MARK TWAIN
If man could be crossed with the cat it would improve man, but it would deteriorate the cat.

CARL SANDBURG
Arithmetic is where the answer is right and everything is nice and you can look out of the window and see the blue sky—or the answer is wrong and you have to start all over and try again and see how it comes out this time.

BARNETT NEWMAN
Aesthetics is for the artist like ornithology is for the birds.

STANISLAW LE C
You will always find some Eskimos ready to instruct the Congolese on how to cope with heat waves.

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 astonishing passages from books, magazines, diaries and other writings. Put differently, it is a journal devoted to wit, the contents of which are intended to be insightful, amusing or thought provoking.

The purposes of Ballast are educational, apolitical and noncommercial. It does not carry advertisements, nor is it supposed to be purchased or sold. It is published approximately every three months, beginning in the fall (more or less) and ending in the summer.

To subscribe to Ballast or to order a gift subscription, simply send in a mailing address and five first class U.S. postage stamps for each single issue desired. In other words, to receive Ballast for one year (four issues), we ask that each reader contribute a total of twenty genuine unused postage stamps. Do not send postage meter slips, nor do we accept orders by phone or e-mail. When subscribing, self-adhesive stamps are preferred. Short of that, send good-looking, antique or unusual stamps. In general we do not accept requests from outside the U.S.
I UNDERSTAND why it's often said that graphic design should be "transparent"—that it should work invisibly or behind the scenes. But I don't understand why designers themselves are invisible.

The idea that graphic design should be as unobtrusive as a crystal wine glass ("thin as a bubble, and as transparent") is attributed to Beatrice Warde (1900-1969), sometimes called "the first lady of typography," an American-born type scholar who moved to England in 1925, where she managed publicity for the Monotype Corporation and edited The Monotype Recorder, its house magazine.

Warde (née Beatrice Lamberton Becker) was both beautiful and articulate. Married to American typographer Frederic Warde, she used the pseudonym Paul Beaujon to publish
Conversation is like playing tennis with a ball made of Silly Putty that keeps coming back over the net in a different shape.

His own small talk, at any rate, was bigger than most people's large.

May all your teeth fall out, save one; and may it have a permanent tooth ache.

According to Warde, her greatest ability was in extemporaneous speaking: "What I'm really good at," she once explained, "is standing up in front of an audience with no preparation at all, then for 50 minutes refusing to let them even wriggle an ankle." In one of those speeches, titled "The Crystal Goblet or Printing Should Be Invisible" which she delivered to the British Typographers Guild in 1932, she described her objection to "mannerisms in typography that are as impudent and arbitrary as putting port [wine] in tumblers of red or green glass!"

Good design, she insisted, should function as inconspicuously as a transparent crystal wine goblet, in which "everything about it is calculated to reveal rather than hide the beautiful thing which it is meant to contain." "Type well used," she continued, "is
invisible as type, just as the perfect talking voice is the unnoticed vehicle for the transmission of words, ideas."

There is renewed interest in Warde's essays, in part because graphic design in our time is anything but transparent. A lot of current design, critics argue, is deliberately cluttered and obtrusive, to the point that the message is all but obscured by the arbitrary mannerisms of its messenger. To paraphrase Warde, some current designers serve wine in opaque goblets "of solid gold, wrought in the most exquisite patterns." As a result, the style of the message is more audible than the content, and the parcel distracts from the part it conveys.

Warde's essay makes perfect sense, somewhat. I understand why transparency in design is often desirable, if not always. But what continues to baffle me is the parallel phenomenon that, in our society at least, graphic designers receive less acknowledgment than even the thinnest wine goblet.

Artists, architects, writers, composers and musicians, playwrights and actors, choreographers and dancers, even fashion designers, are commonly celebrated on television, in encyclopedias, biographies, and cultural surveys. But rarely—almost never—are graphic designers the subject...
FRANK DALBY DAVISON
You need a skin as thin as a cigarette paper to write a novel and the hide of an elephant to publish it.

ELEANOR DARK
(The Little Company)
Instead of being educated like a human being she has been domesticated like a cat. Her whole life was planned to that end, and she's no more to blame for the result than a goose destined to provide pâté de foie gras is to blame for its enlarged liver.

M ARSHALL M C LUH AN
The reason universities are so full of knowledge is that students come with so much and they leave with so little.

For example, on the shelf beside me I have a recent edition of *The Columbia Encyclopedia* (Columbia University Press, 1993), an inclusive one-volume encyclopedia. It contains tens of thousands of biographical entries, including articles about television evangelist Jim Bakker; chess champion Bobby Fischer; the pop singer Madonna; dancer and choreographer Twyla Tharp; the painter Helen Frankenthaler; and violinist Isaac Stern.

