

Winter 2003

Ballast Quarterly Review, v19n2, Winter 2003-04

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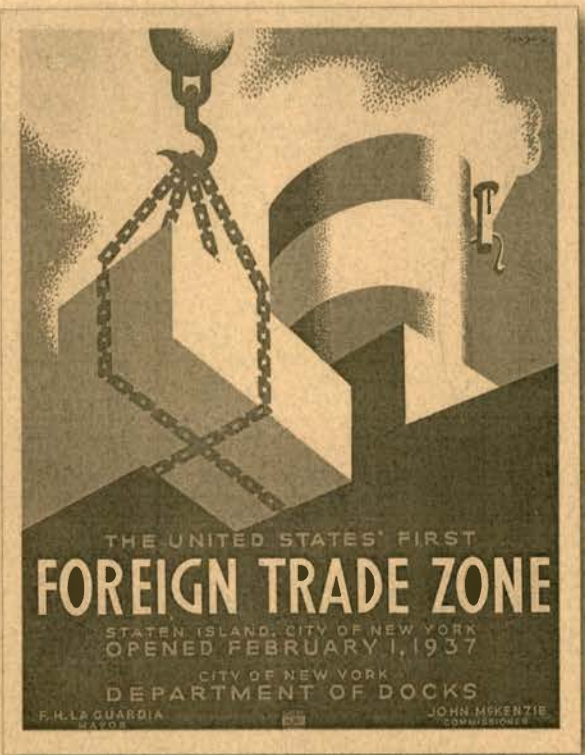
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Behrens, Roy R., "Ballast Quarterly Review, v19n2, Winter 2003-04" (2003). *Ballast Quarterly Review*. 73.
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It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way.

Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859).

WOODY
ALLEN

Sex between a man
and a woman can
be wonderful—
provided you get
between the right
man and the right
woman.

The chick
He wed
Let out a
whoop
Felt his chin
and
Flew the coop
Burma-Shave

ROBERT
FROST

Home is where,
when you have to go
there, they have to
take you in.

A N O N

A neighborhood is
where, when you go
out of it, you get
beat up.

Ballast Quarterly Review Volume 19 Number 2
Winter 2003-04. Copyright © 2004 by Roy R.
Behrens, editor, publisher and art director. ISSN
1093-5789. E-mail <ballast@netins.net>

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 pas-
sages 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, apoliti-
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A N O N

Nobody knows the truffles I've seen.

LYTTON STRACHEY [the British Bloomsbury writer, who was also homo-
sexual] was unfit [for military service during World War I], but instead of
allowing himself to be rejected by the doctors he preferred to appear
before a military tribunal as a conscientious objector. He told of the extra-
ordinary impression that was caused by an air-cushion which he inflated
during the proceedings as a protest against the hardness of the benches.
Asked by the chairman the usual question: "I understand, Mr. Strachey,
that you have a conscientious objection to war?" he replied (in his curious
falsetto voice), "Oh no, not at all, only to this war." Better than this was his
reply to the chairman's other stock question, which had previously never
failed to embarrass the claimant: "Tell me, Mr. Strachey, what would you
do if you saw a German soldier trying to violate your sister?" With an air of
noble virtue: "I would try to get between them."

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

LES COLEMAN

Little Miss Muffet sat on a whoopee cushion.



LES
COLEMAN
The cowboy put on
his dark glasses and
rode into the sunset.

LEFT
Poster (designer
unknown) from the
Works Progress
Administration
(WPA), Federal Art
Project (c1936)

THE FOLLOWING is an excerpt from the memoirs of DARD HUNTER (1883-1966), titled *My Life With Paper: An Autobiography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958, pp. 79-81). Hunter was an Ohio-born designer, letterpress printer, and pioneering expert on the history and technique of papermaking. To understand the incident he describes, it is important to realize that, for several years (beginning in 1904), he lived in an artists' colony in East Aurora, New York (just outside of Buffalo, across from Canada), called the Roycroft Workshops, where he was a close associate of its eccentric long-haired founder, Elbert Hubbard (self-dubbed Fra Elbertus), who was a leading participant in the American Arts and Crafts Movement. In Hubbard's mind, he was the American equivalent of British designer William Morris, founder of the Kelmscott Press. The best books to come out of Roycroft were designed not by Hubbard, but by Hunter, including an edition of Washington Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*. After leaving that colony, Hunter became an authority on the history of papermaking, in part because he had the means to travel throughout the world, collecting examples of exotic handmade papers, and recording the process by which they were made. In the passage that follows, he reports a curious incident that took place shortly after his arrival in Wellington, New Zealand, where he went in part to learn about Maori culture. Here's the excerpt—

WHEN THE SHIP finally reached Wellington in the late evening of a dark, rainy day, I was lonely and disconsolate. A dismal room was available in the Royal Oak Hotel, and after a dreary dinner I

DAVID
MEYER
[*Ernie and Me*]
His name was Ernest Summers and he told this joke about himself: When he was dead the marker on his grave would read, "The worms are eating in dead Ernest."

