The following articles were authored over the past two decades. Although some of the details have become irrelevant, the thrust of the articles continues to be germane.

"BACK IN THE U.S.S.R.: (OR THAT UKRAINE TYPE REALLY KNOCKS ME OUT)"

It's funny the way something suddenly looks good. I was recently shocked to find that a couple of terrific El Lissitzky and Rodchenko posters grace the pages of moldy art history books from my college days. In fact, there are Russian constructivist posters in all the poster collection books that I accumulated over thirteen years; but for some reason, I never really studied them until 1979.

I flipped by them when I was looking for Victorian inspiration. I ignored them when I was ripping off art nouveau and art deco designs.

I discovered El Lissitzky when I was heavily into my Cassandre phase. I remember flipping through *The Poster in History* and finding the black-and-white poster of a boy and girl whose heads were merging together. There was a giant red "U.S.S.R." running across their foreheads. "That's great!" I said.

At the moment I said "That's great!" I was back in the U.S.S.R. I knew I would look for more El Lissitzky posters and that I would incorporate the style into my own work.

I didn't say "That's great!" when I saw the poster in 1974. In 1974, I looked at the giant U.S.S.R. foreheads and said, "Too weird." If we want to predict future graphic trends, all we have to do is pick up poster books and tape-record our responses to various genres and periods. Here's what the responses mean:

That's great: what we are doing now or will be doing tomorrow, even though every client will reject it.

Nice: what we have been doing for the past three years, and what we will resort to when "That's great!" is rejected

Tired: what we have been doing for the past five years

Too weird: what we will be doing in five years

Too ugly: what we will be doing in ten years

It is no coincidence that around the time that I said "That's great!" to El Lissitzky, two Rodchenko books were published, followed by a big new Lissitzky book and *The Art of the October Revolution* and *Paris-Moscow* and *The Art of the Russian Avant-Garde*, plus the George Costinokos exhibition at the Guggenheim with the accompanying book, the Malevich book, etc. It was also no coincidence that many of my designer friends had gone Russian crazy at the same time. When 500 unrelated people say "That's great!" at the same time and incorporate the influence into their work, it constitutes a movement.

In analyzing our response to Russian constructivism, I'm convinced that we're responding to our political and economic climate in both emotional and practical terms. The work of the Russian constructivists represented the optimism of the Revolution and the Marxist utopian dream. But the late 1970s and the 1980s have been politically depressing times, a period of negativity, conservatism, and a general lowering of our personal and economic expectations. Constructivist work could make us feel we were creating a visual rebellion in inspired times. We could make a graphic statement that was visually strong although there was no justification for it. Another triumph of style over substance.

The practical aspect of constructivism is that it is cheap to do. A vigorous and "important-looking" graphic design can be had for the cost of typesetting and a few photostats.

The drawback to the constructivist design approach is that it is very difficult to sell. Firstly, the most logical use for it would be on jackets for Russian political books of that period.

Unfortunately, publishing editors find type on an angle very difficult to read. This means that a good Constructivist design is usually killed in favor of something "less complicated." Another editorial complaint is that it doesn't look "serious" enough. I confess that I don't understand this complaint. They were dead serious in 1917.

In four years and after umpteen attempts, I've had only three constructivist designs reach the printing press. Two were posters for a CBS Records promotion of *The Best of Jazz*. The problem was to get twenty big names on a poster, not spend any money, and have it look good enough to motivate record-store owners to hang it up.

The wonderful thing about being a designer in the music business is that nothing has to mean anything. That doesn't mean that it's easy being a music business designer. On the contrary. When I did the *Best of Jazz* posters in early 1980, the CBS Records marketing department didn't understand that I was being influenced by El Lissitzky. They were mostly concerned that the names be big and legible and that the posters be cheap. The marketing department thought the posters were a little weird stylistically, but that was OK because it made them new wave.

After the *Best of Jazz* posters came out, I began getting calls from the graphics community asking me to submit work to various new-wave shows. I would respond that I was not a new-wave designer, and then I would be asked specifically for the *Best of Jazz* poster.

How can something blatantly ripped off from 1917 be considered new wave?

Gene Greif, a designer who often displays constructivist influences in his work, told me recently that when he showed his portfolio two and three years ago, everyone said it was "too new wave." "Now," he tells me, "everyone says it's too postmodern."

I've never liked labels. Constructivism has certainly had an enormous impact on the way I design, but so has nearly every other movement in art history at different times.

It's 1983. I still think El Lissitzky is great, though sometimes I think he's merely nice. I think I only have one year left in the U.S.S.R.

"BACK TO SHOW AND TELL"

A year ago I relived an experience I had in my ninth grade Algebra II class. The occasion was a seminar on graphic-design education at the Maryland Institute of Art in which some practicing designers and design educators shared a common stage. The premise was sound: to generate debate between these factions. However, what resulted was disappointing. Instead of meaningful discussion and clear explanation, the design educators gave pompous presentations on the structures and curricula of their schools supported by pedantic visuals and charts. They spoke in jargon I've never used professionally and didn't understand. The lectures were so abstruse that I hadn't a clue as to what was going on in their schools. I wondered if the students did either.

The Algebra II syndrome (a compulsion to hum 1960s rock and roll and make spitballs) is my reaction whenever theoretics (theoretics as an end in itself) are applied to design. At Maryland, my feelings were compounded. The first was one of shame. That's what happens when I'm bombarded with incomprehensible language. Boredom follows shame: I tune out and squirm in my seat. Then I realize I'm really angry. Boredom is anger. I'm angry in this case because the speaker is supposed to be talking about graphic design, not quantum physics.

Semiotics was one of the favorite words bandied about the Maryland session. In fact,

some of the educators took great pride in the fact that their schools were breaking new ground in this area. If so, why couldn't any of them make the idea understandable? At the risk of losing anyone who has read this far, the following is the Webster's dictionary definition of semiotics: "a general philosophical theory of signs and symbols that deals especially with their function in artificially constructed natural language and comprises syntactics, semantics, and pragmatics."

How does it really apply to graphic design? I thought it would be fun to call seven of my favorite "award winning" designers and ask them to define semiotics. Four said they didn't know (one of them didn't want to know); two said that it may have something to do with symbols; and one said she knew but didn't want to answer. If one asks the same designers how a symbol works, they'll give articulate answers and use good examples to illustrate their points.

It's not just the exclusionary language that bothers me, but also the process of making more complex the difficult act of explaining graphic-design principles to would-be designers. Obviously, my reaction is based on a personal teaching style that might be termed "extended apprenticeship." Call it what you will—a style, method, or philosophy—it is a hands-on process that has produced tangible results.

In 1982, I was asked to teach graphic design to seniors at the School of Visual Arts, in New York. The media department has a loosely prescribed curriculum, with an emphasis on doing. There are few, if any, theoretical courses. The school hires working designers who represent a broad range of experiences and approaches. Hence the instructors are completely responsible for course content and are encouraged to teach what they know best. The students have a certain choice in what they take. After the foundation year, they audit classes to see whether they feel comfortable with the approach being taught.

When I first saw the work by the students entering my class, I thought that they were unprepared to enter the job market unless radical improvement occurred over the year. No amount of theoretical instruction would help. Therefore I created a series of complex assignments that were extensively critiqued. The challenge was to pinpoint what was wrong and show how it could be made better. My method was to use simple language and strong visual examples to illustrate my points. In effect, I became the client. But I also became a graphic fascist, disallowing typefaces, reordering elements, dictating style and content. The students were forced to design and redesign, yet in the process of following these directives, they made their own discoveries, which had surprising results.

The approach I instinctively used was the old apprentice method. Do what I do, and watch it come out your way. This method requires total commitment. The teacher must "give it all away" (style, conceits, tricks), or the premise won't work. It's sometimes threatening. It can be intimidating to watch as a student easily accomplishes something it took me fifteen years to master. But in the end and in a relatively short amount of time, some potentially good professionals emerged.

At the Maryland Institute seminar, one educator presented a chart that showed the spiraling growth of students as they absorbed the design theories of successive courses culminating in graduation—meaning the students were qualified to enter the profession. What hogwash! There was no mention of talent. All the theory in the world cannot replace talent. Talented students can overcome any form of education unless they've been bored out of the profession.

I abhor the charade of the Maryland session. These academicians, I believe, have created design speak to give credence to the profession because they're embarrassed that it was once called "commercial art." Is it necessary to indoctrinate students with jargon just to compensate for a sense of professional inferiority?

