New Perspectives:
Critical Histories of Graphic Design

Special Project of *Visible Language* in Three Issues

Guest Editor:
Andrew Blauvelt

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Critical Histories
of Graphic Design

Part 3:
Interpretations

Andrew Blauvelt, guest editor

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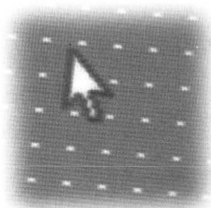
"...the history of our people as written into things their hands made and used...a piece of machinery, or anything that is made, is like a book, if you can read it."

Henry Ford [1]

The Henry Ford Museum is a large complex in a suburb of Detroit which devotes itself to collecting various sorts of mechanical products. It specializes in machines borne of the industrial revolution, particularly those of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Henry Ford understood that industrial objects bore a (his)story of the society which produced them, as reflected in the quote above. Ford's likening of this understanding to the reading of a book is prophetic, foreshadowing the influence that textual criticism would have in the development of interpretative practices. Ford was, however, making an analogy. If Ford's mute object does have a story, then his museum serves as its container, structuring the content and sequencing the events. The story of the Henry Ford Museum unfolds as the progression of technological innovation. Ford's statement underscores a prevalent notion in design history: that understanding lies on the surface of objects which simply requires that we see it. Unfortunately, this

has been reduced to the idea that objects reveal their meanings transparently. This logic is also congruent with the particular belief that form is a natural (rational) outcome of an object's function. [2]

The problems associated with an understanding of things derived from their surface are multiple. First, such a scenario creates an intense interplay between designer and product whereby one validates the other; designers' intentions are confirmed by historical perceptions. This tension forecloses an understanding of existence beyond the designer and the product itself, particularly its actualization (use) by audiences and its historical receptions (past, present and future). Second, the transparency of certain meanings comes at the expense of those which remains opaque, such as the conditions of distribution and reception. If the conventional focus of interpretation in design history remains in the sphere of production (those aspects of the designed object's formation), this surely comes at the expense of its understanding

1
Ford, Henry. 1964. *Mechanical Arts.* Dearborn, Michigan: Henry Ford Museum, 1. Quoted in: Sparke, Penny. 1986. *An Introduction to Design and Culture in the Twentieth Century.* New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 205.

2
For an understanding of the eclipse of function (as an inheritance of the Bauhaus) by sign value see: Baudrillard, Jean. 1981. "Design and Environment," in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign.* St. Louis: Telos Press.

through consumption. Karl Marx understood this when he stated that a "garment becomes a real garment only in the act of being worn; a house where no one lives is not a real house; thus the product, unlike a mere natural object, proves itself to be, *becomes*, a product only through consumption."[3] Design historians Fran Hannah and Tim Putnam have expressed the need to understand the use of design by audiences as the intertwining of two distinct modes, direct and indirect:

"Direct *usage is what is often called utilitarian or functional; it refers to the sense in which designed objects may be said, externally to constitute part of the objective conditions of a mode of living irrespective of whether they are seen as such from within that mode of life.* Indirect *usage is mediated symbolically; it refers to the sense in which discrimination between design qualities is used to define boundaries between different social and cultural categories and also, within a way of life, between times, moods, activities and other dispositions."[4]*

It is this area of actual use and consumptive value that remains critically underexplored in design history if not in the study of consumer culture at large.[5] The reconstruction of original use remains a difficult task for historical research. This is undoubtedly compounded by the ephemeral nature of graphic design and the dearth of activity regarding its reception by intended and unintended audiences.

Literary criticism has produced a range of interpretative positions in relationship to the historical understanding of texts that have been adopted by many scholars of non-literary works including visual art, popular culture and design. The trajectory of interpretative strategies has moved decisively away from both authorial intentionality and the recovery of original meaning.[6] These adaptations depend on the realization that non-literary works can be discussed in the terms of textual criticism. Although there are distinct differences between design objects and works of literature, and while some might argue against such cross-applications (particularly an overly determined or privileged position of language), graphic design perhaps more so than other design disciplines invites such comparisons in view of its interests in communication and its use of both words and images. Perhaps the greatest insight produced by work in literary criticism in relationship to historical studies is the relative (unfixed, flux) nature of interpretative positions. This allows us to see, for example, the role of the designer as one of

3
Marx, Karl. 1973. *Grundrisse*. Harmondsworth, United Kingdom: Penguin, 91.

4
Hannah, Fran and Tim Putnam. 1980. "Taking Stock in Design History," *Block* 3, 33.

5
The work in the study of consumption in the social sciences is plentiful when compared to design history. For differing accounts see: Douglas, Mary and Baron Isherwood. 1979. *The World of Goods*. New York: Basic Books; Poster, Mark, editor. 1988. "The System of Objects," in *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press; and Bourdieu, Pierre. 1993. "Part I," of *The Field of Cultural Production*. New York: Columbia University Press.

6
The extreme positions of the significance of the author in textual interpretation are represented on the one hand by E.D. Hirsch, Jr. who advocates the recovery of original meaning and the centrality of the author, and on the other hand, by Roland Barthes who dispenses with the author. See: Hirsch Jr., E.D. 1967. *Validity in Interpretation*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press and Barthes, Roland. 1977. "The Death of the Author" and "From Work to Text," in *Image–Music–Text*. New York: Hill and Wang.

many in the life of objects (neither primary nor peripheral), that an active role is played by users of objects (neither completely determined nor liberated from the prevailing hegemony), that meanings are not simply assigned by designers or historians, but that use implies a reinterpretation of meanings and that meanings are not wholly transparent on the surface of objects or entirely embedded in them, but are often obscured by the opacity of shifting and overlapping contexts (historical, social, cultural, etc.). While historians strive for an objective understanding of design, the best that can be achieved is, perhaps, the articulation of the subjective, critical interpretative position of the historian.

"Explanation in history is not an end in itself; it seems to mediate historical understanding which is tied in turn to the narrativity of the historical text."

John B. Thompson [7]

The essays found in this issue are gathered under the guise of case-studies of graphic design to explicate some issues involved in historical interpretation. These essays explore varying interpretive approaches to their objects of study. The subjects they examine are also diverse, ranging from icons of twentieth-century graphic design to more recent activities of both professional and non-professional designers. This range of subjects serves an important service in both the re-evaluation of major works of graphic design as well as their previously assigned historical meanings and the inclusion of work produced outside the rather limited range of commercial practice including the understanding of contemporary work that is cast in opposition to current professional standards.

Susan Sellers looks at the shaping of the Modernist Woman in the pages of *Harper's Bazaar* magazine through the film *Funny Face*, which was constructed around the story of *Bazaar's* editor-in-chief Carmel Snow, art director Alexey Brodovitch and photographer Richard Avedon. Sellers is especially concerned with the use of a European modernist form language in service to American cultural and social interests and, in particular, their confluence in the construction of the female consumer in post-war United States. Sellers reveals the site of modernist experimentation as the idealized female body, evidenced in the construction of the fashion magazine and transformation of the film's central character,

Joe Stockton.[8] Important in this explication is the social effects produced by this particular incorporation of modernist defamiliarization strategies (e.g., abstraction, surrealist juxtaposition or decontextualization) on the development of women's roles through popular representations. Sellers provides a thoughtful reading of the film as she shows how the model Joe Stockton is transformed, both visibly and psychologically, as she enters what Sellers describes as a "restricted, mass-mediated femininity." Sellers' essay serves to underscore the social use of European modernism that adds to our historical understanding of a phenomenon that has been previously understood in general terms of stylistic mannerisms and utopian philosophies.

Jack Williamson also has the body as his site of investigation, focusing on the articulation of various aspects of human identity (understood as characteristic appearance). In his essay "Embodiments of Human Identity: Detecting and Interpreting Hidden Narratives in Twentieth-Century Design History," Williamson discusses what he terms a "historical visual narrative" that he defines as "the visual revelation of underlying meaning." Williamson detects this narrative in the development of product forms that are tied to the relationships among three bodily modes: the thinking, feeling and willing spheres, adapted from educator Rudolf Steiner. For Williamson, these three spheres are the site of great disturbances in the twentieth century as manifested in the forms associated with avant-garde movements such as cubism, futurism, constructivism and surrealism. Despite these upheavals, Williamson adopts an optimistic position that sees the frequent need for the re-embodiment of lost human faculties in product form. Williamson's interpretive approach seeks to recuperate the importance of visual form in discussions of history, showing that form is capable of engendering meanings and that the evolution of form is "not necessarily explainable by, or reducible to, single-factor explanations." While meanings may reside with the artifact, the revelation of narrative occurs over time and between artifacts, thus reinforcing the importance of chronology for Williamson. Also implicit, however, is the notion of change and with it the prospect for understanding form as the consequence of specific historical conditions.

Teal Triggs examines the role that British fanzines play in subcultural communications in her essay "Alphabet Soup: Reading British

8
For an account of the representations of the female body in the context of the twentieth-century avant-garde see: Suleiman, Susan Rubin. 1990. *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Fanzines." Fanzines (or "zines") exist as an alternative form of practice for graphic design, representing the self-publishing interests of largely untrained individuals who, as Triggs shows, often appropriate graphic languages of mainstream culture and reinvent them as unique, vernacular expressions for new contexts. Triggs charts the ascendancy of the fanzine from its historical precursors to the increasing popularity of today. The life cycle of popular forms is addressed by Triggs through her analysis of the productive effects of zines on both the audiences they address and the mainstream media they influence. As Triggs states: "Images and ideas will continue to be taken from mainstream media, appropriated, subverted and recoded in an endless cycle of interpretation and reinterpretation." Triggs's essay underscores the importance of understanding use, in this case reuse, and other forms of reinvention and interpretation by users for historical studies of design. Additionally, the search for work outside the canon of graphic design is laudable as it forces us to adjust our definitions of design away from preoccupations with the professional avant-garde toward the practices of amateurs.

It is the activity of one segment of the professional avant-garde

which Frances Butler addresses in her essay, "New Demotic Typography: Search for New Indices." But as Butler aptly demonstrates, the particular inventions of this avant-garde are to be understood in relationship to the informational needs of the non-professional, or as Butler calls them, the national or international nomad of the *isolati*. In the course of her essay, Butler offers an explanation of what constitute the visual hallmarks of new demotic typography, why it might exist at this time and what it offers and to whom. Butler sees new demotic typography as the reinvention of many older punctuation devices that she describes in terms of "marginal reuse." Butler argues that a shift in cognitive preferences has occurred, away from linear, hierarchal thinking and towards a nonlinear, more spatial alternative. Adopting a strategy Butler describes as "reader syntaxed," new demotic typography and its promotion of the implicit and privileging of the ambiguous speak to the desires of a visually oriented group, a product of literate, élite culture rather than to the needs of the *isolati* who require access to the explicit text for existence in institutional culture. Butler concludes by adapting the theory advanced by the art historian Alois Riegl (1858-1905) in his work on

late Roman sculpture. Riegl noted the existence of two modes of surface control, the haptic which favors the near (particularly the sense of touch) and the optic which favors the distant (principally the sense of sight).[9] These modes present differing valuations of their handling of information which passes from the haptic to the optic mode with a loosening of surface control, a less clear delineation of forms and consequently an excess of information. The optic mode is thus adopted by Butler to account for the particular attributes of the new demotic typography: the loosening of the surface by the abandonment of the grid and other explicit structuring devices, the ambiguity provided by a looser sense of information hierarchy including layers of information and an excess of information. Just as Riegl wanted to recover the optic mode from "the pejorative concept of decline," Butler argues for the coexistence of both haptic and optic modes, contemporaneously and historically, that "serve the same audience at different times." By providing a historical understanding and a critical interpretation of this contemporary design practice, Butler offers the most cogent explanation thus far of the contexts in which to view this phenomenon.

For graphic design history, the problem of interpretation lies in the tension created by the oscillation between the desire for a rather transparent *explanation* from historically assigned meanings and an empathetic, unproblematic *understanding* of the life of the object. These essays begin to address this problem by offering examples of the variety of interpretative approaches available that serve to question both the previously unchallenged acceptance of historical explanations and the transcendent understanding of things. All four essayists make connections to the larger social and cultural practices that form the complex and opaque discourse in which design's subjects and objects reside. □

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9
The haptic and optic modes derive from an essay by sculptor Adolf von Hildebrand, "The Problem of Form in the Visual Arts" where he speaks of near and distant views. For an account of the work of Alois Riegl and its continuing influence in the late twentieth century, particularly in his concern for the role of the spectator see: Iversen, Margaret. 1993. *Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Susan Sellers

How Long Has This Been Going On?

Harper's Bazaar, Funny Face and the Construction of the Modernist Woman

In this essay, the Hollywood musical *Funny Face* (1956), loosely based on the success of fashion magazine *Harper's Bazaar*, serves as a departure for rethinking the incorporation of modern European design in the context of post-war American consumer culture. *Funny Face* offers a prescient glimpse into the ways women understood the fashion magazine and, consequently, modernist form language, as a purveyor of fantasy, cultural capital and a restrictive, mass-mediated femininity. Approaching modern design from this vantage suggests the female body as a primary site of modernist experimentation.

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*Suddenly we stopped using the word "bourgeois"
...we were very interested in houses and things:
chairs, tables, silverware. We went to the Museum of
Modern Art to study furniture and displays of modern
architecture, and bought our first possessions —
Eames chairs, a blond free-form sculptured Noguchi
dining table, and a Herman Miller couch day bed with
a plain tweed-covered mattress and bolsters, so
modern, so different from the overstuffed tufted
davenport at home.[1]*

Betty Friedan

In 1956, the same year Alexey Brodovitch retired as art director
of *Harper's Bazaar*, Hollywood released *Funny Face*, a film musical
depicting the intricate machinations of *Quality*, a fictionalized
double of *Bazaar,* and its editor, art director, photographer and
star model. *Quality* is a magazine, in the words of its strident
editor Maggie Prescott, "for the woman who isn't interested
in fashion, the fashion magazine for the woman who *thinks*."
She imagines a new kind of literary household helpmate, one
designed to elevate the woman reader from the drudgery of
domestic chores and suburban isolation to the rarified pleasure
of high taste and urbane culture.

For the design historian, *Funny Face* sheds an alternate light on
a familiar story; the incorporation of Eurocentric modern
design in *Harper's Bazaar* and the meaning of that incorpora-
tion in the context of a publication produced for women. In
addition, *Funny Face* offers a prescient glimpse into the way in
which the fashion magazine was understood in the mid-fifties
as both a purveyor of fantasy and cultural capital and as a coer-
cive medium, eight years before the release of Betty Friedan's
The Feminine Mystique. In the opening passage, Friedan implies
that in the late '40s the modernization of domestic furnishing
seemed to represent a structural reformation of domesticity. In
a similar vein, the modernization of the fashion spread suggests
a female consumer liberated from the overstuffed constraints of
Victorian femininity. In deconstructing fashion images — that
is in revealing those seamless images to be constructions —

1
Friedan, Betty from Ware,
Susan. 1989. *Modern Women:
A Documentary History.*
Chicago: Dorsey Press, 293.

Funny Face seems to overturn those modern utopian ideals, replacing social reform with a more conservative vision of feminine destiny.

The film's thinly veiled caricatures illuminate *Bazaar*'s creative troika: editor-in-chief, Mrs. Carmel Snow; photographer, Richard Avedon; and art director, Alexey Brodovitch. *Funny Face* depicts a highly mythicized design process dramatizing the complex negotiations that exist between producers and consumers of the modern fashion magazine focusing on two distinct feminine characters; the hard-boiled, masculinized woman editor and the resistant woman consumer in the form of Audrey Hepburn, "the woman who isn't interested in fashion." In witnessing the transformation of Hepburn at the hands of the *Quality* design team, the film forces us to consider the effects of Brodovitch's visual innovations and the ultimate site of his modernist experimentation, the female body.

All Eyes on Europe

The primary plot of *Funny Face* centers on *Quality* editor-in-chief Maggie Prescott's orchestration of her newest model, Joe Stockton (Audrey Hepburn) and chief photographer, Dick Avery (Fred Astaire as Richard Avedon). Avery discovers Stockton during a chance encounter in her dank workplace, the Embryo Concepts Bookshop in Greenwich Village, center of the Beat universe. An unexpected kiss from the presumptuous photographer draws the androgynous Joe to reveal her embryonic sexual identity in a cloying rendition of Gershwin's "How Long Has This Been Going On?" The scene prefigures Joe's transformation from "a thinker" and "a talker" — sheathed in black turtleneck and slacks, the masculinized uniform of the young beatnik — into Prescott's model of femininity, the *Quality* woman, drifting away in a brilliant white wedding gown in the closing shot.

As a budding intellectual, Joe scorns the fashion magazine as "an unrealistic attitude toward self-impression and economics" yet she is lured to model as the *Quality Woman* with the promise of a trip to Paris and a meeting with her academic

idol, the famed professor Emile Flostre, "father of empathical-ism."[2] She accepts her compromised role as "a means to an end" although the ultimate result is not what she had antici-pated. Though the voyage is invariably madcap, it yields several key revelations: Emile Flostre, the archetypal European aesthete, is a lecherous sham; her unacknowledged femininity has real power; and her own intellectual pretensions mask her intuitive desire for conventional feminine rewards: beauty, love and marriage.

On the most basic level, this neat formula falls in line with Hollywood's post-war imperatives to restore traditional values of home and hearth. This process turns on the privileging of intuition over rationalism, desire over knowledge. Meta-phorically, it suggests the fate of European modernism which accepted the strictures of the nascent mass-media "as a means to an end." It seemed inevitable that modernist graphic materialism assume its *natural* place in the product world of post-war America. Formal strategies such as surrealist defamil-iarization and Bauhaus simplicity, functionalism and construc-tivist reflexivity — the foundations of graphic materialism — were wedded to industrial capitalism. Modern design found a life-partner in corporate capitalism, the union of commerce and culture.

Coming at the end of the tenure of Carmel Snow and Alexey Brodovitch at *Harper's Bazaar*, the film's rejection of European cultural superiority seems to close a curtain on a project thirty years in the making; the domestication of European modernism. Maggie Prescott's insatiable appetite for novelty apes Carmel Snow's dedication to the tenets of modernization. Prescott imagines herself a general leading faithful troops of hapless American women though the labyrinths of a necessarily Eurpoean taste and culture. Snow noted that her readers followed *Bazaar* "...because they are fascinated by the new (in styles, in photography, in art, in writing) because they are eager to train their taste, and because they depend on the editors to present the best in every field."[3] Prescott's mission — like Snow's — is to dress the women of the world, to instruct them in the ideology of progress.

2
Emile Flostre is an obvious parody of Jean-Paul Sartre while "empathicalism" stands in as depoliticized existentialism.

3
Snow, Carmel and Mary Louise Aswell. 1962. *The World of Carmel Snow*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 117.

By the time of her retirement, Carmel Snow was an internationally recognized authority of sorts; a paradigm of the high fashion maven, equally at home in the salons of Paris and New York. *Life* included her image alongside other "Headliners": Eleanor Roosevelt, Martha Graham, Georgia O'Keefe, Grandma Moses and Claire Booth Luce.[4] But even as an assistant editor, working her way up the ranks of the fashion industry, she was an early and ardent promoter of the budding aesthetic movements and contradictory avant-garde activities now gathered under the general heading of modernism.

It is important to emphasize many forms of aesthetic modernization were prevalent by the time Carmel Snow adopted the mantel of European modernism in the name of *Harper's Bazaar* and "the well-dressed woman with the well-dressed mind." After the Paris *Exhibition des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes* in 1925, the terms "modern," "modernistic," and "modernist" were bandied about intermittently in the pages of prescriptive literature and home-furnishing magazines like *House Beautiful* and *House and Garden.*

Modernism often referred to the stylized forms derivative of modern art: i.e., cubism, futurism, etc. Its primary aim was the interpretation of chaotic reality, "lived Nature."[5] Startling incongruity was produced through the juxtaposition of heavy, organic forms with wildly angular patterns capturing both angst and laughter. These stylistic attributes were apparent in illustrations by eminent artists like Erté and A.M. Cassandre, window displays by industrial designers Norman Bel Geddes and Raymond Loewy, and the interior decoration of large department stores.[6]

It was suggested by some editors, the modernist impulse was motivated by a surfeit of tradition, an unlikely ailment in the United States, a country with such a short history. The logic followed that a young nation was bound to be conservative, protecting and nurturing what little tradition it possessed. In 1933 *House and Garden* editor, Richardson Wright, noted the foreign nature of the modern movement:

4
Life Magazine (December 1956).

5
Wright, Richardson. "The Modernist Taste." *House & Garden* (October 1925), 77-79.

6
For a fascinating account of John Wanamaker and the development and uses of modern aesthetics in early department stores see William Leach's *Land of Desire* as well as Neil Harris' "Designs on Demand: Art and the Modern Corporation" in *Cultural Excursions: Marketing Appetites and Cultural Tastes in Modern America.* 1992. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

*For over a decade the modern taste had been creeping into all
lines of designing in America. It did not spring up here. It was
imported from abroad. It has come from the faubourgs of
Warsaw, Vienna, Berlin, Stockholm, and Milan, and gradually
like a slow moving mist it has coated the taste of the people.*[7]

Another writer, explicating "The 'New Simplicity' in Modern
Typography," warned of the alien nature of modern style:
"One of our greatest dangers is in copying too literally
European typography," and went on to promote an American
version of the new typography befitting American taste.[8]

The widely variable meanings and styles gathered under the
rubric of modernism had, by the thirties, been streamlined to
refer to the work of the Bauhaus, Le Corbusier and the
International Style. Avant-garde strategies like defamiliarization
were replaced by functionalism as the official expression of
modernism in American intellectual circles, in part, through
the efforts of cultural institutions like the Museum of Modern
Art and through the writings of critics such as Philip Johnson
and Henry Russell Hitchcock.[9]

As assistant to the editor at American *Vogue,* Carmel Snow
was introduced to the modern aesthetic in graphic design by
Russian-born art-director, Mehemed Fehmy Agha and
photographer, Edward Steichen. Agha, who emigrated from
Berlin in 1928 with an invitation from Condé Nast, "was
trained in the new European style of layouts, which was a
complete departure from the static, stilted look of all American
magazines at the time..." Snow recalled that "Dr. Agha
wanted bigger photographs (vigorously supported by me and
Steichen), more white space, and modern typography."[10]

In a 1930 issue of *Advertising Arts,* Agha recognized the frac-
ture between the modern qualities in form and content when
he queried: "What makes the Magazine Modern?" Agha was
disheartened with the American attachment to a nationalist
style embodied in Americana, typified by elaborate surfaces of
figurative ornamentation drawn from an eclectic array of
historical movements: "The change in women's fashion, in a
direction precisely opposite to that which every self-respecting

7
Wright, Richardson.
"Will our ancestors shudder
at modernist architecture?"
House & Garden (October
1933), 30.

8
Ecke, Alice Beeson. "The
'New Simplicity' in Modern
Typography." *Advertising Arts*
(July 9, 1930), 25-26. For an
account of the role of
Advertising Arts and other
trade journals instrumental in
the promotion of modernism
in America see Lorraine Wild.
1989. "Europeans in
America." *Graphic Design in
America: A Visual Language
History.* New York: Harry N.
Abrams, Inc., 152-169.

9
Davies, Karen. 1983. *At Home
in Manhattan.* New Haven,
Connecticut: Yale University
Art Gallery, 12. For an account
of the early institutional
promotion of modern design
particularly in the decorative
arts such as furniture design
see "Promoting Modern
Design," 83-101.

