

Fall 2003

Ballast Quarterly Review, v19n1, Autumn 2003

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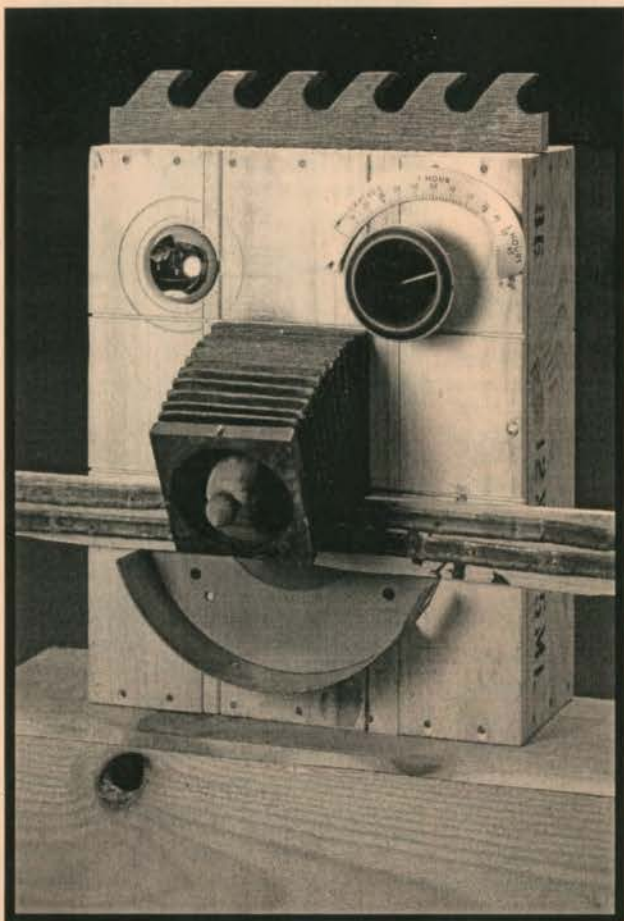
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HABITUALIZATION DEVOURS WORKS, CLOTHES, FURNITURE, ONE'S WIFE, AND THE FEAR OF WAR...AND ART EXISTS THAT ONE MAY RECOVER THE SENSATION OF LIFE; IT EXISTS TO MAKE ONE FEEL THINGS,



Walter Hamady

TO MAKE THE STONE STONY. THE PURPOSE OF ART IS TO IMPART THE SENSATION OF THINGS AS THEY ARE PERCEIVED AND NOT AS THEY ARE KNOWN. THE TECHNIQUE OF ART IS TO MAKE OBJECTS "UNFAMILIAR," TO MAKE FORMS DIFFICULT, TO INCREASE THE DIFFICULTY AND LENGTH OF PERCEPTION IS AN AESTHETIC END IN ITSELF AND MUST BE PROLONGED. ART IS A WAY OF EXPERIENCING THE ARTFULNESS OF AN OBJECT; THE OBJECT IS NOT IMPORTANT.

—VICTOR SHKLOVSKY

**BLIND WOMAN
GETS KIDNEY
FROM DAD SHE
HASN'T SEEN
IN YEARS**

SAMUEL
BUTLER

A definition is the enclosing of a wildness of idea within a wall of words.

.....

EDMUND AND
JULES DE
GONCOURT

Savagery is necessary every four or five hundred years in order to bring the world back to life. Otherwise the world would die of civilization.

.....

W. H. AUDEN

A man has his distinctive scent which his wife, his children and his dog can recognize. A crowd has a generalized stink. The public is odorless.

.....

BOB
GUCCIONE

[of Ken Russell]
An arrogant, self-centered, petulant individual. I don't say this in any demeaning way.

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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.

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NONE OF US, I suspect, easily owns up to his own irregularities. I was recently to be met at an airport by someone I had never met before. When I asked him what he looked like, so that I might recognize him upon arrival, he said he was blond, had a moustache, and would be wearing a blue suit. All of which turned out to be quite true, except that he neglected to mention that he also weighed around three hundred pounds.

JOSEPH EPSTEIN "About Face" in John Gross, ed., *The Oxford Book of Essays* (UK: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 669-670.

MARK TWAIN

History does not repeat itself, but it does rhyme.

■ **Depression Dog** by Toby Olson. The Perishable Press Limited (201 North Hay Hollow Road, Mount Horeb, Wisconsin 53572 USA), 2003. Unpaged [20 pp.], illus. Cloth, \$775.00.



WALTER
HAMADY
The book is the Trojan
horse of art.

LEFT
Book designer
WALTER
HAMADY
working like a
Trojan in his
studio at the
Perishable Press
Limited, near
Madison,
Wisconsin.

