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the black pot series and
DEAN SCHWARZ
on the death of his father



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LES COLEMAN

Fat chance of losing
 weight.

DONALD KRUGER

It's not really the
 doors of perception
 that artists constant-
 ly recreate, but only
 variations on the
 welcome mat.

RODNEY

DANGERFIELD

It's been a rough
 day. I got up this
 morning, put on a
 shirt and a button
 fell off. I picked up
 my briefcase and the
 handle came off. I'm
 afraid to go to the
 bathroom.

ADRIENNE

GUSOFF

I have often depend-
 ed on the blindness
 of strangers.

BALLAST is an acronym for Books Art Lan-
 guage 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 aston-
 ishing passages from books, magazines, diaries
 and other writings. Put differently, it is a jour-
 nal devoted to wit, the contents of which are
 intended to be insightful, amusing or thought
 provoking.

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FRANCINE DU PLESSIX GRAY (*Them: A Memoir of Parents*)

As children, I suspect, we are all born collaborationists; we do
 everything in our power to enchant and charm the enemy, to save
 our skins, to survive. With an enjoyment I knew to be infamous, I
 thrilled to the radiance of the young Germans' stern faces [in World
 War II, during the occupation of France]. I wanted to kill them, yet I
 felt the thrill of a child admiring anything that is sleek, streamlined,
 powerful. My crass little soul delighted in the pomp of uniforms, in
 all appurtenances of rank and might. I thought back with pity and
 rage to the haggard, desperate French soldiers we had seen on the
 road out of Paris. I stared hard at the young Germans, trying to
 summon up hatred, feeling disloyal to my father (who might at any
 moment, wherever he was, be killed by one of them) for admiring
 their beauty, their futurity. I know my mother felt no such ambiva-
 lence. She stood at the window in a defiant posture, her hands on
 her hips, as if confronting someone in a brawl, and quietly whis-
 pered, loathing in her voice, "*Quelle merde.*"

ANDRÉ BRETON

The man who can't
 visualize a horse
 galloping on a
 tomato is an idiot.

BEATRICE

LILLIE

In my experience,
 anyone can paint
 if he doesn't
 have to.

Dean L. Schwarz / Black Pot Series



ON THE DEATH OF MY FATHER, HIS FRANK-NESS

by Dean L. Schwarz

[Editor's note: One of my finest students once said to me, to my great surprise, that I had saved his life. For a moment, I thought he was joking. But he had come from a destitute background, and, although he was smart and resourceful, he had reason to assume that his future was bleak. In truth, he had saved his own life, for the only thing I did was simply to point out to him his own extraordinary capabilities. When I remember that moment, I cannot help but also think of my own education, and especially of one of my teachers, an Iowa-born painter and potter named Dean Schwarz, who, after a stint in the Navy, moved to my small hometown to become its art teacher, when I was a senior in high school. During Christmas break that year, he and I hitchhiked to New Orleans, on an excursion devoted to sketching. Meanwhile, he encouraged me to apply for college, in the process of which (with his prompting) I won an art scholarship that paid for my tuition for four years. Shortly after graduating from high school, I traveled to California with him to spend the summer with Bauhaus master potter Marguerite (Friedlander) Wildenhain. I have often thought that, as a result of his teaching, it was Dean who saved *my* life, and in the forty-plus years since I studied with him, our friendship has only grown stronger. His fam-

DOROTHEA
LANGE

The camera is an instrument that teaches people how to see without a camera.

HOWARD
NEMEROV

A teacher is a person who never says anything once.

JOSEPH EPSTEIN
(*A Line Out for a Walk*) [While on a book promotion tour] on television before an audience of I don't know how many millions, I gazed deep into the blue eyes of Phil Donahue to discover that they resembled the city of Oakland in Gertrude Stein's youth in that there was "no there there."

ANON

Excellent day for putting Slinkies on an escalator.

HENRY DAVID

THOREAU

Pursue, keep up
with, circle round
and round your
life... Know your own
bone: gnaw at it,
bury it, unearth it,
and gnaw at it still.

LIAM HUDSON

["Texts, Signs, Artefacts"] The arts in particular are seen [in our society] as peripheral, or—even worse—as "fun"; that is to say, as a simple emotional release that receives little professionally academic attention because it deserves none. Yet the briefest glance shows that poems, novels, paintings, photographs, plays, films of any quality are rarely fun, either for artist or for spectator; what is more, that they are at least as carefully poised, as subtly calculated in their effects, as any other genre of intellectual activity. Many take months, years, to put together, and at least as long to assimilate in any but a superficial way.

ily name *Schwarz* is German for *black*, and partly for that reason, some many years ago he created a series of memorable pots (my favorite of all the many he's made), all of which are entirely black, and known appropriately as "the black pots."

