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## Ballast Quarterly Review, v20n1, Autumn 2004

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WORDSIGHTSAND  
THESONICARTS



Papa, potatoes, poultry, prunes, and prism,  
are all very good words for the lips: especially  
prunes and prism.

CHARLES DICKENS

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JOSEPH  
LANGLAND  
("Poetry! What in  
the World are You  
Saying?")

One is drawn to  
poetry not nearly so  
much because some-  
one thinks he has  
something impor-  
tant to say as that  
he thinks he can say  
something well. And  
when something is  
well said, it is more  
important than the  
same idea less well-  
said. All those who  
care for civilization  
know the truth of  
this.

JOSEPH  
JOUBERT  
Music has seven  
letters, writing has  
twenty-six notes.

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  
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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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WILLIAM H. GASS For prose [like music] has a pace; it is dotted  
with stops and pauses, frequent rests; inflections rise and fall like a low  
range of hills; certain tones are prolonged; there are patterns of stress  
and harmonious measures; there is a proper method of pronunciation,  
even if it is rarely observed; alliteration will trouble the tongue, conso-  
nance ease its sounds out, so that any mouth making that music will  
feel its performance even to the back of the teeth and to the glottal's  
stop; mellifluousness is not impossible, and harshness is easy; drum  
roll and clangor can be confidently called for—lisp, slur, and growl; so  
there will be a syllabic beat in imitation of the heart, while rhyme will  
recall a word we passed perhaps too indifferently; vowels will open and  
consonants close like blooming plants; repetitive schemes will act as  
refrains, and there will be phrases—little motifs—to return to, like the  
tonic; clauses will be balanced by other clauses the way a waiter car-  
ries trays; parallel lines will nevertheless meet in their common subject;  
clots of concepts will dissolve and then recombine, so we shall find  
endless variations on the same theme; a central idea, along with its  
many modifications, like soloist and chorus, will take their turns until,  
suddenly, all sing at once the same sound.

COVER AND FACING PAGE: Calligraphy by Edward M. Catich  
from *The Origin of the Serif* (Davenport IA: St. Ambrose Col-  
lege, Catfish Press, 1968).



**THE ART OF THE IMPROVISER**  
**An Essay in Remembrance of**  
**American Calligrapher**  
**Father Edward M. Catich**

by Leslie Bell

Professor of Art / St. Ambrose University

IN ADDITION to being an amateur magician, world-class chess player, rabid hockey fan, riveting teacher, demanding colleague, shrewd numismatist, multilingualist, seasoned traveler, and one of the world's finest calligraphers, Father Edward Michael (Ned) Catich was also a professional jazz trombonist. Perhaps the Purple Grackle in Elgin, Illinois is not Birdland but Father Catich's musical skills paid for his education, and he idolized and sat in with some of the big names of the 1930s.

The title of this show, *The Art of the Improviser* [an exhibition of Catich's work at St. Ambrose University in Davenport, Iowa, March through September 2004], derives from an Ornette Coleman album of the same name. Coleman came on the music scene at the time that Father Catich was making the bulk of the work in this show. My thesis is not to examine Father Catich's musical past but to draw parallels between his utilization of the elements of improvisation—memory, extrapolation, a good ear or eye, nerves of steel, logic, a confident grasp of formal principles, an embrace of illogic, and the ability to think five steps ahead—in both the visual and sonic arts.

Orphaned young, Catich developed the instincts of the outside cat. He knew

**JOHN KEATS**

My imagination is a monastery, and I am its monk.

**JOSEPH  
 LANGLAND**

I wanted to sing to you to say, not to be forgotten, that poetry is among other things, song, varied carols, hymns, chants, or even a drone. But it is verbal music; the word is its god, and the poet its worshipper. I never was much interested in helping anyone into poetry because he had exciting ideas, but the moment I find someone who is enchanted by a phrase I think that he might be trained to lift whatever he thinks into a whole holy city of the imagination.

**YEVEGENY  
 YEVTUSHENKO**

Poetry is like a bird, it ignores all frontiers.