THIS BOOK of fiction is described on its title page as "Chapter Four and Chapter Ten from the as yet unpublished novel *The Bitter Half*". Its author, Toby Olson, is a prolific American writer who has written more than 30 books of poetry, fiction and essays. Eleven of those were published in connection with the celebrated book artist and assemblagist, **Walter Hamady** (Professor Emeritus at the University of Wisconsin), the founder and proprietor of the Perishable Press Limited, which broadcasts from a wooded farm near Madison, Wisconsin.

A papermaker and letterpress printer, Hamady began his now legendary "private press" 39 years ago, when he was only 24. Since then, he has published 128 limited-edition artists' books, while working with more than 80 writers, among them such familiar names as Robert

WALTER
HAMADY
A dented deckle.
A fold-over corner. The
out-of-square sides.
That fortuitous red
thread underlining a
random word, that
lace-wing insect pre-
served forever in the
corner of the title
page, that crate, the
vatman's drops, the
vatman's tears, a circle
between title and text.
The irregularity signi-
fies: here, humanity,
here is a sign that a
human being did this!
The eye and hand were
here! The aesthetic
Kilroy, if you will.

**PANDA
MATING FAILS;
VETERINARIAN
TAKES OVER**

LES

COLEMAN

Second by second
the clock's life ticked
away.

TERRY

VENABLES

If history repeats
itself, I should think
we can expect the
same thing over
again.

DAVID VINE

Here we are in the
Holy Land of Israel, a
Mecca for tourists.

DANNY

OZARK

Even Napoleon had
his Watergate.

GORE

VIDAL

[of Andy Warhol]
The only genius with
an IQ of 60.

Creeley, Loren Eisley, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and W.S. Merwin. Each time he produces a volume (typically in editions of about 100 copies), he prepares and brings to the table a visual-tactile *bouillabaisse* of the various facets of book design and production, including inks, paper, color, typesetting, illustration, letterpress printing, binding, marbling and so on.

Unlike most inheritors of the Arts and Crafts tradition, from the outset, Hamady has never simply printed books, in the sense of merely placing a text on a page. Rather, he orchestrates all its components into a complete "work of art," so that each book is so astonishing that it falls outside the normal realm of what we expect to encounter in life. As a result, a single copy of a Perishable Press book sells for hundreds of dollars (sometimes thousands), and editions are eagerly, quickly acquired (as works of art) by individuals and institutions throughout the world, including book museums at Harvard, Yale, Newberry Library, British Museum, Oxford, Victoria and Albert Museum, Royal Library in Stockholm, and so on.

Not surprisingly, Hamady's efforts have earned him well-deserved prestige, with his books being chosen repeatedly by the American Institute of Graphic Arts (in various years) as the best-designed books in the country. In this latest volume, he not only collaborates with the author, but also integrates the work of four illustrators (Jim Lee, Henrik Drescher, Peter Sis, and David McLimans), who produced ten line-art images to complement parts of the story. As firmly as do all his books, this new one also demonstrates why his work is so widely admired and owned.

One indicator of Hamady's presence (and in ways it is this that defines him) is his refusal to permit a thing—or a word or a thought or a tangible form—to remain simply as it is, as if he were haplessly driven to reconfigure everything: to reshape and reform and restructure to the point

that it must be compulsive. Having mastered a skill or traditional craft (such as papermaking, typesetting, letterpress printing, or bookbinding), his immediate impulse is to outdistance that practice; to lampoon his own expertise; and to purposely act in a way that is "wrong," to arrive at an end that is even more "right."

For example, in one of his handmade books (a collection of poems and paintings he called *John's Apples*, 1995), the binding is designed to appear unfinished; while in another (titled *Nullity*, 2000), an actual intact letter key from an old typewriter is bound in as part of the cover itself. In *Depression Dog*, there are times when he typesets a page from the text but intentionally fails to stabilize the type, so that letters are hopelessly shifted and squeezed. I myself have fallen victim to his high jinks, because in an earlier book (titled *Traveling*, 1997, from his wacky and much sought after *Gabberjabb* series), he deliberately shredded a copy of my rare book on *Art and Camouflage* (1981), then used the ground-up pulp to make a handmade page of paper in each copy of his book—imprinted with the word *camouflage*—so that my book is concealed in his.

I was first drawn to Hamady's art (his collages, assemblages and handmade books) in the mid-1970s, and thereafter assumed that his genius rests on a level that most of us only observe. Thirteen years ago, when I initially sent him a note, it was with considerable hesitation, and, having assumed that he was arrogant, I did not expect to receive a reply. Not only did he answer immediately (signing with one of his spurious names, such as Walter Semi-Hittite Hamady, WshH, or Voltaire the Hamadeh), he replied with such exuberance that he has never stopped writing, sometimes flooding me with two or three letters in rapid succession, regardless of whether I answer or not.

