

Winter 2004

## Ballast Quarterly Review, v20n2, Winter 2004-2005

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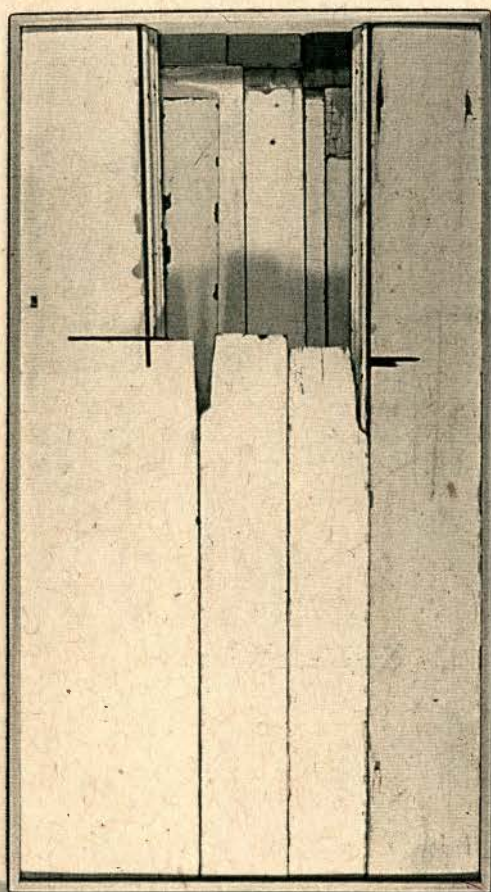
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DANIEL  
WEISS

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**ROBERT  
DOUGLAS-  
FAIRHURST**

("Melting Away")  
[The act of writing]  
is always partial: it  
involves the choice  
of some words rather  
than others, and  
choice requires rejection: As Henry James  
observed, "Stopping,  
that's art": the writer  
must know what to  
shut out, when to  
shut up. ■

**RALPH WALDO  
EMERSON**

No man should travel  
until he has learned  
the language of the  
country he visits.  
Otherwise he voluntarily  
makes himself  
into a great baby—so  
helpless and so  
ridiculous. ■

**MURIEL SPARK** (*Memento Mori*) The real rise of democracy in the British Isles occurred in Scotland by means of Queen Victoria's [weakness of the] bladder... When she went to stay at Balmoral in her latter years a number of privies were caused to be built at the back of little cottages which had not previously possessed privies. This was to enable the Queen to go on her morning drive round the countryside in comfort, and to descend from her carriage from time to time, ostensibly to visit the humble cottagers in their dwellings. Eventually, word went round that Queen Victoria was exceedingly democratic. Of course it was all due to her little weakness. But everyone copied the Queen and the idea spread, and now you see we have a great democracy. ■

BALLAST is an acronym for Books Art Language Logic Ambiguity Science and Teaching, as well as a distant allusion to *Blast*, the short-lived publication founded during World War I by Wyndham Lewis, the Vorticist artist and writer. BALLAST is mainly a pastiche of astonishing passages from books, magazines, diaries and other writings. Put differently, it is a journal devoted to wit, the contents of which are intended to be insightful, amusing or thought provoking.

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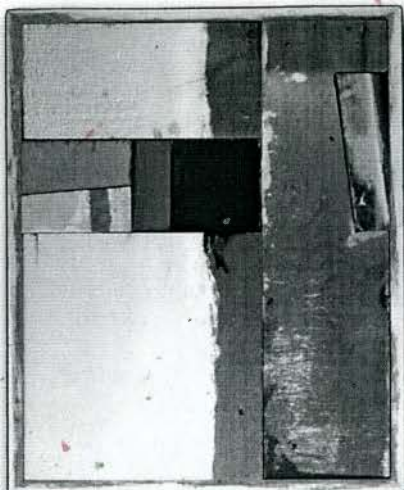
**ELIZABETH SMART** (*By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept*) I am over-run, jungled in my bed, I am infested with a menagerie of desires: my heart is eaten like a dove, a cat scrambles in the cave of my sex, hounds in my head obey a whipmaster who cries nothing but havoc as the hours test my endurance with an accumulation of tortures. Who, if I cried, would hear me among the angelic orders? ■

COVER

**DANIEL WEISS**

*White Coat* (2004)  
Wood, paint, nails  
25.75h x 14w x 2.5d in





LEFT

**DANIEL WEISS***Farmington Painting* (2004)

Wood, paint, nails

14h x 11w x 1.25d in

**HEATHER McHUGH** (in *Poets Teaching Poets*) [Her essay "Moving Means, Meaning Moves: Notes on Lyric Destination"] first took form as a lecture given in Bergen, Norway (a place where, as no tourist agency likes to tell you, it rains 305 days a year; in some senses, every destination is unexpected). I was there for one academic quarter, without the benefit of any knowledge of Norwegian, and it reminded me of the general truth that poets bear a naive or estranged relation to language. For example, it kept striking me as concretely evocative that the word for *speak* was *snakker*: "Snakker du engelsk?" smacked of "Do you eat English?" (not the fast food of choice, in America). And every time I saw that perfectly innocent Norwegian phrase meaning "Very good," I was subject to a sudden sense of titillating oxymoron: the Norwegian reads *bare bra* and cannot help packing, in an American eye, considerable wallop. ■