LANCE
MORROW
[*Fishing in the Tiber*]
Humphrey Bogart was a brilliant smoker. He taught generations how to hold a cigarette, how to inhale, how to squint through smoke. But as a kisser, Bogart set an awful example. His mouth addressed a woman's lips with the quivering nibble of a horse closing in on an apple.

He asked
His kitten
To pet and purr
She eyed his
puss
And screamed
"What furl!"
Burma-Shave

PAUL RAND

[Paul Rand:

Modernist Design]

I once had the pleasure of meeting him [British typographer Stanley Morison] at the Garrick Club in London. He was sort of like the Pope. He sat there in a black suit with a little white collar, just like a priest. I decided, this is too much. I started to drink, and haven't the slightest idea of what he was talking about for about two hours. Fortunately, I was with a friend who was talking to him while I was supposedly listening. However, after a while I got up and I walked to the dining room. It was a beautiful room, and the tables were set with silver flatware, flowers and candles, the chandeliers were lit. In the midst of all this, in the midst of this empty room, stood T.S. Eliot. He was standing there, and this was no vision. That sums up my experience with Stanley Morison in London.

went to sleep with the disconcerting thought that I was almost eight thousand miles from home and that in all New Zealand I did not have a single friend. The following morning I was up at daybreak. The rain continued to fall, the skies were a dull gray, and the entire scene was one of discouragement. A feeling of homesickness overcame me.

As I was interested in the hand-crafts of the Maoris, the highly developed aboriginal people of New Zealand, I inquired the way to the Wellington Museum. But after walking to the museum in the splashing downpour, I found that the doors of the institution would not be opened for another hour. I stood under the museum entrance seeking protection from the drenching rain. A few pedestrians and vehicles splashed through the puddles of water lying in the uneven street. A man, soaked through, came running up the museum steps and stood beside me under the meager protection of the doorway. He nodded casually, but said nothing about the weather, which I thought showed considerable restraint. He appeared to be a New Zealander. Finally he spoke.

"Stranger here?" he said.

I replied with a polite nod.

"Come recently?"

Arrived last night, I told him.

"From the United States?"

Yes, was my reply.

"I spent a day in the United States twenty years ago," he said with an air of having been around.

His short stay in the United States aroused my curiosity, and I asked how he could remain but one brief day in a country so large as the United States.

"I'll tell you" he said. "It was in 1906. I was a member of the Royal New Zealand Band. I played bass horn. We played in a number of Canadian cities, including Toronto and Hamilton. When in Hamilton, the band was invited to visit a small town in New York State, a short distance beyond the Canadian bor-

der. The name of the village was East Aurora, and an eccentric old man with long hair, flowing black tie, and a broad-brimmed hat had a socialistic community there. They printed books and made furniture and did all the work themselves. The old gentleman looked like a Quaker; his name was Fra Elbertus. It was a strange sort of place, different from anything in New Zealand."

I remained strangely silent regarding my early connection with Elbert Hubbard and the Roycroft Shop. The bandsman was telling me about a man and a place as familiar to me as my own name, yet I could not bring myself to offer a single word of explanation.

The stranger went on talking, the rain was gradually clearing, and I knew he would be gone in another moment. He continued in a low voice: "After our band concert was over in the village, the elderly gentleman with the long hair gave us each an inscribed book as a personal favor. My book was a story about a man who went for a nap in the Catskill Mountains and remained asleep for twenty years. I believe the writer was Irving Washington. I always liked that little book, bound in soft leather. In my untrained way I admired the peculiar decorations. On the last page of the book it was printed that the designs had been made by a person named Dard Hunter. Odd name, that. The rain's about over and I must be off. Hope you have a good look at our museum. Good-by, good luck."

I stood dazed and bewildered. Again I could not bring myself to call after the stranger and tell him what was in my mind. I never saw him again. ■

HAVING READ scores of autobiographies (the first being that of Benjamin Franklin), I've noticed that, even in the finest, most engaging and eloquent sections are in the chapters on the author's childhood. Among my favorites is the autobiography of the American poet CARL SANDBURG (1878-1967), who was born in Galesburg, Illinois, to impoverished Swedish immigrants, and whose childhood name

**Are your
whiskers
When you
wake
Tougher than
A two-bit
steak? Try
Burma-Shave**

DAVID
MEYER

[*Ernie and Me*]

On our first introduction he asked me how old I was.

"Seven," I think I told him.

"D'you know how old I was when I was your age?" he asked.

"No."

"I was eight."

It wasn't only waiters Ernie confounded; children were included.

"If S-O-U-P spells 'soup,'" he'd say, "What does G-O-U-P spell?"

"Goop?"

"No... 'Go up,'" he'd reply.

He'd also show how he had eleven fingers. "Ten, nine, eight, seven, six," he'd say, counting backwards, "and five on this hand makes eleven."