WILLIAM  
H. GASS

*(Finding A Form)*

The students do not imitate the faculty; teachers cannot be accused of turning out copies of themselves. The teacher is nothing but a future recommendation. Nor do the instructors push the students much. No one is asked to write against the little grain they've got. Relations grow personal before they grow professional. And the community perceives each poet as a poet, each writer as a writer, making them members in this social sense, although they may not have written a worthy word. Here they hide from academic requirements and from intellectual challenge. There are always shining exceptions, of course, but on the whole the students show little interest in literature. They are interested in writing instead...in expressing a self as shallow as a saucer.

HENNY  
YOUNGMAN

Somebody stole all my credit cards. But I've decided not to report it, because the thief spends less than my wife did.

how to thread his way through situations, conversations, melodies and visual phenomena with equal ease. In the fifteen years I knew Father Catich, I never heard him play so much as a note on his dented and dinged 'bone but I did hear a short, impressive harmonica tune with a walking bass line and a high, independent melody—played simultaneously. He knew his stuff on a lot of instruments.



Edward M. Catich

As Dr. [Michael] Halstead has made interestingly clear [in an accompanying essay in the same exhibition booklet], the intellectual and emotional tools of the musician work quite handsomely for the visual artist and vice versa. Kandinsky and Klee played string duets together. The Rolling Stones met in art school. Larry Rivers supported not only himself but also several other starving artists as a tenor sax player in a New York jazz band. Music and visual art share a vocabulary and although ability in one field is not necessarily ability in the other, it does give one a leg up.

Whereas a musician improvises second by second according to what's happening with the rest of the band, the visual artist improvises positive form out of negative blankness or responds to what he's already painted or drawn. Works 7-15 [in the exhibition], scratch-board drawings, play delicately incised lines, squiggles and atributes of marks against earlier statements—blunt ink forms brushed on the slick surface of the paper. When laying down the black ink structure, Catich saved energy and room for the calligraphic counterpoint that was



to come. To put it in Eastern terms, the masculine or yang forms are respected, softened and complemented with decorative and integrative filigree. The under-layer functions as a solid rhythm section comping for a more fragile, linear voice. Despite their temporal independence, they conjoin in the timeless atmosphere of the picture plane into an irreducible newness. The white scraffiti owe their visual existence to the black forms while giving them their significance.

Most of the works are not dated but they range from the 1930s to the 1960s and often call to mind the European artists Fernand Leger, Emile Nolde, Eric Gill, Paul Klee and Edvard Munch along with the Americans John Marin and Stuart Davis. It isn't a stretch to call them Father Catich's peers. He knew and admired their work and in a cloistered way, shared their ambitions and goals. In the cases of Gill and Munch, Father knew them and championed their work to a broader audience in the U.S.

The watercolor and gummed paper collages on the main wall were created in 1950-52 and are conspicuously full of the bebop, zoot-suited flamboyance of the era. These key works display an uncanny set of forces wrestling to build a dynamic and balanced whole out of a lot of ricocheting, "dizzy," angular elements. While summoning up vague notions of animals, hipsters, weirdoes and impenetrable space, the central concern of these pieces is abstract and emotional. Some might not even recognize these as Father

JOSHUA  
FINEBERG  
("Classical Music:  
Why Bother?")

Most art is crap. This may be a shocking idea to many people. We think of art as the great master-works we know, and it's very easy to forget the mountains of mediocrity that were sifted to lift Bach or Dante or Emily Dickinson to their Olympian heights.

RODNEY  
DANGERFIELD  
I met the Surgeon  
General. He offered  
me a cigarette!

JOSEPH  
LANGLAND  
Poetry, like an  
indulgent parent,  
defends its children  
no matter what they  
say with this one  
strict difference:  
they must be well-  
spoken.

ON PRECEDING PAGE AND  
RIGHT: Calligraphy by Edward M.  
Catch from *The Origin of the Serif*  
(Davenport IA: St. Ambrose Col-  
lege, Catfish Press, 1968).



Edward M. Catich

Catich's work. In the classroom he made a solemn and unquestionable point of the primacy of intellect over emotion in art making. I think that by letting the balance tip momentarily in the other direction, Father Catich created some of his most complex and evocative paintings.

These are some of Father Catich's most musical works—those in which the

DONNA TARTT  
A spider of anxiety  
crawled up the back  
of my neck.

ULLA E. DYDO  
Tenderness is for two;  
anxiety is for one  
alone.