ART SCHOOL catalogs from the turn of the century are filled with reproductions of student paintings that look like slavish copies of John Singér Sargent or Henri Toulouse-Lautrec, and exhibitions catalogs from the 1950s show hundreds of students works that emulate abstract expressionism. The lesson I draw from looking at older art school catalogs and graduation exhibitions is that fifty years from now even the most diverse-looking work will begin to seem quite homogeneous. Works that seemed new or promising will fade into what they really are: average works, mediocre attempts to emulate the styles of the day. That's depressing, I know: but it's what history teaches us.

**JAMES ELKINS** *Why Art Cannot Be Taught* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), p. 68. ■

**ROSE****MACAULAY***(Crewe Train)*

Love's a disease.  
But curable...  
Did you ever  
look through a  
microscope at a  
drop of pond water?  
You see plenty of  
love there. All the  
amoebae getting  
married. I presume  
they think it very  
exciting and impor-  
tant. We don't. ■

**JOSH BILLINGS** Love iz like the meazles; we kant have it bad but onst, and the latter in life we hav it the tuffer it goes with us. ■

**LES COLEMAN**

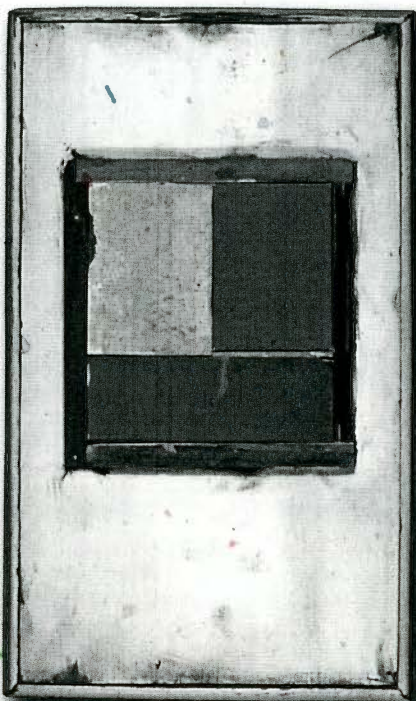
The hangman's wife wore a rope neckless. ■

RIGHT

**DANIEL WEISS**

*Air and Architecture 2*  
(2003)

Wood, paint,  
cardboard box, nails  
21h x 12.5w x 2.25d in



[IN 1947 OR 1948, George A. Wolf, Jr was a young physician in New York. One weekend he was asked to take the emergency calls of one of his professors, who was John Dewey's doctor. The American philosopher, who was in his late eighties] had gone for a walk on Fifth Avenue, slipped and hurt his shoulder. I was called to see him which I did in his apartment. The old gentleman was literally quivering in pain and his new wife was most apprehensive...I am an internalist but I remembered from medical school orthopedics a maneuver, somewhat old fashioned, said to reduce such dislocations occasionally.

The patient was in so much pain that I decided to try the maneuver. It consisted of taking off my shoe, sitting on the foot of Dr. Dewey's bed, placing my sock covered foot in Dr. Dewey's armpit, grasping his hand and forearm on the affected side and gently pulling... Suddenly, there was a feeling that the bone had slipped back into place. My memory tells me that it was a loud satisfying crack but my biological training tells me that both Dr. Dewey and I were so relieved, he of his pain and I of my apprehension, that the event was really very quiet. He stopped shaking, looked at me gratefully, and smiled a little smile. He said the appropriate thank you's, as did his wife.

The amusing part was that as I put my foot in the suffering gentleman's armpit (axilla), I said, "Pardon me, Dr. Dewey."

**GEORGE A. WOLF, JR**, quoted in Robert Bruce Williams, ed., *John Dewey, Recollections* (Washington DC: University Press of America, 1970), pp. 172-173. ■

AMERICAN BOOK designer Merle Armitage, who married four or five times, was notorious for his lustiness. His friend Robert Purcell wrote, in *Merle Armitage Was Here!*, "In the world of lust, [Jimmy] Carter was a peanut compared to Merle Armitage." ■

**ELIZABETH JENKINS** (*The Tortoise and the Hare*) If you take a woman fishing, it has to be a dull one. Anybody lively scares away the fish. There's a special type of woman, in fact, who is chosen for fishing holidays. My uncle had a friend, old General Mather, who used to take a particular woman away with him twice every year, simply to fish with.