And just as he burlesques himself by pseudonyms, he delights in playing com-

**LOCAL HIGH
SCHOOL
DROPOUTS
CUT IN HALF**

GEORGE
GISSING

I know every book of mine by its scent, and I have but to put my nose between the pages to be reminded of all sorts of things.

.....

VIKTOR
SHKLOVSKY
[*Zoo, or Letter Not
About Love*]

I used to see Marc Chagall in [St.] Petersburg. It seemed to me that...he was the spitting image of a small-town barber. Mother-of-pearl buttons on a gaudy vest. This man has ridiculously bad taste. He transfers the colors of his suit and his small-town romanticism to paintings.

.....

LES
COLEMAN
The shoe fitted like a glove.

ROBBIE
VINCENT

Our walking encyclopedia on the problems of the disabled, Ann Davies, is waiting in her wheelchair to hear from you.

.....

LES
COLEMAN

Snow lay like a carpet on the sitting room floor.

.....

FRIEDRICH
NIETZSCHE

Books for all the world are always foul-smelling books: the smell of small people clings to them.

.....

LES
COLEMAN

Once dead, the artist falls into a rut.

parable tricks on my rural mailman by rarely addressing his letters to me, but instead to a grab bag of ludicrous names (all of whom appear to live on my farm), such as Roy Ball Bearings, Corps du Roy, Rhoidamoto, Roy Blastoff Behrens, R Bobo, Roi d'Hoity Toit, and so on.

Only recently, when a heavily insured package arrived from the Perishable Press Limited containing a review copy of *Depression Dog*, it could not be fully delivered until it was signed for by myself, the addressee, who was listed on the package as Bob O Bare Ends. Accustomed to Hamady's handwriting, and savvy to his postal pranks, my stalwart mailman did not flinch.

In *Depression Dog*, as in all his books, Hamady's understanding of color stands out as a primary virtue, and yet it would be wrong to say that his books are "colorful" in a more prosaic, simple sense. He uses color in his books (less so when he makes his collages) in a way that is skillfully nuanced, by which I mean that he applies the most whispered distinctions (it reminds me of the well-known phrase "just-noticeable differences"). In some cases, the contrasts are so understated, so unobtrusive that most likely only those who see color attributes (hue, lightness and saturation) at a level comparable to that of a wine taster, will notice the adroit ingenious forms that he creates by placing on a page, for example, the slightest warm off-white, against a textured cool off-white, against an ink that hints of green—and so on and on.

Hamady's extraordinary artists' books are about many many things, far too numerous and complex to embrace in a single, simple review. I would urge anyone who is genuinely curious about such phenomena to move on beyond just reading *about* Perishable Press books, and to somehow find an immediate way of touching at least one of them. Nothing can substitute for the experience of holding in ones hands an object as unforget-

table as *Depression Dog*—of feeling the tooth of the imprinted sheet, of seeing the rise and fall of the ink, and of slowly but joyfully turning the page to the next welcome surprise. ✂

USING electroencephalograms in the study of response to graphic designs, the Belgian psychologist Gerda Smets found that maximal arousal (measured by the blockage of the alpha wave) occurs when the figure contains about 20 percent redundancy. This is the amount present in a spiral with two or three turns, or a relatively simple maze, or a neat cluster of ten or so triangles. Less arousal occurs when the figure consists of only one triangle or square, or when the design is more complicated than the optimum—as in a difficult maze or an irregular scattering of twenty rectangles. The data are not the result of a chance biochemical quirk. When selecting symbols and abstract art, people actually gravitate to about the levels of complexity observed in Smet's experiments. Furthermore, the preference has its roots in early life. Newborn infants gaze longest at visual designs containing between five and twenty angles. During the next three months their preference shifts toward the adult pattern measured with electroencephalograms.

EDWARD O. WILSON *Biophilia* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

I REMEMBER Rudi [a friend and teacher] saying once that all life is about transcendence. If you're ugly you have to transcend your ugliness, if you're beautiful you have to transcend your beauty, if you're poor you have to transcend your poverty, if you're rich you have to transcend your wealth... There is nothing worse than being born extraordinarily beautiful, nothing more potentially damaging to the self. You could say the same for being born inordinately rich. You suddenly realize how wise the idea is that you get nothing at birth except things to transcend. That's all you get.

MILTON GLASER interviewed in Joan Evelyn Ames, *Mastery: Interviews with 30 Remarkable People* (Portland OR: Rudra Press, 1997), pp. 84-85.

