Introduction

Three times a year *Design Issues* arrives in readers' mailboxes with another set of articles on a design topics drawn from a variety of disciplines. This issue contains six articles addressing a variety of topics familiar to the journal's readership: design pedagogy, digital media, graphic design, exhibition design, criticism and history. As editors, we recognize the contribution different articles make to our understanding of specific topics rooted in discrete disciplines such as graphic design or history. But it is the peculiar nature of an interdisciplinary forum such as *Design Issues* to draw out of disciplinary discussions insights and implications applicable to the entire field of design studies. Rob Roy Kelly shares his recollections of Josef Albers and the studio environment at Yale University in the 1950s. On its surface, Kelly's reminiscences are valuable for the light they shed on one of the important figures in post-World War Two design pedagogy. Yet Kelly's description of Albers as an "inspirational teacher" also reminds us how schools and careers are shaped by more than abstract models of pedagogical systems. Inspiration is one of the unintended gifts great teachers pass on to their students and the gift is a richly human one. Charles Traub and Jonathan Lipkin explore the impact of digital media on definitions of design and designers. When they speak of "man's ability to think, to search for the commonality of knowledge, and to ponder his relationship to the whole of existence," they are grounding their discussion of design in profoundly humanistic terms. We are immensely pleased to be publishing an article by Eladio Rivadulla Jr., a prominent Cuban art director, on Cuban film posters from the 1940s, many done by his father Eladio Rivadulla Martinez. While much has been published on the film posters of the post-revolutionary period, little is known of the earlier work and Rivadulla's article brings to public attention material that will help to construct a larger history of graphic design in Cuba. The essays by Adelaida de Juan, one of Cuba's leading art critics, give us a sense of the critical response to Cuba's post-revolutionary graphics from within Cuba. We are publishing them here for the first time in English. Both the Rivadulla article and the de Juan essays help us to gain a greater knowledge of Cuba's cultural life as Cuba continues to define itself in the international cultural arena. They also continue the journal's tradition of bringing to an English-language readership important material from other—often unjustly—neglected design cultures. James Traue's article on contemporary exhibition design in France and Italy brings into focus specific design strategies used to structure the exhibition experience. In an artful manner, Traue employs the concept of structure to establish links between the experience of pilgrimage as the narrative

structure of his essay, the spatial structure of different exhibition designs, and the deep structure (as opposed to the physical) structure of classical design. John Maciuika's careful reading of Adolf Loos's design criticism challenges us to be more attentive to the specific cultural context from which Loos emerged and in which he operated. Such a close reading of seminal design critics and historians continues an important thread in design discourse. Recent issues of the journal have carried articles treating Reyner Banham and Manfredo Tafuri among others. As editors, we believe this type of design commentary brings a valuable depth of reflection to design discourse. It is yet another sign of the growing maturation of this design discourse that we can recognize in a simple list of topics discursive threads and themes which challenge us as human beings to consider how our basic humanity is enriched—or thwarted—by the world we design.

Richard Buchanan
Dennis Doordan
Victor Margolin

Recollections of Josef Albers

Rob Roy Kelly

To Design
To design is
to plan and organize,
to order, to relate
and to control.
In short, it embraces
all means opposing
disorder and accident.
Therefore, it signifies
a human need
and qualifies man's
thinking and doing.[1]

I consulted with Joseph Lucca, Bob Engman, and Dorothy Yanik; and I am most grateful for their input in preparation of this paper.

For anyone with an interest in teaching, Josef Albers was, and still is, an exemplary role model. He had enormous experience and insight into teaching and students. He was the most effective and inspirational teacher I encountered in my career. I came to Yale during 1953 from Minnesota so naive and visually ignorant as to cause others to wonder how I ever got there. The truth is that I came to Yale through the good graces of Dean Charles Sawyer, rather than through admissions. The East Coast and Yale University were total cultural shock for me. Perhaps even more so than for students coming there from much more exotic parts of the world than Minnesota. I did not understand anything that was happening, but I did recognize that it was all very important.

I am certain it was Albers, and not coincidence, that led so many of his graduates into teaching. Graduates gained enormous confidence and inspiration from Albers, and were eager to share their newfound understanding with others. Yale graduates often were resented by colleagues at other institutions as their self-confidence was interpreted as arrogance.

When graduates from Yale are asked how they most benefited from studies with Josef Albers, they invariably reply, "Albers taught me to see." The word "see" has several meanings. One is in the optic sense using the eyes, but another definition of "see" is to discern, to understand. I believe that students of Albers are referring to both definitions.

Among those things that I learned from being a student in classes taught by Albers were: to see nuance in color and drawing; to use color with confidence and differently than before; to understand spatial relationships; to better understand the illusion of form;

1 Josef Albers *Poems and Drawings* (New York: George Whitenborn, Inc., 1961, Second Edition).

to see nature abstractly; to understand activation of color or space; and to realize that suggestion is more powerful than delineation in visual art. In viewing Albers the teacher, there was much to be learned in terms of beginning with simple exercises with criteria being understood by students, and the sequencing of related problems where one builds on another. Also, the teacher's awareness in knowing what can and cannot be taught is important.

My experiences at Yale were the foundation for what I was to do as a teacher, and they prepared me at a later date to better appreciate the teaching of Armin Hofmann. My views and appreciation of Albers, and his contribution to education, were not shared by all of my colleagues in graphic design. Most felt influenced more by men such as Alvin Lustig, Herbert Matter, Leo Lionni, and Lester Beall. I found these men to be interesting since they presented challenging problems and were excellent role models, but they did not teach. Albers did. When you completed an Albers course, you learned, you could apply what you learned, and you viewed your work and that of others in an entirely new way.

Being a graphic design graduate student, I did not have as much contact with Albers as did the fine art students, but there was a great deal of interaction between painting and design students in printmaking, where I was an assistant to Gabor Peterdi, and I heard stories from painters and sculptors about Albers. I was teaching at The Minneapolis School of Art before entering Yale, and knew that I would return to teaching following graduation. It is likely, that because of vested interests, I focused more attention on teachers, the problems, critiques, and methods of instruction than did my classmates. While I did not actually understand everything, I made notes regarding problems and comments by instructors. The notes became my bible during the early years of teaching.

Upon returning to Minneapolis, I was the only faculty member with a graduate degree. Consequently, whenever there was a faculty opening, I was always asked if there was someone I could recommend. My strategy was to recommend anyone from Yale who I felt understood what was happening there. Within a relatively short time, we had about six Yale graduates on the faculty. At every opportunity, I pumped each one for every bit of understanding I could get.

Visual education can be broken down into at least three broad areas such as history and precedent; technical knowledge based on equipment, processes, and materials; and perceptual understanding. Some might include professional practices as a separate segment. An effective education requires an appropriate balance between the various areas emphasized. The different concerns are taught sequentially and sometimes concurrently. In the most general sense, perceptual studies are at the beginning, and form the foundation for the other areas. Technical instruction is strongly emphasized during the second and third years. Professional practice is

concentrated in the last year, with history and craft taught throughout the program.

Perceptual understanding is the most confusing, misunderstood, and the weakest link in visual education. Too often, the educational emphasis is focused in technology or professional practice. Style and example are substituted for perceptual understanding, and students are expected to learn through imitation. Too many instructors admonish students to "just keep drawing and painting—it will come." Other instructors impress students with the notion that only feeling, emotion, or mood can lead to real art.

Albers's peculiar genius was in formulating a pedagogy that resulted in his students' abilities to grasp and incorporate perceptual factors into their work and to recognize them in the work of others. His color course is a pedagogical model that can be applied to introductory studies in drawing, design, fine arts, and crafts.

The unique qualities of perceptual understanding in visual education are that they are applicable to all areas of art—architecture, fine arts, design, photography, and all of the crafts. Perceptual understanding always is relevant, since it transcends all styles and time frames—it is never in or out of date. Albers is as valid today as he was during the 1930s at the Bauhaus, Black Mountain in the 1940s and Yale in the 1950s.

Albers compared learning to the crystallization process in which one crystal forms on another. He believed that, in the first year, students should learn simple, uncomplicated concepts; and as they moved through the program, the work should become progressively more complex. Each bit of new learning is added to the first until a body of knowledge accumulates, and from thereon, students are expected to grow as a result of their experiences. Albers was fond of saying that, if he did his job properly from the first day of class, he was beginning a process that would put him out of work. The import of his remark was that, if he was effective in his teaching, by the time of graduation, students no longer required his input.

Albers approached instruction through a pedagogical scheme employing principles, sequence, criteria, and learning through doing. Albers either said or wrote that basic studies incorporated only those elements and principles that were in common to all visual arts including painting, drawing, sculpture, design, and architecture. Within my experience, he never made any distinction between students in one discipline or another, they were all treated equally. Albers remarked several times that, as a teacher, he had to treat all students equally because, regardless of individual performance, he had no way of knowing which ones might become artists in the future.

The terms "problem" and "exercise" often are used interchangeably, but they are really quite different. "Problem" implies a solution, while "exercise" is defined as experiential learning with-

out solution, and it has infinite variations. In graphic design, we were given problems, but, under Albers, we did exercises.

My observation was that Albers used two different types of presentation. One employed demonstrations to illustrate a point, while the other consisted of exercises. Albers had strong feelings about the need for concentration when drawing. His introduction to basic drawing was to make a few remarks about mental concentration and control. Then he would take a piece of chalk in each hand and, simultaneously, draw two circles on the blackboard—one from right to left, and the other from left to right (try it sometime!).

To further make his point, he asked students to write their name and hold up their hand when completed. The response was nearly immediate. Next, students were asked to write their name backwards and raise their hand when completed. This took longer. He then asked students to write their name upside down and backwards. This took a considerable amount of time. He used this demonstration to talk about "automatic" drawing, which is done without thinking. Writing their name backwards called for mental visualization and concentration, and it was this state of mind that he felt essential to drawing. I believe this demonstration was effective because students experienced what he wanted to communicate. The ploy might be compared to teachers who simply tell students that, to draw, they must concentrate.

Another one of his demonstration exercises was to take a sheet of paper, fold it, and then flatten it out. The crease made a line. After this demonstration, we were to lay the sheet of paper next to our drawing board. We were to mentally fold the paper on angles and draw in the crease lines. After making two mental folds, the concentration necessary was so intense it became painful. When we reached that point, we were instructed by Albers to have that same degree of concentration each time we drew.

One day in drawing class, we were doing quick sketches of the model. Albers was upset with the class because he did not believe students were concentrating on what they were doing. After some scolding which apparently did not resolve the problem to his satisfaction, he halted the class for a fifteen-minute break.

Students were instructed to go across the street to Michael's Art Store and purchase a large sheet of D'Arches paper. As I recall, it was a little more than three dollars a sheet, and three dollars was quite a bit of money for most students in those days. Upon returning to the studio, he had us pin the paper on our easel, and we were instructed to resume our quick sketches. You never saw such mental concentration as this group of students making quick sketches on three-dollar-plus sheets of paper. When we finally went back to newsprint pads, he frequently would remind us that we were sketching on D'Arches paper. Knowing that he might make a reality of it, we gave our drawing the attention and focus he demanded.

Albers effectively conveyed to students the requisite mental and physical attributes for working in the visual arts.

Exercises had to do with refinements. Perhaps the best examples are found in the color course. Each exercise was preceded with a quick demonstration by him or using students. For instance, at the first class, he would ask students to go through the color pack, pick out red, and lay it face down on the desk. When everyone had done so, he asked students to hold up red. Of course there would be a variety of reds, and he used this demonstration as a preface to talking about the relativity of color, and how each person sees color differently. He then made a statement of the principle for the first exercise, and stated criteria and objectives. The exercise demanded that students go through a process of putting something down, pinning it up and evaluating it, making adjustments and, usually, repeating the last step several times. As I recall, Albers did not collect student work until the end of the semester, which allowed students to do exercises over and over. Most students would go through their work before handing it in, and redo those pieces they felt were weak.

At each stage of the exercise; because of working with cut and torn paper which could be moved, reduced, enlarged, added, or subtracted; students made numerous decisions based on trial and error. Learning resulted from knowing objectives, and the process of evaluating the work and each decision along the way.

Students not only learned about the interaction of color, but to see nuances as well; how the smallest change affected the whole. Big decisions often were made in moments, but small decisions might take hours if not days to finalize. When studying with Albers, the little decisions were the big decisions.

Just as athletes train to build their bodies, and develop muscles and athletic skills, the eyes can be trained as well. Albers's drawing and color exercises might be construed as visual calisthenics to train the eyes to recognize the most minute detail and variation, along with the learning criteria which provided direction and an ability to assess work.

I recall one instance in drawing class when Albers held up his arm and explained to students that drawing the arm could be approached from several different points of view. On one hand, if the shirt-sleeve was carefully drawn, it would describe the arm. A drawing of the skeletal structure composing an arm would be another option. He rolled up his sleeve and pointed out that, if he focused on drawing the hairs on his arm, it would reveal the form and shape of the arm. Albers was fond of saying that the purpose of art was to re-present nature, not to represent it. Albers taught students to see objects and nature in new ways.

An aspect of courses under Albers that impressed me was the absolute silence when students were working. The only sound was an occasional crumpling of paper as students made the deci-

sion to start over. The ability to judge their own work was the direct result of Albers providing simple, uncluttered objectives which made criteria obvious. This can be compared to the more prevalent practice of students not starting over until the teacher is critical of the work. Albers taught students how to evaluate work for themselves, and thus began the process of students becoming less and less dependent on the teacher with each new exercise as they progressed in the program.

In drawing class, Albers required students to keep a sketch book which was turned in at the end of the semester. He threatened students with hell and damnation, and a low grade at the least, if they had doodles, phone numbers, cartoons, messages, or anything other than serious sketching in the book. He likewise cautioned students about not tearing out any pages—he wanted to see everything. I don't know if it is true, but students swore that Albers had counted the pages in the sketch book that we used, and if he suspected pages had been removed, he counted the pages. He did not like work that was crumpled, dirty, or otherwise damaged. He could be scathing when messy work was submitted. Albers taught students to respect their own work, no matter if it was a sketch or a finished piece.

In Basic Drawing, Albers did not permit charcoal drawing—he referred to it as "smear" drawing (That is with a German accent that makes it sound more like "schmeer.") He had equal distaste for rubbed graphite or blunt pencils. Every student was required to have a pencil sharpener, and to keep a sharp point on the pencil when drawing. Particularly so in drawing classes, Albers constantly admonished students, "You must learn to crawl before you can walk, and until you can walk, you cannot run."

Once students progressed beyond the abstract exercises and began to draw objects, Albers demanded a single line describing form. He became agitated when students used multiple lines to define a contour—what he called "hen scratching." He would point to one stroke and say, "Do you mean this line, or perhaps this one, or which one do you mean?" He justified this by saying that he could not judge what the student had done when there were so many options. Whether students were drawing with line or mass, he required control, and students were held accountable for every mark they put on paper. Albers did speak a great deal about the need for discipline and not much about skills or craft, but he constantly demanded them from each student.

A large part of Albers's success with teaching had to do with his ability to verbally communicate with students regarding visual theory and content. He most often expressed his views through metaphors that students understood. He was uncanny in this respect. Albers clearly stated problem objectives which were uncomplicated and easily grasped by students. He always provided criteria for evaluating progress and goals. Consequently, students

became increasingly self-sufficient in working toward problem objectives. He presented exercises in sequential and incremental steps, with each new one building on the one before—much like the crystallization process he described as learning.

Albers's pedagogy was not suited to every individual's concept of an art education. Because of the restrictive nature of simple exercises with specific criteria and objectives, some felt that he was too dogmatic, rigid, and arbitrary. His classes were never conducive to free spirits who wanted to do their own thing. My observation was that students who had another education in art before Albers did much better than students who had only Albers. I think the reason for this was that students with prior experience had something to compare with what they were receiving from Albers, and immediately, realized the value of Albers's approach to visual education. Because of the positive response, they were better motivated, and more appreciative and productive.

Albers often was misunderstood and unfairly judged by many. The fact that Albers worked with color paper packs and controlled line did not mean that he believed that these were ends—he used them only as instructional strategies at the initial stages of visual education. There was a distinct difference between how Albers related to students at the beginning level and with those in advanced classes. In basic courses, Albers dictated objectives, format, and materials. In upper level courses, students chose content, style, format, and materials; and Albers taught within parameters set by students. Never before or since Albers have I seen so much variety of approaches to painting in one class as those taught by Albers.

Students worked with abstract expressionism, representational art, impressionism, or color studies in paint and some even imitated Albers's work. He never questioned content, only what the student was doing or trying to do visually. The same was true with prints and drawings. Albers was open and receptive to all kinds of expression. It always was a matter of the student's level of study and understanding of what they were doing.

When critiquing painting students, it was customary for Albers to ask the student what they were trying to do. If the student responded in terms of color, space, or form, Albers engaged in meaningful discussion with the student. If the student responded in terms of feelings, or some esoteric rationale, Albers would throw up his arms and, in a loud voice, exclaim, "Gotten Himmel! Don't show me your intestines." He would avoid that student for the next few weeks. It did not take students long to learn how they should reply to Albers's inquiries if they wanted his input.

Albers was extremely rational in his approach to instruction. When it came time to put pencil or pen to paper, brush to canvas, or chisel to wood or stone, Albers believed that artists became intensely rational as they concentrated on how best to give form to

intent. In the classroom or studio, he had short shrift for mood, emotion, mystique, or self-expression. He rarely relied on the past for examples. He was more likely to rely on analogies to explain a point. He concentrated on pedagogical principles, and reacting to what the student was doing. Albers said to me that those aspects of painting dealing with emotion, expression, or message were personal and subjective, therefore, as a teacher, he was in no position to judge them. Albers confined his comments to what students were attempting to do in terms of color, line, shape, space, or form. Albers made clear distinctions between what could and could not be taught. He provided students with tools for expression, but felt that expression itself was a private matter.

There were many occasions where Albers talked about teachers and teaching. One view that he expressed was that only the best teachers should be permitted to work with students during the first year of studies. It was this period in which students learned work habits, acquired values, became motivated, and began the learning process that would shape what they did in the future. The first year of study was the most important year of education.

To better appreciate this viewpoint, it can be compared to the common practice in the majority of American art schools and universities of staffing the first year of study with young, inexperienced teachers beginning their careers, older teachers who have passed their prime, and, in some instances, teachers who are assigned to basic courses as administrative punishment. At numerous universities, the first year is taught with graduate assistants which, in most instances, is the blind leading the blind.

Albers explained to our class one time that, in order to be a good teacher, you had to be a good actor. There would be times in dealing with students when you might be extremely angry with a student, but it was a time to speak softly and be encouraging. Likewise, there might be an instance where it was in the best interest of the student to affect great anger even though you felt none. This reflects an insightful and disciplined teacher. Albers often commented that, when students can anticipate a teacher, much of that teacher's effectiveness as an instructor is lost. It is a credit to Albers that although he was in his seventies and might be expected to be more routine in his teaching, we never knew what he was going to say or do next.

In his color class, which met twice a week, the students often were intimidated. Albers was so highly respected by students that, if he was critical of the work, an immediate response was to want to crawl under the desk and hide. Secondly, Albers's color classes were so famous that frequently there were visitors. Sometimes, they were people from other departments of the university, or from other parts of the country or Europe. As a result of these conditions, a number of students did not put work up for critique.

One day when we came to class, and there was Albers standing at the head of the stairs in front of the door to the classroom. No one knew what was happening, and so a line formed that ran all the way down the stairs to the front door. At two o'clock, Albers looked at his watch and, with a great flourish, announced, "It is time for the show to begin." He turned to the first student and said, "Your ticket, please." When the student mumbled something about not knowing he had to have a ticket, Albers explained, "Your work is your ticket." The student pulled work from his knapsack and showed it to Albers. Albers then said to the student, "You have your ticket. Go in and find a seat up front. We have a good show today." The procedure continued with several other students. Finally, he came to a student who confessed that she had not finished her work. Albers put his arm around her shoulders, and walked her to the head of the stairway saying, "It is too bad you do not have a ticket young lady, but you come back on Thursday with your ticket and we will have another fine show." All students who did not have "tickets" were turned away. That was the last time it was necessary for him to address this problem that year. The problem of students not putting work up for critique is a common one. I have often thought about how the rest of us handle it. Ordinarily, we bluster and threaten students with low grades if they do not mend their ways. Albers's method of handling the situation was not only more intriguing, but it was also more effective.

I remember one rather humorous situation with Albers when four or five of my classmates and I pulled an "all-nighter" in preparation for a Graphic Design presentation. Around six in the morning, Albers walked into the Graphic Design studios. We froze in our tracks because we were not supposed to be in the department all night and we had been caught, and by the Department Head. He had his car loaded with drawings and, evidently, was looking for a janitor or someone to help him carry the work to his office. Of course, we jumped at the opportunity to help. As we went by him on the way to his car, he smiled and said how nice it was to find young men willing to come to school so early in the morning to do their work. He did not fool us. We knew he was aware that we had been there all night.

Albers was very Germanic in that he used himself to punish or reward students. On several occasions, I would pass Albers on the sidewalk and address him with a "good morning" or "good afternoon." He never acknowledged that he even knew me. Several of the graphic design students asked Albers if he would critique our work if we set up a noncredit painting class. He agreed to do so. When the class began, there were about nine of us. In six weeks, it was down to four who regularly participated. I was one of the four. The next time I met Albers on campus and spoke, he gave me a hearty greeting, put his arm around my shoulder, and asked me what all I was doing. I felt good all over.

Dorothy Yanik told me about one occasion with Albers when he asked her how her studio work was going? She said that it was terrible. Nothing was coming out the way she wanted. He smiled and said, "Good! Good!" Albers understood the role of frustration and struggle as an essential part of the educational process.

Albers was capable of incredibly intensity, and I think that, for some, it was intimidating. Each year when I would go back to Yale, Clancy, who was Albers' secretary, would always make certain that I was able to see him. I would go into his office and he would pull up a chair for me. We would be sitting almost knee to knee, and we would begin talking. After twenty or thirty minutes, I would leave with my head spinning. All the way back to Minneapolis, I would be trying to remember everything he had said. Sometimes, it was weeks before it was sorted out. Josef Albers was an incredibly intense individual.

I have no idea whether it is true or not, but I did hear that there were times when Albers was upset and went to see Dean Smith. The Dean would hide behind his desk, and instruct the secretary to tell Josef that he was out. Knowing Albers when he was upset, I can easily believe this story, although it is extremely doubtful that it ever happened.

When Albers retired, Rico LeBrun, a West Coast painter, was appointed as Visiting Lecturer in Painting. A year after Albers left Yale, he was invited back to critique a painting class. A young teacher at Minneapolis recorded the critique, and I only heard the tape. It was apparent that he was quite disturbed by what students were doing in the new program. Also, some of the students had worked with him earlier, and he was not pleased with how they were currently being directed. At one point in his critique, he shouted, "Big brushes do not make big painters." You heard a young lady say, "What if your teachers tell you to use big brushes? His reply was, "Did you hear what I just said? PERIOD!"

