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DONALD
SINDEN
(*A Touch of
the Memoirs*)
Looking one
day at the
enormous
nude statue of
Achilles at
Hyde Park
Corner I heard
a Londoner
saying to a visi-
tor, "No, no,
dear—Big Ben
is a clock."

JOSEPH
ALSOP
Auntie Bye had
a tongue that
could take the
paint off a
barn.

ERASMUS
It is well
known that
among the
blind the one-
eyed man is
king.

CHARLES
DICKENS
He had but
one eye, and
the popular
prejudice runs
in favor of
two.

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 mainly a pastiche of astonish-
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.

JEAN COCTEAU [The artist]
is a cat that walks by itself...[he
or she] must walk along the dark
side, and keep to the edge of the
great main roads.



LEFT
Face made entirely
of letterforms by
ALISA
BUSETH
(1999).

One of my funniest early memories: Mama had back trouble, and one winter night—we all slept in the same room where it was warm—Mama said to Daddy, “Grady, you have got to rub my back.” Well, we didn’t have electric lights, so Daddy got up in the dark and got a bottle of liniment and rubbed Mama down. And she said, “Oh, that’s the best stuff.” Then she went to sleep in about thirty minutes, saying, “That is the best liniment I’ve ever seen.” When we got up the next morning, we saw Daddy had rubbed her down with O-Cedar furniture polish. I was about six or seven then.

BUCK JOHNSON in Remar Sutton and Mary Abbott Waite, eds., *The Common Ground Book: A Circle of Friends* (Latham NY: British American Publishing, 1992), p. 17.

YIDDISH PROVERB The tongue is the pen of the heart.

Mother gave me a cent with which to buy a banana. I returned from the corner Italian’s with a ripe not too ripe yellow banana of prodigious size. “Here is a cent. Go and get another like it,” said mother. I went. But I made the supreme mistake of bringing my first banana with me. I gave the Italian the penny and was about to help myself to a banana. “You already gotta one,” said the Italian, pointing to the previous already paid-for banana in my own hand. Of course! But no amount of explanation could make it clear to him why I should have two bananas in my hands when I was paying only for one.

JOHN CURNOS *Autobiography* (New York: Van Rees Press, 1935), p. 99.

He [his father, a medical doctor] could seldom get anybody's name right, including those of people he treated, and in later years, when I was enlarging my circle of friends, he was not above telling me, "You had a telephone call from a Mr. Vaseline"—and I could interpret that as meaning Mr. Basil Dean, the producer. And my father had a most distinctive rechristening for Tallulah Bankhead; she was known to him as Tarara Buncombe in later years.

CEDRIC
HARDWICKE
*The Irreverent
Memoirs of Sir
Cedric Hardwicke*
(Garden City NY:
Doubleday and
Company, 1961),
p. 22.

DOUGLAS JERROLD

Dogmatism is puppyism come to its full growth.

✱ HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Linda Merrill, *The Peacock Room: A Cultural Biography* (Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art, and New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1998). ISBN 0-300-07611-8.

"Remember," wrote the British art critic John Ruskin in 1853, "that the most beautiful things in the world are the most useless; peacocks and lilies for instance." When a peacock unfolds its plumage, the eyespots on its feathers form exact logarithmic spirals, like those in a daisy, a pinecone, and a sunflower. Twenty years later, Ruskin's remark inspired the Aesthetic Movement ("Art for art's sake"), of which the chief proponents were the Irish playwright Oscar Wilde and the American painter James A.M. Whistler. Wilde sometimes wore a sunflower in his lapel; and Whistler, as is documented in this thoroughly researched and richly illustrated volume (with 250 illustrations, nearly half in color), created an opulent dining room for London businessman Frederick Leyland, with peacocks as the main motif. Completed amid controversy in 1877, *Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Peacock Room* was dismantled and sold after Leyland's death, and, in 1923, reconstructed in the U.S. at the Freer Gallery of Art, a branch of the Smithsonian Institution, where it remains on view. A key event in design history, it was restored physically in 1989 through 1992; and now this book restores it historically, thereby "dispelling some of the myths and misconceptions that had settled over the story like mantles of aging varnish." As a cultural biography, the book's greatest virtue is its breadth of focus: just as Whistler's interior served as an elaborate setting for Leyland's Chinese porcelain collection, Merrill provides a rich wide factual setting for the Peacock Room.

