER ST. JOHN GOGARTY (on the experience of swimming in Liffey, the Irish river, polluted by sewage) It was no more than going through the motions.



LEFT
Collage portrait of Freud by LISA JAMES (1996).

G. RAVERAT (*Period Piece*) There is a tale of Queen Victoria being shown over Trinity [College in Dublin] by the Master, Dr. Whewell, and saying, as she looked down over the bridge [onto the river Liffey]: "What are those pieces of paper floating down the river?" To which [realizing that they were toilet paper], with great presence of mind, he replied, "Those, ma'am, are notices that bathing is forbidden."

SAMUEL GOLDWYN
If I could drop dead right now,
I'd be the happiest man alive.

Almost everybody is an artist these days. Rock 'n' Roll singers are artists. So are movie directors, performance artists, makeup artists, tattoo artists, con artists, and rap artists. Movie stars are artists. Madonna is an artist because she explores her own sexuality. Snoop Doggy Dogg is an artist because he explores other people's sexuality. Victims who express their pain are artists. So are guys in prison who express themselves on shirt cardboard. Even consumers are artists when they express themselves in their selection of commodities. The only people left in America who seem not to be artists are illustrators.

BRAD HOLLAND in "Express Yourself: It's Later Than You Think" in *Communication Arts* magazine (September/October 1996), p. 28.

J U D G E : Why did you shoot your husband with a bow and arrow?

W O M A N : I didn't want to wake the kids.

Sometimes small things are the ones one is grateful for all through life. At a faculty reception at Sarah Lawrence, the president's mother-in-law, a British lady, taught me now to tie my shoes with a double knot so that they keep tied more securely and still come apart in a jiffy. Kneeling on the floor in the midst of the chattering sherry sippers she tied my shoes. I remember her twice a day ever since.

Contributed by R U D O L F
A R N H E I M .

Q U E S T I O N (*The Prairie Rambler*): How many surrealists does it take to screw in a lightbulb?

A N S W E R : Two. One to hold the giraffe and the other to fill the bathtub with brightly colored machine tools.

J U D G E : Is this the first time you've been up before me?

M A N : I don't know. What time do you normally get up?

A N O N If you fall out of that tree and break both your legs, don't come running to me!

H I G H L Y R E C O M M E N D E D
Bela Julesz, *Dialogues on Perception* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1995). ISBN 0-262-10052-5. The author (a MacArthur Fellow) is a 68-year-old Hungarian perceptual psychologist who directs the Laboratory of Visual Research at Rutgers University. He became famous in 1971, with the publication of *The Foundations of Cyclopean Perception*, which described his development of random-dot stereograms (computer-generated stereo pairs in which the image is unreadable until the two patterns are fused in the brain), a discovery which came from his research, as a military radar engineer, of stereo aerial photography to break camouflage. That subject and related issues are discussed in this charming, eccentric, and humorous book (at times highly technical) in which Julesz the skeptical naif partakes of an informal dialogue with Julesz the world-renowned scientist. Of peripheral interest to artists will be Julesz's encounter with Salvador Dali, who made stereo paintings in the 1970s.

[In Mark Leyner's *My Cousin, My Gastroenterologist* (New York: Harmony Books, 1990), a fictional prison inmate, condemned to die in the electric chair, utters the following frolicsome note about Bauhaus-era furniture:] Luckily, I'd developed an unusually close relationship with the warden. Knowing how much I loved Mies van der Rohe, he had an electric Barcelona chair custom-built for my execution. And when the date finally came and I was led into the death chamber, I couldn't help but marvel at the delicate curvature of the X-shaped legs, the perfect finish of the plated steel and the leather upholstery, and the magnificent, almost monumental proportions that have made the Barcelona chair timeless.

Quoted in George H. Marcus, *Functionalist Design: An Ongoing History* (Munich: Prestel, 1995), p. 165.



LEFT Logo for Moon Dog Coffee by BRAD FLANAGAN (1996).

RECOMMENDED Alberto Perez-Gomez and Louise Pelletier, eds., *Anamorphosis: An Annotated Bibliography* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996). ISBN 0-7735-1450-3. Anamorphic distortion is a spin-off of linear perspective, first described by Leonardo da Vinci about 1485. In most anamorphoses, the picture is acutely stretched when viewed from the front, but correctly proportioned when viewed from the side from an extreme angle. By the 16th century, it was commonly used to disguise scatological and erotic imagery. It is once again popular, partly because it is easily done on a computer (by "horizontal and vertical scale" adjustments). While this illustrated bibliography is both extensive and invaluable, it mistakenly claims to consist of "all known existing sources on anamorphosis."