In that same volume, there are only a handful of articles on graphic designers, and those featured are either turn-of-the-century Arts and Crafts typographers (e.g., Gill, Morison, Frederic Goudy, and W.A. Dwiggins) or those who also had careers as fine artists or illustrators, not merely designers.

Thus N.C. Wyeth, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, and Edward Gorey have entries, but not Lucian Bernhard, Ludwig Hohlwein, Herbert Bayer, Edward McKnight Kauffer, Jan Tschichold, Lester Beall, Bradbury Thompson, Paul Rand, Milton Glaser, Wolfgang Weingart, April Greiman, Katherine McCoy, or Neville Brody. The range of omissions is astonishing. Is graphic design less
important in our society than
chess playing or tv evangelism? So why are designers the
dentists of art?

When I ask that question of
other people (both designers
and non-designers) here are a
few of the answers I get: First,
like it or not, graphic designers
are servants, not artists. They
don't pursue their own desires;
they carry out others' requests, they solve other people's problems. Not only must
they stay within a client's directives, they also play sec-
ond fiddle to copywriters, edi-
tors, marketing analysts, art
directors, and account execu-
tives. Like the maid and the
butler who never divulge their
master's most private conver-
sations, they stand by
unheard, unseen.

Second, graphic designers are
invisible because the forms
they create are both subordi-
nate and ephemeral. As Warde
said, designers make things
that contain or convey other
more essential information.
Unlike art, in which form and
self-expression are primary,
people toss design in the
trash-and with it, the identity
of its designer. Perhaps it is
partly in answer to this that
some current designers do
what Beatrice Warde opposed:
They draw attention to design
and their own individuality
through annoying typefaces,
labyrinthine layouts, and lavish

DAVID
FROST
He's turned his
life around. He
used to be
depressed and
miserable. Now
he's miserable
and depressed.

LES
COLEMAN
The crematorium
was reduced to
ashes.

MARVIN
BELL
So let us go
then, you and I,
when the
evening is
spread out
against the sky
like a pigeon
poised upon a
nickel. Let us not
get into a pickle.
Or, finding our-
selves already
deep in the briny
pickley flesh, let
us find there the
seeds of our
poetry.
self-promotion books in which—uncelebrated by society—they celebrate themselves.

Third, graphic designers "get no respect" because (dammit!) they don't deserve any. Unlike architects, lawyers and medical doctors, they don't actually have a profession. Anyone with a computer can claim to be a graphic designer, with or without a degree in design. It’s the old argument about professional certification and whether or not we should put up a gate to make the practice of design at least more rarefied, regardless of whether it also results in higher quality.

I don’t know the answer. Perhaps the best solution (as one friend suggested) is that it’s perfectly fine for designers to be as invisible as a crystal wine glass. "Vulgar ostentation is twice as easy as discipline," wrote Beatrice Warde, and "There is nothing simple or dull in achieving the transparent page." It may be better to go unnoticed than to be what she refers to as a "stunt typographer."

Of course, no one but other designers will know what you do or how well you do it. But in the end, as Warde suggests, "you may spend endless years of happy experiment in devising that crystalline goblet which is worthy to hold the vintage of the human mind." 

S A M U E L  B U T L E R

Forgive us our Christmasses, as we forgive them that Christmas against us.
IN LOOKING at certain historical prints (nearly any wood engraving by Gustave Doré, for example), it is evident that there are two signatures. One is that of the artist, who made the initial drawing, while the other is an unknown craftsman, an engraver, who converted the drawing into a finished print. The concern of this book is with a comparable asymmetry in the practice of architecture: The architect is nearly always listed as a building’s sole creator, while the work of the engineer goes unacknowledged. Sometimes they are one and the same, when architects also function as engineers, or vice versa, but even then they still perform distinctive tasks, both indispensible to the process. Ideally, argues Czech-born architect Ivan Margolius, it is neither the architect nor the engineer who should be credited with the authorship of a building (or bridge or monument), but the seamless collaborative efforts of each. Throughout this articulate, elegant book, he discusses and illustrates nearly fifty examples of extraordinary structures that resulted from balanced, collaborative ties between architecture and engineering. Many of these are well-known, such as the Crystal Palace, the Johnson Wax Building, the Sydney Opera House, and the Pompidou Centre, while others are largely unheard of. In the book’s lucid narrative, among the observations made is that both architecture and engineering are, to some extent, about the defiance of gravity (or at least the persuasive appearance of that), both spiritually and physically. In a related photograph, we are shown an ingenious method devised by the Spanish architect Antonio Gaudi for harnessing gravity, or (as Marcel Breuer said) for using “gravity to defeat gravity.” Functioning as both architect and engineer, Gaudi built upside-down models of his vaulted structures, from which he suspended weights, structures he later inverted to form his eccentric church steeples.>

RAYMOND CHANDLER
It was a blond. A blonde to make a bishop kick a hole in a stained-glass window.

