

Summer 1998

Ballast Quarterly Review, v13n4, Summer 1998

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BALLAST



SM

TOUR DE
FALLS

JULY 23 1998
CEDAR FALLS

ROBERT
DRENNAN

(*Wit's End*)

[Dorothy]

Parker once
collided with
Clare Boothe
Luce in a door-
way. "Age
before beau-
ty," cracked
Mrs. Luce.
"Pearls before
swine," said
Mrs. Parker,
gliding
through the
door.

JONATHAN
MILLER

(*Beyond the
Fringe*)

In fact, I'm not
really a Jew.
Just Jew-ish.
Not the whole
hog, you
know.

SOREN
KIERKE-
GAARD

Most people
think that the
Christian com-
mandments
are intention-
ally a little too
severe—like
setting a clock
half an hour
ahead to make
sure of not
being late in
the morning.

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Behrens, editor, publisher, and art director.
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Ballast is an acronym for Books Art Language
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as a distant allusion to *Blast*, the short-lived
publication founded during World War I by
Wyndham Lewis, the Vorticist artist and
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ing passages from books, magazines, diaries
and other writings. Put differently, it is a jour-
nal devoted to wit, the contents of which are
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printed magazine.

SANFORD ZANE

MESCHKOW He who drinks
borscht with a cross bear may
carry home salt, but he will limp.

WILLIAM STARKWEATHER
 [describing John Singer Sargent]
 An American, born in Italy, edu-
 cated in France, who looks like a
 German, speaks like an
 Englishman, and paints like a
 Spaniard.



ABOVE Photographic portrait of the American painter **JOHN SINGER SARGENT** (1856-1925) by Peter A. and Paul Juley, as reproduced in Joan Stahl, comp., *American Artists in Photographic Portraits: From the Peter A. Juley & Son Collection, National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution* (Mineola NY: Dover, 1995). ISBN 0-486-28659-2. As part of the Dover Pictorial Archives Series, this book of 200 portraits permits the printed use of up to 10 images, in any one educational project, without paying a fee or asking permission.

SAMUEL SCHOENBAUM
(Shakespeare's Lives) [Desmond
 McCarthy] said somewhere that
 trying to work out Shakespeare's
 personality was like looking at a
 very dark glazed picture in the
 National Portrait Gallery: at first
 you see nothing, then you begin
 to recognize features, and then
 you realize that they are your
 own.

**W. G.
 ROBERTSON**
 It is positively
 dangerous to
 sit to Sargent.
 It's taking your
 face in your
 hands.

**HAROLD
 ACTON**
*(Memoirs of an
 Aesthete)* His
 [Sargent's]
 advice to a fel-
 low painter
 was: "Begin
 with Frans Hals,
 copy and study
 Frans Hals, after
 that go to
 Madrid and
 copy Velasquez,
 leave
 Velasquez, till
 you have got all
 you can out of
 Frans Hals."

**THOMAS
 BABINGTON
 MACAULAY**
 [having sur-
 vived a certain
 surgery]
 Well, better a
 semi-colon
 than a full
 stop!

JANE ACE
 Doctor, feel my
 purse.

**RUDOLF
ARNHEIM**
(*Parables of
Sun Light*) One
of the nice
things about
Rome is that
one never
knows exactly
what time it is.
No two clocks
ever agree.
One perceives
the moment
through a soft
focus, in which
the edges of
all duties and
commitments
are happily
cushioned.

**EDWARD
ROTHSTEIN**
There are only
three things
that are sure in
life: Marsh-
mallow, plum
pudding,
orangutans,
and chairs.