And was she boring?

To madness, in ordinary life. But just the thing for fishing. And being in the open air all day made him very sleepy, so he needed someone dull to sit in hotel lounges in the evening. ■

**VLADIMIR NABOKOV** (*Speak, Memory*) America has shown even more of this morbid interest in my retinary activities [of butterfly collecting] than other countries have—perhaps because I was in my forties when I came there to live, and the older the man, the queerer he looks with a butterfly net in his hand. Stern farmers have drawn my attention to NO FISHING signs; from cars passing me on the highway have come wild howls of derision; sleepy dogs, though unmindful of the worst bum, have perked up and come at me, snarling; tiny tots have pointed me out to their puzzled mamas; broad-minded vacationists have asked me whether I was catching bugs for bait; and one morning on a wasteland, lit by tall yuccas in bloom, near Santa Fe, a big black mare followed me for more than a mile. ■

...I WAS WITH [American-born British artist Sir Jacob] Epstein the sculptor [circa 1940] when [Abraham] Ratner brought [American philosopher John] Dewey for tea because sittings had to be arranged for a head of Dewey that someone had paid for. The head, like the one of [Albert] Einstein, was among the worst that Epstein did...

The Epstein encounter was a raucous one. Dewey was ill at ease in a sculptor's home, particularly one as superficially disorganized as Epstein's. Epstein, like most artists, had nothing but contempt for academics. So he said, with marked sarcasm, "Well, Professor Dewey, when do you think we should have these sittings?" Dewey got the sarcasm all right, and like most ill-at-ease people thought to save himself by relaxing the situation, foolishly said, "Don't call me Professor Dewey, just Mr. Dewey." But Epstein, who was the Whistler of his day, shot back, "Oh well, in London they just call me 'Epstein,'" which was perfectly true. But Dewey was so embarrassed he upset his cup of tea and seemed completely in rout.

**JAMES K. FEIBLEMAN** in Robert Bruce Williams, ed., *John Dewey: Recollections* (Washington DC: University Press of America, 1982), pp. 57-58. ■

**LES COLEMAN**  
Cavemen discouraged their children from scribbling on the cave walls. ■

**LES COLEMAN**  
Ventriloquists drink gottled geer. ■

**LES COLEMAN**

You can sure that it it's in small print, it should be in large print. ■

**GEORGE COURTAULD**

Waiting for a bus is about as thrilling as fishing, with the similar tantalisation that something, sometime, somehow, will turn up. ■

**LES COLEMAN**

There is no future in being a clairvoyant. ■



**LEWIS CARROLL**[*Sylvie and Bruno*]

"But why do you say 'Dindledums,' Bruno? *Dandelions* is the right word." "It's because he jumps about so," Sylvie said, laughing. "Yes, that's it," Bruno assented. "Sylvie tells me the words, and then, when I jump about, they get shaken up in my head—till they're all froth!" ■

ONE OF my ancestors had once driven a carriage for Napoleon when he was fleeing Russia because the czar had made a bargain with Napoleon to provide transport through Germany, which is where my family came from. Later on, the family came to the US to live.

This ancestor was a very old man. He was poor of eyesight, he was hard of hearing, and he had no sense of smell whatsoever. They lived out in the woods and he didn't recognize many of the animals here or how they lived.

So one day he was strolling there with his walking cane and his Sunday best, and he came upon a skunk. The skunk of course had a nice big stripe up his tail and a great plume and it reminded him of Napoleon whom he had driven in his carriage. And he said, "Well, Napoleon, what are you doing here?" He took his cane and gave the skunk a big smack and of course the skunk retaliated. The old gentleman was completely unaware of it because he had no sense of smell and he returned home but no one would let him in the house. They made him go to the barn where they burned the Sunday clothes which he had brought all the way from Germany.

**CAROL MAAS** quoted in Steven J. Zeitlin, et al, *A Celebration of American Family Folklore* (NY: Pantheon Books, 1982). ■

IN MY WHOLE adult life I think I have never asked anyone for anything. I have not only faced all the problems in my life alone but have also solved them alone. I left Halle alone, searched for and found a workshop and a house in Holland; in the USA looked around for six months, then taught two years in a college (so that Franz [Wildenhain, her husband, stranded in Europe] could come), then finally built up a workshop and made it livable. (Slept on the ground for four months, cooked primitively with only cold water and a small shepherd's oven and built up my workshop from a cow barn, etc., etc.) Always alone. Even nowadays I never ask anyone for anything. Whatever I receive, and that is a great deal, comes from my students who love me, and that is the greatest joy of my whole life. For these students too the time that they spend or have spent with me here is the greatest experience of their lives.

**MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN** (Bauhaus-trained French-German American potter) in a letter to her former teacher, Gerhard Marcks, in Ruth Kath, ed., *The Letters of Gerhard Marcks and Marguerite Wildenhain 1970-1981: A Mingling of Souls* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1991), pp. 160-161. ■

**G.K. CHESTERTON**

A great deal of contemporary criticism reads to me like a man saying: "Of course I do not like green cheese: I am very fond of brown sherry." ■



LEFT  
**DANIEL WEISS**  
*I Spoke of This House*  
 (2003)  
 Wood, paint, book, nails  
 22.25h x 15w x 2d in

ONE DAY my dad got hurt on the job and as a result, he said he couldn't bear to put any weight on his heels. The doctors, however, said it was all in his mind, and they sent him to a psychiatrist. This irked him, so my dad said, "If they want to think I'm crazy, I'll make them think I'm crazy." So he goes to the doctor's office, and the doctor brings out the Rorschach ink-blot tests. The doctor laid these cards down in front my father, and dad reached over, picked them up, shuffled them and dealt them out for a hand of Five Card Draw and said, "I'll open for a dollar." This was good enough to prompt the psychiatrist to report to the company lawyers, "He's a good boy, but he's crazy as hell."

**DANIEL HUMPHREY** quoted in Steven J. Zeitlin, et al, *A Celebration of American Family Folklore* (NY: Pantheon Books, 1982). ■

[DURING WORLD WAR I, Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw attended a rehearsal of an amateur wartime production of one of his plays, as produced by British airmen. Later, the unit's officer recalled that] I sat behind him in the empty Mess at this rehearsal. He laughed throughout the performance and enjoyed himself enormously. I thought it a curious sight to see an author laughing at his own jokes, and at the end leaned over and said to him: "I'm glad you appreciate our poor efforts at your play, sir." He could scarcely speak for laughing. "D'you know," he said, "if I had thought the stuff would prove to be as poor as this, I'd never have written it."

**DAVID POWELL** quoted in A.M. Gibb, ed., *Shaw: Interviews and Recollections* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1990). ■

**ILYA BOLOTOWSKY**  
 [Russian-born painter who, while teaching at Black Mountain College, resented the influence of Bauhaus painter Josef Albers. Bolotowsky said that Black Mountain was] the outhouse of the Bauhaus. ■

**LES COLEMAN**  
 The dice had never learned to count beyond six. ■



RIGHT

**DANIEL WEISS**

*Drawing for a Field*  
*(Form for the Years 2)*  
 (2004)

Wood, paint, nails, glass,  
 masking tape  
 24h x 15.25w x 1.75d in

**LES COLEMAN**

Terror struck at  
 the very heart of his  
 epiglottis. ■

"I INCLINE TO the theory that the plays of Shakespeare were written by Bacon."

"How could they be?" said William... "How could that man Ham—"

"I said Bacon."

"Well, it's nearly the same... Well, if this man Bacon wrote them, they wouldn't put this man Shakespeare's name on the books..."

"Now, boys, I want you all please to listen to me... There was a man called Hamlet—"

"You just said he was called Bacon," said William.

"I did *not* say he was called Bacon."

"Yes, 'scuse me, you did... When I called him Ham, you said it was Bacon, and now you're calling him Ham yourself."

"This was a different man... *Listen!* This man was called Hamlet and his uncle had killed his father because he wanted to marry his mother."

"What did he want to marry his mother for?" said William...

"It was *Hamlet's* mother he wanted to marry."

"Oh, that man what you think wrote the plays."

"No, that was Bacon."

"You said it was Ham a minute ago... I tell you what," said William confidently, "let's say Eggs for both of them."

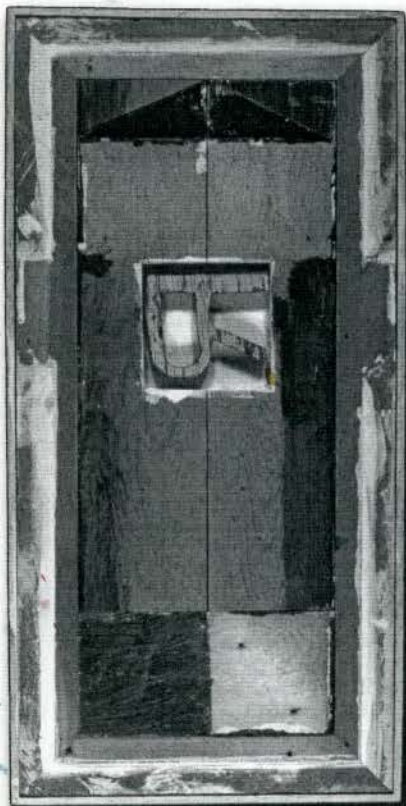
**RICHMAL CROMPTON** *William's Treasure Trove* (London: George Newnes, 1962). ■

"IS YOUR maid called Florence?" "Her name is Florinda." "What an extraordinary name to give a maid!" "I did not give it to her; she arrived into my service already christened." "What I mean is," said Mrs Riversedge, "that when I get maids with unsuitable names I call them Jane; they soon get used to it." "An excellent plan," said the aunt of Clovis coldly; "unfortunately I have got used to being called Jane myself. It happens to be my name."

