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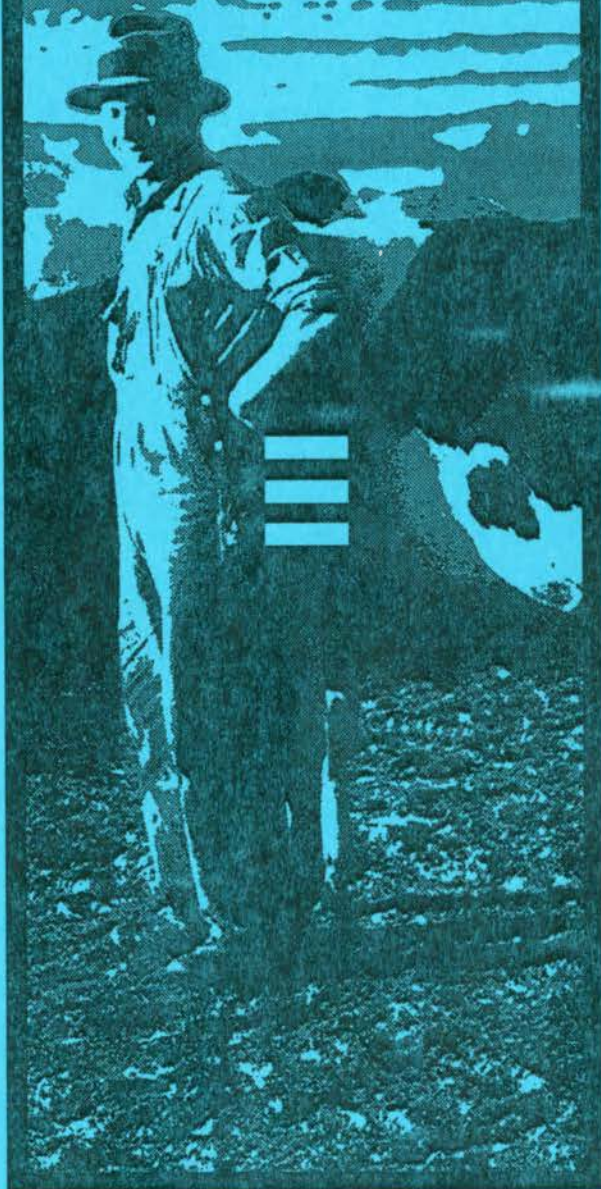
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< CARTOUCHE BLANCHE >



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MARK
TWAİN
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
LEC
You will
always find some
Eskimos ready to
instruct the Con-
golese 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 Wyn-
dham Lewis, the Vorticist artist and writer. *Bal-
last* is mainly a pastiche of astonishing passages
from books, magazines, diaries and other writ-
ings. Put differently, it is a journal devoted to
wit, the contents of which are intended to be
insightful, amusing or thought provoking.

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RICHARD WILBUR
Edgar Degas purchased once
A fine El Greco, which he kept
Against the wall beside his bed
To hang his pants on while he slept.

STANLEY RUDIN
Frustrate a Frenchman, he will drink
himself to death; an Irishman, he will
die of angry hypertension; a Dane, he
will shoot himself; an American, he
will get drunk, shoot you, then estab-
lish a million dollar program for your
relatives. Then he will die of an ulcer.

WHY ARE DESIGNERS THE DENTISTS OF ART?

Copyright © 1998, 2002
by Roy R. Behrens



LEFT
Drawing for U.S. Patent No. 127,915, filed in 1941 by E.J. Weller, Jr, a streamlined vehicle for children called a Velocipede.

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 Lambertson Becker) was both beautiful and articulate. Married to American typographer Frederic Warde, she used the pseudonym Paul Beaujon to publish

ALAN SCHEFLIN and EDWARD OPTON
The computer is to individual privacy what the machine gun was to the horse cavalry.

HINDU PROVERB
When an elephant is in trouble, even a frog will kick him.

JOSH BILLINGS
He iz a man ov small caliber, but a good deal ov bore.

DAVID
LODGE
(*Small World*)
Conversation
is like playing
tennis with a
ball made of Silly
Putty that keeps
coming back
over the net in a
different shape.

PETER
DE VRIES
(*Comfort Me
with Apples*)
His own small
talk, at any rate,
was bigger than
most people's
large.

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

provocative essays about typography in magazines such as *The Fleuron*, edited by Stanley Morison, with whom she was also romantically linked. After separating from her husband, she became closely associated with British typographer Eric Gill, who found her engaging, and for whom she modeled for dozens of drawings and wood engravings, most notably the "belle sauvage" on the frontispiece of his *Art-Nonsense and Other Essays* (Cassell, 1929).