On one occasion, when our critic in graphic design could not attend the class, we requested Albers to critique the work. The student work was pinned on the board, and Albers came into the room and began to examine the work. While looking over the work, he explained how teachers were like circus clowns that entertained the audience between main acts. The teacher was expected to walk into the room, look at the student work, and give a performance by telling them what was good and what was bad.

He said that he found this extremely difficult to do. Often, there was work that he would like to hang in his house for a week, a month, or even longer so he could look at it every day. Only then might he be able to give a constructive critique.

Albers then began to take each student's work and point out those places in the composition where the student had to make a visual decision. He talked about the decision they made, the result

of that decision, and what other options could have been explored. It was one of the most enlightening critiques that I ever experienced.

Albers talked about type only once. He recounted how, as a child in Germany, childrens' books were printed in different sizes of type. Each size dictated the tone of voice, with the largest type being shouted and the smallest being whispered. He suggested that we read advertisements using this method to see how ridiculous some of them were in establishing priorities.

While I was a student at Yale, Josef Albers was invited to the Minneapolis School of Art for several days of meetings with the faculty and to lecture. I was asked to assist him while he was in Minneapolis. He never traveled by air, so he took the train to Minneapolis. I flew out ahead of his arrival, and picked him up at the train station. I was his companion, guide, and driver while in Minneapolis.

The one event that is still most vivid for me was Albers's meeting with the drawing teachers. They asked him to explain his drawing program. Albers clearly outlined his approach to, and sequencing of, a basic drawing program. The reaction to his views were that the program inhibited creativity. And what about expression, mood, and the role of emotion? Albers's reply was that emotion can bring the artist to the easel, get out the paints and set up, or to work all night, but it had little to do with the actual drawing or printing. He believed the artist must be lucid, critical, focused, and objective out of concern for imagery, and meeting the ends being sought. This required objectivity and not subjectivity.

The teacher became increasingly defensive, and began challenging Albers's views. Gustav Krollman, an elderly Austrian drawing master, was especially vocal. After a few moments of verbal attacks, Albers would listen to the comments and then say, "Gentlemen prefer blondes." This infuriated Gustav Krollman. After these exchanges had gone on for a few minutes, Gustav finally blurted out, "You damn Prussians are all alike!"

After the meeting was over, Albers wanted a break so we went outside and sat in the park. I asked him what he meant by "Gentlemen prefer blondes." He told me that he had fought these battles thirty years ago, and now that he was growing old, he must conserve his energy for more productive purposes. They asked for his views and he gave them. They disagreed, indicating that they preferred something else, so they should do what they preferred and he would do the same. There was nothing to be gained through argument, because it was apparent no one was open to changing their mind.

The longer I taught design, the more appreciative I became for Albers' color class. There have been numerous critics of Albers and his color course., largely by individuals who never took the course or truly understood it. The principal criticism was his use of color papers in place of pigments.

Albers's rationale was that the purpose of the course was for students to learn about color, and he did not believe they should have to cope with problems connected to brushes, mixing pigments, and applying color all at the same time. Imagery was always abstract because Albers wanted color to dictate quantities and, with representational images, content tended to dictate quantities.

Using cut and torn color papers was simple and quick. It allowed students to make considerably more visual decisions in the same amount of time than if they had been using pigment. He also liked the fact that each sheet of color was numbered on the back, and if more of that color was required, it could be identified and purchased at the art store by using the code number.

The process of laying one color against another was much quicker than mixing color, applying it, and waiting for it to dry. The more judgments students made, the more they learned. Albers's exercises were designed to make students explore and refine, which are positive learning processes.

I believe that Albers always enjoyed seeing student work when it was put up for critique, but I am convinced that process was considerably more important to him than the end result.

Over the years, I have known a number of individuals who took Albers's color course and later taught it. I never met two teachers that taught color the same, or exactly as Albers had presented the course. Yet, most of them were effective in that students understood criteria and objectives, and applied what they learned. The pattern seemed to be using Albers's problems in the beginning, and gradually substituting or adding problems of their own definition. Each teacher would personalize the course by emphasizing certain principles, or identifying different objectives. This certainly was true for me.

I recall Albers talking about the relationship between shape and color. His point was that, when studying color, all other elements such as shape should be subjugated. Active shapes, oppositional relationships, or other visual dynamics detract from what is happening with color. I am sure this was the reasoning for his "Homage To A Square" series, since the square is the most nonintrusive and static shape possible. Taking this point-of-view to heart, I guided students away from highly active compositions, and kept the emphasis on color.

I tended to see most of the free studies other than the leaf studies as landscapes. With both the free and leaf studies, I stressed composition almost as strongly as color. I found the course excellent for working with refinements, and developing student awareness of visual sensitivity through nuances.

Albers conceived color exercises within the framework of general principles. The principles never changed, but problem definitions varied from year to year, especially in the color course. Albers introduced a number of principles that, within my experi-

ence, were unique to him. These principles were clear and had broad application to visual areas other than his courses. The genius of Albers as a teacher is found in his ability to define learning principles, relate one to another or how one principle built on another, and defining criteria for each.

Teaching Albers Color Problems

At no time within my teaching career was I afforded the opportunity to teach the Albers color course as a separate class. The best I could do was to steal an hour a week from the design course, and teach a class with very restricted content.

Color interaction used three colors to appear as four, using two small squares with each centered on a larger square. A variation of the exercise using the same format was to make four colors appear as three. The most common difficulty for students with this problem was confusing color with value change. Sometimes, Albers would have students use the same format but work with values, i.e., make three values of gray appear as four, etc. I would sometimes have students do a twenty-step value scale for them to better understand that color also has value as well as density and hue, and value change is not the same as color change.

Albers told students that, when one color is laid next to another and nothing happens, color is not being used. The color change problems forced students into extensive exploration of color on color, and helped them to better understand color interaction.

The "how much to how much" problem always began by Albers asking the class what two colors did not go together? After a few minutes listening to student responses, he informed them that there was no such thing as two colors that did not go together. It really was a question of how much of one to how much of the other.

Students chose two colors that they thought to be ugly in combination. First, they put down an equal amount of each butted up to one another. Using the same format, they searched for a quantity relationship that was pleasing or, at the least, less offensive.

The next part of the problem was identified as color climate, where students chose four colors and did four small compositions. By varying the amounts in each composition, the objective was to disguise the fact that the same four colors were used. Sometimes, the compositions were done as vertical stripes.

I found the "how much to how much" problem to be especially good for awakening latent student sensitivities. The exercise required a great deal of experimentation and refinement. The concept applied to other areas of design such as how much type to a page, how much drawing to how much white of the paper, how much line to how much shape, and so on. I found this exercise very effective in terms of students grasping its significance, and using it in a wide variety of applications.

Color mixture most often was done as a stripe problem. Students selected three colors and attempted to create as wide a range of colors as they could using the optical mixture principle. Each of the three colors were included as a wider band to identify the base colors. This problem required a high degree of craft to assemble.

The color boundary problem was of extreme importance, because it allows designers to be precise in controlling the depth of elements in the picture plane. When one color butts another color, it forms a line. The line may be soft or hard according to values. Colors that are far apart in value create a hard line; colors that are close in value create a soft line. A traditional belief was that cool colors recede and warm colors advance. With the boundary theory, students discovered this was not true—it was really the boundary lines that determined spatial relationships, and not hues.

Our first problem involved selecting six squares, with three in one color and three in another, and an illusion of transparency. One set of squares overlapped the other. The area of overlap was done in another color, creating a smaller square with two boundary lines in each of the large squares. If the boundaries of the overlap that were within the top square were softer than the boundaries in the lower square, the reading was that of transparency with the large top square in front of the bottom square. If the boundaries of the overlap within the lower large square were softer than the boundaries in the large upper square, the reading was that of transparency with the lower large square in front of the square above it. The last step was to find a value that would make the boundaries of the overlap equal in hardness or softness in both the large squares. The reading would be of colors merging, and both of the large squares would appear to be on the same spatial plane.

The second part of the problem called for the selection of four colors of different intensities, and butting them against one another forming one large square. A small square was selected arbitrarily and positioned in the lower right corner of the top left block. Another color was selected that had the same boundary value as the first square. The process was repeated twice more. The objective was to create a boundary line around all four of the small squares that had the same degree of hardness or softness. Needless to say, finding the first three were relatively easy, but finding the fourth small square that had a boundary which was equal to both the square behind and the one above was nearly impossible. If you were successful, the integrity of a square formed by the four small squares was established. The square formed by four small ones appeared as a transparency. The check on this problem was to reverse the sizes of the large and small squares, and see if the boundary around the four small squares was consistent. I believe that Albers was much more concerned with students' exploration of this problem than with their success in finding the solution.

The boundary concepts were another example of principles with broad application. Hard and soft edges to place elements in space—including pencil lines in drawing—were a tremendous tool for the designer.

As students did each of the four principles, if I thought they were not understanding, they were required to repeat the problems until it was evident that the majority understood the objectives. As a check of student understanding, I often asked them do a free-study, demonstrating the principle.

After the theoretical problems, students did free-studies without any teacher imposed conditions. Application of the principles are evident with some regularity in the free compositions. An interesting aspect of the free-studies came near the end of the course, when students had used all the colors of first choice and they did not want to buy another color pack. They began using colors that they probably would never have used, and the results often were stunning. I firmly believe that students working with the color pack were exposed to, and used, many color relationships that they would never have tried if they had been using brushes and pigments. I believe that Albers's color course truly broadened the students knowledge and use of color.

By the end of the course, most students had tremendous self-confidence regarding color. With the knowledge and experience gained from the color course, students were prepared to move into mixing pigment, using the brush, and applying color to any artistic endeavor.

I am convinced that the students' realization of the relativity of color, and understanding the definition of problem objectives and criteria; combined with the ease of exploration using cut-and-torn color paper; plus the flexibility of the color course which could be absorbed into personal terms by a wide range of individuals with different tastes and objectives reflects the genius of Albers as a teacher.

Those individuals who were never students of Albers or actually did the exercise within a classroom context cannot possibly understand the value of Albers's pedagogy through reading a book or simply looking at the illustrations in *Interaction of Color.* Albers's teaching had to be experienced to be appreciated.

This how I remember Josef Albers, the man and the teacher.

Endnotes

It is my impression that Albers's retirement was not entirely a voluntary decision on his part. I suspect that he was undercut by some colleagues and fine art students while he was in Europe for the State Department, working on establishing a new Bauhaus at Ulm. It was my observation that the School of Art was riddled with political dissension for a number of years following his retirement. The crux for disagreement seemed to be between advocates for instruction based on perceptual emphasis and those with other views. By 1958, the New York School of Painting was a growing force, influencing many fine arts students. Because Albers was associated with the Bauhaus, it was decided by a few that he was "out of date." The new Rudolph building was a huge disappointment to Albers. I heard that his comment regarding the new facility was "That building spits on me!" It certainly sounds like something Albers might say.

I believe that Albers was badly misunderstood by many during his day, and since then. Most people associate Albers with squares, when his real contribution was instructional pedagogy and his role as a teacher. Visual educators, as a whole, have failed to recognize or benefit from what Albers unmistakably demonstrated to be a valid and effective educational model. Some of the more important lessons to be learned from Albers and the Yale program that have been ignored are:

- Only the best and most experienced teachers should be assigned to the first year of studies.
- Identifying and respecting what can and what cannot be taught.
- Perceptual understanding as the basis for introductory studies.
- Capitalizing on Albers' pedagogy of process, values and what constitutes learning experiences.
- Strict limits on enrollment.

It is tragic that changes in visual education that could have come about because of Albers did not. Because of the oversight, countless students in visual arts all over the country for many years have been denied the education they believed they were receiving.

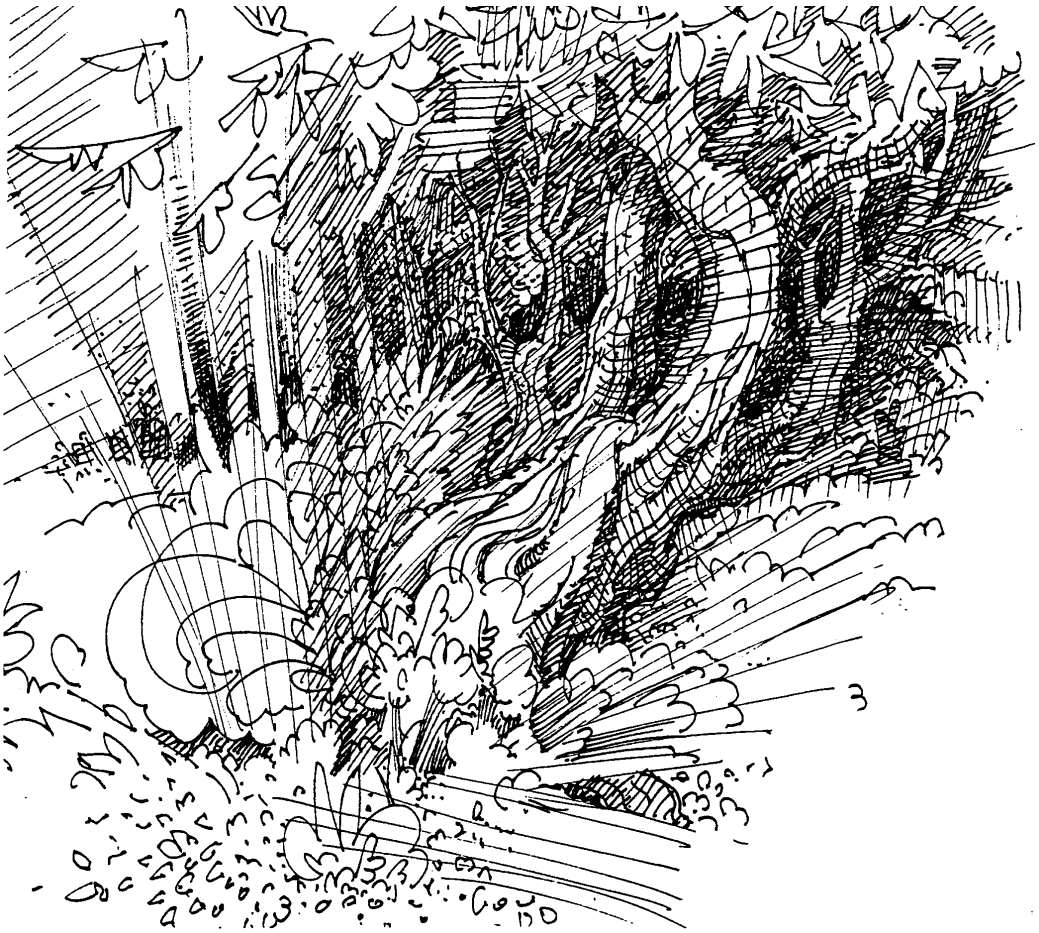
Drawings by Rob Roy Kelly.

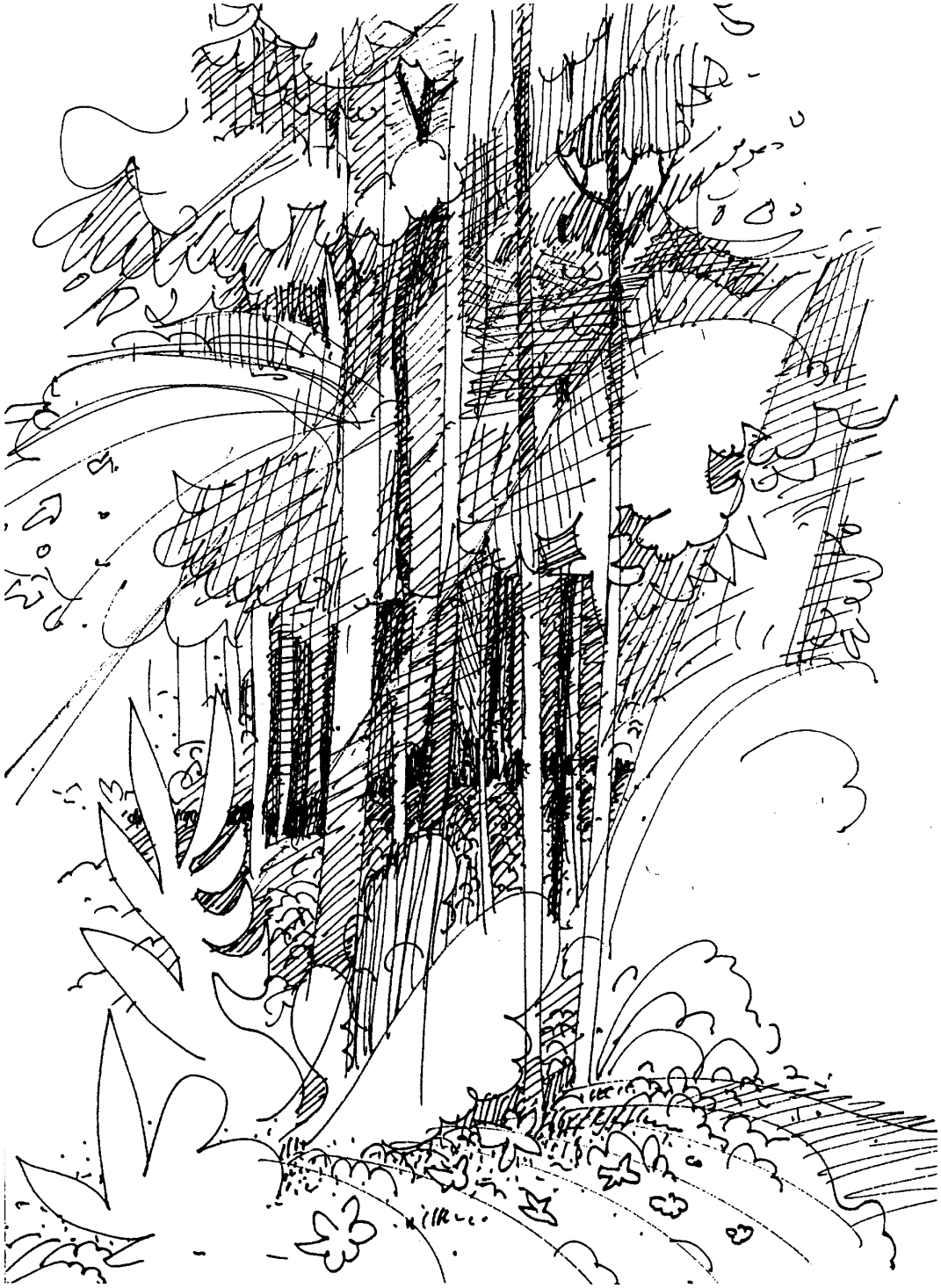
Rob Roy Kelly on drawing

During the early 1980's while in Pittsburgh, I felt the urge to resume drawing. I had not drawn or made a print for more than twenty years. I have always identified with subject matter taken from nature. In almost all instances, imagery is conceived in my mind and not done on location. I have always worked best when doing sequential work within a theme. Since I was still involved with burls, a great deal of time was spent tramping through the woods, and this was the source for this series of drawings.

There were several concerns; one being to make visible the invisible. For me, nature has always been vibrant, vigorous with constant movement of agitation. At other times the concept was silent, still, dark and somber—just a hint of mystery. Yet another point-of-view dealt with nature as patterns or textures—almost decorative at times.

I have always been fascinated with drawing nature using symbolic marks in place of more representational imagery. It is a kind of shorthand using a variety of cryptic marks with each representing some specific aspect of natural forms.





Creative Interlocutor and Multimedia Dialog

Charles Traue and Jonathan Lipkin

This chapter will serve as the Introduction of a forthcoming book by the authors entitled *In the Realm of the Circuit.*

Learned American society is formed by these post-revolutionary times, where the computer has created profound new ways of interacting, thinking, and doing. The digital computer and its accompanying methodologies recreate modes of working which stress relationships between bodies of knowledge and human minds. This technology is most valuable in its ability to allow us to reconceptualize our relation to knowledge, and to organize it, rather than allowing us to merely accumulate or dominate information.

Human expression is nondisciplinary by nature. Disciplines exist only because of boundaries which are artificially imposed by the academy. The goal of the arts is to help us understand the commonality between fields, not to reinforce the boundaries. They have always fostered man's ability to think, to search for the commonality of knowledge, and to ponder his relationship to the whole of existence. The great achievements of mankind lie in our quest to expose the unseen. The computer is an embodiment of our cultural desire to move forward. If approached openly by designers who hold the humanist traditions dear, computers allow a means for creativity which will enable us to reinforce that which makes us human.

We see the designer not as a sole individual, reinventing the forms of our commerce in a tangible commodity. Rather, this creative individual is one bred not by a single discipline, but rather by the ability to engage us as a community to redefine boundaries of discourse, facilitating the better management of our great accumulated knowledge.

The creative interlocutor is a designer who facilitates the exchange of ideas and information between one human need and another. This person is the producer, the director, the organizer. Specifically, this is the curator, editor, and collector, then the maker, weaver, welder, builder, and distributor. The computer is the cathedral of the creative interlocutor.

Dataset: All Art Is Image

> When we seek to fix a fantasy or a dream, the results are representational.
>
> Laszlo Moholy-Nagy [1]

> The activity of art is based on the fact that a man receiving through his sense of hearing or sight another man's expression of feeling is capable of experiencing the emotion which moved the man who expressed it.
>
> Leo Tolstoy [2]

Throughout the history of human existence, we have attempted to communicate with one another. Whether this communication has taken the form of vocal utterances, ink on paper, or modulation of radio waves; the intention always has been the transfer of meaning from one individual to another to create an image which will convey an idea. Perhaps our first network was the Greek foot messenger, who gave greater meaning to his message by conveying it from one person to another. It is in our humanism that we attempt to make manifest some facet of experience/content, and communicate it to another person or persons.[3]

Up until now, the medium has determined both the audience for the message and its destination. Thus, oil paintings were destined for the museum, text for the printed page, and music for the radio. Subcultures have grown up around these destinations, and these subcultures have become insular and self-referential. Yet, the separations are artificial, imposed by the restraints of the technology and of the vision of those working within those fields. With its virtual writing space,[4] the computer allows us to transcend these restraints, and to reunite all experience within its algorithms, to recognize the common humanism within all communication.

All representation and communication, no matter how it is physically designed, is a means for human expression. The digital computer; when combined with the optical scanner, the music sampler, and a myriad of other computer input devices; allows us to reduce all physical media to a virtual binary digit. At this point, when we have digitized sound, or photographs, or film—it is all equal in the memory of the computer—it is a dataset. A dataset is merely a sequence of numbers; nothing more, nothing less. Every digital movie, every digital image, and every digital sound is nothing more than a sequence of zeros and ones stored in the memory of the computer. These numbers now can be seamlessly combined and juxtaposed. In the computer's virtual spaces, all forms of communication are equal.

The computer, in its use of multimedia, merely is reinforcing common and historic human themes. To communicate in the interest of evolving the human condition, there must be a commonality

1 Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, *Vision in Motion* (Chicago: Hillison & Etten Company, 1961), 15.

2 Leo Tolstoy, *What Is Art* translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), 171–3.

3 "As a photographer, I don't care about photography, and have always held those who are concerned exclusively with f-stop and stop bath with disdain. For me, it is the communication of idea to another which holds the true excitement. Photography is merely a means to an end, and if I could achieve that end in another way, I certainly would." Jonathan Lipkin, *One Family's Journey*, MFA Thesis, (1993).