**SAKI** *The Chronicles of Clovis* (London: John Lane, 1926). ■

"IT'S GIVING girls names like that [Euphemia]," said Buggins, "that nine times out of ten makes 'em go wrong. If unsettles 'em. If ever I was to have a girl, if ever I was to have a dozen girls, I'd call 'em all Jane."

**H.G. WELLS** *Kipps* (London: Collins, 1925). ■



LEFT

**DANIEL WEISS**

*Poet Painting 2* (2003)

Wood, paint, nails

22.75h x 11.25w x 1.25d in

**GARRISON**

**KEILLOR**

They say such nice things about people at their funerals that it makes me sad to realize I'm going to miss mine by just a few days. ■

ON THE FIRST day [at an art school in Hamburg] I was placed in an enormously large studio in front of a cactus plant, which I had to draw for many hours, everyday for several weeks, and all these weeks I was alone in the studio. Two other students of Professor X, who called themselves master students, worked in another studio. Twice each day, Professor X entered the room to take a look at my drawings, glancing over the rim of his spectacles and shaking his head disapprovingly before leaving the room, without saying a word. I was very unhappy then.

One day I met my former art teacher from high school. I told him about my Kafka-like experience. He said in his Berlin dialect: "Man, you are nuts to waste your time there. If I were young today I would go and study at the Bauhaus. There they have some quite different ideas from your Herr Professor X."

**HANNES BECKMANN** (Bauhaus-trained photographer) as quoted in Eckhard Neumann, ed., in *Bauhaus and Bauhaus People* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1993), pp. 205-206. ■

**LES COLEMAN**

The smell was blinding. ■

ON THE SECOND night of his visit, our distinguished guest [Sir Charles Dilke] met Laura in the passage on her way to bed; he said to her: "If you will kiss me, I will give you a signed photograph of myself." To which she answered: "It's awfully good of you, Sir Charles, but I would rather not, for what on earth would I do with the photograph?"

LES

COLEMAN

A crucifixion complex. ■

**MARGOT ASQUITH** *Autobiography* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1920). ■

### ■ Lumière and Company

A film by Sarah Moon. 1995. DVD. 88 minutes. Color and Black and White. English and French with English subtitles. Distributed in the U.S. by Fox Lorber Home Video. \$24.98.

THE LATIN FOR "light" is lumen. What a wonderful verbal coincidence then that the Lumière brothers, Auguste and Louis, were the first to patent in 1895 a motion picture camera, which they called a "cinematograph." Housed inside a wooden box and operated by a hand crank, their camera not only took pictures, it also projected them. Using it, they made their first now-famous films, each lasting about 52 seconds, including a view of the workers leaving the Lumière Factory at the end of the day (said to be the first motion picture), the arrival of a locomotive at a French railroad station (both reproduced and then parodied in this production), and a water spraying prank played on a gardener (which greatly delighted the audience then). This current film, which was released initially in 1995 as a 100-year tribute to the Lumière brothers, is an annotated series of forty brief films (some far more interesting than others) that were made, in response to a challenge, by an equal number of today's most famous film directors (among them David Lynch, Arthur Penn, Wim Wenders, Spike Lee, Ishmael Merchant and James Ivory, Liv Ullman, Peter Greenaway, Zhang Yimou, and John Boorman), in which they agreed to photograph with a restored version of the original Lumière camera, to limit themselves to three takes, no synchronous sound (although sound tracks could later be added), and to stay within a total time of 52 seconds. Judging from the results (described by one critic as "cinematic haiku"), as well as from the comments by the participating directors, this must have been enormously difficult, and presumably lots of directors declined. As a consequence, each film is more or less unique, making it very difficult to compare one result with another, or to rank them in terms of their final success. In retrospect, I recall that I was particularly moved by Romanian director Lucian Pintilie's film of the departure of a military-looking helicopter, in which the oddest assortment of beings (both human and non-) appear to be trying to scramble aboard. In that brief sequence, I was reminded emotionally of some of the most unforgettable moments from the films of Federico Fellini, and, on the other hand, of that forever ghoulish farce, at the end of the Vietnam War, when the last American helicopter departed hurriedly from the roof of the American Embassy in Saigon (with clinging people falling off), denying life and safety to loyal Vietnamese embassy workers, who had assisted the Americans, thus putting their fate in the hands of the invading army. One final point: I found that much of my interest in this production had less to do with cinematography or film history than with my own fascination (as a teacher) with the idea of provoking uncommon responses from students by insisting that they work within an unfamiliar set of limitations (an unpopular idea at the moment, since some would consider it contrary to a more self-centered use of the word "creativity"). I am not sure if necessity is the mother of invention, but I do know that novel ideas result (reliably) from working within limitations. As a graphic design teacher, nearly all the problems I present in my classroom are set up in a form that resembles the set of constraints that were given to these courageous film directors.—RB



**■ MARGUERITE A Diary to Franz WILDENHAIN**

Compiled by Dean L. Schwarz. South Bear Press, Decorah, Iowa, 2004. 154 pp., illus. color and b/w. Paper, \$39.95. ISBN 0-9761381-1-5. Available from South Bear Press, 2248 South Bear Road, Decorah, Iowa 52101 for \$43.95 postpaid, or inquire at <dschwarz50@hotmail.com>.