In this issue of BALLAST are reproductions of a few of the pots from that series, interwoven with a talk he gave on June 30, 2005, at the funeral of his father, Frank L. Schwarz, a welder from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, who passed away this summer.

Nearly four years before his father's death, Dean had compiled and published a 330-page book, titled *Paddled Tails from Tattled Tales: An Autobiography of a Family* (Decorah IA: South Bear Press, 2001), ISBN 1-890643-02-5. In part an oral history of the Schwarz and Sills families (who merged in 1937, with the marriage of Frank and Nona Schwarz), it also includes excerpts from what Frank described as his handwritten "Yellow Pages Memoirs," which he began in 1989, and tape-recorded memories by Frank's brother, Charlie.—RB]

IT IS WITH a mixture of pleasure and pain that I now stand where we, as family and friends, have stood so many times before, and where we will undoubtedly stand again in the future, when others also come to rest. Is it a blessing to be here? Will someone still be here to stand when we ourselves die? Surely, my "little sister" (Beverley) and my "knee-action brother" (Bill) will never fail to stand on behalf of our family. They know that the future is never the past, and that the present will only be good for those who strive to make it so. Beverley and Bill, I thank you, for your passion in making our father's departure from "the good life" a time that was also worth living. Beverley resides within a sweet bouquet of family, while Bill is receiving the benefits of family buds bursting into full bloom. We all give thanks for what we gained from the teaching of our parents. And to my wife, Gerry, and our children—and to their children's children—"I give thee flowers to strew thy way."

I myself have been lucky to know a handful of people who were not afraid to die. They and others like them found the courage to deal with the termination of their lives. My mother Nona, my father Frank, and (his brother) my Uncle Roger all died in the process of teaching, and each died with dignity. One used his observational skills to help others as a hospice volunteer—he knew how to

Dean L. Schwarz / Black Pot Series



LES COLEMAN

The deck of cards
was in no mood to
play.

GEORGE HARDIE

Wayne Thiebaud,
the American artist,
described painting a
letter O as a junior
in a sign writing
shop. The project
was not going well.
His boss advised
him, "You're looking
where you're going
rather than where
you want to be."

make wise use of medication. Another knew when to stop eating at a time when that resource failed to provide sustenance for the life that he desired. And yet another was consoled by the belief in having been visited by angels in the hospital.

My friend David Cavagnaro once said to me, "Dean, why fear death?" He went on to tell about thousands of people, from the widest range of cultures, who, in one way or another, were able to cross the border between life and death. Stamped on their passports is proof that they have traveled through an egg yoke yellow tunnel (free-range chickens, of course) of warmth and happiness. When their names were called to return to the life of that existence, they protested. They wanted to stay, they insisted. I have not yet experienced this but I know it is not wise to fear without cause. Fear is a tool that a person should use only rationally. We have enough problems without creating additional fears. Why invent new kinds of darkness when instead we might create more light, recalling the beauty of lilies of the valley of life?

The beloved man who has left us (Frank Lester Schwarz) will nonetheless always be with us. This is our prerogative, to which he contributed by living creatively. Of course there were exceptions: He was neither a god nor a demigod. Our family of independent thinkers has never been heavy enough to tip the balance of Dad's convictions. We have

BESSIE SMITH

Back in Black
Mountain
A chile will slap
your face
Babies cryin' for
licker
And all the birds
sing bass.

CHARLES

DICKENS

(*Great Expectations*)

Mrs. Joe was a very
clean housekeeper,
but had an exquisite
art of making her
cleanliness more
uncomfortable
and unacceptable
than the dirt itself.
Cleanliness is next to
Godliness, and some
people do the same
by religion.

**FRANK
SCHWARZ**
*(Paddled Tails
from Tattled Tales)*

Some time ago I wrote Mr. [George H.] Bush and let Mr. President know what I thought of Saudi Arabia and the battle of the sand box. Well today [January 12, 1991] this complainer received a letter from the Bush White House. Really nicely telling me that who cares, George ran this show and yes it, more than likely, will go on as planned. Letter signed by [a presidential assistant]. She also sent me a statement by the President, dated 11-30-90, real new statement from a very busy man who is trying to cover his mistakes by not moving his lips.