10
Grundberg, Andy. 1989.
Brodovitch. New York: Harry
N. Abrams, Inc., 67.

modernist would advise, is a terrible blow to the faith which
was built on the creed of simple clothes — simple interiors —
simple art — simple typography — etc." This disjuncture was
apparent in the contradiction of developing a universal gram-
mar of "eternal artistic units out of elementary and 'timely
materials.' "[11]

Well-known for her competitive spirit — and presumably
ready to top *Vogue* at its own game — Carmel Snow sought a
new art director for *Bazaar* upon her appointment as editor-
in-chief in 1934. After attending an exhibition of advertising
art sponsored by the New York Art Director's Club and
curated by Brodovitch, Snow wrote:

> *I saw a fresh new concept of layout technique that struck me
> like a revelation: pages that "bled" beautifully cropped
> photographs, typography and design that was bold and arrest-
> ing. Within ten minutes I had asked Brodovitch to have cock-
> tails with me, and that evening I signed him to a provisional
> contract as art director.*[12]

In hiring Brodovitch, Snow advanced the aesthetic ideals of a
European-based modernist movement through the editorial,
sartorial, typographic and photographic forms of *Bazaar*.
Bazaar's success and distinction in the vast marketplace of
women's magazines were tied to its close association with the
European fashion industry. Brodovitch would serve as Snow's
conduit to the European avant-garde facilitating the transfor-
mations she envisioned in both the magazine and its audience.
For Brodovitch, *Harper's Bazaar* and models like Dovima —
Snow's paradigmatic *Quality* woman and Avedon's "real" girl
— would serve as the canvas for his formalist vision of the
world as a montage of rhythms, sequences, light and color.

The Real Girl as Modern Canvas

Four years before Carmel Snow "discovered" him, Brodovitch
had sailed to New York to coordinate a "Design Laboratory"
at the Pennsylvania Museum School of Industrial Art.
Fundamental to the foundation of this program was

11
Agha, M.F. "What Makes a
Magazine Modern."
Advertising Arts (October 13,
1930), 17.

12
Snow, Carmel and Mary
Louise Aswell, 90.

Brodovitch's fascination with new forms and production techniques. He was particularly devoted to photography, which was to become his acknowledged contribution to the profession of graphic design and the development of the fashion magazine. Students report his favorite exhortation was "Astonish me!" — reportedly an affectation borrowed from Diaghilev — which fell in line with an aesthetic ideology more closely aligned with the surrealists than the Bauhaus. His article from the British journal, *Commercial Art* (1930), entitled "What Pleases the Modern Man?" supports this assertion:

> *Blinking lights of a city. The surface of the revolving phonograph record, the fantastic reflection of the red tail light and the tread of an automobile tyre on the wet pavement, the heroism and daring in the silhouette of an aeroplane. The rhythm of the biographical or statistical diagram...In the monotony and drudgery of a work-a-day world, there is to be found new beauty and a new aesthetic.*[13]

The tendency toward novelty and the fascination of defamiliarization that drove the modernist movement coincided perfectly with the capitalist need to expand markets. "Admitting it is odd that such a 'radical, eccentric art form should have been embraced by the most conservative element of the American community, i.e., business, the unassailable fact is'" a 1944 *Newsweek* article confirmed, "'Surrealism Pays'... Its very weirdness seems to present a high potentiality for attracting attention."[14] The fashion magazine's devotion to the modernization of the domestic landscape — and the fashion industry's inexhaustible need to invest old products with new meanings — accomodated Brodovitch's fascination with visual innovation. Both functionalism and surrealism were aesthetic devices that could reinvest everyday images with intrigue and the mystique of high culture.

The contrasting nature of surrealism and functionalism would come to be an essential feature of the Brodovitch redesign of *Bazaar*. His typography tended toward the stark and unadorned, setting off vivid, often surprising, photographs. Before his arrival at *Bazaar*, text was paramount, the clothing

13
Brodovitch, Alexey. "What Pleases the Modern Man?" *Commerical Art* (August 1930), 60.

14
"Surrealism Pays" from *Newsweek* 23:56, January 1944.

Figure 1
Harper's Bazaar, October 1934.
Photographer: Man Ray.

represented through illustration. Words and pictures were not
closely allied and the text area was determined by a grid of
symmetrical proportions reminiscent of traditional book
design. Drawings and photographs were contained within the
text area in conventional frames.

In contrast, a spread from the October 1934 issue, the first
Brodovitch would design (*figure 1*), foreshadowed the changes
ahead. On the left-hand page is a photograph by the surrealist
Man Ray. The elongated shape of the model leans dramati-
cally to the right — most likely a distortion performed in the
darkroom — its edge bears the trace of the camera aperture
which mirrors the tilt of the silhouette. On the right-hand
page, two skewed columns of text, a distortion of a traditional
typographic grid, are set in a sans-serif font of different
weights composed to mirror the photographic composition.

The extreme excess of white page and simple, asymmetric
typography are emblematic of the Brodovitch style. By the
early fifties he had eliminated almost all ornamentation and
depended completely on typographic composition to express
values of currency. White space was the key to graphic mate-
rialism. Its successful manipulation distinguished clear typo-

graphic hierarchy without the use of rules and bars vestigial of printing technology prior to the introduction of offset lithography. A focus on technical production and qualities inherent in materials purported to liberate the consumer from the deceptive facade of fashion. It was the typographic equivalent of the architectural theory that espoused open-plan design, exposed structure and natural materials that projected a kind of formal "honesty."[15]

Brodovitch employed his powerful white space to counterpoint the full bleed photograph and facilitate a seamless, "cinematic" layout which flowed uninterrupted from page to page. The art director turned away from fashion illustration, long the staple of women's magazine, and like *Life*, adopted grainy black and white images to signify a kind of visual immediacy. Early photographs not only represented the featured sartorial accoutrement, but also often encapsulated a dream-like narrative in a single frame. Carefully arranged sets and location photography set the stage for fantastic dramas. In later years, Brodovitch applied the same graphic principles to his art direction as his typography; the surrealism of the earlier issues increasingly gave way to a kind of photographic formalism. He reduced his models to formal abstractions. The Brodovitch image was as much about form/counterform, rhythm and contrast as the Dior gown or the Chanel suit (*figure 2*).

Of all his photographers, none captured his vision like Richard Avedon. Brodovitch described Richard Avedon's photographic panache as a "vacation from life;" which was tremendously appealing to war-weary Americans.[16] Avedon's father had owned a women's shop, Avedon's Fifth Avenue. In his early work, he aimed to capture the carnivalesque glamour of the department store, just as he recreated his childhood world of the women's shop on his bedroom walls in a haze of clipped photographs by photographers such as Edward Steichen, George Hoyningen-Huene and Martin Munkasci. His interest in capturing the invisible or aberrant has been characterized by historians of fashion photography as realistic in the tradition of Munkasci, a Hungarian sports-photographer who preceded him as chief photographer at *Bazaar*. Avedon

15
Modern designers seemed to overlook that their honest aesthetic might not be read as they intended. For instance, Russell Lynes critiques the excessive white space used in a contemporaneous DeBeers Diamond advertisement as the hypocritical expression of "understated quality" which was in fact, ostentation, a sign of conspicuous waste. Russell Lynes. 1954. *The Tastemakers.* New York: Harper & Brothers, 294.

16
Hall-Duncan, Nancy. 1979. *The History of Fashion Photography.* New York: International Museum of Photography/ Alpine Book Company, 136.
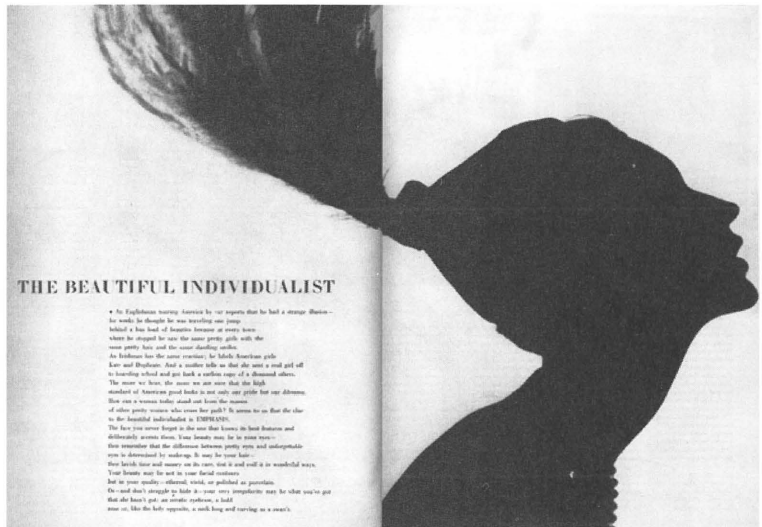
THE BEAUTIFUL INDIVIDUALIST

Figure 2
Harper's Bazaar, October 1955.
Photographer: Richard Avedon.

had admired the flecked surface of Munkasci's images, the spontaneous texture of rhythm and color captured on film as if by accident."[17]

Avedon came to prominence photographing the collections of the most exclusive European designers, especially Christian Dior. "Dior's New Look" writes Lesley Jackson, "was reactionary and an anachronism, making women once more subservient to their clothes, but it caught the public imagination, seeming to promise women exhausted and depressed by the war everything they thought they wanted."[18] Avedon wrapped what was perceived as a regressive style of almost caricatured femininity and material excess in a new form of photography that emphasized color, movement and carefree, incidental gesture in blurred or out-of-focus images. In this way, he managed "to suggest freedom and spontaneity even when [his] subject matter was corsetry."[19]

One of the most interesting of Avedon's techniques — often exploited by Brodovitch — was his use of the silhouette, the empty form waiting to be filled. The silhouette suggests a certain filmic identification, the form compels the reader to

17
Hall-Duncan, Nancy. *The History of Fashion Photography*, 136-144.

18
Jackson, Lesley. 1991. *The New Look: Design in the Fifties.* London: Thames and Hudson, 120.

19
Grundberg, Andy. *Brodovitch*, 84.

Figure 3
Harper's Bazaar. October 1950.
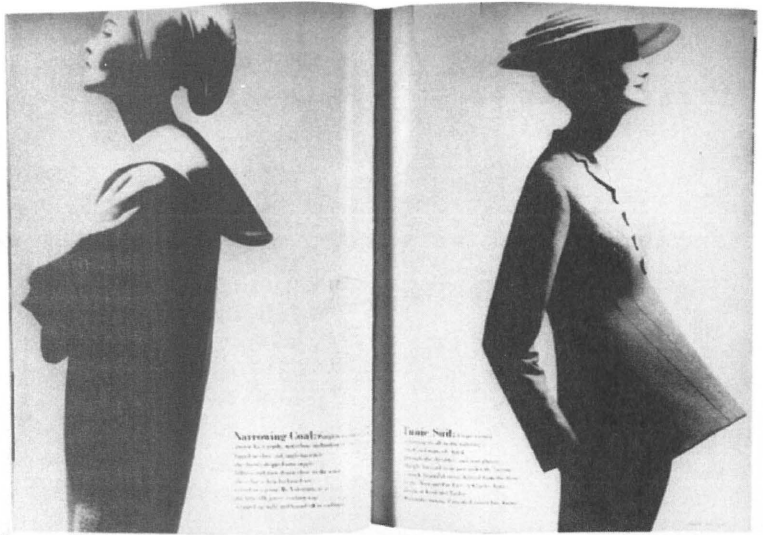Photographer: Richard Avedon.

Figure 4
Joe is fixed and developed
by photographer Dick Avery,
her "Professor Higgins."

insert herself into the magazine narrative, to become the "Beautiful Individualist" (*figure 3*). Famous for his single-minded attachment to a particular model — Dorian Leigh, Suzy Parker, Dovima — Avedon cast his various fantasies on one woman at a time.[20] Each model became the consistent backdrop for a series of successive transformations. As a key consultant to *Funny Face*, it is not surprising that the film focuses on a photographer's unyielding devotion to the transfiguration of his newest star.

In *Funny Face*, the photographer Avery rewrites Joe's body. Summoned to *Quality* headquarters by Prescott, Joe is assaulted by a bevy of stylists eager to reconstruct her fashion-less facade. Repelled by the swarm of cosmeticians — and pursued by Prescott wielding a mammoth pair of shears — she escapes to Avery's darkroom where she finds the photographer in the process of enlarging her image, a detail captured in the background of a frame from the bookstore session (*figure 4*). The ensuing sequence commences Joe's refiguration: from gamine to woman, from obscurity to stardom, from funny to classic, from seeing to seen.

Avery develops a large print which he lifts for Joe to behold. She is momentarily transfixed by her own transfiguration. Her face, small and nondescript, is covered by the exaggerated image Avery has fabricated. Through the *magic* of photography her face is transformed from funny to a thing of beauty. The scene concludes with her face framed in the easel under the bright white light of the enlarger. Her positive image has replaced the negative as Avery's hand steadies her head.

Joe's face is just a trace of its original. Through the mystery of the photographic process, Avery has stripped the face of specificity. She becomes the raw material of *Woman* on which an excessive femininity will be mapped through the *masquerade* of fashion. As with magazine art direction, it is not through the naturalistic, indexical aspect of photography that the manipulation takes place, but rather in its ability to be distorted, cropped and changed. It is through the perversion of the object that the *Quality* woman is manufactured. Joe had

castigated Avery for promoting superficiality — dismissing his pursuit of a "synthetic beauty at best" — but confronted with her new image, she is seduced by Avery's vision. In justifying her complicity in the plot as "a means to an end," Joe adopts the masquerade as a form of positive image, a method to employ the structures of advertising for her own devices.

Emptied of her specificity, Joe is ready to assume the litany of guises that constitute the magazine's construction of "womanliness." Joe's presumed masculinity is not so much erased, as coated with layer upon layer of assumed meanings. "Womanliness" notes film critic Mary Ann Doane:

> ...could be assumed and worn, both to hide the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if she was found to possess it — much as a thief will turn out his pockets and ask to be searched to prove that he has not stolen goods. The reader may now ask how I define womanliness or where I draw the line between genuine womanliness and the 'masquerade.' My suggestion is not, however, that there is any such difference; whether radical or superficial, they are the same thing.[21]

The photoshoot sequence in *Funny Face* is segmented into metonymic melodramas encapsulated in ten brief scenarios on-location for the *Quality Woman* collection. In these segments (*figure 5*), Joe is transformed time and again into varying images of femininity. Avery's photo narratives evoke the Avedon women that "...laughed, danced, skated, gamboled among herds of elephants, sang in the rain, ran breathless down the *Champs Elysees,* smiled, and sipped cognac at café tables..."[22] Each shot involves Joe's composition and inclusion in a mythic narrative contained within the film still. The process from real time (24 frames per second) to still photograph to printed page is represented in a rapidly edited montage at the end of each story in which the captured image is frozen, reversed, separated into color plates, cropped and framed.

In each brief segment Joe is *developed* and *fixed* by her photographer (*figure 5*). Joe's femininity is formed through the eyes and apparatus of the photographer. Avery's development of Joe is more than a little self-serving; in classic Pygmalion fashion,

21
Mary Anne Doane. "Masquerade Reconsidered" from *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film, Theory, Psychoanalysis.* 1991. New York: Routledge, 34.

22
Saregeant, Winthrop. "Profiles: Richard Avedon," 49.
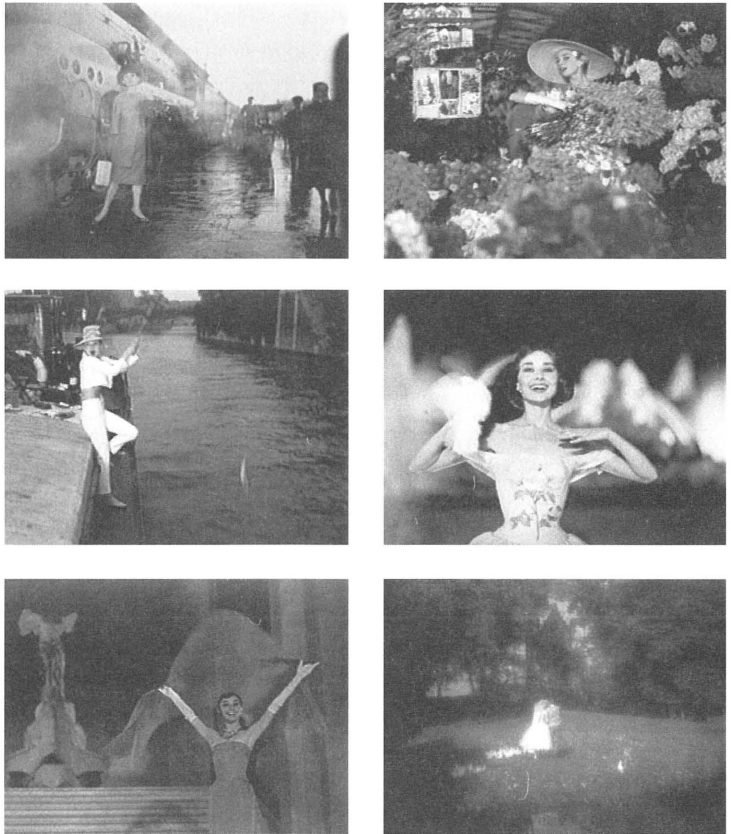
Figure 5
In a series of metonymic melodramas
which comprise the *Quality* photoshoot,
Joe is tranformed time and again into
varying images of femininity.

he forms the object of his own desire. (Avery counters Joe's
"means to an end" with "Or perhaps a means to a begin-
ning..." implying their impending love affair.) Perhaps his
fabrication of an unambiguously feminine Joe Stockton serves
to assure the audience of Astaire's masculinity and unoccluded
position as her Professor Higgins. This bifurcated structure in
which an audience is both constructed and courted is central
to the strategy of the fashion magazine that shapes readers to
be the kind of women that read fashion magazines.

In this way, the film is ultimately self-reflexive. *Funny Face* is one media's explication of another, employing the magazine as a metaphor for its own formal structure. Thus the key characters of the fashion magazine — the art director, the editor, the photographer and model — illuminate the popular roles of the director, writer, cinematographer and star. The film demonstrates the manner in which the magazine fantasy is constructed and Hepburn is the canvas on which each narrative is painted.[23] Although masquerade is proffered as a form of resistance or "a means to an end," it is ultimately bound by the larger strictures of a mass-mediated femininity. Joe's transformation from obscurity to celebrity, which parallels the alchemic metamorphoses of the undiscovered actress into a movie star, is in effect, the development of her exchange value.

The Organization Woman

While *Funny Face* foregrounds the more traditional love story developing between Avery and Stockton, it is Maggie Prescott that serves as the true sexual foil to the reluctant Joe Stockton. Prescott presents another image of femininity selected from the roster of masquerades available to women in the white collar world of the 1950s. She is representative of a distinct caste of highly-paid, hard-working women that emerged in the nascent mass-market fashion industry in the early century who were ridiculed as "the Brahmins of the ready-to-wear store world," and "Lady Buyers." "She laughs too much, she argues too readily. She's used to getting her way. She is Success."[24] In *Funny Face,* Prescott is clearly masculinized, linked to the sterile modernist office of the managerial landscape; a cool white, minimalist stage ringed with a series of identical doors marked by color (*figure 6*). Her entrance is underscored by a drum tattoo. Her mission: to clothe the American Woman. Over an intercom she calls — with a bellowing "Now hear this!" — the *Quality* magazine staff, a brigade of homogeneous, nameless women, to order.

The troops emerge from the colored doors — which come to signify a myriad of packaged tropes manufactured at *Quality*

23
"[T]he face of Audrey Hepburn..." remarked Roland Barthes in 1957, "is individualized, not only because of its peculiar thematics (woman as child, woman as kitten) but also because of her person, of an almost unique specification of the face..." Barthes, Roland. 1957. *Mythologies.* New York: Hill and Wang, 57.

24
Leach, William R. 1993. *Land of Desire from the Department Store to the Department of Congress: the Rise of America's Commerical Culture.* New York: Pantheon Books, 312.

Figure 6
Prescott, the organizational woman, marches
through *Quality* headquarters, a sterile modernist
office emblematic of the white-collar landscape.
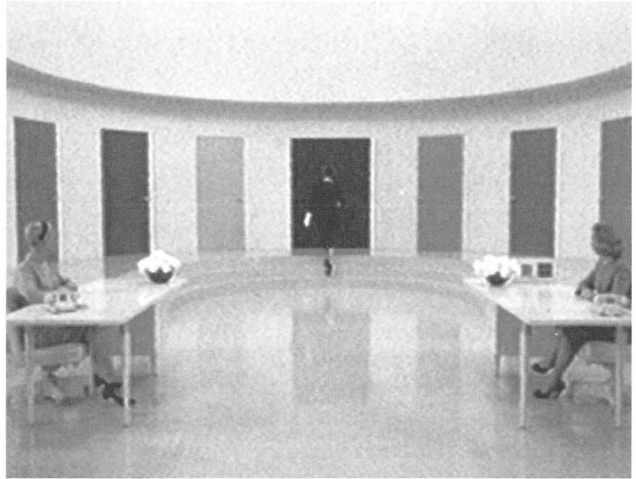
magazine — to the tune of the *Light Calvary Overture*; a
succession of commodified fantasies, each a stereotype of the
fashionable individual completely undistinguished from her
workmates. The women speak in unison: "Oh no, Miss
Prescott, you musn't say that..." just as the consumers of her
magazine are expected to respond to her nationwide directives
on the appropriate behavior for the fashionable set.

In a musical number, "Think Pink" performed by Prescott
and a chorus of troopers, the narrative is frozen in a series of
still photomontages evoking magazine spread layouts (*figure 7*);
advertisements for clothes, shoes, toothpaste, cars, modern art,
film. The frozen images reflect the American graphic design-
ers' fascination with mechanical techniques of the historical
avant-garde,[25] such as montage and the stylistic applications
of surrealism and modernism. It is the manifestation of
Prescott's power disseminated through products and the artifi-
cial construction of difference. Prescott urges her readers to
"Try pink shampoo." Her original idea ("to turn the whole
world pink") is transformed into a commercial attraction.

Essentially, the location photoshoots, the darkroom scene (in
which Avery makes Joe's face into the image of *Quality*) and
the "Think Pink" number clarify the central question of the

25
Bürger, Peter. 1984.
Theory of the Avant-Garde.
Minneapolis: University
of Minneapolis Press.
The "historical avant-garde"
specifies the term "avant-
garde" as a moment and
movement in the history of art
rather than as an attribute
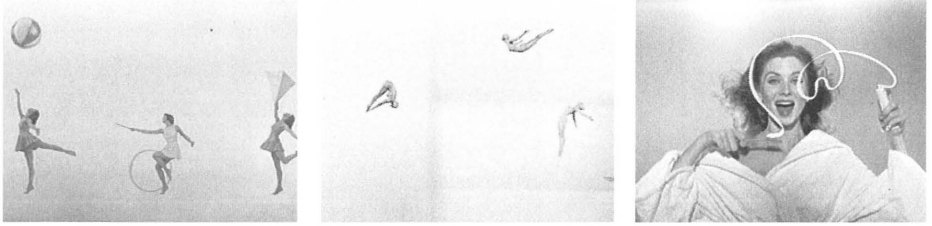connoting stylistic innovation.

Figure 7
A chorus of pink-collar workers appear in a succession of commodified fantasies, each immortalized in a still photomontage evoking a magazine spread layout.

movie: "How is femininity constructed through aesthetic device, in this case, modernist design?" As Prescott elaborates this master narrative, she hands a small fetish of pink crinoline to each of the women circling her, each donning "the New Look" at *Quality,* the little pink suit. Prescott, on the other hand, prefers gray flannel. She is not subject to the vagaries of fashion; she creates them. She fabricates the spectacle of femininity turning everything pink from the *Quality* magazine TWA jet to her troopers' uniforms. When art director Dovitch — the film double of Brodovitch — questions: "But what about you?" she retorts, "I wouldn't be caught dead." Prescott is director of production; pink bags, pink toothpaste, pink shampoo are the indices of her cultural control. The proliferation of *pink* — an obvious signifier for mass-mediated femininity — through everything from shoes to shampoo exposes the acculturation of an advertising campaign that markets that particular brand of femininity.