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

PEDRO E. GUERRERO
(*Picturing Wright*)

[His career as a photographer] was foreshadowed by several incidents, one as early as first grade. By chance I discovered that when the door to the boys' toilet was shut, images from the outside—including my schoolmates at play—were projected onto the wall, ceiling, and floor through a tiny hole in the door. As if by magic the entire room was transformed into a camera obscura.

MAE WEST
A man has one hundred dollars and you leave him with two dollars, that's subtraction.

CHARLES DICKENS
(*A Mutual Friend*)
He'd be sharper than a serpent's tooth, if he wasn't as dull as ditch water.

FRANK
DALBY

DAVISON
You need a skin
as thin as a ciga-
rette 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 domesti-
cated 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 *paté de
foie gras* is to
blame for its
enlarged liver.

MARSHALL
McLUHAN

The reason
universities are
so full of knowl-
edge is that
students come
with so much
and they leave
with so little.

of programs, articles, and
books outside their own pro-
fession.

For example, on the shelf
beside me I have a recent edi-
tion of *The Columbia Encyclo-
pedia* (Columbia University
Press, 1993), an inclusive one-
volume encyclopedia. It con-
tains tens of thousands of bio-
graphical entries, including
articles about television evan-
gelist Jim Bakker; chess cham-
pion Bobby Fischer; the pop
singer Madonna; dancer and
choreographer Twyla Tharp;
the painter Helen Franken-
thaler; and violinist Issac
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 typog-
raphers (e.g., Gill, Morison,
Frederic Goudy, and W.A.
Dwiggins) or those who also
had careers as fine artists or
illustrators, not merely design-
ers.

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, Brad-
bury Thompson, Paul Rand,
Milton Glaser, Wolfgang Wein-
gart, April Greiman, Katherine
McCoy, or Neville Brody. The
range of omissions is astonish-
ing. 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 second fiddle to copywriters, editors, marketing analysts, art directors, and account executives. Like the maid and the butler who never divulge their master's most private conversations, they stand by unheard, unseen.

Second, graphic designers are invisible because the forms they create are both subordinate 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.

NOTE

This essay was first published as "Invisible Designers" in PRINT magazine (New York), Vol 52 No 6, November-December 1998.

The full text of Beatrice Warde's crystal goblet essay has been reprinted in Ruari McLean, ed., *Typographers on Type* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995). Her collected essays are in *The Crystal Goblet: Sixteen Essays on Typography* Henry Jacob, ed. (London: The Sylvan Press, 1955), now out of print. See also Fiona MacCarthy, *Eric Gill: A Lover's Quest for Art and God* (New York: Dutton, 1989).

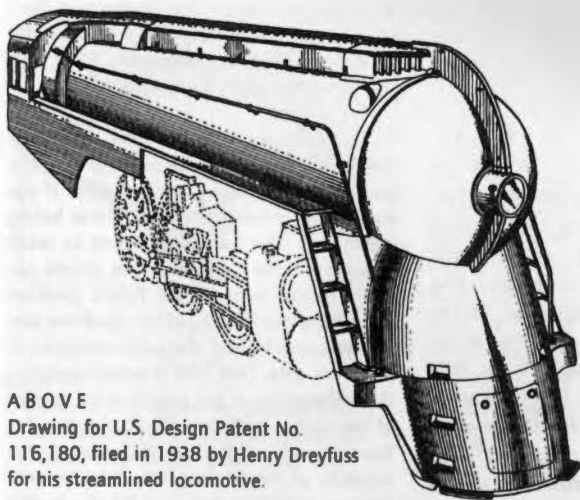
SAMUEL
BUTLER

Forgive us our
Christmasses, as
we forgive them
that Christmas
against us.

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." >



ABOVE

Drawing for U.S. Design Patent No. 116,180, filed in 1938 by Henry Dreyfuss for his streamlined locomotive.

★ *Architects + Engineers = Structures*, by Ivan Margolius. Wiley-Academy, London and New York, 2002. 104 pp., illus. Paper, \$40.00. ISBN 0-471-49825-4.

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 indispensable 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.