JACK OVERHILL (in Derwent May, ed., *Good Talk: An Anthology from BBC Radio*) Well, one August morning [shortly after the death of a friend]—it was a Saturday—I had a strange feeling come over me as I was going to work. My heart started to beat fast. I felt hot and flushed. I stopped, and I came to myself, as though I'd abruptly awakened from sleep. I was intensely conscious of myself, and that was a new self. And as I started walking again, I suddenly felt full of fear. I was afraid of myself, the street, and everything in it. Then I began to watch myself walk and breathe. I felt I was losing my breath and going to collapse. I stopped again: the feeling went, and again I started walking. Then I had a queer sort of feeling come over me and I seemed to be two persons instead of one. One of them, my rational self, was telling me to keep calm, and that other self, that was telling me to run. Well, I knew I couldn't run away from myself—that's what my rational self kept telling me—"You can't run away from yourself," but all the while the other self, that malignant sort of self, that was telling me to shout and scream and go berserk. I thought I was going mad...

abstract elements are most clearly and powerfully embodied. The happy energy of the music he grew up with and played as a nightclub professional infuses his visual statements with a rollicking good humor and breakneck timing that exists almost independent of the subject matter. I ask that you look past the content to the underlying structure for the pleasure that such analysis brings and to discover the solid connection between two of Father Catich's many lives.

# GROUCHO MARX

Time flies like an  
arrow. Fruit flies like  
a bannana.

Leslie Bell, the author of this essay, is Professor of Art at St. Ambrose University in Davenport, Iowa. Many years ago, as an undergraduate at St. Ambrose, Bell was a student of Catich, then later returned as his colleague, after receiving an MFA in painting from Northern Illinois University. This essay appeared initially in a publication that accompanied the exhibition at the Catich Gallery, St. Ambrose University, through whose courtesy it is reprinted here. For more information, see <<http://catich.sau.edu>>.

# SAMUEL F. PICKERING (*A Continuing Education*)

Collectors are different from other people. I have known this a long time. As a boy I spent summers on my grandfather's dairy farm in Hanover, Virginia. Near my grandfather lived a recluse named Mason Jefferson. There was nothing remarkable about Old Man Jefferson, as he was called, until two lightning rods appeared on the roof of his house one summer. The next summer there were six; then there were nine. Soon after I arrived from Tennessee, Henry and James Hackenbridge, sons of my grandfather's herdsman and my constant companions, would take me on an expedition to Mr. Jefferson's house. We would stand barefoot in the dirt road and count lightning rods. One summer when the number had grown to fourteen and counting was difficult, we climbed Mr. Jefferson's fence to get a better view. Mr. Jefferson saw us, came out on the porch, and asked what we were doing. James answered that we would looking at the lightning rods and then unaccountably bold, he asked Mr. Jefferson why he had so many. Mr. Jefferson said, "I like lightning rods" and went back inside. James, he thought the old man was crazy, but I recognized a kindred spirit. Mr. Jefferson was a collector, and although I would not have wanted new lightning rods on my roof, I understood why Mr. Jefferson bought them.

# JOSEPH EPSTEIN ("Vin Audenaire")

[When the French painter Degas decided that he should write poetry] he asked [his friend, the poet Stéphane] Mallarmé where he got his ideas. "But Degas," Mallarmé wisely replied, "poetry is not written with ideas but with words." This deceptively simple remark, like so many of Mallarmé's remarks, has great weight and subtlety, speaking about the dangerousness of ideas to poetry. One may end up with ideas but one should never start out with them.



# EUDORA WELTY

*(One Writer's  
Beginnings)*

At around age six, perhaps, I was standing by myself in our front yard waiting for supper, just at that hour in a late summer day when the sun is already below the horizon and the risen full moon in the visible sky stops being chalky and begins to take on light. There comes the moment, and I saw it then, when the moon goes from flat to round. For the first time it met my eyes as a globe. The word "moon" came into my mouth as though fed to me out of a silver spoon. Held in my mouth the moon became a Concord grape Grandpa took off his vine and gave me to suck out of its skin and swallow whole, in Ohio.

# MARK TWAIN

Denial ain't just a river in Egypt.