Avedon believed Carmel Snow unconsciously imagined herself "a dictator over women — a general, maybe."[26] Snow was frequently characterized as hard and uncompromising, a stickler for detail for which she was loved, mocked and despised. Perhaps the most frequent word used to describe Snow was "uncompromising" and yet the masculinization of Prescott reveals the sacrifices women like Snow made for a life outside the femininity they helped to manufacture. Avedon elaborated on Snow's tendency to view herself outside her sex:

26
Snow, Carmel and Mary Louise Aswell. *The World of Carmel Snow,* 207-208.

> *She made a strange slip of the tongue at the last collection we went to together. She talked through the collections, always out of the corner of her mouth, and sometimes she'd say, "now if I were a society woman, I'd choose that dress, or "If I were a secretary, I'd take that." This time she said, "If I were a woman…"[27]*

27
Snow, Carmel and Mary Louise Aswell. *The World of Carmel Snow,* 207-208.

28
Lynes, Russell. *The Tastemakers,* 247.

Maggie Prescott is an exception, as was Snow presumably, in that as a woman, she controlled the production around her; "She was Success." She had authority in spheres that routinely excluded women; the office, the boardroom, the corporate headquarters.

Modernism was a man's game for the most part, reserved for the space of the city center, the factory floor, the efficient office. As corporations grew increasingly diversified and multi-national, abstract modernism, the International Style, was adopted as the official corporate language. Writing in 1954, Russell Lynes attributes the spread of the modern in the corporate landscape to the failure of the program at the domestic level. Suburban men, he contends, did not take to the idea of their homes mimicking their offices:

> *The modern house was unrelenting in its demands for an orderly life…It seemed an unlikely place for a man to come home to, throw himself down, put his feet up and shut out the world of work and neighbors…He insisted it was not for him and never would be. Modern was damned nonsense and he wanted no part of it, and neither (except in the kitchen) did his wife.[28]*

Men preferred the solace of tradition after a hard day in the world of corporate modernism and the wives were expected to play along.

But perhaps Lynes misread the wife's rejection of modernism and, in turn, this accounts for the success of Brodovitch's redesign of *Harper's Bazaar.* The wife, isolated in the suburbs, surrounded by the modernistic efficiency of her hygienic kitchen could not have such access to the cold rationality of the corporate office. *Bazaar* brought the visual language of museum and the boardroom into women's homes. Elegantly spare, white space shaped by sedate columns of Didot type and

the svelte arms of an Eames chair, *Bazaar* bore the mark of "good design," showcasing modern products amidst the models. In relegating all advertising to the front and back sections of the magazine, Carmel Snow afforded women the luxury of negotiating their path through the magazine — their path to art and culture — without passing through the kitchen, the home, the suburb or the representational worlds portrayed in the unrelenting advertising which had assailed readers in earlier decades.

29
Freidan, Betty. 1963. *The Feminist Mystique*. New York: Norton, 206-230.

Bazaar sold women "upward mobility" through the pleasure of knowledge rather than pecuniary advantage; it produced a kind of high cultural consummerism. Thus "the New Look" was interleaved with the words, images and portraits of renowned novelists, painters, photographers, architects, dancers and actors. "Carmel Snow's Paris Report" sat neatly between a short story by Carson McCullers and a photographic journey to José Luis Sert's modernist Piazza. The Little Black Dress was admirably ensconced between an essay by Aldous Huxley and an interview with curator of the Museum of Modern Art, René d'Harnoncourt, not coincidentally the architect of its "good design" agenda.

As fashion and marketing turn on the construction of difference, the shift from the suburban landscape to the environment of culture and art democratically advanced through the mass-cultural form of the magazine forged a devoted constituency. In 1933, *Bazaar's* advertisers had ranged from Budweiser (beer) to Heinz (tomato paste), Canon (towels) to Hachmacher (suits). By the early fifties, new advertisers were almost exclusively department stores and fashion accessories with the exception of few discrete beauty items. *Bazaar* delivered a new consumer market forged from the "Career or Would-Be Career Woman,"[29] the emerging class of women disinterested in traditional notions of domesticity, who, like Betty Friedan, were suddenly "...very interested in houses and things: chairs, tables, silverware."

In contrast to the scientific homemakers in streamlined kitchens of the 1910s and '20s, *Bazaar's* women were abstract, cool,

formal. The happy homemakers and the smiling wives were conspicuously absent in the pages of the magazine. Modernism represented women as connotative of elegance and cultural sophistication, outside the messy realities of everyday life. The modernist style was another representational layer laid over the framework of femininity. Industrial designer Raymond Loewy had defended the superficial quality of streamlining asserting that the external shield "accomplishes something, and it becomes functional, the specific function being to eliminate confusion."[30] In this respect abstract modernism, or functionalism, shared that role. Just as streamlining had served to hide complex machinery inside its sleek casings, the rational, ordered surface of modernism smoothed over the confusing workings of a socially constructed femininity.

How Long Has This Been Going On?

The complex machinery of Joe Stockton's masculinized intellectual identity is neatly occluded under the abstract order of the New Look. But Joe's initial rejection of Prescott's and Avery's advances gives us a hint of at least one form of resistance, that of the enlightened beat, savvy to the manipulation of the fashion machine. Prescott offers another vision of the masquerade; the woman resistant to the proffered models of womanhood in the 1950s, one who conquers the man's world of management and power.

Joe Stockton is not without motives when she finally gives way to Avery's proposal. The false consciousness of the *Quality Woman* is not entirely forced upon her; her acquiescence is more aptly an exchange. A trip to Paris seems a fair trade for "a few silly pictures." Tellingly, Joe is lured to femininity with the *promise* of authentic — European, masculine, intellectual — culture. As a caricatured young beat from the Village, she is drawn to the realm of *authentic* intellectual thought, necessarily European, and into the schemes of both Prescott (as sales tool) and Avery (as sexual object). Joe accepts the formulaic image of womanhood proffered through *Quality* in order to gain access to high culture, "the best that has been

thought and said."[31] Ironically the film turns that notion on its head by exposing the intellectual culture of Joe's dreams as a sham and lionizing the commonsensical, folk truth associated with the spheres of marriage and unambiguous femininity.

Through her Faustian deal with *Quality* magazine, Joe penetrates the elite circles of Dior and Noguchi, but perhaps, more importantly, she comes to have insight into the aesthetic *production* of the fashion magazine and, so follows, the social production of femininity. In her complicity with *Quality*, one might argue, Joe attains a perspective on culture not so much in Matthew Arnold's sense but rather more in line with Raymond William's definition as a "particular way of life which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning, but also in *institutions* and *ordinary behavior* [my italics]."[32]

This new perspective, however, does not save Joe from the wedding dress at the end of the film. She is unable to link her intimate knowledge of the fashion industry with her own gendered role. The film suggests a deep fulfillment at the level of traditional femininity; Joe gets the man in the end, not to mention a lovely new wardrobe. *Funny Face* suggests the complex relationship that existed between women and media in the mid-fifties, a wary standoff that belies typical images of suburban bliss. As Joe was making her peace with American capitalism — throwing off the vaguely socialist ideals of her youth — the idealistic proponents of modernism were completing a similar pact. The intellectual and socially-engaged utopianism of European modernism quietly disappeared as modernism and American capitalism marched down the aisle and set off on a honeymoon that would last the next thirty years.
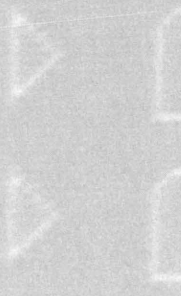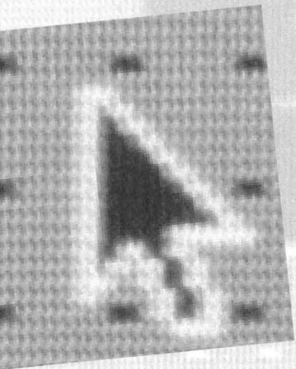
31
Matthew Arnold quoted from Hebdige, Dick. 1979. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style.* London: Methuen, 7.

32
Williams, Raymond. 1965. *The Long Revolution.* London: Penguin, 8.

Jack Williamson

Embodiments of Human Identity: Detecting and Interpreting Hidden Narratives in Twentieth-Century Design History

The article argues that the practice and influence of design history can benefit from new forms of visual and chronological analysis. To this end, a unique phenomenon, the "historical visual narrative," is identified and discussed. Special instances of this phenomenon in twentieth-century design and visual culture, which are tied to the theme of the embodiment of human identity, are examined in depth.

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A persistent theme within twentieth-century society, politics and culture concerns the nature and development of human identity, especially in terms of the relationship between individual autonomy and freedom on the one hand, and social participation and responsibility on the other. The actualization of human identity — both within the single individual and society at large — is in many ways determined by the process of its embodiment in the individual human organism. It is significant that, during the course of our century, it is possible to detect a unique relationship between the embodiment of human identity in the physical body on the one hand, and the physical and visual embodiment of some key artifacts in art, design and visual culture on the other. For these artifacts, the body, as an expression of human identity, itself operates as a model. Study of this phenomenon can provide insight about the relationship between visual culture and historical process, and can help suggest some new directions for the practice of design history.

Before examining how certain well-known artifacts reflect the twentieth-century drama of human identity and its embodiment, one must first understand how personal identity becomes manifest in and through the human physical organism during its initial development and subsequent maturity. According to the educational philosophy of the early twentieth-century educator and polymath, Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), human growth and development from birth through adolescence consists of three major stages during which the faculties of willing, feeling and thinking are successively established.[1] These faculties find expression in the accompanying diagram of the physical body *(figure 1).*[2] Steiner maintained that thinking, as focused, wide-awake, rational cognition, was physically expressed in the human head, with its similarly focused clustering of the major senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste). The head is where the world, as sense data and as food, is taken into the body. At the lower extreme of the physical organism a complimentary activity occurs which is linked with the unconscious will. Here, the main gesture is expansion outwards, as in the excremental function, and is of an unconscious nature, as in our digestive and metabolic processes.

1
The three-fold model of human development informs a large body of educational literature produced by Steiner (usually in the form of printed collections of lectures), or by his followers, which is part of the worldwide Waldorf/Rudolf Steiner school movement. Although Steiner's insights about the three faculties of thinking, feeling and willing are often unique, the recognition of this triad as basic dates back to Aristotle and is consistent with most current psychological and educational discussion of the fundamental categories of human cognition and experience.

2
Both the diagram and the accompanying discussion on the correlation between thinking, feeling and willing and human physiognomy were presented in a lecture the author attended given by Dr. Otto Wolff at a seminar to medical students at the University of Michigan Medical School in Ann Arbor in the mid-1970s.
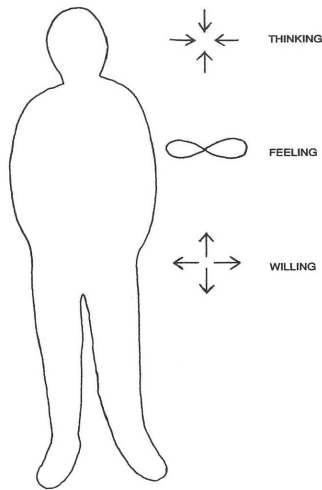
Figure 1
The three-fold human organism
and its correlative faculties.

Whereas head-centered cognition is self-conscious and self-oriented, lower body will activity — such as ritualistic movement, dancing or sexual intercourse — is communal and non–self–oriented. Between the spheres of the head and lower body is the middle region of the physical organism which expresses — in the rhythmic contractions and expansions of the heart and lungs — traits of both of its neighbors, thus mediating between them. Appropriately, this middle sphere is characterized by an intermediate state of cognition in the form of emotions and feelings. These are neither as crystalline as abstract thinking nor as formless and unconscious as willing. Upon reflection, it should be evident that the healthy and unhindered development of these three faculties would result in an adult fully capable of independent critical thought and a strong sense of self, yet equally able to actively participate in social life beyond the self, and possessed of a vivid and balanced emotional life. However, when human development has been one-sided, uneven or thwarted in some way, the three spheres do not operate in an integrated and harmonious fashion. Because these three faculties are so thoroughly inter-related in their actual operation, insufficiencies in one can engender problems in the functioning of the other two, thus thwarting the actualization of the identity which expresses itself through thinking, feeling, willing and their interaction.

In the twentieth century, disturbances to harmonious threefold development are in great evidence. Two such disturbances, which are historical in nature, have disrupted the relationship between thinking and willing. First, according to a theory of history first postulated by Steiner and later promulgated by Owen Barfield, the history of western civilization reveals a threefold evolution of consciousness, passing from ancient will culture, where man fully participates in nature and the group, to a devotional feeling culture during the Middle Ages, on to our modern scientific thinking culture in which the experience of head-centered critical self-consciousness eclipses the former experience of a participated oneness with nature.[3] Modern man, according to Barfield, is characterized by a critical "onlooker consciousness" in which a strong thinking pole is typically accompanied by a relatively passive and disengaged will, so that mediated experience, often specifically packaged for the head (e.g. television), substitutes for directly participated or "lived" experience. This situation is exacerbated by the second historical disturbance alluded to above, the Industrial Revolution. By the twentieth century, the widespread industrialization of virtually all societies and of virtually all levels of society, with the near universal human dependence upon machines, has significantly displaced both the physical and the psychological exercise of the human will.[4] A host of individual and social problems have arisen in consequence of the resulting imbalance. The German social philosopher, Karl Marx (1818-83), who lived most of his adult life in England, identified a number of disturbances of the will caused by industrialization. For example, Marx decried the worker's loss of skills and expertise (deskilling) with the division of labor in mechanized factories and the demotion of skilled crafts people to machine operators. Marx also spoke of the worker's experience of powerlessness and alienation because of the narrowing of the worker's conscious grasp of the meaningful totality of the work process to the awareness of only the worker's single production step.[5] These arguments about the dehumanizing nature of industrial work helped fuel the English design reform movement of the third and fourth quarters of the nineteenth century. Leading members of the Arts

3
An excellent introduction to the evolution-of-consciousness theory of history is Owen Barfield's, 1957, *Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry*, New York: Harper, Bruce & World. For an application of this approach to the history of art and design, see the author's article, "The Historical Antecedents and Iconology of the Fixed Visual Field" in *Coming of Age: The First Symposium on the History of Graphic Design*, Rochester Institute of Technology, 1983, 48-53.

4
In fact, the two "disturbances" are different sides of the same historical phenomenon. With the growing dominance of head-centered rationality, rationality is able to bolster its independence by rationalizing production (the Industrial Revolution) thereby disengaging itself from the will.

5
Westrum, Ron, 1991. *Technologies and Society: The Shaping of People and Things.* Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing , 31, 32, 38.

and Crafts movement were as much social theorists as design reformers, and they sought to redeem the experience of both the worker and the consumer through quality handcrafted production. Therefore, with the rise of industrial culture in the nineteenth century, there was an attendant recognition that the displacement of the human will by the machine was inhibiting the actualization of human identity.

Before finally considering the impact of such "disturbances" on the theme of human embodiment as expressed in twentieth century art and design, a brief presentation of this study's methodology is first necessary. In the modern disciplines of art and design history there has been a particular reluctance, even inability, to deal effectively with the process and meaning of the physical and visual embodiment of historical artifacts. This failure is due largely to the factors discussed above: namely, that the twentieth century intensification of focused, critical cognition, has been accompanied by a corresponding disengagement of the will,[6] so that despite gains in the clear analytical processing of data, the breadth and depth of interpretation has suffered through a failure to deeply engage and participate the visual and historical phenomena studied. This is evident, for example, in the way that art history and design history consider the issue of "visual style." Design historians, in particular, are often critical of the traditional art historical method of characterizing art historical periods on the basis of common visual stylistic traits without correlative explanations of the role of social, economic and technological factors which design historians are used to treating.[7] And yet, instead of developing their own methods for understanding and explaining the visual embodiment of design artifacts, design historians have generally avoided visual analysis altogether.[8] It is important to realize that "style," as the description of artist-specific or period-specific visual characteristics, was originally developed by professional art connoisseurs as a method of visually categorizing artworks for the purpose of attributing, authenticating and dating these artworks for the museums and collectors who were their clients. The method was strictly one of describing, categorizing and cross-referencing external visual traits, not of explaining or interpreting the deeper origin and significance of

visual stylistic phenomena.[9] Due to dissatisfaction with the perceived limitations of the traditional art historical concepts of style and stylistic periods, there has recently been the tendency in the academic design community to undervalue both visual style and chronological succession in favor of an ahistorical focus on design issues.[10] However, as I intend to demonstrate, attention to visual form and chronological succession in design history can have great value. Chronology helps design students recognize that different historical periods face different design tasks. For the design historian, study of chronological development continually reveals new patterns of causal influence and meaning. One such "new pattern," which attention to chronological visual stylistic development has revealed to this historian, is a unique type of visual construct which evolves over time which I call a "historical visual narrative." In the course of the following discussion I will describe several instances of these visual narratives which help to enrich not only our understanding of design process, but also of historical process as well.[11]

Visual Narratives of Embodiment

The impact of the polarity between thinking and willing upon the human bodily image is evident in the works of cubism, surrealism, futurism, soviet cubo-futurism and constructivism which will be reviewed in the first part of this article. The tension between thinking and willing is frequently represented as a tension between self and non-self. This is expressed, often visually so, as an opposition between the forces of contraction (as a picture of the collected, thinking self, inwardly focused and withdrawn into the head) and the forces of expansion (as a picture of will which dilates and disperses — sometimes with ferocious, explosive and fragmenting force — outward towards the world beyond the bodily self). Both extremes operate, for example, in Pablo Picasso's 1910 cubist portrait of Kahnweiler *(figure 2)*. The painting challenged conventions in traditional portraiture by ignoring the sitter and focusing on the viewer: the self-conscious act of looking, the viewer's multiple vantages, etc.

9
In the field of art history, there was the attempt to overcome this shortcoming of stylistic analysis through an investigation of deeper relationships between artworks and their cultural settings and roots called "iconology." Iconology, however, never became realized as a coherent methodology. For an introduction to iconology, see "Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art," in Panofsky, Erwin. 1955. *Meaning in the Visual Arts.* Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 26-54. For an introduction to art historical stylistic analysis, see the pioneering 1915 work by Heinrich Wolfflin, *Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art.* New York: Dover, 1950, or, for an overview which incorporates major advances in stylistic theory over the following six decades, see Finch, Margaret. 1974. *Style in Art History: An Introduction to Theories of Style and Sequence.* Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press. For an introduction to alternative approaches in more recent art history, see Rees, A.L. and Borcello, Frances, editors. 1988. *The New Art History.* Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press International.

10
Because I have taught a graduate seminar in design issues on an on-going basis since 1989, I am convinced of the value of design issues as a separate domain within the larger field of design studies. Although I believe it is difficult, if not impossible, to
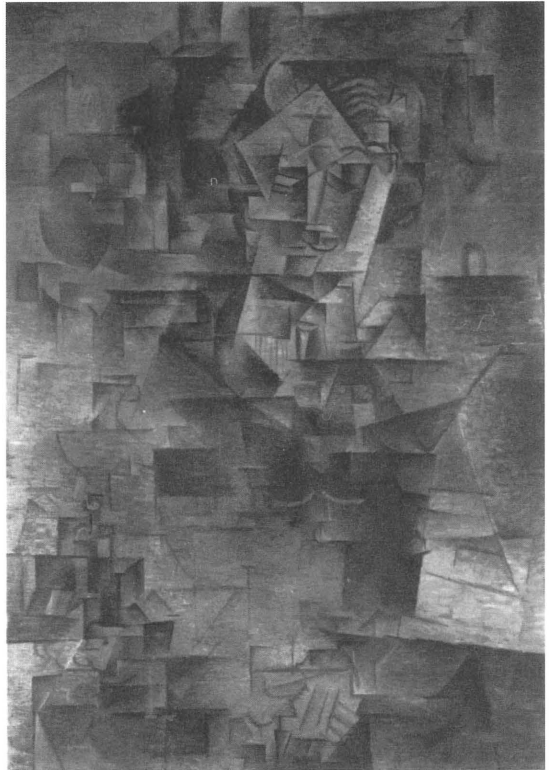
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Figure 2
Pablo Picasso, *Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler*, oil on
canvas, 1910, 100.6 x 72.8 cm. The Art Institute
of Chicago, gift of Mrs. Gilbert W. Chapman
1948.361 (photograph ©1994, The Art Institute of
Chicago, All Rights Reserved).

Traditional interest in the sitter's identity and the depiction of
character through careful observation of facial detail and
gestural nuance was abandoned. Here, as the viewer self-
consciously withdraws into him/herself, the picture space
follows this retreat and progressively flattens towards the
viewer and the two-dimensional field of the picture plane.
Thus as the viewer increased in value, the sitter Kahnweiler
decreases, and suffers a loss of recognizable identity as his
countenance dissolves into a series of generalized shards.[12]
The de-individuation of Kahnweiler's image via its dispersion
throughout the flat field of the picture mimics the death
process in nature, where the expiration of the vital organizing
being results in the body's decomposition into its constituent
chemical components and the return of these to the larger
surrounding environment.

productively discuss design
issues without some recogni-
tion of the role played by
historical context, to do so
should in no way be consid-
ered a form of design history
or as a substitute for design
history. A serious problem
with treating design issues
outside of their historical
frame is that to do so auto-
matically privileges present
(and equally historically
rooted) interests which, when
projected onto earlier histori-
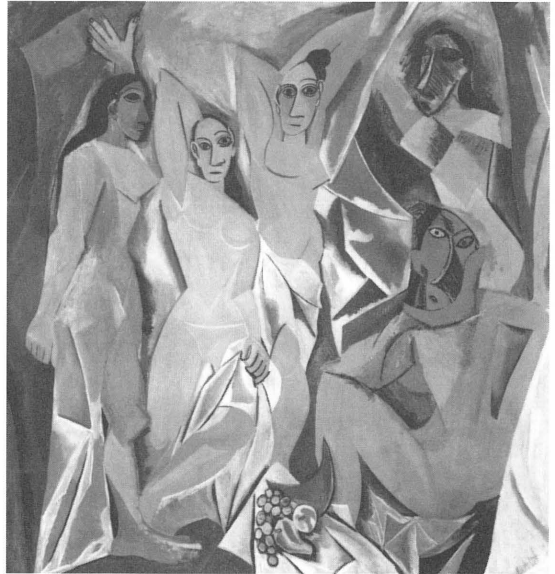cal periods, severely distorts
the nature of the phenomena
studied.

11
If design history is to take its
place as an autonomous disci-

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Figure 3
Pablo Picasso, *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon.* (June-July 1907). Oil on canvas, 8' x 7'8". The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest.

This theme of the eclipse of identity as a process of progressive bodily decomposition and death finds an even more literal depiction in Picasso's 1907 painting, *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon (figure 3).* The work presents a row of prostitutes in a brothel, most of whom face the viewer and confront his gaze. When their faces are read from left to right, a progressive transformation occurs (hinted at in the face of the first figure at far left), and we pass from faces with the stamp of distinctive individual personalities to, at far right, faces "cubistically" decomposed and rendered as African death masks. These final faces are spread out and flattened, transformed and distributed by the eruption of a primitive sexual will which has completely displaced any trace of the personal self.[13] Appropriately, the final figure squats down, a savagely distorted face transposed over the genital region of the figure behind, thereby underlining the normal distinction between the head (as representative of thought and self) and the lower will (which can overpower and supplant that self).