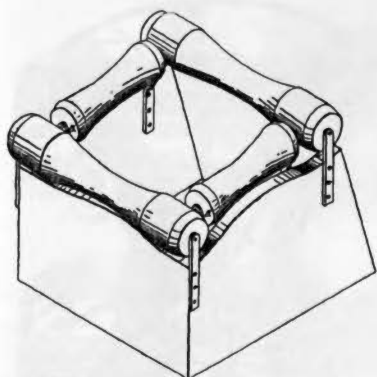
EDWARD
M A R S H
He [Maurice Bar-
ing] had a good
way of spelling
his name on the
telephone. "B for
Beastly, A for
Apple, R for Rot-
ten, I for England,
N for Nothing, G
for God"—all
rattled off at top
speed.

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

N A T H A N
G O L D S T E I N
This, it seems, is
the ultimate
irony: that those
for whom a realis-
tic 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.

★ *Envisioning Science: The Design and Craft of the Science Image*, by Felice Frankel. MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2002. 328 pp., illus. Cloth. ISBN 0-262-06225-9.

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 Martini 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.

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.

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

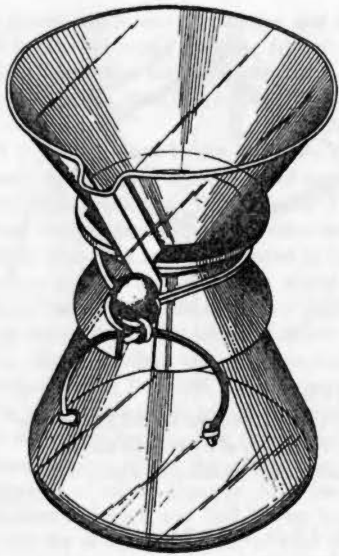
Kate Smith.

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.

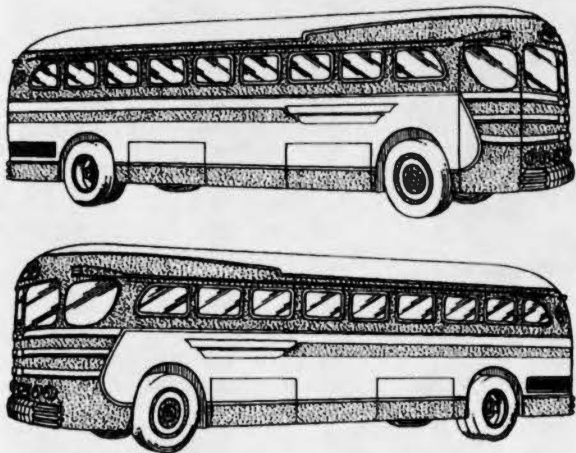
SAMUEL
GOLDWYN
Coffee is not my
cup of tea.



ABOVE
Drawing for U.S. Design Patent No. 137,943,
filed in 1943 by Peter Schlumbohm for his
Chemex coffee maker.

★ *Automobiles by Architects*, by Ivan Margolius. Wiley-Academy, London and New York, 2000. 148 pp., illus. Paper, \$60.00. ISBN 0-471-60786-X.

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. >



★ *Extreme Beauty: The Body Transformed*, by Harold Koda. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut, 2001. 168 pp., illus. Cloth, \$40.00. ISBN 0-300-09117-6.

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 Reinach'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

Drawings for U.S. Design Patent No. 129,411, filed in 1941 by Raymond Loewy.

★ *Reinventing the Wheel* by Jessica Helfand. Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 2002. 160 pp., illus. Cloth, \$24.00. ISBN 1-56898-338-7.

**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."

INFORMATION WHEELS are antique rotational, circular charts that display information in windows—in a sense, they were paper computers. Widely available in the 1940s and 50s, they were used in education and advertising to provide essential facts about such subjects as first aid, bird watching, enemy airplane spotting, star gazing, and weather forecasting. This book was put together by a prominent graphic designer and design commentator who was given her first wheel chart as a gift ten years ago. It includes a narrative history of these exotic and usually elegant tools; is beautifully illustrated by scores of full-color examples from her own and other collections; and concludes with some interesting notions about current and future manifestations of information circles. This book is a must for designers. Irresistibly charming, it is a microcosmic overview of the history of information design. ↗



**AMBROSE
BIERCE**
CORPORATION, n.
An ingenious device for obtaining individual profit without individual responsibility.

ANON
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.

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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.

W O M A N

[to baseball player Yogi Berra, on an intolerably hot day]

Good afternoon,
Mr. Berra. My,
you look mighty
cool today.

B E R R A

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

J E A N

A N O U I L H

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.

COVER Derived from
a detail from a Farm
Security Administration
photograph by
ARTHUR
ROTHSTEIN
(1936).

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