"THE RIGHT FACE"

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Let's face it: We're living in an era of style over substance. Every day we are going to be asked to give something "a look."

I've been asked to give things all different kinds of looks, but very often I've had difficulty figuring out what kind of look the client is describing. The problem is language. In initial meetings, the client would talk about "concept development." I naively went off and came up with concepts, until I found out that "concept development" meant "the look." Another mistake I made was the use of the word style. I would talk about employing a style, as in "the style of tin-metal signs," or discuss a specific period style, such as Jugendstil or constructivism. I found that my clients didn't know what I was talking about. Firstly, they preferred the word look to the word style. Secondly, they had to see a picture of the style so they could grasp it within their own vernacular ("Art deco looks sort of like that postmodern stuff and is a little bit high-tech and would be good for yuppie audiences").

After seven years of trial and error, I have deciphered a style code. What follows is a guide to "the look" and how you make it, plus a list of common complaints and how to improve upon them.

High-tech: matte-black background, white or primary-colored sans serif type, slightly letterspaced, small geometric shapes incorporated with graph-paper motif

Postmodern: sans serif or serif type (small); one box, one triangle, one circle in salmon, gray-green, or turquoise; cream, white, or light gray background

High-tech/Postmodern: same as postmodern except change background to matte black and change geometric shapes to primary colors

New Wave Generic: sans serif type in different weights and heights, with italics intermittently dispersed; minimum of two ripped pieces of paper, one triangle (right triangle, not isosceles; long, skinny, right triangle preferred; use hot pink, lime green, and black; never use beige

New Wave Yale: same as new wave generic except change ripped paper to vertical parallel lines (preferably at an angle) and use different weights of Univers

New Wave West Coast: same as new wave Yale except add photographic images in boxes or silhouettes; suggested imagery: one to three eyes, one television set, one telephone

New Wave/Postmodern: same as postmodern except change gray-green to bright lime, change salmon to hot pink, add ripped paper, and enlarge triangle.

New Wave/Postmodern/High-Tech: same as new wave/postmodern except make background matte, take out ripped paper, add graph-paper grid

Classic: serif type (Bodonis, Caslons, Garamonds), lots of white space, white or cream background

Funky: same as new wave generic but all elements are bigger

Gritty: any of the above styles without any design sensibility such as color, form, or scale

New York or Downtown New Wave: same as gritty but use new wave generic elements

Understated: same as classic only use eight-point Garamond

L.A.: same as new wave West Coast but use turquoise and flamingo pink as predominant colors

Complaints and Remedies

Too new wave: remove one piece of ripped paper.

Too funky: make everything smaller.

Too understated: make everything bigger.

Too L.A.: remove turquoise.

Too classic: add one circle and one square.

Too clever: remove inadvertent idea.

Too cute: remove inadvertent idea.

Too smart: remove deliberate idea.

"THE DARK IN THE MIDDLE OF THE STAIRS"

One morning, my snotty twenty-two-year-old assistant danced into the studio and informed me that he had gone to the opening of some graphic design competition and that I only had one piece in the show.

"Was it a good show?" I asked. "Yeah, it was OK," he said. "There was a lot of work from a guy in Iowa who sort of looks like Duffy Design." I harrumphed and muttered, "Too much style and no substance."

I've been muttering "too much style and no substance" frequently for the past several years. I love muttering it, and I hear all kinds of people I respect and admire mutter it. Our great designer "institutions" mutter it a lot. I've noticed that it's usually muttered in relation to designers who are younger than the mutterer. "Too much style and

no substance" is often coupled with "flash in the pan" as a way of describing hot young designers who get more than one piece in a design show.

What a wonderful way to demean youth! "Too much style" helps us conceal that nagging inkling we have that our own work may be out of style, and "no substance" convinces us that our potentially dated work is somehow more meaningful, rendering style irrelevant. Sometimes it is even true.

But what all this muttering denies is the great excitement in finding and creating style, that thrill in putting the pieces together in a way that looks new and fresh, if not to the design community at large then at least to ourselves. These are the kind of discoveries we generally make early in our careers, when each design is a new experience for us, when problem solving seems more experimental and some of our solutions may be true breakthroughs. This is when we are building and expanding the graphic vocabulary that will probably serve us for the rest of our careers, when we are establishing our rules and parameters, and breaking them, and reestablishing them.

I've always felt that a design career is like a long, surreal staircase. At the bottom, the risers are steep, and the landings are short. One makes long leaps of discovery at the bottom in a relatively short period of time—a step a year, or two, and sometimes even one great leap to the middle of the stairs. Then, suddenly, the risers become shallow and the landings lengthen. We trudge along the same endless plateau, and the scenery doesn't change. The light becomes dim around us, but there are sudden flashes back in the distance from the bottom of the steps. We don't dare turn around to look because we might lose our footing. Worse yet, the flashes seem ominous, hostile, like a potential fire that could burn up the whole staircase.

If only we could scamper to the top with the ease with which we loped to the middle. Instead we take baby steps and mutter, "Too much style and no substance," because we learned that line from higher-ups when we were hot young flashes at the bottom.

Very often, when we look at the work of our great graphic-designer institutions, we find that so much of their truly important, innovative work was produced over a relatively short period of time: five years, ten years, flashes in the pan. Then there seems to be a leveling. Maybe these institutions never made it to the top of the staircase but were merely inching along some other plateau in the dark. Maybe there is no top, just shorter risers and longer plateaus that go on forever.

Plateaus are actually very comfortable, because it takes less energy to move. The problem is the dark. Perhaps the solution is to step aside and allow a flash to trot by. With a little light from that torch, we may find the next step.

"RASHOMON IN THE RECORD BUSINESS"

Last winter, Milton Glaser called me to ask if I would prepare a talk for a conference about the history of the cover department of CBS Records. He was specifically interested in the rise of power in the marketing department and how it affected the design of record covers. He suggested that I trace record-cover design back to its birth fifty years ago and create a case study of a corporation, illustrating the increased influence of marketing over the years.

Now, I hate marketing. Somehow it wheedles its way into everything I do, enforcing guar-

anteed mediocrity. I clearly remember beautiful cover illustrations biting the dust at CBS Records, only to be replaced—always due to the influence of the marketing department—with trite photos of overweight musicians who were uncomfortable in front of the camera. So I began my research.

The very first call I made was to the newly appointed East Coast art director Chris Austopchuk, who had worked as a designer at CBS Records when I held his job. I enthusiastically recited the premise of my proposed speech while he listened in silence. Then he icily replied that while that may be my view of CBS Records, it certainly wasn't his and that my talk made it sound like design at CBS Records had gone downhill, while in his view it was better than ever.

I couldn't initially understand why Chris would defend the marketing department. But of course he wasn't. He was defending himself.

I was then persona non grata with the CBS Records art department, and since I couldn't expose the evils of marketing with the present, I'd have to rely on the past. Over the course of this year, I have conducted a series of conversations and interviews with the past heads of the CBS Records art department and some of the designers who served under them.

A peculiar thing began to happen. None of the stories really connected. There seemed to be no thread. It was as if each reigning art director had existed in a space and time that was totally his own. Rules changed; corporate personality changed. It was *Rashomon*.

For those of you who have never seen it, *Rashomon* is a film by the Japanese director Akira Kurosawa, produced in 1951. The film is set in eighth-century Japan and centers around an alleged rape and murder as told by witnesses. Each witness gives his or her version of the same story, but the stories are totally different, each affected by the person's point of view.

Alex Steinweiss graduated in 1934 from Abraham Lincoln High School, where he had been trained by Leon Friend. Steinweiss was granted a scholarship to Parsons School of Design and in 1937 began his career as an assistant to Joseph Binder. Shortly thereafter, he started freelancing. In 1939 he got a telephone call from Doc Leslie saying that CBS had just bought a record company and that they were setting up an advertising department and would need an art director. An appointment was set up with the new advertising manager, Patrick Dolan. Steinweiss was hired. It was a thrilling development in his life because he would be doing creative work, and the work would be connected with music, which he loved.

Steinweiss was responsible for creating a visual image for the new company and was given a free hand in the design of catalogs, mailing pieces, posters, letterheads, and finally the design of album covers. The 78 rpm records were packaged in plain gray or tan folders, with the name of the album simply positioned on the cover in black or gold. Steinweiss thought this was no way to present a beautiful thing to the public, so he began designing bright, colorful, posterlike covers. Originally management balked because of the increased production cost, but when sales jumped 800 percent with the first release, they got enthusiastic. By 1943, Steinweiss had a staff of four or five designers, including James Flora and Bob Jones, plus ten writers and other specialists.