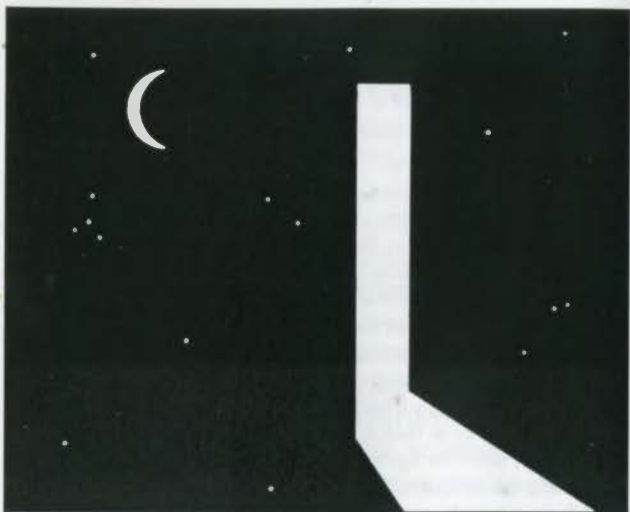
FRANK GAARD
How ya gonna keep 'em down on the farm
after they've seen R. Mutt?

LES
COLEMAN
A brick came flying
out of the jewelry
shop window.

LES
COLEMAN
A correspondence
course for the illiter-
ate.

JAMES
JOYCE
[*Ulysses*]
And I thought well
as well him as
another and then I
asked him with my
eyes to ask again
yes and then he
asked me would I
yes to say yes my
mountain flower and
first I put my arms
around him yes and
drew him down to
me so he could feel
my breasts all per-
fume yes and his
heart was going like
mad and yes I said
yes I will Yes.

EVELYN
WAUGH
We are all Ameri-
cans at puberty; we
die French.

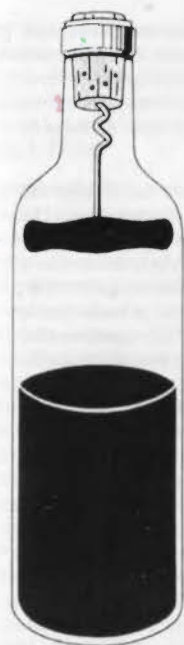


Les Coleman / Unthink

■ **Zygosis** a film by Gavin Hodge and Tim Morrison. 1991. VHS video. 26 minutes. Color. Available from First Run / Icarus Films, 32 Court Street, 21st Floor, Brooklyn NY 11201. Website: <http://www.frif.com>. Reviewed by Roy R. Behrens.

I SHOULD explain at the outset, since (unfortunately) the title of this film does not, that this is a biography of a German political satirist named John Heartfield (1891-1968). In recent years, there have been countless discussions about the corruption of "photographic evidence" because photographs can now be changed "seamlessly" (undetected) with clever software programs. One of the classic examples of this was a composite image on the cover of *TV Guide* magazine in 1989, in which the head of Oprah Winfrey was digitally transplanted on the sexier torso of actress Ann-Margret. (The public might never have noticed had it not been for the latter's husband, who recognized his spouse's ring.) In the wake of that controversy, I was reminded of "doctored photographs" from the days before computers, in which, through a process called "photomontage," various political foes could be extracted from photographs of historic scenes, as was done by Stalin when he removed Trotsky from a view of a rally with Lenin. I also thought of the related (yet radically different) effects that were achieved by Heartfield, who was a well-known practitioner of montage for political causes. Actually, while Heartfield is in fashion at the moment, as recently as a dozen years ago, he was more or less unknown, at least in the US. Before and during World War II, he had courageously opposed the policies of Adolf Hitler (twice fleeing for his life), but Heartfield himself was a Marxist and an outspoken opponent of Capitalism, and thus was despised or neglected—cut out of our own books on the history of Modernism—until after the Soviet Union collapsed. His big revival came about in 1991, more than twenty years after his death, when a major touring exhibition enabled his original work to be shown in Germany, England, Ireland, Scotland and New York. As an exhibition catalog, a lavishly beautiful book was produced. It is interesting that this documentary film about Heartfield was also made in 1991, so, although there is no indication of that, perhaps these two events were linked. Unlike Oprah Winfrey's case, Heartfield's doctored photographs were anything but seamless. They were outrageously blatant distortions, made by juxtaposing bits of unrelated photographs, the cut-and-paste equivalents of caricature and editorial cartoons (although, in terms of Heartfield's work, it is probably better to think of them as editorial assaults or assassinations, which he does with no shortage of humor). To my knowledge, this is the only film about John Heartfield; it is also greatly interesting, largely because of the way it was made. It doesn't just talk about or show Heartfield's method; it emulates it. And I think that's what pushes it over the edge. It often feels as if it were edited by John Heartfield himself, although of course that is not literally true. I am not alone in thinking that this is an extraordinary film: In 1991 and 1993, not surprisingly, it won three very deserving awards at American and international film festivals. ➤

GEORGE JEAN NATHAN
Art is the sex of the imagination.