**MARTIN
VENEZKY**
*[It Is Beautiful
Then Gone]*

I don't encourage my work toward permanence. The materials I use—tape, cardboard, copy paper, pencil, wax—practically beg to disintegrate. If pieces flutter off, what remains means more to me. It can come apart. It ages. It is more alive than a digital file, whose permanence and fidelity have no precedence in our organic, decaying, wonderful world.



Dean L. Schwarz / Black Pot Series

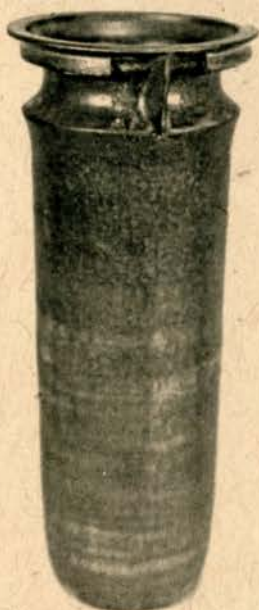
argued that chicken and fish are food, while he insisted that food was a form of hamburger. Meatloaf is food. And when Nona, his Ruby, went to the reward of her convictions, Frank's global world shrank to the size of a Swedish meatball. As a result, for the past few years, he wanted most to join his wife—our mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, great, forever great. So now our feet are expected to make giant footprints, our legacy from their legacy.

We are all related. Perhaps there was an Adam and Eve, in the form of many truths at least. Whether metaphor, science, religion, or philosophy makes no difference. Choice need not divide us, I hope.

My father, Frank Schwarz, showed us some incredible changes in his lifetime. Rising from his own father's labors in a world of steel, he himself became a welder, a "master welder." And then when everyone thought he had done enough and that his life was set in steel (even his games, such as horseshoe, were steel), he suddenly went back to school. With an outlandish bravado, he said to his teacher (as he entered the college classroom for the first time) that "I will not accept anything but an A in this class." And that, indeed, was what he received, and continued to achieve.

And then he became an avid reader. Previously he had only read a few books, including *God's Little Acre*. His brother Gail, who was the most successful entrepreneur in our family, had only read one book in his whole

Dean L. Schwarz / Black Pot Series



MARINA
WARNER
(*Alone of All
Her Sex*)

[In] a manual written around 1372 by a father for his daughters, the chevalier...when discussing womanly obedience describes as exemplary the reaction of a wife who, when ordered by her husband, "*Sal sur la table*," leapt on the table when he was merely asking her to pass the salt.

MARCEL PROUST
There are optical illusions in time as well as space.

life, *Smoky the Cow Horse*. But now Frank began to read about history, which led in turn to reading about other cultures. No one could have anticipated that.

During this period he honored the memory of his beloved son, Steven Charles Schwarz, by making a monumental steel sculpture, based on his convictions about the Native American belief in contrarians. He had learned that contraries cried when others laughed, and walked on their hands instead of their feet. He saw the marvelous humor, introspection, and the psychological value of this tradition. His sculptural abstraction of a teepee standing upside-down at the entrance of South Bear School, a place that he referred to as his Asa Haugan Home, is about twenty feet tall. The shadows of this sundial still travel across our hearts. When the Hearst Center For the Arts, in Cedar Falls, invited Frank Lester Schwarz, artist, to have a show of his sculptures in the gardens on that center's grounds, he declined.

He began to see the value of looking at his own Frank-ness from the outside. This view led him to create by word-smithing, the lead-penciled yellow-paged products of which were published in *Paddled Tails From Tattled Tales: An Autobiography of a Family*, a family book of power and conviction as strong as his welds. (And that is strong considering that he was hired to weld some of the most important seams in the nuclear energy plant in Palo, Iowa. Not a single bubble was found in the x-rays of his welds. So Cedar Rapids and surrounding area

FRANK
SCHWARZ
(*Paddled Tails
from Tattled Tales*)
January 12, 1991,
three days from
"Deadline," hope Mr.
Bush and Mr. Sadam
wake up soon. We
need no war and no
body bags, either.

JAMES
INGO FREED
(in Joan Evelyn
Ames, ed., *Mastery*)
I felt great relief
when I broke away
...I had to reject the
teaching of Mies
van der Rohe [his
mentor] while
accepting it. To me
a key of a successful
teacher is to accept
but reject simulta-
neously. Maybe a
great student does
that as well.