During the war, in 1944, Steinweiss joined a unit of the navy that produced training ads for sailors. It was located in New York, and he continued to design album covers for CBS on a freelance basis. His hours for the navy were from 8 A.M. to 4 P.M., and then he'd go home and work on album covers until 11 or 12 at night. He'd mail the comps up to CBS in Bridgeport, where his former assistants would do the finished art for reproduction. After the war, he set up a freelance design office in his apartment and was retained by Ted Wallerstein, president of CBS Records, as a design consultant.

In 1948, he witnessed the birth of the Columbia LP record and designed the record jacket, which is still in use today for this product. He patented it, released the patent to CBS, and found the manufacturer, Imperial Paper Box Corporation, which was willing to invest about $250,000 in new equipment to produce it. Not long after, in 1953, Wallerstein had a serious disagreement with William Paley, the chairman of CBS. His contract was bought up, and he was out.

Steinweiss learned that Goddard Lieberson, who had come into the company the same year that Steinweiss had and for the same salary—$65 per week—had been named president. Lieberson and Steinweiss were old friends, having worked on a myriad of record releases over the years. When Steinweiss went to see him, Lieberson said, "Who's going to protect you, now that your buddy Ted Wallerstein is out?" Steinweiss said, "The quality of my work is the only protection I need!"

Steinweiss adds that the newly appointed art director, Neil Fujita, got rid of him within the next month.

The package Alex Steinweiss invented was later known in the trade as the "wrap-pack." It was printed on pieces of paper that were pasted on a board backing. In the late 1960s, the shore-pack was introduced, for which the image was printed directly on a board and folded into the package. CBS Records still manufactures wrap-packs. The manufacturer is still Imperial Paper Box Corporation.

I told Steinweiss that a lot of my talk here would center on the rise in power of the CBS Records marketing department. He seemed puzzled, then he said, "Oh, you mean sales!"

"That's it."

"Those sales guys came in, like Goddard Lieberson. Real Seventh Avenue types!"

This is a picture of Goddard Lieberson. As vice president and then president of CBS Records, he would have a powerful effect on the direction of the company and its graphics until his death in 1977.

Neil Fujita was working for N. W. Ayer in Philadelphia when he was hired to become the first in-house art director of CBS Records. He was recommended to Goddard Lieberson, who was executive vice president at the time, by Bill Golden, CBS's famous corporate art director.

I asked Neil Fujita whom he had replaced at CBS Records, and he said, "No one. There was only an advertising manager, and he stayed in place."

Fujita said that he had to develop a department from nothing. This began by upsetting the arrangements that freelance designers and studios had with the company because he had been hired gradually to do all the design internally. He started with a secretary. Within a period of three years, the department grew to six or seven designers and mechanical artists; by the end of six years, he had nearly fifteen on staff. He started by doing all the record covers for Columbia Records and Epic Records plus the promotional work. Some advertising was done before an ad agency was retained. He worked very closely with sales and A&R.

He started by working in Bridgeport, Connecticut, at the company's plant and had to learn how a record was made and how records were packaged and mailed. He began designing the company's identity and everything related to that identifying image. Several months later, he moved to New York and began to sort out all the record labels under CBS. Fujita developed a new look for CBS packaging by calling in new and young photographers, designers, and illustrators, who offered a broad variety of solutions.

Neil Fujita says that he served as art director from 1954 to 1957, then left for a year to establish his own business. Roy Kuhlman replaced him but was fired after one year. Then Fujita returned to CBS and remained until 1960. He told me that he had been asked by Goddard Lieberson to return until Lieberson could find a suitable replacement. Roy Kuhlman says he was hired at CBS in 1954 and fired in 1955. Alex Steinweiss says that Fujita was hired in 1953. Bob Cato says that he was hired in 1959 and that Fujita was fired in 1959.

After talking to Roy Kuhlman about his CBS tenure, I called back Neil Fujita to try to straighten out the discrepancies in their stories. Fujita said, "You know, Paula, someone once told me the higher you get, the more people you have looking at your behind!"

Still later, Neil Fujita came to visit me in my studio. He talked about the department he built and the designers he hired: Peter Adler, Bob Sullivan, Ken Deardoff, George Gecomba, Marty Moskoff, and Clara Gentry. He told me that he was the art director who initiated the policy of putting the type in the top third of the record cover so it would be displayed properly. This rule has been record-business dogma ever since.

I asked him about the marketing department, and he said, "Oh, you mean sales! Yes, they were involved, but I had no problem with them. That stuff came later!"

Fujita did remember two of the freelance studios that he replaced. "There was a studio called Monogram, and there was another guy named Art Schlosser."

Roy Kuhlman: 1954–55

Roy Kuhlman was the art director hired to replace Neil Fujita for one fateful year. Fujita said that he had originally recommended Art Kane, but Kane didn't want to do it and suggested that Fujita hire Roy Kuhlman, who was a young art director who did a lot of good work for Grove Press.

Kuhlman remembers that Fujita called and said he was going to recommend him for his job because he was planning to leave CBS Records. He asked Roy if he wanted it.

Roy said, "Want it? Ye gods! Want it? I thought I was going to have to bump someone off to get a shot at something like this…to get paid for doing album jackets!"

So he put on his best Phil's Men's Shop suit, and Fujita ushered him into the baroque office of Goddard Lieberson. Kuhlman was properly awed by the salary offered but succeeded in hiding the fact. He was not awed by the dinky, scrungy bull-pen they told him was his new office. It looked very much like what he imagined the owner of a sweatshop in the Garment District might call an office.

Fujita let Kuhlman in on the budgets: total $300 per, all-inclusive. That meant all: artwork, type, stats, and mechanicals. But that didn't bother Kuhlman; he'd been doing Grove Press covers for a third of that. He felt like a tycoon. He hired a secretary and got it out in the grapevine that he wanted to see portfolios.

He was getting along just jim-dandy with sales by using Kuhlman's law: listening to what they had to say, then doing it his way, later convincing them it was the right way for the job. He didn't remember showing designs to recording artists. Somebody may have, but Kuhlman was blissfully unaware of it. The only artist he met in the flesh was a new one they'd just signed on by the name of Johnny Mathis.

Kuhlman was often asked to design flyers for the sales department, usually 6,000 titles for the record club, in a one-page format. His designs were too simple for sales, and they quickly went back to their agency. Some of the records needed special inserts for musical comment or biographical notes, so he hired a hot young designer named Ivan Chermayeff to handle the promotional things.

It was almost a year to the day since he was hired, and he was still having a ball. The sales department was well trained, and the budget was balanced, when he got a call to see Lieberson.

"Roy, I'm afraid I've got some bad news for you. I'm afraid we're going to have to let you go." This was quite a surprise, and Roy asked, "Has anyone had any complaints about my performance as art director?"

"No, Roy. That's not the reason," Lieberson said. "Neil Fujita wants his job back, and we feel obligated to give it to him."

Kuhlman's epilogue to this story was that Neil Fujita had left to start his own studio, and Kuhlman had not given that studio very much work because he didn't like their portfolio.

I was surprised to find out that Ivan Chermayeff had worked for CBS Records, and I called to get his recollection of the time. He remembered a bizarre thing that had happened. He was hired by Roy Kuhlman to work on promotional things, but when he turned up for his first day of work, he found out that Kuhlman had just been fired. Chermayeff said he ended up working for Neil Fujita. He described working on promotional booklets that ran as long as sixteen pages with no time for layout or design, and he specified type by intuition. He described many of the covers produced at the time as real garbage—an ugly portrait of Johnny Mathis and a line of type. Young Chermayeff lasted about six months at CBS Records before he quit.

I asked him what the allure of record covers was in those days. He said, "They were bigger than book jackets!"

Bob Cato: 1959–68 and John Berg: 1960–84

Bob Cato told me that he originally met Goddard Lieberson in 1949. Lieberson wanted to package a special twelve-record set of contemporary authors reading the spoken word. Mitch Miller, the powerful head of A&R in the 1950s and 1960s, had recommended Cato to Lieberson. There was an instant rapport between Lieberson and Cato, and Lieberson, a mere vice president at that time, told Cato he would hire him when he became president of the company.

I don't understand why he had to wait to become president in order to hire Cato, because he seemed to be capable of hiring and firing art directors all through the fifties; but he did in fact hire Bob Cato right after he was named president.