The cubist visual strategy of eclipsing a person's or a thing's visual identity by decomposing its recognizable form was employed soon after its initial fine arts development for

pline among other forms of history (e.g., art, architectural, cultural, economic, institutional, intellectual, political, scientific, social and technological history, *among others*), it must not only establish a more complete factual narrative of design and its historical development, but also must reveal those things which are truly unique about historical design phenomena, and thus make a contribution to the understanding of history as well. Clive Dilnot has voiced a similar concern: "Is it [design history]...merely a minor, if useful, subsection of economic, social and technological history? Or might it be a more significant contribution, a different way of reading or comprehending history?" He continues, "Little has thus far been done on the relationship between history in general and the history of design..." (Dilnot, Clive. "The State of Design History II,"

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purposes of military concealment during the First World War. "Camouflage" (from the French verb *camoufler*, meaning to disguise), was the art of military deception, necessitated by the introduction of the airplane into military combat and recon- naissance, to protect installations, activities and equipment from enemy observation. The Cubist mechanism for subordi- nating identity by fragmenting form into centers of fixation (Cubism's multiple vantage areas) is also operative in some types of visual pornography. As in American painter Richard Lindner's 1967 work, *Marilyn was here (figure 4)*, reference is made to fetishistic garments which employ straps and pieces of clothing alternating with regions of exposed skin to zone the body into areas for visual fixation, allowing the viewer to
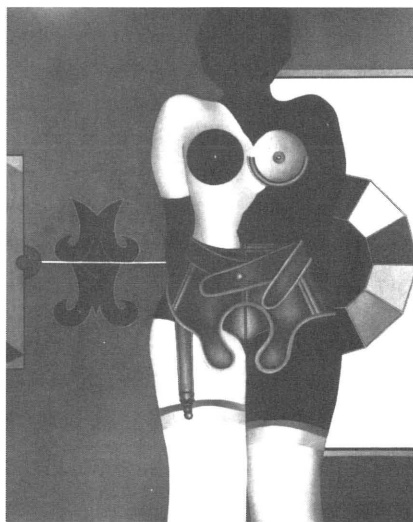

Figure 4
Richard Lindner, *Marilyn was here*, 1967. ©1995, Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

concentrate upon the depersonalized part without acknowl- edging the identity of the entire person. Visual pornography, used as a substitute for real sexual intimacy and communion, is an extreme example of modern "onlooker consciousness;" it is voyeuristic, it both depends upon and reinforces an impris- oned self and a will which is disengaged (thus obsessive) and incapable of real participation. Because real sexual intimacy is the most personal form of communication,[14] and because it is a communion of wills, the vehicle of the communication — the physical body — disappears and one truly participates in the

238 and N. 33). For those interested in investigating design history's potential contribution to the under- standing of history, I would recommend starting with Dilnot's previously cited two- part article (note 8) on the current status and potential scope of design history, followed by as thorough a familiarization as possible with the nature, aims and methods of other types of historical practice. The aim of this course of study would be to gain — through these vari- ous lenses — an intimate understanding of historical phenomena in its rich complexity. By better under- standing the nature of history itself, a unique understanding of its relationship to design can result. Useful overviews of a diverse number of histori- cal approaches can be found in: Beringer, Richard. 1978. *Historical Analysis: Contemporary Approaches to Clio's Craft*. New York: John Wiley & Sons; Stern, Fritz, editor. 1973. *The Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present*. New York: Vintage Books; and Fischer, David Hackett. 1970. *Historian's Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought*. New York: Harper & Row.

12
See also Picasso's similar treatment of the sitter in *Portrait of Ambroise Vollard*, 1909-10, Pushkin Museum, Moscow.

13
Again, as in the Kahnweiler portrait, the focus is the viewer, whose self-interest distorts the latter faces. Implicated as the customer who surveys the line of prosti- tutes, the viewer, whose own

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other, the beloved, the non-self. Only when the self cannot be transcended, only when the communication cannot be completed, does the vehicle of communication — the body — become a barrier instead of a channel, the goal and not the means. This is the experience of the "body as limit" (as expressed in the straps and garments which tightly bind the body),[15] or the body as dysfunctional "language." And when one becomes disconnected from the object of communication, she or he withdraws and fixates on what was formerly the means, turning it into an end.[16] An important goal of sexual intimacy is to participate in the identity of the loved one, but because the voyeur must fixate on the limits of self, the facial identity of the other is either shunned or actually obscured *(figure 4)*. The combination of voyeuristic fixation, focal body parts and subordinated identity is again evident in Jasper Johns two sculptures of 1955, *Target with Four Faces* and *Target with Plaster Casts*. Both works rivet viewer attention on a target with bull's-eye, above which are displayed, in a row of small boxes, either four anonymous lower faces, or, alternately, body parts (including, among others, a female mouth, a breast and male genitals). Johns, in a quite conscious fashion, and with calculated insight, presents to us the basic visual and psychopathological mechanism whereby the modern voyeuristic "onlooker" fixates by means of the obsessive will on the object of desire, yet with no possibility of meaningful participation with that object's (or person's) real and full identity.

John's alienated viewer and his use of fragments of literally depicted objects ties him to earlier dadaist art which grew up as a satiric and nihilistic response to the inhumanity of the First World War and the experience of human helplessness, and which also treated the theme of alienation through the representation of uncanny object juxtapositions.[17] Surrealism also dealt with the theme of helplessness and alienation, but in terms of an oppressive, often libidinal, Freudian unconscious which could overwhelm conscious identity and personal will. Surrealist painting typically featured an "estranged object," disconcertingly wrenched from its normal context and abandoned on a plain of vast empty space. The theme of

libidinal desire (part of the unconscious will) grows as his gaze proceeds to the right, increasingly sees only the primitive sexual side of the final figures, their countenances disfigured by the customer's own prurient stare. By contrasting decidedly French faces with African masks, emphasis is given to the difference between intellectual European culture (which prizes the individual self) and will-oriented, ritualistic tribal culture (which prizes the group).

14
The irony of visual pornography is that it is the "private made public," which automatically falsifies its promise of intimate communion with the other. Sexual communion can only be experienced by the lovers themselves. At no point is the communication ever public because it only occurs *within* the lovers. At the moment visual pornography makes the "language medium" of sexual communication (i.e., the body) public, it ceases to be "language" (i.e. capable of the communication transfer).

15
Psychiatrist Wilhelm Reich, the pupil of Freud who focused on sexual dysfunction, said that his sexually neurotic patients (especially the masochistic ones) were excessively conscious of their bodily periphery, and experienced their skin as a tightly constricted boundary, keeping them from realizing themselves. On this basis, the straps and binding apparel of Lindner's figures express the frustration of identity by both mimicking the neurotic experience of the constricted bodily periphery, and by visually fragmenting the body so that viewer recognition of the

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Figure 5
Salvador Dali, *Giraffe on Fire*, 1935.
©1995 Demart Pro Art, Geneva / Artists
Rights Society (ARS), New York.

the alienated, powerless self, is portrayed in Salvador Dali's 1935 painting, *Giraffe on Fire (figure 5)*. The painting features a vast dusky plain, in the foreground of which is the limp form of a woman, bodily appendages propped up by crutches, struggling blindly forward. In the distance stands a phallic, burning giraffe. In the face of an irresistible sexual will, she has lost all vestiges of self: gone are her personal will (hence the crutches), her personal feelings (the drawers pulled from the middle sphere of her body are empty) and her individual identity (she is without a face). She gropes aimlessly forward, trancelike, a picture of witless, mechanical longing in the absence of an exiled self.

person infusing the whole is thwarted. This visual zoning of the body also suggests that the occupant's experience of self has lost cohesion and has suffered a fragmentary distribution into, and conscious preoccupation with, disparate bodily centers where consciousness has become internally and externally fixated.

16
It might be suggested that, as a symptom of the increasing withdrawal of the late twenti-

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It was with futurism, however, which arose in pre-war Italy, that the subordination of centrifugal rational consciousness and identity is coupled with the dynamic centripetal forces of the will. Furthermore, this will comes to be identified with that which is non-human and mechanical. Futurism's founding manifesto, written by the Italian poet Filippo Marinetti, evinces an intoxication with both the unleashed power of the machine and the destruction of life by "recounting" a reckless nighttime automobile joyride through the streets of Milan, and the sadistic act of running over a dog on someone's porch. The possession of self by a larger force which seizes and propels it blindly forward (not unlike the female in Dali's painting), is presented again and again in futurist artworks. Called "universal dynamism" (suggestive of its de–individuating action), this force was first depicted as the collective madness of a mob in Umberto Boccioni's 1909 painting, *Brawl in the Milan Galleria,* in which a single great current flows through all the figures of a street riot. It is then identified with brute animal will, as in Boccioni's 1910 painting, *The City Rises,* where the bristling dynamism of horses courses through both the picture space and the human figures occupying it. In the artist's 1911 painting, *Forces of a Street,* universal dynamism is represented as "lines of force" which come to be identified, first in the work of the futurist painter Luigi Russolo, with lightning and electricity. Electrical force and explosive mechanical force (internal combustion engine) become the most perfect embodiment of the principle of universal dynamism. In the 1914 cityscape drawings of the futurist architect Antonio Sant' Elia, for example, electrical generating centers were the most important architectural form. But of all these works, the subject of the replacement of human will by electrical-mechanical force and of human bodily identity by mechanomorphic form was nowhere better expressed than in Boccioni's 1913 sculpture, *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space (figure 6).* The work visualized Marinetti's speculations about the future evolution of man when "the mechanical kingdom" supplanted "the animal kingdom," and a new being, capable of great speed, would be "mechanized...

eth-century human into his or her critical consciousness, the resulting separation from his or her former sources of meaning has likewise caused him or her to become suddenly aware of language (itself suddenly opaque and dysfunctional), and to fixate upon it as the culprit, much as the sexual voyeur fixates upon the body as limit. This might help to explain the current vogue of critical language theory which invariably treats the "materiality" of language, and regards language as limit, not as communion.

17
Jasper John's work is heir to the more intellectual side of dada, as represented in the work of Marcel Duchamp. But dada also celebrated the theme of the disengaged mind, exalting irrationality and the eruption of the enraged, destructive will.

with replaceable parts."[18] In the streamlined form of this figure, all marks of differentiated individuality and human character are absent, and only the most generalized (i.e., universalized) forms remain. This body, shaped aerodynamically and entirely in regard to externals, expresses no reference to an internal occupant, having the appearance of a hard encapsulating shell, hollow within. This theme of

Figure 6
Umberto Boccioni, *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space,* 1913. Bronze (cast 1931) 43 7/8" x 34 7/8" x 15 3/4." Museum of Modern Art, New York. Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest.

externality is present as well in Marinetti's futurist orthography, in which letterforms were exploited for their optical impact. Just as the figure's rational identity was subordinated to the irrational will in *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* and *Giraffe on Fire,* so did Marinetti's graphic compositions set letters free from words and their rational meanings. Earlier we discussed the pornographic representation of the body, and how, when the vehicle of communication becomes detached from the transfer of meaning, the vehicle itself becomes opaque and

self-referential. For the same reasons, Marinetti's graphics represent the hollow rind or carcass of language, all external-ity, like the empty shell of Boccioni's futurist man.

Throughout its formative years, futurism exercised a powerful influence in Russia, in the aftermath of the Revolution of 1905 and leading up to the Revolution of 1917. Marinetti conducted a lecture tour there in 1910, and futurist ideas of rapid change, based on a destruction of past societal forms, was eagerly embraced, and well complemented Marx's dialectical concept of historical change through revolutionary opposition of new forms against old. Also, the futurist opposition of thinking and willing, with the latter overcoming the former, was fundamental to the revolutionary principle at work in Russia at this time. Marxist social theory posited the opposi-tion and irreconcilability of management (the head, thinking) and workers (the will), and proposed the inevitability of a violent worker's revolution (the victory of willing over think-ing). Consistent with this was the de-emphasis of the individ-ual in favor of the collective will of the group, which was basic to the communist project. The visual expression of these attitudes is first manifest in the cubo-futurist peasant paintings of Kasimir Malevich of 1911 and 1912. Focusing on the rural peasant-laborer, a perfect anti-bourgeois subject and the arche-typal picture of collective-group culture and the communal will that binds it, Malevich's figures are composed of stacked, metallic-looking cylinders and curved planes. The hollowness and sheen of these surfaces remind one of the metallic shell of Boccioni's sculpture of futurist man.[19] Hollowness again typifies Malevich's slightly later representations of human figures of 1913 in his book cover design for *The Three* and a costume design for the Russian futurist opera by Kruchenykh and Matyushin, *"Victory Over the Sun" (figure 7)*.[20] But here, hollowness is merely a prerequisite for a collapsing-inward of the middle part of the form (even the prismatically constructed letters of *The Three*'s book title seem to cave-in at their mid-points). Reminiscent of the hollow middle feeling sphere of the self-estranged female figure in Dali's *Giraffe on Fire*, the "absent middle" was, in fact, a salient feature of Marxian

19
Malevich's figures also share much in common with the painted figures composed of compound metallic cylinders of Fernand Leger being done at the same time in France, and which anticipate Leger's later 1925 painting, *The Breakfast*, in which three human figures appear to consist of standardized sets of perfectly machined, hollow metal parts.

20
Appropriately, the opera, like Italian futurism before it, idolized the new sources of mechanical and electrical power. Kruchenykh, in refer-ence to the opera's theme, says: "The sun, expressing the old energy of the earth, is ripped out of the heavens by modern man, who creates his own sources of energy, through the power of his technical mastery." Rowland, Kurt. 1973. *The History of the Modern Movement: Art, Architecture, Design.* New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 185.
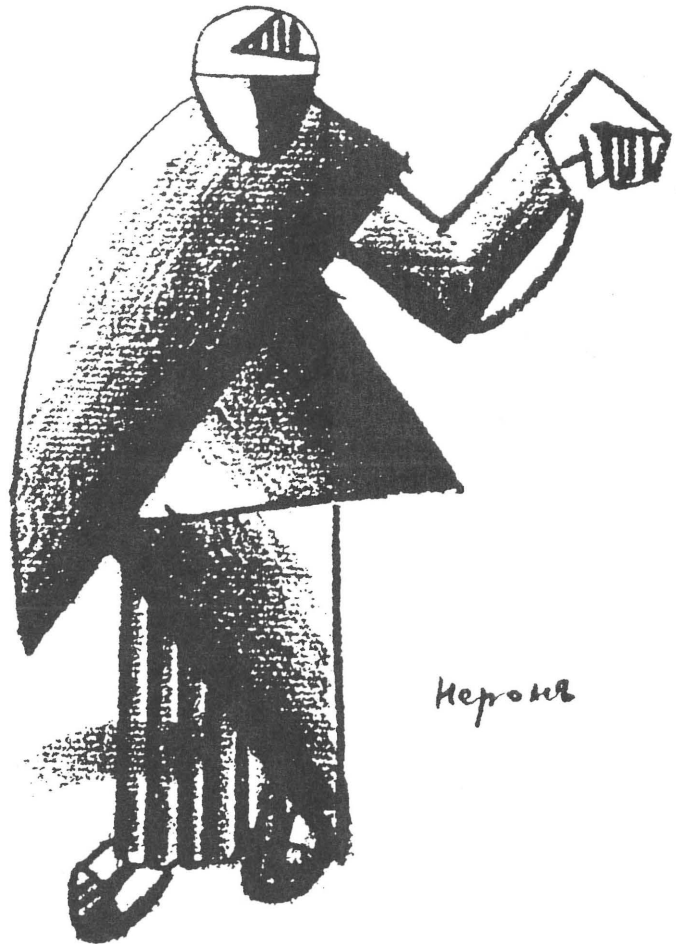
Figure 7
Kasimir Malevich, *Costume for the Opera "Victory Over the Sun,"* 1913.

dialectics, in which only polaric extremes existed and inevitably clashed, with no possibility of resolution through a middle mediating factor. Indeed, in our own socialist-inspired labor unions, democratic work arrangements and workplace participation have often been opposed due to fear that they might lead to workers' collaboration and integration with management,[21] thus destroying the bi-polar dichotomy fundamental to Marxian principles. The dialectic bi-polar opposition (with no middle term) was visually expressed in the immediately proximate but never physically convergent axes and planes of constructivist composition, as in El Lissitzky's 1923 *PROUN*

21
Westrum, Ron. *Technologies and Society,* 38.

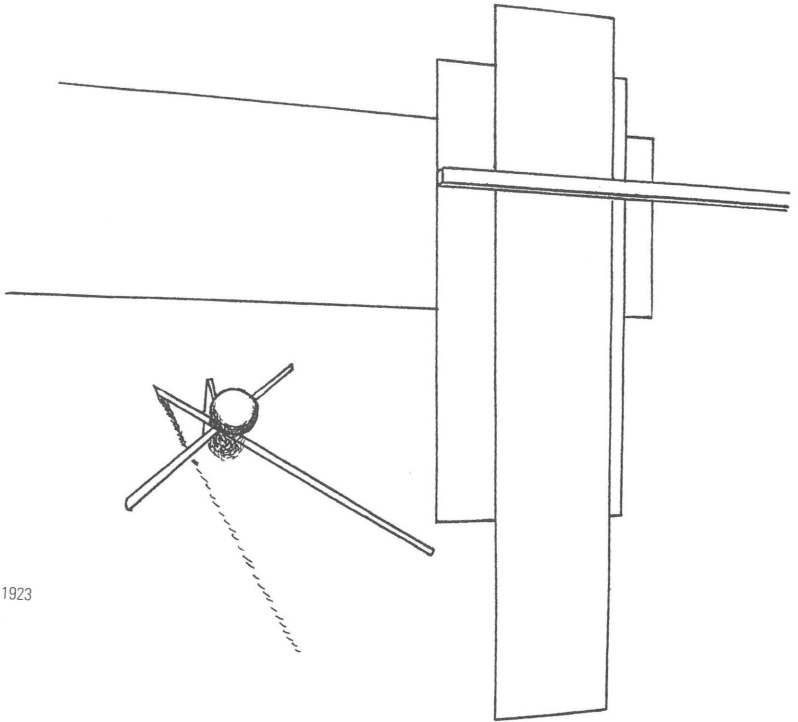Figure 8
El Lissitsky, *PROUN* room, 1923
(recreation of room detail).

Figure 9
Alexander Rodchenko, *Ad for Pacifiers*, 1923.

room *(figure 8)*. A similar polaric tension is present in the mirrored formats popular with Alexander Rodchenko, where the left and right halves of his graphic compositions repeat one another in whole or in part *(figure 9)*.[22]

But to return to the concept of the "absent middle," and its connection to the hollowness of cubo-futurist forms in general and Malevich's collapsing figures in particular, the theme of lost or displaced identity — so far encountered in cubism, dada, surrealism and futurism — becomes apparent once again. Architectural historian Kestutis Zygas has identified a formal principle operative in much of early Soviet architecture in which distinctly different forms invade the same building. Zygas calls this phenomenon "compaction,"[23] a term which effectively indicates the tense lack of resolution which exists between these distinct forms, as in V. Petrov's 1921 cubo-futurist *Forge Project (figure 10)* or Ilya Golosov's *Worker's Club Building* of 1926. This phenomenon is similar to the

Figure 10
V. Petrov, *Forge Project,* 1921

previously discussed constructivist axes (apparent in El Lissitzky's work in particular) which retain their identity by never merging. But it is also similar to Malevich's collapsing hollow forms, for compaction may also be read — to use a psycho-pathological analogy — as the sense of being overwhelmed by externals which the person with diminished ego-strength (i.e., sense of self) experiences.[24] Compaction can

22
Rodchenko's use of "kiss registration," in which his large display letters would be divided at their vertical mid-point with top and bottom halves each printed a different color (either red or black), uses the same dialectic of polaric confrontation. (Figure 9 also uses this approach.)

23
Zygas, Kestutis Paul. 1981. *Form Follows Form: Source Imagery of Constructivist Architecture, 1917-1925.* Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press.

24
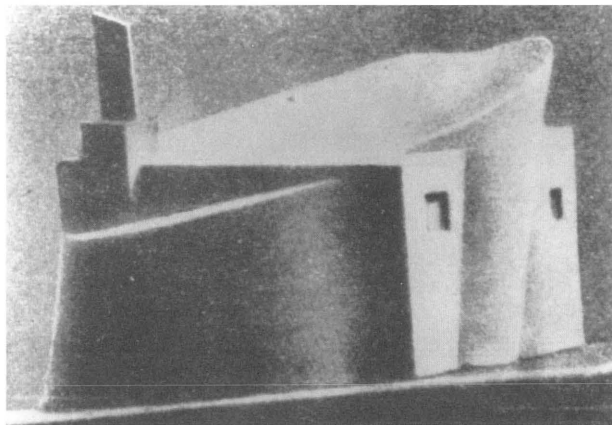When the ego or self is threatened, as in schizophrenia, this experience of being overcome by externals can manifest visually as a flattening of the person's spatial field, and a lack of depth. Aaronson, Bernard. 1967. "Mystic and Schizophreniform

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be further read as the invasion of one form by another, of one identity forcibly intruding upon the autonomy of another identity. Both of these interpretations — of identity collapsing in upon itself and of one identity being invaded by another — have also been tied to early constructivist architecture, and to more recent "deconstructivist" architecture (which is said to derive from early constructivism), by authors who quite literally treat these buildings as representing human psychological states and as pictures of human identity in crisis.[25] Compaction, as either the unresolved dialectical tension between two separate entities, or as the failure to maintain the integrity of one identity against incursion, is tellingly translated into human terms in Lissitzky's 1929 poster *(figure 11)* which tries to force together two physical heads, one male and one female, creating a freakish androgene which is neither a consistent, unitary self, nor a harmonious union where individuals achieve a higher order of non-physical integration (e.g., spiritual communion, community, fellowship, love).

States and the Experience of Depth," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion,* 6:2, 246-252. The decreased strength or continuity of the ego, the "subject-pole," can no longer maintain a clear subject-object relationship, and the phenomena, or "object-pole," become non-hieratic, confused and overwhelming.

25
See Wigley, Mark. 1988. *Deconstructivist Architecture.* New York: Museum of Modern Art, and Jencks, Charles. 1988. "Peter Eisenman: An Architectural Design Interview by Charles Jencks," *Architectural Design,* 58 (314).
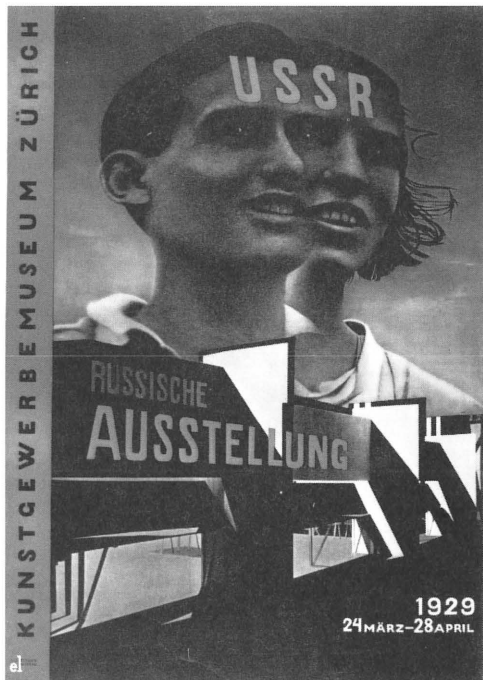

Figure 11
El Lissitzky. *USSR Russische Austellung Russian Exhibition,* 1929. Gravure, printed in color, 49" x 35 1/4." The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Gift of Philip Johnson, Jan Tschichold Collection.

Figure 12
Norman Bel Geddes, *Ocean Liner: Bow,* 1932.
Norman Bel Geddes Collection, Harry Ransom
Humanities Research Center, The University
of Texas at Austin, by permission of executrix
Edith Bel Geddes.
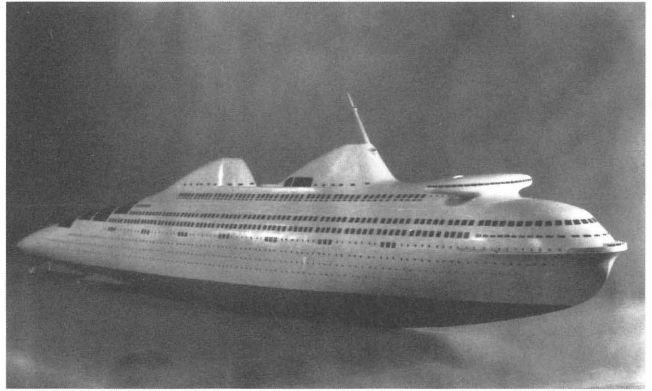
In 1929, the year Lissitzky did his poster for the Zurich exhibi-
tion, Stalin banished Trotsky and dictatorial repression of the
individual and of individual expression (including progressive art
and design) began in Soviet Russia. The same year, in America,
the collapse of the New York Stock Market occurred, signaling
the beginning of the Great Depression and long-term nation-
wide unemployment. In America, as in Russia at this time, one
can detect the motif of the reduction and displacement of the
individual human will, but in America the phenomenon is not
the result of political authoritarianism, but of the growing
authority granted machine technology as the economic self-
sufficiency and self-esteem of individuals decreases. Interestingly,
the influence which futurist ideas and forms exercised in revolu-
tionary Russia was repeated — more in spirit than as a direct
influence — in Depression-era America. This spirit is evident in
the focus on a romanticized technological vision of the future,
the denial of and escape from the past, an idolization of mecha-
nized speed and the development of a visual language of stream-
lined, hollow metal forms (reminiscent of Boccioni's 1913
sculpture), as in Norman Bel Geddes ocean liner design of 1932
(figure 12). To understand how these interests relate to the
displacement of the human will, three cultural-historical
phenomena — which manifest visually as well as sociologically
— must be examined. These include the progressive phenomena
of withdrawal, the suspension of the will and the replacement of
human will power by machine power.