■ **DPM: Disruptive Pattern Material: An Encyclopedia of Camouflage: Nature, Military, Culture.** Compiled and edited by Hardy Blechman and Alex Newman. DPM Limited, London, 2004. One-volume edition: distributed in the U.S. by Firefly Books Limited, Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada. 624 pp., profusely illustrated. Hardbound, \$125.00. ISBN 1-5540701-1-2. Two-volume edition: available in the U.K. from Maharishi, London, at <www.dpmhi.com>. 944 pp., approx. 5000 full-color illustrations. Hardbound in slipcase, £100. ISBN 0-9543404-0-X. Includes Swatch Viewer and Origami Papers.

I WAS SENT an advance copy of the two-volume slip-cased version of this highly unusual volume because several texts I authored are included in it. [This review pertains to that edition, since I hadn't yet seen the one-volume version, the contents of which are identical to the first volume of the U.K. edition.] The book is so out of the ordinary that four weeks after it arrived, I carried it with me wherever I went, in part to show it to my friends, but also to share it with students, university colleagues, and anyone else who would likely be astonished by its bulk and remarkable detail. Not being as young as I once was, I now carry it less frequently, because, in its slipcase, the two-volume U.K. edition (with its retrieval ribbon, dust jackets, inserts, and so on) weighs more than eight pounds. I was not surprised to receive an early copy, since I've known that the book was being prepared for about six years. About that many years ago, I received an unexpected note from an upscale London fashion firm called Maharishi (founded and inspired by Hardy Blechman, its Creative Director), asking if I would be willing to be a contributing writer on a huge encyclopedic book on camouflage, clothing and culture. I responded but not with great fervor, for the simple reason that, as an author of books and articles on art and camouflage, I get e-mails weekly from all over the world, few of which have any result. Eventually I did contribute to this project—by writing and illustrating several sections on art and camouflage, by lending historical images from my own research files, and by locating current U.S. artists whose art pertains to camouflage. Otherwise, I had little to do with its gestation, so I really was fully and greatly amazed by the book's complexity when I first held it in my hands (or rather, given its size, sat down and propped it on my lap). Months later, I am still propping it on my lap (if any book, whatever scale, is inexhaustible, this surely is) and savoring each pleasurable moment as I gradually acquaint myself with its many levels of content, both visual and verbal (to view online sample page layouts, go to [www.dpmpublishing.com](http://www.dpmpublishing.com)). Having researched and written about camouflage for more than forty years, I know the territory. That said, what



I find most impressive about this gargantuan production is the extent to which its contents are all-encompassing, factually accurate, and, in many cases, comprised of both pictures and data that have rarely, if ever, been published before. I was especially pleased to find so much new information on the World War I field camouflage of French artists, who are most commonly credited with its first systematic adoption; on the changes that have taken place, worldwide, in the design of field service uniforms (the entire second volume is a visual and verbal account of the military camouflage patterns employed by 107 nations); on the camouflage-based experiments of a considerable number of contemporary artists (visual and otherwise) from throughout the world, including, for example, French artist Laurant La Gamba (who paints his sitters to blend in with product-laden grocery shelves) and Wisconsin performance artist Harvey Oppenorth (who visits art museums dressed in colored clothing that enables him to merge with the paintings of Ellsworth Kelly [a camouflageur in WWII], Mark Rothko, Henri Matisse and others); and on the burgeoning popular use of camouflage patterns on the widest range of commercial products, including such items as clothing, toys, vehicles, hunting equipment, dinnerware, furniture, and even toilet paper. Among the most striking examples of historic camouflage applied to upscale fashion is a collection of breathtaking fabrics produced just this season by Maharishi, called "Bamdazzle" (an allusion to WWI ship camouflage, called "dazzle painting"). As is often pointed out, camouflage predates human warfare, in the sense that sensational models abound among animals and plants. In addition, despite the stereotype, it need not always be allied with the military, and repeatedly throughout this book, as explained in its publicity, "a strong anti-war sentiment is expressed with the emphasis on camouflage's natural and artistic beauty." Indeed, one might even go further and claim that the main value of this extraordinary publication is the freshness with which it informs us about the predilections of human vision—and the ease with which we are beguiled.—RB

#### MAVIS GALLANT

The bar and the tables and the sticky, salty, half-naked tourists were covered alike with zebra stripes of light and shade.

