from Bauhaus to BRODY and Beyond

The Significance of Postmodernism in Contemporary Graphic Design

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INTRODUCTION

Graphic design was born in the 1920s, and is the child of Modernism. The pioneers in the field were primarily artists, architects and writers who, because of their democratic ethos and their desire to fuse art and technology applied themselves and their work to print. This way they could reach the masses who had previously been oblivious to contemporary art. Graphic design seemed to be the common denominator through which all other forms of creative expression could be translated.

Piet Zwart was an architect by trade but he was also a skillful typographer. He designed everything from buildings to typefaces and stamps, and described himself as a 'typotect'. El Lissitzky was a painter, an architect, and a graphic designer. His 'Prouns' were typographic experiments in space, influenced greatly by the Supremetist paintings of Malevich. Perhaps the first 'graphic designer' in the modern sense was Jan Tschichold. He was trained as a calligrapher and printer. When he first came across the typography of the Bauhaus and Constructivists he became an instant convert. His 1928 book, *Die Neue Typographie*, was aimed at others in the printing trade, the nearest thing to graphic design at the time. Its effect was tremendous and all across Europe the technique pioneered by the Constructivist Avant-Garde crept into the mainstream. The craft of typography was revitalised, due on the one hand to these pioneers inventing new ways of composing and designing type. On the other hand, in order to defend itself, classical typography was forced to snap out of its lethargy or become obsolete.

Since then, design has never been quite as exciting, nor perhaps as effective. The machine age was at its height and the artists of the day reflected that. The word 'Prouns' that El Lissitzky used to describe his work was an acronym for 'Project for the Affirmation of the New.' Sans serif

typefaces such as Futura were designed along strict geometric grids. Function was the priority and form followed. All aspects of design were considered. The Bauhaus remains one of the most influential typographic sources today, and all expressive typography owes much to its approach.

Graphic design began as a highly principled medium for communication. By the 1980s however, this had been corrupted into little more than a style. Design has been abused greatly both by designers and by clients. Since the 1920s it has lost or forgotten its purpose which was surely communication. The saturation of our streets with corporate logos amounts to nothing more than pollution. To be effective in this environment a logo has to be big and instantly recognisable. This hardly requires great skill on the designer's part. The only message that is communicated is 'We are IBM and we're here to stay!', or something similar. This is not simply a question of professional ethics. The whole medium suffers. Design is suffering a tremendous corporate hangover. Multinationals tend to have a faceless approach to their presentation. Their logos reveal nothing about the functions of the group and are used generally to bully people into accepting the corporation's opinion of itself (7. p.45).

This mentality has wormed its way into the minds of both clients and designers. There is a plethora of meaningless logos flaunted shamelessly every time we open a newspaper or take a walk down the high Street. The intelligence of the 1920s has been replaced by stylistic gimmickry. Dynamic design has been replaced by 'professionalism' and craftsmanship. The accepted priority of both clients and designers is that the product must simply look good. Tastes apparently are more conservative now than ever before. Modern design spread like wildfire in the 1920s and 1930s. Good design was sought out by all kinds of clients, including large corporate firms. The use of this was to present the client as a confident, forward-looking business. These days the confidence of a firm is measured by the size and

weight of their logo. Optimism or advancement is almost invariably reflected, not in the use of something new, but by arrows incorporated into their logo. It is considered adventurous to have gimmicky type - never mind that it is generally irrelevant. It's not that all design is bad - it isn't, but even among the most respected of designers there are only a very few who do not practice this sort of meaningless imagery.

In the late 20th century communication is needed more than ever and design simply isn't providing it. Visual glibness is more desirable than 'gutsy' ideas. This is not solely due to the clients who commission the work. There can be no doubt that clients are conservative but this is the fault of the designers too. Design has ceased experimenting. All that we see are countlessre-interpretations of the same ideas and formats. It has been decided what designs should look like and if it worked for the first sixty years then why not for sixty more?

The culmination of staleness of the design process must have been the International or Swiss design style. Based largely on the Bauhaus and De Stijl movements the Swiss style evolved as a watered down, inoffensive formula. One of the goals of the Bauhaus had been to create an international style. Unfortunately when this was achieved it became apparent that this was nothing better than bland. The use of white space and rigid formats may have been appealing for a while and there is no doubt that many of the Swiss designers produced some really great work, which is partly why this style was so imitated, but in the end the format was too confined. Although it was accessible to the viewer, it was ultimately a lowest common denominator form of communication. The Swiss typefaces that were designed at the time are at once the most common sans serif typefaces and the most appallingly dull ones. I believe that the Swiss style is the watershed before which design experimented with images, style, type and formats and after which it has become increasingly formulaic. Graphic design was separated more

completely from other creative disciplines than ever before. It was seen as a collection of production skills such as layout and typography, which could be taught. There is no longer any theory taught in schools - history yes, but design theory no! The universities and colleges teaching design are at fault.

The 1980s are infamous as the style decade. This was graphics in the throes of a serious illness. Designers lacked any goals. Fashion became more relevant that real impact. Shops and firms wanted to look trendy and designers were more than happy to indulge in some meaningless and insubstantial style. The gurus of design were not intellectual experimenters who approached design in a different manner but the art directors of style magazines such as *i-D* and *The Face*. Neville Brody of *The Face* was particularly imitated. His design, far from being modern, hailed back to the Constructivists and to later Modernists such as Bradbury Thompson, an American magazine designer of the 1940s and 1950s. Brody disliked being plagiarized so blatantly and constantly updated and revised his style, resorting to hand rendered type in an attempt to make his work less accessible. This only provided the model for a glut of hand drawn type to appear. Design became superficial and irrelevant - and therefore changeable. Styles would alter radically so that what had been an acceptable logo last year was already looking outmoded.

There is nothing remotely wrong with style. It is probably an indispensable element of visual communications. Certainly the Bauhaus had a style as do Pentagram, who have produced some of the most successful and creative design of late Modernism. Even the most 'styleless' of forms, that of Swiss typography and design, was guided by an aesthetic belief and was instantly recognisable. The designers of the 1980s however, had no aesthetic belief. They wandered promiscuously from trend to trend not looking for a direction so much as waiting to have one pointed out to them.

Indeed, there seems to be a parallel between the state of design in the 1980s and in the pre-Bauhaus years. The state of the medium is a mess. There are plenty of good, or at least potentially good designers. Most however, seem content to give nothing more than is expected, whereas what is needed is an injection of new ideas and new potential. Thankfully there are a few avant-garde designers. The most courageous and innovative of these is April Greiman, the Los Angeles-based Postmodernist. She is a leader of what has been termed 'new wave' graphics. A central process vital to her work is that of layering. She superimposes and juxtaposes images often contrasting in meaning, for example male / female or dream / waking imagery (8, p.13). Her work is unashamedly introspective. Much of her work makes direct reference to the art of Zen, which she constantly cites as an influence (she does live in California after all).

April Greiman is also a highly 'technological' designer. She was one of the first to adopt the Macintosh computer wholeheartedly, and has remained at the forefront of computer-generated imagery. She allows her images and - more revolutionary still - her type, to be broken up and 'bit-mapped' by the computer. Texture is very important to her work and in fact she prefers the 'rawness' of the imperfect computer-manipulated textures of the Macintosh to the more sophisticated high-resolution equipment available today. Nonetheless, much of her work is generated on those machines to which she adds the lower grade images. She has half-jokingly remarked, 'if it works - it's obsolete.' (12, p.16).

Many designers react very strongly to her style. Most don't like it. She is constantly challenging the mainstream. She has consistently produced some of the most subversive images and typography of the past decade. Perhaps Greiman is the only leading designer who isn't afraid of the technology which design is more and more coming to rely upon. I believe that there exists a very close parallel between April Greiman and the Bauhaus pioneers

of the 1920s. There are numerous areas in which their goals and techniques are either similar or reacting to similar stimuli. Firstly, I see her as reacting to the profusion of misdirected, incompetent, non-communicative design. It is not that bad design didn't exist before the 1980s - but simply that it had never before been acceptable. Secondly, her love affair with the computer reflects the goals of the Bauhaus who wished to glorify all that was modern. Thirdly, her withdrawal from the accepted format of modernism, her seeming aversion to 'instant accessibility' and her personal -textural - textual approach lend her theoretical credence, if not quite artistic acceptance.

This new aesthetic deliberately alters the effects of design. It must be perceived differently. Greiman is accused of taking things too far; making her message too obscure. Is the layering of images akin to the media 'white out' of the late 20th century where we are presented with a glut of data and almost no information? Is it more desirable to present one solid piece of instantly accessible information than to juxtapose images and meaning? Do these contrasting styles fulfil different functions? Does anybody bother to decipher the layers in an April Greiman poster? If they don't, does it matter? The Postmodernists are not the first to juxtapose images. One of the classic solutions in visual communication is the visual rhetoric or pun. Perhaps it is because juxtaposition is at once a highly effective way of communicating and at the same time an overused, hackneyed technique that the need is felt to subvert it.

THE RISE AND FALL OF GRAPHIC DESIGN.

MODERNISM

Commercial art was not dreamt up in the 20th century. Obviously there Typography has existed for thousands of years. Books were being designed in the 5th century and artists such as Toulouse-Lautrec were producing posters in the last century. The medium of design however, wasn't considered until the advent of Modernism in the early 1900s. Until then commercial art was less art and more craft. By this I mean that it required a form of manual skill as opposed to creativity. There was an established way of working and the end result adhered to a strict style that remained constant, regardless of whether the designed object was a book, a poster or a newspaper advertisement. The forms that had been established in the 15th and 16th centuries had mimicked those of calligraphy, and were handed down from generation to generation of craftsmen. The classic form of symmetry was considered dogma by those responsible for design, mostly printers.

Arguably, by the late 19th and early 20th centuries, even the craft element had virtually disappeared from commercial art (19 p.11). Somehow commercial artists at the turn of the century had forgotten their skills. Type was treated clumsily with scant regard paid to ensuring readability. Coherent word-spacing was deemed less important than fitting more and more text onto a page. Type sizes were inconsistent with the significance of the text. Classic fonts which had been designed by masters and which are among the most legible ever seen were rendered unreadable by such inconsiderate handling. Also there was rarely any consistency of typefaces used, with numerous different fonts and styles appearing in close proximity. The effect was not unlike that of the 'Evening Press' today, cluttered, unattractive and despite the obligatory nods towards symmetry, lacking any balance. It was

from the reaction of the Modernists to this mindless approach to printing that graphic design evolved.

Not surprisingly, the rise of Modernism is well documented. Since the publication of Marinetti's Futurist manifesto in 'Le Figaro' in 1909, Modernism wholeheartedly embraced print as an unsurpassable medium of mass communication. In this radical statement it was announced that from then on the page would be approached in a far more painterly manner. It would become yet another medium through which the artist could express his / her ideas.

> The book will be the futurist expression of our futurist consciousness. I am against what is known as the harmony of a setting. When necessary we shall use three of four columns to a page and twenty different typefaces. We shall represent hasty perceptions in italic and express a scream in bold type...a new painterly typographic representation will be born on the printed page (19, p15).

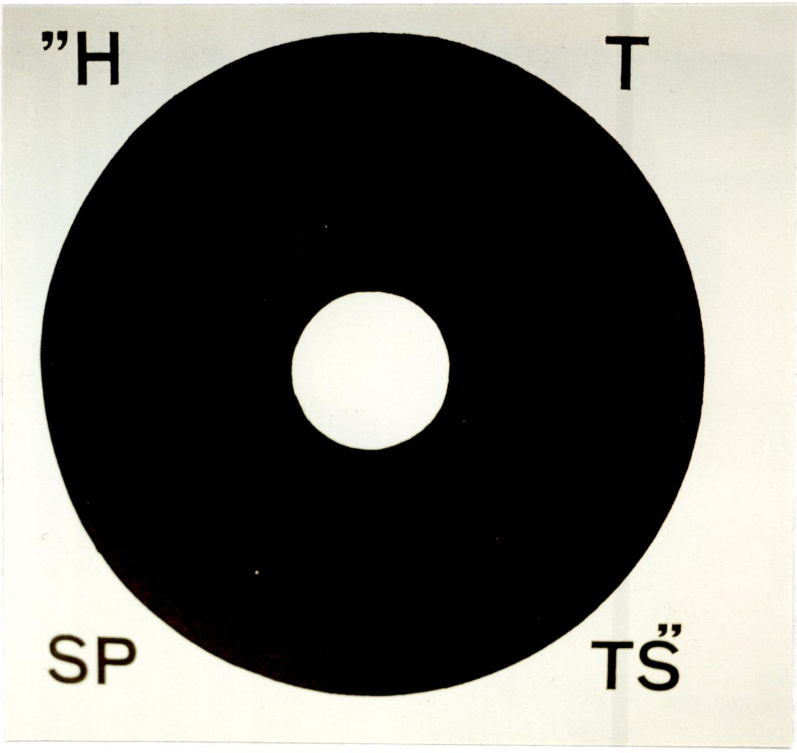
The page had officially been liberated. Naturally the people to take note were other artists, not tradesmen. Nonetheless, a long period of innovation and exploration had begun. The poet Guillaume Apollinaire produced calligrammes - poems whose structure was as relevant as their words. The poem 'La Cravate' is written in the shape of a neck tie and 'Il Pleut' is graphically represented by lines of downward falling type. The Dadaists also began to use typography in entirely new expressive ways. The words they wrote were often meaningless, yet the forms of their 'designs' carried all the meaning intended. They were disillusioned with art. They were angry with their governments. Their deconstructive poetry and images expressed their anarchic sentiments perfectly.