**GEORGE S.
KAUFMANN**
I like terra
firma—the
more firma,
the less terra.

ELIAS CANETTI (*Notes from
Hampstead*) The couple's watch-
es: never the same time.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Florian Rodari, et al., *Shadows of a Hand: The Drawings of Victor Hugo* (London: Merrell Holbertson / distributed by University of Washington Press, 1998). ISBN 1-85894-050-8. Leonardo da Vinci anticipated the Rorschach inkblot test when he advised that artists in need of ideas "should look at certain walls stained with damp." In the 18th century, the artist Alexander Cozens recommended "blot drawings" as points of departure, as did Aubrey Beardsley, who said of his method: "I make a blot upon the paper and begin to shove the ink about and something comes." In this fascinating, beautifully-produced catalog for an exhibition held in 1998 at The Drawing Center in New York, we learn of comparable practices by the celebrated French novelist Victor Hugo (1802-1885), author of *Les Miserables* and *Notre-Dame de Paris* ("The Hunchback of Notre Dame"), who made drawings and paintings not only from blots, but from soot, black coffee, mulberry juice, burned onion, cigar ash, fingerprints, fingernails, matchsticks, stencils, sprays of water, folds, lace, and cloth impressions. It is even suggested that Hugo, not Marcel Duchamp, invented "readymade" art because he signed and dated stones found on the beach (not entirely a new practice, as is explained in "Pictorial Stones" in Jurgis Baltrusaitis, *Aberrations*). He experimented with left-handedness, made art in a trance, and drew with a ouija board by attaching a pen to the planchette. More than 100 drawings by Hugo are reproduced, nearly all in color, enhanced by four excellent essays (among them a wonderful article by Luc Sante) about the extraordinary mind and methods of a literary genius whom Jean Cocteau once characterized as "a madman who pretended to be Victor Hugo."

**SAUL
BELLOW**
She was a sui-
cide blonde—
dyed by her
own hand.

ANON
For people
who like peace
and quiet: a
phoneless
cord.



ABOVE Pencil-drawn caricature by JOSEPH PODLESNIK (1995).

ELIAS CANETTI (*Notes from Hampstead*) Everything you don't like in others is really what you don't like in yourself...

Once, as I sat talking to him [the British scholar Gilbert Murray] in his study about Aristotle's *Poetics*, while he walked up and down, I suddenly asked: "Exactly what is the principle of that walk of yours? Are you trying to avoid the flowers on the rug, or are you trying to keep to the squares?" My own compulsion-neuroses made it easy for me to notice them in others. He wheeled around sharply: "You're the first person who has caught me out," he said. "No, it's not the flowers or the squares; it's a habit I have got into of doing things in sevens. I take seven steps, you see, then I change direction and go another seven steps, then I turn around. I consulted Browne, the Professor of Psychology, about it the other day, but he assured me it isn't a dangerous habit. He said: "When you find yourself getting into multiples of seven, come to me again."

ROBERT GRAVES, *Goodbye to All That* (Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1957).

OGDEN NASH (*Free Wheeling*) A bit of talcum
Is always walcum.

WILLIAM DRUMMOND
(his description of Ben Jonson)
He hath consumed a whole night in lying looking to his great toe, about which he hath seen tarters and turks Romans and Carthaginions feight in his imagination.

**FRANK
MUIR**

(Upon My Word!) It has been said that a bride's attitude towards her betrothed can be summed up in three words: Aisle. Altar. Hymn.

**DOUGLAS
JERROLD**
[to a thin man whose arguments he found tedious] Sir, you are like a pin, but without either its head or its point.

**ANNIE
DILLARD**
I read about an Eskimo hunter who asked the local missionary priest, "If I did not know about God and sin, would I go to hell?" "No," said the priest, "not if you did not know." "Then why," asked the Eskimo earnestly, "did you tell me?"

GEORGE ADE He had been kicked in the head by a mule when young, and believed everything he read in the Sunday papers.



ABOVE Photograph of American painter **PHILIP EVERGOOD** (1901-1973) by Peter A. and Paul Juley in *American Artist in Photographic Portraits*.

[During the summer of 1957, while Philip Evergood was a visiting artist at the University of Northern Iowa, he] wrote on the chalkboard the ingredients for an egg-oil painting medium. "Afterwards," says [Paul R.] Smith, "some students added to the list 'a cup of beer.' Upon returning to the classroom, another instructor had faithfully copied the list and included the cup of beer, which he dutifully mixed and used in his paintings. Phil thought that was terrific."