LES COLEMAN
It was standing room only in the sitting room.

.....

SIGMUND FREUD
[*Totem and Taboo*]

We may say that hysteria is a caricature of an artistic creation, a compulsion neurosis a caricature of a religion, and a paranoid delusion a caricature of a philosophic system.

JULIE BURCHILL
It is said that a pretty face is a passport. But it's not, it's a visa, and it runs out fast.

■ **Women Artists: The Other Side of the Picture**
VHS video, color, 1999, 54 minutes. Available from Films for the Humanities and Sciences at 800-257-5126 or <www.films.com>. *Reviewed by Aaris Sherin.*

THIS INFORMATIVE VIDEO is a provocative, interesting look at the role of women in the contemporary art world, examining their larger place in society, as well as their inclusion in art history and museum collections. Three generations of well-known women artists are profiled as they discuss their ongoing struggle to be professionally successful, their views on feminism, and how they define themselves within a world that increasingly asks women to do all that men are asked to do—and more. What is perhaps most astonishing, in a time when we often consider ourselves fully liberated and equal, is how many female artists are still having to make the difficult choice between career and family. In this film, when an art student is asked to name five of her favorite male and female artists, in separate categories, it is extremely telling when she is able to accomplish the first task without difficulty (producing the names of five male artists with ease and enthusiasm), but when she tries to recall five females, she is surprised and discouraged to find that she is only able to name one. On average, the work of women artists represents a mere five to ten percent of the permanent collections of large national and international museums. While it is always difficult to say which works by women should replace those of acknowledged male masters, such statistics may challenge the viewer to question his/her own conception of equity and the ground rules for inclusion in a field that typically considers itself to be among the most open-minded and liberal.

A N O N
The early bird may get the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese.

.....

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY
[of John Dryden]
His imagination resembled the wings of an ostrich; it enabled him to run, though not to soar. When he attempted the highest flights, he became ridiculous; but while he remained in a lower region, he outstripped all competitors.

HENRY DAVID THOREAU
The bluebird carries the sky on his back.

**NEW OBESITY
STUDY LOOKS
FOR LARGER
TEST GROUP**

LES
COLEMAN

The crematorium is
reduced to ashes.

CLINT
EASTWOOD

If you look back
through history, the
people who've been
strongest in film
were people who
could express a lot
by holding certain
things in reserve so
the audience is curi-
ous to find out what
the reserve is.

LES
COLEMAN

A trip down Amnesia
Lane.

A N O N

I have a splitting
headache. I was
putting some toilet
water on my hair
and the lid fell
down.

■ **Howard Finster: Man of Visions** a film by Julie Desroberts, Randy Paskal and Dave Carr. 1988. VHS video. 20 minutes. Color. Available from First Run / Icarus Films, 32 Court Street, 21st Floor, Brooklyn NY 11201. Website: <http://www.frif.com>. Reviewed by Roy R. Behrens.

HOWARD FINSTER was a Southern tent preacher and a prolific creator of amateur art. In a mere 25 years, he made more than 46,000 works of "sacred art" (one time producing as many as 17 pieces in less than a half hour), some of which he initially placed in his Paradise Gardens Park and Museum, a major tourist attraction in northern Georgia. He experienced his first religious vision at the age of three: While searching for his mother in "the 'mater patch" on their farm in Alabama, he saw his dead sister Abby emerge from the clouds. (He was sure of the date, because it took place the same year that he was hit in the head by his mother with "the tater fork.") Called to preach at age 16, he served as the pastor for nine different fundamentalist churches, while also conducting tent revivals. He retired from the ministry in 1976 and turned instead to making art, along with bicycle and mower repair. This happened in part because one day, while repairing a bicycle, he saw a face in a paint stain on his finger tip. When a voice then told him he should "make sacred art," he demurred, believing that he lacked the training to be a serious artist, to which the voice then responded "How do you know?" In this brief and slightly dated film, a somewhat tired Finster talks about his religious and artistic development, and the way in which the two tracks merged in the use of his paintings for preaching. This film (which is made up of portions of interviews with Finster and with university art professors, critics, collectors and art dealers) was produced in 1988, by which time the artist had appeared on the Johnny Carson Show, had illustrated album covers for R.E.M. and the Talking Heads, was selling his "Outsider Art" like hotcakes, and was well on his way to becoming as much of a ballyhooed insider in the corrupt New York art world as any aspiring artist would want. In anthropology, sincere observers do their best to guard against their own contamination of the culture that they are observing. Just back from a final publicity jaunt to New York, Finster came down with pneumonia and died in 2001 at age 84. From all appearances, he was a sincere, ambitious and talented man (even gifted)—but he was not, as a scene from this film would suppose, the post-modern era's equivalent of William Blake. →

GEORGE ADE
R-E-M-O-R-S-E!