ELLEN GLASGOW

I have observed with wonder so many intellectual and literary fashions that I have come at last to rely positively upon one conviction alone. No idea is so antiquated that it was not once modern. No idea is so modern that it will not some day be antiquated.

BARBARA PYM

(*Less Than Angels*)

[A university thesis] must be long. The object, you see, is to bore and stupefy the examiners to such an extent that they will have to accept it—only if a thesis is short enough to be read all through word for word is there any danger of failure.

KATHARINE WHITEHORN

We were discussing the possibility of making one of our cats Pope recently, and we decided that the fact that she was not Italian, and was a female, made the third point, that she was a cat, quite irrelevant.

Dean L. Schwarz / Black Pot Series



is safer because of Frank.) One of his playful stanzas reads: "Dean Dean, made a machine, Frank Frank turned the crank, Joe Joe made it go, just because Steven is leavin'."

Our father was a keeper of and a sharer of the lessons he learned. So is our Uncle Charlie, who speaks of the wisdom of being streetwise, a necessity for his brothers and sisters in their youthful days. Some of the lessons never taught in school are those that keep homes wise today. Ask Uncle Charlie to show you his hands: One is a map of the French coast that he stormed in World War II, the other is a pointer that teaches us about the important battles.

There were years when Frank would pout and crab at social events and drink beer into friendliness. But this was surely not the case in his later years. During those years (and there was certainly no family precedent for this), he began to make speeches at social gatherings. He became an orator. Yes, an orator, truly! And he liked to say the Lord's Prayer, aloud and loudly, with great reverence and conviction, and in what his deaf ears thought to be unison, very s-l-o-w-l-y. Some people had finished their dinner before he finally said A-a-a-men.

Beverley was witness to his growing love for children in his later years, and how he got so good at it. He became a grand grandfather. He quit suffering the little children to come unto him. He began to make it very pleasant. He loved to baptize them with new names,

names they will forever remember in his spirit.

Our Aunt Jeanette is a wise woman. In the pains of our recent yesterday she kindly reminded me of a fact that is one of the most important ideas for us to remember from the wisdom of El Franko: "He was a rich man." And yes we often heard him say, "I am the richest man in the world." If you think it so, so it is. Such direct teaching has made all of us rich: We are a rich family finally, because we have inherited a great legacy, a richness beyond money.

Our many memories now tease the passions of our lives, lives that could not have been lived without our "Why-Nona?" and her "Frank husband." But now they are together again. His mission is complete, and now it is our responsibility to insure that the heaven we seek is the one we will receive. One of my hopes is that wherever Frank and Nona are—and they ARE together—that each of them can simultaneously enjoy the low and high volume of their television set.

For many years I suffered because I could not say words of endearment to Frank without hollering loudly, because of his deafness. And even if he did hear what I heard coming from my shouting mouth, it never sounded intimate, no matter how hard I tried. And the pathos was made even greater because I knew that he could only see a shadow of who I am....

So now, dear Father, for the first time in many years, I can say to you in a softer, pleasant voice that all can hear, from a radiant countenance: "I love you, please say hello to Mom and Stevee." ■

LADY MAUD
WARRENDER
(*My First 60 Years*)

The beauty of Lord Curson's first wife had impressed the Indians. She was the daughter of Mr. Joseph Letter of Chicago. Her mother's twistings of words are worthy of immortality: "What did I like best in Rome? Why, the Apollo with the beveled ear, the Dying Alligator and Romeo and Juliet being suckled by the wolf." She used to say that it was essential to have a *ventre-à-terre* in Paris; also that she had given her decorators *bête noire* to do what they liked; and she thus described her first meeting with her future husband at a costume ball—"He was dressed in the garbage of a monk and I said to Momma, '*Alma Mater, Ecce Homo!*'"

MARTIN VENEZKY

[*It Is Beautiful Then Gone*] I remember my grade school teachers standing before me, and me before them. These were times of assessment, when we were face to face, cataloging my shortcomings and achievements. Our presence together embodied more than a report card. The physical manifestation of either pride or shame, and my vulnerability at these moments, made resolutions stick. For me raising a hand, standing to recite, sitting in a circle, and walking in single file are such deeply human rituals of teaching and learning that I see bodily presence as the classroom's greatest quality. Respect, humility, honesty, discipline—all of these can be communicated directly and unforgettably through the physical proximity of student and teacher...And after ten years of teaching, I understand why I can summon up the names and faces of distant favorite teachers more clearly than the lessons they taught me.