The theme of withdrawal in the Depression era is evident both in human behavior and visual form. The hard realities of mass unemployment caused people to retreat inward, both because of the humiliation of being jobless, and also because of the need to insulate oneself from a hostile and unpredictable environment. Insulation against the unforeseen shocks of the outer world is a theme of Buckminster Fuller's 1927-30 *Dymaxion House*, a low-cost, mass-producible kit-of-parts dwelling consisting of a single donut-shaped living unit suspended by wires around the top of a central spindle-mast, and promoted as earthquake- and flood-proof. The idea of withdrawal is also quite literally depicted in the modernistic interior design of the period in which fixtures and sometimes furniture pull back and become recessed into the wall of the room. In transportation design, all external protuberances also retreat into one major streamlined form, as in Geddes' ocean liner *(figure 12)* in which the top engine stack is incorporated into the contoured body of the ship, or in the individual lifeboats lining the sides which are suspended on retracting booms and become invisible when not in use. The very process of withdrawal goes hand-in-hand with the concept of the armored, detached surface. The hard, protective shells of so many streamlined forms in transportation design — the spate of thin metal bullet-shaped shrouds designed for locomotives during this period — express the ideal of the impervious facade. The cinematic expression of this ideal was the hard-skinned "tough-guy" character, played by both male and female actors, in many movies of the thirties. Furthermore, the implicit concept here of the "detached surface," operating in the surface styling (and re-styling) of thirties products, had also, by this decade, become an ideal for people too as "popular image" came to displace "character" in personal advice manuals.[26]

The theme of the suspended or detached will, tied to the loss of personal control over external events and one's own destiny, was evident in the enormous increase in various forms of gambling in the thirties, and even President Roosevelt's 1933 economic recovery plan, the "New Deal," used a poker metaphor which pointed to the elements of luck and chance.[27]

26
Cultural historian Warren Susman has documented how, until the turn of the century, "character" was the defining element of the person in hundreds of books, pamphlets and manuals, but this gradually changed in the first decades of the twentieth century to a focus on personal image and surface behavior. See chapter fourteen, "Personality and the Making of Twentieth Century Culture" in Susman, Warren. 1983. *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century.* New York: Pantheon Books.

27
Susman, Warren. *Culture as History,* 161, 162.

The frustrated will also was evident in the notion of "boundaries" which dominated the period. The hard streamlined shell of thirties transportation vehicles provides one concrete example of this. In early thirties book illustration (e.g., the children's books drawn by Lois Lensky and others) we often find featured a thick black contour line around all the human figures in the story.[28] But another quite rampant type of thirties iconography, horizontal banding, also stresses the period's fixation on boundaries and limits. Consisting of exposed steel stripes or continuous dark graphic bars, these bands could be found wrapped around products,[29] recessed into or applied on top of interior and exterior wall surfaces[30] or encircling desks, cars and locomotives.[31] This horizontal banding, as I will seek to demonstrate presently, is an expression of widespread thirties consciousness of social and economic boundaries, of the economic "haves and have nots." Numerous movies of the period concern the divisions between classes, between the insulated rich versus the destitute jobless, and do so from perspectives both serious and humorous. A near universal plot device in these movies is that rich and poor (or working class) trade places, usually only temporarily (so that boundaries, though briefly bridged, are ultimately inviolable).[32] Inasmuch as such boundaries were, in actuality, unbridgeable, a frustration and fatalistic acceptance of economic limitations meant that a sense of hopelessness — that is, a withdrawal and suspension of one's will — was very much part of the experience of boundaries in this period.

How, we may ask, were the phenomena of drawing within oneself, and the suspension of human will, related to the replacement of human will by mechanical power? During the depths of the Depression, when it appeared that even the cornerstones of the American identity — ingenuity and determination — had proved inadequate, the search for saviors fastened on the machine, for where human will failed, machine will would succeed.[33] This belief in the machine was coupled with a mechanistic and deterministic notion of historical progress made over in the machine's image. The "machine age" of the thirties would take us, with deterministic certainty and mechanistic inevitability, out of the poverty of the present

28
The heavy black bounding lines which zone all areas of the game board and property cards in Monopoly,™ the 1936 Depression era theme game about chance, luck and loss, is another such example. The illustrations of Rockwell Kent are another.

29
Such as Henry Dreyfuss' 1933 Sears "Toperator" Washer or Walter Dorwin Teague's 1936 Kodak "Bantam Special" Camera.

30
As in Raymond Loewy's 1934 Industrial Designer's Office Interior for the Modern Museum of Art, Teague's 1934 Texaco Station fascia detailing or Frank Lloyd Wright's 1939 Johnson Wax Headquarters.

31
Examples of which include Donald Deskey's 1931 Sideboard, Carl Breer's 1934 Chrysler Airflow automobile or Loewy's 1939 S-1 Locomotive.

32
Examples include Charlie Chaplin's *City Lights* (1931), Frank Capra's *It Happened One Night*, (1934) and *You Can't Take It With You* (1938) and especially *Amazing Adventure* (1937) starring Cary Grant, among many others.

33
A belief deeply rooted in the American psyche, as seen in folk-heroes like Paul Bunyan or John Henry who epitomize American will and determination which is nonetheless (as in their tree-cutting or rail-laying contests against machines) no match for technology.

to a future technological utopia of plenty. The Chicago and New York World's Fairs of 1933 and 1939 promised as much, as did movies like *Things to Come* (1936), visually accoutered with streamforms, horizontal bands and — the third element of the thirties major iconographic triumvirate — stepforms. Stepform was evident in symbols of progress, especially skyscrapers,[34] but was transferred to the profiles of bookcases or radios, often in reference to skyscrapers.[35] The idea of incremental, forward, stepwise progress, was represented in the numerous formal evolution charts prepared by industrial designer Raymond Loewy for products like phones, women's attire or cars. In all such charts, it is interesting to note that a gradual loss of identity — that is, of differentiating features — is shown as products become increasingly streamlined, sometimes beyond recognition. In Walter Dorwin Teague's design for the 1939 World's Fair's enormous "Ford Cycle of Production" display *(figure 13)*, a circular stepform exhibit with moving figurines at different tiers indicates the many steps of mechanized production necessary to transform the raw material shown below into the finished cars above. Here, the stepform clearly presents, in terms anyone could understand, how progress towards a better life was realizable by virtue of the modern machine. Interestingly, this deterministic process, made possible by machines and not inconstant humans, might even allow one to climb the socio-economic ladder. When we visually merge two of the major pieces of thirties iconography — horizontal bands and the stepform *(figure 14)* — we see how the concept of upward progress combines with the picture of different economic strata to yield an image of upward socio-economic mobility. As a representation of historical process, however, it offers a general picture of societal progress towards a more secure and materialistically bountiful future. With this, it becomes apparent that streamform and stepform, though unlike visually, arose as typeforms in support of much the same idea: technological escape. Streamform, associated most closely with travel and leisure — luxury ocean liners, planes, trains and cars — was also associated with speed and insulation, that is, escape from the deprivations of the jobless life. Ironically, the life of leisure (the idle rich so

34
One possible source for the stepform in skyscrapers was the 1916 New York zoning code which required tall buildings to be set back so as to provide sun and fresh air to pedestrians. Pilgrim, Diane. 1986. "Design for the Machine," *The Machine Age in America 1918-1941.* New York: Harry Abrams, 284.

Figure 13
Walter Dorwin Teague,
"Ford Cycle of Production" exhibit, 1939
New York World's Fair.
From the collections of Henry Ford
Museum & Greenfield Village.

Figure 14
Transposition of two 1930s iconogra-
phies: horizontal bands and stepform.
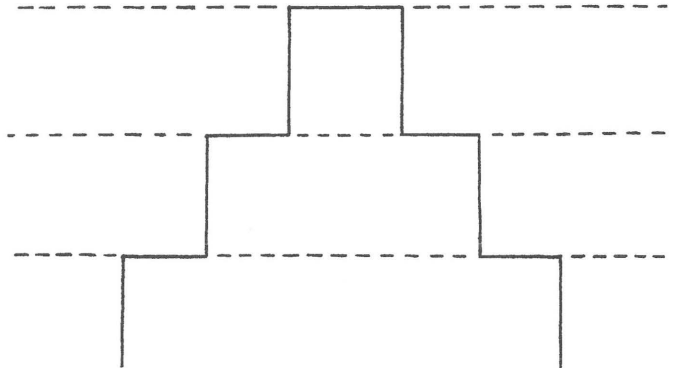
dominant in thirties films), and the life of the future (charac-
terized by the robots and labor-saving machines of the World's
Fairs) were also jobless, but now the life of the disengaged will
was socially acceptable, a mandated perk. Ironically, stream-
form is the result of the process of involution, and yet it arose
as an expression of forward technological progress, or evolu-
tion. This apparent disparity is resolved when we remind
ourselves that streamform can be read as a picture of the with-
drawal of the personal will, and that "technological progress"
meant the replacement of human will by machine will.
Therefore, technological progress really meant "progress in the
absence of human will,"[36] which is precisely what streamform
(as an image of mechanical escape into the future) represented.[37]

There is a special instance of streamlined design — the 1934
Chrysler Airflow automobile designed by Carl Breer and his
associates — which will help us to better understand the rela-
tion of streamform to the will and its embodiment in the
human organism. At the beginning of this article, the will's
connection with the lower part of the human anatomy was
explained *(figure 1)*. Now we will see, using the Chrysler
Airflow as our focus, that the will is also expressed in the
anatomy of the human head. The streamlined appearance of
the Chrysler Airflow, America's first streamlined production
car (produced between 1934 and 1937), was achieved through
a process of formal involution (as with Geddes' ocean liner,
discussed earlier) in which, heretofore, external automotive
elements like headlamps and fenders were "drawn into" a
single sleekly curvaceous form *(figure 15)*. A revolutionary
design in both form and engineering, the Airflow's consoli-
dated form was a radical departure from conventional autos
which placed one box (for the engine) behind another box
(for the passengers) *(figure 16)*. In examining the Airflow's
connection to the human head, we can begin by noting
the use of an Airflow look-alike as the head of the mother
ape in Pablo Picasso's 1951 sculpture, *Baboon and Young*
(figure 17).[38] The fact that the car is fairly convincing as a head
should perhaps not surprise us, once we remember that both
streamform and the head represent the process of formal

35
Such as the mid-1920s
Skyscraper Bookcases done
by Austrian émigré Paul
Frankl, who was identified
with the New York branch of
the Wiener Werkstatte.

36
Arguably the most memorable
cinematic image in thirties
films is of King Kong's ascent
to the summit of the Empire
State Building where he is
fired on and killed by
warplanes (RKO's *King Kong*,
1933). On one level, the film
is a critique of modern scien-
tific-rational civilization (i.e.,
thinking) which has, in its
one-sidedness, released the
uncontrollable forces of the
will and, having failed to
tame these, extinguishes
them. It is thus a picture of
how our technological
progress — represented not
only by the skyscraper itself
as modern marvel, but also by
the ape's move up the step-
form (itself an image of the
Darwinian concept of human
evolutionary progress) — has
robbed man of his will.

37
In Norman Bel Gedes three
restaurant proposals for the
1933 Chicago World's Fair,
the themes of technological
progress and of escape into
an insular fantasy world find
their most imaginative articu-
lation prior to the technologi-
cal fantasy escapes of
Disney. Geddes' Island
Dance Restaurant, Aquarium
Restaurant (glassed and under-
neath a waterfall), and spin-
dle-top Revolving Restaurant,
all radically distance visitor's
from their known world to
maximize the experience of
the fantastic.

▶

Figure 15
Carl Breer and associates,
Chrysler Airflow automobile, 1934.

Figure 16
Conventional pre-1934 automotive form.

consolidation and focusing inward *(figure 1)*.[39] One contemporary critic of the Airflow wrote that it resembled "…a human face covered with a stocking,"[40] an impression no doubt influenced by the fact that its uniquely innovative one–piece body frame resembled a skull.[41] It is, perhaps, not insignificant that Picasso's ape is female, for the Airflow is distinctly female in its formal vocabulary. Whereas conventional autos were angular and featured radiator grilles which strongly resembled coats of arms (family crests),[42] symbols of male lineage, the Airflow was a radically curvaceous form (especially in 1934) in which all

38
After the Airflow was introduced a number of other auto manufacturers copied the design. Most notable was the 1936 Volkswagen, a scaled-down version of the Airflow designed and manufactured by Ferdinand Porsche who had been immediately impressed by the Airflow's sophisticated engineering logic. Irwin, Howard. 1977. "The History of the Airflow

▶

Figure 17
Pablo Picasso, *Baboon and Young.* Vallauris, 1951. Bronze (cast 1955), after found objects, 21″ x 13 1/4″ x 20 3/4.″ The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund.

square forms had been softened into rounded ones. But it is in the formal involution of the headlights that the femaleness of the form is most pronounced. Physician and writer Dr. Karl Konig has pointed out how the principle of formal involution is operative in the female anatomy whereas the opposite is the case in male anatomy. In a work on embryology which compares the analogous paired reproductive organs of the female (ovaries) and the male (testes) *(figure 18)*, Konig observes that whereas the ovaries remain in a state of suspension within the body, the testes descend outside the body coming under the influence of gravity.[43] Based on this description, if we return to the forms encountered in the Airflow and its contemporary *(figures 15, 16)*, we might observe that the externalized headlamps of the "male" car, correspond to the similarly externalized male testes, but when these headlamps

Car," *Scientific American,* 237, (August), 103. Picasso's car probably either literally uses, or is inspired by, an Airflow derivative.

39
Breer did intentionally model one aspect of the Airflow on human form and behavior. In his interest to provide a smooth ride, Breer had found that the least tiring stride for humans was 80 to 100 steps per minute, and then limited the flexing of the Airflow's front wheel springs to between 80 and 100 cycles per minute. Irwin, Howard. "The History of the Airflow Car," 101, 98.

▶

are drawn into the body of the Airflow, they correspond to the female ovaries. Interestingly, these differences are detectable within the formal composition of the human head. The eyes correspond to both the paired reproductive organs of the lower anatomy in both sexes; to the female ovaries and the male testes.[44] Whereas the relationship between the eyes and mouth roughly corresponds to that between the ovaries and vaginal opening,[45] the relationship between the eyes and nose corresponds to that between the testes and penis *(figure 18)*. This latter relationship not only helps to explain the long history of phallic references to the male nose,[46] but clearly reveals the meaning of the Kilroy figure, a piece of veiled pornographic graffito commonly found in men's restrooms *(figure 19)*. Named "Kilroy" (from the phrase "Kilroy was here," which often accompanies the image), the figure appears to be a large-eyed, large-nosed cartoon character who peers at

40
Irwin, Howard. "The History of the Airflow Car," 101.

41
See the bodyframe drawing on page 102 in Irwin, Howard. "The History of the Airflow Car."

42
The use of the radiator for its symbolic potential, owing to its visual prominence, is not implausible. The radiator of the Rolls Royce is a perfect replica of a classical temple front, right down to the winged figure which crowned the peak of the arch, which became the radiator cap ornament.
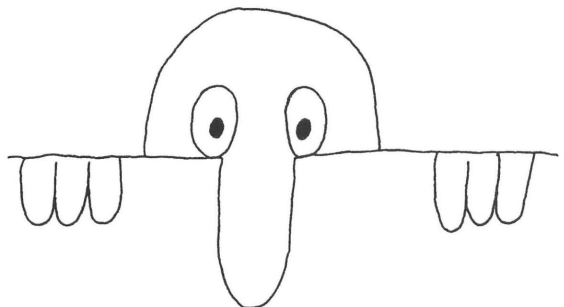
▶

Figure 18
Comparative diagram of the relative positions of the female ovaries and vaginal opening, and the male testes and penis.

Figure 19
Kilroy figure.

the viewer over a high wall. In actuality, Kilroy is an image of the male genitalia; the large eyes are the testes, and the nose between them is the penis. His presence on the walls of bath-room stalls, peeking at the occupant from behind his wall, helps us recognize that he is simultaneously voyeur, and object of voyeuristic fixation in one image. It is thus now possible to understand why, as a form ultimately deriving from the human body, the Chrysler Airflow takes as its typeform the female body. Finally, in regards to our earlier discussion of stream-form as an image of the withdrawal of the human will, it should be pointed out that, in terms of physiognomic expres-sion, the lower male anatomy expresses the outward expansion of the unconscious will *(figure 1)* quite literally in the erect male organ, whereas the female anatomy literally expresses the middle sphere of the emotions in the projection of the breasts (and their role in creating the emotional bond between mother and nursing child). Therefore, the streamform, as a picture of the withdrawn or inwardly focused will, can be appropriately considered a female form.[47] However, if we consider the later evolution of the American automobile, we will find a startling example of the expression — not of the inwardly focused, "feminine" head — but of the lower anatomy and male will.

The themes of speed and escape which streamform vehicles of the thirties expressed was carried into the sculptural forms of American automobiles in the forties and fifties.[48] These themes were at the heart of the phenomenon of the "drag race," and the various forms it took in the post–World War II era of the 1950s. "Dragging" referred to a short acceleration and speed contest between two cars from a standing start to, ostensibly, determine which car was fastest. In actuality, it was a ritualistic contest of courage and will ("guts") between two males, as well as a thinly veiled display of male sexual potency (again, an aspect of will) to the young women in attendance.[49] The cars used in this early form of drag racing were often customized cars with rebuilt "souped up" engines, commonly known as "hot rods," a term with fairly obvious phallic overtones. Drag racing was later formalized as an audience sport in the 1960s and was run on a straight quarter mile track (along one side of

43
Konig, Karl. 1968-9. *Embryology and World Evolution.* No publisher given (reprinted in *The British Homeopathic Journal,* 57, (1-4) and 58 (1-2) from lectures given 1965-6), 10.

44
Note also that the eyes are similar in size to the ovaries and testes.

45
This correlation of vaginal opening to mouth might help explain why red lipstick carries an erotic suggestion, for the red lips of the mouth would thus mimic the engorged lips of the vagina during sexual excitation.

46
Selected examples include the large nose of Cyrano de Bergerac (from Edmund Rostand's 1897 play), whose nose was the only tip-off of his otherwise concealed amorousness; the extendible nose of Pinocchio, which only grew when he lied (i.e., went against his higher nature); the long noses of caricatures in general, which seek to emphasize the "lower" or appetitive nature of its victims; and the popular use of elephants as father-figures in children's books, often with whales serving as mother-figures.

47
Historically, the will has been visually de-emphasized in regards to women. The most obvious example is the long dress which conceals the legs, for merely in walking the legs are the archetypal picture of human will in action. The legs are unmistak-able expressions of the

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which ran stands for spectators), between two radically redesigned cars, now called "dragsters." The stripped-down form of the dragster, having evolved into a picture of pure function, consisted of huge wide tires in the rear called "slicks" (to provide maximum traction), between which the driver was located, and a long, thin and bare structural chassis which carried an enormous engine, supported at the light-weight front end by a set of small, inconspicuous bicycle-like wheels. Due to advances in clutch technology, the driver could "rev the engine" and then "pop the clutch" to instantly transfer the engine's high rpm's directly to the stationary rear wheels, allowing for very quick starts. A crowd-pleasing aspect of these quick starts was the "wheelie" in which the instanta-neous release of explosive power to the rear slicks would momentarily cause the front end of the dragster to jump up and hang in the air *(figure 20)*. The origin of the dragster in male potency displays and the "hot rod" is born out by the fact that formally, it resembles the male genitalia. The large slicks correspond to the testes (both representing the principle

human will in excessive cases like the Nazi "goose-step"or the karate kick. The restriction of female mobility repre-sented in the Chinese ritual of foot binding is a similar mani-festation. I want to thank the editor for bringing this latter example to my attention.

48
In the forties and especially the fifties, sculptural automo-bile styling entered an exag-gerated baroque phase, where the typically consoli-dated streamform was differ-entiated (although sculpturally so) into bulbous protuberant forms (usually expressed in front and rear bumpers and lights) and tail fins (in refer-ence to the jets and espe-cially rockets of our "space race" with Russia, and indica-tive of immense speed and "escape velocity").
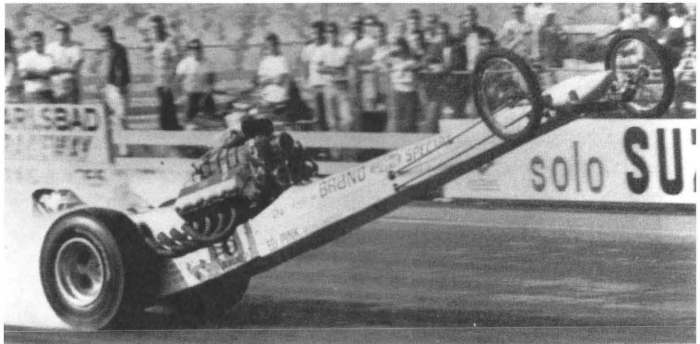

Figure 20
Dragster doing a "wheelie."

of generative power), and the long tapering chassis resembles the extended penis. The comparison becomes complete when we realize that the "wheelie" is a simulation of the male erec-tion.[50] Thus, in the Airflow and the dragster, we have two examples of design which express human faculties (inward-oriented thinking and outward exploding willing) and their manner of formal embodiment in the physical organism (upper head and lower physical phallus). Also, as in our earlier exami-

49
Ritualistic variations of drag-ging focused on courage, as in "chicken," where two cars would drive towards each other until one driver, the "chicken" swerved. The midnight auto race in the 1955 James Dean film, *Rebel Without a Cause*, combined the motifs of the drag race

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nations of futurist, Soviet and American design of the thirties, machine will again substitutes for human will.[51] Our final design artifact, to be discussed presently, also expresses this theme of human will displaced by machine will.

So far, this article has attempted to provide a survey of selected instances of the ways in which twentieth-century culture has visualized the process of the embodiment of human identity. Because the examples cited have all in some way indicated impediments to this process, the article could have been entitled "disembodiments of human identity." Because I believe in the fundamental impulse of human identity to physically and visually embody itself, even under (and sometimes because of) adverse circumstances, the more positive view and title were selected. However, it remains true that machine technology, by its very nature, disembodies, externalizes, and re-embodies human capabilities and faculties previously internal to the human being,[52] often replacing the original human function and/or contributing to an atrophy of that displaced function or faculty. It is, however, interesting how the appropriated faculty — even in its re-embodiment — often seeks a form similar to that which it would normally take (if left unhindered) in the human body. Such is the case with the desk-top computer which became popular in the mid-1970s and represents the physical embodiment of modernist rationality (thinking) now in its own self-contained and self-perpetuating system (i.e., it perpetuates its already re-embodied rationality in and through the mental operations of its human users). This is why, also in the mid-1970s, post-modern design arose as a distinct and recognizable phenomena. That is, modernism having assured itself a kind of perpetuity via physical embodiment (no longer merely a cultural thought-form, but now a fully incarnated thought-form), design was freed to explore seemingly arational values (e.g., the ornamental, ambiguous, irrational and eccentric). The computer thus represents the disembodiment and re-embodiment of human thinking.[53] Appropriately, it has taken the form of the human portrait bust: the keyboard corresponds to the shoulders, with an incredibly large head on top of (in some models) a skinny

and "chicken" as two cars race towards a cliff, with (as the story turns out) the winner getting the girl.