Cato also told me that he had to put together an art department quickly because, in his words, "There wasn't much there."

One thing that's troubled me throughout my research is that every art director so far, including Cato, had to run out and set up a completely new art department. There was never anything there. Where did it all go?

The department Cato built was called Creative Services, which included packaging, promotion, publicity, and advertising design. This department remains pretty much intact today and is still called Creative Services.

Cato describes himself as a "music freak." His two passions are art and music. He attended the Chicago Art Institute and was also a student of Alexei Brodovitch. Cato had done stints at *Junior Bazaar* and *Harper's Bazaar* before being hired by Lieberson. He was phenomenally social and charming. His demeanor was one of a tall, elegant hipster, sophisticated and chic. Goddard Lieberson had cast the perfect art director.

Cato's initial graphic input was in advertising. He hired Richard Avedon and Irving Penn to shoot big, glossy celebrity ads. He believed the recording artists should become more involved in their album covers. Barbra Streisand was the first recording artist actually to come in and move around type. Cato loved it. Streisand loved it. Lieberson loved it. A trend was set that would become expensive, annoying, and irreversible.

CBS Records at that time made its money on big-selling musicals, like *My Fair Lady*, and popular mainstream artists, such as Johnny Mathis and Ray Conniff. Lieberson allowed the classical division to lose money as long as the pop division supported it. Lieberson was building an image of himself and CBS Records in the CBS corporate mold: a classy company that produces a public-worthy product but is not above putting out a lot of garbage for the quick buck. CBS was proud of their classical division, called Masterworks, and their jazz artists, like Miles Davis. John Hammond, a brilliant A&R man, had recorded Billie Holiday and Bessie Smith, and later discovered Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen.

Cato hired John Berg, a graduate of Cooper Union who was working as the art director of *Escapade* magazine. Cato was the guru, the troubleshooter, and the political schmoozer, and Berg ran the nuts and bolts of the operation. Berg did not have Cato's savoir faire, nor was he particularly comfortable with recording artists; but Cato loved them and smoothed out the rough edges. Berg liked winning awards and finding talent, and he excelled in both areas. Over the next twenty years, he would hire a slew of young designers, among them Henrietta Condak, Virginia Team, Ron Coro, Ed

Lee, Richard Mantel, Tony Lane, Nancy Donald, Anne Garner, Lloyd Ziff, John Crocker, Karen Lee Grant, Allen Weinberg, Teresa Alfieri, Gerry Huerta, Andy Engle, Carin Goldberg, Gene Grief, Chris Austopchuk, and me. He and his designers would also rack up a steady stream of awards for the cover department, which would enhance its reputation and glamour.

The Cato/Berg marriage set a perfect condition for exploratory design. Cato created harmony both within the corporation and with the recording artists. The art department was expected to be creative. This resulted in making the CBS Records packaging department one of the real hot spots in New York, with a line around the block filled with young designers, illustrators, and photographers all clamoring to get a crack at the big graphic lollipop. The record cover was king.

This didn't mean that there still wasn't garbage. There was a lot of it; there was still the Johnny Mathis and Ray Conniff cover. Later, heavy-metal rock would become the garbage cover. There was the garbage country and western cover and the garbage R&B cover. Anything was potentially garbage, but anything was also potentially good. There was simply a lot of everything, with plenty of room for tremendous success and terrible failure.

In 1968, four major events took place that would begin to change the company forever. Lieberson was promoted into the corporate arena, and Clive Davis, a company lawyer, was named president. Lieberson had become convinced during the sixties that CBS Records had to become a rock-and-roll company.

Contrary to legend, it was Lieberson, not Clive Davis, who initiated CBS's presence at the Monterey Pop Festival in 1968, which led to the signing of Janis Joplin, Sly Stone, and the Byrds—but Clive Davis took the credit.

Cato hated Davis. To Cato, Davis was "pure sleaze" and unworthy of Lieberson's position. Apparently the feeling was mutual. Almost from the day he became president, Davis began meddling with Cato's ads. Cato quit.

John Berg inherited Cato's job, but Berg didn't want to be responsible for advertising. He suggested that Creative Services be split into two separate divisions: promotion and packaging. Promotion was given to Arnold Levine, who had designed ads under Cato. Berg kept packaging.

CBS Records first hired me in the promotion department in 1971, three years after Creative Services split. I worked for Arnold Levine. I was there for two and a half years and never had any idea that promotion and packaging had ever been one department. The two departments were on the same floor at Black Rock. Both sides were filled with designers, but an icy wall existed between the two. The packaging department was the glory department, and the promotion department was the cootie department. Clive Davis rewrote almost every ad. I left and went to Atlantic Records, where I began designing record covers. John Berg hired me back to CBS exactly one year later, after my cooties had been sufficiently removed.

Along with the major changes of 1968 came the invention of something called "product management." Product managers were designed to be liaisons between the recording artist and the company. They became the core of the marketing department. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, product managers were nice hippies who had majored in liberal arts in college and liked to hang around with rock bands. In the early 1980s, product managers were nice yuppies who had majored in business in college and liked to hang around with rock bands. Some of them knew an enormous amount about music, and a few of them actually had very good ideas for record covers.

Clive Davis never really bothered Berg, but some product managers did. Berg threw them out of his office. But most product managers were in awe of Berg because they had grown up with his record covers.

In 1972, there was drug scandal in the Columbia label's A&R department. Clive Davis may or may not have been implicated, but he was fired for using corporate funds to pay for his son's bar mitzvah. The whole public scandal tainted the relationship between CBS Records and CBS corporate, which would steadily worsen over the years.

For a year, someone from CBS corporate managed CBS Records, and then Bruce Lundvall was appointed president. Lundvall had grown up in the records division. He was a Lieberson man. He loved the cover department and John Berg.

The seventies were an incredible time for the record industry. One year of profits was bigger than the next. CBS Records seemed to sell anything it shipped to the stores. The company grew layered and fat. Departments got restructured and restructured again. Berg got older while the rest of the company got younger. Product managers cut their hair and became vice presidents. Creative Services became part of something called Central Core Marketing, which was headed by a vice president of merchandising, who reported to the vice president of sales. The vice president of merchandising changed three times in two and a half years. Two of them were promoted to vice president of something else. The packaging department became larger also. Branches had opened in Nashville and Los Angeles.

Above all this was Bruce Lundvall, who still loved his art department, which was now referred to as the "famous award-winning packaging department."

Berg was untouched by the new maze of corporate hierarchy. He had become a perma-nent fixture at CBS Records and an institution, and had direct access to the president regardless of the maze.

Goddard Lieberson died of cancer in 1977. He had been ill throughout the seventies. All of the major vice presidents attended the funeral, but the majority of the people who then worked for CBS Records were unmoved. Most had been hired after 1968 and had no idea who Goddard Lieberson was.

In 1979, CBS Records, which had experienced nothing but continual growth in sales and size for twenty-five years, crashed. For the first time, records were returned from the stores in huge amounts. There was a recession. Blank cassettes were outselling records. Kids were taping from the radio and spending their pocket money on video games. CBS Records, once a huge profit center for CBS corporate, for the first time did not make its sales expectations.

There is nothing more horrific within a corporation than the climate of fear that exists in a time of massive layoffs. At CBS, the layoffs came in waves every six months, then more frequently. They were known as "Black Fridays." CBS Records was scaling down. They closed plants; they closed branches; they fired secretaries and merged departments. Bruce Lundvall was demoted and quit. Another president was hired and fired and replaced with one even scarier than the last. It was like a burning office building. One didn't know whether to jump out the window or stay and get burned. John Berg got burned in 1984. The merchandising vice president decided to merge packaging and promotion back together, with himself as manager, and appointed Holland McDonald, who then ran the promotion department, to be the head art director on the East Coast.

I jumped out the window in 1982. In the midst of horrific corporate fear, I was having endless battles with the marketing department.

If I had not spent the past six months researching and remembering CBS Records, I would have told you that marketing considerations overpowered everything, killed creativity, and destroyed the Cato/Berg art department. I am beginning to realize that marketing in the abstract has nothing to do with anything and never really did at CBS Records, either.

There were no market-research surveys. Testing was tried once and then abandoned. There were no demographic studies. There were only people. People in something called the "marketing department." People in something called the "merchandising department." People in something called "sales." Too many people in a corporation that had ballooned too quickly. People afraid. People looking to impress other people. People grappling for power or survival, always in the name of something else.

The cover department lost power because the art director no longer had the firm and loyal support of the president of the company.