ABOVE

EDWARD MARSH
He [Maurice Bar-
ing] had a good way of spelling his name on the telephone. "B for Beastly, A for Apple, R for Rotten, I for England, N for Nothing, G for God"—all rattled off at top speed.

ANON
Knock, knock. Who's there? A little old lady. A little old lady who? Well, I didn't know you could yodel.

NATHAN GOLDSTEIN
This, it seems, is the ultimate irony: that those for whom a realistic image is an important goal, will not reach it until they turn from it to learn the visual and expressive abstractions that constitute the language of drawing.


IN THE introduction to this book, two statements are purposely made to stand out: One advises that you "read the images as if you were reading text"; while the other boldly states that "this book is intended to teach you to see." The book's title was almost certainly derived from Edward Tufte's Envisioning Information (1980), which advocates similar attitudes toward the communication of statistical data. That book is recommended in the bibliography of this one, as are a number of memorable works such as Charles and Ray Eames' Powers of Ten, the stroboscopic photographs of Harold Edgerton, Peter Stevens' Patterns in Nature, and Cyril Stanley Smith’s From Art to Science. Books of that genre (which began to appear in the 1950s) were less technical than inspirational, and encouraged an almost poetic regard for the startling resemblances between Modern-era scientific and abstract artistic images, a view that Gyorgy Kepes called The New Landscape in Art and Science (1956). This volume differs from those in the sense that it can also serve as a technical handbook for scientific photographers, a manual that the cover states "should become a standard tool in all research laboratories." Written by an MIT Research Scientist, it is primarily addressed to other scientists, with the purpose of showing them how to produce (for illustration and presentation) documentary images that are both accurate and effective. It includes specific sections about the basics of photography (point of view, composition, lighting, etc.); on photographing minute phenomena through stereomicroscopes, compound microscopes, and scanning electron microscopes; and on presenting or printing the final results. There is also a visual chronology of the history of scientific images, compiled and annotated by Scientific American columnist Phylis Morrison, who with her husband, MIT physicist Philip Morrison, was an early important contributor to science education. This is an unusually beautiful book. Artists, particularly graphic designers, will be delighted by its typography and page layout, designed by Stuart McKee, and the rich, expressive impact of its wealth of images.
Above
Drawing for U.S. Patent No. 90,298, filed in 1869, consisting of a device to discourage pranksters from standing on a privy seat.

Donald Barthelme
(in "Brain Damage" in City Life)
The Wapituil are like us to an extraordinary degree. They have a kinship system which is very similar to our kinship system. They address each other as “Mister,” “Mistress,” and “Miss.” They wear clothes which look very much like our clothes. They have a Fifth Avenue which divides their territory into east and west. They have a Chock Full o’ Nuts and a Chevrolet, one of each. They have a Museum of Modern Art and a telephone and a Martini, one of each. The Martinis and the telephone are kept in the Museum of Modern Art. In fact they have everything that we have, but only one of each thing... They can conceptualize but they don’t follow through. For instance, their week has seven days—Monday, Monday, Monday, Monday, Monday, Monday, and Monday. They have one disease, mononucleosis. The sex life of a Wapituil consists of a single experience, which he thinks about for a long time.

Stephen Leacock
The landlady of a boarding house is a parallelogram—that is, an oblong angular figure, which cannot be described, but which is equal to anything.

Question
What is the shortest distance between two points?
Answer
Kate Smith.

Hugh Kingsmill
It is difficult to love mankind unless one has a reasonable private income and when one has a reasonable private income one has better things to do than loving mankind.

Lewis Carroll
He thought he saw a Rattlesnake
That questioned him in Greek,
He looked again, and found it was
The Middle of Next Week.
Coffee is not my cup of tea.