Although the Dadaists were undoubtedly radically left wing in outlook, they were not as democratic in their socialism as the Russian Constructivists and Suprematists. These artists were the first to systematically explore the potential of the printed page, be it a poster, a book or an advertisement. The

socialist element of their work was very important to them and they regarded mass production techniques not as a desecration of art but as a democratisation of it. It was in many ways a reaction to the staleness of the art world, communicated through galleries and salons, remote from the proletariat. By adopting the channels of mass communication they hoped to wield an influence on society and bring the qualities of art into people's lives in a tangible way. Many of them believed that the more practical art forms, such as graphic design and architecture were of more importance and relevance to people's lives than painting or sculpture. Even so, Kasmir Malevich's Supremetist compositions had overwhelming impact on the emerging art form. His reductionist theories, his use of primary colours and strong geometric shapes were often imitated.

What all facets of Modernism, Cubism and De Stijl, had in common was the "search for the new form" (15, p.19). The process of art was considered obsolete. Its purpose or its form therefore, had to change. The abstract paintings of Picasso and Mondrian, for example, were so radically different to the paintings of previous centuries that their evaluation of art had to be altered. Theirs was a deliberately elitist form, inaccessible to anyone unfamiliar with abstract art. Another reaction was to alter the purpose of art. Huyssen argues that the democratic wing of Modernism was not Modernist but Avant-Garde art (9, p.31). However, I see the move towards mass production of Huyssen's Avant-Garde more as the democratic wing of Modernism. Fine artists invaded the territory of commercial artists and brought with them concepts and forms similar to those of 'High Modernism'. In doing so, they invented a new art form.

The belief in things new was entire. It entailed not merely a new goal and a new form but also the manipulation of new technology, and the expression of it. The machine age was evoked by the constant use of geometrical elements, grids, photography, rules and perhaps most importantly -

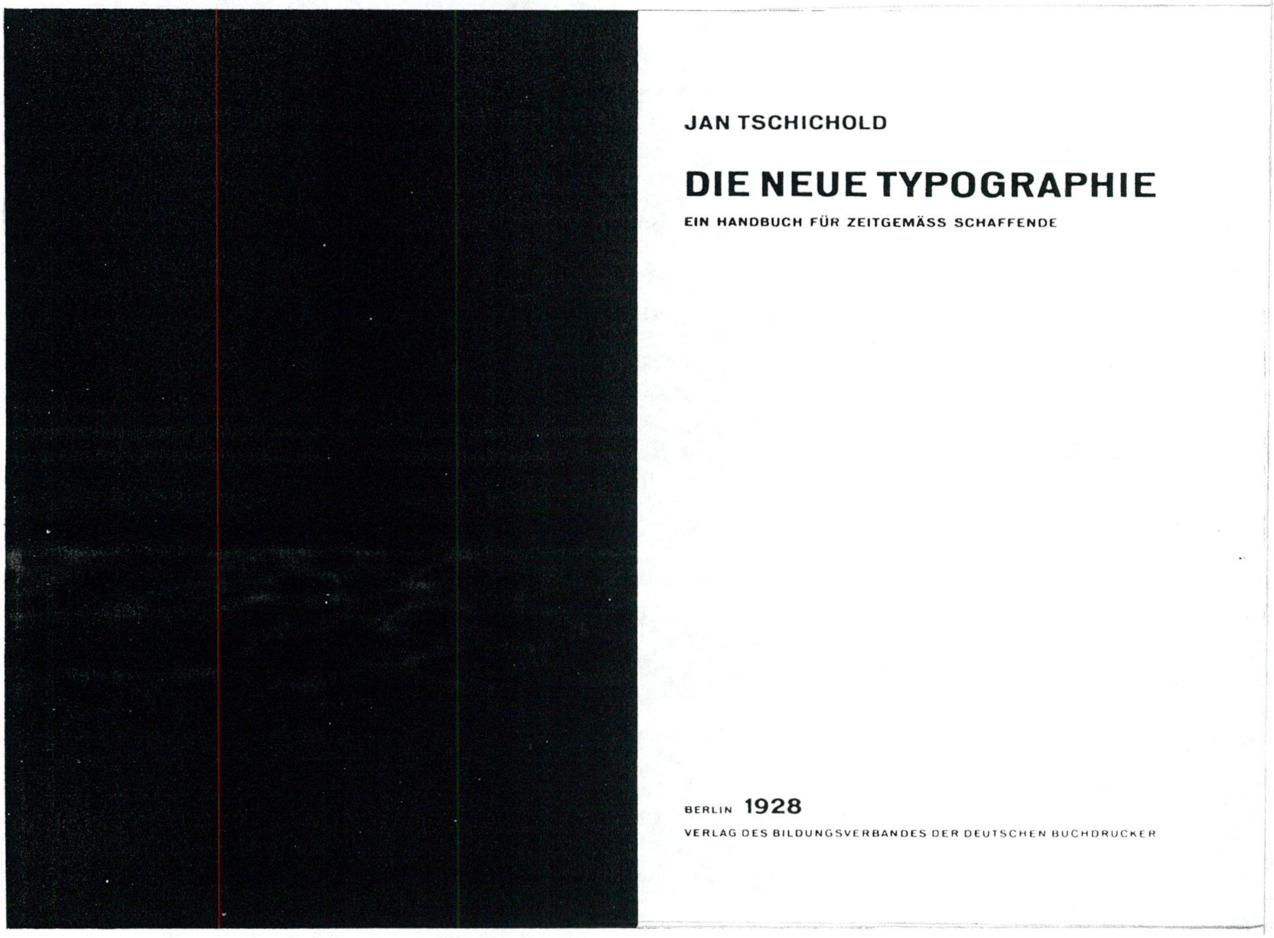


1 Hot Spots. Piet Zwart 1926.

dynamism (illus. 1). For the first time since the invention of printing published material was exciting. Type and images were set at angles, in bold colours and with a kinetic use of layout. The nineteenth century approach of centred typography and layouts based on book design was well and truly usurped.

The most crucial step towards the foundation of graphic design came in 1919 when Walter Gropius founded the Bauhaus school in Weimar, Germany. In this school the Constructivists and the De Stijl movements were the strongest influences, but were added to a much more defined sense of direction. Gropius's goals were threefold. Firstly he intended to remove the barriers between the various arts. Secondly he demanded exploration and investigation of the new forms and ideas. Thirdly, his students were expected to become accomplished craftsmen. 'The artist is an exalted craftsman.. .proficiency in his craft is essential to every artist.' (19, p.34). The Bauhaus attracted such renowned figures as Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky and Theo Van Doesberg to its staff. Although these staff members shared the common goal, that the artist of the 20th century should be as adept with the techniques of mechanical reproduction as with the paintbrush, they had conflicting ideas about the means to this end. Gropius espoused the theory that each student should develop his or her own style and not have one imposed. Van Doesberg, in contrast, believed that personal style was something to be avoided.

In the end the objective outlook inspired by the Suprematists and the De Stijl movements took hold. 'For modern advertising and for the modern exponent of form the undivided element - the artists "own touch" - is of absolutely no consequence.'(El Lissitzky; 19, p.9). The dictum 'Form follows Function' became firmly established as a guiding principle of the school. They aspired to objectivity. It was believed that design entailed the proper arrangement of only those elements vital to the piece. Ornamentation



JAN TSCHICHOLD

DIE NEUE TYPOGRAPHIE

EIN HANDBUCH FÜR ZEITGEMÄSS SCHAFFENDE

BERLIN 1928

VERLAG DES BILDUNGSVERBANDES DER DEUTSCHEN BUCHDRUCKER

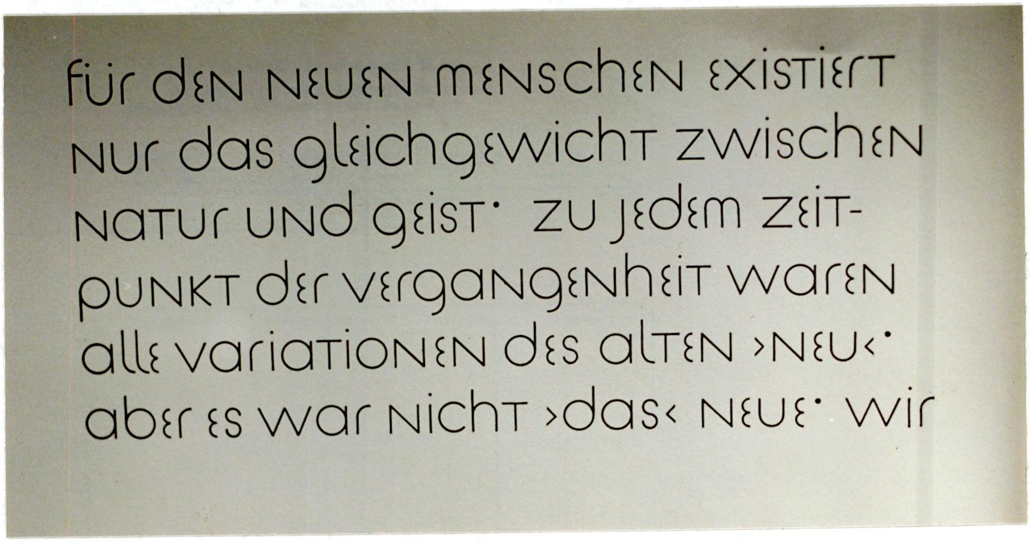
2 Title Spread from *Die Neue Typographie*.

Jan Tschichold, 1926

was therefore eschewed. Rationality was the means through which pure communication would be achieved.

The Bauhaus was hugely successful during its relatively short lifetime. It was one of the most radical experiments in art and design education and a source of many revolutionary ideas. From the Weimar and Dessau schools came design, both industrial and graphic. The Bauhaus was closed in 1933 when the Nazis came to power in Germany. The demise of the school marked the end of the period of innovation enjoyed by modernism. From then on consolidation not exploration was the priority (19, p.11).

This process of formalisation in graphic design had begun years before the closing of the Dessau school. Jan Tschichold, although he had never been associated with the Bauhaus or any other Modernist movement, was a highly capable and ardent practitioner of the theories of Modernism. I see him in many ways as the first modern 'graphic designer'. He had no background in 'art', having been trained as a letterer and printer. Therefore, he was the first specialist of the new movement, concerning himself almost entirely with typography. Tschichold was also a more capable craftsman than most of his contemporaries. Positioned as he was, halfway between the 'Art' wing of design and the traditional 'commercial' end of design, he sought to unite them. To this end he published a number of highly influential articles in trade periodicals including a showcase of the typography work of El Lissitzky. In 1928 he produced a book *Die Neue Typographie* (illus.2) in which he made clear the aims of the modern movement. This book was directed at the printers and jobbing artists who, at the time, were responsible for almost all of the printed material produced. Unfortunately, *The New Typography* concentrated entirely on form and craft and made no attempt at all to promote the spirit of inquiry that had driven the Bauhaus. Nevertheless, there were many throughout Europe who responded positively to the book and it undoubtedly promoted the rapid acceptance for the styles of the modern movement.



für den neuen menschen existiert
nur das gleichgewicht zwischen
natur und geist· zu jedem zeit-
punkt der vergangenheit waren
alle variationen des alten ›neu‹·
aber es war nicht ›das‹ neue· wir

3 Single Case Alphabet, Jan Tschichold, 1929.

Ironically, Tschichold, who had been so determined to convert the entire medium of print to Modernism, reacted equally strongly against it. Shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War he returned to a classical style. He began to equate the dogmatic tone of Modernism with that of Fascism. The fact that a number of experiments conducted by the Bauhaus ended in failure also fueled his disillusionment. Their rejection of classic serif typefaces in favour of 'purer' sans-serif fonts proved unnecessary, and in many cases counter-productive. Serif fonts are more legible in text form than sans serif fonts. Also the concept of a one case alphabet - with no capital letters - was democratic and rational in theory but in practice it rendered text more difficult to read. (illus.3)

Despite failures such as these, most of the theories proposed by the early Modernists become established creed. For fifty years the style of the Bauhaus evolved, and most of their design vocabulary is still in use today.

LATE MODERNISM

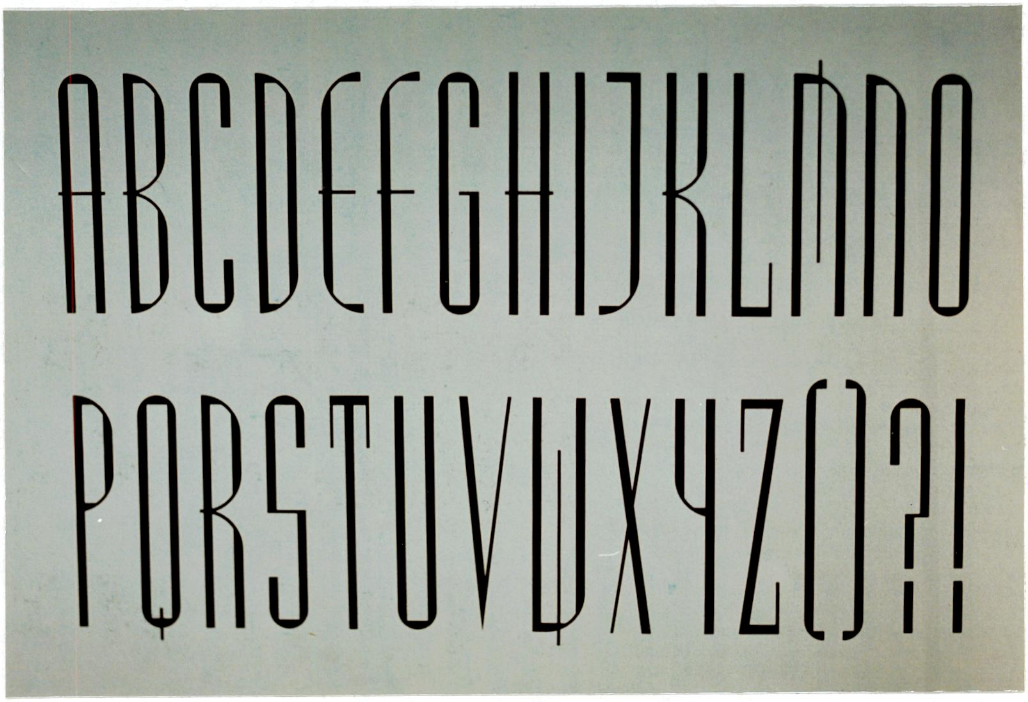
In the 1980s graphic design was in difficulties. The decade is notorious as the time when style became more important than content. Although the demise of graphic design is often blamed on commercialisation and while narrow-minded clients always restrict designers, capable artists have always been able to respond both to their clients' needs and their own desires to produce work of quality. If commercialisation is to blame then it is because designers allowed the medium to be co-opted by capitalism. The truth is that the medium lost sight of its original goals. The motive behind the graphic design of the early 20th century was to bring art into fields that affected life, including commerce. Only the incidental ideals of objectivity and legibility and the desire to create an international style remained however, by the1950s.