#### RICHARD ROGERS

The problem about art is not finding more freedom, it's about finding obstacles.

ABOVE: Examples of "Bamdazzle" clothing issued by Maharishi Ltd (Autumn-Winter 2004-2005), as reproduced in *DPM: Disruptive Pattern Material*.

#### ANTHONY BURGESS

You can't create unless you're willing to subordinate the creative impulse to the constriction of a form.



RIGHT

Jennifer Lapham (2000-2002), *Mimetic Series: Blue Rabbits*. Slipcast, glazed ceramic, as reproduced in *DPM: Disruptive Pattern Material* (2004).

■ *Seurat and the Making of La Grande Jatte* by Robert L. Herbert, with an essay by Neil Harris, and contributions by Douglas W. Druick and Gloria Groom, Frank Zuccari and Allison Langley, Inge Fiedler, and Roy S. Berns. Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago IL, in association with University of California Press, Berkeley CA, 2004. 288 pp., 371 illus., 307 in color. Paper, \$34.95. ISBN 0-520-24211-4.

IT IS LARGELY because of one painting, *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte* (1884-86), that French Neo-Impressionist Georges Seurat is among history's best-known artists. That picture is surely a jewel in the crown of the Art Institute of Chicago, along with *American Gothic* by Grant Wood and the exquisite dream-like boxes of Joseph Cornell. In the summer of 2004, in part to mark the 80th year since the painting's acquisition, the museum mounted an exhibition called *Seurat and the Making of La Grande Jatte*, which included along with that artwork a parade of historical artifacts that, in one way or another, contributed to *La Grande Jatte*. This large, impressive volume—a 288-page exhibition catalog, illustrated by hundreds of images (including recent parodies), and enhanced by a medley of scholarly talks that touch on a wide range of issues (from aesthetic considerations to historiography)—was produced to accompany that showing. How wonderful to have at hand such diverse and detailed essays on one particular painter, and even more to learn so much about a single painting (by adjusting scans of the painting, for example, it is now possible to digitally “unage” its surface without physically “restoring” it, by making prints that are all but identical to its original condition). This approach is especially helpful in the case of Seurat, who does not easily fit in with the stereotype of a “Modern artist,” whose aims are so often purported to be self-expression and unbridled spontaneity. Seurat, on the contrary, claimed to be as much a scientist as an artist (he relied on “the science of color,” he said), with the result that the bulk of his paintings (like those, for example, of M.C. Escher or Victor Vasarely) are often dismissed as too static, as lacking in gestural freshness. As we learn from this volume, Seurat’s creative process (and it was creative) was informed by an extraordinary discipline, as when he decided (based on the “scientific aesthetics” of Charles Blanc, Charles Henry and others) that certain angles are inherently related to certain emotions (upward angles, for example, are perceived as more cheerful than downward), and that a comparable “aesthetic protractor” might as readily be devised for color, intensity, value, and other attributes of form. During his lifetime, people such as French novelist Victor Hugo (who often toyed with painting) were experimenting with chance and accidental strokes. But Seurat wavered rarely in his quest for an objective process, as shown by his marks that are visible now through infrared photography, X-radiography, and other scientific ways to examine what exists beneath an opaque painted surface. We now have evidence of his use of grids, and of the countless revisions he made. A particularly wonderful part of this book is its account of the cultural contexts of *La Grande Jatte* (the island pictured by Seurat) and *La Grande Jatte* (the painting itself). Almost as if by sleight of hand—or would it be better to think of it as literary Pointilism—this book partly functions as a social history of the Art Institute of Chicago in the years since the painting was purchased in 1924.—RB



■ **Fecal Matters in Early Modern Literature and Art: Studies in Scatology.** Edited by Jeff Persels and Russell Ganim. Ashgate Publishing Company, Burlington VT, 2004. 192 pp., illus. Hardbound, \$79.95. ISBN 0-754641-16-3.