50
The picture of spectators cheering excitedly as two "erections" roar down the track suggests a link between modern drag racing and the pagan spectacles of ancient Rome, for example, which were similarly visceral.

51
In the case of drag racing as a spectator sport, our earlier discussion of the disengaged will of the "onlooker" seems relevant, inasmuch as the actual content of drag racing makes spectators voyeurs rather than participants. In addition, the dragster as a machine image of the sexual will can be tied to earlier literary and artistic comparisons of the two, for example, historian Henry Adams comparison of the virgin to the dynamo he saw at the 1900 Paris Exposition (*The Education of Henry Adams*, 1906), or the works of Marcel Duchamp like *The Bride* and the *Large Glass*.

52
The "machines" referred to here thus differ from what are sometimes called "simple machines" or hand tools (e.g., saws, hammers, scythes) in that the latter assist the exercise of will rather than replacing or inhibiting it.

53
There are ethical issues that can arise when human faculties are disembodied outside of the human organism. For example, human thinking occuring within the body is permeated with feeling (i.e.,

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neck. The will element is also present in the form of electricity (as with the Italian futurists), which enables the computer to process data at dazzling speed. The computer is thus a re-embodiment and even image of the human being, but of one missing the middle, affective sphere. We have encountered this image of the absent middle sphere earlier, for example, in surrealism, Soviet art and design, and American design of the thirties. It is a chronically recurring image in our century and ultimately relates to the larger phenomenon of how the three spheres of the modern human being, having experienced a fragmention for reasons already discussed, are seeking reintegration.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude this article by commenting on some of the forms of evidence presented here and the implications of these for the practice of design history. First, the notion of "period style"— which would, for example, include thirties streamform, stepform and horizontal banding — has been shown capable of carrying significant meaning, rather than being a merely arbitrary visual construct. Second, that visual chronology is important. Both factors, visual form and chronology, in fact, came together in the underlying historical visual narratives which were identified and discussed. Although the article as a whole attempted to explicate the larger narrative concerning the embodiment of human identity which underlies so much of modern culture, two segments of that larger narrative — the development of streamform and stepform, and the formal evolution of the car ("boxform" to dragster) — could be called underlying (or hidden) historical visual narratives in their own right. The historical visual narrative can be tentatively defined as the visual revelation of underlying meaning over time, and exists as an identifiable and unique phenomenal historical construct. "Visual" is used broadly in this definition and would include, in the dragster narrative, for example, not only the vehicle's visual resemblance to the male genitalia, but also to the complete narrative scenario which includes its erection in the "wheelie." This narrative, as a unique species of historical phenomena, is not

the polarity of sympathy and antipathy which is connected to moral discrimination) and will (experiences, memories and the understanding of the *consequences* of ideas and actions). When thinking is disembodied and not so permeated — and conse-quently "disencumbered" and "speeded up," as it is in computers — there is the tendency (if not the necessity) for human operators to run at the speed of thinking alone, not at speeds typical of think-ing in concert with feeling and willing. For a discussion of the interaction of thinking, feeling and willing in ethical problem-solving, see the author's article, "Three Major Streams in Twentieth Century Design History and Their Ethical Implications for Current Teaching and Practice," in *Ethics and Values in Graphic Design Education.* Graphic Design Education Association Conference, Raleigh: North Carolina State University, forthcoming.

only independent of the historical researcher (and thus, presumably, discoverable by other historians), but also is to some extent independent from the designer as well. In the case of the dragster, many separate incremental developments (powerful engines, clutch and tire technology, etc.), and the creative acts of countless individuals were necessary before the dragster was articulated in its "final" form. And it is doubtful (and, in the case of the dragster, virtually impossible) that Carl Breer, or the designers developing the dragster, were conscious of or in any way sought to embed human anatomical references into their artifacts. Rather, an underlying typeform seems to have worked through a succession of creative human acts to finally embody itself. This has implications, at the very least, for our understanding of creativity, creative influence, the nature of inspiration and the nature of historic causation, subjects which cannot be more than mentioned here. Certainly, the historical visual narrative indicates that form is an evolutionary phenomenon not necessarily explainable by, or reducible to, single-factor explanations.[54] Also, the narratives made clear that the visual is not an arbitrary dimension of an artifact's total reality.[55] Far from being arbitrary, the narratives discussed in this article show that visual form is a revelation of inner identity, and that — as is true of human identity — identity reveals itself over time.[56] In the discussion of the contemporaneous visual expressions of streamform and stepform, for example, a related set of underlying themes (generally concerned with technological escape into the future) was expressing itself through these quite different visual manifestations. Form changed but the underlying "identity" remained constant (though certain aspects of this identity were more effectively embodied in one form than in the other, which may help to explain their equal necessity). In the narrative leading from the early automobile to the dragster, the theme of the human will was revealed over time through an extraordinary variety of changing forms. Thus there is a close and important relationship between time (chronological succession) and identity (in terms of its development and embodiment), which it is important for the historian concerned with the meaning of artifacts to recognize.[57]

54
It has been proposed that thirties streamform was influenced, and perhaps even attributable to, the fact that metal stamping technology at that time was only capable of producing large-radius convex curves. As my discussion of streamform and the Chrysler Airflow sought to demonstrate, there were other reasons as well. Although people have a preference for seeking single causes for seemingly single events (perhaps because, in individual decision-making, the final decision is often the most conscious one, and we de-emphasize the many reasons and purposes leading up to and served by that final decision), there are always multiple causes, and often very different historical agendas are satisfied in a single event. Historical phenomena are organic, and different developmental streams are continually evolving and interacting ("events" thus represent the "crossing points" of these streams). To identify a single event in time, which we do continually as humans, is, in truth, to artificially extract a part of that historical organism (reality) for conscious inspection, and we often forget that that event or fact is part of the larger, ever evolving, organic continuum. To return to my example, there can thus be many different and yet equally valid reasons for streamform.

55
In addition to earlier reasons for the belief that the visual dimension of artifacts is arbitrary (i.e., the art historical concept of style as limited), the long-standing complaint of functionalist designers that

▶

The historical visual narrative also helps to reveal design in its role as an "historical artifact," and not only as a sociological, economic or technological phenomenon. This suggests that, as a form of history, design history can make a unique contribution to the understanding of history itself, and is not merely a subset of other forms of historical practice. Thus, the historical information carried by visual artifacts can provide confirming or even new information useful to other types of historians. Furthermore, design artifacts may in fact carry more of a period's meaning (or at least more of certain types of meaning) than other artifacts because design artifacts typically represent the confluence of broad social, economic, technological and cultural forces (filtered through clients, audiences, the realities of production technology, distribution, competition, pricing and so forth). Providing insight into visual culture can be an important domain of design history, which includes what the visual can tell us about non–visual historical phenomena.

Finally, the historical visual narrative, as a historical phenomenon, is a unique form of information which requires the use of a "participated" methodological approach for its detection. This participated methodology is directly related to one of the article's recurring topics: the passive "onlooker mode" of modern consciousness. Because unaided analytical methodologies often separate the researcher from the phenomena studied, the phenomena are not fully plumbed. This is very often the case in contemporary visual studies (e.g., art, architecture and design history), where the visual is often prematurely dismissed. Certainly, if a stronger element of will is brought into thinking — and the visual analytical faculty in particular — it is possible for the researcher to more deeply connect with and participate the phenomena studied. It is not merely a matter of a longer, more sustained span of observation, attention and consideration (although this is certainly important). It is also a matter of the quality of attention. This quality of attention arises ultimately through "balanced cognition," where thinking, feeling and willing — each with its special role — interact in a manner consonant with the dictates of the phenomenon being studied. In the case of the historical visual

"design is (or should be) more than surface styling," coupled with the fact that many design problems are solved in large part by non-visual means (e.g., problem redefinition, etc.), has buttressed the notion that the visual is a detachable design element.

56
For example, in viewing the human facial physiognomy at different life stages we see that "human development" can be defined as "a change in form without loss of identity." Said differently, not only is the *same* identity and character recognizable in all stages, but a *fuller expression and embodiment* of that character is detectable in the latter stage. The same principle seems to apply in the narratives discussed in this article.

57
Time is the medium in which human identity exists. This is why memory, which protects the continuity of self over time, is so fundamental to a healthy identity. Thus identity disorders, such as schizophrenia, are characterized by the experience of being locked in the present moment.

narrative, formal transformations over time (along with the non-visual phenomena with which these are connected) are investigated to understand the causes of the formal change, the nature and direction of that change, and the possible significance of the change. This usually begins with a study of historical periods, and involves an understanding of how the issues and concerns of the period are reflected in, and addressed by, the design artifacts themselves. A "horizontal inventory" can be conducted to learn of the presence of the "theme" in contemporaneous phenomena beyond design, with special attention to how any visual embodiments may differ. Thus, the design historian needs to be cognizant of historical developments across design fields as well as in the different areas of visual culture as a whole. A "vertical inventory" may also be conducted to learn if the "theme"— or variants of it — is evident in different, perhaps contiguous, periods. Special attention in the vertical inventory is given to the possible relationship of different visual forms that may indeed constitute different chronological stages in the same narrative sequence. The actual recognition of an underlying narrative can be gradual, remaining quite tentative until subsequent investigation either explodes the possibility of its existence or brings its distinctive historical pattern and outlines into higher relief.

Ultimately, if design history can become more successful in revealing the inherent logic of the visual dimension of historical phenomena, especially to the lay public, our designed environment will seem less opaque and "mute," history will become more meaningful and design will become much more interesting.
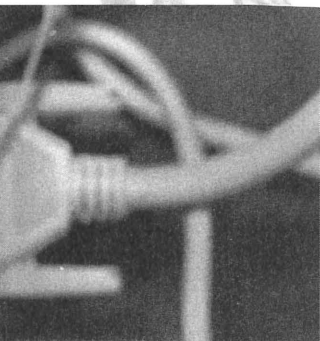
Teal Triggs

Alphabet Soup: Reading British Fanzines

The absorption of subcultural graphic ephemera into mainstream culture warrants careful consideration within academic study as it challenges conventional methodologies used in design history research and writing. Fanzines represent one form of subcultural communication which embrace specific visual and textual languages — elements often appropriated from mainstream cultural and media sources. Found within the realm of amateur publishing, fanzines offer "alternative critical spaces" for dialogues between like-minded individuals who share a passion for a chosen subject. In Britain, the growth of fanzine production has grown steadily over the last twenty years while maintaining consistent language paradigms with well-considered historical precedents.

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*I'm curious: do you, the reader, like a zine which places
considerable emphasis on layout and graphics?
Or would you rather (or just as soon) have a publication
featuring fiction, poetry and a minimum of art?*

Laurie, editor of *Galactic Discourse 3*, July 1980

Introduction: The Recipe

For almost twenty years Britain's fanzines have flourished.
Collectively, they provide a valuable record of subcultural
manifestos and other responses to established and orthodox
notions of society. Fanzines are vehicles of subcultural
communication that arose from a history of amateur and polit-
ical printed ephemera, offering "alternative critical spaces"
unconstrained by the rules and conventions of mainstream
publishing. Fanzines are journalistic, but often include literary
works of the subcultural "avant garde." Narratives are
constructed interactively by both readers and producers of
fanzines emphasizing their non-commercial nature and their
legitimacy as accurate indicators of community views. The
fanzine's theme is intentionally selective and promotes the
producer's ideology and intent; it communicates and responds
to a like-minded audience. The market is limited and distribu-
tion occurs through well-established networks of members and
subscribers who use postal services and to a limited extent,
alternative record and book shops. One element distinguishing
fanzines from other forms of "zines" (e.g., magazines), is its
amateur status. Profit is rarely a motive for fanzine production,
rather its producers have an implicit passion for the chosen
subject. The passion is its true raison d'être.

The profile of underground publications has been elevated
recently by the media resulting in an increased awareness of
fanzines by mainstream culture. In Britain, the dramatic rise in
fashion fanzine numbers alone prompted the London *Evening
Standard* to report on what it described as an "Overdosing on
fanzines."[1] Recently, a new specialist publication *The Zine
(figure 1)*, that acts as a clearing house for many of Britain's

1
Delaney, George. 1994.
"Overdosing on fanzines,"
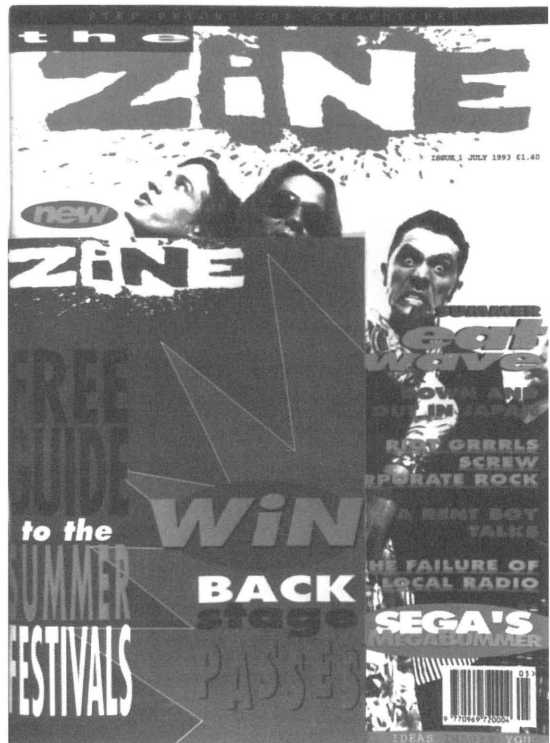*Evening Standard*, Tuesday 3
May, 44.

Figure 1
The Zine. 1993. Issue 1 cover, July.

fanzines, demonstrates this increase by the number of new titles it lists each month. Issue six (February 1994) of *The Zine* reports receiving twelve new titles. Other established British "street style" publications such as *The Face* and *i-D* (once fanzines themselves) also list and review on average, six new titles each month. In contrast, *When Saturday Comes,* a British football-orientated fanzine, lists nearly 400 football titles. R. Seth Friedman's revival of Mike Gunderloy's *Fact Sheet Five,* lists 450 new fanzines received internationally in his December 1993 issue alone. The size of these lists suggest that the actual numbers of fanzines is staggering. Most are probably not included because of the nature of underground distribution, the lack of ISSN identification and the fact that they are not catalogued by the British Library or the U.S. Library of Congress.

Even though these publications are considered to be "non-professional" and "non-commercial" in nature, fanzines are not insubstantial or unsophisticated. The graphic element alone is worthy of careful consideration as an important meta-linguistic element of subcultural identity. Subcultural graphic ephemera, its historical context and especially the process of its absorption into mainstream culture also warrants careful academic study. The ephemeral, non-commercial nature of the material though presents problems that challenge conventional concepts of taxonomy and methodology within graphic design history research and writing. Fanzines require a wider scope of study, one which includes cross-disciplinary analysis of the mediation processes that occur between the social, political and economic elements of culture at specific points in time. The visual nature of fanzines cannot be viewed in isolation from these contexts. Studies of "designed objects," particularly in the areas of industrial design, have already successfully employed methods of analysis derived from the areas of anthropology, sociology, feminist critiques, psychoanalysis, social history and structuralism.[2]

The application of similar methods to the study of subcultural printed ephemera is less common and usually employed in relationship to studies of the comic strip and graphic/pulp novels. A recent example is David Kunzler's *History of the Comic Strip* (1990). Here use is made of social art historical and socio-political theory to analyze and position "street" or "low level" texts and images within carefully defined class structures. He provides "readings" of the comic strip in relation to audience class perceptions as well as to the political intents of contributing artists. The focus on visual street language and youth-orientated literature (of which fanzines and comic strips are genres) only recently has gained academic respectability. To date, critical analysis of fanzines is found primarily in sociology and cultural studies, but only as sub-themes within broader examinations of music, youth and popular culture (Lewis, 1992; Frith, 1983; Hebdige, 1979). The visual representation of fanzine content and process of production has largely been ignored, despite the fact that, collectively, fanzines

2
Walker, John A. 1989. *Design History and the History of Design.* London: Pluto Press. This book provides an excellent account of the variety of approaches and general problems of design history-writing.

have a wide audience, and that fanzine authors and editors appropriate elements from vocabularies of past anarchical publications and contemporary popular media sources to advance their ideologies. These acts of *bricolage* require a coherent and systematic method of analysis. The distinctive, coded visual language deserves as much consideration and interpretation as the conventional, textual language of "rebellion" produced by these highly individualistic subcultural groups. One form of analysis that holds promise for analyzing fanzines that respects, and in some measure legitimizes subcultural identity is Umberto Eco's "guerilla semiotics" or what Roland Barthes describes as "signs of signification."[3]

The Ingredients

The term fanzine was first coined by Russ Chauvenet in the United States in 1941[4] to describe a mimeographed publication devoted primarily to science fiction and superhero comic enthusiasts. Many of the early publications grew out of established science clubs such as the Scienceers (1930) and the British-based Science Fiction Association (1937). The first known fanzine, according to the psychologist and author Fredric Wertham, was *The Comet* published in the U.S. in 1930 by members of the Science Correspondence Club. Other fanzines soon followed, including *The Time Traveller* and *The Planet*.[5] By 1936 the idea of fanzines spread to Britain with the production of *Novae Terrae* edited by Maurice Hanson and Dennis Jacques. This was followed by J. Michael Rosenblum's *The Futurian* (1938–40) produced in Leeds.[6]

Fanzines have since come to embrace any subject faithful to the specific interests of "fans." They focus on: personalities such as *I Hate Brenda* spotlighting the television character from *Beverly Hills 90210*; the music scene such as *Ludicrous Line* for the band I, Ludicrous *(figure 2)*; athletics such as *Out of the Blue* for Colchester United F.C. fans; or issue-based topics including *Green Anarchist* which comments on ecological ways to "save the planet." Cari Goldberg Janice in her introduction to *Some Zines: American Alternative and Underground Magazines*,

3
Eco, Umberto. 1986. *Travels in Hyper-reality*. London: Picador. Barthes, Roland. 1964. *Elements of Semiology*. New York: Hill and Wang.

4
Nicholls, Peter. 1979. *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction: An Illustrated A to Z*. Granada, 215.

5
Werthan, Frederic. *The World of Fanzines: A Special Form of Communication*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973, 38. See also: Ash, Brian. 1977. *The Visual Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*. London: Pan Books, 274.

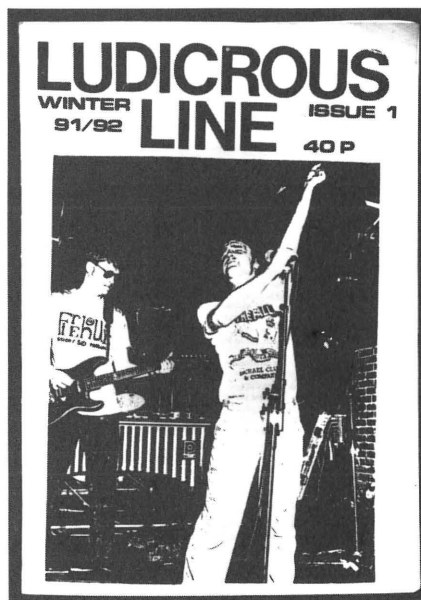6 Nicholls, *The Visual Encyclopedia of Science Fiction...*,237.

Figure 2
Ludicrous Line. 1991/2. Issue 1 cover, Winter.

Newsletters and APAs (1992) describes what is now recognized formally as a fanzine:

> *Basically, a zine is anything that is published on a non-commercial basis. It can be called underground, or alternative, or independent. It has no limitation and is accomplished purely through individual blood, sweat and tears. Anyone can publish a zine — that's the main attraction.*[7]

As "fandom" grows in popularity, an inevitable communication arises between fans through letters and meetings creating "cultural solidarity" and a "sense of community"— a process that John Fisk (1992) might understand respectively as "textual" and "enunciative productivity."[8] Fanzines provide a focal point and unifying vehicle for establishing and reinforcing shared values, philosophies and opinions. In early science fiction magazines, such as Hugo Gernsback's *Amazing Stories* (c. 1926), readers contributed letters to "discussion" columns. This provided the original impetus for similar interactive communicative forums. Discussion columns became a fundamental vehicle adopted by many independent publishers. Even today, the editor of *Peter Weller is Back* (1991) — a revived

7
Janice, Cari Goldberg. 1992. *Some Zines: American Alternative and Underground Magazines, Newsletters and APAs.* Boise, Idaho: Boise State University, 64.

8
Fiske, John. 1992. "The Cultural Economy of Fandom," in Lewis, Lisa. 1992. *Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media.* London: Routledge.

British fanzine that accompanied the relaunch of the singer's career — makes a plea for contributions and a continuous dialogue amongst fans: "to keep *WIB* [Weller is Back] going I need the help of the readers through articles or interesting info."[9] Similarly, Chris Wheelchair of *Ruptured Ambitions* (c. late 1980s) asks: "...if you feel you may have anything of interest you'd like to share with others, please write to us, 'cos we'd love to hear from you..."[10] Characteristically, readers' letters and communiques are anonymous as known individual identity often inhibits discourse. The editor of *UK Resist* (1990) once observed that "...the extended letter writing that comes from fanzine culture can fulfil a kind of fantasy role."[11] Readers who communicate with each other through letters can imagine their "correspondents appearance and character" without facing any of the "problems and inhibitions of real social contact." Even the commercial publication *The Zine* maintains an editorial policy that seeks to continue this unihibited discourse. Its informal and conversational narrative style is consistent with the original manifesto of its parent fanzine *Charlotte's Magazine*. The first issue of *The Zine* includes an explicit declaration of policy:

> *Express Yourself! The ZINE is created by its readers.*
> *It's for YOUR personal thoughts, photographs, artwork,*
> *cartons, opinions, designs, stories, poetry, free ads, your*
> *anything! If you're not in...You're not in.*[12]

The Soup's Seasoning

Fanzines belong to subcultures. Therefore, to further our understanding of the context and place of fanzines and to appreciate their origin and evolution, it is important to distinguish between "counter-cultures" and "subcultures." This distinction is explored in depth by John Clarke and others in *Resistance Through Ritual*.[13] Counter-cultures are understood, essentially, as middle-class political alternatives to mainstream culture. Typically, they are issue-based: gay liberation, women's rights, environmentalism, etc. Counter-culture drives the alternative and radical presses. In contrast, subcultures are

9
Wyness, Andy. 1991. *Peter Weller is Back*. Issue 1, October, n.p.

10
Wheelchair, Chris. 1992. *Ruptured Ambitions*. Issue 10, June, n.p.

11
Rutherford, Paul. 1992. *Fanzine Culture*. Glasgow: Clydeside Press, 16.

12
The Zine. 1993. Issue 1, July, 1.

13
Clarke, John, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson and Brian Roberts. "Subcultures, Cultures and Class," in *Resistance Through Ritual*. Hall, Stuart and Tony Jefferson, editors. 1986 reprint. London: Hutchinson, 9-74.

Figure 3
Go Go. 1985. Number 8 cover, November. (From the collection of Lee Young.)

independent groupings exhibiting "...a distinctive enough shape and structure to make them identifiably different from their parent culture."[14] Examples include the mods *(figure 3)*, rockers, teds and punks. All operated as distinctive groupings, and in Britain, all emerged from the working-class. If this distinction poses difficulties, so the avant-garde raises further difficulties. In certain respects, the mythic avant-garde was never assimilated into mainstream activity. Instead it developed, as Raymond Williams suggests:

> ....*into alternative, more radically innovative groupings, seeking to provide their own facilities of production, distribution and publicity; and finally into oppositional formations, determined not only to promote their own work but to attack its enemies in the cultural establishments and, beyond these, the whole social order in their power.*[15]

The mythic avant-garde is subcultural. It is therefore of great interest that the form, content and graphic sensibilities of fanzines are derived from early twentieth-century avant-garde publications as W. T. Lhamon observed in *Dadapunk* (1980).