4 Jay Bolter, *Writing Spaces* (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995). Here, Bolter traces the history of the effects of technology on writing. He discusses the book, the scroll, and pictographic and logographic alphabets. The computer is seen merely as the next step in a long series of technological advances which interact with the culture of the time.

in the design endeavor which makes this possible. Unfortunately, in recent history, various forces—commercial media, academic disciplines, and design and art elitists—have attempted to divide and categorize this endeavor for the personal gain of those who are endowed with power. The ability of the computer to reduce all communication to a common level implied within the dataset and to reorganize the message in new administrative way should be empowering the individual to further the social good.

Humanism and the Liberal Arts

The computer has value only as it enhances that which makes us human; our ability to learn or, rather, to learn how to learn—the knack to order, manage, and reconfigure that which we know. Our humanity lies in our ability to transmit from one to another, allowing others to gain access to successful formulations and articulations which further our notion of being. This is what builds culture—the accumulated conceptual riches brought through the history of civilization.

The liberal arts ideal treats the fields of knowledge in a balanced and equal manner in the cause of furthering our humanity. In the study of these arts, emphasis is placed on the commonality of human experience and thinking, while the differences between fields of knowledge are de-emphasized. The liberal arts attempt to weave meaning through our study to find patterns for our enlightenment.

Since the Renaissance and its enlightenment, the core of this traditional education held that all areas of human endeavor are suitable topics for inquiry, regardless of their nominal concerns. An integrated individual versed in the liberal arts loves learning and is directed by intellectual curiosity rather than by disciplinary guidelines.

The Renaissance dawn from the *a priori* methods of the Dark Ages revealed the various facets of diverse fields and the common rays of humanism's enlightenment. Educators such as Vittorino da Feltre of Mantua taught men to be well rounded individuals. In his boarding schools, princes, and poor scholars mixed in a classical education. Character was shaped, along with mind and body, through frugal living, self-discipline, and a high sense of social obligation. All was done with an eye to the practical: philosophy was a guide to the art of living, along with training for public life. "Students were expected to excel in all human existence." [5]

Renaissance worldliness challenged the hermetic doctrine of the Church without quelling its spiritual quest. Such is the great genius of Leonardo, Copernicus, and Bacon; to name but a few of the obvious. For our interest here, Francis Bacon serves as a model of the interlocutor who connects the spirit of the Enlightenment with the great age of reason following the Renaissance. Through his methodology of inductive reasoning, he sought to free intelligence

5 Dennis Max Smith, *The Renaissance* (New York: American Heritage Publishing, 1961), 322.

from dogma which constrains and limits us from understanding the greater rational scheme of the world. In *Novum Organu* in 1623, he argues not only for scientific methodology, but for the arts and the humanities to accompany it. His inductive reasoning—the search for pattern in accumulated information—lays the groundwork for the commonality of procedures which would dispel the notions of *a priori* knowledge. His philosophies opened the field of human inquiry to an ever-expanding body of knowledge. Francis Bacon's life rooted in philosophy, politics, and the creative art of writing is exemplary of methodological inquiry furthering the connectedness of our human interest.

Maria Sibylla Merian[6] (1647–1717) was the visual arts analogue to Bacon. Through her use of evolving technologies such as optical magnification and mechanical reproduction, she was able to further humanist values and the ideals of the enlightenment. Born to a family of bookmakers, she began, at an early age, to observe and sketch insects. She would use the skills learned as a child to publish two major works: *Raupen* and *Metamorphosis*, both editions of copperplate prints. In these works, she depicts the insect and plant life of Europe and Surinam in terms of the emerging intellectual class of the period. Merian was unique among botanists of her age. She depicted insects and plants not as specimens, but rather as intricately and intimately involved in the cycle of life. She was not interested in then common conventional classification schemes or in cabinets of wonder which presented sterile specimens. (In fact, she told one potential collaborator to stop sending her dead insects—she was only interested in "the formation, propagation, and metamorphosis of creatures."[7])

Merian was inspired by the new optical technology of her time. The past century had seen a renewed interest in observation—the compound microscope had been invented in the 1660s, and Athanasius Kircher published his book, *Ars manga lucis et ubmrae* in 1649,[8] in which he discussed the "camera obscura" as a tool for observation and illustration. In her imaginative use of these tools, Merian was an artist who responded to enlightenment discourse about knowledge and the natural world. No longer drawn *a priori*, knowledge was created through empirical observation.

Ironically, the fruits of scientific methodology fathered by Bacon nurtured other great transdisciplinary thinkers such as Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin while, at the same time, creating further specialization of discourse. Yet, the same methodologies produced more specialization as the nineteenth century expanded the fields of knowledge. But even in this dawn of specialization, the creative interlocutor can be found. Samuel F.B. Morse, Liberal Arts student at Yale University, a renowned painter and founder of the national academy of design enabled a great leap in human communication.[9] He had always been fascinated by Franklin, and upon hearing a fellow passenger on a steamboat remark

6 Natalie Zemon Davis, *Women on the Margins* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

7 Ibid., 181.

8 Martin Kemp, *The Science of Art* (New Haven: Yale, 1990) and Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994).

9 Wade Rowland, *The Spirit of the Web* (Toronto: Sommerville House, 1997), 54.

that electricity could pass instantaneously through a length of wire, Morse excitedly replied: "If this be so, and the presence of electricity can be made visible in any part of the circuit… intelligence may be instantaneously transmitted by electricity to any distance." The rest is history. Morse, who had practically no knowledge of engineering or electromagnetism, enlisted the help of those who did to pursue his great invention of the telegraph. Morse's brilliance lay in his equation of electricity with intelligence, and of the visual as a bridge between the physical and electric.

Cross Fertilization

The idea that one field might enrich another is not a new one: the concept and practice of what currently is termed multimedia is an age-old notion. Multimedia is not suggested merely by technological advancement, but rather it is grounded in fundamental human practice which predates the invention of the computer by thousands of years. Multimedia's early uses were cross disciplinary without knowing it—the modern day boundaries between the fields had not yet been erected. The advent of the computer did not create multimedia, but rather manifests a preexisting need in a more democratic and universal way.

We can see multimedia in the burial rituals of the ancient Egyptians, who made no demarcation between media employed in the great technology of the pyramids and their elaborate burial rituals. These burial sites combined elements of architecture, writing, sculpture, and during the rite, even music and performance—all for the purpose of captivating and mystifying the laity under the dominance of their rulers.

In the Middle Ages, the prevalent form of multimedia was, at the same time, a form of mass communication. The cathedral communicated the awe-inspiring Christian spiritual doctrine, which was the dominant means of rationalizing human existence. The message was made stronger by its embodiment in a variety of media stimulating the senses: visual (stained glass and statues), sound (music and hymn), touch and taste (performance and mass), and smell (incense such as myrrh). Writing itself was the means for codifying the knowledge held in the cathedral, the knowledge to sort out the patterns of our existence, and to know the unknowable. This was a highly specialized technology whose use remained solely the property of the power elite.

As a mass communications device, the cathedral had several limitations. The first was the expense and duration of construction, which often spanned many decades. The second was its limited mobility—its defined space which confined its reach to those capable of traveling to it. Due to these inherent and, perhaps, intentional constraints, knowledge, and thus power, were concentrated in the hands of the theocracy. It was not until the advent of the printed book that knowledge could be more easily distributed.

Victor Hugo wrote of the conflict between the cathedral and the book in his novel *The Hunchback of Notre Dame.* A character in his novel, a priest in fifteenth century France, compares the newly invented book to the cathedral and states "this will kill that"—the book will kill the cathedral. Yet it did not. People continue to go to church, and the cathedral is still a site for multimedia presentations. The printed book allowed for the democratic distribution of information and knowledge, and thus spurred inquiry which reached beyond the hermetic doctrine of the church.

Hugo's phrase refers to the to the conflict between the text of the book and the imagery of the church. In this case, the book and its textual mode of representation were triumphant over the multimodal imagery of the church. For centuries to follow, the word, through the great dissemination of the written text by means of the printing press, was the primary source of creative inspiration. In the twentieth century, Marshall McLuhan, in his book *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, foresaw the rise of the image, empowered by global visual media such as television. He envisioned "the civilization of imagery," wherein the word is no longer the sole stimulating force to the imagination. Italo Calvino notes that, at the millennium juncture, there is an unanswerable conundrum, much like the chicken and the egg question. Which stimulates the imagination first, the word or the image?

From the beginning of Western civilization, we find resistance to new technology; Plato, in the dialog *Phaedrus*, questioned the value of the written word. The phrase "this will kill that" was repeated with the invention of photography, and all too often is heard again today as we experience the digital revolution. Much in the same way that the text of the book threatened the multimodal cathedral, or photography's imagery that of painting, the nonlinear and multimedia computer now threatens the book. Most likely, there will be a coexistence in the media. The book will probably not disappear, but will inevitably change in function and meaning, much as painting did after the introduction of photography. Furthermore, the computer and cyberspace offer us a new renaissance in our extensions of creative possibilities through the coequal distribution and interconnectedness of multimedia.

Flawed Development

Generally, it is true that programming and the design of the tools of our industry, whether public or personal, are based upon the procedures, strategies, and metaphors that are ingrained in the engineering and marketing worlds. It is rare that the design of a tool is based on the vision of the artist, historian, or humanist. As a result, users have to adapt their practice to the constraints embedded and implied by the existing parameters of engineering. However, when this model is not followed, and when innovative minds collaborate with technology developers, great things can happen.[10] Conversely,

10 Douglas Ingber, "The Architecture of Life" *Scientific American* (January 1998): 48–57. Available at http://www.sciam.com/1998/0198issue/0198ingber.html

artists often are uninformed about the basic scientific principles which drive the engines of our culture. It is an exceptional artist who is educated in physics or mathematics.

For too long, the creative community has labored under the impression that technology's promise owes us something. This limiting expectation has left us disappointed again and again. We expect the digital world to deliver itself packaged with ease of access, adapted to our every whim, and sympathetic to our psychological complexity. Humanists approach the technology tentatively because they have not seen their role in its development. We must create that role for ourselves. Ask not what the computer can do, but what you can do for the computer.[11]

Few enlightened people fear sweeping technological advances in medical science, where a kind of creative interlocutor working with groups and networks of other researchers is commonplace. Yet these same individuals turn into raving Luddites when presented with advances in information and imaging technology, even those so commonplace as word processing or the Internet. Perhaps this reaction results from the perception that medical science always has had the express purpose of serving human needs. Ironically, we do not perceive technology in the arts as serving mankind so directly. Feeling a loss of human function rather than a gain of concrete benefits, we view technology in a negative light because we have no control over its intrusion into our lives, and no control over its creation. Because of our increasing dependence on technology, those of us who think we have something to say ought to become more actively involved in its conception.

No technology is Utopian. However, we must not dwell on what we have lost—clearly all advances produce a residue of regret! It is more important to consider what we have gained. The beauty of the computer is not that it might allow us to design cars more efficiently, but, rather, that it might allow us to reconceptualize the very notion of the automobile. Today, at the onset of the almost universal use of digital technology, we have an opportunity to understand it and to mold it for our utility. Previously, it had taken intellectuals many years, even generations, to understand how technology could change cognition and interaction. It is the very speed of the new digital communication which facilitates our understanding of it. We ask why our educational institutions are failing by not helping us more readily grasp this inflection point. Technology must be the subject and content of creativity.

In the testing and development of any new technology, as it moves from prototype to market, a person called an early adapter plays an important role which may, in many cases, be counterproductive. This is the person who, for whatever compulsive reason or fetish, must have the latest technological gadget. Many of these people are curious, some are obsessive, and some are merely frivolous. But new technology needs the financial support of their early pur-

11 Fritjof Capra, *Turning Point, Science, Society and the Rising Culture* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982). He asks not how we can use science or technology, but how science and technology and, in particular, modern physics have altered the world. Along with others, he chronicles the demise of the Newtonian foundations of science. He calls for a paradigm shift in the way we view the world from a mechanized system of reductionism to a more universal view of interdependence based on pattern and relationship.

chases. These are the people who bought $500 calculators, the Model T Ford, or the Altair home computer. These purchases endow the early adapter with authority and uniqueness. Unfortunately, much of the feedback that developers use to create and refine new products comes from these early adapters. This feedback all to often reflects the vanity of the adapter and the fetishizing of the technology, rather than reasons of human utility. What would happen if the alpha and beta test sites were placed in the arts school or the poets' coffeehouse?

The propagation of much that is touted as important is in the field of contemporary design. The chic, another form of early adapter, seeks to protect their authority as the most *au courant*, whether they be critics, editors, curators, or highly financed connoisseurs playing to a system of self-aggrandizement and commodity-promoting acquisition. Like feedback from early adapters of technology, feedback from these arbiters of culture more often reflects their selfish needs rather than any constructive communications. The new drives itself for itself.

Even as technologists inadvertently have territorized themselves, losing track of certain human values that further the map of the mind, a line also encircles the society of arts and letters. While it is easy to chide the "techie" for a lack of poetry, it is not so acceptable to hold the world of the arts accountable for our great loss of the humanist concerns. Nevertheless, the contemporary scene has managed, in its insistence on theory, arcane jargon, deconstruction, and celebrity, to have detached us from the classical models of feeling, seeing, and thinking.[12] The new academic stars of the university are as suspect as any sequestered engineer. Ironically, in this case, there is no difference between the worlds of technology and art. A culture which produces and needs the methodologies described above for pushing the new inevitably is going to create items for conspicuous consumption, and creativity, as it alienates everyday communication needs for both art and technology.

Cross Fertilization

The sculpture of the artist Kenneth Snelson and its influence on the biologist Douglas Ingber shows how the fields of science and art can inform one another. In the late 40s and early 50s, Snelson and Buckminster Fuller, the remarkable engineer / architect, developed the principle of tensegrity.[13] In the 1990s, Douglas Ingber used these architectural principles to better understand cell behavior, and developed an anticancer drug now in clinical trials.

This story begins in 1948, when Snelson, then an engineering student, attended a summer session at Blackmountain College, the experimental school in North Carolina. There, he studied art with the Bauhaus master Joseph Albers, and architecture with Fuller. Snelson, after his exposure to a variety of media in the cross-disciplinary atmosphere of Blackmountain College, developed the con-

12 Jacques Barzun, *The Education We Deserve* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 181.

13 Tensegrity refers to a system that stabilizes itself mechanically because of the way in which tensional and compressive forces are distributed and balanced throughout the structure.

cept of tensegrity. After his exposure to Fuller, Snelson began building small sculptures out of wire: "I had learned much about geometry from Fuller, as well as art and design from the Bauhaus."[14] Eventually, Snelson would become well known for his large-scale sculptures, ethereal but complex constructs of struts and cables. They are not rigid, yet have great structural strength because of their ability to flex and move; load is continuously transmitted across all structural members. Twenty years later, Douglas Ingber, a medical student who studied sculpture, saw Snelson's work and made the connection between tensegrity structures and that of the biological cell. Had he followed the more conventional path of the molecular biologist, he never would have been in the sculpture class which allowed him to make this great leap.

The computer and the digital network are ideal tools for the creative interlocutor. Rather than erect boundaries between areas of thought, the computer, if approached properly, has the ability to remove them and allow the return of liberal arts to their traditional meaning, freeing us to think. Our colleagues now must overcome their hesitancies regarding both the machines themselves and the change wrought by the digital. Technology historically has aided, rather than hindered, human expression and creativity. From the introduction of the phonetic alphabet, to movable type, to photography, invention has served to uncover more for more.

Yet today, the human potential of the computer all too often is ignored. The self-fulfilling prophesy of entrenched interested (be it tenured faculty, established designers, or whomever) that technology is becoming more incomprehensible will only become more so if humanists don't engage it. Such excuses as "You can't touch it; you can't read it in bed; it hurts my eyes," and so forth, are fears that are deeply inhibiting. These fears segregate minds, all too often humanists' and designers', whose creative input is vitally needed in the implementation of this new technology. The irony is that the seemingly threatening power of the computer reinforces the power of the technocrat, who then directs, designs, and implements technology for technology's sake. Thus, development drives culture rather than culture driving development. Ask not what the computer can do for you, "but...."

The computer has value as it enhances our ability to learn, or rather to learn how to learn—the knack to order, manage, and reconfigure that which we know. Being cultured lies in our ability to transmit from one to another, allowing others to gain access to successful formulations and articulations which further our notion of being. This is what builds culture: the accumulated conceptual riches brought through the history of civilization. It is the failure of education today, and maybe most directly those who espouse the liberal or visual arts, to recognize it is not how much we know, but how we use and share that which we know.

14 Kenneth Snelson, letter to R. Motro. Cited at http://www.teleport.com/~pdx4d/docs/rmotro.html.

We foresee a new creative individual, an aspirant modeled on Leonardo da Vinci, the weavers of the Bayeux tapestry, Anna Sibylla Merian, Samuel F.B. Morse, the Roeblings, Booker T. Washington, Charles and Ray Eames, Benjamin Franklin, Tim Berners-Lee, and countless others whose reach across boundaries changed civilization for the better. This individual is one who is both integrated within the technology and an integrator of these post-revolutionary times. Their integration allows their creativity to function as an organic part of society, as he or she acts to connect for the common good. They are distinguished by their ability to negotiate the disparate fields of human knowledge, bringing them together in previously unimagined ways, and relating them for others to use meaningfully.

In his last book, the Italian writer Italo Calvino states that creative visualization is a process that, while not "originating in the heavens" goes beyond any specific knowledge or intention of the individual to form a kind of transcendence. Not only do poets and novelists deal with this problem, but scientists as well.

> To draw on the gulf of potential multiplicity is indispensable to any form of knowledge. The poet's mind, and at a few decisive moments the mind of the scientist, works according to a process of association of images that is the quickest way to link and to choose between the infinite forms of the possible and the impossible. The imagination is a kind of electronic machine which takes account of all possible combinations and chooses the ones that are appropriate to a particular purpose, or simply the most interesting, pleasing, or amusing.[15]

Despite, and perhaps because of, our familiarity with the new digital tools, it is all too easy to lose sight of their potential. All representation and communication, no matter how it is physically manifested, is a means for human expression. The digital computer, when combined with the optical scanner, the music sampler, and a myriad of other computer input devices, allow us to reduce all physical media to a virtual binary digit. When sound, or photographs, or film, or sculpture become digitized, the traditional boundaries separating them become eased. This easement of boundaries allows the creative interlocutor to work across academic and artistic boundaries which would have traditionally hampered him or her. Every digital movie, and every digital image, every digital sound is nothing more than a sequence of zeros and ones stored in the memory of the computer. These numbers can be seamlessly combined and juxtaposed by the creative interlocutor. In the computer's virtual spaces, all forms of communication are equal.

Educators might use models such as that of Vitorino de Feltre of Mantua cross disciplinary institutes to free them from the dogma of rigid academia which prevents them from reaching

15 Italo Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 87–91.

through technology for greater understanding of a rational scheme of the world. Educational practice should teach us how to learn by employing the ubiquitous interdisciplinary tool of the computer. True creativity lies in the management of knowledge, not in the production of given objects of art, or tomes of discourse.

Precursors of multimedia and hypertext have existed for centuries. Throughout the history of our culture, we have brought together creative energy in institutions, from the cathedral to the library, which represent our highest aspirations.

> Society itself becomes a web of consciousness, a form of imagination to be realized as a social construction.... Men in their imagination will always seek to make society a work of art: that remains an ideal." [16]

The present strength of the computer is its ability to coalesce our energies in the quest for enlightenment; its speed, flexibility, and strength in retention of fact enhance what already has been embedded in the constant course of human intelligence—the desire to create new meanings through relationships.

We posit that the visionary designer, the creative interlocutor, is one who is both integrated and an integrator. This individual is learned in a manner so that his creativity functions as an organic part of society, and he or she acts to connect for the common good. The creative interlocutor is an integrator in his or her ability to negotiate the disparate fields of human knowledge, and bring them together in previously unimagined ways. In so doing, this person enables others to further their creative potential.

16 Daniel Bell, *Coming of the Post-industrial Society* (NY: Basic Books, 1973), 488–9.

The Film Poster in Cuba (1940–1959)

Eladio Rivadulla, Jr.

Translated from the Spanish by Jessica Gibbs.

Introduction

Cinematography, a public display of art and industry sustained by powerful economic interests, arose during the nineteenth century as a result of the work of various individuals. It was introduced to the public on March 22, 1895, the day on which Louis Lumihre, a Frenchman, exhibited *Lasortie des ouvriers de l'usine Lumihre* in Paris. Known as "the Seventh Art," and popularly called "cinema," it generated from the beginning its own advertising methods including the cinematic poster.

Since the beginning of its commercialization, cinematography was conceived of as a popular entertainment which did not have to be evaluated according to the ruling norms of art in order to fulfill its destiny. This meant that people enjoyed movies for their own characteristics, independent of subsequent evaluations.

Consistent with these principles, film producers and directors never hoped or wished for promotional posters to be works of art in their own right, fearing that this would detract from their fundamental goal of attracting the attention and interest of the public. For this reason, the premise of the film poster should not be confused with any other piece of advertising or expression of fine art. In spite of this, the film posters worldwide were designed by graphic artists and painters, who endowed them with aesthetic values.

Background

Less than two years after the first projections of Louis Lumihre in Paris, another Frenchman, Gabriel Veyre, presented the first cinema showing in Havana on January 24, 1897.

This presentation was received with real enthusiasm, and rapidly popularized the cinema among Cubans, leading them to culturally and socially assume many of its codes, influences, language, and ethical and aesthetic values.

The first promotional posters for European, North American, Mexican, and Argentine movies arrived in Cuba with the imported films. The promotion was complemented in the country with advertisements ordered and paid for by national distributors, who had them printed in newspapers and magazines. Photographic reproductions of the most important scenes of each film were hung in the vestibules of the theaters, and later in gigantic and showy displays produced in color by national painters including Studio Chromos,

Figure 1
Title: *La Manigua o La Mujer Cubana*
Author: Unknown
First edition: New York, USA, 1915
Printed: Lithograph
Size: 28¼" x 42" (71.5 x 106.5 cm)
Production: Film Cuban
Archive: ICAIC Collection

Figure 2
Title: *Sucedió en La Habana*
Author: Caravia
First edition: Havana, Cuba, 1938
Printed: Offset
Size: 26⅜" x 39¾" (67 x 100 cm)
Production: Film Cuban
Archive: ICAIC Collection

Reguera, Barrios, Rivadulla-Alonso, and Vargas. These were specially designed for the facades of theaters that held premiers of films. Flyers also were distributed from house to house with the day's and the week's showings, and many specialized magazines were started.

Generally, the posters produced abroad were created by designers and painters who were part of the film industry, much like cameramen, technicians, and scriptwriters. The poster designers created them according to the directions of the film producers or directors, and the posters were then mass-produced by offset lithography.

The few posters that were designed in Cuba to promote Cuban films in the first three decades of this century were printed by offset lithography in the United States (*La manigua o La mujer cubana*, 1915, Acme Litho Co., New York), and by the Lithographic Company of Havana (*Sucedio en La Habana*, 1938). Poster production by offset lithography or letterpress printing was not economically viable for distributors based in Cuba.