IN THE 1990s, Random House produced a book by marine biologist Ralph Lewin called *Merde: Excursions in Scientific, Cultural, and Socio-Historical Coprology*, which was followed shortly by an MIT Press edition of the *History of Shit* by Dominique Laporte. This related current book (the title is a double entendre of course) is comprised of a series of essays about societal apprehensions about human waste products. ("Scat" is an age-old synonym for excrement, which explains why bathroom jokes are called "scatological humor.") The specific focus of it is the prevalence of open talk about excremental "filth" in Early Modern Europe (1500-1700), when scatological art and literature were both "copious and ubiquitous"—a fact that is often unmentioned today in scholarly studies of the same time period. As foul-mouthed as we ourselves may be, our predecessors were even less civilized, if, as this book's editors claim, to be civilized is "synonymous with the marginalization of human waste and its production, restricting it to discrete corners of our lives and minds, banishing it from our educated, polite discourse." Some people find delight in jokes about "fecal matters," while others are displeased at best. Either way, scatology as a subject can be fascinating, especially in light of the notions of "dirt" that were formulated by structural anthropologists in the 1970s. "Dirt is matter out of place," wrote Mary Douglas (1966): it is an inevitable byproduct of any "systematic ordering and classification of matter." That said, the most basic distinction we make is between "self" and "not-self." In searching for the boundary where each of us begins and ends, there becomes an unsettling emphasis on things that fall between the two categories. In virtually every cultural group, the structural anthropologists said (read especially Edmund Leach in *Culture and Communication*), it is this ambiguous, borderline stuff—feces, urine, intestinal gas, phlegm, pus, sweat, mucus, teeth, semen, menstrual blood, hair, fingernails, and so on—that is forbidden and/or powerfully prized, in which case it becomes taboo (in polite settings, such matters can only be mentioned by their Latin names, e.g., feces, urine and mucus) or are set aside for sacred rites (for example, as sources of influence in the practice of voodoo). This book is prefaced by a quote from Douglas about her definition of dirt, but beyond that she is mentioned twice. Claude Levi-Strauss is also cited, but only briefly, and the writings of Leach do not even appear in the bibliography. Perhaps we should forgive such omissions; after all, the subject of this book is not structural anthropology, and there is much of interest to enjoy in this welcome collection of essays about our squeamishness toward what we are—and are not.—RB

RODNEY  
DANGERFIELD

I remember when I swallowed a bottle of sleeping pills. My doctor told me to have a few drinks and get some rest.

SAMUEL F. PICKERING

Some time ago a friend asked me to go to a movie with him. "A high school buddy," he said, "is in it. He's on the way to becoming famous, and I want to see what he's like." I agreed to go, and sure enough, my friend's classmate was listed as a character. "Tell me when he appears," I said, settling in with a package of M&M's, a bucket of popcorn, and a coke. "Right," he answered; "I'll nudge you" and sat forward in his seat intensely watching the screen. I didn't come down with indigestion and enjoyed the afternoon. At the end of the film, though, I realized that my friend had not nudged me. "Hey," I said, "you forgot to point out your buddy." "Not—not exactly," he answered, "I didn't recognize him. Anyway," he added as we left the theatre, "we weren't really very good friends."



■ **Better Things: An Annotated Visual Essay of Photographs Interpreting the Collection of the Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester**, by Douglas Holleley. Clarellen, Rochester NY, 2004. 120 pp., 165 illus. Paperbound, \$19.95. ISBN 0-9707138-2-7. Available from the Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, 500 University Avenue, Rochester NY 14607. For ordering information, call (585) 473-7720, ex. 3057.