■ **Leonora Carrington: Surrealism, Alchemy and Art** by Susan L. Aberth. Burlington, VT: Lund Humphries, 2004. 160 pp., with 115 illus. color and b/w. Clothbound. ISBN 0-85331-908-1.

REPRODUCED IN THIS book is a famous photograph, taken in New York in 1942, of a group of mostly European artists, in "exile" in the U.S. They are arranged in three rows, in a quietly comical manner: Everyone in the back row faces left, those in the center face right (with one exception), and those in the front row face whatever direction they like. Of the fourteen artists in the photograph, eleven are men, but, as if to anticipate recent concerns about gender inequality, each row contains one woman, including Peggy Guggenheim (of Guggenheim Museum fame), Berenice Abbott (the famous photographer), and a largely obscure painter named Leonora Carrington. While everyone else in the photograph has died, this third woman, whose life and work this book concerns, is the only one still living. Born in the north of England in 1917 to a family of wealthy industrialists, she is less known in part because she is so easily confused with another person, of the same time period, named Dora Carrington (unrelated), who was closely linked with the London-based Bloomsbury artists and writers; and because her fame initially grew from having been romantically tied with the handsome German-born Surrealist Max Ernst (Dada Max), whose artistic celebrity eclipsed nearly everyone's, and, as this book suggests, whose conquests of women were many. In addition, after World War II, Carrington finally settled with other Surrealist émigrés in Mexico City, which was then and still is, too distant from the molten core of the New York "art world." So while she certainly became prominent and admired in Mexico City (among her friends were Luis Bunuel, Octavio Paz and others), there is no reason to expect that her work will ever be lauded at the level of such superstars as Frida Kahlo and Georgia O'Keeffe. Biographies and films about those two famous women are premiered almost weekly, while this is the first and only English book about the art and writings of Carrington. Reproduced are many finely detailed plates of her paintings, prints and sculpture, the first from about 1936, the most recent from only a few years ago. Looking at them, I sense that they could never appeal to audiences as wide as those of Kahlo or O'Keeffe, both of whom, while certainly indebted to Surrealism, use styles and symbol systems that are more believable, less sci-fi, and far more approachable than the nightmarish androids that tend to appear in a Carrington painting. This book's author, an art historian at Bard College, more or less admits to this when she contends that (because of Carrington's interest in alchemy and the occult) "there is no key with which to decipher her work easily, because there cannot be one. It is not that certain embedded symbols have no meaning; it is that these symbols cannot and do not 'illustrate' ideas in the manner we are accustomed to." —RB

MRS GREVILLE

[in reference to Alice Keppel in 1939]
To hear Alice talk about her escape from France, one would have thought that she had swum the Channel with her maid between her teeth.

QUEEN VICTORIA

[said to her daughter, the Crown Princess of Prussia in 1901] I would venture to warn against too great intimacy with artists as it is very seductive and a little dangerous.

GERMAINE GREER

[*The Female Eunuch*] A full bosom is actually a millstone around a woman's neck; it endears her to the men who want to make mammet of her, but she is never allowed to think that their popping eyes actually see her... [Breasts] are not parts of a person but lures slung around her neck, to be kneaded and twisted like magic, putty, or mumbled and mouthed like lolly ices.

■ **Proteus: A Nineteenth Century Vision** a film by David Lebrun. 2004. VHS. 61 minutes. Color and BxW. Available from First Run / Icarus Films, 32 Court Street, 21st Floor, Brooklyn NY 11201. Website: www.frif.com.