Another difference that existed between the situation in Cuba and abroad was that none of the Cuban designers or printers were part of the cinema sector between 1900 and 1930, and from 1940 to 1959.

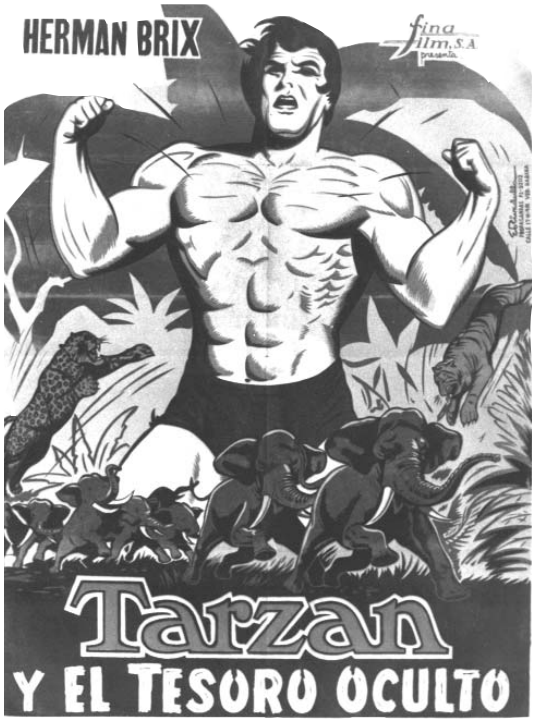


Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6

Figure 3
Title: *Tarzan y El Tesoro Oculto*
Author: Rivadulla
First edition: Havana, Cuba, 1942
Printed: Silkscreen
Size: 28" x 36" (71 x 91 cm)
Production: Film USA
Archive: author's collection

Figure 4
Title: *Jorge Negrete*
Author: Rivadulla
First edition: Havana, Cuba, 1942
Printed: Silkscreen
Size: 28" x 36" (71 x 91 cm)
Production: Film USA
Archive: author's collection

Figure 5
Title: *Muertes a Plazo Fijo*
Author: Radillo
First edition: Havana, Cuba, 1950
Printed: Silkscreen
Size: 28" x 36" (71 x 91 cm)
Production: Film Cuba
Archive: ICAIC Collection

Figure 6
Title: *El Dueño del Mundo*
Author: Rivadulla
First edition: Havana, Cuba, 1952
Printed: Silkscreen
Size: 28" x 36" (71 x 91 cm)
Production: Film Germany
Archive: author's collection

The Beginning of a Tradition

It was at the beginning of the 1940s, coinciding with the boom in Argentine and Mexican cinema, that the Cuban silkscreen printer-designer Eladio Rivadulla Martinez decided to start designing and producing film posters in Havana using the silkscreen process. He thus set off on a path that he would follow for more than twenty years producing silk-screened film posters. This singular type of production became the national tradition up until the present day. No other known silkscreen designers adopted this form of poster production during the 1940s.

In those years, the print runs of posters needed by the national film distributors were very small. The distributors called for a lot of color, and required the format of the "American-type body" which was 28 inch x 36 inch (71 x 91 cm). However, the distributors had to work within a tight budget to fulfill the demands of advertisers. Under such conditions, they were only able to respond to the necessity of producing posters for films in Cuba by using serigraphy. This process had a long and sustained development in the country, beginning in the first decades of the century, and was developed primarily for printing advertisements, followed by mass-produced posters for election campaigns.

The intervention of silkscreen printing in the development of Cuban poster design generated peculiar characteristics that were evident in modeling the taste, sensibility, and aesthetic appreciation of Cuban popular culture. The film poster exemplifies these singularities of Cuban posters in a special way. It is a genre that evolved and developed systematically, and without interruption, by way of a symbiotic relationship between silkscreen printing and design. This relationship left its imprint on Cuban posters, including those produced by other printing methods, and even on the formal and aesthetic aspects of the fine art produced by the relevant national artists.

Outsized images in a daring chromatic scale of color planes appeared in the first Cuban film posters produced by the silkscreen process (handmade and in very limited editions). These examples are unusual in that their design envisioned the possibility of promoting several movies of the same principal actor in the empty spaces where different titles could be rotated. This plural idea made the posters cost-effective, and their existence made possible the established star system of those years.

We are dealing here with posters in which the hot colors associated with violent passions, the successful physical likenesses, and the expressions of the principal actors are the result of only three dyes; solutions in which an integral dominion of the conjunction of multiple designs is evident. The posters with the images of Mexican actors Jorge Negrete and Pedro Infante, Mexican actress Maria Felix, and Argentine actress Libertad Lamarque, among others, exemplify this.

Figure 7
Title: *Antesala del Infierno*
Author: Rivadulla
First edition: Havana, Cuba, 1958
Printed: Silkscreen
Size: 28" x 36" (71 x 91 cm)
Production: Film Great Britain
Archive: author's collection

Figure 8
Title: *Mares de Pasión*
Author: Rivadulla
First edition: Havana, Cuba, 1959
Printed: Silkscreen
Size: 28" x 36" (71 x 91 cm)
Production: Film Cuba
Archive: author's collection

It is fitting to emphasize that in 40s Cuban moviegoers went to the cinema to do more than watch movies. They went to live, to dream, to be swept away with passion, and to enjoy themselves with their idols from the seats in the theater. The principal attraction was the iconic image of the star, more loved than admired, and from this springs the importance of the physical identification of the "boy" or "girl," as the actors were known publicly.

The value that Cuban distributors put on these posters was similar to that of foreign producers. It depended on the identification and the attraction of the public as a guaranty of their usefulness. The frequency with which the above-mentioned posters were reissued throughout the years is proof of their recognized effectiveness.

Systematization, Evolution, and Development

By the end of the Second World War in 1945, many events of a political, economic, social, and cultural nature had taken place on a universal scale. This brought about the increase, development, and systematization of the production of cinema posters in Cuba. During the war years, the principal North American and Mexican movie producers had practically displaced the European cinema in Cuba but, in the new world order the revitalized Italian, French, and Spanish film industries arose and brought new ideas and trends. A new galaxy of European stars very quickly achieved popularity among Cubans after the start of the 50s.

However, European promotional cinematic posters did not catch on in Cuba for several reasons. Their graphic styles were not popularly assimilated, the titles of the films were in other languages, the formats were larger or smaller than the existing poster frames, and the prices were higher. The most important reason for their rejection was that North American, Mexican, and Cuban poster designers had achieved a very deep identification with the viewers.

These factors contributed to and determined the increased production of posters in the country, and consequently stimulated the increase in styles, the development of artistic and textural values, and the enriching of the chromatic scale with more homogeneity and harmony. This last development was the fruit of successful innovative experiments converting opaque pictures into transparent ones, and the reversal of the classical printing sequence, made possible thanks to the design resources happily combined with the printing system. This fusion of creativity and technology allowed the posters to communicate more effectively.

I would like to point out that the validation of the film posters discussed here does not only derive from their success in representing the physical features of the actors, their well-balanced and structured composition, and their attractive coloring, but also from the associative mechanisms and images made concrete in the designs in a coherent form during the creative process, taking into consideration the aims, techniques, and materials used in the production within the available budget. In several examples, we can see pop art anticipated and, in others, ideas later taken on and legitimized by postmodernism.

I should also say that the Cuban film poster, since it began, has embodied an ample legacy coming from diverse sources taken on board creatively. These include formal elements belonging to North American, Mexican, and European film poster production, the spontaneity and bright colors of Cuban painting by anonymous artists since the colonial period, the visual narrative from comics, the impact and chromatic contrast of political posters, the principles foreseen at the Bauhaus of the integration of art and technology, the lack of inhibitions of the movements inspired by the vanguard of European art and, of course, the fundamentals of publicity and visual communication.

Already in the 50s, the symbiosis of design and production by the silkscreen method had been very fruitful at different levels. The development and systematization of a concept of design created in the poster production of those years, the homogenous styles, graphic solutions, and similar forms of composition, the presence of particular elements from letterpress printing, original combinations which gave a hint of the contents of the film in the forms and colors of the titles, and novel chromatic contrasts that united with the communicative aims which produced them and the

techniques of the screen process employed by the different artists of this visual promotion, formed a type of school with its own identifying characteristics.

In the above-mentioned decade, along with the film posters produced by Rivadulla Propagandas, others in Cuba were created by the Almela Studio, the Cillero and Machado Studio, the Dekora Studio, and the Sante and Dominguez Studio. The film posters were produced by direct orders from foreign distributors, principally Mexicans, Argentines, Italians, Frenchmen, and North Americans who were all based in Havana, as were the studios of this kind of film advertising. At the end of the 1950s, the silkscreen designers Barrios, Avila, and Abelardo all were involved in the promotion of films. Together with Rivadulla, they prepared silkscreen production posters for the Institute of the Cinematic Art and Industry (ICAIC) after 1959, beginning a new creative stage of international transcendence for the Cuban film poster.

One can add that the production of film posters in the period between 1940 and 1959 was sustained by principles similar to those that governed silkscreen printing as a fine art, because the designer and the silk-screen printer were the same artist. This silkscreen printer designer created the image specifically for mass production by the silkscreen process, selected the printing technique, determined how many dyes to use and in which order, made the stencils, and executed transformations and additions along the way, mixing the colors in accord with the need for self-expression. Of course, when dealing with the conception of the posters, self-expression was modified to satisfy the principal aim: the visual communication to which the creator was committed, even though the psychic process of this creative action sometimes was maintained in a conscious form and sometimes in an subconscious one. For this reason, these examples were aesthetically successful achievements of undoubted artistic value.

Conceived of originally for the urban population, with no distinction between social classes, cultural levels, sex, creed, or race, the Cuban poster achieved social consensus. Its influence spread, sensitizing people and making them aware of collective aesthetic appreciation. Like all authentic art, it went through transformations during its uninterrupted historic evolution in which faithfulness to tradition was accompanied by innovative spirit.

Appendix 1

Structural Scheme in the Production and Distribution of the Cuban Cinematic Poster (1940–1959)

1 The film distributor gives the order to the silkscreen technician, detailing the integral components and the objective: to attract the potential viewer to see the film which was going to be shown.

2 The silkscreen technician conceived the graphic response, bearing in mind the target audience, the available budget, and the technical possibilities for its production. The designer calculated the cost and the profit. He decided on the technique to employ and the colors to print.

3 The designer interpreted the goal he was given, deciding how to make the required components stand out. He structured the space looking rationally at the images, the titles, and the credits. He adjusted the quantity of colors and the techniques needed.

4 The silkscreen technician analyzed the project. He decided on the technique and the order of printing the colors. He prepared the stencils for printing by hand. He prepared the colors and reproduced the work.

5 The printed posters arose as a result of the direct interrelated intellectual and manual activity of the designer and the silkscreen technician, as well as the indirect contribution of the distributor, the intermediary between the producer and the spectator.

6 The silkscreen designer delivered the printed posters to the distributor. He then offered them to the exhibitor of the film. (Note: The silk screen technician and the designer were the same person in those years.)

7 The exhibitor acquired the posters he considered necessary. He proceeded to display them at the poster sites at strategic urban locations.

8 The potential viewer, as the destination, decided in the last instance the efficacy of the poster, in agreement with his spiritual and emotional interests and his sensory receptive experience.

Appendix 2

Designers of Cinematic Posters

Posters printed by relief (or letterpress printing), and lithography (1900–1939)

First generation:

- Jaime Valls
- Enrique Garcia Cabrera
- Conrado Massaguer
- Antonio Perdices
- Enrique Crucet
- Juan Orol
- Enrique Caravia
- Oscar Reguera

Posters printed by silkscreen (1940–1959)

Second generation

- Eladio Rivadulla
- Almela
- Cillero and Machado
- R. Radillo
- Sante and Dominguez
- Barrio-Avila
- Abelardo

Appendix 3

Film Distributors Based in Havana, Cuba (1940–1950)

Alex Film, Allied Artists, Astol Films, Barral Films, Bernades Films, Berndes Films, Blanco y Travieso, Capitolio, Caribe Films, Carmona Films, Carlos Perez, Cifesa, Cine Periodico, Columbia Pictures, Cofran, Continental Films, Cuba Mexico, Cubmex, Eladio Novo, Faustino Films, Fenix S.A., Filmica Antillana, Film Exchange, Fina Films, Fox Films, Francia Films, Franco American Film, Heliodoro Garcma, Ibero American Films, Ideal Films, International Films, Italia Films, Liberty Films, Lippert Films, Justo Suarez Films, Llarena Films, Reynaldo Medina, Mercurio Films, Metro Goldwyn Mayer, Monogram Pictures Corp, Motion Picture, Negrete, Noticuba, Oro Films, O. Rank, Pan American Films, Paramount, Pelicuba, Pelmculas de Amirica, Pelmculas del Caribe, Pelimex, Pelmculas Mexicanas, Selecciones Capitolio, Republic Pictures, Reynaldo Medina, RKO Radio Pictures, Sol Films, Tropical Films S.A., Universal Films, Vicente Blanco y Cia., United Artists, and Zenith Films.

In 1959, the employees from the most important North American film distributors organized socialist cooperatives: Cooperativa RKO, Cooperativa Metro, and Cooperativa Warner Bros.

Three Essays on Design

Adelaida de Juan

Translated from the Spanish by John Cullars

Introduction

Almost thirty years ago, I wrote a piece for the Havana magazine *Cuba internacional* entitled "La belleza de todos los dias" ("The Beauty of the Everyday"). It turned out to be the first major essay on a new form of visual art produced in Cuba, one with scarcely any national precedents. This new art was the eruption of an avant-garde output, mainly in posters and billboards. In a way, it was as original as the initial modern painters had been in Cuba during the 1920s. If those painters, some of whom were still active during the 1960s, had rebelled against the academic, outdated ways of painting, the designers would have had to start with practically no antecedents in Cuban art. Up to 1959, posters and billboards usually were imported, mostly from the United States, together with the merchandise they promoted. I can still recall billboards showing a world sphere covered with red Sherwin Williams paint; and the young, slim, blue-eyed blonde who seemed that way because she drank Coke all the time. Or the posters displaying beautified film stars: Clark Gable and Vivien Leigh with "Tara" as a background. Charles Boyer, Garbo, Spencer Tracy, and Humphrey Bogart (not to mention Betty Grable and Bob Hope) were among the more popular images that were familiar to the urban population in Cuba. Those posters and billboards were packaged with the product, the only change being the translated text: "Coca-Cola: la pausa que refresca" instead of "Coca-Cola: the pause that refreshes."

As in other spheres of Cuban life, the triumph of the Revolution in January 1959 represented a complete change from the decades-old, neocolonial status of the country. With the birth of political, social, and cultural institutions, the need for a different type of promotion was deeply felt. Cultural institutions were the first to search for a new visual and conceptual image. The forerunner in this initial production undoubtedly was the newly-established Cuban Institute of Cinematic Art and Industry (ICAIC). The first Cuban films were announced with Cuban designs, a practice immediately followed with original posters for films from other countries as well. The main figure in this enterprise was Saul Yelin, not a designer himself, who gathered together a group of young designers and chose the posters to be shown. Some of the designers had some training as painters, while others were trained in commercial design. The change was mainly conceptual—the abolition of the star system in favor of an image that evoked the film's

central idea or theme. The designers had to work with scarce means because the few available colors could only be used on fifty percent of the total surface. This way of working was quickly taken up by other institutions and, by 1965, there was a burgeoning of political and cultural designs produced for posters, billboards, book jackets, and publishing enterprises.

None of this output was considered, how can I express myself, as a "serious" form of visual imagery. Painting was still the main medium to be studied, as it went through the latter forms of abstract expressionism and the beginnings of what later was called a "Cuban pop," mainly because of Raúl Martinez's excellent work. Martinez, then in his thirties, was, in fact, a painter who had had some training as a designer in the United States, and he blended both ways of working in his oils as well as in his designs for the Cuban Publishing Institute. But most critics only paid attention to his paintings, which were shown in the main Havana galleries, and ignored his work as a designer.

In this sense, I still recall the Argentine critic Angel Guido lecturing in 1959 at Havana University on the convenience of a sort of mechanical transposition from the 1910 Mexican Revolution to the existing Cuban situation, with muralism as the ideal corresponding art form. The difference in time, character, concrete conditions, and history are too well known to enter into here, but the fact remains that the role played by the excellent murals in Mexico was, as a mater of fact, taken up by the explosion of design work produced throughout those first decades of the Cuban revolution.

As often happens, recognition first came from abroad. In 1964, Antonio Fernandez Reboiro's poster for the Japanese film *Hara Kiri* received an international award. I find this link to filmmaking significant since I felt, from the start, that the two forms of visual expression—film and graphic design—were fresh approaches to our new exciting life. Design, on the one hand, and documentary film (mainly the work of Santiago Alvarez), on the other, were original forms of imagery that were linked to filmmaking. Both called on the spirit of our cultural tradition as means to incorporate modern ways of doing things with a yet unexploited talent.

In 1966, the Primera Muestra de la Cultura Cubana (First Show of Cuban Culture) was exhibited at Havana's Pabellón Cuba (Cuban Pavilion). It turned out to be the initial effort in a multidisciplinary collective project that brought together painters, architects, musicians, writers, and designers. Two years later, in the same pavilion, a major show was put on, called the "Exposición del Tercer Mundo" (Exhibition of the Third World). Film and cinematic effects were added to the elements of the preceding show, with the designers taking advantage of the various levels in the architectural layout. An Argentine critic Damián Bayon wrote, at the time, that the original feature of the exhibition was mainly the manner in which paint-

ing, design, film, music, and moving lights were combined with the brief texts, which acted as guidelines.

By 1969, the initial *Salon Nacional de Carteles* (National Poster Show) brought together an award jury with designers (such as the painter and designer Umberto Peña, who recently had begun doing his excellent designs for the Casa de las Americas' literary output), printers, and, for the first time in this sort of contest, art critics. When I was asked to serve as a juror, I felt that this was a recognition of my lectures on design as a visual production to be considered also from a creative aesthetic point of view. As jurors, we were not constrained by any limitations or preconceived ideas of what a poster of billboard should communicate, and I still feel that our choice of the awards stands the test of time. In 1970, when the Havana Museum held a national art show, some new features were added. For the first time, the traditional beaux arts concept (paintings, etchings, and sculpture) was put aside in order to include photography and graphic design.

These were the elements of the overall context in which I wrote that first essay on Cuban design, "La belleza de todos los dias" (The Beauty of Every Day). The reactions were twofold. The designers, in general, but specifically those mentioned in the essay (and in the accompanying debate included in that issue of *Cuba internacional),* naturally felt that they had at last received due recognition of the value of their work, to the point that one of them playfully called me "Madrina," the godmother who in Cuban transcultured beliefs is a highly protective and knowledgeable figure. Some painters, however, deeply resented the phrases where I had written that graphic design "constitutes… the newest innovation to be considered in the Cuban art field of recent years… and has rapidly become an essential part of our visual world." Some of these painters, until then rather close friends of mine, felt that I had belittled their work ("Why don't you write about [my] painting?") and even half-turned away when we met.

In the History of Art Department at Havana University, where I taught Latin American and Cuban art, my consideration of design as part of Cuban art was just beginning to be accepted. This topic first became a postgraduate seminar before being incorporated into the undergraduate curriculum in the 1970s.

During that decade, a rather interesting experiment was carried out in Cayo Hueso, a poor neighborhood in central Havana that was being rebuilt. In the old buildings that were to be torn down, a film debate was held each weekend. On Mondays, the film's poster was pinned up at the entrance to the building, and the debate included opinions on its beauty and communicative power. Of the twelve films and posters shown, the favorite design was Raúl Martintez's award-winning poster for the Cuban film *Lucia.* I personally think that years of excellent designs shown on the streets had brought about, at least in part, a new sensibility for visual

images. Instead of the extended use of very kitsch, cheap paintings that included snowbound landscapes, posters were being put up on walls of urban and rural homes. From 1968, designs based on Korda's well-known 1960 photograph of Che Guevara were widely coveted side by side with cultural posters, mainly Alfredo Rostgaard's rose with the bleeding thorn made originally for the Casa de las Americas' 1967 festival of the Canción Protesta (Protest Songs) and Eduardo Muñoz Bach's versions of Chaplin. This mainly was the initiative of very young people—my daughters included—who felt that posters were in tune with their aesthetic needs.

The difficult conditions of the early poster production had disappeared. Silkscreen was hardly used and colors were plentiful and bright with the exception of René Azcuy's striking work with fragments of blown-up black and white photographs, with only a dash of color. Experts began to speak of a Cuban school of graphic design with a highly original way of working. Awards were plentiful, and the designs were the theme of several texts, the major one being *The Art of Revolution*, published in 1970 by McGraw-Hill in several languages, with an introductory essay by Susan Sontag and a critical one by Dugald Sturmer, who quoted my original 1969 text, "La belleza de todos los dias." Thus, within a few years, Cuban posters were nationally popular and internationally acclaimed as an original and fresh outlook in the midst of a young socialist upheaval.

Havana, August 1998

A Face of Cuba

"The poster is a cry nailed to the wall!" Since the time when a scholar thus defined the poster more than fifty years ago, the poster (also called *affiche* or other names) has been this and many other things as well. Since its origins in the last century, it has been a commercial attraction, in the mercantile sense of the word; it has been a memento of altogether memorable events; it has been the souvenir of a commemoration; and it always has been an incitement.

And this incitement, the poster, operates in two directions simultaneously: it is a visual incitement (our first sight of the poster) and also a conceptual one (our successive readings of the poster). Consequently, it acts in the creation of iconic signs, therefore, complementing the initial sensory reception and the subsequent intellectual reception, which demands active participation in its decoding by the spectator.

The lasting value of the best posters produced in the Dada period is rooted precisely in this fact. Though the local circumstances that provoked the manufacture of the poster have passed away, it survives well beyond its immediate circumstances as a testi-

mony to a given moment in time, and as a thing of beauty which, as we all know, "is a joy forever."

If I must cite a single creator of posters in order to exemplify this fact, I will doubtless go to the great precursor, Toulouse Lautrec. How otherwise could we remember the Gilded Age of the Moulin Rouge, Jane Avril, La Goulue, and many other artists of that Parisian café society of a century ago? Because Toulouse Lautrec *interpreted* them in his innovative and audacious posters, they will live forever in our visual and historical memories. Almost unintentionally, we have attributed to the poster certain conditions that are integral parts of it—beauty, audacity, power, and knowledge. The poster that permits, thanks to its rich possibilities for decodification, the communication of such qualities to us is the poster that survives the specific circumstances that gave rise to its production by being converted into a beautiful and faithful testimonial to the moment or of a given fact. In this way, the author confronts a great challenge: given that the theme of a poster *is dictated* to the artist and is, at the same time, an artistic manifestation in multiple reproductions, one could think this situation detrimental to its aesthetic quality. Nevertheless, for more than a century, poster making has been converted—and rightly so—into a new and significant manifestation of the visual arts.