Holland McDonald and Arnold Levine

Holland McDonald was given the job of uniting two departments that hated each other. He set up a system in which each designer worked on everything from the record cover to the smallest ad. The advertising designers liked this, and the cover designers hated this. Some of the cover designers quit, and McDonald replaced them. McDonald reported to the merchandising vice president, who didn't particularly support him, so the designers were run ragged by increasingly aggressive product managers who reported to a very aggressive president named Al Teller.

The art directors of the West Coast and Nashville offices reported to both the merchandising vice president and a finance person. They were geographically distanced from

the New York office and did not suffer the same political problems.

CBS Records' sales position had improved dramatically with the help of MTV, the new technology of compact discs, and the phenomenal performance of superstars like Michael Jackson.

In 1986, Al Teller moved the vice president of merchandising to the purchasing department and then moved him out of the building and into the Nashville office. Teller then hired Arnold Levine to head up Creative Services. Levine had been the head of the promotion department under Clive Davis and Bruce Lundvall but was fired during one of the Black Friday purges in the early eighties and was replaced by Holland McDonald. Al Teller restructured Creative Services by pulling it out of the merchandising department, which reported to the sales department. Arnold Levine reported directly to the president of the company.

Holland McDonald didn't want to work for Arnold Levine again, so he quit. So did some other designers. Arnold Levine replaced them. By all accounts, the political clout of the art department has grown stronger under Arnold Levine.

CBS Records was sold to Sony in 1988, but the designers say that it hasn't noticeably changed anything.

Shortly after CBS Records was sold to Sony, Al Teller was fired and replaced. The new president is still there at this moment.

None of the designers I spoke to knew who Alex Steinweiss was. No one knew that Neil Fujita designed the logo they put on their record packages. No one thought that it was particularly odd that they didn't know. Like everyone else before them, including me, they exist in their own space and time at CBS Records, ignorant of the past and oblivious of the future.

Currently compact discs outsell records by more than three to one. The expectation is that LP records will be discontinued altogether in

one to three years. Masterworks has already begun discontinuing LPs. The whole Masterworks operation is being moved to Germany. I have been told that the new German management was appalled to discover how much input American designers had in the creation of classical record covers.

The long rectangular CD package was developed by Adam Summers, a creative director at Warner Communications. It is roughly the same size as a book jacket. The rectangular CD box became the industry standard in 1985, but CBS Records is presently planning to discontinue the package in favor of shrink-wrapping the plastic CD case.

In four to six years, compact discs that are three inches in diameter will be introduced. Their covers will be considerably smaller than book jackets.

I feel a certain absurdity in the knowledge that I have spent half of my adult life designing something that is about to become an antique.

But how fortunate we all are to be graphic designers and make these tangible objects—a piece of paper, a folded board—because long after all the power regimes rise and fall, rise and fall again, all that remains that is certain and true is our work. And the work speaks for itself.

"THE DEVALUATION OF DESIGN BY THE DESIGN COMMUNITY: I HAVE SEEN THE ENEMY, AND HE IS US"

What's wrong with this picture?

The Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum selected five designers in a paid competition (base price $1,000, though some reportedly got more) to create a new identity for the museum. The winner was then awarded the job.

I.D. Magazine considered a number of designers for its redesign and asked at least one of them to provide comps on spec but did not award him the job.

The Industrial Designers Society of America (IDSA) contacted three or more design firms requesting a "proposal" for its new identity package even though it was a pro bono job, because they didn't want to show favoritism. They received some critical responses from some of the design groups they had approached, rescinded their policy, and awarded one firm the unpaid job.

The American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA), which assigned its annual jacket to a designer on a pro bono basis (plus $1,000 to cover expenses), decided that the jacket was too important a marketing tool to rely on what the designated designer submitted. The institute changed its policy and requested a minimum of three sketches from the chosen designer while the assignment remained pro bono, and the expense money remained $1,000.

All of these events occurred in the last year and a half. In that same time period, MTV, a winner of the AIGA Design Leadership Award, asked twenty designers and illustrators to create political art for the cause of their choice, to be aired at the MTV Video Music Awards ceremony and to be printed in the program. The artists were requested to produce the art for a fee of $500, which would be donated to any charity they designated, with MTV matching the donation. (MTV is owned by Viacom, which is currently locked in the Paramount take over battle.)

Each organization operated with apparently altruistic motives, inspired by the design community itself. In three cases, the organizations are not-for-profit and rely on funds given by the communities they support. They are aware that many designers would love to work on their

projects for prestige or exposure or the opportunity to produce award-winning graphics, and they emphasize this as the selling point of the free work. In fact, with so many designers available and eager to work for so little, they probably feel the need to be fair about it and spread the opportunity around. When one considers this, it's not surprising that MTV would follow in kind with the added kicker of political-cause affiliation. And suddenly Seagram's has developed a similar attitude toward its annual report, which it touts as a "marvelous opportunity for exposure with cachet for any good designer." They asked three firms to compete and produce several ideas on spec.

These events can be blamed on the economy or on the overpopulation of the design community or, when one gets really far-fetched, on young designers using computers. If one is employed by an educational or other institution, a corporation, a publication, or an organization that supports, promotes, or is allied with graphic design in some way but does not rely on a paying clientele other than designers for survival, one can ignore these events altogether and assume they speak only to the commercially competitive concerns of design firms. Unfortunately, they speak to all of us. They are the symptom of a design community contemptuous of itself, a community so splintered by social, political, academic, sexual, regional, and aesthetic factionalism that it has lost sight of its original collective goals.

When I first became active in the AIGA in the 1970s, its goals were very clear: to promote, protect, and document the profession of graphic design and to encourage, support, and recognize quality work. What made the AIGA especially appealing was its stated tenet: the AIGA was about design, not designers. The belief was that by elevating the profession of graphic design, the AIGA would also elevate design value

to the American business and civic communities and thereby improve the visual standards and expectations of our society. The notion of value here had very little to do with money. Money is only one American symbol of value. The AIGA was interested in the power of the design profession, the ability of good graphic designers to become powerful enough individually and collectively to persuade cumbersome bureaucracies that good design is good business and good for society. How to do it? Organize a national community of designers. Publish. Involve the educational community. Alert the press. Create a journal, develop dialogue and criticism. Record history. Stage a national conference. Create professional practice guidelines. Encourage press coverage. Create awareness.

The events and activities of the design community in the 1980s and 1990s remind me of almost every boxing movie I've ever seen. The young idealistic fighter who has trained hard, has good family values, and a nice girl back home hooks up with a ne'er-do-well promoter with mob ties, who quickly pushes the young boxer to fame and fortune so heady and corrupt that our hero forgets his early family values one by one. He dumps the girl back home, compromises his principles, breaks his immigrant father's heart, and finally breaks his fingers, so he can neither fight nor play the violin. Moral of the story: Don't forget your values.

In the eighties, the design community witnessed the great rise of "professionalism" (now a euphemism for the production of non-innovative but stylishly acceptable work—usually in corporate communications—coupled with very good fees). Along with "professionalism" came the "business consultant to the designers," who proclaimed, "Design is a business." This became the mantra of the eighties. The AIGA, along with other organizations and publications, produced seminars, conferences, and

special magazine issues devoted to the business of design. These were followed by a plethora of design self-help books, which told you how to set up your own business, how to promote, how to speak correct business jargon, how to dress, how to buy insurance, and so on.

There was nothing inherently wrong with this except for the subsequent confusion it caused. "Professional" work did look more professional, and corporate communications in general were visually improved. The level of design mediocrity rose. Also, practicing designers as a rule had previously been rather sloppy about running their businesses. They were easily taken advantage of, didn't know how to construct proposals, and were generally more interested in designing than in minding the store, networking, or planning for the future. The business seminars did no harm, but the political and economic climate of the eighties in general, coupled with the pervasiveness of the "design is a business" hype, perverted the design community's overall goal. The goal became money.

How and *Step-by-Step Graphics* magazines were born in this climate. Both publications explained how to be a professional graphic designer. A young reader could learn how to set up a design business, how to furnish it, how to buy equipment, how to make a design and sell it to a client, and how to do award-winning work just as the rich and famous designers featured in the magazine did.

It was not surprising that enrollments at colleges with halfway decent design programs shot up in the eighties. Graphic design had become a viable profession, with the promise of glamour and success. In the 1950s and 1960s, graphic design had been a relatively obscure profession, largely undocumented and poorly reported. As a profession it seemed risky, populated by talented mavericks, and not a place

where a person could count on making a living. The publications of the eighties changed all that. If the goal of the AIGA was to change the general perception of graphic design and to create awareness of the profession, then this was our greatest area of success—an ambiguous success at best.