MY FAVORITE STATEMENT by German scientist Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919) is not mentioned in this film. A zoologist, scientific illustrator, and advocate of pantheism ("God is everywhere") he wrote in 1899, in *The Riddle of the Universe*, that the typical Christian description of God is that of "a gaseous vertebrate." This wonderfully interesting, prize-winning film provides an informative overview of Haeckel's intellectual growth, the social setting in which his ideas matured, and the progress of his writings on evolutionary biology (he popularized the "tree of descent," the notion of ecology, and the biogenetic assumption that the development of an individual (ontogeny) is indicative of the stages by which its species evolved (phylogeny)). Haeckel was among the most widely read writers of the 19th century, and yet he is all but forgotten today. When his name is mentioned, it may not be for his scientific writings, but for the innumerable drawings he made (using a microscope connected to a camera lucida tracing device) from live specimens of astonishing one-celled animals called radiolarians. These tiny sea creatures were called that because their silicon skeletons are examples of radial symmetry; yet (like snowflakes), no two are identical, and their variety is truly amazing. I've been aware of Haeckel's work for years because I own a copy of *Art Forms in Nature*, a book of his drawings and paintings that was first published in 1904, and was more recently reissued (with the plates only, without his scientific text) by Dover Publications in 1974. Those same images are used inventively throughout this film to produce animated sequences of the similarities and differences of radiolarians and other protozoa, a term that purposely alludes to Proteus, the Greek god of the sea, who (like radiolarians) could appear in countless varied forms. Haeckel's greatest influence was Charles Darwin, but, as this film postulates, he may have been equally influenced by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's attempts to reconcile art with science; by *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the epic poem about the sea and creativity by Samuel Coleridge, who described the ocean as "the reservoir of the soul"; and, most surprisingly, by the inadvertent research of ocean life that came from the laying of the first transatlantic telegraph cable by Cyrus Fields in 1866. When this film premiered in 2004, it was deservedly given awards at several film festivals as the "best documentary." In watching it, I learned quite a lot about Ernst Haeckel as a person, Darwinian evolution theory, the beginnings of oceanography, the Victorian era, and society's age-old equation of the quixotic moods of the ocean with madness and the imagination—so much so that, prior to the formation of asylums, people who were mentally ill were sometimes set adrift on ships, in ill-fated crafts that were commonly known as "ships of fools." —RB

GEORGE PLIMPTON

(In Joan Evelyn Ames, ed., *Mastery*) [The pitfalls to mastery can be] Anything from having children to booze to hedonism. The pleasures of life come along and they tend to keep the "master" from working. A spouse, a lover can be a terrible destroyer of mastery. Telephones, televisions, radio, cars, all the modern appliances can be a problem. But then how barren life would be if one couldn't enjoy all those things in moderation. And when you think of the masters who have denied themselves anything but their mastery—the workaholics and driven people who take none of the pleasures of life—you wonder whether it's worth it.

LES COLEMAN

The termidity to be audacious.

LES COLEMAN

Lightning never strikes mice.

LES COLEMAN

When we get old, we lie through our dentures.

■ **Them: A Memoir of Parents** by Francine du Plessix Gray. New York, NY: The Penguin Press, 2005. 530 pp., with 92 illus. b/w. Clothbound. ISBN 0-59420-049-1.

FOR MANY YEARS, I have often run across the name of this book's author (so colorful who could forget it!), a frequent *New Yorker* contributor who was also once a student at Black Mountain College, at a time when others at that school included Robert Rauschenberg (with whom she played strip poker), Merce Cunningham, and John Cage. And I've also been somewhat acquainted with the name of Alexander Liberman, in part because I gained so much as an undergraduate from his book about the studios of Modern-era painters and sculptors (documented by photographs and interviews) titled *The Artist in His Studio* (New York: Viking Press, 1960). Oddly, somehow I failed to make the link between that Alexander Liberman (photographer, artist and writer) and the one who held a "day job" as the powerful editorial director of Conde Nast Publications, which gave him almost total control of such prominent magazines as *House and Garden*, *Glamour*, and *Vogue* (succeeding the legendary, and apparently irascible, Mehemed Agha). As it turns out, Liberman was the stepfather of this book's author, while her mother was Tatiana (née Yakovleva) du Plessix Liberman, who was widely known in New York during the 1940s and 50s as "Tatiana of Saks," a trend-setting *haute couture* milliner for Saks Fifth Avenue. Born in Russia in 1906, Tatiana grew up in an aristocratic family, with close connections to the Czar, and yet she was also romantically linked to one of the most admired figures in the Bolshevik revolution, the poet Vladimir Mayakovsky. This book's new details about Mayakovsky (including his and Tatiana's love letters) are among its most interesting aspects, as are reports of encounters by the author or her relatives with Anna Pavlova (her Uncle Sasha's girlfriend), Vladimir Lenin, Andre L'hote, A. M. Cassandre, Marlene Dietrich and others. The book's title is an implicit parody on the title of an earlier book of photographs (called *Then*, and which the author describes as "self-serving") by her stepfather, while its subtitle makes clear that this is not an autobiography (not an author's confessional view) but a candid and often disturbing account of the lives of her mother and stepfather, from their daughter's (biased) point of view. This leaves open the possibility that the author may someday prepare a real autobiography, which might be even more interesting, since this account omits so much about her memories of Black Mountain College, her participation in the Vietnam antiwar demonstrations, the presidential campaign for Eugene McCarthy, or her experiences as a writer. This book is both interesting and entertaining. I found it hard to put down for the first two thirds, but at more than 500 pages, it eventually went on too long, a fault that is thankfully softened by about one hundred photographs, many of which are family snapshots, while others are wonderful images by Irving Penn. Throughout its pages, there are interesting photographs of the author at various stages of her life, including some in which she is oddly positioned (e.g., her eyes or her legs are askew), as if she were posing for Balthus. Among the delightful details of the book is a photograph on the dust jacket of the author now, at age 75 (or thereabouts)—aged, surely—but just as entrancing as she always was.—RB ➤