14
Hall, Stuart. *Resistance Through Rituals,* 13.

15
Williams, Raymond. 1989. *The Politics of Modernity.* London: Verso, 50-51.

The situationists and punks, much like members of fluxus or
the dada movement before them, sought to break down the
artificial division of art and life, and thereby the division of art
into low and high culture. Like these predecessors, they did so
by questioning conventional ideas and practices in a variety of
media including poetry, performance, music, painting and film
as well as typography and graphics as Tricia Henry shows in
her article "Punk and Avant-Garde Art" (1984). A recogniz-
able visual language matured under punk reflecting the under-
lying aesthetic pioneered by printed publications of the
avant-garde, including artist's magazines and mail art such as
Man Ray's *Dadazine*, *The Ridgefield Gazook* (1915), Ken
Friedman's fluxus-inspired *NYCS Weekly Breeder* (c. 1960)
(figure 4) or Ben Vautier's *Taut* (1965), to list a few. The situa-
tionist's *King Mob Echo* (1968) and Jamie

Figure 4
NYCS Weekly Breeder
covers. (From the collection
of Ken Friedman.)

Reid's *Suburban Press* (1970) are examples defining this
language, both visually and textually, and gave good indication
of what was to come. When examining the visual language of
the fanzine, due consideration must be given to artists of the
avant-garde whose work offered both "newness and
confrontation" and established precedents for the production
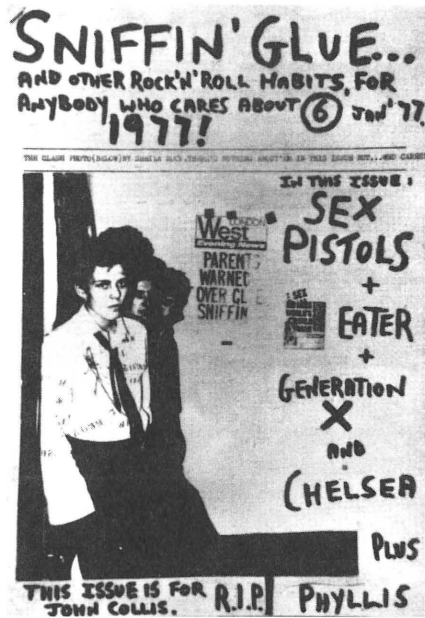of contemporary British fanzines.

Figure 5
Sniffin' Glue. 1977. Cover.

Though subcultural, British fanzines' graphics also received decisive impetus from the counter-cultural alternative and underground publications of the 1960s. Underground publications such as the *International Times* (*IT*, 1966) and *Oz* (1967) presented literary, journalistic and visual documents of the counter-cultural avant-garde reflecting the inherent and often explicit political nature of their message. David Widgery, a frequent contributor to *Oz*, wrote in 1972 that "*Oz* dazzled with its eclecticism....[and] *IT* became political in a most formal and unhelpful way..."[16] In contrast, "Punkzines" of the late-1970s, despite appropriating elements of visual language from counter-cultural publications, were usually devoted entirely to music and included record reviews, band profiles and interviews.[17] In music, punk was a deliberate attempt to "undercut the intellectual posturing of the previous generation of rock musicians."[18] Accompanying fanzines for bands such as the Damned, Sex Pistols and The Clash, embraced a "do-it-youseff" approach to typography and layout reflecting visually feelings emerging from somewhere in between anger and ambivalence *(figure 5)*. The eventual politicized nature of punk

16
Widgery, David. 1972.
"Underground Press."
International Socialism, 51,3.

17
Savage, Jon. 1991. *England's Dreaming*. London: Faber and Faber, 201. Savage credits Brian Hogg with producing the first fanzine in Britain, Bam Balam, focusing on the late-1960s music scene.

18
Hebdige, Dick. 1979.
Subculture: The Meaning of Style. London: Methuen, 63.

emerged in a calculated response to the disintegration of post-war politics, economy and social life in Britain. It may have accompanied the commercial assimilation of punk into the counter-cultural mainstream.

Despite the rapid assimilation of Punk stylization into main-stream areas of music and fashion — encouraged primarily by Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood — commercial-ization of punk fanzines themselves, was not immediate. Nevertheless, like the punk fanzines themselves, the visual language created by Jamie Reid — a graphic designer for album covers and posters promoting punk bands such as the McLaren-managed Sex Pistols — was situationist based. Reid attacked "notions of originality, genius, and talent" by appro-priating "found typography," primarily from cut-up newspa-pers. Coupled with the use of typewritter and grafitti letterforms, a recognizable "punk typography" emerged and was soon sanctioned by commercially oriented graphic design-ers Terry Jones (*i-D*) and Neville Brody (*The Face*).

This commercial assimilation of punk typography came partly in response to increased competition for an "institutionalized" youth culture promoted by magazines such as *Time Out, i-D* and *The Face*. Stewart Home observed that while the under-ground youth press of the 1960s had little or no competition, the next decade proved difficult. Commercial publications took "...away a general youth audience for [punk] 'zines such as *Sniffin' Glue* and *Ripped & Torn*."[19] Despite these forces and a growing political consciousness, fanzine editors responded by providing their readers with ever more specialized music coverage mirroring more closely, the tastes of the "small coteries of cultists."[20] This alone distinguished fanzines from the youth culture publications of the last decade and gives force to Simon Frith's assertion that "...the essence of fan mags is that they *respond* to tastes."[21]

The overabundance of eighties youth culture magazines generated a backlash. Many fans rebelled increasingly against magazines which imposed particular sets of values, ideas and tastes. Magazine "zines," such as Michael Jackson's *Off the Wall* (c. late 1980s) and the Beastie Boys' *Grand Royal* (1993),

19
Home, Stewart. 1991. *The Assault on Culture: Utopian Currents From Lettrisme to Class War*. Stirling, UK: AK Press, 84.

20
Frith, Simon. 1983. *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure and the Politics of Rock*. London: Constable, 177.

21
Frith, Simon, *Sound Effects*, 175.

represent "official" mouthpieces of the singers' organizations and are used primarily as promotion. They are less interactive than fanzines, opting instead to encourage and foster fan loyalty as dictated through carefully directed messages. The magazine "zines" are also commercial by nature seeking to sell and establish "fan-identity" through advertisements for sweat shirts, coffee mugs, posters, etc. For example, *StarTrek: The Next Generation* (Paramount Pictures official magazine of the television series) promotes a number of "officially authorized" products including models of the *U.S.S. Enterprise*, silver coins, posters, collector's photos, soundtracks and so forth. More recently, British football clubs are seeking to restrict the use of club icons by fanzines, recognizing their potential as a means of promoting the sale of club souvenirs. Interestingly new "official" publications have been criticized by fans who cite a lack of depth and sophistication as compared to the informal fanzines.

Stirring the Soup

Fanzines represent and communicate specific interests of both the fanzine producer and audience as expressed through an assemblage of images, typeforms and commentary. Considered collectively such assemblages constitute a "system of values" comprised of discrete interrelated elements that Roland Barthes would describe as an independent language.[22] The vocabulary is coded, both verbally and visually. Indeed well-known imagery appropriated from popular media is often subverted and assigned new meanings that are understood readily by their fanzine readers. In Britain, the simplest example is media imagery depicting members of the royal family. Such images are appropriated (often plagiarized) and juxtaposed with other incongruous images and texts. In *H.A.G.L. 19*, the Queen Mum *(figure 6)* is recoded from a revered symbol of Britishness into an instrument of elitist privilege and class oppression: "God bless Queen Mum!- but spare a thought for daughter Liz! While we work for 3 grand a year, poor Liz has to get by on a mere 7 million!![sic]." Images are but one element of a large constructed vocabulary of manipu-

Figure 6
H.A.G.L. 19. c early-1990s. Number 20, cover.

lated meanings drawn from such well-recognized imagery. The
lexicon of type, especially in association with imagery, provides
an additional element of the shared language. Cut-up ransom
note lettering, graffiti handwriting and typewritten texts are
juxtaposed with newspaper photographs and "child-like" draw-
ings to evoke an air of rebellion and exclusivity within the
language *(figure 7)*. These simple tools may be employed with
sophistication and may be accessible only to those who know
and understand the iconography and codes. Fanzine editors
often publish subversive ideas and images without fear of
censorship by a non-comprehending status quo.

The latent rebellion of fanzine followings developed rapidly
with the "awakening of political consciousness" that accompa-
nied punk and its response to the world *outside* of fanzines.[23]
Recent examples include *Birth of A Hooligan* (c. 1992), a
fanzine for politically correct skinheads. On the back cover
issue two "Rights on Arrest Advice" may be found a short
piece describing official procedure and individual rights when
stopped by the police. *Drop Babies* (1993) — a fanzine for girls

23
Henry, Tricia. 1989. *Break All
Rules! Punk Rock and the
Making of a Style*. Ann Arbor,
Michigan: UMI Research
Press, 96.

Figure 7
Dipper. c. 1993. Number 1, interior page.

Figure 8
Drop Babies. 1993. Number 1,
interior spread, April.

only — adopts a radical feminist position supported by articles
such as "The Revolution is Female" refuting stereotypical
media–constructed images of women *(figure 8)*. As one
contributor observes "...all 'girlie' toys like barbie have big tits
and a small waist. Is this men's dream girl image, thrust upon
us at such an early age?"[24]

As mouthpieces of rebellion, fanzines seek increasingly to break
conventional rules of typographic and visual communication.

24
Layla. 1993. *Drop Babies.*
Brentford, Middlesex, n.p.

In so doing they have created their own unique aesthetic which has been appropriated by mainstream graphic designers. Printing techniques have always depended on available technology, but usually reveal an "anyone can do it" ethos — or what might be described as a "technofolkgrafik." Early science fiction fanzines were produced as handwritten texts; duplication via carbon paper. Later, hectograph and mimeograph machines provided simple and accessible forms of duplication. The advent of the photocopy machine (1938) raised new possibilities and facilitated the use of media imagery and cut-up letterforms. Each new duplication process added new qualities to the overall aesthetic. Fanzines soon developed their familiar aesthetic — low quality, distorted, rough, grainy, "degenerated" reproductions reflecting the "noise" of the machine.[25] Despite this crudeness, fanzines achieve maximum visual impact by numerous graphic techniques. They employ multilayered texts with numerous varieties of type sizes, faces and weights. The seemingly random chaotic placement of text and image creates an odd dynamic where readers are forced to engage themselves more actively than in conventional texts so as to decipher the message. The narrative is often discontinuous and disagreeable, and style is employed intentionally to "decenter" what might be understood as a "totalizing cultural hegemony."[26]

Despite the diversity of material and editorial approaches, fanzines still retain a unified stylistic vocabulary, so much so that the coding system of the "zine" is now generally accepted and understood by a wider audience. Publications such as *The Zine,* demonstrates clearly that visual and verbal codes formulated within street-level communication networks, may be identified, appropriated, stylized further and absorbed into mainstream culture. Though appropriated and turned to the use of the commercial market, the original graphic elements of fanzines remain intact. Images and ideas will continue to be taken from mainstream media, appropriated, subverted and recoded in an endless cycle of interpretation and reinterpretation. And as this cycle unfolds, new and innovative elements of visual languages will continue to arise.

25
Perneczky, Geza. 1991. *The Magazine Network: The trends of alternative art in the light of their Periodicals 1968-1988.* Köln: Soft Geometry, 86. With rapidly changing forms of technology, however, fanzines are moving from printed production to that of electronic dissemination. Postal services are substituted by electronic mail (e-mail); handwriting by voice recognition and photocopied materials by laser printer output and computer discs.

26
Viegener, Matias. 1991. "Gay Fanzines: There's trouble in that body: Cool Politics, Revolting Style." *Afterimage,* January, 12.
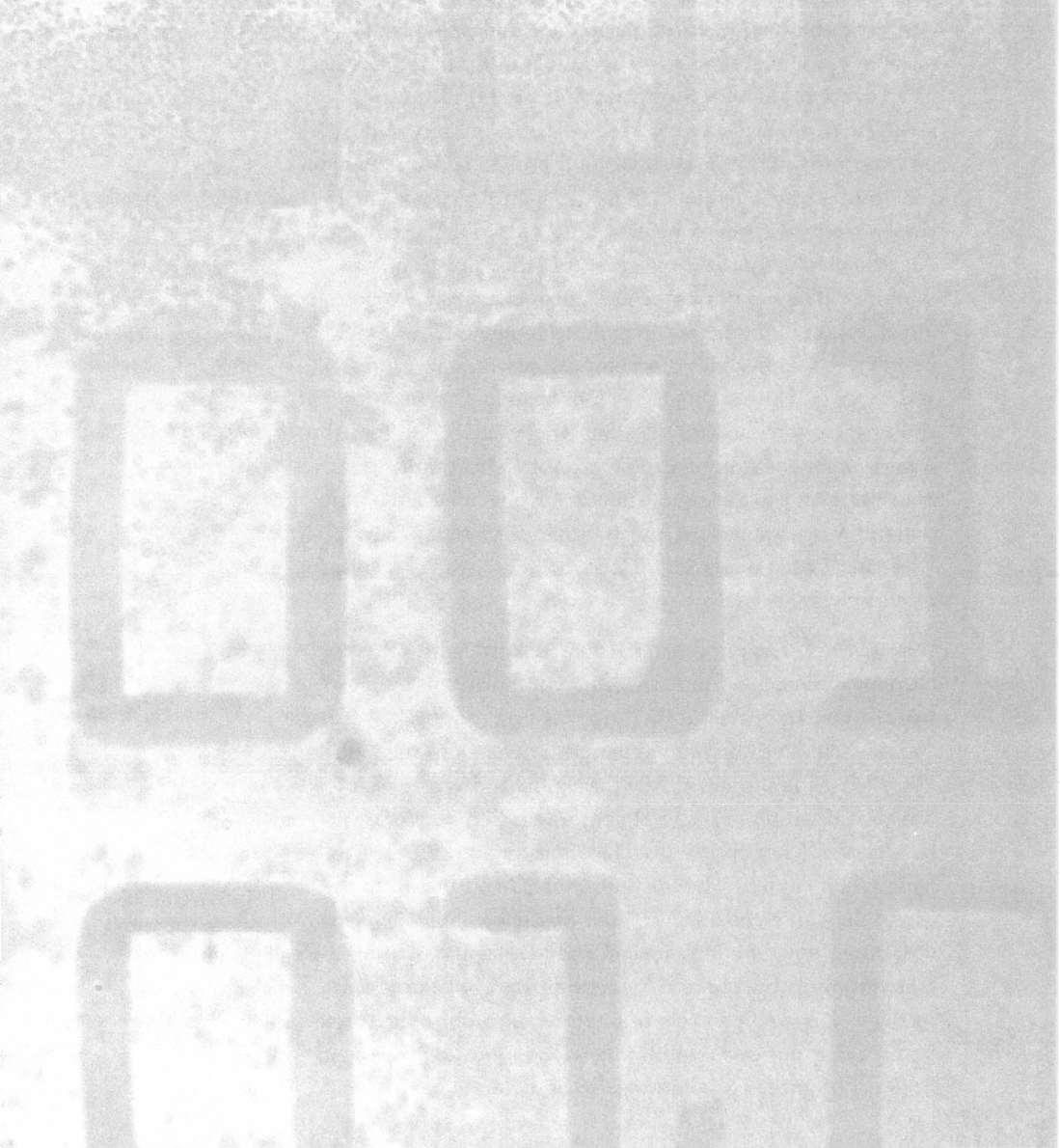
Frances Butler

New Demotic Typography: The Search for New Indices

During the last fifteen years the nature of the cognitive practices needed for rapid access into information and for creative thought has changed. Linear thought is now too slow. In the effort to devise short cuts, so that disparate information widely separated can be joined by metaphoric juxtaposition, or lateral thinking, designers of type and image are searching for ways with which to represent the fluid fields of type and image that will induce reverie, often a pre-condition for metaphoric, non-linear thought. One of the paths taken in the search for a new mnemonics of free visualization, the fusing of the "widely separated" typical of lateral thinking, is the reinvestigation of syntac-tic devices used before printing with moveable type codi-fied punctuation, including many devices once in use among quasi-literate populations. This reinvestigation of the origins of punctuation, including indices, in the search for ideational guidance and creativity within new technol-ogy parallels research in medicine or nutrition, where rein-vestigation of original plant and animal species, rather than their later hybrids, has proved useful.

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During the last fifteen years the shape of the cognitive system needed for rapid access into information and its use for creative thought has changed. Linear thought is now too slow for searches through the mass of material available, especially on the CD-ROM In their effort to devise short cuts to activate a much faster ideational trajectory through excess information by metaphoric juxtaposition (which joins widely separated and disparate information and invites lateral thinking), some designers of type and image have freed the field of the structures which supported linear thought, traditional punctuation and page layout. They are searching for ways with which to represent and access that which has hardly been described, much less indexed, lateral thinking. Often they produce a visibly nonlinear field, which read in any direction by small-scale decisions, a state of mental activity inducing reverie, a condition encouraging metaphoric, nonlinear thought. In their search for both non-hierarchical fields for the presentation of information, and for devices to highlight information without predetermining its position in ideation, typographic designers are reinvestigating syntactic devices used before printing with moveable type codified punctuation, including those once in use among quasi-literate populations.

With the expansion of the "immediately retrievable" to the scale of information available on the CD-ROM has come a need for indices to that information which escape the linear logic of traditional indices and the excessive real-time of computer search. Linear thinking is now too circumnavigational for creative thinking within this massive display of information. This expansion of information retrievability has been underway for decades and for perhaps fifteen years typographic designers have been searching for new visible structures to represent, to access and to control the informational morass. Working inside and outside of academic institutions, but having a wider range of cognitive techniques regularly available than standard academic logocentrism, they have always used visual metaphor as a primary component of communication. Designers are familiar with the nonlinear thought process called lateral thinking, and are in an excellent position

to attempt representation of the primal visual flux in which lateral thinking can occur, or even to represent diagrams of lateral thinking as a short-cut to fluid ideation.

Visual metaphor, the operative process within lateral thinking, has not had a "good name," being associated with popular culture, the unschooled, or illiterate, the primitive and the female. Graphic designers have always addressed the popular audience. Nineteenth-century popular graphics were a wonderland of idiosyncratic metaphor, and early in the twentieth century graphic designers fully assimilated the folk metaphor of Giorgio de Chirico, misnamed surrealism, into their vocabulary. They have never entirely ceased using metaphoric image and logic, lateral thinking, in their designs, even in the era of the dominance of the Swiss grid. Thus they had in place tools for the invention of a new visual structure to literacy even before the arrival of the effective universality of digital production, with the arrival of the Macintosh™ computer in the 1980s. But within the last decade designers have increased their efforts to both produce fluid fields of image supporting lateral thinking, and their efforts to create marks and layout for the punctuation and indexing of that field. In so doing they have reused both old attitudes towards punctuation and layout and old marks that were once *demotic*, and are now the foundation of what I am calling "new demotic typography."

New Demotic Typography: A Social Definition

What does demotic mean? Demotic script, historically the most popular of the three forms of the Egyptian hieroglyph, after the most representational and very carefully made (the hieroglyph), became ever more quickly, or cursively, fashioned, less skillfully made, and progressively more abstract. The trajectory of abstraction through the hieroglyph to the hieratic script to the demotic script can be seen in a chart in I.J. Gelb's *A Study of Writing (figure 1)*.

The hieroglyph was used to record the doings of gods and kings. Hieratic and demotic characters were used for day-to-

HIEROGLYPHIC					HIEROGLYPHIC BOOK·SCRIPT	HIERATIC			DEMOTIC

Figure 1
I.J. Gelb. 1952. *A Study of Writing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 76.

day written communications for *popular* activities. Although the word demotic has the same root in Indo-European as does democracy, that is, *demos*, the common, the popular, the vulgar, the word demotic is only relatively democratic, being connected to an elite `practice, reading and writing.` Some contemporary typographic practices are examples of a new demotic mode exactly because they come out of the same relative loosening of skill that produced the original demotic written scripts. The computer, like many new technologies, reduces traditional skill to ground zero and invokes both formal and `epistemological restructuring.` New demotic typography shares the same ambiguous relationship to social power as did the original demotic script; its design components were generated by those schooled in educational institutions, but are now used in the service of more popular projects.

The Representation of Linear Thought

While lateral thinking had escaped most earlier efforts at two-dimensional representation, there were some attempts to represent it in dada publications during and immediately after World War I in Switzerland and Germany. These beginnings were soon swamped by the previously important graphic punctuation system, one that represented linear thought at its

most precise, the grid system. This system had been developing throughout the nineteenth century and reached perfection in the hands of the Swiss after World War II. The grid system is an example of tight surface control, in which place has meaning. It is supported by a simple formula, a narrow range of options and continued control of the options through a manual which defines parameters into the future. Since the layout skeleton is so easily recognized, information can be applied to the grid with full confidence that every position on the page can be quickly seen as an information-bearing point. The grid system is still being used by institutions because their communication is usually `quantitative`, analytical and easily reduced to positives or negatives.

Early Experiments in Typographic `Nonlinearity`

Some experimental constructions that preceded new demotic typography can be found in the work by those designers who shaped the Swiss grid, Armin Hofmann and Emil Ruder. Later designers, Wolfgang Weingart, who taught at the `Basel` School of Design and whose ideas influenced a generation of designers, or Karl Gerstner, whose *Compendium for Literates* is a catalogue of possible components of the typographic page, are responsible for developing these early hints. In the United States, one of the first pioneers of new demotic typography was Cindy Marsh, whose classes at the Women's Center in Los Angeles influenced many typographers, including Sheila Levrant de Bretteville. Another post-Weingart but pre-Mac practitioner of new demotic typography, Neville Brody, working in London, began creating images of flux and its fusing in the 1970s, and continues to influence a worldwide graphic design audience, while Rudy VanderLans and Zuzana Licko and their magazine *Emigré* made their subject matter out of the computer and its early, "low-rez" output.

Once reinforced by technological opportunity, new demotic typography expanded from the early, bare, diagrammatic examinations of the nature of page layout favored by Weingart, or the German designer Willi Kunz, into a mix of

old and new letterforms, type and script, changing letter direction, overprinted images, changes of scale and ambiguous syntax. April Greiman, a celebrated practitioner who added density to this skeleton, calls her style "hybrid imaging." David Carson, latest heir to many innovators, now moves through their devices with ease, as a user of this canon. This is not a fad.

Construction of the Fluid Field

A formal description of the space of the new demotic page begins with a surface onto which information is packed so fully that much of the surface becomes invisible. Layering of text and image fills the framing spaces traditionally held to be necessary for the isolation of meaning, swamping any positioning of information on a vertical/horizontal grid. Instead, in a new demotics layout, the reader encounters meaning somewhere on a shaded path, a blurred field of spatial implications, through a reading process that is closer to that used to understand the abstract gathering shapes that serve as musical notation for composers like Karlheinz Stockhausen or John Cage than to that involving the actual presence or absence of marks traditionally indicating meaning. Neville Brody has continued to lead the pack with his fluid field illustrations for *Fuse (figure 2)*. Many European music magazines, especially from Germany, have sequences of double page spreads which can only be described as formless. On the contents page for `Wired,` a magazine about digital media, numbers and text are usually reversed out from a swirling image, an approximation of indexing flux. In the search for the visible shapes `that will suggest or aid` nonlinear reading and thinking, many older types of gathering marks and shapes are being given prominence, beginning with the enlarged parentheses much used in publications from Cranbrook Academy of Art and the California Institute for the Arts in the 1980s, and continuing through the reuse of enlarged brackets in magazines such as *Raygun* and *Metropolis* `in 1994` *(figure 3)*.