With all the young designers graduating from various design programs and entering the field, the design-publishing boom was on. More and more awards competitions were founded, more magazines, more books on type, on trends, on letterhead design, package design, shopping bag design, trademark design, magazine design, the history of design, famous designers, famous designers from California, famous designers under forty, women designers, more alternative design books featuring people left out of other books, and more books one could buy into to use for self-promotion.

The proliferation of graphic-design books in the eighties and nineties made all trends readily apparent and ripe for immediate imitation. The graphics publications began reporting on design trends like fashion columnists watching hemlines. Trends were news. Even the general press could understand them. Recently an article in the *New York Times'* Style section reported that the typeface Bodoni has become popular in magazine design. I had never seen the word Bodoni in the New York Times before, but I don't think this is what we had in mind when we wanted to create general graphic design awareness.

The increased number of annual award shows put a new financial and professional burden on the design community, a heightened sense of obligation to promote, be noticed, published, acclaimed, and have a national presence in every annual, in all compendiums then appearing, in total, almost monthly. The pressure was considerably less on older designers with

established reputations and recognizable work. For unknown young designers working on corporate communications, promotional material, obscure packaging, and obscure magazines, getting noticed was more and more impossible. The last design firm to gain national standing through design annuals was the Duffy Design Group, in the mid 1980s. If there is no substantial change in the number of annuals and frequency of publication, no designer or design group will gain that kind of national prominence again. The mass of work displayed in the total annual publishing output cancels out new designers. Familiar names remain familiar, and unfamiliar names stay unfamiliar.

Pick up a *Communication Arts Design Annual* and thumb through it, then flip through *Print's Regional Design Annual.* Follow it up with an *AIGA Annual*, then breeze through the graphic design section of the *New York Art Directors' Club Annual, Graphis Design,* the *American Center for Design 100* Show, the *Society of Publication Designers* show*,* the *I.D. Magazine Annual Design Review,* and wind it all up with the *Type Directors Club Annual.* Do it all in one sitting, and don't read any of the copy. Make sure they are all from the same year, or at most a year or two apart. The effect will be a numbing sameness. There are some general stylistic differences in the work selected by various annuals, but only when one confronts the same piece three or four times in different books does that individual piece develop a character of its own, separate from the rest of the work in the publication. In fact, one could generalize about contemporary graphic design as viewed in annuals exactly the way Paul Rand did in the essay "From Cassandre to Chaos" in *Design: Form and Chaos.* Rand's analysis of stylistic approaches is separated from the intent and content of the work. It overgeneralizes the way annuals do.

Several years ago I thumbed through an *Art Directors Club Annual* from the mid 1950s. The print ads all seemed to have dumb line drawings of creatures with smiley faces that closely resembled the drawings in Paul Rand's El Producto ads. The drawings were coupled with quaint, poorly letter-spaced typography, some of it stenciled, some of it, apparently, in alternating colors (the annual was black-and-white), and some of it with cute little curlicues at the ends of the letterforms. The El Producto ads may have been in there too; I honestly don't recall. I just remember that everything looked the same—all style and no substance.

It was not surprising that by the end of the "design is a business"–ridden eighties, we got good and disgusted with our own rhetoric. The "Dangerous Ideas" AIGA National Conference in San Antonio in 1989, which attempted to highlight important social issues, was a refreshing change from the 1987 conference in San Francisco, which highlighted an insurance salesman. I applaud two social themes explored at the conferences: that wasteful packaging is a pollutant, and we need to take responsibility for it; and that our communications can be powerful and damaging to people, so we need to take responsibility for them.

Actually, the messages are the same. We are responsible for our work and its consequences. Responsibility is a crucial part of our professional ethic. We are also responsible (according to our original goals) for encouraging and supporting quality design. Therefore racism, sexism, and other forms of personal prejudice have no place in the design community.

That said, I believe that the phrase "social relevance" has replaced "design is a business" as a mantra for the nineties. Confusing social issues with design issues is dangerous. They're not the same.

It's hard to write this with dispassion because I hate mass mantras. I never trust or believe them, because they always pervert themselves, even when the mantra is in sync with my own views. Progressive political and social beliefs are generally lifelong, deeply held convictions, not transient group mores. Yes, consciousness can be raised, and I always love it when someone who voted for Ronald Reagan wakes up and smells the coffee, but I'm nervous when we try to make converts through the AIGA or *I.D. Magazine.* If they're that easily converted, they may respond just as positively to the mantra of the next decade, which could well turn out to be fascism.

The "social relevance" mantra disturbs me mostly because it confuses and diminishes our primary goals. It becomes easy to decry graphic design as a trivial profession. If one factors in all the world wars, diseases, poverty, illiteracy, and natural disasters, a well-designed hangtag is silly. But I don't think the responsibility for the visual environment of our society is silly or trivial, and collectively, that is our charge.

"Social relevance" can also become a strange criterion for judging design. I was on a jury last year with a judge who voted for work on the basis of the organization that commissioned the work. This is OK if the point of the exhibition is to highlight politically correct organizations; but if the point is design excellence, then a poorly designed brochure for an AIDS benefit is not better than a brilliantly designed brochure for an investment banking company, no matter how much one's sympathies run toward the AIDS brochure.

The recently created Chrysler Awards for Innovation in Design offer a cash prize of $10,000 to architects, product designers, and graphic designers for their individual contributions to society. The items in the program's definition of design excellence for graphic design appeared in the following order: Sustainability (environmentally sensitive), accessibility (seen by people), technology (the appropriate use of it), communication (successfully speaks to its audience), beauty (that extra aesthetic "something" that sets the design apart).

Had we been constantly reinforcing our original goals, the first three parts of this definition would be irrelevant, merely expected aspects of any responsible design. But here, communication and beauty are last, implying that the design community is so irresponsible that it cannot even meet the minimum requirements. An environmentally sensitive design that doesn't communicate is a real waste of paper—even unbleached, recycled paper with the proper amount of postconsumer waste. An environmentally sensitive design that actually communicates its message but looks like such holy hell that you don't want it in your home, on your desk, or in your hands for one minute is still a piece of garbage. Visual environmentalism matters, now more than ever.

Overall design goals also become confused when they are coupled with "women's issues." Women represent the largest percentage of the design community while holding the lowest-paying jobs. They feel robbed of opportunity, prestige, and even history. They are constantly confronted with the previous and still powerful generation of male design leaders, who, through their generation's culture, remain inherently sexist and completely unaware of their bad behavior. There's valid reason for anger.

Also, women as a group face a real struggle in overcoming centuries of sociological baggage. They must confront their fears of self-assertion, management, and success. In this respect, the Special Interest Groups provided by

AIGA on the chapter level are immensely helpful and successful.

But there is a tremendous danger of enforcing women's issues at the expense of the design community's primary goals. Blatant tokenism implies that a standard is being breached. Contemporary women's shows and books have the same implication. They inadvertently set different criteria for judging the work of women and may serve to diminish real achievement, not promote it.

At the AIGA National Conference in Miami in 1993, some women were infuriated by the small number of women invited to speak (five women were asked, one canceled, and twenty men participated as speakers). The number is low when we consider how many terrific women practitioners, educators, and writers with something important to contribute there are. But what was worse was that three of the women speakers were giving talks that had the word women in the title. This implied that women speak only to women's issues. In the planning of the conference, women had accidentally become segregated, as if operating under a separate agenda. The anger of the women at the conference was focused on the number of women though, not the content of the speeches.

I'm sure that the conference organizers meant well. Women's issues were addressed in three presentations, more than for any other single issue. This kind of thinking, however, either by or for women, is ultimately more damaging to women and the design community than it is helpful. Women's issues and overall design goals don't necessarily reinforce one another, and they may create destructive factionalism.

But an even broader example of angry factionalism that damages our community is something I have come to call "ageism," simply for want of a better word. Ageism reflects the divide between what are perceived to be East Coast "establishment" designers, largely from an older generation, and younger designers with differing cultural and aesthetic sensibilities. Some ageism can be defined as regionalism because a lot of the aesthetic splits have to do with technologically experimental design emanating from the West Coast. Some ageism returns to women's issues when it involves splits between the so-called East Coast establishment and women who head aesthetic movements (Kathy McCoy at Cranbrook or Lorraine Wilde at CalArts) or socially oriented design movements (Sheila de Bretteville at Yale). Or ageism can be perceived as the split between establishment/practicing designers and academic/experimental designers.