PAULA POUNDSTONE (*The Prairie Rambler*) The wages of sin are death, but by the time taxes are taken out, it's just sort of a tired feeling.

ELLEN TERRY Before you can be eccentric you must know where the circle is.

RIGHT
Portrait made of
letterforms by
MIKE DENNIS
(1996).



HIGHLY RECOMMENDED Beryl McAlhone and David Stuart, *A Smile in the Mind: Witty Thinking in Graphic Design* (London: Phaidon, 1996). ISBN 0-7148-3328-2. On the title page of this book, the uppercase D has been rotated clockwise and printed in bright red, so that it functions as both a letterform and a smile. It's a simple and wonderfully elegant way to begin a beautiful book about wit, described by Boswell's Johnson as "a combination of dissimilar images, or a discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike." This is a large format, 240-page compendium of 700 examples of the finest uses of visual wit (puns, parodies, metamorphoses) by more than 300 graphic designers, among them Milton Glaser, Paul Rand, Shigeo Fukuda, and Steve Guarnaccia. Given the number, quality and variety of examples, it would be an invaluable volume if it were only a compendium. As it happens, there is an engaging, intelligent text, including statements by more than 25 designers on how they came up with particular ideas, that offers substantial suggestions about the classification, creation, and uses of wit.

PETER DE VRIES The tuba is the lower bowel of music.

WOODY ALLEN My uncle was a musician. One day he blew his liver out trying to play "Flight of the Bumble Bee" on the tuba.

MARY ANTIN A long past vividly remembered is like a heavy garment that clings to your limbs when you would run.

RECOMMENDED Johanna Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books* (New York: Granary Books, 1995). ISBN 1-887123-01-6. The popularity of artists' books as an artform has increased so dramatically in recent years that their number and variety are almost overwhelming. They range from traditional letterpress books, inspired by the Arts and Crafts Movement, to collage novels, to avant garde experiments that are as much sculpture or performance art as sequential printed forms. As the first full-length compendium of contemporary artists' books, undoubtedly this is a valuable work. It begins with a brief and selective review of pioneering efforts in the late 19th century and early 20th (e.g., William Blake, William Morris, El Lissitzky, and Max Ernst), while the remaining pages are an illustrated survey of 200 more recent examples, including such familiar names as Dick Higgins, Dieter Roth, Richard Kostelanetz, Keith Smith, Buzz Spector, and Fluxus. But the smallness of the black and white halftones is frustrating; and certain omissions (historic and contemporary) are baffling, Lucas and Morrow's *What a Life!*, for example, and the strange exclusion of the "gabber-jabbs" of the Walter Hamady, one of the country's most prolific and influential book artists.

WILLIAM MEREDITH (*The Writer's Chapbook*) I remember when we were in training to be night fliers in the Navy, I learned, very strangely, that the rods of the eye perceive things at night in the corner of the eye that we can't see straight ahead. That's not a bad metaphor for the vision of art. You don't stare at the mystery, but you *can* see things out of the corner of your eye that you weren't supposed to see.

ANON Did you hear about the butcher who backed into the bacon slicer and got a little behind in his work?



ABOVE Logo for Moon Dog Books by JOSH MINNIE (1996).

ANON My wife and I started arguing on our wedding day. When I said, "I do," she said, "Oh, no, you don't!"

ANON Spinach is the broom of the stomach.

JAMES
JOYCE
(*Ulysses*) Come
forth, Lazarus!
And he came
fifth, and lost
the job.



ABOVE Museum logo proposal by
RYAN MCADAM (1996).

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED Michael Snodin and Maurice Howard, *Ornament: A Social History Since 1450* (New Haven CT and London: Yale University Press and the Victoria and Albert Museum, 1996). ISBN 0-300-06455-1. This richly illustrated essay on the history and theory of ornament is a valuable companion to two classic but less lavish volumes on the same subject: E.H. Gombrich's *The Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Arts* (1979) and Oleg Grabar's *The Mediation of Ornament* (1992). Snodin is head of the Design Collection at the Victoria and Albert; Howard is a British art historian. A social history of Western ornament in the past five centuries, this book is made up of five essays about the uses and meaning of ornament in printed forms, buildings, clothing, interiors, and popular culture. A concluding section discusses the absorption of exotic styles from historic non-Western sources.