ROY R. BEHRENS in "The Good, the Bad, and the Evergood" in *Tractor: Iowa Arts and Culture* Vol 6 No 2 (Spring 1998), p. 5.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED Emmett Williams and Ann Noel, eds., *Mr. Fluxus: A Collective Portrait of George Maciunas 1931-1978* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997). ISBN 0-500-97461-6. Fluxus was a Dada-inspired alliance of avant garde artists, designers, and composers that began as a Lithuanian cultural club in New York in 1960. At the initial meeting, it was decided to start not a club but an experimental magazine—about “electronic music, anarchism, experimental cinema, nihilism, happenings, Lettrism, sound poetry and even painting”—for which George Maciunas proposed the name *Fluxus*, an allusion to effluent bowel activity. An American-born Lithuanian who had studied architecture, art and graphic design at Cooper Union and RIT, Maciunas was responsible for many of the “movement’s” printed artworks (always irreverent, often humorous), and is now generally said to have been its founding member. Among his associates were Dick Higgins (Something Else Press), Alison Knowles, Dieter Roth, Ken Friedman, and Emmett Williams (who co-edited this book). Often called Neo-Dada, Fluxus was art historical *déjà vu* but heavy on *déjà* and light on the *vu*. As its erratic ringleader, Maciunas led a painful life that was generally less interesting than one might expect, and certainly less comic (for example, in 1975, three years before his death of liver cancer, he lost an eye and nearly died when beaten up by the Mafia for unpaid debts). In the end, the most valuable aspect of this book is not the subject matter but the editors’ use of “collective portrayal” (juxtaposed fragments from memories of Maciunas by 80 friends and co-workers) by which a single life is sketched, blurred, drawn, smudged, and then redrawn again. More than ten years ago, Richard Kostelanetz used the same method, when he rearranged excerpts from dozens of talks with composer and Fluxus associate John Cage in *Conversing with Cage* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1987).

SAMUEL BUTLER

It was very good of God to let Carlyle and Mrs. Carlyle marry one another and so make only two people miserable instead of four.

ELIAS CANETTI (*Notes from Hampstead*) Everyone there has just the amount of space that fits under an umbrella. No one goes out without one, and everyone puts his up. No one comes too close to anyone else. A distance is preserved. There is freedom everywhere. When acquaintances meet, the umbrellas are made to bow. How dignified are these greetings from umbrella to umbrella.

RODNEY DANGERFIELD My wife has cut our lovemaking down to once a month, but I know two guys she’s cut out entirely.

DAVID MILLER ARITHMETIC: a thuthessful doctor.

OGDEN
NASH
The Bronx?
No thonx.



ABOVE Detail from "the overlay demonstration," a peepshow-like laboratory setup invented in the 1940s by the American artist and psychologist ADELBERT AMES II. For more on Ames, see Roy R. Behrens, "The Artistic and Scientific Collaboration of Blanche Ames Ames and Adelbert Ames II" in *Leonardo* Vol 31 No 1 (1998), pp. 47-54.

EDWARD
MARSH
[Ned Lutyens]
thought as a
little boy that
the Lord's
Prayer began
with "Our
Father Charles
in heaven,
Harold be thy
name."

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED Richard Balzer, *Peepshows: A Visual History* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998). ISBN 0-8109-6349-3. The author is an antique collector, and this book is a full-color showcase of 180 artifacts and images from his collection of scenic viewing boxes or "peepshows." Ancestors of the stereoscopic viewer (such as the Viewmaster), they were commonly called "raree shows" in England, *optiques* in Holland, *guckkasten* in Germany, *boite d'optique* in France, and *mondo nuovo* in Italy. While there is a tradition of comparable devices in China and Japan (where they were known as "Holland machines" and "Red Hair Ukiyo-e), the earliest European examples can be traced to the Renaissance, and may either have influenced or resulted from pioneering attempts at linear perspective by Brunelleschi, Alberti, and others. Among the finest examples (discussed but not illustrated here), of which seven still exist, are Samuel van Hoogstraten's 17th-century box-like demonstrations of anamorphic perspective distortion. Peepshows were made available to families in the 19th century when accordion-like multiple copies were made (along with alabaster peepshow eggs) as souvenirs of historic events. As delightful as this volume is, it comes to a sudden, regrettable stop at the beginning of the 20th century, in part because the peepshow, unable to compete with stereoscopic photography and motion pictures, drifted toward erotic and pornographic imagery. This book denies us that aspect of the peepshow's history, as well as its recent more innocent use in art and perceptual psychology, particularly in the "Ames Demonstrations" (c1940s), the ingenious laboratory setups of Adelbert Ames II.