AS A COMMUTER, I drive back and forth to work almost daily. Seated at the steering wheel of my fuel efficient vehicle, accompanied by music and coffee, I often feel as if my car is a shell-like mobile house, or "architecture on wheels," as author Ivan Margolius suggests in this elegant, interesting volume about automobiles designed by architects. Emerging at the same time as Modernism in art and architecture, the automobile, he writes, became a "metaphor for modernity." Architects fell head over heels for it, and, despite the enormous distinctions between buildings and cars, surprisingly often regarded it as "an opportunity for an exercise in miniature architecture." Among the earliest and most prolific was Frank Lloyd Wright, who insisted on owning American cars, the bodies of which he redesigned and invariably painted in Cherokee red. ("Mobility, argued Wright, should be like a school of fish, all working together." The American automobile, he felt, lacked that quality.) Other architect-car designers included Josef Maria Olbrich, Adolf Loos, Bauhaus founder Walter Gropius, Pierre-Jules Boulanger (who once described his Citroen as "an umbrella on four wheels"), Le Corbusier, Richard Neutra, Norman Bel Geddes, Buckminster Fuller, Carlo Mollino, and Renzo Piano. The accounts of their excursions into transportation design are fascinating, but equally interesting are the plentiful visual examples of forms that they created: A plywood model, for instance, of a simple and stunningly beautiful car by Le Corbusier (called Voiture Minimum); the ghostly shells of three dust-covered Citroens (discovered in a barn in France); or a wonderfully graceful yet comical bus by Jan Kaplicky that completely wraps around this book. The author is a Czech-born architect and writer who fled that country in 1966, and now lives and practices in London. The idea for this project came as he was gathering material for earlier books on Cubism and Czech architecture and design.
THERE ARE any number of ways by which we change the way we look: We do the strangest things to hair, paint our faces, and transform the surface of our skin by the painful incision of tattoos. This book is not about those methods but is focused instead on the changes that come from "extreme" or astonishing uses of clothes. The book's author is the Curator of the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where it was produced as the catalog for an exhibition that took place in the winter months of 2001-2002. As explained in its fluent and interesting text, this is only the latest in a long and respectable history of exhibits and publications about the uses of adornment for reasons other than warmth—as tacit symbols that announce “status, wealth, power, gender, cultivation, ceremony, and group affiliations.” Like the exquisite corpse (a Surrealist variation on a Victorian parlor game in which distinctly different parts are juxtaposed to arrive at zany mismatched wholes), the contents of this book are grouped into body parts: neck and shoulders, chest, waist, hips, and feet. Within these zones, many or most of the topics addressed may be old hat to anyone with a long-term, serious interest in the subject, things like Victorian corsets, Chinese foot-binding, high-heeled shoes, bustles, push-up bras, and cod pieces. While the richness and variety of its 225 full-color paintings, prints and photographs are reason enough to own this volume, of added interest is the text, which offers brief descriptions of such oddities as Salomon Reina’s system for dating nude statuary, based on measurements of the breasts (he believed that the space between nipples was linked to certain time periods); a rarely seen screw-like costume (c. 1922), with a blade that moves from waist to hem, from the Triadic Ballet of Bauhaus theatre designer Oskar Schlemmer; and x-ray demonstrations that the Padaung women of Burma do not really stretch their necks by wearing eight pound rings of brass, but only (only!) create the appearance of that by radically redirecting the growth of their collarbones.

ABOVE
Jock Munro
(The Common Ground Book)
Nanny was the kindest person I ever knew. At Christmas, for instance, she'd take the trouble to get up early and put red cloth on the barbed wire of the gate that goes up to the railway line. Then she'd take us children for a walk on Christmas afternoon and say, “Oh, Father Christmas [Santa Claus] must have torn his trousers.”

Ambrose Bierce
Corporation, n.
An ingenious device for obtaining individual profit without individual responsibility.

Anonymous
I owe, I owe, and off to work I go.

Eric Hoffer
(The Ordeal of Change)
In animals, action follows on perception mechanically with almost chemical swiftness and certainty, but in man there is an interval of faltering and groping; and this interval is the seedbed of the images, ideas, dreams, aspirations, irritations, longings, and forebodings which are the warp and woof of the creative process.
All subscriptions to Ballast (including gift subscriptions) must be mailed to the following address:

Ballast Quarterly Review
Attn: Subscription Flunky
2022 X Avenue
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. Rarely 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 over 17 years, it has operated at a loss. Such losses are currently offset by contributions from enlightened subscribers and generous deductions from the paycheck of the Subscription Flunky. If anyone is foolishly philanthropic (foolish because such gifts are surely not tax deductible), we will sometimes accept a check.

Ballast has a collaborative affiliation with Leonardo: Journal of the International Society of Arts, Sciences, and Technology (MIT Press). As a result, some of the book reviews in Ballast are reprinted either on the Leonardo digital reviews web site at <http://mitpress2.mit.edu/e-journals/Leonardo/ldr.html> or in the printed magazine.

LEWIS CARROLL
He thought he saw an Elephant,
That practiced on a fife:
He looked again, and found it was
A letter from his wife.

WOman
[to baseball player Yogi Berra, on an intolerably hot day]
Good afternoon, Mr. Berra. My, you look mighty cool today.

BERRA
Thank you, ma'am. You don't look so hot yourself.

JEAN ANOUILH
God is on everyone's side... And, in the final analysis, he is on the side of those who have plenty of money and large armies.