Because of its relatively small format, natural environment, and heterogeneous destinations, the poster requires a heightened synthetic sense on the part of its maker. For this reason, it has been rightly affirmed that the poster is aggressive from the start. It must rapidly capture the attention of spectators, who, at that point, have innocent eyes in the sense that they don't suspect that they are about to confront a work of art. Museum space, with a public predisposed to and desirous of aesthetic satisfaction, differs notably from the open space for which posters originally are conceived. This is an aspect of the polysemous quality that is native to poster making, related to the poster's primary capacity of being read by a spectator who is on the move and its subsequent reappraisal through another reading that is already distinct from the specific moment that the work refers to.

Seeing the success of anthologies of posters produced in Cuba during the last three decades, we find examples that endorse the appreciation of this artistic manifestation. Practically nonexistent in Cuba before the revolutionary triumph of 1959, poster making started at the beginning of the 1960s, reaching a level whose quality was appreciated internationally. Its most salient merit, as was pointed out by a shrewd critic at the time, is rooted, above all, in its capacity to combine various languages for the creation of new modes of discourse. This marked expressive liberty created a favorable atmosphere throughout those years for a production that has been highly distinctive. Thus, the use of photography and photomontage with the paraphernalia of pop art; recourse to cinematic art

with reminiscences of art nouveau; and the intelligent use of typography or design with the many colors of informality or the creative discipline of geometric abstraction—these are all found together. In this way, styles already identified as personal to some Cuban designers enrich a vivid and significant collection.

At the same time that we are enjoying these works without considering their chronology, we are offered an account of what we have seen, heard, and done and finally, of what we have lived through, during this period. Acts of historical commemoration and of national reaffirmation, educational, and public health campaigns are side by side with concerts, performances of the theater and ballet, and art and film exhibitions. With respect to these events, a constant has been the rejection of the manipulation of the star system in which the faces of the leading actors are converted into the principal attraction of the work of design. On the contrary, the Cuban poster with a cinematographic theme is centered on the essential or central character of the film in order to translate the theme through visual language. This leads, aside from the poster's lasting beauty as an art object, to a reflective knowledge of the filmed piece.

It was precisely the poster with a cinematographic theme that, from the point of view of chronology, laid the ground work for a lasting national production. A Cuban school of posters has achieved recognition over the years. The team of designers who worked on this during the early 1960s had few material resources, and operated in an almost artisanal manner, using the silkscreen technique. With these posters, they rejected the earlier practice of importing blurbs together with foreign films. In this way, they consolidated their own interpretation of filmic creation, which, on the other hand, included Cuban productions from the earliest years of the Cuban Revolution. The flowering of an ample cultural program in the nation was supported, at the same time, by graphic design.

Artists who devoted themselves to posters for diverse cultural activities maintained the freshness of an original manipulation of the elements with which they created their works. Posters with political content, following similar models, reached a worthwhile qualitative level by the second half of that decade, with equal freedom in the creation and employment of the various codes that have been pointed out. Occasionally, painters produced posters with different topics that were parallel to their unique works.

In each case, the artists chose the language that was most apt for the selected theme and its proper expression. Since these works were not commissioned by established patrons, the maker of the poster could act with ease and, occasionally, use unexpected resources. The fact that the scale of colors, for instance, was extremely limited during the first years of the rise of the Cuban poster made this limitation a highly expressive device. The use of white—that is, the absence of applied color—was converted into a

factor of notable expressive power, as had happened with the Bauhaus in its time. The poster also acquired added impact with respect to the color zones. These frequently are flat with brilliant colors.

It is necessary to mention another formal characteristic of Cuban poster making—the integration of text with the painted image. For the most part, the works show a preference for the typography of the print shop rather than for letters drawn by hand. The latter frequently is a component of a kind of typographical informality that points in two directions. On the one hand, it privileges design or painting as the only technique of the composition. On the other, it points out that the text, as such, is seen as an element in support of the painted image. This role assigned to the text implies that it is subsumed in the totalizing pictorial structural framework of the poster as a united work, as well as the voluntary rejection of the printing techniques characteristic of works meant for multiple reproductions. Printing typography acquired a notable semantic character in the hands of many Cuban poster makers. At times, it constitutes the only visual element that is employed with a great deal of variety. Letters can give rise to a cinematic illusion that carries an important conceptual burden. In those cases, typography operates best as a supporting or contrasting element to the painted or photographed image that fills the role of protagonist in the semantical structural framework of the poster.

Having previously referred to the photographic image, it is necessary to point out its importance in many Cuban posters. The use of photography as an assistant in effective poster communication shows how creatively the manipulation of elements drawn from various photographic techniques has been used. Photomontage allows the creation of a new reality by juxtaposing images. In other cases, isolating an object or amplifying some of its component parts introduces a degree of unanticipated expression, at times achieving an element of fantasy. This characteristic has worked well in the choice of a significant object or, on the contrary, an apparently banal one. On other occasions, the designer manipulates the photograph, accentuating its character so as to exploit its latent incongruence in a voluntarily created situation. This use of photography in its different aspects is testimony in Cuban poster making to the well-known phenomenon of feedback among the distinct manifestations of the visual arts in our country.

Some years ago, I wrote that the Cuban poster was an important element in the creation of everyday beauty. Starting with a selection including works by designers from several generations, I have demonstrated how the poster has, with its enduring beauty, collaborated in the rise of new face of Cuba.

1989

The Incitement of Graphic Design

"An incitement to lust! Three pesos fine!" The person who expressed himself in these words was a certain Dr. Cristo, a correctional judge of the Second Department of Havana; he rendered a judgment on December 23, 1927, instigated by the head of the Bureau for Public Affairs of the Secretary of the Interior, Mario Coto Leiseca. The latter, while walking in front of a shop window of the painting supplies store El Arte, was scandalized (to the point of calling the police to seize them) by some posters that advertised the "Grand Artists Ball" that was taking place at the National Theatre on January 6, 1928 to raise funds to support the Association of Painters and Sculptors "for a year." Coto Leiseca, "a wonder of a troublemaking boy," was wounded in his "unregenerate modesty"—in the words of a certain Havana newspaper of the day—by a poster that showed a painter's studio with a nude model in it. In his complaint, he was supported by the "prudish" judge, the champion of legal challenges, who condemned the owners of the establishment to a fine of three pesos "for the intent with which they had prepared… the nude, which is artistic in cold countries, but here the nude in art is an incitement to lust."

Aside from the peculiar erotic-climactic criticism expressed in this legal judgment of a poster, I agree that a provocative character can—and should—be attributed to all graphic design. Incitement to aesthetic pleasure, to an immediate comprehension of facts of a very diverse nature, to action: this is the focus for the projection of graphic design into our daily lives. I tend to remember the Cuban Missile Crisis by visualizing one of the posters made by COR (Commission for Revolutionary Orientation) that time based on a photo of Fidel with the text, "Commander-in-Chief: Attention!" Since 1967, the protest song—and solidarity with Cuba—had been the rose with the bloody thorn created by Rostgaard. The rationing of electricity was definitely synthesized in 1969 in Beltrán's CLIK; the cruiser Granma was popularly seen in Nikoí's version which, in 1971, was combined with Fidel's phrase, "If I set out, I arrive. If I arrive, I go in. If I go in, I triumph." Our visual image of Che derives in large measure from the billboards and posters that creatively used a photo of him taken by Alberto Korda. Solidarity with Palestine was presented by Faustino Pérez as an image that has visually shaped the struggle for this people. How many memories of unforgettable films spring to mind in the form of a poster: *Lucía*, designed by Raúl Martínez, *Besos robados* (Stolen Kisses) by Azcuy, *Cayita* by Muñoz Bachs, *Hara Kiri* by Reboiro, and *Hanoi, March 13* by Rostgaard. How many publications are identified by their covers—the endless variety that Umberto Peña brings to the design of the editions at Casa de las Américas; Martínez's creation of the original prototypes for the Institute of the Book; editions of *Granma*

Figure 1
Azcuy: "Besos Robados" (Stolen Kisses).

Figure 2
Reboiro: "Hara Kiri."

Figure 3
Beltran: "CLIK."

Figure 4
Rostgaard: "ICAIC Decimo Aniversario" (ICAIC 10th anniversary).

Figure 1

Figure 2

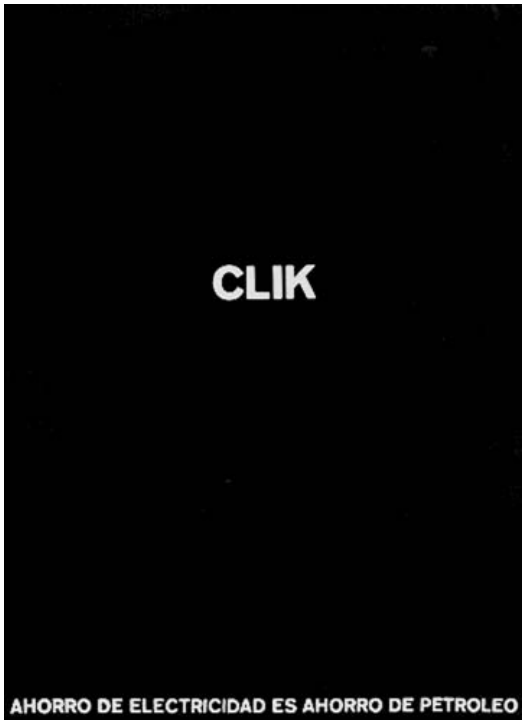


Figure 3

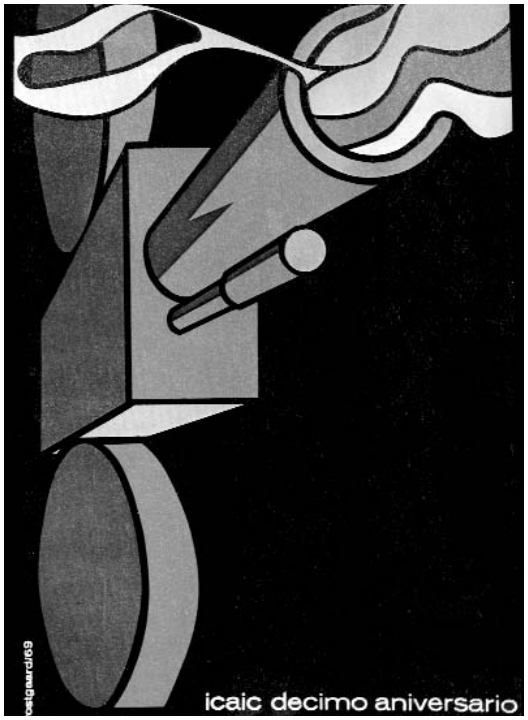


Figure 4

and *Juventud Rebelde* (Rebellious Youth) designed with daily efficiency by Chago and Gallardo, respectively, while Villaverde gave new life to the editions of UNEAC (Union of Cuban Writers and Artists). Of course, there has been no lack of occasions when creators from various disciplines have united to give us totalized images of events and historical commemorations: the Cuba Pavilion at La Rampa; the Plaza of the Revolution, the National Park of Demajagua, and the Plaza of Santa Clara all have been marked by various expositions in which architects, designers, painters, musicians, photographers, and filmmakers have united to achieve a beautiful global vision of the theme being tackled.

In all cases where Cuban graphic design has reached a sustained level of excellence, a quality has been present that confers a notable degree of originality. I'm referring, not so much to the nature or initial primacy of the elements employed, as to the manner in which they were used, and the goals pursued in each particular case. Cuban graphic design during its best years presented a coherent discourse through its communicative power and its beauty. It was able to play a role in our daily lives, touching on beauty, effectiveness, and the affirmation of our most fundamental values. It didn't hesitate to use the most novel and worthwhile resources of international contemporary art. Such resources, in the hands of our best designers, became expressive instruments that opened the doors to free and notably fresh creations. A youthful art made, for the most part, by young artists, graphic design, since the Revolution that made its rise and organic development possible with the requirements of creative specificity, took on the propagation of the goals of the historical process of our country. The variety of visual forms customarily was determined by the wide thematic range and the emphasis that, at set moments in time, are chosen to stress different aspects of daily life. Photography can fit directly into the formation of an integral part of the composition, as Niko did in 1968 with the image of Fidel on the poster of the CDR meeting or, in 1975, when two photos—one of Martí, the other of Fidel—gave the intimate link between the master and the Revolution: "Martí, intellectual author." Mayito's photo of a meeting dominates the cover of a record of revolutionary popular music; photography can offer the designer the chance to fix the spectator's attention on an expressive detail that can, isolated and magnified, catch a particular sentiment (as Azcuy did numerous times with hands in various positions, which are other means of communication: in posters for the films *Sobre el amor* (About Love), *Luz de esperanza* (Light of Hope), *Testimonio* (Testimony), and *Territorio libre de analfabetismo* (Free Territory of Illiteracy), among others, or a poster for the Lenin Centenary. Photography can, however, be the point of departure for visual creation of a distinctive nature, such as the fact that different photos of Che have been used by several designers (Rostgaard and Niko, among others) for elaborations according to their own

personal styles. Frémez has incorporated photographic images into some of his graphic designs.

So graphic design has nourished Cuban painting; on the one hand, through the work of no small number of painters in the wide field of graphic design—the covers of books and magazines, posters with cultural themes; containers of various sorts, silkscreen textiles—have been designed by Amelia Peláez, Lam, Portocarrero, Mariano, Martínez Pedro, Milián, Servando Cabrera Moreno, Fayad Jamís, Sandú Darié, Antonia Eirez, Peña, Corratgé, Abela-Alonso, and Adigio Benítez, among others. (Containers and cans for preserves, more than other similar designs, have been done by foreign artists such as Matta, Miró, Tapies, Saura, and Sequí.) On the other hand, graphic designers occasionally have taken over works of art to use them significantly in graphic composition. The sketch of Martí's head made decades earlier by Carlos Enríquez is the focal point of Ayala's poster for the Center for Martí Studies. In another poster for the center, Ayala used a picture of the master done by a ten-year-old girl. On more than one occasion, Peña used engravings from the last century for the covers and interior layout of the magazine *Casa de las Américas*; Portocarrero's *Floras* and Mariano's *Masas* have been used on various posters. Humorous design also has formed part of the communicative repertory of graphic design, especially in the sustained work of cinematographic thematics of Muñoz Bachs, such as his newly conceived versions of Chaplin *Por primera vez* (For the first time) in 1968; *Cine Móvil* (Moving Pictures) of 1969, *Unidades móviles* (Moving Unities) of 1970 and his interpretation of *The Three Musketeers* (1968); and his most recent poster for the documentary *Cayita* (1981); all of which constitute some of the most significant works of a genre in which he has worked in an exemplary manner. Another aspect of this same phenomenon was given by the interrelationship between painting and graphic design. Martínez Pedro's *Aguas territoriales* (Territorial Waters) influenced posters and billboards on Varadero and other beaches of our coastline, while the distinctive language of graphic design determined, for its part, some formal concerns present in the development of painting of recent years. In his most recent posters for the Collection of Cuban Letters, Raúl MartÌínez succeeded in reaching an admirable synthesis of the three salient aspects of his artistic activities: the painter, the designer, and the photographer were united in a single person to achieve works that were representative of this interrelationship, in which the parts complement and enrich the whole.

The formal instrumentation of design in our country simultaneously had other sources, nourished in as much as organic growth, not imitation, had been favorable for the assimilation of those elements that enrich expressive language. Geometric abstraction, the cinema, and photomontage formed integral parts of the language of some of our best designers. (I must not fail to mention the exceptional explosion of talent experienced earlier in the Soviet

Union in this same sense in the precursor design of Tatlin, El Lissitzky, Mayakovsky, Rodchenko, and the Stenberg brothers, among others). We can trace these sources in some design projects meant for open spaces, especially those created to commemorate the 100 Years of Struggle in 1968; in some posters for May Day, to instruct pedestrians, for the gatherings of July 26. The exclusively typographical poster has, however, sometimes reached exceptionally creative levels in the manipulation of text without visual support. Notable examples are Faustino Pérez's *A la Plaza* (On the Square) and Eufemia Álvarez's *Revés* (Reverse), both from 1970. A happy conjunction of a brief but impressive text with the expressive stain coming from *Tachisme* (a French school of art related to Abstract Impressionism) was the billboard for DOR (Department for Revolutionary Orientation) in 1972, which used the word "USA" struck through by a horizontal black line in which was inserted in red the phrase, "Bay of Pigs, XI Anniversary."

The design of publications, record jackets, containers, etc., requires, for the same purpose, a tone of greater intimacy than is required by a billboard or poster exposed in a public place. These require other visual and contextual characteristics. Since a poster can be placed anywhere (and this "anywhere" will determine, of course, its changing function), and the billboard has a location that is independent of its environment and open to a transient public, there is another manifestation of graphic design that has captured the attention of our country in the past decade. Often called "supergraphics," graphic design directly tied to urban plans has enjoyed some significant successes. A notable antecedent of the tying together of the fine arts to highway rebuilding was the inclusion in the new pavements of La Rampa in the early 1960s of blocks that were designed by such artists as Amelia (Peláez), Lam, Portocarrero, Mariano, and Martínez Pedro, among others. In this decade began the decoration of the facades of some public buildings to commemorate historical dates. The range of elements used in this work was very broad: moving cinematic compositions, for instance, the first decoration of the facade of the main building of ICAIC (Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry) for which an image was designed by Reboiro with the name "Camilo" (Cienfuegos) as its main motif; the use of compositions based on enlarged photos; ecstatic or dynamic luminous images, of which I remember the distinctive rhythmic design for *Carifesta 79* designed by Peña on the main facade of the hotel Habana Libre. The most recent projects to enliven preexisting sites take into account, as an integral part of their composition, the design of already-existing areas—the facades of buildings, murals, and separating walls, and the creation or recreation of significant areas in the urban environment. Produced to last longer than other categories of graphic design in areas open to public transit, graphic design on the urban scale should be considered as an integral part of a totalizing union of elements. What is

important is the development of these elements that qualify the urban environment, and promote a great valorization of the zone in question at an indispensable technical and aesthetic level.

In pointing out these varied aspects of graphic design in our nation beginning with the Revolution, I only wish to again underline the role that graphic design has played in its finest moments in the culture of a new society. For its massive public, graphic design has succeeded in forming part of our daily life by means of many different types: the visual impact of our street and public squares, the recreation of the concept of decorating facades and containing walls, the signposting of public buildings, and, on the level of the most personal enjoyment, the publications that we read and the records that we hear. It is an ample cultural world into which graphic design is inserted with its creative and original specificity.

1982

This Essential Object, the Book

Let's consider the book as an object. It forms a part of a conglomeration of objects that surround us in our daily lives. These objects are almost totally designed and constructed by persons who carry out specialized tasks within concrete social systems. The book's function is implied within an ideological framework, a conceptual body and a conjunction organized of values, whose class essence is the determining factor. Within this framework, and responding in the end to interests that express particular elements such as taste, talent, technical capabilities, and the availability of materials, bookmaking, which is an important branch of the work known in general terms as design, is then an integral element of the general need to surround people with objects that correspond to the development of the society in which they live. An all-encompassing definition of design has been given by Yuri Soloviev, director of the Institute for Industrial Aesthetics (VNIITE) of the USSR, in which he stated that design is:

> …a creative activity whose object is to give form to an artificial harmonious environment that, as completely as possible, satisfies the material and spiritual needs of human beings.… Formal qualities are not only external aspects, but principally constitute the structural relationships that convert a system into a functional and compound unity, and also help to ameliorate the efficiency of its production.

For his part, Gillo Dorfles specified that an object can be included in the category of industrial design when it is exhibits three qualities: (1) being produced in a series; (2) through mechanical production; and (3) possessing a conscious aesthetic from its initial planning stages, and not the later manual intervention of an artist.

In fact, it was only with the Industrial Revolution that the objects I'm talking about could be produced manually or with the partial intervention of mechanical means; it was only with this Revolution that the specific nature of various functions, whose scope and character were socially determined, was made obvious. In highly developed capitalist countries, submission to the laws of consumption favored the use of styles that were thought to satisfy needs that had been artificially provoked by the communications media. This leads to change accelerated by forms that follow, not so much mechanical or functional progress, but rather economic causes that are represented as attrition of the iconographic functions of objects. Here, one observes a subversion of the innovative frameworks of the creators of the modern conception of design, movements such as art nouveau, the Bauhaus, and, especially, the extraordinary Russian constructivism that functioned in historical and social conditions very different from those of these other movements. All of these objects in daily use have a new dimension, that of carrying aesthetic values in themselves. This integrated binomial of utility and beauty is based on a dialectical relationship that does not permit assigning absolute priority to any of its constituent elements.

It then is necessary in the current state of development in my country to set up some governing principles whose existence make possible the creation of our values. How is the utility of design produced for this book that we now see just in its exterior aspects, in the perceptual grasp that we have of it? It is evident that the generic content of the book determines certain basic formal requirements. The initial choice of category planned for the book is established in the first place and in the most general manner for the specific consumer to whom the object is directed; this consumer is defined by age, professional or vocational needs, and by general interests shared by the growing masses of readers in a revolutionary country that continues to reach higher cultural levels.

In the choice of category mentioned above, the determination of the reader's age leads directly to the production of books for children and young adults. In Cuba, this is connected to some interdisciplinary studies by teachers, psychologists, and designers; it relates, at the same time, to some investigations that unfortunately used small control groups. There was collaboration, in the first place, to establish different age groups within the basic categories of children and young adults. The results of such investigations helped lay down the bases for an increasing efficiency in communication through the formal elements that make up vehicles for visual and conceptual information. The percentage of space dedicated to textual illustration, the range of colors that are significant in our cultural context, the type fonts and size of the letters, the size of the books and how easy it is to use them, the possibility of breaking up a word phonetically at the end of a line; beginning with a certain

age group—these are only some of the elements that constitute the parameters for the design of our books. Their importance cannot be underestimated at any moment: the first contact that children have with one of these basic elements of the cultural world, is on many occasions, the touchstone for their ultimate full comprehension of this activity. And the relations and concepts that are established then can—and should—constitute the basis for continued deepening of their responses and demands in the world of knowledge and enjoyment contained in books.

The type of book directed at the adult reading public, as I've pointed out, obeys different purposes. The satisfaction of professional or vocational specifics sets up a vast thematic range that includes separate branches of the hard sciences, technology, and the social sciences. Designs for these books tend to be conservative: orientational and generic identificatory elements have priority over those whose function markedly includes attraction and stimulation. The homogeneity of design in its totalizing aspect constitutes the necessary signpointing that orients specific readers to what I'm referring to now: this is, normally, by the very nature of professional or vocational interests, the search for a book on their specialized interests, they quickly respond to the identifying signs of the kind of book they need. The conjunction of elements that signpost this type of book have been established with particular attention to their capacities for durability in both the sign order and the aesthetic order, which must function satisfactorily for a particularly long period of time. It is worth pointing out that the use of a format designed originally for a fiction series in a work with scientific themes and standards not only leads to the mechanical transfer of design from one type of book to a very different kind, but is a very disturbing practice which fragments the established system of signs.