I MYSELF GAINED immeasurably from this book, in part because it is about the psychological life of a French-German ceramic artist named Marguerite Wildenhain, who was one of the first students at the Weimar Bauhaus. She was also one of my teachers, as was this book's compiler, American potter Dean Schwarz. Together, in the summer of 1964, he and I attended Wildenhain's Bauhaus-styled pottery school, called Pond Farm, near Guerneville, California. While I was never a serious potter, he returned to work with her year after year, introduced other students to her methods and philosophy, and founded his own influential school, called South Bear, near Decorah, Iowa. As Wildenhain aged, she advised that students study at South Bear before applying to work with her. As a consequence, today, Decorah's nearby Luther College houses the largest U.S.-based collection of Wildenhain-related artifacts and research documents (called The Pond Farm Collection), among them dozens of original works by Wildenhain, the German sculptors Gerhard Marcks (her form-master at the Weimar Bauhaus), Franz Wildenhain (to whom she was married before they separated and he resettled at RIT), and many of her students. Another major reason for this book's significance is that virtually everything in it has not been published previously. Let me explain: Pond Farm School (which has since become part of California's Austin Creek State Park) was actually established through the efforts of Gordon Herr, a Bay-area architect who for years had wanted to set up an artists' colony in northern California. With that in mind, he traveled to Europe in early 1939, to seek out other artists whose work and attitudes might be compatible with those of his wife Jane and himself. While in Holland, he stayed for a week in a pottery shop in Putten called Het Kruike ("little jug"), that was owned by the Wildenhains. Herr convinced the couple that they should emigrate to California and join his anticipated colony. As it happened, Marguerite (a French citizen, of Jewish ancestry) was able to set sail for the U.S. in early 1940, while her husband (a German citizen) was not allowed to leave. As a result, the Wildenhains were physically separated for seven years, and, during the first months of that period, had no contact of any kind. So Marguerite did not know her husband's whereabouts, nor even if he had survived (as it turned out, he had been forced to join the German Army). During part of that time (especially as she traveled slowly across the U.S., en route to California), she made drawings and letter-like entries to Franz in a diary of sorts. This book is the first publication of those pages, with her text translated into English. Throughout, her words are supplemented by wonderfully rich illustrations (vintage drawings and photographs, examples of her pottery, specimens from their rock collection, and a suite of commemorative woodblock prints by Luther's David Kamm). A conspicuous highlight is a stunning sepia photograph of a beautiful and exquisitely dressed Marguerite in 1929. The richness of her diary is largely because of her candor in describing what and who she meets: For example, her drawing and description of Niagara Falls, or her disgust in response to a visit to the School of Design in Chicago of former Bauhaus teacher Laszlo Moholy-Nagy ("I thanked him, but I was glad to get out of that joint. A real proletariat of the arts.") Artists, designers, art historians, women's studies scholars, and historians in general will find this book of value. In addition, any readers who has been in love, or married to someone from whom they've become separated, for whatever reason, should find themselves drawn into the painful details of the text.—RB

**LAURA Z. HOBSON**

Where did ideas come from, anyway? This one had leaped at him when he'd been exhausted, AWOL from his search. ■

**LES COLEMAN**

Please refrain from prohibiting. ■

### ■ The Way Things Go

A film by Peter Fischli and David Weiss. 1987. DVD. 30 minutes. Color. Distributed in the U.S. by First Run / Icarus Films, 32 Court Street, 21st Floor, Brooklyn NY 11202. Website: [www.frif.com](http://www.frif.com).

