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 to the other way.

It was the winter of our dispair, we had nothing anywhere.

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.

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

LYTTON STRACHEY [the British Bloomsbury writer, who was also homosexual] 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 extraordinary 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.
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.

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...
He asked his kitten to pet and purr. She eyed his pu$$ and screamed "What fur!"

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 handicrafts 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 Oard Harrison. Odd name, that. The rain's about to fall, and I must be off. Hope you have a good look at our museum. Goodbye, good luck."

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.

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
The whale put Jonah down the hatch but coughed him up because he scratched Burma-Shave

ABOVE

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 tolerance 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," "rellroad" 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're 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 was de Czar of all de Russias.

READING THAT passage, I am always reminded of the autobiography of another writer from Illinois, the poet MARL< 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.

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.
Iii

People.

questions of what should be emphasized in the design process. Is money-making 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 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 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.

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 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 clear, but as amply documented in 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.

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B O B  B U R N S  
[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?..."

L E S  C O L E M A N 
A brick came flying out of the jewelry shop window.

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

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 freelance 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. 

B E W A R E  W E T  P A N T  


The Art of Looking Sideways is a magnificent stimulant for thinking, designing and teaching. 

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.

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.

IN THE SUMMER of 1969, I was a drafted U.S. Marine in San Diego, struggling to survive psychologically in the inhospi-Table 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 leapedfrogged 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 unequalled 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 discomforting 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
scuo/a
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.

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 "Hands-Eyes," 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 Hohlwein (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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**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.**

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 waiter 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.