Early on he gave me a piece of advice which I have never forgotten:

He who takes what isn't his'n

Pays a fine or goes to prison.

The whale put
Jonah down
the hatch
But coughed
him up
Because he
scratched
Burma-Shave



ABOVE
Self-Portrait made of
autumn leaves by
KATHERINE
HALL (2003)
*scuola di Giuseppe
Arcimboldo.*

PAUL RAND
[*Paul Rand:*
Modernist Design]
Helvetica is a display
face. It looks like dog
excrement in text.

ERIC
ANDERSON
The most insidious
influence on the
young is not violence,
drugs, tobacco, drink
or sexual perversion,
but our pursuit of the
trivial and our toler-
ance of the third rate.

was Charles. In *Always the Young Strangers* (New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1953, pp. 92-93), he remembers how his parents' thick Swedish accents were an early source of his fascination with language. He writes—

EARLY THE mother pronounced it "Sholly," which later became "Sharlie" and still later the correct "Charlie," while the Old Man stuck to "Sholly, do dis" and "Sholly, do dat." She learned to pronounce "is" as "iz" and "has" as "haz" while with him it stayed "iss" and "hass." He said "de" for "the," "wenlup" for "envelope," "Hotty do" for "How do you do?," "yelly clay" for "yellow clay," "rell-road" for "railroad," "Gilsburg" for "Galesburg," "Sveden" for Sweden, "helty" for "healthy." ...Anyone who couldn't get what he was saying was either dumb or not listening. He invented a phrase of his own for scolding Mart and me. When he said, "Du strubbel," we knew he meant "You stupid" and he was probably correct. He would impress us about a scheme he believed impossible to work out, "You could not do dat if you wass de Czar of all de Russias." ■

READING THAT passage, I am always reminded of the autobiography of another writer from Illinois, the poet MARK VAN DOREN (1894-1973), who grew up on a farm near Urbana. His parents were not immigrants, and while his father did not have an accent, he could not resist the temptation to call people and things by the wrong name. Van Doren recalls of his father—

HE LOVED to call things by the wrong names—or, it may be, the right ones, fantastically the right ones. Either extreme is poetry, of which he had the secret without knowing that he did. It was natural for him to name two lively rams on the place Belshassar and Nebuchadnezzar... [Mark's brother] Frank became Fritz Augustus—just why, I never inquired—and I was either Marcus Aurelius or Marco Bozzaris. Guy was Guy Bob, and Carl was Carlo. And Paul, when it came time

for him to share in the illicit luxuriance, was no other than Wallace P. Poggin—again, I have no faint idea why. My father never discussed his inspirations, any more than he analyzed his spoonerisms, or even admitted that they had fallen from his mouth. He would cough, and appear to apologize by saying: "I have a little throakling in my tit." ■

PAUL RAND

[*Paul Rand: Modernist Design*]
Making something **bold** and making it ALL CAPS is like wearing a belt with suspenders.

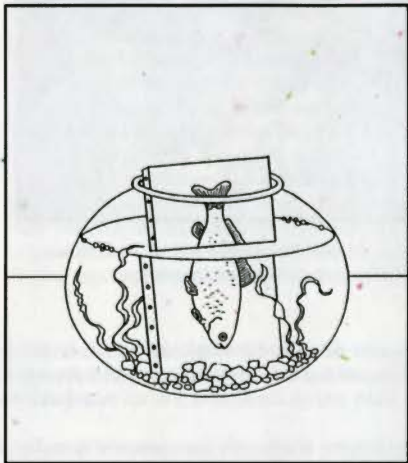
W. H.

AUDEN

[at the beginning of a reading in a large lecture hall]
If there are any of you at the back who do not hear me, please don't raise your hands because I am also nearsighted.

LEFT

Drawing by
LES COLEMAN



■ **Teaching at the Bauhaus** by Rainer K. Wick with one chapter by Gabriele Diana Grawe. Stuttgart, Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2000. 404 pp., 270 illus. Hardbound, \$30.00. ISBN 3-7757-0801-4. *Reviewed by Roy R. Behrens.*

IF ANYTHING, there is a surplus of writings about the Bauhaus, the legendary school of art and design that flourished in Germany during the Weimar Republic (1919-1933). Despite the number and quality of its predecessors, this may be the finest, most serious book about the practice of teaching in relation to that famous experimental school. In fact, it may be fair to say that if someone is looking for a single, solid summary of the social and political origins of the Bauhaus, its historical setting, the nature and rationale of its foundations or preliminary course, the innovative teaching strategies of its faculty, and the extent to which their discoveries were widely adopted by art schools and universities, there is no better source than this. Most other English-language books on the Bauhaus (of which there must be now at least two or three dozen) are beautifully illustrated, but the texts are not always well-written, and the scope of what they cover tends to be very wide, with restricted attention to teaching. While this book has 270 illustrations, they are entirely black and white. Its text, on the other hand, is amazingly thoughtful and thorough, and is based on the painstaking scrutiny of twenty pages of books and articles (most of which are in German). It too has broad coverage, but it does this by looking microscopically at the teaching methods of seven major artists there, and by that connecting to various things that one might otherwise ignore as unrelated. Beyond these specific essays, I found that I also profited from five other, more generalized chapters about the school's social context, its chronology, the historic antecedents of its teaching philosophy, and the manner in which its tradition survives in Europe and the U.S. A final note is that this is not a book to read just once, from cover to cover, and then forget about. Rather, it functions best as a reference book, a storehouse of detail and fullness that one can repeatedly search through for provocative ideas about art, design and art education. ➤