CHINESE PROVERB

To talk much and get nowhere is to climb a tree to catch a fish.

During one Christmas holiday in London I was taken to a fancy dress ball at the Town Hall in Kensington and I went as a candle and candlestick. I was sixteen. I fashioned a white tubular arrangement out of cardboard to go on my head, and from crepe paper a yellow and blue candle-flame; also a wide white cardboard collar. I won the first prize, which was a large, brown, fiber suitcase. But it was a humiliating experience as so many people flicked their cigarettes into my collar and then said, "Sorry, thought you were an ashtray."

ALEC GUINNESS *My Name Escapes Me: The Diary of a Retiring Actor* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1997), p. 46.



There was my art teacher, Mrs. Zable, who if we'd made a wonderful lino cut, would say, "Ooh, would you do some on material for me?" So you'd do your lino cut print all over some material and a week later she'd turn up in this badly made skirt with your lino cut print all over it.

STEPHANIE BEACHAM in Remar Sutton and Mary Abbott Waite, eds., *The Common Ground Book: A Circle of Friends* (Latham NY: British American Publishing, 1992), p. 113.

GRAHAM GREENE

I remember distinctly the suddenness with which a key turned in a lock and I found I could read.

THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH

Cynicism is a small brass field-piece that eventually bursts and kills the artilleryman.

LEFT

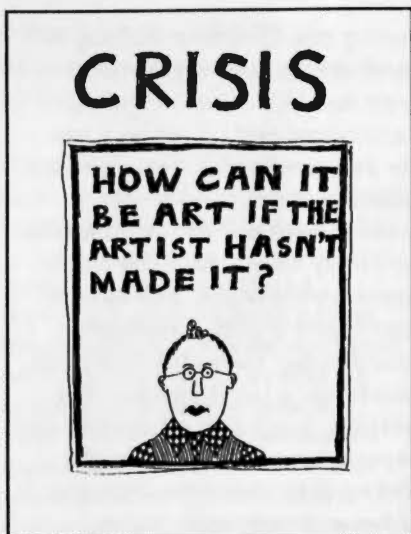
Face made entirely of letterforms by **AARON CUMMINS** (1999).

VLADIMIR NABOKOV

She took off one glove, stroked the bed table, and consulted the face of her finger.

RIGHT

Illustration by LES COLEMAN (1997) from his book, *Meet the Art Students*. ISBN 1-900072-18-1.



✱ **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** Jan Tschichold, *The New Typography*. Translated by Ruari McLean. Introduction by Robin Kinross. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). ISBN 0-520-07147-6. One year before the publication of the first German edition of this famous book, the Swiss-born typographer and book designer Jan Tschichold (pronounced *Yohn CHICK-hold*) gave a lecture in Munich with the same title. His lecture, an advertisement promised, will be illustrated by more than 100 slides, many in color, "and there will be no discussion afterwards." That terse statement, notes Ruari McLean, "seems to say something about the firmness of Tschichold's views" at age 25. Six years later, several months after Hitler became Chancellor, Tschichold was taken into "protective custody" for six weeks by the Nazis as part of a crack-down on bolshevist radicals. Soon after, emigrating first to Switzerland, then to England, he evolved from "a tireless promoter of modernism in typography," writes Robin Kinross, to "one of its most acute and sometimes acid critics." That may explain in part why the original version of this innovative and influential book (which the young Tschichold championed in 1928, then renounced in 1946 as too militaristic) was translated into English only recently. How wonderful to hold it now, with its famous black frontispiece opposite the title page, and to realize its verbal and visual effect on the authors of subsequent books on graphic design, such as Gyorgy Kepes, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, and Paul Rand. Among the charms of this paperbound edition are the elegance and appropriateness of the cover design (by Steve Renick), in which formal strategies that Tschichold celebrated (grid-based edge alignment, asymmetry, sans serif typefaces, primary colors) are applied in a quietly powerful way.