Those dry Martinis did the work for me;
Last night at twelve I felt immense,
Today I feel like thirty cents.
My eyes are bleared, my coppers hot,
I'll try to eat, but I cannot.
It is no time for mirth and laughter,
The cold, gray dawn of the morning after.

■ **Painted Landscapes of the Times: The Art of Sue Coe** a film by Helene Klodawsky. 1987. VHS video. 30 minutes. Color. Available from First Run / Icarus Films, 32 Court Street, 21st Floor, Brooklyn NY 11201. Website: <http://www.frif.com>. Reviewed by Roy R. Behrens.

BRITISH PAINTER, printmaker and illustrator Sue Coe was 36 years old when this film about her work was made in 1987. Born near London, she was trained at the Guilford School of Art and the Royal College of Art, then moved to New York in 1972, where she has lived ever since. She is not just an artist, in the sense that she purposely uses her work as a means to jolt us out of our complacency and, by that, to alert us to various social injustices. It's a venerable strategy, and she freely admits her indebtedness to any number of celebrated artist-protesters, including Francisco Goya, George Grosz, John Heartfield and Kathe Kollwitz. While today there is hardly a shortage of artistic protesters (or injustices to fight), it has been evident for almost twenty years that Coe's potential is greater than that of most of her peers. In the art of recent decades, few paintings are half as compelling as a certain unforgettable few that she created in the 1980s, the finest and most enduring of which is a tribute to IRA martyr Bobby Sands. Then and in the years since, she has also made unsettling images of racism, nuclear power, rape, muggings, South Africa, political villains (Nixon, Reagan and Thatcher), war resisters, the use of animals for scientific research, factory farming and other issues. According to her Graphic Witness website (www.graphicwitness.org/coe/coebio.htm, through which she sells her original prints at affordable prices, then donates a part of the earnings to various causes), her current work includes a dreamlike vista of New York on September 11, 2001. This video documentary, which was filmed in New York more than fifteen years earlier, is comprised of informal, provocative scenes of the artist talking about her work (at a gallery) with a group of public school students, sketching on the subway, working in her studio, and replying to on-camera questions about her motivations. Despite their portrayals of suffering, Sue Coe's finest paintings are strangely beautiful. But they are never pretty, and her raw outspoken opinions are sometimes so outrageous that she undermines her own effects. Yet, even if we disagree with her remarks or their stridency, this film will surely be valuable as a provocative way to raise issues about the relationship between art and social activism. ~

DIANE ACKERMAN

I don't want to get to the end of my life and find that I lived just the length of it. I want to have lived the width of it as well.

RAYMOND CHANDLER

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

LES COLEMAN

At the waxworks the candles bore an uncanny resemblance to the real thing.

QUEEN MARY HAVING BOTTOM SCRAPED

VIKTOR SHKLOVSKY [Zoo, or Letter Not About Love]

I am alone.
A drunken soldier
sobers up on his
horse, but a lonely
man is drunk beyond
repair.

PAUL VALERY [Moralitiés]

God created man
and, finding him not
sufficiently alone,
gave him a compan-
ion to make him feel
his solitude more
keenly.

ALAN BENNETT

We started off trying
to set up a small
anarchist communi-
ty, but people
wouldn't obey the
rules.

LES
COLEMAN
What happens to the
train's wheels when
the tracks meet at
the horizon?

LES
COLEMAN
He could count all
the fingers of one
hand on the fingers
of his other.

■ **Lester Beall: Space, Time and Content** by R. Roger Remington. Graphic Design Archives Chapbook Series: One. Rochester Institute of Technology, Cary Graphic Arts Press, 2003. 36 pp., illus. Paperback, price \$15.99. ISBN 0-9713459-8-8. *Reviewed by Roy R. Behrens.*

A CHAPBOOK is a small book or pamphlet, the term for which comes from its having been sold by peddlers, who were at one time commonly known as "chapmen." The term is familiar to designers because at the end of the 19th century in the U.S., there was an offshoot of the Arts and Crafts Movement called the "Chapbook Style." This particular chapbook is the first in a series of booklets about various 20th-century graphic designers, whose personal papers, business records, and work examples are currently housed at the Wallace Library, at the Rochester Institute of Technology, in the Graphic Design Archives, a collection that was founded by RIT design historian R. Roger Remington nearly twenty years ago. As this essay reaffirms, Lester Beall (1903-1969) was an extraordinary graphic designer, who was born and raised in the American Midwest but spent nearly all his professional life in New York. He is typically remembered for two major projects: That astonishing series of posters he made for the REA or Rural Electrification Administration (exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in 1937), and a logo and packaging system designed for the International Paper Corporation (c1958). But his achievements were considerably deeper and broader than that, and through its concise text, chronology, and more than fifty accompanying pictures of Beall and his work, this book (introduced by Massimo Vignelli, and enhanced by an elegant layout by Bruce Ian Meader) provides a brief, wide-angle view of the full, rich range of his accomplishments (both client-based and not) as a designer, artist and teacher. ➤

OSCAR
LEVANT
I knew Doris Day
before she was a
virgin.