The International (or Swiss) style was developed in Switzerland during the late 1940s and 1950s. It was the ultimate in neutral design, striving for forms that were clear, concise, unambiguous and devoid of any charisma. In concept and practice it resembled a watered down Modernism. Avenues opened up during the 1920s were not expanded upon but rather narrowed down. The typographic freedom of the Bauhaus was constrained by a new set of rules. Everything was cleaner and more technically perfect than before but it was also less colourful, and visually less interesting. Objectivity was sought but only neutrality was found. Neutrality is blandness.

This fact finally seemed to dawn on designers in the late 1970s. The reaction was strong and instant. 'Punk' graphics lasted only a short while and coincided with 'punk' rock music. Punk graphics rediscovered some of the flexibility of the Bauhaus and some of the anger of Dada. When this 'Neo-Dadaesque' revolution failed and died away graphics was left in the cold. The high minded 'artiness' of the Bauhaus was long gone. Discredited now too were the philosophies of minimalism and objectivity. Design was left with no theoretical guidelines, no ethics and no rules.

In the ensuing chaos many designers ran for the cover of early Modernism. Russell Mills, a British illustrator, emulated the techniques of Kurt Schwitters and Marcel Duchamp (6, p.5). 8VO, a design house revived the typography of the 1920s. More common however, was a cacophony of senseless ideas and a rapid succession of styles as designers clutched desperately at every straw available. Most of these straws were presented by designers of magazines, most notably the British style publications *The Face* and *i-D*.

The magazine is a peculiar medium. It is printed of course, but the format is entirely flexible. Magazines tend to cover a wide range of vastly different topics on every issue. Certainly, this is the case with *The Face* and its


ABCDEFGHIJKLMNO
PQRSTUVWXYZ()?!

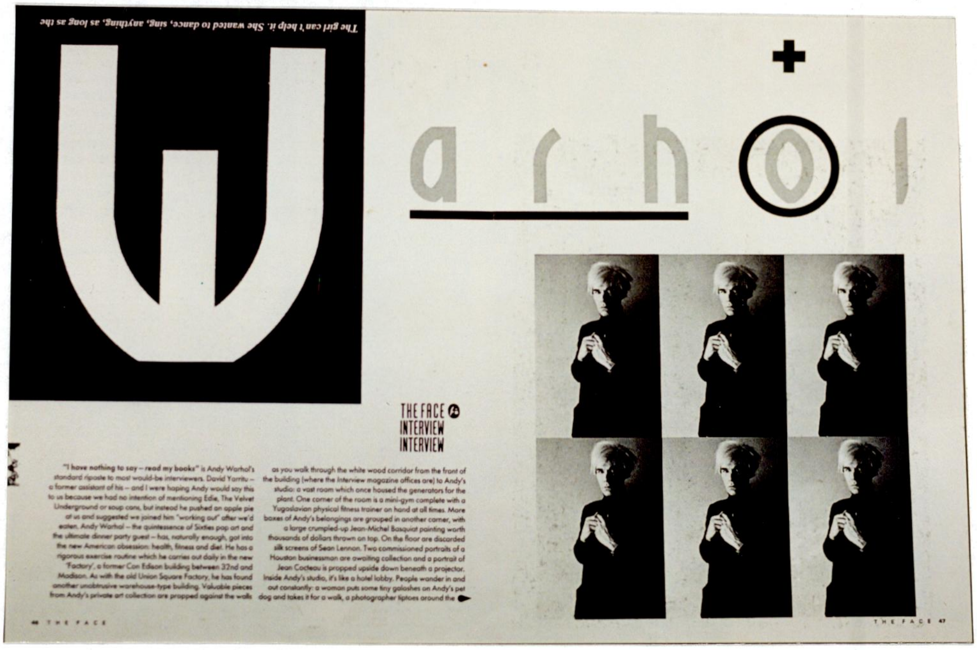
4 Typeface 5. Neville Brody, 1985.

contemporaries. A single issue might address issues as diverse as art, music, fashion and anything else remotely relevant to youth culture. This variety lends the designer an incredible freedom. Neville Brody - art director of *The Face* - took advantage of this liberty. He devised a flexible grid system to ensure that the magazine functions visually as a coherent whole. He adhered to the use of one typeface for the text throughout. His handling of headlines, images and layout, on the other hand, was considered separately for each article in the magazine. 'Everything in *The Face* was reasoned; every single mark was either an emotive response or a logical extension of the ideas.' (3, p.96)

Neville Brody is one of the most accomplished craftsmen of today. *The Face* is testimony to this fact. The layouts he designed are exemplary. His inventive use of type is exciting and effective. It is by no means surprising that he is much imitated. Brody apparently took much of his inspiration from the early Modernists. He displayed a preference for sans-serif type and bold colours. Often, his typographic experiments would be seen weeks later on store fronts, book covers and in other magazines. This annoyed him so much that he went out of his way to compose hand rendered headlines using fonts of his own invention (illus.4). These too were poached as was his fondness for punctuating text with bold graphic symbols. He denies any responsibility for the stylistic promiscuity of 1980s graphics, claiming that he did not indulge in meaningless style (as did his imitators) but rather had an intelligent content behind his chic façade.

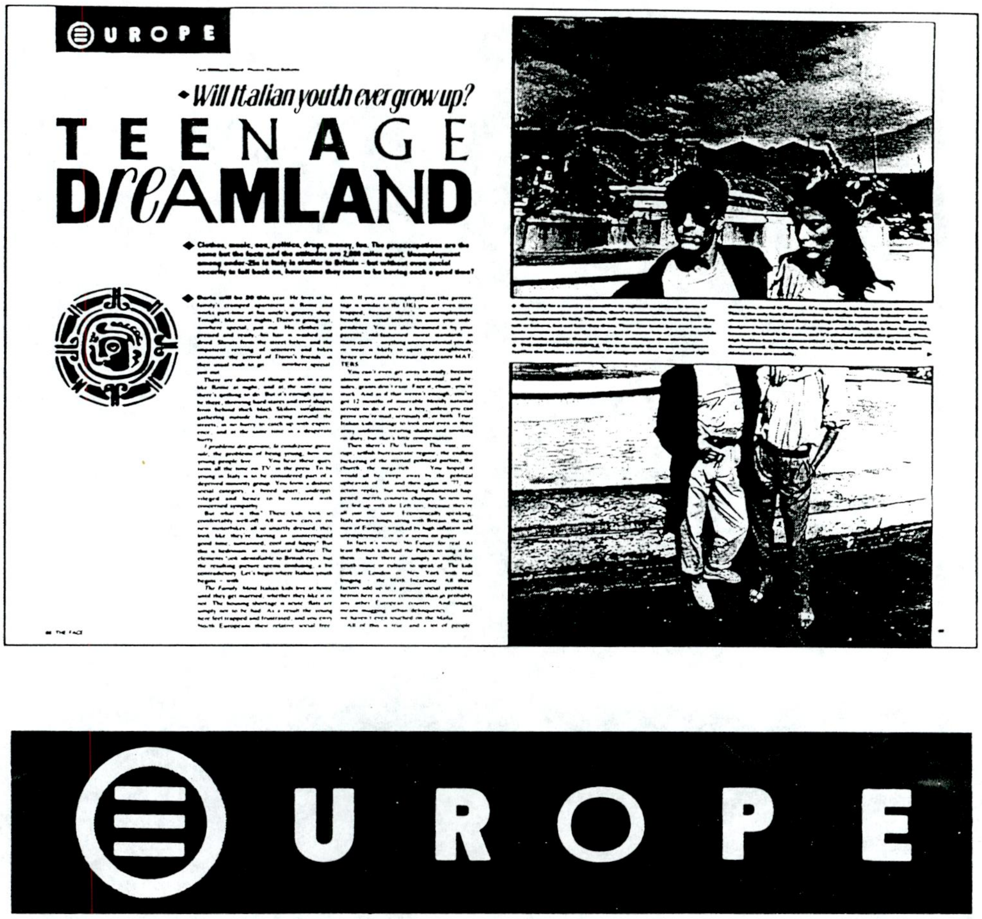
Brody often produced great work. His design for an arcticle on Andy Warhol, for example, is dynamic and relevant (fig.5). His use of multiple portraits of Warhol is a witty reference to the artist's own work.

However, Brody could not deny that *The Face*'s style was deliberately esoteric. Much of his work went further and was simply self indulgent. As


The girl can't help it. She wanted to dance, sing, anything, as long as the
W
arhol
THE FACE
INTERVIEW
INTERVIEW
46 THE FACE
THE FACE 47

"I have nothing to say – read my books" is Andy Warhol's standard riposte to most would-be interviewers. David Yarritu – a former assistant of his – and I were hoping Andy would say this to us because we had no intention of mentioning Edie, The Velvet Underground or soup cans, but instead he pushed an apple pie at us and suggested we joined him "working out" after we'd eaten. Andy Warhol – the quintessence of Sixties pop art and the ultimate dinner party guest – has, naturally enough, got into the new American obsession: health, fitness and diet. He has a rigorous exercise routine which he carries out daily in the new 'Factory', a former Con Edison building between 32nd and Madison. As with the old Union Square Factory, he has found another unobtrusive warehouse-type building. Valuable pieces from Andy's private art collection are propped against the walls as you walk through the white wood corridor from the front of the building (where the *Interview* magazine offices are) to Andy's studio: a vast room which once housed the generators for the plant. One corner of the room is a mini-gym complete with a Yugoslavian physical fitness trainer on hand at all times. More boxes of Andy's belongings are grouped in another corner, with a large crumpled-up Jean-Michel Basquiat painting worth thousands of dollars thrown on top. On the floor are discarded silk screens of Sean Lennon. Two commissioned portraits of a Houston businessman are awaiting collection and a portrait of Jean Cocteau is propped upside down beneath a projector. Inside Andy's studio, it's like a hotel lobby. People wander in and out constantly: a woman puts some tiny galoshes on Andy's pet dog and takes it for a walk, a photographer tiptoes around the ►

5 'WARHOL' SPREAD from *The Face* . Neville Brody, 1985.



EUROPE

◆ Will Italian youth ever grow up?

TEENAGE DREAMLAND

◆ Clothes, music, sex, politics, drugs, money, fun. The preoccupations are the same but the facts and the attitudes are 2,000 miles apart. Unemployment among under-25s in Italy is similar to Britain – but without even social security to fall back on, how come they seem to be having such a good time?

6 ‘Europe’ Spread from *The Face*.. Neville Brody, 1983.

often as not the visual coding was indecipherable and the meaning behind his graphics was lost. Regarding one such piece he confessed, 'I decided to subvert the European success in all forms of art by using Ancient Mexican symbolism..I don't think many people, or even *The Face*, realised this side to the design.' (3, p.113)(illus.6). By and large, it was unsuccessful visual rhetoric such as this which was plundered. All that could be gleaned from much of his work was its considerable visual appeal; its style. Neither Brody nor his colleagues in *i-D* had anything of real substance to offer the medium. Although they aspired to an intelligent, coherent progressive form they failed to deliver consistently on content. With Brody running to keep ahead of a closely following pack of imitators, graphics resembled more an ever changing fashion statement than a means of communication.

THE NEW WAVE

POSTMODERNISM

For the last fifteen years April Greiman has been at the leading edge of a 'new wave' in graphic design. She is without doubt notorious in design circles. Her work seldom fails to provoke strong reactions, most of which have been, unfortunately, negative. It has taken over a decade for her work to become accepted. She is the designer most closely associated with Postmodernism, her work being for many people the definition of Postmodern design. There are countless imitators who aspire to Postmodernism seemingly without any knowledge of what that entails. Most have been conspicuously unsuccessful, gleaning from Greiman only the surface trimmings of her work. The ever increasing number of successful Postmodern graphic designers, many of whom while influenced by Greiman, produce work quite different in style to hers. Nevertheless, April Greiman is possibly the most successful and is undoubtedly the most radical Postmodern graphic designer in the world and therefore provides, I feel, the most coherent example of Postmodernism.

This begs the question; what is postmodern graphic design? An answer to this proves particularly elusive. The movement displays different symptoms throughout different media, although there is indisputably a relationship between them all.

Some critics regard pastiche as the single most important element of Postmodernism (17, p.20). This symptom is displayed in the pop art of Andy Warhol and Jasper Johns who assimilated objects from mass culture into their work. Arguably, pastiche is also visible in postmodern architecture, which assimilated many of the trappings of classicism. The fields of architecture and painting were the first to develop strong Postmodern

movements, so it is not surprising that the movement was accused of being reactionary. Literature, even Modernist literature, has always made reference to the past. Joyce's 'Ulysses' is based on Homer's 'Odyssey' for example. Graphic design too has always referred to previous eras, manipulating styles and images to its own ends. Therefore pastiche fails as a defining point for the new wave.