Altho insured
Remember,
kiddo
They don't pay
you
They pay
Your widow
Burma-Shave

AN ON

He goes into a bar
optimistically and
comes out misty
optically.



ABOVE Self-Portrait by JAMIE MEYER
(2003) scuola di Giuseppe Arcimboldo.

■ **The Industrial Design Reader** edited by Carma Gorman. New York: Allworth Press, 2003. 244 pp. Softbound, \$19.95. ISBN 1-58115-310-4. **Designing for People** by Henry S. Dreyfuss. New York: Allworth Press, 2003. 286 pp. Softbound, \$21.95. ISBN 1-58115-312-0. **Industrial Strength Design: How Brooks Stevens Shaped Your World** by Glenn Adamson. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2003. 220 pp. Clothbound, \$45.00. ISBN 0-262-0127-3. *Reviewed by Roy R. Behrens.*

THESE WELCOME, useful books came out at about the same time, and it may be of value and interest to look at all three together. Their shared subject is Modern-era industrial design, a profession that grew out of the Industrial Revolution and the often insidious marriage between machine manufacture and Capitalism. Like most categories, its parameters are not always obvious, so that, while we typically think of industrial design as product development (appliances, vehicles, tools), it also often overlaps with interior design (such as furniture design), and with technological and mechanical invention. Industrial design has a long history, but one commonly hears that its halcyon days (at least in the U.S.) began in the 1930s, and resulted from the efforts of a small number of pioneering designers, most notably Walter Dorwin Teague, Raymond Loewy, Norman Bel Geddes, Donald Deskey, Harold Van Doren and Henry Dreyfuss; and, from the following generation, a brusque but prolific practitioner named Brooks Stevens. Throughout their careers, each of these men tried to deal in their own way with the question of what should be emphasized in the design process. Is money-making more important than honesty?—Or functional efficiency?—Or sturdy, enduring construction?—Or safety? One of the earliest arguments was associated with the use of aerodynamic surfaces on vehicles, increasing their efficiency because they were less resistant to air or to water. But when it was determined that such "streamlined" surfaces dramatically increased the sales of any product, even immobile objects like toasters, radios and pencil sharpeners were designed to look as if they flew like rocket ships.

Carma Gorman's *Industrial Design Reader* is a collection of sixty-two brief and readable texts about industrial design that begins in 1852 (with an essay about the Crystal Palace) and ends in 1999 (with a warning from Donald Norman about the dangers of discounting function in favor of appearance). In her preface, Gorman explains that she put this book together because she could not find a comparable text for a course that she was teaching on the history of industrial design. The result is a wonderfully varied account of the social evolution not just of industrial design, but of a larger, more inclusive field that includes graphic, interior and architectural design. I thought it was also of value to find that she has assembled not only excerpts from the works of prominent designers and design critics (e.g., Christopher Dresser, Adolf Loos, Robert Venturi, Victor Papanek, and dozens of others) but also influential texts by politicians, social activists, and other non-designers (e.g., Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Richard Nixon, and Ralph Nader, even the Americans with Disabilities Act). If anything, in light of the range of its contents, the book's title (implying that it is restricted to industrial design) is misleading, as it could serve as an excellent resource for any course on design history.

One of the readings in Gorman's anthology is an illustrated excerpt from a famous book by Henry Dreyfuss (1904-72) on anthropometrics and ergonomics called *Designing for People*. First published in 1955, then revised and reissued in 1967, it has now been issued again, this time in a format that echoes the look of the original edition. It is enriched by the author's fluid cartoons (in brown ink) in the margins, his diagrams of the measurements of the average man and woman (called Joe and Josephine), and vintage photographs of the countless industrial products he made (e.g., his John Deere tractors, the standard black desk telephone, a Hoover upright vacuum cleaner, and an RCA television). It is of particular interest to look at his predictions about technology in the first edition, in a section called "An Appraisal," as compared with his subsequent (greatly revised) reappraisal in the second edition.