THIS IS A reissue of a delightfully curious, offbeat film that was released originally in 1987. Seeing it now for the first time, I find it fresh and instructive, in part because it reaffirms what I and other teachers gained in the 1970s from reading books and essays by Claude Lévi-Strauss, Edmund Leach, Mary Douglas and other structural anthropologists. As were they, we were particularly interested in the concept of bricolage, the idea that learning might often result, not from intractable scientific inquiry, but from deliberately goofing around—from improvisation. Among the heroes we unearthed was an American cartoonist named Rube Goldberg (1883-1970), who, in the 1920s and 30s, had published satirical drawings about a fictional Professor Butts, a hopeless academic nerd (an absent-minded professor) who made absurdly complex schemes with which to accomplish the easiest tasks. When I began teaching in the early 1970s, we launched a humorous annual event called the Rube Goldberg Drawing Machine Contest, in which students of art and design, using only the most prosaic materials, were challenged to devise "machines" that produced some kind of discernible mark (or "drawing"). The results were not only amusing—they were almost always amazing as well. This film is an artists' view of more or less the same process. Precisely choreographed and then just as exactly recorded in a large warehouse, it consists of the step-by-step evidence of a chain reaction that was collaboratively devised by two Swiss artists, Peter Fischli and David Weiss. Throughout the process, these two artists (whom we never see, nor is there any narration) use such common household trash as balloons, tires, wooden ramps, and teakettles, combined with an amateur's knowledge about water, fire, gravity, gunpowder, and other basic chemical props. Once triggered, this process continues for a half hour, and at times it may even feel longer. Having once been excited by experimenting with bricolage, I myself never lost interest in the film's events—but the process is repetitive and, in fairness to others, not everyone will be awake when the film ends.—RB ↯

### LES COLEMAN

Seaside holidays should be seen as a last resort. ■

### HERMANN HESSE

If you hate a person, you hate something in him that is part of yourself. ■

### PAUL RAND

Making something bold and making it all caps is like wearing a belt with suspenders. ■

**CARL MARX** (quoted in *Bauhaus and Bauhaus People*) [One day at the Bauhaus, Joost Schmidt, who taught typography, was cautioning his students about the importance of avoiding extraneous decorative elements in typography] when Martin Hesse (a wildly polemical fellow fond of sarcasm), the Swiss foster son of the writer Hermann Hesse, raised his hand and, in Swiss German, blurted out the question: "But Herr Schmidt, why then do you wear a necktie?" Suddenly we realized—for the very first time—that little Schmidt did indeed wear a cravat... Of course, the selected color ensemble consisting of shirt, tie, and lounge jacket was just that—an ensemble—and worked as a good poster works, as a unit. The cravat was not an "extra." Joost Schmidt reached for his chest and, for a split second, remained silent. But then a sovereign grin spilled over his entire being as he said, "Well, yes, that's how it is," and refused to succumb to argumentation. His face exuded kindness, he was in control of himself... ■

### LES COLEMAN

Audience tells stand up comedian to sit down. ■

EVERY TIME we came home from the store with a new jar of peanut butter, my dad, when we would go out of the room, would write the initials of the one he thought had been the best that week. And then the next morning, or whenever we'd go to open the peanut butter to put on our toast or something, he'd call the person, and they'd come running around, and he'd say, "Oh, look what's here!" And he would tell us that it was the little fairy that lived in the light downstairs, whose name was Matilda and that she had done it. That used to make you be good so you could get your name in the peanut butter.

**EMILY SARDONIA** quoted in Steven J. Zeitlin, et al, *A Celebration of American Family Folklore* (NY: Pantheon Books, 1982) ■

HE [HIS FATHER] was always telling stories about himself. He'd say this or that wonderful thing had happened to him. It might be something that made him look like a fool. He didn't care. If it was a story, he'd tell it.

He was like this, let's say an Irishman came to our house. Right away Father would say he was Irish. He'd tell what county in Ireland he was born in. He'd tell things that happened to him in Ireland when he was a boy. He'd make it seem so real, telling little details of his life as a boy in Ireland, that, if I hadn't known where he was born, in a county down in southern Ohio, I'd have believed him myself.

If it was a Scotchman the same thing happened. He became a Scotchman. He'd get a burr into his speech. Or he was a German or a Swede. He'd be anything the other man was.

I think now that they all knew he was lying but they seemed to like him just the same. As a boy that was what I couldn't understand.

**SHERWOOD ANDERSON** *A Story Teller's Story: Memoirs of Youth and Middle Age* (NY: Penguins, 1989) ■

GEORGE MOORE came to me one day and said, "O Yeats, I wish you would advise me on a matter that has been troubling me for years. How do you keep your little pants up that are inside your trousers?" And I said to him, "Moore, if you look at the tops of your little pants that are inside your trousers, you will see that they have small tapes fastened to them. And if you put the ends of your braces through the small tapes before you fasten them to your trouser buttons, your little pants will stay up inside your trousers." Moore thanked me and went away, and the next time I saw him he came up to me and said, "O Yeats—God bless ye."

**WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS** as reported by L.A.G. Strong in *London Magazine* Vol 2 No 3 (March 1955). ■

**GEORGE**

**BERNARD SHAW**

The photographer is like the cod, which produces a million eggs in order that one may reach maturity. ■

**LES COLEMAN**

The autobiography of a ghost writer. ■

**EMIL WILLIMETZ**

[a designer at Black Mountain College, described Josef Albers' approach to typesetting and designing as the] tausands technique... You do a *tausand* and then you can see which one is right. ■



**GARRISON****KEILLOR**

Sweet corn was our family's weakness. We were prepared to resist atheistic Communism, immoral Hollywood, hard liquor, gambling and dancing, smoking, fornication, but if Satan had come around with sweet corn, we at least would have listened to what he had to say. ■

**MARY****MCCARTHY**

In those days modern literature (like "creative writing") was not taught in school or in college... As with Prohibition liquor, you had to know somebody to get hold of the good stuff. Professional librarians were no help. ■

**LES COLEMAN**

Dogs bark at the moon. Cats meow to be let in. ■

**GLORIA****NAYLOR**

(*Mama Day*)

Hell was right now. Daddy always said that folks misread the Bible. Couldn't be no punishment worse than having to live here on earth, he said. ■

**■ How to Draw a Bunny**

A film by John Walter and Andrew Moore. 2004. DVD. 90 minutes. Color and Black and White. Distributed by Palm Pictures, 601 West 26th Street, 11th Floor, New York NY 10001. Website <[www.palmpictures.com](http://www.palmpictures.com)>. \$29.98.

THIS IS A documentary on the life, work and apparent suicide of American artist Ray Johnson (1927-1995). He and Pop Artist Robert Rauschenberg were students at the same time (c1946-48) at Black Mountain College, where two of the teachers who influenced him were Bauhaus painter Josef Albers and musician John Cage. Johnson could be very clever at times, as when he made an artwork from a pair of black and white saddle shoes—he painted JOHN on the toe of one shoe, and CAGE on the toe of the other. Perhaps because most of his efforts were experimental, irreverent, and more conceptual than tangible, his work was rarely exhibited, nor is he easy to categorize in the usual art movements. At times, he is regarded as an early practitioner of Pop, Fluxus and Performance Art. But he may also have originated Mail Art (in which he mailed cryptic drawings, including drawings of bunnies, to other artists, with instructions to "add to and return to Ray Johnson") and maybe even Happenings (which he called Nothings). Nevertheless, for all his apparent innovations, he was not widely known, so that, as someone once remarked (was it him?), he was "the most famous unknown artist in the world." In a way, this film is less about Johnson's odd life than it is about his mysterious death (at age 67) on January 13, 1995 (friday the thirteenth), a day on which he apparently drove for two hours from his New York home, and jumped from a bridge in Sag Harbor, near the end of Long Island. There was no explicit note, but his death by drowning was ruled a suicide, in part because (as explained in interviews in the film) he seems to have planted intentional clues, as if he hoped his death would be the finest and final accomplishment of "the original art-world prankster." As morbid as its subject is, this film is almost always fascinating and not infrequently funny as well. Mostly it holds ones attention because it features vintage snapshots, home movies, and videotapes (many of Johnson himself), mixed in with clips from interviews with his art dealers, the investigating police officer, and various friends and acquaintances, among them well-known artists like Richard Lippold, Roy Lichtenstein, Christo, Chuck Close, and James Rosenquist.—RB

**JEAN KERR**

Do you know how helpless you feel if you have a full cup of coffee in your hand and you start to sneeze? ■

**LADY JEKYLL**

The fussed shall be last, and the last shall be fussed. ■

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**AFTERTHOUGHTS** So much has happened in such a short time since the previous issue. One of my favorite high school teachers, Florence Helt, has died. I will always remember her kindnesses, but especially her insistence that we all memorize in Middle English the opening lines from the prologue to Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. I can still recite those, as can, I am encouraged to find, a small number of students graduating from high school even now.

Far more unexpectedly, my friend and mentor Guy Davenport revealed in a letter that he *too* was dying—as happened shortly after that. What an astonishing person he was, and one to whom I feel so indebted. When he first reviewed my work (which set off a ten-year correspondence), he said my collages were *scuola di* Max Ernst. But in time I think my writing grew increasingly *scuola di* Guy.

Meanwhile, this issue is an opportunity to share the richness of the work of an artist-teacher named **DANIEL WEISS** (who lives in Des Moines, Iowa), whose assemblages (comprised of wood scraps he retrieves from old house interiors) we first noticed at an exhibition a few years ago, at which time we both exclaimed (separately) "here is an artist who actually *sees*." Since then, his artwork has evolved in surprising yet perfectly reasonable ways. ■

**MARY WILSON  
LITTLE**

In some parts of Ireland the sleep which knows no waking is always followed by a wake which knows no sleeping. ■

**GREGORY ORR**

[What lyric poetry] seems to tell us is that you don't need to connect up all the dots for your reader. That in fact one of the reasons why we can't take a lot of pleasure in narrative poetry anymore is because in narrative we seem to be moving from A to B to C to D to E to F, and that's like stepping stones that are placed too close together in a stream... ■

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