An ancient tradition makes the phallus as the generator of life the power that checks the evil eye. Hence the use of coral shapes as jewels and of horns on top of barn doors. At our staff meetings of men and women at an institute in Rome it happened that when at a discussion the name of a person in repute of being a "iettatore" was mentioned, all the men at the meeting immediately touched themselves between their legs. I once took occasion to ask the director why he and the other educated men gave in to such a superstition, and he replied: "Oh, no, it is not a superstition! I will prove it to you. One day I was riding on the Via Condotti bus' open platform, and to steady myself against the shaky course of the bus, I held on to the strap. At that moment I saw walking toward us the avvocato M., a well-known iettatore. So I let go of the strap to touch myself and fell from the bus and broke a leg. That will show you!"

Contributed by RUDOLF ARNHEIM.

RECOMMENDED Eleanor M. Hight, *Picturing Modernism: Moholy Nagy and Photography in Weimar Germany* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1995). Louis Kaplan, *Laszlo Moholy Nagy: Biographical Writings* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1995). ISBN 0-8223-1592-0. Publication of these two books marks the centenary of the birth of Laszlo Moholy Nagy (1895-1946), the Hungarian graphic designer, photographer, and art theorist, who taught in Germany at the Bauhaus in the 1920s, then moved to Chicago in 1937 to establish the New Bauhaus. Despite the postmodernist tendency toward form bashing, he continues to be influential in design, art, and photography. As Richard Kostelanetz wrote, *Moholy's Vision in Motion* (published posthumously in 1946) is "the single most insightful survey of avant-garde modernism" and "an 'artist's book' of the highest order, demonstrating that few practitioners of any art ever wrote as well or as truly about their own esthetic aspirations." As a result, for anyone audacious enough to write about Moholy, his own writings are a hard act to follow. While both these books are deserving attempts to assess his legacy, Hite's is by far more engaging, comprehensive, and richly-illustrated.

Nor could I sing "The Birmingham Jail" at Granny Fant's, as Uncle Jamie had once spent a night in that place. Nor could we (later on, in adolescence) mention new births in Uncle Jamie's presence, for at forty he still did not know the facts of life, and Granny Fant was determined to keep up the illusion that humanity is restocked by the stork. She was, as my father and I discovered to our amazement, wrong. It turned out that Jamie thought pregnancy came about by the passage of a testicle into some unthinkable orifice of the female. He remarked reflectively that if he'd been married he could only have had two children. "And I don't think I could have stood the pain."

GUY DAVENPORT in "Finding" in *The Geography of the Imagination* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1981), pp. 362-363.

DONALD BARTHELME
The principle of collage is the central principle of all art in the twentieth century in all media.



ABOVE
Museum logo
proposal by
SARAH STEIL
(1996).

OSCAR
WILDE
All bad poetry
springs from
genuine
feeling.

HELEN PRJEAN (*Dead Man Walking*) If I were to be murdered I would not want my murderer executed. I would not want my death avenged. *Especially by the government*—which can't be trusted to control its own bureaucrats or collect taxes equitably or fill a pothole, much less decide which of its citizens to kill.

RIGHT
Museum logo pro-
posal by AMY
BACKER (1996).



HIGHLY RECOMMENDED Michael Donner, *I Love Me, Vol. 1: S. Wordrow's Palindrome Encyclopedia: Being A Magic Mirror, Master Key, and Treasure Map to Some Well-Defined Cracks and Hot Spots in Reality (All-Round Trips) Arranged Alphabetically from AA to ZZZ-ZZZ-ZZZ* (Chapel Hill NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 1996). ISBN 1-56512-109-0. A palindrome is a reversible word, phrase, or sentence that reads the same backward or forward, for example, this book's title (*I Love Me, Vol. 1*), its author's pseudonym (Wordrow), the dedication (To Gray Argot), and even the spurious prepublication blurbs: "Remarkable!"—Elba Kramer. "Put Eliot's toilet up!"—Avon Nova. "Har-har! Rah-rah!"—Lon Nol. This amazing, delightful book never stops. From beginning to end, it offers unrestrained palindromic madness, 3500 examples in all, including places (Apollo PA), names (Harpo:Oprah), things (a Toyota), reversible numbers (Zip Code 27672), and whimsically absurd examples like "Nat, I ram a Samaritan," "Kay, a red nude, peeped under a yak," and "Otto made Ned a motto."