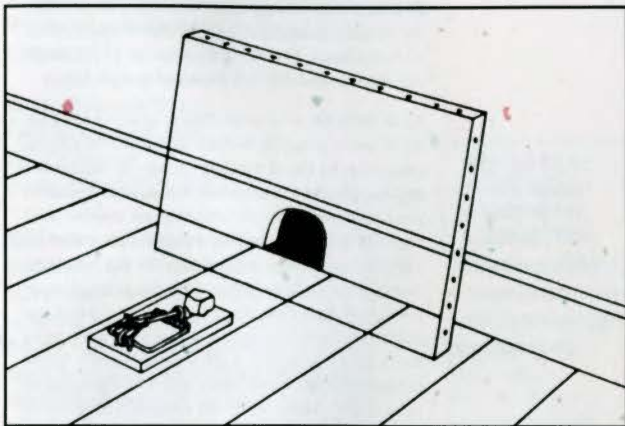
WHAT USUALLY makes a face interesting—a priggish nose, quizzical eyebrows, sarcastic lips, lines and wrinkles oddly placed—is there as a result not of heredity but of experience. What time does to a face is most fascinating of all, and I sometimes think that no face, unless it be one of rare beauty or especial hideousness, is of great interest—rather like wine that hasn't had time to age properly—much before thirty.

JOSEPH EPSTEIN "About Face" in John Gross, ed., *The Oxford Book of Essays* (UK: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 668.

THE INITIALS "OK" were the signature of Oskar Kokoschka. Every time I use the two letters to mark my approval of one of my editor's changes on the galleys of my next book. I sneakily credit myself with the small creative act of impersonating one of my favorite painters.

RUDOLF ARNHEIM *Parables of Sun Light: Observations on Psychology, the Arts, and the Rest.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 346.

ANON
The only difference between a rut and a
grave is the depth.



Les Coleman / Unthink

■ **Fagus: Industrial Culture from Werkbund to Bauhaus** by Annemarie Jaeggi. Princeton Architectural Press, 2000. 152 pp., illus. Cloth, \$34.95. ISBN 1-56898-175-9. *Reviewed by Roy R. Behrens.*

FOR YEARS, I have wrongly assumed that the Fagus factory in Alfeld, Germany, designed in 1911 by Walter Gropius and Adolf Meyer, was owned by a person named Fagus. Not so; as I learned from this interesting book about the company, its buildings, and its role in industrial culture. The products manufactured at the factory were wooden shoe lasts (the molds around which shoes were formed), and Fagus is simply the Latin word for beechwood. The German industrialist who founded the factory and commissioned its famous main building was Carl Benscheidt Sr. Born in 1858, Benscheidt wanted to be a doctor, but instead he ended up employed at a naturopathic center where he worked with patients with foot complaints. In those days, for convenience in manufacturing, shoes were produced as identical pairs, with the same straight model being used to make shoes for either foot, so that each newly purchased pair had to be broken in, often painfully, until they fit the wearer's feet. It was Benscheidt's innovation to manufacture shoe lasts that were specifically designed for right and left shoes. For 23 years, he worked as a factory manager for a major shoe-last firm in Alfeld, then resigned in the wake of an argument with the company founder's son. Less than six months later, in March 1911, with financing provided by an American corporation, he launched his own company, also in Alfeld, which triggered a wave of defections to his factory by craftsmen from his former firm. He chose a familiar, reliable plan for the factory's interior, but hired Gropius and Meyer (who had met while both were apprentices in the studio of Peter Behrens) to design an avant-garde architectural exterior, one that Benscheidt hoped would become an icon of Modernism (as had happened with Behrens' famous design for the AEG turbine factory). As he anticipated, the Fagus factory is emblematic of "less is more," the slogan most commonly said to belong to Modern-era architecture and design. The most celebrated example of this is the way in which the corners meet: When the glass walls come together at the building's corners, they appear to be lacking a load-bearing beam (the supports are there but are simply offset from the corners). More than a decade later, under Gropius' leadership, designers at the Bauhaus produced comparable "magical" forms by omitting the backlegs of chairs. In 1919 (which is also the year that the Bauhaus began), management of the Fagus factory was taken over by Benscheidt's son, who proved to be just as resourceful as his father, and was even more actively interested in innovative art, design and architecture. Benscheidt Jr. was a frequent visitor to the Bauhaus, a promoter of arts education, and a conspicuous defender of artistic experimentation, to the point that, after the mid-1920s, the gate of the Fagus factory was "like a revolving door for artists from the international avant-garde." There are only 152 pages in this book, but, to its credit, it feels much larger. It provides a surprising abundance of facts, and is filled with provocative images of the factory's buildings, its cast of characters, and the products it produced. ↗