If Dreyfuss's attitude toward design was based on "designing for people," that of an outspoken designer named Brooks Stevens (1911-95) was regarded as almost the inverse. In 1944, Stevens was invited to be a charter member of the Society of Industrial Designers, but unlike his fellow big-leaguers, he chose to live throughout his life in his hometown of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In part perhaps because of that, his name was never a household word, but as amply documented in *Industrial Strength Design* (based on research material in the Brooks Stevens Archives at the Milwaukee Art Museum), many of the things he made were ubiquitous in American homes, and at least one of his phrases ("planned obsolescence") was widely adopted and argued about. Indeed, with the disclosure of that concept in 1957 by Vance Packard's *The Hidden Persuaders* (a best-selling exposé of American advertising), Stevens was thereafter typecast as "the crown prince of obsolescence" and "the enfant terrible of industrial design"—an infamy, as this book claims, that "he obviously enjoyed."

But assessed for their resourcefulness, his inventions were many and major: He developed the steam iron, the snowmobile, the outboard motor, and the electric clothes drier. He designed the 1940 Packard, the 1950 Harley-Davidson motorcycle, the 1959 Lawn-Boy power lawn mower, and the 1980 AMC Cherokee. On the other hand, it was Stevens who also developed the decadent Excalibur (a tacky roadster for the rich), and the Oscar Meyer Wienermobile (1958), in which a wiener-shaped cockpit was nestled in the cleavage of the bun-shaped chassis of a car. Not without a sense of humor (however acerbic), Stevens's favorite comment on that infamous project was that "there's nothing more aerodynamic than a wiener." ➤



Violets are
blue
Roses are pink
On graves
Of those
Who drive and
drink
Burma-Shave

BOB BURNS

[Paul Rand:
Modernist Design]

As a first-year graduate student at Yale [in 1985], I had made up my mind that I was there to study with Paul Rand. When I was told that he only taught second-year students, I was not deterred. I asked the advice of my first mentor, Lou Danziger, with whom I had studied at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts). Lou said, "Bob, call him up and tell him I told you to call." When Mr. Rand answered, I told him I had come to Yale to study with him. He replied sharply, "I'm the reason everyone comes to Yale. What makes you any different?"...

LES COLEMAN

A brick came flying out of the jewelry shop window.

■ **The Art of Looking Sideways** by Alan Fletcher. London and New York: Phaidon Press, 2001. 533 pp. Hardbound, \$39.95. ISBN 0-7148-3449-1.
Beware Wet Paint Designs by Alan Fletcher, with a commentary by Jeremy Myerson. London and New York: Phaidon Press, 2004. 266 pp. Softbound, \$29.95. ISBN 0-7148-4378-4. *Reviewed by Roy R. Behrens.*

I'VE NEVER SEEN a jackdaw, a relative of crows and magpies, and a bird that's apparently common throughout much of the British Isles. Foxy, resourceful and fearless, it sometimes mimics human speech, and (like a child) is easily distracted by things that are shiny and colorful. As I learned from these two extraordinary books, for years I have been witness to the creations of a "visual jackdaw" (his words) in the sense that I've known and admired the work of a London-based graphic designer named Alan Fletcher. The son of a British civil servant, he was born not in England but in Kenya in 1931, which means this year he will observe his 73rd birthday. *Beware Wet Paint* (which initially came out in the mid-1990s) is a retrospective album of his work as a graphic designer, which began in 1957, when, having studied at various British and American art schools (including with Josef Albers at Yale), he worked for the Container Corporation and *Fortune* magazine. Returning to London in 1959, he soon became a founder with Colin Forbes (a British schoolmate) and Bob Gill (an American designer) of a legendary partnership called Fletcher Forbes Gill. A decade later, he was a founding partner of Pentagram Design, a now-famous design firm. He left Pentagram in 1992 to set up his own free-lance business in London, one result of which has been his position as a design consultant for Phaidon Press (publisher of both these titles), which is heralded today for the elegance design of its books as much as it is for the wealth of their contents. Fletcher's style is often recognizable, so that when you see these books (both of which he designed in every detail), you may find yourself exclaiming "Oh yes, he's the one who did the cover of *The Art Book*" and the subsequent books in that series. *Beware Wet Paint* offers reproductions of 250 examples of Fletcher's design work, with brief editorial musings about his creative process, and a series of separate essays about his life, education and influences. I feel fortunate to have both these volumes, but if I had to choose just one, it would be *The Art of Looking Sideways*. Nearly two and a half inches thick, and weighing almost five pounds, it is a massive collection of excerpted passages, visual exemplars, and Fletcher's observations on how to look at life in ways that are instructive, thought-provoking, and always out of the ordinary. It looks as if it came about by commingling flotsam with jetsam in an ocean of unfettered color, exotic printing papers, and typographic trail runs, especially with gestural writing. As I was growing up in the 1950s, a question that was often asked was "If you were marooned on an island, what book would you want to have with you?" Asked that now, I would not hesitate to name Alan Fletcher's *The Art of Looking Sideways*, which is a magnificent stimulant for thinking, designing and teaching. ➤