Aesthetic debate is crucial to our community and has always existed. The modernism/eclecticism debate has raged for years while devout practitioners on both sides have come together in mutual admiration and respect because their goal is always the same: quality in graphic design for the betterment of business and society.

With ageism, fear, loathing, and disrespect bury our overall design goal. The goal of ageism is power, but not the power and influence of the design community as a whole. It becomes a power struggle within the various political and aesthetic factions to win control of the debate to define quality. As I've stated previously, I'm wary of value being defined by social and political agendas, but the aesthetic debate had become unnecessarily ugly, divisive, and destructive.

I'm not sure how ageism came to be. Its roots start in the early 1980s with the tremendous growth of the design industry and the perversion of its original goals. With the increase of design publishing and the proliferation of annuals, the older generation of designers became distanced from the younger generation. They stopped learning their names. (I think the last generation to be absorbed included Woody Pirtle and Michael Vanderbyl.) When they stopped learning young designers' names, the veterans of graphic design began to refer to the work in terms of stylistic elements, like "layering," "letterspacing," "leading," "retro," and, finally, "that computer stuff." That there was appropriate and inappropriate use of each element became lost on them, simply because of the pervasiveness of it all (exactly my response when I looked at that *Art Directors Club Annual* from the fifties). The work had become all style and no substance.

Knowing (and liking) an individual helps to mute the competitive animosities caused by aesthetic differences. In the New York design community, Pushpin and Herb Lubalin lived harmoniously with Vignelli and Rudy de Harak. They all knew one another. Theoretically speaking, Massimo Vignelli should be as repulsed by Ed Benguiat's work as he is by that of Rudy Vanderlans. But Massimo knows Ed. Ed is a fine fellow, and after all, they both agree that what matters most is the continual striving for quality. Their goals are the same even if they approach them from different directions.

But the young designers featured in annuals and articles have become faceless and therefore valueless to this Eastern Establishment.

A progressive community turns reactionary when it believes it is about to lose something. This couldn't be more true of the Eastern Establishment. New technology has totally revolutionized the method, craft, and structure of the design practices that have existed for forty years. The technological shift has been coupled with a devastated economy, particularly on the East Coast. In the midst of layoffs, price reductions, and a general sense of demoralization, healthy perspectives become elusive. The computer is seen as an evil enemy, a dangerous tool in the hands of valueless incompetents bent on destroying the design profession. When this fear is coupled with strange social agendas by some design groups, with angry women, and with bizarre experimental work by design schools receiving an amazing amount of press attention, suddenly it looks like the whole world is going to the dogs. It looks like the standards of quality are being destroyed.

The question then becomes, What is quality work? This is the eternal debate. We know design must function properly, but design functions differently for different problems and audiences. *Ray Gun* works perfectly for its audience but won't be received well by someone over forty-five who doesn't care about rock and roll. Is it quality or garbage? Aesthetics is a tricky business.

One can admire the aesthetics of a specific school without loving it. I admire *Emigre* without loving it. It's ten years old now. I admire the publication and some of the typefaces even though I'll never use them. But the *Emigre* designers were innovators. I felt the same way about Herb Lubalin. In fact, I feel the same way about Paul Rand. I never loved his work as I love Cassandre's, El Lissitzky's, Pierre Mendell's, and some of Fred Woodward's *Rolling Stone* spreads. But I admire it. I know how important it is. One builds admiration from a distance, in retrospect. It takes time.

With ageism there is no admiration for any work produced by a younger generation. None. No shining example, no beacon among the heathens. It's all bad: Neville Brody: bad. *Emigre* garbage. Fabien Baron: a rip-off of Brodovitch. Chuck Anderson: too many advertising cuts. Cranbrook: feh. Rick Valicenti: P.U. Et cetera. Pretty soon there's nothing left to eat. Only designers from their own generation or the distant past merit praise. At the end, there is no debate, no enlightenment—only a divide. And we are all losers.

We are losers because the ensuing factionalism, hurt feelings, confusion, resentment, and anger are damaging to the most important goals of the community. If we fear and loathe one another, how can we persuade society of the collective value of good design? If we're all chopped into different factions with different agendas, collectively we have no power at all. We destroy our credibility. When we are contemptuous of one another, we invite the contempt of business and society. We devalue design.

Everyday I find myself in supermarkets, discount drugstores, video shops, and other environments that are obviously untouched by our community. No "bad Brody" or "*Emigre* garbage," or for that matter, no "saintly" Vignelli, Rand, or Glaser. Just plain, old-fashioned, uncontroversial bad design, the kind of anonymous bad we've come to ignore because we're too busy fighting over the aesthetics of the latest AIGA poster. We don't talk or write about it, it heads no one's agenda, but it's still most of America.

So I come back to the petty list from the beginning of this article. What's wrong with the picture is that four organizations that exist in support of design demonstrated that they have absolutely no idea how to hire or work with a graphic designer. Responding to the contemptuous, factionalized climate we have created, they pitted designers against one another in competition for free work, and they lost sight of the fact that pro bono is a donation. They assume that the designer's benefit from the free job is greater than theirs. (With all the angry criticism they receive from the various design camps regardless of what is produced, maybe they have a point.) Yet for all our annuals, seminars, conferences, political- and sexual-consciousness-raising groups, environmental lectures, aesthetic manifestos, and diatribes, respect and understanding of the graphic design profession is worse than it was in the seventies.

At the end of all the boxing movies, the fighter always learns that his original ideals were valid and that things went wrong when the ideals were perverted, corrupted, and abandoned. The same lesson applies to us.

"THE BOAT"

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Editor's note: The following letters were exchanged between Julie Lasky, managing editor of *Print,* and Paula Scher. Lasky's letter has been edited for brevity; Scher's is reproduced in its entirety.

Dear Paula:
Thumbing through the latest *AIGA Annual*, we ran across the picture of Pentagram's partners gathered together on a boat on the Thames, and we couldn't help noticing that you were the only woman in the group. And then we recalled that the art department at CBS Records wasn't exactly a bastion of feminism, either.

How would you feel about writing 1,000 or so words for us on the subject of breaking into and working for the boys' clubs? (I know it's not an original topic, but you always provide an original point of view.) Has your experience in the male-dominated Pentagram of the early 1990s been different from working in the male-dominated CBS Records of the early 1980s and before? Have you ever suffered tokenism? At the Chicago AIGA Conference last year, Cheryl Heller remarked that being the lone woman among male professionals brought an element of surprise that worked to her advantage: She could easily soar above the low expectations of her colleagues and clients. Has this been your experience? Does your status as a woman executive bring more responsibility in terms of mentoring other women, both within and beyond your workplace? Do you consider yourself

a role model? Has role modeling been thrust upon you? Please let me know.

Sincerely,
Julie Lasky
Managing Editor

Dear Julie:
I've long resisted the notion of writing a "woman's issue" piece or what it's like to be the only woman blah blah. I'm genuinely uncomfortable with the subject because I have conflicting feelings about it. I'd have to have been an ostrich not to have experienced the painful exclusivity of corporate boys' clubs, glass ceilings, and financial exploitation. I can sing along with any woman's group about the sexist–insensitive–noncommunicative–emotionally inept nature of men and add a few two-syllable adjectives of my own for good measure. But my confusion comes not in the worthy politicizing of women's issues but in their valid application to a life in graphic design.

Every time I give a presentation to a design group, I'm asked what it's like to be a woman blah blah. When I'm invited to give the presentation, I'm told that women will really want to hear about being a woman blah blah. They go like this: "Hello, can you judge the annual Peoria Hang Tag competition? Please say yes because we need a female juror." How I envy my male partners, who are invited to speak based on their achievements and prestige as opposed to their sex. I cannot separate my achievements from being a woman blah blah.

On the other hand, the tokenism has had its advantages. I've been able to attain a visibility that might have been harder to come by if I were male. The visibility may be helpful professionally, but it's always clouded by the veil of "women's issues." How ironic that the grand attempt in the graphic community to promote

women designers (me in this case) serves to undermine and diminish achievement.