BILL BRYSON (*The Lost Continent*) I had forgotten how flat and empty it is [in the Midwest]. Stand on two phone books almost anywhere in Iowa and you get a view.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED Michael Liversidge and Catharine Edwards, eds., *Imaging Rome: British Artists and Rome in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Merrell Holberton, 1996). ISBN 1-85894-029-X. This is an attractive full-color catalog for an exhibition (held in Bristol, England earlier this year) of Roman history paintings by British Victorian artists, which consist of detailed and romantized scenes of everyday life in ancient Rome. As explained in accompanying essays, J.M.W. Turner, Frederic Leighton, and Edward John Poynter were prominent in this movement. But the most famous, at least in his own time, was Lawrence Alma-Tadema, whose paintings (six of which are reproduced in this book) were technically brilliant, implicitly erotic, and of wide appeal. His *Tepidarium* (reclining nude with feather fan) is Victorian pornography, thinly disguised as historical fact.

I have early memories of copying photographs of horses in the rotogravure section of the *Sunday New York Times*. My father read the *Times* religiously, and I was fascinated by its illustrations. I copied pictures of horses in pencil on paper provided by a teacher friend of our family, Miss Lulu Robinson. From copying horses I progressed to copying 8 x 10 photographs of relatives... What mattered was that my parents were supportive of my drawing and not all opposed to copying. In the 1930s, museums were full of copyists—professionals, amateurs, and students; there was no disgrace in that. My parents saw that my copies were reasonably accurate, which convinced them that I had "talent." Later, they were told that copying was not a good idea, so my career as a copyist had to end.

EDMUND BURKE FELDMAN
in "Teaching Art and So On," *Noted Scholar Series*, National Art Education Association (1994), p. 5.

THOMAS MANN A writer is somebody for whom writing is more difficult than it is for other people.

**EDMUND
LEACH**

Earth in the garden is just earth; it is normal matter in its normal place. Earth in the kitchen is *dirt*; it is matter out of place.

**SAMUEL
JOHNSON**

A cow is very good in a field, but we turn her out of a garden.

In the 1960s and 70s, when [Bauhaus potter] Marguerite Wildenhain drove from Pond Farm [her Northern California home] to Santa Rosa, she sometimes picked up hitchhikers, providing they "looked okay." One day she picked up two girls, one taller than the other, both with shoulder-length blond hair. Inside the car, she noticed the stubble of a beard on the taller one. "Oh," said Marguerite, "I thought you were both girls because of your long hair, but I see now that one of you is a fellow." "Yes," said the boy, "I prefer to wear my hair long because *they* cut theirs." "Well, I like long hair on girls," Marguerite replied, "and on boys, too—if it's clean." "Oh, I wash my hair everyday," said the young man, "but I don't brush it because *they* brush their hair." "Do you brush your teeth?" asked Marguerite. "Oh, yes, I always brush my teeth," he answered. "Well, you do realize, don't you," said Marguerite, "that *they* also brush their teeth?" The young man was very quiet for the rest of the trip, and Marguerite always wondered if he stopped brushing his teeth.

A story told to BALLAST by Geri Schwarz of Decorah IA, who heard it from MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN years ago.

PETER

DE VRIES

I love being a writer. What I can't stand is the paper-work.

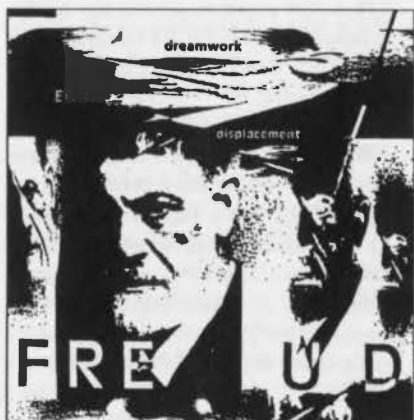
EDGAR

DEGAS

Anyone can have talent at age 25; what is more difficult is to have talent at age 50.

RECOMMENDED Terence Conran with Elizabeth Wilhide, *Terence Conran on Design* (New York: Overlook Press, 1996). ISBN 0-87951-686-0. The author, a knighted British interior designer, is best known in this country as the founder of highly successful retail stores (Habitat, and Conran Shops) that feature well-designed household objects, including kitchenware and furniture. Seven years ago, he opened London's Design Museum at Butler's Wharf, and, more recently, a group of restaurants, including Quaglino's and Mezzo. Of his earlier publications, of particular value was Steven Bayley's *The Conran Directory of Design* (NY: Villard, 1985). Neither a conventional history nor a chronological directory, this lavish large format volume is an "erudite and highly personal" overview of modern design history, infused with Conran's comments on "what makes good design."