Figure 2
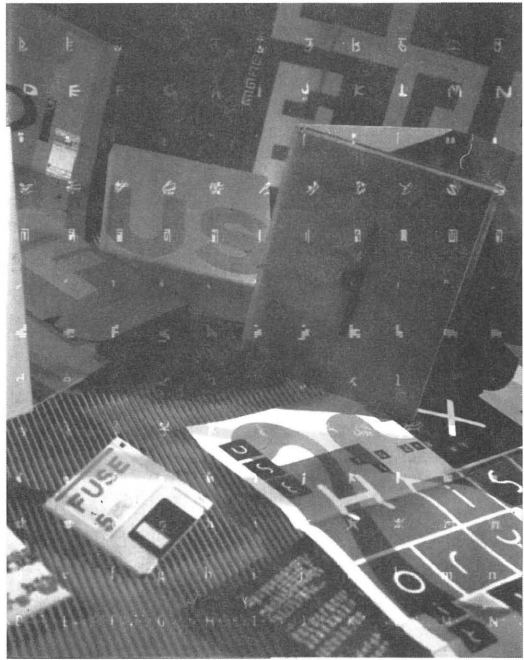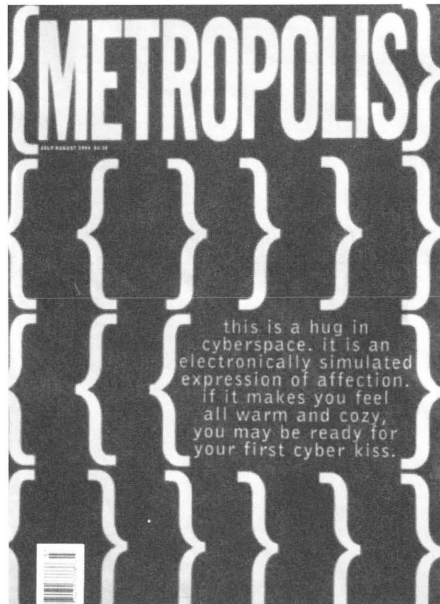Neville Brody. c. early 1990s. Promotion for *Fuse. Wired,*

Figure 3
Metropolis. July/August, 1994. Cover.

E-mail has had an impact on the reinvestigation of old punc-
tuation marks. In the effort to inject vocal tone into their
communication, e-mail users have equated brackets with
messages of warmth and affection, and all-caps with shouting.
This is another indication that sound is now considered an
important component of cognition, and efforts are being
made to represent it. This has led to contemporary
reuse of old punctuation, devised when marks served to indi-
cate the length of pauses, the intonation and rhythm of phrases
needed for reading *out loud,* the main style of reading until the
fifteenth century. Punctuation was a guide to aural rhetoric in
a time when the impact of oral framing on the shaping of
information into sense was fully understood. It is significant
that a history of punctuation, *Pause and Effect: Punctuation
in the West,* by M.B. Parkes, was published in 1993. It is also
significant that this is a period in which cataloged subtleties
of sound, from speech to dolphin song, are recorded and
available for review to a majority of the people in the techno-
logical world.

This preoccupation with both the micro-subtleties of sound
and with the interstices of traditional two-dimensional
communication is an effort to project an outward record of
the cognitive process used for generating both memory and
new ideas described by its investigators as parallel cognitive
processing.[1] This cognitive structure involves the brain and the
total body in constant small-scale decisions in time and space,
a series of minute decisions that reconstructs knowledge,
generates new understanding and underlies the process of
creative reverie. Creative reverie comes about exactly through
the process of making many small, stress-free decisions, and is
supported traditionally by projects for which there is perhaps
an overall design, but in which no individual step is critical,
like gardening or some kinds of craft (e.g., woodcarving,
embroidery). It is this evocation of creative reverie, with its
invitation to lateral thinking, not linear textual decoding, that
supports new demotic typography.

1
Rummelhart, David E. and
James L. McClelland. I986.
*Parallel Distributed
Processing: Explorations in
the Microstructure of
Cognition.* Cambridge, MA:
MIT Press.

Reuse of Pre-literate Devices: Implied Meaning and Parataxis

All of this manipulation of the type and spacing of the page
buries syntax. Invisible or dissolved syntax allows the viewer
to choose the order in which texts or images are read. Such
reader-syntaxing, with its opening into stress-less reverie, uses
the practices of a pre-industrial, pre-institutional and pre-inter-
national past, when texts and images were used to recall
implied meaning, not as bearers of explicit instruction. Implied
meaning is supported by the social habits of the polity that
uses it, in deeply rooted habits having to do with the need
for group cooperation in the interests of achieving large
projects necessary to life and death: crop harvesting or house,
road and fort building. Illiterate societies train their members
in the production of food or the construction of houses by
example, not with written explanations, and when they do
have texts, these do not educate, but remind. In fact, literacy
was not necessary to use these texts. The informa-
tion in each of these images, including images of text, was
often reader-syntaxed, since no starting place, upper-right or
the middle left, necessarily contained a *first* segment of mean-
ing, and often enough, the text turned itself from left reading
to right reading. The density of folk prints, like the Russian
lubok that El Lissitzky and Kasimir Malevitch used for inspira-
tion, was not made up from layers of semi-transparent over-
printing as are the new demotic texts. Their density lay in the
juxtaposition of elements by position, large and important or
small and inconsequential according to the spaces left over by
the simple expedient of assigning most space to the most
important rhetorical component.

The structure of these compositions offers a visual parallel
to the cognitive habit called *parataxis*. Parataxis is the
gathering of ideas, spaces, objects or actions into a unit, whose
sense is determined only by temporal (in the order thought) or
spatial (in the remembrance of spatial sequence) enumeration
of parts, not by a logical or hierarchical relationship of ideas.
Parataxis is a practice that can occur at every scale of educa-
tion or endeavor. A. R. Luria recorded paratactic speech in
the illiterate villagers of Eastern Russia in the late thirties:

"Everyone knows what a car is. It has chairs in front for people to sit on, a roof for shade and an engine. If you get in a car and go for a drive, you'll know what it is."[2] Today, worldwide, there are still many groups of the *demos* — peasants and wandering laborers — who both think and use texts and images paratactically, without access to literacy. But I recently recorded a college-educated artist speaking in the paratactic mode: "I just love Nietzsche. I don't remember much about his work, but he was very contradictory. He was very contradictory. And he had a big mustache which I drew." This was a female, recalling another of the prejudices long held against such additive and freely recombinative thought. But today parataxis is being re-evaluated because it is one cognitive mode that predisposes one to the creativity of lateral thinking. And new demotic typography has made parataxis visible.

2
Luria, A.R. 1976. *Cognitive Development: Its Cultural and Social Foundations.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 87.

3
1991. "Massimo Vignelli vs. Ed Benguiat (Sort of)," *Print.* XLV:V, 91.

Responsibility and Legibility

The debate about the legibility of new demotic typography, initiated by Massimo Vignelli, in an interview with Ed Benguiat in *Print* magazine in the fall of 1991, who called this "illegible" typography an "aberration of culture," continues.[3] April Greiman believes the style exists as an expression of revolt by the unrepresented when she says that "they can't force us to read their way anymore." And she is right, although the "they" are not socially or politically retrograde, as she contends. "They" are not, as yet, aware of the difficulty of thinking creatively within a field of excess information, perhaps because creative thinking, a specialty afterall, is not necessary to "them." But the real change is a shift in the cognitive needs of the audience. This is the celebrated paradigm shift noticed since Thomas Kuhn wrote the *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* in 1962, and reflected in publications whose very titles imply change: *Atlas, Boundary, Borderline, Emigré, Offramp, output, Shift, Wired* or *Fast Forward.*

As we who are "global villagers" know, the traditional community which uses the representation of implied meaning

to remind them of common sense, has changed its social and geographic location. Although some active traditional cultures still exist, there are now more mediated "communities without propinquity" which share assumptions based on institutional education. It is now the members of traditional cultures who are forced to become international nomads, "unskilled laborers" who, belonging to no group at all, become an *isolato* (as Herman Melville named the international crew members of whaling vessels in the nineteenth century). The *isolati,* whether Turks, Laotians or Iowans, need explicit instructions to operate in implicit, mediated culture. Cities and states, worldwide, have had to devise explicit texts to help them, to keep them from falling onto subway tracks, for example. These texts are clearly structured, with wide letter, word and paragraph spacing, often using the grid system.

Massimo Vignelli, who has spent his life producing subway maps and other signs that will quickly inform the international nomad of vital information says: "One should not confuse freedom with [lack of] responsibility. They show no responsibility. It's just like freaking out, in a sense. The kind of expansion of the mind that they're doing is totally uncultural...."[4] He does not understand that new demotic typography and its `paratactic` text is responsible to an audience which needs to better understand cognitive mapping, not to be kept from falling off subway platforms.

Marginal Reuse in the Service of New Indices

Why does this cognitive preference exist now? I have found a suggestive proposal in the writings of Alois Riegl, who addressed questions of visual preferences and the styles they supported in two books written around the turn of the century, one of them, *Stillfragen,* recently translated and published in English as *Problems of Style*. Riegl defined two modes of control of the representational surface, the haptic and the optic. The haptic mode was `one based on the visibility of` all of the surface, and assumed the possibility of imagining how that surface was made, with what tools and

with what material. The haptic mode implied tight visual control of a surface as well as such physical care in the finishing of the surface that incursions into it were minimal. The haptic mode thus contained clearly delineated, and somewhat reduced, information. It also implied strong institutional support, that is, a corps of highly trained and skilled carvers, and an attentive audience, with common understanding of how the images were made.

The optic mode, on the other hand, was defined as having a rich surface which was loosely controlled both optically and in terms of workmanship. The material tended to be more abruptly invaded by the carving, with much deeper incisions, so that much of the area was no longer visible, being cast into shadow. The undercutting generated excess surface that could not be seen, with the excess itself implying loosened control, even declining skill. Riegl was interested in separating this style of work from the pejorative concept of decline, substituting the idea that such shifts from the production of haptic to optic works indicated a societal preference for one type of visual control over the other.

I cite Riegl's theories here because they provide a notion of two modes of visual control, one tight, one weak, as an explanation for the new layout or punctuation system that I am calling new demotic typography. Obviously, Riegl's concern with the third dimension is only relevant to represented space within new demotic typography, and Riegl's belief in a pendulum movement between social use of the two modes is not valid: today both modes coexist. In fact, I believe that these two modes of visual control of information have always coexisted, the haptic based on high speed retrieval of specific information needed for action, the optic based on low speed retrieval of information implicit within that system, but ripe for questions. I believe that today the two modes serve the same audience at different times. The tightly controlled surface of the grid system serves newspaper readers and those searching for a competition entry deadline. The loosely controlled system, a visual fuzz of partly invisible implied meaning, serves those who are longing for self-defini-

tion through creative interaction with a range of indefinite but charged options. This audience is searching for self-definition within the infinitely expanded information resources promised to all, delivered to a few, by the "information superhighway," the informational support for holistic practices. They are not worried by the lack of indexing that makes this real-time treasury difficult to think with. This new audience insists on creating its own categories and the trajectories connecting them, the index, through the vast information array.

The first stage in the devising of new categories is the baring of the devices of the old, and the reinvestigation of rejected options. Parataxis and its visible trace, demotic typography, are rejected options now being reconsidered as less constraining categories of the process of thought and its representation with which to form useful indices of the seemingly infinite expanse of information before us. Since the latest discoveries about the workings of the brain give equal value to the visual, verbal, spatial and tactile cognitive processes, it is timely that the new demotic typography blends two of these processes, the verbal and the visual, with density and intimacy.

It is no more surprising that the organizational devices (indices, punctuation, layout) being researched for visual guides to lateral thinking are archaic than it is that much contemporary nutritional research concerns the gene pools of marginal plant or animal species, like the Peruvian potato or the Red Poll cow. This is a period when marginal inversion is a useful research concept. But the theory of marginal inversion recalls the *ourobouros*, or the snake biting its tail, and that ancient mark of gathering recalls the infinity symbol, and opens this essay to lateral shortcutting, so it is now time to let this tale go.

Appendix: Early Punctuation Marks and New Demotic Reuse

From the time of the Greeks and Romans to the fifteenth century, most cultures were oral, and, when writing was used, it was used as an aid for those reproducing speech for listeners, not readers. Even those who were literate read out loud, and

it was only in the `fifteenth` century that reading became silent, and punctuation served to indicate unformed sounds, unspoken emphases. Punctuation was either expressed by differing the amount of space between the words, or by varying the size or the number of dots or dashes, and these variations differed from scribe to scribe. These vague early punctuation markings included different kinds of dots and dashes, boxes, framed and filled letters and space-fillers, including abstract ornament, grotesqueries or didactic images, to insure that all lines ended at the same place on the page, making what we now call justified columns. The page itself was also used as a textual divider, being differently structured to indicate different types of logic. Columns, two, three or four to a page, were used to activate the repetitive power of list-intoning. Introductory pages could indicate beginning by being entirely taken up with one word, or could slide into a beginning with the use of the *diminuendo*, a gradual decrease in the size of letters as the new chapter progressed. The paragraph as such did not exist and new thoughts were usually indicated by larger letters, often in another, older, hand than the one used for the main text. After the `eighth` century, with the development of religious scriptoria, much of this punctuated writing ended up being for the church, and was thus employed in texts about the ultimate values in life and death. Those church fathers who oversaw text production were aware of how easily the inflections of reading could change interpretation, and sought to control both sense and emotion through consistent punctuation, but it was not until the spread of printing from movable type that punctuation became uniform.

The new demotic typographer has reexamined the freedom resulting from use of these earlier punctuation devices, sometimes explicitly, often by substituting idiosyncratic devices: pictures of space, new forms of boxes, arrows, maps, diagrams, "backward" letters and expanded typographic color, especially the use of many different typefaces, weights and widths within one word or text. Some of the specific tactics used in the fluid new palette include large scale charts and diagrams reminiscent

Figure 4
Advertisement for AT&T in *Wired*. 1:1, Winter, 1993.
(detail)

of the memory-theater diagrams popularized by the philoso-
pher-orators of the sixteenth century, like Raymond Lull.
The inaugural issue of *Wired* includes an illustration of a hand,
fingers divided into digits, each with a specific memory aid,
exactly like the mnemonic devices used by medieval orators
(figure 4). Other publications overlay images or texts with
suggestions of geographic control (maps) or numerical control
(charts) as does *output,* a student publication from schools
including the Herron School of Art, Cranbrook and the
University of Texas at Austin done in the early 1990s, or an
advertisement in *Wired*, from 1994 *(figure 5).*

Many new demotic typographers like to add extra color and
emphasis within a sentence or paragraph by boxing some of
the text, either with rule or with color *(figure 6).* Sentences
dotted with boxed words suggest musical notation, where
shape and color convey emphasis and duration. The computer,

Figure 5
Advertisement for Z-Code Software in *Wired*. June, 1994.

Figure 6
Studio Dumbar. Poster for the *Holland Festival*. Den Haag, The Netherlands. 1988.

Figure 7
Zakglobe. Linotype/Hell. *Face to Face*. 1994.

with its repertory of ready-to-use textures and shapes encourages layout color. Jacques Bertin, in *Semiology of Graphics: Diagrams, Networks, Maps* (1983), catalogued typographic color and assigned `quantitative` significance to it. Edward Tufte, on the other hand, in *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information* (1983), and *Envisioning Information* (1990), found such type and page color confusing and called it "chart junk." Some contemporary designers have already developed a counter-chaos movement which controls images and text by centering them in layers of boxes, for example, Jennifer Curtis of *Industry* in San Francisco.

As part of an imagery of flux or fusion, letters ornamented into pattern, not to be quickly deciphered, flourish. With the baseline of necessary skill erased by computer type design programs, letter invention is running through the traditional changes of the `nineteenth` century, ornamentation of the traditional shapes and changes of that shape, as demonstrated by the typeface *Zakglobe*, `issued by Linotype/Hell` and shown at the 1994 AtypI Conference *(figure 7)*.

Figure 8
Charles Byrne. *Rolluerown*. Oakland , California, 1992.

The absence of all word separation, typical of early Greek and Roman inscriptions, has also been re-investigated. One California greeting card, by Chuck Byrne, uses equal space set-width letters to announce: "Epistemology police are after you" *(figure 8).*

The direction of reading, including the direction in which the page or pages are held and turned has been re-investigated, including experiments with an early Greek writing process, *boustrophedon*, in which both words and letters are read one way left to right to the end of the line and then reversed when the next line is read (from right to left), resulting in what we now consider backward letters. The Medieval xylographic print, which fit letters into waving ribbands which often reversed text as it zig-zagged back and forth, also resulted in backwards letters. New demotic typography incorporates many different types of *boustrophedon,* from

simple reversing of the page so that it is read from either end, as in a Capp Street Foundation notice designed by Jennifer Morla in 1991, to April Greiman's self-portrait of the late 1980s with the reversed text *"Live as you can,"* or David Carson's layout on *Nine Inch Nails* in the June/July 1994 issue of *Raygun (figure 9).*
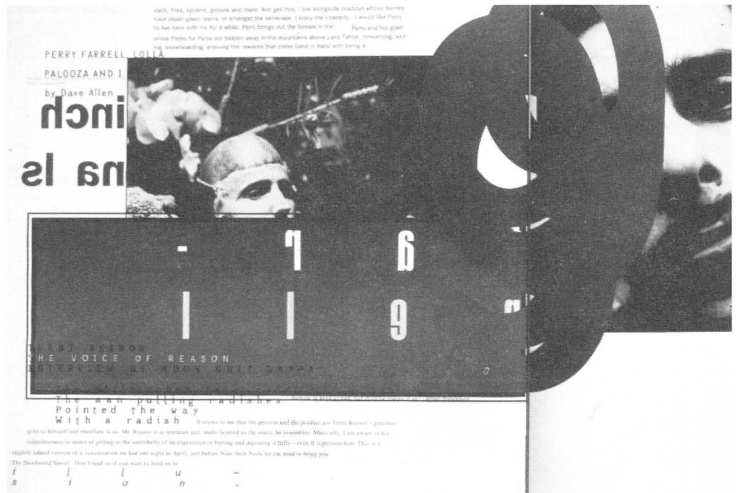

Figure 9
David Carson. *Raygun,*
June/July 1994 (detail).

There are many experiments with new page layouts, some even requiring physical manipulation of the page for legibility. The interweave of sentences, a handwritten annotation practice used by medieval European and Arab readers, and formalized by early printers as interlinear textual commentary, was cast into modern typographic form, without the fluidity of handwriting, by the Swiss designer Armin Hofmann in the '60s, and brought back to the United States by Sheila Levrant de Bretteville in the 1970s. Phil Baines in England used this interlinear text setting in 1985 in his famous *Gutenberg Galaxy* project *(figure 10)* and it is now a worldwide device. Baines also used elaborately shaped paragraphs for texts, a practice of medieval European/Arab scribes, although their shapes did have the fluidity of the handwritten line. The shaped paragraph has always been used by advertising typographers, but the computer programs for automatic text outlines now allow change in every column in a text, as often used in layouts for

FORGET　　　　**REMEMBER**

Figure 10
Phil Baines. *Guttenberg Galaxy.*
London: Royal College of Art. 1985.

the journal *Now Time,* designed by ReVerb of Los Angeles
(figure 11). The Adobe program, *Matrix,*™ facilitates interweaving and the ultimate dismembering of the legible edge, a recent fashion for changes in type size and weight within every word, regardless of position.

Excess, not absence, is the primary mode of new demotic typography. Inky overlays of texts and images imply layers of surface on which text can be deposited. Of all of the new uses of punctuation as a visible reproduction of ideational fluidity and abstraction, the overlay is the most archaic. The earliest reproductions of form and space, animals and objects, in the

cave drawings in Spain and France, describe space by overlay-
ing drawings of animals and humans. Overlay of images, and
sometimes of type, had a period of popularity during the first
reaction to the new spatial representation possible through the
use of cinematic film in the 1920s, a reaction incorporated
into the high-prestige product, oil painting, by the cubists.
Overlay by actual transparency has been popular since the
introduction of transparent, offset printing papers.
However, traditional rice papers have long been used, as in
Life in L.A., a portfolio of poetry designed and published by
Sheila Levrant de Bretteville and Susan King in 1983. Films
and plastic are also popular for furthering the illusion of deep
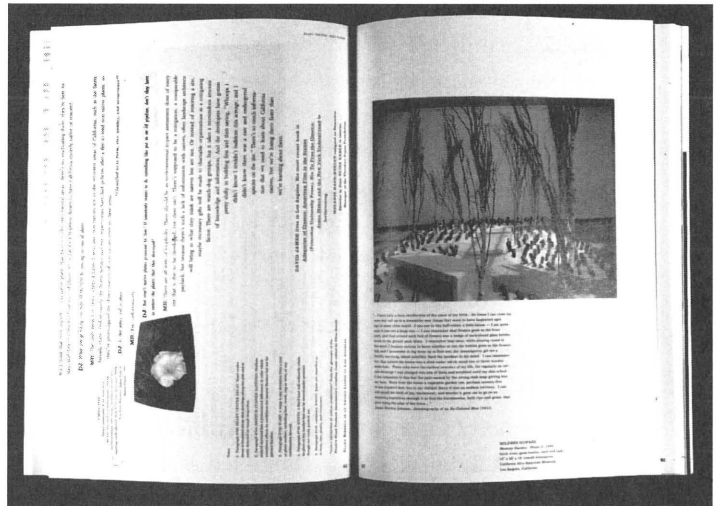space. Such density of surface supports interpretation based on

Figure 11
ReVerb. *Now Time*, No. 2,
Los Angles: Art Press. 1992.

either ambiguity or irony, both a necessary consequence of
our ongoing twentieth-century concern with the *baring of the
device,* and visible irony, wherein the first layer of information
is neither the truth, nor quite a lie, as in *output No.4* (1993),
a transatlantic collaboration with students at North Carolina
State University and England's Ravensbourne College of
Design and Communication *(figure 12).*

Figure 12
North Carolina State University and
Ravensbourne College of Design and
Communication. *output No. 4.* 1993
(detail).

There are many different ways to indicate such irony or
ambiguity, including juxtaposition. An early appreciation
of the value of juxtaposition of layers of information as an
intellectual project appropriate to the late twentieth century
was the post-war *Independent Group* in England, whose
most famous member was, and is, Eduardo Paolozzi. This
group investigated the nature of generating new ideas out of
information-overload through the juxtaposition of institutional
cultural diagrams, and objects, mostly from consumer culture,
which did not as yet have symbolic readings. They abandoned
the *exquisite corpse* game preferred by the surrealists, wherein
juxtaposition of images was based on minimal information
(marks on each paper fold to connect the next image).
The *Independent Group* members preferred the bulletin board
on which many images were assembled and their possible
connections and effects considered for some while before the
collection was modified. Their assemblages of diagrams and
represented objects was, through the paintings of another
Italian, Lucio del Pozzo, directly linked to Giorgio de Chirico,
who had already explored the intersection of institutional
diagrams and random objects. The *Independent Group*
updated de Chirico's material with the computer boards
admired by Paolozzi. They tried for metaphoric recombina-
tion using proximity, prefiguring new demotic typography
by twenty years.

Another ancient device now used for the representation of
ambiguity or irony was the joining of multiple differently-
scaled resolutions of the same image, made melodramatic in
the 1960s by Antonionni's film, *Blow-Up,* and made mysteri-
ous in the 1970s and 1980s by Chuck Close's (pre-computer)
digitized photographically-based portraits. April Greiman has
exploited the scale blow-up. Some of her posters are simply
rhythmic sequences of patches of the same image at different
magnifications, connected by the reproduced Macintosh™
scaling icon, a magnifying glass.

Figure 13
Tom Bonauro. Capp Street Projects,
1987-88. San Francisco, 1989.

Finally, the obscuring of information by shadow, threatening
obscurity since Platonic times, is popular again. Shadowy
imagery was explored in the 1920s and 1930s, when Steichen
dissolved fashionable models into shadow produced by multi-
ple carbon arc lamps and Man Ray and Moholy-Nagy
camouflaged bodies in sun-cast shadow. Contemporary repre-
sentation of shadow was used ornamentally by designer Tom
Bonauro in many of his designs for Capp Street Foundation
in San Francisco *(figure 13)*, Diane Burk for her 1991 journal
for the Marin County, Headlands Foundation, or as the point
of the piece by Yale designer Janet Zweig in her book *Heinz
and Judy,* 1985.

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