Another critic, Merquior, sees Postmodernism as merely a continuation of Modernism (15, p.19). Again in painting we see how this conclusion might have been arrived at. Jasper Johns and Jeff Koons both produce art not dissimilar in concept to that of Marcel Duchamp. Indeed Merquior describes this relationship as revering "marginal, minor, obsessional lesser gods in the modern pantheon." (15 p.19). Architecture though, has quite obviously reacted strongly against the principles and practice of Modernism. The use of historical references is flagrantly defying the dictum 'Form follows Function', and opposes the very concept of Modernism. Nonetheless, Postmodern architecture does use modern materials. Regardless of this, it is patently unfair to dismiss Postmodernism, as Merquior does, as 'an extremist remake of Avant-Garde tics.' (15, p.19).

In contrast, there is a strong case to be made that Postmodernism is in fact a reaction against Modernism. Warhol's meaningless images were a reaction against the esoteric, elitist works of modern art which were entirely inaccessible to all but an indoctrinated few. Architecture was perhaps Modernism's greatest failure. The buildings which were supposedly designed to cater for 20th century man turned out to be brutally inhuman. Not surprisingly, Postmodernist architects have abandoned the concept of pure functionalism and now seek to imbue buildings with personality.

Unlike 'High Art', such as painting and literature, graphic design never suffered from being too elitist. In effect the opposite was true. Graphics is a

medium of mass communication and as such must appeal to the masses. Designers espousing Internationalism and striving to avoid obscurity, went to the other extreme of instant accessibility. The result of this was a medium which allowed commercial factors to become overly important and which was orientated toward the lowest common denominator. This banality is akin to the atrocious lack of personality of the International movement in architecture.

The impetus of Postmodernism in all fields is to bridge 'The Great Divide' created by the Modernist / Avant-Garde split. While painters such as Koons, Johns and Warhol indulge in the parody / glorification of mass culture and kitsch, so does April Greiman produce graphics with references to 'High Art', most notably quoting Jenny Holzer. Artists in all fields reacted strongly to the rigid pigeonholing of Modernism.

It is apparent, however, that these restrictions were not always symptoms of Modernism. The Bauhaus, conspicuously, was concerned with the integration of 'High' and mass culture. Logically, therefore, it appears unreasonable to suggest that Postmodernism is simply a reaction provoked by the failures of early 20th century art and design. Charles Jencks offers a solution to the apparent paradox. He considers Postmodernism to be both 'the continuation of Modernism and its transcendence,' (10 p.15). As its very title suggests, the movement has evolved from Modernism. Most conspicuously absent from Postmodern theory is the Modernist creed of modernity itself. Artists no longer feel compelled to disregard all but contemporary culture. Nonetheless, a common feature of Postmodernism is the use of modern materials and media. Jencks defines Postmodernism as 'double coding, the combination of modern techniques with something else.' (10, p.14).

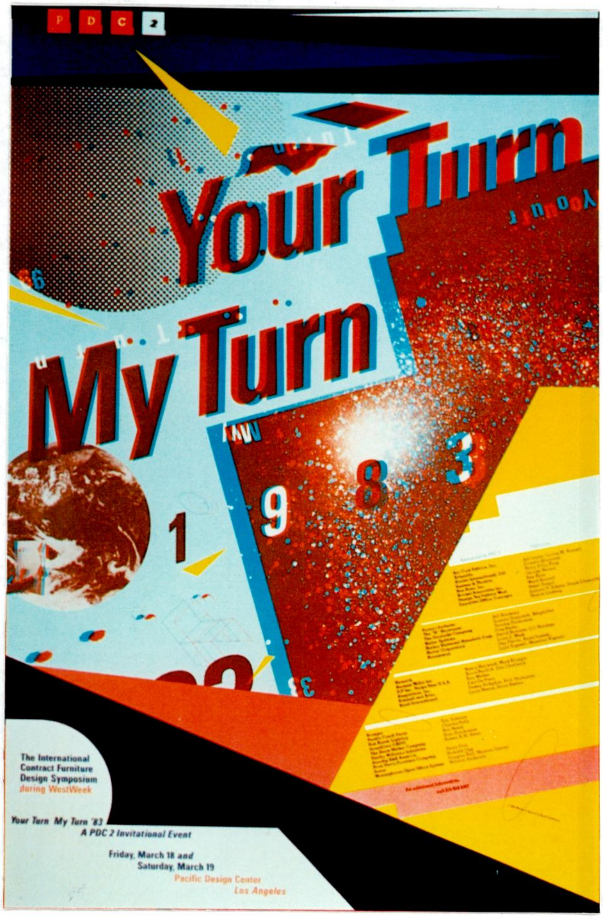
Postmodernism in graphics is marked, as in other fields, by 'a set of plural departures from Modernism' (10 p.23). Significantly, the belief that design should be based on objective reason is no longer widely held. Postmodern graphic designers insist on subjectivity. I don't wish to imply that they compromise the communicational element of their work, rather that the 'artist's own touch' is once again considered desirable. It is suggested that Modernism coincided with the era of monopoly capitalism and Postmodernism with postindustrialism (17 p.18). It is not surprising therefore that the industrial coolness of Modernist internationalism, so suited to the anonymous capitalist corporations, should be replaced by the more personal warmth of the postindustrial Postmodernists.

Graphic design's most radical departure from Modernism is, however, its tendency to be inclusive as opposed to reductive. By opposing the pithy minimalism considered until recently to be the epitome of graphics, the Postmodernists have expanded the potential for communication. Their argument is that reducing the message to a simplistic, trite, condensed form limits the power of the medium. Postmodernism, by operating on different levels, aims to communicate more, to more people. Jencks describes this as 'a pluralism both philosophical and stylistic.' (10,p.23).

APRIL GREIMAN

For April Greiman the key word is 'Hybrid'. The title of her book is *Hybrid Imagery*. The first paragraph of the book refers both to the pluralism of Postmodernism and to the subjective personality of her work;

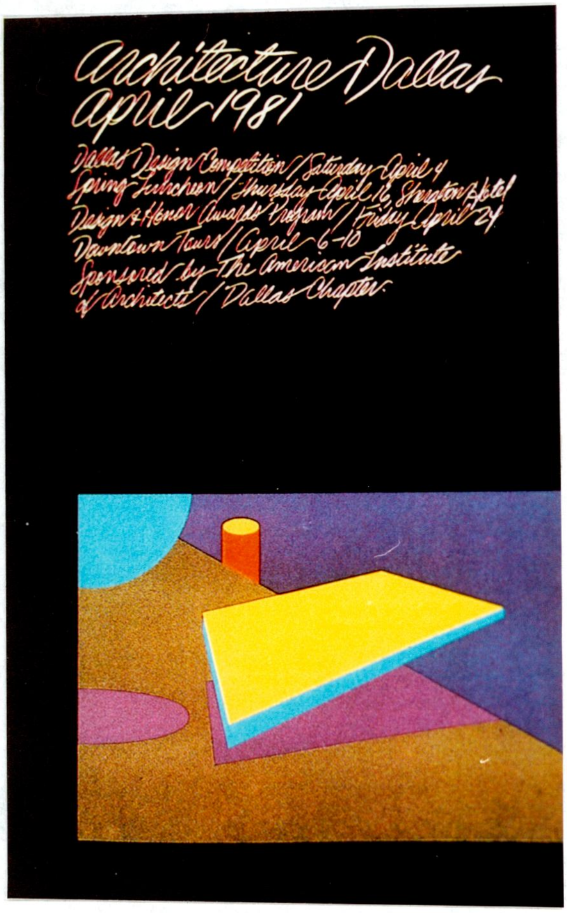
> April Greiman's approach questions the conventional idea that dualities are opposed pairs. Instead she suggests that they are interdependent possibilities at play in a common field. Her broader themes - the constancy of change, form as energy and the interconnectedness of matter in space and time - take this approach to its limits. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the increasing variety of sources and techniques she incorporates into her images (11,p.13).


PDC 2
Your Turn
My Turn
1 9 8 3
The International
Contract Furniture
Design Symposium
during WestWeek
Your Turn My Turn '83
A PDC 2 Invitational Event
Friday, March 18 and
Saturday, March 19
Pacific Design Center
Los Angeles

7 My Turn, Your Turn. April Greiman, 1982.

The pluralistic, hybrid approach manifests itself in what Greiman terms the layering process. Her poster for the International Contract Furniture Symposium (illus. 7) - entitled 'Your Turn, My Turn.', demonstrates her juxtaposition of numerous images. At a cursory glance, it appears to have absolutely nothing to do with furniture. Closer inspection reveals a small diagram of a chair. The most apparent elements of the poster are the boldly coloured geometrical shapes and the title of the event. There is also a picture of a supernova and another of the planet earth. The bold headline and the galactical image are printed in 3D - so that when viewed through special glasses which were supplied with other promotional literature, the images spring off the flat surface of the poster. This seems to be a reference to the three dimensionality of furniture; the solidity of the subject matter is paradoxically evoked from a two dimensional plane. The space images of the planet and galaxy seem to refer to the movement of an object (furniture) through space. The bold shapes are apparently also intended to reflect the forms of furniture. 'Seems' because in an April Greiman poster one can never be entirely sure what the message is, or where it ends. The images in this poster probably relate to 'form as energy and the interconnectedness of matter in space and time', as much as to furniture. The layering of meaning is reflected in the layering of imagery.

In order to illustrate the radical departure Greiman's Postmodernism entails, a comparison with one of her contemporaries seems appropriate. Woody Pirtle is one of the most creative designers in the world. His work contrasts strongly with Greiman's. Essentially, Pirtle is a Modernist although he dismisses any affiliation to any creative dogma (5, p.82). Nonetheless, his work displays some of the basic assumptions of pre-Postmodern doctrine. This is not to suggest that his work is 'old fashioned' but rather to demonstrate just how radically different Greiman's work is.


Architecture Dallas
April 1981
Dallas Design Competition / Saturday April 4
Spring Luncheon / Thursday April 16, Sheraton Hotel
Design & Honor Awards Program / Friday April 24
Downtown Tours / April 6-10
Sponsored by The American Institute
of Architects / Dallas Chapter.

8 Architecture Dallas '81.Woody Pirtle 1981

Despite the fact that later Modernists considered ambiguity to be useful and exciting, the pluralist Postmodern poster by Greiman takes this much further than the mildly equivocal poster designed by Woody Pirtle (illus: 8) This poster promoting an architectural competition has much in common with Greiman's 'My Turn, Your Turn' piece. He uses bold, abstract shapes to illustrate architecture. The flat background and strong colours and shadows reflect the Texan landscape. The poster functions by attracting the viewer with a striking, witty image and composition. Then the precise information of the text is read. Only one idea is displayed. The problem is broken down to a single image which conveys the message. The visual ambiguity of the abstract shapes referring to Architecture is soon resolved.

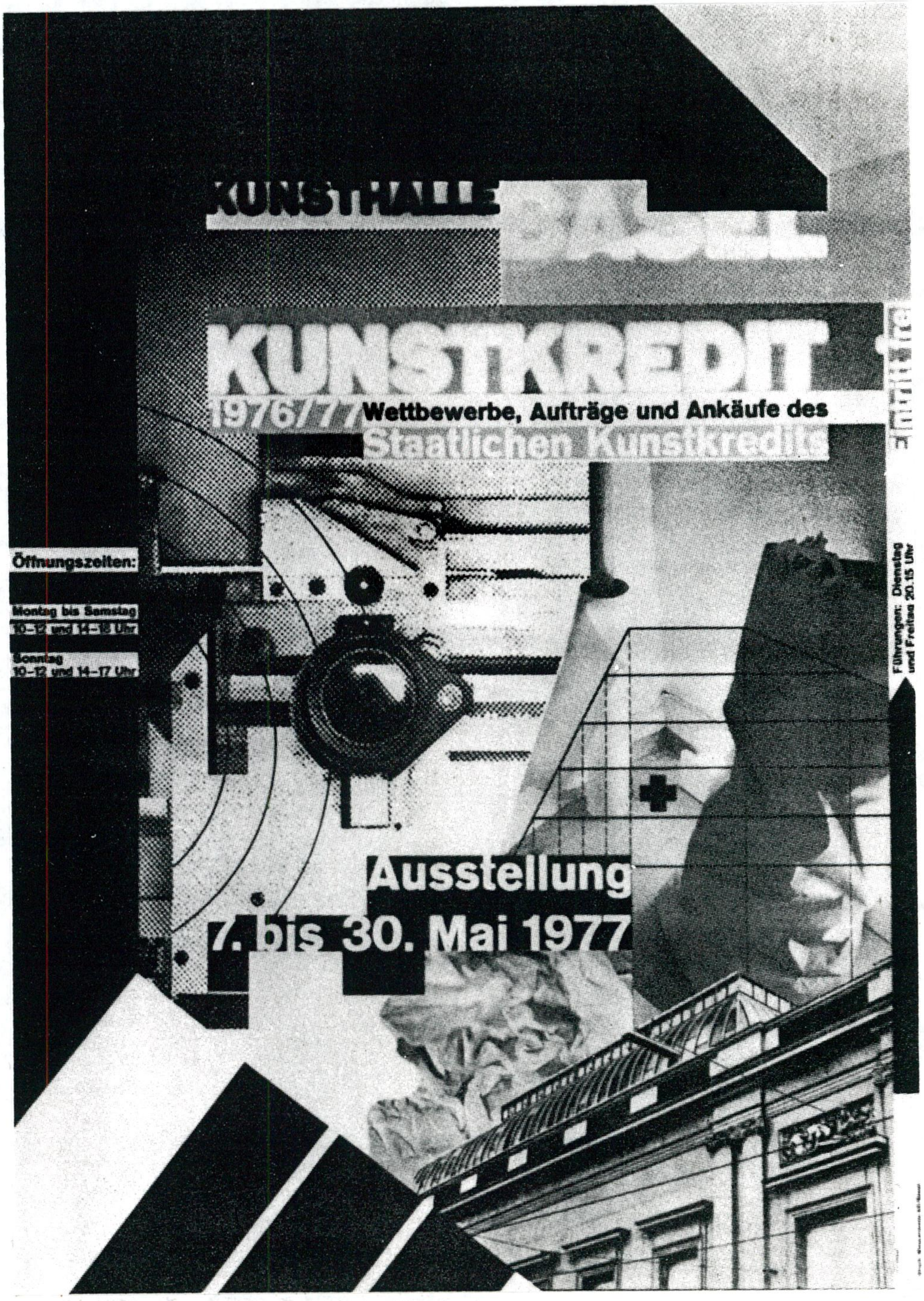
> The best work I produce presents a message in the most direct, streamlined fashion. I'm not interested in graphic trends or even a recognisable style - I'm proudest of work that is graphically compelling, crystal clear as a communications vehicle and stylistically timeless. (5,p.82).