JOSEPH EPSTEIN

(*A Line Out for a Walk*) When I learned that the literary critic Harold Bloom claimed, in *Time* magazine, to be able to read one thousand pages an hour, for example, it occurred to me to ask, What possible value can this have, except to permit one to read everything that Harold Bloom has written in fewer than two hours?

ARTHUR CLARKE

The object of teaching a child is to enable the child to get along without the teacher.

■ **Red Persimmons** A film by Shinsuke Ogawa and Peng Xiaolian. Distributed by First Run/Icarus Films, Brooklyn NY, 2001. VHS, 90 minutes, color. Website: <http://www.frif.com>. Reviewed by Soo Hostetler.

THIS DOCUMENTARY FILM was begun in 1984 by Shinsuke Ogawa (1935-1992) but was finished by Peng Xiaolian, his Chinese discipline, in 2001. It very beautifully portrays the process of growing, cultivating, and marketing the red persimmons in the northern districts of Japan. Ogawa's main purpose in producing this film was to document and thereby preserve a vanishing Japanese tradition. He also shares his impressions of a culture that embraces the unity and harmony of nature and humanity. Persimmons are the main source of income for the tiny village of Kaminoyama. The process of growing, peeling, drying, and packaging this crop is filmed in a way that uniquely captures the character of the people and their way of life. The film illustrates their simple, daily routine of hard work as they both perform and talk about their centuries-old farming methods. It is obvious that these people have great respect for the land that was passed down to them from their ancestors, as is evident in the way in which they proudly share their knowledge of utilizing its natural elements to successfully bring a crop to market. They express their fortune of having ideal conditions for growing the sweetest tasting persimmons in the region. The film shows the development of the "peeler" from the process of using a single-blade knife, to a crank-style peeler made with spare bicycle parts, to the invention of electric peelers as the villagers strive to modernize their technology, and thereby to improve their production. The filmmaker's idea of tracing the development of the peeler is a wonderful way to show the progressive innovations of the villagers as they invent better and better mechanical means. Peng Xiaolian, who returned to the village fifteen years after Shinsuke Ogawa finished his original filming, directed the final episodes of this documentary. He successfully concluded the film by paying homage to the passage of time, and by honoring some of the deceased villagers and the gradual (and inevitable) extinction of their former way of life. Over the years, many of the younger people had chosen to move away, which left the older people to continue their traditional way of life alone. It is obvious that both directors developed a close personal attachment to the people who appeared in the film. One of the film's highlights is its cinematic portrayal of the visual beauty of nature, such as the way in which it shows the changing lights and shadows of the drying process, which were filmed by time-lapse photography. The contrast of the persimmons, which evolve from a fresh colorful red to a dried fructose brown, is simply gorgeous. The film's music enhances the beauty of nature and also helps to underscore the spirit of the culture. As the film ended, I myself (in part because of my own Asian origins) was left with an awful sense of remorse in response to the extinction of a traditional culture. At the same time, I felt fortunate to have had the opportunity to have been there, if only vicariously, to witness all this through the eyes of the two directors, Shinsuke Ogawa and Peng Xiaolian —SH >

LIAM HUDSON

(The Cult of the Fact)

...the teacher who leaves his students' minds open, in a state of promiscuous athleticism, is scarcely a teacher at all. His proper function, in other words, must be an ambiguous one: he must transmit an intellectual tradition with gusto, and instill loyalty to it, but leave open the possibility of gradual or even revolutionary change. And what matters in practice is not so much the teacher's motive, nor even his style, as the elbow-room he allows.

VIRGIL

THOMSON

When I find myself among those who don't know my name, I know I'm in the real world.

AMOS BRONSON ALCOTT

The true teacher defends his pupils against his own personal influence... He will have no disciple.

NED ROREM

No one old thinks old—or even thinks of himself as old. You don't recognize me because I'm disguised as an old man.

■ **The Pocket Paper Engineer** by Carol Barton. Glen Echo MD: Popular Kinetics Press, 2005. 68 pp., illus. Wire-O bound in hard cover. ISBN 0-96277-520-7.