MANY YEARS ago, as an undergraduate art student, I attended a baffling evening in which the speaker showed pairs of images that seemed to have little or nothing to do with one another in terms of time period, medium, subject matter, and so on. I found this completely confusing at first. But then my "thinking eye" kicked in and I realized that I myself, independent of the lecturer's efforts, was continually "finding" connections between the juxtaposed images. Essentially, that is what this book attempts: Using cropped details from photographs of artworks in the Memorial Gallery of the University of Rochester, it confronts us with incompatible pairs. None of the images is identified, and a few are close to being abstract. If the anonymity becomes too tantalizing, one can always choose to "cheat" by turning to the lengthy "key" at the end of the book, where every work is reproduced, wholly and in full-color, complete with its catalog data. The author-photographer-designer, an Australian-born artist who is known for his earlier excellent book on Digital Book Design and Publishing (2001), believes, as he says in the elegant texts that announce each section, that we need not always experience art as a kind of docent-guided tour, being led sequentially from one single work to another. His method (by which his stated purpose is, like the Russian Formalists, to see both art and life "afresh") is based on what he designates as an "interactive reading" of art. He assumes by this that works of art (and why not other things as well) need not always be esteemed as discrete and indivisible wholes. We might instead approach them as "fields of choice and potential," in which canonical boundaries fade, enabling "characters and events [to speak] directly to each other across geographical borders and even time itself." This book is a great pleasure to read as well as to view, because Holleley is as exacting a writer as he is a photographer and book designer. Consistent with its point of view, this is an appeal to museums to look at reservoirs of antique art in a new light, and to encourage a similar attitude in their habitués. Related to that, I recall a poignant line that ends the author's introduction: "How we read them [works of art] is up to us. But read them we must." —RB

ULLA E. DYDO

(*Gertrude Stein: The Language That Rises*)

She [Stein] did not use made-up or nonsense words, but she broke the vocabulary down into syllables until they became new words. *Selfish* became *sell fish*, two new words with new meanings—not no meanings—and new grammatical possibilities: an adjective turned into two verbs or nouns. And how quick we are to reconstruct *sell* and *fish* into a phrase about selling fish! *Disappointment* became *disappoint meant*, and we can imagine other ways of breaking it up. Such reductions create a double jolt, removing the meaning and destroying the anticipated grammatical behavior of a word.

JAMES JOYCE

(*Finnegans Wake*)

The Gracehoper was always jiggling ajog, hoppy on akkant of his joyicity.

GERALD  
BRENNAN

When the grasshopper gathers its strength to hop, it does not know where it will land. So it often is with poets.

KEITH GUNDERSON  
**You'll Catch A Pollack**

you put a mussel on  
 you'll catch a pollack  
 you put a clam on  
 you'll catch a pollack  
 you put a shrimp on  
 you'll catch a pollack  
 you put a worm on  
 you'll catch a pollack  
 you put a minnow and no weight just let it swim free  
 you'll catch a pollack  
 you put a minnow on  
 and lots of weight  
 send it  
 way  
 down  
 to the  
 blup  
 to the  
 bottom  
 you'll catch a pollack  
 you put a fancy jig on  
 which cost \$3.79  
 and is designed for albacore  
 you'll catch a pollack  
 you put on that freshwater lure  
 you'd won as a doorprize  
 which you were never going to use  
 because it's so crazy looking  
 some woman had picked it out  
 for the occasion  
 you'll catch a pollack  
 you put on the head of a pollack  
 you've cut up  
 you'll catch a pollack  
 you put on the head of the pollack  
 which ate the pollack-head  
 you'll catch a pollack  
 you put on a piece of your ham sandwich  
 just to see  
 you'll catch a pollack  
 you put on any of the anythings you might put on  
 at any time of the year  
 and even when none of the other fish are biting  
 you'll catch a pollack  
 but I met a guy from Rake, Iowa  
 who drives up to Casco Bay in Maine  
 as fast as he can  
 at the end of August  
 just so he can get in on  
 the pollack fishing

RING LARDNER

He gave her a look that you  
 could have poured on a waffle.

WILLIAM H. GASS  
*(Finding A Form)*

I believe that the artist's  
 fundamental loyalty must be to  
 form, and his energy employed  
 in the activity of making. Every  
 other diddly desire can find  
 expression; every crackpot idea  
 or local obsession, every bias  
 and graciousness and mark of  
 malice, may have an hour; but it  
 must never be allowed to carry  
 the day.

GERTRUDE STEIN

There was also Glenway Wescott  
 but Glenway Wescott at no time  
 interested Gertrude Stein. He  
 has a certain syrup but it does  
 not pour.

HENNY YOUNGMAN

Some guy was complaining that  
 he's so old he can't remember his  
 age anymore. And an old lady  
 says to him, "I'll tell you how old  
 you are—take off your clothes  
 and bend over." So the guy does  
 this, and the old woman says,  
 "You're 74 years old!" "How can  
 you tell?," the man asks. And  
 the woman says, "You told me  
 yesterday."