The multiple images of the Postmodern poster function in an entirely different way to the elemental simplicity of Pirtle's. Greiman's layering process involves the presentation of more that just one idea. The ambiguity of her poster is far more thought provoking - far less simply resolved. Her images do not inform in a direct manner but must be interpreted to some degree. The layering process allows her to include numerous levels of interpretation, in this example from the straightforward literal picture of a chair to the deeper references to her own personal philosophy. She abstains from Pirtle's Modernist commitment to 'direct, streamlined communication' believing, in contrast, that, 'design must seduce, shape and perhaps more importantly, evoke emotional response.' (8,p.45). She is also fond of quoting Wittgenstein; 'In many cases there is a picture in the foreground but the sense lies far in the background.' (8, p.44)

April Greiman's working methods are as radical as her work is. The tried and tested method taught in design schools since the Bauhaus is to sketch in

'thumbnail' form all the ideas one can think of until you get one that you like. This idea is then developed into the final piece. Greiman long ago rejected the rigidity of this work method for the fluidity of a much more 'painterly' approach. She decides, sometimes very rapidly, what she wants to convey in a piece. Immediately, she begins to produce it. Before the advent of the computer this was a much more time consuming process. She develops her ideas while she builds and designs her images - not beforehand. The purpose of this is to enhance the gestalt of the work, with all the elements unified and complete.

Her working process is in many respects a direct result of her training. Although she was 'classically' educated in Kansas, she also went to Basle in Switzerland where she was trained in the early 1970s by Wolfgang Weingart. Weingart, a German, is a self-trained designer who was hired in 1968 by Armin Hoffman, a renowned Swiss designer, to teach a course in advanced typography. In the space of five years he had changed the face of graphic design. He is the acknowledged father of new wave (Postmodern) graphics. However, his course revolved around the syntactic element of design, not the semantic, that is it concentrated almost entirely on form and rarely touched on content. Weingart himself admitted that this was a great problem and in 1975 altered the structure of his seven month course to consider the semantic a little also. This left less time to develop the syntactic element with the result that the course is not as revolutionary as it once was. April Greiman however, attended the Basle School before that happened. Weingart regards what he achieved typographically as a direct descendant of classical Swiss form. He took Swiss typography, which was minimalist and devoid of expression, and began to produce expressive typography with it. Central to Weingart's doctrine of typographic innovation was the exploration of the functional presentation of information. He showed that whatever the message was it could be expressed typographically. One of the most radical forms he introduced was information layering (illus.9). This is such a


KUNSTHALLE
BASEL
KUNSTKREDIT
1976/77
Wettbewerbe, Aufträge und Ankäufe des
Staatlichen Kunstkredits
Öffnungszeiten:
Montag bis Samstag
10–12 und 14–18 Uhr
Sonntag
10–12 und 14–17 Uhr
Führungen: Dienstag
und Freitag 20.15 Uhr
Ausstellung
7. bis 30. Mai 1977

9 KUNSTKREDIT. Weingart, Wolfgang, 1978

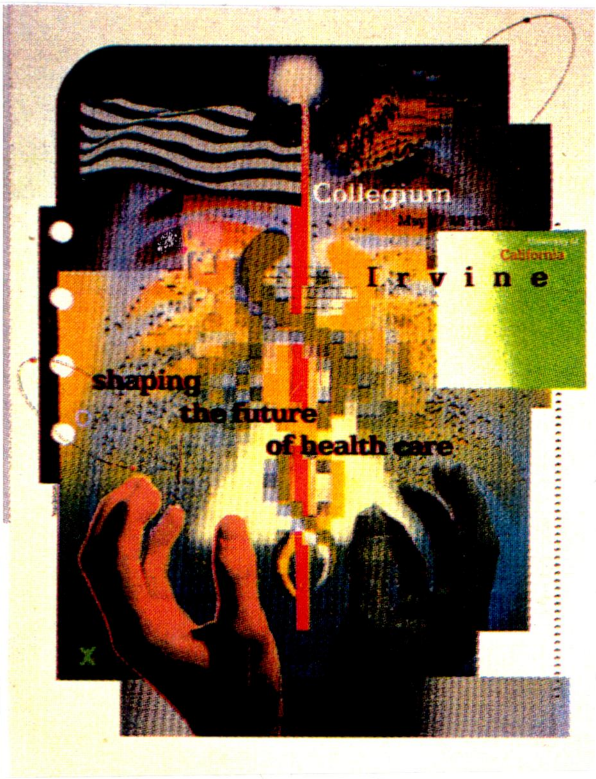
departure from the coolness and remoteness of classic Swiss form that it is difficult to see how he developed one into the other. The underlying ethic and the overpowering effect of these posters is completely opposite to what classic Swiss Typography set out to achieve. His effect on contemporary design has been profound.

I suggest that whereas Modernism aims to provide an answer, Postmodernism prefers to ask a question. The effect of graphic material has been fundamentally changed. The poster is no longer just looked at - it is read.

Many of his students have taken his syntax and combined it with their own semantics. April Greiman is certainly one of these. Others, however, failed to understand that his instruction was exploratory and not definitive. Much of what purports to be Postmodern design merely imitates Weingart's style. All too many designers paid attention solely to his vocabulary, without listening to what he had to say. Elements of his work such as 'steps', 'type and stripes', repeated type and dramatically contrasting scale have been plundered by style-conscious designers eager to keep up with a rapidly changing medium.

One imitator 'realised' that he could not help but be Postmodern as most of the typefaces used date from previous centuries (2,p.10). This seems akin to an architect declaring affiliation to Postmodernism because he uses slate roof tiles. Others interpret the return to subjectivity as a license to produce meaningless work. Despite this however, many of the concepts of Postmodernism have been accepted by the design profession. The introduction of the Macintosh computer in 1984 proved to be a catalyst for the eventual acceptance of Postmodernism.

April Greiman was one of the few who instantly recognised the graphic potential of the Macintosh. She regards computers as the medium which 'implodes' the role of the specialist, both within design and between all


Collegium
California
Irvine
shaping
the future
of health care

10 Shaping the Future of Health Care.

Greiman April. 1986

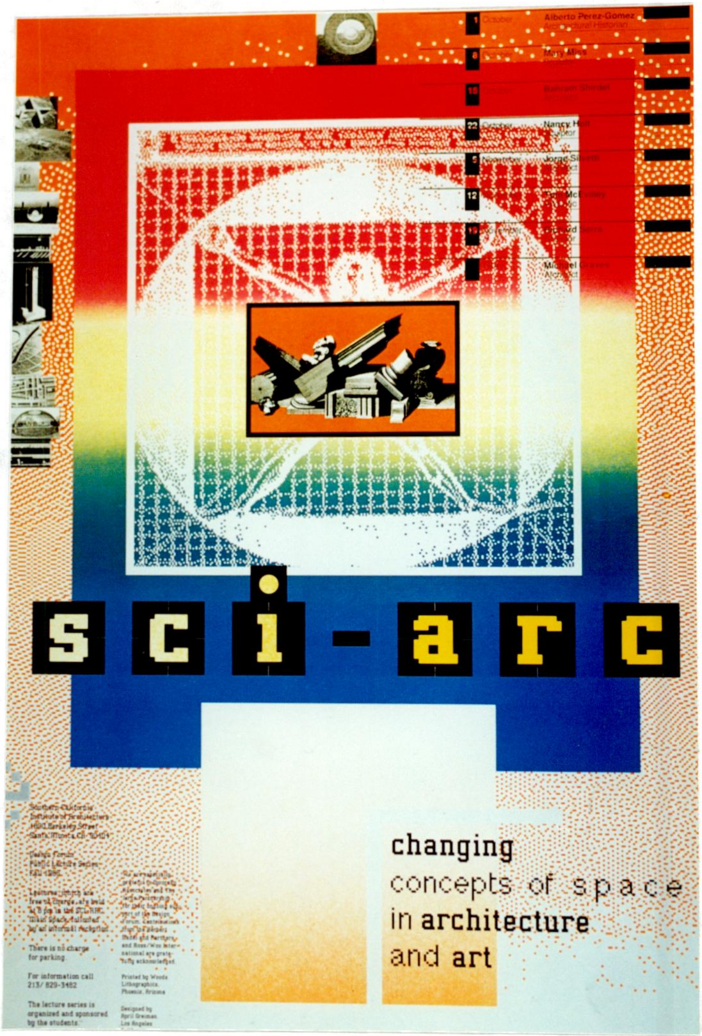
fields of art. An epigraph at the beginning of her book (there are a number of them) states:

> The meaning of the word implode is 'to burst inwards'. This definition captures the spirit and dynamic of the digital revolution and its profound impact on existing disciplines, graphic design among them...Digital technology is no respecter of existing boundaries whether spatial, temporal, conceptual or professional.(8,p.10).

Despite such optimism however, Greiman was possibly the first victim of computer technology. Much of the work she produced immediately after acquiring a Macintosh was disastrous. Seemingly enthralled with the ease and speed with which one could layer images using the computer, she went too far. So many images are superimposed that instead of achieving a coherency, any message that was suggested or implied in the imagery and any message explicit in the text was overpowered. This work is a potent caveat of the worst excesses of Postmodernism (illus. 10).

A poster that is unattractive and uninformative is a pollutant. When the double coding and the pluralism of Postmodernism fails to appeal to anyone and is indecipherable, the effect is not unlike that of bad television. The information white out - the bombardment by the media of endless data which is almost never comprehended - is an undesirable symptom of post industrial culture (23,p.32). Good Postmodern visual communication subverts this process by eschewing the 'instant gratification' mentality of most mass media - and indeed of most modernist graphics. On the other hand - bad Postmodern graphics match and perhaps exceed the obtusity of the most mindless television shows.

Fortunately, Greiman soon mastered the machine. In 1986 she produced a poster for a lecture series at the Southern California Institute of Architecture entitled, "Changing Concepts of Space in Architecture and Art". This poster is one of her most successful computer generated pieces (illus: 11).


1 October Alberto Perez-Gomez
Architectural Historian
8 October Mary Miss
15
22 October Nancy Holt
5 November
12
19 November
sci-arc
changing
concepts of space
in architecture
and art
There is no charge
for parking
For information call
213/ 829-3482
The lecture series is
organized and sponsored
by the students
Printed by Woods
Lithographics
Phoenix, Arizona
Designed by
April Greiman
Los Angeles

11 CHANGING CONCEPTS OF SPACE. April Greiman, 1986

It cannot be said that one image dominates this poster. Perhaps the bright colours of the background will catch attention or maybe the eye will settle on the type - 'Sci-Arc'. The noticeable (Post) modern coarse computer typography reflects the notion of 'changing' in the title as do the graduated colours. The large areas of tone, the varied letterspacing and the layering of the images themselves refer to 'concepts of space'. A dramatic inserted photograph of 'tumbled architectural elements' is specific to the architectural element of the event while the digitised and 'bit-mapped' version of da Vinci's 'Ideal Man', while obviously related to 'Art' is relevant to the entire series. There are numerous inserts of various buildings and interiors, including a photograph of a row of coathangers in a wardrobe and in contrast, an image of a skyscraper.

Clearly, Greiman regards the computer as more than a mere electronic pencil. She manipulates these machines more for their textures than for their speed and ease of use.

Also in 1986, April Greiman produced what is possibly the boldest statement of graphic design since Jan Tschichold published *Die Neue Typographie*, almost sixty years previously. She was invited to design an issue of *Design Quarterly,* an American design magazine that devotes each issue to a single issue or designer. Rather than do a straightforward retrospective of her work she chose to use the opportunity to declare her highly personal philosophy of design (illus. 12 & 13).

Nothing about the magazine refers to any of the standard 'norms' of magazine design. Firstly, it is arguably not even a magazine. The issue folds out into a 2' by 6' poster featuring on one side, a life-size image of the designer. She resolved to use the poster to demonstrate her experiments on the computer. The Macintosh had been on stream for only two years and was not at that time standard studio equipment. The imagery of the piece is

related to the origins, conditions, and future of mankind, subject matter more typically associated with fine art. It is also one of the most intensively layered pieces she has produced. All the images were 'scanned' into the computer and then arranged. The central image of the front side, that of a naked Greiman asleep, (or with eyes closed) is enlarged to such an extent that the pixels are extremely coarse. Beside the head there are images of a brain to one side and of a galactical vortex to the other. Pictures of a dinosaur and stonehenge bracket the genitals. The body is divided just above the navel. Other images evoking a feeling of movement or space travel are superimposed over her legs. At the feet of the body there is another image of the designer's face, fainter and with eyes open, labelled the 'spiritual double'. This appears to refer to the duality she explores and to the Zen philosophy from which she seems to derive considerable inspiration. What at first appears to be a measuring ruler printed along the side is in fact a history of the universe and graphic design, beginning with 'Birth of Solar System, 4.8 billion B.C.', going through the first photograph in 1826, the birth of April Greiman in 1948 to the introduction of the Mac in 1984. There are also some Jenny Holzer-like didactic statements and a reference to 'Talking and Falling - Laurie Anderson'. There are many other elements to the piece, with many treatments and textures which relate to each other in different ways. The complexity of the piece is confessed in the half apologetic, half challenging, 'Does it make sense?', which was the working title Greiman gave the poster.