■ **Anni Albers and Ancient American Textiles: From Bauhaus to Black Mountain** by Virginia Gardner Troy. Burlington VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002. 170 pp., illus. Hardbound, \$59.95. ISBN 0-7546-0501-9. *Reviewed by Aaris Sherin.*

GERMAN-BORN ARTIST and designer Anni Albers (1899-1994) is well known for her textiles from the 1920s, when she was a student at the Bauhaus in the weaving workshop. Her subsequent artistic work, which is equally skilled but less familiar, reveals her degree of indebtedness to traditional Peruvian weaving, and to various art-related European influences, including Paul Klee (one of her teachers at the Bauhaus), De Stijl and Russian Constructivism. As the title of this book predicts, it follows Anni Albers' life from the point of her arrival at the Bauhaus in 1920 to her immigration to the U.S. in 1933 (with her husband, Bauhaus painter Josef Albers), then traces her further development as an artist, writer, collector and educator at Black Mountain College (near Asheville, North Carolina), until the Albers moved to Yale in 1950. It begins with a discussion of Europe's apparent unquenchable thirst for non-western or "primitive" art during the final years of the 19th century and the early decades of the twentieth. Albers and her contemporaries may have been well acquainted with the Berlin Museum für Völkerkunde, which housed a large collection of Peruvian weavings, numbering more than 7500 by the year 1920. While at the Bauhaus (initially as a student, later as a weaving teacher), Albers was (like her husband) intensely curious about the exploratory use of a wide range of materials, without regard for conventional use, in the context of inventing art. Her interest in Andean weaving began during this same period, and then gradually evolved into a lifelong interest in the forms, styles and techniques that characterize that tradition. Albers believed that Modern-era textile designers could benefit immeasurably from knowing more about the skillful mastery of design in Andean weavings. While teaching at Black Mountain, she encouraged her students to learn from these age-old artifacts, which she sometimes researched by taking actual works apart to determine the process by which they were made. While Albers' own work was influenced by Andean textiles, she did not emulate them directly, nor did she feel obliged to use antiquated processes. She willingly used commercial yarns, and eagerly embraced the loom as a modern tool that saved her time and labor. While teaching at Black Mountain, Albers began to conceive of herself not only as a designer, but also as an artist. One evidence of this is that she began to sign her textile art (with her initials), something she had never done with industrial prototypes. The 1950s and 1960s were among her most productive years, at the beginning of which she and her husband moved to New Haven, Connecticut, where Josef joined the faculty at Yale University. It was during this period that Anni Albers frequently met and interacted with leading authorities on Andean and Ancient American textiles. Increasingly in her personal work, she became persuaded that woven fabric was well-suited for conveying meaning and implicit cultural coding within its repetitive patterns. By her own artwork, by her writings on textile design, and by the strength of her teaching, Anni Albers led the charge in slowly building up the role ascribed today to textile art (sometimes known as fiber arts). This book affords us an interesting look at a second-tier participant at the original Bauhaus. More importantly, it traces the growth of the interest in primitive and abstract work with such care and detail that readers cannot help but be captivated by the story of modern textile design as it evolves from a minor decorative art to its prominence at the Dessau Bauhaus and then onto its present (peripheral) role in the three-ring circus world of art. While there are scores of books about the Bauhaus, there is a smaller recent list that deals with lesser-known aspects of this exhaustively-studied historical time. Examples of these are Isabelle Anscombe, *A Woman's Touch: Women in Design from 1860 to the Present Day* (NY: Viking 1984); Sigrid Wortman Weltge, *Women's Work: Textile Art from the Bauhaus* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1993); and Anja Baumhoff, *The Gendered World of the Bauhaus: The Politics of Power at the Weimar Republic's Premier Art Institute, 1919-1932* (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Peter Lang, 2001). This particular volume about the life of Anni Albers is surely a welcome addition to this same list of scholarly studies. ➤

MICHELLE CLIFF
Tourism is whorism.

RIGHT
Poster (designed
by BYRON
BROWNE) from
the Works Progress
Administration
(WPA), Federal Art
Project [c1938]



■ **American Modernism: Graphic Design, 1920 to 1960** by R. Roger Remington with Lisa Bodenstedt. New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2003. 192 pp., 250 color illustrations. Softbound, \$35.00. ISBN 0-300-0916-2. *Reviewed by Roy R. Behrens.*