## JOSEPH LANGLAND

Poetry is a rhythmic and emotional form of elevated speech. Speech is the most pervasive source of power in our world. Poetry is one of the great laboratories of our language. Poetry has a primary interest in play, serious play; poetry is word play. Most poetry is not interested in neutrality or balanced argument; it pursues the bias of its particular subject with emotional fervor. Poetry could never be the primary source of communication in any society; it is too unbalanced. But it is a remarkable and superb balance to the standard of our daily thought and speech.

## ULLA E. DYDO

It is not the mind that puts the words in order but the words that open the mind to possibilities of order.

## ANON

A policeman spotted a woman who was driving and knitting at the same time. "Pull over!" he yelled. "No, officer, it's a scarf."

■ **Problem Solved: A Primer in Design and Communication** by Michael Johnson. Phaidon Press; New York NY, 2004. 288 pp., 400 color and 150 b&w illus. Paperbound, \$29.95. ISBN 0-7148-4453-5.

IN THE U.S., where art schools are often a mixture of artists and designers, the former are typically said to "create" works of art while the latter are apt to more modestly claim that they only "solve problems." To put it another way (as does this book's author), "[while] a fine art student can get away with creating his or her own problems to solve, a communications student is usually handed someone else's, with a looming deadline thrown in." It is itself a problem that designers always have to deal with limitations of time, function, budget, style and print production, and it leads to unending discussions about whether or not it would help to compile a typology (a comprehensive directory) of kinds of problems, and having done so, to identify trustworthy, time-saving means to address those problems. Among the best-known books on this was *Forget All the Rules You Ever Learned About Graphic Design* (1981), by Bob Gill, whose influence is acknowledged in the introduction to this book. Of related significance are books by Edward de Bono (not mentioned here), who wrote interminably about what he called "lateral thinking"; *A Smile in the Mind* by Beryl McAlhone and David Stuart (1996); and, more recently, *The Art of Looking Sideways* by Alan Fletcher (2001). This book by a British designer who is Creative Director of Johnson Banks is the paperbound edition of a title that was first released by Phaidon in 2002. Given the excellence and extraordinary number of its illustrations, as well as its vigorous, literate tone, it is a deserving addition to the always ongoing debate in design about how to arrive at proposals that are at once unexpected and appropriate. There are eighteen sections in this book, each given to a certain kind of communication problem, the point of which is summed up by a memorable heading that (consistent with the samples shown) is both surprising and suitable. There are, for example, chapters about such themes as evolution versus revolution, doing more while using less, making fresh use of historical styles, finding legitimate ways to resolve ethical imbraglios, effectively designing for education, and so on. With each turn of the page, one encounters the finest examples of wit (ranging from hilarious to offensive), such as the political billboard of a pregnant Tony Blair that reads "Four Years of Labour and He Still Hasn't Delivered"; or a book of short stories by Vladimir Nabokov (who was not only a writer but a prominent butterfly expert as well) in which the letters of the author's name on the cover are mounted on pins in a butterfly case; or a recent ad for Volkswagen in which three of the redesigned Beetles appear to be feeding like piglets at the chassis of an older van. —RB



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RODNEY  
DANGERFIELD  
When I played in the  
sandbox the cat kept  
covering me up.

E. E. CUMMINGS  
All ignorance toboggans into know  
and trudges up to ignorance again.

BURMA-SHAVE  
Her chariot  
Raced at 80 per  
They hauled away  
What had  
Ben Hur

KURT  
SCHWITTERS  
I have devoted my  
life to poeting and  
paintry.

LITTLE  
RICHARD  
My music made your  
liver quiver, your  
bladder splatter, and  
your knees freeze.

ALAN  
FLETCHER  
(*The Art of Looking  
Sideways*) I made  
my weekly telephone  
call to my mother.  
"What have you been  
up to this week,"  
she asked—as usual.  
"Nothing much," I  
responded—as usual.  
Then adven-  
turally said, "I've  
been putting a  
book together." "Oh,  
what's it about," she  
queried—with vague  
interest. My mother  
wasn't into reading,  
she equated it with  
working. "Well," I  
improvised, "it's  
about seeing." "Oh, I  
see"—she said. Then  
changed the subject.  
"Are you looking  
forward to going on  
holiday next week?"



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