ROBERT ROSSI
BLEMISH: the official language of
Felgium.

SAMUEL GOLDWYN
The reason so many people
showed up at his [Louis B.
Mayer's] funeral was because
they wanted to make sure he was
dead.



LEFT
 Photograph of
 Mexican painter
FRIDA KAHLO
 (1910-1954) by
 Peter A. and Paul
 Juley in *American
 Artists in
 Photographic
 Portraits*.

RECOMMENDED Lloyd E. Herman, *Trashformations: Recycled Materials in Contemporary American Art and Design* (Bellingham WA: Whatcom Museum of History and Art / distributed by University of Washington Press, 1998). ISBN 0-295-97720-5. In the mid-1960s, far in advance of the current concern with ecology and recycling, the Museum of Modern Art sponsored "The Object Transformed," an exhibition of (mostly old Surrealist) art in which commonplace materials were used in unexpected ways to radically change the appearance of things: Meret Oppenheim's famous fur-covered cup, saucer, and spoon, was included; as was Man Ray's strange *Cadeau*, an iron with carpet tacks glued to it. Looking at this book, we are reminded of that event, in part because this is the catalog for an exhibition (the dates of which are not listed) of more recent but somewhat comparable art. Exhibited first at the Whatcom Museum in Bellingham, Washington (housed, appropriately, in the city's magnificent recycled City Hall), then slated to tour nationally, most of the 80 pieces displayed were created in the 1980s and '90s by artists, craftspersons, and designers throughout the country, who reused or recycled junk (linoleum floor tiles, clothespins, baseballs, toothbrushes, coffee filters, bowling balls, and barbed wire) in devising unique and provocative forms of art, jewelry, furniture, and so on.

WOODY ALLEN I had a rough marriage. Well, my wife was an immature woman, that's all I can say. See if this is not immature to you: I would be home in the bathroom taking a bath, and my wife would walk right in whenever she felt like and sink my boats.

PRICE WALKER BUMPKIN:
 unpleasant Mafia assignment.

EZRA POUND
 [describing Amy Lowell] ...our only hippo-poetess.

**ELIAS
CANETTI**
*(Notes from
Hampstead)*

The excess fat
in my works
will turn ran-
cid.

RIGHT
Pencil-drawn cari-
cature by
**JOSEPH
PODLESNIK**
(1995).



**WILHELM
STEKEL**
Anxiety is fear
of one's self.

My favorite toys in those days
were a clockwork train and lead
soldiers. When the soldiers had
lost too many limbs to stand up
we melted them down in a frying
pan over the nursery fire and
dropped them in cold water as
people do now in Sweden on
New Year's night, seeking omens
of the future.

GRAHAM GREENE, *A Sort of Life*
(New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971), p.
50.

The fundamental purpose of tenure appointments
that protect against arbitrary dismissal is to protect
the public, not the professors...Tenure rests on the
conviction that truth can be transmitted and discov-
ered and education can succeed only with open and
untrammled inquiry. If freedom is replaced with
timidity and conformity, university students and,
ultimately, the taxpaying public are shortchanged.

THOMAS H. THOMPSON, "Tenure Defends Free Speech,
Not Jobs" in *Des Moines Register* (17 September 1977), page A7.