Why are pop-up books so charming, so irresistible? Perhaps because while essentially flat, they are also three-dimensional. A distant relative of the jack-in-the-box, they straddle two categories, surprising us by their physical wit, a refined literary slapstick. With this book, one learns step-by-step to make new pop-up pages, whatever the subject. Painstakingly engineered and produced, it is not so much a book as a hands-on workshop—illustrated, of course, by all sorts of wonderful pop-ups throughout. For more information, see <www.popularkinetics.com> —RB ➤

ERNST HAAS

The best zoom lens is your legs.

■ **More Paperwork: Exploring the Potential of Paper in Design and Architecture** by Nancy Williams. New York, NY: Phaidon, 2005. 176 pp., with 180 illus. color. Clothbound. ISBN 0-7148-4364-4. What an inspiring book this is about the imaginative use of paper by designers of all kinds, worldwide. Arranged in categories of two-dimensional (surface effects, cutting, folding, binding, interactive, and mixed media) and three-dimensional (architecture, exhibit design, sculpture, fashion, product and package design), the book (designed and written by the author) takes full advantage of the opportunity to demonstrate the rich potential of paper, as much by its own design (each section begins with a tipped-in example of surprising paper use) as by scores of exquisite examples, represented by detailed, color photographs. It ends with what must surely be one of the most complete glossaries of paper terminology.—RB ➤

■ **The Nature of Design: How the Principles of Design Shape Our World—From Graphics and Architecture to Interiors and Products** by Peg Faimon and John Weigand. Cincinnati OH: HOW Design Books, 2004. 200 pp., illus. Clothbound. ISBN 1-58180-478-4. The text in this book is comparatively brief, but that's largely because nothing in it is filler, and that every word is made to count. Serving as verbal and visual proof of the logic of design, the book's written text is no less nor more important than the selection of images, their pairing, and the precision of the book's design. Divided into sections called elements and principles, it closes with a section called process in which stages are discussed (and illustrated) in the design of a trademark, an office space, a creamer, and a single-family dwelling.—RB ➤

■ **Universal Principles of Design** by William Lidwell, Katrina Holden and Jill Butler. Gloucester MA: Rockport Publishers, 2003. 216 pp., illus. Clothbound. ISBN 1-59253-007-9. It is at best myopic to talk about art, architecture and design without at the same time being aware of recent discoveries in scientific disciplines like cognitive psychology, neurophysiology, and biology (especially ethology). As anticipated by its subtitle, this book is an attempt to bridge the usual divisions between art, design arts, and the sciences by identifying concepts that can be applied to all. Each concept is assigned a spread (defined on one page, then demonstrated visually on the facing page), including such ideas as Baby-Face Bias, Form Follows Function, Mimicry, Ockham's Razor, Fibonacci Sequence, and the Rule of Thirds. Over all, the text may seem to be largely addressed to architects rather than artists or graphic designers, but every concept featured should provide invaluable insight to anyone in any discipline.—RB ➤

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GEORGE HARDIE

I admitted in a lecture that I struggle to draw, having no academic ability and not being able, for instance, to achieve a likeness of anyone. A recurring nightmare for me is that I witness the theft of an expensive computer at the university. The police arrive and I'm asked, "You're an artist, draw us a picture of the burglar." Collapse of stout party. A voice from the audience. "Don't worry, George, you'd be good at drawing the computer."

JOSEPH EPSTEIN in *A Line Out for a Walk*, writes that a considerable number of Jews, during the Vietnam War, decided to become pacifists and join the Quakers, the Society of Friends, at which time a certain rabbi said "Some of my best Jews are Friends."

LES COLEMAN
The white elephant
coloring book.

FRANCINE DU PLESSIX GRAY
(*Them: A Memoir of Parents*) At Black Mountain [College], I occasionally smoked pot, sat entranced through John Cage's Zen-anarchist lectures, played strip poker with Bob [Robert] Rauschenberg, and particularly appalled my mother by wearing leather motorcycle jackets and chopping my hair as short and jagged as a contemporary punk's.

RUDOLF ARNHEIM
(*Parables of Sun Light*) When scientists stand "on the shoulders of giants" they form a totem pole on which each is placed higher than the one below him, a little closer to the truth. But in the arts, when Cézanne succeeds Poussin, he is not therefore closer to the truth. In the arts, the giants stand in a circle around the truth and scrutinize it, each from his own angle.

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