TO THE EXTENT that any country is a melting pot, its culture is indebted to the traditions that were brought in by its emigrants, whether European, Asian, African or whatever. But with luck those same traditions mix, through synergistic alchemy, into new and original cultural forms, of which the most famous example is jazz. At times, related claims are made about a cluster of graphic designers who flourished in the U.S. in the years before and after World War II, and whose styles are sufficiently different from other influences as to merit the special, distinguishing tag of American Modernism. A surprising number of these designers were born and raised in the Midwest (e.g., Merle Armitage, Lester Beall, Bradbury Thompson, Noel Martin and Charles Eames), while others grew up in the cities (Paul Rand, Saul Bass and Alvin Lustig). Without exception, they were wonderfully smart and resourceful; they were also eager for experimentation, so much so that they all embraced the European avant garde (in particular De Stijl, Surrealism, the Bauhaus, and Tschichold's New Typography), acquired firsthand in some cases by working side by side with recent emigrants, among them Ladislav Sutnar, Alexey Brodovitch, Herbert Bayer and Will Burtin. At the same time, they did not complacently align with that influence, but practiced what in retrospect is a seamless amalgam of European Modernism and American Regionalism, in the sense that its softened geometry is not unlike the art produced by Grant Wood, Thomas Hart Benton, Edward Hopper, Charles Sheeler, and others who were active in the WPA era. The author of this beautiful book, design historian R. Roger Remington, is as well-informed about this subject as anyone, and is widely known for his efforts as the founder of the Graphic Design Archives, a large collection of printed ephemera and other research materials in the Wallace Library at the Rochester Institute of Technology. This volume, which is his fourth and largest study of various aspects of this segment of design history, begins in the 19th century and retraces the emergence of the European avant garde. It slows down as it looks more reflectively at the major representatives of American Modernism, then speeds up again as it surveys the forty-year period near the end of the 20th century, in which Modernism is replaced by the maze that we currently find ourselves in. In addition to Remington's wonderful text, it is exquisitely designed (as it really has to be, to practice what its text promotes) by Brad Yendle, and stunningly illustrated by 250 color illustrations of the finest, most unforgettable works from an historic period in which not just graphic design, but cinema, literature, dance, popular music, and other forms of expression were produced at a very high level. ➤



LEFT
Pencil drawing by
JOSEPH
PODLESNIK
(2004) of his infant
son Michael.

■ **Merz to Émigré and Beyond: Avant-Garde Magazine Design of the Twentieth Century** by Steven Heller. New York: Phaidon Press, 2003. 240 pp., illus. Hardbound, \$75.00. ISBN 0-7148-3927-2. Reviewed by Roy R. Behrens.

IN THE SUMMER of 1969, I was a drafted U.S. Marine in San Diego, struggling to survive psychologically in the inhospitable ambience of boot camp. At that same moment, a somewhat younger rookie named Steven Heller was working as a graphic designer in New York, doing the layout and paste-up for two notoriously offensive underground magazines, *Screw* and the *New York Review of Sex*, the latter of which he describes as "an odd mix of new left politics and sexploitation." Five years later, he leapfrogged to the rank of Op Ed art director at the prestigious *New York Times*, where since 1986 he has art-directed its *Book Review*, while also serving as co-chair of the graduate program in design at the School of Visual Arts. In his spare time, he collects tons of printed ephemera from the history of design, and writes about it, with unequaled richness and detail, in magazine articles and books. At last count, he has written, edited or co-edited about 80 books, many of which are among the finest surveys of the subject. With that as background, I would not hesitate to say that this book, which is one of his latest (I say that because another came out as I was writing this review), may be the best he has ever produced. It is also directly connected to his own experience (as a former art director of underground magazines), since it consists of a verbal and visual account of the role that irreverent magazines play in the comet-like existence of avant-garde movements—the main function of which, as Heller explains, is "to make trouble." As he also argues, the manner in which they cause trouble (and this is the primary point of the book) is not just by promoting ideas that the *ancien régime* finds offensive, but, just as often, by being visually offensive as well: almost always by the use of discomfiting layouts, annoying typefaces, and discordant combinations of things that don't belong together. The entirety of Heller's text (which is exhaustive in its range and depth) is both stirring and beautifully written. But the book's single feature that will be of particular value to designers, artists, teachers and students is the way in which it functions as a design aficionado's "museum without walls." That is, its visual examples (with 550 full-color illustrations, nearly all of generous size) are not only thoughtfully chosen, but are so painstakingly printed that it is a breathtaking journey to turn to reproductions so precise that it feels as if one's eyes can feel the creases, scuffs, smudges, paper fibers, and other tactile features of the original object. The book's range is wider than indicated by the title, in the sense that it actually covers some of the 19th century, far in advance of the founding of *Merz* (by Dadaist Kurt Schwitters) in 1923, while, on the other end, it also moves beyond the start of *Émigré* (edited by Rudi VanderLans and Zuzana Licko) in 1984. The one thing I found most appealing was the reproduction (on one spread of this book) of a sequence of as many as eighteen page spreads from a single publication. Judge for yourself, but I don't know a finer example of sequential (cinematic) spread design than the page layouts created by Russian Constructivist Alexandr Rodchenko in 1940 for an issue of *USSR in Construction* (pp. 94-95). Like so many of this book's examples, I have never before seen this reproduced, much less been able to watch it unfold. ➤

These signs
are not
For laughs
alone
The face they
save may be
your own
Burma-Shave



ABOVE
Self-Portrait by ERIC
BOLLMAN (2003)
*scuola di Giuseppe
Arcimboldo.*

KYLE COOPER
[*Paul Rand:
Modernist Design*]
[The title of his graduate school thesis at Yale was] "Sergei Eisenstein / Collateral Stimuli" and explored the work of the graphic designer complementing the visual sense of the filmmaker. Fortunately, [his thesis advisor] Mr. [Paul] Rand [who designed the corporate logo for IBM] lost the only copy of my final thesis. "I think some guy from IBM that came here to my house took it by mistake," he explained.