YIDDISH PROVERB

I've heard it before. That joke has a long beard.

He [an officer on a "dry" British ship during World War II] was a short round man with a "baby bottom" face, known as "Pinkie," and in the absence of any branded alcohol, he mixed a cocktail called Pinkie's Revenge. You must believe me when I tell you the ingredients: a base of brandy made in Cairo, rather more than a few drops of "bitters," a splash of Eau de Cologne and, to provide a cloudiness like an egg nog, a dollup of Brylcream. It was lethal! It tasted innocuous enough, but I was warned that the effect would strike me about three hours later, so to be safe I retired to my cabin. I sat on my bunk happily reading when something seemed to hit me on the back of the head. I came to seventeen hours later in the heat of the Red Sea. I have never been so ill.

DONALD SINDEN *A Touch of the Memoirs* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1982), pp. 62-63.

On waking this morning I thought how lovely it would be to have a tame bird again. There has been Percy, a South African grey parrot who lived with us for about twenty-five years, gave us a lot of laughs and painful nips, could recite about the first two lines of a Hamlet soliloquy—"O what a rogue and peasant slave am I! Is it not monstrous that this player here"—except that he substituted "parrot" for "player," followed by gales of laughter; he also ripped sitting-room curtains to shreds.

ALEC GUINNESS *My Name Escapes Me: The Diary of a Retiring Actor* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1997), p. 156.

STANLEY ELKIN

A truth about art is the company it keeps with the slightly askew, the fly in that woodpile of symmetry.

S. J.

PERELMAN

While waiting around my doctor's ante-room to have a swelling excised from my checkbook, I ran across an extremely informative article in a medical journal.

PERCY

WYNDHAM
LEWIS

Laughter is the mind sneezing.

PLATO

(The Laws)

The best way to educate the younger generation (as well as yourself) is not to rebuke them but patiently to practice all your life what you preach to others.

PETER

BUCK

If Adolf Hitler came back [to the United States] and said "I will reduce taxes" he'd win by a landslide.

RODNEY

DANGER-

FIELD

If her dress had pockets, my wife would look like a pool table.

✱ HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Rupert Faulkner, *Masterpieces of Japanese Prints: Ukiyo-e from the Victoria and Albert Museum* (NY: Kodansha America, 1999). ISBN 4-7700-2387-1. Unexpected earnings from the Great Exhibition of 1851 (at the Crystal Palace in London) were used to establish the following year the Victoria and Albert Museum, the world's largest collection of applied art and design. In 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry made his famous expedition to Japan, which had been isolated for 250 years, and set up trade agreements. Examples of Western technology (locomotive, telegraph, camera) were given to the Japanese, and Japanese artifacts to Westerners. Of particular impact were Japanese woodcuts of the 17th through 19th centuries, called *ukiyo-e* or images of "the floating world," tens of thousands of which ended up in museum collections throughout the world. Many (perhaps most) American and European artists and designers were influenced by the then-strange stylistic traits of these prints (crisp black outlines, bold flat areas of color, asymmetrical arrangements, and dramatic cropping), among them such people as Whistler, Manet, Degas, Toulouse-Lautrec, Gauguin, Aubrey Beardsley, and Frank Lloyd Wright. "All my work," wrote Vincent van Gogh to his brother, "is in a way founded on Japanese art." This stunning volume is a full-color treasury of 130 of those woodcuts (introduced and annotated by scholars) from the many now in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

As one gets older, it happens that in the morning one fails to remember the airplane trip to be taken in a few hours or the lecture scheduled for the afternoon. Memory does return in time, but the suspicion remains that in the end dying will consist in simply forgetting to live.