The thing of it is I never set out to be the only woman blah blah. I set out to be a designer. I set out to be a designer who could design all kinds of things well with the hope that those things that I designed well would lead me to even more things to design. I set out as a designer not thinking that being a woman had much to do with anything. What mattered was the work. After all, designers produce tangible products. You can see the results. There is physical evidence of success or failure. I believed that good work brought more good work, and that money, while dictated by the marketplace, could mushroom, to a degree, in relationship to good work and reputation. I've held these beliefs for twenty years. I've had to, or I would not have been able to continue to work. The ability to produce work continually, make professional changes, take advantage of business opportunities as they arise, and create the opportunities yourself when they don't arise is absolutely key to the growth and development of a designer, male or female.

I don't believe that pursuing this course while happening to be a woman is particularly special, nor do I believe there should be special standards for women. I haven't "broken" into boys' clubs. I am merely following the path of a life in design at a time when doors are opening for women, not only because they are women but also because they are successfully following that path.

Which brings me to the photograph of the Pentagram partners on the boat. It is interesting how one photographic image can perfectly encapsulate my feelings. You said you couldn't help noticing that I was the only woman on the boat. I was less interested in the fact that I was the only woman; I already knew that. I was struck more by the pure visual physicality of the

Left to Right: Michael Bierut, Kenneth Grange, Alan Fletcher, John Rushworth, Peter Harrison, Theo Crosby, Mervyn Kurlansky, Peter Saville,
David Hillman, me, Jim Biber, Kit Hinrichs, Woody Pirtle, Neil Shakery, Colin Forbes, John McConnell, Lowell Williams

situation—not the oddity of the sex, but the strangeness in scale. There I am, halfway down the side of the boat, in between rugged David Hillman and James Biber, who is twice my size. Kit Hinrichs, who is actually sitting behind James Biber, has a head that is half again as large as mine. And Colin Forbes, who stands with John McConnell and Lowell Williams way in the back, appears much larger than me. I look like a person who was originally standing far beyond Lowell Williams and was then stripped into the middle of the photograph but not blown up in proportion to the new position.

The photograph has made me look at my own professional situation and those of other women today as a matter of strange scale. I'm in the picture, but I'm not blown up in proportion to the new position. (If the photograph had pictured the same number of men and women, the scale wouldn't be strange; I'd just be short.)

I saw a similar thing in the *New York Times* several weeks ago. There was Donna Shalala standing next to Bill Clinton and Al Gore and some male senators and newly appointed cabinet members, and she was not blown up in proportion to her new position. The same week, in the same *New York Times,* I read about how women's groups were upset with Clinton for not appointing enough women to cabinet posts and how Clinton railed against the quotas. All of this served to diminish the wonderful accomplishments of the excellent women who were appointed. One woman in the group. Two women in the group. Their individuality is lost, and all one sees is the strangeness of scale.

I'm physically odd at Pentagram, the way I'm physically odd at a corporate meeting with clients who happen to be men. I'm physically odd to women who work for men in groups and view me as out of scale to the men in those groups.

I joined Pentagram the way I set out to design. I had had a business with one male partner for seven years. We had been split for one year, and I had continued running the business myself. I was offered the opportunity to join Pentagram, and I took it because I wanted to design things well and get more new things to design. There's no more to it than that. No crusade, no breaking down back-room doors. I took some personal risk to take advantage of a new business opportunity, with the price being the daily discomfort of being out of scale.

I can't equate Pentagram and CBS Records. Pentagram is a group of very intelligent, talented, and relatively sensitive men who design well and want to get more new things to design. I may be out of scale at Pentagram, but I was out of sync at CBS Records. That's much worse than being out of scale. One doesn't have to be a woman to be out of sync. All that requires is for one to have a completely different set of values than the larger group. Being out of scale can be uncomfortable. Being out of sync is dangerous. Women need to learn the difference.

It seems to me from your letter, particularly in reference to Cheryl Heller's talk, that you are looking for some sort of modus operandi for surviving in male-dominated working situations. There isn't one. Men are different. Situations are different. And women are different. The only thing that is a constant for me is my relationship to my work. When I find myself in a professional situation that is purely about politics or personalities and not about the effectiveness of design, I tend to fail.

Which brings me back to my ambiguous feelings about women's issues in relation to design. A profession that has long been dominated by men is changing. There are simply more women. There are more women who are terrific designers, more women running their own businesses, more women corporate executives, more women changing the scale of things and appearing out of scale in the process.

There are also more underpaid women, more women juggling careers and motherhood, more women who feel squeezed out in a bad economy, more women going to art school and going nowhere afterwards, and more women who are resentful of their lack of success "because they are women." There are more women in design groups, more women's panels, more women mentoring women, more women who want women to mentor them, more women looking for women role models, and more women who don't like other women's success.

I don't know what my responsibility is in all this. I'm not sure I have one as it relates to women in general. There are things I've done naturally through relationships that existed by chance. I felt supportive of the terrific women designers at CBS Records because they were my friends. I have encouraged talented students, male and female, equally. I've supported those people I know and care about who want to design well and get more things to design. It is not a planned activity or a duty; it is simply part of a life in design.

I don't want to be anyone's "role model." I dislike the term because it diminishes my life by implying that I'm playing some kind of role for other people's benefit. It places my entire life out of scale.

This takes me back to the picture on the boat, where I'm confronted with my own image within a group. The boat ride on the Thames was really lovely. There was a good lunch, terrific conversation, and all in all it was the most pleasant part of an exhausting partners meeting. I don't remember feeling like an oddity on that boat, but in the photo there is that strangeness of scale.

Women's issues in design are focused on scale. We count the numbers, look at the statistics, and demand change; and all the while change is occurring. Change doesn't come in one great thump. It comes one by one by one by one, and it looks kind of funny.

And then it doesn't.

Sincerely,
Paula Scher
Partner, Pentagram Design, Inc.

My editor Mark Lamster, *who encouraged me to write this book and gave me pivotal advice that made it better.*

My graphic design team at Pentagram, who designed this book a million times, principally Tina Chang *and* Sean Carmody *on the cover and spreads,* Keith Daigle *on the charts,* Steffi Jauss, *who coordinated and typed it, and* Kurt Koepfle *and* Jim Brown, *who provided the archive research.*

My partners
Terry Koppel

(at Pentagram)
Lorenzo Apicella
Jim Biber
Michael Bierut
Bob Brunner
Theo Crosby
Alan Fletcher
Colin Forbes
Michael Gericke
Kenneth Grange
April Greiman
Fernando Gutiérrez
Peter Harrison
David Hillman
Kit Hinrichs
Angus Hyland
Mervyn Kurlansky
John McConnell
J. Abbott Miller
Justus Oehler
Woody Pirtle
David Pocknell

John Rushworth
Peter Saville
Neil Shakery
DJ Stout
Lisa Strausfeld
Daniel Weil
Lowell Williams

Partners (in work)
All of the work produced in this book exists as collaboration with many talented young designers, who began their careers working with me. They are:
Richard Baker
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Deborah Bishop
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Sean Carmody
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Tanja Gaul
Kim Gernsbacher-Swiler
LuAnn Graffeo
Mary Bess Heim
Laurie Henzel
Laurie Hinzman
Drew Hodges
Barbara Hofrenning
Rosemary Intrieri
John Jay
Abbey Kuster
Annika Larsen
Carmen Lazul

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Allen Richardson
Tony (Bodoni) Sellari
Anke Stohlmann
Jany Tran
Michele Willems
Elsie Woolcock

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Dana Arnett
Elizabeth Arnold
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Richard Avedon
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Stephen Bear
Dan Beck
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Merrill C. Berman
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Rob Biro
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Maggie Christ
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Jeanne Collins
Greg Colucci
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Patrick Coyne
Richard Coyne
Bart Crosby
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Cristina Cursino
Myrna Davis
Paul Davis
Bob Defrin
Tom DeKay
Josephine Didanato
Nancy Donald
Tyler Donaldson
Bob Downs
Stephen Doyle
Bill Drenttel
Heinz Edelmann
Sara Eisenman
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John Paul Endress
Andy Engel
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Nick Fasciano
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George C. Wolfe
Amy Wolfson
Wang Xu
Susan Yelovich
Artie Yourainian
Stanislas Zagorski
Lloyd Ziff
Michael Zweck-Bronner
Daniel Zylberberg

And my partner in life
Seymour Chwast

OVER

A designer I respect warned me that the danger of doing a book on my own work, beyond the obvious egotism involved, is that after its publication I'd be "over." I've been "over" at least three times, rather prominently. Being over is a little embarrassing the first time, but if one considers that the average period of being "not-over" is perhaps five years, possibly now shortening to three, being over is inevitable and something a designer should plan for. The great thing about being over—after one finishes the self-flagellation part—is that one can start right up again. This book is over.