In the final analysis and in the most general terms, there exists the necessity of satisfying the appetites of an adult mass public, whose range of interests is wide and whose reading habits vary according to cultural level, to the leisure time available to them, and to the specific ways in which they live. Books that are designed to stimulate and fill their public's appetites are normally published in a series that maintains certain permanent formal elements that function as visual identifiers. The dimensions of the book and their interrelationships are the first and most obvious signs for recognition; the typography of the cover—the distribution of space, use of color elements, and positioning of textual information—will be the principal guide to orient the reader. Generalizing, we see the extended use of two broad conceptions regarding the specific means of approaching the choice of category for a series of a given character. On the one hand, formal elements are kept as identifiers that can be of dimensional proportions, the informative constant of a known name, or the logo of the series or publishing house. Within these integral elements that serve as the structural

basis for the design, the remaining elements are freely manipulated by the artist, who creates a surface intended for the visual and occasionally conceptual satisfaction of the reader, remaining relatively independent of the subject matter of the text. It is easily recognized as belonging to a series of works whose common denominator is the series established by the regularity of its installments. The reader responds, in the first place, to the stimulus given by recognizing a specific series of works, and then to the apprehension of the particular work itself.

The other conception builds on what I've referred to as that which offers an artistic version of the content of the book within the standardization of some basic parameters that are established, particularly by its dimensions. In this way, an attempt is made to stimulate a reading within the field of visual perception: the assimilated formal qualities conform to an artistic translation of the written content. It is indispensable to take account of the referential systems of knowledge held by the public to whom the book is directed. The meanings that are associated with visual images are multiple, and one must make sure of their conceptual and aesthetic validity in order for the intended informative and persuasive message to function coherently.

Books, as everyone knows, begin to be "read" even before one deciphers the title or the author's name. It is precisely the exterior design that constitutes the initial code of this first reading. But the concrete informative system that we have suffers from deficiencies, especially with adult publications. Books for adults generally share some common goals with books intended for children or young adults: the cover must contain sufficient stimulating, informational, and provocative elements to capture the potential reader's interest. Even though this has not yet been established well enough in my country, we know that the necessary stream of information should reach the producers in relation to the real action that book design exercises over consumers. But, of course, this is only one element in a system that includes the timely distribution of the book and its review or critique at the proper time. When such information is insufficient, it is possible to hypothesize a theory that doesn't rely on a guarantee systematically founded on the effective movement of the creation and expansion of the reader's habits, and of the acquisition of the book.

There are those who state that, in order to achieve such ends, "one must give the mass public what it wants." This inevitably leads to certain questions: "What is wanted by whom? Which *whom* are we referring to? What *what* are we alluding to, this *what* that is wanted so much?" In this way, we may conclude that we must rapidly reestablish the production of works that are paradigmatically represented by Corín Tellado y Cía (an author whose romantic fiction is comparable to Harlequin Romances), which was—is?—

certainly a *what* that counted—counts—with many *whos* adept at reading.

In design, as in the text of the work itself, it is necessary to give the consumer a balance, even a balanced ensemble, between what they want and what satisfies that want, and what is new and should be incorporated as new values. If we stick with what we know and want, stagnation is ensured and progress is impossible. If, on the contrary, everything is unexpected and surprising, what is most likely is that the consumer will reject it—a rejection that will impede the enrichment of the consumer's spiritual world, an enrichment that, as we know, constitutes one of the fundamental goals of the political and educational politics of our Revolution. Present taste cannot be ignored, but it also must not be elevated to an absolute value. Taste in some measure continues to be the taste established by the capitalist media, whose value system, as we know, differs from ours. The only solution rests, as before, in reaching a balance thanks to which the known opens the way to the unknown, and guarantees the ascent toward higher levels.

1983

Seducing the Eye: Contemporary Exhibition Design in France and Italy

James E. Traue

Adapted from a public lecture delivered under the auspices of the Friends of the Turnbull Library in February 1997. The author acknowledges financial assistance from the Internal Grants Committee, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In 1401, Filippo Brunelleschi, the Florentine sculptor, made his first pilgrimage to Rome, accompanied by his friend Donatello, with the intention of studying antique sculpture. "While he was studying the sculptures," according to his biographer Manetti writing in 1480, "he observed the ancients way of building and their laws of symmetry. It seemed to him that he could recognize a certain order in the disposition, like members and bones, and it was as though God had enlightened him." [1]

In 1996, I made a similar pilgrimage from Paris to Lyon, Turin, Milan, Florence, and Rome, ostensibly to study recent developments in the art of the book exhibition, but the experience was similar to that of Brunelleschi: my eye turned constantly to the structure of exhibitions themselves, and like him, I began to recognize a "certain order" in their disposition, certain underlying structures present in exhibitions of books, manuscripts, paintings, and sculpture, and of objects in archaeological, anthropological, and science museums. This paper is deliberately structured as a pilgrimage,[2] and the reasons for this departure from the academic norm will become clear in due course. This account begins with Rome, the last city visited, and it is to Rome that it returns for its conclusion.

My interest in book exhibitions arose from the particular needs of the Alexander Turnbull Library, New Zealand's national research library, in the 1970s and 1980s. The Library had been forced, under the pressures of escalating public demand and shrinking resources, to redefine itself from being all things to all comers to a research library dedicated to serving those who used the library's resources to create new works. As the focus narrowed, it was obvious that something had to be given back to the general public. What was needed was a new kind of book exhibition appealing to the person in the street, which would please, stimulate, and also carry messages about the nature and purpose of the materials in a heritage institution dedicated to serving researchers. The traditional book exhibitions I had seen in Europe, North America, and Australasia were, with very few exceptions, dull, boring, and inappropriate to this need.

Similar thinking, arising from a perception that the research library had to reach out beyond its research users to communicate directly with the general public, had taken place in the United States

1 David Watkin, ed., *A History of Western Architecture*, 2d (London: Laurence King, 1996). A slightly more pedestrian translation is available in *The Life of Brunelleschi* by Antonio de Tuccio Manetti (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1970), 50.

2 For the significance of pilgrimage as a liminoid function, see Victor Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).

in the early 1980s. The "blockbuster" book exhibition, pioneered by Vartan Gregorian at the New York Public Library and Daniel Boorstin at the Library of Congress in the early 1980s, seemed to offer a possible solution. From a careful study of these exhibitions, the concept of the "minds-on" book exhibition was developed in 1988,[3] as a book exhibition designed deliberately to enable the viewer to uncover the underlying relationships between the objects on display.

The assumption made was that human beings are pattern-makers who instinctively try to fit experience into patterns or structures to give them meaning,[4] and that a book exhibition should be designed to allow the viewer to use, to the maximum, this passion for discovering structure. If the viewers participate in the exhibition by discovering new connections, new relationships and, thus, new meanings, they will experience a shock of recognition and have a truly minds-on experience. This minds-on experience is the same kind of thrill that children experience in the new hands-on children's museums. Essentially, it is the recognition of structure in the external world.

Books, manuscripts, and archival records are, in general, unlikely candidates for exhibition in a gallery or museum setting because of their lack of visual appeal. They are packages of meaning, and tightly wrapped packages at that, which take hours to undo and require the use of a special, linear technique called reading. To adapt Stephen Greenblatt's concepts of resonance and wonder, they, are in general, low on wonder. Wonder is "the power of a displayed object to stop the viewer in his or her tracks, to convey an arresting sense of uniqueness, to evoke an exalted attention." [5]

The great medieval illustrated manuscripts such as Michelangelo's diaries, Gutenberg's Bible, and the Kelmscott Chaucer are all objects capable of evoking wonder and, as such, eminently exhibitable as isolated objects. But there was little in the Alexander Turnbull Library's collections of predominantly nineteenth and twentieth-century New Zealand books, manuscripts, and pictures that had that kind of power.

Michael King, the biographer of Frank Sargeson, commented that the most powerful object for him in the *Behind the Printed Page* exhibition of writers' papers in the National Library of New Zealand Gallery in 1996 was the handwritten draft of Frank Sargeson's story, "Conversation With My Uncle." Its power did not reside in its wonder, its arresting sense of uniqueness, its power to stop us in our tracks and to evoke an exalted attention, but in its relationship to what had gone before in New Zealand writing, the change in Sargeson's style that it signaled, and the impact of that vocabulary and sentence structure on future New Zealand writing: in short, to use Greenblatt's other term, its resonance.

3 J.E. Traue, "The Book Exhibition as a 'Minds-On' Experience," in *Committed to Print: Selected Essays in Praise of the Common Culture of the Book* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1991).

4 This assumption has a long pedigree. A useful beginning is Plato's observation in *The Laws* that only humankind has developed a sense of order, and Aristotle's notion in his *Poetics* of the pleasure of recognition. A useful summary can be found in the introduction to E.H. Gombrich's *The Sense of Order* (London: Phaidon, 1979). The more adventurous can sample G.L. Edelman's theory of cognition in *Neural Darwinism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

5 Stephen Greenblatt, "Resonance and Wonder," in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display,* edited by Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 42.

Books and manuscripts have a potential for resonance, "the power of the displayed object to reach out beyond its formal boundaries to a larger world, to evoke in the viewer the complex, dynamic cultural forces from which it has emerged and for which it may be taken by the viewer to stand."[6] In a resonant exhibition, according to Greenblatt, the viewer is pulled "away from the celebration of isolated objects towards a series of implied, often half-visible, relationships and questions,"[7] towards questions of how, of what, and of why, questions of relationships and meanings.

Greenblatt developed these concepts of wonder and resonance to distinguish between different approaches to the exhibition of works of art, the one emphasizing the uniqueness of a work of art, and the other the various contexts of a painting or sculpture; but, as one can readily appreciate, they are handy tools for thinking about the exhibition of books. For the exceptional, the *Book of Kells*, the Lindisfarne Gospels, and the Kelmscott Chaucer, the evocation of wonder is in order; for the run-of-the-mill exhibitions of books and manuscripts it is clearly resonance that the designer seeks to manifest. The kind of book exhibition that would meet the Turnbull's needs would, first of all, draw the viewer into recognizing connections between objects in the exhibition, and then set up resonances which would hint at wider meanings to be uncovered by the viewer.

The objectives of the visit to France and Italy were to see as many book exhibitions as possible against which to test the principles developed for the "minds-on" book exhibition, and to catch up with recent developments in European exhibition design. The copious quantity of published literature on exhibition principles and techniques does not address the problems inherent in book exhibitions, and the available published analysis of particular exhibitions offers little of relevance.

Paris was the first choice because of the extraordinary number and range of first-class museums concentrated in one area, outranking even the richness and concentration of Washington, DC. In addition, the French, since the time of André Malraux, the first Minister of Culture under de Gaulle, had been investing heavily in museums and, recently, under Mitterand, had invested billions of francs in building new museums and refurbishing old ones. This created a bonus, something not anticipated, and that was an historical perspective on the evolution of contemporary exhibition design. The exhibitions in Paris dated from those created in the late 1940s to those of the mid-1990s, and the contrasts were a further stimulus to thought. Mitterand's demand that the new state-funded museums and libraries be more accessible to the public, abetted by substantial investment in research and development by the Ministry of Culture (the Ministry's annual budget is one per cent of the national budget) had created innovative approaches to exhibition design and a cadre of brilliant exhibition designers. But initially, the French had

6 Greenblatt, "Resonance and Wonder," 42.

7 Greenblatt, 45.

imported Italian designers such as Gae Aulenti, who designed the display areas in the Musée d'Orsay, and then the space in the Pompidou Centre for the permanent exhibition of modern art. The names of Italian designers appear regularly in the literature from the United States, South America, Britain, Germany, and other European countries. Even though there appears currently to be a lack of investment in museums in Italy, and many travelers' tales of the perilous state of many of the government-funded museums, the brilliance of Italian designers in special exhibitions and fairs, and in other related areas, made a short visit to Italy essential. Those related areas and, at first glance, the relationship may seem very tenuous indeed, became increasingly important sources after Paris. In these related areas, I thought I had found the ultimate in the interactive exhibition, where the displayed object becomes a part of the viewer.

The result of this immersion was the isolation of a few general principles, of a "certain order in the disposition" of exhibitions per se, which can be applied to the exhibition of books and manuscripts. The first, and the most obvious, is the use of a strong focal point to draw the eye to a point in space and the strengthening of focal points by adding frames: either the "n" frame (the arch closed to the sky, or the doorway) or its opposite, the "u" frame (the avenue of clipped trees open to the sky). And as a variation, the interposition of a sighting device similar to the blade of the foresight of a gun—such as the obelisk in the Place de la Concorde—which focuses the eye on the opening of the Arc de Triomphe.

Exhibition designers use either one strong controlling axis which allows no ambiguities—the eye is commanded towards one goal—or a multiplicity of focal points which are revealed as the viewer moves through the exhibition. The most powerful example of the single compelling axis was in the exhibition on Armenian civilization at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. The opening section, rich in rare illuminated manuscripts and books, was in a long room almost the length of a football field but half as wide, with a stud of some eight or nine metres. To break up this vast space in order to display relatively small objects, several large structures, about four meters high and two-thirds of the width of the room, were built containing small niches to hold folio-sized volumes. These niches provided focused viewing for the objects in this large room, plus security and controlled lighting. To create a visual unity in a long room with very low lighting levels, and with what easily could have been visual clutter, the designer drove a narrow avenue, the "u" frame, the full length of the central axis, between the structures, to a brightly lit doorway (the "n" frame), used to frame light at the end of the room. This avenue was created solely for the visual effect; it was very narrow and obstructed so that the viewer could not walk down it, and it was so compelling that the feeling was of a sudden visual swoop down the length of the gloomy room to the

lighted doorway. As a means of articulating visual space and compelling the eye, it was superb. As a means of articulating meaning, even of showing the objects to their best advantage, it was far less successful. And it was not by chance that the structures were painted a dark green, and that the strongly emphasized linearity of the space was softened by curves, by using a rounded structure as the vestibule to the exhibition and curved balustrades at the midpoint. The significance of these features will be discussed later.

Much more common was the use of serial focal points; offering one focal point at the entrance, and then allowing new focal points to emerge as the viewer moved throughout the exhibition. The eye is caught, the head follows, and the feet are led down the visual path.

One of the most successful was in the permanent display of paintings at the Sforza Castle in Milan. The visitor moves through a series of large rooms organized by the standard art history categories of country, century, school, and artist. Most of the paintings are hung on rigid banner-like structures of perforated aluminum or heavily varnished scrim of varying widths suspended between ceiling and floor in irregular patterns. It seems unsophisticated at first glance, and certainly very inexpensive compared with the newly refurbished galleries in Paris and Lyon. As the viewer moves forward in each gallery, a new focal point is revealed, usually on one of the banners but sometimes on a side wall, and emphasis is added by slight or large increases in the intensity of the lighting. As the viewer's feet follow the visual clues and move towards a focal point, other focal points emerge. From time to time, a very obvious focal point was left blank; there was no picture. Viewers, obviously puzzled by this absence, slowed down, looked around, and discovered the painting on the reverse side of the banner, boldly illuminated. The painting at each focal point was, as one soon discovered, one of the choicer items in the collection. The viewers, by following the visual clues with their feet, received a visual reward, that of finding the best paintings in the collection.

The major variation on the vista with its strong focal point is the full or partial blocking of a vista to create suspense or, if the anticipation is strong, to create a visual shock. The paintings hidden on the reverse of the banners at the Sforza Castle created suspense: the imposition of a blank wall totally blocking the view creates a visual shock, and even greater suspense and anticipation. With partial *blocage*, a tantalizing portion of what lies ahead is revealed. Total and partial *blocage* were used with great subtlety in the exhibition galleries of the Institute du Monde Arabe in Paris to create suspense. In addition, "masking" was employed, by hiding from view at a distance in order to heighten anticipation and encourage exploration. Structures that the mind registered as likely to be display cabinets, and seemingly next in the exhibition sequence, were deliberately concealed from direct view by eye-level walls,

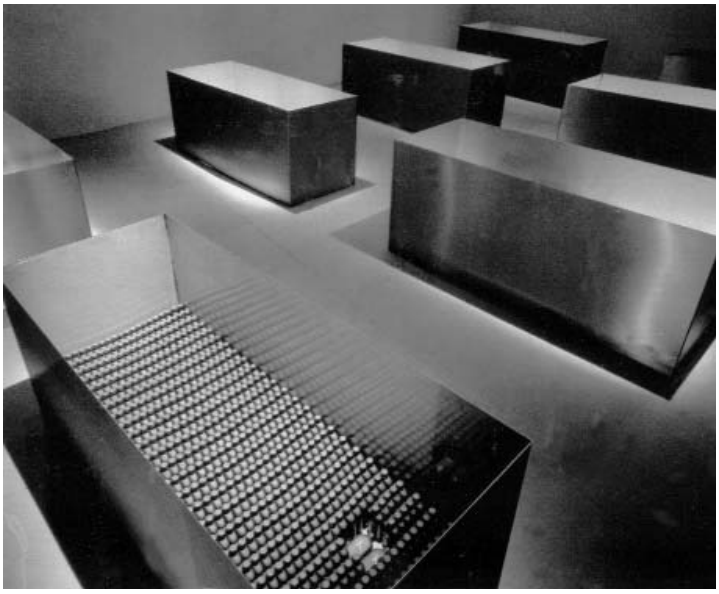


Figure 1
"Masking" in the Calvin Klein installation at the Leopolda station, Florence. Photo Attilio Maranzano, reproduced with the permission of *Abitare.*

angled slightly to suggest their entrances. In the Gallo-Roman Museum in Lyon, occasional circular waist-high walls, blank and unlabeled, from behind which light was emerging, served to excite the viewer's curiosity. By approaching and then interacting with these walls, that is by leaning right over them, the viewer was enabled to look down to see brilliantly lighted Roman mosaic floors on the level below.

One of the most blatant uses of this device was in the Armenian exhibition at the Bibliothèque Nationale. Two blank walls, about five meters wide, each with an open window cut through it, stood in isolation. Only as the viewers approached, curiosity whetted, did they become aware of light coming up on the far side of the sill of the window. It was only by interacting physically with the construction, that is by leaning right through the window, that the viewer could see the display case, the reward, set well below the level of the sill.

The masking technique was used brilliantly in the theme exhibition of the Florence Biennale at the Leopolda railway station. One stunning example was the display of the Calvin Klein fashion clothing pieces; they were concealed in a clutch of large, visually arresting unlabeled stainless steel vats, each stomach height, into which one had to lean in order to see the objects which were set well down at knee height.

The same trick was used in the display stand for Ferre, the designer of accessories, on the ground floor of the Rinascente department store in Milan. Two open stands allowed the passer by to see some of the goods from the aisle, but the third stand was a hollow tube, lit from the interior and waist high, into which one had to lean to see the goods on display. But to get to the tube, the shoppers had to step up slightly onto the Ferre stand and to invade the

selling space from the aisle of the department store, thus first making a commitment with their feet.

Another technique with a very powerful effect is that of making the viewers turn around, against the forward flow induced by the focal point ahead, and retrace their steps for their reward. The painting on the other side of the banner at the Sforza castle is a mild example. In the Louvre in Paris and the Musée des Beaux Arts in Lyon, as viewers emerge from narrow doorways in massively thick walls they discover major objects in deeply recessed niches, strongly lit, in the walls behind them, to which they have to turn back. A prime example was in the Gallo-Roman Museum in Lyon, which winds down a steep hillside. Each gallery slopes downward, and the impulsion forward under the pull of gravity is accentuated by very strongly lit focal points at the end of each gallery. This strong forward acceleration was deliberately checked by requiring the viewer to turn back into concealed bays to see the choice exhibits. This technique of *renversement*, a turning back, has a powerful psychological effect on the viewer. There is a feeling of choice, of personal control, and of discovery.

What was common to all of these techniques—these tricks of the trade, or art, of the designer—was the principle of seducing the eye and then proffering a visual reward if the viewer succumbed and moved in the direction indicated by the designer. A subtle example is in a boutique in Milan. The very small display window on the pavement featured an exquisitely arranged bowl of flowers, behind which was a photograph of the face of a smiling, beautiful woman. Only if the shopper moved to enter the door of the boutique could he see, behind the bowl of flowers, the even more beautiful unclothed body of the woman.

The designers were cajoling the viewers into interacting with the exhibition space, to move in a certain direction, to bend their backs to lean into containers and over walls, to invade closed spaces, to turn in their tracks, and guaranteeing a reward. Other, more obvious physical interactions with the spaces were the lifting of lids to see light-sensitive objects, the turning of handles or wheels to look at written information on turning drums, the turning of pages of text, the pulling of information sheets from containers, and climbing steps to see objects. The eye, the hands, the back, and the feet all were involved in a physical interaction with the exhibition's space, but not with the objects on display.

This is "light" interactivity, as distinguished from the heavy interactivity that is characteristic of the new science and technology museums. There, the viewers interact physically with the objects on display; they cause pendulums to swing, balls to roll down slopes, wheels to turn, patterns to form on computer screens, chemical reactions to take place, and living organisms to respond to stimuli. Clearly, in an exhibition of works of art or books and manuscripts, the viewer cannot be allowed to interact with the objects themselves

in the same way. This "light" interactivity, a cleverly calculated interaction with the exhibition space, is the solution which modern exhibition designers are developing for exhibitions of books, museum objects, and works of art, and they appear to be learning a great deal from that other related area touched upon earlier—the area where the interactivity is such that the object becomes a part of the viewer.

I am, of course, referring to the design of displays in boutiques and department stores, where the whole purpose of the seduction is consummation, that is the consumption of the object by the viewer. In a retail establishment, the viewer has to be turned into an active participant in the exhibition, first by invading the space and, finally, by acting to purchase.

In Italy, I was spending more and more time in the boutiques exploring the application of the display techniques and principles first discovered in the museums in Paris and Lyon. There were two reasons. First, that of size. Museum spaces in Paris and in the major Italian museums are vast, far beyond the size of any of the spaces available in New Zealand. The Richlieu wing of the Louvre is four city blocks long, and the whole Louvre a full five city blocks. In Paris, I sought out small exhibition spaces such as the Espace Électra, and glanced in passing at boutiques and department stores, where I recognized that the same techniques were being applied in small areas. Second, by the growing realization that the reason the very best Italian exhibition designers were heavily involved in boutique design was because of the considerable design challenges involved. In the city centers of old Italian cities, the shops are housed in buildings dating back several centuries. The external walls, those on the pavements, are all load-bearing walls and, therefore, the openings for shop windows are quite small. The large display windows opening directly onto the pavement that are possible in a steel framed nineteenth century building, where the load is carried internally and not by the external walls, are ruled out. Either the display window on the pavement is small, the width of an archway, or the display window is inside the external wall, and barely visible from the pavement. The shop designer has to seduce the eye, initially using a very limited window space, and then provide powerful incentives to persuade the passersby to use their feet and invade the shop space. Just as in an age of faith, the medieval Christian church was the public art gallery for the masses, so in our consumer culture exhibitions in shops are the true people's exhibitions.