RUDOLF ARNHEIM *Parables of Sun Light* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 156.

ROBERT FROST (*Selected Letters*) My poems—I should suppose everybody's poems—are all set to trip the reader head foremost into the boundless. Ever since infancy I have had the habit of leaving my blocks, carts, chairs and such like ordinaries where people would be pretty sure to fall forward over them in the dark. Forward, you understand, *and* in the dark.



LEFT
Face made entirely
of letterforms by
ANGEL
JOHNSON
(1999).

My daddy never went shopping, but while my mother was sick, he had to take me to buy a bathing suit. I was four or five, and he bought me an adult size-fourteen bathing suit, a size which I have never worn my entire life.

When he got us home, Mother asked, "Why did you get her that bathing suit?"

He said, "That's the one she wanted."

Evidently he had said, "Pick out a bathing suit," and I had—a white two-piece. I can still remember it because you can't return a bathing suit, and every year I would try it on thinking that it might be the right size. It never was.

ANNE BRUNSON in Remar Sutton and Mary Abbott Waite, eds., *The Common Ground Book* (Latham NY: British American Publishing, 1992), pp. 275-276.

EOIN
O'MAHONY
My entire
involvement
with the Irish
Literary Revival
consisted in
standing
beside Mister
W.B. Yeats in
the urinal dur-
ing an interval
at the Abbey
Theatre, where
I remember he
was having
great difficulty
with his water-
works.

WELSH
PROVERB
Money is an
eel in the
hand.

**RANDALL
JARRELL**
Some poetry
seems to have
been written
on typewriters
by other type-
writers.

**MRS
PATRICK
CAMPBELL**
[to Noel
Coward, after
seeing the first
performance
of *Private
Lives*] All your
characters talk
like typewrit-
ers, but I do
quite like it
when you do
your little
humming at
the piano.

AKIO MORITA (*Made in Japan*) The Japanese constantly pare down and reduce the complexity of products and ideas to the barest minimum. They streamline the design, reduce the number of parts, and simplify the inner workings and parts. The influences of Zen and haiku poetry are often evident in the simplicity and utility of Japanese design.



ABOVE
Face made entirely of letterforms by
HEIDI KAUTZA (1999).

If you want to hurt your parents and you don't have the guts to be a homosexual, go into the arts. They say there aren't enough jobs and you can't make any money, but that's not what the arts are about. It makes your soul grow. The actual writing of the poetry is the payoff.

KURT VONNEGUT in a lecture at the University of Northern Iowa on 19 April 1999.

**JOHANNES
BRAHMS**
If there is any-
one here
whom I have
not insulted, I
beg his par-
don.

✱ HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Frank Gehry: Architecture in Motion. VHS color video. 45 minutes, 1994. (Produced by Robert Sherrin for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation / distributed by Films for the Humanities and Sciences, Box 2053, Princeton NJ 08543 @ 800/257-5126; website <www.films.com>). The title of this annotated conversation with Frank Gehry, a Canadian-born American architect, is a play on words. It alludes both to his lifelong interest in hockey (when visiting schools, he prefers to play hockey with students rather than to lecture) and to his increasingly prominent role (at age 69) as an aging *enfant terrible* of architecture. Born in Toronto, he worked during childhood in a family-owned hardware store, from which he developed an interest in simple construction methods and a wide range of common, inexpensive building materials. His ad hoc, often brutish architectural style (described by critics as "Deconstructivist") is reminiscent of anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss' definition (in *The Savage Mind*) of a *bricoleur*, a jack-of-all-trades who has few preconceptions and relies on unorthodox ways to make use of "whatever is at hand." Gehry has applied the same approach less radically to furniture design, most notably in chairs made of corrugated cardboard and those of woven wooden strips (each of which is named for a hockey strategy). In this interesting and instructive film biography, there are excerpts from a critique with architectural students; visits to more than a dozen Gehry buildings (e.g., the Norton Residence, his own remodeled home in Santa Monica, the Walt Disney Concert Hall); and views inside the factory where his woven wood chairs are manufactured.