CYRUS CHING

I learned long ago never to wres-
tle with a pig. You get dirty, and
besides, the pig likes it.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED Museum of American Folk Art, *Self-Taught Artists of the 20th Century: An American Anthology* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1998). ISBN 0-8118-2099-8. In Man Ray's autobiography, he reports a remark to Picasso by his naive friend, the French painter Henri Rousseau: "Picasso, you and I are the greatest painters of our time, you in the Egyptian style, I in the modern." This statement is absurd at first, then disarmingly wise moments later. In that way, it has the paradoxical profundity that is typical of examples of genuine "primitive art," now known by less nasty alternative names, such as "visionary art," "intuitive art," and "art of the self-taught." This is the catalog for an exhibition of 140 artworks by 32 American naifs, including paintings, sculpture, drawings, collages, and (surprisingly) photography. As with most "folk art," one is tempted to say that this artwork is so bad that it's good. But, as with Rousseau's statement, there are aspects of it that are both charming and unbelievably brilliant—like the spontaneous sayings and drawings of children—and that are attributable not to systematic instruction but to innate "giftedness" and, in this case, the advantage of a lack of training. As implied in three interesting articles by Arthur Danto, Maurice Berger, and Gerald Davis, art school graduates striving to be "outsider artists" might benefit from the study of these curious inventions, which are both genuinely strange and strangely genuine. The exhibition will travel throughout the U.S. (Philadelphia, Atlanta, Fort Worth, Rochester, Columbus, and New York) until the end of 1999.

WILLIAM P. FIRTH (*My Autobiography and Reminiscences*) At a dinner when I was present, a salad was offered to [British painter J.M.W.] Turner, who called the attention of his neighbor at the table...to it in the following words: "Nice cool green that lettuce, isn't it? and the beetroot pretty red—not quite strong enough; and the mixture, delicate tint of yellow that. Add some mustard, and then you have one of my pictures."

JOHN CHIPMAN GRAY
Dirt is only matter out of place.

ANON
Oboe—an ill woodwind that nobody blows good.

ANON
If you really want to be a writer, you must write something everyday, even if it's only a suicide note.

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT (*Autobiography*) No house should ever be *on* a hill or on anything. It should be *of* the hill, belonging to it, so hill and house could live together each the happier for the other.

ANON

A woman I knew slightly about twenty years ago hears that we will both be at a social gathering, and wonders if she will still recognize me. Someone tries to point me out, but she misunderstands and instead walks up to someone else who hardly looks like me at all. She says to him, "I'll bet you don't remember me"—and of course he doesn't.

GEORGE
BURNS

Too bad all the people who know how to run the country are busy driving taxicabs and cutting hair.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED Jerome Klinkowitz, *Keeping Literary Company: Working with Writers Since the Sixties* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998). ISBN 0-7914-3723-X. If this memoir by a literary critic were a Biblical text, perhaps its triune god(s) would be Kurt Vonnegut, Jerzy Kosinski, and Donald Barthelme; while the author, who has written more than 30 books on literature, music, sports, philosophy, art, military history, and contemporary culture, would be John the Baptist. Back in 1969, as a rookie college professor (dressed not in a hair shirt but a corduroy jacket with elbow patches), it was he who crawled out of the wilderness of Modern fiction (Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Faulkner) to broadcast the radical Postmodern change that was happening to novels, short stories, poetry, and to literary criticism itself. In such books as *Innovative Fiction* (1972), *Literary Disruptions* (1975), and *The Life of Fiction* (1977), he introduced the academic community to such contemporary classics as Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Kosinski's *The Painted Bird*, and Bartheleme's *City Life*, as well as more difficult, knottier stuff by Ronald Sukenick, Raymond Federman, Gilbert Sorrentino, and Clarence Major. Klinkowitz shares his behind-the-scenes tales of these and other writers, all of whom he knew personally, then stops when his own life "regresses" to things that interested him as a child: baseball, airplanes, and jazz.

A. J. FINSBERG (*The Life of J.M.W. Turner R.A.*) [Shortly before his death, the British painter J.M.W. Turner was told by his doctor] that death was near. "Go downstairs," Turner said to the doctor, "take a glass of sherry and then look at me again." The doctor did so, but his opinion remained unchanged.

ROBLEY WILSON

HE: Do you like Kipling?

SHE (shyly): I don't know. I've never kipped.

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

MIRCEA ELIADE, *Journal II 1957-1967* (University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 270.