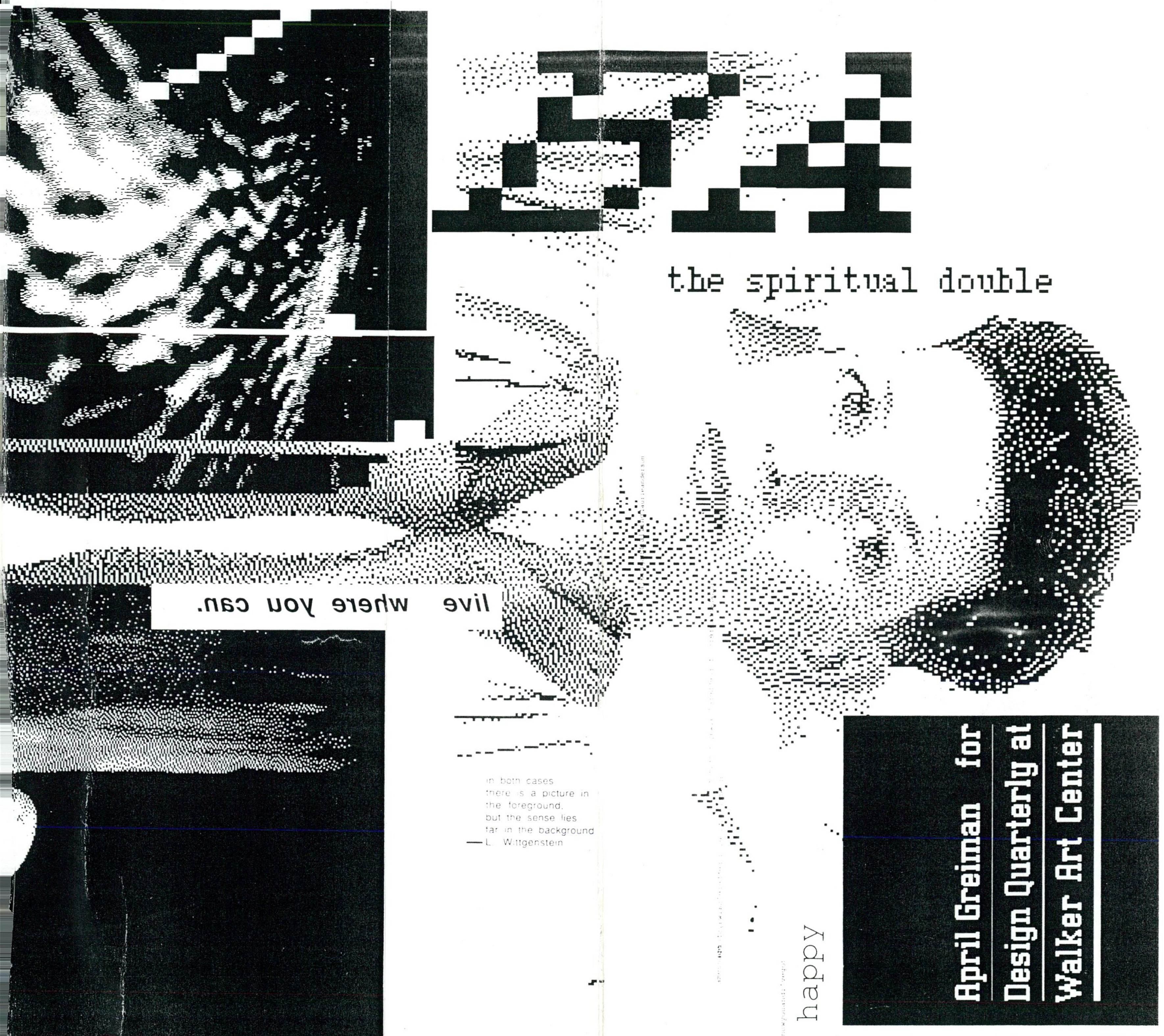
The reverse side of the poster attempts to decipher to some extent, if not every nuance of meaning in the imagery, at least the thought processes that went into producing it. Below a very coarse, almost indistinguishable picture of her mouth, Greiman describes her theory of duality and mentions the chaos theory. She also relates a Zen parable which she links to a description of the production processes used in the magazine.

> The Zen monk starts on his daily walk through the forest. A young student follows behind, hoping to discover some secrets of his master along the way. Deep in the forest his master comes across a giant boulder fallen across the path, making it impossible to continue forward on the journey. The monk meditates for a few short moments and then goes into the forest and gets a large tree branch which he then uses as a lever to gently roll the rock out of his path. The master continues on but the young student, terribly excited to have witnessed this, grabs the stick and runs back to the monastery to impress the others with the discovery: when you encounter an obstacle find a stick.
>
> The moral of the story is that it isn't about the stick, it's about how to continue the journey. (8,p.65).

This side of the poster is in full colour and demonstrates her use of video imagery with some space age pictures and a discoloured shot of the back of her head.

Greiman's issue of *Design Quarterly* is a manifesto of Postmodern graphics. The specifics of what she apparently said are less important than the fact that she said them at all. In this case, to paraphrase Wittgenstein, the sense lies far behind the pictures in the foreground. In many respects she addresses not the condition of mankind in general but graphic design in particular - albeit in a most oblique manner.

She was criticised severely for producing such a self-indulgent piece. Regardless of this - she had made her point. She had set her own agenda for design, claiming that designers needn't bow to a preconceived standard. She was publicly reinstating the subjective element of the 'artist's own touch' into design. She had made a bold statement on the power of the layering process. Greiman also demonstrated the potential of the electronic image and predicted the overwhelming effect it is having on visual communications.

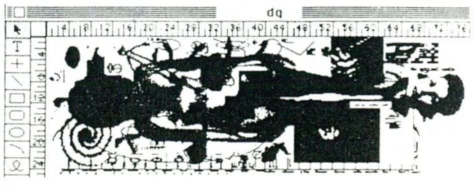


the spiritual double

live where you can.

in both cases
there is a picture in
the foreground,
but the sense lies
far in the background
—L. Wittgenstein

April Greiman for
Design Quarterly at
Walker Art Center



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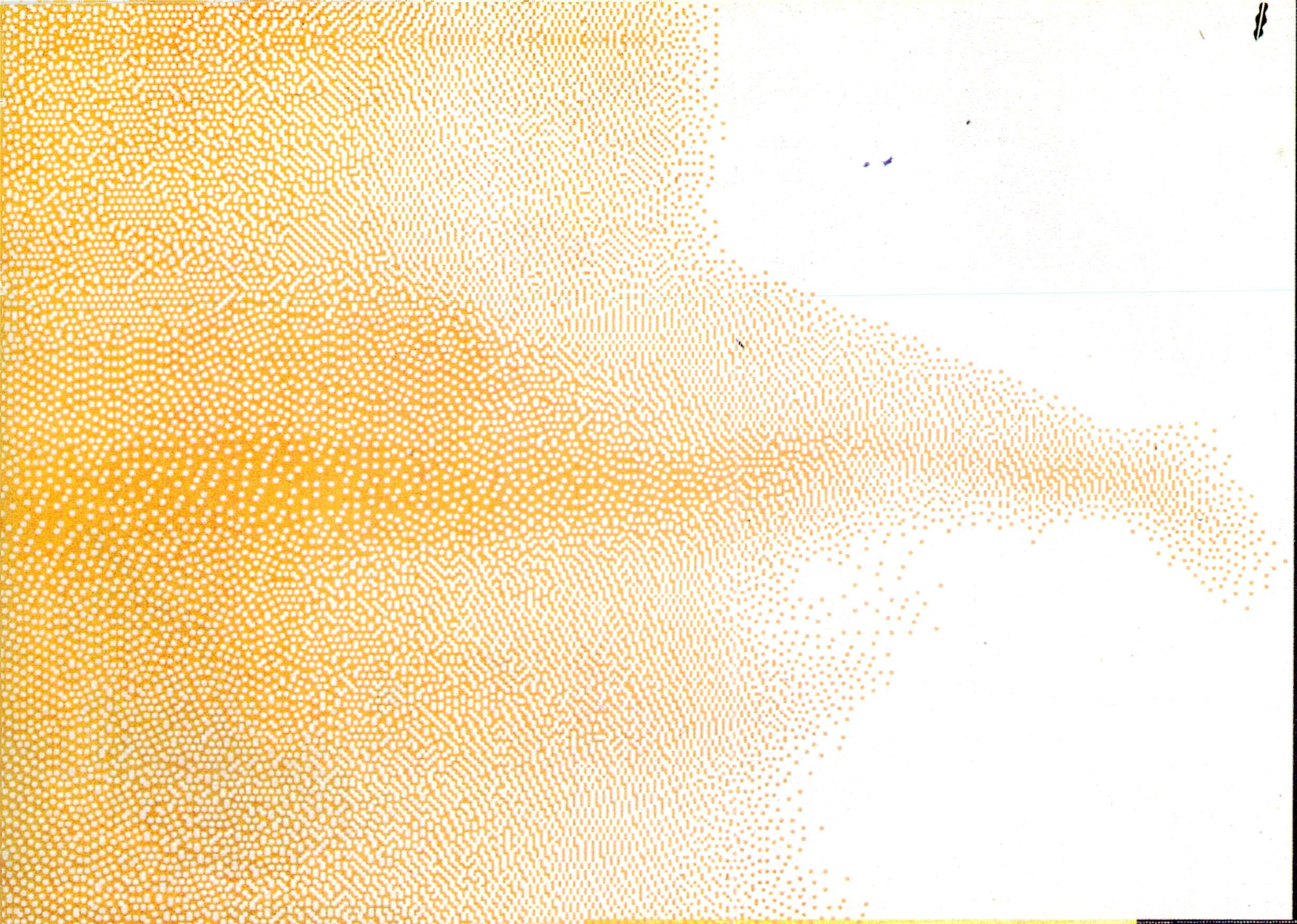
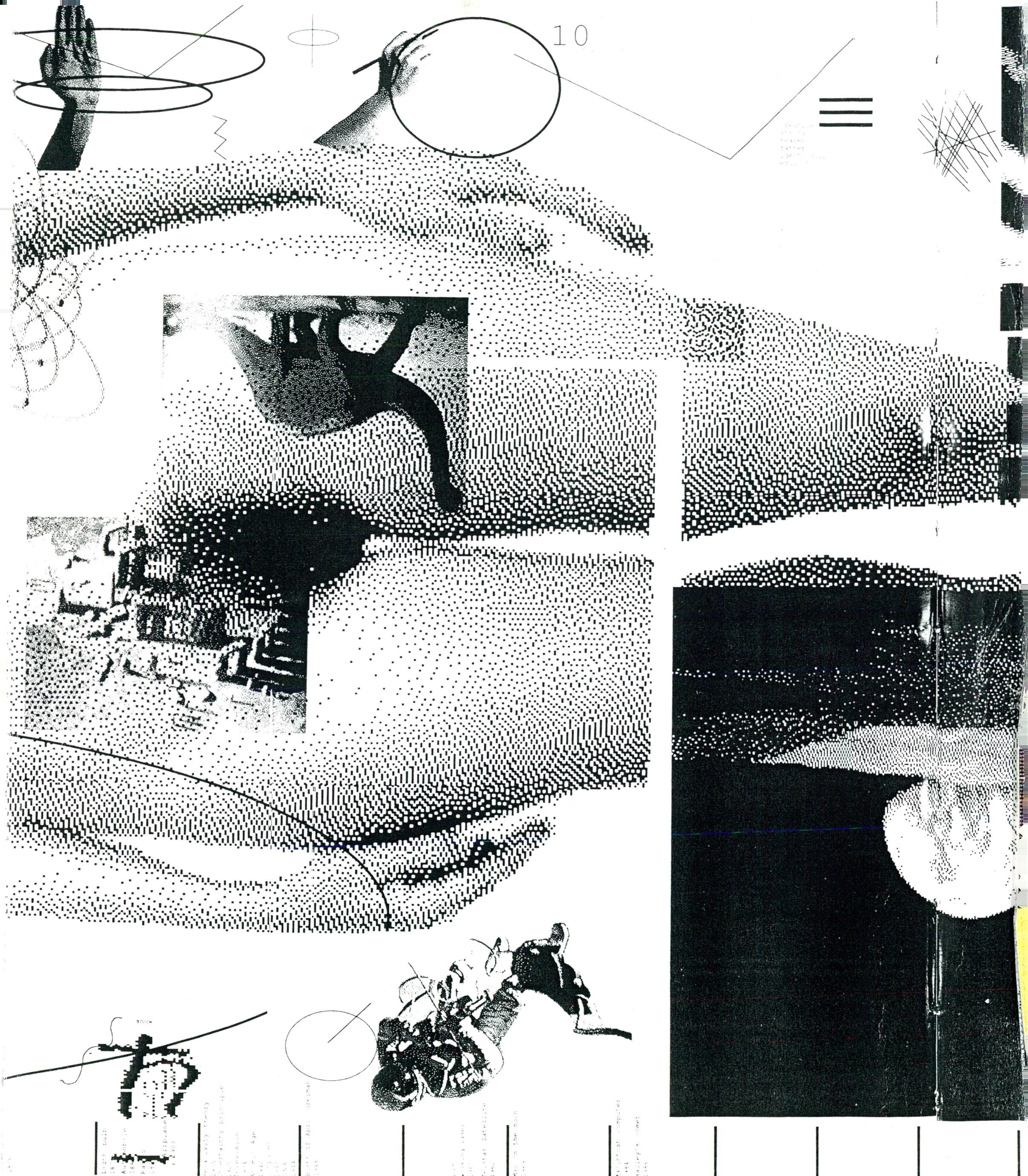
well,youdon'tknowme,butiknowyouandi'vegot

mybirthsaidlittlecreaturethouartformedofjoyandmirth-golovewithouttheheloof [illegible] ykinghingorear [illegible] geewhizohmomohdad onthestreetofdreamkingsdon tmeanathing

. dance . make sounds. feel . don't worry . be happy



I'm walking through the English Garden with Andreas--and I mention the idea (duality) of order and chaos. So, he tips me off to the latest philosophical twist--chaos is simply a man/mind-made invention that frankly doesn't exist! I think about this and I say...yea, come to think about it, in seeing a computer model of fractal geometry, things that appear without structure, such as clouds and mountains, are in fact orderly processes. While on the surface, things seem irregular and chaotic, when you break down the parts, in reality they are more and more modular and ordered. The more finitely we perceive them, the more their inherent order becomes apparent.