■ **Situating El Lissitzky: Vitebsk, Berlin, Moscow.** Edited by Nancy Perloff and Brain Reed. Los Angeles CA: Getty Research Institute, 2003. 288 pp., 15 color and 69 b/w illustrations. Soft-bound, \$39.95. ISBN 0-89236-677-X. *Reviewed by Roy R. Behrens.*

OF ALL THE episodes in art and design history, few are more intriguing than Russian Constructivism. Within that movement, among the most gifted participants was a Russian-Jewish artist named Lazar Markovich Lissitzky (1890-1941), invariably referred to now as El Lissitzky. While it is not inaccurate to categorize him as an "artist," one goal of this volume of essays is to show that he was far, far more than only that. At the very least, he was an architect, an engineer, a painter of Jewish folk tales, an abstract painter, an author and illustrator of children's books, a typographer, a book designer, an exhibition designer, a photographer, an avant-garde practitioner of installation art, an advertising designer, and a Marxist propagandist in the Stalinist era. The eight main essays in this book initially came from a conference at the Getty Institute in Los Angeles in December 1998, an event that was held in conjunction with that center's exhibition of a series of new acquisitions having to do with Lissitzky. Conveniently, dozens of full-color images, a chronology and background texts can still be accessed on the internet at <http://getty.edu/research/tools/digital/lissitzky/index2.html>. The website is well worth the visit, as is this beautifully printed account of Lissitzky's short, productive life (he died of tuberculosis at age 51). The book's essays are divided into three sections, each representing a topical theme. The first, titled "East-West," discusses his early activities as a Suprematist painter and his close affiliations with De Stijl, Dada and other branches of the European avant-garde; the second, titled "Hand-Eye," deals with his belief that art should not just represent what is, but that, in a kind of hybrid blending of art and engineering, it should instead be constructive (hence the term "constructivism"), meaning that it should result in unique components or experiences that were not pre-existing (in this regard, his so-called "demonstration rooms" are especially interesting); and the third, titled "Propaganda," addresses some difficult questions about the willingness with which Lissitzky contributed to agitprop, and the "grim political evil" that we now associate with the Stalinist period in Russian history. If we condemn Ludwig Hohlweih (an extraordinary German graphic designer) for the propagandistic effectiveness of his posters for the Nazis, should we not also raise questions about the work of El Lissitzky? It is not the purpose of books of this kind to arrive at definitive answers. The challenge of such studies, as Nancy Perloff tells us in her introduction, "is not to shift the focus in one direction but to continually address the inescapable pull of both." >

CLEMENT FREUD
[his nickname for Margaret Thatcher]
Attila the Hen.

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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* reviews web site at <<http://mitpress2.mit.edu/e-journals/Leonardo/ldr.html>> or in the printed magazine.

DAVID MEYER [*Ernie and Me*] His antics in restaurants were always entertaining. "As Shakespeare once said, 'What food these morsels be!' was his usual comment when a meal was served... He would scoop up unused silverware into his coat sleeves and let it spill out again as he was paying for the meal. He was never rude to waiters, but he often confounded them. He kept a stack of freshly minted one-dollar bills glued together at one end so they appeared to be a pad of paper. As Ernie tore off singles to pay a bill, the expressions on the faces of the wait staff or cashiers were wonderful to watch. Decades before the advent of portable cell phones, he carried a phone receiver with a cord attached to the inside of his suit coat. A ringing device was in his pocket. We would be in a restaurant and as the waitress was taking the order, Ernie would have the phone "ring." He'd reach into his coat, pull out the receiver and put it to his ear. After saying "Hello" and "Hold on," he would hand it to the waitress and say, "It's for you." No one I saw who was given that fake phone ever hesitated saying "Hello" into its receiver.

Credits

The artwork on the cover is a poster (designer unknown) from the Works Progress Administration (WPA), Federal Art Project [c1937]

The self-portrait collages on pages 6, 8 and 14 are by undergraduate art students at the University of Northern Iowa.

Regrets

We are sorry for the long delay in publishing this issue. This is the Winter issue, and yet by now it's officially Spring. One explanation (although of course it's no excuse) is that the editor seems to be into the Autumn of his existence, and is increasingly finding it hard to keep up with all the deadlines.
Burma-Shave.

BALLAST QUARTERLY REVIEW 2022 X AVENUE DYSART IOWA 52224-9767 USA