My pilgrimage has provided a set of techniques which I believe will enable me, as an exhibition designer, to seduce the eye and to lead the head and the feet to objects in an exhibition. They have been outlined above as: the use of focal points, either the single controlling visual axis or serial focal points, with the total or partial obstruction of an implied vista to create shock or suspense; the

masking of objects, initially to create curiosity and then to involve the viewer in a physical interaction, such as penetrating or bending, to see the concealed object; *renversement*, a turning back against the natural progress of the exhibition; and other techniques which require the viewer to use his or her body to interact physically with the exhibition space; all of which are deployed so as to provide visual rewards for the viewer. However, while such techniques are very useful, they are not sufficient to realize the minds-on book exhibition. Most of the objects in the Turnbull's collections provide little by way of visual rewards. At the Bibliothèque Nationale exhibition, the visual rewards were sumptuous illustrated manuscripts and books; in the Espace Électra, superbly colored illustrations of plants and animals from books and manuscripts; in Florence, elegant Matisse drawings and Michelangelo's illustrated diaries; in Milan's Sforza Palace and elsewhere in the Louvre and the Musée des Beaux Arts, European masterpieces of painting and sculpture. In all of the European institutions, the techniques were being used to enhance the display of items which already had a high visual appeal, and which had a relatively high degree of wonder.

The visual rewards for the viewer in the display of very ordinary nineteenth and twentieth-century books and manuscripts from the Turnbull collections are likely to be few and far between. The use of the standard tricks without adequate rewards will eventually pall, even though in the short term they will provide great fun for the viewer.

In the interactive science and technology museums, the rewards for pressing buttons and pulling levers are normally not aesthetic. They are unlike the visual rewards provided in the art museums and the boutiques. The best exhibits enable the viewer, through interaction, to come to understand principles, whether of mathematics, physics, optics, sound, hydrology, planetary movement, space travel, psychology, chemistry, or biology. The rewards are intellectual, since they are discoveries about relationships in the external world. These are the same objectives of the minds-on exhibition introduced earlier in this paper. For such an exhibition, in order to satisfy the viewer, it will be necessary to create intellectual rewards as the consummation of the seduction of the eye. Such intellectual rewards have been achieved at the Musée d'Orsay and at the exhibition in Florence alluded to earlier in this paper. At the Musée d'Orsay, the philosophy of the curators, abetted by the brilliant design of Gae Aulenti, has created marvelous resonances between works of art and between paintings, sculpture, and the decorative arts. The resonances are so strong that the traditionalists, used to the emphasis in most art museums on isolating the object as a unique work of art to be worshipped, have been very vocal in their protests. The exhibition at the Leopolda in Florence was one of the two major theme exhibitions for the 1996 Florence Biennale. The Biennale theme was *Il tempo e la moda*, loosely translated as time

and fashion, but more accurately the times, that is modernity, and fashion. There were twenty-four separate exhibitions in museums in Florence and Prato, and the two major theme exhibitions featured the interplays between modern art and fashion. At the former Leopolda railway station, now little more than a brick shell covered with a corrugated iron roof, Denis Santachiara had designed the installation for the exhibition *New Persona, New Universe*, an exploration of rapid change and the collapsing of boundaries, using fashion, sculpture, sound, film, painting, and conceptual art. He was attempting to show the increasing interactions between ideas, inventions, new discoveries, fashion, and art, and the collapsing of the boundaries between them. It was an exhibition driven by ideas in which the objects were perfectly structured to reveal the ideas.

Santachiara created within the shell of the station building, bigger than a football field, a cocoon of muslin to define the exhibition space. Muslin, insubstantial, temporary, amorphous, lacking rigidity, and moved by every eddy of air, and every passing movement, roofed in the exhibition space and defined passageways and walls within the exhibition. The themes announced by the dominant material of the exhibition were further elaborated at the entrance. Of the four great roman arches of the station entrance, two were used as the outlets for the air conditioning, and the whole area of these two arches was draped in muslin which pulsated in irregular patterns to the air conditioning fans. Half of the front of the building was in constant, pulsating change. One of these themes, the regular pulsation, the distinctive beat of the popular music of modernity, was picked up again and again throughout the exhibition by works using pulsating sound and pulsating light.

The first exhibit was entitled "O," and consisted of a circular wall, painted black on the outside and white on the inside. Around the inside, at eye level, were some sixty round inset spaces, each containing a finger ring provided on request to the artist by a

Figure 2
Denis Santachiara's fabric cocoon for the exhibition *New Persona/New Universe* at the Leopolda station, Florence. Photo Nucci-Sestini, reproduced with the permission of *Abitare*.

famous ring maker. It was a stunning announcement of a theme picked up by several later exhibits, that of borrowing; the borrowing of art to create fashion, the borrowing of art to create art, and the borrowing of fashion to create fashion. A work of art made up entirely of the works of art of others is pastiche in its purest form.

The second exhibit, this time a square, was a square room almost entirely filled with a square table (note the juxtaposition of circle and square, the basic elements of design). It had a replica of Karl Lagerfeld's working desk, with brushes, pencils, paints, and artists' tools, surrounded by the images that he had drawn on over a lifetime for his work for Chanel and Fendi. From books, magazines, newspapers, and posters, there were images drawn from art, architecture, industrial design, landscape architecture, advertising, and fashion. On the walls were large photographic blow-ups of fashion garments on the models that had made them famous, from Josephine Baker in the 1920s up to the present. Again, there was the theme of indiscriminate borrowing across genres to create the new, one picked up later by other exhibits.

What Santachiara had achieved was a remarkable resonance between the objects in the exhibition, the materials used for the installation, and the structure of the exhibition itself, to provide a powerful persuasion for the viewers to absorb the ideas that underpinned the exhibition. It offered a truly minds-on experience.

This minds-on experience is characterized by a series of epiphanies induced by the exhibition designer through the resonances built into the exhibition. This differs from the optimal experience characterized by Csikszentmihalyi as "flow"[8] in that the epiphanies sought are sudden, akin to the "ah ha" or "eureka" response. However, it is possible that a viewer, suitably challenged by an exhibition, may enter into the flow experience. In its most developed form, a rhythmical pattern of relationships is constructed so that the viewer, early on in the exhibition experience, is induced to expect to find a pattern, to expect Gombrich's "forward matching."[9] Part of the intellectual enjoyment arises from the challenge of reading this pattern.

This paper has been deliberately structured around the experience of a pilgrimage as a verbal narrative designed to simulate the experience predicated for a minds-on exhibition. At the beginning, there is an announcement of a special experience to come, and hints of structures to be uncovered, in order to heighten expectations and excite the imagination of the reader. Discoveries are announced, with further hints of an underlying pattern into which these and further discoveries will fit. Throughout the narrative, a number of rhythmical elements are introduced, such as linkages backwards (*renversement*) and forwards in the text; regular hints of resonances between museum exhibitions, boutiques, architecture, and gardens; and themes announced only to be delayed to maintain the suspense. At the end, the underlying truth is revealed to the reader (that is, the

8 Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1990).

9 Gombrich, *The Sense of Order,* 10.

principle of the use of visual rewards to seduce the eye and lead the feet) but, like the best exhibitions, something beyond this expected truth is revealed. In this paper, it is that of the principles of the minds-on exhibition experience.

I propose now to return to tie up some of those loose ends which I have been quite deliberately dangling in front of the reader throughout this paper. What was the designer attempting in the Bibliothèque Nationale exhibition of Armenian books and manuscripts? He was using a visual construct which is part of the visual experience of Parisians, something to which they would immediately respond with surprise and then with delight. He simulated, as the controlling axis of the exhibition, the view down through the Tuileries gardens, through the high-clipped avenues of trees open to the sky, towards the lighter space of the Arc de Triomphe, or similar vistas in Paris down avenues of trees to a light-faced building anchoring the vista. The display stands were painted green to make the point obvious, and the curved space at the beginning and the curved balustrade further on were added to suggest the round basins of water surrounding the fountains in the Tuileries.

In Paris, the designer city par excellence, where simply to walk the streets is an education in the principles of design, and where the eye is constantly being trained to respond to focal points, vistas pure, semi-blocked, and fully blocked; to suspense, balance, harmony, and proportion; the response of the Parisians to the visual pun in the Bibliothèque Nationale exhibition is likely to be immediate. However, it has been argued that the techniques and principles used in France and Italy may be substantially European-specific, that people living in an environment of cities with two thousand or more years of classical design built into them are conditioned to respond to certain visual stimuli, and that in a different landscape people might be conditioned differently. It is an argument that must be addressed.

Throughout this paper, the tricks of the good story tellers in all cultures have been deliberately employed. Tricks of partial concealment, of hinting at surprises to come, of using suspense and a little mystery suggest that these tricks are not specifically European, not culture-specific, but universal. They are the same kinds of tricks used by the cunning exhibition designer to motivate viewers to move through space.

I believe that the principles uncovered on my pilgrimage, the equivalent of that “certain order” that Brunelleschi recognized in his studies in Rome, are universal; and as I progressed from Paris, to Lyon, to Turin, to Milan, and to Florence, the influence of Rome became more and more palpable. In the end, it came as no surprise to see, in St. Peter’s, the Parthenon, and in the Roman ruins, nearly all of these same principles for articulating space, and leading the eye and the feet through architectural space.

I end with a quotation from Alan Greenberg, the leading traditional architect in the United States. "The classical language of architecture (by that he means the tradition inherited from Greece and Rome) is always modern because it is rooted in the physiology and psychology of the individual human being… Classical architecture… is the most comprehensive architectural language that human beings have yet developed."[10] It is this language that the best European exhibition designers are translating into exhibitions, and that we need to learn and understand.

10 "What Is Modern Architecture: An American Perspective" in *Allan Greenberg: Selected Works* (London: Academy Editions, 1995), 11.

Adolf Loos and the Aphoristic Style: Rhetorical Practice in Early Twentieth-Century Design Criticism

John V. Maciuika

Adolf Loos has been described in the annals of architectural and design history as the individual most responsible for introducing the principles of abstract, austere, orthogonal design into numerous pre-World War I Viennese buildings.[1] His early commissions—the Steiner House of 1908, the Scheu House of 1910, and others—are generally interpreted as embodiments of the maxims contained in his most famous 1908 essay, "Ornament and Crime." As one of the most radical polemics of design criticism of the twentieth century, this essay gained Loos considerable notoriety in the way in which it violently denounced, and then claimed to close the door forever on, an "arbitrary" use of ornaments that had predominated in Viennese architecture and applied arts for decades. Employing a series of grand rhetorical gestures to denounce nineteenth-century historicism as well as newer styles being explored by the Austrian Secession, the Deutscher Werkbund, and the Wiener Werkstätte, Loos's written and built works generally are credited with inventing the forms that inspired countless modernist architects to embrace abstraction and the International Style of the 1920s.[2]

Succeeding generations of scholars and architects have treated Loos with varying degrees of sophistication, analyzing his buildings as expressions of his cultural polemics, connecting him loosely with other Viennese cultural innovators, or mining his writings for justifications of new directions in late-twentieth-century architecture. Among the most illuminating analyses of Loos's complex, anti-systematic philosophy are those of architectural historian Stanford Anderson. Anderson has argued that Loos's critical breakthrough consisted of developing an awareness of how competing conventions and practices—drawing, photography, master craftsmanship and building, and the production of art—could constructively criticize one another from within respective, sovereign domains of praxis.[3] Instructive for understanding Loos's approach to the process of building and making, Anderson's work nevertheless leaves open the question of how Loos used language in particular ways to advance his ground-breaking design philosophy.

This article contrasts Loos's celebrated early design criticism with certain rhetorical practices in his writings, insofar as the field of rhetoric traditionally has concerned itself with "the way discourses are constructed in order to achieve certain effects." This

1 This line of interpretation was inaugurated by Nicholas Pevsner in *Pioneers of the Modern Movement From William Morris to Walter Gropius* (London: Faber & Faber, 1936), 188–92.

2 For example, Loos is said to prefigure the International Style by at least eight years in Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1980), 90–95.

3 Stanford Anderson, "Critical Conventionalism: Architecture," *Assemblage I* (1986): 6–23, quoted in Stanford Anderson, "Critical Conventionalism: The History of Architecture," *Midgard: Journal of Architectural Theory and Criticism*, 1: 1 (1990): 47. The architectural theorist Massimo Cacciari characterizes Loos's philosophy as "negative thought" that seeks to "give an order to the absence of synthesis." See Massimo Cacciari, *Architecture and Nihilism: On the Philosophy of Modern Architecture*, trans. by Steven Sartarelli (New Haven: Yale, 1993), 37.

definition of rhetoric, borrowed from Terry Eagleton, emphasizes rhetoric's long-standing interest in writing as a form of power-laden performance.[4] Arguing for a cultural and geographical specificity that has been omitted in many studies of the International Style, this article begins by examining the dependence of Loos's thought on his Viennese context. It then investigates the extent to which Loos's writings and his agenda for design and architecture followed radically different sets of rules. Not only did these rules conform to different conceptions of modern public and private domains, as Michael Hays and Beatriz Colomina have argued, but Loos's writings embraced a colorful, even ornamental style that assisted him in the construction of his celebrated theory of modern culture and identity.[5]

Theatricality and Authenticity in *Fin-de-Siècle* Viennese Culture

Loos's early and formative writings give him a significant relationship to other major late-nineteenth-century rhetorical masters who, together, make up a group known as the Viennese "language circle" because of their commitment to language as a tool of cultural reform. Intellectual historian William Johnston, author of *The Austrian Mind*, refers to Loos's associates such as the writer Karl Kraus as one of Vienna's "therapeutic nihilists," to the poet Peter Altenberg as an "expert at dissimulation," and to the philosopher of language Ludwig Wittgenstein, who designed his own house inspired by Loos's ideas, as "a Utopian and therapeutic nihilist at once."[6]

These figures shared a cultural and social matrix that has been characterized by an array of historians in Vienna as being highly "theatrical," and though the term is significant, it also is used very differently by different scholars. In works by Carl Schorske, Donald Olsen, and Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, for example, Viennese tendencies toward performance and theatricality could be seen spilling over into the journalism, café culture, and street life of the city.[7] Other historians, such as Michael Steinberg and Edward Timms, have interpreted tendencies toward Viennese theatricality much more darkly. To Michael Steinberg, theatricality denotes the settings and rituals of a centuries-old ideological technique with roots in Catholic baroque culture.[8] In Edward Timms's more nuanced view, theatricality permeated the structure of Viennese social, cultural, and political life as a form of performance and dissembling throughout the waning years of the Habsburg Empire. In a multinational entity struggling to preserve its dynastic structure through the early decades of the twentieth century, Timms argues, Austrian leaders and much of the rest of Viennese society exhibited an increasing tendency to embrace theatricality in cultural forms, as well as in behavior. As a form of dissembling, theatricality could be detected in society through the blurring of the lines between actors and the behavior of avid Viennese theatergoers, in the layers of

4 Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 205.

5 K. Michael Hays, *Modernism and the Posthumanist Subject: The Architecture of Hannes Meyer and Ludwig Hilbersheimer* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992); Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994). Both authors make this point but, as with many other examinations of Loos, these works do relatively little to examine the architect's theories in their specific relation—and in their debts—to Loos's Viennese cultural context.

6 William Johnston, *The Austrian Mind: An Intellectual and Social History 1848–1938* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1972), 207, 223, and 397. Paul Engelmann, a Loos disciple, forms a crucial link between Loos, Kraus, and Wittgenstein. As one-time personal secretary to Kraus, Engelmann also was assistant architect of record for Wittgenstein's own house in Vienna's Kundmanngasse, built between 1926 and 1928. See Paul Engelmann, *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein: With A Memoir* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1976). For another account, see Dagmar Barnouw, "Loos, Kraus, Wittgenstein, and the Problem of Authenticity" in Gerald Chapple and Hans H. Schulte, eds., *The Turn of the Century: German Literature and Art, 1890–1915,* The McMaster Colloquium on German Studies II (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1981), 249–273.

7 Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1973); Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage, 1981); and Donald J. Olsen, *The City as a Work of Art: London, Paris, Vienna* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), especially the chapter, "Vienna: Display and Self-Representation," 235–50. Also excellent on this period, though less specifically focused on theatricality, are Jacques Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity:*

pomp and historicist ornament self-consciously intermingled with products of modern manufacturing, and in laws, customs, and cultural practices that fundamentally conflicted but persisted side by side. These trends compensated for tensions building up within the Austrian Empire's increasingly anachronistic system. At the same time, they betrayed a hypocrisy that Timms locates at different levels of the Imperial government, the military, and the social hierarchy.[9] It is not surprising, therefore, that theatrical performance and social dissembling figured as central themes in works of contemporary literature by such *fin-de-siècle* literary figures as Arthur Schnitzler and Robert Musil.[10]

It was precisely such hypocrisies and seemingly decadent frills that gave rise to radical cultural critics like Adolf Loos. The architect's writings and buildings suggest that he knew his targets well. Largely an autodidact, he appeared poised from early in his career to articulate a vision for architectural and cultural change—his total of two semesters at Dresden Technical University notwithstanding.[11] Loos's work, however, cannot easily be separated from the very Viennese dissembling against which the architect claimed so forcefully to rebel. Exhibiting, in fact, a kind of anti-theatrical prejudice, Loos's crusade for an authenticity befitting the modern age led him to enact his own versions of Viennese theatricality. As Jonas Barish has shown, upsurges of theatricality in Western cultures historically have been opposed by a "rage for authenticity" which, for many reformers, represents the reassertion of a reality seen as distorted or suppressed.[12] Loos's contributions to the nascent modern movement in architecture and design must thus be understood as the product of theatrical and anti-theatrical forces balanced in palpable tension. To the extent that his writings and architecture charted new cultural territory, on the one hand, they were not-so-subtly undermined by dissembling, performative, and highly theatrical conventions that the architect absorbed from his cultural context on the other. More than the achievement of an eccentric architect forming a new style before his time, Loos's work is particularly useful for understanding many features of modernism's own ambivalence.

In view of the numerous historical accounts of *fin-de-siècle* Viennese theatricality, it is easier to understand Adolf Loos's contemporary criticism of a culture that embraced so much historicist ornament in its architecture and design of everyday objects that it undermined the very idea of a modern culture. His designs for buildings, furniture, and everyday objects were, in part, a critique of an urbanity Loos regarded as intrusive and grossly out of step with the times. As other scholars have pointed out, Loos, Wittgenstein, and Karl Kraus thematized "the limits of language" by constructing an ethical critique of Viennese social practices.[13] Loos's relatively blank exteriors in architecture, the "silences" of Wittgenstein's language philosophy, and Kraus's denunciations of print media

Footnote 7 continued
Culture and Society in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna, trans. by Rosemary Morris (New York: Continuum, 1993), and Hermann Broch, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal and His Time: The European Imagination, 1860–1920*, trans. by Michael P. Steinberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

8 Michael P. Steinberg, *The Meaning of the Salzburg Festival: Austria as Theater and Ideology, 1890–1938* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990).

9 Edward Timms, *Karl Kraus, Apocalyptic Satirist: Culture and Catastrophe in Habsburg Vienna* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 3–30. See also Kari Grimstad, *Masks of the Prophet: The Theatrical World of Karl Kraus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982).

10 Typical treatments of these themes are Robert Musil, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften [The Man Without Qualities]* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rohwolt, 1978); and Arthur Schnitzler, *Der Weg ins Freie [The Road Into the Open]* (Wien: Residenz Verlag, 1980).

11 See the discussion of Loos's education in Burkhardt Rukschcio's and Roland Schachel's unsurpassed, 700-page critical biography and catalog, *Adolf Loos: Leben und Werk* (Salzburg: Residenz Verlag, 1982), 14–21.

12 Jonas Barish, *The Anti-theatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981). See especially 451–69. This study explores the numerous complexities faced historically by Western playwrights, artists, writers, and philosophers who have grappled with the antagonism between theatricality and cultural authenticity.

13 Johnston, *The Austrian Mind,* 203–207.

conventionalism in his one-man journal, *Die Fackel* (*The Torch*), sought collectively to purge superfluous elements from a culture seen as carnivalesque and debased.[14]

To Adolf Loos the writer, however, Viennese theatrical traditions left an indelible imprint on his ironic, aphoristic, and, at times, incendiary prose style. As the architectural historian Reyner Banham put it, Loos's writing typically consisted of "not a reasoned argument but a succession of fast-spieling double-takes and non-sequiturs holding together a precarious rally of clouds of witness—café Freudianism, café-anthropology, (and) café criminology."[15] To what can we attribute the difference between Loos's austere, even "silent" buildings, and the highly "ornamented" and theatrical quality of his writings? If there is a connection between aphorism and ornament, how should we understand the seeming contradiction between the writing style featured in Loos's design criticism and the outward sobriety of his architecture and furniture?

One can begin by pointing to Loos's fundamental distinction between the qualities of private and public life, an attitude usefully explored by Beatriz Colomina in her 1994 book, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media.* She recounts how Adolf Loos and Josef Hoffman, his Viennese counterpart and rival, developed radically different approaches to urban residential design. Hoffman understood the house as a social artifact: the architect's task was to design an elegant residence that reflected the owner's station to an outside world which, beholding a monument to taste, would elevate the house to the status of an artwork. This point is illustrated in one of his best known works, the Palais Stoclet in Brussels, whose interior mural paintings were carried out by Gustav Klimt.[16]

Loos, on the other hand, renounced that aestheticization of building which confused utilitarian objects with art. He insisted on the use of architectural drawing not for the production of images, but as a tool for communicating constructional and technical ideas to the builder. Since humanity had evolved past the need for superfluous historicist ornaments, Loos reasoned, modern creativity lay in the development of a method of designing houses three dimensionally, in section rather than in plan, and from the inside out. Presenting "masked" exteriors to the outside world, these houses were designed with an emphasis on spatial fluidity and adaptability, shielding the owner from the fast-paced modern metropolis. The most inventive spatial features of Loos's architecture did not translate in the new technology of photography which, like drawing, was regarded by Loos as an "irreducible system" for the communication of form.[17]

Cultural Reform as Design Reform: Loos's Rhetorical Devices

A different set of rules applied to the public realm, however. Loos's public persona was that of an outspoken cultural critic and mesmer-

14 Barnouw, "Loos, Kraus, Wittgenstein," 251–60; Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, 339–40; Johnston, *The Austrian Mind*, 212–13.

15 Reyner Banham, "Ornament and Crime: The Decisive Contribution of Adolf Loos," *Architectural Review* (February 1957): 86.

16 Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity*, 38–43.

17 Ibid., 65.

izing lecturer who delighted as well as educated audiences through his performances.[18] Regarding the private and public realms of the modern city as radically discontinuous, Loos adopted such additional performative elements of Viennese theatrical culture as the feuilleton and an aphoristic writing style as his chosen means of public self-expression.