10
snow
Light bulb
Automobile
Radio
Airplane
1903
Relativity theory
Uncertainty principle
Television
Atomic Age
DNA
Birth of April Greiman
Telstar Satellite
Man on the moon
Macintosh computer
1984
Halley's comet
1986

energy wearea continuation of the geologic process DiegoRivera ikadowawazolotyponomaneinquastomadonat folowatoyouoyonardzomemebababodeodeodo

mega . giga . tera . order . chaos . play . dream
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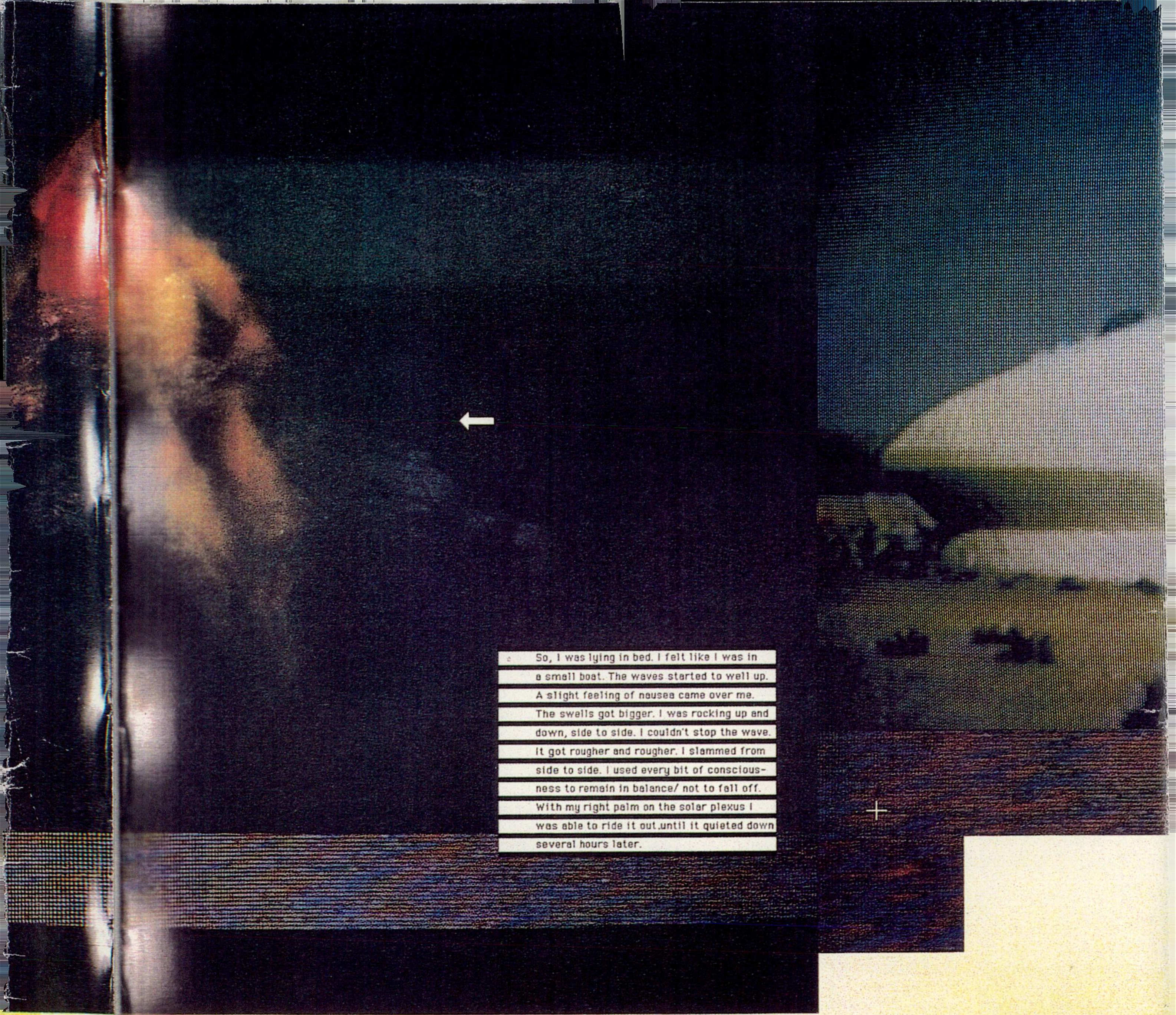

So, I was lying in bed. I felt like I was in a small boat. The waves started to well up. A slight feeling of nausea came over me. The swells got bigger. I was rocking up and down, side to side. I couldn't stop the wave. It got rougher and rougher. I slammed from side to side. I used every bit of consciousness to remain in balance/ not to fall off. With my right palm on the solar plexus I was able to ride it out.until it quieted down several hours later.

The Zen monk starts on his daily walk through the forest. A young student follows behind, hoping to discover some secrets of his master along the way. Deep in the forest the master comes across a giant boulder fallen across the path, making it impossible to continue forward on the journey. The monk meditates for a few short moments and then goes into the forest and gets a large tree branch, which he then uses as a lever to gently roll the rock out of his path. The master continues on but the young student, terribly excited to have witnessed this, grabs the stick and runs back to the monastery to impress the others with the discovery: when you encounter an obstacle find a stick.

The moral of the story is that it isn't about the stick, it's about how to continue the journey.

...this story reminds me of my particular journey with this piece. In the beginning the obstacle was simply to master the Macintosh technology and software used to generate text and image. The image was ultimately composed in MacDraw, a program which permits large scale (up to 4 x 8 foot) collaging of digitized and drawn images electronically cut and pasted from MacPaint. The collage is spit out of the LaserWriter as separate 8 1/2 x 11inch sheets which are then assembled together.

This issue of DQ began over one year ago when Robert Jensen, Graphic Designer for the Walker, invited me to do an issue on my work. I can't remember being so flattered and, simultaneously, so scared by an invitation. Without knowing what format it would take I knew it would involve something of all the technology I had been throwing myself at over the past three years. Soon after, Robert left the Walker and I began my discussions with Mickey Friedman, an inspired, sympathetic client. I never enjoyed anything so much, or laughed so hard while developing a project.

About the time I had the thought to use MacDraw software on the Mac to layer and compose all the bits I had been collecting, I contacted Marv Zweier (from the printer, George Rice and Sons). I wanted to know the possibilities for printing an oversized image. He told me that he could find a plant to print the piece (Ivy Hill) but that the maximum size that I could design for was 2 x 6 feet. It was then that I decided to create an actual-size image of myself as the underlying idea. (Marv, huge tears well up when I think of how you bail me out all the time; I absolutely could not have done this work without you.)

The genius of MacDraw is that you can input an image/idea /object and then literally stretch it on screen from a few inches to a few feet in a matter of seconds. You can compose the entire 4 x 8 foot image right in front of you -- altering, adding, layering, trying different compositions-changing meaning and form with a click of the mouse. It's a miracle! You can move things around freely on the surface working at large scale or diving into actual size any time you see fit - in and out, small to large, dense to sparse, complicated to simple. Text was added in MacDraw and manipulated in the same manner.

For six months I gathered materials; for three months I sketched (MacPaint) and digitized images (MacVision) . For another three months I composed, layered, and stretched (MacDraw) and finally produced this piece on my LaserWriter. In the middle of the process it seemed we were perfectly matched --my ideas and the ease and speed of the software. It enabled an extraordinary fluidity in a complex creative process. It made possible placing and altering new imagery or text in the space until it became unable to handle all the layering of information I came to want. Ultimately, the speed with which this new technology encouraged me to work threw it into overload. System Errors kept popping up, making it impossible to print out the final image. One night I left the printer on to print overnight, since it takes a fair amount of time for it to process this much information. In the morning when I returned to the studio I saw that the printout had left out the entire bottom half of my body. When I looked at the screen to see what was going on, I noticed that my entire body was no longer there! Everything else layered on top of my former self was as plain as day. So, somewhere, near the planet Pluto, we believe, a 5 foot 4 1/2 inch digitized image of April Greiman is orbiting.

My absolute genius assistant, Ron Romero, finally tricked the software into printing out, helping me to create the original digitized images, and providing me with constant support in the studio, including back-rubs when I had contorted myself into silly-putty.

Then we thought about a staple to bind it to the cover. I was afraid that it would tear no matter how gently it would be pulled. The appearance of the piece would be ruined. I thought it would be good if it didn't bind in at all. We're thinking about putting it in the Walker 's envelope--but what about when it needs to be on a shelf? And what about the necessary printed spine? So my last thought is a slipcase with a printed spine. First it was to be glued, but the budget didn't allow that .....then I resolved it with a slotted tab and a diagonal cut. This was all fine--the new size of the piece was slightly under 9 x 12 inches, with a slipcase of 9 x 12 inches. Then we talked to Mickey...who said that the envelopes were 9 x 12 inches! So that was that!

Back to the drawing board. We looked finally at the 2 x 6 foot piece and how it folded. The 11 inch dimension that folded twice left an awkward 2 inch strip and the 8 1/2 inch dimension folded eight times left an equally odd strip of 4 inches. So, I naturally let the piece grow to 33 x 76 1/2 inches. We checked with the paper company to see if their custom sheet size could accomodate this-- it was a go, and so the piece evolved and grew. What that meant in terms of MacDraw is that I continued to layer and layer more information. The thought of making it any smaller had practically left my mind completely. Then the bindery said they wouldn't fold this for less than 75 cents apiece if it went wider than 22 inches since it would be hand-folded! Typical obstacle. The printer then jumped in and offered (for slightly more money, of course) to put a scoring plate on the press so that the hand-folding could simply accordion and then have two hand-folds. Our problems seemed over, once again. Then the printer mentioned that they had planned to print two-up and so 33 inches was an impossibility without doubling the press time and cost. These technical production problems were being handled by the production master of my life, Karlee Greene. At no time did she ever stop pushing to help me get it exactly the way I saw it. She would ask any supplier anything, anytime. This woman is an absolute whiz at most everything that has to do with the creative process.

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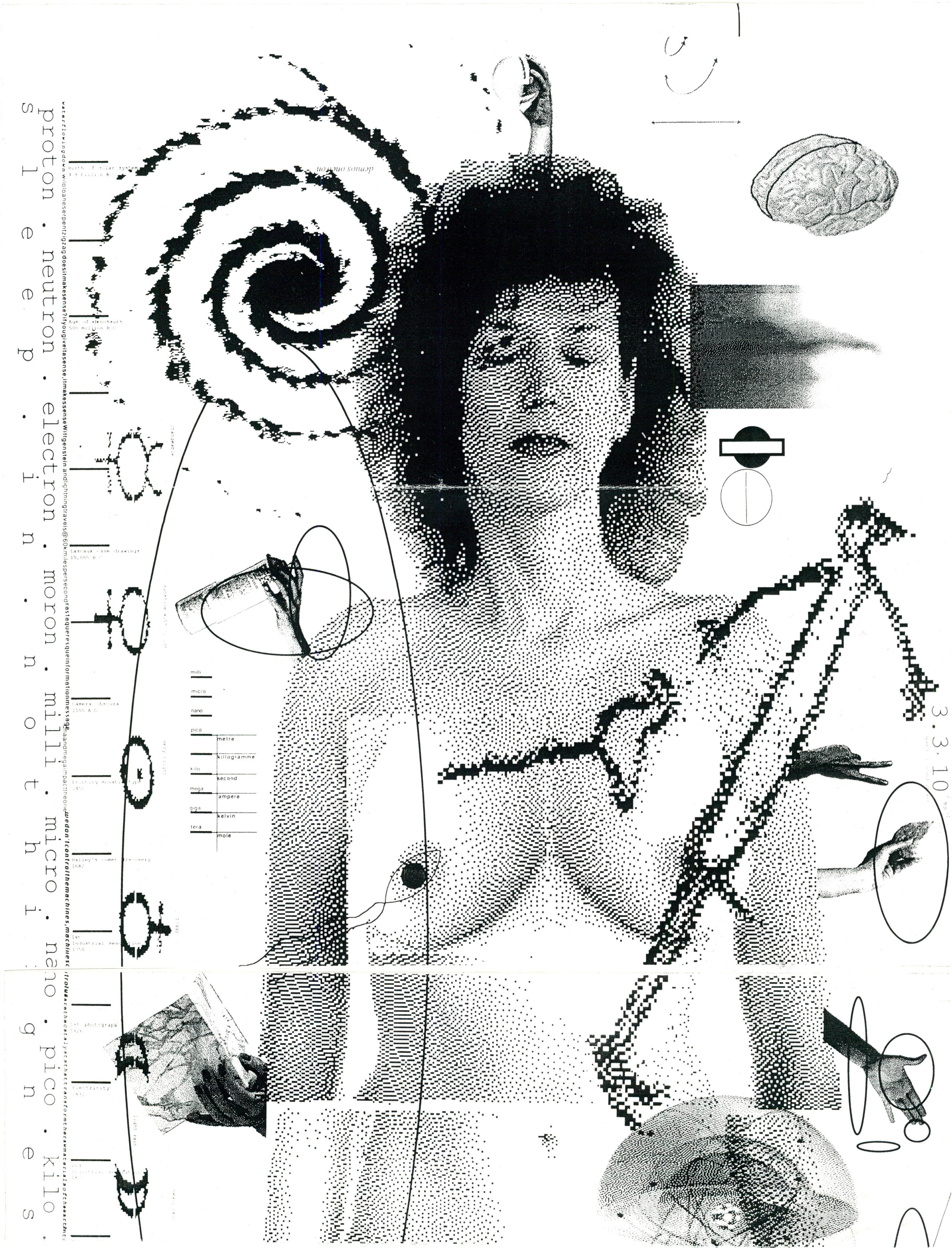
12 & 13 Does it Make Sense?.