SAMUEL BECKETT (during a theatrical rehearsal, when an actor complained he was failing): Go on failing. Go on. Only next time, try to fail better.



LEFT
Collage portrait of Freud by JOSH MINNIE (1996).

LES COLEMAN
Facing up to virtual reality.

SAMUEL GOLDWYN I'm having a bust made of my wife's hands.

The German word *Gesamtkunstwerk*, which translates literally as "total work of art," was often used among *fin-de-siècle* architects like Frank Lloyd Wright and Josef Hoffmann to refer to the planned integration of all aspects of an architectural space, inside and out, from chairs to dinnerware to wallpaper. In some houses, residents were forbidden to move any furniture from its prescribed position. This inspired Austrian architect Adolf Loos to write a satirical essay about a "Poor Rich Man" who is required to consult his architect before making even the slightest changes in his own home. One day the architect arrived to find the owner wearing a pair of bedroom slippers. "The rich man looked at his embroidered slippers," wrote Loos, "and breathed a sign of relief, for this time he was entirely innocent. The slippers had been made after an original design by the architect himself. So he retorted, 'My dear architect! Surely you haven't forgotten? You designed these slippers yourself.' 'Certainly I did,' thundered the architect. 'But I designed them for the bedroom. In this room you ruin the whole atmosphere with those two ghastly patches of color. Can't you see?'"

ADAPTED from Jane Kallir, *Viennese Design and the Wiener Werkstatte* (New York: Galerie St. Etienne / George Braziller, 1986).

OTHER EXCELLENT BOOKS

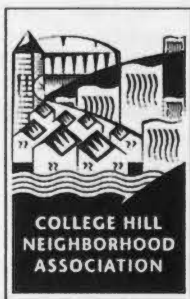
RUDOLF ARNHEIM *The Split and the Structure: Twenty-Eight Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). ISBN 0-520-2-478-6. Collected recent essays by the famous 92-year-old art theorist, psychologist, and historian, his thirteenth book.

ARLEN J. HANSEN *Gentlemen Volunteers* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996). ISBN 1-55970-313-X). An illustrated account of Americans (Ernest Hemingway, e.e. cummings, and John Dos Passos among them) who were volunteer ambulance drivers in France during WWI.

MICHELLE H. BOGART *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art* (University of Chicago Press, 1995). ISBN 0-226-06307-0. A detailed account of the historic tensions among the overlapping professions of artist, illustrator, and advertising designer.

JAMES McCONKEY, ED. *The Anatomy of Memory: An Anthology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). ISBN 0-19-507841-1. A superb sampling of some of the finest writing (by a wide range of authors, historic and contemporary) about an essential and largely mysterious part of human experience.

MICHIEL C.C. KERSTEN & DANIELLE H.A.C. LOKIN *Delft Masters, Vermeer's Contemporaries* (Zwolle, The Netherlands: Waadners Publishers, 1996; distributed by University of Washington Press). ISBN 0-7148-3354-1. Large format, full-color exhibition catalog about illusionistic effects in the paintings of 15th-century Dutch masters, especially perspective and treatment of light.



ABOVE & COVER Proposed logo by **RYAN McADAM** (1996).

ALAN BENNETT
Mark my words, when a society has to resort to the lavatory for its humor, the writing is on the wall.

LEWIS CARROLL
It's a poor sort of memory that only works backward.

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Only infrequently do we use unsolicited submissions, but readers are always encouraged to send offbeat 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 eleven years, it has operated at a financial loss. Such losses are currently offset by contributions from enlightened subscribers and generous deductions from the Dogsboddy's paycheck. If anyone is foolishly philanthropic (foolish because such gifts are surely not tax deductible), we will sometimes accept a check.

Since last issue, we were saddened by the death of an old friend, CHARLES MOORMAN, an authority on Celtic literature who lived in retirement in Fayetteville AR. We never met Charlie; we only knew him by way of his wonderfully interesting notes to BALLAST, beginning in 1988. He had studied with John Crowe Ransom at Kenyon College, where his roommate was Paul Newman. Charlies introduced us to many things over the years, among them Robert Gibbings, David Jones, and Wendy Cope. We miss him.

NOTE All illustrations in this issue are by undergraduate design students in the Department of Art at the University of Northern Iowa.

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Ballast Review