JANE YOLEN The moon is a sickle for pruning the stars.

DONALD SINDEN

(*A Touch of the Memoirs*)

[describing Frank Verral] A kind man of medium height and enormous strength, he had a decided paunch which he always claimed was "not a paunch but a hollow back."

JOHN
MASON
BROWN
[describing
Alexander
Woolcott]

His spleen
could be merci-
less, his sweet-
ness diabetic;
his behavior
unhousebro-
ken.

YIDDISH
PROVERB

The masses are
asses.

O. HENRY

The furniture
was chipped
and bruised;
the couch, dis-
torted by
bursting
springs,
seemed a hor-
rible monster
that had been
slain during
the stress of
some

grotesque con-
vulsion.

ANON
Exaggeration
is to paint a
snake and add
legs.



Imagine, perhaps, an art form that is comprised 10% of music, 25% of architecture, 12% of drawing, 18% of shoemaking, 30% of painting and 5% of smell. What would it be like? How would it work? How would some of the specific art works appear? How would they function? How would the elements interact? This is a thought experiment that yields interesting results. Thoughts like this have given rise to some of the most interesting art works of our time.

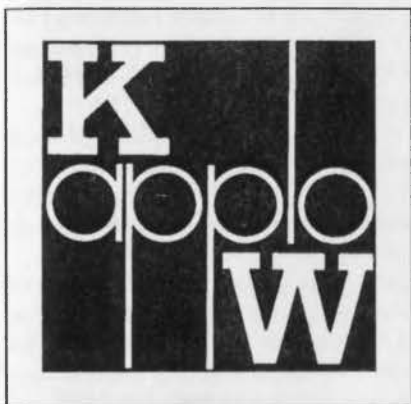
KEN FRIEDMAN in "Fluxus and Company" in *The Fluxus Reader* (NY: Academy Editions, 1998), pp. 247-248.

**TOVE
DITLEVSEN**
(*Early Spring*)
Childhood is
long and nar-
row like a cof-
fin, and you
can't get out
of it on your
own.

**SAMUEL
BUTLER**
Life is one long
process of get-
ting tired.

There's surely too much literature in literature nowadays, and not enough of life. Life seems to have gone out of it because, perhaps, it has ceased being a vocation and has become a profession or a trade, the same as tooth-pulling or the baking of bread. We need our tooth-pullers and our bakers, mighty useful men both, but that's no reason why they should be writing our books. Maxim Gorky, to be sure, was at one time a baker; on the merits of his bread we have no data; but it is certain that he had no call from God to bake bread, and he baked only that he might live to give bread of another kind to his fellow men: bread of the spirit.

JOHN CURNOS *Autobiography*
(New York: Van Rees Press, 1935), pp. 3-4.



I think the best speech I ever made was one to a Rotary Club which had asked me to discuss "Freedom of the Press" during Newspaper Week. I shall favor my readers with the entire speech herewith: "Mr. President. Gentlemen of the Rotary Club: There is no such thing as freedom of the press. I thank you." Then I sat down, to the consternation of the program chairman. Of course, I spoiled it all later by yielding to the urging of the president to go on and say something about it anyway, and I talked for a while about the nature of freedom and the controls to which the press is subject. It would have served me right and served me well for my smart-aleck "hamming" if the Rotarians had all walked out immediately after I had sat down, but they were so intrigued by the spectacle of a man who actually appeared not to want to make a speech that they stayed it out.

FRANK LUTHER MOTT in "The S.P.C.S." [an essay on The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Speakers in Iowa City IA, c. 1930] in *The Palimpsest* (State Historical Society of Iowa), Vol 43 No 3 (March 1962), pp. 114-115. Suggested by Gordon Mennenga.