April Greiman for *Design Quarterly*, 1986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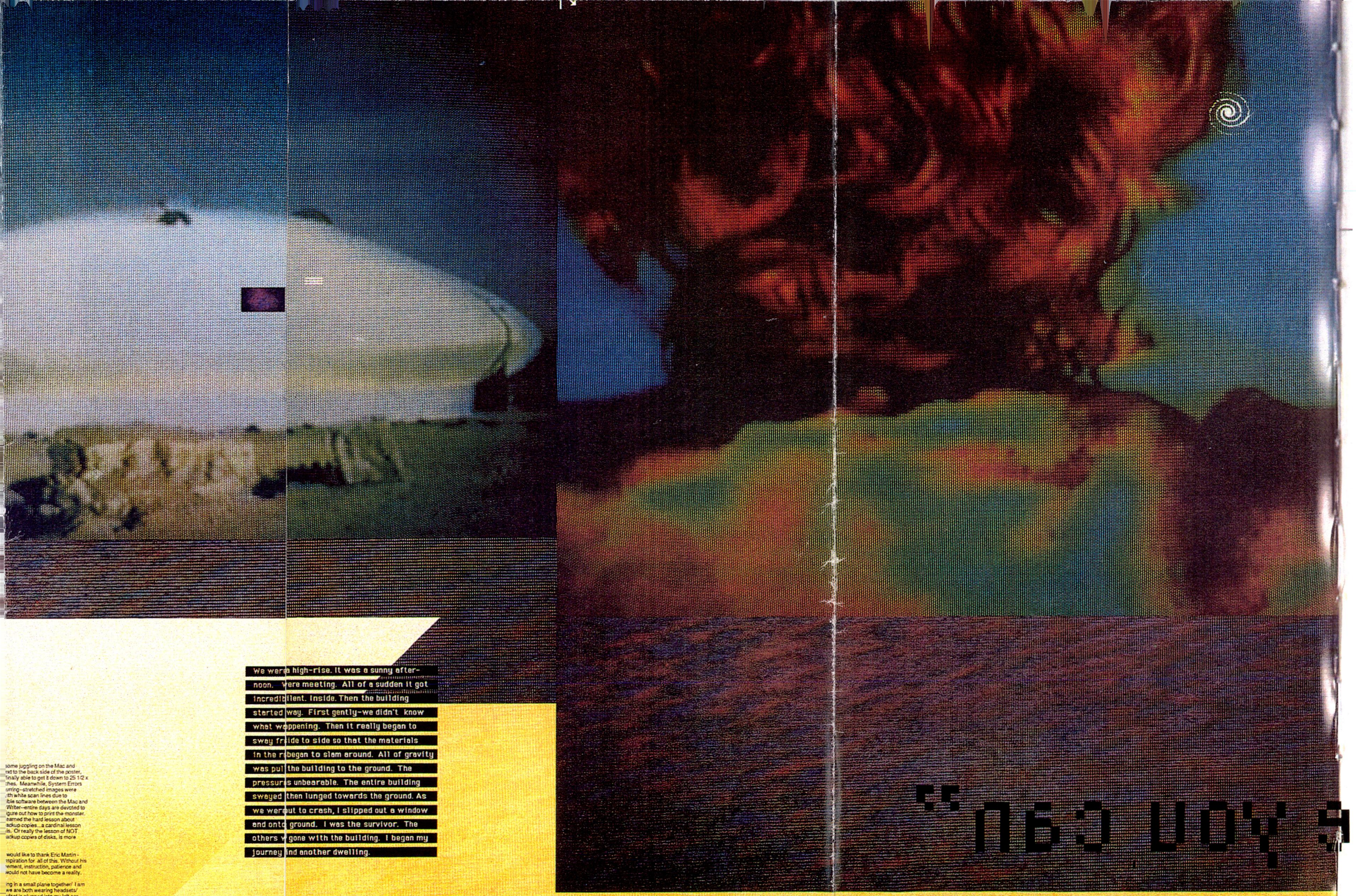

some juggling on the Mac and
ext to the back side of the poster,
finally able to get it down to 25 1/2 x
ches. Meanwhile, System Errors
urring--stretched images were
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Writer--entire days are devoted to
igure out how to print the monster.
earned the hard lesson about
ackup copies...a cardinal lesson
ls. Or really the lesson of NOT
ackup copies of disks, is more

would like to thank Eric Martin -
spiration for all of this. Without his
ement, instruction, patience and
would not have become a reality.

ing in a small plane together/ I am
we are both wearing headsets/
dset is plugged into my left ear.
u Eric.

y Marks introduced me to the Mac,
or not, in Macy's in Carmel! He has
early tech-guruwawapal. And so I
debted forever. And to Kurt
hose photograph of me appears on
of the slipcase and who opened a
me that has taught me to look at it
ther side. To Andreas Kemmerling's
the background. To Paul Hinckley –
ere -with- the- big- important -stuff.
JG, Edith, Muriel, Kath and
or all their selfless support
t the process.

Thank You

George Rice and Sons
Coordination,
separations, stripping and
printing on slipcase

Ivy Hill
Printing of the poster

Area Trade
Binding

Macintosh / LaserWriter
Typesetting

We wer a high-rise. It was a sunny after-
noon. ere meeting. All of a sudden it got
incredib ilent. Inside. Then the building
started way. First gently–we didn't know
what w ppening. Then it really began to
sway fr ide to side so that the materials
in the r began to slam around. All of gravity
was pul the building to the ground. The
pressur s unbearable. The entire building
swayed then lunged towards the ground. As
we wer ut to crash, I slipped out a window
and ont ground. I was the survivor. The
others w gone with the building. I began my
journey nd another dwelling.

The signature line, "made in space by April Greiman," tells us a number of things about this unique artist/designer: she possesses an original wit; she means to expand the traditional two dimensional surface of graphic design into the multiple layers of the third dimension; and, she accomplishes this by applying a creative mix of old and new technologies to graphic problems.

In this issue of Design Quarterly, Greiman has used the computer to create a large-format montage that defies the magazine norm. The usual thirty-two pages of DQ are reorganized into a single-page poster filled with ideograms and thoughts about the creation of man--a large-format topic! Visual poetics, impossible to achieve without the magical transformations of the thinking machines (in this case Apple's Macintosh programs MacDraw, MacPaint and MacVision on one side and video and Macintosh texture-imagery on the reverse), are the result.

April Greiman's work with electronic media comes out of her earlier explorations into deep space through photography. Now, stretched out moving forms create a proscenium for photographs of objects that behave like orbiting planets around a core of ideas. These experiments combine electronic impulses with photographic and typographic tradition that hark back to the refinement and clarity of her Basle days.

Less talented hands have delivered a flood of computer graphics that break no design barriers. For the most part such efforts have yielded rather rigid, repetitive, formulaic results -- little content and less probing of the medium's potential. The difference in Greiman's work is her ability to take the same equipment into areas of her own invention. She not only stretches the imagery, but she expands the ideas, developing a fresh, rich pluralism, a mixture of words and images that challenge previous conceptions of the limits of graphic vision.

April Greiman currently works out of a large, light-filled studio near central Los Angeles. She studied at the Kansas City Art Institute and the Allgemeine Kunstgewerbeschule in Basle, under the tutelage of Armin Hofmann and Wolfgang Weingart. After several years of teaching, she was named Program Director of Visual Communications at the California Institute of the Arts in 1982, where she served through 1984. For a new client, she has recently created a series of colorful ten-second video spots--the promising start of a daring new adventure in space.

Mildred Friedman

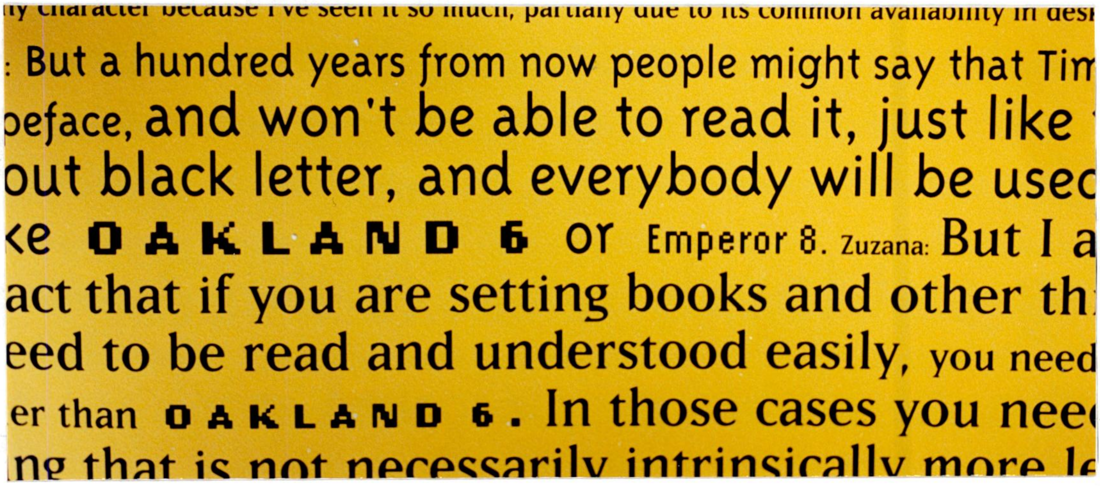
CONCLUSION

Emigré is a graphic design magazine published in California by Rudy Vanderlans. Vanderlans, a contemporary of Greiman, uses the magazine to showcase the primarily typographic experimentation of new-wave designers. The magazine is printed using its own typefaces. These fonts contrast interestingly with Brody's in *The Face*.

Neville Brody's typefaces were designed principally because he disliked being imitated by other designers. He did not consider legibility as an element because he intended to use them solely for headlines (see illus. 4). There was no particular impression he was trying to express with his fonts. From conception to effect, the only excuse for their existence was style.

The typefaces designed by Vanderlans and his wife Zuzana Licko are also stylish. However their reasons for creating them are extremely different to those of Brody. Firstly, they are concerned with legibility. Also they are designed using the computer as a tool. This latter point is important. Most typefaces in existence were designed to be cut into lead. Nowadays of course, practically all type is printed from computers, using filmsetting processes, which require no metal. Metal type took much of its form from the cutting process, and these forms do not always translate well or easily into computer formats. *Emigré*'s typefaces are invariably designed using the forms that are most accessible on the computer. These range from extremely low resolution 'bit-mapped' fonts to highly legible text faces for print (Illus.14).

April Greiman and her contemporaries have returned to many of the principles which were intrinsic to the period of heroic Modernism. There are a number of significant parallels in graphics between the Postmodernists and the Modernists. Firstly, both movements were initiated by a vehement reaction to a stale regressive medium. The mundane, international and



ly character because I've seen it so much, partially due to its common availability in des
: But a hundred years from now people might say that Tim
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ke OAKLAND 6 or Emperor 8. Zuzana: But I a
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ng that is not necessarily intrinsically more le

14 TYPEFACES in *Emigré*.

Rudy Vanderlans and Zuzana Licko, *1990*

essentially lifeless approach of Swiss design and the mindless reactionary design of the stylish 1980s are strikingly similar to the restricted forms and the craftless work of the turn of the century. Where Modernism invented the medium of graphic design Postmodernism now seeks to re-invent it.

This search is at the very core of the process of revitalisation provided by Postmodernism. Graphics is undergoing a new era of innovation and exploration, similar to that of the Bauhaus. Modernism centred its experimentation around form and while the Postmodernists have introduced many new forms into the medium, these derive from a new-found concern with content (10,p.20).

Computer technology has had a great impact on design. Postmodernists have seized the opportunities it provides in the same way that the Bauhaus was intent on using the technology of the 1920s. Computers have also provided the basis for the integration of all the arts. Almost all fields of creativity have been affected by the electronic revolution. Writers, musicians, artists, architects and designers have all adopted this technology. This has facilitated the breakdown between disciplines. April Greiman has exhibited sculpture (which she of course designed on the Macintosh). Similarly, the Modernists aspired to a generation of artists all of whom could function as artists, designers, poets and architects.

I am drawing comparisons between Modernism and Postmodernism not because I believe that none of the design produced since the Bauhaus has been worthwhile but because all of the great design of the last fifty years has drawn considerably on the experiments of the Weimar school. Heroic Modernism is important not solely for the work produced during its relatively short lifetime but also for the later generations who were inspired. Essentially, Postmodernism has re-introduced a progressive approach to design.

It is probably too much to expect all graphic designers to become practitioners of a progressive movement. Design has become too much of a ‘profession’ for that. Many designers, alas, will not even enter the debate. However, as long as there are progressive designers such as April Greiman and her Postmodern contemporaries, graphic design will continue to be a vibrant and progressive medium.

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