LEFT
Photograph of Japanese-born American painter YASUO KUNIYOSHI (1893-1953) by Peter A. and Paul Juley in *American Artist in Photographic Portraits*.

ELIAS CANETTI (*Notes from Hampstead*) Perhaps people are able to distinguish only among a discrete number of faces, and when that number is exceeded, perhaps after a certain age they are receptive only to the old faces they already know, and in the new see only those.

Mr. Sheridan told us of Mr. Richard Cavendish, who had a trick of swinging his arm round when talking, that, walking up Bond Street with a friend, he found, on stopping, that he had drawn seven hackney coaches to him.

LORD BROUGHTON, *Recollections of a Long Life* (New York: AMS Press, 1968).

RUDOLF ARNHEIM (*Parables of Sun Light*) By now, most people I meet look familiar. There exists only a limited number of human types.

CHARLOTTE CURTIS
BISexual: a Southern prostitute's greeting.

J. C. GHOSH

*(Works of
Thomas*

Otway) It is said that they [Otway and John Dryden] lived in houses facing each other, and Otway wrote sarcastically on Dryden's door one night: "Here Dryden lives, a poet and a wit." To which Dryden replied the next night by writing on Otway's door: "Here Otway lives—exactly opposite."

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED The American graphic designer **PAUL RAND** died of cancer at age 82 on 26 November 1996. *Paul Rand*, a book by Steven Heller, George Lois, and Jessica Helfand is scheduled for release this fall by Phaidon Press (London). In addition, the following titles are already available: Two essays on Rand's life and work have been reprinted in Jessica Helfand, *Paul Rand: American Modernist* (New York: William Drenttel, 1998). ISBN 1-884381-16-2. To order, see the web site at <www.emigre.com>. A delightful 28-minute video interview with Rand at his Connecticut home and studio (filmed shortly before his death), titled *Conversations with Paul Rand*, is available from PM Films, 74 Gentian Road, Cranston RI 02921. The transcript of a dialogue in 1995 between Rand and **RUDOLF ARNHEIM**, the celebrated Gestalt psychologist and art theorist, was published recently in Kent Kleinman and Leslie Van Duzer, eds., *Rudolf Arnheim: Revealing Vision* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997). ISBN 0-472-10859-X. In addition, coincident with a Paul Rand Symposium (held at the School of Visual Arts in New York on 3 April 1998), Steven Heller, Georgette Ballance, and Nathan Garland have produced *Paul Rand: A Designer's Words*, consisting of quotable excerpts from Rand's books, lectures and interviews.

ANON During lunch, someone confuses Norman Rockwell, the benign illustrator, with George Lincoln Rockwell, founder of the American Nazi party, by referring to the latter as "Norman Lincoln Rockwell." Hoping quietly to correct the error, I make some comment about the Nazi leader, using his correct name. A third person in the group, thinking I've misspoken, follows with another statement in which he politely but clearly refers to Norman Lincoln Rockwell.

CASEY STENGEL

Going to bed with a woman never hurt a ball player. It's staying up all night looking for them that does you in.

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PABLO
PICASSO
Photographers,
along with
dentists, are
the two pro-
fessions never
satisfied with
what they do.
Every dentist
would like to
be a doctor
and inside
every photog-
rapher is a
painter trying
to get out.

HERMINE
STOVER
It is better to
wear out your
slippers danc-
ing than to
have your feet
cut off.

COVER Computer-drawn logo by RYAN MCADAM, a graphic designer at Mathis, Earnest and Vandeventer in Cedar Falls, Iowa, for that city's segment of RAGBRAI (Register's Annual Great Bike Ride Across Iowa). Service marked 1998 by ME&V. McAdam and AMY BACKER (now a publication designer at the University of Illinois), both of whom graduated recently with bachelor's degrees from the University of Northern Iowa's graphic design program, have been chosen by *Print* magazine (New York) as among the top 20 "promising young designers" in the country, with the result that their work will be featured in the January/February 1999 issue of that magazine. We are pleased to note that works by both of these talented designers have been published in past issues of *Ballast*.

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