LEFT and OPPOSITE Two of a series of monograms for associates of the Fluxus art movement, designed c. 1964 by GEORGE MACIUNAS. Extended discussions of that curious, now-defunct intermedia movement can be found in two recently-published books: Ken Friedman, ed., *The Fluxus Reader* (NY: Academy Editions, 1998), ISBN 0-471-97858-2; and Owen F. Smith, *Fluxus: The History of an Attitude* (San Diego CA: San Diego State University Press, 1998), ISBN 1-879691-51-5. Of particular value is the anthology by Friedman, who is Director of the Nordic Center for Innovation at the Norwegian School of Management in Oslo; and who, as a 16-year-old college student in the 1960s, was himself an associate of Fluxus.

As medical officer to a battalion of local volunteers, he [his father] used to tell of seeing them off in their scarlet tunics to fight in the Boer War. The wife of one dashing bucko stood weeping at the railway station, inconsolable until the train pulled out. Then she turned to my father and through her tears exclaimed, "I hope I never set eyes on that bastard again."

CEDRIC HARDWICKE
The Irreverent Memoirs of Sir Cedric Hardwicke
(Garden City NY: Doubleday and Company, 1961), p. 28.

EDWARD HOAGLAND
Death tickled him in a gradual crescendo.

OTHER EXCELLENT BOOKS

✱ **ROBERT C. HARVEY** *Children of the Yellow Kid: The Evolution of the American Comic Strip* (Seattle: Frye Art Museum / University of Washington Press, 1998). ISBN 0-295-97778-7. Curated, with helpful annotations, by a leading expert, this is a beautifully produced exhibition catalog of the original art for American comic strips since 1896. Especially wonderful is the reproduction of cartoon originals in full-color (not just as black and white line art), so that preliminary blue pencil drawings, glue stains, and pasted-over changes are all clearly visible.

✱ **ANNAMARIE STAPLETON**, Ed. *Austerity to Influence: British Art and Design 1945-1962* (London: Merrell Holberton / distributed by University of Washington Press, 1998). ISBN 1-85894-046-X. A pictorial overview, enriched by ten short essays, of post-World War II British design (in such categories as furniture, textiles, ceramics, glass, metalwork, typography, and so on), published originally as an exhibition catalog.

✱ **ROBIN LANDA** *Thinking Creatively: New Ways to Unlock Your Visual Imagination* (Cincinnati OH: North Light Books, 1998). ISBN 0-89134-843-3. Designers are problem-solvers. While required to be creative, they nearly always have to work within restrictions imposed by others. Essentially, this is a book about how to think about and/or visualize graphic design problems in ways that result in a greater number of high quality solutions, more reliably and within a shorter time period. Written by a university design professor, the book features brief interviews with eleven designers and design teachers, hundreds of examples of graphic design solutions, and 44 exercises and work strategies that are likely to promote creative thinking.

JOHN KEATS
My imagination is a monastery, and I am its monk.

PHINEAS FLETCHER
Sleep's but a short death; death's but a longer sleep.

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HAVELOCK ELLIS

Once at the age of twelve, she [his mother] took me to spend the day at the London Zoological Gardens. In the afternoon as we were walking side by side, along a gravelled path in a solitary part of the Gardens, she stood still, and soon I heard a very audible stream falling onto the ground. When she moved on I instinctively glanced behind at the pool on the path, and my mother, having evidently watched my movements, remarked shyly: "I did not mean for you to see that."

WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE

There on the farm I had only one great sorrow. To this day, across seventy years, I can hear the dying cry of my pig, my own little pig that I had reared, when they killed him to eat and he bled to death, and I hated everybody and went to the brook, stayed there all day, then sneaked to the barn and would not eat ever of his flesh. I can remember few sorrows in my life, no anguish so poignant as those that came the day they slaughtered my pig.

COVER

Illustration by
OSIE L. JOHNSON, JR. (1999).

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