HELEN HAYES
If you rest, you rust.

VIRGINIA
WOOLF
[*A Room of
One's Own*]

Why are women...
so much more interest-
ing to men than men
are to women?

WILLIAM
FAULKNER

We have no laws
against bad taste,
perhaps because in
a democracy the
majority of the peo-
ple who make the
laws don't recognize
bad taste when they
see it, or perhaps
because in our
democracy bad taste
has been converted
into a marketable
and therefore
taxable and there-
fore lobbyable
commodity.

■ **Zinat: One Special Day** VHS video, color, 2000, 54 minutes. Available from First Run / Icarus Films, 32 Court Street, 21st Floor, Brooklyn NY 11201. Website: <http://www.frif.com>. Reviewed by Aaris Sherin.

AS A WOMAN in a small village in southern Iran, Zinat was married at thirteen and made history six years later by being the first woman to remove her *borgheh* (the mask that women are required to wear in some countries from the time they are married until they die) in order to become a health care worker. In 1999, Zinat became a candidate for the first local council election to be held in 20 years. In this film, on the day of that election, Zinat and her family are observed in real time going about their daily tasks while waiting for the poll results. Zinat's home becomes an open forum where fellow villagers stop by to voice their reactions to her candidacy. One visitor tries to convince Zinat to withdraw from the election and, instead, to be content with her husband serving on the council. This man argues that a woman's place is in the home, and that she should properly behave like any domestic animal, remaining docile and pious as she responds to the orders of governing males. Zinat considers the concerns of each visitor with graciousness, while also steadfastly defending the stance that she is the best candidate to bring much needed change to the Salakh and the surrounding villages. Throughout this thought provoking film, Zinat is depicted as an outspoken woman who is successfully challenging tradition and will eventually have an effect on the growth of her community. ➤

I HAVE MADE and collected slides—by now more than twenty-five hundred—over three decades as illustrations for the principles and arguments I discuss in my lectures. Lately I find that my procedure has almost reversed. Now the images are primary. I pick a group of slides and arrange them on my viewing board like a bouquet of flowers. My lecture becomes a comment on the pictures appearing on the screen.

RUDOLF ARNHEIM *Parables of Sun Light: Observations on Psychology, the Arts, and the Rest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 224.

PICASSO DEFINED art as the lie that helps us to see the truth. The aphorism fits both art and science, since each in its own way seeks power through elegance. But this inspired distortion is only a technique of thinking and communication. There is a still more basic similarity: both are enterprises of discovery. And the binding force lies in our biology and in our relationship to other organisms. In art, the workings of the mind are explored, whereas in science the domain in the world at large and now, increasingly, the workings of the mind as well. Of equal importance, both rely on similar forms of metaphor and analogy, because they share the brain's strict and peculiar limitations in the processing of information.

EDWARD O. WILSON *Biophilia* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

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LOVE OF one's work tends to make one's face interesting. Artists have animated faces, and performing musicians the most animated of all. Suffering, too, confers interest on a face, but only suffering that, if not necessarily understood, has been thought about at length. Uninterested people have uninteresting faces.

JOSEPH EPSTEIN "About Face" in John Gross, ed., *The Oxford Book of Essays* (UK: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 672.

A. J. BALFOUR
History does not repeat itself. Historians repeat each other.

**DR. RUTH TO
TALK ABOUT
SEX WITH
REPORTERS**

Credits

The artwork on the cover, titled *Existence Requires Revision of Our Physiognomic Notions* is by WALTER HAMADY (detail, 1994). Collage, assemblage, construction, objet trouvé. Private collection.

The drawings and aphorisms by artist LES COLEMAN featured in this issue are reprinted by permission from his latest book, *Unthink*, which was published in 2002 by Errata (Skomargatan 5, 11129 Stockholm, Sweden). It can be ordered on the internet through Boekie Woekie: Books by Artists in Amsterdam, The Netherlands <boewoe@xs4all.nl>.

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STANISLAW
LEC
Thoughts, like fleas,
jump from man to
man.

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