As a lecturer and through his tenure writing feuilletons for Vienna's best known liberal newspaper, *Die Neue Freie Presse (The New Free Press*) Loos revealed himself to be a masterful writer and incisive cultural observer. The feuilleton consisted of an impressionistically written article, one that seized upon seemingly minor elements of behavior or material culture, and examined them with merciless wit. Introduced first in Paris around 1800 before making its way to Vienna in the decades that followed, the feuilleton, as the historian William Johnston has noted, was the literary correlate to the intellectual camaraderie of the coffee house. Carl Schorske has further demonstrated that the feuilleton was symptomatic of an expanding aesthetic strain running through late-nineteenth-century Viennese culture, one which provided a competitive, educated bourgeoisie, or *Bildungsbürgertum*, access to aristocratic privilege via recognition in the arts and literature.[19] At their best, feuilletons cleverly expanded on small details of cultural life until they became, in the hands of skilled authors, virtual embodiments of the hypocrisies and afflictions of the culture at large. In *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, historians Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin attest to Loos's talents through their observation that "to have an essay accepted by Theodor Herzl, the feuilleton editor of the *Neue Freie Presse*, was to have 'arrived' on the Austrian literary scene."[20]

In fact, Loos had "arrived" on this literary scene in 1897, after returning from three years in the United States.[21] Loos supported himself for several years in Vienna by publishing design criticism in various Viennese newspapers and journals. Many of Loos's early essays between 1897 and 1900 adhere to the style of the Viennese feuilleton, commonly appearing as a lead front-page piece of cultural commentary in Viennese dailies. Loos, however, went far beyond the limits of a mere disgruntled arbiter from the fashion pages. Instead, he published scathing, satirical reviews of Viennese society and cultural groups, diagnosing hypocrisy and cultural anachronism everywhere. A well-known early essay, for example, attacked the falseness of the facades of the famous Ringstrasse, the pride of late-nineteenth-century bourgeois liberal Vienna. Calling the buildings part of a "Potemkin City," Loos likened the monumental Ringstrasse facades to the false building fronts erected in the Potemkin village of the Crimean peninsula by a conquering Russian military commander. The commander had hoped to impress the Russian ruler, Catherine II, by fabricating the appearance of a territory already developed when she passed through on inspection. But if a false stage had been put up in the rural Crimea, such pretense

18 See the reviews and description of Loos's "free, sparkling speeches" in "Vorträge: Karl Kraus und Adolf Loos," *Prager Tageblatt* Nr. 63 (March 5, 1913): 4; and "Ein reichbegabtes Brünner Kind," *Tagesbote aus Mähren und Schlesien: Feuilleton-Beilage* Nr. 7 (January 4, 1908): 1.

19 Johnston, *The Austrian Mind*, 115-27; and Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna,* 7–21.

20 Janik and Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, 46.

21 On the journey to the U.S., see Rukschcio and Schachel, *Adolf Loos: Leben und Werk*, 21–32.

amounted, in Loos's estimation, to blasphemy in Central Europe's purported cultural capital.[22]

Loos's other feuilletons cleverly exploited seemingly minor details found in Viennese clothing, crafts, and other items of material culture. Through comparisons to these objects' counterparts in England and America, Loos inflated his interpretation of Viennese consumer products until they became a virtual index of Viennese backwardness and hopelessness—exhibits of a willful Viennese blindness to the challenge of living in the present. Loos interpreted the gaudy frills of outmoded Viennese clothing (compared to the smart, practical English suit), wallets and leather goods covered with Rococo ornamentation, and "tin bathtubs that aim to look as if they are marble" as part of a Viennese culture steeped in imitation. He identified quality in those objects that had escaped the ornamental applications of art and remained in the control of craftsmen, engineers, and trades workers (such as plumbers), the focus of whose attention had been on practicality and use.[23]

Loos did not shy away from finding direct institutional and personal targets for his attacks. His essay, "Poor Little Rich Man," lambasted the Secession movement's approach to design. Like his other feuilletons, "Poor Little Rich Man" performed the work of the knowing satirist: it took everyday life as the setting in which to tell the woeful tale of a successful man who was virtually strangled in the "total-work-of-art" [*Gesamtkunstwerk*] atmosphere of his house. Secession architects had designed furniture, wall coverings, and even clothing for the client in such excruciating detail that the simple act of living put the dweller in danger—either of injuring himself or of transgressing some ostensibly "artistic" principle governing the design of the house.[24] Loos penned equally aggressive essays with such titles as "The Superfluous Ones" and "Degenerate Art" to attack Hermann Muthesius, the whole Werkbund association, and the Wiener Werkstätte arts and crafts branch, led by Anton von Scala, for foolishly seeking to invent new styles truly "of their time."[25] Loos argued that such a search was pointless: abandoning artistic pretension, the English and the Americans already were introducing the world to a style for the times by using efficient production methods and by respecting older, evolved forms that did not have to be decorated or improved. The one contemporary Austrian for whom Loos reserved praise was Otto Wagner, the architect who had glorified practicality and efficiency as the principles of modern life in his expansion plan for Vienna of 1893, and who had published his ideas in an 1895 textbook for his students at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts.[26]

Yet, if Loos's early essays contained exaggerated complaints about Viennese imitation in material objects, the essence of the architect's objections became clear in *Das Andere: Ein Blatt zur Einführung Abenländischer Kultur in Österreich (The Other: A Newspaper for the Introduction of Western Culture into Austria)*, which Loos

22 Loos, "Die potemkische stadt" (Juli 1898), *Sämtliche Schriften* (Wien: Verlag Herold, 1962), 153–56. All citations are from the German text, but Loos's early essays between 1897 and 1900 have been reprinted in an English translation in Adolf Loos, *Spoken Into The Void*, trans. by Jane O. Newman and John H. Smith (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982).

23 Loos, "Lederwaren und Gold- und Silberschmiedekunst," "Herrenmode," and "Die Plumber" (originally in *Die Neue Freie Presse*, May 15, May 22, and July 17, 1898 respectively) in *Sämtliche Schriften*:15–25; and 70–7.

24 Loos, "Von einem armen reichen manne" (April 26, 1900), *Sämtliche Schriften*: 201–7.

25 Loos, "Die Überflüssigen" and "Entartete Kunst" (1908) in *Sämtliche Schriften*: 267–75.

26 Loos, "Die Interieurs in der Rotunde," *Neue Freie Presse* (June 12, 1898); and "Das Sitzmöbel," *Neue Freie Presse* (June 19, 1898) in *Sämtliche Schriften*: 40–54. Also see the discussion of Loos and Wagner in Rukschcio and Schachel, *Adolf Loos: Leben und Werk*, 48–9.

founded in part through the inspiration of Karl Kraus's radical journal of cultural criticism, *Die Fackel* Loos's short-lived publication, with a run of two issues in 1903, furthered his polemic with such impressionistic articles as "Clothing," "The Home," "What We Read," "What We Print," and "How We Live."[27] In these pieces, Loos drew the crucial distinction between the culture of the Austrian countryside and the culture of the Austrian city—or, more accurately, the absence of authentic culture in the modern city. To Loos, the cultural authenticity of a people depended on cultural practices and production methods derived from their local context; thus geography as well as temporality figured into his notion of authentic culture. Since most city dwellers were immigrants from the countryside, it was much more difficult for urban centers to realize a culture that was truly their own. This, then, was the challenge of the city: to recognize that modern production methods represented an authentic cultural practice, just as traditional crafts generated the authentic products of rural culture. In a later essay Loos discussed authentic culture as "that balance of man's inner and outer being which alone guarantees rational thought and action." If the urban dweller could only unify his "inner being" with the outer practices being engendered in the modern city—something the Viennese had abjectly failed to do, in Loos's view—then there would exist an authentic urban culture as well.[28]

It was from this perspective that Loos glorified manufactured goods that had not received the beautifying attention of applied arts decorators. Loos rejected as inherently false any urban product that bore applied ornamentation. As long as the typical Viennese city dweller continued to accept outmoded Gothic script in the city's newspapers, along with masses of gaudy decorations from random historical periods on everyday consumer products, Loos argued, he or she was doomed to remain completely out of step with cultural progress.[29] Because Loos defined "progress" in terms of forward-looking Anglo-American accomplishments, Austria stood in need of Western culture's "introduction," as his journal title made plain. Until this happened, Loos's "blind burgher" would continue to buy inferior applied arts goods and "shake his head" at the English assertion that quality products were worth paying for; he also would continue to denigrate farmers and peasants—eighty percent of his country's population, as Loos pointed out—as second-class Austrians.[30]

This cleft between city and country especially bothered Loos. In all of their blindness, the Viennese failed to recognize the responsibility of their city to disseminate culture and civilization throughout the countryside in a process of cultural development. Idealizing the New World as a land unfettered by aristocratic traditions, the Austrian architect claimed to see fewer discrepancies between the American city and countryside. Instead, he perceived America as a place where modernization was dissolving unhealthy divisions

27 Loos, *Das Andere: Ein Blatt zur Einführung Abendländischer Kultur in Österreich* 1: 2 (1903), reproduced in facsimile by Carlo Pirovano, ed. (Milan: Gruppo Editoriale Electa, 1982). Mark Wigley examines the relationships between clothing, dress, and the development of modern architecture in *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995).

28 Loos, "Architektur" (1910) in *Sämtliche Schriften*, 303.

29 In a 1921 foreword to his first book of essays written between 1897 and 1900, Loos enlisted the authority of the philologist-folklorist Jakob Grimm in order to criticize the Gothic "Fraktur" script, and to explain why he had not capitalized any of the common nouns in his early essays. Loos regarded this German convention as a degenerate, "distorted fashion" of writing that produced a "purposeless proliferation of capital letters." See "Vorwort," *Sämtliche Schriften*: 10.

30 Loos, "Abendländische Kultur," "Was man Verkauft," *Das Andere*, n.1 (1903), pp. 1–3.

between country and city in a process that was equal parts political, economic, and cultural. In short, Loos embraced a view, according to the historian Benedetto Gravagnuolo, that included "a necessary presupposition for a gradual breaking down of the historical discrepancy between town and country," a trajectory of history that Loos felt was being followed in the New World. As something of a wide-eyed traveler from the Old World, Loos idolized the efficiency and practicality of American culture, claiming to sense something Hellenic in its spirit. While leading American architects and engineers in Chicago tackled the new problems of the age—the design of new machine tools, tall buildings, electrical wiring and lighting, and fireproofing—they were availing themselves of the same spirit that enabled classical architects to meet and surpass the technical challenges of their own time.[31] But back in the Old World, Loos wrote in *Das Anderer*,

> When you travel for an hour on the railway and then go on foot for another hour and enter a peasant's house, you meet people who are stranger than those who live a thousand miles away across the sea. We have nothing in common with them… they dress differently, their clothes strike us in the same way as those in the Chinese restaurant of an international exhibition, and their celebration of festivities arouses the same curiosity in us as if we were watching a procession in Ceylon. This is a shameful situation. There are millions of people in Austria who are excluded from the benefits of civilization.[32]

In essence, the model for restoring authenticity was to be found in old Europe's "other," in the New World and its pragmatism. Through the idolization of selected features of American culture—filtered through his stance toward the Old World—Loos constructed a foil for the ornamented, theatrical culture of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna. Using the theatrical feuilleton and the articles in his own journal, he exhorted the Viennese to embrace the present, and to rejuvenate an authentic Austrian character embalmed in ornamental frills.

Yet Loos's conflicting attitudes toward rural culture reveal an ambivalence toward traditional and modern peoples characteristic of many features of early twentieth-century modernism. In some articles, Loos treated the farmer, rural builder, and craftsman as the untainted preserver of an unspoiled crafts tradition—the embodiment of Rousseau's primitive ideal.[33] In other essays, however (and most notably in "Ornament and Crime"), he denigrated peasants as primitive and backward, equating them with tribal peoples whom most Western contemporaries regarded as inferior. If Papuans were "savages" in essays such as "Ornament and Crime," in "Architecture," written two years later in 1910, Loos announced: "I am preparing a new lecture: 'Why the Papuans Have a Culture While the Germans Do Not.'"[34] This sliding scale of cultural relativity

31 Loos, "Wiener Architekturfragen" (*Reichspost Morgenblatt*, October 1, 1910), *Sämtliche Schriften*: 299–300.

32 Loos, *Das Andere*. The translated quote is from Benedetto Gravagnuolo, *Adolf Loos: Theory and Works* (New York: Rizzoli, 1982), 44.

33 Adolf Loos, "Architektur" (1910), *Sämtliche Schriften*: 302–18.

34 Ibid., 303.

depended on Loos's consideration of different criteria of social development and economic activity, making different cultures seem alternately more primitive or more advanced. Recent scholarship by Mitchell Schwarzer and Patricia Morton has traced connections between Loos's thought and the currents of the social Darwinism of Herbert Spencer, the criminology of Cesare Lombroso, and the teleological anthropology of John Lubbock and the philosopher Condorcet before him. These thinkers, including Loos or his Viennese contemporary, Sigmund Freud, contributed to models of individual and societal development that progressed linearly from primitive savagery to modern civilization. This view was linked to a deep-rooted tradition of modern social scientific thinking that rested upon problematic assumptions of Western superiority.[35]

Ornament, Aphorism, and Crime

Loos carried many of the assumptions of modern social science into his design criticism. At the same time, he embellished these through the use of rhetorical techniques common among Viennese literary figures. Loos's criticism most frequently relied on the aphorism, a literary device closely allied with theatricality. As with the feuilleton and with the contours of Loos's thinking in general, the architect's aphoristic mode specifically locates him within a *fin-de-siècle* Viennese intellectual and cultural milieu. Once again the research of William Johnston on "The Vienna School of Aphorists" sheds light on the utility of a writing style known for removing the reader from his or her usual context—a precursor to the reconfiguring of the reader's reality through the arguments of the text.[36] Drawing on the biting wit of such contemporary Viennese authors as Arthur Schnitzler, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, and Karl Kraus, Loos exploited aphorisms as an ideal medium for radically dissembling, questioning, and reordering experience. They provide, moreover, a direct way of understanding his theory and criticism of culture.

A successful aphorism, in the view of students of this genre including William Johnston and J.A. Cuddon, expresses a kernel of wisdom in unconventional terms, addressing readers outside of their specific identities in the world. Aphorisms, in other words, reconfigure a reader's relationship to the commonplace or familiar. Aphorisms also tend to focus on moral rather than aesthetic considerations, furnishing the perfect technique for a writer intent on cultural reform. In commemorating Adolf Loos's death in 1933, architecture journals such as *Architectural Review* chose to publish a list of Loos's aphorisms as a provocative and entertaining "anthology" of the architect's outlook.[37] However, while Loos had observed many of the "chattier" conventions of judging taste in early feuilletons, he pushed the radical, perspective-altering potential of aphorisms to the limit in such essays as "Ornament and Crime" (1908) and "My School of Architecture" (1913).

35 Mitchell Schwarzer, "Ethnologies of the Primitive in Adolf Loos's Writings on Ornament," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 18 (1994): 225–47. For a useful discussion of Loos in the broader context of nineteenth-century German architectural theory, see Mitchell Schwarzer, *German Architectural Theory and the Search for Modern Identity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), especially 238-60; Patricia Morton, "Modern Architecture and Its Discontents: Loos and Le Corbusier on Ornament," (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the College Art Association, Toronto, February 1998).

36 William Johnston, "The Vienna School of Aphorists, 1880-1930: Reflections on a Neglected Genre" in Chapple and Schulte, eds. (see note 6), 275–90.

37 "Adolf Loos Anthology: Basic Principles," *Architectural Review* 76 (October 1934): 151. J.A. Cuddon discusses the aphorism in *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1977), 376–7.

Architectural theorist Beatriz Colomina has argued that Loos's writings participate in a storytelling tradition that, "like those of (Walter) Benjamin… have an almost biblical structure." Colomina further asserts that Loos's approach engages in a Benjaminian resistance to that "replacement of [an] earlier storytelling tradition by information, of information by sensation, (which) reflects the increasing atrophy of experience."[38] In my view, however, Loos's rhetoric goes far beyond that of resistance, placing him squarely within a *fin-de-siècle* Viennese cultural milieu. Loos's aphoristic mode bears relatively little relation to the tradition of Benjaminian Marxism. It exhibits, in fact, a constitutive dimension whose building blocks are contained within the aphoristic style. With theatrical gestures and aphoristic flourishes, such Loos essays as "Ornament and Crime" ridicule and dismantle the usual structure of sense by which the reader might reasonably expect to relate to the world.[39]

> To illustrate briefly, Loos begins the following way:
> The human embryo in the womb passes through all the evolutionary stages of the animal kingdom. When man is born, his sensory impressions are like those of a newborn puppy. His childhood takes him through all the metamorphoses of human history. At two, he sees with the eyes of a Papuan, at four, with those of an ancient Teuton, at six, with those of Socrates, at eight, with those of Voltaire.

After offering similar comments on color theory, tattoos, and the erotic nature of art, Loos makes his point:

> I have made the following discovery and I pass it on to the world: *The evolution of culture is synonymous with the removal of ornament from utilitarian objects* (emphasis original).[40]

The rest of Loos's essay issues similar decrees even as it overreaches. But into the rhetorical space opened up by this performative style, Loos advances a fairly sophisticated theory of culture—though one admittedly riddled with the cultural biases identified by Schwarzer and Morton. With respect to the crafts, trades, and building, Loos's writing advocates a combination of a selective historical consciousness with a sensitivity to present circumstances, which, together, form the cornerstone of his program for Viennese cultural modernization. Influenced by Nietzsche, this program called, on the one hand, for the retention of the best that the ancients had achieved in their time; on the other hand, it called for the use of "new" practices made available by contemporary technological innovations. Truly modern practices, in Loos's view, were continuous with the "spirit" of the modern practices of past eras which had understood themselves as modern.[41]

As observed at the beginning of this article, Stanford Anderson has argued that Loos's achievement consisted of developing a critical awareness of how competing conventions and prac-

38 Colomina, "On Adolf Loos and Josef Hoffman: Architecture in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in Max Risselada, ed., *Raumplan Versus Plan Libre* (New York: Rizzoli, 1988), 74.

39 Loos's "Ornament and Crime," in which his earlier arguments reach a kind of rhetorical crescendo, is the best example of this practice. Quoted in Ulrich Conrads, *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th-Century Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1970), 19–20.

40 Loos in Conrads, 19–20.

41 Loos's debts and similarities to Nietzschean "historical perspectivism" are developed in Taisto H. Makela, "Modernity and the Historical Perspectivism of Nietzsche and Loos," *Journal of Architectural Education* 44: 3 (May 1991): 138–43. For a brief discussion of other German-speaking architects' reception of Nietzsche, see Steven E. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany, 1890–1990* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1992), 33–4, 48; and also Fritz Neumeyer, *The Artless Word: Mies van der Rohe on the Building Art*, trans. by Mark Jarzombek (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 53–61, 87–93.

tice could constructively criticize one another.[42] Loos's writings, I would add, dismantle and reconstitute the reader's understanding within a dense narrative of aphorisms, hyperbole, and theatrical gestures. This writing style represents a radical abandonment of usual notions of narrative time. In so doing, this narrative structure bears some resemblance to Loos's program for simultaneous awareness of past and present in actual social practice. These rhetorical effects also could be said to embody elements of the same "highly differentiated subjectivity" which theorist K. Michael Hays points out has material analogues for Loos in the "insuperable partitions between languages of form." How this subjectivity translates into the everyday lives and practices of architects, designers, or users of buildings, however, is an issue that theorists including Hays still have to explain.[43]

The success of Loos's autonomous narrative logic, which I am suggesting embodied his theory of culture in form and content, derives in large part from the architect's participation in the Viennese milieu of theatricality. The leaders in this milieu formed a constellation of actors who assumed self-conscious roles for the express reason, it was felt, that dramatic personae could mount more effective attacks on Viennese culture. Thus, the wandering aphorist-poet and feuilletonist Peter Altenberg, one of Loos's closest friends, followed the motto "To live artistically," adapted from Nietzsche's *The Gay Science*. Altenberg's reputation and work has led the historian William Johnston to characterize the poet's café behavior, and live and written performances, as a "walking kaleidoscope of worldviews."[44] Karl Kraus, a complex figure who actually denigrated the feuilleton for its violation of his language-based ethics,[45] nevertheless admitted to writing his aphoristic journal, *Die Fackel*, "as an actor" whose utter conviction in the act of performing was meant to convert his masked persona into a "real identity."[46]

Adolf Loos clearly was part of this theatrical yet peculiarly sensitive Viennese culture. This was a culture in which, as William Johnston writes, "Experts at dissimulation, such as (Hermann) Bahr and (Peter) Altenberg, professed to find no fixity beneath a flux of sensations, while positivists, like (Sigmund) Freud and (Ernst) Mach, ferreted out natural laws behind a welter of detail."[47] Into this matrix can be added the perspectivism of Adolf Loos, whose views were meant to "inoculate" his students of architecture against the mindless copying of classicism. Thus, to Loos, "The present constructs itself on the past just as the past constructed itself on the preceding past. It has never been another way—nor will it ever be any other way."[48]

To conclude, Carl Schorske's classic work on *fin-de-siècle* Vienna characterizes this city as an "infinite whirl of innovation" in which modern ideas appeared against the background of a fading Habsburg Empire.[49] Yet many Viennese innovations contained significant continuities with the past, for example, in the debt that

42 Anderson, "Critical Conventionalism: The History of Architecture," *Midgard: Journal of Architectural Theory and Criticism* 1:1 (1990): 47.

43 K. Michael Hays, *Modernism and the Posthumanist Subject*, 62.

44 Edward Timms, *Karl Kraus: Apocalyptic Satirist*, 194. Johnston, *The Austrian Mind*, 123. For an in-depth documentary study of Altenberg, see Andrew Barker and Leo Lensing, *Peter Altenberg: Rezept die Welt zu Sehen* (Wien: Braumüller, 1995).

45 Johnston, *The Austrian Mind*, 122.

46 Edward Timms notes how much the aestheticized, conscious self-fashioning of Altenberg, Kraus, and (through Kraus) Loos owed to Oscar Wilde and Friedrich Nietzsche. Significantly for Loos's own crusade at the time, Kraus reprinted such Nietzschean aphorisms in a 1908 issue of *Die Fackel* in the definition of the artist as "a person for whom form is coextensive with content." This discussion of theatricality has benefited greatly from the analysis of Timms, 188–195.

47 Johnston, *The Austrian Mind*, 397.

48 Adolf Loos, "Meine Bauschule" (1913), in *Sämtliche Schriften*: 323.

49 Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, xix.

aphorisms owe to the romantic tradition of what is known as the literary "fragment." One prominent theory of late eighteenth-century German romanticism goes so far as to maintain that:

> The motif of the unification of the Ancient and Modern, as it appears so often in the fragments, always refers to the necessity of bringing about a rebirth of ancient naiveté according to modern poetry.[50]

A critical modern awareness is evident here in these eighteenth-century roots of the German-speaking world's aphoristic style, containing a conception of historical simultaneity and perspective that resurfaces through figures such as Nietzsche to influence the literature of Kraus and the writings, and even the book titles, of Adolf Loos. Following a century of modernization and fragmentation in the Habsburg Empire of the nineteenth century, Adolf Loos re-tapped these romantic roots at the opening of the twentieth century. His theory of modern culture, in fact, is nicely encapsulated by historian Jonathan Crary's characterization of the nineteenth century as a whole. He writes: "The destructive dynamism of modernization [in the nineteenth century] was also a condition for a vision that would resist its effects, a revivifying perception of the present caught up in its own historical afterimages."[51] Bounded as he was by his particular historical and cultural context, the figure of Adolf Loos reminds us that, in our own era, among the most arresting visions of modernity are those that transfigure the fragmentation of the present into an intelligible pattern, a pattern somehow continuous with a meaningful past.

50 Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*, trans. by Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988), 49.

51 Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 21.